

Transformations: Land and Lives Renewed

A Visit to Pond Farm

State Park Docent Manual

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods

Funding provided by: Sonoma County Landmarks Commission



Photo taken in 1959

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Contact Information

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods

Mailing: PO Box 2, Duncans Mills, CA 95430

Physical: 17000 Armstrong Woods Road, Guerneville, CA 95446

(707) 869-9177

(707) 869-8252 Fax

stewards@stewardscr.org

www.stewardscr.org

<http://www.pondfarmpottery.org/>

Michele Luna, Stewards Executive Director

Annie Cresswell, Stewards Administrative Director

Volunteer Support:

Charlotte Chavez

Janet Gracyk

Laura Parent

Natalie Robb-Wilder

Sandra Rucker

Amy Southwick

Gail Vann

State Park Support:

Andrea Mapes, Ranger

Leslie Hartzall, Chief of Cultural Resources Division

Christopher Corey, Senior State Archaeologist

Kathleen Kennedy, State Historian II

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Chapter 1 – Where We Are

Pond Farm and Austin Creek State Recreation Area

Austin Creek State Recreation Area (SRA) is comprised of nearly 6,000 acres in western Sonoma County, CA, about 12 miles from the Pacific Ocean. It is visited annually by over 250,000 people, primarily concentrated in the 24-campsite campground and 37 miles of hiking trails. Few visitors have the opportunity to learn about Pond Farm Pottery, the story of its founders, its significance in the art world, U.S., and local history, or the physical wonders found on the site such as Marguerite Wildenhain's rock collection, pottery shard landscape features, or purposefully slanted studio floor. The hope is that this will change through personal interpretation by specially trained Pond Farm Docents, both on-site, off-site, and elsewhere.

As a Pond Farm Docent, you will be representing California State Parks AND the non-profit Cooperating Association, Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods (Stewards). These two entities are working closely together to protect the resources of Austin Creek SRA and educate the public about them. All Pond Farm Docents should be signed up as California State Park Volunteers. This will give docents the protections of the State's Worker's Compensation program and also a free day-use pass for California State Parks in the area (or the entire State, when minimum volunteer service hours are met). As State Park Volunteers, Pond Farm Docents will be helping to carry out California State Parks' multi-faceted mission:

To provide for the health, inspiration, and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

Austin Creek SRA is being operated by Stewards, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, in partnership with California State Parks, from August 1, 2012, until present (Jan. 2018), as a result of the 2011 park closure list and Assembly Bill 42, which sought to avoid park closures by allowing operating agreements of units by qualified non-profits. Cultural resource management and the Volunteers in Parks programs are both responsibilities retained by California State Parks under the operating agreement. Pond Farm is a significant cultural resource listed on the National Register of Historic Places; and Pond Farm Docents are considered part of the Volunteers In Parks program, thus California State Parks' role in volunteer training for and implementation of the program.

California State Parks relies heavily on the capacity of Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods, and other park partners such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the California State Parks Foundation to assist in fundraising efforts and development projects pertaining to Pond Farm, its future preservation, and use(s). Without the support of organizations like these, Pond Farm would not be experiencing the current levels of attention and revival. It will take the support of many partners and passionate docents to educate and inspire visitors and philanthropic interests to learn more about Pond Farm's legacy and to invest in its future.

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods (Stewards) is a non-profit organization launched in 1985 whose mission is to promote preservation through environmental education (EE) and stewardship in support of California State Parks' Russian River Sector, encompassing 29,331 acres of coast, redwood groves, and park lands, including Armstrong Redwoods State Natural Reserve, Austin Creek State Recreation Area, Sonoma Coast State Park, and the Willow Creek watershed. With park closures imminent in 2012, Stewards and State Parks signed a five-year operating agreement to keep Austin Creek SRA open under Stewards' management.

In Sonoma County, Stewards is a leader in docent-led interpretive programs focused on conservation and wildlife/habitat preservation, and in training/support to over 300 volunteer docents/stewards, who give 10,000 hours annually, significantly increasing the parks' organizational capacity. Our annual suite of coastal and redwood orientations and community seminars are popular and well-attended.

Over the past decade, Stewards has developed and enhanced curriculum-based education programs/materials on watersheds, tide pools, and redwood ecology, including docent and teacher resource guides, serving 6,000 school children each year. New partnerships include Latino Outdoors and Sonoma County's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program, managed in part by Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, broadening our program reach to families, especially those in underserved communities.

Stewards' leadership has built a successful track record across an array of interpretive programs, visitor services, and community partnerships. Stewards has also developed deep knowledge of and experience with connecting visitors to Pond Farm, all of which provide a strong foundation for a successful on-going oral history project. Since the early 1990s, Stewards has been working with volunteers who have helped us collect archival materials about Pond Farm Pottery. In 2014, Stewards organized a Pond Farm stakeholders' meeting that established a sense of trust with many of the Pond Farmers, who had been wary of compromising Marguerite Wildenhain's vision. In April 2015 Michele Luna, Executive Director,

participated in the Alliance of Artists Communities' Emerging Program Institute – a training curriculum for organizations developing new artist residency activities. A committee of Stewards' volunteers and staff came together to create this docent manual for Pond Farm.

Pond Farm's Current Status

The story of the Pond Farm Pottery holds a compelling place in the history of art and arts education, women's history, Jewish history, California history, and sustainable living; and it embodies a universal story of triumph in the face of adversity. Founded in Guerneville, California, in the 1930s by Gordon and Jane Herr, Pond Farm was conceived as an artist colony with a faculty composed primarily of artisans forced to flee Nazi Europe. Envisioned by Gordon Herr as a "sustainable sanctuary for artists away from a world gone amuck," Pond Farm evolved into the Pond Farm Pottery School of Ceramic Arts led by Marguerite Wildenhain, an internationally renowned female pioneer in ceramics and ceramics education and a central figure in the studio pottery movement. Wildenhain, an early Bauhaus graduate and Germany's first female "Master Potter," was forced to leave her teaching post in 1933 because of her Jewish ancestry. After emigrating to the Netherlands, she was forced to flee the Nazis once more in 1940, finding a teaching position at the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland before making her way to Pond Farm in 1942. The Pond Farm site — including a 19th century livestock barn converted into a ceramics studio and showroom, Marguerite's modest home, a guest cottage, and cultivated landscape — served for half a century as an important gathering place for artists and students. Her life work as an artist and teacher sent out ripples that still course through the art world.

Located within the Austin Creek State Recreation Area, since 1964 Pond Farm has been closed to the public and maintained in a state of "arrested decay" since Marguerite's death in 1985. In the 90s a new roof was put on the barn and annual cleanups were accomplished by volunteers led by Laura Parent, State Park Worker 1. The guest house was maintained to provide staff housing and protection for the site. The beginnings of a rehabilitation effort are underway to return this significant historic resource to active use. In 2012, the California State Parks Foundation and the National Trust for Historic Preservation joined forces with Stewards and the California State Parks to bring the artistic and historic legacy of Pond Farm back to life with strong community support and a sustainable management plan. The Pond Farm Pottery Historic District was placed on the National Registry of Historic places on June 17, 2014, for its national significance in the areas of art, education, and social history.

Pond Farm represents a special cultural history opportunity for California, with its legacy steeped in a unique Northern California setting that also served as a locus for national and international arts education and collaborations.

Pond Farm partners are committed to engaging the public and serving the interpretive purposes of the park in a meaningful way. A community-based artist-in-residence program is in the works, with selected “artists” representing a broad range of academic disciplines. By engaging the public in history, nature, community, and creativity, Pond Farm programs will seed new ways for State Parks to fulfill its mission of providing for the inspiration and education of park visitors while protecting a critical natural and cultural resource.

Chapter 2 – Being a Docent

Introduction

Our docents are the living heart of today's Pond Farm. They animate the past, bringing the excitement of this community to visitors, inspiring us all to learn from the dedication of these artists to their work and to develop a similarly innovative approach to our lives. Gratitude is owed not only to the volunteer docents who give so generously of their time but also by those volunteers themselves, who are enriched by their experiences and by the knowledge they gain.

The material below has been developed to help you, the potential docent, take on this task. These basic pointers are designed to be used in conjunction with the formal Pond Farm docent training sessions.

Framework for Docent Work: Getting Started

Docents who engage in a conversation with visitors can ignite their interest and creativity. Such a conversation combines active visitor participation with the docent's knowledge and his/her skill in questioning and drawing out the members of the group.

The best docent work deepens the visitor's understanding by intriguing and inspiring them. This requires more complex skills than simply reciting a lecture on often highly technical facts. Most importantly, docents have fun talking about this exciting site and meeting many interested visitors; people who themselves often have much to offer.

General Tips

Obviously, being a docent often entails leading a group of people around a site where they can learn, but it may also include interpreting for outside groups, addressing classes, meeting with civic groups, and more. Some of the issues you should keep in mind in whatever setting include:

1. The group's behavior is influenced mostly by you. Act as if you are in charge. **YOU ARE THE RESPONSIBLE ADULT.**
2. Be sure everyone understands that the group must stay together and alert them to any hazards. Their safety is a primary concern, followed by the security of the site. Tell them what they may and may not touch.

3. Make eye contact with all group members.
4. Be sure you can be heard.
5. Deliver your talk from an outline you develop, not a full-text script, or you will sound “canned.”
6. Be sure you know the procedure for emergencies (See page 86.) and other practical information such as the location of rest rooms, available drinking water, length of tour, accommodations for the handicapped, etc.

Preparing for a Tour

Docents must have some knowledge about the Pond Farm site, its history, Marguerite Wildenhain’s life, art, and the issues surrounding her work. (See Chapter 4—4.C.) You don’t need to be an expert in these subjects, but you must be able to present information that engages visitors by using various teaching techniques, encourage their questions, and know where to find answers you don’t yet know. Your presentation might include activities, quotes, visual aids, and other sensory/hands-on opportunities to stimulate visitor interest in and involvement with Pond Farm.

A good preparation method is to create and become very familiar with your own personal topical outline. This can help you acquire the knowledge base for your talks so you can avoid simply reading to the guests. Part of this preparation could include formulating questions you might ask at various points in the tour and preparing helpful props and activities you want to use to illustrate key points and themes.

