

Victor Gruen

A Register of His Papers in the Library of Congress

Prepared by Harry G. Heiss



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

Washington, D.C.

1995

Contact information: <http://lcweb.loc.gov/rr/mss/address.html>

**Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress
Manuscript Division, 2001**

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Collection Summary

Title: Papers of Victor Gruen

Span Dates: 1886-1991

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1960-1980)

ID No.: MSS81474

Creator: Gruen, Victor, 1903-

Extent: 30,450 items; 88 containers plus 83 oversize; 123.6 linear feet; 1 microfilm reel

Language: Collection material in English, German, French, and Dutch

Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: Designer, architect, and urban planner. Personal and business correspondence, project files, speeches, writings, biographical material, and scrapbooks documenting Gruen's career in architectural design, city planning, and environmental counseling, with special emphasis on architectural and land use projects undertaken from 1960 to 1980 by his firms, Gruen Associates, headquartered in New York, New York, and Los Angeles, California, and Victor Gruen International, centered in Vienna, Austria.

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.

Names:

Gruen, Victor, 1903-

Baumfeld, Rudolf L., d. 1988

Belle, John

Berg, Betty--Correspondence

Beyer, Jack

Branigan, Daniel

Brisker, Sydney H., 1914-

Contini, Edgardo

Gooch, Mel, 1923-

Gruen, Margaret, 1944- --Correspondence

Gruen, Michael Stephen, 1941- --Correspondence

Guttman, Herman, 1918-

Harle, Abbott, 1923-

Hotchkiss, Frank E.

Jarka, Horst--Correspondence

Kafka, Judith--Correspondence

Kafka, Richard--Correspondence

Lawrence, Rita--Correspondence

Lindtberg, Leopold--Correspondence

Lindtberg, Valeska--Correspondence

Lowry, Harry, d. 1974 --Correspondence

Michaelis, Helen--Correspondence

Park, Ki Suh, 1932-

Pelli, Cesar

Press, Sylvia

Rubenstein, Allen

Salzer, Felix--Correspondence

Salzer, Hedi--Correspondence

Sklarek, Rolf.

Southland, Ben, 1917-

Steiner, Valerie--Correspondence

Steiner, Willy J.--Correspondence

Travers, David.
Udall, Stewart L.--Correspondence
Van Leuven, Karl, 1914-
Wheaton, Marge
Zwicker, Beda
Gruen Associates
Université catholique de Louvain (1970-)--Buildings
Victor Gruen Foundation for Environmental Planning
Victor Gruen International (Firm)
Zentrum für Umweltplanung (Vienna, Austria)

Subjects:

Architectural design
Architectural firms--Austria--Vienna
Architectural firms--California--Los Angeles
Architectural firms--New York (State)--New York
Architecture
Central business districts
Cities and towns
City planning--Austria--Vienna
City planning--California--Fresno
City planning--Illinois--Urbana
City planning--Massachusetts--Boston
City planning--Michigan--Kalamazoo
City planning--New York (State)--Rochester
City planning--Texas--Fort Worth
College buildings--Belgium
Environmental engineering
Land use
Public housing
Real estate development

Occupations:

Architects
City planners

Administrative Information

Provenance:

The papers of Victor Gruen, designer, architect, and urban planner, were donated to the Library of Congress by his widow, Kemija Salihefendic-Abazz Gruen, in 1980, 1983, and 1992.

Transfers:

Items have been transferred from the Manuscript Division to other custodial divisions of the Library. Two Asian scrolls have been transferred to the Asian Division. A dictation belt has been transferred to the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division. A map and atlas have been transferred to the Geography and Map Division. Numerous photographs and architectural drawings have been transferred to the Prints and Photographs Division. All transfers are identified in these divisions as part of the Victor Gruen Papers.

Copyright Status:

Copyright in the unpublished writings of Victor Gruen in these papers and in other collections in the custody of the Library of Congress has been dedicated to the public.

Microfilm:

A microfilm edition of playbills in Container 71 is available on one reel. Consult a reference librarian in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan.

