

Julian Francis Abele, 1881-1950

A Finding Aid for
European Travel Sketches, ca. 1902-1906,
in
The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania

Archival Description

Descriptive Summary

Title: European Travel Sketches, ca. 1902-1906.

Coll. ID: 188.

Origin: Julian Francis Abele, 1881-1950, architect.

Extent: Architectural drawings 4 sheets.

Repository: The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania
102 Meyerson Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104-6311
(215) 898-8323

Abstract: Abele was the first African-American to graduate from the University of Pennsylvania Department of Architecture. He was Chief Designer for the distinguished Philadelphia architect Horace Trumbauer beginning in 1909, and he continued the firm after Trumbauer's death in 1938. The four watercolor sketches in this collection are the only surviving drawings that are clearly identified as drawn by Abele himself.

Indexes: This collection is included in the Philadelphia Architects and Buildings Project, a searchable database of architectural research materials related to architects and architecture in Philadelphia and surrounding regions:
<http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org>

Cataloging: Collection-level records for materials in the Architectural Archives may be found in Franklin, union catalog of the University of Pennsylvania Libraries:
http://franklin.library.upenn.edu/record.html?q=julian%20francis%20abele&id=FRA_NKLIN_3845008&

Biographical/Historical Sketch

Julian Francis Abele was born in Philadelphia, son of Charles R. and Mary A. Abele. He attended the Pennsylvania Museum School of Industrial Art (Certificate in Architectural Drawing, 1898, Frederick Graff Prize, 1898). Abele was the first African-American to graduate from the University of Pennsylvania Department of Architecture (B.S. in Arch. 1902, Arthur Spayd Brooke Memorial Prize 1902). He was an active member of the University's Architectural Society, and served as its President in 1901-1902. With the encouragement and financial help of successful Philadelphia architect Horace Trumbauer, he also studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Little evidence is available for his time in Europe. Travel sketches from Italy and France were later exhibited in the T-Square Club Annual Exhibition (1915). Much later in life, he listed travel to England, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and Spain on his application for membership in the American Institute of Architects (1942).

Abele entered Trumbauer's office in 1906, quickly rising to the position of chief designer in 1909. Over the next thirty years the firm was responsible for such important institutional commissions as the Philadelphia Museum of Art (with Zantzinger, Borie & Medary), the Free Library of Philadelphia, Harvard University's Widener Library, and the master plan for Duke University. In addition, the firm received over 200 large-scale residential commissions. All public credit for the firm's projects went to Trumbauer and the firm. Abele was unknown to most clients and little known among architects outside of Philadelphia. Following Trumbauer's death in 1938, Abele continued the firm under the name of the "Office of Horace Trumbauer" with partner William O. Frank.

Abele was a highly accomplished draftsman and renderer and may be presumed to have made a great many of the design drawings and renderings for Trumbauer projects. However, drawings produced in Trumbauer's office were consistently unsigned, not even marked with a draftsman's initials. The only surviving drawings that are clearly identified as drawn by Abele himself (as of 2005) are the four travel sketches in this collection.

Scope and Content Note

The collection comprises four watercolor sketches made by Abele during a trip made to Europe between 1902-1906.

Access Points for Indexing (Controlled Vocabulary)

Abele, Julian Francis, 1881-1950.

African American architects.

University of Pennsylvania - Graduate School of Fine Arts - History – Sources.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on access: This collection is available for research by appointment only.

Preferred collection citation: Julian Francis Abele Collection, The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania.

Acquisition: Gift of Jeanne Yelcick.

Processing: The collection was processed and the finding aid prepared by William Whitaker and Nancy Thorne. Work was substantially completed in 2002, with additions and corrections in 2005.

Container list

Call#	Descriptive Title
188.1	[Campo and Church of San Vidal from the Grand Canal, Venice], ca. 1902-1906. Watercolor on wove paper, signed "Abele"
188.2	[Interior of a Chapel with Gilded Mosaics] Pastel on wove paper, not signed
188.3	[Church from Plaza] Watercolor on wove paper, not signed
188.4	[Town in the Cotswolds?] Watercolor on wove paper, not signed