The structure of your talk as you lead your tour will include an introduction, a body of information, and a conclusion. The introduction sets the stage for the visit, including the theme, selected key ideas, and the rules and guidelines for the site. The body develops the theme by presenting information, showing or demonstrating aspects of the site and its history, and asking questions to guide the visitor. The conclusion of your talk reinforces the theme of the tour and the important points you wish the visitor to retain (“I hope you leave here today with...”), encourages them to learn more, and thanks them for coming.

(See Sample Tour/Talk, Appendix B in this manual.)

Your Audience

As people arrive, get to know them and encourage their involvement by asking them to take a moment to introduce themselves and tell something about their background, including any experience in art or ceramics. Ask them what they look forward to learning during their visit. Use this information to gauge your presentation to the level and interests of the group and possibly to call on a visitor for relevant insights during the tour.

If you will be leading a group such as students in a class, club, or family group, it is recommended that you contact the group leader in advance. This will allow you to introduce yourself, perhaps prepare the group by sharing some key ideas, and get information about the participants so you can tailor your presentation as needed. Should there be any behavior issues in the group, it will help that you have established some rapport with the leader.

As you begin to feel more comfortable giving talks and learn more of the rich history of Pond Farm and its inhabitants, you will find you can deviate from your outline and adjust your presentation to the specific interests of the group. This becomes easier when you get to know your audience before their arrival or at the beginning of your talk and by carefully observing their reactions, body language, and the types of questions they ask. Like any skilled teacher, you will learn to redirect the focus of those whose attention wanders by pulling out a prop or photo, varying your voice, telling an amusing story, or asking a question.

Inquiry-based Interpretation

The docent who includes questions during a tour (inquiry-based interpretation) creates a more dynamic, interesting visit than one who relies on lecturing. Visitors who feel involved enough to participate in the give and take of questioning have a deeper experience to remember. Visitors may be shy about asking or answering questions for many reasons, but active participation not only enriches their visit but also gives you valuable feedback about their level of understanding. Your questions must be well-planned and carefully crafted, and visitors' responses or questions must be treated respectfully and enthusiastically.

Types of Questions

1. **Memory questions** ask for facts. Such questions might be prefaced by leading questions, to help the listener arrive at the correct answer. Support the person who answers incorrectly with something like: "Good thinking. It seems like that might be right, but in this case...."

2. **Convergent questions** search for the best among many possible answers. (“How could they water the garden?”)

3. **Divergent questions** have many possible answers and challenge the visitor’s thinking and creativity. “What if.....? How many ways.....?”

4. **Evaluative questions** call for the highest order of thinking by asking the visitor to evaluate information and make a judgement. “Is it most beneficial to have a school in a remote, isolated location, and why or why not?”

Within the above framework, you can craft various questions, starting with the most basic: naming the various items on the tour. This will be useful with young visitors and those with no background in art or ceramics. Next in level of complexity are questions about the characteristics of what visitors are observing: comparing different tools, experiencing texture or composition of an item. Convergent questions might follow by asking about types or common aspects of different designs, comparisons and groupings of different rocks or plants and their usefulness. The highest order of thinking/questioning asks for inferences from the information presented (“What aspects of modern art may have been influenced by the art of the period represented at Pond Farm?”)

Another aspect of questioning is how questions are asked. Ask only one question at a time, and use vocabulary that is familiar to the group. Always pause after a question to give visitors time to consider their responses, waiting longer for more demanding types of questions. If there is no response, try re-phrasing the question. Be mindful of who is asking or answering questions to avoid monopolization by certain individuals. Aim to involve all visitors.

Other Techniques for Audience Engagement

The more ways you can engage all the senses of your audience (sight, sound, touch, taste, smell) and the more you can relate Pond Farm to universal themes, the more memorable your presentation will be. Below are several ways you might engage your audience.

- Storytelling
- Clay (activity)
- Photos (laminated and handed around)
- Drawing (activity)
- Quotes, poems, songs
- Artifacts, models, or other items to pass around
- Role playing

- Discuss food preparation or edible plants. [*DON'T LET ANYONE INGEST ANYTHING HE OR SHE DID NOT BRING ALONG. SMELL and TOUCH ARE USUALLY SAFE*].
- Physical comparisons—size, weight, color, etc.
- Imagining (perhaps with eyes closed)
- Discuss what they hear or smell (eyes closed) or ask to count sounds/smells
- Age-appropriate games

Concluding the Tour

Review the main themes and points of most interest to the group, referring to the overall theme of Transformations. Ask if there are any last questions. You may describe actions they can take to help preserve this site or support California State Parks and other historic sites. Offer further resources (See the Bibliography at the end of this manual.) if they wish to learn more about those topics. Let them know you appreciate their visit, encourage them to tell others about Pond Farm, and promote future visits to Pond Farm, Austin Creek, Armstrong Redwoods, and the Coastal Parks. Give any necessary practical instructions, such as how to get back to the ranger station.

Evaluation and Improvement

After your tour, take some time to reflect, reviewing the high points and areas you wish to improve. As you continue to give talks, you will constantly fine-tune your presentation and techniques. The RAPPOR form in Appendix C is an effective self-evaluation format for your use.

Chapter 3 – The Pond Farm Story

Marguerite Wildenhain and Pond Farm Pottery – Janet Gracyk

Marguerite Wildenhain was a potter, an artist and a writer. She was 46 years old when she came to Guerneville and she became a leading ceramicist in the United States, part of a small group of potters who altered the course of ceramics in the United States. Our acceptance of the idea that ceramics can be considered an art form, and that ceramicists may be artists, are ideas that can be directly traced to her influence. This was a radical idea in the 1940s, when Marguerite arrived in the California. She was an early proponent of what we now think of as the Studio Pottery Movement.

As a young woman, Marguerite exhibited her independence of mind by choosing a profession outside the norm for her social class in Germany. Initially she chose sculpture but felt she didn't have enough talent, and she turned to ceramics. She saw the notice for an experimental school, the Bauhaus, and she hurried to sign up, becoming one of the first students to do so.

After finishing her course of study, she became the first woman to achieve Master Potter status in Germany. Throwing pots was considered a role for men, with decoration of pots saved for women. She established an excellent reputation for her work in production ceramics, creating forms for dinner services, tea sets, etc. Along with the work of a handful of other ceramists of that time and place, her work, featuring strong and stripped-down forms, often without any decoration, was a dramatic departure from ceramic designs of the time.

How did this dynamic woman come to live in Guerneville in the 1940s? She had a slim connection to a young couple named Jane and Gordon Herr. They were Californians who were seeking to establish a utopian, Bauhaus-style school, somewhere in the U.S., definitely in a rural area. The idea must have appealed to her idealism and sense of adventure, and she chose to join their endeavor after she was forced to leave Europe.

Gordon and Jane Herr

The vision for the experimental school came from Gordon and Jane Herr. They were disillusioned by World War I and the Great Depression, urban squalor, and upheaval all over the world. As with many in the country and in Europe at the time, they were willing to reject social convention and comfortable surroundings to try to define a better way of living. They certainly did sacrifice in the course of their search. If they did achieve the satisfaction they sought, it was short-lived.

The Herrs wanted to integrate all the arts, with students and teachers working across disciplines toward integrated solutions. The Herrs believed a rural environment was an essential ingredient, and they sought sustenance and inspiration from nature. In 1938, Gordon traveled to Europe to witness different school systems, but also to invite artists to come to California and join him and Jane in their project. Gordon traveled to meet Marguerite and her husband, Frans Wildenhain, at their studio, but the school was only a tantalizing vision at that time.

Marguerite and the Herrs continued to exchange letters after Gordon's return to California. As a first step to realizing their dream, the Herrs purchased a parcel known as Walker Ranch (now part of Austen Creek State Recreation Area). Jane, of an old San Francisco family, the Brandensteins, relied on some family funds for the initial investment. Jane and Gordon moved to the property with their two children. They learned to farm and ranch as they continued to work towards their vision.

The story of how Pond Farm Workshops came to be follows, but let's pause that story to learn more about the life of Marguerite Wildenhain.

Marguerite's Life

Marguerite Friedlaender was born in 1896 to a Jewish family in France. She described herself as secular. She received an excellent education and was fluent in several languages. She studied at the Bauhaus between 1919 and 1925. To learn about art and design, she studied under teachers Lyonel Feininger, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, and Walter Gropius. (She also encountered Johannes Itten, Josef Albers, and László Moholy-Nagy, but did not care for their teaching methods.) Following an introduction to art and design, she received most of her Bauhaus training in a small town called Dornburg, at the pottery workshop of Max Krehan. Krehan was the student's "Werkmeister," teaching craft and technique. Sculpture and theory were led by the artist Gerhard Marcks, the "Formmeister."

Students were taught how to create pottery on a wheel, and they also created forms that could be used for mass production, such as for dinnerware. They were expected to master all aspects of ceramics production, including business and marketing, and they were charged with elevating their work into the realm of art. After Marguerite finished her education at the Bauhaus, she became the chair of the ceramics department at the School of Fine and Applied Arts in the town of Halle-Saale. She partnered with Royal Berlin Porcelain to create new, updated lines.¹

¹ Marguerite's "Hallesche Form" tea service, from 1930, was undecorated, glazed only in white, and was considered quite a sensation in its day.

Marguerite married a fellow potter, Frans Wildenhain, in 1930. She was forced to leave her job in 1933 by Nazis who threatened to destroy the school if she remained. She headed to Holland, sure it would prove a haven, with Frans soon following. She and Frans set up a pottery called "Little Jug" where they made functional hand-thrown pottery. In time, Marguerite again began designing forms for production, winning a prize for her tea and dinner service at the 1937 *International Exhibition* in Paris. After a few short years, she was driven out of Holland, too, by Nazis. Marguerite secured a passport, but her husband could not leave. He continued to work and teach at a school, but was conscripted into the German army. He deserted in 1945 and was hidden in Amsterdam by friends. Marguerite and Frans were separated for seven years. For three of those years communication from him stopped and she did not know if he was alive.

