

# CRANBROOK

## ARCHIVES

### **Jayne Van Alstyne (1923-2015) Papers**

(1950-1993)  
6.5 linear ft.

Acquisition Number:	1990-51
Acquisition:	This collection was the gift of Jayne Van Alstyne.
Access:	Access to the collection is unrestricted.
Preferred Citation:	Jayne Van Alstyne Papers, Cranbrook Archives, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.
Copyright:	Copyright to this collection has been retained by the donor.
Photographs:	Filed topically throughout the collection.
Architectural Drawings:	Three blueprints are included as part of Van Alstyne's 1950 Thesis; one oversize drawing was rehoused and cataloged as AD.24.07.
Processing:	Margaret Appleman, 1994. Leslie S. Edwards, 2015



## **HISTORY**

Martha Jayne Van Alstyne was born 11 April 1923 in Delaware, Ohio to Madeline and Benjamin F. Van Alstyne. In 1927, Ben was appointed head men's basketball coach at Michigan State University and the family moved to East Lansing, Michigan. After graduation from East Lansing high school, Van Alstyne was accepted into the Intermediate School at Cranbrook Academy of Art. She was only eighteen years old.

During the fall 1941, Van Alstyne studied ceramics with Maija Grotell, metals with Harry Bertoia, and Industrial Design with Walter Baermann. She then entered Pratt Institute in New York (1942-1945) where she studied industrial design with Alexander and Rowena Reed Kostellow. She obtained her Certificate of Industrial Design in 1945. During her time in New York, she did freelance work for such notable designers and architects as Gilbert Rohde Associates, Raymond Loewy, Clifford Pascoe, William Lescaze, and Eva Zeisel. Van Alstyne returned to Michigan State University where she taught Studio Art and Design courses from 1946-1948 and helped develop the first industrial design program as well as a Basic Design course for the Landscape Architecture School.

In 1948 Van Alstyne enrolled in the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University in New York State under Charles Harder. During the summer of 1949, she taught a course in Ceramic Raw Materials at Alfred, and by June 1950, had completed both her BFA and MFA requirements.

Upon completion of her program at Alfred University, Van Alstyne took a position at Montana State University in Bozeman where she developed an Interior and Industrial Design program for the School of Art. After four years she returned to Michigan to take a design position with General Motors Frigidaire Division. Her focus was on designs for appliances including ranges, refrigerators, and laundry equipment. In 1954, Van Alstyne's mentors from Pratt, the Kostellos, were hired by GM as consultants on the "Kitchen of Tomorrow" project which Van Alstyne helped design. She remained with GM for fourteen years, the latter four with the Safety and Human Performance Group in the Automotive Division, and holds several patents for her design work.

From 1960-1963, Van Alstyne also taught night classes at the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts and Oakland University. In 1969, Van Alstyne accepted a teaching position at Cornell University, and in 1972 she returned to Montana State where she was the professor in charge of the Professional Design Program. She retired in 1985 to Bozeman, Montana, where she passed away August 27, 2015.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT

The collection is arranged in three series: **Teaching, GM, and Personal.**

**SERIES I: Teaching** includes course outlines and related design projects, student papers, and professional studies pertaining to her long teaching career.

**SERIES II: GM** consists primarily of Frigidaire project notes and proposals, but includes projects like Ideas for Living (1960), Human Factors Studies (1965-1969) and Automotive Vision Studies (1966)., but also design sketches.

**SERIES III: Personal** primarily relates to Van Alstyne's interests as a ceramist, artist and designer and her hobby as a fly fisherman. Of particular note are two pieces of correspondence from the British ceramist Bernard Leach whom Van Alstyne met at Alfred in early 1950. All three series contain slides and photographs. Bound volumes of her thesis work at Pratt are included, along with portfolios of her design work for General Motors.

