

MUSEUM ARCHIVIST

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SPECIAL REPORT: THE AUSTIN PAPERS AT THE WADSWORTH ATHENEUM, HARTFORD

"But you did things sooner and more brilliantly than any of us." So wrote an incredulous Alfred Barr, founding director of the Museum of Modern Art, to A. Everett Austin, Jr., director of the Wadsworth Atheneum. The year was 1944, and Austin had just resigned after 17 memorable years in which he transformed America's oldest public art museum into one of its liveliest. The Austin Papers, documenting both a significant figure and a critical period in American cultural history, comprise a valuable segment of the Wadsworth Atheneum Archives.

In 1981 I became the Atheneum's first archivist and began a preliminary survey of its records, scattered throughout the museum's five connected buildings in Hartford, CT. These amounted to over 300,000 pages, reaching back to the first meeting of the Atheneum's founders in 1841. Among this disorganized mass of documents, scrapbooks, photographs and memorabilia were the Austin files, reflecting the years of his directorship, 1927-1944. Because of the extraordinary number of important letters from major figures of the 1930s, including Gertrude Stein, Le Corbusier, Salvador Dali, Lincoln Kirstein, Alexander Calder, Virgil Thomson, the Austin files were processed first. During the ensuing two years as this material was being organized, Austin's widow, Helen Goodwin Austin, and his children, David E. Austin and Sarah G. Austin, gave the museum additional correspondence, photographs, and sound recordings. In 1985 the Austins gave the museum their Hartford home, a Palladian-style villa with both Baroque and Bauhaus interiors. Included in that gift was the balance of Austin's personal correspondence and family photographs. These were incorporated into the Austin Papers in the museum's archives.

A. Everett Austin, Jr. (1900-1957), known to almost everyone as "Chick," was born in Brook-

line, MA and was educated at Harvard College. As an undergraduate he spent a year in Egypt and the Sudan with the Harvard Museum of Fine Arts archeological expedition. He continued his studies in fine arts at Harvard's Fogg Art Museum where he was a protégé of its director, Edward Forbes. In 1927, at the age of 26, he became director of the Atheneum and immediately began presenting a series of groundbreaking exhibitions and programs. In the late 1920s he introduced Hartford to works by Braque, Derain, Matisse, Modigliani and Picasso.

Several major exhibitions are associated with Austin. In 1930 he organized the first important Italian Baroque show in America, and his purchases in the field were profoundly influential. The following year he presented America's first exhibitions of the neo-Romanics and the Surrealists. In 1934 the museum's new wing, the Avery Memorial, which boasted this country's first International Style interior, opened with America's first comprehensive Picasso retrospective.

New Art Forms Introduced

Art forms new to museums such as music, dance, theatre, films, photography and entertainments, were all encompassed by the Atheneum. In 1928 Austin founded The Friends and Enemies of Modern Music, a society that sponsored premieres or rare performances of works by composers such as Igor Stravinsky, Erik Satie and Virgil Thomson. The Avery Theatre, one of the first fully-equipped theatres in an American museum, opened in 1934 with the first performance of the now-legendary Gertrude Stein-Virgil Thomson opera, *Four Saints in Three Acts*, with costumes and cellophane sets by Florine Stettheimer, choreography by Frederick Ashton, direction by

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AUSTIN PAPERS Continued

John Houseman, and the first all-black cast in an American opera. At the request of Lincoln Kirstein, Austin had sponsored the immigration of choreographer George Balanchine to America in 1933. Late in 1934 Balanchine's company, now the unrivalled New York City Ballet, gave its first public performances in the Avery Theatre. Austin's lavish and fanciful entertainments at the museum reached an unparalleled height in the Paper Ball of 1936 with decor by Pavel Tchelitchew, made entirely of painted newspapers, and costumes by Alexander Calder.

Directorship of Ringling Museum

After his resignation in 1944, Austin served as the first director of the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, FL. From 1946 until his death in 1957, he strengthened that museum's important Baroque collection, founded the Ringling's Circus Museum and re-constructed the famous Asolo Theatre on the museum grounds.

The Austin Papers include 26 linear feet of records in two series: Director's Records and Austin Family Papers. The first series is arranged alphabetically with the following headings: Artists' Solicitations, Dealers and Galleries, Events, Exhibitions, Friends and Enemies of Modern Music, General Correspondence, Lectures and Articles, Museums and Organizations. The second series, to which access is restricted, includes childhood correspondence and memorabilia, correspondence with his wife and children, and the personal records of Helen Goodwin Austin.

The Austin Papers constitute a significant source for scholars working in a variety of fields. They help to illuminate the history of museums, the development of modernism, and the role of art, architecture, music, dance and film in 20th century American culture.

