



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

A Finding Aid to the Trude Guermonprez  
Papers, circa 1900-1987, bulk 1932-1976,  
in the Archives of American Art

Sarah Mundy

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Archives of American Art  
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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Trude Guermonprez papers
<b>Date:</b>	circa 1900-1987 (bulk 1932-1976)
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.guertrud
<b>Creator:</b>	Guermonprez, Trude, 1910-1976
<b>Extent:</b>	1.2 Linear feet
<b>Language:</b>	The collection is in English, Dutch, and German.
<b>Summary:</b>	The papers of fiber artist and educator Trude Guermonprez measure 1.2 linear feet and date from circa 1900 to 1987 with the bulk of the material dating from 1932 to 1976. The collection includes biographical material, diaries, correspondence, printed material, artwork, and photographs.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

The Trude Guermonprez papers were donated in 2004 by Eric Elsesser, Guermonprez's stepson, as part of the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

### Processing Information

The collection was processed and a finding aid prepared by Sarah Mundy in 2018.

### Preferred Citation

Trude Guermonprez papers, circa 1900-1987, bulk 1932-1976. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C., Research Center.

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## Biographical / Historical

Trude Guermonprez (1910-1976) was a fiber artist and educator in San Francisco, California.

Guermonprez was born in Germany to Dr. Heinrich and Jalena Jalowetz and attended the Municipal School of Arts and Crafts in Halle Saale, Germany where she learned weaving from Bauhaus artist Benita Otte. In 1933, her parents and sister Lisa immigrated to the United States. Her parents began teaching at Black Mountain College in North Carolina. Guermonprez stayed with her husband, photographer Paul Guermonprez, in the Netherlands where he became involved in the Dutch resistance during World War II. Paul was killed fighting with the resistance on D-Day in 1944. After his death, Guermonprez decided to

move to the United States to be with her mother and sister. Her father had died a year earlier. Guermonprez temporarily led the weaving program at Black Mountain College when Josef and Anni Albers went on sabbatical, and eventually she became a full time faculty member. When the weaving program ended in 1949, she left North Carolina for California to join her former classmate Marguerite Wildenhain at Pond Farm Workshops. There she met her second husband, craftsman John Elsesser. They moved to San Francisco and Guermonprez began teaching at the California College of Art and Design. She was designated chair of the crafts department in 1960.

Outside of teaching, Guermonprez completed designs for textile companies and commissions while still creating her own works of fiber art. She gained little recognition during her career, winning a couple of awards before her death from cancer in 1976. Her only exhibition, *The Tapestries of Trude Guermonprez*, was held several years after her death in 1982 at the Oakland Museum of California.

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## Scope and Contents

The papers of fiber artist and educator Trude Guermonprez measure 1.2 linear feet and date from circa 1900 to 1987 with the bulk of the material dating from 1932 to 1976. The collection includes biographical material, diaries, correspondence, printed material, artwork, and photographs.

Biographical material includes an address book, awards and certificates, two diaries, and a wedding announcement. Correspondence is with Guermonprez's family, Paul Guermonprez, John Elsesser, Gerhard Marcks, and others. Printed materials include Clippings and periodicals about Guermonprez. Artwork contains doodles, sketches and drawings, etchings, and two sketchbooks by Guermonprez and others. Photographs are of Guermonprez and her family.

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## Arrangement

The collection is arranged as five series.

- Series 1: Biographical Materials, circa 1950-1975 (0.2 linear feet; Box 1, OV 4)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1930s-1987 (0.4 linear feet; Boxes 1-3)
- Series 3: Printed Materials, 1946-1976 (2 folders; Box 2)
- Series 4: Artwork, circa 1940-1976 (0.5 linear feet; Boxes 2-3, OV 4)
- Series 5: Photographs, circa 1900-circa 1970 (2 folders; Boxes 2-3, OV 4)

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Decorative arts  
Women artists  
Women educators  
Women textile artists

Types of Materials:

Diaries  
Drawings  
Photographs  
Prints  
Sketchbooks

Sketches

Names:

Elsesser, John

Guernonprez, Paul.

Marcks, Gerhard

Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America

Occupations:

Educators -- California -- San Francisco

Fiber artists -- California -- San Francisco

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Biographical Materials, circa 1950-1975

#### 0.2 Linear feet (Box 1, OV 4)

Scope and Contents: Biographical material includes an address book, an American Institute of Architects craftsmanship award, an American Crafts Council Fellow of the Collegium of Craftsmen certificate, two diaries documenting Guermoprez's travels to Europe and New Mexico, and a handwritten wedding announcement for Guermoprez's marriage to John Elsesser in 1951.

