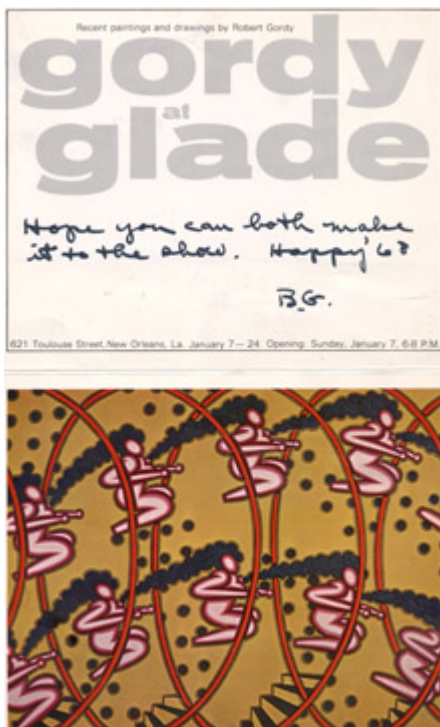


## Fleeting Records of New Orleans Artists, Galleries Preserved

January 08, 2009 11:00 AM Mary Ann Travis  
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Looking for records of the art scene in New Orleans during the last hundred years? A good place to pursue your search is the Louisiana Collection Vertical Files.



This gallery invitation carries a personal note and signature by renowned artist Robert Gordy. It is one of more than 50,000 items of art ephemera included in the Louisiana Collection Vertical Files.

Part of Special Collections of Tulane's Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, the [files](#) are a useful resource for information about more than 3,000 artists and hundreds of art galleries. An index of the files is searchable online.

Kenneth Owen, resources specialist for the collection, has preserved more than 50,000 items of [art ephemera](#). Piece by piece, he has placed the ephemera ? bits of information and flimsy printed memorabilia ? in file folders stored in filing cabinets in Jones Hall, home of Special Collections.

Originally intended to have only a fleeting life span and produced with the expectation that they'd be tossed away, the ephemera include fliers, brochures, invitations to openings, announcements of art shows and other printed material related to the visual arts in New Orleans.

Ephemera “have an incredible amount of information, which can be amazingly valuable to researchers,” says Leon Miller, manuscripts librarian and a colleague of Owen in Special Collections.

The Louisiana Collection Vertical Files also include substantial sections on political and theatrical ephemera, and touch on almost every aspect of Louisiana life, says Miller.

What makes the art component of the collection “highly unusual, if not unique,” says Miller, is that Owen has cross-referenced the ephemera by both artists and art galleries.

Researchers can search by artist and discover the galleries, dates and media in which an artist exhibited. If researchers are more generally looking into the art scene, they can search by gallery to learn which artists a gallery featured as well as exhibition dates and what kind of work was presented.

It's satisfying and ultimately fun to collect and conserve materials for future researchers because there's no telling how they'll use it, says Miller.



This 1920s-era item preserved at Tulane invites visitors to the Arts and Crafts Club galleries where “works of originality and distinction by leading local and foreign artists and craftsmen are shown.”

“They're always using it in ways we wouldn't have thought of,” he says. “Our job is to preserve the material without imposing our view of what it ought to be used for.”

Owen says the goal is to make the collection accessible to the general public and traditional scholars.

“People have an interest in what we're doing,” he says. “They're bringing us materials by the sackful. We are getting on mailing lists [of art venues] of new people, new places. We are interested and we will work with this material.”

They are saving for the future, say Owen and Miller, but that is a relative concept. The future is now for some material in the collection, such as brochures from the 1920s Arts and Crafts Club.

“And the new stuff I'm bringing in, of course, their future hasn't happened yet,” says Owen. “But it will.”