It was 1940 when Marguerite sailed out of Holland, on one of the last boats to make it out of the harbor. She landed in New York and eventually made her way to the Bay Area and connected with the Herts, but there was no school yet. She took a job at the California College of Arts and Crafts (actually, *in absentia* for Frans). She thought the ceramics program at the college in those days left much to be desired.

Now Gordon began actively constructing buildings for Pond Farm Workshops. Marguerite moved to the property in 1942. She camped at the site, and she helped Gordon remodel the barn as the main studio building. She slept in the barn until she and Gordon completed construction of her own little cottage. They began converting other farm buildings to studio and living spaces. Marguerite installed a wheel and kiln right away and began producing pottery. She needed to support herself. She sold her work at Gumps in San Francisco, and other galleries. She also exhibited her work and won a first-place prize in the *Ceramics National* competition in 1946. She may have been producing a few forms for production, but the main work was individually-thrown pottery pieces that she fired and glazed.

Pond Farm Workshops

After WWII ended, Frans arrived at Pond Farm to great celebration. Pond Farm Workshops was officially beginning as an arts and crafts school under the guidance of Jane and Gordon Herr. Frans taught painting and sculpture. Trude Guermonprez, a German weaver from the Bauhaus, was given a position. (She became quite influential in the U.S.) Victor Ries, a metalworker and German immigrant who had been living in the Middle East, taught jewelry. Marguerite taught pottery. Gordon taught architecture.

Other teachers included Claire Falkenstein (painting and sculpture), Lucienne Bloch and Stephen Pope Dimitroff. Bloch and Dimitroff were assistants to Diego Rivera and were frescoists and painters. The innovative composer Harry Partch, considered by some to be one of the most significant composers of the twentieth century, often constructed his instruments at Pond Farm. Jean Varda (collage) participated. The great metalworker, Harry Dixon, became a "summer artist."

Additional artisans and artists associated with Pond Farm Workshops include the photographers Otto Hagel and Hansel Mieth, architect Albert Lanier and his wife, sculptor Ruth Asawa, the painter Forrest Bailey. Other local artists taught classes and artists visited; these included Merry Renk, Roz Watkins, Ed Rossbach, Maija Groetel and Odetta.

Gordon Herr designed the Hexagon House, a new structure at the edge of Guerneville, as well as the Butterfly Cottages, small cabins for students near the Hexagon House. (The Hexagon House burned down, but the Butterfly Cottages continue to exist on private property outside Guerneville.)

1952

1952 was a pivotal year: Jane Herr died and the school collapsed. Accreditation, funding problems and infighting doomed the school. Probably Gordon's non-democratic stance was a problem, but Marguerite was also hard-headed; furthermore, the recently arrived artists were worn out from war. They were cooped up most of the year in sub-standard housing in a remote location. By 1952, Frans had already abandoned both the project and his wife and moved to the East Coast. (He and Marguerite divorced in 1951.)

Marguerite had been fending for herself for many years already, and continued to steadily work. This same year, 1952, Marguerite was invited to demonstrate her skills at Scripps College, which led to her making demonstrations at colleges and university every year thereafter. She was also invited to speak at Dartington Hall, in England, at the *International Conference of Potters and Weavers*. (More on that under "Contributions.")

In 1953, the school was dissolved. Marguerite decided she would make Pond Farm her own pottery school. She accepted students for the summer months, spending the rest of the year working, writing, or visiting schools around the country where she would demonstrate her skills and offer critiques.

Here is an edited quote from the ceramic artist Val Cushing, who was a student at Alfred University in New York in 1952 when Marguerite made a visit:

If you were a beginning potter in the 1940s and 1950s, and your goal was to make pottery your life's work, the person you would have been advised to study with would have been Marguerite Wildenhain. Of course, there were a number of other potters teaching in art schools and universities around the country, but Wildenhain took her students beyond technique and the mechanics of the craft to a philosophical inquiry of the nature of work and the individual's relationship to a creative activity. Historian Elaine Levin, *The Legacy of Marguerite Wildenhain. Ceramics Monthly*, Jun/Aug 1997

“Marguerite came into town in faded blue jeans with a handful of pottery tools wrapped up in a cloth and stuck in her back pocket. Right from the start I was enchanted by her... She was such an incredible inspiration. She was the embodiment of strength, conviction, skill, talent, discipline and leadership... She worked with us, ate with us, drank with us, danced with us and dreamed idealistic dreams with us; and became a model for me of what one could do in live with talent, energy, motivation and a resolve to dedicate oneself. Her skills as a potter were overwhelming. I had not seen anyone who could handle idea, process, and material, and their relationship to the creative process in the way that she could. In 1952 no one could touch Marguerite as the ‘total’ potter.”²
(See Section 4.C.)

In 1955, Marguerite bought some of the Workshops land from Gordon, including the barn, a guest house, and her own little house. She erected a sign that said “Pond Farm Pottery.” She resumed her journey towards creating work that was more expressive and sculptural, exploring her earlier interest in sculpture.

Life at Pond Farm Pottery

Students at Pond Farm were usually quite intimidated by her at first, and some remained so. Others became dear and valued friends. Her summer studio was notoriously challenging. New students were instructed in various subjects touching on pottery, including philosophy, art, and literature. Newcomers began their ceramics work with a small “doggie bowl.” They were not allowed to move onto a new form until they had mastered the beginning form. Typically work was not retained and fired. Marguerite believed it necessary to throw many hundreds of pots to achieve basic fluency and she did not want her students to become attached to early efforts. She did not hesitate to cut into a student’s finished product if she wanted to show them form or the thickness of the pot walls, and this was, understandably, jarring to students. Praise from Marguerite came in doses that were small and therefore treasured.

Students often stayed in Guerneville and walked up to Pond Farm. Former student Dorothy Herger described the journey, through the moist and dark redwood groves into the sunny hillsides, as representing the experience of going from darkness to light, under Marguerite’s guidance.

Former student Dave Stewart had this to say about Pond Farm:

“The first time I walked through the open gates at Pond Farm, I sensed that there were invisible standards there and precious secrets that were not treated secretly or

² Press, Nancy Neumann, and Terry Faith Anderson Weihs. *Marguerite: A Retrospective Exhibition of the Work of Master Potter Marguerite Wildenhain*. Ithaca, NY: Herbert E. Johnson Museum of Art, 1980.

*preciously. I heard from the Master at Pond Farm words I had only read in books, ideas I firmly believed in but never tried to live by. I saw the Master living by those ideas. The integrity, simplicity, and beauty of this example have been a source of strength and inspiration to me.*³

Contributions

Marguerite arrived at an important juncture when most American ceramists were at the limits of their technical skills and aesthetic theory. Other European immigrants also joined a suddenly lively conversation about the future of ceramics. An important contribution Marguerite made was a potting wheel based on Bauhaus designs. Wheels then in use were clumsy affairs that required a person to stand and operate a heavy flywheel at an angle. It took great physical strength, which may have perpetuated the custom of male-domination in throwing pots. The newly-introduced wheels were smaller and lighter. The techniques employed were also more refined and considered a revelation to American potters.

Wildenhain advanced the knowledge of materials and methods in preparing clay, throwing on a wheel, and glazing. Along with Gertrud and Otto Natzler and other European potters, she is directly tied to a major switch from the use of hand-building and molds to the use of kick wheels. (Gertrud used a wheel that had different dimensions from the Bauhaus-style wheel.) Now kick wheels are ubiquitous.

Other innovations and techniques were being introduced during this period. Bernard Leach, from Britain, was an advocate for Japanese methods of creating pottery. The Studio Pottery Movement was well under way in Britain in the 1950s, mostly due to the influence of Leach. He traveled to the United States in 1950 with his mentor, the Japanese potter Shoji Hamada, and the Japanese philosopher Soetsu Yanagi. They promoted and demonstrated a centuries-old Japanese pottery technique and advanced the idea that strong philosophical underpinnings were necessary for strong results. Leach and Hamada exerted a profound effect on the Studio Pottery Movement in the United States.⁴

Marguerite advocated that students throw thousands of pots before they considered themselves even competent. Maybe more importantly, Marguerite was eloquent on the subject of why and how one ought to make pots. She believed a pot was a manifestation of the potter's search for truth and wisdom and required the full dedication of one's intelligence and soul. Her

³ Letter from Dave Stewart to Marguerite. Archives of American Art and on the Dave and Gail Stewart website: <http://www.dgsartgalleries.com/>

⁴ Leach and Marguerite were both speakers at the International Conference of Potters and Weavers at Dartington Hall, England, in 1952. Leach disparaged pottery in the United States, claiming it had no tap root. Marguerite fiercely and eloquently rejected Leach's notion. She and Leach carried on a long public disagreement on the subject. Out of the disagreement, Marguerite became the most well-known spokesperson for ceramic art in the United States, a position she held for a few years. (See Ch. 4 and its section C for more information on this period in Marguerite's life.)

philosophical approach was considered by many students as “rain on thirsty ground.”⁵ She taught and inspired several generations of potters and gave them the skills and desire to become artists in their own rights.

Marguerite wrote three books as well as several magazine articles, taught summer classes at Pond Farm and workshops around the country. She spoke to clubs and hobbyists, enthusiastically describing pottery creation with passion and knowledge.

Her own work and lifestyle were also inspirational. She bucked convention to fully participate in the kind of life she felt was necessary to create beautiful pottery, believing that true art could only be produced by someone who had mastered a craft, certainly, but who also approached each day with integrity, sensitivity, and intelligence; that the artist’s personal qualities would be expressed through the work.

Marguerite was direct and outspoken. Some called Marguerite bossy and more male than female, evidence that her strength, success, and conviction were unusual for women in the field of ceramics in the 1950s and earlier, but she established an international reputation. She was an artist and innovator, as noted by historian Pat Kirkham:

“A number of ‘modernisms’ helped shape ceramic design in the United States in the twentieth century... The synthesis of studio pottery and modernism was a central concern for American potters in the 1940s and 1950s, and Wildenhain was one of the foremost thinkers and writers on the subject.”⁶

Marguerite worked into her 80s. The last time the kiln was fired was 1980, and she passed away in 1985. Wildenhain’s reputation as an artist was widely known and respected, even during the 1960s boom in Funk ceramics. As many observers of ceramics write, the Funk movement in ceramics would not have taken place without the Studio Pottery Movement and the acceptance of ceramics as a fine art.

