WEAVING NETWORKS: INTERSECTIONAL MATRILINEAGE IN THE LIFE OF TRUDE GUERMONPREZ

by
Phoebe Grace Adams

Bachelor of Arts, 2019
University of North Texas
Denton, Texas

Bachelor of Fine Arts, 2019
University of North Texas
Denton, Texas

Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of
College of Fine Arts
Texas Christian University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2021

APPROVAL

WEAVING NETWORKS: INTERSECTIONAL MATRILINEAGE IN THE LIFE OF TRUDE GUERMONPREZ

by

Phoebe Grace Adams

Thesis approved:

Major Professor: Dr. Jessica Fripp, Associate Professor of Art History

Lori Diel

Dr. Lori Boornazian Diel, Professor of Art History

Jennifer Way

Dr. Jennifer Way, Professor of Art History, University of North Texas

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to extend my sincerest gratitude to Dr. Jessica Fripp, my primary thesis advisor, without whom this research could not have happened. Thank you for taking on this immense task, and for encouraging me to take risks.

I would also like to thank the rest of my committee, Dr. Frances Colpitt, Dr. Lori Diel, and Dr. Jennifer Way, for their time and advice over the last year. Your critique and assistance have made me a much better art historian. Thank you also to Dr. Babette Bohn for always challenging me and cheering me on.

From the bottom of my heart, I also thank Andy and Emma. You have both witnessed me at my most unhinged and, for some reason, have chosen to stick around. Thank you for your constant support.

Of course, I would be amiss if I did not also thank my own matrilineal network for inspiring this research: thank you Alexa, Kim, Gail, Sharon, Wanda, Amie, Ms. Edwards, Bev, Dr. Alex, Kathryn, Hailey, Marina, Myranda, Jackie, Peyton, Lucy, and a seemingly endless list of other women, without whom I would not be where I am today.

"…results are only phrases of past chapters, waiting for the story to continue."

–Trude Guermonprez

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Introduction

The fact that women artists have been underserved by art history is hardly a well-kept secret. To be a woman in art through the early twentieth century was to be a perpetual amateur whose artistic "career" was simply a means of occupying her leisure time. It was not until 1971 that Linda Nochlin's "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" seriously challenged our methodologies for studying women of the past.[1] By problematizing the standard patriarchal methods for establishing an artist's supposed "greatness," Nochlin provided the impetus to examine the altogether different circumstances that disadvantaged women in the history of art.

Rather than claiming to uncover a forgotten woman-genius of the twentieth century, this thesis employs matrilineage, both as the product of a specific place and time and as a theoretical lens through which women artists can be studied. I do this to argue that the history of women artists in craft is one defined by networks. For the purposes of this study, "network" is defined as an affiliated group of artists who stem from an individual who serves as the main hub. Utilizing matrilineage to study networks specifically emphasizes the systems of communication and support maintained by women artists within those networks as they navigated an oft inhospitable art world. I will periodically refer to networks in terms of their growth, expansion, and maintenance. These are explicit references to the personal, matrilineally-defined, relationships between network members, which are exemplified in my case study.[2]

---

[1] Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists? (1971)," in *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays*, ed. Linda Nochlin (New York: Harper & Row, 1988): 145–178.

[2] Though I am employing the word matrilineage, I am not referring to its use as an anthropological kinship term. I am using this word in a way that is new to art history: to describe relationships between women in a way that is valuable to the study of women artists across generations, and that is based on transnational and multireligious connections.

This case study, the life of the weaver Trude Guermonprez (1910–1976), provides a hub for one such matrilineal network. I will begin with a brief biography of the artist, followed by an extended discussion of how she exemplifies the proposed methodology, and how her matrilineal network evolved throughout the twentieth century. Her biography is a tangible example of how an otherwise abstract epistemology such as matrilineage can be used by art historians in the quest to study women artists without forcing them into the patriarchally defined canon. I will follow the formation and expansion of Guermonprez's network of female colleagues and propose that matrilineage provides the theoretical underpinnings for her network, even as that network changed over time.

This work, both historical and conceptual, requires ample coverage of a multitude of sociopolitical contexts that shape the lives of women in craft. Matrilineal networks influenced Guermonprez's artistic career in many ways. I will address her network as it impacted her devotion to teaching, as well as how the influence of other women artists manifests in her pedagogy. My argument is not centered upon Guermonprez's weavings, but I will occasionally bring them up in instances where they demonstrate marked influence from women in her network or demonstrate a facet of her educational philosophy.

As a German-born Jewish woman, the atrocities of the Holocaust were life and career-defining for Guermonprez in that they triggered her trans-Atlantic migration. Being forced to leave her home meant that she became part of a community of Jewish women artists who also fled the Nazis. These Jewish artists joined an already established craft tradition in the United States and together helped to integrate craft media into the fine art world.[3] In the United States,

[3] Hazel V. Bray, "Introduction," in *The Tapestries of Trude Guermonprez*, ed. Hazel V. Bray (The Oakland Museum, 1982), 4.

Guermonprez's institutional affiliations ran the gamut from highly experimental workshop spaces to more conventional university programs. This thesis will focus specifically on her role as an educator in three of these spaces: Black Mountain College in North Carolina, the Workshops at Pond Farm in Guerneville, California, and the California College of Arts and Crafts in San Francisco.

It is in these three spaces, I argue, that Guermonprez became an active member of and contributor to a matrilineal network of her own, made up of women in craft. By addressing her dual role as teacher and artist, I will demonstrate that Guermonprez built and contributed to matrilineal networks by providing female students with necessary resources to navigate an uncongenial academic environment.[4] For instance, in my discussion of Guermonprez's time teaching at the California College of Arts and Crafts, I will describe her impact on Kay Sekimachi, a woman artist who Guermonprez brought into her network and who she aided in becoming an educator and professional artist.

The basis for this argument about the role of matrilineal networks is relevant to another key component of Guermonprez's story: her identity as a Jewish woman. Matrilineage is a complex and central part of the history of Jewish women. In some Jewish communities, to be considered Jewish, a child's biological mother must be also Jewish. Judaic matrilineage was established as a means of community survivance, in order to convince Jewish men not to take

[4] Kay Sekimachi Stocksdale, "Trude Remembered," in *The Tapestries of Trude Guermonprez*, ed. Hazel V. Bray (The Oakland Museum, 1982), 22; Howard Singerman, *Art Subjects: Making Artists in the American University* (University of California Press, 1999), 19–21.

non-Jewish wives.[5] Though Jewish theologians have long debated the relevance of matrilineage, it is still an entrenched part of many Jewish societies, particularly those which are more conservative. Her biography, therefore, provides the opportunity to explore matrilineage as an intersection between art and religion as both a framework of study and as a means of community survival.

The first spaces that Guermonprez joined post-migration, Black Mountain College and Pond Farm, were densely populated with other Jewish emigrés. The network of which she is the hub was initially based largely on connections with other Jewish women but evolved to become more secular as she traveled and taught in other places and expanded her network to include many non-Jewish women. Even as religious potency waned, matrilineage remained a key characteristic of Guermonprez's network: her demonstrable creative and professional influence upon female students is what defines her career and, I would propose, her place in the history of art. Altogether, this thesis will not only provide a view into the life of a lesser-known woman artist, but it will do so by establishing matrilineage as a methodology through which women can be further studied.

The Life of Trude Guermonprez

Trude Guermonprez, née Gertrude E. Jalowetz, was born to Jewish parents in Danzig, Germany. Both parents were talented creatives: her father, Heinrich a conductor and

[5] 10 Ezra 3, "Now then let us make a covenant with our God to expel all these women and those who have been born to them, in accordance with the bidding of the Lord…" *The Jewish Study Bible* Second Edition, ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1679.

musicologist, and her mother, Johanna, a vocalist and bookbinder. Guermonprez was encouraged to pursue creative education. In 1930, she enrolled in the School of Art at Cologne to study painting but transferred only a year later to the School of Fine and Applied Arts at Halle-Saale, often called the "Little Bauhaus."[6] In 1933 she received her diploma from the school, and then another from the Textile Engineering School at Berlin. Though she did not study at the German Bauhaus, its influence is obvious in Guermonprez's education, a fact which remained important after she emigrated to the United States. Her pre-migration network included the Bauhaus weaver Benita Otte, who she would later work with at Black Mountain College. Some of the first colleagues to come into her post-migration network, such as Anni Albers and Marli Ehrmann, were also important Bauhaus figures. Both Otte and Albers held leadership positions at Black Mountain College.

The political upheaval of 1933 sent Guermonprez's parents and sister to the United States, fleeing persecution by the Nazi party. As artists and Jewish people, her family faced particular harm from the rise of the Third Reich. Guermonprez, however, stayed in Europe to teach at the Het Paapje weaving studio in the Netherlands and complete industrial weaving commissions. In 1940, she married Paul Guermonprez, but the marriage was short: Paul was executed by the Nazis in 1944, shortly after D-Day, under accusation for leading a Dutch resistance group. Her father's death in 1948 finally prompted Guermonprez to leave Europe and

[6] Charlotte Cotton, "Barbara Kasten" *Artforum*, May 2015, 369.

emigrate to the United States, where she joined her mother and sister, Lisa.[7] There, she became affiliated with Black Mountain College in North Carolina, where her parents had both previously taught. Guermonprez's tenure at Black Mountain would be relatively short–only around two years–but helped her begin establishing connections with other women in American fiber art and develop her pedagogical philosophy.

