



ARLIS/New York News

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Winter 2002

From the Chair

By Paula Gabbard

What a spectacular holiday party Anna Maria Poma-Swank and her colleagues at the Cloisters just arranged for us. In this dreary economic world, it is particularly amazing that this event cost the organization almost nothing. With her gentle urging, Anna-Maria was able, through volunteerism and institutional largess, to cover the considerable costs of this evening. The wine was generously donated by our ARLIS/NY member and Bookbinder Ralph Ocker, and the champagne by Robert Swank. Thank you one and all.

The year and my tenure as chair are coming to a close. Next year, the Chair of ARLIS/NY will be the extremely capable Debbie Kempe. Congratulations to our new board members **Judy Connorton (Vice-Chair/Chair Elect)**, **Heidi Hass (Secretary)**, and **Faith Pleasanton (Member-at-Large for Advertising)**, and welcome. I would like to thank all the candidates who ran this year.

Joy Kestenbaum will be stepping down from the board at the end of 2002 as past chair. During her tenure as chair, she single-handedly organized some of the most exciting events our organization has seen, including, among others, the Japan Society tour during the "Frank Lloyd Wright and the Art of Japan" show, the Planting Fields, the meeting at the Dahesh Museum, and the holiday party at the Whitney. Joy was also a conscientious contributor to discussions at board meetings during her three years of service. **Elizabeth Broman** will be stepping down at the end of 2002 as Secretary. In her minutes, she managed to make sense out of the verbal chaos of our board meetings, always with great patience and good

humor. She also wrote scintillating accounts of many member events during the year. **Leslie Preston** will be stepping down from her position as Member-at-Large for Advertising. She kept the advertising monies rolling in, surely saving us from fiscal crisis. She was also a welcome voice of reason during our board meetings, moving us along with grace and understanding. Thank you, Joy, Elizabeth and Leslie!

Along with Debbie and me, Caitlin Kilgallen and Heather Topcik will continue to serve on the board. Caitlin has been wonderfully capable as Treasurer while Heather has worked hard and effectively as Member-at-Large for Membership. Debbie often had the essential role of keeping us all on track at our board meetings. Thank you, Debbie, Caitlin and Heather.

Our organization would be mute were it not for the stalwart efforts of our Newsletter Editors, Alexandra de Luise and Jamie Mitchell, not to mention our Webmaster Jim Viskochil, who worked tirelessly to keep us all wired. Thank you, Alexandra, Jamie and Jim! We appreciate your good work presenting ARLIS/NY to the world. This group has a new member, Suz Massen, reporter-at-large and assistant in publishing and online development. Welcome, Suz, and thank you for joining us.

I urge members of ARLIS/NY to mark their renewal forms to accept online notification instead of paper copies of newsletters and other materials in 2003. The costs of production and mailing have gone up, and we are trying to minimize this expense.

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2002 ARLIS/NY Executive Board

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Elizabeth Broman, Paula Gabbard, Debbie Kempe, Joy Kestenbaum, Suz Massen.

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Angels and Obelisks: Tour of Green-Wood Cemetery, September 28

By Deborah Kempe

On a glorious Indian Summer day at the end of September, twenty-five intrepid ARLIS/NY members discovered one of the oft-overlooked jewels in our midst. In this case, the gem was the Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn. One of the first garden cemeteries to be built in the United States, it predates Central Park. Opened in 1838, it represents perhaps the most splendid example of the rural cemetery movement that advocated places of beauty and contemplation rather than churchyard burials. Our expert tour guide to the 478-acre park was ARLIS/NY Secretary and cemetery-savant Elizabeth Broman, a neighborhood resident with an encyclopedic knowledge of the park and its monuments. Elizabeth's article, "Egyptian Revival Funerary Art in Green-Wood Cemetery" in *Markers: The Annual Journal of the Association for Gravestone Studies* was the recipient of a 2002 ARLIS/NA Research Award. Although our group wandered the breadth of the park, her tour naturally honed in on the Egyptian Revival monuments with which she is so familiar.

