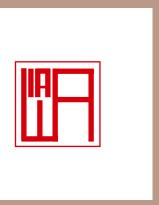
IAWA NEWSLETTER



International Archive of Women in Architecture

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Fall 1999 No. 11

Recent Acquisitions Swiss Women of the First Generation: Berta Rahm and Clair Rufer

Since 1855, women have been accepted to study architecture at the Eidgenossiche Technische Hochschule (ETH) in Zurich. Zurich was the first place in Europe, and perhaps in the world, where women could study architecture (MIT opened its doors in 1866). However, it wasn't until 1923 that the ETH awarded a diploma in architecture to Flora Crawford, its first female graduate.

Berta Rahm, who graduated in 1934, worked as an architect until 1966, when she left architecture to become a publisher. She operated her own publishing house until the late 1990s. Claire Rufer graduated in 1937 and worked as an architect until the end of her life, in 1973. She owned and managed an office in Bern with her husband Oskar Rufer.



(1) Berta Rahm, Nägeliseehof Farm, Hallau, 1951

The Life and Work of Berta Rahm (1910-1998)

Rahm's interesting life was a constant struggle with prejudices against women. Rahm had been very interested in social concerns since her childhood, and wanted to study medicine. However, in part due to the influence of her uncle, Arnold Meyer, who had a successful architectural office in Hallau where Rahm grew up, she became an architect.

Berta Rahm enjoyed traveling. She visited Holland and Denmark in 1935, after receiving a traveling grant from the ETH. Some years later, she toured Scandinavia. Following this tour, she wrote an award-winning novel, 1939: Reise nach Skandinavien und Finnland (Zurich, 1942), which included many of her travel sketches. At that time, Scandinavian architecture was an important model for young Swiss architects, including Rahm. She also was impressed by the emancipated life of women in the Nordic countries and considered them a model for her own life.

After receiving her degree in architecture in 1934, Berta Rahm opened an office in Zurich. Her one-woman office encompassed all phases of architectural practice, from the project design to construction plans to supervision of the construction sites. Her work included a variety of one-family houses, exhibition pavilions, and a very progressive farm, as well as the renovation of many houses, apartments, and farms. She believed that many of her designs for public projects (hospitals, churches, homes for the elderly) were never built because she was

female, a situation that caused her a great deal of suffering. At that time in Switzerland, very few women architects had their own offices, and women architects were mistrusted, particularly with large projects. As a woman, Rahm had difficulties securing building licenses and was excluded from competitions in her own home district, because, the authorities argued, a female architect would be unable to deal with competitions. The obstacles Rahm met made it impossible for her to continue her practice as an architect. In 1966, she closed her office and gave up her architectural practice.

After Rahm closed her office, she became a publisher. She founded the ALA-Verlag, publishing basic literature by women and about the emancipation of women. Berta Rahm, who wrote books and articles while she was an architect, regularly wrote for newspapers and professional journals. As a publisher, she continued on pg. 2



(2) Berta Rahm, Barn during construction, Nägeliseehof Farm, Hallau, 1951



sold her books throughout Switzerland and Europe, pulling a book-filled trolley from one book store to another.

I met Berta Rahm when she was 80 years old. She had already destroyed all of the work from her architectural office. Only her exhibition panels remained. These were exhibited in 1963 at the first International Union of Women Architects (UIFA) Congress in Paris. These panels, a gift from Ms. Rahm to me, are unique documents that reveal her 30 years of architectural practice. I was happy to donate them to the IAWA in the fall of 1998.

I will introduce three of Rahm's projects included on the panels: "Nägeliseehof," a progressive farm; "SAFFA," an exhibition pavilion; and the "Hohweri House," an historical home. The exhibition panels also include the Vogeli Farm in Gachlingen (1959), renovated in collaboration with the famous female artist Cornelia Forster, as well as other projects.

Nägeliseehof Farm, Hallau, 1951: Rahm designed the Nägeliseehof Farm (1, 2) as the first farm in Europe with open cow stalls, to allow animals to walk freely. Visitors came from all over Europe to see this farm. The entire project, including the stalls, barn, and house, were of wood construction. The farm remains in use and continues to fit the complex needs of the current owners.