Guermonprez's pedagogy was based deeply in Bauhaus principles, which challenged assumptions about the feminine and domestic natures of weaving.[8] While at Black Mountain, she developed a teaching style similar to that of Anni Albers, focusing more on practical critique than praise and encouraging students to experiment with non-functional textile forms.[9] She remained steadfastly loyal to the loom and encouraged the same for her students, who learned the importance of understanding weaving fundamentals, and of knowing all parts of the loom. This

[7] Much of the available information on Guermonprez's weavings comes from Hazel V. Bray's catalogue *The Tapestries of Trude Guermonprez*, written for a retrospective exhibition of the same name (The Oakland Museum, November 13–December 26, 1982). Bray provides the most comprehensive view into Guermonprez's weavings available, contextualized by the artist's biography and personal writings. The catalogue also includes anecdotes from Guermonprez's former weaving students. In addition to important information about her weaving techniques, the catalogue also provides insight into her role as teacher, mentor, and friend, to the many women artists who learned from her. The only monographic source available on Guermonprez is Albrecht Pohlmann's *Modell, Kuenstlerin und 'wahre Eva'. Das abenteuerliche Leben der Trude Guermonprez*, published in 2004 but unavailable in English. According to an interview with Key Sekimachi Stocksdale, a student of Guermonprez's, Pohlmann hoped to curate an exhibition of Guermonprez's work for the twentieth anniversary of her death (1996). This would presumably require an accompanying catalogue. It is unclear at this time whether or not that project will ever come to fruition.

[8] T'ai Smith, *Bauhaus Weaving Theory: From Feminine Craft to Mode of Design* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2014), xxvi–xxxi.

[9] Oral history interview with Kay Sekimachi (Stocksdale), 2001 July 26-August 6. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

was with the idea that they should be independent, rather than blindly follow the advice of an instructor.

This pedagogical philosophy was inspired by Guermonprez's own role as an artist. Though Guermonprez remained devoted to the loom, her work still underwent multiple evolutions in terms of format and content.[10] Her early post-migration art is heavily Bauhaus-influenced, no doubt due to her relationship with Anni Albers and Benita Otte at Black Mountain. A wall hanging simply titled *Textile*, circa 1950 (fig. 1), demonstrates marked influence from Albers in particular, in its dark color palette and repeating geometric forms. She continued innovating on the loom during the 1960s and 1970s in California, when many fiber artists were moving off-loom in favor of other processes. One of Guermonprez's innovations during this period was her "warp painting." Inspired by the way that painters use woven canvases, Guermonprez painted with inks and dyes directly onto her vertical warp threads. She would then weave using the weft (horizontal) threads to strategically reveal or conceal the painted design, a technique seen, for example, in the wall hanging *Our Mountains* from 1951 (Figure 2).

Guermonprez left her position at Black Mountain College in 1949, resigning alongside Anni and Josef Albers in symbolic protest of administrative changes to the school.[11] In order to remain in the country with her current visa, Josef Albers found Guermonprez a position teaching

[10] Sigrid Wortmann Weltge, *Women's Work: Textile Art from the Bauhaus* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1993), 176.

[11] Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* (Boston: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1972), 312–315.

part-time at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco.[12] She moved to California, where she also taught at the workshops at Pond Farm until 1952. She was invited there by Marguerite Wildenhain, a friend from her time at Halle-Saale. Though her relationships with its other educators were sometimes turbulent, Pond Farm was key to helping Guermonprez establish roots in California, where she would continue to teach until her death in 1976. These years were formative: her matrilineal network expanded more widely beyond European transplants to include students at these institutions, and her own attitudes towards teaching continued to evolve and solidify while facing both support and opposition from other faculty members.

Guermonprez left Pond Farm permanently in 1952 due to a falling out with Wildenhain, and followed her soon-to-be husband, John Elsesser, to San Francisco.[13] Guermonprez taught innumerable students during her nearly 15 years teaching in San Francisco, and many more during the workshops and lectures that she traveled to teach in other parts of California. She was truly a pioneer of textiles in California: she established the undergraduate and graduate programs in textiles for the California College of Arts and Crafts (CCAC) and taught many notable alumni who also went on to forge new paths in fiber art. Guermonprez served as the chair of the crafts department at CCAC until 1976, when she died of cancer. In the coming sections, I will demonstrate that, as both teacher and administrator, the role of Guermonprez's matrilineal network was to support the plight of female students who faced institutional opposition.

---

[12] Hazel V. Bray, "Trude Guermonprez: Her Legacy Continues Today in the Spirit and Intent of those Who, as Students, were Inspired by Her Knowledge and Dedication to Weaving," *American Craft (Archive: 1979-2005)* vol. 43 No. 3 (June 1983): 3–5.

[13] Albrecht Pohlmann, "Trude Guermonprez, 'Still Not Old Enough to Avoid Foolishness'," trans. Wilfred Bunge, in *Marguerite Wildenhain and the Bauhaus: An Eyewitness Anthology*, ed. Dean and Geraldine Schwarz (Louisville: South Bear Press, 2007), 369-370.

Matrilineal Networks and Domesticity

In a matrilineal community, mothers pass along key community characteristics and knowledge. In Guermonprez's case, that knowledge is the traditional handicraft of weaving, a knowledge that has specific domestic connotations. When I refer to weaving as domestic, I am specifically referencing the way that Parker and Pollock define it in *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*.[14] They argue that the implication that craft is inherently domestic has to do with "where these things are made, often the home, and for whom they are made, often the family."[15] Therefore, when I call weaving and other fiber crafts domestic, I am explicitly referencing their historic association with use in the home and the role of women in producing and maintaining fiber furnishings. Though the archeological record now implies that weaving was an industrialized and unisex trade in Europe much earlier than has been commonly assumed, other fiber crafts like embroidery, which were taught to young women and girls in the home for much of history, have served to reinforce fiber's domiciliary connotations.[16] Even the work of an artist like Guermonprez, who produced objects with no domestic function, might still be associated with the term. Weavings, even when not produced by a woman, are inherently domestic under this definition because of the deeply-rooted association of fiber with the home.

---

[14] Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

[15] Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 70.

[16] Ingvild Øye, "When did weaving become a male profession?" *Danish Journal of Archaeology* 5, nos. 1-2 (2016), 35–36. Many of our presuppositions about the domesticity of craft are being challenged by new archaeological discoveries, outlined by Øye, indicating that weaving may have become an "industrialized" process far earlier than we have thought.

Referring to weaving as domestic subsequently also references its subsequent unfortunate associations with amateurism because of the association of fiber with the "private" sphere.[17] In this period from the late 1940s to the early 1970s, though the number of women in studio art programs expanded, they were often relegated to the world of the "amateur."[18] Elissa Auther, in her book *String, Felt, Thread: The Hierarchy of Art and Craft in American Art.* In this book, Auther outlines the cultural factors delineating the art versus craft debate in the American art world. She directly associates domesticity with weaving, as well as other characteristics that she deems "low," such as amateurism and primitivism.[19] This association between the weaver and the amateur, and the woman as the amateur, is a key factor in understanding why the twentieth-century American art world was difficult for many women in craft to navigate.

One of the primary issues facing women artists was their struggle to be treated as professionals by their male colleagues. This was not a new issue: Rousseau, writing in eighteenth-century France, claimed that women "in general love no art, know nothing, and have no genius."[20] The nineteenth-century philosopher J. S. Mill, even while arguing for legal equality

---

[17] This is specific to the craft world and does not entirely encapsulate the twentieth-century fine art world. That is not to say that these two spheres were entirely separate. However: in the 1970s, feminist artists such as Miriam Schapiro would begin to experiment with using fiber in their fine art practices and were often met with great success. See: Broude, Garrard, and Brodsky, *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1994).

[18] Norma Broude, Mary D. Garrard, and Judith K. Brodsky, *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1994), 12. There are exceptions: most notably, perhaps, is Georgia O'Keefe.

[19] Elissa Auther, *String, Felt, Thread: The Hierarchy of Art and Craft in American Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 14.

[20] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theater* trans. Allan Bloom (Ithaca, NYL Cornell University Press, 1968), 103.

between the sexes, asserted that no matter their level of education, "women artists are all amateurs."[21] Attitudes towards women artists changed slightly in light of the success of the Bauhaus, as popular thought emphasized the importance of the college-educated and gainfully-employed artist, and as the Western definition of art started to include more than just painting and sculpture.[22]

Auther emphasizes the twentieth century as a time when craft flourished in the United States, but also encountered great resistance from a variety of sources due to its definition as "women's work."[23] Her specific focus, the evolving treatment of fiber art and artists, provides essential context for understanding the United States that Guermonprez encountered in the 1940s. However, as the hub of a matrilineal network and as a dedicated educator, Guermonprez helped counter the notion that women in craft were eternal amateurs by providing support to female students who would later become some of the biggest names in American fiber art: for example, Ruth Asawa, Barbara Kasten, and Kay Sekimachi.

Additionally, scholar Mira Schor has identified and problematized the ways that exhibition catalogues and reviews during the post-war period contributed to the problems women faced by over-emphasizing male influences on women artists. The key issue with "patrilineage" (as Schor calls it in her article, "Patrilineage") in the twentieth-century art world was that it tended to conflate the relationships between women artists and their male predecessors and

---

[21] Bridger Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace, *Women Artists and Writers: Modernist (im)positionings* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 70.

