Inventory of the Records of the National Peace Garden, 1985-2002

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Inventory of the Records of the National Peace Garden, 1985-2002

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Inventory of the Records of the National Peace Garden
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Abstract: Inventory of the Records of the National Peace Garden, 1985-2002
Physical location: Environmental Design Archives
University of California
Berkeley, California, 94720-1820

Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English

Access
Collection open for research.

Publication Rights
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Preferred Citation

Historical Note

In 1985, after viewing Washington D.C.’s many monuments to war, Elizabeth Ratcliff wondered why there were no monuments to peace. Ratcliff, a former English teacher from Berkeley, reasoned that since the nation’s Capital was meant to showcase the ideals of the country, those who visited, especially children, should come away with the knowledge that Peace is counted among them.

Thus began the grassroots movement for the creation of a Peace Garden in Washington D.C. Garnering enthusiastic support from local Berkeley activists, members of the national design community, and the National Park Service, the Bill to establish a National Peace Garden was passed by Congress, and signed by President Ronald Reagan in 1987.

Following a rigorous site selection process, members of the Peace Garden Project Committee, headed by Garrett Eckbo, chose Washington D.C.’s Hains Point as the future site of the Garden. In 1989, the National Endowment for the Arts provided a $75,000 grant to help finance a design competition for the Garden. The competition attracted nearly a thousand
entries from all over the country. Each entry interpreted the idea of a Peace Garden differently. A jury made up of Hideo Sasaki, J.B. Jackson, and several other artists, writers, and designers, considered the many designs which varied widely, from vistas for quiet contemplation, to areas for active celebration. Both permanent and changing landscapes were featured, as were naturalistic designs, highly geometric designs, gardens as art, and gardens for food. One submittal called for no Peace Garden at all, until America became a true advocate of peace, and peace actually existed in the world.

After considering hundreds of entries, the Design Competition jury unanimously selected architect Eduardo Catalano's olive branch design as the future plan for the National Peace Garden. Born in Argentina, and educated at the University of Pennsylvania and at Harvard University, Catalano designed buildings in the U.S. and abroad, two of which were U.S. embassies. He taught at North Carolina State University in the 1950s, and, at the time of the competition, was an emeritus professor of architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, while running his own firm. His design for the Peace Garden used the olive branch pattern as an organizational framework; the stems and veins of leaves acted as raised walkways, which partitioned spaces of solitude and interaction, interplanted in soothing shades of green and white.

While Catalano's design had received unanimous acceptance from the competition jury and tentative approval from the National Capital Memorial Commission and the National Capital Planning Commission, in the spring of 1992, it was unanimously rejected by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, whose members found it to be disconnected from its environs, and awkward in circulation.

Though the rejection of Catalano’s design was disheartening, the Peace Garden Project Committee immediately launched a new search for a Peace Garden designer. Rather than holding another competition or going back to old competition entries, they invited twenty designers to submit proposals. While this received criticism from some former competition entrants, the committee believed that it was critical to minimize costs (a growing concern as they struggled to raise funds), expedite the search process, and find a designer based on the designer’s skills, rather than on a single design. After careful consideration, they settled on the firm of Royston Hanamoto Alley & Abbey (RHAA), headed by Robert Royston a renowned landscape architect and former professor at UC Berkeley.

After many sketches and visualizations of what the Peace Garden could be, and many long conversations with members of the Peace Garden Project Committee and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, Royston & his team developed an axial concept that complemented the McMillan plan for the National Mall. A stepped water feature, aligned with the Washington Monument, would run the length of the Point, reflecting the sky above and referencing the rivers surrounding the site. It would then terminate in a circle of bell towers at the Point’s tip (later this circle of bells would be exchanged for a jet fountain). The plan was approved by the Commission in July of 1993.

Royston’s design reflected the original vision of the garden: to educate children on the value of peace. Some teaching elements included in the design were pavement inscriptions about peace from visionaries and world leaders; a walk to honor those who served in the Peace Corps; and a Peace Bell that required teamwork to sound. The Peace Garden Project, now The National Peace Garden Foundation, also developed a classroom curriculum sent out to teachers to help educate students on the importance of peace and the National Peace Garden.

