How Secretaries Changed the 20th-Century Office: Design, Image, and Culture

Chances are that you know someone who has been a secretary. During the 20th century, women poured into offices all over the U.S. to work as “typewriter girls,” stenographers, and secretaries. New spaces, furnishings, and clothing emerged to meet their needs, while popular culture glamorized them. How Secretaries Changed the 20th-Century Office: Design, Image, and Culture explores transformations in the workplace and women’s lives and features office equipment and furniture plus office fashions, trade and fashion magazines, satirical postcards, and typing speed awards.

Co-curators Midori Green (Ph.D. candidate, Art History) and Katherine Solomonson (Associate Professor, School of Architecture, and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, CDes) mined archives from New York to Los Angeles, researched office design, and talked with scores of women who had been secretaries. The resulting exhibition reveals the ways secretaries’ changing image and experience were intertwined with design. For instance, how did clothing design relate to information technology and to the design of office furnishings? As increasing numbers of women entered previously male-dominated offices, how did women and men negotiate working and personal relations, power, and status? How were male-female office roles and tensions reflected in office gags, jokes, and cartoons?

Curatorial talks will reveal additional research findings, and a film series will explore fifty years of the office in popular culture. During the exhibition, GMD will also collect donations of gently-used women’s office wear for WomenAchievingNew Directions, a 20-year-old organization providing career and job services to low-income single mothers.

Exhibition and programs are partially sponsored by Friends of GMD, the College of Design, and the Fashion Group Foundation of Minneapolis/St. Paul, Inc.

February 6–May 23, 2010
Strategic Planning—Striding into the Future

Welcome to a new year of design and learning at GMD! This year, we begin the process of developing a new 5-year strategic plan.

Simply put, strategic planning determines where an organization is going over a defined period of time and how it’s going to get there. This is an opportunity to start with an overview of what we’ve achieved and explore innovative ideas for partnership and engagement. What would you suggest for GMD?

This past year, as we joined the world in weathering financial challenges, we also realized significant achievements in serving both our educational and community audiences. Exhibitions showcasing faculty and student research were well-received for their exploration of design topics. Thousands of students experienced works from the collection through object-based learning. Groups from across the Twin Cities visited exhibitions and the research center to enjoy and learn about designers and designed objects.

GMD was also the recipient of several grants that enable us to serve these communities better. Our most significant was the IMLS Museums for America grant that will facilitate adding images and information about the collection to the website. A description of this project is included in this newsletter. Other grant awards included collections preservation projects and important institutional support from the Minnesota State Arts Board, the state’s top arts granting agency. In addition, individual sponsorships supported our exhibitions and related programs.

Museum futurist Nina Simon, in her blog, defined the following steps to opening doors to innovation, change, and new ideas. 

- Connect your idea to the institutional mission.
- Find the right tool to implement your idea.
- Align your idea with institutional culture.
- Evaluate what visitors do—and more importantly, evaluate using criteria that are understood and appreciated by everyone in your institution.
- Most challengingly, reserve resources (dollars and staff) for new ideas.
- Enlist other people to help you.

In August 2009, the Goldstein Museum of Design (GMD) received a Museums for America Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). IMLS is the primary source of federal support for libraries and museums and works at the national level to sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge; enhance learning and innovation; and support professional development.

GMD’s project, Design for Everyone: Increasing Access to Collections will expand the use of the Goldstein Museum of Design’s collection of 26,200 designed objects by making digital images and information about the collection available online. The end product will be an easily-navigable, information-rich tool that will be web-accessible to everyone for study, historical reference, and inspiration. The goal for initial public online access is fall 2010.

This project will provide online access to all GMD collection records. Approximately 25% of collection records will also have photographs of the objects. Objects to be photographed will present an overview of the collection with a cross-section of types of objects, time periods, and individual designers.

Design For Everyone: The Collection Web Project

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As additional funding is secured, GMD will continue to photograph the remainder of the collection to add to the database.

Preparing museum objects for photography will be new hire Rebekah Njaa. Rebekah trained in Italy for textile conservation and has worked locally at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the Science Museum of Minnesota, and the Minnesota Historical Society. Evan Baden will be the staff photographer for this project. He is a graduate of the College of Visual Arts in St. Paul and a recent recipient of the Jerome Foundation Fellowship for Emerging Artists. Both Rebekah and Evan will start in January and will be working part time for the duration of the grant.

We look forward to working with them and know that they will be a great addition to our staff.