SAFFA, Exhibition Pavilion, Zurich, 1958:

Berta Rahm's exhibition pavilion (3, 4) was one of a number of temporary buildings designed for the Second Swiss Exhibition of the works of women (SAFFA). The achievements of women in many different professional fields were exhibited in various pavilions. The leading architect of the exhibition, Annemarie Hubacher-Constam, conceived the general plan and a number of other buildings, e.g. a tower with apartments (plans of the tower are in the IAWA). No less than 25 women architects and 5 interior architects worked on the exhibition with Hubacher-Constam. They created an impressive show of the skills of women in architecture in the fifties. Following



(3) Berta Rahm, Exhibition Pavilion for SAFFA, Zurich. 1958



(4) Berta Rahm, Exhibition Pavilion reused as Recreation Building, interior, 1958



(5) Berta Rahm, Hohweri House, Hallau, '53-54



(6) Berta Rahm, Hohweri House, interior view of upper apartment, Hallau, 1953-54

the exhibition, Berta Rahm's pavilion was moved to a mushroom farm and reerected as a recreation building for the farm workers. The relaxation room within the building has wonderful light, with a completely translucent front. Here, Rahm experimented with "fural," a new building material.

Hohweri House, Hallau, 1953-54: Rahm transformed this historic single-family home into three apartments (5, 6). Her designs of built-in furniture for the dwellings recall the work of Alvar Aalto. Rahm occupied the upper apartment leaving the other two as rental units.

The Life and Work of Clair Rufer (1914-1974)

Claire Rufer-Eckmann, the daughter of a chemist and a doctor, came into architecture as a designer with talent in drawing. I was never able to meet her, as she died in 1973, when she was only 59. Professionally, Rufer was a very active woman, producing a large amount of work during her short life.

Before she received her architectural degree in 1937, Rufer traveled to Scandinavia, and in particular, to Sweden and Finland, where she worked for Gunnar Asplund and Alvar Aalto, respectively. In 1938 she returned to Sweden for two years. Rufer wrote an unpublished report on her visit to Sweden and its architecture, which she illustrated with her ink drawings of plans and views of important buildings (this report is in the IAWA).

In 1942, Claire Rufer began to work in Bern with her husband Oskar Rufer, a developer and architect. They worked together for 34 years and had a son who became a doctor. Their practice encompassed almost every building type, including shopping centers, theaters, schools, factories, and dwellings of all kinds. Rufer was especially concerned with dwellings, but was also involved in a variety of other projects. She specialized in design, and her husband specialized in management and development. After Rufer's death, her husband closed

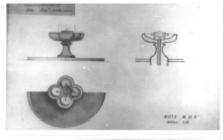
their office and destroyed most of the work, with the exception of a number of boxes that I saved and donated to the IAWA in the fall of 1998. In addition to Rufer's work, these boxes contain the work of other female architects, such as Beate Billeter, Verena Fuhrimann, Annemarie Hubacher-Constam, Jetti Judin-Mutzen-berg, and Heidi Wenger. Their projects include designs of houses and pavilions for the SAFFA exhibition (1958). These were economically conceived as unique models for temporary architecture.

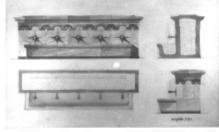
Evelyne Lang Jakob

Recent Acquisitions Bulgarian Architects: Dina Stancheva, Nevena Kechedzhieva, Tsvetana Ninova

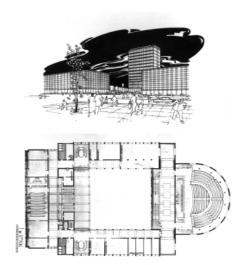
The holdings of the IAWA reflect the status of women in different cultures. While the interest in women architects has been growing in the West, their achievements continue to be neglected in Eastern Europe. This attitude does not match the number of professional women, as almost half of the architects in these countries are women. Yet, it is difficult to obtain original drawings from the former communist countries due to the ban on private practice and the organization of professionals in large state controlled groups. The head of each team, often a trusted member of the Communist Party, took credit for the work of all team members even though he or she seldom contributed to the design efforts. Drawings and specifications for every building belonged to the state and were usually destroyed several years after a project's completion. Thus, valuable documents have disappeared. While many buildings still stand as testimony to an architect's creativity, unbuilt projects can be judged only if drawings and sketches have been preserved.

The IAWA is pleased to add to the collection unrealized projects by women architects, such as the recent donation by the Bulgarian architect Dina Stancheva (b. 1925). Typical of many young architects, Dina participated in





(7) Dina Stancheva, Competition project for drinking fountains, First Prize, 1955



(8) Dina Stancheva, Competition project for the House of the Soviets, Sofia, Bulgaria, 1958



(10) Dina Stancheva,, Lake Pancharevo Project, near Sofia, Bulgaria. Model, 1969-1970.

several competitions after graduating in 1952. Some were for small artifacts, as the 1955 competition for drinking fountains to be mass-produced for public parks and urban plazas. She won first prize for several of her designs that were inspired by the shape of wild flowers (7).

