
Inventory of the Getty Center Central Garden Design Plans

Finding aid prepared by Cyndi Shein

Descriptive Summary

Title: Getty Center Central Garden design plans

Date (inclusive): approximately 1992-1996

Number: IA40020

Creator/Collector: Irwin, Robert, 1928-

Physical Description: 65.4 linear feet(1 model; 17 framed drawings; 3 architectural rolls; 8 flat files)

Repository:

The Getty Research Institute

Institutional Records and Archives

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Los Angeles, California, 90049-1688

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Abstract: Dating from approximately 1992 to 1996, materials comprise drawings, presentation boards, and a landscape study model generated as part of the design process for the Central Garden at the Getty Center in Los Angeles. Artist Robert Irwin conceived of the design and produced the materials, assisted by Spurlock Poirier Landscape Architects.

Request Materials: Request access to the physical materials described in this inventory through the catalog record at [library catalog record](#) for this collection and click "Request an Item." Click here for [general library access policy](#) . See the Administrative Information section of this finding aid for access restrictions specific to the records described below. Please note, these records are stored off site; advanced notice is required for access to these materials.

Language: Collection material is in English

Biographical note

Born September 12, 1928 in Long Beach, California, artist Robert Irwin is a leader among the generation of West Coast artists that defined the Light and Space movement. Irwin studied at the Otis Art Institute and the Chouinard Art Institute, Los Angeles and began his career as a painter, associating with the vibrant Ferus Gallery scene of the late 1950s and 1960s. Irwin's ongoing considerations of the nature of light and space led him to create complex environmental paintings and, in turn, non-object based environments and installations. The transformative pieces he produced in the 1960s and 1970s helped shape the aesthetics and conceptual foundations of the Light and Space movement, which continues to inform the complex works he produces. Irwin strategically places his artwork in its interior or exterior environment, confronting the viewer with the conditions and qualities of the surroundings as well as the work, thereby orchestrating the viewer's awareness and experience. His work is therefore characterized with unique perceptual qualities that are produced as a viewer interacts with and responds to his art as a physical, sensory, and temporal experience. In addition to his painting, installations, and landscape design, Robert Irwin has contributed to the arts through extensive theoretical writing.

Historical background

The Central Garden, created by American artist Robert Irwin, lies at the heart of the Getty Center in Los Angeles, California. The 134,000-square-foot design features a natural ravine and tree-lined walkway that leads the visitor through an extraordinary experience of sights, sounds, and scents.

The walkway traverses a stream that winds through a variety of plants and gradually descends to a plaza where bougainvillea arbors provide scale and a sense of intimacy. Continuing through the plaza, the stream cascades over a stone waterfall or "chadar," into a pool with a floating maze of azaleas. Specialty gardens encircle the pool. All of the foliage and materials of the garden, including over 500 varieties of plants, have been selected to accentuate the interplay of light, color, and reflection. Robert Irwin began planning the Central Garden in 1992, as a key part of the Getty Center project. Since the Center opened in 1997, the Central Garden has evolved as its plants have grown and been trimmed. New plants are constantly being added to the palette. Irwin's statement, "Always changing, never twice the same," is carved into the plaza floor, reminding visitors of the ever-changing nature of this living work of art.

Executing Irwin's design for the Central Garden required the collaboration of a number of people, including engineers, soil scientists, plant experts, landscape architects, and Getty staff. In finalizing all aspects of the garden, Irwin worked closely with Harold M. Williams and Stephen D. Rountree of the J. Paul Getty Trust; Richard Naranjo, the Getty's manager of grounds and gardens; and Spurlock Poirier Landscape Architects.

The Central Garden is set within the larger context of the Getty Center campus. Emmet L. Wemple & Associates Landscape Architects designed the landscaping of the major hillsides of the 110-acre site while Olin Partnership, Philadelphia designed additional gardens throughout the campus.

Access Restrictions

The materials described in accession 1998.IA.15 are available for use by qualified researchers. The landscape study model in accession 1998.IA.13 is oversized, fragile, and stored off site; special arrangements must be made to view the model.

The following types of records are permanently closed: records containing personal information, records that compromise security or operations, legal communications, legal work product, and records related to donors. The J. Paul Getty Trust reserves the right to restrict access to any records held by the Institutional Archives.

