

# International Archive of Women in Architecture

## IAWA Center News

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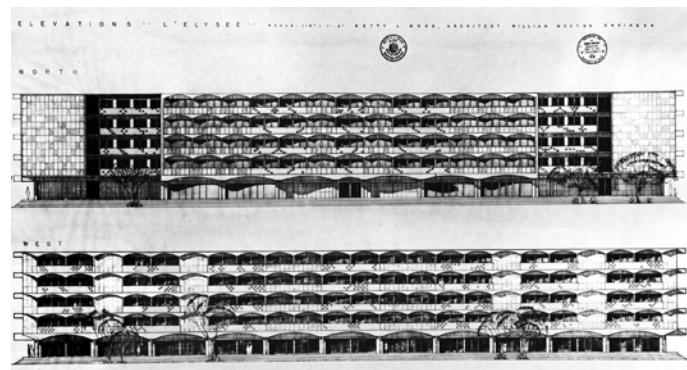


### INTRODUCING THE BETTY MOSS COLLECTION

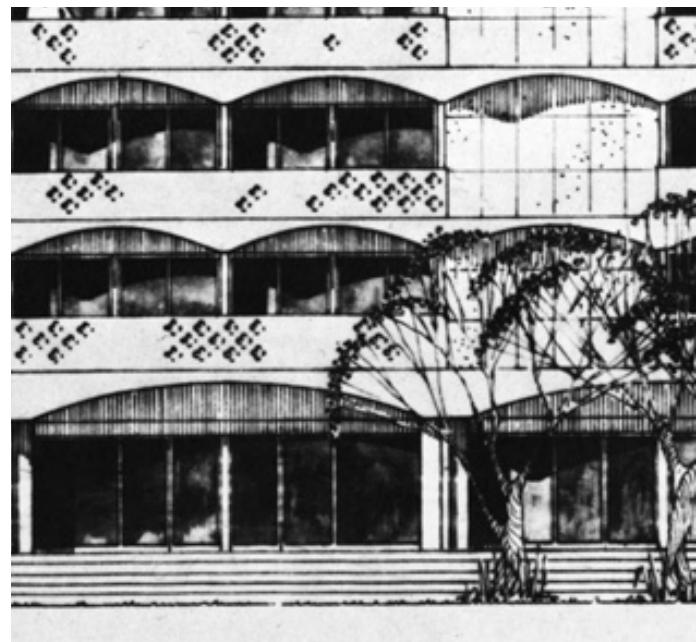
By Helene Renard and Lisa Tucker

The Betty Moss Collection was donated to special collections in 2008 and contains architectural renderings, construction documents, and preliminary sketches along with business correspondence. These exhibits create a portrait of the New Orleans-based architect as a versatile practitioner and an outspoken defender of building preservation and conservation. Projects in her later career highlight her motivation to improve the lives of others on a civic scale.

Born in 1921 in Houston, Texas, Moss initially received a degree in journalism from Tulane in 1942, and later returned to Tulane to earn a bachelor's degree in architecture. She completed that course of study in 1960. She started her architectural practice when she was in her 40s, although she designed her own home before receiving her formal education as an architect. Her body of work, as represented by extensive rolls of drawings on vellum or trace and diazo prints, encompasses various project types and sizes and reveals a range of stylistic influences. Single as well as multi-family residential projects of different scales and religious buildings are among her works. Elevations of three multi-family projects in the collection show the designer's range in both scope and style. The St. Charles Street Condominium (fig. 1), designed for an unknown client in 1995-97, is a smaller-scale project, which is representative of the local vernacular plantation style, while a project entitled "The Marguery" for Urban Living, designed for an unknown client in 1963, reflects a more modern aesthetic, making playful use of simple geometric forms (fig. 2). The third project, entitled "L'Elysee," (1961) designed for client Archie Hellman, is a large-scale, mixed-use residential and commercial building, rendered in a modern style, the formal expression of which seems to be an interpretation of the structural system that forms the skeleton of the 256-unit structure. This project offered 36,000 square feet of commercial space and many communal spaces, as well as four unit types for families of different sizes and a below-ground parking structure. (fig. 3)



