Parsons School of Design oral history program, 1994, 2010-2017
PC.07.01.02

This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit
June 18, 2019
Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Kellen Design Archives
May 11, 2017
66 5th Avenue
lobby level
New York, NY, 10011
212.229.5942
archivist@newschool.edu
Table of Contents

Collection Overview ................................................................. 2
Biographical Note ................................................................. 4
Scope and Contents note ....................................................... 11
Organization and Arrangement .............................................. 11
Administrative Information ................................................... 11
Keywords for Searching Related Subjects ............................... 11
Other Finding Aids note .......................................................... 12
Collection Inventory ............................................................. 12

Collection Overview

Repository Kellen Design Archives

Creator - Interviewee Apple, Jacki

Creator - Interviewer Aziz, Anthony

Creator - Interviewee Bannerman, Jane Campbell

Creator - Interviewee Barrows, Stanley, 1914-1995

Creator - Interviewee Carlson, Dan, 1981-

Creator - Interviewer Charleston, Beth Dincuff

Creator - Interviewer Dieffenbacher, Fiona

Creator - Interviewee Dwork, Melvin
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creator - Interviewee</th>
<th>Elow, Adela</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creator - Interviewee</td>
<td>Gruber, Ziva S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator - Interviewee</td>
<td>Hannan, Alison Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator - Interviewee</td>
<td>Matthews, Lydia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator - Interviewee</td>
<td>McGrath, Brian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator</td>
<td>New School (New York, N.Y.). New School Archives and Special Collections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator</td>
<td>New School (New York, N.Y.). New School Archives and Special Collections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator - Interviewee</td>
<td>O'Hagan, Helen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator - Interviewee</td>
<td>Palumbo, Mike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator - Interviewee</td>
<td>Porcaro, Don, 1950-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator - Interviewer</td>
<td>Scheir, Wendy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator - Interviewee</td>
<td>Sherman, Maurice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator - Interviewer</td>
<td>Swadosh, Jeanne F., 1976-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator - Interviewee</td>
<td>Whitfield, Tony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator - Interviewee</td>
<td>Wines, James, 1932-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator - Interviewer</td>
<td>Witkus, Dani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator - Interviewee</td>
<td>Yelavich, Susan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parsons School of Design oral history program

Date [bulk] Bulk, 2010-2019

Date [inclusive] 1994, 2010-2019

Extent 15.5 gb: 83 files; 26:11:46 duration; 18 PDF transcripts

Preferred Citation note
[Identification of item], [date (if known)], Parsons School of Design oral history program, PC.07.01.02, box __, folder __, New School Archives and Special Collections, The New School, New York, New York.

Biographical Note

Participant Biographies

Jacki Apple
Jacki Apple is a designer, artist, professor, and alumna of Parsons School of Design. She studied painting and graphic design at Parsons in the early 1960s and went on to work for many years as a fashion designer in New York City. In the 1970s she focused more on her art practice and co-founded the experimental arts organization Franklin Furnace, where she served as the first curator. In the 1980s she relocated to California where she continues to teach at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena.

Anthony Aziz
Anthony Aziz is an artist and professor of fine arts at Parsons School of Design. Aziz has a collaborative art practice with Sammy Cucher. Their sculpture, photography, textiles, videos, and installations have been exhibited at the Venice Biennale, the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, among others. Aziz received his MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1990.

Jane Bannerman
Jane Campbell Bannerman grew up in Elizabeth, New Jersey. She attended the New York School of Fine and Applied Art, where she studied in the Graphic Advertising and Illustration Department. Bannerman began her education at the New York School of Fine and Applied Art's campus on West 80th Street, then spent the 1929 academic year studying at the school's Paris Ateliers before returning to New York for her third and final year. Following graduation, Bannerman worked in...
a series of design-related positions. She was employed by the textile design studio Contempora and worked for The Delineator, a women's magazine. In 1932, Bannerman won an award from the Art Alliance of America, an organization promoting excellence in product design and advertising, for her textile designs. She worked for McMillen for approximately three years before leaving the professional sphere to raise a family. After her daughter was older, Bannerman started her own interior decorating business, building a strong clientele through word of mouth. She later returned to McMillen, but left after a year to pursue travel and artistic interests.

**Stanley Barrows**

Stanley Barrows was born in Texas in 1914 and died in 1995. He first graduated from Washington and Lee University before becoming a graduate of Parsons, and post-graduation worked briefly for Joseph Platt. After serving in Italy in World War II as a draftsman, Barrows returned to Parsons to join the Interior Design Department in 1946. Barrows was director of the Interior Design Department for twenty years, leading the school’s renowned summer trips to Europe. He left in 1968 to serve as chairman of the Interior Design Department at the Fashion Institute of Technology. After retiring in 1985, Barrows became an occasional contributor to Architectural Digest.

