Language of Material: English
Contributing Institution: SJSU Special Collections & Archives
Title: San José State University Art Department Records
Identifier/Call Number: MSS.2009.11.07
Physical Description: 1 Box(0.42 linear ft.)
Date (inclusive): 1942-1963
Abstract: The San José State University Art Department Records, 1942-1963 (bulk 1951-1959), document the department's course curriculum, as well as art exhibits created by students. The records consist of miscellaneous brochures, pamphlets, course catalogues, flyers, and art ephemera. This collection is arranged into one series: Series I. Course Curriculum & Miscellany, 1942-1963 (bulk 1951-1959).
Access
The collection is open for research.
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Organizational History
In 1857 the San Francisco Board of Education established Minns' Evening Normal School for current and prospective teachers in the city. Named after its principal, George W. Minns, the institution was formally established as the first California State Normal School by the State Legislature in 1862. A decade later, the Legislature voted to move the Normal School to San José, and the school relocated to its new home on Washington Square prior to the fall term of 1872. After a fire destroyed the Normal School building in 1880, the Legislature authorized $200,000 to construct a new building on the same site. Completed in 1881, the building was commonly referred to as the Second State Normal School. After several names and curriculum changes, Minns' Normal School is now San José State University, offering more than 134 bachelor’s and master's degrees with 110 concentrations, and is recognized as one of the top public universities granting such degrees in the West.

The San José State University Art Department originated in 1911, when a one-year course leading to an elementary diploma in art was instituted by the San José State Teachers College. Inspired by Calthea Vivian, the head of the Art Department from 1911-1916, students began to take advantage of the course work offered. Soon after, under the new department head Ruth W. Turner, the department expanded to include a two-year course leading to a secondary diploma. Turner was succeeded by Dr. Marques E. Reitzel, under whose guidance the Art Department gained its reputation as one of the finest in the West. During Reitzel's time, the faculty was enlarged and the curriculum expanded to include course offerings in commercial art and interior design. In 1956, Dr. Reitzel was succeeded by Dr. French, a San José State University graduate, author, and painter. In 1957, the department consisted of 30 professors, making it the "largest group of artist-educators between San Francisco and Los Angeles." The establishment of a graduate program further increased the number of students, and led to many graduates entering the fields of commercial art and interior design, as well as winning important fellowships in fine arts.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the Art Department won numerous awards for painting, ceramics, sculpture, jewelry, silver craft, and weaving at exhibitions on the local, regional, and national levels. Plans for a new campus building, located behind the Music Building, originally included lecture halls, laboratory and activity rooms as well as an art gallery. The Art Building was later expanded to include the Visual Resource Center, numerous shops for wood, glass, machine, metal, spray, and welding work, along with facilities for jewelry and small metal work, photography, foundry, glass and print making. Current students can choose from a great variety of Art Department undergraduate and graduate programs. In recent years, the work of Art Department students and graduates has been included in the Whitney Museum of American Art Biennial Exhibition, and has also won awards in the National Housewares Competition as well as international film and animation festivals. Today the School of Art and Design has the largest number of full time students enrolled, surpassing the college of Business and Engineering.

Related Material
Edith Harvey Heron Collection, MSS-2005-01, San José State University Library Special Collections and Archives.
San José State University Faculty Papers of H. Brett Melendy, MSS-2009-05-01, San José State University Library Special Collections and Archives.
Robert Freimark Collection, MSS-2008-05-01, San José State University Library Special Collections and Archives.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Education, Higher -- California -- San José.
Art -- California -- San José.
Art -- Study and teaching (Higher) -- California -- San José.
Art -- Exhibitions.
San José State University -- History.
San José State University -- Art Dept. -- History.
San Jose State College

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