The dedication of a volume of the Metropolitan Museum Journal to Helmut Nickel is extraordinarily fitting. In the first place, he is the only member of the Editorial Board who has served since the Journal's inception in 1968. It is worth quoting from the foreword to the first volume, because Helmut's own contributions so fully bear out the new publication's stated purpose: "The Journal will be published annually and will contain articles and shorter notes in all fields of art represented in the Museum... They will reflect in their diversity the wide range of our holdings."

As one peruses the titles in Volume 24, one notes that only Helmut, with his irrepressible creativity and good humor (and with collusion from the Editorial Board), would contribute unwittingly to his own Festschrift—not just one piece but three. Indeed, so broad are his curiosity and range of knowledge that his name could plausibly be substituted for any and every one of the contributing authors.

The outpouring of articles in Helmut's honor demonstrates, as nothing else can, that the substance of a museum lies in the interaction between the professional staff and the works of art. From his outpost in the Department of Arms and Armor, Helmut influenced the culture of the whole institution, because he was the animateur par excellence of his collections, in their every ramification. Perhaps his greatest quality is this spontaneous predisposition to enjoy and communicate his knowledge and his objects. He would not only command the scholarship on a helmet or corselet, but he was equally likely to wear it—just as he regularly appeared in costume at the medieval festivities organized by The Cloisters. He mesmerized children, he charmed grown-ups, and within the Museum he indulgently enlightened his colleagues, whether at coffee, at an acquisition meeting, or in the galleries before an object. Helmut is not only Homo sapiens and Homo faber but also, and quintessentially, Homo ludens.