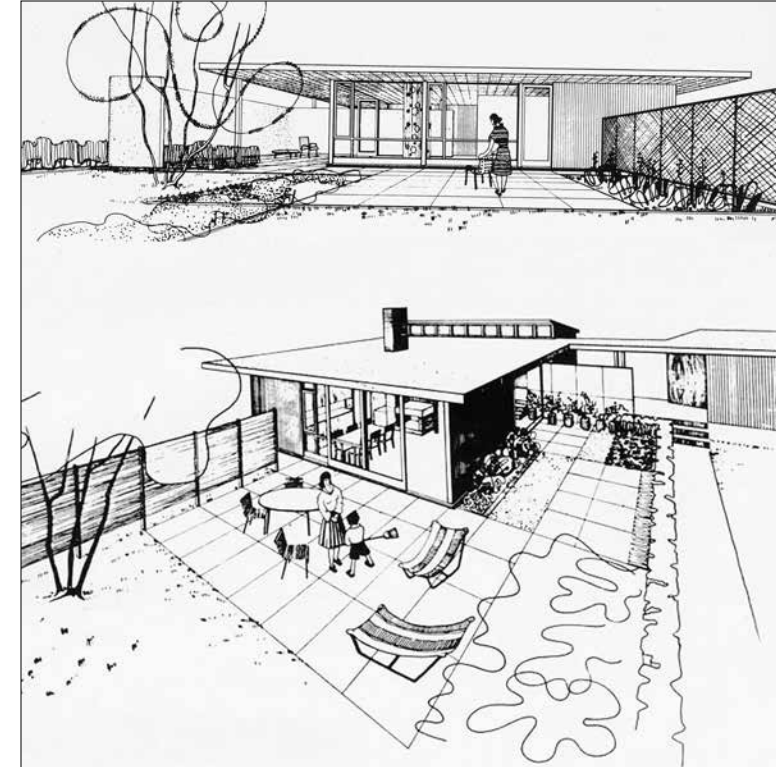


Playground studies, 1947.
RC EDA.



Concept sketches of homes and landscapes, 1947. RC EDA.

ner, accessible via a steep slope. Eckbo would later describe “similar but smaller plateaus” in the west half, “from which one climbs steeply through oak woods to an elevated knoll on which the more hide-away homes will be developed.”⁵

The architectural plans of the homes were conceived in conjunction with the site plans, so that each house could be properly oriented on its lot. In January 1947, Funk and his associates were completing a topographic survey—mapping out two-foot contours on the building sites. At this point the site plan was expected to be finished by July, with construction beginning in 1948. During this period the PHA



Chinn garden, view of terrace from apartment above, 1951. Photo by Ernest Braun, EBA.

CHINN GARDEN

SAN FRANCISCO

1951

In 2006, when asked to choose a favorite among his many residential garden designs, Royston replied without hesitation, “the Chinn garden.”¹ Both a captivating abstract composition and a place in which a large family could relax in the midst of the city, the Chinn garden exemplified Royston’s lifelong effort to incorporate modern art into daily life. The small garden was located at the rear of a four-story apartment building on the edge of San Francisco’s Chinatown. Royston recalled the client, A. B. Chinn, a local physician who owned the building, as a quiet man who had few requests beyond wanting to replace the existing nondescript garden with something better. Since the Chinn family occupied the fourth floor of the building, which offered a clear view of the site, Royston saw an opportunity to create a three-dimensional abstract design to be appreciated from above. The garden would also become an outdoor living space for the Chinns and their young children and serve as a



