Guide to the California Graduate School Of Design and the California Institute of Technology Industrial Design Section Papers, 1928-1964

Richard J. Frechen and Caltech Archives Staff
Edited by Penelope Neder-Muro, 2017
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This collection contains documents pertaining to the formation and operation of the California Graduate School of Design (CGSD), which subsequently was reorganized to become the Industrial Design Section of the California Institute of Technology (CIT-ID). The CGSD represented a unique attempt to establish an American "Bauhaus."

The CGSD was situated at the northeast corner of the intersection of Colorado Street and Orange Grove Avenue in Pasadena, the current site of the Norton Simon Museum. This 12-acre parcel was then known as Carmelita Garden, a "memory garden" begun in 1880 in which 90 varieties of trees were planted. During the 1920s and early 1930s, the Pasadena Art Institute was situated at Carmelita Garden, but this venture proved financially unsound when its mortgage went into arrears. As the Garden was a preeminent historic site in Pasadena, a group of citizens resolved to preserve this natural monument. They decided that a school would prove suitable (due to its tax free status), and that an art school would be most fitting. In 1936 these organizers engaged Royal Bailey Farnum, the Educational Director of the Rhode Island School of Design, to determine what type of school would be most suitable. The Farnum Report's recommendations proved too broad for Cicero Hunt Lewis, who urged specializing in one aspect suggested by Farnum--industrial design. Lewis was appointed as Organizing Director, and in the spring of 1937 he went east on an investigative trip to establish a definite basis for starting the school. Lewis's report was accepted as the basis for the school's organization.

The school was incorporated in July 1937 as the California School of Design. Later to prevent confusion with an unincorporated school of the same name, it was called the California Graduate School of Design. The CGSD was a privately endowed, nonprofit-making institution which operated from October 1937 to June 1941. Its Board of Directors were nearly all Caltech Associates or members of the Caltech Board of Trustees. This affiliation was further strengthened by having some Caltech faculty members teach at the CGSD. The cause of the school's demise was never explicitly clear, but it appeared to be a victim of hard financial times. The student body never grew to a size considered sufficient to keep the school viable, and Walter Baermann, CGSD's Director from 1938-1941, did not want to increase the quantity of students at the expense of quality. Baermann, an industrial designer from Germany, made an exhaustive cross country trek in the summer of 1939 in an attempt to drum up financial support for the school. All the while he corresponded with his assistant who related to Baermann the Board's desire to ease entrance standards and increase the size of the student body.

The CGSD per se closed its doors in 1941, but was reorganized into the Industrial Design Section at Caltech. When the CIT-ID initiated its efforts in September 1941, it came under the direction of industrial designer, Antonin Heythum, for four years. Following Heythum, J. Paul Youtz became the final Director until Caltech closed out the section in June 1949. Youtz had instructed at the CGSD while he was a Research Fellow at Caltech, and later he became the Institute Patent Officer. Some of the section's work was devoted to the war effort, such as investigating alternative uses for clay and ceramics. Although the eventual demise of the section again appeared to have its roots in financial difficulties, the letters of two disillusioned students who left the Industrial Design Section shed light on some other interesting problems. They criticized
some course instruction as being everything from ineffectual or excellent but unnecessarily specialized to spasmodic and contradictory. They also cited an "insidious undertone of individual rivalry," pettiness, and a lack of cooperation and esprit de corps. In any case, the section folded at a time when there was a general building and operating fund drive.

The collection is interesting on a number of levels. First and foremost, there is much commentary on the concepts of teaching and the uses of industrial design. The correspondence also focuses on the role of the industrial designer vis-a-vis mass production techniques. It explains that the industrial designer should be educated in engineering, sociology, economics and, of course, art. The industrial designer needs training in all these disciplines, and the curriculum at both the CGSD and the CIT-ID reflected this. The two schools offered instruction in design techniques and trends, workshop practice, materials and manufacturing processes, art history, business economics, and social and buying psychology.

Youtz continued to correspond with some students from the CGSD and CIT-ID into the early 1960s. Many of them obtained positions in major firms, such as Corning Glass, Eastman Kodak, and the automobile manufacturers in Detroit, while others joined established design companies in the east and still others used their education to create their own companies. Nonetheless, although there was an unquestioned need for the industrial designer, it turned out that the United States in the 1940s was not the place to establish a school to train such a specialist.

Written by Richard J. Frechen, June 1977

Scope and Contents
The California Graduate School of Design (1937-41) and the California Institute of Technology Industrial Design Section (1941-49) papers contain student files, correspondence, and documents regarding the formation and operation of the two schools.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Administration
California Institute of Technology
Design
Manuscript Collection
Pasadena -- California