Preferred Citation:

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container or reel number, Victor Gruen Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1903, July 18	Born Victor David Grünbaum, Vienna, Austria
1918-1925	Attended Vienna Technical Institute and Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, Austria
1923-1932	Designer with Melcher & Steiner, Architects, Vienna, Austria
1930	Married Alice Kardos (divorced 1941)
1932-1938	Independent designer, Vienna, Austria
1938	Emigrated to United States Changed name to Victor Gruen
1938-1948	Independent designer, New York, N.Y.
1939	Founded Gruen & Krummeck Partnership, New York, N.Y. Designed Lederer de Paris department store, New York, N.Y.
1939-1940	Produced two Broadway shows with Refugee Artists Group, New York, N.Y.
1941	Moved main office to Los Angeles, Calif. Married Elsie Krummeck (divorced 1951)
1943	Became a citizen of the United States Rudi Baumfeld joined Gruen & Krummeck Partnership, Los Angeles, Calif.
1944	Karl Van Leuven joined Gruen & Krummeck Partnership, Los Angeles, Calif.
1948	Received first license to practice architecture Desinged Milliron's department store, Westchester, Calif.
1949	Published <i>How to Live with Your Architect</i> (New York, N.Y.: Store Modernization Institute. 32 pp.)
1950	Founded Victor Gruen Associates (later Gruen Associates), Los Angeles, Calif. Edgardo Contini joined Gruen Associates as partner
1951	Married Lazette E. McCormick Van Houten (died in 1962)

- 1954 Designed Northland Center, Detroit, Mich.
Received American Institute of Architects National Award of Merit (Northland Center, Detroit, Mich.)
- 1956 Ben Southland joined Gruen Associates as partner
Designed Southdale Center, Minneapolis, Minn.
Received *Progressive Architecture* Design Award for Urban Redevelopment (Detroit, Mich.)
- 1957 Herman Guttman joined Gruen Associates as partner
Received *Progressive Architecture* Design Award for Planning (Fort Worth, Tex.)
- 1958 Designed 1964 world's fair proposal, Washington, D.C.
Designed downtown plan, Kalamazoo, Mich.
Received *Progressive Architecture* Design Award for Residential Design (Wilshire Terrace, Los Angeles, Calif.)
- 1959 Received *Progressive Architecture* Design Award for Urban Design (Boston, Mass.)
- 1960 Designed Midtown Plaza, Rochester, N.Y.
Published *Shopping Towns USA, The Planning of Shopping Centers*, with Larry Smith (New York, N.Y.: Reinhold Publishing. 288 pp.)
- 1961 Designed Welfare Island development plan, East Island, N.Y.
Elected fellow, American Institute of Architects
- 1962 Elected fellow, International Institute of Arts and Letters
- 1963 Married Kemija Theresa Salihefendiz-Abazz
Beda Zwicker joined Gruen Associates as partner
Received *Progressive Architecture* Citation for Urban Design (Cincinnati, Ohio)
Published *Stadsformyelse i Forenta Staterna* (Stockholm, Sweden: Bonniers. 14 pp.)
- 1964 Published *The Heart of Our Cities, The Urban Crisis: Diagnosis and Cure* (New York, N.Y.: Simon & Schuster. 368 pp.)
- 1965 Received American Institute of Architects Citations for Excellence in Community Architecture (Fresno, Calif., Rochester, N.Y., and Urbana, Ill.)
- 1966 Received *Who's Who in America* Significant Contribution to Society Award
Published *New Cities U.S.A.* (Washington, D.C.: Housing and Urban Development Department. 42 pp.)
- 1967 Designed city center plan, Valencia, Calif.
Founded Victor Gruen International, Vienna, Austria
- 1968 Retired from Gruen Associates
Founded Victor Gruen Foundation for Environmental Planning, Los Angeles, Calif.
- 1970 Designed Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain, Belgium
- 1971 Designed city plan, Vienna, Austria

- 1972 Designed Glatt shopping center, Zürich, Switzerland
 Received Preise der Stadt Wien
 Published *Downfall and Rebirth of City Cores on Both Sides of the Atlantic* (Los Angeles, Calif.: Victor Gruen Foundation for Environmental Planning. 42 pp.)
- 1973 Founded Zentrum für Umweltplanung, Vienna, Austria
 Published *Centers for the Urban Environment, Survival of the Cities* (New York, N.Y.: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co. 266 pp.)
 Published *Meine Alte Schuhschachtel, Schriften aus den zwanziger Jahren* (Vienna, Austria: Europa Verlags-AG. 125 pp.)
 Published *Das Überleben der Städte, Wege aus der Umweltkrise: Zentren als urbane Brennpunkte* (Munich, Germany: Verlag Fritz Molden. 352 pp.)
- 1975 Published *Ist Fortschritt ein Verbrechen? Umweltplanung Statt Weltuntergang* (Vienna, Austria: Europa Verlags-AG. 278 pp.)
 Published *Die Lebenswerte Stadt, Visionen eines Umweltplaners* (Munich, Germany: Paul List Verlag KG. 183 pp.)
- 1978 Received Gross Goldene Ehrenzeichen für Verdienste um die Republik Österreich
- 1979 Received Goldenen Ehrenzeichens für Verdienste um das Land Wien
- 1980, Feb. 14 Died, Vienna, Austria