Once in a while an artist reaches the undisputed stature of master. Just how or when one arrives at such a level is impossible to determine, yet recognition of it is usually unanimous and undisputed. Marguerite Wildenhain has achieved that eminence in the field of pottery. By now generations of American potters owe their attitudes and techniques to the teacher at Pond Farm in northern California. Nancy Neumann Press and Terry Faith Anderson Weihs. "Marguerite: A Retrospective Exhibition" of the Work of Master Potter Marguerite Wildenhain." 1980.

⁵ "Judy Weeden," Judy Weeden, accessed November 27, 2012, <http://judyweeden.com/>

⁶ Kirkham, Pat. *Women Designers in the USA, 1900-2000: Diversity and Difference*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000.

She was honored with the Charles Binn award, and in 1982 was selected by *Ceramics Monthly* as one of the twelve foremost living ceramists in the country. Her work is in the collection of museums in the United States, as well as international museums.

Pond Farm and California State Parks

In the 1960s there was funding to expand parks and the State began to acquire properties for new parks. The land containing Pond Farm Pottery and Gordon Herr's land, as well as that of several other property owners, was purchased by the state through public domain to create Austin Creek State Recreation Area.

Neither Gordon nor Marguerite wanted to sell their land. Gordon brought a lawsuit, but lost. Marguerite's students began a letter-writing campaign to assure she would not have to leave her property. She was allowed to stay. Her land was purchased and she paid rent to the state and continued her summer school until 1980. The Pond Farm Workshops buildings that remained on Gordon's property, and a house he had lived in, as well as other buildings, were razed very quickly, and Austin Creek State Recreation Area was created.

After Marguerite's death, her belongings were dispersed per her wishes, with much of her collection going to Luther College in Iowa (where a former student, Dean Schwarz, teaches). The Pond Farm Pottery buildings were in limbo. The guest house was remodeled inside for use as a Parks employee residence. The barn was simply locked up, with nearly all the potting wheels, and Marguerite's first kiln, intact.

An appreciation for Marguerite's story, and the presence of her house and the studio, began to grow. Employees stationed at Austin Creek became de-facto caretakers, with Parks Maintenance Worker Laura Parent collecting archival information about Pond Farm and keeping an eye on the property. Other State Parks employees understood the importance of the site and began quiet efforts to raise consciousness about the remarkable story embedded in this place. The State Park cooperating association, Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods (Stewards), stepped up to assist in the operations and interpretation of this important historic resource in 2012 when Austin Creek State Recreation Area was slated to close. At that time the National Trust for Historic Preservation named the property as a "National Treasure" and the California State Parks Foundation recognized the new partnership with California State Parks as a "model of excellence." California State Parks commissioned a National Register nomination, resulting placement on the National Register, and the property was designated as significant at a national level in 2015. The nonprofit/State Park partnership worked together to acquire State Parks grant funds to stabilize the historic barn and Marguerite's house, completed in 2017. In 2017, State Park funding will renovate the guest house for ADA compatibility, which will lead the way for an Artist-in-Residence program managed by Stewards.

Chapter 4 – Transformations Over Time:

Notes on Pond Farm and Marguerite Wildenhain

by Natalie Robb-Wilder

The Land / Habitat / Early People and Settlers / Pond Farm's Origins / The Colony Begins
/ Going Solo: Pond Farm Pottery

4.A - Influences on Marguerite: Early Bauhaus, Her Masters, Values, and Goals -- How Bauhaus experiences influenced Marguerite's student-teacher relationships / Marguerite's innovations in the modern Bauhaus style / Form unified with function / Marguerite's designs influence commercial production/ Marguerite's forced resignation, resettlement, flight to the U.S. / Marguerite's professional timeline / Rodin's "Testament"

4.B – Challenges to Their Dream 1939-1952 -- The Herrs and Marguerite create Pond Farm Workshops: Ideas / Trials / Misunderstandings / Marguerite's resolve / The Herr children's views

4.C – Marguerite's Commitment and Impact: Pond Farm Pottery 1953-1980 -- Marguerite's tenacity / Her mission / Students' memories / Notes on her lessons/ Critique of an advanced student's work / Craft and truthful expression / How drawing influenced Marguerite's work / A student compares the philosophies of his teachers/ Marguerite defines the quest for inspired freedom / Potters dissent

POND FARM: WHAT DOES THIS SITE MEAN TO US?

TRANSFORMATIONS: Studying this land and the transformations that have occurred here offers us many layers to investigate. From the history of its major geologic formations to those of human endeavor, changes have been dramatic and reveal a lineage of nature and human culture, from the early native tribes to the present, where forms and forces of the natural world influenced practical necessities as well as creative interpretation. Efforts dedicated to developing our abilities to live and create purposefully with heart and mind are revealed in the stories about Pond Farm. These notes are only to guide glimpses into how people, in this natural environment, drew new vision from themselves and each other as they developed the skills to transform their discoveries into creation.

POND FARM: WHAT DOES THIS SITE MEAN TO US?

THE LAND:

RICH WITH GEOLOGICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE, THIS PLACE REVEALS ITS HISTORY.

Pond Farm is built upon rocks that are approximately 140-150 million years old. This Franciscan Formation is the 'basement' rock layer of California's North Coast Ranges. Five to seven million years ago the sea floor uplifted and became part of the North American continent. Franciscan rocks, including sandstone, shale, serpentine, blue schist, and chert abound within the area.

Chert is a microcrystalline sedimentary rock composed of silicon dioxide. Chert fractures easily and produces very sharp edges. Early people used chert to make cutting tools and weapons. The name 'flint' is also used for this rock.

Less dense than chert, **schist** is composed of crystals that can be seen with the naked eye. Schist is a metamorphic rock -- formed from the pressure of plate tectonics. When the shifting plates cause the earth's crust to heat and crumple up, the shale 'parent' rock metamorphoses into new rock. Depending on the degree of heat and pressure, the rock is changed into slate, phyllite, schist or gneiss.

Schist is associated with regional metamorphism that builds mountains – as it did here!

The archeological record suggests that people have been aware of the site where Pond Farm is nowadays for at least the past 5000 years.

The local Kashaya Pomo and Southern Pomo Indians used the chert rocks for arrow points, knives and scrapers. Sandstone was used for grinding, and schist was best for making petroglyphs.⁷

When non-native settlers arrived in 1867, these same rocks were cleared from fields and used to construct fences, fireplaces, and house foundations. Much later, some of the more colorful and oddly-shaped rocks were set into Marguerite Wildenhain's Pond Farm rock garden just outside the old barn studio.

EARLY PEOPLE:

⁷ E. Breck Parkman, "Pond Farm: 9000 Years of Archaeological Significance," *MW+B*, pp. 24-6.

EARLY SETTLERS:

DID THE NATIVE TRIBES LIVE ON THIS SITE?

Only a few, if any, of the archaeological sites in the vicinity of Pond Farm were inhabited permanently. Those few were at important stream confluences or atop open ridges and likely inhabited by small groups, perhaps an extended family or two.

WHAT ARE "MIDDENS"?

(Middens are dumps of habitation refuse, broken pottery, and other garbage.)

The Austin Creek area was apparently utilized by the Pomo primarily for hunting and food gathering and a source for stone tool-making materials. While most of the sites suggest ephemeral use, a few were occupied long enough to create rich, dark middens.

HOW OLD IS THE EVIDENCE?

Evidence also suggests that people traveled through the area to the coast to trade and acquire important marine resources: seaweed, dried fish, and clamshells for beadwork. Chert projectile points indicating the Clear Lake Highlands (about 90 miles inland), dated between 5000 – 3000 years ago, have been found at Pond Farm, where there may have been a trailside camp. Use of this camp continued into the 20th C. In the early 1940s, Wappo Indian trading parties were seen stopping at Pond Farm on their way to the coast.

HOW HAS THIS LAND CHANGED SINCE THE EARLY DAYS?

The land around Pond Farm was distributed by the U.S. Homestead Act of 1862. The remaining Indians were forced north, and local contact diminished.

Settlers encroached further into Pomo territory and with commercial logging underway, old growth forests began disappearing. The Kashaya Pomo watched this, but could do little to prevent it. Near Guerneville was a former Kashaya campsite called *ciycle* or "Shady Place" – because of the thick redwood forest there prior to 1850. By the mid 1850s, the Kashaya called this area *mokocpeulu* or "Stump Town".⁸

⁸ Ibid., p. 30.

THE HABITAT:

WAS THIS LAND ATTRACTIVE TO SETTLERS?

The area around Pond Farm faces south, offering open grassy ridges, gentle slopes, and the water necessary to farm food and raise sheep and dairy cattle.

The property is centered between diverse plant communities. To the south is a dense redwood forest; to the east, a mixed forest. To the north are patches of chaparral and to the west, mixed evergreens and oak woodlands. This combination is good habitat and nurtures deer, foxes, squirrels, owls, jays, woodpeckers, and many other species.

FIRST NON-NATIVE SETTLEMENT:

WHO WERE THE NON-NATIVE SETTLERS BEFORE POND FARM?

In 1875, Leonidas Walker from Indiana was the first non-native homesteader to settle the area encompassing Pond Farm. Walker, age 48, lived on the ranch with his parents, Joseph, age 82, a retired Methodist Minister and Polina, age 76, both born in New York.

The Walker Ranch (Rancho del Lago):

Little is known about the activities of the Walker Ranch at this time. Some crops were raised for subsistence purposes, perhaps to be traded with local ranchers as well as the miners and loggers residing in Guerneville. However, sheep and cattle raising were the primary sources of income for the local area, and a barn was needed for the animals during winter months. The barn was built in 1870.

By 1900 the Walker Ranch was thriving under Leonidas as head-of-household farmer. The family included his wife Sarah, a brother and his two sons, a daughter-in-law, and two granddaughters.

Leonidas' nephew John, with his wife Eva Walker, eventually inherited the ranch, and in 1939 they agreed to sell the entire 160-acre property (less the one acre containing their house) to Gordon and Jane Herr, who wanted to develop a utopian arts and crafts colony. It came to be known as Pond Farm.⁹

⁹ Ibid., p. 31-2.

