History of the Winners of the IAWA’s Milka Bliznakov Awards
submitted by Donna Dunay, Chair, International Archive of Women in Architecture
March 19, 2012

1st Milka Bliznakov Prize
Claire Bonney

2nd Milka Bliznakov Prize - 2002
Elizabeth Birmingham

3rd Milka Bliznakov Commendations - 2003
Barbara Nadel and Ozlem Erkarslan

4th Milka Bliznakov Commendations -2004
Dorrita Hannah and Janet Stoyel

The Milka Bliznakov Prize is conducted annually to recognize research that advances knowledge of women’s contributions to architecture and related design fields. This year the Board of Advisors of the International Archive of Women in Architecture is pleased to announce the recognition of two finalist projects with Commendations; un-housing performance: The Heart of PQ by Dorrita Hannah of Wellington, New Zealand and Sonicloth by Janet Stoyel of Sheldon, United Kingdom.

5th Milka Bliznakov Prize - Three Awards - 2005
Carmen Alonso Espegel, Isabel Bauer and Bobbye Tigerman

This year the Jury awarded three first place awards for the Milka Bliznakov Prize of the International Archive of Women in Architecture. This was due to the exceptional level of the projects. The following projects from Carmen Alonso Espegel, Madrid, Spain; Isabel Bauer, Berlin, Germany; and Bobbye Tigerman, Winterthur, Delaware are recipients of the 2005 Milka Bliznakov Award. Each project receives the $1000 Award. In announcing their decision, the Jury released the following statements:

Heroines of the Space by Carmen Alonso Espegel

Heroines of the Space, a book by Carmen Alonso Espegel is a brilliant theoretical and historical synthesis that relies on research published in several languages, as well as a great deal of primary research. Her text is the only comprehensive effort known to the jury that stands a chance of truly helping re-write the history of Modern Architecture in the 20th century. It is also feminist scholarship at its best. One third of the book is a theoretical overview of the development of women’s roles from traditional societies to the beginning of modernity in Europe. The remaining two thirds are monographic analyses of the work of Eileen Gray, Lilly Reich, Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky and Charlotte Perriand. Though one may think everything there was to be known about them is available; Espegel's analysis reveals new aspects of their work, seen in the context of their contemporaries’ production. Although this book is intended for a Spanish-reading audience, large in the world in terms of numbers of speakers, the jury recommends this book for English translation. There is simply no other text that approximates the breath and depth of her analysis on the topic, and no other known that could be so readily embraced as a textbook for course work in the history of Modern Architecture. It is very readable, engaging and thought provoking -- full of original insights.
Architekturstudentinnen der Weimarer Republik by Isabel Bauer

Architekturstudentinnen der Weimarer Republik, Isabel Bauer’s path-breaking study of women architects in Weimar, Germany seeks to understand what drew women to study and practice a profession that their contemporaries understood as inherently masculine. This exhaustive history compares two groups of female architectural students in the 1920s and 30s: those enrolled at the Bauhaus, which was closely associated with the modernist avant-garde, and those who studied at the Berlin Technical University with Heinrich Tessenow, an accomplished architect and teacher identified with more traditional movements. This framework allows Bauer to challenge conventional understandings of “modern” and “traditional” in this period, and examine how gender operated within those categories. Bauer’s comprehensive analysis goes beyond the classroom, however, to document the subsequent careers of these students, providing fresh and unexpected insights into the architecture of this period. Bauer’s research makes a very significant contribution not only to scholarship on gender and architecture, but also to the history of modernism, which is seen here in an unfamiliar and provocative new light.

“I Am Not a Decorator” Florence Knoll, the Knoll Planning Unit, and the Making of the Modern Office by Bobbye Tigerman

“I Am Not a Decorator” Florence Knoll, the Knoll Planning Unit, and the Making of the Modern Office, a master’s thesis by Bobbye Tigerman is first rate original research. With probing questions and detailed analysis Bobbye Tigerman manages to establish Florence Knoll’s importance in the context of modern architecture in the U.S., and contributes to the analysis of the official history and the great impact that Florence Knoll had in bringing many aspects of the modern movement together with her extensive work. Tigerman writes of the complex contributions of Florence Knoll with extensive archival research complimented by interviews from Knoll designers to document Florence Knoll’s professional design education and work in creating a platform for modern architecture. Tigerman’s research details the vision for the Knoll Planning Unit and development of the modern office, while weaving whole the fabric of Florence Knoll’s life in design. “I Am Not a Decorator” Florence Knoll, the Knoll Planning Unit, and the Making of the Modern Office should be made available to a much larger audience.

