

# Guide to the Sheila Levrant de Bretteville Papers

ALSC MS 0006



compiled by Adrienne Pruitt

December 2025

Arts Library Special Collections

180 York Street

New Haven, CT 06511

203-432-1712

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<https://web.library.yale.edu/arts/alsc>

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Robert B. Haas Family Arts Library Special Collections  
Arts Library Special Collections  
180 York Street  
New Haven, CT 06511  
203-432-1712  
haasalsc@yale.edu  
<https://web.library.yale.edu/arts/alsc>

**CALL NUMBER:** ALSC MS 0006

**CREATOR:** Levrant de Bretteville, Sheila

**TITLE:** Sheila Levrant de Bretteville papers

**DATES:** circa 1963-2020

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 26.83 linear feet (20 boxes and 2 oversize folders)

**LANGUAGE:** The majority of the materials are in English, with a small amount of material in Italian.

**SUMMARY:** This collection includes examples of Sheila Levrant de Bretteville's graphic design work and public artworks from all eras of her career, as well as a small amount of biographical materials.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/ead.arts.alsc.0006>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use on site, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/ead.arts.alsc.0006>.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box  
f. folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Sheila Levrant de Bretteville, 2024.

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### Custodial History

The majority of the materials in this collection were originally on display at the Yale University Art Gallery, in "Sheila Levrant de Bretteville: Community, Activism, and Design" February 16, 2024–June 23, 2024, and were transferred to ALSC in February 2025. The collection also includes materials gathered for that exhibition but not displayed (also transferred by the Gallery) and a small number of materials

that had been acquired previously. The separate provenance of these three items is noted at the item-level.

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## Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

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## Conditions Governing Use

Copyright is retained by Sheila Levrant de Bretteville for materials she has authored or otherwise produced. After the lifetime of Sheila Levrant de Bretteville, copyright passes to Yale University. Copyright status for other collection materials is unknown. Transmission or reproduction of materials protected by U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.) beyond that allowed by fair use requires the written permission of the copyright owners. Works not in the public domain cannot be commercially exploited without permission of the copyright owners. Responsibility for any use rests exclusively with the user. Please include appropriate citation to the artist if reproducing or otherwise sharing materials in the collection.

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## Preferred Citation

Sheila Levrant de Bretteville papers, Robert B. Haas Family Arts Library, Yale University.

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## Related Materials

Related material: School of Art, Yale University, records (RU 291)

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## Biographical / Historical

Sheila Levrant de Bretteville (born 1940) is a public artist, graphic designer, and educator known for her focus on inclusive, participatory design and feminist principles. She served as director of graduate studies in graphic design at Yale from 1990-2022 and became the first woman at the Yale School of Art to be awarded tenure.

Sheila Levrant de Bretteville was born on November 4, 1940, in Brooklyn, NY, to Hellen (Gruenwald) and Israel Levrant. Immigrants from Poland, her parents worked in the textile and millinery industries. De Bretteville was exposed to art through classes at the Brooklyn Museum and at Abraham Lincoln High School, where she was taught by Leon Friend. Friend's book *Graphic Design* (1936) impressed her with its notion of graphic design as an inclusive endeavor. As part of Friend's extracurricular "Art Squad," de Bretteville won the Alex Steinweiss prize, among others, for her work.

De Bretteville received her BA in art history from Barnard in 1962 and her MFA in graphic design from Yale in 1964. After working for Yale University Press and Chanticleer Press, she took a job at Olivetti in Milan, Italy, returning to New York in the fall of 1969. She was offered work doing the branding for the newly established California Institute of the Arts (known as CalArts) in Los Angeles and became the first female faculty in the design department there in 1970. In 1971 she created the first women's design program at CalArts. Two years later she would leave to co-found the Woman's Building in Los Angeles along with Judy Chicago and Arlene Raven. The Woman's Building housed the Feminist Studio Workshop, an independent art school for women, and the Women's Graphic Center, a design and printing operation. De Bretteville was hired to create and chair a new Communication Arts Department at the Otis College of Art and Design in 1980, and remained on the board of the Woman's Building until the closure of the Feminist Studio Workshop in 1981.

In 1990 de Bretteville returned to Yale as the director of graduate studies in graphic design, looking to bring "democratic pluralism and activism and a focus on what's been left out" to the program. Paul Rand,

professor of graphic design at Yale since 1956 and noted for his emphasis on formal modernism, resigned in 1992 in protest, convincing his longtime friend Armin Hofmann to do the same. In 2010 she was named the Caroline M. Street Professor of Graphic Design, and became Professor Emeritus in 2025.

