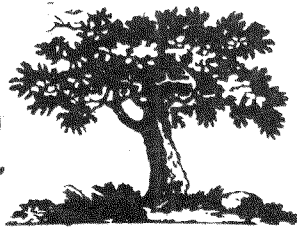


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Dramatic 'Torii' marks

Woodside's unique art colony

HIGH ON A RIDGE overlooking the Pacific, the "Torii" by Bruce Johnson welcomes visitors to the Djerassi Foundation's center for artists in Woodside. Jamie Edmonds, a poet, shows the texturing created by a combination of chainsaw marks and etching by the wind superimposed on the whorls of redwood grain. Join "Country Almanac" writer Marion Softky and photographer Carol Ivie for a visit to the unique cultural colony beginning on Page 13.

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a new volunteer equestrian unit*

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day of fun at Portola Valley*

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PEOPLE

A haven for creative growth

High in the hills west of Skyline, Djerassi Foundation offers artists the opportunity of a lifetime

BY MARION SOFTKY

A slender figure in painter's overalls erupts from the redwood forest carefully holding a shiny metal rectangle away from her body. "I bring 'em back like the catch of the day," says sculptor Josefa Vaughan as she bounds up the hill to the 12-sided barn.

On one side of the aluminum glisten the whorled markings of a machine tool; on the other Ms. Vaughan has painted an intricate scene of forest life and death—a body interwoven with dark spirits of the forest.

Soon the metal sheet joins others dangling from some chicken wire laced with redwood boughs and manzanita in her studio at the Djerassi Foundation high in the hills west of Skyline.

"I'm so enamored of the ways of the forest," she says, sitting cross-legged on the floor caressing clay into the shape of a skull. "I get a sense of wholeness in the woods—young trees growing out of old. At times I feel old-young."

Ms. Vaughan is one of the artists who seek inspiration among the rolling hills far above Woodside overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

The Djerassi Foundation itself represents an effort to bring new life—artistic life—out of death. It is dedicated to the memory of Pamela Djerassi, a painter and poet who took her own life nine years ago. Her estate, including 600 acres of land, passed to the foundation.

Dr. Carl Djerassi, better known as the father of the birth control pill and an artist himself, has directed the foundation toward nurturing promising artists.

"I wanted to create, basically, life out of the death—the type of life that meant a great deal to her, namely artistic creation," Dr. Djerassi says in an interview in his Stanford office.

And life there is in those remote hills dotted with statues and cows. Sculptures in the forest canyons—a staircase carved out of giant log rising from a stream, for example—remind the visitor of artists who have passed through.

About 10 artists at a time spend one to three months each concentrating on their art, away from the distracting pressures of family, outside commitments and making a



DINNER ON THE DECK on a warm evening is a highlight of the artists' day at the Djerassi Foundation. Artists unwind, share ideas and

insights, dream up new projects at a gourmet meal prepared by the foundation chef. Photo by Carol Ivie.

living.

"This is totally different. I am going a whole lot deeper," says Ms. Vaughan. "I can work continuously like when I was 5 years old. When I write home, I feel like I'm sending a letter from heaven."

In the past five years some 250 artists have worked at the foundation: poets and painters, composers and dancers, writers and sculptors and photographers.

These artists come in a variety of ages, races and nationalities. At any time there are men and women, old and young, Americans and foreigners. What they have in common is a commitment to art and a record of accomplishment.

"I see this as an international community of working artists," says Sally Stillman, executive director of the Djerassi Foundation. Mrs. Stillman, who is an artist herself, lives on the ranch with her husband, Michael—a musician and poet as well as computer specialist—in the house where Pamela Djerassi once lived.

"Our project allows today's artist time for concentration and intensity that is necessary to the process of creativity," she continues. "It's important to remember that creativity happens at the edge of human experience."

A DAY AT THE RANCH

The artists are on their own all day. They may work in their rooms or their studios in the converted cattle barn. Or they may enjoy the striking beauty of the pristine California landscape.

Sculptors tend to find special places for their works or collect materials. Ms. Vaughan paints in a forest glade carpeted with redwood sorrel. Here she arranges plastic mirrors to help dissect and organize the landscape. "It helps to have an edge to create another dimension," she says. "It creates a dialogue with all that organic confusion."