**Dan Carlson**

Dan Carlson is a fine artist whose work explores “the tension between conceptual ideals and existing realities” with a focus on the “materiality of high and low technology.” His mediums include photographs, drawings, videos, sculptures, and installations. Born in 1981 in Providence, Rhode Island, Carlson received a BFA in Studio Art from James Madison University before graduating with a MFA in Fine Arts from Parsons School of Design in 2010. Carlson has exhibited his at Micro Art Space (Cleveland, OH), Soapbox Gallery (Brooklyn, NY), James Madison University (Harrisonburg, VA), FiveMyles (Brooklyn, NY), The Wassaic Project (Wassaic, NY), Samson Projects (Boston, MA), Governor's Island Art Fair (New York, NY), and Cameo Gallery (Brooklyn, NY). His work has appeared in ArtFile magazine, One Place One Art, and Panhandler magazine. He has completed artist residencies at Obras Portugal, Micro Art Space, Wassaic Projects, and I-Park Foundation. Carlson was also a recipient of The New School Staff Development Award.

**Fiona Dieffenbacher**

Fiona Dieffenbacher is an assistant professor of fashion design at Parsons School of Design, and is director of the BFA program in fashion design. She received an undergraduate degree in fashion and textiles from the University of Ulster in the United Kingdom and a BFA degree from Parsons. In 1998, Dieffenbacher launched her ready-to-wear label "Fiona Walker," which is sold at select retailers in the United States and internationally.

**Beth Dincuff Charleston**

Beth Dincuff Charleston is a fashion historian and professor at Parsons The New School for Design. Formerly the manager of the Calvin Klein Archives, she maintained a garment archive that served as a creative catalyst for designers from every division of the company. Working with Mr. Klein and the company's creative directors she created an image database to facilitate designer research, as well as to record Calvin Klein's design legacy. As a research associate at the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Dincuff Charleston worked with many well-known fashion designers, costumers and writers, and contributed to the exhibitions Dangerous Liaisons, Goddess and Chanel. She regularly contributes to scholarly publications including the online Grove Dictionary of Art and The Timeline of Art History. Her education includes a BFA in Film from New York University and an MA in Museum Studies: Costume and Textiles from The Fashion Institute of Technology. As
acting curator of the Parsons Fashion Archive, Dincuff Charleston organized the exhibition Sophie of Saks: Sophie Gimbel and the Salon Moderne, in 2013.

**Melvin Dwork**

Melvin Dwork was born in Kansas City, Missouri on February 9, 1922. After graduating from Southeast High School in 1939, he attended the Kansas City Art Institute for two years before moving to New York City, where he enrolled in Interior Architecture and Decoration classes at Parsons School of Design. Dwork served in the U.S. Navy's Hospital Corps beginning in 1943, but he was labeled "undesirable" and dishonorably discharged in 1944 after it was discovered he was involved in a homosexual relationship. Dwork returned to Parsons with the assistance of the school's president, Van Day Truex, and commenced a personal campaign to have his veteran's status changed. In a landmark 2011 decision, the Board for Corrections of Naval Records formally altered his status to "honorable." In 1946, Dwork was hired as an assistant for designer James Pendleton, his first interior design position in New York. Three years later, he obtained a job as a decorator for Edward Garratt, Inc., a position he held for six months before starting his own business, Melvin Dwork Interiors, in 1950, sharing office space with friend and Parsons alumnus Sheridan Kettering. His first commission as head of his own company was completed in 1951 -- a penthouse apartment in the Hotel Lexington belonging to a former Parsons classmate, Gorda Klein, and her husband, Harold. In 1953, the Herbert Charles Company invited Dwork to design a model apartment for a co-operative across the street from the Metropolitan Museum of Art at 1025 Fifth Avenue. His designs for the apartment garnered him national visibility, as well as several new clients. In 1956, Dwork closed his business and started working with Irving M. Altman. Later that same year, Altman and Dwork initiated a partnership that included an antiques store and interior design firm located on East 57th Street. This partnership lasted for three years before Dwork joined Yale R. Burge Associates (later Burge-Donghia, Inc.) in 1960. He remained there until 1970, when he re-launched his own business. Frpm 1979 until 1982, Dwork partnered with James Maguire, a Parsons graduate, to form Dwork-Maguire. In 1993, Dwork was inducted into the Interior Design Hall of Fame. Corporate clients included Aetna Life Insurance and Shearson Lehman Hutton. Dwork designed interiors for numerous executives and artistic figures. By 2011, he was semi-retired. While managing his design business, Dwork also served on the Advisory Committee at Parsons School of Design from 1992 to 1995. In 1997, he established the John Butler Foundation to promote the work of his former partner, a choreographer, who died in 1993. Melvin Dwork died on June 14, 2016 in New York City.

**Adela Elow**

Adela Elow (maiden name Hilsenroth) was born December 7, 1927 in Jersey City, New Jersey. She was one of six children born to Austrian immigrant parents. Elow attended the Traphagen School of Design in New York City and after graduating worked as a fashion designer for Sporteen, a division of Apparel Industries. She married Lawrence Elow in 1952. After their marriage she stopped working and focused on making art. She and Lawrence, a musician, have two sons, Clifford and Douglas.

