

OAKLAND'S CCAC

Across San Francisco Bay in Oakland, the California College of Arts and Crafts recently added to its facilities, following a master plan by Architects DeMars and Reay. The architects, who also designed the two new buildings, proposed complete reconstruction, over the long run, of CCAC's present campus. Availability of U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare funds in the mid-1960s made construction possible by supplementing the private money raised by the college. The results offer another testimonial to the positive benefits of federal aid to education during the 1960s in encouraging imaginative college and university building.

CCAC's master plan gave highest priority to two rather disparate needs. One called for a multiple-purpose academic structure to house a new library, lecture hall and teacher training complex along with some ancillary facilities for TV taping and filmmaking. The other called for a studio building devoted mainly to workspace for graduate students in painting. The two buildings fell into different zones of the master plan. The academic unit occurred in a front region of permanent constructions which would eventually include a wall of shops and stores lining the main route between downtown Oakland and the University of California campus in Berkeley.

The studios, on the other hand, were programmed for a back area of flexible, less permanent building running across the rear of the site. This planning determination, coupled with building code, safety, and cost factors, lies behind the remarkable architectural dissimilarity of the two elements. However rational the decision, the results startle the eye. It looks on first sight as if the two structures had been done by two different architects and built by different builders. Yet they do touch, and the mystery of their junction enlivens the campus.

The studio building, a two-story, faceted wooden prism, is both programmatically and constructionally much the simpler of the two. On the ground floor it provides a variety of seminar, classroom and office spaces plus a large printmaking studio. A more generously proportioned second floor offers a single space under a north-light sawtooth, to

be freely subdivided into individual painting studios. The building has no interior circulation space. Ground floor rooms are entered directly from grade outside. Above, an open-air gallery surrounding the second floor leads to modularly spaced, cryptically blank doors corresponding to potential private studios for graduate students.