De Bretteville's interests in community and democratic spaces that invite individual participation and interpretation can be seen in her public artworks. Her site-specific public artworks have included Path of Stars (1993) and Hillhouse (2003) in New Haven, Connecticut; Biddy Mason: Time and Place (1989-1990) and Omoide no Shotokyo (1994) in Los Angeles; West End Echoes (1995) and Hear Us (1999) in Boston; At the Start . . . At Long Last in the 207th Street MTA station in New York City (1999); and Step(pe) in Yekaterinburg, Russia (2006).

Her design work has included the redesign of the Los Angeles Times, special issues of publications including Everywoman, The Aspen Times, American Cinematographer, Arts in Society, and design work on numerous books including The Motown Album. De Bretteville holds honorary degrees from the Maryland Institute College of Art, California College of the Arts, Moore College of Art, and Otis College of Art and Design. She received the American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) medal in 2004 and was declared a Design Legend by the AIGA in 2006.

De Bretteville married her husband, Peter, in 1965, and had one child, Jason, in 1970.

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## Content Description

This collection includes examples of graphic designer, artist, and educator Sheila Levrant de Bretteville's graphic design and public artworks, as well as a small amount of biographical materials. Items range from student work at Yale and commercial projects done for Olivetti in Italy, to materials produced at the California Institute of the Arts and the Woman's Building in Los Angeles, to documentation of public art installations done worldwide. Formats include posters, prints, brochures, invitations and announcements, stationery, mock-ups, photographs, bound volumes, and project sketches and schematics. There is also realia including decals, stickers, tiles, t-shirts, and a scale model of "Biddy Mason: Time and Place." The collection includes little correspondence. The collection also lacks any teaching materials or administrative records from her time as a professor and program director.

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## Arrangement

This collection is arranged roughly chronologically, and then by project or institution where practicable.

## Collection Contents

	<i>Parade</i>	circa 1963
b. 5 (oversize), f. 1	<i>Parade</i> photograph Silver gelatin print.	circa 1963
b. 18	<i>Parade</i> handmade book	circa 1963
b. 1, f. 1	Boston City Hall Competition prospectus	1963
b. 6 (oversize), f. 1	"American Symphony Orchestra, Carnegie Hall, Sixth Season" posters Offset lithographs mounted on board. 3 copies.	1967
	Yale University	1967–1968
b. 1, f. 2	Yale Psychiatric Institute booklet and poster	1967–1968
b. 5 (oversize), f. 7	Yale Psychiatric Institute logo	1967–1968
b. 6 (oversize), f. 2-3	Yale University Press design screenprints	1967
b. 1, f. 3	Yale University Press book catalogs Includes Spring and Fall 1967 and Spring 1968.	1967–1968
	"Auguri"	circa 1968-circa 1969
b. 8 (oversize), f. 3	"Auguri" screen-printed poster	circa 1968-circa 1969
b. 17 (oversize)	"Auguri" framed screen-printed poster	circa 1968-circa 1969
b. 4 (oversize), f. 3	"The Lost Pilot" by James Tate poetry reading poster	1968
	Olivetti	1968–1969
b. 1, f. 4	Olivetti Programma 101 brochures	1968–1969
b. 5 (oversize), f. 2	Olivetti Programma 101 advertisements	1969
b. 1, f. 5	Geometric pattern screenprints	circa 1969
	Stationery	circa 1969-circa 1990s
b. 1, f. 18	Robert A.M. Stern & John S. Hagmann stationery	circa 1969-circa 1977
b. 1, f. 19	Etel Thea Kramer stationery	circa 1970s-circa 1990s

b. 1, f. 20	L.A. Exclusive Designs stationery	circa 1980s-circa 1990s
b. 1, f. 21	Sheila and Peter de Bretteville stationery	circa 1990s
	California Institute of the Arts	1970–1973
b. 16	California Institute of the Arts School of Design poster Features a shrink-wrapped pinecone, toy jack, and computer chip.	1970
b. 1, f. 6-7	"California Institute of the Arts: Prologue to a Community (Arts in Society, volume 7, no.3)" publication	1970
b. 1, f. 8	"California Institute of the Arts Bulletin 1971-1972" publication	1971
b. 1, f. 9	"Broadsheet 1: Women's Design Program" folded publication 3 copies.	1972
b. 1, f. 10	"California Institute of the Arts: Admissions Bulletin 1973-1974" publication 2 copies.	1973
b. 20 (oversize)	"Your Vagina Smells Fine Now Naturally" stickers	circa 1972
b. 1, f. 11	<i>Womanhouse</i> exhibition catalog 2 copies.	1972
	International Design Conference in Aspen	1971
b. 6 (oversize), f. 4	"Aspen Times" newspaper 2 copies.	1971 June 20– 1971 June 24
b. 1, f. 12	"International Design Conference in Aspen: Paradox" registration card	1971 June 20– 1971 June 25
b. 1, f. 13	"International Design Conference in Aspen 1971" laminated comment card	1971
b. 12 (oversize)	"International Design Conference in Aspen 1971" participant kit	1971
b. 4 (oversize), f. 4	<i>Everywoman</i> (volume 2, number 7, issue 18) newspaper	1971 May 7

