

**DIVISION NEWS**

**Architecture Libraries**

▶ The finding aids of the Alexander Architectural Archive of the Architecture and Planning Library, University of Texas, Austin, have been added to "Archival Resources", one of the subscription databases of the **Research Libraries Group**.

----Janine Henri

**Architecture Libraries**

▶ Polly McCord will be leaving the University of Arizona and librarianship in December. She is moving to Taos, and in January will open her own business, The Artful Traveler, planning New Mexico trips for arts-interested travelers. Starting with northern New Mexico, within a year or so, Polly hopes to expand to include all of New Mexico, west Texas (the Marfa area), and the Four Corners area. Polly promises to stay in touch and in ARLIS, although she won't be in Houston in April. More information to follow.

# THE Medium

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▶ **PRESIDENT'S COLUMN**

I am looking for two members to serve as the Nominating Committee for this year's election. For the autumn election, we will need to fill the following offices:

- Vice President/President-Elect (Gwen Dixie will have completed her one-year appointment as Vice President)
- SECRETARY (Elizabeth Schaub will have served her two-year term for 2003 and 2004)

Please consult the Chapter Bylaws for further details, and let me know if you have any questions or are interested. Remember, serving on the Committee saves you from being recruited!

---Mark Pompelia

▶ **2005 ARLIS/NA ANNUAL MEETING HOUSTON PREVIEW**

How do I become fluent in GIS, Disaster Planning, and setting goals and objectives for my organization? Where is the Live Oak Meeting House, Painted Churches, The Orange Show? How can I find out about Visual Access to Visual Materials, Cataloging Cultural Objects, De-Googleing Today's Students?

Find out all of this and more at the 2005 ARLIS/NA Annual Meeting in Houston, Texas April 1-6, 2005. Your Program Co-Chairs, Elizabeth Schaub and Laura Schwartz have been hard at work selecting and scheduling panel sessions, poster session, workshops, and special speakers. Our Conference Planning Team has been working to ensure the ARLIS/NA membership has many reasons to come to Texas in 2005. The mix of practical and enjoyable, rich and diverse content should make this a well-attended conference. The preliminary program will be available at the beginning of October. We look forward to hearing your comments.

---Laura Schwartz

▶ **GROTTOS AND CORN WITH SOME ARCHITECTS THROWN IN**

Attention, all Outsider Art Lovers, (all others throw up your hands in disgust, and read no further), Houston's **Orange Show** annual Memorial Day tour has just returned from Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota where it toured grottos, concrete parks, and clock museums all designed and built without the aid of any school larnin' or written plans--- objects built to no specifications but those in the artist's mind.

After reconnoitering at the Minneapolis airport from Houston, Dallas, New York City, and Phoenix, the tour's first stop was for lunch in

Owatonna, Minnesota, at Cabela's, home of at least 600 stuffed animals. You can get your hunting or fishing license here while buying coolers, duck decoys, deer blinds, rifles, or anything else needed or imagined needed by hunters, fishermen, or outdoorsmen. It made you want a good piece of meat! Cabela's food was home cooked and good. Ostrich, elk, and buffalo were on the menu. But I had something else; it tasted like chicken. Cabela's art is an extremely large, life sized hunting scene, populated by stuffed deer, elk, ducks and prairie chickens, or any other animal unlucky enough to drift across the prairie at the wrong time---that is, when an artist was nearby. All walls were covered with examples of the taxidermist's art. I found it unnerving to use the ladies' while large soulful deer's eyes stared down at me, but carried on, as art lovers have to do.

Several artist visits were on schedule. First was Judy Onoferio's home and studio, Judyland, in Rochester. Onoferio was one of the Minnesota artists chosen to be exhibited in the Minneapolis airport. Many on the trip were already familiar with her work, which had just been shown in the assemblage show at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts. Too sophisticated to be a real outsider, she is well educated (but not in art) and makes bright and colorful sculpture that has a "folky" look to it. You can get an idea of what she does [here](#). She had a totally organized studio; all of her many drawers are labeled and hold various objects from which to choose when she works. Her home, connected to the studio, is art filled. Even the ceilings were decorated with her imaginative work. Judy's garden extends almost straight up a hill. It holds her garden ornaments: bowling ball sculptures, giant-sized concrete birds and cats, and mosaics. The centerpiece was a six-foot tall concrete cat encrusted with marbles and glass. It was made by her husband to commemorate a deceased pet. Lush plants enhance the art. She is also a collector--- outsider of course. Her husband, a retired neurosurgeon from the Mayo Clinic, served wine to the group. Oh, what we must ingest for art.