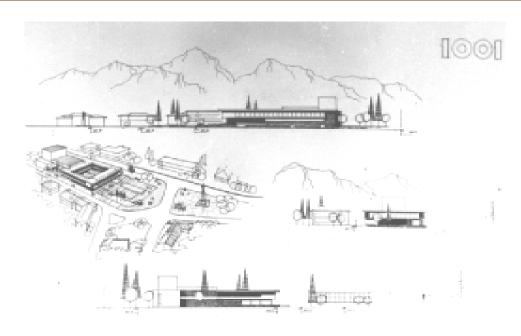
With a team of young colleagues, Dina Stancheva entered the 1958 National Competition for the most important building in the center of Sofia, the House of the Soviets. No project met the expectations of the jury--a decorative monument in the official style of Socialist Realism. Stancheva's team, however, was recognized with a monetary prize (first acquisition) (8). After several closed competitions (among invited leading architects), the project was abandoned and its site still stands empty today.

To elicit the best efforts of many architects, local governments also organized competitions. Dina Stancheva teamed with two women architects, Elena Dimcheva and Liuba Koeva, in the 1965 competition for a Cultural Center in the mountain town of Bansko. First prize was not awarded and the team was recognized with the second prize (9, next page).

A year later, Stancheva participated in a competition for a hotel in the small northwestern town of Belogradchik. Although she was not a winner, her talent was recognized and a few years later (1969-1970) she was assigned a most challenging project--a large hotel, its adjacent restaurant, a cultural center, and several administrative and commercial buildings by a lake near the village of Pancharevo (10). Only the cultural center, enlarged to include commercial and administrative functions, was built from Stancheva's design.

Competition projects usually exemplify the ambitions of the client and an imaginative projection into the future of the designers. Often they are ahead of their time and serve as mile posts in the progress of the profession.

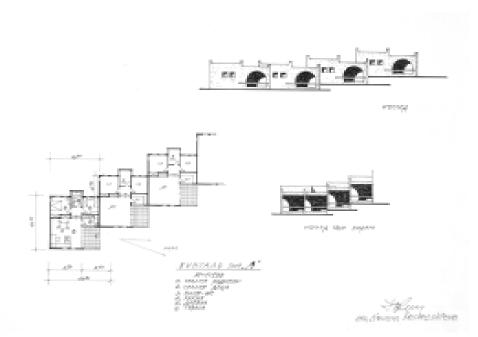
Another Bulgarian architect, Nevena Kechedzhieva (b. 1927), worked for sev-



(9) Dina Stancheva, Competition project for a Cultural Center in Bansko, Bulgaria, Second Prize, 1965

eral years in Nigeria, in the People's Republic of Yemen (Aden), and in Mozambique. While her modern hospital in Nigeria (1980) demonstrates the government's aim to import the latest in international achievements, her project for a motel in Yemen (1980-1982) cap-

tures the flavor of traditional architecture. The motel and bungalows in the sea resort "Gold Moor" modulate the sunlight through covered terraces and a variety of window openings (11). All units have a view of the sea and follow the slope of the site. In all her projects,



(11) Nevena Kechedzhieva, Motel at Gold Moor, Plan and Elevations Peoples Republic of Yemen, 1980 - 1982

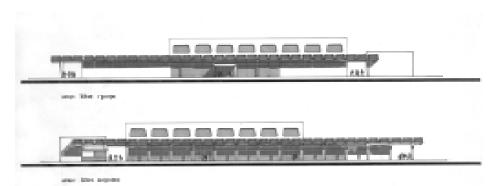


(13) Tsvetana Ninova, "Beli Brezi" apartment housing, Sofia, Bulgaria, 1977-1989

Kechedzhieva demonstrated her sensitivity to the buildings' site and to local culture.

While in Sofia in October 1998, this author was invited to an exhibition commemorating the 75th birthday and 50 years of productive practice of the leading Bulgarian Architect Tsvetana (Tsetsa) Ninova (b. 1923). Displayed at the Union of Bulgarian Architects headquarters, the exhibition focused on Ninova's best known work: large housing estates and important government buildings in Sofia and in provincial towns. Ninova, who curated the exhibition herself, has devoted a central section to "small projects designed with lots of love." These included the railroad station in Ikhtiman (1971) and the public facilities at the border town Kalotino (1973-1975). Waiting rooms, restaurants, and administrative facilities surround the Ikhtiman railroad station's two-story high lobby. The prefabricated concrete structure itself is an integral part of Ninova's design, its repetitive elements creating a dynamic image in harmony with the train's movement (12). Documents of both have been donated to the IAWA.

