Claude Stoller Collection, 1957-1996

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Claude Stoller Collection, 1957-1996

Collection number: 2000-14

Environmental Design Archives
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, California

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Claude Stoller collection
Dates: 1957-1996
Collection number: 2000-14
Creator: Stoller, Claude
Collector: Environmental Design Archives
Collection Size: 2 boxes
Repository: Environmental Design Archives
College of Environmental Design
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, California
Physical location: Environmental Design Archives
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, California 94720-1820
Languages: Languages represented in the collection: 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 Curator.
Preferred Citation
[Identification of Item], Claude Stoller Collection, 2000-14, Environmental Design Archives. College of Environmental Design. University of California, Berkeley.
Custodial History
Collection was sorted and packed by donor.
Biographical Note
Claude Stoller was born and raised in the Bronx, New York where he attended public schools. He enrolled at City College of New York for a semester while searching for a school with a strong visual arts curriculum. Although he had heard of Black Mountain College from his brother Ezra Stoller, an architectural photographer, it was at the 1938 Bauhaus exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York that Black Mountain caught his attention. Although both Moholy-Nagy's New Bauhaus and Black Mountain College were represented, Black Mountain's sliding tuition scale appealed to Stoller. He applied to Black Mountain and Cooper Union in New York and was accepted at both. A dinner interview by the ever-charming Xanti Schawinsky, a former Bauhaus student who had taught at Black Mountain, at a restaurant overlooking the Hudson River helped make the final decision.
At Black Mountain, Stoller took a general curriculum with a focus on art and architecture. He took Josef Albers's basic courses in design, color, and drawing. He also took architectural courses with Lawrence Kocher, Howard Dearstyn, and Lou Bernard Voight. The architectural program at the time included architectural drafting and courses in Introductory Architecture, Contemporary Architecture, Introductory Design and Structural Design. For the class in Small House Design, the students designed small low-cost houses based on a four foot module. Stoller and another student, Charles Forberg, were put in charge of the construction of the Jalowetz House, a small house designed by Lawrence Kocher for the Jalowetz family: Heinrich Jalowetz, who taught music, his wife Johanna, and their daughter Lisa. This involved meetings with Charles Godfrey, a local contractor who was directing the construction of several buildings, to plan each day's work and the responsibility of directing other students assigned to the project.

At Black Mountain Stoller also explored his interest in photography. Students had set up a darkroom in the basement of Lee Hall, and although there was no photography teacher, Albers critiqued the work of the student photographers. Stoller left Black Mountain after the 1942 fall quarter when he was drafted into the United States Army. He had applied for the Enlisted Reserve in hopes of finishing college but was rejected because he was deaf in one ear. During World War II he first was in the 14th Coast Artillery on Puget Sound. He then attended army engineering school after which he was sent overseas with the 13th Armored Division in France and Germany.

In February 1946, Stoller entered Harvard Graduate School of Design where he was accepted with advanced standing despite the fact he had not graduated from Black Mountain. He recalled that at first he was envious of the more advanced drafting skills of those who had come through professional undergraduate programs. He soon realized, however, that his courses with Josef Albers, an excellent physics course with Peter Bergmann, and his practical construction experience at Black Mountain compensated by far for any deficiency in technical skills which he soon mastered.

After graduation in 1949 (M. Arch.), Stoller studied for a year at the University of Florence in Italy. He and his wife Nan Oldenburg Stoller (now Nan Black), a Black Mountain student and a graduate of Radcliffe, were joined by Lucian and Jane Slater Marquis, both Black Mountain students. On his return Stoller worked for architectural firms in the Boston area. In 1955 he moved his family to St. Louis, Missouri, where he taught at Washington University. While there, he was registered as an architect in both Missouri and Iowa.

After two years the Stollers moved to the San Francisco area. In 1956, he formed a partnership, Marquis & Stoller Architects, with another young architect, Robert B. Marquis, the brother of Lucian Marquis. The firm, with its office on Beach Street, focused on the general practice of architecture and planning including residential, housing, institutional, and governmental projects. Stoller's use of natural materials in combination reflects both his studies with Albers and his admiration for the architect Marcel Breuer. In 1978, Stoller formed Stoller/Partners (later Stoller Knoerr Architects) in Berkeley. Projects included single homes, multiple dwellings, religious buildings, and institutional and commercial structures. Social issues such as housing and energy-efficient designs were a primary concern for Stoller, as was historic preservation.

Marquis & Stoller, Stoller/Partners and Stoller Knoerr have received many awards. In 1963-64 Stoller was visiting architect at the National Design Institute in Ahmedabad, India. In 1968 he was elected to the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects, and in 1991 he was awarded the Berkeley Citation by the University of California. Stoller served on city and county planning commissions, on an advisory panel for the federal General Services Administration and on several other public and professional committees. He was licensed to practice in several states and certified by the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards.

In 1957 William Wurste invited Stoller to join the faculty in the Department of Architecture at the University of California. He was acting chairman in 1965-66 and Chair of Graduate Studies from the early 1980s until he retired Professor Emeritus in 1991.