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Victor Gruen (1903-1980) span the years 1886-1991, with the bulk of the materials produced during the period 1960-1980. The collection consists of personal and business [correspondence](#), [project files](#), [speeches](#), [scrapbooks](#), and [writings](#) that document Gruen's professional career in architectural design, urban planning, and environmental counseling. The papers touch on every phase of Gruen's career and include much information on his personal life as well. Although the formation and dissolution of his business operations are well documented, most of the collection focuses on several of the architectural design and land use projects undertaken by Gruen Associates between 1960 and 1980.

The Gruen Papers appear to have been gathered from several sources, including Gruen's home and the Zentrum für Umweltplanung in Vienna, Austria, and the offices of Gruen Associates and the Victor Gruen Foundation for Environmental Planning in Los Angeles. These materials have been consolidated by the Library into a single collection of business records and family papers, with the original, internal order of the records maintained where possible. Much of the material in this collection is written in languages other than English, particularly German, French, and Dutch.

Gruen began his career in 1923 as a designer in his native Vienna, working initially for the architectural firm of Melcher & Steiner and later in independent practice. He emigrated to the United States in 1938 in the wake of the Anschluss. Settling in New York he practiced independently as a designer, working on such diverse projects as the General Motors Corporation *Highways and Byways of the Future* exhibit for the 1939 New York World's Fair. In 1939 Gruen and Elsie Krummeck formed a design partnership that eventually attracted as collaborators Rudolf L. Baumfeld and Karl Van Leuven Working with other designers and architects on store buildings, storefronts, and store interiors, Gruen's first large project was to design, in association with architect Morris Ketchum, a new department store for the Lederer Company in New York City. In 1941 Gruen & Krummeck moved its main office to Los Angeles, and after the dissolution of his marriage to Krummeck in 1951 Gruen founded Victor Gruen Associates (later Gruen Associates) with Baumfeld, Van Leuven, and consulting engineer Edgardo Contini. Ben Southland and Herman Guttman joined as partners in 1956 and 1957 respectively, and Beda Zwicker became a partner in 1963.

Gruen Associates was a collaborative team of architects, planners, and engineers with main offices in Los Angeles and New York and project offices in Detroit, Chicago, Miami, Rochester, Minneapolis, Honolulu, San Francisco, Washington, D.C.,

and Tehran. The company developed the pioneering concepts for regional shopping centers, beginning with Northland Center near Detroit and Southdale Center near Minneapolis. Gruen Associates also undertook projects to revitalize the central business districts of several American and European cities, beginning with a never-executed plan for Fort Worth, Texas, and later with Midtown Plaza in Rochester, New York, and downtown revitalization plans for Kalamazoo, Michigan, Boston, Fresno, California, Urbana, Illinois, and many others. In later years the scope of projects undertaken by Gruen Associates also extended to planning new towns, regional planning, general land development, public housing projects, and college campuses.

In 1966 Gruen Associates decided to intensify its activities outside the United States by founding Victor Gruen International (VGI), an independent organization centered in Vienna. VGI was primarily a consulting organization working with clients in the conceptual and preliminary phases of overseas projects, with Gruen Associates architects and engineers undertaking the advanced phases to bring those projects to completion.

Upon his retirement from Gruen Associates and VGI in 1968, Gruen founded the Victor Gruen Foundation for Environmental Planning in Los Angeles and later in 1973 its sister organization, Zentrum für Umweltplanung in Vienna. The purpose of these organizations was to promote environmental education for the improvement and protection of natural resources in urban and metropolitan areas. In 1967 Gruen returned to Vienna where he died in 1980.

The [Correspondence](#) series is subdivided into [Condolence](#), [Congratulatory](#), [General](#), [Interoffice](#), [Legal](#), [Partners](#), [Personal](#), and [Vice Presidents](#) subseries. [Condolence correspondence](#) concerns the death of Victor Gruen in February 1980 and contains sympathy cards, letters, and telegrams received by his widow from colleagues, friends, and acquaintances worldwide. [Congratulatory correspondence](#) pertains to Gruen's seventy-fifth birthday and his winning of the 1979 Vienna prize, the Goldenen Ehrenzeichens für Verdienste das Land Wien.

[General correspondence](#) documents the day-to-day business of a large design and planning operation, including travel arrangements, shipment and receipt of goods, payment for services received and rendered, holiday and social greetings, speaking engagements, research for writings and publications, and other routine business of Gruen Associates. Some of the General correspondence also relates to design and planning projects.