Eugene R. Gaddis
Archivist
Wadsworth Atheneum

ARLIS MEETING TO HOLD SPECIAL
SESSION ON MARC AMC AND MARC VIM

The Art and Architecture Program Committee (AAPC) of Research Libraries Group (RLG) has organized a special session for the upcoming ARLIS conference entitled, *One Stop Shopping: Access to Visual and Archival Materials in RLIN - Use of the VIM and AMC Formats*.

Within the AAPC there is growing interest in expanding art information contributed to RLIN to include archival and visual materials. This program will explore the use and potential of VIM and AMC in the field of art and architecture

including: 1) results of AAPC survey on cataloguing Visual Resources; 2) MARC format VR cataloguing at the Getty Center; 3) the whys and wherefores of the AMC -successful use of RLIN for cataloguing archives in other fields and potential for art, special and manuscripts collections.

The session speakers will include Nancy Sahli, Director of the Records Grant Program, NHPRC; Barbara Orbach, Cataloguer, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress; Jim Bower, Vocabulary Coordination Group, J. Paul Getty Trust; and moderator Nancy Allen, Librarian, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

The session will be held on February 5, 1988 from 8:00-10:00pm at the ARLIS conference headquarters, Sheraton Dallas Hotel and Towers, 400 N. Olive Street, Dallas, TX 75201. For more information contact Nancy S. Allen, Librarian, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 465 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02115, (617) 267-9300.

Archives, museums or libraries experienced with using *NOTA BENE* to write finding aids, catalogue and track collections, or in other ways: please contact Leon C. Miller, Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR 72701.

Museum Archivist is issued twice a year by the Museum Archives Roundtable of SAA. News items, letters to the editor, and comments from the archival community are welcome. Contact the Editor, *Museum Archivist*, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, P.O. Box 6826, Houston, TX 77265.

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BIRTH OF AN ARCHIVES: THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

The idea of establishing a museum archives first occurred in 1972 when the Board of Trustees established a committee to consider the organization and preservation of the institution's permanently valuable records. The committee consisted of the secretary of the museum, the chairperson of the Library Visiting Committee, and the archivist of Harvard University. Negotiations with the Archives of American Art yielded an attractive option for launching the project. Joyce Tyler, a part-time staff member of the Boston AAA office, was brought in to begin the task of identifying and accessioning records of the 102 year old museum. She was assisted by four dedicated volunteers.

AAA Films Documents

The project involved the arrangement of Presidents' correspondence; minutes of the Committee on the Museum, the Executive Committee and the Visiting Committee; and records from the original Copley Square building as well as the 1909 Guy Lowell museum on the Fenway. Only those papers which dated from 1870 to 1954 were within the scope of this phase. No curatorial records or object files were included.

The agreement with the Archives of American Art arranged for the microfilming of these records as well. This made them available for the first time to scholars, researchers, and, indeed, to museum staff. Unfortunately, the original documents were then moved to unclimate controlled storage in the museum's attic, where they were completely inaccessible and unserved for over ten years.

Museum Trustee Interest Revived

The future of the archives brightened in September 1986 when Trustee William Osgood became the new secretary of the museum. His acceptance of the post was contingent on trustee support for the establishment of an archives, a commitment given by both the president of the Trustees and the president of the Overseers. The administration endorsed the project and announced the archives as a new responsibility of the library.

While grant availability was researched, Joyce Tyler of the Archives of American Art was contacted about serving as consultant to the librarian on the archives. In late December 1986 it was decided that the museum would submit a proposal to the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). Both consultant and librarian benefitted tremendously from the experiences at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Brooklyn Museum as described with enthusiasm

and patience by Catherine Stover and Deirdre Lawrence respectively. Copies of the NHPRC proposals from both institutions offered models for the organization of the museum's proposal. Alan Bain, Associate Archivist, Smithsonian Archives, also offered professional guidance which helped enormously in crafting the museum's proposal.

Grant Proposal Refined and Submitted

Institutions in Massachusetts submit NHPRC proposals to State Historical Records Coordinator, Albert Whitaker. His critical review of the proposal prior to final submission to the commission suggested more detailed explanation of space, computerization and budget information, all of which helped to strengthen the grant. During the spring 1987 commission staff members Nancy Sahli and Laurie Baty were consulted on numerous occasions. Their frank appraisal of the grant draft not only allowed more fine-tuning but also helped the museum to better conceptualize the task ahead. Helen Samuels, archivist at MIT and a member of the commission, read the preliminary proposal, visited the museum, and became a strong advocate of the grant.

