

**Finding Aid for the
The Woman's Building Collection, 1973-1991
Los Angeles Public Library Special Collections**

OVERVIEW

Identifier/Call No.: LA MSS 0007

Creators: The Woman's Building

Title: The Woman's Building Collection, 1973-1991

Dates: 1973-1991 (1980-1989 bulk)

Language: Materials in English

Abstract: This collection consists of materials that document activities at the Woman's Building in Los Angeles, including the Women's Graphic Center and Feminist Studio Workshop, from 1973 to 1991. Materials include print promotional materials relating to programs and events, fundraising and membership, and calendars and newsletters.

Scope and Content: The collection contains exhibition postcards, event calendars, flyers, and newsletters, among other print materials. Many items were designed and printed in-house. The Woman's Building included the Women's Graphic Center (WGC), which offered programs in letterpress, offset printing, silkscreen, design, photography, papermaking, as well as lectures by professionals in the field, a publication exhibit and sale. It was founded to provide an accessible design and printing arts studio for women artists. The studio was used to make artists' books, posters, and postcards over a period of ten-plus years. The mission of the school was unique in that women encouraged each other to produce professional quality work without sacrificing a personal voice. The Feminist Studio Workshop was another school within the Building. Most of the materials date from the 1980's.

Quantity: .45 cubic feet (1 Hollinger legal document box)

Location: Rare Books, South Stacks. Los Angeles Public Library Special Collections, 630 W. 5th Street, Los Angeles, California 90071.

ADMINISTRATIVE/BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY

In 1970, "Art and Technology," a group exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) had no women artists included. As a reaction to this, the Los Angeles Council of Women Artists researched that between 1961 through 1971, even though women represented 53% of the population in Los Angeles, only 4% of works shown in group shows at LACMA were that of women. As part of that zeitgeist, artist Judy Chicago, graphic designer Sheila Levrant de Bretteville and art historian Arlene Raven, experiencing frustration in creating a supportive feminist education environment, decided to start an independent school for women artists.

In 1973, these founders established the Woman's Building, a non-profit alternative education center that organized, sponsored and fostered programs, activities and groups in the old Chouinard Art Institute (1921-1961) building on Grandview and later in 1975, moved to the edge of Chinatown on North Spring Street. (Chouinard joined with the Los Angeles Conservatory of Music in 1961 to become CalArts in Santa Clarita.) The Woman's Building stood as a counterpoint to major museums, galleries and teaching spaces that (were unintentionally or intentionally patriarchal) and excluded female artists. The building included gallery spaces, artists' studio spaces, performances spaces, and teaching spaces and in its 18-year history (1973-1991), the space brought together women from throughout the United States and the world

and served as a gathering space for painters, printers, graphic designers, performance artists, video artists and writers.

The Woman's Building hosted many programs within its doors, including the Feminist Studio Workshop (the inaugural group), Center for Art and Historical Studies, Los Angeles Women's Video Center, Women's Writer Program, and the Women's Graphic Center. The Women's Graphic Center (WGC) was both an educational space and a community studio space where artists could take classes and rent studio time to create books, posters and other printed ephemera.

The WGC had an extensive roster of equipment, including an offset press, letterpress machines, offset plate-making equipment, a darkroom and space to do screen printing. Artists who used the space could effectively print a book from start to finish; they could conceive, write, design, print, and bind their books. WGC was based on this ethos that the ability to publish and distribute artists' own printed works allows their own voices to be heard through having control over production and distribution, which was vital to their mission to empower women to share their thoughts, concerns and life experiences.

The Woman's Building had a huge impact on women artists and on feminism as a whole. It was thus incredibly supportive of multiculturalism and lesbianism, and for the printed word, created an environment supportive of the printing and books through training a community of printers, artisans, and book artists in Los Angeles. Many who were trained at the WGC started their own studios elsewhere; some even taught at local institutions and others started their own printing businesses. Some of these people later became teachers and professors throughout the Southland, such as Otis, CalArts, Scripps College, Armory Center of the Arts, etc.

The newsletter "Spinning Off" contains articles by well-known authors, such as Andrea Dworkin and Ruth Iskin, and topical articles on domestic abuse, rape, self defense, electoral politics, and lesbian culture. The advertising reflects concerns of women, including reproductive healthcare, and businesses centered on women, such as Sisterhood Bookstore.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Use Restrictions

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Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research by appointment only in the Rare Books reading room. Information about setting appointments can be found on the Library's website at lapl.org/branches/rarebooks. Appointments can also be arranged by sending an email inquiry to [rarebook \[at\] lapl.org](mailto:rarebook@lapl.org).

Provenance/ Source of Acquisition

Unknown.

Preferred Citation

[Item], The Woman's Building Collection. Los Angeles Public Library Special Collections.

Related Materials

The Book Arts Collection, part of Special Collections, includes books printed at the Woman's Building including *Look Ahead, Los Angeles!* (1989) by Renée Ackel; *Logical Confusions: A Collection of Aphorisms, Epigrams, and Silly Sayings* (1989); and *Once Upon a Moment* (1989). All three titles were produced in a class taught by Bonnie Thompson Norman at the Woman's Building.

Items Removed:

The following seven books were removed from the archive, cataloged and added to Special Collections:

"Generations: A Fictional Family History" (1984) by Mariona Barkus.

"Woman Rising" (1975) by Mary Beth Edelson.

"Metamorphosis: An Exhibition at the College of St. Catherine, January 5-31, 1975" by Judy Chicago and Arlene Raven.

"L.A. Artists for Survival Present Fallout Fashion: Performance and Exhibition" (1983) by L.A. Artists for Survival.

"Manteniendo el Espíritu = Keeping the Spirit" (1982) by Aleida Rodríguez and the Woman's Building.