[Interoffice correspondence](#) covers the same topics as [General](#) correspondence but consists of internal communications between company officials and the various national and international offices of Gruen Associates.

[Legal correspondence](#) mostly concerns international regulatory and tax matters relating to the incorporation of Gruen Associates and Victor Gruen International offices abroad. Also in the Legal correspondence is information on a challenge Gruen made to the Austrian Architektenkomitee für aktive Standesvertretung concerning his certification as an architect, an issue also reflected in the [Subject File](#).

[Partners correspondence](#) contains letters, memoranda, and telegrams exchanged among partners of the firm. Topics include speaking engagements, contract pricing, design and planning projects, solicitation of new clients, and discussion of potential development projects. In addition to the partners discussed above, others represented in this subseries are Jack Bayer, John Bell, Daniel Branigan, Abbott Harle, Ki Suh Park, Cesar Pelli, Sylvia Press, Allen Rubenstein, and Marge Wheaton.

[Personal correspondence](#) includes incoming mail and copies of outgoing mail sent by Gruen and his wives and their personal and professional friends and acquaintances. Some of the more extensive correspondence is with Rudolf L. Baumfeld, Betty Berg, Margaret Gruen (his daughter), Michael Stephan Gruen (his son), Hortense Hockett, Horst Jarka, Richard and Judith Kafka, Ben and Alice LaRosa, Max and Rita Lawrence, Leopold and Valeska Lindtberg, Harry Lowry (his uncle), Helen Michaelis, Felix and Hedi Salzer, Willy and Valerie Steiner, and Stewart L. Udall. Others represented in the Personal correspondence are Monette Büchele-Schober, Edgardo and Beatrice Contini, Giorgio and Franca Gentili Urs and Renate Heierli, Robert and Ida Lucas, Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, Cesar and Diana Pelli, Gertrude Weiss Szilard, Karl and Norma Van Leuven, Wolf von Eckardt, and Victor Frederick Weisskopf.

[Vice Presidents correspondence](#) contains letters, memoranda, and telegrams exchanged among vice presidents of Gruen Associates. Topics include speaking engagements, contract pricing, design and planning projects, the solicitation of new clients, and discussion of potential development projects. Included are files on Bernard Barry, Dan Branigan, Sydney Brisker, Mel Gooch, Frank Hotchkiss, John Pointer, Rolf Sklarek, and David Travers.

The [Personal File](#) series contains household and personal records and other ephemera retained by Gruen. Included are such items as his baby book, school records, a ballad written for his wife, medical records, and obituaries. Documenting his professional accomplishments are awards, certificates, licenses, newspaper clippings, and magazine articles. Also in this series

are records issued by government organizations, including marriage and death certificates, passports, emigration and immigration records, and military draft papers. There are family records of Gruen's parents, Adolf Grünbaum and Elisabeth Lea Levy, as well extensive biographical research files on Victor Gruen and, to a lesser degree, his wife, Kemija Salihefendiz Gruen.

The [Project File](#), one of the most voluminous series in the collection, documents design and planning projects undertaken by Gruen Associates. However, there are no records for many projects, including most of Gruen's precedent-setting contracts such as those leading to the creation of Northland Center and Southdale Center in 1954 and 1956. Two projects for which there is extensive documentation are the Université Catholique de Louvain in Belgium and the city plan for Vienna. These files include correspondence, reports, contractual agreements, architectural drawings, illustrations, newspaper clippings, magazine articles, legal files, printed matter, research notes, and other such records. Files for the remaining projects generally have simply correspondence or a report as their only documentation.

The [Subject File](#) contains information of a general nature concerning design and planning projects undertaken by the Gruen companies, such as project data books and time and expense records. Other business and personal topics include organization memberships, conferences in which Gruen participated, business and household finances, exhibition of a Gustav Klimt painting "Schloss Kammer II," background information on environmental topics, foreign travel, and litigation with the Austrian Architektenkomitee für Aktive Standesvertretung concerning Gruen's professional certification. There is considerable material documenting Gruen's involvement with the Refugee Artists Group of New York, including playscripts, programs, advertisements, and a letter from Albert Einstein commending the group's founding. Also in this series is information on opening ceremonies for Victor Gruen International in Vienna in 1967, as well as limited material from the two environmental foundations founded by Gruen, including the game, "It's Your Town, Citizen Brown!"