WHERE DID THESE NEW OWNERS COME FROM?

Jane Herr, nee Brandenstein, 1912-1952.
Gordon Herr, 1907-1970.

WHY DID THEY WANT TO MOVE TO THE COUNTRY?

BACK-TO-THE-LAND-MOVEMENT:

Excerpts from the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, Bron Taylor, editor, 2005

The idea that a pastoral ... setting can serve as a morally purifying force is an ancient one. From Biblical texts to ... medieval ... writings, Western religious and philosophical concepts of nature ... have included ... the natural world as the appropriate context for inner contemplation and, at times, for the creation or reformation of community. American “back to the land” movements ... span the historical period of the mid-19th C. to the present, with notable peak periods ... at the turn of the century, from the late 1920s -- the Depression, after World War II (... in the late ‘60s, early ‘70s), ... in the mid-1990s. p. 148

In creating a new life, “back-to-the-landers” often understand nature as both the economic and spiritual focus of daily practice. Nature is understood to set the terms for the conduct of life and is given priority as a source of meaning and authority. Work such as splitting wood ... is valued as a kind of ritual ..., voluntarily pursued for the sake of the personal transformation and the “lessons” (about nature and the self) to be learned.

These ways of living also resonate symbolically as a response against the outside culture that has been left behind and is seen as comparatively corrupting and empty of spiritual significance. p. 149

POND FARM BEGINS:

Living in San Francisco, Jane and Gordon Herr had been searching for rural land to develop their dream of fostering a community of artists. Their son Jonathon Herr remembers, “When my parents saw the pioneer homestead that had been an old Indian campsite, they knew it was the place....”¹⁰

Both Herrs grew up in California, and while family history and location were influential, Jane and Gordon avidly followed advocates of the “Back-to-the-Land” movement and conservation ideas of the 1940s. Citing an essay by D.H. Lawrence describing how centuries of Italian workers had farmed and maintained the land in “Flowery Tuscany”, Jane wrote, “... [this] shows that it can be done. Man can live on the earth and by the earth without violating it.”¹¹

As an architect, Gordon Herr was passionate about the effects of culture:

When the destructive forces of superficial living values begin to dominate the pattern of living – then comes the weakening of creative impulse.... We need a return to the land, in many ways.¹²

Gordon Herr was a grandson of Kentucky farmers and his family had a Pennsylvania Quaker background. Jane Herr was a child of one of San Francisco’s most distinguished Jewish families. She shared Gordon’s vision for Pond Farm in 1939 to develop “...a sustainable sanctuary for artists away from a world gone amuck.” For Jane, “...it was a new beginning after rejecting conventional city upbringing.”¹³

The Herrs did not find the property for Pond Farm until later; but visiting Europe in May 1939, they met Marguerite Wildenhain and saw her and her husband

¹⁰ Jonathan Herr, “Love, Because Nothing Else Matters”, *MW+B*, p. 314.

¹¹ Jane Herr, “Letters from Pond Farm 1941-1952”, *MW+B*, p. 284.

¹² Gordon Herr, “Letters from Europe 1939”, *MW+B*, p. 269.

¹³ Jonathan Herr, Op. cit., p. 315.

WHAT QUALITIES DID THE HERRS BELIEVE ARTISTS
WOULD BRING TO THEIR ENVISIONED COMMUNITY?

Marguerite Wildenhain, nee Friedlaender, 1896-1985, married in 1930 to Frans Rudolf Wildenhain, 1905-1980.

Jane Brandenstein Herr, and Gordon Herr, founded Pond Farm Workshops (1949-1952) with Marguerite Wildenhain as the first faculty. Marguerite founded her own school: Pond Farm Pottery (1953-1980).

Marguerite Friedlaender Wildenhain, among the first students trained at the Bauhaus in 1919-25, was awarded the distinction of Master Potter, the first woman to achieve this in Germany, where Master Potter had been awarded only to males. Marguerite was then appointed in 1926 to take on the re-development of the ceramics facilities and production program for the art and design school at Burg Giebichenstein in Halle-Saale, Germany.

Marguerite served there as Head of Ceramics for seven years, during which she designed commercially produced dinnerware for Royal Berlin Porcelain. They produced three of her designs, in limited series, which were highly successful. Although production that carried her name ceased in 1933, her forms led German porcelain design until modern times.

Marguerite had excelled at the Bauhaus, mastering and inventing techniques that became notable for their exquisite, formal elegance and inherent success in commercial production. When forced to flee the Nazis in 1933, she and husband Frans relocated in Putten, Holland. There, her creative work returned to reflect a naturalistic aesthetic.

Frans as potential members of their future community.

The Herrs' early plans focused on finding a creative way of living. They were inspired by architect Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin Fellowship in Wisconsin, built in 1930, where "...a communally-oriented apprenticeship would replace learning from books. Everyone would work as gardeners or farmers and be caretakers of the buildings, kitchen and fields."¹⁴ The idea was to cultivate a self-reliant life unfettered by what they believed was virtual enslavement by a commercially-driven world.

In 1939 Gordon and Jane visited Marguerite in the village of Putten, Holland, where the Wildenhains were enjoying success with their new pottery, "Het Kruijke". Gordon admired the Wildenhains' house and workshop:

They live well, their values, both aesthetic (or cultural) and economic, are sound, their tastes simple, unaffected or influenced by superficialities, so their work is 'pure'.¹⁵

He admired their Spartan lifestyle and its effect:

Needing to spend less, they can live on less sales and do more work of their own choosing. ...To summarize what I believe to be essentially valuable, or right in the Wildenhains' way of living or their work,...I come to this: Their living and work are basically established on natural truths, derived from natural sources, contact with natural forms (rock, earth, plant patterns, animal life) or simple life....¹⁶

Gordon also was pleased to hear that both Wildenhains did not agree with the Bauhaus aesthetic that had evolved over its first years into one that stressed principles that were "...mechanistic and mass productive...."¹⁷ Gordon wrote, "They yearn to get clear of Europe and come

¹⁴ Katja Schneider, "The Putten Years", *MW+B*, p. 235.

¹⁵ Gordon Herr, "Letters", *MW+B*, p. 273.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

Excerpts from “The Putten Years”, by Katja Schneider. *MW+B*, pp. 233-6.

Although she was born in France and attended school in England, Marguerite felt completely at home in Germany because she loved the Thuringian landscape, the simple, unspoiled life in nature and many friends...” (The beautiful countryside in the state of Thuringia is historically famous for its pottery.)

Marguerite’s pioneering spirit had served her well as she left the comforts of her family’s lifestyle and entered the Spartan conditions of the Bauhaus to develop a career requiring dedication to hard work and responsibility for contributing to the community of craftsmen.

In January 1933, after 14 years in Germany, she left her position in Halle within 24 hours of the Nazi demand that Marguerite, the Jewish teacher, leave.

She was always concerned about keeping a stiff upper lip, but she could never really overcome her wounds:

‘If I think of all these things...I could cry, it makes me so miserable, and it doesn’t take much to make me feel an anger and a hatred toward everything,’

she wrote, but ended as if to give herself courage with an observation:

‘Gradually one gets distance from it. We are living so peacefully and furthermore nature is there, and that is a lot, because it is genuine and doesn’t betray one. At the moment I have a true fear of people.’

Marguerite and Frans’ ideas about returning to the land was full of practical necessity—to live and work without fear for their lives.

to California.... I was asked to help.... I will — they will be good for us to have near.”¹⁸

The Wildenhains’ idyllic lifestyle in Holland was becoming increasingly overshadowed by the mounting political dangers.

Finally, in fall of 1939 Marguerite began the five-month process to emigrate to the U.S. This was possible since she had been born in France. It was not possible for Frans, who was German.

On what may have been the last Dutch boat out, Marguerite sailed from Holland through mine fields in the English Channel to New York on March 3, 1940. Germany invaded Holland in May, 1940.

DID THE COLONY AT POND FARM BEGIN SOON AFTER THE PROPERTY WAS ACQUIRED IN 1941?

Few buildings on the Walker ranch (“Rancho del Lago”) could serve the needs of the envisioned Pond Farm colony. The wartime economy affected the costs of building materials and availability of laborers, so the transformation of a single family ranch site into spaces to accommodate numerous artists and workshops for themselves and students as well as housing for their family was quite challenging for Gordon and Jane Herr. (See 4.B.)

Before building the studio facilities and artists’ living accommodations, the Herrs built their family house next to the original homesteader’s; expanded the pond (the source of water in the ‘north forty’); installed water tanks; set up water pumps and generators; created an additional pond to increase fish; planted an additional orchard; expanded the vegetable garden; built coops for poultry production; and raised livestock.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

THE FARM ESTABLISHED, THE COLONY BEGINS

WHY A COLONY OF ARTIST/CRAFTSMEN?

Pond Farm Workshops Faculty

In 1947 Marguerite traveled to Black Mountain College in North Carolina to recruit weaver Trude Guermonprez to join Pond Farm. This same year, Marguerite's husband, Frans Rudolf Wildenhain, was finally allowed to immigrate into the USA after they had been separated for almost seven years. He joined her at Pond Farm as ceramic sculptor and painter.

Weaver Trude Guermonprez, metal smiths Victor Ries and Harry S. Dixon, and fresco painters Lucienne Bloch Dimitroff and Stephen Pope Dimitroff arrived to teach in 1949.

By 1950, painter and sculptor Claire Falkenstein joined the Pond Farm faculty and jewelry maker Merry Renks also came with Jean Varda, who taught collage.

Marguerite Wildenhain joined the Herrs at Pond Farm in 1942 and worked with them to convert a barn into the pottery studio and build her house.

Pond Farm's first session for students was more than ten years after the property was purchased. Another building and wings -- Gordon Herr's design, Hexagon House -- were built and finished by summer 1949, when students attended the first Pond Farm Workshops.

In concept, by sharing community in a natural setting, the artists/craftsmen would deepen their understanding and share their inspirations, sparking a community of appreciation and support for their own creative process and that of their students. Teachers unable to live on the property would travel once a week to teach.