Within the museum, the secretary of the institution lobbied for the archives throughout the winter 1986 and spring 1987 with curators, trustees, and museum administrators. As a testament of his devotion, it should be noted that he volunteered to accompany the librarian to a one-day workshop on basic archival principles offered in Portland, ME by the New England Archivists group to improve his understanding of the actual process involved. He also wrote a concise and persuasive paper on the archives project for presentation to his colleagues at a Board of Trustees meeting.

NHPRC Awards Funding

In June 1987 the NHPRC voted to support a two-year archives implementation project at the museum with an award of \$54,240. Project archivist Maureen Melton began work last month. Her experience coupled with the invaluable guidance of Joyce Tyler and the untiring support of Trustee William Osgood will insure a successful two-year implementation project and help to assure the future of the archives at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Nancy S. Allen
Librarian
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

KANSAS CITY MUSEUM ARCHIVES ITS
CORPORATE RECORDS

For nearly 50 years the Kansas City Museum has collected artifacts and archival materials that relate to the history of the greater Kansas City region. The resulting archival holdings are a veritable cornucopia of documents that give vital testimony to the social, political and commercial heritage of the area. Included are manuscripts, maps, posters, publications, photographs, films, sound recordings -- virtually every sort of document. But among the array is a unique record group: the museum's own corporate records. As an in-house tool, these records have administrative, legal and fiscal uses that help shape the future of the museum; as an outside resource, they provide valuable information on one of Kansas City's major cultural and educational institutions.

It often happens that organizations concerned with historic preservation make little effort to preserve their own past. Such was the case with the museum's corporate records, which over the years were saved haphazardly at best by reigning directors and some department heads. A systematic approach to records management was not used, and little consideration was given to deciding what should and should not be saved.

Corporate Record Group of Museum

In the early 1980s, the museum determined to establish control over its non-current corporate records, as part of a project to reorganize its archival holdings. Sponsored by a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), the two-year project was launched in 1984. Its goal was to devise procedures for the comprehensive management of the archives, and to establish a basic level of control over as much of the holdings as possible. Included in this, of course, was the corporate record group.

Problems with Provenance & Arrangement

A few problems were evident immediately. First of all, the approximately 100 cubic feet of records that had survived represented over 40 years of unstructured collecting. They were, for the most part, reference copies of records kept by the museum's director but not generated by him. Any organization by office of origin or basic function, then, was not present.

Secondly, there was the problem of an arrangement structure. As in many institutions, offices and titles had changed considerably over the years; a strict arrangement by office title would have made the arrangement structure unduly complicated. While this could be handled by copious cross-references, we opted to arrange the records by function, based on the idea that the museum's operation could be broken down into several functions that would remain constant. In this way, records on collections management would be arranged together, as would records on

exhibits, programs, public relations, and so on. After the arrangement structure was drafted in outline form, the backlogged records were parcelled out accordingly.

Retention Plan Established

With our backlog organized, we next had to devise a records retention policy that would accommodate and direct periodic transfers of records from offices as these records became non-current. We developed a method whereby office staff could share in the processing duties by transferring only those materials of permanent value to us. Each records-generating office is armed with a schedule of those items which should be transferred to the corporate archives, complete with active life recommendations so that museum staff may quickly determine non-current status. The archivist meets with office staff once a year, as part of routine office housecleaning duties. Using a *Records Transmittal Form* which doubles as an inventory sheet, the archivist and museum personnel work together to describe records before they reach archival storage. This approach of *description at point of transfer* lessens processing time and involves staff members in the initial descriptive process, thereby creating a more accurate inventory of archival deposits.

After years of undisciplined record-saving, the Kansas City Museum is now on track in its commitment to preserve its own heritage as well as that of the region.

Paul Eisloeffel
Archivist
Kansas City Museum

AAM DEPOSITS ITS RECORDS AT SMITHSONIAN

The Smithsonian Institution Archives has become the official repository for the archives of the American Association of Museums, as reported recently by Alan Bain, Associate Archivist at the Smithsonian Institution Archives.

This past August SIA received 43 cubic feet of AAM records dating from 1906 through 1985. The records include proceedings, 1907-1917; minutes of AAM meetings, 1921-1934; Council minutes, 1938-1948; copies of *Museum Work*, 1919-1925; *Museum News*, 1932-1962; and publications about United States and foreign museums, 1910-1978.

Due to gaps in the official publications, and no correspondence documenting AAM activities before 1960, procedures will be developed to solicit papers and records to supplement the transfer and locate repositories which maintain records and papers containing information relating to AAM. For more information on the AAM records contact Alan Bain, Associate Archivist, Smithsonian Institution, A & I Bldg., Room 2135, Washington, D.C. 20560.