[22] Howard Singerman, Art Subjects*: Making Artists in the American University* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1999), 36.

[23] Auther, *String, Felt, Thread*, 22-24.

contemporaries. Critics found ways to connect the work of female artists to male artists even if those connections were tenuous at best.[24] The issue of patrilineage is firmly rooted in art history, beginning with the Renaissance tradition of the artist family, wherein careers in art were traditionally passed from father to son. Many women artists of the early modern period were only able to begin professional careers because of their relationships with artistic men.[25] The problem has persisted throughout history because of systemic sexism in institutions, such as universities, that placed female students under male mentors who were not always able to view them as potential professionals. Such was the case in the mid-twentieth century United States when Guermonprez emigrated and began her teaching career in earnest.

As Schor redefines the biological concept of patrilineal descent to include symbolic relationships, so too does my definition of matrilineage.[26] Although standard definitions of matrilineage refer to biologically-defined mother-child relationships, expanding this definition to include non-familial connections creates a new way of looking at the relationships formed by female weavers and fiber artists in the United States. I argue that the domestic connotations of weaving, plus an influx of women teaching and learning in studio craft programs after World War II, made the post-war period particularly potent for weavers to develop matrilineal

[24] Mira Schor, "Patrilineage," *Art Journal* 50, no. 2 (1991), 58.

[25] Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists? (1971)," 156.

[26] Essential to my definition is Cynthia Eller's *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory: Why an Invented Past Won't Give Women a Future,* which outlines some of the issues common to matrilineal feminist thought. Eller describes the desires of matriarchal feminists of the 1960s to redefine and reclaim the value of the "feminine" through an invented prehistory of female supremacy. She also engages with the role of this type of matrilineage in art, via goddess worship and spiritual activism of the 1970s and 1980s. Though her scholarship is hardly new, Eller's book was instrumental for developing the line of questioning I follow in this thesis regarding possible methodological uses for matrilineage.

networks. I propose a matrilineal lens specifically because it provides a way for art historians to de-center men from narratives about women artists, as Schor implores us to do. Instead, it is possible through matrilineage to demonstrate how women artists influenced and were influenced by other women.

To understand why matrilineage is a relevant lens through which to study weaving as opposed to other craft, like ceramics or bookbinding, and to place Guermonprez within a specific historical context, it is important to understand the long history of fiber that she eventually joined in the United States. Throughout the history of humanity, craft has served society in manifold ways, not the least as a way to enumerate and embrace communal identity–to delineate networks of people defined by class, race, age, or religion. In the Americas, fiber processes have been a particularly essential part of the role of women and girls in the home. Woven cloth has been found in graves in Peru dating back as early as 3000 B.C.E., indicating that weaving has been an essential practice for society since early history.[27] The majority of employed women in what is the United States until the seventeenth century worked with textiles both in and out of the home.[28] Craft scholar Glen Adamson argues that throughout US history, craft, for many people, was the best and only way to protect and provide for themselves and their communities.[29]

---

[27] Suzanne Trocmé, *Fabric* (London: Mitchell Beazley, 2002), 10.

[28] Rosalyn Baxandall, Linda Gordon, and Susan Reverby, eds., *America's Working Women: A Documentary History, 1600 to the Present* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1995), 15–18.

[29] Glen Adamson's new publication *Craft: An American History*, provides the historical backbone for this project. Beginning with the colonial Unites States, Adamson traces the history of artisan production, management, and value, through to the radical and studio craft movements of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In doing so, Adamson reiterates the idea that the United States is a country built on the efforts of craftspeople whose legacies are worth noting even in an overwhelmingly digital age.

Textiles were also a massive household expense in eighteenth-century America, so skills such as needlework and mending were taught almost universally to young women, who could then expand upon elementary techniques as a means of providing for the family.[30] The textile cottage industry was full of women and girls who spun, knitted, wove, and repaired fabrics. The public sewing industry was also dominated by women workers.[31] The nineteenth-century idea that a matriarch overpowered the patriarch regarding matters of her "natural province" firmly associated feminine power with children and other parts of the household.[32] This entrenched idea is one of many reasons that art by women, particularly fiber art, retains its domestic associations, and why women in art institutions during the twentieth century were so often deemed amateurs.[33]

The nineteenth century brought a revolution in industry that overwhelmed artisan makers and indicated enormous shifts in the market for handmade goods. Though the Industrial Revolution did not entirely end home textile production, it did alter its scale. Increasingly, weavers and other fiber workers left the home to work in factories on large industrial looms.[34] Women and children worked grueling hours under dangerous conditions in a hierarchy that set their work in direct opposition with men, who were threatened by their cheap and available labor. As textile work was further industrialized, the American Arts and Crafts movement of

---

[30] Glen Adamson, *Craft: An American History* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021), 26-27.

[31] Adamson, *Craft*, 28.

[32] Laura R. Prieto, *At Home in the Studio: The Professionalization of Women Artists in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 41.

[33] Prieto, *At Home in the Studio,* 43.

[34] Adamson, *Craft,* 32.

1900–1916 attempted to balance mechanized craft by emphasizing the value of handmaking, both in terms of conserving traditional knowledge and producing high-quality goods for the market.[35] Businesses founded by Arts and Crafts supporters allowed women of the time to enter a generally unfriendly corporatized workforce by catering to the abilities they had developed at home.[36]

While teaching at experimental schools in the 1940s and 1950s, Guermonprez established the matrilineal network of which she was the supporting base. When that network expanded to include Guermonprez's students and colleagues at the California College of Arts and Crafts, it acted as direct aid to female students facing the challenges of navigating a patriarchal institution. Though Guermonprez's work does not deal explicitly with domesticity, I contextualize my argument this way because Guermonprez as a woman in craft would have encountered the same hierarchical delineations that I have described.

Following the definition of domesticity that emphasizes function within the home and for the family, Guermonprez's work does not deal explicitly with domesticity, as she produced work that was not solely intended for home or family use. There is an implicit relationship to domesticity, of course, in her choice of fiber media and the weaving process, but Guermonprez intentionally did not engage with domesticity beyond her choice of material or process. This is likely a result of the Bauhaus' influence on her education. Though she did not attend the Bauhaus herself, many of the weavers Guermonprez encountered throughout her career trained

[35] Catherine W. Zipf, *Professional Pursuits: Women and the American Arts and Crafts Movement* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007), 9.

[36] Zipf, *Professional Pursuits,* 84–85.

in the Bauhaus Weaving Workshop. The Bauhaus Weaving Workshop focused primarily on industrial innovation rather than domestic function.

Bauhaus influence is also obvious in Guermonprez's pedagogy. Kay Sekimachi, a student from her time in California, credited Guermonprez with her own artistic shift towards "nonfunctional" and "aesthetically oriented" work.[37] In a 2015 interview with ceramicist and former student Leslie Nelson, Nelson describes how the idea of function played out in Guermonprez's classes at CCAC. According to Nelson, Guermonprez was "very into textiles as art… you weren't allowed to just make a blanket you were going to use."[38]

Guermonprez's main artistic concern was with complex woven structures that could be produced on the loom. See, for example, her many wall hangings, such as *Wall Hanging (1955-1975)* (Figure 3). Fig. 3 is woven using a technique called double-weave, in which two layers of cloth are woven over one another simultaneously and will periodically intersect. Double- and triple-weaves are complex structures that Guermonprez experimented with throughout her career. However, this is not an object with an intended function, other than as a wall-hanging. Even Guermonprez's functional designs were not explicitly domestic. For instance, *Design for an Ark Curtain* commissioned by Beth Am Synagogue in Los Altos (Figure 4), which resulted in a functional (religious) object, still is not explicitly domestic by the standard set by Pollock and Parker.

There is anecdotal evidence that Guermonprez's teaching was better accepted by her female students than her male ones. Take, for example, a critique of her work by Ed Rossbach.

---

[37] Oral history interview with Kay Sekimachi (Stocksdale), 2001 July 26-August 6. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[38] Oral history interview with Leslie Nelson, 2015 March 26. University of Wisconsin-Madison Archives.

He found Guermonprez's dedication to loom-based textile art during the late 1960s and early 1970s distinctly out of fashion. Rossbach, oft described as a textile pioneer, certainly endured an entirely different set of circumstances in his artistic career than Guermonprez. Born in Chicago, he experienced neither the challenges of trans-Atlantic migration, nor the gender-based struggles within the American education system that Guermonprez experienced herself and witnessed for her students and colleagues. Rossbach viewed the nature of the designer-craftsman–the basis of Guermonprez's pedagogical strategy–as a distasteful dead end, and a Bauhaus relic.[39] Though he was known for being radical in his fight for textiles to be recognized as fine art, it seems that he did not recognize the radicalism inherent in Guermonprez's teaching.[40] Her way of breaking boundaries was decidedly focused upon the issues that were faced specifically by women: her lingering dedication to Bauhaus pedagogy and aesthetics was due, perhaps, to its being one of the first art schools to openly admit women, and her old-fashioned dedication to loom weaving was a tangible connection to women of the past. Rossbach desired to thrust textiles into the art world of the postmodern future, but women artists hadn't even achieved equity in the present. That said, even though he found her teaching methods sometimes "absurd," Rossbach still respected Guermonprez's commitment to hands-on instruction, and would eventually write her obituary in *Craft Horizons*.[41]

---

[39] Glen Adamson, "The Fiber Game," *Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture* 5, no. 2 (2007): 157.