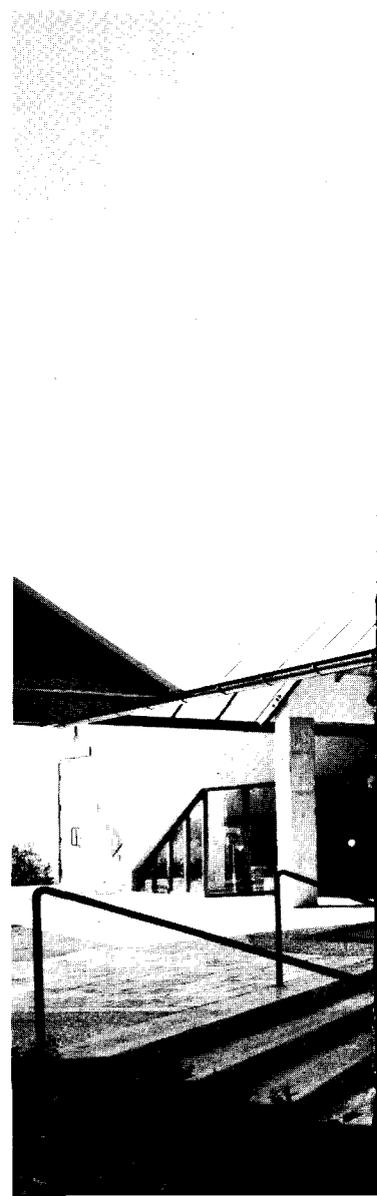
Ambiguous connection

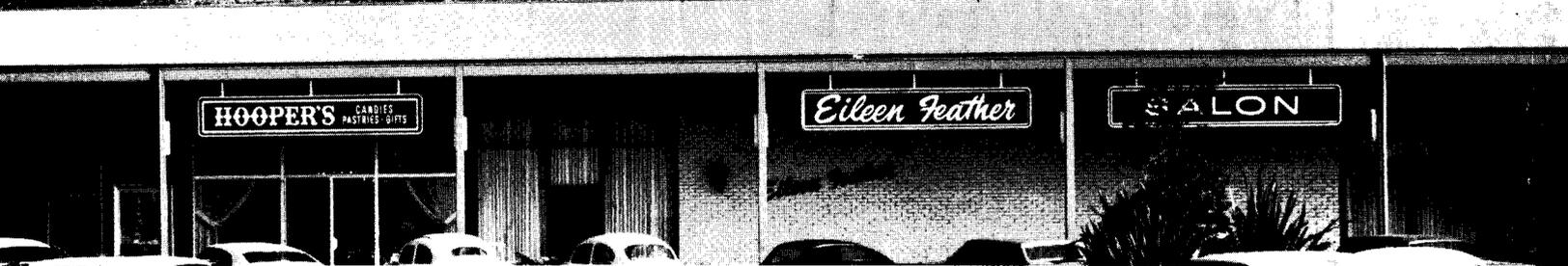
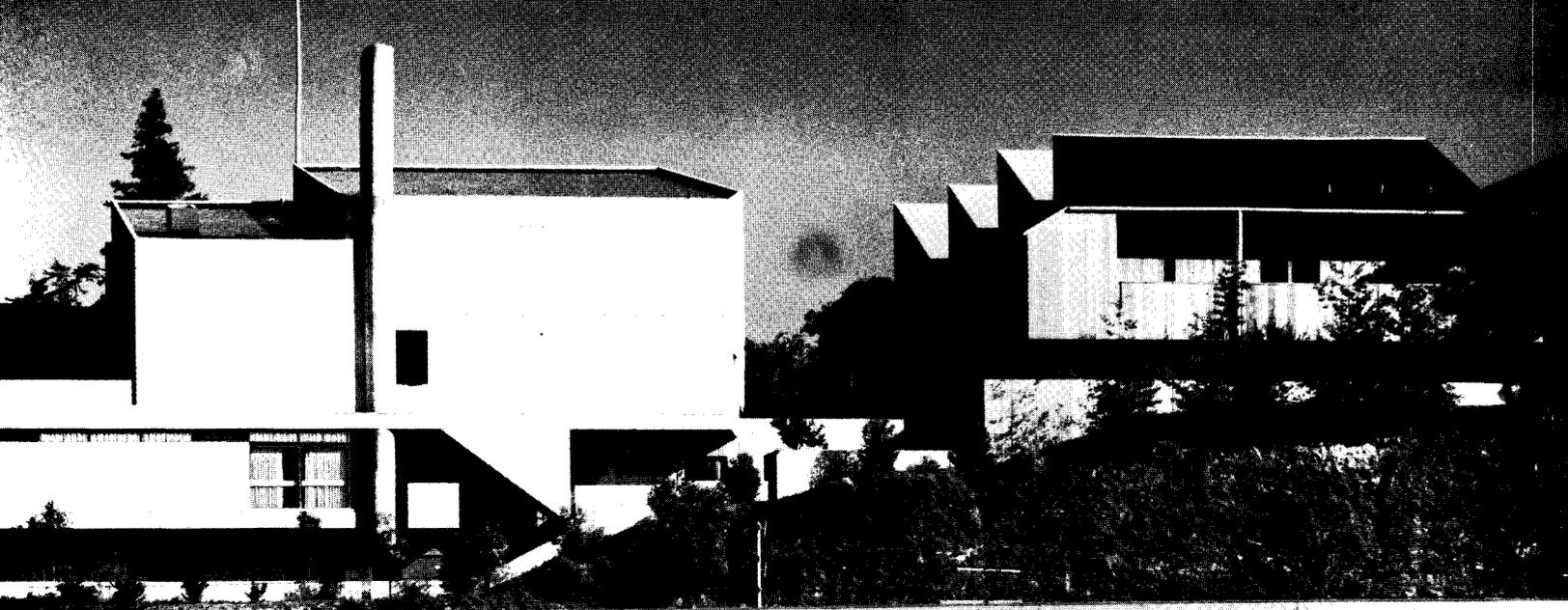
Natural finish, rough-sawn lumber surfaces appear everywhere. The structure supporting them looks perfectly ordinary. Only at one point does any complexity interrupt: a quartered piece of hip roof juts out to touch a matching form made of glass and metal which reaches across from the concrete academic building. This curiously complex and ambiguous junction relates somehow to the astonishing juxtapositions produced decades ago by Bernard Maybeck.

