Recent Acquisitions

The Work of Lois Gottlieb, Architect

The Timeline of a House: Residence for Mark and Sharon Gottlieb

During a visit to the Virginia Tech College of Architecture and Urban Studies in the spring term, Lois Gottlieb made a generous donation of a life of work to the IAWA. The collection includes a current project, the ongoing construction of a Virginia residence for her son, daughter-in-law, and four grandchildren. In a presentation to the students and faculty she displayed great enthusiasm saying, "I am an explorer by nature. I perpetually look for better, more practical, and yet aesthetically pleasing ways of doing things." Lois Gottlieb (born Davidson) is a residential designer in San Francisco, California. She attended Stanford University, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree. She also went to the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, and was an apprentice to Frank Lloyd Wright as part of a Taliesin Fellowship. She has designed residences in California, Washington, Idaho, and Virginia and is the author of Environment and Design in Housing, published by Macmillan. The Lois Gottlieb papers consist of project files, architectural drawings, photographs, a video and correspondence that map her life and career. Gottlieb's work maintains an ardent respect for the site and its gracious provisions. She has an inquisitive eye and keeps an open mind for inventive materials and methods of construction. She remarks that her apprenticeship with Frank Lloyd Wright "taught her to be harmonious with nature and to take full advantage of a beautiful setting."

The current Gottlieb residence (Illustration 1), designed for her son and his family, shows an understanding of what is required in the making of a house and what the architect is willing to commit to a project. The project, documented through videotape, illustrates a timeline of construction and material selection for both student and practitioner. The viewer is given a glimpse of the wonderful lessons and questions revealed in the building process.

The story of the house begins with two years of clearing trees and making paths in preparation for construction. During the third year, the building is located on the site, and the documentation of the construction begins with the building of a gazebo, followed in the fifth year by the layout of an initial 4 foot by 4 foot module which establishes the floor for the main house. The image of the architect constantly on the site both directing and listening to the team is paired with the parade of trades and the change of seasons.

The 10,000 square foot house is a two level residence wrapped around a hill on a five acre southern slope. The construction of standardized factory-made materials provides both low maintenance and energy efficiency. Alternative wood products are used to offset the depletion of wood resources. The home is to house an innovator of high technology consumer products, his family and guests. New materials such as "Trex" decking (made from sawdust and melted plastic bags) are used for balcony flooring, and materials such as "ICE" (block made from recycled plastic bottles) provides the form work for concrete walls. Given that this block is lightweight and can be saw cut, it is easily located and left in place as insulation material for the exterior brick walls. "Weatherall" flexible stucco is used on the exterior to reduce maintenance, and solar collectors on the roof provide for energy efficiency. The structural components are of glue-laminated wood beams and engineered wood products whose manufacture produces relatively no waste. The integration of traditional finish materials of brick and wood with contemporary innovations in building assembly and materials, coupled with the implementation of a "smart house" computer system for security, results in a 250 foot long and 24 foot wide main house with a four foot overhang on both sides. The upper level has a living area, an attached carport, and a guest house. The lower level includes workshops, a gym and flexible space for future living areas. The 250 foot main spine of the house is framed by a continuous strip of daylight on either side. Inside the house, one is never more than six feet from sunlight.

Five years of video documentation of the site overlooking the Occoquan Reservoir shows the nature of construction. Numerous individuals working together is presented as a collaborative system where one may truly understand the complex work and rigorous dedication of an architect. In studying the "Residence for Mark and Sharon Gottlieb," the researcher may refer to both a fine set of drawings and a visual timeline of construction where the building slowly and precisely presents itself on the site complete with the sounds of saws, hammers and conversations of construction. As a part of the archive, it has immense value in that the project reveals

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the public nature of the process of building even a private residence, while chronicling the labor, efforts and talents of an architect and her family.

Lois Gottlieb states, “It is the structure itself that is exposed and forms the interest and ornamentation of this kind of architecture.” This project is an example of the sensitivities of all of her works, and the constant openness toward what is new in architecture tempered with an awareness of what is already known. Her work is an example of a way of life that may be brought forth in the making of a building: “Completing the landscaping and other interior amenities may take 10 years, but this is a lifetime enterprise for a whole family,” she said.