'LIONS AND TIGERS AND BEARS:' A REPORT ON THE LINCOLN PARK ZOO ARCHIVES

Lincoln Park Zoo, founded in 1868, is one of the oldest zoological gardens in the United States. Verifying this significant date and other important facts concerning the 119 year history of the zoo is possible by consulting the archival records maintained by the zoo's library.

The library opened in December 1980 and began organizing the historical records collection in 1982 when outside funding made it possible to hire an archival intern. The librarian and intern began sorting 30 cubic feet of materials. They took an initial inventory and created a schedule of items. Early reports, correspondence, memoranda, and financial records filled over 20 Hollinger boxes. When additional funds were made available in 1984, 20 more years worth of records were sorted and inventoried. At that time the archives established some guidelines for access and operation which were based on ones developed by the New York Zoological Society in 1980. Basic conservation supplies for the archives are a part of the library's operating budget.

Records Found in Lion House

In 1985 the Lincoln Park Zoological Society initiated a multi-million dollar fund-raising campaign to finance the renovation of 4 of its landmark buildings. Sometime after the campaign began, the librarian discovered that a closet located in the basement of the Lion House (built in 1912 and scheduled for renovation) contained boxed records relating to the zoo. A quick survey revealed a grim sight: 3 closets filled from top to bottom with stacked apple boxes of zoo records. The records had been subjected to the worst of tropical climates and were infested with mice and roaches. Emergency action was needed if these materials dating from the 1920s were to be saved. Architectural plans indicated that the basement was scheduled to be completely gutted during renovation.

Grant Submitted to IMS

The timing seemed ideal for a major archives project. The zoo's administrative staff responded to our plans and gave the librarian permission to approach the Institute of Museum Services (IMS) with a grant proposal. However, zoological gardens traditionally request funding for "living" collections. This was the first time any zoo had requested funding for "non-living" collection conservation. IMS was quick to point out its reservations.

The grant, which was written by the librarian and the zoological society's director of development, requested funds for 2 consultants from the Northeast Document Conservation Center to visit the zoo. George M. Cunha was selected to perform an environmental site survey and Gary

Albright was chosen to examine various photographic and print materials and make specific suggestions and recommendations for their care. Their reports could then be used in seeking additional funds to establish an ongoing conservation program.

After submitting the grant, our first priority was to move the records from the Lion House to adequate storage facilities. A temporary storage area in the Antelope/Zebra exhibit was chosen for several reasons: it was cool, dry, above ground, and it was the only space immediately available. Designing a permanent space would be a part of the renovation plans for the Primate House, present home of the library. Removing the materials stored in the Lion House basement involved superficial cleaning of the records as they were transferred from the infested apple boxes into standard-size file boxes. This was done every Monday for 4 months. Armed with rubber gloves, small brushes, and large brooms, we diligently emptied boxes and filled boxes. We saw terrible things, living and non-living! One afternoon we were joined by a LaPlata three banded armadillo (*Tolypeutes metacrus*) who escaped from his enclosure as we worked next to him. Over 100 boxes were filled and moved.

Conservators Visit Zoo

Next, we selected individual items for the photograph/paper conservator to examine. Glass plate negatives (we own 900), loose photographs, scrapbooks dating from 1922, post cards, blue prints, posters, ledgers, diaries, and animal X-rays were chosen based on their condition and value to the overall collection. Albright established conservation priorities and suggested treatments.

George Cunha conducted an environmental site survey. He offered the ideal situation -- construction of a new building -- and a more realistic alternative -- upgrading the present facilities based on certain environmental control standards. As it is the intention of the zoo's administration to completely remodel the Primate House in the near future, we now have guidelines for improving and adding to the existing space.

We can now pursue an archival conservation program using the priorities set by both consultants. Their reports allow us to plan more effectively for future growth based on sound conservation practices. Work is underway including investigation of local options for fumigation, additional cleaning of materials and rigorous pest control. Such measures must be completed before further organization of the archives can be done. We have been advised not to bring the problems of the rescued records into the library.

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FOCUS ON ARCHIVES:

STATEN ISLAND INSTITUTE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

The Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences (SIIAS), founded in 1881, administers a general public museum with collections in art and natural science. Facilities include also the High Rock Park Conservation Center, the William T. Davis Wildlife Refuge, Evergreen Park, and Reeds Basket Willow Swamp.

The archives of the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences were arranged and described in 1979 with assistance provided by the NHPRC. The archives collections document the history of SIIAS as well as the origins of many other local cultural institutions nurtured by SIIAS founders, trustees and staff over the past century. These include the Staten Island Zoo, Staten Island Historical Society, the Conference House, and various parklands. With a long commitment to the documentation of the natural environment of Staten Island, the archives provides pertinent information today for comparison studies. Among the researchers served are archaeologists, environmentalists and urban planners.