From this point, the academic building descends stepwise along the bluff on the south edge of the CCAC campus. Its boldly idiosyncratic form set forth in smooth light gray, almost white, concrete makes a new landmark on the Oakland skyline. It stands out clearly seven miles away from the bridge in the middle of the Bay. And it stands out even more sharply on the campus, where it forms a splendid foil for its immediate neighbor, the gingerbread Victorian manor house which serves now as the college administration building. On top of these tensions between its very contemporary feel and the two kinds of carpentry—19th-century exuberant and 20th-century controlled—it adds allusions to Corbu-Sert concrete details quite new to Bay Area building.

Inside, the academic building gives the college its first permanent-feeling, generously proportioned spaces. On a campus totally dominated by makeshift and temporary interiors—which may be quite appropriate for art studios—this seems a particularly welcome contrast. Though some

The two new buildings by DeMars & Reay—a library and a studio building (left and right in top photo)—are strikingly different. The library (near right) is a permanent structure of cast-in-place concrete. The studio building (far right) is a smaller-scaled structure of wood. The glass and steel library canopy and the wood-framed studio canopy reach out and meet—sharing an elongated rain gutter—above a crazy-quilt pavement designed by the students and faculty.





of its users find the lecture hall almost too big and well finished, it clearly provides a kind of setting much needed in such an otherwise fragmented environment. And the associated gallery, which grows out of the circulation space, gives the campus a new kind of facility.

Serene space, lively details

But it is the new library which contributes most on all counts. Here the building's duality of clarity and complexity works most successfully. The concrete structure stands completely exposed and perfectly straightforward, panel-formed walls, joist floors and roof, round columns, well-made and uncluttered. Carpeted floors and a rich spatial composition of balconies, alcoves, and great double-height main space give it a strong but quiet ambiance. The fenestration seems especially effective—each opening frames a special view of the specimen planting that enriches the campus, or a panorama out across downtown Oakland, the Bay, and San Francisco, or (in the great north window) a framed study of the Victorian administration building. Of the considerable number of art and design school libraries in the Bay Area, this must be the most comfortable, spatially, and satisfying, visually.

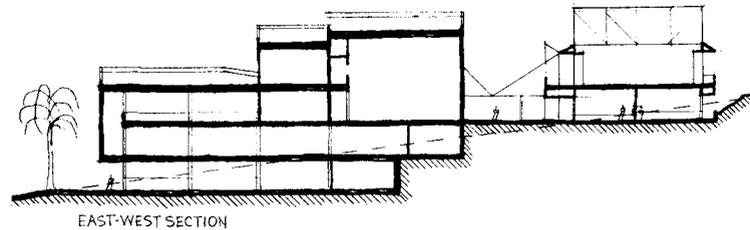
The project includes some engaging minor details. Colors, for instance, were chosen by Don Reay, the partner in charge of the job. He used a process blue on the sprinkler piping in the lecture hall lobby which has very likely never been used that way before. At certain moments he correctly bowed out and let the users take over. For instance the floor in the same lobby and in the small plaza outside between the two buildings (where the strange roof meeting takes place) have been turned over to the school community, which has laid a wild patterned paving of marble samples and pebbles.

Oakland, which won an AIA award for the high quality of its civic architecture, has got another good piece of architecture at CCAC. And the college, which had previously added nothing but clutter to the old homestead it took over 40 years ago, now has some architecture worthy of the name. With this auspicious start the community can eagerly anticipate further development of the master plan.