[40] Adamson, "The Fiber Game," 159.

[41] Pohlmann, "Trude Guermonprez," 367.

Art vs. Craft and The Bauhaus

By the time of Guermonprez's emigration in 1948, craft programs had exploded in number in American universities. Veterans went back to school in droves, often seeking the potentially therapeutic nature of handwork, and started to populate studio craft programs.[42] Additionally, the impact of the German Bauhaus school began to sweep through the United States, further cementing the place of studio craft in universities. Despite an abundance of newly-established programs for fiber artists in the post-war period, the relationship between "craft" and "fine" art still subjugated the medium in artist communities. The distinction between the two categories was and is hotly debated and highly malleable. In his *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) defines art as an endeavor entirely divorced from function. Kantian ideas about the nature of art versus craft say that art is distinguished by the pleasure of making it, rather than labor, and the total originality of art, rather than the apparently derivative and replicative nature of craft.[43] However, this assertion is clearly inapplicable to the fiber art of twentieth-century American craft communities, especially those influenced by the German Bauhaus.

In the nineteenth century, the debate between the two fields was marked more so by discussions of material. Descriptors like "craft" and "applied" had been used as a catch-all term for media deemed lesser, such as fiber, and distinguished these media from the "fine" arts of

[42] Erin Morton, "The Object of Therapy: Mary E. Black and the Progressive Possibilities of Weaving," *Utopian Studies* 22, no. 2, Special Issue Craftivism (2011): 322–323.

[43] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 87–89.

painting and sculpture.[44] The debate, as it entered the twentieth century, began to again heavily involve notions of function and use.

Walter Gropius founded the Bauhaus in 1919, proclaiming that it would be a utopian school combining many different artistic disciplines. Teachers, who were masters of their particular area, would work alongside students in the school's discipline-specific workshops. This artist-teacher education model had enormous implications for the world of art education and was a key facet of Guermonprez's pedagogy when she taught in the United States. Its influence would be particularly potent upon Guermonprez before her emigration, as she received her education in Europe when the Bauhaus was at the peak of its political influence. The Weaving Workshop, which survived the full lifespan of the Bauhaus (1919–1933), was the primary option of a very limited roster of classes available to women.

Gropius argued in his initial program for the Bauhaus that the arts could only be "renewed" in the wake of World War I by way of cooperation between artists and craftsmen.[45] The manifesto did distinguish between art and craft, arguing that craft can be taught while art cannot– demonstrating Kantian influence, but not dismissing the importance of craft. The initial courses, which were taught to every student who entered the workshops, emphasized the importance of learning certain artistic fundamentals before launching into more rigorously

[44] Auther, *String Felt Thread,* xv.

[45] Walter Gropius, *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus*, trans. P. Morton Shand (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1968), 52–54.

defined specialties.[46] This system would transfer to art programs in the United States after Bauhaus artists fled Europe and populated American universities and experimental schools.[47]

The rate at which women applied for and were accepted into the Bauhaus was higher than Gropius ever expected. In response, a "Women's Department" was established and tasked with directing the women towards the three most suitable workshops for their sex: Pottery, Bookbinding, and Weaving. Pottery was averse to accepting female students, however, and Bookbinding was shuttered within a year, leaving only Weaving open to women. To enroll in classes in other specialties, women were required to enroll in Weaving courses. Though the Bauhaus was uniquely positioned to allow women to learn and teach in a broad range of subjects, this decision continued to force women into what Gropius determined to be women's work.

Relegating women to specific media was not a phenomenon unique to the Bauhaus. It was a time-weathered art historical tradition that had often left women in craft stranded.[48] Though admitting women was at least a step towards equality, it was not one that automatically ensured equity between men and women in the workshops. Bauhaus scholar Sigrid Wortmann Weltge distinguished three main categories of women who passed through the Weaving Workshop. The first category, women who quickly left the Bauhaus and the arts entirely, and the

---

[46] In order to quickly return focus to weaving and gender at the Bauhaus, I have kept this discussion brief. For additional information, see Magdalena Droste's *Bauhaus archiv* (Taschen: 1990), Walther Scheidig's *Crafts of the Weimar Bauhaus, 1919–1924: an early experiment in industrial design* (Reinhold: 1967), or Bergdoll and Dickerman's *Bauhaus 1919–1933: Workshops for Modernity* (Museum of Modern Art: 2009).

[47] Anita Cross, "The Educational Background to the Bauhaus," *Design Studies* Vol. 4 no. 1 (January 1983): 43 (43-52).

[48] Elizabeth Sutton, "Introduction," in *Women Artists and Patrons in the Netherlands, 1500–1700* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 17.

second, who only unenthusiastically deigned to make Weaving their primary artistic focus, made up the majority of the Weaving Workshop's students.[49] The third category, however, was populated by women who not only dedicated their educations to weaving but created from it a lifelong passionate pursuit both in terms of teaching and creating.[50]

Despite the sexist nature of its founding, the Bauhaus Weaving Workshop became recognized as an excellent barometer for artistic innovation at the institution. Its students experimented widely with material and function and even worked collaboratively on major industrial projects.[51] That is perhaps why the influential women artists from the Weaving Workshop might go on to participate in matrilineal network-building in other institutions–they had survived the sexism of the Bauhaus and could therefore go on to help other women do the same in a collaborative manner rather than a competitive one.

Though Gropius desired to keep the Bauhaus apolitical, the school was a clear opponent of Third Reich ideologies.[52] In August of 1933, under mounting political pressure and facing threats to his and his students' lives, then-director Ludwig Mies van der Rohe officially dissolved the school. Masters and students who escaped immediate Nazi persecution found themselves scrambling for passage to other countries, both within and outside of Europe. This is also true for artists outside the Bauhaus who were censored by the Reich, or whose Jewish

---

[49] This phenomenon is also not unique to the Bauhaus, and it would reoccur in craft programs in the United States as well.

[50] Sigrid Wortmann Weltge, *Bauhaus Textiles: Women Artists and the Weaving Workshop,* (London: Thames and Hudson Inc., 1998), 43-44.

[51] Weltge, *Bauhaus Textiles,* 10.

[52] Christina Volkmann and Christian de Cock, "Consuming the Bauhaus," *Consumption, Markets and Culture* vol. 9, no. 02 (2006): 131.

identities became a danger. Guermonprez was one such artist: not officially part of the Bauhaus, but definitely influenced by its practices, and openly Jewish. Ultimately, many Bauhaus weavers fled to the United States to escape persecution upon the school's closure. They took with them complex new ideas about how function, originality, and innovation could exist hand-in-hand in a weaving practice, thanks to their time in the Weaving Workshop. Being Jewish was not the sole foundation upon which Guermonprez built her life and career, but it was arguably the most important factor that influenced her decision to emigrate to the United States in 1944. This was true for many European creatives: even for an artist like Anni Albers, who famously referred to herself as only Jewish "in the Hitler sense," real or perceived Jewish-ness was a driving force in many people's decisions to leave Europe. Migrants from Nazi-occupied countries came to dominate creative communities in the United States in the years following the Second World War.

Guermonprez's post-migration weaving expresses Bauhaus thought in many ways. First, and perhaps most importantly, was her borderline religious adherence to the loom as the most important tool for the fiber artist.[53] The loom was more than just a staple piece of equipment at the Bauhaus Weaving Workshop: it was the end-all, be-all, tool for the Bauhaus weaver, whose focus was on innovation using traditional materials. She would pass this love of the loom along to the students she taught after her emigration.[54]

The pedagogical goals of the Bauhaus, which kept teacher and student in close consistent conversation, would come to dominate North American craft spaces in the post-war twentieth

[53] Bray, "The Tapestries of Trude Guermonprez," 20.

[54] Ibid., 20–21. After her death in 1976, fiber artists returned to the loom in large numbers, but Guermonprez was an exception.

century. Guermonprez taught until her death in 1976, and while her consistency in engaging with educational institutions demonstrates her loyalty to teaching, she would not remain loyal to the sexist discrimination of the Bauhaus. Though the basis of her education may have been influenced by the German school, Guermonprez's engagement with experimental art schools like Black Mountain College and the Pond Farm workshops caused her teaching to evolve. Non-biological matrilineage would play a role in her teaching and her artmaking as she developed rich and valuable relationships with other women artists, thus evolving past Bauhaus prejudice in favor of more arguably supportive educational spaces.

Issues in Arts Education

The end of the Second World War led directly to increased enrollment of men in colleges and universities, thanks to the support of the GI Bill, which provided financial benefits for higher education. According to a 2006 study by Goldin et. al., men outnumbered women in American universities at a rate of 2.3 to 1 until 1947, when women began enrolling in higher numbers.[55] According to that study, the two main factors that increased the number of women in college were an increase in women working "male" jobs (i.e., not teaching), and the widespread use of the birth control pill and other circumstances that changed the fertility rates of female college-

[55] Claudia Goldin, Lawrence F. Katz, and Ilyana Kuziemko, "The Homecoming of American College Women: The Reversal of the College Gender Gap," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 20, no. 4 (Fall, 2006): 133.

age populations.[56] The 1960s and 1970s saw large population increases in female students, with the disparity disappearing almost completely by the 1980s.[57]

Higher populations did not necessarily foster more equity. Even when women's rates of college attendance were equal or almost equal to men's, women joined the labor force in much smaller numbers.[58] The alternative generally offered was domestic work–an amateur outcome rather than a professional one. The trend was not unlike what had happened in the Bauhaus Weaving Workshop, where many women who initially enrolled ended up leaving art altogether.

