
Guide to the Papers of Trude Guermonprez, 1947-1976

Paul Mills Library and Archives of California Art
Oakland Museum of California
Oakland, California

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Papers of Trude Guermonprez,

Date (inclusive): 1947-1976

Collection number: Consult repository

Creator: Guermonprez, Trude, 1910-1976

Extent: 1.67 linear feet (3 boxes)

Repository: The Paul Mills Library and Archives of California Art

Oakland Museum of California 1000 Oak Street Oakland, CA 94607 Phone: (510) 238-3005 Fax: (510) 238-6925 URL:
<http://www.museumca.org>

Abstract: Contains biographical material, writings and speeches, correspondence, photographs of the artist and her work, workshop and seminar notes documenting the professional career of Trude Guermonprez as an artist and art educator.

Physical location: Please contact the Paul Mills Library and Archives of California Art, Oakland Museum of California, for information regarding the location of this collection.

Language: English

Access

The records are open for research with no restrictions under the conditions of the museum's access policy. Appointments may be made by calling (510) 238-3005.

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Papers of Trude Guermonprez, 1947-1976, Oakland Museum of California.

Related Materials

Included with the Guernonprez Papers was a folder of materials relating to the organization of the posthumous exhibition of Trude Guernonprez tapestries held at the Oakland Museum of California in 1982. This file will eventually be accessioned as part of the Oakland Museum archives, but remains housed with the Guernonprez collection temporarily.

Additional information about Guernonprez and her art can be found in the California Design Collection held at the Oakland Museum of California. California Design was a triennial exhibition of the decorative arts and crafts, active during the years 1955 to 1984. Guernonprez participated in California Design Exhibitions 8 and 9, held in 1962 and 1965 respectively.

Separated Materials

The book, *Research in the Crafts* (American Craftsman Council, ca. 1963), which is a proceedings of the Fourth National Conference of the ACC in 1961, is shelved with other books in the Library collection. It is not included in this collection and has been cataloged separately.

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the collection.

Personal Names:

Albers, Anni
Albers, Josef
Elsesser, John
Guernonprez, Trude, 1910-1976
Wildenhain, Marguerite

Corporate Names:

American Craftsmen's Council
Black Mountain College (Black Mountain, N.C.)
California College of Arts and Crafts (Oakland, Calif.)
Pond Farm Workshops (Guerneville, Calif.)

Subjects:

Tapestry--United States--20th century--Exhibitions
Weaving--United States--20th century

Acquisition Information

Consult repository.

Accruals

Additional materials may be added to this collection as donations are received.

Biographical Notes

Trude Guernonprez was born Gertrud Jalowetz in 1910 to Austrian parents in Danzig, Germany. Both parents were involved in the arts and Guernonprez described her childhood home as a place where all forms of art were an integral part of life.

As a student at the School of Fine and Applied Arts in Halle-Saale, Germany—noted for the many Bauhaus-trained artists on its faculty—Guernonprez began textile studies and soon discovered a special affinity for weaving. After receiving her Diploma of Arts in 1933 and then completing further studies at the Textile Engineering School in Berlin, she accepted a position at the Dutch handweaving production studio, Het Paapje. From 1934-1947, she created rugs, upholstery fabrics, and other custom textiles for Het Paapje. During this period she married a young photographer, Paul Guernonprez, who later died during the war.

Her family immigrated to the United States in 1933 and settled in North Carolina where both parents taught at the innovative Black Mountain College. Following the death of her father in 1947, Guernonprez joined her mother and sister and also began to teach at Black Mountain, at the invitation of Josef and Anni Albers. In 1949 she was invited to teach at the Pond Farm Workshops in Guerneville, California, a

Bauhaus-inspired school and artist community founded by Marguerite Wildenhain, a potter and former teacher at the School of Fine and Applied Arts in Halle-Saale.

In 1951 Guernonprez married John Elsesser, a San Francisco builder-craftsman whom she met while at the Pond Farm Workshops. They settled in San Francisco and Guernonprez taught part-time at local art schools such as the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute) and the California College of Arts and Crafts (now California College of the Arts) in Oakland.

In the 1950's, Guernonprez began a period of great activity that combined both weaving and teaching, and which would last for the next two decades until her death in 1976. She was a gifted teacher who has been cited as a formative influence on such contemporary fiber artists as Barbara Shawcroft and Kay Sekimachi Stocksdale. She joined the faculty of CCAC full-time in 1954 and served as the Chair of the Crafts Department from 1960-1976. She was frequently invited to give public lectures and workshops and her lecture notes from this period illuminate her views on teaching the creative process, particularly through the discipline of weaving.