Shelley Martin

Women Architects in Eastern Europe: The Contributions of the Bulgarians

Access to a technical education came comparatively late, as most European polytechnics did not open their doors for women until World War I. In Finland, a woman could be admitted to universities during the 1870s only by special permission entailing a petition for “exemption of her sex.” In neighboring Russia, the St. Petersburg Women’s Polytechnic was established in 1906, but the Russians were among the first to enroll in West European polytechnics when women were finally admitted. In Germany, the Munich Polytechnic allowed women to audit classes in the summer of 1904. The first three registering in architecture were from the Russian Empire: Helena Gicharova from Voronezh in 1904, Helena Lemmerman from Tiflis (now Tbilisi, Georgia) in 1907, and Zinaida Hefner from Odessa, Ukraine in 1908. The same year, the first woman to enroll in structural engineering was again a Russian, Rahel Ginsburg, from Vitebsk. The polytechnics in Charlottenburg, Danzig, Hannover, and Aachen began accepting women for degrees in 1909. Although the first woman to study architecture at Charlottenburg was a prominent Berliner, Elisabeth von Knobelsdorff (1877-1959), she was soon followed by many East European women: Marie Frommer from Warsaw (then in Russia) studied from 1911 to 1916, and Elena Markova (1894-1970) from Sofia, Bul-

garia from 1912 to 1917. Another Bulgarian, Maria Louise Doseva (1894-1975), graduated in 1917 from the Darmstadt Polytechnic. Austrian polytechnics were among the last to accept women, in 1919. Yet again, the first graduates from the Vienna Polytechnic were from Eastern Europe: the Czech Helen Roth graduated in 1926, the Bulgarian Todora (Richka) Krustanova in 1928 and the Czech, Erika Nussbaum in 1929.

The impact of these women on the development of architecture has not yet been adequately studied due to the ban on private architectural practice, publications, and independent research during the communist period. Professional services were offered only through state design and planning organizations formed in the Soviet Union in 1933, in Bulgaria in 1948, and at about the same time in the other Eastern European countries under Soviet domination. Large organizations, such as the Bulgarian Central Architectural and Planning Organizations (abbreviated as TsAPO and later renamed “Glavproekt”), and the Sofia Design Organization (Sofproekt) were subdivided into design studios headed by politically reliable architects. Although 10 to 20 architects participated in these groups, the head of the studio received credit for entire projects. Most women were only members of groups and therefore, their work remained anonymous even when they were the actual designers. All sketches, drawings, specifications, and models were considered state property to be discarded and destroyed whenever not needed. Thus, few architectural design documents could be saved. Fortunately, eight women architects recently donated examples of their work to the IAWA: Dina Stancheva (b.1925), Nevena Kechedzhieva (b. 1927), Lilia Gramatikova (b.1929), Anna Peeva (b.1930), Snezha Khristova (b.1934), Elka (Elisaveta) Ribarova (b.1939), Bissera Ribarova (b.1943), and Rozina Chervenkova (b.1948). All graduated from the architectural program (established 1943) of the Sofia Polytechnic (founded 1942). Dina Stancheva, Anna Peeva and Bissera Ribarova worked for “Sofproekt,” while Nevena Kechedzhieva, Snezha Khristova, Elka Ribarova, and Rozina Chervenkova spent years in “Glavproekt.” Almost half of the architects in these organizations were women, due to the state policy to enroll 50 percent women in all institutions of higher education.

The official style in all Communist dominated countries was Socialist Realism, initiated in Moscow during the 1930s and defined by Stalin as “national in form and socialist in content” architecture. According to him: “Proletarian culture does not negate national culture, but gives it content; and in reverse —

