

**Lyman Martin interior decoration
work and papers, 1928-1992
KA.0031**

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Kellen Design Archives

October 11, 2010

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Collection Overview

Repository	Kellen Design Archives
Creator	Martin, Lyman
Creator	Thedlow Inc.
Title	Lyman Martin interior decoration work and papers
Date [inclusive]	1928-1992
Extent	6.3 linear ft: 5 boxes, 3 oversize boxes

Summary

Lyman Martin (1908-2003) graduated from Parsons School of Design in 1939 and went to work for Thedlow, a prestigious interior decoration firm. After serving in World War II, Martin returned to Thedlow, where he created interiors, produced watercolor renderings, designed rugs and painted murals for clients. In 1969, Martin was appointed president of Thedlow and stayed until the company closed in 1979. The collection includes student work, renderings and drawings of interiors, sketches, an illustrated European travel diary, floor plans, photographs, news clippings, and exhibition records.

Preferred Citation note

[Identification of item], [date (if known)], Lyman Martin interior decoration work and papers, KA.0031, box __, folder __, New School Archives and Special Collections, The New School, New York, New York.

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Biographical Note

After graduating from Carleton College in Minnesota, Lyman Martin (1908-2003) moved to New York City and began attending the New York School of Fine and Applied Art (later, Parsons The New School for Design). In 1939, Martin graduated from Parsons and shortly thereafter was hired by Thedlow, Inc., one of the oldest interior decoration firms in the United States. Founded in 1919 by Charlotte (Lottie) Handy, Thedlow was exclusively staffed by women until Martin's hiring. He would remain with Thedlow until his retirement, a career interrupted only by three and one half years of service in the U. S. Army Air Forces during World War Two and a post-war study abroad program through Parsons.

At Thedlow, Martin decorated interiors for residential and corporate spaces throughout the United States and the Caribbean. His detailed, evocative renderings enhanced his reputation. When Charlotte Handy retired as president of Thedlow in 1969, she appointed Martin to succeed her. The firm closed in 1979 and the Rhode Island School of Design Museum acquired Thedlow's records.

Source: Rhode Island School of Design. Museum of Art. *Thedlow: Twentieth Century Interior Design for Town and Country*. Providence : Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, 1990.

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Scope and Contents note

The Lyman Martin interior decoration work and papers document Martin's education and four decade career (1939-1979) with Thedlow, Inc. The collection contains clippings, corporate publicity materials, floor plans, photographs, student lecture notes and artwork, an illustrated travel diary, and a variety of sketches, drawings, and renderings depicting rooms and elements such as floors, windows, and rugs decorated by Thedlow. Materials in the General series are those that do not appear to be related to Martin's professional work for Thedlow, nor do they appear to be student work. Of note is an illustrated travel diary textually and graphically chronicling a sojourn in post-war Europe. Although the trip involved classes with Parsons instructors, Martin had already graduated from the school by this time and was employed by Thedlow.

The Student Work series consists of materials created and received by Martin while studying at Carleton College in Minnesota and, later, at the New York School of Fine and Applied Art. Included are a student notebook and exam booklet from undergraduate studies at Carleton around 1928-1929, and extensive notes and assignments from interior decoration and art history classes taken at the New York School of Fine and Applied Art between 1936 and 1939.

The third and largest series contains primarily graphic materials created, received, and collected by Martin in his capacity as designer, renderer, and, later, president of Thedlow, Inc. As the firm's chief artist, the graphic records in the collection provide documentation on Martin's and Thedlow's business and creative practices. Also included in this series are a promotional booklet advertising Thedlow's services, Martin's stock certificates, a publicity scrapbook, and photographs, one featuring a group portrait of the Thedlow staff. Some materials pre-date Martin's term with the firm. While many of the photographs and renderings in this series are stamped "Thedlow," similar materials that do not display the Thedlow stamp are included in this series. Of note are a watercolor by Elizabeth Hoopes of a living room, two watercolors depicting the exterior of Thedlow's offices, and a rendering of ranch-style military housing by and for Lyman Martin.

Few renderings in the Thedlow series feature dates, locations, client names, or decorator names. Apart from the illustrated travel diary, there is little documentation of Martin's private life.

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Arrangement note

Organized in 3 series

- I [General, 1948-1992, undated](#)
- II [Student work, 1928-1939](#)
- III [Thedlow, Inc., 1930-1990](#)

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Administrative Information

Publication Information

Kellen Design Archives October 11, 2010

Conditions Governing Access note

Collection is open for research use. Please contact archivist@newschool.edu for appointment.

Use Restrictions

To publish images of material from this collection, permission must be obtained in writing from the New School Archives. Please contact: archivist@newschool.edu.

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Donated by Harry S. Martin, 2004.

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Related Materials

Fellow Parsons student and interior designer Raymond S. Waldron's papers (KA.0044) in the New School Archives include a travel sketchbook from the same period as Martin's travel diary. Examples of renderings that Martin executed for fellow Parsons graduate Eleanor Horst are included in her collection in the New School Archives, Eleanor Horst interior decoration photographs and renderings (KA.0026). One watercolor by Parsons alumna and instructor, Elizabeth Hoopes, is present in the Martin papers. Additional works by Hoopes may be found in the Elizabeth Hoopes interior design watercolors (KA.0093). The Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) Museum holds the administrative records of Thedlow, Inc. Photographs of residential interiors decorated by Thedlow will be found in the Gottscho-Schleisner Collection at the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

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Keywords for Searching Related Subjects

Corporate Name(s)

- Carleton College (Northfield, Minn.).
- New York School of Fine and Applied Art.

Genre(s)

- Clippings (information artifacts).
- Drawings.
- Exhibition records.
- Floor plans.
- Notebooks.
- Perspective views.
- Photographs.
- Renderings.