Papers of Staten Islanders Featured

Special collections in the archives include the papers of Staten Islanders such as entomologist and local historian, William T. Davis; botanist and first director of the New York Botanical Garden, Nathaniel Lord Britton; political editor of *Harper's Weekly*, George William Curtis; and nature photographer, Howard H. Cleaves. Special collections of some notable Staten Island artists include those of Jasper Cropsey, Franz K. Heissinger, and Cecil Bell. Graphic material, including 50,000 photographs, document the Staten Island natural and built environment.

The archival collections have been utilized in many public programs, educational outreach programs in Staten Island public schools, and in major museum exhibitions. The archivist participates each year with other museum staff in a seminar to help students prepare for science fair projects. In such outreach programs, archival material and its use are explained to high school and grade school children.

Based on experiences with the organization of the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences archives and with the benefits other departments in the Institute gained, SIIAS staff have proposed a session for the 1988 AASLH meeting, to be held in Rochester, NY from September 14-18, 1988. *The Forgotten Collections: Discovering Museum Archives* will include as participants Laurie Baty, Grants Analyst, NHPRC; Eloise Beil, former SIIAS Archivist and now SIIAS Curator of Collections; Paula Holloway, Assistant Director/Education, Rockwood Museum in Wilmington, DE; and a

staff member from the New York State Archives.

Kristine K. Hogan

Archivist/Librarian

Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences

[Editor's note: Museum Archivist will report on the status of this proposed session in the next issue.]

LINCOLN PARK ZOO ARCHIVES continued

The most significant result of the conservation project is the awareness and appreciation of the value of archival records at the zoo. The numerous inquiries we have received from other zoological gardens about our conservation project indicate a growing interest among zoos to preserve their history by conserving their archival documents.

Outlined below is a summary of the Lincoln Park Zoo archival holdings, as assembled by archives volunteer Jane Jurgens:

Annual Reports

Director's Correspondence and Papers

Curator's Correspondence and Papers

Associate Curator's Correspondence and Papers

Zoo Keeper's Papers

Miscellaneous Financial Materials

Miscellaneous Printed Zoo Materials

Photographic Materials

Videotapes

Lincoln Park Zoological Society

Joyce M. Shaw

Librarian

Lincoln Park Zoological Gardens, Chicago, IL

POSITION AVAILABLE AT AIC IN CHICAGO

Archivist, The Art Institute of Chicago. Responsible for administration of AIC Archives Department, serving the museum and the School of Art Institute. Develop and implement archival and records management policy, prepare guidelines for archives use, process archival collections, provide service to Institute staff and outside users. Supervise and direct archives staff (1.5 FTE), report to Director of Libraries. Qualifications: Appropriate humanities degrees including formal archival training, substantial archival and administrative experience, preferably in an art museum or as a university archivist. Salary based on qualifications and experience. Position available 11/1/87, applications accepted until filled. No closing date provided. Applications along with names of three references should be sent to: J.P. Brown, Director of Libraries, Ryerson & Burnham Libraries, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL 60603.

TRANSCONTINENTAL MODERNISM: THE ARENSBERG ARCHIVES

by Naomi Sawelson-Gorse

Archivist, Arensberg Archives, Francis Bacon Library

Consultant, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art

The American art collectors Louise Stevens Arensberg (1879-1953) and Walter Conrad Arensberg (1878-1954) played a crucial and decisive role in the formation and furtherance of modern avant-garde art in the United States during the first half of the 20th century. Within the short time they lived in New York (fall 1914 - summer 1920), their apartment on West 67th Street became the unofficial salon of the New York Dada movement. Scholars have concentrated upon this dynamic period, reconstructing the Arensbergs' gatherings and its participants, and analyzing the resulting effects upon the American cultural scene, aesthetic theory and artistic production.

The more than 30 years the Arensbergs lived in Los Angeles (1921-1953/54) have, however, received scant attention. Yet in Los Angeles, as in New York, their presence, their collection, and their participation in the art world played a major role in the development and dissemination of avant-garde art. The Arensbergs' Hollywood home was a mecca for artists, architects, collectors, critics, dealers, musicians, writers, museum and film personnel, and others interested in the advancement of modernism.

