

International Archive of Women in Architecture (IAWA)

2003 Archivists Report, Jennifer Gunter, Coordinator of Special Collections at Virginia Tech's Digital Library and Archives (GMC, Dec. 6, 2004)

Congratulations, IAWA! As Archivist of the IAWA just before its Twentieth Anniversary, I have certainly had opportunity to become impressed both with the wonderful resource you have created and with the tremendous challenge it offers in terms of its preservation needs. 2002/2003 has been an exciting year for the International Archive of Women in Architecture. Great progress was made preserving large collections, many very detailed finding aids to collections were made available online, and a very important donation and endowment was established in support of preservation of the archive. The year's exciting developments draw attention to the growth of the archive and the resources needed to ensure its success as an excellent research collection.

Given the IAWA's almost twenty years of success in collecting the under-documented contributions of women to the cultural fabric of the built environment, I urge the IAWA Board of Advisors to celebrate. But with every celebration, after the champagne is drunk, the hangover must be treated gently. The hangover of the tremendously successful development of the IAWA (collections like those of Beverley Willis, Zelma Wilson, Lois Gottlieb, A. Jane Duncombe, just to name a very few) is that the original drawings are expensive to preserve and are very voluminous. At this juncture in the IAWA's period of sustained growth, it is time to strategically plan for the future growth of the collection so that developing the collection and sharing it via outreach activities is balanced by the need to preserve the collection and make it accessible in a standardized and professional way. At the present time, all resources devoted to the physical care and maintenance of the collection (preservation, access online and in the Special Collections Reading Room) comes solely from the University Libraries. The pace of the collection's growth exceeds resources and infrastructure immediately available through the Library. Perhaps the most strategic way to engender more resources is to continue to acquire high profile collections that are accompanied by even higher profile endowments. This summer the Library was very fortunate to receive a very large collection as well as an endowment for its care. Carefully selecting collections and developing resources for their care will hone a collection poised to enrich scholarship in architecture, women's studies, and the built environment.

The archive's larger collections, ranging from 2.0 linear feet to 100 linear feet (lf), are often attracted to the IAWA by its extensive website documenting hundreds of women in architecture. Because small donations are quickly processed and put online, donors often give larger collections of their materials. The larger collections, however, are not quickly processed or put online. For example, the Zelma Wilson collection (80 linear feet) was donated to the Library in 1991 and was not opened for processing until 2002/2003. This fall the Library's work-study (devoting 8 hours per week) began processing the collection (i.e., preserving, organizing, and making it available online with a detailed finding aid). The only way a large collection of this scope can be made accessible is to shift the archive's attention from the small incoming collections to the larger collections of original drawings.

Last year the Library processed 40 IAWA collections totaling 26 lf. This year the archive has processed 8 collections totaling 90 lf. In just the last six months, the archive has received collections of original drawings from Eleanor Pettersen (500 cf), Iris Alex (8.5 lf), Jane Duncombe (6 lf), Diane Gayer (5 lf), Lois Gottlieb (10 lf), Jane Hastings (12 lf), Barbara Robinson (3 lf), Lilia Sofer Skala (4 lf), Brinda Somaya (4 lf), Paula Treder (4 lf), Vera Jansone (additional 8 lf), Diana Balmori (10 lf). Other large collections received in years past include Zelma Wilson (80 lf), and Beverly Willis (100 lf). Considering a standard rule of thumb that a professional archivist can process 100 lf in one year, if the IAWA was the only collection in Special Collections and had an entire position devoted to it, Special Collections should be able to accession, preserve, arrange, and describe the IAWA's incoming collections and backlog.

The Archive's utmost responsibility is the preservation of its unique and original materials. Up until this time, many of the Library's resources have been used to create online resources for the IAWA and that has paid off (VT ImageBase, IAWA Biographical Database, guides, and newsletters). The time has come, however, to shift the focus from bringing in anything and everything, to developing a strategy for caring for what we've got.

2002/2003 Developments in the Archive

ACCESSIONS

Special Collections accessioned thirty-eight new collections or donations to the IAWA between October 2002 and August 2003. Of those accessions, most were generated by the collection development activities of the IAWA Board of Advisors, especially through the efforts of Milka Bliznakov, Despina Stratigakos, and Inge Horton. The largest accession was the Eleanor Pettersen Architecture collection, 5 times the size of Beverley Willis' collection.

