Joseph Esherick Collection, 1933-1985

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Note
Arts and Humanities--ArchitectureHistory--California History--Bay Area HistoryHistory--California HistoryGeographical (By Place)--CaliforniaGeographical (By Place)--California--Bay Area
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Collection Number: 1974-1

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Descriptive Summary
Collection Title: Joseph Esherick Collection,
Date (inclusive): 1933-1985
Collection Number: 1974-1
Extent: 29 vertical file drawers, 1 carton, 30 flat file drawers
Language: English.
Access
Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights
All requests for permission to publish, reproduce, or quote from materials in the collection should be discussed with the Director.

Preferred Citation

Access Points
Architects--California.
Architecture--California.
Architects--Travel.
Joseph Esherick was born in Philadelphia in 1914, and graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a degree in architecture in 1937. He moved to San Francisco the following year, where he worked part-time for structural engineer Walter Steiberg before securing a full-time position in the office of Gardner Dailey.

Esherick served in the Navy during World War II, then opened his own firm in San Francisco in 1946. His early work, primarily residential, was influenced by William Wurster and Gardner Dailey, and built upon their expression of the Bay Area Tradition.

In the 1960s Esherick's firm began to take on larger projects, such as The Cannery (San Francisco, 1965-1967) and Stevenson College at the University of California, Santa Cruz (1965-1966). Esherick also designed demonstration houses for The Sea Ranch (1965-67), a planned community noted for the sensitivity of plan and design to the natural elements of the site. Esherick established a partnership with George Homsey, Peter Dodge, and Charles Davis in 1972, and the firm became Esherick, Homsey, Dodge, and Davis (EHDD).

In addition to his work with the firm, Esherick was an educator and consultant. He taught at University of California, Berkeley from 1952-1985 and served as the Dean of the School of Architecture for the university from 1977-1981. Esherick established an independent consulting firm in the early 1980s. His projects included speaking engagements and committee memberships as well as design consulting. In this capacity he served on the Professional Consulting Group for The Sea Ranch twenty years after the community's original design. He also delivered a number of lectures on topics such as architectural education, the use of computers in design, and the Bay Area Tradition.

Esherick was awarded the American Institute of Architect's Gold Medal Award in 1989. He continued working as senior design principal at EHDD until his death in 1998.

In 2016, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission funded a project to digitize archival materials relating to the development of The Sea Ranch. The project resulted in a virtual collection published online that can be viewed at http://searanch.ced.berkeley.edu

Scope and Content
The Joseph Esherick collection is arranged in four series: Personal Papers, Professional Papers, Office Records, and Project Files. Student drawings and travel sketchbooks comprise the bulk of Esherick's personal records. His professional papers include speeches and writings on topics such as architectural education and the Bay Area Tradition as well as records of consulting projects. Consulting projects include work with the Sea Ranch Design Committee, and the National Architectural Accrediting Board. The bulk of the collection consists of project files, primarily from the 1960s. The Cannery, University of California, Santa Cruz and Sea Ranch projects are especially well-documented.

The collection was donated by the architect in a number of accessions between 1974 and 1985.

Title: Joseph Esherick, An Architectural Practice in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1938-1996,

Contributing Institution: The Bancroft Library Regional Oral History Office

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Personal Papers, ca. 1933-1973</th>
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<tr>
<td>Scope and Content Note</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consists of renderings and sketches of student projects and notebooks. Notebooks contain sketches and text and relate primarily to travel, including trips to New York, Chicago, Helsinki, Moscow, Warsaw.</td>
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| A. Student Work                  |

| B. Sketchbooks                   |
II. Professional Papers, 1961-1985
Scope and Content Note
Comprised of speeches, writings, reports, correspondence, notes, and drawings which document Esherick's consulting projects, committee and jurying work. Contains records of the Sea Ranch Design Committee. Speeches and writings cover subjects such as architectural education, the Bay Area Tradition, architectural criticism, and the use of computers in architecture, and include Esherick's contribution to The Architect, by Spiro Kostof.

III. Office Records, 1948-1974
Scope and Content Note
Arrangement
Arranged chronologically.
Includes what the firm referred to as "Dead Prospects." Correspondence, notes, reports, informational publications from other firms, slides and drawings relating to unbuilt projects.

IV. Project Records, 1940-1977
Arrangement
Arranged by project number.
Scope and Content Note
Specifications, correspondence, notes, photographs, trade literature, reports, and drawings. Textual records from the 1940s primarily consist of specifications. The bulk of these records relate to projects completed during the 1960s, such as Sea Ranch, the Cannery, and the UC Davis residential facility. Researchers interested in Sea Ranch should also see Series II Professional Papers for records of Esherick's later work with the Sea Ranch Design Committee.

A. Files

B. Drawings

C. Cannery Shop Drawings