Arensbergs in Los Angeles

But there were important changes in the activities of the Arensbergs and their west coast salon members from those of the New York years. This was partially a result of the paucity of art and art dealers in Los Angeles, as well as the absence of an art museum. The Arensbergs became more involved within an established conservative art community which itself was attempting to promote artistic awareness through the founding of a museum of art. Walter Arensberg, who so actively promoted avant-garde journals, exhibitions and other New York Dadaist happenings, accepted nominations to the governing boards of various local art associations, most of which were ruled by conservative businessmen. Moreover, by frequently lending items from their art collection for local exhibitions, the Arensbergs provided a much needed public display of modern art in an area which lacked a civic art institution and an art market.

The promotion of avant-garde events in the former years also gave way to a more insular and isolated attitude in California. Entrance to the Arensbergs' Hollywood home was by invitation or recommendation, in contrast to the more open-house all-night New York apartment gatherings. Additionally, the Los Angeles salon members had a different focal point from those of the New York years. No artistic or literary movement arose from these gatherings. In fact, throughout

the California decades, the most frequently debated issue among the Arensbergs' friends was the final arrangements for the housing of the Arensbergs' art collection.

West Coast Museum Sought for Art Collection

The negotiations among the Arensbergs, their friends, and a variety of museums, universities, architects and civic leaders, provide a unique case study of the receptivity to modern art and museum acquisition policies in the United States. Unlike other early 20th century art collections formed during the Armory Show era which were auctioned, privately sold or dispersed among a variety of museums, the Arensbergs' entire collection was offered to public institutions during the 1930s and 1940s. Furthermore, the Arensbergs' original intention was to have their collection remain in their new hometown of Los Angeles, far from centralized east coast metropolitan areas.

The Arensbergs' commitment to donate their collection for public edification on the west coast eventually collided with the bureaucratic structures of museums and universities, as well as contemporary political events. Because of the repeated frustrations these factors caused, the Arensbergs attempted to circumvent established institutions. On at least three separate occasions, for instance, the Arensbergs proposed building a modern art museum in Los Angeles. They also assisted in the founding and financial support of two modern art galleries in the city. But these endeavors failed. Reluctantly, the Arensbergs finally concluded that no Los Angeles institution could house and maintain their collection.

The ultimate success of the Philadelphia Museum of Art in obtaining the collection after 3 years of intense negotiations (1947-1950) is a testament to the tenacity of its Director, Fiske Kimball. His diplomatic mastery in dealing with the Arensbergs' criteria for the display and use of their collection in a museum context was unequalled by any other museum administrator. Additionally, due to the similar academic backgrounds of Fiske Kimball and Walter Arensberg (both were Harvard graduates), and their supportive wives -- Marie and Louise -- a personal relationship arose between these two couples which was unlike any other interaction between museum administrator and potential donor.

Collection Grows in California

Another important development during the Arensbergs' California years, which also greatly influenced the disposition discussions, was the

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TRANSCONTINENTAL MODERNISM: THE ARENSBERGS *Continued*

growth of their art collection. At their deaths, it numbered over 1,500 items, a vast increase over the approximately 75 works they had acquired during their New York period. Modern works and primitive artifacts comprised two of the collection's strengths, reflecting a pattern of collecting which the Arensbergs began in the mid 1910s. In these years modernism was equated with the Armory Show in 1913. The exhibition's *cause célèbre*, Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*, was joined in the Arensbergs' collection by 7 other Armory Show works purchased during the California decades. French modern art, which dominated the Armory Show, also governed the Arensbergs' purchases -- most particularly works by Duchamp (over 35 pieces) and Constantin Brancusi (19 works acquired). Eventually, the Arensbergs envisioned all other works in their collection as revolving around the magnetic *oeuvre* of these two artists. To Duchamp -- friend, art dealer, and artist whom they patronized for almost 40 years -- the Arensbergs humbled themselves and all other art when they referred to their collection as his "living memorial." His perceptions influenced their art acquisitions and the disposition discussions. Most importantly, Duchamp's variety of duties for the Arensbergs was done with their full and enthusiastic support. These duties included his ambassadorial role in the negotiations between the donors and a number of museums (e.g., The Art Institute of Chicago, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the National Gallery of Art, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art), and his assistance in the installation of their collection at Philadelphia.

Non-French Art Collected

After moving to Los Angeles, the Arensbergs added steadily to their collection of modern art. Works by Surrealists Salvador Dali and Max Ernst were hung in their Hollywood home next to the earlier acquisitions of paintings by Georges Braque, Paul Cezanne, Robert Delaunay, Wassily Kandinsky, Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso. Joan Miro's paintings also entered the collection. Through local art dealers, the Arensbergs purchased other non-French art, especially Paul Klee's. They also bought the works of contemporary Mexican artists, such as Diego Rivera, David Siqueiros and Roberto Montenegro.

