

# Cecil L. Striker, History of Art

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*Cecil Striker*

Cecil L. Striker, a world-renowned archaeologist, historian, and a former professor in the department of art history, died on January 8 from age-associated decline. He was 91.

Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, Dr. Striker graduated from Oberlin College. He enlisted in the Army Counterintelligence Corps during the Korean War, then spent three years in Germany learning the language (a skill necessary in the archaeological world). He then received his master's degree and doctorate at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York, under the direction of Richard Krautheimer. Dr. Striker continued his studies at Harvard University, the University of Marburg, and Technische Hochschule Munich. He began his teaching career at the Harvard Summer School, then served as an assistant professor from 1965 to 1968 at Vassar College.

Dr. Striker joined Penn's faculty in 1968 as an associate professor in the department of history of art. At Penn, "he supervised many students, established innovative graduate programs, and turned Penn into a powerhouse of architectural history," said Dr. Striker's former colleague Kostis Kourelis, an associate professor of the history of art at Franklin & Marshall College. Dr. Striker was granted full professorship in 1978. He served several terms as chair of the department of the history of art and helped design Penn's graduate program in the art and archaeology of the Mediterranean world. He retired in 2002 and was awarded the title of emeritus professor in 2007.

From 1966 to 1978, Dr. Striker led the archaeological exploration and restoration of the Middle Byzantine Church of Kalenderhane Camii in Istanbul, an excavation that unearthed momentous antiquities that stunned the historical world, including a Roman bath, 13th-century frescoes, two previous churches, and a one-of-a-kind religious mosaic. His colleagues called the excursion "the most extensive combined archaeological exploration and historic preservation carried out on a Byzantine building in Istanbul, and one of the largest anywhere." Dr. Striker also pioneered the application of dendrochronology (tree trunk dating) in the dating of medieval buildings across Greece, the Balkans, and Turkey, and later applied pioneering computer technology and statistical analysis to the field. He published numerous scholarly articles on his findings; in particular, his monograph on the imperial church of the Myrelaion (Bodrum Camii) was a pivotal work of archaeological literature.

Dr. Striker was a member of the board of directors of the American Research Institute in Turkey, a founding member of the executive board of the Council of American Overseas Research Centers, and a consultant for the Istanbul Metro and Bosphorus Tube Tunnel Project. "Working at the intersection of architecture and archaeology, C. L. Striker played a seminal role in ensuring that the late-twentieth century would be a golden age of Byzantine studies in North America," said Dr. Kourelis.

Dr. Striker and his wife, Ute, a professor at Haverford College, hosted gatherings with other professors and intellectuals, and their home was known by friends as the local "Byzantine Bed and Breakfast." He played guitar in a jazz combo at Oberlin and enjoyed classical music by Johannes Brahms.

He is survived by his wife, Ute Striker; his sister-in-law, Carol Striker; his nephew, Robert L. Striker; and his niece, Laura Striker.

Donations in Dr. Striker's memory may be made to the American Research Institute in Turkey (<https://aritweb.org/support/donate/>) or to the the University of Pennsylvania department of history of art (<https://arth.sas.upenn.edu/gift>).