The Feminist Studio Workshop, The Women's Graphic Center, and The Woman's Building 1973-1981

The Feminist Studio Workshop, the Women's Graphic Center, and the Woman's Building led intertwined existences. In 1973, Sheila Levrant de Bretteville left the California Institute of the Arts to co-found the Feminist Studio Workshop with art historian Arlene Raven. The Feminist Studio Workshop was an independent art school for women. After initially meeting in de Bretteville's living room, the Workshop found a home in the Woman's Building, co-founded by de Bretteville, Raven, and Judy Chicago.

The Woman's Building was named for Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition building, designed by a female architect to house women's artworks. In fall 1973, the new Woman's Building was established in the former Chouinard Art Institute building at 743 South Grandview Boulevard in Los Angeles, California. The building housed a variety of women's organizations, including the magazine Chrysalis and the Women's Graphic Center, a design and printing operation. Although it changed location in 1975, the Woman's Building continued to host art, education, printing, and performance before closing in 1991.

b. 14 (oversize)	"Feminist Studio Workshop" poster Framed, as received from Sheila Levrant de Bretteville.	1973
b. 6 (oversize), f. 5	"Woman to Woman" grand opening poster	1973 December 13
b. 10	Women's symbol necklace Silver-colored neck chain necklace with 5 cm standard commercial eye bolt pendant representing the gender symbol.  Gift of Sheila Levrant de Bretteville, 2021. Exhibited in "Lux et Femina: Women in Graphic Design at Yale" at the Haas Family Arts Library, 2021-2022.	circa 1973
b. 4 (oversize), f. 5	"The Extension Program at the Woman's Building" broadside	1974
b. 1, f. 14	Feminist Studio Workshop folded brochure	1974
b. 19	"Women and the printing arts" exhibition and card catalog [76] leaves ; 12 x 16 cm.  Acquired prior to 2021.	1974
b. 4 (oversize), f. 6	Eileen Gray exhibition broadside Exhibition held at the Community Gallery of the Woman's Building. 3 copies.	1975
b. 1, f. 15	"Woman to Woman" postcard	1975



f. 1	<p>"Women In Design: The Next Decade" poster</p> <p>Poster for the "Women in design: the next decade, a conference for women who work with public visual and physical forms, March 20th, [1975] at the Woman's Building, 1727 North Spring Street, Los Angeles, California 90012." Images of the gender symbol for women shown as eye bolt in beige on a mauve background, some of which is displayed as a grid.</p> <p>Gift of Sheila Levrant de Bretteville, 2021. Exhibited in "Lux et Femina: Women in Graphic Design at Yale" at the Haas Family Arts Library, 2021-2022.</p>	1975
	<i>Chrysalis</i> magazine	1977-1979
b. 2, f. 1	<i>Chrysalis</i> magazine (No. 1)	1977
b. 2, f. 2	<i>Chrysalis</i> magazine (No. 2)	1977
b. 2, f. 3	<i>Chrysalis</i> magazine (No. 3)	1977
b. 2, f. 4	<i>Chrysalis</i> magazine (No. 4)	1977
b. 2, f. 5	<i>Chrysalis</i> magazine (No. 5)	1977
b. 2, f. 6	<i>Chrysalis</i> magazine (No. 6)	1978
b. 2, f. 7	<i>Chrysalis</i> magazine (No. 9)	1979
b. 2, f. 8	<i>Chrysalis</i> magazine (No. 10)	1979
b. 6 (oversize), f. 6	The Woman's Building calendar of events poster	1976
b. 1, f. 16	The Woman's Building stationery	circa 1980
b. 1, f. 17	The Woman's Building membership form	1980
b. 7 (oversize), f. 1	"Woman's Graphic Center" poster	circa 1981
b. 7 (oversize), f. 2	<p>"If this were your broadsheet, what would you say?" poster</p> <p>Printed at the Women's Graphic Center in the Women's Building.</p>	circa 1981
b. 4 (oversize), f. 7	<p>"This poem could save your life" by Louise Bernikow broadside</p> <p>Typeset in the Women's Graphic Center.</p>	1981
b. 7 (oversize), f. 3	<p>"Conference on Women's Culture in American Society, 1880-1980" poster</p> <p>Conference at the Women's Building.</p>	1981 March 21- 1981 March 22
b. 8 (oversize), f. 4	"Pink" poster	1974
b. 13 (oversize), f. 2	<p>"Women in American Architecture: A Historic and Contemporary Perspective" exhibition poster</p> <p>3 copies.</p>	1978
	California Faults	1979

