

Land Arts of the American West Collection CAE0902

Introduction/Abstract

Land Arts of the American West contains materials generated from the studio-based field studies program started by Bill Gilbert at the University of New Mexico (UNM) in 2000 with the help of John Wenger. In 2002, Chris Taylor, an architect then at the University of Texas, Austin (UTA), was brought in to co-direct the program until 2007.

Biographical Note: Bill Gilbert

Bill Gilbert is an artist and professor whose work has addressed the environments and communities of New Mexico for the past 30 years. Gilbert received his M.F.A. from the University of Montana, Missoula in 1978 and began teaching sculpture at the University of New Mexico in 1987. He currently holds the Lannan Chair in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of New Mexico where he directs the place-based, field program entitled Land Arts of the American West. To advance the Land Arts program, Gilbert is creating alliances with other educational institutions in the United States and abroad to expand into a network of field-based art programs. Partners include Chris Taylor, now teaching Architecture at Texas Tech University; former Land Arts student and instructor Erika Osborne; Nathan Lynch at the California College of Art in San Francisco; and John Reid at Australia National University in Canberra. As another part of the program's growth, Gilbert is also developing the Land Arts Mobile Research Center to support research and publication of program participants.

Scope and Content

Bill Gilbert started this studio-based field studies program at the University of New Mexico (UNM) in 2000 with the help of John Wenger. In 2002, Chris Taylor, an architect then at the University of Texas, Austin (UTA), was brought in to co-direct the program until 2007. Studio art students from UNM and design students from UTA spend a fall semester alternating between fieldwork and studio to create responses to a spectrum of land arts from pre-contact Native American to contemporary Euro-American cultures. Gilbert defines Land Arts practices to include everything from constructing a road, to taking a walk, to building a monument, to leaving a mark in the sand. The program seeks to expand upon connections between typically separate fields: the fact that Donald Judd surrounded himself with both contemporary sculpture and Navajo rugs; that Chaco Canyon and Roden Crater function as celestial instruments; and that the Very Large Array is a scientific research center with a powerful aesthetic presence on the land.

Initially, fourteen students led by the two faculty members spent a semester living and working in the southwestern landscape with guest scholars and artists in disciplines including archeology, art history, architecture, ceramics, criticism, writing, design, and studio art. The program continues to evolve, with Taylor now leading a separate program at Texas Tech University. This archive includes materials from UNM students, visitors, and Bill Gilbert starting in 2000, and offers notebooks, photographs, maps, itineraries and curriculum materials from what has become a progenitive program. Materials are organized by year and by student.

This archive is currently in process.