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# ARTIST ARCHIVES IN THE UNITED STATES

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**Mark Staff Brandl** In America, the preservation of visual artists' archives is actively encouraged, as are the papers of related individuals such as gallerists, critics, art historians, collectors and curators. Many leave their papers to their Alma Mater, the university which they attended. My first university, the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana, was indeed a bit dismayed with my choice of the Kunstmuseum Thurgau without first consulting with them. Alternately, creators in the US may leave their works to university libraries which harbor collections of similar art. The University of Iowa, for example, has the most important collection of Dada archives in the world as well as an Archive of Alternative Traditions in the Contemporary Arts, documentation from later, yet Dada-influenced creators. (<http://sdr.lib.uiowa.edu/dada/index.html>)

Various museums have archives, but eventually turn them over to the central US archive, the illustrious Archives of American Art, a part of the Smithsonian Institution, the educational and research institute and museum complex of the U.S. government (<http://www.aaa.si.edu/>). The Tate in London sought out their help years ago, modeling their own archive program on that of the AAA. Liza Kirwin, the Curator of Manuscripts encouraged me to reconsider my testament and leave my archive to them. She stressed that they emphasize high-quality preservation, but also unproblematic access to researchers; apparently a problem in much of Europe. Digitization is making it possible for the AAA to present their archives on the internet

Kirwin emphasized that the Archives desires as much personal and process-oriented documentation as possible, such as: personal letters, professional correspondence, diaries, sketchbooks, studies, documentation of life and work, lectures, published or unpublished articles, scrapbooks, clippings, exhibition catalogues, teaching material, research files, financial papers.

Not primary artworks. Archives are intended for secondary research, not the collecting of art, which should be the responsibility (or fault) of local museums and governmental bodies.

The AAA only collects the archives of Americans or foreigners active primarily in the American artworld. However, as the Tate has done, a Swiss agency could study their model in order to build their own. Kirwin and the Archives are willing to be supportive.

Artist archives can be of immense use to future art historians as a slice of the life of a creator in the times and culture in which he or she lived. We must leave future scholars as much as possible, in addition to the artworks, and let them research and decide for themselves what is valuable. Archiving is a cultural duty of professional artists and the governments and institutions under which they live.

## **Hans-Peter Weber**

*arbeitete als wissenschaftlicher Zeichner in der Neurochirurgie am Universitätsspital in Zürich. Nach seiner Pensionierung 1979 widmete er sich hauptsächlich seinen Schülern an der Volkshochschule. Durch Wochenmalkurse, Privatunterricht und vielen Ausstellungen, war es ihm möglich, seine Werke der Öffentlichkeit zu zeigen. Hans-Peter Weber ist mit 93 Jahren erstaunlich fit und genießt die Freiheit des Künstlers in vollen Zügen. Was mit seinen Werken geschehen wird, überlässt er der Zeit. Jedoch hält er fest: „Einrichtungen, die sich mit dem Thema Künstlernachlässe auseinandersetzen und den Künstlern Lösungsmöglichkeiten anbieten, würden das künstlerische Schaffen sicherlich erleichtern.“*

*Hans-Peter Weber a été dessinateur scientifique en neurochirurgie pour l'hôpital universitaire de Zurich. Après son départ à la retraite en 1979, il s'est consacré principalement à ses élèves à l'Université populaire. Grâce à des cours de peinture, des cours privés et de nombreuses expositions, il a pu faire connaître ses œuvres au public. A 93 ans, Hans-Peter Weber est dans une forme étonnante et jouit pleinement de sa liberté d'artiste. Quant à ce qui adviendra de ses œuvres, il «laisse faire le temps». Pourtant, il constate: «des institutions qui s'occuperaient de la question des successions d'artistes et qui proposeraient aux artistes des ébauches de solution faciliteraient certainement la création artistique.»*

*Hans-Peter Weber worked as a scientific illustrator for the Department of Neurosurgery at the University Hospital of Zurich. After his retirement in 1979 he devoted himself chiefly to his students at the adult education centre. In his weekly painting courses, private lessons and numerous exhibitions, it was possible for him to present his work to a wider public. Hans-Peter Weber is astoundingly fit at 93 and enjoys an artist's freedom to the fullest. He is leaving it to times to come to determine what is to happen to his work. Nonetheless, he maintains: "Institutions that deal with artists' estates and offer viable solutions would certainly facilitate artistic creations."*