As a teacher Stoller always bore in mind Josef Albers's emphasis on "seeing." He considered the development of a sensitive visual perception to be essential to the education of the architect. A second influence of Stoller's Black Mountain experience was the value of direct "hands on" experience. To the extent possible within a conventional architectural curriculum, Stoller used real sites and exposed his students to the manufacturing process of materials through visits to factories. In both St. Louis and Berkeley, Buckminster Fuller was invited to speak to Stoller's students who built experimental structures. For one design class at Berkeley Stoller started the Wurster West Workshop, a studio in San Francisco where students could gain practical experience in planning, construction, and client relationships by working in poor neighborhoods. The major project for the workshop was the design in a redevelopment area of a square with both commercial space and housing. The square was designed in cooperation with the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency. The plan used both old buildings to be moved from other locations along with new buildings designed by the students. Although the square was never constructed, the project generated an ongoing discussion of urban design and redevelopment issues. Wurster West Workshop was continued by graduate students who renamed it ARKIS.
In 1965 Stoller started a program called Continuing Education in Environmental Design in collaboration with the University of California Extension. Several courses were instituted for architecture, planning, landscape architecture and design professionals. In 1966-67, as the internship component of the program, Stoller founded the pioneering San Francisco Community Design Center, a response both to student concerns about inequities in housing and community concerns about redevelopment plans. The Center, located on Haight Street in San Francisco, was started with a Research and Development grant from the University. The Center became a prototype for other Community Design Centers which brought the skills of architectural interns to poor neighborhoods where buildings needed remodeling or new construction was possible and where interns worked with “real” clients. In addition to architects, the program drew on the expertise of other disciplines including psychology, economics, law, and engineering. The program provided the type of practical experience Stoller had valued at Black Mountain. This was an extension of his teaching in which he selected specific sites which students visited. Stoller has retired from active practice except for consulting. His last partner, his son-in-law Mark Knoerr, continues to practice in San Francisco. Stoller lives with his second wife Rosemary Raymond Stoller, also a Black Mountain student, in Berkeley and Maine where he continues his lifelong interest in photography. They inhabit a Julia Morgan House which they restored as well as an old house and barn on the Maine seacoast which they have been remodeling for many years. 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 of Collection
The Claude Stoller Collection is comprised of two boxes of material that primarily represent his career as a Faculty member at UC Berkeley. The bulk of the collection consists of course materials and student work from 1957-1991. Also included in the collection are reference materials, many of which focus on issues surrounding architecture's social role and teaching architecture. One of these reference materials utilizes 3-D glasses to explain engineering graphics. There are some faculty administrative files, and professional papers relating to Stoller's professional projects. The faculty papers document Stoller’s long career as a UC Berkeley professor, and consists of student work from a variety of Architecture and Environmental Design courses, lecture plans and notes, reference materials for teaching, ideas for course development, and administrative papers. These files also include drawings and photographs.

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.

Genres and Forms of Material
Architectural records.
Architectural drawings.
Architectural photographs.

Related Collections
R. Buckminster Fuller papers, ca. 1920-1983, (M1090), Stanford University. Libraries. Dept. of Special Collections and University Archives.
I. Professional Papers 1966-1993

A. Community Design Center

Journal Articles 1968-1970
Correspondence 1969
Project Description 1966-1970
Funding Proposal 1968
Grant Proposal 1967

B. Stoller Partners

Berkeley Projects 1981-1982
Marketing materials ca. 1985
UC and National Science Foundation: Taiwan 1992

II. Faculty Papers 1966-1993

A. Administrative

Grievance: C. Alexander 1985
Correspondence relating to C. Alexander 1982-1991
Grievance: M. Wang 1990

B. Course Materials

Environmental Design 3 1968-1976
Architecture 23 1959-1960
Architecture 100B 1981
Architecture 102 1990
Architecture 102 1991
Architecture 152 1989
Architecture 207 1970

C. Reference Files

Engineering Graphics and Descriptive Geometry in 3-D 1977
Role of Social Needs of the Urban Poor in Determining Performance Standards for Housing 1968
II. Faculty Papers 1966-1993
C. Reference Files

Various reference materials 1961-1990
ARKIS Proposal 1977-1978
Math course for Architecture Students 1988

D. Student Work

Environmental Design 3: Photographs 1976
Environmental Design 3: Photographs 1976
Arts and Science 103: Alternative Garbage Collection System for Redevelopment
Housing in Hunter’s Point 1969
Architecture 120: Materials Report 1966
Architecture 120: Final Exam 1966
Architecture 131: Materials Reports 1957-1979
Architecture 131: Final Exam 1960
Architecture 200: House at San Quentin 1986
Architecture 200: Chambers Landing n.d.
Masters Thesis: Relationship between Natural Land Forms and Air
Movement/Effect of Alterations in a Specific Land Form on Wind Patterns 1963
Masters Thesis: An Outline of Thesis on Urban Housing of Baroda, with photographs 1966
Professional Report: Eighth and Heinz Street Project 1988