Tsvetana Ninova was born in the mountain village of Popovitsa (September 16, 1923), and began her architectural education at the University of Zagreb, Yugoslavia (today the capital of Croatia). Due to the war, she transferred to Sofia Polytechnic and graduated in 1949. Ninova worked for several design organizations in Sofia until 1966 when she departed for Paris, France to continue her education in the Institute for Urban-



(12) Tsvetana Ninova, Railroad Station, Elevation, Ikhtiman, Bulgaria, 1971

ism and in the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Returning to Sofia in 1971, she headed a design studio until her retirement. Many of her projects won national competitions, as, for example, the housing estate "Beli Brezi" (white birches) in Sofia (1977-1989) where Ninova has her own apartment and, since 1993, her private office (13).

Unfortunately, much of the work of the earlier generation of women architects has disappeared. One example is Maria (Mimi) Berova-Henning (1897-1980's) who graduated from Darmstadt Polytechnic (1923), practiced for over twenty years in Bulgaria, and after WWII, established her office in Freiburg, Germany. After her death, her daughter, also an architect, unfortunately destroyed her entire archive. It is lost forever. The IAWA hopes to raise awareness of the importance of preservation.

Milka Bliznakov

New Acquisitions An Overview

From September 1998 through March 1999, the IAWA received twelve new collections and significant additions to five existing collections. The most significant donations were the Kathleen Cruise papers, the Claire Rufer-Eckmann papers, SAFFA '58 material, the Berta Rahm papers, and the Jean Linden Young papers. Smaller new collections include an Anne G. Tyng photograph, Evelyn Chi-Chan Hermann-Chong papers, books from the Organization of Women Architects and Engineers of Japan, the papers of Irina Patrulius of Romania, a

book from Raili Pietila, the Annemarie Hubacher papers, a brochure from Mojca Svigelj-Cernigoj, and the Sarelle T. Weisberg papers. Additions to existing collections were made to the Silvia Paun papers, the Sena Sekulic-Gvozdanovic papers, the Verena Huber papers, the Evelyne Lang Jakob papers, and the Heidi Wenger papers.

Gail McMillan

Other Acquisitions

From Japan: UIFA: The leading Japanese periodical "Architectural Journal," No. 930 of November 1998, was kindly donated by Architect Kyoko Takeda. This issue of the "Architectural Journal" includes several articles on the September, 1998 Congress of the International Union of Women Architects (UIFA) in Tokyo, Japan.

One of the articles, based on an interview with Ms. Junko Matsukawa-Tsuchida, Secretary General of UIFA Japan, reviewed the Congress in Japan: "There were more presentations and exhibitions than usual, demonstrating a great diversity of women's interest and their social roles. The Congress was very fruitful in the sense that we could exchange a variety of ideas and proposals which we can apply to our practice."

Another article reviews "Women City-Makers," a presentation by architects Grasciela Schmidt and Ives Guemberena from Argentina. Their video presentation shows social action initiated by women architects to improve the quality of life in poverty stricken Rosario, Argentina. Their actions led to improve-



(14) "Earthworks" exhibit, general view, Toronto, Ontario, 1998, Blanche Lemco van Ginkel

ments in public housing as well as increased economic and educational support. Schmidt and Guemberena encouraged participants at the Congress to follow their example. (A copy of this video was donated to the IAWA).

Several pages are also devoted to Hana Architecture and Interior Design Associates, the office of Kyoko Takeda which is comprised of five women architects. Hana is featured as a model of collaboration. It is a unique partnership which utilizes collective management and mutual help. Ms. Takeda explains, "At first, the character of the office was more like a group of individuals. Each architect handled her projects independently. But now, we get together not only to solve problems but also to divide work of a project. Now clients don't ask for a specific person in the architectural office; they recognize Hana as a group ..." Each partner in Hana is aware of the differences between Hana and other offices because of their "flexible schedule and mutual assistance. We try to reflect the women's view on architecture and design good buildings through collaboration and friendly relationships with cli-



(15) Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, "Earthwork", Toronto, Ontario, 1998

ents."