The project will dramatically increase access to our collection by using technology to disseminate both visual and written information about collection objects. This new database will transform the way students, staff, and volunteers interact with the collection, improving the efficiency and efficacy of GMD’s service and dramatically increasing the number of people who benefit by this resource.
**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

As we go forward into the winter season, the FGMD and GMD Staff are planning events that you should mark on your calendar. All of them are listed in the Calendar of Events in this newsletter.

The Design in the Dark: A Film Series has been well received. We began with Lagerfeld Confidential in November. Untapped (about Isaac Mizrahi) and in January we’ll show Yves St. Laurent 5 Ave. Marceau 75716 Paris. The series will continue through April. Go to the GMD website: http://Goldstein design, umn.edu for the schedule. There is no charge to attend these at 33 McNeal Hall and beverages and snacks will be available for purchase.

On behalf of the GMD, the U of M Foundation has sent the Annual Appeal to Friends members. If you haven’t already sent in a donation, please consider supporting GMD. I’m sure most of you know that GMD was hit with a 40% budget cut for fiscal year 2009/2010, resulting in self support for those absent funds. More than ever we need your help. Your donations are an investment in GMD’s educational programs, exhibitions, and care of collections. I thank you in advance.

The Board is about to embark on several membership drives with community partners. We hope to double our membership by Spring 2010. If you know someone that would like to become a member of FGMD, please invite them personally to join. The application is available on the GMD website, or call the GMD office to 612-730-6751.

Plans are underway for another fantastic Garden Party Fundraiser in May. Previously, the Annual Meeting was combined with the Garden Party, but this year, the Annual Meeting will be held separately. Watch for more details about both of these events soon.

As we start a new year, I want to thank the incredible Friends of the Goldstein Board of Directors for their time and talent. Every single one of them works very hard for you, the Friends of the Goldstein Board of Directors for their time and talent.

**FIRST GMD ONLINE SILENT AUCTION A SUCCESS**

GMD had its first online auction with a Louis Vuitton Greta Multicolore Noir handbag donated from Louis Vuitton North America through Macy’s.

The auction started December 1 on the GMD website and closed December 31. Pictured here is Jeoungsoon Chi, the recipient of the Louis Vuitton bag which was purchased for $1,025. Proceeds of its sale will benefit the exhibitions of the Goldstein Museum of Design (GMD).

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**CONTACT AND HOURS**

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**MCNEAL–ST. PAUL CAMPUS**

The Goldstein Museum of Art is in 333 McNeal 1985 Buford Avenue. The HGA Gallery and Library are open Monday–Friday 10 am–4 pm, Thursday 10 am–9 pm. Admission is free. Parking is available at a rate of $3 per hour up to a daily maximum of $24. Sundays parking is free (except for special events).

**RAPSON–MINNEAPOLIS CAMPUS**

This HGA Gallery is in the lobby and the Architecture and Landscape Architecture Library is in 210 Rapson Hall, 89 Church St.

**ADMISSION AND PARKING**

Admission is free. Parking is in the Church Street Ramp at 80 Church Street SE. Public parking is available at a rate of $3 per hour up to a daily maximum of $24. Sundays parking is free (except for special events).

**HOURS**

The gallery is open Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday 9 am–9 pm; Friday 9 am–6 pm. The gallery is closed on weekends. The HGA Gallery and Library are open Monday–Friday 10 am–4 pm. The gallery is closed on weekends. The library is open Monday–Friday 10 am–9 pm. The library is closed on weekends.

**MCNEAL CAMPUS**

The HGA Gallery and Library are open Monday–Friday 8 am–4 pm, Saturday 9 am–5 pm, and Sunday 12–5 pm. The HGA Gallery and Library are closed on holidays and weekends.

**ADMISSION AND PARKING**

Admission is free. Parking is available in the nearby Gortner Ramp located at 1355 Gortner Avenue. Parking is available at a rate of $3 per hour up to a daily maximum of $30. Sundays parking is free (except for special events).

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**CHOOSING FEATHERS**

Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, and near Madison, Wisconsin. The feathers were collected for the purpose of creating and selling a handbag designed by French fashion designer, Yves Saint Laurent. The handbag was purchased for $1,025. The proceeds of its sale will benefit the exhibitions of the Goldstein Museum of Design (GMD).