PRESERVATION

Zelma Wilson Collection, 1918-1996. Undergraduate architecture student Jessica Caruthers has processed half of the 80 cubic feet of the Wilson Collection. Architect in Ojai, California, and a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, Wilson studied at the University of Southern California (B. Arch., 1947), U.C. Berkeley, and L'Ecole de Beaux Arts in Paris before establishing her own architecture firm in 1967. Projects included the Ojai City Hall, the Simi Valley Library (Simi, California), and other structures in the Ojai area. Papers include copies of articles about her career and her designs, an extensive series of architectural drawings of projects she designed throughout her career, and administrative and project files. Ms91-046.

Vera Jansone Drawings, ca 1940s, 1961-1975. Jansone was born in Latvia and educated at L'Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris from 1945-1949. The collection (9.5 cubic feet) consists of 89 drawings by Vera Jansone as both a student and a professional architect. Also included is an article in the "OWA Tour of Residences Designed by Women Architects in Marin County and Napa Valley" about the Greenbrae Residence, which Jansone designed in 1975, as well as two resumes. Inventory available online at <http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaead/published/vt/vivadoc.pl?file=vibl bv00082.xml>. Ms2001-026

ACCESS

These collections had finding aids posted online:

Beverley Willis

<http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaead/published/vt/vivadoc.pl?file=vibl bv00072.xml>

Gae Aulenti

<http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaead/published/vt/vivadoc.pl?file=vibl bv00072.xml>

Diane Elliot Gayer

<http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaead/published/vt/vivadoc.pl?file=vibl bv00063.xml>

Jane Duncombe

<http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaead/published/vt/vivadoc.pl?file=vibl bv00091.xml>

Rutsu Taniumura

<http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaead/published/vt/vivadoc.pl?file=vibl bv00054.xml>

Brinda Somaya

<http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaead/published/vt/vivadoc.pl?file=vibl bv00049.xml>

Jane Hall Johnson

<http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaead/published/vt/vivadoc.pl?file=viblbn00085.xml>

UIFA 13th Int'l Congress

<http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaead/published/vt/vivadoc.pl?file=viblbn00055.xml>

DEVELOPMENT WORK

Eleanor Pettersen Architectural Archive! Pettersen's career as a female architect is unparalleled in the state of New Jersey. She graduated Cooper Union College with a degree in architecture and became the first woman to practice architecture solo in New Jersey in 1952. She was a fellow of Frank Lloyd Wright's, studying at Taliesin East and West. Her practice included residences for Richard Nixon, George Benson, and the Allford Estate as well as the lauded Bear's Nest community that garnered international acclaim for Pettersen. She was President of the New Jersey Institute of Architects, Altrusa, and a fellow of the American Institute of Architects.

Through the combined efforts of Virginia Tech's Development Officer Anne Grove and the Library's Coordinator of Special Collections, and IAWA Archivist, Jennifer Gunter, the collection was donated along with an endowment of \$100,000. The endowment was established to fund the preservation of the IAWA. It is intended to be further developed to support a full-time archivist devoted solely to the care of the IAWA.

Highlights of New Collections *(partly drawn from the IAWA 2003 Newsletter)*

Lilia Sofer Skala, the first female architect in Austria, fled the Nazi's in 1939 with personal that included her student portfolio from graduate studies at the University of Dresden. Art and architecture historian Despina Stratigakos arranged for the donation of this remarkable portfolio containing 65 original watercolor, charcoal and ink drawings, sketches and plans, by Skala's two sons, Peter and Martin.



<http://imagebase.lib.vt.edu/>

Though Lilia studied architecture, she is better known for her acting career, performing on stage, in television, and film. Presently touring is a one-act play entitled, *Lilia*, by Skala's granddaughter Libby. For more stories about Ms. Skala, please see the delightful article included in this newsletter by her son, Peter Skala.



<http://imagebase.lib.vt.edu/>

Brinda Somaya, founder trustee, donated a collection of outreach materials from the Hecar Foundation's exhibit "Women in Architecture – 2000 Plus" that documents the dynamic work of women architects from South Asia. The collection has 29 exhibit panels, a published catalog, and her book wherein, "twenty-six committed women architects from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, and a representative each from Singapore and from Australia, speak about the ideas, emotions and beliefs that inspire their work." (<http://www.hecarfoundation.org/publications.html>) Brinda Somaya, India's 2000 Designer of the Year is an architect, conservationist, post-modernist, abstract minimalist, and urban activist from Bombay. She received her architecture degree from the Sir JJ College of Architecture and a Master of Arts degree from Smith College, Boston, Massachusetts. Somaya has offices in Mumbai and Bangalore.