**Ziva S. Gruber**

Ziva S. Gruber was born in Jerusalem, Israel. Her parents encouraged her to pursue a career in either medicine or law. To that end she studied chemistry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. However, in 1960 Ziva moved to New York to pursue her studies in interior design at Parsons School of Design. In 1965, Ziva took a job with an architectural firm where she learned technical drafting. In 1968, she moved to Ford and Earl Design Associates: a firm at which she would work for the next eight years. During this period Ziva participated in critiques at Parsons. In 1971, the
Friends of Central Park Zoo approached Ford and Earl to redesign the zoo pro bono. Ziva brought the project to Parsons and worked as a voluntary instructor and liaison between Ed Frank and Tom Gould (Parsons faculty) and the firm. “The Central Park Redevelopment Study” was completed by nineteen students as their senior project, and was Parsons’ first community design workshop. Between 1977 and 1982, Gruber worked as a designer at a number of firms: Daroff Design, Fulton & Partners, Luss / Kaplan & Associates, and Stanley Felderman Ltd. After 1982, Ziva worked as a private contractor for high end residential buildings and speciality shops, until her retirement in 2011.

Alison Hannan

Alison Smith Hannan was born in New York City in 1925. She was the second of three children. Her mother, Dr. Adelaide Ross Smith, was a medical doctor who worked for the State of New York as an occupational safety inspector. She later became a psychoanalyst in the school of William Alanson White. Alison's father, W. Seymour Smith, was a Wall Street wealth manager. Alison's lived with her parents and two siblings at 172 Sullivan Street, in Greenwich Village. Alison attended City and Country School and Friends Seminary, graduating in 1943. She then attended Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri from 1943-1945. Having exhibited an interest in clothes from early on, Alison learned how to sew at Stephens. After receiving an Associate's degree from Stephens, Alison returned to New York and attended Parsons School of Design from 1945-1947, first specializing in fashion design, then switching her focus to fashion illustration. She graduated from Parsons in 1947. After graduating from Parsons, Alison worked as a stylist for fashion photographer William Payne and one other fashion photographer. She then worked in the art department at Abraham & Strauss in downtown Brooklyn. In 1950, she spent six months traveling alone in Europe. Upon her return to New York that year, Alison got a job at Time, Inc. She was working at Time when she met Tom Hannan, in 1953. Hannan had arrived in New York in 1950 with a scholarship to study painting at The Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts, located on 8th Street in Greenwich Village. Tom and Alison were married in 1954 and moved to 137 Thompson Street, a cold-water flat below Houston Street. Tom met Bob Weinstock, owner of Prestige Records, in 1956 and was hired to design jazz album covers. Alison prepared printer's mechanicals for the album cover designs. She worked at the kitchen table at 137 Thompson Street, while Tom worked in the front room. An artist friend, Bruce Barton, also assisted Tom a few days a week. Three album covers were prepared and delivered each week to Prestige, Blue Note, Columbia, and Roulette records. Evening outings included attending friends' openings at the 10th Street galleries, where many of Hans Hofmann's students showed their work, followed by drinks at the Cedar Tavern. The Hannans also frequented jazz clubs, often "closing out Mingus" at the Five Spot on the Bowery. In 1957, the Hannans moved to a loft on the fourth floor of 156 West 22nd Street, where Tom set up a larger studio. Other artist friends from the Hans Hofmann school lived in the building and nearby, including painters James Gahagan, Gerald Samuels, Joe Stephanelli, and Jan Muller. The Hannans bought their house in Guilford, Vermont in 1959, spending summers in Vermont and winters in New York until moving to Vermont permanently in 1969. Alison sang in choirs for many years, beginning with the Interracial Chorale in New York City from 1950 until it disbanded in the late 1960s. -- Prepared by Pamela Seymour Smith Sharp, with Alison Hannan, September 26, 2011.

Brian McGrath

Brian McGrath was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, into an Irish-American family. He did his undergraduate degrees in architecture and liberal arts at Syracuse University, graduating in 1979. He completed his Master’s of Architecture at Princeton University in 1981. McGrath’s
professional career has been a mix of architectural practice and teaching. McGrath’s association with Parsons School of Design began in 1991. At Parsons Brian has held several positions. He served as research chair in Urban Design between 2010 and 2013; between 2013 and 2016, he held the post of professor of Urban Design. In 2016, McGrath completed a three-year term as dean of the School of Constructed Environments. He is also an author and editor of several publications, including Urban Design Ecologies Reader (2013), Resilience in Ecology and Urban Design: Linking Theory and Practice for Sustainable Cities (2013) (with S.T.A. Pickett and Mary Cadenasso), and Cinemetrics: Architectural Drawing Today (2007) (with Jean Gardner).

