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Ely Jacques Kahn papers 11015367

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Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library

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Summary Information

Repository:	Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library
Creator:	Kahn, Ely Jacques, 1884-1972
Creator:	Kahn, Liselotte
Creator:	École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts (France)
Title:	Ely Jacques Kahn papers
ID:	11015367
Date [inclusive]:	1906-1986
Date [bulk]:	1906-1972
Physical Description:	3 manuscript boxes
Physical Description:	7.5 print boxes
Physical Description:	2 folder
Language of the Material:	English .

Preferred Citation

Ely Jacques Kahn papers, 1906-1986, (bulk 1906-1972), Department of Drawings & Archives, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

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Biographical sketch

Ely Jacques Kahn was one of the most significant architects in New York City in the 20th century, sustaining an active career over more than six decades. Many of his buildings are now New York City landmarks, bearing witness to the sophistication of Art Deco and Moderne styles and the ambitions of the post-World War II building boom.

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Biographical sketch

Born in Manhattan, Kahn graduated from Columbia College in 1903 and completed further study in architecture at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1907-08. Returning to New York, Kahn struggled to find work in the wake of the 1907 stock market collapse. Competition for architectural jobs was tough given the growing number of trained architects and Kahn also faced a rising wall of anti-Semitism in the patrician world of New York architecture. In 1914, Kahn took a teaching position at Cornell as a replacement for a French architect unable to return due to the outbreak of World War I. In 1917, he joined the partnership of Buchman and Fox, already an established firm. As part of Buchman & Kahn, he began designing and building successful commercial buildings, profiting from the building boom in the 1910s and 1920s.

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Scope and Content

The collection consists of papers related to the personal and professional life of American architect Ely Jacques Kahn. A small amount of personal papers was transferred from the Arendts Library at Syracuse University in 1992. Additional personal papers, including two large scrapbooks, were donated by Liselotte Kahn, wife of Ely Jacques Kahn, in 1992 and 1993. Also found in this collection are student drawings and an incomplete autobiographical essay, donated to Avery Library by Kahn himself in 1963. Completing the Kahn holdings are personal materials from Ely Jacques Kahn, including drawings done while Kahn was a student at the Ecole de Beaux-Arts in Paris (1907-1908), sketchbooks, diplomas, autographs from fellow students, a typescript of Kahn's autobiography, and scrapbooks containing clippings, photographs, telegrams and other ephemera. Additionally, there is a small holding for Liselotte Kahn within the collection, including her unpublished memoirs, some correspondence, and a watercolor painting. Liselotte Kahn's memoirs describe her childhood in Germany; her marriage to Dr. Ernst Müller and the birth of their sons; Nazi anti-Semitism; their emigration to Greece; her husband's medical practice in Athens; the Italian and German invasion of Greece; their escape to Palestine; and their emigration to and experiences in the United States.

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Arrangement

The collection is arranged in six series: Biographical/Background Material, Student Work and Art, Professional Papers, Writings, Photographs and Miscellaneous Ephemera, and Liselotte Kahn papers.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library

Revision Description

File created. EAD was imported spring 2019 as part of the ArchivesSpace Phase II migration. 2014-11-19 2019-05-20

Restrictions on Access

This collection is available for use by appointment in the Department of Drawings & Archives, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University. For further information, please email avery-drawings@library.columbia.edu.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Source of acquisition--The collection was donated in six accessions: 1963.001, 1973.012, 1992.03, 1992.011, 1993.016, and 1994.013. A small donation by Jules Stern was added in 2023 (2023.001)

Processing Information

This finding aid was produced by Shelley Hayreh, Avery Archivist, in 2014. The scrapbooks were processed by Nicole Richard in 2015.

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Related Materials

Related Material

[Kahn & Jacobs architectural drawings and records, circa 1893-1965, \(bulk ca. 1893-1950\)](#): Hellmuth, Obata, and Kassabum Gift (1978.001)

Related Material

[Robert Allan Jacobs papers, 18902-1990s, \(bulk 1909-1983\)](#): Margot Jacobs Gift (1999.013)

Related Material

[\[Conceptual cross-section rendering for a multi-use building\] / Kahn & Jacobs](#) : Mark Dessauce Gift (2003.005)

Related Material

[150 Permanent Dwelling Units and Community House \[Lexington Park, M.D. \] / Kahn & Jacobs](#): Mark Dessauce Gift (2003.005)

Related Material

[\[2 Park Avenue \(New York, N.Y\)\] : \[design for bronze Subway sidewalk sign post\] / Buchman & Kahn](#): Andrew Alpern Gift (2010.005)

Related Material

[\[Perspective rendering of\] Federation Building \[New York, N.Y.\] / Buchman & Kahn: Catha Rambusch Gift \(1994.017\)](#)

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Controlled Access Headings

- Architects -- New York (State)
- Architecture -- Sketch-books
- Architecture -- Study and teaching
- Architects -- United States -- Biography
- Photographs
- watercolors (painting)
- Sketchbooks
- Autobiographies (literary works)
- Autographs (manuscripts)
- Bergdorf Goodman (New York, N.Y.)