national culture does not negate proletarian culture, but gives it form." Examples of this dictum were reflected in Soviet architecture and imitated in Eastern Europe. While men usually built the official symbols of the power structure according to Soviet models, the search for "national in form" architecture was clearly evident in designs by women architects, who were often charged with small-scale buildings for everyday use. Kindergartens and day-care centers were most appropriate for innovative reuse of the traditional domestic idiom. Care of pre-school children was an important part of the education of the "new socialist man." At the same time, this care allowed mothers to join the work force and contribute to the speedy industrialization of the country. The "socialist content" of this building type could easily be housed in one or two-story structures which were similar in scale to traditional houses. Traditional stone or brick construction and traditional white stucco walls blended schools and kindergartens with the neighborhood. Porches and balconies, windows of traditional proportions accentuated with dark wood frames, and outward jutting eaves are all icons of Bulgaria's historic heritage. Among the many excellent examples are those designed by Dina Stancheva in the capital, Sofia. From the beginning of her architectural career in 1952, Dina was assigned to design schools and kindergartens. In 1960, her nursery and day-care center in the "West Park" neighborhood of Sofia was so successful that it was repeated as a model in several other neighborhoods and in 1968, received the Union of Bulgarian Architects award. Dina Stancheva continued to develop this building type. Her design for an integrated kindergarten, nursery and day-care center in "Krasno Selo" neighborhood (1968) became another model repeated many times during the early 1970s. It successfully expresses a traditional psyche within a contemporary vocabulary. (See illustration 2 on page 2.)

The search for a regionally inflected architecture, coupled with the personal desire of many architects to link their work to the artistic culture of the past, yield a wealth of architectural statements. Some are romantically uplifting, others theatrically artistic, and many are lyrical and intimate. Most designers were also inspired by the compositional structure of settlements or urban units. The dynamic, articulated volumes and spatial structures of small mountain towns have been successfully perpetuated in the educational facilities and tourist resorts inserted into these old towns. Although compatible with the Western Post-Modernism, the Bulgarian development not only preceded it, but continued well after Post-Modernism had run its course.

The traditional semantic relations between interior and exterior (house-courtyard or building-natural environment) have been sensitively integrated in several designs. The leading example is the music school in the village Shiroka Luka designed by Lilia Gramatikova, a graduate (1953) of Sofia Polytechnic who worked in Sofproekt (1953-1965) and Glavproekt (1968-1985). (See illustration 3 below.)

Greek legends have claimed this region of the Rhodope mountains as the home of the Thracian singer Orpheus, hence the location of the school for folk instruments and songs (with its dormitories, practice rooms and auditoriums) in this small village, Shiroka Luka. Although a continuous structure, most of the large space is subdivided into interconnected pavilions creating harmony in scale, form, and construction method with the surrounding houses stepping up the hillside. The school received the Union of Bulgarian Architects Award (1979). Her sensitivity to local cultures helped Lilia Gramatikova to receive work in Ulan Batar, Mongolia (1961-1963) where she designed a youth center with its administrative offices. Between 1967 and 1982, she spent several years in the former East Germany, designing (with Milka Ilieva, another Bulgarian woman architect) a neighborhood for 16,000 inhabitants in Halle-Neustadt, for which she received the Halle Architectural prize (1982).

The model houses designed by Anna Peeva for the same region of the Rhodope are on a more intimate scale. The result of a national competition (1960), these housing types (for one-to-four families) used local materials and construction to blend with the environment and provide all modern amenities for the mountain inhabitants. In Sofia, Anna designed several apartment houses, schools, kindergartens and day-care centers. She received the Union of Bulgarian Architects Award (1964) for her integrated kindergarten and day-care center (with Todorka Todorova, another woman architect). She brought her expertise in designing housing and educational facilities to Algeria where she worked for several years (1977-1981) before retiring in 1986.

Another large, complex structure in Shiroka Luka is the Obstetrics and Maternity clinic with a nursery and rehabilitation center de-
signed (1984) by Snezha Khristova. The building is organized with steps around an elaborate central courtyard. It is scaled down and integrated into the hilly site similar to the village houses. (See illustration 4). Snezha Khristova worked for over thirty years in Glavproekt (1958 - 1989), and, as all working women, had to retire at the age of fifty-five. The political changes in 1989 opened the possibility for participation in the democratization of the country. Snezha applied her expertise and energy to the political process, was elected (1995) to the town council of the Slatina district of Sofia, and continued to work for the environmental amelioration of the capital.

Nevena Kechedzhieva is another architect who, after making major contributions to the built environment, continues to influence the political democratization of the country through her articles in the daily press. Nevena also worked in Glavproekt (1951-1984) after graduating (1951) from Sofia Polytechnic. She is the architect of numerous hotels and resort communities around the Black Sea Coast and in the mountains. Nevena Kechedzhieva is also an accomplished interior designer. Her expertise in all these fields helped her work in Cuba during the late 1970s, and in Nigeria and Yemen during the early 1980s. She continues to work after retirement, designing private houses and vacation homes. “My work is always inspired by the natural or the man-made environment,” she states. “The cultural context and the landscape are different for each of my projects, hence the variety of my design responses to these conditions.”