Lydia Matthews

Lydia Matthews, professor of Visual Culture at Parsons School of Design, is a curator, writer, educator and cultural activist, she trained as a modern and contemporary art historian at UC Berkeley and London’s Courtauld Institute. As Parsons' Dean of Academic Programs between 2007-2012, Matthews designed a collaborative process through which faculty members crafted a new undergraduate curriculum, aiming to provide more cross-disciplinary opportunities for students and faculty across the division. Through a series of "charrettes" (i.e., intensive workshops) and committee work that she facilitated, faculty in the newly established "five schools" of Parsons identified the kinds of skills that young designers and artists would need to work successfully in the 21st Century. Through these dialogues and debates, they envisioned administrative structures and pedagogical strategies that would support the breadth and depth required for their contemporary practice to flourish. The administrative shifts and new Parsons-wide curriculum was ultimately launched in Fall 2014. In her own work, Matthews explores how today’s artists, artisans and designers foster critical democratic debates and intimate community interactions in the public sphere, often in response to a variety of urgent global and local conditions in their daily lives. Her essays have appeared in numerous journals and exhibition catalogs, and she has lectured internationally on socially-engaged art, craft and design practices. Commissioned by Fulbright, Open Society Foundation, Trust for Mutual Understanding, CEC Artslink, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Emre Senan Foundation and the US Embassy in the Republic of Georgia, her participatory curatorial projects in New York, the Post-Soviet region, Turkey and Southern Europe include exhibitions, community-based urban festivals, and multidisciplinary pedagogical exchanges addressing ecological and social sustainability.

Helen O'Hagan

Helen O'Hagan (1931-) was the vice president of public relations and special events at Saks Fifth Avenue from 1955 to 1993. A native of Charleston, South Carolina, O'Hagan had no background in fashion before beginning work at Saks, although her previous theater and photography training would eventually contribute to her success in public relations. In 1955, O'Hagan moved to New York and was soon hired by Countess Grace de Mun to work as an assistant press officer at Saks Fifth Avenue. After the Countess was let go a few years later, O'Hagan succeeded her as the vice president of public relations. Over the years, O'Hagan became a friend and protégée of Sophie Gimbel, fashion designer for the Salon Moderne at Saks, and would help produce publicity fashion shows and photo shoots in addition to writing press releases for the department store. O'Hagan met actress Claudette Colbert on the set of the 1961 film Parrish, and the two remained close friends until Colbert’s death in 1996. O'Hagan had taken an early retirement from Saks Fifth Avenue in 1993 in order to care for Colbert. In 1994, O'Hagan opened her own company, HOH Public Relations, and continues to serve as president of the company. She divides her time between residences in Charleston and New York.
Michael Palumbo

Michael Palumbo was born in Cranston, Rhode Island in 1955. After attending the University of Rhode Island, where he majored in art, Palumbo moved to New York City to attend the Pratt Institute. While focusing on his art, Palumbo also worked at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of the City of New York before moving to The New School. There, he worked in the Financial Aid office for thirteen years before becoming the Senior Office Assistant in the Fine Arts Department at Parsons School of Design. He is currently the Senior Office Assistant in Parsons School of Art, Media, and Technology. Palumbo remains a practicing artist, working in the mediums of painting, drawing, and land art.

Don Porcaro

Don Porcaro is a sculptor who was a member of the faculty in the fine arts program at Parsons School of Design for forty-two years, retiring in December of 2017. Porcaro grew up in Caldwell, New Jersey in a blue-collar Italian American family. He earned his BFA from Farleigh Dickinson University and his MFA from Columbia University. While still a student at Columbia University he was hired to help establish a sculpture program at Parsons. Porcaro's sculpture has been widely exhibited and reviewed. He is married to the painter Leslie Wayne.

Wendy Scheir

Wendy Scheir came to The New School in 2008 to direct the Kellen Design Archives for Parsons The New School for Design (a unit of The New School Libraries and Archives). In 2012, while continuing to lead the Kellen Design Archives, Scheir established the first ever university archives at The New School. Prior to starting at The New School, Scheir worked for the New York Public Library, where she was project archivist on a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to process the records of the New York World's Fair Corporation, 1939-1940. She holds a BA in English Literature, an MFA in Film, and an MA in History and Archives, all from New York University.

Elsa Schwarz

Elsa Schwarz moved from Argentina to New York City around 1957 with her husband, a chemist at the pharmaceutical corporation Pfizer. About one week after her arrival in America, Schwarz met fashion designer Sophie Gimbel’s personal secretary, who offered to let her take over the position the next day. Schwarz accepted the proposal and worked for Gimbel at the Salon Moderne at Saks Fifth Avenue, where she took care of bookkeeping, internal calls, and other business matters. Schwarz left Saks Fifth Avenue sometime in the 1960s when her husband was transferred to Chile, but continued to visit the Salon Moderne during occasional trips to New York until the salon closed in 1969.

Maurice Sherman

Photographer. Raised in Brooklyn, New York. Graduate of the School of Visual Arts. Active in New York City and Cleveland, Ohio as editorial and fine art photographer. Faculty member of School of Art, Media and Technology of Parsons School of Design, 1999-2013.

