

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: sesnon@ucsc.edu

Shelby Graham 831-459-2314

As part of UCSC's 50th Anniversary celebration, The Sesnon Gallery is proud to present:

An Uncommon Place: Shaping the UC Santa Cruz Campus

Curated by Emeriti Professors James Clifford, Michael Cowan, Virginia Jansen, and Emeritus Campus Architect Frank Zwart.

Exhibition Dates: April 8-May 9, 2015

Public reception at the Sesnon Gallery at Porter College: April 8, 5-7pm

Alumni Weekend: Reception and Curators' walkthrough: April 24, 4-6pm

Alumni Weekend walk with curators, April 25, 2:15 PM, Cowell College entry.

All events FREE

Everyone agrees that the UC Santa Cruz campus is breathtaking. How was it created? *An Uncommon Place* traces decisive moments in the site's early development. Here an innovative educational project engaged with a beautiful and challenging environment. The university took shape among steep ravines and dramatic trees in a way that respected as it transformed the landscape. Using architectural plans, photographs, and oral histories, the exhibition illustrates paths taken and not taken—decisions, constraints, and hopes. It celebrates the achievement of UCSC's founding planners while analyzing the tensions and contradictions that were built into their project. Through its many subsequent transformations, the UC Santa Cruz campus remains an extraordinary work of environmental art.

The story begins in the 1950s with a sustained postwar economic boom and the dramatic growth of the University of California. It breaks off in the late 1970s, a time of recession and shrinking enrollments, leading to a construction pause. After sketching the site's early history, the exhibition recounts the political, economic, and aesthetic decision to locate the new campus on the Cowell Ranch property. Key visionaries are introduced, along with their crucial choice not to build in the open meadows but rather among the redwoods and ravines. The exhibition then traces other formative decisions: the mapping of a formally structured "academic core" with informal colleges on the periphery; plans for the residential colleges; intensive clustering of scientific research facilities; and the eventual bifurcation of the campus on east-west lines. These structural features were firmly established by the end of the first intense phase of growth.

Remembering these formative years can perhaps help us renew a powerful utopian experiment. At UC Santa Cruz, architecture and environment still conspire to create an uncommon place, a setting for teaching, research and imagination outside the bounds of the ordinary.

<http://art.ucsc.edu/galleries/sesnon/current>

“Not the standard campus we have always known, not an automobile under every redwood—but a vast area in which to live and study. It must be magnificent in conception, daring and forthright in its architecture—but gentle be the hand it lays upon the land.”

—Thomas Church, Founding Landscape Architect, 1962.

Sponsored by UCSC Alumni Association, Divisions of the Arts, Humanities, Physical and Biological Sciences, Social Sciences, Colleges: Cowell, Eight, Kresge, Oakes, Porter, and Stevenson; McHenry Library Special Collections & Archives, and University Relations.

In conjunction with *An Uncommon Place* exhibition, The Sesnon Gallery also presents:

Rhythms of Place: Photographic Explorations of the UCSC Campus.

April 8– May 9, 2015 Faculty Gallery at Porter College

Reception May 9, 5-7pm

Curated by James Clifford, Irene Reti, and Richard Wohlfeiler

<http://art.ucsc.edu/galleries/rhythms-place>

The Santa Cruz campus is often said to be “beautiful,” “awesome,” “spectacular”—words that strain to evoke a sense of place for which we lack adequate language. This gathering of historic and contemporary images by professional and amateur photographers accompanies “An Uncommon Place,” at the Porter Sesnon Gallery. It adopts a phenomenological approach, evoking sensory rhythms characteristic of UCSC’s environment—the movement between shadow and light, vertical and horizontal, void and structure, thicket and clearing, formal and improvised uses of the site.

Sesnon Gallery and Porter Faculty Hours

Tuesday - Saturday, noon to 5 p.m.

Open LATE: Wednesday 12:00-8:00 p.m.

The gallery is wheelchair accessible and admission is free. Parking is free on Saturdays. Group tours are available by appointment (831) 459-3606. Please visit our website

For more information contact Frank Zwart, Campus Architect Emeritus.

[About the curators:](#)

Since 2011, Professors Emeriti James Clifford, Michael Cowan, Virginia Jansen and Campus Architect Emeritus Frank Zwart (Cowell '71) have been investigating the early history of UC Santa Cruz as a built environment, from four distinct perspectives. Neither a natural history, an institutional history, nor a purely architectural history, their project focuses on place making, and on architecture as a broadly interactive process.

James Clifford, Emeritus Professor in the History of Consciousness Department, has been photographing the campus intensively for a decade and gathering an archive of images—from before the founding to the present—that document and attempt to capture the spirit of the place. He is also developing an analysis of UC Santa Cruz’s “poetics of space,” its continuing role as a utopian, visionary site.

Michael Cowan, Emeritus Professor of American Studies, has had a long-standing interest in campus physical and academic planning and in the relationship of places as imagined and places as actually experienced. For a number of years he taught a course in urban planning literature that used the UC Santa Cruz campus as a case study, and he has written several essays on the campus's history. He has served on the Campus Planning Committee and on several campus building committees.

Virginia Jansen, Emerita Professor of the History of Art & Visual Culture, taught courses on The History of the UCSC Campus Plan and American Campus Planning and served on the Campus Physical Planning Committee and the Design Advisory Board. She is particularly interested in the development of campus planning from medieval monastic and collegiate traditions, including the history of collegiate experiments. She continues to study the intersection of building and society.

Frank Zwart, FAIA, FAUA, Campus Architect Emeritus, first arrived at UC Santa Cruz in 1967 and graduated from Cowell College in 1971. After receiving a master’s degree in architecture from Princeton University, he joined the campus’s staff in 1985 and served as campus architect from 1988 to 2010. He is particularly interested in the ways that UC Santa Cruz’s development relates to contemporaneous trends in architecture, landscape architecture, and planning.

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