The work of two sisters, Elisaveta (Elka) Ribarova and Bissera Ribarova best exemplifies the search for cultural identity specifically through regional architecture. After graduating from Sofia Polytechnic (1962), Elka Ribarova joined the main design organization Glavproekt, first as a junior designer, and soon after as head of a design studio. Her most expressive interpretation of the regional heritage is her hotel “Strazhite” in Bansko, a town in the valley between the Rila and Pirin mountains. (See illustration 5.) Designed (1980 - 1983) to house 200 adults and 70 children, the resort hotel accommodates skiers in the winter and hikers in the summer. The large volume (restaurant, bar, lounges, game rooms, and library) is parcelled into four wings around a courtyard which is thus shielded from the cold


winds. Each room has a view — of Pirin, Rila, or the old town. The slope of the site is followed by the stepping wings of the building. "It is difficult to design for a settlement which evokes strong emotions," Elka explains. "Bansko is a very Bulgarian town; its architecture is unique—revealing the continuous story of its past... The large hotel Strazhite had to harmonize with the scale of the town and the traditional local architecture characterized by simple facades of stone, wood, and stucco, and by large projecting eaves..." Similar materials and forms are used in the hotel, although the structure is of concrete. The construction took four years (1984-1988). An "artistic synthesis" was achieved with the participation of artists whose lighting fixtures, ceramic panels, wood carvings, and handmade wall-hangings complemented the architecture.

Elka Ribarova is the designer of numerous residential and educational buildings in Sofia and many other provincial towns. Her buildings for the Bulgarian National Bank in Lovech (1986) and in Gabrovo (1988) received national awards. For the town of Bansko, she built (1989-1990) an addition to the museum of the local poet Nokola Vaptsarov, as well as several private houses. For many years (1968-1992) Elka Ribarova was an adjunct professor at Sofia Polytechnic.

The so-called "creative retreat" for movie producers and actors in the village Lesidren is a picturesque composition firmly rooted in its region. (See illustration 6.) The sensitive spatial elaboration again portrays the touch of a woman architect, Bissera Ribarova (Elka's sister), a graduate of Sofia Polytechnic (1967) who is an accomplished urban designer. The retreat (designed 1972-1975 in collaboration with the architect Bogdan Tomalevski), was intended to heighten the creative energy of movie makers and allow for privacy, as well as for fruitful interaction and discussion. Consequently, the common spaces (lounges, dining room and bar, administration offices, and a projection room) form a half-circular courtyard with patios for outdoor gatherings. The private rooms and apartments extend in a horse-shoe form away from the noise and commotion. Each room is expressed on the outside (stepping forward or pushed back) forming private terraces or balconies, scaling down the large building. Thus, the compound echoes an urban street of small houses. The local materials used for construction reinforce the connection with the village houses: cobblestone, white stucco, lightly stained wood, and red roof tiles.

Bissera Ribarova was familiar with the local architecture since she designed (1984) the master plan of the Lesidren village and built (1985) an addition to the local library. Her contacts with local craftsmen account for the careful execution of the compound of the Cinematographers' Union, which was finally completed in 1985.

Urban design was an important aspect of architectural practice, as the state controlled the development of all towns and villages. Dina Stancheva contributed to the urban environment of Sofia through her pedestrian passageways under the boulevard "Bulgaria" (1977-1983). As part of the pedestrian network, they formed underground urban hubs, with market facilities, shops, cafeterias, and bars, places where neighbors and friends often meet. For these successful "urban places" Dina Stancheva was awarded the "Gold Order of Labor" in 1981. (See illustration 7.)

For her project for the urban space in front of the Central Railroad Station in Sofia, Rozina Chervenкова received the town council award (1989). (See illustration 8.) This project never materialized, but Rozina developed a flourishing private practice in architecture and urban design during the 1990s. Since her graduation in 1972, Rozina Chervenкова was involved in urban design, first in the Rhodope Mountains and later in Sofia. She also taught at the National Art Academy, and participated in several international competitions, such as the new opera in Paris, France and the new library in Teheran, Iran.