One honest-to-Gawd outsider was next on the itinerary. In McGregor, Iowa, at a bend in the highway, chainsaw artist, Dan Slaughter, graciously received us in his studio/shed. He allowed the tour to run all over his yard, and sawdust-floored sheds. Everything was for sale. I bargained for the bus driver who was DEAD to have a Sponge Bob to take home to his little boy. One of the travelers bought a Tin Man, painted silver, with a pair of red shoes sitting beside it just in case you didn't get the reference. With sadness I report that the first thing the artist did for his patron was chainsaw off the legs so it would fit under the bus and into the airplane. The crowd gathered and a cheer went up as the artwork was mutilated and cut down to size. The chainsaw has been a democratizing tool in late twentieth century art; anyone can take a swing at being artistic. Imagine if Michelangelo had had this tool! What would the David have looked like? Maybe there would have been more than one.

Two grottos were on the tour. Both were built by Catholic priests to the greater glory of God over a period of thirty or so years. Indeed, they were still being maintained and added to by the faithful. In Italian grotto means cave; but in the Midwestern, Roman Catholic sense it means some sort of edifice built of natural, uncarved, original state rocks. Father P. M Dobberstein, a German immigrant priest, built The Grotto of

the Redemption in West Bend, Iowa, over forty-three years beginning in 1912. It is still being worked on today by one of his helpers. Though he was sent rock from all over the world, he often went rocking in the western states and particularly, Nebraska, the state that contains the most variety. The trainmen knew him and allowed him to bring his rocks back to West Bend free. He rode the freight train along with his rocks and off-loaded in West Bend, a nonscheduled stop. Father Dobberstein used lots of other help with his project, but the Grotto of the Redemption is primarily his manual labor and all his vision. It includes two chapels, a half block long stations of the cross, a Calvary mountain, and various trails, entries, lookouts, and switchbacks on a half-acre of land next to the church. Often Father Dobberstein would announce from the pulpit on Sunday that he needed a certain number of men right after church to lift something into place. Parishioners said he was always there for them during deaths or needed times, but didn't socialize much because he was engaged by his grotto. The only man-made forms in the grotto are the marble religious statues from Italy placed throughout---jarring, perhaps, but also adding to the folkly aspect of the whole thing.

Father Phillip J. Wagner was the builder of the Rudolph Grotto and Wonder Cave in Rudolph, Wisconsin. It has a different feel from the other because of native plants and vegetation in the surrounding park. Highlight of the park is a cave walk which, when entered, must be completed. There's a bit of light at intervals from alcoves holding plaster saints; otherwise it is dark. Though the walker goes only one-fifth of a mile, it seems like ten times that long. Signs exhorting the reader to lead a better life are in each alcove. The words are punched into backlit tin giving a surreal effect. There are other sermons in stone around the grounds. There's a viewfinder looking into a log building; if you put a quarter into a slot you will be treated to a homemade panorama of Wisconsin during World War I.

Paul and Matilda Wegner built their own little rock garden and grotto near Cataract, Wisconsin, calling it the Prairie Moon Garden and Museum. It contains a small ocean liner, a pulpit, a church, and a wedding cake made of rock, glass or whatever the two turned up to use as decoration. It's fenced with thin-railed concrete half moons with ice cream cone finials. I don't know how they got those little rails to stay up.

And then there was Fred Smith's Concrete Park outside of Phillips, Wisconsin. Fred Smith had worked as a logger, homesteader, ginseng and Christmas tree grower and ended up owning a tavern next to what became his concrete park. Tavern patrons became progenitors of some of the pieces by daring him to make certain things. In Paul Bunyan country Fred Smith was dared to make a statue of the hero standing on a marble. He just put Bunyan on a hemisphere and called it a "half-marble". All the pieces are life-sized or larger. Kit Carson is rearing up on a horse. A full team of Clydesdales heads up a wagon. A whole different area of the park is given over to the presidents and famous Americans. Don't miss Mary Todd Lincoln. Fred expressed his artistic impulse by saying, "It's gotta be in ya to do it!" Well, Leonardo couldn't have put it better.

What's with these Midwesterners and rocks? I know it gets cold up there, but ... Come to think of it there used to be a lot of rock art around Texas

in the twenties and thirties--- homemade fences, filling stations, houses... so maybe it's the time, not the place. There's a certain rock house in Pampa, Texas, with the head of a longhorn created from rock and embedded in the front wall of its porch. I always look for it to know I am on the right road to New Mexico.

Speaking of winter pastimes--- the tour visited the Bily Clock Museum in Spillville, Iowa. The Bily brothers, Frank and Joseph, were German bachelor farmers (I don't know if they grew wheat) who designed and carved phenomenal clocks during the long winters. The rest of the year they kept up their regular chores on the farm where they were born and lived with an old maid sister until their deaths in the 1960's. Neither man ever ventured more than twenty-five miles from home. Each of the clocks is totally different. The Apostle Clock, carved in 1915, has one of the twelve apostles come out at each hour. The Lindbergh clock was done in 1928, year of the historic flight. The American Pioneer Clock has farmers and oxen-pulled wagons. During the Depression Henry Ford dropped by to see the famous clocks and offered the Bilys' a million dollars for their collection. They turned him down saying they had no use for that much money. So the clocks remain in downtown Spillville in the very building occupied by Antonin Dvorak when he spent the summer there in 1893. While considering summering in Europe, Dvorak heard about this picturesque Czech village in Iowa. Here he found solace and natural beauty and was able to compose. Dvorak concerts in Spillville are given by noted musicians and attended by people from around the world. This area also claims the world's smallest church, Festina, and the Little Brown Church in the Dell, whose eponymous song all native-born Texans of a certain age will remember.