Entering through the imposing neo-gothic gate designed by Richard Upjohn, rambling through picturesque lanes and arbors, the surroundings felt like the English countryside, far from the auto body and scrap metal shops that envelope the park. It seemed a throwback in time, although apparently it was a much more crowded place in the 19th century, when strolling through the park was fashionable and the fact that it was also a cemetery considered not at all macabre. In the 1850's it was a leading tourist attraction, drawing half a million visitors a year. To paraphrase the New York Times, social climbing city residents strove to live on Fifth Avenue, stroll in Central Park, and sleep forever in Green-Wood. The hundreds of funeral monuments range from the amusing (the Holy Family in front of a Ptolemaic pyramid, gazed upon by adoring Sphinxes), to the melodramatic (the tomb of 16-year-old Charlotte Canda, killed in a horse carriage accident), and to the especially somber (a monument to the mass grave of 287 killed in the Brooklyn Theater Fire of 1876—for more on this subject, read Ted Goodman's *Fire!*).



Photo courtesy Elizabeth Broman.

Although clearly dominated by monuments to the departed, due to its beauty and peacefulness, the mood of the park is not desolate. Designed by a Major Owens, Green-Wood reflects the tastes and beliefs of American Victorians. Drawing on contemporary books and documents of the time, Elizabeth conveyed those attitudes towards death. Certainly there was a preoccupation with the afterlife and with resurrection. That said, the all-too-human element of wealthy rivalry is evident in the ambitious mausoleums. In addition to the popular statues of angels, obelisks and pyramids abound, so it was interesting to learn that Egyptian revival monuments were controversial, considered by some to be immoral, unchristian, and even pagan. Nevertheless, Elizabeth pointed out, most of the obelisks and angels were widely available in trade catalogues of the period.

Famous people buried here whose monuments we visited include Louis Comfort Tiffany (a modest and unadorned marker), De Witt Clinton, Brooklynites Peter Schermerhorn and Peter Cooper, Henry Bergh (founder of the ASPCA), Elias Howe (inventor of the sewing machine), and Leonard Bernstein. Artist George Catlin is among the residents. More unexpectedly, so is Jean-Michel Basquiat, neither a Victorian nor an angel. The 1869 Civil War Memorial was recently restored, and nearby lies the memorial to WWI, which eternally faces the Statue of Liberty. We also entered the 1911 Chapel, designed by Warren & Wetmore (architects of Grand Central Terminal), which has been beautifully restored and is again available for services after being closed for many years.

After scaling the heights of Brooklyn, many in the group strolled to a nearby Czech-Slovak restaurant, one of the many ethnic choices in the evolving neighborhood of Sunset Park. For those of you who missed the ARLIS/NY tour, Green-Wood Cemetery is open to the public and frequent tours are offered. For more information, see <http://www.green-wood.com>. Rather than receive a fee, Elizabeth designated that donations be given to the Green-Wood Historic fund, resulting in a gift of \$250 towards the preservation of this amazing site.

From the Chair, *continued from p.1*

Since we have just raised our dues, some members may begin to feel that they are paying more money for fewer benefits. However, with the downturn in the economy, few venues can afford to freely host our large groups. Those few who offer us free accommodation are more appreciated than ever. We must have money in our coffers to pay for future meeting spaces, guards, food and drink. It is the only way that we can continue ARLIS/NY's tradition of offering members meetings and tours in extraordinary surroundings.

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Interview: Richard Lilly, Strand Book Store

By Joy Kestenbaum

The following conversation with Richard Lilly, manager of the Art Department of the Strand Book Store, took place on August 29 at the Gotham Bar and Grill on East 12th Street, a block and a half from the Strand. As a longtime resident of the Village and neighbor of the Strand, I thought it might be an interesting time to interview Richard, whom I've known for about 20 years. Many well-known NYC bookstores have come and gone. Jaap Rietman, A Photographer's Place, Scribner's and Brentano's are no longer, but the Strand is going strong; indeed, last year the Strand acquired Hacker Art Books on 57th Street. [Now called Hacker-Strand Art Books, Hacker was originally founded in the Village in 1946 by Seymour Hacker, who died two years ago.]

JK: How long has the Strand been in existence?

RL: It's 75 years old. The present owner's father, the much-missed Ben Bass, started it in 1927. Fourth Avenue used to be known as Booksellers Row. There were 48 little secondhand shops. There's a book on it being written by one of our best estate buyers, Marvin Mondlin, on the old Fourth Avenue booksellers. [According to October's *Book Source Monthly*, Marvin Mondlin's and Roy Meador's manuscript, "Book Row America (Anecdotal and Pictorial History of the Fourth Avenue Antiquarian Book Trade in New York City)" is currently in the hands of a literary agent.] But our building, where we started way back when, was torn down and we moved to [828] Broadway in 1956, where we've been ever since. It's still a family run operation. We're working on our third-generation Basses. The present owner is Fred Bass and his daughter Nancy Bass.

How long have you worked at the Strand Bookstore? What is your background?