- Sketchbooks.
- Sketches.
- Student projects.
- Tracings (drawings).
- Travel sketches.

Subject(s)

- Art -- Study and teaching -- New York (State) -- New York -- 20th century.
- Decoration and ornament, Architectural -- United States -- 20th century.
- Europe -- Description and travel.
- Interior decoration firms -- New York (State) -- New York -- 20th century.
- Interior decoration -- Study and teaching -- New York (State) -- New York -- 20th century.
- Interior decorators.

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Other Finding Aids note

For selected item-level description and images from the Lyman Martin interior decoration work and papers, see The New School Archives Digital Collections at <http://digitalarchives.library.newschool.edu/index.php/Detail/collections/KA0031>.

Collection Inventory

Series I. General 1948-1992, undated		
Artwork: Watercolors, undated	1	1
	4	1
Holiday cards and sketches, 1992 and undated	1	2
Photograph of wall painting, after 1983	1	3
Series II. Student work 1928-1939		
Link to selected images from this series., 1928-1939 [http://digitalarchives.library.newschool.edu/index.php/Detail/collections/KA0031.01]		
Carleton College circa 1928-1929		
	Box	Folder
Art and history notebook, circa 1928	1	4
Exam book, 1929	1	5
New York School of Fine and Applied Art 1936-1939, 1948		
	Box	Folder
Artwork: Furniture renderings and sketch of nude	OSxx-1	1

Artwork: Ink wash and watercolor elevations	1	6
Artwork: Linoleum block prints and watercolor rendering of chair	1	7
Clippings	1	8
Drawings	4	2
	OSx-1	1
Notebook	1	9-13
Contains book and field trip reports, essay prompts, graded assignments, hand outs, lecture notes, design problems, and tracings. Includes notes from classes taught by Elsie Brown Barnes, Glenn Boyles, Betty Carter, Robert Castle, Olga Gloushkoff, LeRoy Nelson, Clifford Preston, Charlotte Smith, and guest lecturer Eleanor McMillen Brown. A large cache of loose tracings is housed in a separate folder.		
Watercolors	4	3
Travel diary [sketchbook], 1948	4	1
Series III. Thedlow, Inc. 1930-1990		
Link to selected images from this series., 1930-1990		
[http://digitalarchives.library.newschool.edu/index.php/Detail/collections/KA0031.02]		
Clippings, 1930-1986	1	14
	4	4
Clippings scrapbook, 1950s-1960s	1	15
Primarily newspaper and magazine clippings about Thedlow projects as well as Thedlow publicity materials. Photographic images featured in the scrapbook may be found in the Photographs sub-series.		
Corporate correspondence and publications, 1936, 1963-1967	1	16
Exhibition materials, 1990	1	17
"Five Decades of Design" [clipping] and photograph, circa 1969	1	18
Includes Thedlow staff group portrait.		
Floor plans, renderings and sketches between 1939 and 1979		
Contains drawings, renderings and sketches executed in gouache, ink, pen, pencil, and watercolors. Few of the materials display date or client information. Many do, however, feature annotations related to color, furnishings, and materials depicted. The bulk of the renderings depict residential interiors.		
Floor plans primarily date from the 1960s through the early 1970s and include plans for 860 United Nations Plaza, 14 Sutton Place South, 799 Park Avenue, 200 East 66th Street, 160 East 55th Street, and 325 East 79th Street, all in Manhattan, as well as plans for residential properties in Newark, Delaware (Wright); Concord, Massachusetts (Berkeley); Mishaum Point, Massachusetts (Perkins); and Charleston, South Carolina.		
Decorative elements		
General and unidentified	1	19
	4	5
Carriages [tracings]	1	20
Decorative panels: Geometric, shells, and tassels	2	1
Decorative panels: Oversize	k_OSxxx-1	6
	OSx-1	2

White flowers painted on tracing paper	4	8
Floor treatments	2	2
Furniture	4	6
Tracings	2	3
	4	7
	k_OSxxx-1	4
	OSxx-1	2
Window treatments	2	4-6
Floor plans, between 1939 and 1979	2	7-9
	4	9
	MC D 4	2
	OSx-1	3
	OSxx-1	3
Interiors and exteriors		
Bathroom and office	5	1
Bedrooms	2	10-11
	5	2
	OSx-1	4
	OSxx-1	4
Churches, probably 1951	OSx-1	5
Commercial interiors	2	12
	k_OSxxx-6	3
	OSx-1	6
Dining rooms, living rooms, foyers, and staircase	2	13
	5	3-4
	k_OSxxx-1	5
	OSx-1	7
	OSxx-1	5
Exploded plans	OSx-1	8
Exteriors	2	14-15
Living rooms	2	16-18
Includes one watercolor rendering by Elizabeth Hoopes, 1939.	5	5-7
	k_OSxx-3	6
	k_OSxxx-6	2
	OSx-2	1-5

	OSxx-1	6-7
Post war house: I Troop Carrier Command, Stout Field, Indiana	MC D 4	1
Photographs 1940s-1970s		
<p>The majority of photographs are undated and contain no identifying information apart from the photographer. Many of these photographs are featured in the Thedlow clippings scrapbook. Photographs by Samuel Gottscho appear to pre-date the other prints in the series by several decades and may document early Thedlow projects prior to Martin's employment with the firm. Clients include Mr. and Mrs. Herman Watkins (Palm Beach, Florida), Mr. and Mrs. William Chapman Foster (South Carolina?) and Mr. Harton Singer (Sewickley, Pennsylvania).</p>		
Projects (by client)	3	1-5
	5	8
Projects (by room function or element)	3	6-14
	5	9-10