

MARY PORTER
SESNON
ART GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Shelby Graham
sgraham@ucsc.edu; 831.459.2314

**The Mary Porter Sesnon Art Gallery Presents
The Gail Project: "An Okinawan-American Dialogue"**



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"Seed Store" by Charles Eugene Gail; Charles Gail Collection; c.1952

International public history project explores the founding years of the American military occupation of Okinawa through historical photos

**Thursday, October 5 – Saturday, December 2, 2017
Mary Porter Sesnon Art Gallery, Porter College, UC Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA
art.ucsc.edu/Sesnon; 831.459.3606**

**Opening Reception: Thursday, October 5, 5-7 p.m.
Porter College Koi Pond**

Gallery and Reception: Free and open to the public

SANTA CRUZ, CA – (September 7, 2017) Begun over four years ago at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and incubated at the Institute for Humanities Research, The Gail Project is a collaborative, international public history project that explores the founding years of the American military occupation of Okinawa, Japan after World War II.

Encouraging student research and interdisciplinary discourse through the lens of the arts, the project is inspired by a collection of photographs taken in 1952 by American Army Captain, **Charles Eugene Gail**.

The photos, many which are featured in "**An Okinawan-American Dialogue**", were taken during a time when the expansion of U.S. military bases on the war-ravaged island was beginning to ramp up. They documented a way of life that would soon disappear, a last glimpse of a time before the presence of thousands of military personnel and U.S. influence changed the face of Okinawa.

This rare photo collection was generously donated in 2013 to Special Collections at the UC Santa Cruz's McHenry Library by Gail's daughter, **Geri Gail**, a former UCSC staff member, who thought the images would be most useful in an educational setting. Since all of the negatives were lost, the McHenry Library scanned each photo to ensure all images would be properly preserved.

"I wanted to share these pictures of Okinawa with the students at UCSC to perhaps help them learn more about the country and its history," said Geri Gail. "I felt it was important that people learn about the suffering of these people during and after World War II. Secondly, I wanted to honor my father by sharing his wonderful photography with the public. He would have been honored to have these pictures exhibited in Okinawa, a place he loved while he was stationed there."

The Mary Porter Sesnon Art Gallery has been key in initiating the public introduction of the Gail photographs and has brought all of the collaborators together to present this thought-provoking interdisciplinary exhibition. The current exhibit, which includes 50 digital prints reprinted from the original 200 black and white photos, is being developed into a travelling exhibition. There also is an accompanying digital web archive comprised of photos, key texts and documents, oral histories from both American and Okinawan voices, as well as undergraduate research and writing. While in Okinawa, the research team sparked new dialogues when they found many of the original sites of Gail's images and re-photographed the current conditions. These new prints will also be on display.

Later in fall 2017, the Eloise Pickard Smith Gallery at UCSC's Cowell College will feature photographs depicting how the current "**An Okinawan-American Dialogue**" was developed, including student research projects and photographs taken by the participants.

"Using the photographs as a way in which to view this crucial time is relevant to populations throughout Okinawa, Japan, the United States and the entire Pacific region. We hope this project encourages a broad public dialog across the Pacific about the past, present, and future of the Okinawan-American relationship," said **Alan Christy**, professor of history, The Gail Project's director, and co-director of the Center for the Study of Pacific War Memories at UC Santa Cruz.

The exhibition also will include student research outside the frame of Gail's photos referencing Okinawan history, postwar memory, land struggle with the United States military, and current anti-base protest documentation and ephemera.

This past August, a group of UCSC students, faculty, and staff travelled to Okinawa to re-visit many of Charles Gail's original photographic sites and documented how the Okinawan landscape has changed over the past 64 years.

"Being in Okinawa in 2017 with a group of UCSC students, faculty and staff was a profound site-specific learning experience," said **Shelby Graham**, director/curator of the Mary Porter Sesnon Art Gallery. "We all witnessed and walked on charged landscapes, simultaneously beautiful and brutal, mixing histories of conflict and displacement. It was an unforgettable and timely, research opportunity for all!"

The Gail Project: "An Okinawan-American Dialogue" is co-sponsored by the UCSC Arts Division and the Institute for Humanities Research (IHR) at the University of California, Santa Cruz. IHR is a laboratory for theorizing and implementing new visions of the Humanities via faculty research projects, graduate and undergraduate education, and public programs. For more information visit ihr.ucsc.edu.

For more information about The Gail Project visit gailproject.ucsc.edu. The Gail Project is co-directed by Alan Christy, Cowell College Provost and professor in the Department of History at UC Santa Cruz with alumnus Dustin Wright; curated by Shelby Graham of the Sesnon Gallery; with media direction by Tosh Tanaka from Learning Technologies.

About Charles Gail

Dr. Charles Gail was an American Army Captain who served in Okinawa from 1952 - 1953. Gail attended the University of Southern California during World War II, where he served in the reserve officer training corps (ROTC). Following his time at USC, he attended dental school and earned his doctorate. At a young age, Gail had developed an interest in photography, a skill he was able to develop through his work in dentistry. In late 1952 he was sent to serve in Yomitan, Okinawa during the Korean War. While stationed there, Gail traveled around Okinawa, taking photos of Okinawans and scenes from the island, showing the beauty amidst the post-war destruction that had resulted from the Battle of Okinawa.

About the Mary Porter Sesnon Art Gallery

The [Mary Porter Sesnon Art Gallery](http://MaryPorterSesnonArtGallery) encourages interdisciplinary discourse through the lens of the arts. The gallery is located at Porter College in the Arts Division on the campus of UC Santa Cruz, and is wheelchair accessible. Admission is always free and metered parking is available at Porter College. Group tours are available by appointment: 831.459.3606.

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