Atsuko Kubo

Post Script: Architect Junko Matsukawa-Tsuchida, Chair of the Executive Committee of UIFA '98 has kindly donated the final report of the Congress and a catalogue of the exhibition to the IAWA. Although the text is in Japanese, the numerous illustrations bring back beautiful memories from this most successful and enjoyable Congress.

Blanche Lemco van Ginkel donated documentation photographs of an exhibition entitled Earthworks which she curated and mounted for the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts in Toronto, Ontario from October 29 to November 21, 1998. Among the forty-four objects, beautifully displayed, was one of her own recent works, "Earthwork", an installation of sand gravel and rock (14, 15).

Van Ginkel was recently elected a Life Member of the Ontario Association of Architects as well as Fellow of the Toronto Society of Architects. At the latter ceremony she delivered an address on "Culture and Architectures." She defined architecture as "a product of its cultural environment--while at the same time contributing to the culture of its time...As a visual art it contributes to the image of the city and can complement the natural environment; as a technological art it can demonstrate the nature of the material world; as a social art it can satisfy the manifold human needs which go beyond the quantifiable requirements for shelter and for the containment of function. As one of the shapers of our culture, it is particularly in the area of social arts that architects are needed today ..." van Ginkel talked about culture in terms of its intangibles (beliefs, concepts of the individual and the collective, attitudes to authority and institutions) and its physical manifestations (the spoken language, food and utensils, clothes and cities). She sees the arts as "the highest and most enduring manifestations of culture," not only in terms of institutionalized art but even more in "the art of the everyday. It is not only the typography of the special edition of an art book but in the typography of government forms. It is not only in the paintings hung in the museums but in our bank notes, postage stamps and commercial advertisement. It is not only in formal music compositions and [popular] songs but in the pervasive sounds of the city..." A copy of this address is in the archive. The IAWA is proud to have Blanche Lemco van Ginkel serving continuously on its Board since its foundation in 1985.

From Austria: Studies on women's path into the architectural profession have revealed valuable insights about their social and religious background, as well as their role models and aspirations. Ute Georgeacopol-Winischhofer donated an important book on the women who have studied at the Technical University in Vienna, Austria between 1919 and 1996. The book, entitled In Step With the Stride of Time (Dem Zug der Zeit entsprechened) is authored by three women: Juliane Mikoletzky, Ute Georgeacopol-Winischhofer and Margit Pohl. It surveys the attempts by women to enter technical universities before and after the turn of the century. The author of the first part, Juliane Mikoletzky, includes information about the technical education of women in Europe and the USA before 1914. Of particular interest is the chapter on architectural education (1919-1945) by Ute Georgeacopol-Winischhofer because of the biographical information and professional life of several graduates of the Vienna Technical University. Numerous tables with statistics and an extensive bibliography make this book (WUV-Univesitaetsverlag, 1997) a most valuable addition to the IAWA's holdings.

Ute Georgeacopol-Winischhofer also donated her richly illustrated book *From Workers' House to a Giant Industry (Vom Arbeitshaus zur Grossindustrie)*, a survey of the history of buildings for industry in Vienna's Leopoldstadt satellite town, from the seventeenth century to the early 1930s. Published by Osterreichischer Kunst-und Kulturverlag, Wien in 1998, this extensive study includes the devel-

opment of building types, of technology and science, and, eventually, of artistic requirements. The author also catalogues 77 industrial buildings, thirteen of them successfully adapted to new uses. This is particularly useful for professionals in the USA who are facing the task of finding new uses for old industrial buildings. We are grateful for both donations.

Milka Bliznakov

From the Feminist Art and Art History Conference: We are pleased that the Feminist Art and Art History Conference will donate documentation from their conference to the IAWA. This annual event is held at Barnard College in Manhattan, every fall. It provides a forum for artists and scholars of art and architecture to present work and work in progress related to feminism and women's studies in Art and Architecture. Detailed information about the conference is available at: http://www.barnard.columbia.edu/wmstud/projects/faahc.htm.

Marcia Feuerstein

In Search of Industrial Design

The IAWA contains the work of several architects who have developed furniture in their professional careers, but there few other projects that qualify as industrial design. Industrial design, as a so-called profession, is fairly contemporary when compared to architecture. Further, during the development of this profession, men dominated the field, probably more so than in architecture.

There are three notable examples of industrial design and product work within IAWA's collection. One example is a building material composed of recycled paper and glue invented by a young woman, Molly DeGezelle of Mankato, Minnesota. The material is now manufactured as *Environ* by Phoenix Biocomposites. A second mention is Monika Pia Jauch-Stolz whose work includes jewelry design in addition to her architectural work. Finally, Anna Keichline's collection includes the *K-Brick* and copies of patents for a combination sink and laundry tub.