Collection Inventory

Series I: Biographical/Background Material

Title/Description	Instances	
"Building Types Study 500: Forty Years of American Architecture as explored in 499 Building Types Studies," Architectural Record (Apr 1977), pp. 117-150	box 2	folder 1
Scope and Contents		
Accession 1993.016		
Scope and Contents		
Includes a letter from Martin Filler to Lisellote Kahn		
Diary, 1933	box 1	folder 19
Scope and Contents		
Accession 1992.011		

Scope and Contents

Includes India travel correspondence and ephemera

Perpetual Year Book, 1925-1959

box 3

folder 11

Scope and Contents

A Perennial Diary maintained by Kahn for nearly 35 years.

General

Accession 2023.001 (Donated by Jewel Stern)

Ecole nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, Oral History, 1971 to 1973

box 1

folder 20

Scope and Contents

Accession 1992.011

Scope and Contents

Interview conducted by Richard Chafee in 1971; includes transcript, audio tape and correspondence between Mrs. Kahn and Chafee

Manuscript, Family History/Early Life, 1962

box 1

folder 21

Scope and Contents

Accession 1992.011

Notes

box 2

folder 2

Scope and Contents

Accession 1993.016

Saylor, Henry H. "Ely Jacques Kahn." Reprint. Architecture, Vol. LXIV (1931 August), pp. 65-70., 1931

box 2

folder 3

Scope and Contents

Accession 1993.016

The Asphalt Green, 1979

box 2

folder 4

Scope and Contents

Accession 1993.016

Scope and Contents

Seventh Annual Benefit Program and clippings

Tunick, Susan. "A Directory of Significant Terra Cotta Buildings in New York City." Sites, No. 18 (1986), pp. 58-64., 1986	box 2	folder 5
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Scope and Contents

Accession 1993.016

Scope and Contents

Cover: Detail, upper stories of 2 Park Avenue, New York. Ely Jacques Kahn, architect (1927).

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Series II: Student Work and Art

Title/Description	Instances	
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Ecole nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, Lithograph	box 4	folder 3
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Scope and Contents

Accession 1993.016

Ecole nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, Student drawings, 1907 to 1910	box 1	folder 1 to 2
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Scope and Contents

Accession 1963.001

Scope and Contents

33 sheets : graphite on paper ; 28.0 x 21.0 cm. (11 x 8 1/4 in.)

Other Finding Aids

[Project-level record](#)

Ink Drawing	box 4	folder 6
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Scope and Contents

Accession 1994.013

Sketchbook, 1907	box 2	folder 15
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Scope and Contents

Accession 1993.016

Sketches and sketchbooks, 1906, 1971-2	box 2	folder 16
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Scope and Contents

Accession 1993.016

Scope and Contents

22 ink sketches, ca. 1971-1972, mostly New York City buildings and other architectural details

Scope and Contents

11 sketchbook, ca. 28 pp. Paris, [1906?]

Scope and Contents

1 sketchbook, 23 leaves, [Paris, 190?]

Watercolor, 1972	box 4	folder 7
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Scope and Contents

Accession 1994.013

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Series III: Professional Papers

Title/Description	Instances	
"Modern Architecture Symposium (MAS 1964): The Decade 1929-1939." Reprint. Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Vol. XXIV (Mar 1965), pp. 3-96.	box 2	folder 6
Scope and Contents		
Accession 1993.016		
Bergdorf Goodman, Promotional Booklet	box 2	folder 7
Scope and Contents		
Accession 1993.016		
Columbia College Council, 1954 to 1957	box 1	folder 22
Scope and Contents		
Accession 1992.011		

Scope and Contents

Press release, minutes and memorandums

Correspondence (Jewel Stern Donation), 1927-1932	box 1	folder 28
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Scope and Contents

2 letters: M.A. Mikkelsen (editor of The Architectural Record) to Kahn regarding 2 Park Avenue (July 8, 1927); Kahn to Honorable James J. Walker recommending William H. Gompert as Tenement House COMmissioner (May 3, 1932)