Jeanne Swadosh

Jeanne Swadosh (1976-) is an archivist employed with the New School Archives and Special Collections. Prior to joining the New School Libraries' staff as an archivist for the Kellen Design Archives in 2009, Swadosh worked for the Hadassah Archives at the Center for Jewish History and the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences. She holds an MLS from Queens College -- City University of New York and a BS in Media, Culture and Communication Studies from New York University.
Tony Whitfield

Tony Whitfield (b. 1954) is a New York-based artist, curator, and educator. He began teaching at Parsons School of Design in 1993. Whitfield spent his early life in the Philadelphia area. He graduated from Sarah Lawrence College in 1976, with a focus in studio art and art history. Whitfield held a number of curatorial and administrative roles in New York-based arts not-for-profits before teaching. Namely, he served as the director of Printed Matter, Inc. and the associate director of Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC). He also served as a senior policy analyst for cultural affairs in the Office of the Manhattan Borough President from 1990-1995. Whitfield came to Parsons in 1993. From 1999-2009, he served as chair of Parsons’ Product Design Department. In 2010, Whitfield was appointed as associate dean for civic engagement at Parsons. From 2013-2014, he served as Parsons’ director of social engagement. In 2014, Whitfield transitioned to teaching in Parsons’ Art and Design History and Theory (ADHT) department. His art and designs have been shown at The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD), the Leslie Lohman Museum of Lesbian and Gay Art, and the Instituto Cultural Peruano Norteamericano in Lima, Peru, among others. He has published widely on art, design, performance, and film.

James Wines

James Wines is an architect whose artistic work focuses on environmental responsibility and visual imagination. The company he founded in 1970, SITE, is responsible for many iconic buildings and public spaces around the world, including the winning entry for the 1986 Worlds Fair in Vancouver, Canada, the Fondazione Pietro Rossini Pavilion in Briosco, Italy, and the Madison Square Park Shake Shack in New York City. In 1959 Wines received a BFA from the College of Visual and Performing Arts at Syracuse University where he studied painting, art history, and sculpture. He went on to receive many awards over the course of his career, including the 1995 Chrysler Award for Design Innovation, the 2011 ANCE International Architect Award, and the 2013 National Design Award for Lifetime Achievement. Wines has had a long career in higher education, including teaching in the Sculpture Studio of The New School for Social Research from 1963 to 1965. He returned to The New School as the chair of the Environmental Design Department of Parsons School of Design from 1984 until 1990. Wines has authored numerous books on architecture and related topics. He is currently a tenured professor of architecture at Penn State University.

Dani Witkus

Dani Witkus is a student in the MA Fashion Studies program at Parsons School of Design. She holds a BFA in Painting from Tyler School of Art at Temple University.

Susan Yelavich

Susan Yelavich (b. 1950) is a New York-based design critic and educator. Yelavich was the director of the Design Studies MA program at Parsons School of Design from 2012-2018. She holds a BA in Fine Arts and Art History from Brown University and an MFA in Painting from Cranbrook Academy of Fine Art. Before arriving at Parsons, Yelavich spent roughly twenty-five years at the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, in New York. From 1995-2002 she served as the museum’s assistant director for public programs, a position with curatorial, editorial, and pedagogical components. Yelavich came to Parsons in 2004 to teach part-time in the Art and Design History and Theory (ADHT) department. From 2005-2012 she taught Global Issues, a required junior year seminar. After overseeing the Design Studies’ transition from an MA to certificate program, Yelavich formally retired in 2019. She was the 2004 recipient of the Rolland Fellowship.
in Design, and the 2019 Residency Fellowship at the Bogliasco Foundation. Yelavich has authored numerous books, articles, and essays on design.

Scope and Contents note
This ongoing oral history program documents the lives and work of designers, artists, and others active in the fields of art and design. Interviewees include Parsons alumni, faculty, staff, and professionals without a direct Parsons connection.

Organization and Arrangement
Interviews are arranged alphabetically by interviewee name.

Administrative Information
Publication Information
Kellen Design Archives May 11, 2017
Access Restrictions
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 and Special Collections. Please contact: archivist@newschool.edu.
Immediate Source of Acquisition
All interviews conducted during this program were commissioned by the New School Archives.

Keywords for Searching Related Subjects
Genre(s)
- Oral histories (document genres).
Subject(s)

- Art -- Study and teaching.
- Design -- History -- 20th century.
- Design -- Study and teaching -- France -- Paris.

Other Finding Aids note

For item-level description and sound files from the Parsons School of Design oral history program, see The New School Archives Digital Collections at http://digitalarchives.library.newschool.edu/index.php/Detail/collections/PC070102.

Collection Inventory

Audio interview with Jacki Apple 2018 May 15  1.41 gb

Jacki Apple was interviewed by Wendy Scheir, director of The New School Archives & Special Collections, on May 15, 2018 at The New School. Apple is an alumna of Parsons School of Design and a fashion designer, graphic designer, artist, and professor. The interview begins with Apple providing background on her family and her upbringing first in Manhattan, and then in the suburbs of New York. She speaks at length about the influence of her maternal grandmother, who also worked in fashion. The bulk of the interview focuses on Apple's time as a student at Parsons in the early 1960s, a time of great cultural upheaval. Apple shares recollections of specific faculty members including John Kacere, Paul Brach, Marvin Israel, and James Frangides and speaks about romantic relationships between faculty and their students. Apple also talks about her early career in fashion working for the Arkin organization, moving up through different fashion companies and then working as a freelance designer. In the last part of the interview, Apple discusses her transition from design to art and her work with Franklin Furnace.