Although over 65 modern artists were represented in the Arensbergs' collection, only a handful were American. Most of the works acquired of this group were executed in the mid 1910s by members of the Arensbergs' New York salon -- John Covert (Walter Arensberg's cousin), Charles Sheeler and Morton Schamberg. But in photography, Americans dominated. Their photographic holdings included images by Sheeler, Edward Weston, Clarence John Laughlin, Max Yavno and Sherril Schell. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, when Mark Rothko, Milton Avery and other American

artists were introduced to them, the Arensbergs began to consider acquiring contemporary Americans, especially David Smith.

Another consequence of their relocation to Los Angeles was their closer physical proximity to the art of Native American, Spanish-Mexican colonial, pre-Columbian and Oriental art. The Arensbergs ceased acquiring African wooden pieces in favor of pre-Columbian objects (primarily stone), Mexican *retablos*, Native American items (baskets, rugs, spearheads), as well as several Asiatic objects -- totalling over 300 works. The New York galleries of Alfred Stieglitz and Marius de Zayas, the latter financially supported by Walter Arensberg, had promoted the aesthetic and cultural juxtaposition of primitive art to modern works. The Arensbergs maintained this concept in displaying their collection, and it later became a basic criteria for the disposition of their collection.

Baconian Library Created

An additional collection amassed by the Arensbergs was their Baconian library. Books, manuscripts and other materials which related to the English Lord Chancellor, Francis Bacon (1561-1626), and the Shakespeare authorship controversy were continually bought. Walter Arensberg believed that Francis Bacon, and not William Shakespeare, was the author of the plays and poems attributed to the actor. As a firm and immovable supporter of this cause, Walter, with the full encouragement of his wife, Louise, paired the bequeathal of their art collection with the establishment of a Baconian library during the disposition discussions. This proved a serious problem and was a topic as equally contested as the avant-garde character of their modern art collection.

Thesis & Dissertation Research Conducted

Given the ramifications of the Arensbergs' diverse collections and the disposition negotiations, it is regrettable that their California years remained unexamined for so long. My master's degree thesis, *'For the want of a nail': The Disposition of the Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection* (University of California, Riverside, 1987), examined some of the dilemmas and intricacies of the Arensbergs' 25 year struggle to find a location for their art collection, which began shortly after they moved to Los Angeles. A detailed investigation of the more than 30 institutions which expressed interest in the Arensberg's collection was beyond the scope of a master's thesis. Attention was focused on those facilities which were considered seriously. Additionally, because of the lacunae of published accounts of the Arensbergs' post New York years, my research relied primarily on unpublished

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TRANSCONTINENTAL MODERNISM: THE ARENSBERGS Continued

documents in public and private repositories, correspondence, and interviews. My academic studies on the Arensbergs continues with my dissertation, *The Arensberg Circle: The California Years, 1921-1954*, in progress at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and a forthcoming article tentatively entitled, *The Arensberg Collection: Marcel Duchamp's Living Memorial*.

Of primary importance to my research are the papers of Louise and Walter Arensberg. The Arensbergs' personal and financial documents, formerly in their Hollywood home, were bequeathed to The Francis Bacon Foundation upon their deaths. The Foundation is a non-profit research institution established by the Arensbergs in 1938. The vast majority of documents are now deposited in the Arensberg Archives of the Francis Bacon Library (Claremont, CA), which is funded by The Foundation, and the Arensberg Archives of the Philadelphia Museum of Art (Philadelphia, PA). The Foundation gave some materials relating to American authors and the Dada movement to the Manuscript and Rare Book Division of the Henry E. Huntington Library. Other donations by The Foundation include personal photographs of the Arensbergs, given to the Stevens Memorial Library which was founded in memory of Louise Stevens Arensberg's patrilineal family. The personal letters by Louise and Walter Arensberg to Beatrice Wood during their last years were subsequently donated by her to the Archives of American Art of the Smithsonian Institution.

Francis Bacon Library - Arensberg Papers

The Arensberg Archives in the Francis Bacon Library contains the history of The Francis Bacon Foundation. From its origins in 1934, the primary interest of The Foundation was to promote the life and writings of Francis Bacon, with special reference to the Shakespeare authorship controversy. The Archives also contains the correspondence with universities which negotiated for the art collection. These supply, in a unique and unexpected way, a partial history of American university art galleries in the 1940s. The papers relating to the negotiations with the Philadelphia Museum of Art, which now houses most of the art collection, are preserved in Claremont as well. Over 200 letters between the Arensbergs and Marcel Duchamp, at one time a trustee of The Foundation, dramatically reveal the crucial role of this artist as an art agent and negotiating emissary for the Arensbergs. Other documents are from individuals who participated in the negotiations, from architects who hoped to design the projected museums to house the Arensbergs' collection, and from family members, artists and friends which detail the multi-faceted interests of the Arensbergs in art, literature and music.