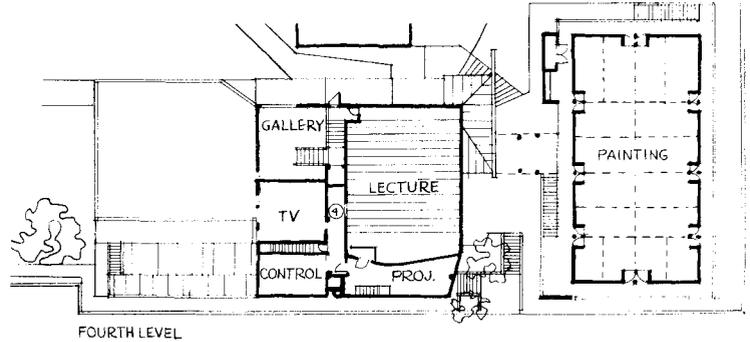
Painting studios (top left photo) can be divided at will; paired doors from the open entrance gallery allow separate access to each potential cubicle. The main reading room of the library (top right) is, by contrast, serene and static; carefully placed windows frame views of specimen plantings outside. The lobby of the library building (bottom left photo) is under the sloping floor of the lecture hall. The space between the two buildings (bottom right) serves as an outdoor extension of the lobby, linked to it by the uninterrupted paving pattern.

FACTS AND FIGURES

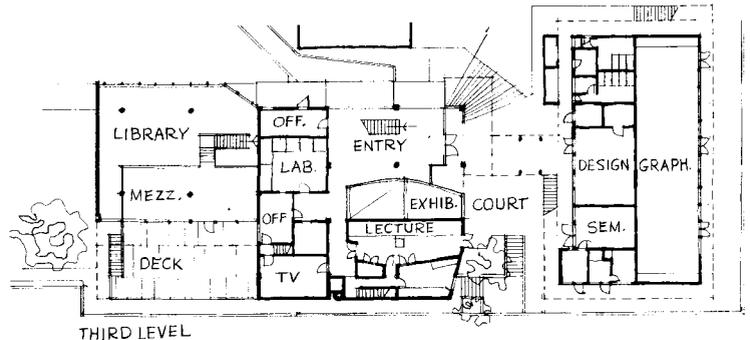
Academic unit and studio, California College of Arts and Crafts, Oakland, Calif. Architects: DeMars and Reay; (Don Reay, partner in charge, and Ed Stromsen, job captain). Landscape architect: Mai Arbegast. Engineers: Stephen Medwadowski (structural); O'Kelly and Schoenlank (mechanical). General contractor: Lathrop Construction Co. Building area: 29,667 sq. ft. Cost: \$950,000 (contract price only). PHOTOGRAPHS: Jeremiah O. Bragstad.



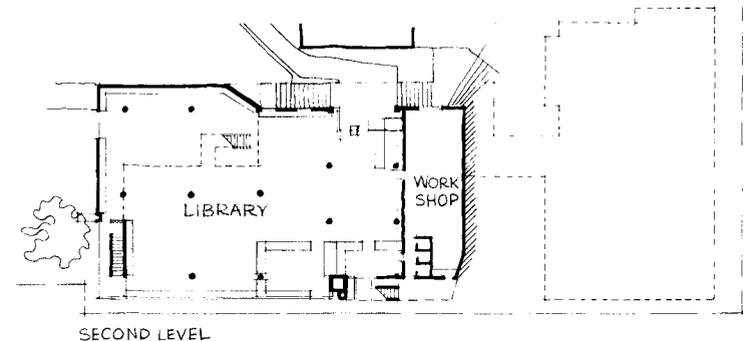
EAST-WEST SECTION



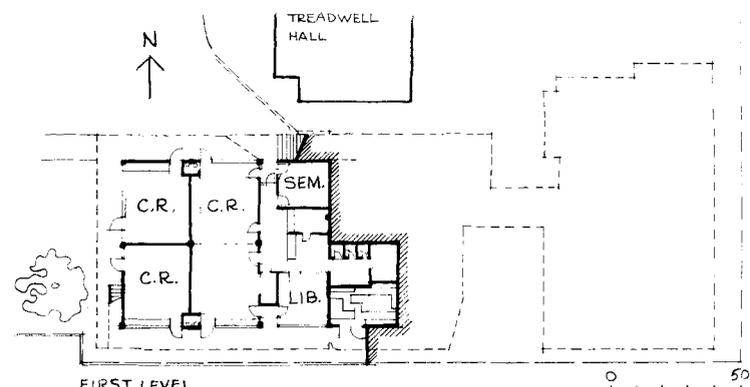
FOURTH LEVEL



THIRD LEVEL



SECOND LEVEL



FIRST LEVEL