Box 1, Folder 1	Address Book, circa 1950-circa 1970
Box 1, Folder 2	Awards and Certificates, American Crafts Council, 1975
Oversize 4	Awards and Certificates, American Institute of Architects, 1970
Box 1, Folder 3	Diary, European Trip, 1957
Box 1, Folder 4	Diary, New Mexico Trip, 1969
Box 1, Folder 5	Wedding Announcement, 1951 Notes: Handwritten announcement for the wedding of Guermoprez and Elsesser.

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## Series 2: Correspondence, 1930s-1987

## 0.4 Linear feet (Boxes 1-3)

Scope and Contents: Correspondence is with Guermonprez's parents Heinrich and Johanna while they were teaching at Black Mountain College in North Carolina and her sister Lisa after they received their first contact from Guermonprez in two years. Other correspondence is with Paul Guermonprez before he died, John Elsesser, and her close friend Gerhard Marcks. Many of the letters exchanged after Trude Guermonprez's death in 1976 are between Ruth Kath, a professor of German researching Marcks, and Elsesser. Kath writes to Elsesser requesting Marcks' letters to Guermonprez for research. Marcks' original letters along with a couple of translated letters by Kath are included in the files. Marcks' files also include photographs of Marcks, his family, and artwork, as well as printed material relating to Marcks.

Box 1, Folder 6	General, 1939-1987 Notes: Includes correspondence with Kath, Elsesser's family, and museums interested in Guermonprez's artwork.
Box 1, Folder 7	Family, circa 1945 Notes: Includes the first correspondence between Guermonprez and her family after World War II, and notes in Dutch about Paul Guermonprez in the resistance.
Box 1, Folder 8	Elsesser, John, circa 1956
Box 1, Folder 9-11	Guermonprez, Paul, 1942-1943
Box 2, Folder 1	Marcks, Gerhard, 1930s-1940s Notes: Includes photographs of Marcks and his family, loose photographs and a small photo album of sculptures, and sketches.
Box 2, Folder 2-3	Marcks, Gerhard, 1933-1987 Notes: Includes an illustrated card from Marcks, printed materials, and letters from Ruth Kath to Elsesser and his family regarding Marcks' letters to Guermonprez. Also includes a notebook with writings by an unidentified writer.
Box 3, Folder 1	Oversize Gerhard Marcks, 1930s-1940s

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## Series 3: Printed Materials, 1946-1976

### 2 Folders (Box 2)

Scope and Contents: Clippings and articles in periodicals such as *Design* and *Handweaver & Craftsman* magazines are about Guermonprez and her work.

Box 2, Folder 4	Clippings, circa 1970
Box 2, Folder 5	Periodicals, 1946-1976

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## Series 4: Artwork, circa 1940-1976

*0.5 Linear feet (Boxes 2-3, OV 4)*

Scope and Contents: Artwork contains doodles, sketches and drawings, etchings, and two sketchbooks in ink, pencil, watercolor, and other media by Guermonprez and others. Artwork depicts of natural landscapes, figure drawings, and patterns. A portrait of Guermonprez by Lucienne Bloch, a comic strip featuring Guermonprez, and a sketch by Ruth Asawa are also included.

Box 2, Folder 6	Doodles, circa 1940s
Box 2, Folder 7-8	Drawings and Sketches, 1950s-1970s
Box 3, Folder 2-3	Drawings and Sketches, 1950s-1970s
Box 3, Folder 4	Sketchbook, circa 1950s Notes: Sketchbook is labeled "etchings" and includes five loose etchings and one page of sketches.
Box 2, Folder 9	Sketchbook, 1972-1975 Notes: Includes sketches and writings from Greece, California, and Oregon.
Box 2, Folder 10	By Others, Drawings by Children, 1960s
Box 2, Folder 11	By Others, Illustrated Card by Jack Lenor Larsen, 1970
Box 2, Folder 12	By Others, Sketch of Guermonprez by Lucienne Bloch, 1958
Box 2, Folder 13	By Unidentified Artists, undated Notes: Includes etchings that may be by Guermonprez.
Oversize 4	By Others and Unidentified, circa 1950-circa 1970 Notes: Includes drawing of a comic titled "Trude The All American Girl," a painted sketch signed Ruth Asawa, and ink sketches of models.

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## Series 5: Photographs, circa 1900-circa 1970

### *3 Folders (Boxes 2-3, OV 4)*

Scope and Contents: Photographs are of Guermonprez in the studio, with her husbands Paul and John, with her family, as a child, of her home in San Francisco, and of her grandfather Julius Jalowetz.

Box 2, Folder 14	Guermonprez, 1910-circa 1970
Box 3, Folder 5	Guermonprez, 1910-circa 1970
Oversize 4	Oversize Guermonprez, circa 1970
Box 3, Folder 1	Family, Julius Jalowetz, circa 1900

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