b. 6 (oversize), f. 7	California Faults mock-up mounted on board	1979
b. 8 (oversize), f. 5	California Faults t-shirt cardboard box packaging	1979
b. 15	California Faults screen-printed t-shirt	1979
	UCLA	1980–1981
b. 8 (oversize), f. 1	"Planning for Women's Needs" UCLA School of Architecture and Urban Planning conference poster	1980 January 26
b. 7 (oversize), f. 4	"Urban Planning at UCLA" poster 3 variations.	1981
b. 4 (oversize), f. 8	<i>Life in L.A.: A Portfolio of Women's Writing</i> publication 3 copies	1983
b. 8 (oversize), f. 6	"Architecture and Design Film Festival" poster Beverly Center Cineplex.	1983 March 12– 1983 March 19
	<i>Los Angeles Times</i> Summer Olympics inserts	1984
b. 9 (oversize), f. 1	Summer Olympics 1984 inserts 3 copies.	1984
b. 9 (oversize), f. 2-4	<i>Los Angeles Times Home</i> magazines with Summer Olympics inserts	1984
b. 7 (oversize), f. 5	<i>Los Angeles Times</i> 1984 Olympic insert presentation materials	1984
b. 1, f. 22	<i>Betye Saar</i> , exhibition catalog from the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles	1984
	Pacific Design Center (PDC) 2 Conference	1984–1985
b. 5 (oversize), f. 4	"Transformations in Architecture: Space and Light" conference poster proof	1984 December 12
b. 3, f. 1	"The Third Annual PDC 2 Business Conference" brochure and symposium program 2 copies of brochure; 3 copies of symposium program.	1985
b. 3, f. 2	PDC 2 letterhead, envelopes and stickers	1985
b. 3, f. 3	"Two Poems by Martha Ronk Lifson" letterpress broadside	1985
b. 9 (oversize), f. 5	"20 Under 30" exhibition invitation and introduction Sponsored by AIGA LA.	1986
	The Otis Art Institute of Parsons School of Design	1984–1987
b. 3, f. 4	<i>Robert Wilson's Civil wars: drawings, models, and documentation: an exhibition organized by Otis Art Institute of Parsons School of Design</i> exhibition catalog	1984

b. 7 (oversize), f. 6	"The First Evidence" newsprint exhibition poster Brooklyn 2 exhibition at Otis Art Institute. 2 copies.	1986 May 21
b. 3, f. 5	"The Otis Art Institute of Parsons School of Design Seventh Annual Commencement Ceremony" program	1986
b. 5 (oversize), f. 5	Otis/Parsons 1987 Critics Awards Fashion Show programs and ephemera	1987
	"Biddy Mason: Time and Place" installation, Los Angeles, CA	1988-1990
b. 11 (oversize)	"Biddy Mason: Time and Place" scale model	1988
b. 5 (oversize), f. 13	Sheila Levrant de Bretteville installing "Biddy Mason: Time and Place" photograph Matted silver gelatin print. Photographer: Lois Gervais.	1988
b. 3, f. 6	"Biddy Mason's Place: A Midwife's Homestead" offset lithograph poster Folded.	1988
f. 2	"Biddy Mason's Place: A Midwife's Homestead" offset lithograph poster Flattened for framing. Move to broadside storage.	1988
b. 18	Biddy Mason: <i>Home/Stead</i> by Susan E King, artists book Edition of 35 copies.	1989
b. 5 (oversize), f. 14-15	Passersby looking at "Biddy Mason: Time and Place" photographs Matted silver gelatin prints. Photographer: Annette Del Zoppo.	1990
b. 8 (oversize), f. 8	Passersby looking at "Biddy Mason: Time and Place" photographs Poster versions of photographs in Box 5, plus an additional digital print of a color photograph.	circa 1990
	<i>Betye Saar: Connections</i>	1988
b. 3, f. 7	<i>Betye Saar: Connections</i> site installations catalog	1988
b. 8 (oversize), f. 2	<i>Betye Saar: Connections</i> poster	1988
	<i>The Motown Album</i>	1990
b. 5 (oversize), f. 6	<i>The Motown Album</i> page spread mock-ups	1990
b. 8 (oversize), f. 7	<i>The Motown Album</i> proposed dust jacket	1990
b. 18	<i>The Motown Album</i> book	1990
	The Sheila Studio	circa 1990-circa 2020
b. 3, f. 8	The Sheila Studio stickers, postcards, and mailing bag Includes a copy of the Yale Press book catalog from Spring 1968.	1968, circa 1990-circa 2020