Audio interview with Jane Bannerman 2010 Oct 27  285 mb

Interviewed by archivist Wendy Scheir at Jane Campbell Bannerman’s apartment at 88th Street and Park Avenue in New York City. Bannerman mentions her childhood in Elizabeth, New Jersey, and her education at Parsons School of Design’s Paris Ateliers campus at 9 Place des Vosges. At the Paris Ateliers, Bannerman met and studied under Eleanor McMillen, William Odom, Frank Alvah Parsons, and Van Day Truex. Bannerman describes Truex’s educational approach and style of dress in great detail. She later graduated from the illustration department at Parsons School of Design in 1930, and then pursued a career as an interior decorator. As a decorator, Bannerman worked for McMillen, Braunschweig and Fils, and herself.

Audio interview with Jane Bannerman, 2010 Oct 27

Audio interview with Stanley Barrows 1994 Sep  0.99 gb2 Broadcast Wave files; 01:03:47 duration; includes PDF transcript.

Stanley Barrows is interviewed by an unidentified man and woman. The interview focuses on the evolution of the Parsons School of Design aesthetic, and by extension, an American aesthetic, and the construct and definition of “good taste.” Barrows mentions Elsie de Wolfe, Eleanor McMillen Brown, William M. Odom, Van Day Truex, and Frank Alvah Parsons.
Barrows details numerous shifts within the institutional history of Parsons School of Design. He describes the founding of the Paris Ateliers by William M. Odom (at the urging of Frank Alvah Parsons), and development of a scholarship program for international students. He emphasizes the centrality of dynamic symmetry to the Parsons curriculum, and traditional studio practices, heavily based on classical European principles and oriented toward such exercises as museum visits and measuring rooms. He also details a later shift under Dean David C. Levy toward methods that Barrows describes as more experimental and “far out,” and his subsequent departure for the Fashion Institute of Technology.

The recording begins when the conversation is already underway, and abruptly ends in the middle of a sentence.
Audio interview with Alison Hannan 2011 Oct 2-3  1424 mb5 Broadcast Wave files; 02:09:50 duration; includes PDF transcript.

Interviewed by archivist Wendy Scheir at Alison Hannan’s home in Guilford, Vermont. Hannan describes her childhood in New York City’s East Village, where she attended the City and Country School, as well as her education at Parsons School of Design in the early 1950s. Hannan details both the studio techniques in which she was trained, as well as the liberal arts (specifically, art history) curriculum intended to complement this practice. Hannan also discusses her time at Parsons’ Paris Ateliers location and furloughs to Italy and Scotland, as well as her studies under Van Day Truex. She also illustrates the school’s long standing support for the LGBT community.

Audio interview with Lydia Matthews 2011 Dec 9  757 mb3 Broadcast Wave files; 01:05:42 duration; includes PDF transcript.

Lydia Matthews is interviewed by archivist Wendy Scheir in Matthew’s office at Parsons New School for Design. Matthews describes her evolving role within Parsons' administration, particularly as related to the development of undergraduate curriculum. Matthews details the incorporation of charrettes and other principals of design practice within Parsons' curriculum and across disciplines. Matthews also discusses the development of dual degree programs between Parsons and Eugene Lang College (BAFA), the launch of The New School's Diversity Initiative, the creation of the Committee for Undergraduate Education (CUE) under Dean Joel Towers, and the founding of Parsons' Sheila Johnson Design Center. She elaborates on institutional influences on the Design Center — including the Wattis Center at the California Center of the Arts, the Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Culture Center at University of California, Los Angeles, and the Grey Gallery at New York University — as well as the challenges faced within The New School's administration.

Audio interview with Helen O'Hagan 2011 Mar 8  1086 mb4 Broadcast Wave files; 01:39:03 duration; includes PDF transcript.

Helen O’Hagan, former vice president of public relations and special events at Saks Fifth Avenue, discusses her experiences working at the department store with Beth Dincuff Charleston, professor at Parsons The New School for Design. The interview begins with an in-depth discussion about her personal background, including her training in theater, and how she eventually moved from South Carolina and became an employee of Saks Fifth Avenue in New York City. O’Hagan and Dincuff Charleston look through multiple binders filled with publicity photographs depicting ensembles by “Sophie of Saks” produced by O’Hagan and her predecessor, Countess Grace de Mun. While looking through these photographs, O’Hagan recounts stories about producing the photo shoots, including details about the garments shown and the models they employed. In addition to providing an intimate look at the history of Saks Fifth Avenue in the mid-twentieth century, including day-to-day life in the fashion offices, O’Hagan talks about her relationships with Saks’ Salon Moderne designer Sophie Gimbel (1898-1981) and her husband, Adam Gimbel (1893-1969), who was the president of the department store until 1969. The interview was recorded at Parsons The New School for Design at 2 West 13th Street in New York.