One particular shift in attitude that characterized the post-war and post-Bauhaus period was a movement away from the painting and sculpture artist of the fine art academy in favor of technically proficient makers of many different media.[59] According to scholar Howard Singerman, these two types of artists–the university craftsman and the academy artist–represented both success and failure, masculinity and femininity, respectively. This new attitude defined how women moved through American art programs during the mid-twentieth century. As media became increasingly divided over their associations with masculinity or femininity, women found that it was difficult to achieve recognition for their work without comparison to a male colleague (a process Mira Schor calls "legitimation").[60] For example: Christopher Knight's 1990 review of Helen Frankenthaler's retrospective exhibition at LACMA references Jackson

[56] Goldin et. al., "Homecoming," 151-153.

[57] Ibid., 150.

[58] Ibid., 136.

[59] Singerman, *Art Subjects*, 38.

[60] Schor, "Patrilineage," 58.

Pollock, Wassily Kandinsky, Joan Miró, Arshile Gorky, Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, John Marin, and Georgia O'Keefe as members of Frankenthaler's artistic lineage.[61] After so many men, the inclusion of O'Keefe hardly counteracts the clearly patrilineal characterization of Frankenthaler's network.[62] Though Frankenthaler was a painter, this review embodies issues that women in craft also faced. To place the accomplishments of women artists in the context of their male peers was not a new circumstance. It is instead an example of how old gender bias was still at play during the twentieth century. The struggle to be taken seriously was exacerbated by an education system that was not only unequal but inequitable, between the sexes. As Weltge stated, the majority of women who entered the Bauhaus Weaving Workshop ultimately did not graduate. Gendered issues did not disappear when the Bauhaus closed, but followed its artists overseas to haunt American institutions as well.

Networks at Black Mountain College and in California

Issues involving the status of women in universities may be one of the reasons why Guermonprez taught at two experimental art schools before moving to a more standard university program. It is also likely that her own matrilineal network, which would begin to form in earnest at Black Mountain College, influenced her to pursue teaching in experimental programs. It is these programs, and the connections she formed there, that helped Guermonprez develop her own career as a "professional" artist and mold her into the ideal artist-teacher. Her

[61] Christopher Knight, "Abstract: LACMA Exhibition Raises Questions," *Los Angeles Times*, February 9, 1990, F17.

[62] Knight, "Abstract," F1.

progression from experimental environments to the California College of Arts and Crafts indicates a shift in how Guermonprez was expanding her network. Many of her earliest connections in the United States, formed at Black Mountain College, were specifically with Jewish women. When Guermonprez came to Black Mountain College in 1947, she was joining the remnants of her pre-war matrilineal network: her mother and sister were both affiliated with Black Mountain. However, from that point on, her network would rapidly expand to include colleagues and students to whom she was not biologically related.

Located in the mountains near Asheville, North Carolina, Black Mountain College is oft described as an "experiment." The school was founded in 1933 by John Andrew Rice upon the idea that free artistic dialogue was the key to creation.[63] The school would, in its 23-year lifespan, undergo many political and financial struggles and see many different ideological regimes. The first regime was influenced by the ideas of Bauhaus-affiliated artists. Rice wanted a "significant" artist to lead the visual art program, so he brought in Josef Albers. Albers and the pedagogy he presented attracted many former Bauhaus members and affiliated artists who had also fled fascism in Europe because it was so similar to the Bauhaus' previous structure. Trude Guermonprez was one such artist. She taught alongside the Alberses until their group resignation.[64]

Though Guermonprez's time at Black Mountain College was short, the connections she made there strongly influenced her artistic practice and her pedagogical methods. These initial contacts with other Jewish emigrés signaled the first major expansion of her network within the

---

[63] Juan Manuel Bonet, "Preface," In *Black Mountain College: Experiment in Art*, ed. Vincent Katz (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002), 11.

[64] Duberman, *Black Mountain*, 315.

United States. In addition to her students, she added Anni Albers and Benita Otte to her network of friends and supporters.

Guermonprez's identity as a Jewish person is highly visible in her art in the decade following relocation. This is not necessarily true of her pre-migration work, which indicates that Guermonprez was safe to express herself religiously in weaving in a previously unprecedented way.[65] For example, *Design for Textile With Two Doves* (Figure 5) and *Design for Woven Torah Cover With Repeating 'Shin'* (Figure 6), both completed sometime between 1948 and 1950, contain references to Judaism in both their functions and religious imagery. Doves appear in the Torah as a symbol of peace, so the appearance of the symbol in Guermonprez's work is perhaps a reflection of her newfound safety in the community. Meanwhile, the Hebrew letter 'shin' is often inscribed on the mezuzah adorning Jewish homes and businesses and can therefore also be seen as a response to her newfound safety in the community at Black Mountain. In the years after her time at the College, Guermonprez also would accept several commissions from synagogues, indicating her sustained involvement with the Jewish community in the United States.

As Judaism was clearly on her mind, it is also an important factor to consider when discussing how Guermonprez participated in matrilineal networks. Though the matrilineal networks in craft that I have already defined are divorced from biological reproduction, matrilineage in Judaism *requires* it to pass along a community characteristic. As a facet of personal or group identity, "Jewish-ness" is difficult to homogenously define and ascribe. Theoretically, matrilineage should provide a reliable way to define a community and ensure its survival. Matrilineal descent in Judaism was established by second-century rabbinic law, though

[65] I say that it is not "necessarily" true because so little of Guermonprez's pre-migration work is extant that it would be difficult to say with one hundred percent certainty that she was not incorporating Jewish themes.

whether or not the practice has been constant is somewhat of a different question.[66] Early Jewish Biblical narratives do not acknowledge matrilineage as any part of Jewish law due to the historically transactional (rather than sacramental) nature of marriage and reproduction.[67]

It is debatable whether or not Jewish matrilineage takes on any feminist connotation in the post-war years, when feminism was rapidly changing in the United States. The Holocaust was an event with major theological repercussions, changing the way that many philosophers defined the very nature of G-d. Emergent theories, such as that of the "feminine divine" and of "divine hiddenness" both recharacterize G-d as passive and feminine rather than active, omnipotent, and masculine.[68] The feminine divine, as explained by scholar Sandra B. Lubarsky, casts G-d within "the classic female role of suffering both with those involved in power struggles and because of them."[69] Divine hiddenness, as articulated by Eliezer Berkowitz, also describes a G-d who is limited and submissive, which are traits traditionally ascribed to women–though not by feminists.[70] Both theories serve to reframe the masculinist discourse of modern theology into an alternative feminine (though not necessarily feminist) conversation.

Though they depart on the issue of biology, Jewish and craft matrilineage share some common themes. The first, and perhaps most important to defining the decades following the

---

[66] Shaye J D Cohen, "The Origins of the Matrilineal Principle in Rabbinic Law," *AJS Review* 10, no 1 (Spring 1985): 19.

[67] Cohen, "Origins," 21.

[68] Eliezer Berkowitz, *Faith After the Holocaust* (KTAV Publishing, 1973), 105–110.

[69] Sandra B. Lubarsky, "Reconstructing Divine Power," in *Women and Gender in Jewish Philosophy*, edited by Hava Tirosh-Samuelson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 302.

[70] Berkowitz, *Faith After the Holocaust*, 105–110.

Second World War, is the notion of community creation and survival. The sheer decimation of Jewish communities by the Nazis destroyed many biological family lines, as well as non-biological communities (schools, businesses, etc.). As survivors, women sought to rebuild their lives, matrilineage could have endured in some communities as a way to create connections to future generations, and to ensure the survival of those (often secular, non-biological) communities.

Holocaust survivors like Guermonprez lived in both physical (spatial) and internal (temporal) exile.[71] They were required to reconstitute or rebuild community to not be entirely lost, but that did not necessarily mean a return to a homeland.[72] Rather, it was a redefinition of home itself. Building networks outside of the home with both Jewish and non-Jewish participants, as Guermonprez did in the art world, could mean survival for the new community. Though Black Mountain College was not necessarily a religious place, it was a safe place for spiritual artistic expression for artists like Guermonprez after their forced migrations.

Black Mountain functioned as a place for safe religious expression, but it was not without systemic issues, nor was any art institution in the post-war United States. The College was significantly less divided along gender lines than the Bauhaus, though its problems regarding race-based exclusion are no secret.[73] That said, the weaving studio at Black Mountain had consistently female leadership of Bauhaus lineage in its first several years. It was because of this

---

[71] Marsha Meskimmon, *Women Making Art: History, Subjectivity, Aesthetics* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 18.

[72] Meskimmon, *Women Making Art,* 21-22.

[73] For more on this topic, see: Wendy F. Soltz, "Just Miles Away but World Apart: Examining Jewish Participation in Integration Programs at Black Mountain College and Highlander Folk School, 1933–1964," *AJS Review* 41, no. 1 (April 2017): 204–206.

precedent that Guermonprez decided to continue teaching after the weaving program's demise.[74] However, this was largely anomalous for midcentury America, where systemic sexism hindered many women artists from succeeding on pace with their male cohorts in studio art programs. For Guermonprez, who witnessed issues related to gender firsthand teaching in a university (and arguably would have experienced at least some form of gender discrimination leftover from Bauhaus ideology while at Black Mountain College and Pond Farm), such oppression would certainly have been a potent motivator for expanding and strengthening her matrilineal network.