HOW DID POND FARM ACCOMMODATE STUDENTS?

The 1950 Pond Farm Catalog describes the facilities:

Hexagon House is the Central Building, Dining Hall, Student Quarters and Exhibition Room of the Pond Farm Workshops. Hexagon House and the cabins for students are in a location of outstanding beauty adjoining the Armstrong Redwoods State Park. [Located outside the entrance to Armstrong Redwoods, *NOT* up on the hill at Pond Farm.]

Hexagon House can accommodate 10 students and facilities for 30 more are available in the cabins. The cabins are simply built, basic shelters of rustic construction and are unheated. Students should bring their own bedding and linen.¹⁹

WHAT WAS THE COST TO STUDENTS?

Sessions are 10 weeks, from late June to September. Weekly Rates for Room, Board, Tuition (combined) If lodged in:
Hexagon House -- \$52, in Cabin -- \$45.

Classes in Painting and Drawing and the Form and Color Workshop will be held at Hexagon

WHERE WERE THE WORKSHOPS?

¹⁹ Hexagon House no longer exists; it was just to the left of the entrance to Armstrong Woods Reserve.

WHO ADMINISTERED, MANAGED THE FACULTY AND THE MANY BUSINESS TASKS OF THE SCHOOL?

House or outdoors. Pottery, Weaving, Metal and Architectural Design Workshops are at a distance of 1¼ miles through Armstrong Woods.²⁰

[...and that *WAS up the hill* to Pond Farm.]

Jane Herr's many talents made her an excellent partner as Administrator/Business Manager of the entire operation of Pond Farm. Holding a Master's Degree in Economics, she was both practical and visionary. Jane inherited a thoughtful outlook on the world from her father, Henry U. Brandenstein; her

own vision complemented the creative dedication of Pond Farm. As a personable, talented writer, reader of history, philosophy, religion, poetry, and literature, she facilitated faculty relations.

Like her father, a highly-respected San Francisco attorney, Jane was an effective communicator and negotiator who was the "glue that held Pond Farm together."²¹

WHAT MADE A STUDENT'S POND FARM EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT FROM OTHER SCHOOLS?

At this point in U.S. history, a few schools, such as The Art Students League in New York and Black Mountain College in North Carolina, were setting examples with new educational approaches for adult studies in the arts. The importance of technical discipline, innovation, and expression were addressed in different ways, depending on the particular school and instructors.

The Pond Farm Workshops' program was quite different from the traditional academic curriculum. Modeled after the Bauhaus program, emphasis was on a concentrated training through studio practice. In Pond Farm's Master/Apprentice program, students worked daily from 8am to 4pm to achieve expertise in the craft of their art form as well as to learn to recognize and use the resources of artistic vision.

Successful as artists, sophisticated and aware of traditional arts in many cultures, the Masters' experience gave students many perspectives to help them develop their own craft and art.

These artists worked for very little compensation, giving their best to contribute to future success. As Lucienne Bloch Dimitroff said, "No, we didn't get paid. But we were so excited about the idea of doing this....

So we had three students. And instead of teaching mural, we said we would paint a mural for free if they give us the okay, and we'll make a sketch and

²⁰ Pond Farm Catalog, 1950, *MW+B*, p. 339.

²¹ Geraldine Schwarz, "Jane Herr: Letters from Pond arm, 1941-52", *MW+B*, p. 283.

do everything to show them how we paint a fresco. [We teach] not only the mural technique, but also the psychological thing.”²²

The “psychological thing” was how students could use the imagery that best expressed the themes.

HOW DID STUDENTS LEARN TO SEE AND EXPRESS THEIR OWN VISION WITH THEIR ART?

Marguerite felt that “the opening of the soul”²³ can be attained through a blending of vision and craft which enables artists to find their personal vision. Students’ rigorous practice with forming techniques trained them to increase the clay’s tensile strength and its supportive density. Drawing sessions emphasized observing qualities of lines, textures, shapes, spaces, colors, and contrasts in nature’s forms.

One has to start at the very bottom of all artistic training: one has to learn to see, to feel, to react and be moved by the forms and the characters, the rhythm and the expression of the most common things around us. This requires both intelligence and heart, but also patience.²⁴

Discovering the basic principles of design and form, students were encouraged to draw responsively, focusing on qualities of line, shape, etc. that evoked similar effects to what they saw in the natural form.

The hand is ultimately the tool through which the picture in your soul has to be transposed into reality. If the hand cannot react freely and sensitively to the emotion of the heart, the most creative artist is impotent. This intimate correlation of the quick hand... will always be the aim of any training of a craftsman and artist. It is only the potency of these combined abilities that will give him the power to convey what he feels in his own personal way.²⁵

IN WHAT WAYS DID POND FARM FACULTY USE NATURE TO INSPIRE AND TEACH THEIR STUDENTS?

Weaver Trude Guermonprez made nature observation a key to the basics of weaving. As her Teaching Assistant, Lore Kadden said:

She took them to the beach...to sketch the structure of the rocks and of the driftwood... to demonstrate the development of their shapes, how they are

²² Lucienne Bloch Dimitroff, Interview by Suzanne Riess for Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, CA, 1984., p. 436-42.

²³ M. Wildenhain, *The Invisible Core*, p. 129.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 131.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 133.

Architect Gordon Herr designed and built Hexagon House and some of the cabins for Pond Farm Workshops. He described why architecture is the key component to developing an ideal community:

“...Sordid surroundings make for sordid living and it is the responsibility of the architectural designer to create harmonious surroundings that will engender harmonious living.”[1]

“The architect, by molding the outward shape, should arrive at the final value of all art: to transform and dignify the inward life of a people. Naturally, the efforts of all other craftsmen; the potter, weaver, metal smith and others are focused toward a common goal.”[2]

[1] *Arts and Architecture* magazine, December, 1949.

[2] “Craftworkshop as a Movement to Encourage Talented Young People”, Carl Shapley. *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 9, 1949, p.7

Herr’s vision was underpinned by his self-described pantheism—“finding God in all things natural”. Designing the unique Hexagon House for Pond Farm, Gordon may have responded to elements he knew from the early Kashaya Pomo conical wood huts-- the *kotcha*, and the woodworking craftsmanship of the nearby Russian Fort Ross. Bernard Maybeck’s design for the rustic Bohemian Club Main Hall, and Frank Lloyd Wright’s Hanna House (1937) and Bazett House (1939), which were designed on hexagonal grids, were also likely references.

Tim Tivoli Steele, “Hexagon House: Home to the Pond Farm Workshops”, *MW+B*, pp.338-365.)

DID POND FARM WORKSHOPS CREATE EXPERIENCES TO FOSTER COMMUNITY FOR STUDENTS?.

²⁶ quoted by A. Pohlmann, “Trude Guernonprez: Still Not Old Enough to Avoid Foolishness”, *MW+B*, p. 367.

reflected in line, color and texture. These observations could then be translated in a step by step, reflective process, where nature...was transformed into another kind of visual appearance.²⁶

Marguerite’s students also drew from nature to learn to see form, as she explained in *The Invisible Core*:

In rocks too,...what specific characteristics everywhere! ...granite in the cut of a highway, or a slab of sandstone at the ocean, or lava or schist on the mountainside, each has its own textures,...specific forms of cleavage, its crystalline or grainy surface, its schistose or viscose formation, its special way of reflecting or absorbing light...

...The sheer visual pleasure and the tactile experience of the innumerable surface treatments. What would (a potter) not give... to have all these ideas to draw upon at will when he makes or decorates a pot!...

[Considering] the expression of forms to give to your clay, you will discover a parallel to that in nature, too....

Contrast in movements, relations of details to the whole mass, or of line to a plane, or of colored sections to a dull main material: all this you can experience in the most grandiose setting first, and then, as you look and observe, learn from it....

If you have the will to learn, and the eyes to see, and the mind to search, some day, too, all the facts that you have discovered through nature will be visible in your work, whether you know it or not.²⁷

Marguerite sometimes invited students and faculty to her very small house and garden, but Hexagon House included a large common room for gatherings. The talks, readings, and discussions

²⁷ Marguerite Wildenhain, *The Invisible Core*, p. 44.

HOW LONG DID THE POND FARM WORKSHOPS
CONTINUE?

Marguerite had with her pottery students were often either under the peach tree near the barn or behind it, around the firepit.

During the years of Pond Farm Workshops, some of the faculty and notable guests joined students to attend picnics, beach dinners, and campfires that Marguerite held at the Farm, on the beach at Goat Rock, or within Armstrong Woods State Reserve.

The Pond Farm Workshops' colony met students during the summers of 1949 through 1952. During these three years, as the faculty struggled with the spare facilities and financial demands, they also found themselves at odds over the governance of the school.

Many were highly conflicted, and the personality clashes were demoralizing for everyone, affecting their personal lives. In the wake of World War II, the Herrs and the faculty had been intent on developing a community in which art and life thrived; however, pressures escalated, and Frans Wildenhain was the first to leave. Trude Guermonprez moved to San Francisco after summer session in 1950. When Jane Herr died of breast cancer in June 1952, the life literally went out of Pond Farm Workshops, and the faculty moved away. Gordon Herr stayed on until 1953 with son Jonathan. Marguerite remained.

GOING SOLO: MARGUERITE'S POND FARM POTTERY

After much soul-searching, Marguerite bought the barn, her house, and a portion of land from Gordon Herr to establish her own school: Pond Farm Pottery.

She decided to stay on, focusing on her work and bringing her singular direction to students.

If I were to be alone, I would try to encompass the whole world in my work. My dedication to it would be total, and my compassion for those who are miserable immense.²⁸

²⁸ Ibid., p. 97.

HOW DID MARGUERITE'S SOLO SUMMER SESSIONS DIFFER FROM THOSE SHE OFFERED IN THE EARLIER WORKSHOPS?

Marguerite's new sessions in her own Pond Farm Pottery were more personal. She shared a great deal of information in personal critiques, often using readings or stories from classical literature to help students open up to new ideas.

Since the studio sessions required limitations on class size, she accepted applications only after careful perusal. Some students were college students or teachers, many had studied basic ceramics, and others had no prior training at all.

