

CHRISTINA COGDELL

Explorations in Design and Disability

California designers have made significant contributions toward design for people once stigmatized as “disabled,” and the three examples featured here mark transitions in prevalent modes of thinking about and designing for them. Jason Weems discusses the pioneering work of Charles and Ray Eames during World War II in their design of a wooden splint for injured soldiers. While the Eameses’s approach still upheld the “medical model” of classifying bodies into abled or disabled, they took a bold first step by designing for the “disabled” population. Bess Williamson’s piece focuses on the post–Civil Rights era when disability activists in Berkeley fought for and achieved the first sidewalk curb cuts in the nation. These are hailed as a landmark of Universal Design, whereby the strategy of designing by broadening one’s bottom line to “universal” principles that seemingly encompass all individuals results in solutions that are beneficial to all. David Serlin carries this story into the twenty-first century, arguing that the newly opened Ed Roberts Campus building at UC Berkeley (designed by Leddy Maytum Stacy Architects, 2011), which is contiguous with the Ashby BART station and is the new home for the Center for Independent Living, forges new ground in its urban integration and its approach to social and environmental sustainability. Since the 1960s, widespread activism by both minority and majority groups, including disability activists, has forged new paths for equality and accessibility. California design—taken broadly as it is here in this special issue of *Boom*—has been at the center of these struggles, and it is encouraging to see how California designers today are working to infuse inclusivity into our daily lives, from the clothes we wear to the paths we take as we negotiate a building or a city. **B**

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