Carl Magnusson Collection of Astrid Sampe Correspondence

1951-1956
.01 linear feet

Acquisition Number: 2009-01

Acquisition: Gift of Philip and Elayne Smith

Access: Access to the collection is unrestricted

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Preferred Citation: Carl Magnusson Collection of Astrid Sampe Correspondence, Cranbrook Archives, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

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History

Astrid Sampe, born in Stockholm in 1909, was the third generation of a Swedish textile family. As an only child, a career within textiles was a natural choice. From 1928-1932, she attended the Higher Industrial Art School of Stockholm, during which time she had the opportunity to become an exchange student at the Royal Academy of Art in London. After her studies in 1935, Astrid was hired by Nordiska Kompaniet (NK) and in 1937, helped to set up the textile studio, soon being appointed as the head of NK’s Textile Chambers until it was closed down in 1971. She also took part in the Paris World Exhibition.

In 1939, Astrid took part in the New York World Exhibition; and in 1946, along with Elias Svedborg, she arranged the "Modern Swedish Home" exhibition at the London Building Centre. In 1949, Astrid Sampe was appointed "Royal Designer, Hon.RDI of the Royal Society of Arts and in 1951, wove the first fibreglass fabrics. Astrid Sampe travelled to Cranbrook for the first time in 1948 to visit Marianne Strengell. During this visit, she met Eero Saarinen. In 1950, she worked on several projects for Knoll with Florence and Hans Knoll and Eero Saarinen, often meeting them at the Knoll’s flat in Paris.

In 1979, Astrid Sampe began creating the first computer-based textile patterns produced in Sweden. Other professional affiliations have included Nordiska Co. (Stockholm), Donald Bros. (Dundee), and Knoll International Textile Section (New York).

Astrid Sampe died in 2002.

Scope and Content of Collection

As this collection is small, no series or sub-series are indicated. The correspondence is organized chronologically, with undated material at the back. Photographs are contained in the collection. Published articles have been removed to the Eero Saarinen’s E&M file.

Eero Saarinen and Astrid Sampe had a personal relationship in the early 1950s, as documented in his correspondence to her. These letters show the interrelation of Eero’s personal and professional life and give insight into Eero’s mindset and work process. The letters are in English and Finnish (untranslated). These letters should be read in conjunction with the letters from the Astrid Sampe Collection of Eero Saarinen Correspondence (1995-87) and the Archives of American Art, Aline and Eero Saarinen Papers, 1857-1972 held at the Smithsonian Institution.

The most significant item in the collection is a drawing of the MIT Chapel from a “train letter” in 1952. The drawing shows the interior and exterior of the chapel with a simulation of the water reflections from the moat surrounding the building into the
building on the recto of the letter. On the verso, a beautiful perspective rendering shows the skylight streaming onto the altar. Another significant letter details Eero’s perspectives of psychotherapy, which he underwent in 1952.

Related Collections

- Astrid Sampe Collection of Eero Saarinen Correspondence, 1995-87
- Saarinen Family Papers, 1990-08
- Marianne Strengell Papers, 1991-07
Box 1

Folder 1
Correspondence from Eero Saarinen to Astrid Sampe, 1952-53

Folder 2
Photograph of Eero Saarinen seated on stone steps outdoors
Two photographs of Loja Saarinen at the Vaughan Road house that Eero designed for her
Photograph of Eero Saarinen’s family home on Vaughan Road
Photograph from Stockholm, Sweden of Florence and Hans Knoll, c. 1952.
Two photographs of Hans Knoll’s apartment in Paris
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