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Preferred Citation

[Cite the item], Getty Center Central Garden Design Plans, Robert Irwin. The Getty Research Institute (IA40020).

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Materials originate from accessions 1998.IA.15 and 1998.IA.13. (Accession 1998.IA.15 was separated from 1997.IA.10 for administrative control.)

Processing Note

Unframed drawings were re-housed during accessioning, but framed drawings have been left in their frames.

Related Archival Materials note

The following materials are offered as possible sources of further information on the people and subjects covered by the records. The listing is not exhaustive.

Series I.B and Series II. [Getty Center Site Planning and Construction Photographs, 1947-1997](#), J. Paul Getty Trust Building Program. The Getty Research Institute, Finding aid no. IA40001.

Series IX. [Robert Irwin Papers, circa 1940-2011, bulk 1970-2011](#). The Getty Research Institute, Accession no. 940081.

Scope and Content of Collection

Dating from approximately 1992 to 1996, materials comprise drawings, presentation boards, and a landscape study model generated as part of the design process for the Central Garden at the Getty Center in Los Angeles. Artist Robert Irwin conceived of the design and produced the materials, assisted by Spurlock Poirier Landscape Architects.

Arrangement note

Original order of materials has been maintained.

Subjects - Corporate Bodies

Getty Center (Los Angeles, Calif.)

Subjects - Topics

Gardens--Design--20th century

Landscape architecture--Designs and plans--California--20th century

Outdoor art--20th century

Public art--Designs and plans

Space (Art)--California--20th century

Subjects - Places

Getty Center Gardens (Los Angeles, Calif.)

Contributors

J. Paul Getty Trust. Building Program

Spurlock Poirier Landscape Architects

Central Garden design plans

Model 1998.IA.13

Landscape study model constructed of wood, clay, and foam, approximately 1992-1995

Physical Description: 16.4 linear feet(model: 23 x 86 x 134 inches; crate: 43 x 99 x 148 inches)

Presentation boards:

Collages of photographs of plants used in designing the stream garden, undated

Physical Description: (4 foam boards measuring 20 x 30 inches each, stored in 2 flat files)

Flatfile
1998.IA.15-24
Flatfile
1998.IA.15-25
Flatfile
1998.IA.15-26
Flatfile
1998.IA.15-27

Area 1
Area 2
Area 3
Area 4

Collages of photographs of plants used in designing the terraces surrounding the azalea maze, undated

Physical Description: (3 foam boards measuring 22 x 40 inches each, stored in 3 flat files)

Flatfile
1998.IA.15-28
Flatfile
1998.IA.15-29
Flatfile
1998.IA.15-30

Board "A"
Board "B"
Board "C"

Drawings and plans:

Scope and Content Note

Material comprises preliminary drawings, sketches, and schematics in various media and of various sizes, the largest being 30 x 86 inches. The drawings were created by Robert Irwin and Spurlock Poirier Landscape Architects.

Roll 1998.IA.15-01

"Roll 1," around 1995-1996

Scope and Content Note

One tube containing 7 original drawings (pencil and colored pencil on vellum) of various sizes. Drawings include zig-zag path rest area bench detail; lower garden bench detail; standing lamp detail; and set of 4 drawings, which layer to demonstrate foliage, buildings, garden structures, and the underlying topography.

Roll 1998.IA.15-02

"Roll 2," 1995-1996 and undated

Scope and Content Note

One tube containing approximately 29 drawings (pen, pencil, and colored pencil on vellum and tissue). Drawings depict various aspects of the garden, including its topography; circle path bench detail; standing lamp detail; bridges and their guardrails; azalea maze; bougainvillea arbors/trellis; and a color palette for bed planting.

Roll 1998.IA.15-03

"Roll 3," 1994-1996 and undated

Scope and Content Note

One tube containing approximately 23 drawings (pencil and colored pencil on vellum and tissue) of various sizes. Drawings depict general landscape; stone patterns of walkways/footpaths; drainage; and grading.