**A HISTORY OF FEATHERS IN FASHION**

**JUNE 12–SEPTEMBER 12, 2010**

Curators: Jean McElvain, Ph. D, Assistant Curator, Angelina R. Jones, GMD Graduate Assistant
Istituto Regionale Ville Venete.

generosity of the Istituto Italiano di Cultura of Chicago and the

Photographs display Palladio’s architectural projects for private

been greater than that of all Renaissance architects combined.

anniversary of the birth of “the most imitated architect in history,” whose

The exhibition has been organized in conjunction with the 500th

January 16–March 7, 2010

HGA GALLERY, RAPSON HALL

and the psychological appeal of wearing feathers.

the origins of feathers commonly used in clothing, the international feather

Historical and contemporary use of feathers in western fashion, including

IN FASHION

FLIGHTS OF FANCY: A HISTORY OF FEATHERS

All films at 6:30 PM, 33 McNeal

April 20

Skyscraper Souls (1932)

April 21

The Best of Everything (1959)

April 22

Nine to Five (1980)

SPECIAL EVENTS

INSIGHT–42ND ANNUAL FASHION SHOW

Saturday, February 6, 2010

Shows at 5:30 PM and 8:00 PM Rapson Hall Courtyard

Advance tickets available at the St. Paul Student Center or fashionshow.
design.umn.edu

$15 general seating, $8 standing, $40 VIP

INSIGHT–42ND ANNUAL FASHION SHOW

Saturday, February 6, 2010

MADISON—MEN

Women of the 20th Century

are the subjects of the WINTER 2010 CALENDAR

WINTER 2010 CALENDAR

GMG GALLERY, MCNEAL HALL

HOW SECRETARIES CHANGED THE 20TH CENTURY

OFFICE: DESIGN, IMAGE, AND CULTURE

February 6–May 30, 2010

Opening: Friday, February 5, 6–8 PM

Exploring women’s impact on office culture from 1900 to the 1970s,

reflecting the largest occupational group of women in the 20th century.

RELATED EVENTS:

CURATOR’S TALK

SHAPING OFFICE CULTURE: SECRETARIES AND DESIGN, FROM MISS

REMINSTON TO MAD MEN

Kate Solomonson and Mollin Green

Thursday, February 18, 6 PM, 33 McNeal

Exploring changes in office design, technology, and visual representation

through the lens of women clerical workers who contributed to the radical

transformation of the workplace.

COFFEE BREAK SERIES: THE OFFICE ON FILM

All films at 6:30 PM, 33 McNeal

April 20

April 21

April 22

Nine to Five (1980)

SPECIAL EVENTS

THE OFFICE: DESIGN, IMAGE, AND CULTURE

February 6–May 30, 2010

OFFICE: DESIGN, IMAGE, AND CULTURE

HOW SECRETARIES CHANGED THE 20TH CENTURY

March 14–May 2, 2010

Architecture and Vision (AV) is an architecture and design practice

established by the Italian and Swiss architects Arturo Vittori and Andreas

Vogler. Based in Rome, Toulouse, and Munich, the company specializes in

the Aerospace technologies applied to architecture and design. Extensive

research and development contribute to AV’s objectives in ecology,

functionality, beauty, and quality.

ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE LIBRARY, RAPSON HALL

NATIVE VIEWPOINTS: PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS BY JOHN KOEPKE

February 12–May 14, 2010

Informed by design principles and his unique blend of intellectual and cultural

heritage that reflect Western analytical and Native American perspectives,

Koepke’s work challenges us to ask new questions about the past.

ARCHITECTURE AND VISION

March 14–May 2, 2010

Architecture and Vision (AV) is an architecture and design practice

organized in conjunction with the 500th

January 16–March 7, 2010

HGA GALLERY, RAPSON HALL

presented by the Friends of the Goldstein and funded in part by the

April 8

March 11

February 11

All films second Thursday of the month, 7 PM, 33 McNeal Hall

$15 general seating, $8 standing, $40 VIP

design.umn.edu

Advance tickets available at the St. Paul Student Center or fashionshow.

INSIGHT–42ND ANNUAL FASHION SHOW

Saturday, February 6, 2010

MADISON—MEN

Women of the 20th Century

are the subjects of the WINTER 2010 CALENDAR

WINTER 2010 CALENDAR

GMG GALLERY, MCNEAL HALL

HOW SECRETARY...
How Secretaries Changed the 20th-Century Office:

DESIGN, IMAGE, AND CULTURE

DoMore Swivel Office Health Chair
Made in about 1925
Manufactured by DoMore Chair Company, Elkhart, IN
Metal and leather chair with casters
Gift of the Department of Design, Housing and Apparel