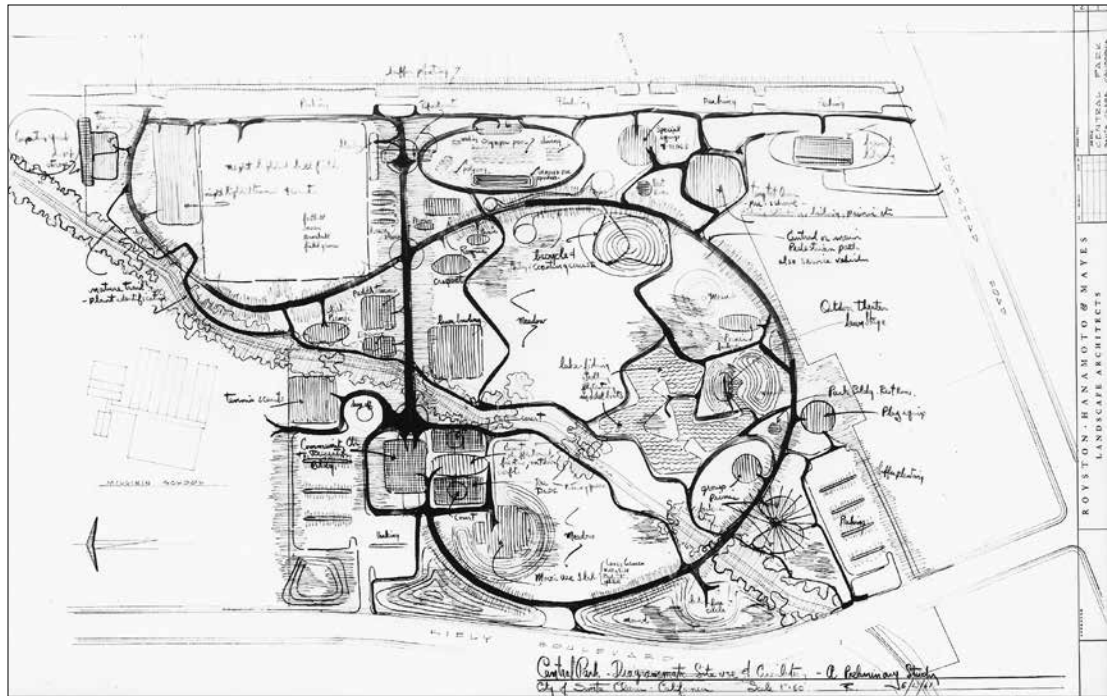
Custom-made pipe climbing structure and pedal car freeway, 1954. JCM.

off from the west area. A colorful sculpture composed of pipes, by the artist Raymond Rice, exemplified the idea of play structure as “art.” Nearby, a row of tree stumps, a larger slide, and a vertical concrete climbing slab were arranged with an intention that children would link these features in imaginary play. The main feature of the east section was the large freeway-like ramp for pedal cars. These were housed

in a row of adjacent A-frame garages, which were locked at night. The ramp had a tight S-curve on the downgrade to test the skill of the adventurous driver; the risk Royston incorporated into this experience was more perceived than actual since a curb kept cars from careening over the edge. A small gas station at the foot of the ramp allowed motorists to fill up for the next run. This encouraged children to play gas station attendant—cooperative play that Royston believed



Pedal car garages, 1954. JCM.



Site use and circulation preliminary study, 1961. RC EDA.

by function, well-defined spaces, a rich and varied planting plan, creative playgrounds, and the use of berms to shape the ground plane. At Central Park, RHM was given the space and freedom necessary to experiment with planting designs, spatial organization, and imaginative amenities for park users. Although Royston designed the original master plan in 1960, construction was phased in seventeen stages funded by a series of municipal bonds and not completed until the mid-1970s. During this period, partners Asa Hanamoto, David Mayes, Kazuo Abey, Louis Alley, and Harold Kobayashi provided substantial input on the design in keeping with the firm's team approach for complex projects.²

The city purchased the Central Park site, a former fruit



Aerial view, c. 1980. RHAA.



Hefferlin house, pool garden, 2019. Photo by Millicent Harvey.



Hefferlin house garden, view to mountains, 2019. Photo by Brent R. Harris.

pool garden, Royston added a curved bench that effectively completed the circular space around the pool. The resulting space responds to the concave slopes of Mount San Jacinto which form the dramatic backdrop to the garden. Behind the wall he added a raised planter bed and a curved walkway with an elevated spot for a bench, creating a quiet and more intimately scaled place to sit and look down into the garden. Three tall Mexican fan palms were relocated from another part of the garden to provide a vertical counterpoint to the flat planes of turf, concrete paving, and water.