

Veterinary Medicine Building

title

The Gentle Doctor

artist

Christian Petersen

Location:
**(Original) Second Floor
Scheman Building
(Reproduction) Located at
Veterinary Medicine Building**

Size:
6'9"

Material:
painted bronze

Date:
1937-38



About the Sculpture

This sculpture has been recognized by veterinary schools throughout the United States and the world as an international symbol of veterinary medicine. The sculpture depicts a vet who is holding a sick or wounded puppy. At the doctor's feet is the mother of the puppy looking upward with concern. *The Gentle Doctor* stands almost seven feet tall. The original terra cotta sculpture sustained weather damage over time and was recast in bronze. It now stands on the main floor of the Scheman Building and the reproduction in bronze is located at the Veterinary Medicine Building. The sculpture represents the strong bond between humans and animals.

About the Artist

Petersen's career advanced during a transitional stage in American sculpture when styles moved from heroic to realistic. He emigrated to America from Denmark with his family in 1894. After attending several different art schools, beginning a die-cutting career, and receiving some sculpture commissions, Petersen moved to the Midwest. There he was invited to join the Iowa Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) under the direction of Grant Wood in Iowa City. In 1934, Iowa State President Raymond Hughes offered Petersen a one-semester residency to create the fountain and bas-reliefs in the Dairy Industry Building courtyard. One semester turned into 21 years, and from 1934-1955 Petersen served as Iowa State's sculptor-in-residence. At the time, he was the only sculptor-in-residence at any college or university in the United States, for which he earned \$25 per week. Petersen created numerous works, including twelve major public art sculptures, which can be viewed throughout the campus.

The Gentle Doctor

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Additional information about the Christian Petersen sculptures, other Art on Campus information sheets, and Art on Campus maps are available at the University Museums office, 290 Scheman Building, (2nd Floor) 515/294-3342, or visit us online at <http://www.museums.iastate.edu/>

This information sheet is intended to be used in addition to viewing the Art on Campus. At no time should this sheet be used as a substitute for experiencing the art in person!