Matrilineage became, if not a solution, then at least a partial remedy to this issue in the United States. It did so first by recognizing that all artists, including women, are *made* rather than born. Linda Nochlin argues that art-making is not a process done by one genius individual, but is the product of an individual's circumstances, which either allow her to or prevent her from expressing artistic ability.[75] To make an artist, she must be able to receive equal access and education for her ability. Art education has, throughout time, been inaccessible to women for different reasons. A woman could not produce the Classical nudes required for a great history painting if she were banned from nude modeling sessions at the academy *and* from depicting the female nude as well.[76]

Matrilineage in studio craft remedies some of these gendered issues by providing a network of women that students could view as professional artists *and* teachers. A woman in craft is, ostensibly, less likely than her male counterpart to stereotype female students as

---

[74] Jan Janiero, "Trude Guermonprez: A Quiet Journey," *Surface Design Journal* (Fall 1991): 6.

[75] Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists? (1971)," 158.

[76] Ibid., 159.

amateurs because she has experienced a professional career herself. Additionally, the artist-teacher provided a defined "professional" career path for artists that was slightly outside of the bounds of the art world. This remedy was made possible by the definition of the "ideal" art educator in the twentieth century. Following in the footsteps of the Bauhaus, the artist-teacher is a highly-regarded professional, a master of her craft. Singerman suggests that the artist-teacher was a solution to a problem that existed before World War II wherein university artists aligned more closely with the sciences than the humanities.[77]

Hiring female artist-teachers like Trude Guermonprez was a clear path to more equitable art education for several reasons. As outlined above, Guermonprez represented the "ideal" educator that colleges and universities desired. Guermonprez was the embodiment of the artist-teacher thanks to the influence of the Bauhaus on her own education, and she would remain pedagogically steadfast in this characteristic. This distinction was not lost on her students. Ruth Asawa, who studied under Guermonprez at Black Mountain College, named her as one of many "strong, creative women" in a place where "teachers were practicing artists, there was no separation between studying, performing the daily chores, and relating to many art forms."[78] She was referring not only to Guermonprez, but also to other women in Guermonprez's network: Anni Albers, Benita Otte, and Mahrli Ehrmann, to name a few.

Guermonprez's positive influence is seen quite clearly in interviews with many of her former students. One such student, Kay Sekimachi (Stocksdale), who Guermonprez taught at the California College of Arts and Crafts, would later become world-renowned for her art, with

---

[77] Singerman, *Art Subjects,* 19–21.

[78] Ruth Asawa, "Ruth Asawa, Black Mountain College," accessed January, 2020, https://ruthasawa.com/life/black-mountain-college/.

works in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Smithsonian Institution, and la Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris. In a 2001 interview, Sekimachi described the impact of Guermonprez's teaching and friendship as central to both the development of her style as a weaver and affirming of her decision to seriously pursue what she called a "professional" art career.[79] Sekimachi also credits Guermonprez with empowering her through her style of teaching, which emphasized individual creativity and curiosity.[80] According to Sekimachi, "all the other teachers [at CCAC]… were just sort of teaching superficially, but Trude went much deeper."[81]

Another Black Mountain student, Lore Kadden Lindenfeld, describes the clarity with which Guermonprez was able to teach weaving. Lindenfeld said she "was simply extraordinary as a teacher… I learned from her how to think independently." Lindenfeld had also fled Nazi fascism, and credited Guermonprez as a major supporter in her new life post-migration.[82] Lindenfeld would have more than ten solo exhibitions in the United States before her death in 2010. For her, Guermonprez provided a model for her female students of their potential to succeed in an otherwise unfriendly system. She was a professional artist, honing her technical skills and creative endeavors while accepting major commissions for industrial weaving projects, and she was also dedicated to teaching.

---

[79] Oral history interview with Merry Renk, 2001 January 18-19, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[80] Oral history interview with Kay Sekimachi (Stocksdale), 2001 July 26-August 6. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Weltge. *Women's Work*, 172.

Guermonprez left Black Mountain in 1950 and made the trek westward to California. It is a testament to her popularity as a teacher that two of Guermonprez's weaving students at Black Mountain College followed her to California.[83] Guermonprez's long California period is important for a few reasons. First, it indicated a major shift in her matrilineal network both spatially and temporally away from her initial contacts in the United States. Second, it represents a time in which Guermonprez taught innumerable students and signaled another rapid expansion of her network.

Pond Farm was formed in the 1930s by the husband-and-wife team Gordon and Jane Herr. The Herrs conceived of the place as a utopian colony to be populated by artists who fled the Nazis. They hired Marguerite Wildenhain, who fled the Nazis under duress, to lead the workshops at Pond Farm in 1942.[84] Her pedagogical philosophy rested upon the idea that challenge could and should be valuable for an artist's development.[85] She also openly stated that her students were her family, a clear acceptance of the idea of a familial network of artists.

As was the fashion in the post-war years, the pedagogical focus of Pond Farm was to keep students in touch with handwork during formal instruction, rather than separating the two. Artist-teachers taught theory alongside material (ideally) in harmony.[86] Guermonprez's first courses, taught in the summer of 1949, emphasized: "for all students: experimental studies on color and texture, constructive studies on designing for special purposes."[87] Additionally,

---

[83] Pohlmann, "Trude Guermonprez," 366-367.

[85] Dean Schwarz, "Foreword," in *Marguerite Wildenhain and the Bauhaus: An Eyewitness Anthology*, ed. Dean and Geraldine Schwarz (Louisville: South Bear Press, 2007), 13.

[86] Pohlmann, "Trude Guermonprez," 365.

[87] Ibid., 367.

students were tasked with paying attention to how the "raw material(s)" of weaving could be manipulated as the "basic equipment" of design and creativity.[88]

As implied by the aforementioned course descriptions, Guermonprez remained a steadfast adherent to loom-weaving during this period. She also often took students into nature to sketch, as artistic focus on the landscape was fashionable in the American West during the sixties and seventies, but her work still retained some level of abstraction. Her inclination towards abstraction was not always in favor with other instructors (including Wildenhain), but most accounts claim that Guermonprez enjoyed a very positive relationship with her students.

There is myriad anecdotal evidence from this period of Guermonprez's positive influence on female students from this period, despite the pushback from other instructors. This is also true of her time teaching at the California College of Arts and Crafts, where she also served as the textiles department chair. Her influence upon the women in her network is especially profound in her California period perhaps because by this time Guermonprez had garnered a certain amount of fame in the American craft community (she was the chair of the crafts department at CCAC and was a fellow at the American Craft Council rom 1975–1976), and because her students from these two institutions in particular would go on to achieve high honors. In a 2001 interview looking back at her career, Kay Sekimachi described the importance of the enduring friendship she felt with Guermonprez. The first time she ever heard Guermonprez speak was at Pond Farm: she and two friends made the trek out to Guerneville just for Guermonprez.[89]

---

[88] Bray, *The Tapestries of Trude Guermonprez*, 6.

[89] Kay Sekimachi, "The Weaver's Weaver: Explorations in Multiple Layers and Three-Dimensional Fiber Art," an oral history conducted in 1993 by Harriet Nathan, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1996.

This was true also for Merry Renk, a jewelry designer who encountered Guermonprez at CCAC. Decades after her graduation, she recounted the importance of her conversations in the studio with Guermonprez– even though Renk was not a weaver, she valued the input from an older female professional. Renk was also a mother, which she recalls placing some strain on her ability to socialize with other artists. However, she says that her conversations in the studio with Guermonprez helped keep her on track with her artistic goals.[90] "Trude Guermonprez was also a mentor for me," said Renk in a 2001 interview, "a friendly mentor… some days she would just knock on the door and say, 'I heard this idea that people are working with this. Tell me, do you know anything about it?'"[91] Renk's work is now in the collections of institutions such as the Renwick Gallery and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, an indication of her achievement.

Guermonprez's influence, not just on her female students, but on the entire field of textile art in California, cannot be overstated. Her work as both artist and educator is what, according to scholar Sigrid Wortmann Weltge, "defined the textile arts for the West Coast."[92]

Conclusion

When Guermonprez died in San Francisco in 1976, she and her husband John Elsesser were in the middle of building a new home, aptly named "Twill House" after the woven

[90] Oral history interview with Merry Renk, 2001 January 18-19, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Weltge, *Women's Work*, 176.

structure. She intended to continue teaching workshops in the large studio John was adding to the home. Her dedication to weaving and to education was an endeavor that attempted to outlast her life: Sekimachi and Elsesser sold Guermonprez's yarn collection to try to raise enough funds to start a scholarship in her name for fiber students.[93]

Despite her achievements, there was not a monographic exhibition of Guermonprez's weavings until 1982–six years after her death. The catalogue for this exhibition, *The Tapestries of Trude Guermonprez*, edited by Hazel V. Bray, contains an essay by Sekimachi that centers upon Guermonprez's intensity in the classroom and devotion to her students. Sekimachi would later lament the small size of the audience when the exhibition opened. She stated,

> "To me she was so important that I wouldn't feel that any show really would do her justice. I know that I was kind of disappointed at the opening because not that many people came. I was expecting, you know, huge crowds but maybe that was just beyond all expectations." [94]

Despite the low turnout, it is clear that Guermonprez, as the hub of a matrilineal network, had a pronounced impact on her female students in terms of helping them navigate the hostile terrain of midcentury studio art education. Her network, initially populated by other Jewish women artists, came to encompass women of many backgrounds and even included non-weavers as well. By balancing her career as an artist with her devotion to teaching, Guermonprez was able to provide her students with an example of an accomplished woman in craft.