The search for industrial designers and other inventors of products from the last century continues, and we know that our collection, which may well be a discovery of the present, will grow. Please contact the IAWA if you uncover any material regarding women in industrial design.

Mitzi Vernon

Uncovering Hidden Archives

The purpose of the IAWA is to collect, document, preserve, and make publicly accessible the rich heritage of women in architecture and related design professions. The success of the Archive in providing a substantial and diverse collection for research is based on the amount and quality of new acquisitions. This short article will focus on the ways the Archive solicits new acquisitions or donations of work by women in architecture.

First, the IAWA makes great efforts to become known as a depository of women architects' work. There is the more obvious publicity through this newsletter, which is mailed to more than 1500 individuals, institutions, and organizations all over the world. The IAWA Website at http://spec.lib.vt.edu/spec/iawa/ provides much information about the Archive to the computer enthusiasts worldwide. The Archive also receives attention through lectures by members of the Advisory Board at professional gatherings and congresses of architects, women architects, and preservationists.

Since the members of the Advisory Board of the IAWA are charged with soliciting new donations of work by women architects, I am actively involved in contacting potential donors in my home state of California and wherever I meet women architects. The primary targets are women who are near retirement or have retired. Although it would be wonderful to find some archives of early pioneers--women who practiced in the first 25 years of this century--this is extremely difficult as their work generally is already in other university or museum archives or has been destroyed. Many

women architects discarded their drawings because they doubted anyone would find them of interest. Unfortunately, it still happens today that women architects or their heirs or executors destroy their work. Thus, it seems to be advisable to persuade potential donors to donate just one of their projects or their early work as a sort of a "downpayment." This allows them to familiarize themselves with the IAWA and become committed to donate the remainder later.

Soliciting work of women for the IAWA requires intuition, patience and persistence. I generally find potential donors by asking other women architects for referrals, and through contacts in women architects' organizations. Some letters are never answered. This is especially true with practicing architects who are sometimes too busy to respond to requests that infringe on their time. Occasionally you have to be lucky that some circumstances such as marriage or an out-of-town job and a subsequent move will cause a potential donor to send her holdings to the Archive. For some architects, it can be very difficult to let go of their work.

It is possible to loose potential archives by not contacting the family immediately after a death. Quite often, offices have to be cleared immediately, which may involve throwing out anything that does not seem valuable to the heirs.

Contacting women architects for the IAWA is very rewarding. It allows me to meet accomplished women in my field of interest, to take a close look at all their work over a long span of time and inquire about how they worked and lived. Their life stories are as different as their work and career paths are diverse. Some dedicated their whole life to architecture (for example Julia Morgan) while others managed to practice architecture and raise a family (for example Sarah Harkness, one of the founders of TAC and mother of seven children). I am amazed at the high level of energy and contagious enthusiasm for their profession some of these women still show at an advanced age. It is inspiring to meet them and I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to get to know them.

Inge Horton

Annual Milka Bliznakov Prize

The IAWA Board of Advisors seeks proposals for the second annual Milka Bliznakov Prize. These should be original projects that contribute to and advance the recognition of women's contributions in architecture and design and extend the IAWA Collection. \$1000.00 will be awarded to a winning project following a two-stage process. A 250-500 word abstract proposal is due 1 September 2000. For more information, see: http://spec.lib.vt.edu/spec/iawa/.

Marcia Feuerstein

Note from the Chair

Please make friends of the archive aware of this digital newsletter. The newsletter is now online at http://scholar2.lib.vt.edu/spec/iawa/news.htm with digital images included.

We express our warm welcome to a new advisor to the Board - Humberto Rodrigeuz-Camilloni. Humberto Rodriguez-Camilloni is a professor of architecture in the College of Architecture and Urban Studies at Virginia Tech. He is an international authority on Latin American Art and Architectural History and Historic Preservation. He presently serves as director of the Henry H. Wiss Center for Theory and History of Art and Architecture and the Center for Preservation and Rehabilitation Technology in the College of Architecture and Urban Studies at Virginia Tech. His professional experience spans over twenty years as director of major restoration projects in Latin America under UNESCO and the Organization of American States. His recent research includes the Cybercore Project "Monasteries of Western Europe"; Interactive Multimedia Database Project for Latin American Cultural History; and Monitoring the Restoration of Frank Lloyd Wright's Pope-Leighey House in Mount Vernon, Virginia.

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