General

Accession 2023.001 (Donated by Jewel Stern)

Correspondence, 1954 to 1957	box 1	folder 23
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Scope and Contents

Accession 1992.011

Correspondence, Kahn & Jacob Staff	box 2	folder 8
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Scope and Contents

Accession 1993.016

Correspondence, Press of Case Western Reserve University	box 2	folder 9
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Scope and Contents

Accession 1993.016

Correspondence, Watercolors	box 2	folder 10
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Scope and Contents

Accession 1993.016

Cushman & Wakefield, Inc. Promotional Booklet, 1957	box 2	folder 11
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Scope and Contents

Accession 1993.016

Scope and Contents

(Real estate firm)

Kahn & Jacob, partnership agreements, 1940 to 1943	box 2	folder 12
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Scope and Contents

Accession 1993.016

Kahn & Jacobs, financial statements, 1957 to 1961	box 2	folder 13
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Scope and Contents

Accession 1993.016

School of Industrial Arts, 1955 to 1956

box 1

folder 24

Scope and Contents

Accession 1992.011

Travel, Itinerary and Information for Asia Tour

box 2

folder 14

Scope and Contents

Accession 1993.016

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Series IV: Writings

Title/Description

Instances

Autobiography, 1970 to 1972

box 1

folder 3 to
18

Scope and Contents

Accession 1973.012

Scope and Contents

Manuscript with annotations

Kahn, Ely Jacques. "American Office Practice." Reprint. The Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects, Vol. 64 (Sept 1957), pp. 443-451., 1957

box 2

folder 17

Scope and Contents

Accession 1993.016

Scope and Contents

Paper read at RIBA, June 4, 1957.

Kahn, Ely Jacques. "Tall Buildings in New York." Reprint. RIBA Journal, Vol. 62, No. 12 (Oct 1960), pp. 451-456.

box 2

folder 18

Scope and Contents

Accession 1993.016

Scope and Contents

Talk given at RIBA, June 2, 1960.

Kahn, Ely Jacques. "The Modern European Shop and Store." Reprint. Architectural Forum, Vol. L (June 1929), pp. 788-804., 1929	box 2	folder 19
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Scope and Contents

Accession 1993.016

Kahn, Ely Jacques. "This Modernism." T-Square Club Journal, Vol. 1 (Sept 1931), p.5., 1931	box 2	folder 20
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Scope and Contents

Accession 1993.016

Manuscript, Speeches	box 1	folder 25
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Scope and Contents

Accession 1992.011

Manuscript, Store Design	box 1	folder 26
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Scope and Contents

Accession 1992.011

Published Articles, 1957, 1963	box 1	folder 27
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Scope and Contents

Accession 1992.011

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Series V: Photographs and Ephemera

Other Finding Aids

For page-level description of the scrapbooks found in this series, please see this [downloadable inventory](#)

Title/Description	Instances	
Clippings, General	box 4	folder 1
Scope and Contents		
Accession 1993.016		
Ephemera	box 3	folder 5

Scope and Contents

Accession 1993.016

Photo, Academic Class Portrait

box 4

folder 2

Scope and Contents

Accession 1993.016

Photo, Academic Class Portraits

box 4

folder 5

Scope and Contents

Accession 1994.013

Photographs, Built Works

box 3

folder 6

Scope and Contents

Accession 1993.016

Photographs, Personal

box 3

folder 7

Scope and Contents

Accession 1993.016

Photographs, Personal

box 3

folder 8

Scope and Contents

Accession 1994.013

Scrapbook, Volume I

box 5

Scope and Contents

box 6

Accession 1992.003

Scope and Contents

See link under the series heading for a downloadable inventory of the scrapbooks.

Scrapbook, Volume II

box 7

Scope and Contents

box 8

Accession 1992.003

Scope and Contents

See link under the series heading for a downloadable inventory of the scrapbooks.

Scrapbook, Volume III

box 9

Scope and Contents box 10
 Accession 1992.003 box 11

Scope and Contents

See link under the series heading for a downloadable inventory of the scrapbooks.

Scrapbook, Volume IV box 3 folder 1 to 4

Scope and Contents

Accession 1993.016

Scope and Contents

See link under the series heading for a downloadable inventory of the scrapbooks.

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Series VI: Liselotte Kahn papers

Title/Description	Instances	
"Memoirs of Lieslotte Kahn", 1970 Scope and Contents Accession 1994.013	box 3	folder 10
Correspondence Scope and Contents Accession 1993.016	box 3	folder 9
Watercolor, 1980 Scope and Contents Accession 1994.013	box 4	folder 4

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