This is a tour organized by an architect so a lot of it is included.

We visited two of Louis Sullivan's "jewelbox" banks. The National Farmers' Bank in Owatonna, Iowa, is still being used as a bank. Friendly folks didn't seem to mind us touring the place during banking hours while gaping and ahhhing, photographing and admiring. Algona, Iowa's, Merchants' National Bank is now used as headquarters for the local Chamber of Commerce. Here we were sat down, served coffee and kolaches by the Chamber president's wife, heard a lecture from the Chamber's president, a former high school math teacher, and shown the bank's scrapbook. The locals were so proud of their famous building and eager to share everything unique to their town. My New York dwelling, daughter/companion said she might like to move there. I said, no you wouldn't Honey.

The architecture and look of these buildings can only be described as "Sullivan-esque"--- ornate, colored brick and tile on the outside, very decorative but never overdone; art nouveauish grillwork on the inside; and whole-wall murals of local flora and fauna, i. e. cows, horses, fields of hay and wheat. Stained glass windows are what give these banks their jewelbox feel; the workers inside say they can tell the time of day and the month of the year by the color changes. Both are two stories tall, small but perfect. They are both a reflection of their agrarian users' needs and Sullivan's genius. He designed these in 1906 and 1913 when the best years of his Chicago career were considered over.

We visited Frank Lloyd Wright's original Taliesin, in Spring Green,

Wisconsin. Every arrangement to see this landmark must be made way ahead of time and adhered to religiously. We waited at the visitors' center for our allotted time and left by bus in a frog-strangling rain. Since heavy machines aren't allowed too close, we were let out to walk the last half mile. Walking around the hill in the rain was one thing, but when faced with walking straight up an unmowed meadow of slippery grass to the sacred place, I began to curse the great man under my breath. But once I got inside, got warm, and had a chance to look around I began to enjoy myself. This Taliesin is actually the third to be built on this spot. It has been destroyed twice by fire and rebuilt both times. The first fire in 1916 was the famous one. The insane handyman set it, then axed the inhabitants as they ran out the one door. The dead included Wright's mistress and her two children as well as other architects and their children. A short in the bedroom phone caused a later fire in 1932. Each time Wright chose to rebuild on the original spot, a high hill overlooking the valley originally settled by his Welch ancestors. Taliesin means "shining place" or "shining brow" in Welch. Many of the Wrights and Joneses, his mother's ancestors, are buried in the nearby graveyard, along with the victims of the fire, and as was Wright himself originally. His third wife, Olgivanna, by the terms of her will had his remains cremated and moved to Taliesin West in Arizona amid much controversy. Taliesin was home to the original Wright fellowships where he trained his apprentices. There is still a training program for young architects and two "apprentices" aged seventy-five years have lived here since they were first taken on in their twenties. Wright's plans can still be bought here; modern building materials are better suited to carry out some of his innovative ideas.

The house is furnished with pieces of Wright's own design, including tables, beds, seating (much of which is built in), grand pianos to cater to his love of classical music, and an octagonal chamber music stand, a replica of which is owned by the Dallas Public Library and stands within my sight from the reference desk of fine arts every day. Dallas Morning News critic, John Rosenberg, admired the original and Wright had another made for him as a gift. It came to rest on the fine arts floor when Rosenberg's archives were given to the library. But, like many Wright designs, it has some flaws in design, which prevent proper usage; it's too tall for the chamber musicians who must sit in a circle, to see each other when playing. Just think of it as a piece of sculpture.

On the last day, before being left at the airport, we visited a Wright Usonian house, and an art studio in the Minneapolis warehouse district, The House of Balls (I'm not making this up), the Walker Sculpture Garden, and did a quick driving tour of the city. We saw the Mary Tyler Moore statue (Yes, she's throwing her hat into the air.), and the new Frank Gehry designed art museum at the University of Minnesota. Its aluminum roof looked like billowing sails in the air. Our architect tour guide said a little overrated gimmick maker had done it. I love architects; they always have opinions. Next year's tour will be "The Rust Belt". I'm looking forward..

---- Gwen Dixie

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 ► **EXHIBITIONS IN TEXAS AND MEXICO**

The [exhibition list](#) is now published and updated on the the Web site.

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▶ **SUBMISSION DEADLINES**

FALL/WINTER issue: December 1, 2004.

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