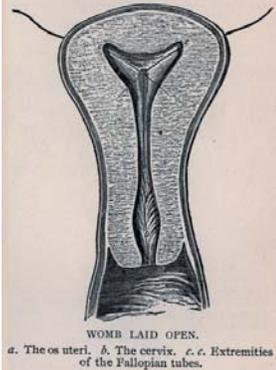


# WOMEN at the CENTER

Duke University Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library

Issue 5, Summer 2003



*Abortion: Research, Ethics, and Activism*, a symposium on the importance of primary source materials to scholarship and activism related to abortion, will be held October 30-November 1, 2003 at Duke University's Perkins Library.

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## Bingham Center Commemorates Two Anniversaries

This fall the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture will commemorate two historic events: the 15th anniversary of the establishment of a center for women's history and culture at Duke, and the 30th anniversary of the landmark Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade*. From October 30 through November 1, 2003, the Bingham Center and Duke University Libraries will host an academic symposium titled *Abortion: Research, Ethics, and Activism* in order to raise awareness about the importance of primary source materials to scholarship and activism on this topic and to explore the ways in which the history of abortion affects its future. The kickoff event will celebrate the work of the Bingham Center and feature many of the people who have been part of the Center's first 15 years, including Sallie Bingham and the Center's first director, Ginny Daily.

As part of our commitment to collecting a wide range of materials related to the history of reproductive rights, the Bingham Center has most recently acquired the records of two women's health care clinics which pro-

vide abortion services, Choices Women's Medical Center in New York City, and the Crist Clinic for Women in Jacksonville, North Carolina. These collections join a diverse group of manuscript and rare print materials on the subject of abortion already in the Center's holdings. To emphasize the range of perspectives represented, we have produced a bibliography on reproductive rights which is available on our website.

We feel that the library is the perfect environment for facilitating teaching and discovery, for sharing scholarship and research, and for engaging in dialogue with people from different disciplines in order to increase awareness of the history of abortion and the way that history is documented. The library can also provide space to explore the ethical issues associated with this topic and effect change personally, locally, and globally. We hope that this conference will open the door to new collaborations and the development of strategies to improve our understanding of the past, present, and future of abortion in the United States.

## Mary Lily Research Grants Awarded for 2003-2004

The Bingham Center is pleased to announce the winners of this year's Mary Lily Research Grants, which support the work of students, scholars, and independent researchers traveling to Durham to make use of the Bingham Center's holdings. From an exceptional group of applicants, this year's grants have been awarded to the following individuals:

**Bebe Barefoot**, for work on her dissertation *The (Trans)Portable Acker*, an experimental biog-

raphy of avant-garde author Kathy Acker.

**Judith Beale**, for work on a book about the woman suffrage movement in Tennessee and North Carolina.

**Tanfer Emin-Tunc**, for work on her dissertation, which examines medical technology and pregnancy termination in the United States from 1850 to 1980.

*(continued on page 3)*

# The Papers of Artist and Activist Irene Peslikis

## Recent Acquisitions:

- The papers of Dr. Jaroslav Hulka, OB-Gyn, reproductive rights activist, and inventor of the first reversible tubal ligation technology, the “Hulka clip.”
- Dozens of early 1970s Women’s Liberation Movement ephemeral publications including *Women’s Liberation, a Communist View* published by the October League.
- An addition to the papers of physician and abortion rights activist Dr. Takey Crist, including dozens of educational films on subjects such as domestic violence, contraception, and STDs.
- An artist’s book in the form of a bustier by Miriam Schaer titled *How Do You Compare?*

The Sallie Bingham Center for Women’s History and Culture has made an exciting new acquisition that will be of great interest to researchers studying the history of the women’s movement, art history, and the fertile ground at the intersection of these two fields. The Irene Peslikis Papers document the personal and professional activities of one of the central figures in the women’s liberation movement of the 1960s and 70s.

As co-founder of the groundbreaking radical feminist group Redstockings, and one of the authors of *The Redstockings Manifesto*, Peslikis worked to incorporate political theory into the feminist activist’s toolkit for social change. Her groundbreaking essay, “Resistances to Consciousness,” was crucial to the understanding of consciousness-raising as a methodology and was included in *Sisterhood Is Powerful*, the first anthology to come out of the modern women’s movement. Peslikis was also a key organizer of, and participant in, the infamous Redstocking Speak-out on Abortion at Washington Square Methodist Church in 1969.

In the early 1970s, Peslikis helped to found Redstockings Artists, a group that played a crucial role in launching the fight for women’s equality in the art world. As one of the earliest proponents of teaching art and art history in a consciously gendered way, Peslikis established the Feminist Art Institute in New York City as well as the journal *Women and Art*. A gifted and prolific artist herself, Peslikis also created numerous political cartoons and posters, which brought attention to Redstockings’ causes. Many of these images have been reprinted and anthologized in the decades since they first appeared.

In addition to documentation related to Redstockings, the Feminist Art Institute, and *Women and Art*, the collection includes Peslikis’ teaching materials, writings, correspondence, journals, and artwork. Particularly rich are her sketchbooks, which document her technical growth as an artist, as well as the political and social themes that fueled her work. The Irene Peslikis Papers are currently being processed and will soon be available to researchers.

## What Was Placed on Her Heart

A recent addition to our materials on domestic culture and women’s private writing is a perfect example of the kind of windfall for which we are continually grateful. In August of last year, the Bingham Center was contacted by Mr. John Finlay, of Cottageville, South Carolina, regarding his mother’s extensive diaries. Having reached the age of 77, Mrs. Ruth Finlay was concerned that her diaries might end up in the trash after her passing.