I've been there 25 years. I grew up in Western Massachusetts in a little country town and I went off to art school in Boston, the Massachusetts College of Art. And I took a BFA and with a major in painting and art history. I started in the Strand as just a quick pick up job but little by little it became more complicated, I got more involved. It turned into something quite different. When I started there were just two of us who could do everything, mailing and shipping included. Now there are nine of us and we can't keep up.

Did you originally work in the Art Department?

In 1976 Strand had a little tiny satellite shop up on Beekman Place, which was an architectural bookstore

that started in the '30s when all the modern architects lived there. Strand then decided it wasn't a go any more so they moved me back to the main Art Department. I've been there ever since. We have a whole different department just for mailing and shipping. There are now over 200 people working for Strand as whole.

What are the trends that you've noticed in art book/book selling since you've been working there?

Up until about 10 years ago Strand was strictly secondhand and remainders. We didn't do any ordering of brand new books, but little by little as people wanted more than we carried, we now order from everyone, so we now do everything, new, old; out-of-print books are our specialty. We're always the lowest price; we're basically a discount shop, even in new books, we manage to get you a discount one way or the other. We have the volume no one else can touch. Of course all the reviewers copies come in too, so we do a huge business, with all of the European books that come in for review...



Richard recreating the Fourth Avenue scowl.

Photo by Marvin Mondlin.

When did the Strand open its Annex on Fulton Street?

I think it was about six years ago. We had a number of those satellites, a kiosk; we had a kiosk for years up at Central Park [near 59th Street and Fifth Avenue], we had one at Bryant Park; they're trying to get that started again. And we even had one at the Tramway for a few years. South Street Seaport was too small for us, so we ultimately had to move the Annex up the street and expand our space to 15,000 square feet. Now we have two huge stores plus, most recently, Hacker's with 5,000 square feet.

Do you go up to Hacker as part of your job? Who is working there?

Stephen Maine, who is another art man who ran the Fulton St. shop for years, took over the running and he's up there working on it now as we speak, trying to get the two systems together. There is a staff of six, including Linda Hacker herself.

So, it still has Hacker prices?

For now, it's going to take time to get the two systems melded... Little by little, these things take time.

What are the future plans for the Art Department?

Well, we're very excited because the Bass's bought the building about five years ago because we were strapped for space. The Art Department is going to move up to the second floor. You noticed on the third floor where Rare Books is they just doubled their space, it's airier, it's lighter and there's plenty of room to look at books and it's air conditioned, for those who prefer air conditioning... Construction is to start in January. We'll be installing an inter-store elevator and a wrap-around-staircase. The Art Department is now spread between two floors, rather higgly-piggly put together. There was no grand plan to grow the department, but books just kept coming in; we finally realized we had to do something. So, they very kindly bought the building. Wasn't that thoughtful? We have a storeroom in the building on Broadway, which is as large as the main selling floor at the Strand. How tall do you suppose those ceilings are? 15 or 20 feet? It's a grand old commercial space. On the 10th floor, stacked floor to ceiling with boxes, the entire floor (no pathways in between) between 40 and 50% of those boxes are mine that I have never seen. So I'm literally years behind for lack of shelf space. So, hopefully, I'll double my staff and triple my space and, by next year, I'll have a fighting chance of seeing what's in those boxes. But ultimately they'll all go out of print anyway, more material for rare books.

I read an article in the New York Times Magazine ["An Actual Internet Success Story," June 9, 2002] which said that the Strand's business had increased dramatically. How has it affected your business?

We've only had the computer for a couple of years now and slowly we're becoming computer literate. Me least of all. The kids of course know how to do this so much better than I. There's an entire separate department that handles just the Internet now. We do the input, someone else does the retrieval.

You get customers now from all over?

Oh yes. It's astounding on the web. It's really tremendous. I fought it all the way because I'm a classic old Fourth Avenue-type bookseller. I've been dragged kicking and screaming into the Internet age. But, they tell me our sales have increased tremendously. Nancy was interviewed in that article in the NYT. It was made quite clear that the Internet is one of the few successes in secondhand and out-of-print books because it draws together all kinds of disparate people all over the planet. It's also very useful for me to research prices, conditions and editions.

Strand is the last remaining of the old Fourth Avenue bookstores. But there are some bookstores that have opened in the neighborhood. There's Alabaster around the corner on Fourth Avenue. And I learned that Twelfth Street Books bought the stock of the Academy Bookstore that was on West 18th Street across from Skyline Books. So even though I'm a great customer of the Strand, it's nice to have more bookstores in the neighborhood.