Philadelphia Museum of Art - Arensberg Papers

The Arensberg Archives of the Philadelphia Museum of Art contains most of the material relating to the Arensbergs' relationships with foundations, societies, museums, artists and architects. The history of two short-lived and little known Los Angeles modern art galleries of the 1940s, financially supported by the Arensbergs -- American Arts in Action and the Modern Institute of Art -- is well documented by Philadelphia's holdings. Letters from various artists, architects, designers and art dealers record the design theory and, on occasion, the actual planning of the projected Los Angeles museums. Numerous museum correspondence files examine acquisition policies, exhibition installations, financial conditions, and the reception of modern art by American museum administrators.

As a result of my thesis and continued work on the Arensbergs, and because of my archival research background, Elizabeth Wrigley, Director of the Francis Bacon Library and President of The Francis Bacon Foundation, offered me a unique opportunity to become the archivist of the Arensberg Archives in the Claremont institution. Anne d'Harnoncourt, Director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, graciously permitted me to act as consultant of the Arensberg Archives housed there. Given that the papers are, for the most part, transcontinentally divided, and given that some files have been separated and dispersed, I have begun a parallel reorganization of the papers housed in Claremont and Philadelphia, with the ultimate goal of compiling a complete annotated register of all Arensberg papers whose provenance was The Francis Bacon Foundation. [Editor's note: A more complete description of this project appeared in the April 1987 issue of *Museum Archivist*.]

MUSEUM ARCHIVES ROUNDTABLE ESTABLISHES
SUBCOMMITTEE WITH AAM

The Museum Archives Roundtable has established a new, informal subcommittee for AAM standards, formed at the 1987 SAA annual meeting. As reported in the December 1986 issue of *Museum Archivist*, the American Association of Museums has added some archival questions to its self-study guide used in the accreditation process. Bill Moss (Smithsonian Institution) and Maygene Daniels (National Gallery of Art) met this fall with Pat Williams of the AAM Accreditation Commission to discuss the study guide's new section on archives. Pat expects a response from museums as they participate in the self-study process. The Roundtable's AAM Standards Subcommittee will meet again next year to assess institutional responses to these new questions.

UPCOMING WORKSHOPS ON MUSEUM ARCHIVES

Old Sturbridge Village:

Old Sturbridge Village and the New England Museum Association are sponsoring a workshop on museum archives March 18-19, 1988. The workshop will be held at Old Sturbridge Village in Sturbridge, MA. Workshop enrollment is limited to 40 participants. Workshop fee is \$45.00. Topics will include arrangement and description, appraisal, access and copyright, funding sources, conservation and utilization of volunteers. The workshop is directed toward those who have responsibility for museum records but little or no experience in archival methods and procedures. For more information and registration contact Theresa Rini Percy, Director of Research Library, Old Sturbridge Village, 1 Old Sturbridge

Village Road, Sturbridge, MA 01566-0200, 617-347-3362 ext. 203.

Smithsonian Institution:

The workshop, scheduled to be held August 22-26, 1988, is sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. The workshop is directed toward museum professionals who have no archival training. It provides the information necessary to permit participants to establish programs for the care of the records of their museums. Particular attention is given to the problems of those institutions as presented by the participants. Enrollment is limited to 18. Contact: Office of Museum Programs, Arts and Industries Building, Room 2235, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560, 202-357-3101.

TEAM UP WITH A COLLEAGUE THROUGH THE MUSEUM ARCHIVES ROUNDTABLE

A member of the Roundtable suggested recently that we consider *pairing* museum archivists together to exchange information between similar museums and to assist with specific problems. The goal is to create a team made up of a beginning professional and a more experienced person. It is hoped that such a team approach can also help someone confronting a new pro-

blem for the first time contact a fellow archivist who has solved the problem in his/her institution.

Below is a form for those who wish to send it. Otherwise, please contact Mary Elizabeth Ruwell, Museum Archives Roundtable Coordinator, at (303) 578-6929. She will be starting a list and will contact all respondents as pairs seem to form.

TEAM UP WITH A COLLEAGUE

(name)			

(institution)			

(address)			

(city, state, zip code)			
SAA member	_____	_____	
	(yes)	(no)	
AAM member	_____	_____	
	(yes)	(no)	

(area of expertise or desired help)			
Comments: _____			

Please send completed form to Mary Elizabeth Ruwell, Archivist, Pioneers' Museum, 215 S. Tejon, Colorado Springs, CO 80903.