California School of Design (CGSD)

box 1, folder 1

Carmelita Civic Grandstand Association, Inc 1935

Scope and Contents


box 1, folder 2

Articles of Incorporation 1937 July 19

box 1, folder 3

Bylaws, ammended bylaws 1937 September 24, 1939 February 9

box 1, folder 4

Executive Committee meeting minutes 1937 September 24 - 1941 July 22, 1951 June 19

box 1, folder 5

Correspondence 1922, 1928, 1937

box 1, folder 6
Memorandum in Support of Opinion that CGSD had the Power to Enter into Agreement with city of Pasadena and others
1941

box 1, folder 7

Quitclaim Deed 1953 July 1

box 1, folder 8

Quitclaim Deed correspondence 1951 June 11-21

box 2, folder 1

CGSD: Committees - Buildings and Grounds, Scholarship 1934-1940, 1938-1940

box 2, folder 2

CGSD: Committees - Educational, Faculty and Curriculum 1937-1940

box 2, folder 3

CGSD: Workshop Equipment, Inventory, and Practice 1937-1940

box 2, folder 4

CGSD: Industrial Information 1937-1938

box 2, folder 5

Audit - Pasadena Art Institute, History CGSD - correspondence A-L 1929-1930, 1937-1938

box 2, folder 6

History CGSD correspondence: M-R 1936-1938

box 2, folder 7

History CGSD correspondence: O-St 1937-1938

box 2, folder 8

History CGSD correspondence: St-U 1937-1938

box 2, folder 9

History CGSD correspondence: Walter Baermann 1939-1944

box 2, folder 10

History CGSD correspondence: Gilbert Brighouse, Remsen Bird 1937-1942, 1939-1941

box 3, folder 1

History CGSD correspondence: Scott Brown 1937-1941

box 3, folder 2

History CGSD correspondence: Donald S. Clark, Royal Bailey Farnum 1937-1941, 1936-1938

box 3, folder 3

History CGSD correspondence: Philip S. Fogg, Hahn and Hahn 1937-1947, 1937-1938

box 3, folder 4

History CGSD correspondence: Ka-Ri 1938-1942
California School of Design (CGSD)

History CGSD correspondence: Albert B. Ruddock 1936-1939
box 3, folder 5

History CGSD correspondence: Albert B. Ruddock 1940-1941
box 3, folder 6

History CGSD correspondence: Sa-We 1937-1941
box 3, folder 7

History CGSD correspondence: Wa-Wo 1937-1939
box 3, folder 8

History CGSD correspondence: Archibald B. Young, J. Donald Young 1937-1938, 1937-1941
box 3, folder 9

History CGSD correspondence: J. Paul Youtz, Philip N. Youtz 1928-1941, 1937-1940
box 3, folder 10

History CGSD correspondence: Karl With 1939-1941
box 3, folder 11

History CGSD correspondence: Jake Zeitlin 1937-1938
box 3, folder 12

History CGSD correspondence: Miscellaneous 1937-1938
box 3, folder 13

CGSD: Exhibition for California State Department of Social Welfare 1937-1938
box 4, folder 1

CGSD: Westridge Job 1939
box 4, folder 2

CGSD: Patricia H. Yeomans thesis part I 1941
box 4, folder 3

CGSD: Patricia H. Yeomans thesis part II 1941
box 4, folder 4

California Institute of Technology Industrial Design Section (CIT-ID)

CGSD and CIT-ID: William Winterbottom thesis 1942
box 4, folder 5

CGSD and CIT-ID: William Winterbottom supplementary material to thesis 1942
box 4, folder 6

CIT-ID: Plans and Blueprints - Industrial Design Section 1942
box 4, folder 7
box 4, folder 8

**CIT-ID: Sponsors 1941-1946**

box 4, folder 9

**CIT-ID: Testimonials, Quotations 1944-1945**

box 4, folder 10

**CIT-ID: Reports 1942-1947**

box 4, folder 11

**CIT-ID: Miscellaneous courses and requirements (undergraduate, graduate, and engineer) 1947**

box 5, folder 1

**CIT-ID correspondence: Henry Dreyfuss 1942-1949**

box 5, folder 2

**CIT-ID correspondence: Antonin Heythum 1941-1943**

box 5, folder 3

**CIT-ID correspondence: Harold M. Huston 1946-1948**

  Scope and Contents

  re: ID-151 "Cost Analysis"

box 5, folder 4

**CIT-ID: Miscellaneous Instructors (former ID students) 1947-1948**

box 5, folder 5

**Merchandising Analysis undated**

box 5, folder 6

**Inquiries staff and student positions 1940s**

box 5, folder 7

**CIT-ID correspondence: R-S 1941-1945**

box 5, folder 8

**CIT-ID correspondence: T-V 1941-1947**

box 5, folder 9

**CIT-ID correspondence: W-Z 1940-1950**

box 5, folder 10

**CIT-ID correspondence: Miscellaneous 1941-1947**

box 5, folder 11

**CIT-ID: Publicity non CIT 1940s**
box 5, folder 12

CIT-ID: Publicity CIT 1940s

box 6, folder 1

CIT-ID: Placement - letters regarding ID 1943-1948

box 6, folder 2

CIT-ID: Placement activities 1947-1949

box 6, folder 3

CIT-ID: Library and Publications 1941-1946

box 6, folder 4

CIT-ID: Society of Industrial Designers 1945-1948

Scope and Contents

correspondence and reports

box 6, folder 5

CIT-ID: Society of Industrial Designers photographs undated

General

Photographs are curled in folder

box 6, folder 6

CIT-ID: Industrial Design Post-War planning 1940s

box 6, folder 7

CIT-ID: Miscellaneous 1940s

Scope and Contents

Includes roster, correspondence, ID section description, meeting minutes, etc.

Student Files

box 6, folder 8

CGSD/CIT-ID: Student Files Al-Be 1937-1958

box 6, folder 9

CGSD/CIT-ID: Student Files Bi-Br 1938-1961

box 6, folder 10

CGSD/CIT-ID: Student Files Br-Ca 1937-1957

box 6, folder 11
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box 8, folder 8

General Correspondence re: graduate students in Industrial Design 1940-1950