The first MILKA BLIZNAKOV HONORARIUM
Joseph Chuo Wang

This year the Prize Milka Bliznakov Prize Committee initiated a new award - The MILKA BLIZNAKOV HONORARIUM –with an honorarium of $1000 to conduct research in the Archive.

The first recipient of this award is Joseph Chuo Wang, Professor of Architecture, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia who is preparing a Chinese language article entitled “The International Archive of Women in Architecture is Alive and Thriving at Virginia Tech” targeted for national professional journals in China.

The jury for the IAWA Milka Bliznakov Honorarium is pleased to recognize the research proposal "The International Archive of Women in Architecture is Alive and Thriving at Virginia Tech" with the Milka Bliznakov Honorarium for 2006. We look forward to the conclusion of this research effort with publication in one of the leading Chinese language journals.
6th Milka Bliznakov Prize - Commendation - 2006
Against all Odds: MIT's Pioneering Women of Landscape Architecture
Eran Ben-Joseph, Holly D. Ben-Joseph and Anne C. Dodge

The Jury for the International Archive of Women in Architecture Milka Bliznakov Prize of 2006 is pleased to announce the recognition of the finalist project Against all Odds: MIT's Pioneering Women of Landscape Architecture by Eran Ben-Joseph, Holly D. Ben-Joseph and Anne C. Dodge with the Commendation in the Milka Bliznakov Prize.

Instead of the Prize, this year the Jury for the Sixth Milka Bliznakov Prize of the International Archive of Women in Architecture chose to recognize one finalist project with this Commendation.

The Commendation recognizes the research report, Against all Odds: MIT's Pioneering Women of Landscape Architecture. Against all Odds frames the “influential, yet little known and short-lived landscape architecture program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) between 1900 and 1909” This work brings an important focus to one of two landscape programs in the United States at that time and gathers information identifying the key figures that contributed to this unique program and the women who went on to find success in landscape architecture. The Jury commends this work as a seed for further research and publication.

The Jury found that Against all Odds suggests a challenge to other researchers to identify and illuminate other programs around the world that pioneered welcoming women to architecture and the related design fields.

7th Milka Bliznakov Prize -- 2007

This year the Jury for the Milka Bliznakov Prize did not award the prize. The jury looks forward to the next cycle of the prize in 2008 to recognize research into the work of women in architecture.

8th Milka Bliznakov Prize – 2008

This year, on behalf of the International Archive of Women in Architecture (IAWA), the Milka Bliznakov Prize Jury honored two finalist projects: the monograph, "Odilia Suárez: The Exemplary Trajectory of an Architect and Urbanist in Latin America," by Martha Alonso, Sonia Bevilacqua, and Graciela Brandariz and the book, A Women's Berlin, Building the Modern City, by Despina Stratigakos. Each finalist project will receive $1,000. The jury also recognized the traveling exhibition feminist practices, by Lori Brown, with a Commendation.

“Odilia Suárez: The Exemplary Trajectory of an Architect and Urbanist in Latin America,” by Martha Alonso, Sonia Bevilacqua, and Graciela Brandariz

There is no question that the publication and wide distribution of this monograph on the Argentine-born architect and urban designer Odilia Suárez, a pioneer woman in the field of urban design in Latin America, opens a world of possibilities for women architects, designers, and planners in Latin America. This monograph, as one of the first attempts to document the contributions of a pioneering woman in Latin America, brings information about her work to the IAWA and to the world at large.

With research and publications on the work of Latin American women in the design professions extremely rare, the jury found this work makes an important contribution to the large number of women who graduate from architecture schools in the region. This work is a valuable contribution to the documented history of achievements of women in architecture; it provides women in the architecture and design fields, which continue to have a very high professional “mortality” rate as
women become wives and mothers, an understanding of how their predecessors juggled professional roles and domesticity.

**A Woman’s Berlin, by Despina Stratigakos**

*A Woman’s Berlin* is a major contribution to the history of women’s shaping of urban contexts—an important history of women architects in general and Berlin in particular. It explores movement in the history of architecture and the first female architects by opening a new window to practice and life. Here, we find women situated in Berlin who were at the forefront of a changing urban context and worldview.

Through the use of materials from the IAWA and many German archives, a completely hidden history is uncovered to expand and deepen our understanding of the contributions women architects made to the city and to the profession. The research is framed by social history that finds its expression in built form, and identifies largely unknown patrons and practitioners. It is illuminating, thorough, original, and an important contribution to the field.

**feminist practices, by Lori Brown**

The exhibition *feminist practices* is an ambitious effort by an architecture faculty to pull together an immerging group of 15 women in architecture to present the diversity of their practices through the generosity of the exhibition form, mounted in schools of architecture across the United States with an accompanying website. While the exhibition celebrates the range and origins of these practices, the threads that continue through their efforts situate the possibilities of practice for students, and open these directions for all in architecture and the related design disciplines.