---

[93] This was, by Sekimachi's account, an unsuccessful attempt. Sekimachi, "The Weaver's Weaver," an oral history conducted in 1993 by Harriet Nathan.

[94] Ibid.

This concept is larger than Guermonprez: applying a matrilineal lens to the study of networks supplies opportunities to study other women in art whose careers did not, for whatever reason, afford them a place in the patriarchal canon of art history. As the field of art history, particularly in the West, grapples with how to best discuss women artists, I propose that employing matrilineal networks as a lens of study provides a way for historians to illuminate the tangible influence of women excluded from the canon.

Figure 1. Trude Guermonprez, Textile, ca. 1950, plain weave with supplementary warp. Image courtesy of Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum Collection.

Figure 2. Trude Guermonprez, *Our Mountains*, 1971, resist dye and stencil graphic. Collection of Mrs. Olive Cowell, reproduced in *The Tapestries of Trude Guermonprez*, ed. Hazel V. Bray.

Figure 3. Trude Guermonprez, *Hanging*, ca. 1955-1975, double-weave silk and metallic yarn.

Image courtesy of Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum Collection.

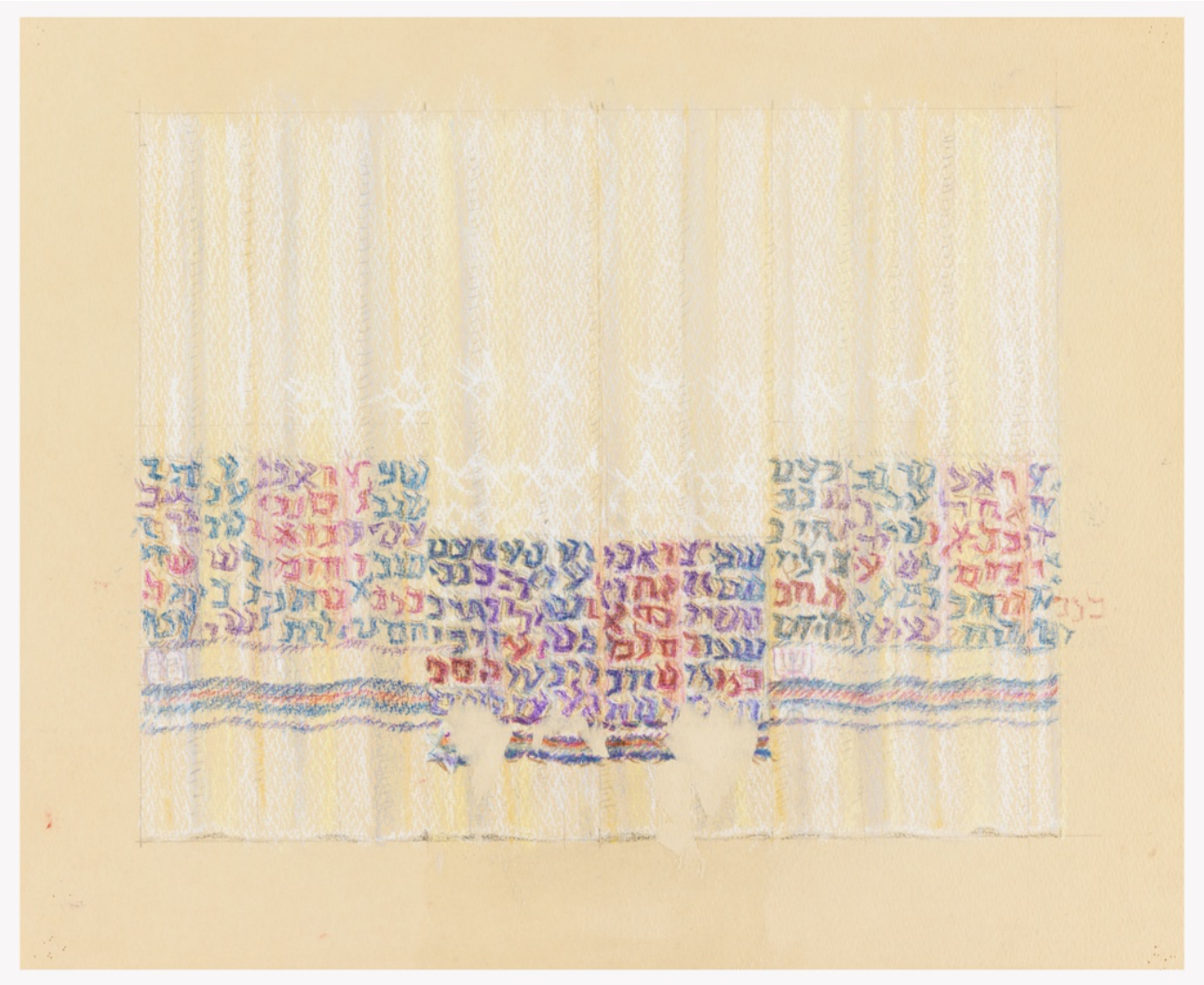

Figure 4. Trude Guermonprez, *Design for an Ark Curtain for Beth Am Synagogue, Los Altos, California*, 1968–9, crayon, graphite, and gouache on paper. Gift of Mr. Eric and Mrs. Sylvia Elsesser, image courtesy of Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum Collection

Figure 5. Trude Guermonprez, *Design for Textile with Two Doves*, 1950, watercolor and gouache on paper. Image courtesy of Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum Collection

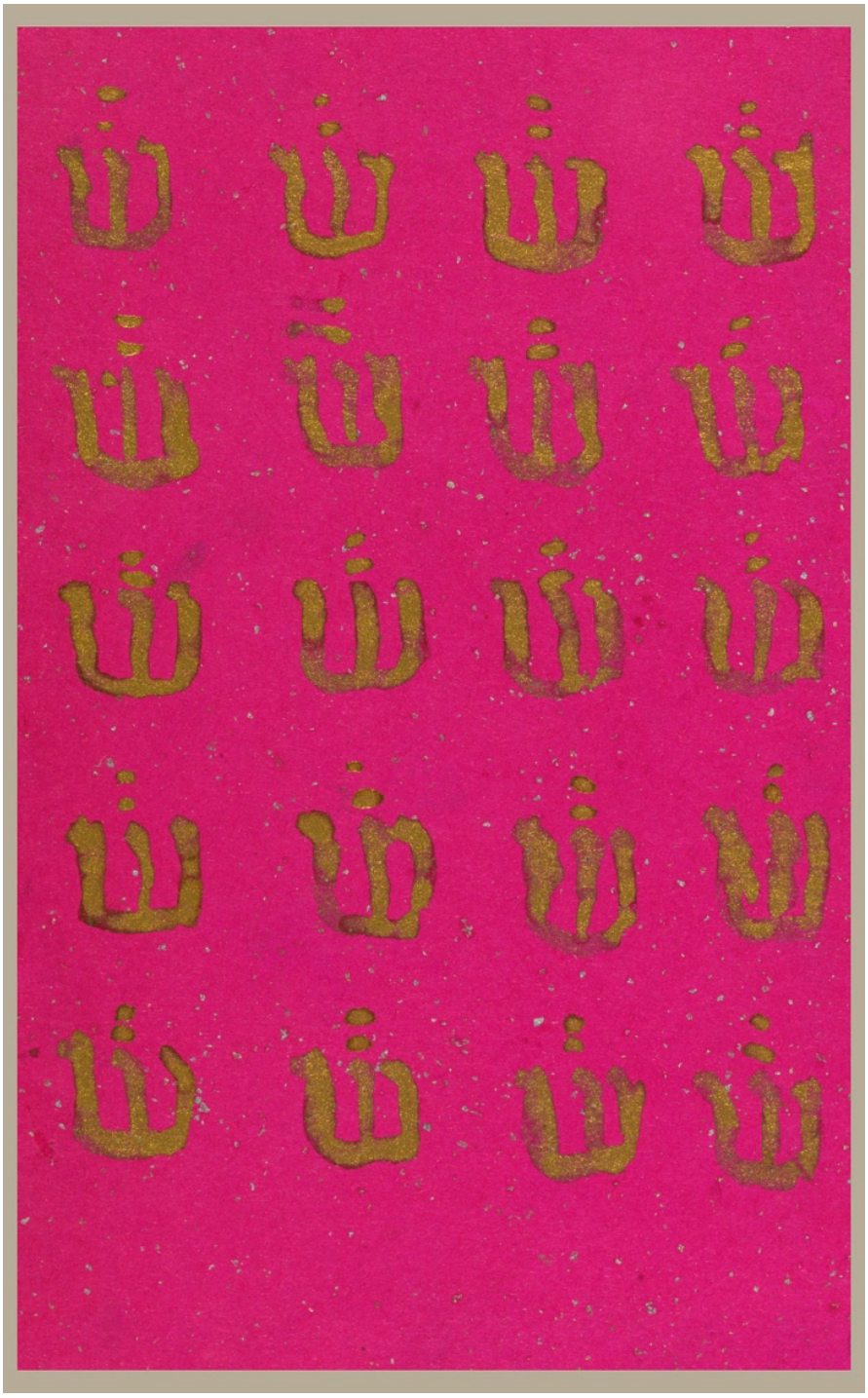

Figure 6. Trude Guermonprez, *Design for Woven Torah Cover with Repeating 'Shin,'* 1950, metallic paint on colored paper. Image courtesy of Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum Collection

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adamson, Glen. *Craft: An American History*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021.