Ruth Ann Spencer was born May 21, 1926, in Burlington, Colorado. Her family lost their land during the dustbowl period and relocated to Lewiston, Idaho, in 1939. She married her high school sweetheart, John A. Finlay, in 1943. They later moved to South Carolina, where they raised six sons. In 1985 she lost her larynx to cancer.

Ruth Finlay’s diaries consist of more than 50 vol-

umes documenting the details of her daily life, her emotional reactions to events, and the activities and behavior of herself and her family. Topics include her hospitalization and ongoing treatment for cancer, life after her laryngectomy, her relationships with her husband, children, and grandchildren, and the death of an adult son.

These diaries provide a window not only into the quotidian activities of an American wife and mother in the second half of the 20th century, but also into her thoughts and feelings about her life and the people in it. Mrs. Finlay has said that writing her diary has become a daily part of her life; she describes the content as “what was placed on my heart.” Future generations of researchers will certainly appreciate her candor as well as her forethought in finding a permanent home for this unique document.



Ruth Finlay (right) with Bingham Center Archivist Amy Leigh. Mrs. Finlay’s donation is a significant addition to our collection of women’s private writing.

# Women's History Month: Sisterhood Is Forever

Women's History Month got off to a grand start at the Bingham Center this year. On March 5th, author and activist Robin Morgan paid a visit to Duke University in celebration of the publication of her most recent anthology *Sisterhood Is Forever: The Women's Anthology for a New Millennium*.

While on campus, Ms. Morgan was a special guest in Professor Jean O'Barr's course on social movements in the United States, where she offered her characterization of the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and where she answered questions from students. She was then treated to a personal "show and tell" in the library's Rare Book Room of highlights from the Bingham Center's collections. Ms. Morgan's talk that evening was greeted with a standing ovation.

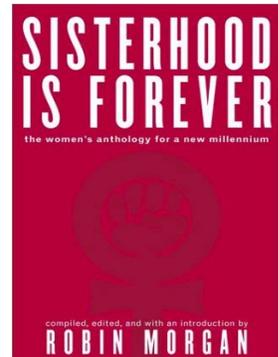
The Bingham Center celebrated throughout the month with an exhibit in Perkins Library. The exhibit, also titled "Sisterhood Is Forever," was an ambitious effort to represent visually four decades of the women's movement in only two exhibit cases using materials from our collections. From photographs and fliers documenting the 1968 protest of the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City, to Riot Grrrl zines and Radical Cheerleaders, the exhibit was a feast for the eyes and the intellect.

The Bingham Center was also featured on the

Department of History's Women's History Month calendar. As part of their luncheon seminar series on "women and war," Center director Laura Micham and archivist Amy Leigh led the group in reading primary source materials from the Center's collections.

Finally, as part of women's history month, and to commemorate the 30th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, the Bingham Center presented a reproductive rights film festival featuring a series of three films from the Duke libraries' collection: *From the Back-Alleys to the Supreme Court and Beyond*. Thanks go to our generous hostesses at Duke's Women's Center for providing a warm and inviting space for an evening of moving testimonies and engaging dialogue.

As March came to a close, discussions with Duke History Department faculty member and fellow Women's History Month organizer Sucheta Mazumdar revealed a desire to keep the spirit of Women's History Month alive all year. Our solution was the creation of the Duke Women's Colloquium, a monthly gathering of students, faculty, and staff from the Duke community who are interested in the intersection of feminist research and activism. You are invited to join us on the second Thursday of each month at 5:30 pm in the Breedlove Room in Perkins Library for refreshments and lively conversation.



*Sisterhood is Forever* : the women's anthology for a new millennium, compiled, edited, and with an introduction by Robin Morgan, was published by Washington Square Press in March of this year. It follows Morgan's previous anthologies, *Sisterhood is Powerful* (1970), and *Sisterhood is Global* (1984).

## Research Grants Awarded (cont'd)

**Caroline Janney-Lucas**, for work on her dissertation, which explores the ways women helped to shape white southerners' understandings of defeat and reconciliation in the years 1861-1890.

**Kimberly Harrison**, for work on a book that examines the rhetoric of southern women's diaries during the Civil War.

**Amy Minton**, for work on her dissertation, which examines the concept of respectability and Southern social relations in the mid-nineteenth century.

**Jennifer Nelson**, for work on a book that exam-

ines African-American women's reactions to the medicalization of reproduction from the 1940s to the present.

**Ann Marie Nicolosi**, for work on a book that compares female imagery in the media during the women's suffrage movement and the women's liberation movement.

**Johanna Schöen**, for work on a book about women's reproductive health from the 1960s to the present.

Congratulations to all our grant winners!





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## The Bingham Center At Home and On The Road

In an effort to promote our collections to the widest possible audience of researchers, the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture presents a range of outreach activities here at Duke and on the road.

Providing instruction sessions for Duke students is a cornerstone of the Bingham Center's work, and this spring brought a record number of students in contact with the amazing resources available to them here in the Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library. In addition, this year the Bingham Center was a featured guest at NARAL's end of year celebration for their student organizers, once again reinforcing the importance of informing activism with a historical perspective.

But our work often extends beyond the boundaries of Duke University. Visits from loyal friends like the middle-schoolers from the Carolina Friends School provide us with the opportunity

to educate a new generation of scholars (and those who will soon be making the very history we are charged with documenting) about the use of primary sources. Visitors to Duke like the Young Writers Camp benefit from the proximity of our collections, utilizing them as resources and inspiration for their writing exercises.

Just down the road a piece, UNC's School of Information and Library Science provided a venue for Bingham Center Director Laura Micham to address dozens of aspiring librarians and archivists. Further afield, Bingham Center staff were on the programs of a number of conferences this year, such as the Association of College and Research Libraries, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference, the Southern Girls' Convention, and the Society of American Archivists. Who knows, maybe next year we will be visiting a town near you!