**9th Milka Bliznakov Prize – 2009**

**Sarah Hunter Kelly: Designing the House of Good Taste**  
**Patrick Lee Lucan.**

The Jury for the 2009 Milka Bliznakov Prize of the International Archive of Women in Architecture is pleased to announce the first place award of $1000 for the Milka Bliznakov Prize for “Sarah Hunter Kelly: Designing the House of Good Taste,” a study by Patrick Lee Lucan. Patrick Lee Lucas’s “Sarah Hunter Kelly: Designing the House of Good Taste” is a valuable addition to the growing body of literature on the history of the interior design profession. Documentary sources, including original plans, and oral history interviews are among the sources from which this study weaves the story of Kelly’s career. Lucas effectively situates Kelly in the context of her era and in relation to interior design as a field of practice, other interior designers, and related design professions. The study is particularly strong in regard to Kelly’s work on a series of North Carolina Modernist houses by Edward Loewenstein, for which she met a dearth of suitable furnishings by designing them herself. Her use of furnishing designs based on historical French forms points to the fact that Modernist interiors did not necessarily contain wholly Modernist furniture. Among her more significant jobs was collaboration with architect Edward Durrell Stone on the “House of Good Taste” for the 1964 New York World’s Fair. Lucas has examined both the space and Kelly’s words to explicate her interpretation of “good taste,” a concept that, while not unique to the 20th century did absorb many designers of her era. As in the case of well-known interior designers such as Elsie de Wolfe, Kelly worked her social contacts and skills to obtain commissions, a networking method that succeeded for a number of women long before the word “networking” entered the vocabulary. Lucas examines Kelly’s work as it influenced and was influenced by the architects, lighting designer (her husband, Thomas Kelly), installers, builders, and other professionals with which she created interior designs. He also highlights the importance of client relationships in discussing how Kelly integrated the wishes of both wives and husbands into the spaces. Lucas’s study of Sarah Hunter Kelly makes a strong
contribution to awareness of the degree to which women interior designers impacted Modernist spaces and their vital roles as part of design teams.

10th Milka Bliznakov Prize

Early Women Architects of the San Francisco Bay Area
Inge Schaefer Horton

The Jury for the 2010 Milka Bliznakov Prize of the International Archive of Women in Architecture is pleased to announce the first place award of $1000 for the Milka Bliznakov Prize for the book Early Women Architects of the San Francisco Bay Area: The Lives and Works of Fifty Professionals, 1890-1951 by Inge Schaefer Horton.

Early Women Architects of the San Francisco Bay Area, by Inge Schaefer Horton, presents an impressive and detailed history of 50 remarkable women from the San Francisco Bay area who through their lives’ works made a significant place for the practice of women in architecture. The book’s detailed research reveals that many women were active in this time period. Some, like Julia Morgan (licensed in 1904 and one of the first women to have her own architectural practice) were prominent then, and are very well known now; others were perhaps obscure then and are almost completely unknown now, such as Florence Thurston Hincks Sanford. Although she opened her own office in San Francisco in the 1920’s, there is almost nothing really known of her work after the First World War. Even though these architects found places in the professional world, in some cases this obscurity was made even more manifest by the context of the day, as in the case of Julian Mesick, a woman in architectural practice who received the request from her boss to change her name from Charlotte to Julian because he did not want to have a woman’s name on his drawings. These documented instances of obscurity make this work even more compelling. As Horton states in the opening lines of the introduction, “The twentieth century was an exciting era for women. Many doors opened, not magically by themselves, but with admirable efforts by women, and new opportunities appeared on the horizon and came within reach.” Through exhaustive research, Horton shows fully how each pioneer found a place in architecture along with the support system that helped them achieve this rare distinction – the contributions of family, friends, husbands, educational mentors, and fortunate circumstances, all helped to bring their architectural work to light. That the author follows these women throughout their lives’ pathways is commendable. The three sections of the book - A Collective Portrait, The Design Legacy of Pioneer Women Architects, and Individual Portraits - give the reader a clear vantage point from which to query this special time in architectural history. The richly detailed narrative is accompanied by photographs of buildings and portraits, important in giving the reader the sense of the person at hand and the stature of their contributions. A precise sources list in each case lays the groundwork for future researchers. This work deserves to be seen as a model for recovering those other unknown histories from other places that reveal the contributions of women to the built environment. Overall, the book offers a welcome, continuing challenge to today by illuminating the manner in which women of a previous era located a creative approach to the profession.

11th Milka Bliznakov Prize Award - pending