"Women Photographers in America, 1985" published by the Woman's Building.

"At Home" (1983) by Arlene Raven.

PROCESSING INFORMATION

Archival processing was completed at the Los Angeles Public Library by Rosemarie Knopka, Librarian Archivist, in May 2024. Vi Ha, Senior Librarian, International Languages Department, contributed to the administrative and biographical history section of the finding aid.

ARRANGEMENT

Materials are arranged chronologically by date of creation within each folder where a date is available.

Series 1: Programming

Series 2: Newsletters

INDEXING TERMS

The Los Angeles Public Library used both Library of Congress Subject Headings and the Library of Congress Thesaurus for Graphic Materials (TGM) as sources for subject headings for cataloging. In addition, TGM was used for genre and format terms.

Subjects:

Woman's Building (Los Angeles, Calif.)
Feminist Studio Workshop
Women's Graphic Center (Los Angeles, Calif.)

Topics:

Art, American -- California -- 20th century.
Community art centers
Feminism in art -- History -- 20th century.
Nonprofit organizations -- California -- Los Angeles.
Women artists.
Women artists -- California -- Los Angeles.
Women artists -- United States -- 20th century.

Persons:

Chicago, Judy, 1939-
De Bretteville, Sheila Levrant
Raven, Arlene

GENRE / FORMAT

Illustrations
Periodicals
Postcards
Posters

CONTAINER LIST

Box : Folder Description

Series 1: Programming

1 : 1 The Woman's Building - Anniversaries, 1978-88

File contains information about events planned in celebration of the 5th anniversary of the Woman's Building in 1978, the Tenth Anniversary in 1983, and the 15th anniversary in 1988. Items include a special edition of the newsletter Spinning Out dated November 1978, a poster, invitations, and a booklet. Also included is the book "The First Decade: Celebrating the Tenth Anniversary of the Woman's Building: A Pictorial History and Current Programs" (1983).

1 : 2 The Woman's Building - Calendars, 1975-90

File contains calendars for the Woman's Building sent as mailers. The majority are from March-April 1987 to Sept.-Oct. 1990, and several from the late 1970s. The calendars listed events, potlucks, videos, artists-in-residence, classes, and announcements.

1 : 3 The Woman's Building - Events and Exhibitions, undated

File contains invitation postcards and announcements for the grand opening of the Woman's Building, performances, lecture series, conferences, group shows, installations, book signings, theater and

performance programs, as well as information on the Women's Graphic Center, Women Writers Program, Summer Art Program, and L.A. Women's Video Center.

1 : 4 The Woman's Building - Events and Exhibitions, 1973-79

File contains postcards, invitations, flyers, and programs for a variety of events including lectures, performance art, the Extension Program, and group exhibitions.

1 : 5 The Woman's Building - Events and Exhibitions, 1980-89

File contains invitations to a WGC open house, a tea, group exhibitions, lectures, performances, installations, a conference and a symposium. There is also a poster for the 1983 Long Beach Museum of Art exhibition "At Home," curated by Arlene Raven.

1 : 6 The Woman's Building - Events and Exhibitions, 1990-91

File contains exhibition and event announcements, an entry form for the Gilding the Building public arts project, and a letter from Kathy Clark, Artistic Director.

1 : 7 The Woman's Building - Feminist Studio Workshop, 1979-81

File contains information about the mission and accomplishments of the Feminist Studio Workshop involving art exhibitions and education at the Woman's Building, as well as a program brochure and a guide.

1 : 8 The Woman's Building - Fundraising and Membership, 1975-90

File contains materials on membership, which often contain concise summaries and testimonials about the extensive program offerings and benefits, as well as information about funding and the history of the Woman's Building. Items include postcards, brochures, fundraiser programs, a special edition newsletter, and a program for the 1990 Vesta Awards, an annual fundraiser.

Series 2: Newsletters

1 : 9 The Newsletter of the Woman's Building, 1982-87

File contains the following issues: Summer 1984; Fall 1984; Summer 1985; Fall 1985; Winter 1985; Summer 1986; Fall 1986; Vol. 2 1987; and Winter 1987. Topics include the gallery and performance space, the Women's Graphic Center Studio, educational programs, the slide library, the Women Writers Series, artists' studios, and the store, as well as listings of events, classes, workshops, and lectures.

1 : 10 Spinning Off, 1978-79

File contains "Spinning Off," a newsletter of women's culture published at the Woman's Building. The incomplete series includes Vol. 1, Nos. 2-11; and Vol. 2, Nos. 12-16, 18. There are twenty issues total from March 1978 to December 1979. Sections include a calendar, classifieds, and announcements.

1 : 11 Spinning Off, 1980-81

File contains "Spinning Off," a newsletter of women's culture published at the Woman's Building, issues from January, March, April, June, August, October, November 1980, as well as May-June 1981 and July/August 1981. Coverage includes special happenings, news, reviews, and community art centers.

1 : 12 WGC Newsletter, 1982-83

File contains newsletters for the WGC, the Women's Graphic Center at the Woman's Building. Issues in the file include Fall 1982 and Fall 1983. Topics include funding information, scholarship opportunities, exhibitions, studio tours, member news, and course listings.

1 : 13 Womanspace Journal, 1973

File contains vol. 1, no. 1 issue from February/March 1973 and vol. 1, no. 2 from April/May 1973.

Womanspace opened in January 1973 on Venice Boulevard in Los Angeles and was affiliated with the West Coast Art Center, Inc.

1 : 14 Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) Newsletter, 1977

File contains one newsletter for the group, issue number 3 dated November 1977. WAVAN, a national organization, had its Los Angeles office at the Woman's Building.