(fig. 1)



(fig. 1 detail)

Betty's husband, Hartwig Moss II, was the owner of an insurance agency, and much of her commercial work seems to have been contracted with her husband's business as the client. The archive also includes a perspective drawing of the Rivergate Casino as re-envisioned by Betty Moss for Harrah's Casino. Her efforts to

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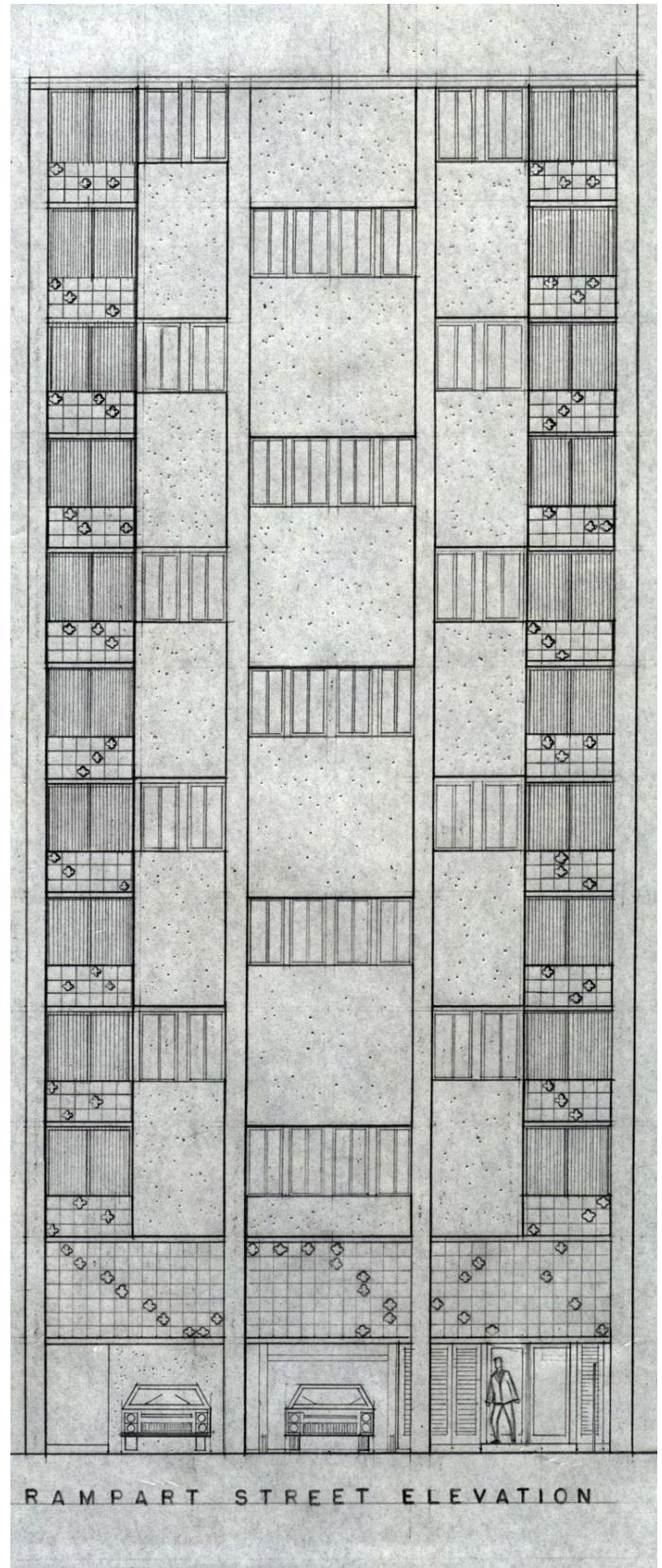
(fig. 2)

prevent its demolition ultimately proved futile. She and Abby A. Gorin made a six-minute film about the building that is also part of the archive, but not part of the Moss Collection.