Apparently there are people everywhere who want to run a little bookstore in the worst way and they're taking the chance, they're jumping in. ... It's nice to see the younger people trying it out; and a number of people just giving up the rat race and want to be in some dusty little bookstore. It's their idea of heaven! But when I first started there were still a few last little places on Fourth Avenue. Oh, were they grouchy. You remember Dauber & Pine, George Forss.

Yes, George at the Abbey Bookstore behind Grace Church ...

George, Abbey Books, a character. Biblio & Tannon. There must be something about buying and selling secondhand books that makes you grouchy. The traditional secondhand bookseller has social problems [i.e., not great people skills] they read books and books don't talk back to them. But at some point the matrix has to cross the hand with the dollar. And that's where the trouble starts. They were just incorrigible, those old guys, but you had to love

in the Berkshires is full. I'm not really what you'd call a collector. That's about the essence of it, really. But God bless cousin Susie, for the barn in the Berkshires.

Did you ever consider becoming a librarian?

That's my mother's job and a very good job she does at it. ... She ran public libraries when I was young and now is librarian for The Academy at Charlemont, a private school in Western Massachusetts, grades 7-12. Naturally she has an outstanding art section ...

ARLIS/NY Holiday Party at The Cloisters

By Suz Massen

The annual ARLIS/NY Holiday Party was held December 6, 2002, at The Cloisters, a branch of the Metropolitan Museum of Art that focuses on the art and architecture of Medieval Europe, located in Fort Tryon Park in upper Manhattan. The Cloisters' building is composed of domestic and religious architectural elements dating from the twelfth to the fifteenth century. ARLIS/NY member Anna Maria Poma-Swank, Associate Museum Librarian of The Cloisters, and the helpful staff at The Cloisters organized the event, which included a tour of the museum, a tour of the library and archives, and a reception in the Fuentiduena Chapel with medieval Christmas music. Poma-Swank wrote in an open invitation posted on the ARLIS/NY website, "It is a time of joy, friendship and sharing: let's celebrate it with beauty in a beautiful setting." This statement set the mood for a fun-filled evening in a most elegant location.

The festivities began with tours of The Cloisters led by Meredith Fluke, Assistant Educator for The Cloisters, and Keith Glutting, Head of Visitor Services. Party attendees were given an overview of the history of the museum and were shown some of the recent museum acquisitions. The tour of the museum was followed by a brief tour of the library and archives given by Michael Carter, Senior Librarian. The Cloisters Library and Archives contains about 20,000 volumes, 100,000 photographs, and a collection of vinyl records numbering around 400 LPs. It shares the online catalog, Watsonline, and electronic resources with the Thomas J. Watson Library located at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's main location at 82nd Street and Fifth Avenue. The Library is open to qualified researchers, as well as the Metropolitan Museum of Art staff. Around two to three outside researchers visit per month to use the collections.

A reception was held in the Fuentiduena Chapel, which is composed of the twelfth-century apse from the Church of San Martin at Fuentiduena, Segovia, and several twelfth-century sculptures and frescos. ARLIS/NY members brought their favorite edible dishes. The Cloisters Library and Archives provided

soft drinks and some desserts. Anna Maria Poma-Swank's husband Roberto Swank donated the champagne. Ralph Ocker of Ocker and Trapp Library Bindery provided the wine. There was plenty of food and drink to go around for all the guests in attendance.

At the reception, new ARLIS/NY board members Judy Connorton, Heidi Hass, and Faith Pleasanton were introduced. Exiting board members Paula Gabbard, Joy Kestenbaum, Elizabeth Broman, and Leslie Preston were thanked for their contributions to the organization. Deborah Kempe was introduced as the new ARLIS/NY chair for the coming year. Laurie Whitehill Chong, the ARLIS/NA Northeast Regional Representative, made the journey from Rhode Island to attend the party and was recognized for her work with the national organization.

The party ended at 7:00 pm. During the duration of the party the gift shop at The Cloisters was open to allow ARLIS/NY guests to browse the merchandise. Also, a gift bag was provided for all party attendees that included a traditional holiday decoration. It was an evening full of cheer that reflected the spirit of the winter holidays.



Chapter officers get medieval. From l. to r.: Elizabeth Broman, Jim Viskochil, Paula Gabbard, and Debbie Kempe. Photo by Leslie Preston.

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The old Strand on Fourth Avenue, "Book Row," circa 1938.

Photo by Alexander Alland.