In the [Writings](#) series are research notes and typed drafts of works authored by Gruen, including his unpublished autobiography, "Ein Realistischer Träumer: Rückblicke, Einblicke, Ausblick." Included in the series is information on several articles and books written by Gruen, including extensive material on *The Heart of Our Cities* the semi-autobiographical *Meine Alte Schuhschachtel*, and *Das Überleben der Städte*.

[Speeches](#) made by Gruen during his career are arranged chronologically in eight bound volumes.

Seventy-eight [scrapbooks](#) contain mostly newspaper clippings, magazine articles, brochures, photographs, illustrations, and press releases concerning appearances, speeches, and writings by Gruen or design and planning projects undertaken by Gruen Associates. Many of the larger projects or clients are represented in scrapbooks, such as development plans for Fort Worth, Texas, and Fresno, California, and the J. L. Hudson Company and the Dayton Company, builders of the Northland Center and Southdale Center. Twelve scrapbooks titled "Reprints" contain magazine articles about Gruen Associates. There are also scrapbooks for Gruen's awards, certificates, and licenses, for two of his publications, *The Heart of Our Cities* and *Shopping Towns USA*, and for the American Federation of Arts traveling exhibit *Shopping Centers of Tomorrow*. A scrapbook documenting the Refugee Artists Group complements material in the Subject File described above.

Organization of the Papers

The collection is arranged in seven series:

- [Correspondence File, 1904-1980, n.d.](#)
- [Personal File, 1886-1980, n.d.](#)
- [Project File, 1924-1990, n.d.](#)
- [Subject File, 1929-1991, n.d.](#)
- [Writings, 1921-1979, n.d.](#)
- [Speeches, 1943-1977](#)
- [Oversize, 1935-1980, n.d.](#)

Description of Series

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BOX 1	<u>Congratulatory, 1978-1979</u> Letters, cards, and telegrams concerning Gruen's seventy-fifth birthday and the 1979 Vienna prize. Arranged by topic and alphabetically thereunder.
BOX 1-9	<u>General, 1952-1980, n.d.</u> Letters, memoranda, telegrams, and attachments. Arranged alphabetically by name of country and thereunder by name of correspondent.
BOX 9-11	<u>Interoffice, 1966-1971, n.d.</u> Letters, memoranda, telegrams, and attachments exchanged among Gruen Associates offices worldwide. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 11	<u>Legal, 1966-1975, n.d.</u> Letters, memoranda, telegrams, and attachments. Arranged alphabetically by name of legal counsel.
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BOX 23-65	<u>Project File, 1924-1990, n.d.</u> Correspondence, reports, contractual agreements, architectural drawings, illustrations, newspaper clippings, magazine articles, legal files, printed matter, research notes, and other records. Arranged alphabetically by location of project or name of client and thereunder by project title.

- BOX 65-76** **Subject File, 1929-1991, n.d.**
Correspondence, diaries, newspaper clippings, magazine articles, pamphlets, financial records, reports, research notes, printed matter, stock certificates, legal files, indexes, playscripts, theater programs, radio transcripts, restaurant menu, an environmental planning game, travel records, publication drafts, speeches, press releases, and other records.
Arranged alphabetically by topic or type of material.
- BOX 76-80** **Writings, 1921-1979, n.d.**
Correspondence, research notes, architectural drawings, illustrations, newspaper clippings, magazine articles, publication drafts, and printed matter.
Arranged alphabetically by title or topic.
- BOX 81-88** **Speeches, 1943-1977**
Printed and bound copies of speeches.
Arranged chronologically.
- BOX OV 1-OV 83** **Oversize, 1935-1980, n.d.**
Scrapbooks, containing newspaper clippings, magazine articles, brochures, awards, certificates, licenses, photographs, illustrations, speeches, and press releases. Arranged alphabetically by location of project, name of client, or topic. Correspondence, awards, certificates, licenses, handmade cards, architectural drawings, illustrations, reports, financial records, environmental game, playscripts, printed matter, and other records.
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Correspondence File, 1904-1980, n.d.

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Personal, 1904-1980, n.d.

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Bardos, Arthur and Lola, 1976-1979, n.d.

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Bull, Neal and Mimi, 1974-1979

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Frisch, Max, 1973-1977

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(3 folders)

Gruen, Michael Stephan

Sept. 1951, Jan. 1961-June 1964

Correspondence File, 1904-1980, n.d.

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"Preliminary Financial Projections for Phase 1 of a 2 Phase Development," n.d.
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- "Report for the Université Catholique de Louvain," 1968
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 - "Report for the Revitalization Project of the City of Monza for La Rinascente-Upim-Milan," n.d.
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