She continued to produce custom textiles, such as rugs, upholstery fabrics, tapestries, "space hangings," and also to design prototypes for industrial manufacture. She frequently collaborated with architects to create special textiles for building interiors. Her art and craft continued to develop and she regularly experimented with new techniques and materials. Some of her later works, for example, weave text into the fabric or create painted tapestries, which she called "textile graphics," using personal imagery.

The American Institute of Architects awarded the Craftsmanship Medal to Guernonprez in 1970. She was made Fellow of the Collegium of Craftsmen, American Crafts Council, in 1975. Trude Guernonprez died in 1976, in San Francisco, California.

1910	Born Gertrud E. Jalowetz in Danzig (then Germany) to Austrian parents.
1930	Enrolled at the School of Art, Cologne, to study painting.
1931	Entered School of Fine and Applied Arts, Halle-Saale. Met Marguerite Wildenhain.
1933	Received Diploma of Arts from School of Fine and Applied Arts. Received diploma from professional training program at Textile Engineering School, Berlin.
1934-1947	Took position at Het Paapje, in The Netherlands. Married Paul Guernonprez.
1944	Began to teach for an adult education program, the Volkshogeschool, in The Netherlands.
1947	Guernonprez immigrated to the United States, settling in North Carolina.
1947-1949	Taught at Black Mountain College in North Carolina.
1949-1952	Taught the weaving workshop at the Pond Farm Workshops in Guerneville, California.
	Took teaching position at the California School of Fine Arts (later known as the San Francisco Art Institute).
1951	Married John Elsesser and settled in San Francisco.
1954-1976	Became full-time faculty member at CCAC.
1960-1976	Served as Chair of Crafts Department, CCAC.
1961-1965	Produced series of works referred to as "space hangings" - three-dimensional structures that depart from traditional tapestry weaving (e.g., "Arachne," 1963).
1966-1969	Completed Notes to John (1966) and Birth of Round (1968-69) which experimented with incorporating text and symbols into the woven fabric.
1968	Commissioned to weave Sanctuary curtain for Temple Beth Am, Los Altos.
1970	Awarded the Craftsmanship Medal by the American Institute of Architects.
	Began work on first of the "textile graphics," combining poetry and personal imagery.
1975	Fellow, Collegium of Craftsmen, American Crafts Council.
1976	Guernonprez died, San Francisco, California.
1982	Posthumous exhibition, The Tapestries of Trude Guernonprez, at the Oakland Museum of California.

Note:

Information for the biography and chronology of Trude Guermonprez was drawn from the publication, *The Tapestries of Trude Guermonprez*, published by the Oakland Museum of California in 1982. Additional information was provided by Guermonprez's vitae and writings.

Scope and Content of the Collection

Contains biographical material, correspondence, writings and speeches, photographs, slides and negatives of Guermonprez and her artistic works. Includes materials related to Guermonprez's career as artist and educator. The earliest materials date to 1947 with Guermonprez's arrival in the United States and cover the remainder of her life to 1976. Guermonprez's artistic philosophy and development are well represented by this collection.

Box I, Folders 1-8 **Series I: Biographical Materials, 1947-1977**

Physical Description: (0.42 linear ft.)

Scope and Content Note

Contains personal and professional correspondence including a letter received by Guermonprez's husband after her death. Some letters are written in Dutch. Also included are photographs of Guermonprez; documents regarding her receipt of the Craftsmanship Medal in 1970; articles written about Guermonprez; and versions of her curriculum vitae. Items are arranged in chronological order though many are not dated.

Folder 1 **Personal Correspondence, 1947-1971**

Scope and Content Note

Contains correspondence to Guermonprez from friends and family.

Folder 2 **Professional Correspondence, 1958-1977**

Scope and Content Note

Contains correspondence to Guermonprez relating to her professional work.

Folder 3 **Vitae, 1951-1977**

Scope and Content Note

Contains chronologies of Guermonprez's career including teaching and exhibition history.

Folder 4 **Awards: Craftsmanship Medal (American Institute of Architects), 1970**

Scope and Content Note

Contains papers and photographs relating to Guermonprez's receipt of the Craftsmanship Medal in 1970.

Folder 5 **Writings about Trude Guermonprez, 1950-1960**

Scope and Content Note

Contains magazine interviews and newspaper clippings about Guermonprez.

Folder 6-7 **Portraits of Trude Guermonprez, 1950-1972**

Scope and Content Note

Contains photo-portraits and negatives of the artist.

Portraits of Trude Guermonprez, 1950-1972

Folder 6 : **Photographs, 1950-1972**

Folder 7 : **Negatives, Undated**

Folder 8 **Telephone and mailing lists, Undated**

Scope and Content Note

Contains lists of telephone numbers and mailing addresses, some handwritten and annotated, others photo-copied from address books and mailing labels.

