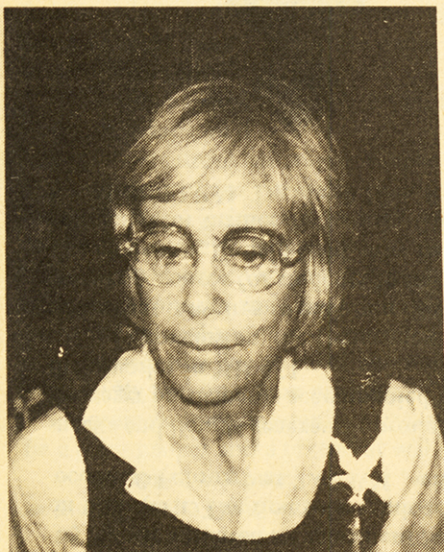


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TRUDE GUERMONTPREZ—  
AN INTERVIEW

By Jared Wickware

"I would just like to know one thing. Why is it that this present generation is so hip on crafts? I see in weaving a very, very ancient technique. Perhaps involvement with this helps to offset a crazy world. These ancients survived. Maybe that is reassuring."

JW—"Perhaps with some it is a comfortable place to hide. There are some who think this way about crafts. How do you respond to that? What do you have to say to the fine arts?"

"We're always discussing the conflict between Arts and Crafts and finally it becomes a boring topic: art-craft, art-art, craft-art. Of course any kind of doing at all this is a vehicle, and what's important is what comes out. I no longer attempt to differentiate, while I would very much like to see a greater degree of communication between the departments, with sculpture for instance."

JW—"Have you tried sending students to the Sculpture Department?"

"I have some slides of Paul Harris' work, and I like his work. Last semester there was a girl, a weaving student, in one of his classes. No one made any attempt to tolerate her approach to sculpture, or to show her what it was she needed to

know; what she was missing."

"Nevertheless she stuck it out through the year and showed steady improvement. She was also consistent in bringing things in to show unlike many so-called sculpture students. Finally on the last day they [the class] got together and told her that she would have to give up her work with the loom if she was ever to become a sculptor. I think this is very harsh advice and I can tell you she is presently back and working with weaving. Perhaps she'll want to try again."

JW—"People sometimes think of weaving as being therapeutic."

"I know, and maybe it is in one sense, but 'occupational therapy.' I don't see it. Like everything else, ninety-five percent is like swimming in the stream. The important thing is whether the medium allows for personal expression. In the case of some for whom weaving is an escape from mass industry I'd say not. No, I'm not in favor of rejecting manufactured products, or for rejecting sculpture, or anything. We should be able to take stock of all these areas, accounting for industry and oil painting, sculpture. To try to be different for its own sake is as bad as imitation. It is meaningless."

Trude Guermontprez (Elsesser) is a professor of textiles and Chairman of Textiles at CCAC. She attended colleges of arts and crafts in Cologne and Halle, Germany. She took her professional diploma at the Textile Engineering School in Berlin, and studied and researched in Finland and Sweden. She worked as a freelance designer for architects and manufacturers in the Netherlands and the United States. She has had exhibits nationally and lectures at universities and conferences in the U.S. and Canada.

Trude spent the summer before last in Holland. Returning with her to the United States is Miss Fenny Nijman from Haarlem, who attended sewing classes and arts and crafts instruction at a teacher-training college in her native town. She is now an assistant teacher with Trude this Spring and anticipates extending her visit through the summer. She enjoys working at California College of Arts and Crafts,

having had previous experience at working with Polish weavers and having toured in Japan and Mexico. She plans to return to teach at the Vrije (free) University in Amsterdam at the conclusion of her visit here. Asked what she likes about the school, Fenny says she is impressed by students being given much more freedom of choice than she ever knew while studying in Holland. "In Holland they decide what you will study and for how long, unlike here where the student can determine his or her own curriculum."