b. 3, f. 9	The Sheila Studio change of address and business cards	circa 1995
b. 3, f. 10	The Sheila Studio stickers	1995
b. 3, f. 11	Chapman Market prospectus	circa 1990s
	"Omoide no shotokyo" (Remembering Old Little Tokyo) installation, Los Angeles, CA	1992-1996
b. 5 (oversize), f. 8	"Omoide no shotokyo" (Remembering Old Little Tokyo) project proposal Little Tokyo Historic District Public Art Project.	1992 September 2
b. 3, f. 12	"Omoide no shotokyo" (Remembering Old Little Tokyo) invitation	1996
b. 15	"Do Not Obey" screen-printed t-shirts	circa 1992
b. 3, f. 13	Sheila Levrant de Bretteville standing by "Path of Stars" New Haven, CT photograph	circa 1993
	"West End Echoes" installation, Boston, MA	1995-1996
b. 9 (oversize), f. 6	"West End Echoes" documentation	1995-1996
b. 5 (oversize), f. 9	"West End History Phase 1 Final Presentation" 2 copies.	1995 September 27
b. 3, f. 14	"West End History First Interim Presentation"	circa 1995
b. 3, f. 15	"West End History PHASE II ( further) FINAL DESIGN" schematics	1996 May-1996 June
b. 5 (oversize), f. 10	"Artery Arts Project" (West End Echoes) schematics	1997 March 22
b. 5 (oversize), f. 11	"Search: Literature" New Flushing Regional Branch Library, NY, stone inventory	1997 June 22
	"Hear Us" installation, Boston, MA	1999
b. 4 (oversize), f. 1	"Hear Us" layout drawing	1999 February 13
b. 4 (oversize), f. 2	"Hear Us" brochure mock-up	1999
b. 3, f. 16	"Hear Us" brochure 2 copies.	1999
	"At the start...At long last" installation, New York, NY	1998-1999
b. 9 (oversize), f. 7	"At the start...At long last..." documentation	1998-1999
b. 3, f. 17	"At the start...At long last..." brochure and postcard	1999
b. 5 (oversize), f. 3	"At the start...At long last" elevator wall stilt walkers digital print Mounted on board.	1999

b. 5 (oversize), f. 16	"At the start...At long last" floor inlay decorations designs Mounted on board.	1999
b. 15	"At the start..." handrail music printout	1999
b. 5 (oversize), f. 12	"Proposal for a New Artwork at the Rhode Island Dept. of Labor and Training Center general complex" Later titled "Take a break...Out to lunch...Back to work..."	2000 February 4
	"Hillhouse" installation, New Haven, CT	
b. 20 (oversize)	"Hillhouse" project ceramic tiles	2004
b. 13 (oversize), f. 1	"Hillhouse" project presentation boards	2004
b. 3, f. 18	"Hillhouse" project documentation	2006
b. 3, f. 19	Hillhouse project postcard and installation photograph	2006
	"Step(pe)" installation, Ekaterinburg, Russia	2006
b. 3, f. 20	"Step(pe)" project documentation	2006
b. 3, f. 21	"Step(pe)" CEC ArtsLink postcards	2006
b. 4 (oversize), f. 9	Hong Kong Design Institute LED scroll documentation	2012
b. 3, f. 22	Public arts project documentation and personal statement, hand-bound book	2013
b. 3, f. 23	Sheila Levrant de Bretteville curriculum vitae	2015
b. 3, f. 24	Conceptual proposal for the Los Angeles Football Club	2016
b. 3, f. 25	"Two Definitions" postcard	2020

## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

Graphic arts  
Graphic design  
Public art  
Women artists -- United States

### **Names**

Levrant de Bretteville, Sheila

### **Acquired From**

Levrant de Bretteville, Sheila