<p>Flatfile 1998.IA.15-04</p>	<p>"Roll 4," 1994-1996 Scope and Content Note Contents were rehoused from one architectural tube into an oversized flat file at time of accession. Contents include over 60 drawings (pencil and colored pencil on vellum, tissue, and graph paper) of various sizes. Drawings depict general landscape as well as detailed drawings of bridges and guardrails; stone patterns for footpaths/walkways and garden walls; planters; and gates.</p>
<p>Flatfile 1998.IA.15-05</p>	<p>"Roll 5," 1994-1996 Scope and Content Note Contents were rehoused from one architectural tube into an oversized flat file at time of accession. Contents include approximately 39 drawings (pencil and colored pencil on vellum and tissue) of various sizes. Drawings depict general landscape as well as detailed drawings of bridges; standing lamps; stone patterns; terrace walls; the "arbor"; the rock waterfall; and the azalea maze planters.</p>
<p>Flatfile 1998.IA.15-06</p>	<p>"Roll 6," 1994 and undated Scope and Content Note Contents were rehoused from one architectural tube into an oversized flat file at time of accession. Contents include 7 drawings (blue-line prints and pencil/colored pencil on vellum or tissue) of various sizes. Drawings depict the general landscape, including an overall site plan of the garden dated September 8, 1994.</p>
<p>Frame 1998.IA.15-07</p>	<p>1 colored pencil/ink (?) drawing of garden landing, undated Physical Description: (Framed: 20 x 26.75 inches)</p>
<p>Frame 1998.IA.15-08</p>	<p>1 multi-layered pencil drawing, undated Physical Description: (Framed: 27.5 x 30.25 inches)</p>
<p>Frame 1998.IA.15-09</p>	<p>2 colored pencil drawings of walkway/footpath, undated Physical Description: (Framed: 26.75 x 63 inches)</p>
<p>Frame 1998.IA.15-10</p>	<p>4 colored pencil drawings of walkway/ footpath and streambed, undated Physical Description: (Framed: 63.75 x 27.75 inches)</p>
<p>Frame 1998.IA.15-11</p>	<p>Study # 10: Schematic/preliminary plan of Getty Research Institute and Museum with garden overview, August 1993 Physical Description: (Framed: 63 x 37 inches)</p>
<p>Frame 1998.IA.15-12</p>	<p>1 pencil/crayon study of the textures, colors, and scales of various plant materials, undated Physical Description: (Framed: 48.75 x 31 inches)</p>
<p>Frame 1998.IA.15-13</p>	<p>1 color preliminary drawing of garden showing contour lines, March 1994 Physical Description: (Framed: 61.5 x 37.5 inches)</p>
<p>Frame 1998.IA.15-14</p>	<p>2 colored pencil drawings of the azalea maze, undated Physical Description: (Framed: 25.5 x 24.75)</p>
<p>Frame 1998.IA.15-15</p>	<p>1 pencil drawing of the bougainvillea arbors/trellises on the garden landing, undated Physical Description: (Framed: 22 x 25 inches)</p>
<p>Frame 1998.IA.15-16</p>	<p>1 pencil drawing of staircase as a "stronger statement," undated Physical Description: (Framed: 21.25 x 15.25)</p>

Frame 1998.IA.15-17	1 color drawing with legend: Getty Center Central Garden schematic plan, July 22, 1994 Physical Description: (Framed 31 x 41.5 inches)
Frame 1998.IA.15-18	3 colored pencil (?) drawings exploring entrances to the garden (?), undated Physical Description: (Framed: 33.5 x 44.25 inches)
Frame 1998.IA.15-19	1 colored pencil perspective drawing of view to north from azalea maze, undated Physical Description: (Framed: 45 x 25.5 inches)
Frame 1998.IA.15-20	1 colored pencil drawing of the underlying structure of the streambed (rocks), terrace, walkways, bridges, bougainvillea arbor and various trellises, undated Physical Description: (Framed: 43 x 61 inches)
Frame 1998.IA.15-21	1 pencil and colored pencil drawing of the zig-zag walkway and the topography/grading surrounding the bowl/azalea pond with line drawings of surrounding building elevations, undated Physical Description: (Framed: 43 x 61 inches)
Frame 1998.IA.15-22	1 colored pencil drawing of the plantings along the streambed, the azalea maze, and the terraces, with hints of surrounding architectural footprints, undated Physical Description: (Framed: 43 x 61 inches)
Frame 1998.IA.15-23	1 colored pencil drawing of trees along the stream and around the bowl, undated Physical Description: (Framed: 43 x 61 inches)