On-site housing was no longer available, so students found accommodations in Guerneville, camped along the Russian River, or stayed with neighboring friends. Their living was Spartan, but the regimen was spirited as well as dedicated.

A big barbeque and bonfire on the coast at Goat Rock became a tradition. Stories were shared and sometimes surprise guests attended, for instance African-American folksinger Odetta.

Other guests were

...some of the former teachers, students, and original crafts people such as Trude Guernonprez and her husband, John Elsesser; Ruth Asawa, well-known bay area sculptor and her husband, architect Albert Lanier; Roz Watkins, a San Francisco weaver;...Merry Renk, the San Francisco jeweler; *Life* magazine photographers Otto and Hansel Hagel and other friends.²⁹

Marguerite's dedication was to transfer power by teaching her technical skills as fundamental. She characterized herself as one with a "strong will and indomitable nature". Her style was stern and her goals firmly based on training the craft process. Similar to traditional methods of clay studio teaching in Japan and Europe, as well as the Bauhaus, Marguerite's style was like that of an athletic trainer or a ballet master in that she insisted students train to acquire fundamental physical proficiency.

²⁹ N. McMahon, "Madam Was Indisputably French," *MW+B*, p. 482-3.

Pond Farm is not a 'school'; it is actually a way of life, and I believe that the attraction of our session is not only that the students really learn their craft, but, more than that, they also learn to concentrate and to find themselves. In working with complete devotion, they discover the elation of finding an aim of life that they indeed have found to be valid.

Marguerite Wildenhain, *The Invisible Core*, p. 145.

FOR HER SCHOOL, DID MARGUERITE EXPAND THE POND FARM FACILITIES? DID ANYTHING CHANGE?

Many of her students appreciated the emphasis on practical training. Not dependent upon polite praise, they were able to strive to meet Marguerite's standard and came to understand its value. Others struggled with her authority, but most accounts reflect on the personal insights that came as they met her challenges.

Numerous student testimonials describe her with reverence, citing her generosity, joyousness, and sensitivity as well as her firmness for "no shortcuts" in the demanding training. Some wrote of how she helped them understand themselves and even inspired them in other professions.

Marguerite revealed another side of herself as she delighted in sharing her experiences and knowledge of art, classical ideas, philosophy, literature, and the sciences. Stimulating and unusual, her metaphors and stories often underlined the challenges of creating and finding meaning in life with depth as well as humor.

The strong student/teacher relationships were instrumental in developing the students' own dedication to their growth, and it brought many of them back for subsequent summers.

For a wonderful overview, read Marguerite's reflections on her 25 years of teaching and her reflections on various students' needs, and how she tried to help them, see "Summer School" in *The Invisible Core*, p. 142-56. (See also 4.A and 4.C.)

The facilities were upgraded when absolutely necessary — such as acquiring a new kiln, etc. In 1962, the Guest House, designed by architect Albert Lanier, was built to accommodate a visit by Gerhard Marcks, Marguerite's Bauhaus teacher and friend.

In 1963, the State of California's effort to protect the watershed above Armstrong Redwoods State Reserve meant the State would seize the land of Pond Farm by right of California's "eminent domain".

Marguerite's home and studio would disappear. Devastated, but not one to shrink from adversity, Marguerite wrote a letter protesting the decision. Many colleagues, former students, and friends actively protested with a letter-writing campaign; and they were successful. Although the State did acquire her land, Pond Farm Pottery continued because Marguerite was allowed to live and work there until her death. Gordon Herr and many neighbors were forced to sell.

In 1985 Marguerite Wildenhain died at age 89. Her ashes were buried beneath the huge peach tree just outside the old barn studio. Here, for over 30 years, she had taught students the disciplined techniques of the Bauhaus and how the intersections of human spirit with nature, art and culture sustain life.

Designated as a National Treasure along with its recognition in the National Register of Historic Places, Pond Farm's history is significant. Marguerite Wildenhain's art and teaching continue to influence contemporary studio training and production.

As many former Pond Farm students recall their experiences with Marguerite, they speak not only about their training with clay, but how she influenced their lives as well. Woven into her lectures and conversation were innumerable connections to a variety of ideas—references to ideas of authors, poets, philosophers and historical figures, along with scientific and other explorations of nature that encourage human understanding.

Well educated herself, Marguerite believed that an ...interest in everything around him is the first necessity for the artist. This opening of the soul, which will help him absorb and understand what he sees, will develop as he searches for it.³⁰

As I see it, we need schools that give far more stress in education on matters of humanities, on things of the mind and the spirit (to which art belongs), on the total

WHAT WERE THE KEYS TO MARGUERITE'S TEACHING?

³⁰ M. Wildenhain, *The Invisible Core*, p. 129.

development of the thinking capacities of the student

We need schools that will be able to infiltrate into the very substance of their students a deep and indelible urge to learn, to work, to try to see and understand....³¹

While it was obvious that she loved to entertain, it was with these beliefs that she selected her Pond Farm readings and gave talks about other cultures as well as their art. She also sought to awaken their inquisitiveness about life and nature as she taught them how to draw to increase their visual acuity.

...The initial vision is both the beginning and a necessity..., but it is only a point of departure. ...He will have to discover beauty in the commonest things of life, for nothing that he sees or that he experiences is without value to him.³²

Students learned to see the surrounding “common things” of rocks and plants, shells and hills reveal countless qualities of form and contrasts. It is apparent from her extensive writings and lectures about value and personal expression that *Marguerite’s passion was to move her students to simultaneously recognize nature as a key source of expressive content as well as the master key to their achievement as craftsmen creating form.*

...We need nature for the form-giving impulse it conveys to the craftsman, for the lesson in patient observation and concentration, for the amazing object lessons it gives him of solving functional problems ingeniously. It nourishes his imagination with innumerable ideas of form, with details of expression....³³

...I do not mean to suggest that a craftsman should not look inside of himself. He needs to do so at all times. There is a fine line of demarcation, though, at which he has to balance this introspection with an open mind, and alertness toward the outside

³¹ Ibid., p. 139.

³² Ibid., p.133.

³³ Ibid., p. 51.

world.... The craftsman is, above everything else, the man who sees, who is intensely moved by what he sees, for the visible picture of his surroundings can bring to life that which lies dormant in his soul, asking to be formed.³⁴

For it is only through the most sensitive and deepest understanding of everything an artist sees and studies, that he can ever hope to unite materials, nature and art through his personal creative powers. Only then can those elements possibly fuse in the live furnace of his heart and mind. Artistic truth and value will be the result.³⁵

Marguerite believed that we ...need to find again a synthesis between technical knowledge and spiritual content...to help build toward a more human way of life...one that can lead man in the coming generations to personal dignity, integrity and peace.³⁶

IS THIS THE WHOLE STORY OF POND FARM?

Today (2017) many of Marguerite's students contribute to revitalizing the story of Pond Farm Pottery and its history. These 'Pond Farmers' are donating time as well as their art to aid these efforts and are adding to the collection of documentary testimonials about their experiences during their sessions with Marguerite.

While a number of Pond Farmers were or became teachers and college professors, others went on to establish their pottery studios and galleries, some used their creativity in many other ways, including sculpture, architecture, painting, writing and music.

Pond Farm's educational lineage ranges far and wide, but, so far, can be easily seen in the schools of Luther College and South Bear School in Iowa, and Adamah Clay Studios in Wisconsin.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 40.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 50.

³⁶ M. Wildenhain, *Pottery: Form and Expression*, p. 9.

These notes are very small excerpts from a large number of sources that reveal much more about Marguerite; Pond Farm Pottery; perspectives of

family members; friends and students. Parts 4A, 4B, and 4C to this overview expand upon some of these themes. The bibliography for sources used in this Docent Manual is annotated to help further research.

4.A - Influences on Marguerite: Early Bauhaus, Her Masters, Values, and Goals

To understand the training program at Pond Farm and Marguerite's commitment to it, it is essential to keep in mind the influence of the Bauhaus and her teachers. Devastated by World War I and their economic depression, Germans struggled in the aftermath of their defeat. Among the changes society faced were: the huge loss of working-age men, many severely injured ex-soldiers; the end of the autocratic Empire, an untested first-time democratic government; ripples from the Russian Revolution, social unrest, hunger, and unemployment; enormous reparations owed to the victor countries, and a devastating inflation in the early 1920s. Germany needed to restart not only efficiently but with forward-looking style and revitalized industry.

In 1919 architect Walter Gropius enthusiastically announced the formation of a new design center. He announced that it would combine some of the traditional principles of the arts and crafts with the goals of a new architecture that would lead the recovery of the new Germany. Named "The Bauhaus", Gropius described its ambition to "...conceive and create the new building of the future...which will rise...like the crystal symbol of a new faith"³⁷ -- accompanied with an expressionistic image by Lionel Feininger titled "Cathedral of the Arts." "Many have remarked on the utopian quality of the early Bauhaus and this was its essence: that a new world could be created as a work of art..."³⁸ Literally meaning "the house of building," the Bauhaus was formed to support the urgently needed post-war recovery by training students to apply the arts and production skills to industry.

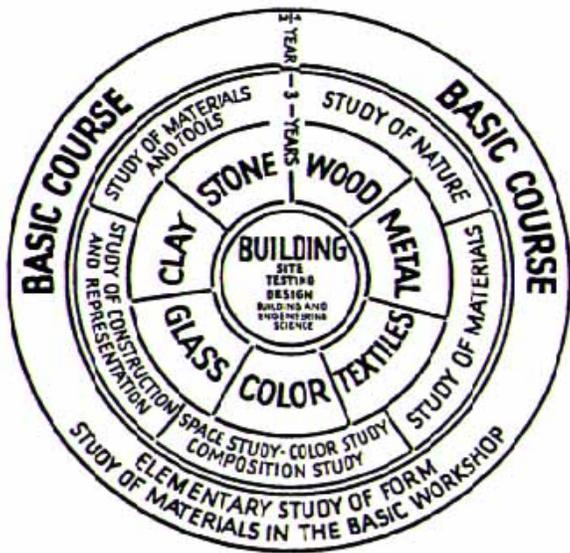
The Bauhaus strives to bring together all creative effort into one whole, to reunify all the disciplines of practical art – sculpture, painting, handicrafts, and the crafts – as inseparable components of a new architecture... The Bauhaus wants to educate architects, painters, and sculptors of all levels, according to their capabilities, to become competent craftsmen or independent creative artists and to form a working community of leading and future artist-craftsmen.³⁹

While many students today enter an art school or program after high school, in 1919 Marguerite and many of the new Bauhaus students came with some prior experience as craftsmen, architects, etc. After studying art in high school in England, she moved to Germany. She had begun with wood sculpture at the University of Berlin in 1914, but left it for clay. Marguerite was employed glazing her designs on ceramics in a production pottery firm when she became a Bauhaus student at 23 years old.

