

Panel Discussion
The Life and Career of Kaneji Domoto
September 26, 2019
UC Berkeley Environmental Design Library, Wurster Hall
Event Contact: designarchives@berkeley.edu, 510-642-5124

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UC Berkeley Environmental Design Library, Wurster Hall, room 210
6:30 - 7:00pm: exhibition viewing and light refreshments

Wurster Hall Auditorium, room 112
7:00 - 8:15pm: Panel Discussion

In 1939, a Japanese garden of maples, peonies, and pines, complete with a pavillion and a drum bridge that spanned a quiet lagoon, bloomed to the delight of thousands at the Golden Gate International Exposition held on San Francisco's Treasure Island. Nisei landscape architect and architect Kaneji Domoto was hired, along with other college boys, to help design and build the Treasure Island garden, bringing experience from working at his family's Oakland business, Domoto Brothers Nursery. When the exhibition closed, some of the garden's rocks were taken to a private residence in Gilroy, where Kaneji Domoto redesigned a new Japanese garden to surround the exhibit's original tea house, which was carefully dismantled and rebuilt. Another 150 boulders, a bridge and lanterns from the exhibition garden were donated to the UC Botanical Garden in Berkeley, where Domoto carefully redesigned the imported landscape elements to accentuate a new Japanese garden, waterfall and pool he named "Strawberry Creek." The Japanese garden at UC Botanical Gardens, now an iconic highlight of the gardens, celebrates its 80th anniversary this year, and remains a tranquil place of beauty.

A free public program focused on the life and work of Kaneji Domoto will be held on September 26, 2019 from 7:00-8:15 p.m., featuring panelists Gary Kawaguchi, who will talk about the Domoto family in the context of Japanese American history and social life and Domoto's three children, who will recollect on aspects of their father's life and career. Drawing on research for her new book, *Japonisme Revisited*, panelist Gail Dubrow will place Kaneji Domoto's story into the broader context of the lives, educational trajectories, and careers of other architects of Japanese ancestry in America. The panel will also cover the influence Kaneji Domoto has had on American architecture, his pre-war and post-war career, in addition to his involvement in the redress movement and discuss influence the Domoto family nursery had on the flower industry. A reception will be held prior to the panel at 6:30 p.m.

The reception and panel discussion accompany an exhibition of Kaneji Domoto's papers, now on display at the UC Berkeley Environmental Design Library. The exhibit explores Domoto's apprenticeship and architectural work at Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin studio in Scottsdale, Arizona pre-war, and his architectural achievements at Wright's Usonian Community in New York, post-war, pulling from original correspondence, photographs, and drawings from the Domoto Collection that were recently accepted and cataloged by the Environmental Design Archives. This exhibition is funded by the Arcus Endowment through the Diversity Platforms Committee of the College of Environmental Design and will be on view in the Environmental Design Library, Wurster Hall, Room 210 from August 19th – December 16th, 2019. Event Contact: designarchives@berkeley.edu, 510-642-5124

To rsvp for this event, please visit: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-life-and-career-kaneji-domoto-exhibition-viewing-panel-discussion-tickets-66594047589>

ABOUT KANEJI DOMOTO

Kaneji Domoto, born in Oakland on November 5, 1912, studied physics at Stanford and architecture at UC Berkeley before he joined architect Frank Lloyd Wright in 1939 as an apprentice. He eventually left Wright to return to the West Coast to help with the family's nursery business, Domoto Brothers Nursery, which was founded in the 1880s in Oakland, and eventually grew to be the largest plant nursery in California, offering 230 different varieties of chrysanthemums and 50 types of ever-blooming tea roses; the Domotos are also credited as the first in Northern California to commercially produce a variety of garden plants such as camellias, wisterias, azaleas, and lily bulbs imported from Japan. The Domoto family mentored numerous other nurserymen and women, which earned the nursery the nickname "Domoto College." and were central to the flower industry that flourished in the pre-war East Bay.

With the advent of World War II at the signing of Executive Order 9066, Domoto and his wife, Sally Fujii and daughter Mikiko (Miki) were incarcerated at the WWII American concentration camp at Amache, Colorado, where he became a member of the camp construction crew— work he later credited with teaching him the basic methods of construction. His son, Kanezo (Anyo) was born at Amache. Two years later, he was released and moved to New Rochelle, New York, where he found work as an architect and draughtsman. Two more children, Katherine and Kris, were born in New York. Despite the hostile racial climate, Domoto deliberately chose to build his practice on the East Coast and raise his family, who were one of maybe two Asian families in their community. Over time, Domoto built a successful career with a largely Caucasian client base who not only appreciated his knowledge of Japanese landscape and architectural elements, but likely helped guide his decision to emphasize various Asian elements in his work. His remarkable career included designing more than 700 residential, commercial and educational projects including dozens of gardens on the East Coast, incorporating gravel and other Japanese garden elements in large corporate landscapes, including landscapes in malls. Domoto died on January 27, 2002.

ABOUT THE PANELISTS:

Chris Marino: (moderator) Chris Marino is the curator of the Environmental Design Archives (EDA) at UC Berkeley, directing a full archival program for architecture, landscape architecture, and planning collections. Previously, she served as reference and outreach archivist at the EDA and at UC Santa Barbara's Architecture and Design Collection at the Art, Design & Architecture Museum. Marino received her master of library and information science with an archival studies specialization from UCLA and a bachelor's degree in ethnic studies from UCSD.

Gary Kawaguchi, Ph.D. is the author of the book, *Living with Flowers, the California Flower Market History*.

Gail Dubrow is Professor of Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and History at the University of Minnesota, previously serving on the University of Washington faculty. She is the author of two prize-winning books, *Sento at Sixth and Main*, with Donna Graves, and *Restoring Women's History through Historic Preservation*, with Jennifer Goodman.

Kris Marubayashi, Katherine Domoto, and Anyo Domoto