The IAWA is fortunate to hold projects by these Bulgarian architects. Their designs demonstrate that the strength of tradition is in its adaptability to changes in time. Their professional lives enlighten us about a most important period in our recent history.

Milka Bliznakov
Alison Margaret Gill Smithson
June 22, 1928 - August 14, 1993

As an architect, Alison Smithson's voice was inseparable from that of her partner, Peter Smithson. In speaking of their built works, they each used the first person plural -- always "we." But in her writing, Alison's voice was usually a strong and declamatory solo, challenging the status quo and obliging us to examine the most mundane subjects both visually and socially.

Born in Sheffield, England, Alison Smithson studied architecture at the University of Durham and after graduation, worked briefly at the London County Council which was, at that time, a lively focus of social architecture. In 1950, she and Peter Smithson formed their durable and influential partnership and immediately won acclaim for their Secondary School in Hunstanton, Norfolk. This school exemplified the intellectual foundation of the Smithsons' work which they developed and refined with each successive project. Built of concrete, it was true to its material and made evident its fabrication. But it also translated into built form the social desiderata of the school. Much of the widespread attention that this building received was due to it being labeled "The New Brutalism" -- a catchy, but unwarranted designation.

The Golden Lane housing project in 1952 was equally noteworthy for its attempt to recreate the daily life of the residential street in its open access galleries or "street-decks." The Economist Building in London (1964) remains, after more than 30 years, a building of grace and durability. It contributes to urban life with an honesty, aesthetic sensibility and openness which is architectonic, social and spatial. The building's response to use, combined with a love of material, is evident in the detailing of the exterior concrete and of the interior furnishings. A space is created which welcomes everyone on the street, yet clearly belongs to the building and its occupants -- a fine balance.

Alison, the individual, was a prolific writer. The subject matter was diverse: autobiography, biography, commentary, theory, criticism, and chronicles. All of it had some bearing on her work as an architect. Throughout her writings ran the theme of recognizing the sublime in the ordinary -- a matter of seeing, feeling and respecting people and place. The ideas and language may have not been beyond the ordinary, but she was able to elevate the commonplace to art. This is exemplified in "AS in DA, An Eye on the Road," published by the University of Delft. It may not be the most important document, but it is an indicator of the breadth of knowledge and interests that Alison applied to her craft, of her keen eye, and her tenacity and flare. (Who else would have persuaded Citrönen to cut the book in the shape of the Citrönen DA automobile?)

The Smithsons were active and frequently vociferous members of the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM) in the early 50s and were among the founders of Team X. Alison was aggressive and could be abrasive in her manner, notwithstanding that she was extolling the imperatives of identity and the virtues of humanity. But she also offered endless kindness and encouragement to the young. She was not only the amanuensis but a veritable mother hen of Team X in its later years.

It is understandable that the drawings of Alison and Peter Smithson from their architectural practice remain together in England. We are grateful to Peter for sending to the International Archive of Women Architects two original drawings by Alison from her submission to a competition in Parc de la Vilette, Paris, together with this statement:

THE FRAGONARD BOCAGE OF SWINGS AND CLIMBING ROSES: In this sylvan spinney, northeast of the Themes Cluster, the Climbing Roses of France are trained up lattices allied in design to the pine and palm structures of the Park Entrances. These lattices are discontinuous, yet contiguous to swing-arbours sturdy enough to carry adults swinging... (and following a detailed description of the varieties of roses)....jasmine officinalis will bridge the period of first flowering to the late flowering.

Both the design and her written description are indicative of Alison's eye for the intimate; for a sense of time and place; and for a delight in life. (See illustrations 9 and 10.)

Blanche Lemco van Ginkel

Spring Exhibit and Lecture

The breadth of the collections in the IAWA was featured in an exhibit, "Contributions of Women Architects to the Man-Made Environment," in Wallace Hall Gallery at Virginia Tech March 17 - April 4, 1997. The show promoted the broad range of specialization and expertise of women architects. On display were their achievements in commercial and residential design, architectural history, computer technology, academia, retail, ecclesiastical, landscape, and interior design. The exhibit consisted of original drawings, models, and photographs. The show included work by Olive Chadeayne, Martha Crawford, Sabine Forsthuber, Anna Keichline, Helene Koller-Buchwieser, Elsa Levisier, Alberta Pfeiffer, M. Rosaria Pionelli, Melita Rodeck, Han Schroeder, Susana Torre, Hilde and Ute Westrom, Beverly Willis, and Liane Zimbler.