In the evening artists and staff gather around a long table for dinner. Ideas, experiences, jokes, stories spark around the table. New projects are born as artists meet and generate new ideas.

"There are people from all over, people you wouldn't meet otherwise," recalls Woodside poet and writer Helen Trimpi, who spent two weeks at the ranch last September. "Working conditions are ideal. You have a

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Founder Carl Djerassi: Renaissance man

BY MARION SOFTKY

"I happen to be an intellectual polygamist," says Dr. Carl Djerassi in his Stanford office.

Dr. Djerassi is much more than that.

A much honored research chemist, he has changed millions of lives through his work developing and producing the birth control pill. Now he is hoping to change lives in a different way by sponsoring promising artists at the Djerassi Foundation artists colony at the SMIP Ranch above Woodside.

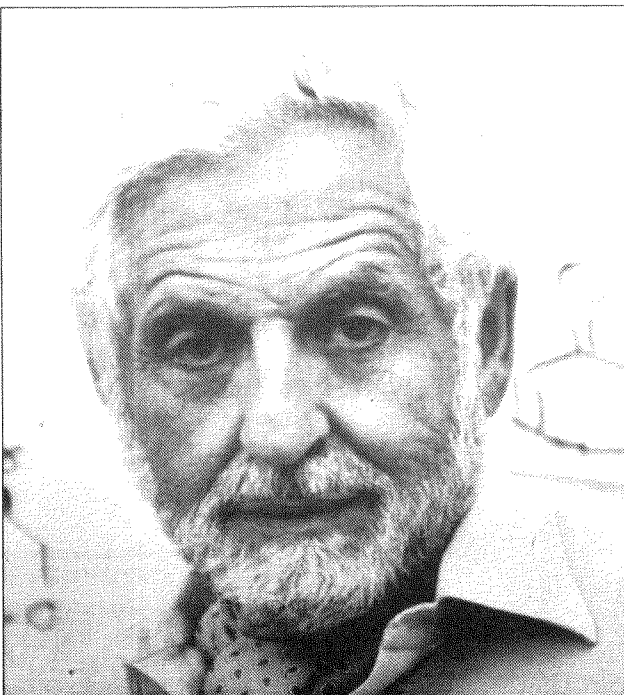
An art collector since his earliest days in graduate school, the Viennese-born chemist sees no conflict between his science and his lifelong interest in art.

"Anyone who likes art likes to have something on the wall," he says. He bought his first picture—a print—as a graduate student earning \$65 a month during the 1940s.

Now he has an outstanding collection of Paul Klee with pieces on display in San Francisco, New York and Europe.

His Stanford office—across the hall from a chemistry lab—is decorated with a wall of chemical diagrams, several paintings and two funeral figures from Mexico dating back to about 800 A.D.

Dr. Djerassi's life is a whirlwind of science, speaking, teaching and art. While he is no longer affiliated with



DR. CARL DJERASSI, "father of the birth control pill," founded an artists' colony on his Skyline ranch in memory of his artist daughter. Photo by Marion Softky.

Syntex, where he made his world-shaking discoveries about the chemistry of birth control, he is still chairman of the board at Zeecon Company—now part of Sandoz Corporation—a company he founded in 1968 to develop new methods of insect control.

At Stanford he runs a research lab and teaches—among other things—two courses related to birth control. "Biosocial aspects of Birth Control" helps students analyze the social, legal and political side effects of birth control and devise practical programs that will work in a specific setting. The other course examines "Feminist Perspectives on Birth Control."

Through these courses and through extensive speaking and writing, the "father of the pill" is attempting to help control some of its effects. He is promoting sex education not only to curb unbridled population growth but to fight the new menace of AIDS. And he was one of the first to urge that condoms be available in every high school restroom.

In addition to collecting and promoting art, Dr. Djerassi is a practicing artist himself. For several years he has been writing short stories and poetry; now he's working on a novel.

This summer Dr. Djerassi and his wife, Stanford English Professor Diane Middlebrook, will visit London and devote three months to writing. He says, "We'll produce our own private environment where we're not disturbed."