In addition to projects for clients, her schoolwork is well represented in the collection and includes a candy shop, a regional dwelling sited in Japan, and her thesis project, "Temple Beth El." Moss's sense of humor makes its way into some of her drawing and project titles, and is clear in much of her personal correspondence. A drawing entitled, "A Very Sketchy Sketch," and a project called, "An Easy House for a Difficult Site," are indicative of the sense of playfulness.

In 2005, Moss designed a block for New Orleans, and sent the proposal along with a letter to "the Honorable Barney Frank, member of the U.S. House of Representatives," making an appeal for the implementation of preventive building practices that could protect against the kind of devastation she and the rest of the nation witnessed during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Exploring the Moss collection with Emily Cook, the special collections staff member who processed the collection, as our enthusiastic and knowledgeable guide, we had the opportunity to catch a glimpse of many episodes of Betty Moss's creative, professional, and personal life. Visitors to the archive will find that the collection provides an intriguing and complete picture of Betty Moss as student, versatile architect and designer, businesswoman, mother, activist, and person committed to and engaged in her community.



(fig. 3)

## THE ELEANORE K. PETTERSON COLLECTION

By Sherrie Bowser

Since arriving at Virginia Tech in February 2009, I have had the privilege of working almost exclusively on the Eleanor K. Pettersen Architectural Collection. Pettersen's collection encompasses 50 years of project files, sketches, drawings, blueprints, models, and photographs representing approximately 600 designs. Currently, processing on the Pettersen collection is 75 percent complete and the collection is well on its way to being processed by year's end. Full processing of this collection will allow students and researchers to systematically mine the depths of the IAWA's largest collection for the first time.

Eleanore K. Pettersen entered Cooper Union for Advancement of Science and Art in New York City in 1937 intent on studying painting, but her first drafting course changed her focus and she emerged in 1941 with a Certificate in Architecture. Following Cooper Union, she apprenticed with Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin from 1941 to 1943. After leaving the communal environment of Taliesin, where Pettersen comments that she "was never without a bandage the whole time," she worked on various projects, including the National Defense Research Committee in Princeton, N.J.; the Tennessee Valley Authority; and with architect Arthur Rigolo in Clifton, N.J., before becoming licensed as an architect in the state of New Jersey in 1950 and opening her own architectural office in 1952. Pettersen was the first woman in the state to open her own architectural office and she did so in style, renovating a 200-year-old barn in Saddle River to be her home and office.

Over the years, she employed a number of interns and apprentices, (often women), preferring to hire right out of architecture school. Within a few weeks of being hired and initiated into the firm's detail-oriented method, the new employees were assigned their own projects and were encouraged to work closely with the clients and to follow their projects through not only the design, but through building aspects as well. Although Pettersen designed a number of commercial and institutional properties, she was primarily a residential architect. She stressed a personal relationship with the clients, and this is very evident in the correspondence and writings found within her collection. An excerpt from the program Ageless Perceptions IV: Senior Women in Architecture, an exhibit held at the SOHO20 Gallery in New York City, highlights Pettersen's devotion to architecture:

*1991 will be my fortieth year as an architectural principal with my own office. Architecture has been a total commitment. If I were to make a choice all over*

*again, the choice would be the same. Architecture has imbued me with a sense of self worth and has given me the privilege of contributing a new sense of life and meaning to my clients and their families.*

Pettersen's commitment to architecture superseded creating designs and working with clients. She also served on a number of national and local professional/civic organizations promoting architecture as a viable profession for women with her presence and accomplishments. The inclusion of Pettersen's collection in the IAWA will ensure that she continues to be a mentor to young architects as they strive to develop their own careers.

*Sherrie Bowser began working as the project archivist in special collections at Virginia Tech in February 2009. Previously, she has worked with women's materials in special collections and university archives at Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. For more information regarding Eleanore Pettersen or other IAWA collections held in Virginia Tech Special Collections, please contact Sherrie Bowser, project archivist, at sbowser1@vt.edu.*



Eleanore K. Pettersen Residence and Studio: courtyard and exterior. Saddle River Road, N.J.