Adamson, Glen. "The Fiber Game." *Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture* 5, no. 2 (2007): 154–177.

____. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Oral history interview with Kay Sekimachi (Stocksdale), 2001 July 26-August 6.

____. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Oral history interview with Merry Renk, 2001 January 18-19.

Asawa, Ruth. "Ruth Asawa, Black Mountain College." Accessed January, 2020. https://ruthasawa.com/life/black-mountain-college/

Auther, Elissa. *String, Felt, Thread: The Hierarchy of Art and Craft in American Art*. University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

Baxandall, Rosalyn, Linda Gordon, and Susan Reverby, eds. *America's Working Women: A Documentary History, 1600 to the Present*. WW Norton & Company, 1995.

Bergdoll, Barry, and Leah Dickerman. *Bauhaus 1919-1933: Workshops for modernity*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2009.

Berkowitz, Eliezer. *Faith After the Holocaust*. KTAV Publishing, 1973.

Bonet, Juan Manuel. "Preface." In *Black Mountain College: Experiment in Art*. Edited by Vincent Katz. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002.

Bray, Hazel V. "The Tapestries of Trude Guermonprez." In *The Tapestries of Trude Guermonprez (The Oakland Museum: November 13, December 26, 1982),* exhibition catalogue, edited by Hazel V. Bray, 5–21. Oakland: The Oakland Museum, 1982.

Bray, Hazel V. "Trude Guermonprez: Her Legacy Continues Today in the Spirit and Intent of those Who, as Students, were Inspired by Her Knowledge and Dedication to Weaving." *American Craft (Archive: 1979-2005)* vol. 43 No. 3, 1–44, http://library.tcu.edu/PURL/EZproxy_link.asp?/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/magazines/trude-guermonprez/docview/1493614753/se-2?accountid=7090.

Broude, Norma, Mary D. Garrard, and Judith K. Brodsky. *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact*. New York: H.N. Abrams, 1994.

Cohen, Shaye J D. "The Origins of the Matrilineal Principle in Rabbinic Law." *AJS Review* Vol. 10, no 1 (Spring 1985): 19–53.

Cotton, Charlotte. “Barbara Kasten.” *Artforum* (May 2015): 368–370.

Cross, Anita. “The Educational Background to the Bauhaus.” *Design Studies* Vol. 4 no. 1 (January 1983): 43-52.

Droste, Magdalena. *Bauhaus archiv, 1919-1933*. Los Angeles: Taschen, 2002.

Duberman, Martin. *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community*. Boston: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1972.

Eller, Cynthia. *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory: Why an Invented Past Won’t Give Women a Future*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2000.

Elliott, Bridger and Jo-Ann Wallace. *Women Artists and Writers: Modernist (im)positionings*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Goldin, Claudia, Lawrence F. Katz, and Ilyana Kuziemko, “The Homecoming of American College Women: The Reversal of the College Gender Gap,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 20, no. 4 (Fall, 2006): 133–156.

Gropius, Walter. *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus*. Translated by P. Morton Shand. Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1968.

Harris, Mary Emma. *The Arts at Black Mountain College*. The MIT Press, 2002.

Janiero, Jan. “Trude Guermonprez: A Quiet Journey.” *Surface Design Journal* (Fall 1991): 6–8.

____. *The Jewish Study Bible*. Second Edition. Edited by Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Edited by Paul Guyer. Translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Knight, Christopher. “Abstract: LACMA Exhibition Raises Questions.” *Los Angeles Times*, February 9, 1990.

Lubarsky, Sandra B. “Reconstructing Divine Power.” In *Women and Gender in Jewish Philosophy*, edited by Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, 289–313. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.

Meskimmon, Marsha. *Women Making Art: History, Subjectivity, Aesthetics*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Morton, Erin. “The Object of Therapy: Mary E. Black and the Progressive Possibilities of Weaving.” *Utopian Studies* 22, no. 2, Special Issue Craftivism (2011): 321–340.

Nochlin, Linda. “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” In *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays*, edited by Linda Nochlin. Harper & Row, 1988. [page #s]

Øye, Ingvild. “When did weaving become a male profession?” *Danish Journal of Archaeology* 5, nos. 1-2 (2016): 34–51.

Parker, Rozsika and Griselda Pollock. *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*. Pantheon Books, 1981.

Pohlmann, Albrecht. “Trude Guermonprez: ‘Still Not Old Enough to Avoid Foolishness’,” translated Wilfred Bunge. In *Marguerite Wildenhain and the Bauhaus: An Eyewitness Anthology*, edited by Dean and Geraldine Schwarz, 365–371. Louisville: South Bear Press, 2007.

Powers, Alan. *Bauhaus Goes West: Modern Art and Design in Britain and America*. Thames and Hudson, 2019.

Prieto, Laura R. *At Home in the Studio: The Professionalization of Women Artists in America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. D’Alembert on the Theater.* Translated by Allan Bloom. Ithaca: NYL Cornell University Press, 1968.

Scheidig, Walther. *Crafts of the Weimar Bauhaus, 1919-1924: an early experiment in industrial design*. New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1967.

Schor, Mira. “Patrilineage.” *Art Journal* 50, no. 2 (1991): 58-63.

Schwarz, Dean. “Foreword,” in *Marguerite Wildenhain and the Bauhaus: An Eyewitness Anthology*, edited by Dean and Geraldine Schwarz Louisville: South Bear Press, 2007), 13–14.

Sekimachi, Kay. "The Weaver's Weaver: Explorations in Multiple Layers and Three-Dimensional Fiber Art," an oral history conducted in 1993 by Harriet Nathan, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1996.

Singerman, Howard. *Art Subjects: Making Artists in the American University*. University of California Press, 1999.

Soltz, Wendy F. “Just Miles Away but World Apart: Examining Jewish Participation in Integration Programs at Black Mountain College and Highlander Folk School, 1933–1964.” *AJS Review* 41, no. 1 (April 2017): 203–233.

Smith, T’ai. *Bauhaus Weaving Theory: From Feminine Craft to Mode of Design*. The University of Minnesota Press, 2014.

Stocksdale, Kay Sekimachi. “Trude Remembered.” In *The Tapestries of Trude Guermonprez (The Oakland Museum: November 13, December 26, 1982),* exhibition catalogue, edited by Hazel V. Bray, 22–23. Oakland: The Oakland Museum, 1982.

Sutton, Elizabeth. “Introduction.” In *Women Artists and Patrons in the Netherlands*, *1500–1700*, edited by Elizabeth Sutton, 13–24. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019.

Trocmé, Suzanne. *Fabric*. London: Mitchell Beazley, 2002.

____. University of Wisconsin-Madison Archives. Oral history interview with Leslie Nelson, 2015 March 26.

Volkmann, Christina, and Christian de Cock. “Consuming the Bauhaus.” *Consumption, Markets and Culture* vol. 9, no. 02 (2006): 129-136.

Weltge, Sigrid Wortmann. *Bauhaus Textiles: Women Artists and the Weaving Workshop*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1993.

Weltge, Sigrid Wortmann. *Women’s Work: Textile Art from the Bauhaus*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1993.

Zipf, Catherine W. *Professional Pursuits: Women and the American Arts and Crafts Movement*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007.

VITA

Personal Background	Phoebe Grace Adams Born in Northampton, Massachusetts Daughter of Alexandra Aldridge and Jason Adams
Education	Diploma, Cypress Woods High School, 2016 Bachelor of Arts, Art History University of North Texas, 2019 Bachelor of Fine Arts, Fibers University of North Texas, 2019 Master of Arts, Art History Texas Christian University, 2021
Fellowships and Awards	Tuition Stipend Award Texas Christian University, 2020, 2021 Outstanding Student in Art History Award University of North Texas, 2019
Professional Experience	Graduate Teaching Assistant Texas Christian University, 2019–2021 Curatorial Intern Kimbell Art Museum, Summer 2020 Visual Resource Library, Assistant Texas Christian University, 2020

ABSTRACT

WEAVING NETWORKS: INTERSECTIONAL MATRILINEAGE IN THE LIFE OF TRUDE GUERMONPREZ

By

Phoebe Grace Adams

Bachelor of Arts, 2019
University of North Texas
Denton, Texas

Bachelor of Fine Art, 2019
University of North Texas
Denton, Texas

Dr. Jessica Fripp, Professor of Art History

This thesis employs matrilineage as a critical lens through which, I propose, art historians can study networks of women artists. My case study is the life of the weaver Trude Guermonprez, who emigrated to the United alongside many other Jewish women artists who fled persecution because of their religion and artistic censorship.

The goal of this research is to examine the role of matrilineage in American craft communities as a critical tool for helping women navigate educational institutions after World War II. Studying the development of weaving communities through a matrilineal lens is key to understanding how weaving is passed from generation to generation. I also investigate the role of matrilineage in Jewish post-war communities. By examining matrilineal networks in the context of post-migration community-building by women artists, I can provide more insight into Guermonprez's influence as an educator. I use interviews with her former students and colleagues as my primary evidence for the argument that matrilineage played a key role in Guermonprez's accomplishments as both teacher and artist.

I also propose that, beyond Guermonprez, matrilineage is a theoretical framework that art historians can employ in search of a more equitable and diverse canon.