## **Box Number--Description**

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### **SERIES I: Teaching**

#### **Box 1**

1. Teaching, 1950-
2. Teaching, 1969. Basic Design (I): Art 110, 111, 112
3. Teaching, 1969. Basic Design (I): Art 110, 111, 112
4. Teaching, 1969. Basic Design (II): Art 110, 111, 112
5. Teaching, 1969. Basic Design (II): Art 110, 111, 112
6. Teaching, 1969
7. Teaching - GM Data, 1970
8. Teaching - GM Data, 1971. Human factors design slides
9. Teaching, 1972. Berg (I)
10. Teaching, 1972. Berg (II)
11. Teaching - GM Data, 1972
12. Teaching - GM Data, 1972
13. Teaching - GM Data, 1972-1973
14. Teaching, 1973. Basic Design 110

#### **Box 2**

1. Teaching. Basic Design 111, 112
2. Teaching, 1973
3. Teaching, 1974. Hand Controls (I)
4. Teaching, 1974. Hand Controls (II)
5. Teaching, 1974. Hand Controls (III)
6. Teaching, 1974. Hand Controls (IV)
7. Teaching, 1975
8. Teaching, 1979. Montana State University
9. Teaching, 1979-1980. Sabbatical, 1979-1980
10. Teaching, 1980. Basic Design '80 (I)
11. Teaching, 1980. Basic Design '80 (II)
12. Teaching, 1980. Composition (I)
13. Teaching, 1980. Composition (II)

#### **Box 3**

1. Teaching, 1981. Basic Design course 1981
2. Teaching, 1982. Study: Housing the Handicapped
3. Teaching, 1982
4. Teaching - GM Data, 1985. Mechanical Engineering Design
5. Teaching. Anthropometrics
6. Teaching - GM Data
7. Teaching - GM Data. Human Factors
8. Teaching - GM Data. Human Factors
9. Teaching - GM Data. Human Factors
10. Teaching. Design in Nature I & II
11. *Field of View from Automotive Vehicles* [bound volume]

## **SERIES II: GM**

### **Box 4**

1. GM Frigidaire, 1955-1965
2. GM Frigidaire, 1955-1965
3. GM Frigidaire, 1955-1965 (GM rejects)
4. GM Frigidaire, 1955-1956
5. GM Frigidaire, 1955-1958
6. GM Frigidaire, 1958-1960
7. GM Frigidaire, 1960-1965
8. GM Frigidaire (Ideas for Living), 1960
9. GM Frigidaire, 1961
10. GM Frigidaire, 1964 (rejects)
11. GM Frigidaire, 1958-1966. Patents
12. GM Automotive, 1965-1969
13. GM Teaching, 1965-1969. Human Factors
14. GM Automotive, 1955-1969
15. GM Automotive, 1966. Vision Studies I
16. GM Automotive, 1966. Vision Studies II

### **Box 4A**

1. GM Frigidaire, n.d.
2. GM Frigidaire, n.d. transparencies
3. GM Frigidaire, n.d. transparencies (Kitchen of Tomorrow)

### **Box 5**

1. GM Automotive, 1966. Human Factors Studies I
2. GM Automotive, 1966. Human Factors Studies II

## **SERIES III: Personal**

3. Personal
4. Personal, 1947-1993
5. Personal, 1950. Thesis
6. Personal, 1950-1954. Montana State University, Danforth Chapel
7. Personal, 1952. Montana State University, Danforth Chapel
8. Personal, 1954. Syracuse show
9. Progress Report, Frigidaire Product Development Studio, 10 May 1962  
[bound volume]

### **Box 6**

1. Personal. Pottery, 1950-[1966?], (Pots I)
2. Personal. Pottery, 1950-1965 (Pots II)
3. Personal, 1950-1966
4. Personal, 1965. Kiln design and construction
5. Personal. Pottery
6. Personal. Ceramic sculpture

**Box 6 (cont'd)**

7. Personal. Pottery Collection (I)
8. Personal. Pottery Collection (II)
9. Personal, 1994. Fly fishing
10. Personal. Pots IV [bound volume]

**Box 7**

1. Personal. Pots, studio [bound volume]
2. Thesis. *The Potter as a Ceramic Designer*. June 1950 [bound volume]

**Box 8**

Black and white photographs, negatives, color photographs of pottery studio, pottery, ceramic sculpture, and shows.

**Box 9**

Slides of pottery studio, pottery, ceramic sculpture, and shows.

**Box 10**

1. Oversize photographs and sketches of GM Frigidaire designs, 1957-1964
2. GM Frigidaire design portfolio, [n.d.] [bound volume]
3. Personal design