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*Archives of American Art*

## **Celebrating 175: Florence Knoll Bassett, Letters (1960s), 1961-1968**

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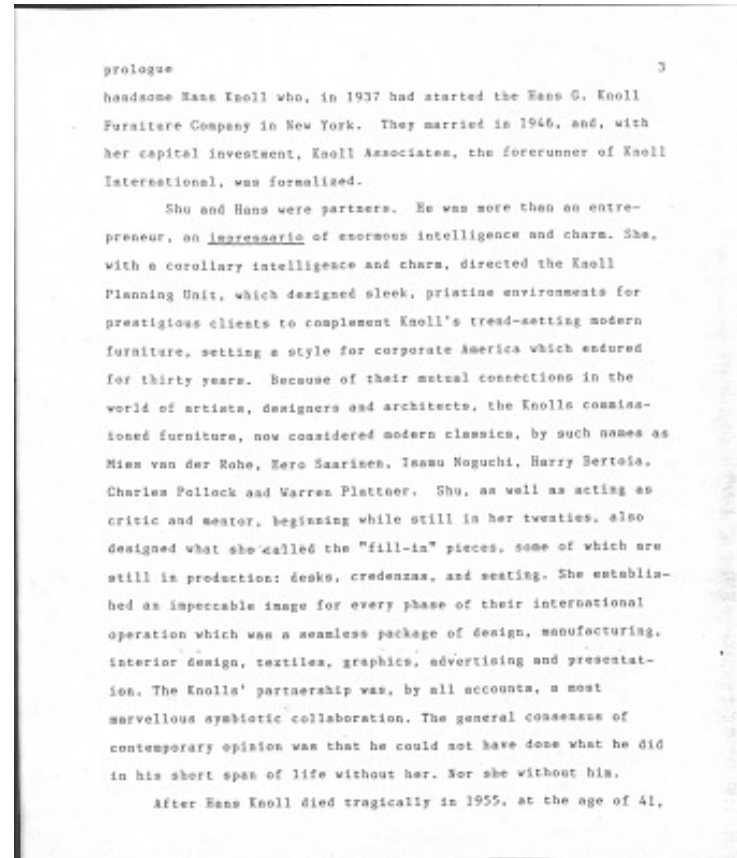
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prologue

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handsome Hans Knoll who, in 1937 had started the Hans G. Knoll Furniture Company in New York. They married in 1946, and, with her capital investment, Knoll Associates, the forerunner of Knoll International, was formalized.

Shu and Hans were partners. He was more than an entrepreneur, an impresario of enormous intelligence and charm. She, with a corollary intelligence and charm, directed the Knoll Planning Unit, which designed sleek, pristine environments for prestigious clients to complement Knoll's trend-setting modern furniture, setting a style for corporate America which endured for thirty years. Because of their mutual connections in the world of artists, designers and architects, the Knolls commissioned furniture, now considered modern classics, by such names as Mies van der Rohe, Eero Saarinen, Isamu Noguchi, Harry Bertoia, Charles Pollock and Warren Platner. Shu, as well as acting as critic and mentor, beginning while still in her twenties, also designed what she called the "fill-in" pieces, some of which are still in production: desks, credenzas, and seating. She established an impeccable image for every phase of their international operation which was a seamless package of design, manufacturing, interior design, textiles, graphics, advertising, and presentation. The Knolls' partnership was, by all accounts, a most marvelous symbiotic collaboration. The general consensus of contemporary opinion was that he could not have done what he did in his short span of life without her. Nor she without him. After Hans Knoll died tragically in 1955, at the age of 41,



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