

30 x 30: Celebrating the first 30 years of the International Archive of Women in Architecture

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The International Archive of Women in Architecture (IAWA) was founded by Dr. Milka T. Bliznakov in 1985. Born in Varna, Bulgaria in 1927, Dr. Bliznakov earned a M.Arch degree from the State Polytechnic University of Sofia, Bulgaria, in 1951, and ran her practice throughout that decade. She escaped Europe and immigrated to the United States in 1961 after practicing in France for two years. Bliznakov received her doctoral degree in architectural history from Columbia University in 1971, and after teaching at University of Texas for two years finally joined the faculty at Virginia Tech in 1974 until her retirement in 1998.

Responding to the need for a balanced history of the discipline and to “help bridge the gap in historical knowledge about women’s professional achievements,” Bliznakov founded the IAWA to collect and preserve the work of women, and promote research. In order to acquire collections Bliznakov started by sending letters to over a 1,000 women in Europe and USA, two years prior to the creation of the IAWA, a statement to the clarity of her vision and her determination. In this initial letter Bliznakov introduced the mission of the IAWA: “The scope of the archives will be international and will include work from the beginning of women’s involvement in architecture in any capacity up to the present time.”

The IAWA currently holds the work of 342 women representing a total of 47 of the 196 countries of the world. Much work remains to be done.

Now on its 30th anniversary, the crafting of a vision for the next 30 years clearly underlines the need to update forms and means of dissemination and publicizing of the IAWA, as key aspects to increase its holdings, and position the IAWA as a centralized resource for research and dissemination of the contributions women have made to architecture and design related disciplines.

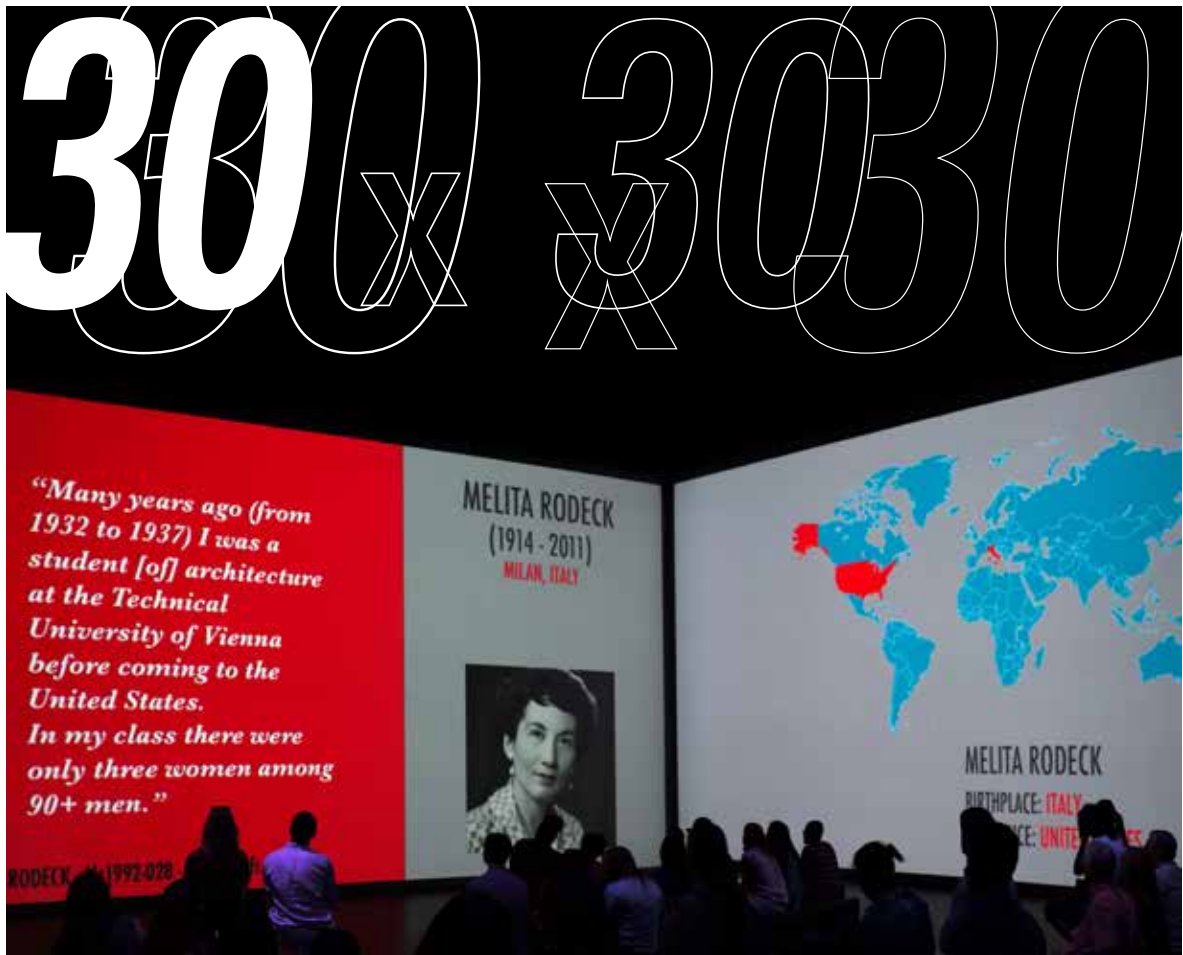
Within the new forms of dissemination the digital exhibit 30 x 30 celebrates the first 30 years of the IAWA by showcasing the work of 30 women from the archives, and the diversity of papers and artifacts held in the archive as a whole.