Audio interview with Mike Palumbo 2017 September 28

In this interview conducted by Wendy Scheir, Mike Palumbo discusses his life and professional growth to become the Senior Office Assistant in Parsons School of Art, Media, and Technology. Palumbo recounts his childhood and adolescence in the Italian-American family and community of Cranston, Rhode Island, where he was raised by his mother. Palumbo considers how his early experiences fostered a love of visual art, a passion that developed into an artistic practice through training in fine arts education at the University of Rhode Island and the Pratt Institute. Seeking work that would allow him to continue making art, Palumbo began working in the bookstore and, later, the accounting office of the
Metropolitan Museum of Art. Palumbo talks about his move from the Met to the Financial Aid Office at The New School, and the impact that this work environment had on his life and art.

Palumbo recounts that by 2001 his artistic practice had been overwhelmed by overtime duties at The New School, and he found a way to regain art-job balance by accepting a position as Senior Office Assistant in the Parsons School of Design Fine Arts program. This job allowed Palumbo to work with fine arts students, and to continue to develop his own aesthetic.

Palumbo also considers the impact the appointment of Coco Fusco as Chair had on the culture of the Parsons Fine Arts program, particularly the aesthetic, personal, and generational difference between her and former Chair Don Porcaro.

The interview ends with Palumbo describing his current tree-planting landscape art project, his thoughts on his life in art and arts education, the history and state of Parsons and The New School, and his plans for the future.

Audio interview with Mike Palumbo, 2017 September 28

[http://digitalarchives.library.newschool.edu/index.php/Detail/objects/PC070102_Palumbo_20170928]

Audio interview with Don Porcaro 2017 Dec 19 995.4 mb

Don Porcaro was interviewed by Wendy Scheir, director of The New School Archives, and Anthony Aziz, professor of fine arts at Parsons School of Design on December 19, 2017 at The New School. In the beginning of the interview, Porcaro discusses his family background, growing up in Caldwell, New Jersey, and how he became interested in art. He goes on to talk about how he was hired at Parsons in the 1970s to establish a sculpture studio shortly after the fine arts program had been created. The bulk of the interview focuses on these early years of the fine arts program at Parsons, including a detailed discussion of the different spaces and buildings that housed the program. Porcaro also shares his philosophy as an art teacher, and mentions some of the students and faculty he worked with during his years at Parsons. At the end of the interview, Porcaro talks about the fine arts program's place within Parsons, and Parsons' place within The New School.

Audio interview with Don Porcaro, 2017 Dec 19

[http://digitalarchives.library.newschool.edu/index.php/Detail/objects/PC070102_Porcaro_20171219]

Audio interview with Elsa Schwarz 2013 May 2 1104 mb5 Broadcast Wave files; 01:39:43 duration; includes PDF transcript.

Elsa Schwarz, former secretary to Sophie Gimbel, discusses her experiences working at Saks Fifth Avenue with Beth Dincuff Charleston, professor at Parsons The New School for Design, and Wendy Scheir, director of the New School Archives and Special Collections. The interview begins with a discussion about how Schwarz moved to New York City from Argentina and began work at Saks Fifth Avenue without prior knowledge of the store or her employer, fashion designer Sophie Gimbel of Saks’ Salon Moderne. Throughout the interview, Schwarz provides detailed descriptions of day-to-day life working in the Salon Moderne, including fashion shows, employee lunches, and client relationships. Schwarz describes her fellow employees and some of Gimbel’s notable clients, such as Claudette Colbert, Hellen Keller, and Margaret Van Alen Bruguiére. In addition to describing how business was conducted at the Salon Moderne, Schwarz recounts how Saks Fifth Avenue gradually began to introduce ready-to-wear lines and outside fashion designers, such Anne Fogarty and Oleg Cassini, during the mid-twentieth century. The interview was conducted in the Kellen Design Archives at Parsons The New School for Design in New York City.

Audio interview with Elsa Schwarz, 2013 May 2

[http://digitalarchives.library.newschool.edu/index.php/Detail/objects/PC070102_Schwarz_20130502]

Audio interview with Maurice Sherman 2013 Jun 12 777 mb3 Broadcast Wave files; 01:17:03 duration; includes PDF transcript.

Interviewed by archivist Wendy Scheir at Grape & Vine restaurant, 52 West 13th Street, New York City. Maurice Sherman narrates his parents’ post-World War II immigration to the United States, and his subsequent childhood in Coney Island near Sea Gate, Brooklyn. Sherman’s father was a tailor who initially worked for Bergdorf Goodman, then opened up his own shop at 83rd Street and Lexington Avenue. The shop included as its clients Senator Jacob K. Javitz, as well as Marlene Deitrich.
Sherman describes his early art making — for which he received an award from then-Mayor John Lindsay — at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, as well as his studies at the School of Visual Arts (SVA) and early work in advertising. Sherman eventually joined the faculty at SVA, where he became an early adopter of Apple technologies. From SVA, Al Greenberg eventually recruited Sherman for the faculty at Parsons School of Design.