The official opening of the exhibit on March 24 was marked by a presentation by M. Rosaria
Piomelli who is a former advisor of the board of the IAWA. She is also a former dean of the City College of New York School of Architecture where she currently teaches. Ms. Piomelli practiced in architectural firms throughout the world, including the office of I.M. Pei, and has spent much of her career promoting the work of women in architecture. Her presentation, Reflections on Practice, Academia, and Community, addressed Ms. Piomelli's experiences and challenges as a woman architect in practice and academia, and described the renovation of a historic building in New York that illustrated the importance of a sense of community.

Anna Marshall-Baker and Milka Bliznakov curated the exhibit and arranged the presentation by Ms. Piomelli. These efforts were supported by Special Collections in Newman Library and funded through the Office of the University Provost, the College of Human Resources and Education, and the College of Architecture and Urban Studies with a grant from the Women and Minority Artists and Scholars Lecture Series.

Anna Marshall-Baker and Jeanette Bowker are currently curating a show of the work of Lois Gottlieb, a residential designer and recent contributor to the IAWA. This exhibit will be in Wallace Hall Gallery at Virginia Tech March 15 - April 5, 1998.

Anna Marshall-Baker

Note from the Chair

We express our warm welcome to four new members of the Board of Advisors: Anna Marshall-Baker, Diane Favro, Shelley Martin, and Nobuko Nakahara.

Anna Marshall-Baker is an assistant professor in the Department of Housing, Interior Design, and Resource Management at Virginia Tech. Her research work is focused upon family development and universal design. She has been curator and co-curator of several exhibits on women in architecture: "Contributions of Women Designers to the Man-Made Environment," "Charles and Ray Eames: America's 20th Century Design Team," and "Han Schroeder: Architect."

Diane Favro is an associate professor in the Department of Architecture and Urban Design, UCLA, California. Over the years, she has written articles, curated exhibits, prepared catalogs and lectured widely on women in architecture. She organized "The First Julia Morgan Colloquium: Different Voices: Architects, Images and Options in the 1980s." In 1995, she received the Parthena Award for outstanding contributions to the promotion of women in environmental design. Her book The Urban Image of Augustan Rome was published in 1996 by Cambridge University Press.

Shelley Martin is an assistant professor in the Department of Architecture at Virginia Tech. Most recently, she coordinated the multi-university project, "The Bosnia Network: Collaborative to Rebuild from War Destruction" held at Virginia Tech. Within the department, she developed the seminar "Writing in Architecture" with visiting architect, Andrea Kahn. Presently she is co-directing the web page data base project of the IAWA to electronically archive biographical information from women in architecture around the world.

Nobuko Nakahara graduated from architecture school in 1952 and was among the first female architects in Japan. She and thirty women architects joined together in 1953 to found the group "PODKOKO" which means "Thinking, Debating, Creating," as a resource for future careers in architecture. Next fall as UIFA JAPON President, she and UIFA JAPON will host the 12th Congress of International Union of Women Architects in Tokyo, Japan.

One further note of interest, 58 web sites link to the IAWA web site Guide to the Collections and Biographical Data Base. The IAWA's web address is: http://scholar2.lib.vt.edu/spec/iawa/iawa.htm.

Donna Dunay, Chair

International News

Initiated in 1963 by our Board of Advisors member, Solange d’Herbez de la Tour, the International Union of Women Architects (UIFA) convened its 11th Congress in Budapest, Hungary in September 1996. The 12th Congress will take place in Japan in September 1998. The theme of the Congress is "People, Architecture, and Cities in an Age of Harmony with the Environment." A pioneering woman architect and a member of the IAWA Board of Advisors, Nobuko Nakahara, is among the organizers of the Congress. She reports that Japan has over 5,000 women architects (although women could pursue higher education only since the late 1940s). We look forward to meeting our colleagues in Japan and making new friends.

Milka Bliznakov