

Case Study 5.3: The Archives Internationales de la Danse in Paris

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Dance-related archival collections were a new phenomenon in twentieth-century Western modernity. As the art form developed to be part of avant-garde movements and progressist discourse, the need to preserve and make accessible textual and visual documents as well as objects relating to the evolution of dance was vigorously discussed. Individuals and institutions alike launched ambitious projects from the 1920s onwards. One of these was the Archives internationales de la danse (AID), the international dance archives. This pioneer project was founded in Paris in 1931 by Swedish patron of the arts Rolf de Maré, and moved in a newly erected building in 1932. The latter was set in the well-to-do sixteenth district (*arrondissement*) of Paris, not far from the Trocadéro Palace. It is the first known instance of a twentieth-century archival institution dedicated to dance and performing arts that was given a purpose-built locale. The construction plan and the façade photographs show an elegant Art Deco ensemble.

The property acquired by de Maré consisted of a turn-of-the-century mansion and a building terrain in the back. It was on this terrain that the operational rooms were constructed, comprising a lecture hall, a small theatre, an exhibition space, some museum rooms and two apartments. The street building was dedicated to offices, storage space and the reading rooms. In line with the arts-driven concept of a collecting archive, the site was designed to house a continuously growing collection and welcome a general audience. Access to the collections and information contained therein was a key element from the start. Hence, large space was provided for vestibules as well as rooms for consulting documents both visual and textual.

The AID closed in 1940 when France was invaded by German troops. After a short interlude between 1946 and 1949, it closed its doors for good in 1952. The building was demolished in the 1960s. The only traces of it today are the collections that were partly handed over to the French national library's music department at the Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra and partly to the newly founded Museum of Dance in Stockholm (1953).

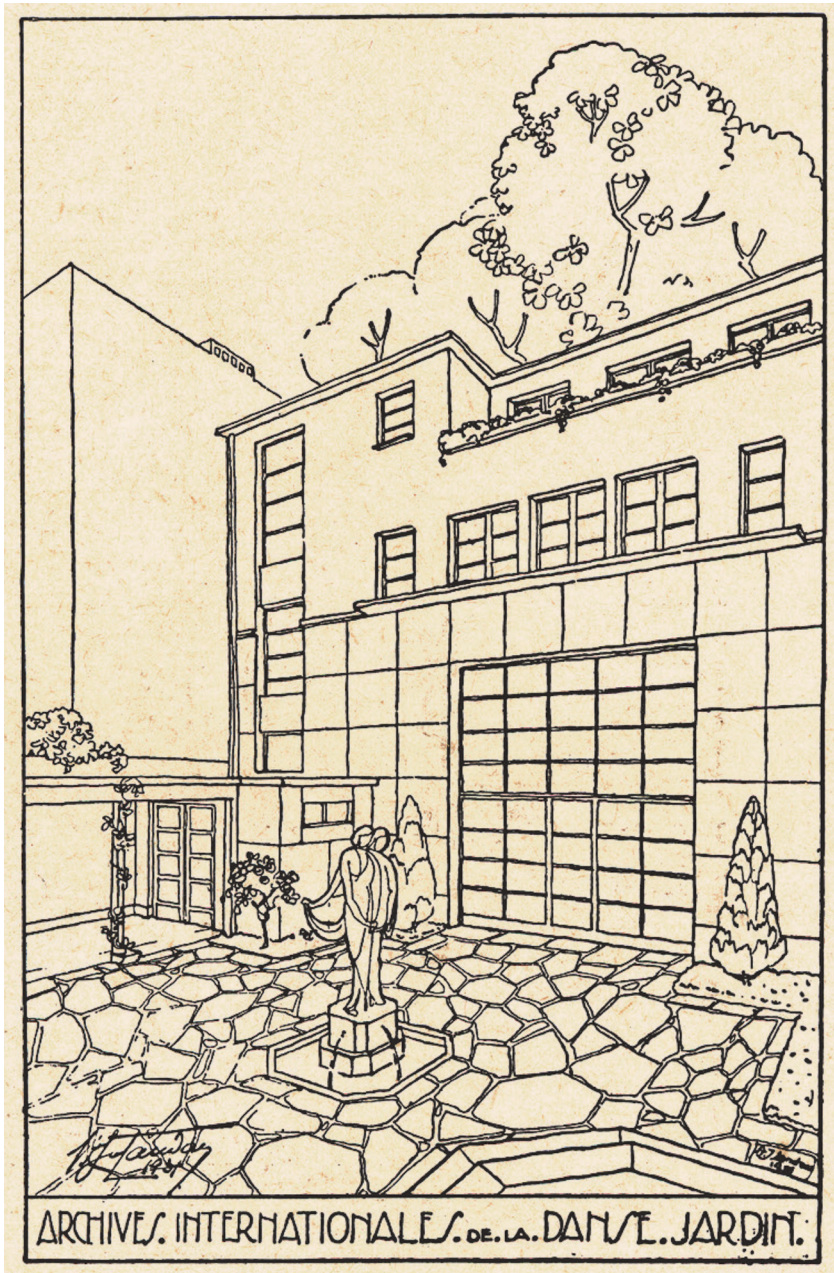


Fig. 1: Drawing for the façade of the rear building, 1931, Stanislas Landau; *Les archives internationales de la danse*, 0 (1932), 3; © Médiathèque du Centre national de la danse – Fonds Gilberte Cournand.