



IN MEMORIAM

Jack Boyd Carter
Professor of Design and Media Arts, Emeritus
UC Los Angeles
1930–2003

Professor Emeritus Jack B. Carter was born on September 8, 1930 in the small town of Dublin, Indiana. After graduating from military school in 1948, he spent a year at Purdue University before joining his parents, sister and brother-in-law, who had left Indiana for California. He enrolled in Santa Monica City College, and it was there that he met Frances Anna Anderson, his future wife. In 1951, Professor Carter transferred to UCLA where he entered in the art program, with a major in industrial design.

Professor Carter discovered his innate talent for the visual and spatial arts early in his education. His mentor, Professor Karl With, had come from Germany during World War II, leaving behind a legacy of museum work. With the post-war expanding interest in international arts, UCLA entered an era of traveling art collections and, hence, Professor Carter added his special interest in museology to his design studies. He joined the Army Reserve while completing his formal studies at UCLA, graduating with his M.A. and a double major of industrial design and museology.

Professor Carter then served his military duty in the Army, from 1954 to 1956, with Special Forces as Lieutenant in the Airborne Regimental Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division. He divided his time between paratrooper maneuvers and serving as curator of the division's museum. In 1956, with his honorable discharge, he returned to UCLA at the urging of Karl With and other faculty. That year he began a career – as instructor and exhibition designer.

It was a career that would span 35 years at UCLA. He started work at the bottom, working in the tool crib and as an art lab “gopher”. But “the bottom,” he said, was where you learned the most, the fastest. The University advanced Professor Carter rapidly, through all levels to full professor in 1970. He taught several courses in industrial design as well as museology, which was forever his passion.

Professor Carter's exhibits brought UCLA into the fore-front of the international art community. He and his team expanded the museum from a modified classroom facility to a state of the art “arena” in 1974. He designed the space with movable walls and baffles and an endlessly flexible lighting system. He was also one of the first to use audio and video elements in the gallery exhibits, now commonplace in museum design worldwide.

Professor Carter received letters from Charles and Ray Eames, Henry Dreyfuss, Thonet Industries and scores of individual artists, thanking him for making their work “sing” and increasing their own visibility. He received commendations and thanks from the Smithsonian, MOCA, LACMA, the Getty, the 1984 Olympic Committee and the Huntington Library, as well as from individual collectors, nationally and internationally, applauding his installation of their exhibitions on loan, naming him “Houdini of the gallery world” and thanking him for his consultant work on many of their own permanent exhibits. But it was the thank-you notes and hugs from the students themselves that made him beam.

Professor Carter felt that the purpose of the exhibition designer was to “make other people’s stuff look good,” not serve as promotion for himself. More importantly, his job was “to invite investigation and instill excitement,” not just in your typical museum enthusiast but, more importantly, in those who might otherwise write off the museum experience as musty and boring. Professor Carter felt if you could get someone’s attention and keep it, they might learn something!

Professor Carter had an integral role in the installation of the sculptures in UCLA’s Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Gardens, the design of UCLA’s Sports Hall of Fame, and, closest to his heart, the interior space plan for the Fowler Museum of Cultural History.

Although Professor Carter retired from UCLA in 1991 he did not stop with his museum passion. Among other art collections subsequently, he worked on developing the Banning Museum in San Pedro, California and also the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Water Museum at the “Power Plant #1” in the Santa Clarita Foothill Mountains in California.

In the mid-1990s Professor Carter was diagnosed with prostate cancer. With the same discipline and drive, he underwent many levels of treatment and continued to consult, enjoy his family and friends, and travel to Hawaii with his family. Professor Carter passed away on July 14, 2003. He was survived by Frances his wife of over 46 years, his daughter Trina Ann Nuovo, his son-in-law Frank S. Nuovo, granddaughter Avalon Frances Nuovo, grandson Anton Jack Nuovo, his sister Patricia Stohler and many other family members and friends.

UCLA TODAY, August 2003
Los Angeles Times, July 21, 2003