One of Pettersen's best known works is the home of former president Richard M. Nixon, Englewood, N.J.



## THE NINTH MILKA BLIZNAKOV PRIZE

By Donna Dunay, FAIA, Milka Bliznakov Prize Committee Chair

This year, on behalf of the International Archive of Women in Architecture Center (IAWA), the Milka Bliznakov Prize Jury honored two finalist projects: the monograph "Odilia Suarez: The Exemplary Trajectory of an Architect and Urbanist in Latin America," by Martha Alonso, Sonia Bevilacqua, and Graciela Brandariz, and the book, *A Woman'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



(fig. 1)

There is no question that the publication and wide distribution of this monograph on the Argentine-born architect and urban designer Odilia Suárez (fig. 1), 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 International Archive of Women Architects and to the world at large.

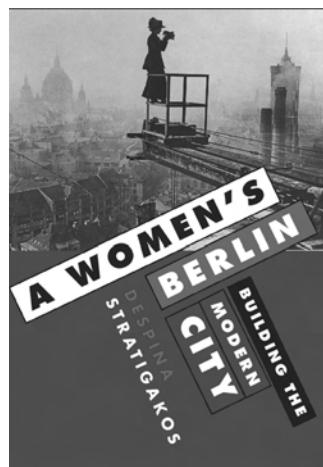
With research and publications on the work of Latin American women in the design professions extremely rare, the jury found this work makes an important contribution to the large number of women who graduate from architecture schools in the region. This work is a valuable contribution to the documented 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* (fig. 2) 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 at the forefront of a changing urban context and worldview.



(fig. 2)

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 immersing 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 related design disciplines.

## CALL FOR 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MILKA BLIZNAKOV PRIZE SUBMISSIONS

The deadline for submissions to the 10th annual Milka Bliznakov Prize is March 1, 2010. Each year, the IAWA center invites architects, scholars, and researchers to honor IAWA founder and Virginia Tech emerita faculty member Milka Bliznakov through research projects on women in architecture and the related design fields. This research in concert with the preservation efforts of the IAWA helps fill the current void in historical knowledge about women's professional achievements. The winner of the Milka Bliznakov Prize receives \$1,000. More information: <http://spec.lib.vt.edu/IAWA/>; <http://archdesign.vt.edu/programs/iawa>.

## NOTE FROM THE CENTER DIRECTOR

By Donna Dunay, FAIA

The mission of the International Archive of Women in Architecture Center (IAWA) is to document the history of women's involvement in architecture, interior and industrial design, landscape architecture, urban design and planning, architectural history, and criticism, and the records of the professional organizations of women.

We are preparing to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the IAWA in 2010 with a travelling exhibition that opens in March at the Virginia Center for Architecture in Richmond, Va., and then travels to Tokyo and Seoul, Korea, for the 16th Congress International Union of Women Architects in fall 2010.

To highlight women's contributions to the built environment, the exhibition, *Researching Women in Design*, is being created through a special advanced seminar examining archive materials from more than 300 collections. The goal of the exhibition is to showcase the tremendous breadth and promise of these collected materials. To enlarge the understanding of these wonderful collections, the seminar is being conducted with graduate and undergraduate students in the School of Architecture + Design here at Virginia Tech. Participating school faculty include Donna Dunay, Kay Edge, Bill Galloway, Wendy Jacobson, Helene Renard, and Lisa Tucker along with University Libraries, IAWA Archivist Aaron Purcell, and Marc Brodsky, public services archivist.

With this exhibition project, students will receive an overview into a largely unknown body of international design work and will gain the ability to transmit this information through a high level of design communication to professional and general audiences. The exhibition will be a contributing feature to the website. To see the organization's history, please visit the IAWA Timeline: Three Decades of the IAWA at [http://caus5.arch.vt.edu/IAWA/IAWA\\_Timeline.html](http://caus5.arch.vt.edu/IAWA/IAWA_Timeline.html).