Iris Alex, Development Administrator for the Facilities Development Corporation of the State of New York, building consultant for the Young Women's Christian Association, and Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, donated 8.5 lf including original drawings from Skidmore and Merrill, Related Designs, and N.Y. State Facilities Development Corp. She also donated her original correspondence with California architect Julia Morgan (Morgan designed nearly 800 buildings from 1900-1950.) and architectural historian Sara Boutelle, Morgan's biographer. Other materials in the collection are photographs, negatives, plans, medals, and plaques and are now combined with Alex's 2000 donation of correspondence, articles, drawings, and her manual, "A Building Manual for the YWCA," written in 1978.

<http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaead/published/vt/vivadoc.pl?file=viblv00142.xml&query=alex&query2=iris&relate=near&amt=40>

This year architect **A. Jane Duncombe** (1925-), contributed original drawings and other records documenting her career spanning 1957-1994. 8 cu. ft. The A. Jane Duncombe Architectural Papers (1925-), spanning the years 1952-2002, include architectural drawings, photographs, newspaper articles, as well as copied photographs and plan sheets. The collection documents thirteen of Duncombe's residences and projects including twelve in California and one in Illinois. Duncombe is a graduate of Art Institute of Chicago School of Industrial Design, the first woman to receive architecture degree in Poland, and was a Charter Apprentice under Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin (1950-1951). A. Jane Duncombe practiced in the San Francisco Bay area from 1956-1996. A detailed finding aid describing the collection is available online at <http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaead/published/vt/vivadoc.pl?file=viblv00091.xml>. Ms2002-004

Diana Balmori, New York Landscape Architect, drawings and plans, (1991-1992, nd), 8 cf. "The work of the firm is not approached as a piecing together of separate specialties but rather as a unified design effort, representing a true integration of the aesthetic and the environmental with the environmental aspects daring to give the project form." <http://www.balmori.com/profile.htm> The collection includes drawings, sketches, watercolors, mylar, computer-designs, and presentation boards, from three projects (Princeton University's Institute for Advanced Study, Loring Park Minneapolis, MN, and University of California at Riverside Humanities and Social Sciences Building). <http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaead/published/vt/vivadoc.pl?file=viblbv00122.xml>

Gorin, Abbye: Gorin visited the archive and donated several of her digital books and other print materials documenting her work in New Orleans and Louisiana architectural preservation.

Lois Gottlieb, a contemporary and partner of Jane Duncombe and a residential designer in San Francisco, California, donated a significant addition to her collection already housed in the IAWA. Lois was born in San Francisco in 1926 and attended Stanford University from 1944 to 1947 before studying at the Harvard Graduate School of Design from 1949 to 1950. She served as an apprentice to Frank Lloyd Wright in 1948 to 1949, as a part of a Taliesin Fellowship. Gottlieb has designed residences in California, Washington State, Idaho, and Virginia and is the author of *Environment and Design in Housing*, published by Macmillan in 1965. Significant materials in this year's addition include her hand-written Harvard class notes, her masters thesis, over 50 original drawings, photographs, correspondence, articles, and a storyboard for the film, "Building a Dream: The Gottlieb House". The Gottlieb collection gives a rare view of her career as it developed.

Vera Jansone. Ms2001-026 5/13/03 (via Inge Horton) The Vera Jansone collection consists of 89 drawings documenting her career as a student at L'Ecole Nationale Superieure des Beaux Arts, Paris, and as a professional architect in California. Her student work is comprised of drawings of the Atelier Labro, Atelier Perret, and Atelier Auguste Perret. Her later work includes drawings from the Mount Shasta Mall in Redding, CA, Commercial Development in Vancouver, WA, and Pearl Ridge Shopping Mall in Honolulu, HI. Also included are drawings from the Del Norte Medical Center, BART Civic Center, Crescent Beach, CA, renderings, Fox Plaza Rapid Transit, and various stations and parks in San Francisco. Additionally, the collection contains an article about the Greenbrae Residence (that Jansone designed in 1975) in the "OWA Tour of Residences Designed by Women Architects in Marin County and Napa Valley" as well as two resumes.

Sigrid Rupp: Two beautiful watercolor paintings

Gay Aulenti: Computer designed Asian Art Museum drawings and literature promoting its opening

Additional collections: **Jane L. Hastings**, the Principal of Seattle, Washington's oldest woman-owned architectural firm The Hastings Group – Architects (1959), donated the Group's architectural records. Included are 8 cartons of original drawings and 2 boxes of display boards, medals, plaques, awards, articles, photographs, negatives and plans. **Paula Treder** donated architectural records documenting her designs of South Carolina buildings (1969-1972) including a library, fire station, college building, and residences. **Tony Wrenn**, former Archivist of the American Institute of Architects and Board Member of the IAWA purchased for the IAWA **Barbara Parker Robinson's** drawings for an addition to and remodeling of Washington DC's Wherlich Residence.