In addition to Greenberg, Sherman also mentions Marshall Arisman, Leon Friend, Martin Solomon, Gilbert Stone, and Henry Wolf, as well as Parsons’ affiliate in the Dominican Republic, Altos de Chavón School of Design.

Audio interview with Maurice Sherman, 2013 Jun 12
[http://digitalarchives.library.newschool.edu/index.php/Detail/objects/PC070102_Sherman_20130612]

Audio interview with Tony Whitfield 2019 Mar 21 1.1 gb: 1 Wave file; 01:48:35 duration; includes PDF transcript

Tony Whitfield (b. 1954) was interviewed by Wendy Scheir at The New School’s University Center Library at 63 Fifth Avenue on March 21, 2019. In the interview Whitfield describes his early life, undergraduate education at Sarah Lawrence College, work in the not-for-profit sector, and transition to teaching. He begins by speaking about his family’s relocation from North Philadelphia to a suburb in 1964, his early and persistent interest in art, and experience as a high school student at the Germantown Friends School. Whitfield remembers struggling with his identity as a queer African American at Germantown. From there, he recounts his decision to attend Sarah Lawrence, a private liberal arts college in Bronxville, New York. Whitfield describes working under Mary Delahoyd, a professor of art history, who facilitated his entry into the New York art scene. He recounts his first years out of college living in New York doing a series of odd jobs, and finally being hired by Larry Aldrich to work at the Soho Center for Visual Artists. Whitfield describes how this position morphed into a career in arts nonprofits. Whitfield describes his subsequent work at Printed Matter, Artists Space, Just Above Midtown, and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC). He recalls wanting a change in career towards the end of his time at LMCC. From LMCC, Whitfield was hired as a senior policy analyst for cultural affairs in the Office of the Manhattan Borough President. While working for the Manhattan Borough President, and making freelance furniture, he remembers being offered a position teaching furniture design at City College. Whitfield recounts how he began teaching at Parsons School of Design. At Parsons, Whitfield held a several of leadership roles. He recalls the circumstances under which he was appointed chair of the Product Design Department and describes the challenges of his subsequent roles as associate dean for civic engagement and director of social engagement at Parsons. Whitfield recounts his transition to teaching in Parsons’ Art History Design and Theory (AHDT) department after suffering from a stroke. Throughout the latter half of the interview, Whitfield describes the transitions he has witnessed at Parsons since his arrival in the early 1990s.

Audio interview with Tony Whitfield, 2019 Mar 21
[https://digitalarchives.library.newschool.edu/index.php/Detail/objects/PC070102_Whitfield_20190321]

Audio interview with James Wines 2014 Oct 31 88 mb

In this audio recording, artist, architect, and founding chair of the Environmental Design Department of Parsons School of Design, James Wines, is interviewed by Brian McGrath, dean of the School of Constructed Environments (what the Environmental Design Department gradually became) at Parsons, and Wendy Scheir, director of the New School Archives and Special Collections. Wines describes his upbringing in Oak Park, Illinois and Baltimore, Maryland, as well as his studies at Syracuse University. Wines discusses his career as a sculptor in Rome, the founding of his firm, SITE [Sculpture in the Environment], and the creation of Parsons’ Environmental Design program. Additionally, Wines relates numerous anecdotes about contemporary architects, and the many changes New York City, particularly lower Manhattan, has experienced over the decades.

Audio interview with James Wines, 2014 Oct 31
[http://digitalarchives.library.newschool.edu/index.php/Detail/objects/PC070102_Wines_20141031]

Audio interview with Susan Yelavich 31 Jan 2019 777.2 mb: 1 Broadcast Wave file; 01:13:26 duration; includes PDF transcript

Susan Yelavich (b. 1950) was interviewed by Wendy Scheir at the The New School’s University Center Library at 63 Fifth Avenue on January 31, 2019. In the interview Yelavich describes her time at Parsons School of Design and Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum. A substantial portion of the interview focuses on Parsons’ MA program in Design
Studies. Yelavich was director of Design Studies from its inception in 2012 to 2018. In 2018, Design Studies transitioned from an MA to certificate program. Yelavich begins the interview speaking about her tenure at Cooper Hewitt. She describes how her original ambitions to work at the museum to supplement to her painting practice transformed into a career. Yelavich recounts her departure from Cooper Hewitt in 2002, where she had been “restructured out” of her role as assistant director a public programs. She remembers being offered a position at Parsons, citing Clive Dilnot as instrumental in this appointment. From there, Yelavich describes her unexpected transition from part-time professor to director of Design Studies. She recalls the challenges of getting the program off the ground, designing coursework, and accreditation process. From there, she describes how Design Studies transitioned from an MA program to a certificate program. Yelavich cites low enrollment from 2016 onwards and Parsons’ leadership as influential in this decision. She recounts overseeing the program’s transition, and her decision to formally retire in 2019. She concludes the interview discussing former Design Studies students’ theses, new trends in materiality, and her retirement plans.