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Jac Lessman architectural records and papers6882189

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library

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Summary Information

Repository:	Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library
Creator:	Lessman, Jac, 1904-1990
Title:	Jac Lessman architectural records and papers
ID:	6882189
Date [inclusive]:	1925-1975
Physical Description:	128 rolls
Physical Description:	18 folders flat-file
Physical Description:	8 print boxes
Physical Description:	2 manuscript boxes
Language of the Material:	English .

Preferred Citation

Jac Lessman architectural records and papers. Located in the Dept. of Drawings & Archives, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

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Biographical / Historical

Jac Lessman was born in 1904 in Chicago and studied at Crane Technical High School and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, receiving training in architecture and engineering. He began working, while still in high school, for his father, who ran a small furnishings and interior decorations shop. In 1922, Lessman was hired as a designer in the interior design department of Albert Pick & Co. in Chicago, where he began specializing in interiors for hotels, theatres, clubs, and cabarets. In the late 1920s, Lessman moved to New York City to join the contract decorating department of L. Barth & Co. In December 1928, Lessman opened his own interior design firm, Jac Lessman & Co. (changed in 1930 to Lessman Interiors), taking

commissions throughout the United States. Among his first independent projects in New York City were the Hotel Delmonico and the Hotel Governor Clinton. After World War II, Lessman became increasingly sought after for large casinos, resorts and hotels, designing the interiors of the famed Desert Inn and Stardust Hotel and Casino, both in Las Vegas, and the Casino Internacional at the Hotel Nacional de Cuba in Havana, among many other projects. He was also known in some circles as "The Nite Club Doctor" for his ability to turn around struggling venues with his redesigns. Although some of his commissions were from members of organized crime, Lessman was always careful to take a straight fee for his work, and not a percentage of profits, thus staying out of legal jeopardy. Lessman also maintained a close relationship with industrialist Henry J. Kaiser and designed residences for several Kaiser family members, as well as interiors for offices and healthcare facilities within the Kaiser Permanente system. Lessman was a long-time member of the American Institute of Interior Designers (A.I.D.) and his work was widely published in the popular press and in professional journals. As his business expanded, Lessman also established several related companies, including Hotel Concepts, Jac Lessman Design Corp., and Jac Lessman Co. He died in New York City in 1990.

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Summary

This collection includes a significant number of original and reprographic interior design and architectural drawings for interiors designed by Jac Lessman throughout the United States and the Caribbean. Records are primarily for hotel, restaurant, club, and resort commissions. Also included are office files and scrapbooks related to his projects and business practices. Noted projects include Wilbur Clark's Desert Inn and the Stardust Hotel and Casino, both in Las Vegas, Nev.; the Hotel Manhattan, the Hotel St. Moritz, and the Hotel St. Regis, all in Manhattan; the Barclay Hotel in Philadelphia; the Virgin Isle Hotel in St. Thomas; the Casino Internacional at the Hotel Nacional de Cuba in Havana; the Beverly Hills Country Club in Newport, Kentucky; the Roosevelt Hotel in New Orleans, La.; and several projects for Henry J. Kaiser.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library

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.

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

Source of acquisition--Gift of Lance Lessman. Accession number--1997.005.

Processing Information

Drawings Processed LT, MN 1997.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Architecture -- Cuba -- Havana -- Designs and plans
- Architecture -- United States Virgin Islands -- Charlotte Amalie -- Designs and plans
- Architecture -- United States -- Designs and plans
- Casinos -- Nevada -- Las Vegas
- Design -- United States -- History -- 20th century
- Interior decoration -- United States -- History -- 20th century
- Hotels -- Illinois -- Chicago
- Hotels -- Louisiana -- New Orleans
- Hotels -- Nevada -- Las Vegas
- Hotels -- New York (State) -- New York

- Interior decorators -- United States
- Clark, Wilbur, 1908-1965
- Cohn, Roy M.
- Dalitz, Morris
- Kaiser, Henry J., 1882-1967
- Desert Inn Hotel and Casino

Collection Inventory

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