Box II, Folders 1-6 Series II: Professional Writings, 1949-1974

Physical Description: 6 folders

Scope and Content Note

This series includes draft and final manuscripts of public lectures given during regional and national crafts conferences, talks presented to weaving guilds and university classes, and articles written for publication. The writings are in English and some of the drafts are handwritten. In these lectures Guernonprez often discusses the tension that is created between the artistic imagination and the limitations imposed by the medium. Many of the lectures also discuss her approach to teaching. The series includes short artist statements about her own work and writings about the work of other weavers, the latter often issued as statements from a jury panel. Each subseries is organized chronologically, where possible.

Folders 1-4 **Lectures and articles, 1949-1974**

Scope and Content Note

Contains drafts of lectures and articles written by the artist.

Folder 1	1949-1954
Folder 2	1955-1960
Folder 3	1961-1974
Folder 4	Undated

Folder 5 **Artist's statements and miscellaneous notes, 1949-1970**

Scope and Content Note

Contains short statements written by Guernonprez about her work and artistic philosophy.

Folder 6 **Writings on works of other artists, 1958-1972**

Scope and Content Note

Contains drafts and finished pieces written by Guernonprez about other artists and their work.

Box III, Folders 1-5 Series III: **Workshops and Seminars, 1948-1971**

Physical Description: (0.14 linear ft.)

Scope and Content Note

This series contains notes and brochures for workshops and seminars taught by Guernonpez including the weaving workshop offered at Pond Farm Workshops, a Bauhaus-influenced crafts school located in Guerneville, California where Guernonpez taught in 1949-50. Missing from the series, and from the collection, are descriptions of courses taught at the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, where Guernonpez taught for over two decades.

Folder 1 **Course/workshop descriptions, 1948-1971**

Scope and Content Note

Contains brochures and drafts of brief descriptions of workshops and courses taught by Guernonpez.

Folder 2 **Student comments on Textile Seminar, Fall 1973**

Scope and Content Note

Contains commentaries written by students who attended a workshop taught by Guernonpez in the Fall of 1973.

Folder 3 **Notes on weaving workshops, Undated**

Scope and Content Note

Contains notes and correspondence relating to weaving workshops taught by Guernonpez including slide lists and schedules.

Folder 4 **Proposal for video on weaving and the creative process, circa 1974**

Scope and Content Note

Contains a draft proposal and budget for producing a video documenting handweaving.

Folder 5 **Photographs of displays about weaving techniques, Undated**

Scope and Content Note

Contains photographs of bulletin board displays demonstrating weaving techniques.

 Box IV, Folders 1-10 Series IV: **Artistic Works, 1948-1975**
Physical Description: (0.42 linear ft.)**Scope and Content Note**

Contains photographs, negatives, and slides of Guernonprez's artistic works charting the stylistic and conceptual strands of her career. Represented are (not a complete list of works): painted warp weaving, "Leaf Study" (1948), textile graphics such as "Self-Portrait" (1951) and "Calico Cat" (1955), space hangings and banners "Arachne" (1963) and "Small Banner" (1965), stencil warp graphics, "Dusk" (1974) and "African Ancestor" (1970), double-weave tapestries "Alter Ego" (1970) and "We Are But Two Shadows" (1971), and curtains commissioned for three synagogues, Temple Beth Am, Los Altos (1968), Park Synagogue, Cleveland Heights (n.d.), and Temple Rodef Shalom, San Rafael (n.d.). Also included is a notebook containing sketches and technical plans for weavings, figure and landscape drawings and knitting diagrams.

Photographs and slides in this series are of individual works. They are mostly black-and-white format and are arranged alphabetically by title. Some works are not identified.

Folder 1 **Sketchbook and weaving descriptions, Undated****Scope and Content Note**

Contains a small, bound sketchbook belonging to Guernonprez which holds excellent examples of the artist's plans for weavings, some in color. The sketchbook also contains notes and figure and landscape drawings.

Folder 2 **Exhibition brochures, 1964-1970****Scope and Content Note**

Contains two brochures announcing exhibitions of Guernonprez's work.

Folder 3 **de Young Museum Designer Craftsmen Exhibition photographs, 1964****Scope and Content Note**

Contains a variety of photographs documenting Guernonprez's participation in the 1964 Designer Craftsmen Exhibition held at the de Young Museum, San Francisco.

Folders 4-9 **Photographs of works, 1948-1975****Physical Description:** 4 folders**Scope and Content Note**

This subseries contains photographs of Guernonprez's weavings. Photographs are black and white and in color and are arranged in alphabetical order by title.

Folder 4 **A-G**Folder 5 **H-O**Folder 6 **P-S**Folder 7 **T-Z**Folder 8 **Unidentified works and contact sheets.**Folder 9 **Negatives of photographs of Guernonprez works, Undated**

Folder 10

Slides of works, 1948-1975, Undated

Scope and Content Note

Contains slides of Guermontprez's artwork.