Over the past year, our appreciation goes to those who sent collections to the archive: Dorothy Alexander, Milka Blitznakov, Robert Daley, Wena Dows, Lois Davidson Gottlieb, L. Jane Hastings, Steven and Cathi House, Dorothee Stelzer King, Marie-Louise Laleyan, Sally Levine, Jay Margulies, Nobuko Nakahara, Joyce Oron, Anna Sokolina, and Susana Torre.

A warm thank you goes to those who gave donations to support the work of the IAWA during this past year: Margaret O'Donnell, the Harvard Club, Sue Griffith, Priscilla Kilbourn, JDL Development,

Sue Hickey, Ednah Friedman, Jennifer Brown, Kristine Fallon, Diane Gayer, and Yumiko Higashi.

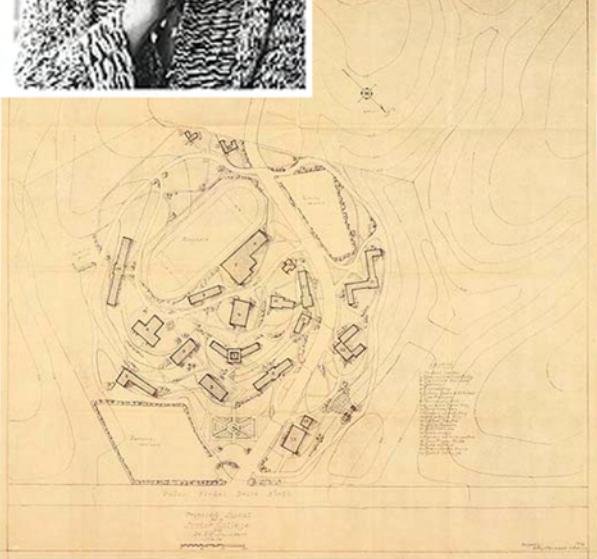
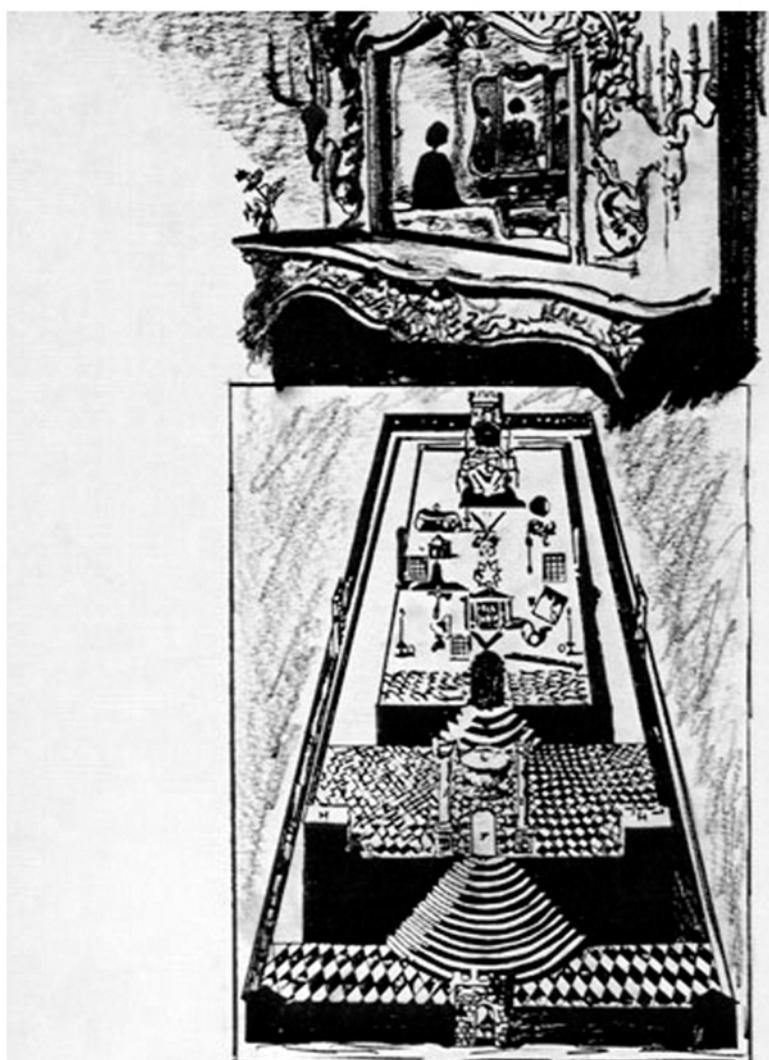
The IAWA is also most grateful this year for a \$5,000 gift received from the Peck-Stacpoole Foundation to support the preservation and processing of IAWA collections.