Djerassi Foundation artists find stimulus

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room with complete isolation and privacy until supper time."

Down by the choreography studio, dancer/choreographer Edward Winslow crawls out of the engine of his VW microbus. Taking a breather from a 10-12 hour day of exercise and dancing, he and his partner Mary Ann Willoughby exult in their opportunity at the foundation. "It's a real dream to be able to wake up and concentrate

on dancing. It's a real luxury," she says.

Mr. Winslow, who grew up on the Peninsula, appreciates life "without the distraction of traffic, the next appointment, the next rehearsal. We're beginning to develop an individual approach."

On a hot evening the artists eat on the deck under the trees. Mr. Winslow and Ms. Willoughby sit next to Ms. Vaughan and across from poet Vikram Seth and jazz composer Mary Watkins. By the end of dinner they have arranged to meet Ms. Vaughan the next morning to dance in her glade while she paints.

After dinner the whole group visits the studio of sculptor Helmut Bohm. He shows slides of sculptures which explore systematic progressions of shapes as they approach infinity.

Dr. Djerassi and his wife, Stanford English Professor Diane Middlebrook, frequently join the artists for dinner and a performance. "I try to have dinner with the artists about once a week," he says. "Intellectually I find it incredibly stimulating."

GROWTH OF AN INSTITUTION

The Djerassi Foundation is located on the 1,400 acre SMIP Ranch two miles west of Skyline via a tortuous, mostly one-land road.

The name "SMIP" officially stands for "Sic Mannebumus in Pace." The Latin expression for "Thus shall we live in peace" was devised by Nobel Prize-winning physicist Felix Bloch on a challenge. Unofficially, SMIP stands for almost any acronym, such as "Syntex made it possible" or "Sexy man invents pill."

Dr. Djerassi, who then lived in Portola Valley, began buying up land almost 25 years ago, partly because he liked it, partly to save it from development. At one time he planned to donate the land to the county, but became doubtful of the county's ability to take care of its parks and to protect its lands. For several years Dr. Djerassi was a familiar figure in planning commission hearings speaking forcefully—and effectively—against motorcycle parks in the hills.

The family enjoyed the land, and Dr. Djerassi used to camp there with his two children. When grown, both children built houses and lived on the ranch.

Pamela Djerassi's suicide at 28 came as a terrible blow. "It was the single biggest tragedy that ever hit me," says Dr. Djerassi. "I had never encountered death before.

In fact, death was something I was never involved with."

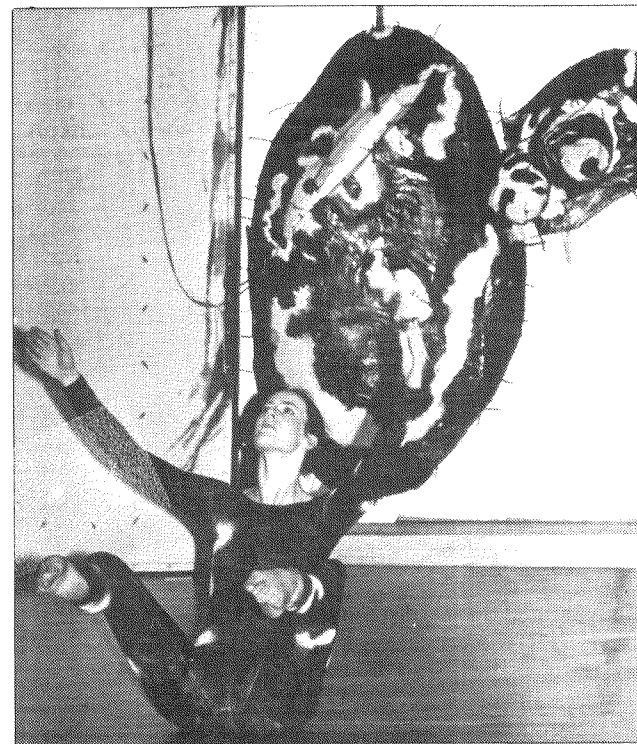
In coming to terms with a death that was premeditated—not the result of accident or disease—Dr. Djerassi wanted to nurture what had been important to her during life. "I wanted to do something for woman artists," he says. "I felt it was one way my daughter's death could have a real impact."