The large-scale immersive environment of 30 x 30 provides a slow space for reflection, for recognition and for learning about contributions made to the built environment by women.

The exhibit explores the potential of the New Visual Archive Project, an ongoing effort to digitize the collections in order to expand the reach of the IAWA and facilitate research. 30 x 30 is not a video but has been designed as a framework, a (Max 7) script that executes the projection by retrieving stored images. This allows the exhibit to be changed and updated as collections are digitized, producing variations with relative ease.

Supporting the goals to increase awareness and record the formative history of women

in architecture, the exhibit maps the range of the archive, offers a preview of the treasures within, and reminds us all of the urgency of saving collections otherwise too easily lost to time.



INTERNATIONAL ARCHIVE OF
WOMEN IN ARCHITECTURE
30 * ANNIVERSARY, 1985 - 2015

FOUNDED BY MILKA BLIZNAKOV IN 1985 THE INTERNATIONAL ARCHIVE OF WOMEN IN ARCHITECTURE CURRENTLY HOLDS THE WORK OF 342 WOMEN OF THE PAST TWO CENTURIES, REPRESENTING A TOTAL OF 47 COUNTRIES. OFFERING AN IMMERSIVE SPACE OF REFLECTION, THE DIGITAL EXHIBIT 30 x 30 CELEBRATES THE FIRST 30 YEARS OF THE IAWA BY SHOWCASING THE WORK OF 30 WOMEN FROM THE ARCHIVES. FIRST SHOWN DURING THE 18th UIFA CONGRESS, JULY 2015, THE EXHIBIT EXPLORES THE POTENTIAL OF THE NEW VISUAL ARCHIVE PROJECT, AN ONGOING EFFORT TO DIGITIZE THE COLLECTIONS IN ORDER TO EXPAND THE IAWA'S REACH AND FACILITATE RESEARCH. SUPPORTING THE GOALS TO INCREASE AWARENESS AND RECORD THE FORMATIVE HISTORY OF WOMEN IN ARCHITECTURE, THE EXHIBIT MAPS THE RANGE OF THE ARCHIVE, OFFERS A PREVIEW OF THE TREASURES WITHIN, AND REMINDS US OF THE URGENCY OF SAVING COLLECTIONS OTHERWISE TOO EASILY LOST TO TIME.