In spite of massive support from world leaders, funding had been a struggle since the inception of the project. Donations were solicited through brochures and pamphlets, fundraising dinners, a national tour of 900 + competition boards, and even the sale of Peace Garden paraphernalia. In 2003, unable to raise the necessary $20 million for the construction of the garden, and the additional $2 million for its maintenance endowment fund, the authorization period for the National Peace Garden expired, and the 18-year project was abandoned.

Sources:
Records of the National Peace Garden, (2006-8), Environmental Design Archives, University of California, Berkeley.

Scope and Contents Note

The Records of the National Peace Garden span the years 1985-2002. The Records are organized into five series: Board Records, Public Relations, Design Competition, Catalano Design & Collaboration, and Royston Design & Collaboration. Within these series, subseries have been organized according to category and chronology.

The Records contain information on the operations of the Board of the National Peace Garden, as well as fundraising and marketing measures, correspondence related to the Garden, design competition logistics and submissions, and drawings and discussions on the design of the Garden from many designers including Garrett Eckbo, Eduardo Catalano, Charles Atherton, Robert Royston/RHAA, and many others. Audio and video cassettes of design discussions are also included.

The Records were donated by Elizabeth Ratcliff, founder of the Peace Garden, in 2006.

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Subjects
Architects--California.
Architecture--California.
Architectural firms--California.
Architecture--California--San Francisco Bay Area--20th century.
Architecture--Domestic--California--San Francisco Bay Area.

Genres and Forms of Material
Architectural records.
Photographs.
Architectural drawings.
Architectural photographs.
Clippings.
Slides.

Garrett Eckbo Collection (1990-1), Environmental Design Archives.
Karl Linn Collection (2004-4), Environmental Design Archives.
Robert Royston/RHAA Collection (2005-17), Environmental Design Archives.
Robert Royston/RHAA Collection (2010-12), Environmental Design Archives.
Ron Wigginton Collection (2006-7), Environmental Design Archives.

Series I. Board Records 1985-2002
Physical Description: Boxes 1-3
Series Scope and Content Summary
This series contain inspiration and design ideas (including pamphlets and brochures for other Peace Environments) for the Garden from members of the board and other supporters. It also includes records of the Garden's Board operations, including articles of incorporation, minutes, event information, and contact information, as well as information on board members, financial records, and general design logistics and discussion. Correspondence to garner political support for the garden is also included here, as is the legislation needed to authorize the design and building of a National Peace Garden in Washington D.C. This series also includes information on potential and actual donors, fundraising events, and the site selection process. Proposals from architects following the rejection of Catalano's design in 1992 are also included here.

A. Inspiration and Design Ideas

B. Board Operations

C. Participating Individuals

D. Financial Forms

E. General Design Logistics

F. Political Support and Legislation

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G. Donors

H. Site Selection

I. Architect Proposals

Series II. Public Relations ca. 1986-2002
Physical Description: Box 1
Series Scope and Content Summary
This series contains marketing materials, press releases and clippings, and correspondence with people expressing opinions, ideas, support, and criticism of the Peace Garden.

A. Marketing

B. Press

C. Correspondence

Series III. Design Competition ca. 1988-1989
Physical Description: Box 1
Series Scope and Content Summary
This series includes records related to the 1989 Design Competition, including informational packets, information of the competition jurors, and design entries. It also includes the lists of winning entries, and information on the display of the entries. Video of the competition's Media Conference and the Exhibition of the entries is also contained in this series.

A. Information and Logistics

B. Entries

Physical Description: Box 2, Tubes 1-2
Series Scope and Content Summary
This series includes Eduardo Catalano's winning design for the 1989 competition. It also documents the development of the design, in collaboration with Christopher Ratcliff, Garrett Eckbo, and others involved with the Garden. This series also contains criticism to Catalano's design, and its ultimate rejection by the Commission of Fine Arts.

Physical Description: Box 24-27
Series Scope and Content Summary
This series includes Robert Royston and the RHAA team's design for the Garden. It documents design meetings and charrettes, expenses, drawings, and presentations.

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