We extend thanks for the service of advisor Marilyn Casto who is leaving the board, but will be close by as a friend of the IAWA.

This year the IAWA Board of Advisors welcomes K. C. Arceneaux, Lois Gottlieb, Junko Matsukawa-Tsudhida, Ute Westrom, and Ann Wittlin, who were elected to three-year terms as off-campus IAWA Board of Advisors members. Kay Edge and Helene Renard were elected from the College of Architecture and Urban Studies as on-campus advisors to the board. We appreciate the unique talents that all advisors bring to the board.



Caption needed





Clockwise from top left corner:

Rebecca Wood Watkin: Residence in Kentfield California

Liane Zimbler: Gnadewald House

Liane Zimbler: House for Dr. F

Sharon Sutton: Engraving "View to a Winter Sky"

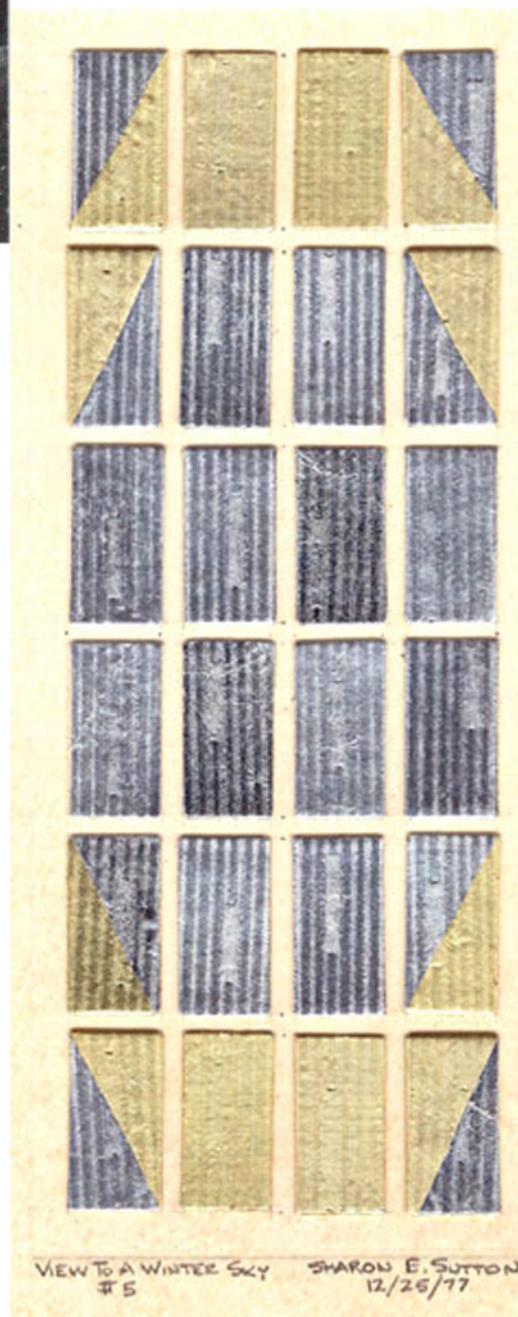
Sharon Sutton: Photograph

Susan Speigel: Composition as Explanation—the Plan

Mae Steinmesch: Proposed layout for a junior college

Mae Steinmesch: Photograph

Rebecca Wood Watkin: Residence in Kentfield California





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