



## **DESIGN AND THE ARTS SPECIAL COLLECTIONS**

### **GEORGE CHRISTENSEN COLLECTION**

**Collection #: MSS 435**

**Location: DESIGN AND THE ARTS SPECIAL COLLECTIONS**

**Drawings and Papers: 1952-2002**

**No. of Items: 5 oversize folders and 1 box, 1.5 ln. ft.**

#### **Biographical Note**

George W. Christensen was born in Evanston, Illinois, on February 26, 1929. He was raised in Wilmette, Illinois, and graduated from New Trier Township High School in 1947. After high school, Christensen studied architecture at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT), directed at that time by Mies van der Rohe, one of the pioneer masters of modern architecture. Following his second year at IIT, Christensen joined the Navy but returned to graduate from IIT in 1953.

After graduation Christensen worked in the Chicago offices of Naess and Murphy. In 1954 he received his architectural license and opened his own office, with the first commission being his parent's home in Glenview, Illinois, followed by several houses in Illinois and Wisconsin.

In 1955 Christensen traveled to Brazil to work for Oscar Niemeyer, a leading modern architect in Brazil. While with Niemeyer, Christensen worked on several churches, learning about use of light, space, and material, a significant experience that would inform his later work.

Christensen moved to Phoenix in 1957. After briefly working for Weaver and Drover, he founded his own practice, George Christensen and Associates, in 1958. Initially his commissions were mainly small houses of adobe walls and exposed timber roofs, which grew out of the Native American, Spanish, and Mexican building traditions of Arizona. Significant early works included the Heuser Hacienda, Bell House, Peterson House, and Spencer House.

In 1960, Christensen began another important facet of his career, teaching in the School of Architecture at Arizona State University (ASU). He remained at ASU for the next 43 years, teaching the fourth-year housing studio, a minimal dwelling seminar, and leading an annual San Francisco trip and summer internship program. In subsequent years, some of Christensen's students would join his growing firm, working on projects that included offices, schools, restaurants, museums, resorts, churches, and homes. Significant projects included Casa Blanca Inn, La Posada, Horwitch Gallery, Pueblo Grande Museum, Paradise Valley United Methodist Church, Gammage Residence, and Dorrance Residence.

Many of Christensen's designs won regional and national recognition from the American Institute of Architects and other professional organizations. In 1982 he was named a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects. His buildings appeared in such publications *Architectural Digest*, *Sunset Magazine*, and *Phoenix Home and Garden*. In 2001 Christensen received the American Institute of Architecture Educator award for Arizona in recognition of his achievements in mentoring students, interns, and other architects.

Known for his formulation of a distinct Southwestern architecture, Christensen synthesized the traditions of modern architecture and the local vernacular to create an architectural style generated from a deep respect for the spirit of place, its landscape, and local building traditions. He died December 28, 2003 in Tucson, Arizona.

### **Scope and Content Note**

The collection consists of architectural drawings for about 16 George Christensen projects, including the Heuser Residences (Phoenix and Carefree), Spencer Residence (Wickenburg), and a Western Savings Office (Mesa). The collection also includes one box containing photographs, awards, correspondence, job files, news clippings, and information on the career of George Christensen.

## **Provenance**

This collection was donated in 2018 to the Library by the family of George Christensen.

## **Container List**

### **Box 1**

Folder 1 Photographs, 1983-1997, Undated

Folder 2 Awards, 1969-1984, Undated

Folder 3 Jobs, 1952-1963

Folder 4 News clippings, 1958-2002, Undated

Folder 5 50 Year Retrospective, 2002

Folder 6 The American Institute of Architects Portfolio for Fellowship Nomination, 1978-1981

Folder 7 George W. Christensen & Associates, Architects, Undated

Folder 8 Christensen, Cassidy, Billington, Candelaria: Architecture, Planning, Programming, Undated

Folder 9 6412 Belt Residence, 1965, Undated

Folder 10 7206 Christensen 24th Street Office, 1974-1975, Undated

Folder 11 7214 Peterson Residence, New Mexico, 1995-1996, Undated

Folder 12 7601 Elaine Horwitch Gallery, 1976-1977, Undated

Folder 13 Maytag Residence, Paradise Valley, Undated

Folder 14 Dorrance Residence, 1997-1998

Folder 15 Fuller Residence, 1999-2000

**Oversize Folder 1 (Housed in Map Case 153E RR3 D13)**

6001 Heuser Hacienda for Mr. and Mrs. William B. Heuser and Family, 6030 N. 51st Place, Phoenix, Arizona, 1960, 1964, 1971, Undated, 14 sheets

6208 Casa Una for Mr. and Mrs. William B. Heuser, Scottsdale Road and Carefree Drive, Carefree, Arizona, 1962, 4 sheets

6217 Casa Dos for Mr. and Mrs. William B. Heuser, 36874 Scottsdale Road, Carefree, Arizona, 1963, 4 sheets

**Oversize Folder 2 (Housed in Map Case 153E RR3 D13)**

6311 Casa de William B. Heuser, Clearwater Parkway, Clearwater Hills, Arizona, 1963-1964, Undated, 12 sheets

6406 Residence for Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Bell, Scottsdale Road, Carefree, Arizona, 1965-1966, 10 sheets

6407 Residence for Dr. and Mrs. Rex Peterson, Lot #1, Starlight Gardens, Paradise Valley, Arizona, 1966-1967, 11 sheets

6407R Additions to the Residence of Dr. and Mrs. Rex Peterson, 6130 N. 52nd Place, Paradise Valley, Arizona, 1971, 1983, 4 sheets

6412 Residence for Mr. and Mrs. Robert Belt, 1216 Highlander Place, Prescott, Arizona, 1965, 7 sheets

**Oversize Folder 3 (Housed in Map Case 153E RR3 D13)**

6906 Residence for Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Horwitch, 5050 Exeter Boulevard, Phoenix, Arizona, 1970, 16 sheets

6908 Residence for Mr. and Mrs. William Spencer, 33233 Condor Road, Rancho de Los Caballeros, Wickenburg, Arizona, 1969-1970, 13 sheets

7012 Additions and Remodeling for the Residence of Mr. and Mrs. Thurmond Gay, 6030 N. 51st Place, Paradise Valley, Arizona, 1970, 4 sheets

**Oversize Folder 4 (Housed in Map Case 153E RR3 D13)**

7208 New Branch Office for Western Savings, Golden Hills, Power Road and Broadway Road, Mesa, Arizona, 1972-1973, 21 sheets

7214 Peterson Residence, Galisteo/Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1973-1996, Undated, 16 sheets

7601 Elaine Horwitch Gallery, Lots #12 and 13, Hurley Tract, 4211 N. Marshall Avenue, Scottsdale, Arizona, 1976-1977, Undated, 18 sheets

7601R Elaine Horwitch Gallery Addition, Scottsdale, Arizona, 1979, Undated, 7 sheets

**Oversize Folder 5 (Housed in Map Case 153E RR3 D13)**

9625 New Residence for Bennett and Jacquie Dorrance, 5722 N. Cameldale Way, Paradise Valley, Arizona, 1997, 61 sheets

**Finding aid by Harold Housley (October 2021)**