Using Pamela Djerassi's home and 600 acres, which were willed to the family foundation that had already

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PAINTER-SCULPTOR Josefa Vaughan is enchanted by the mixture of life and death in the redwood forests of the Djerassi ranch west of Woodside. She paints polished aluminum rectangles with dark forest scenes in a glade where she has left a sculpture of cut-up metal plates in the roots of a tree. Photo by Carol Ivie.



CLARE WHISTLER shows awakening life in "Systems of Judgment," a work combining dance, music and sculpture born when Ms. Whistler and Duncan MacFarland met Australian sculptor John Davis at the Djerassi Foundation above Woodside. In the background is one of Mr. Davis' sculptures of paper on eucalyptus twigs splotched with tar. Photo by Marion Softky.

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in interactivity of diverse disciplines

Continued from page 14

been set up, Dr. Djerassi first sponsored single woman artists who lived in his daughter's house for a year.

The isolation was hard on the artists and kept them from contributing to the Peninsula and Stanford art scene as Dr. Djerassi had hoped.

So in 1982 the program was expanded to support six or seven artists who spent one to three months each at the foundation. Now 10 or 11 artists participate at once.

Dr. Djerassi thinks this group is about the right size. "It's diverse enough to cover a lot of disciplines and small enough to have some real collegiality," he says. "They can eat around one dining room table."

Artists are selected first for merit and then for diversity. There is a yeasty mix of young artists of promise and proven, older artists. "We are looking for serious artists with some record of accomplishment who would like some time when they can be totally committed to their work and not committed to anything else," says Dr. Djerassi.

Prospective artists are selected by one of four review panels covering visual arts, music, performing arts and literature. Each panel is made up of an artist who is also a trustee of the foundation and two other professional artists.

During its short life the Djerassi Foundation has become a major force in Western art. Its alumni read like a who's who of contemporary American art.

Dr. Djerassi sounds like a proud father as he flips through the list, recounting the artists' works, their honors, their prizes. San Francisco composer John Adams was one of the first to visit the foundation and is now a trustee and head of the music selection committee. Writers Janet Lewis of Los Altos and Tillie Olsen of San Francisco were participants, as were poet Amy Clampitt of New York and National Book Award winner Joyce Carol Thomas. There's been one Nobel Prize-winner—Roald Hoffman of Cornell—and the daughter of another—Inger Alfvén of Sweden.

Besides Dr. Djerassi and his wife and son, many of the 14 trustees who govern the foundation come from the local area. They include Ryland and Shirley Kelley of Ladera, Elliott Levinthal of Atherton and Dr. John D. Diekman of Atherton.

Like many non-profit organizations the Djerassi



"SYLVAN'S STEPS" rise out of a stream deep in a redwood canyon at the Djerassi Foundation ranch west of Skyline. Here writer Charlotte Painter descends the stairway built by sculptor David Nash. Photo by Carol Ivie.

Foundation is finding that its programs outstrip its finances. So it is raising money. "These days we're facing lower interest rates," says Mrs. Stillman. "We're raising two-thirds of our budget."

Mrs. Stillman notes there are many ways to give, ranging from direct gifts to gifts for specific projects. For information write her at Djerassi Foundation Resident Artists Program, 2325 Bear Gulch Road, Woodside, CA 94062 or call 851-8395.

BACK AT THE RANCH—SUCCESS

On a chilly evening in May it all comes together. About 30 artists, staff and friends of the foundation gather for a preview of "Systems of Judgment." The collaborative project of dance, music and sculpture was

born when the artists met at the foundation last year. It is being readied for its world premiere in San Francisco.

Dressed in dark mottled tights, dancers Duncan MacFarland and Clare Whistler evoke the beginning of life and evolution. To music of growing complexity, they dance with the suggestive, almost primeval sculptures of Australian John Davis, mirroring the growth of awareness, thought and conflict.

A simple anecdote was the catalyst for the piece, says Mr. MacFarland after the performance. As the artists worked with the idea—with sculpture and dance and music—"it got a life of its own."

Dr. Djerassi concludes the session. "What you have done is what we hope will happen here—the ultimate demonstration that out of death can come creative life."