

Tulane's Latin American Library secures William Spratling's private papers

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The William Spratling collection contains original personal and business correspondence, photographs and design drawings from 1920-1967. (photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

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Tulane University's Latin American Library (LAL) has acquired the personal papers of William Spratling, renowned artist, designer, author, entrepreneur and 1920s Tulane architecture professor. This collection contains original personal and

business correspondence, photographs and design drawings from the peak years of Spratling's artistic and commercial production starting in the 1920s until his death in 1967.

The Spratling collection was made possible by a lead gift from the Zemurray Foundation to the Roger Thayer Stone Center for Latin American Studies' Doris Stone Fund for Acquisitions and Special Projects. The collection was complemented by contributions from Mr. and Mrs. Jim and Penny Morrill, Mr. John Sutherland Williams, Mr. and Mrs. Jackson and Nicole Morrill and by Mr. and Mrs. Bruce and Spas Christian through the Christian Pradel Endowed Fund at the LAL. In addition, Mr. and Mrs. Liza and David Jacobs made a generous donation for the conservation of the collection.

Hortensia Calvo, the Doris Stone Librarian and Director of the Latin American Library, in conjunction with Tulane's Office of Advancement and Office of the General Counsel, worked with the William Spratling estate to bring the collection to Tulane.

"The acquisition of Spratling's personal papers lends substantial context to our already strong holdings documenting his work and that of the extraordinary group of artists and designers working in Taxco (Mexico) in the first half of the 20th century," Calvo said.

Spratling ushered in a renaissance of the Mexican silver industry beginning in the early 1930s. This collection, which has not been made available to researchers, illuminates critical aspects of Spratling's personal life, as well as his business ventures and relationships with key figures of his time.

Included are letters and sketches from his days as a student in New York and at Auburn University as well from his time on Tulane's faculty. There is correspondence, jewelry, hollowware and furniture designs and artwork from his decades in Taxco when the Spratling ranch attracted artists, politicians and prominent figures from the U.S. and Mexico.

The Ulrich Collection of William Spratling Papers will complement the existing Sutherland-Taxco Collection at the library, documenting Spratling's work and that of his contemporary Taxco silver designers and artisans. A major exhibition of the collection is planned for 2020.