³⁷ Walter Gropius, quoted by M. Wildenhain, *The Invisible Core*, p. 2.

³⁸ David Anderson, "Bauhaus and the Crisis of Modernism", *MW+B*, p. 67.

³⁹ Excerpt from "Programme of the Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar", quoted by D. Anderson, *Op.cit.* p. 66.



This circular diagram shows the organization of the components studied in the Bauhaus' original and influential curriculum. The Basic Course, a six-month preliminary course, concentrated on practical analysis and on the contrasting properties of forms, colors and materials. This introductory course, designed and led by abstract painter Johannes Itten, was meant "... to pierce the veil of nature and achieve awareness of the deeper truths of nature's outward forms and of being".⁴⁰ Principles introduced in the Basic Course continue to be studied today in most academic Art programs at the secondary and college level.

After the Basic Course, students proceeded to study the issues shown in the next ring where they entered into apprenticeship in one of the craft workshops led by a Master Craftsman

(*Werkmeister*) and a Master of Form (*Formmeister*). The Master Craftsman focused on workshop instruction that emphasized technical craft skills, and the Master of Form focused students on design problems related to form. These classes emphasized functionalism rather than decoration.⁴¹ Not only the techniques of forming the ceramic pot, but how it would serve its purpose were basic concerns. Decisions were necessary to enable the pot to perform well. For example: if a pitcher, the pot must be light so that the added weight of the contents will not make the handling of the pot awkward; the pitcher handle should not only fit the hand but be placed so that when the pitcher is tipped, the pot and its contents are balanced during the pouring. Whatever decorative qualities might be envisioned for the pot and its handle, the craftsman must first make the elements of form serve their function well.

For the Basic Course, all of the students attended the Bauhaus in Weimar. While the 1919-24 Weimar Bauhaus was housed in an art school building designed in 1904, the former school had not yet established ceramic studios. In Weimar, beginning students could explore clay in a provisional instructional space set up in the Weimar Oven and Pottery Factory. However, the limitations of space and facilities meant that only a few students could produce small ceramic sculptures and handbuilt vessels there. After that, for students who then chose to become apprentices in Ceramics, the program continued in a legendary pottery workshop located in Dornburg, a town approximately 12 kilometers away from Weimar. In 1920 the Bauhaus Director, Walter Gropius, was impressed by the professionalism and technical expertise of the Krehan Pottery Works in Dornburg and arranged to situate the Apprenticeship Program for Ceramics there with Master Potter **Max Krehan** as Ceramics *Werkmeister*. The quality of the Dornburg workshop, passed

⁴⁰ David Anderson, Op. cit., p. 61.

⁴¹ Principles delineated in the Basic Course as well as many of those in the next ring continue to be studied today in most academic Art programs as crucial to students' success at the secondary and college level.

down from Master to Master for over 200 years, was well-known and Krehan's authority was undisputed. His quality handwork and artistic talent were noted in all documents of the time.⁴²

Gerhard Marcks, principally a sculptor, was chosen as *Formmeister*. Marcks taught his workshops on Form by stressing an organic wholeness of the making, management, and spiritual. He felt that this emphasis would help to correct man's impoverishment in organized industry.⁴³ Both Marcks and Krehan were strongly committed to observation of Nature as a key resource, and they influenced Marguerite greatly.

At its beginning, the Bauhaus Masters encouraged students to find inspiration from attention to the organic variety of natural forms and to design in response to these forms with the expressive elements of their craft. For example, a student might develop a series of line designs and shapes inspired by flowing ripples in a stream that would then be used to develop a series of curves in a pot or its textural surface.

In addition to Marcks, Marguerite studied with well-known artists Lionel Feininger, Paul Klee, and Wassily Kandinsky when they were all working in an Expressionist style. These artists sought to convey their feelings in response to observed nature by distorting color, space, and scale.⁴⁴

As a student from the first Bauhaus class in 1919 until her departure in 1925, Marguerite's experience bridged the evolution of the school's pedagogy: from the early attention to the organic variety of natural forms and expressive elements to the distillation and reduction of these into designs using geometric analysis. Designs based on geometric forms helped facilitate commercial production. This generated an aesthetic emphasis on the structure of forms.

While Bauhaus courses focused on building and construction, leading students to seek the practicality required by technological production, the school developed an increasing emphasis on designing for mass production. This issue caused a major philosophical split among the Masters of the Bauhaus that we should remember. In 1923 as the International Style of Architecture emerged and Gropius announced "a new unity" for the Bauhaus' focus on mass production, Master Marcks warned about a formalistic over-emphasis on technology and industrial design. Marcks and Feininger fiercely rejected the severely simplified geometric form of fellow faculty member Moholy-Nagy: "... Moholy-Nagy's Constructivism, which he presented as a means or method of design education, caused Marcks to call him 'The Undertaker of the Bauhaus'".⁴⁵ Krehan, the tradition-bound master of the craft, consistently declined to go along with it at all.⁴⁶ Marguerite commented that she and many other ceramics students did not like the minimalist Constructivism, underlining her commitment to the position of her Masters

⁴² Hans-Peter Jakobson, "Pottery in Dornburg: An Extraordinary Workshop", *MW+B*, pp. 83-92.

⁴³ A. Hartog, "Rodin-Bauhaus-Rodin", *MW+B*, pp. 103-107.

⁴⁴ "German Expressionism (c.1905-35)", *Art Encyclopedia*, www.visual-arts-cork.com

⁴⁵ Hans-Peter Jakobson, *Op. cit.*, p. 92.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

and those of Feininger, Kandinsky, and Klee. Constructivism actively discouraged design reference to nature and its forms.

WHAT BAUHAUS EXPERIENCES INFLUENCED MARGUERITE'S STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS?

The Bauhaus pedagogical approach was to eliminate competitive tendencies in order to foster individual creative potential, a sense of community, and shared purpose. Emphasis on training in craft and skills helped students shift from competing with each other to focus on problem-solving for functionality of the pots.



View of the Dornburg Bauhaus Ceramics Pottery on the ground floor of the converted Marstall, 1920

As she wrote *The Invisible Core: A Potter's Life and Thoughts*, Marguerite remembered that before they could even begin their ceramic apprenticeships in Dornburg, she and her fellow students had to remove junk and clean centuries of dirt from an old carriage house, the Marstall,⁴⁷ which was to become the students' dormitory and pottery workshop. At that time, school funding was minimal and paid jobs few. Students worked together, and by necessity, they lived together, pooling their money to create meals. Above the studio, the dormitory facilities were very basic: a 9'x12' room, each with a very high window, chair, table, and simple chest with a basin and jug on it. There was also a narrow, plank bed with a gunny sack of straw as a mattress. A tile stove was built into the common wall of every two rooms, and there was a communal kitchen and oven.⁴⁸

Because the group of students remained the same for more than five years, we became a real community, and even at this late date, when former Bauhaus students come together, it is as if members of a long-divided family meet again. The amount of work, of ideas, of deep involvement,

⁴⁷ *Marstall* means horse stables.

⁴⁸ M. Wildenhain, *MW+B*, p. 111-5.

and also of joy and real ecstatic fun that came from that first group of people can never be duplicated.⁴⁹

The early Bauhaus emphasized a student and faculty community so that a student's experience was not only as an "apprentice" of *Werkmeister* and *Formmeister* but all were aware of their Masters' personal perspectives and artistic abilities. Marguerite recalls that their classes were small,

... this made for very personal teaching and intensive learning. The relation to our masters was soon quite close intellectually and artistically, though always very respectful ... Work and life were a marvelous unity; though work was strenuous, in the evenings we still found time and energies for exciting and stimulating talks about any subject that would interest us ... At the Bauhaus in Weimar, sometimes Klee would play the violin and Feininger would have an open house, where he played the piano, and a friend, the flute.

Other artists were occasionally invited, Stravinsky, for instance. We also painted or carved or wrote poetry in our free hours ... in Marcks' home, he would read something from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, or about American Indians, whom he admired deeply, or poetry. Or go to one of those exhilarating Bauhaus parties, dance the whole night, and walk back the twelve kilometers at the crack of dawn to be back at work on our wheels at 7am.⁵⁰

Marguerite was very devoted to Max Krehan, her Master of Craft, for his guidance and generosity in passing on the traditions of Thuringian⁵¹ pottery. In 1925, just as she was finishing her apprenticeship, Krehan died. Her diary reveals that they had been lovers and she loved him deeply. Abject and grieving his death for months afterward, she wrote letters to him in her diary, sharing her thoughts that she would make her work worthy of him.⁵² Marguerite often repeated her vow that "...I must live for You, for your idea, our idea – for your Craft."⁵³

These few accounts of Marguerite's personal experiences during her seven years at the Bauhaus are important to note because they begin to reveal how she responded to her world, growing her emotional and intellectual sensibilities along with her skills into a dedication to Craft and Form. She was very serious. Marguerite's books and her students' testimonials offer much insight about her sense of duty!

HOW DID MARGUERITE CREATE WORKS USING NATURAL FORMS WHILE WORKING IN THE MODERN BAUHAUS STYLE?

Throughout her life, Marguerite's dedication to observing and responding to nature as the primary source of inspiration as well as to her craft grew in many ways. After her Bauhaus training, her first job included further training to design for commercial production. Tasked with following the evolving modernism in 1925, Marguerite explored structural contours and proportion in her work to create a

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 114.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 26.

⁵¹ Thuringia is a state in central Germany where ceramic potteries have flourished for hundreds of years.

⁵² M. Friedlaender, "In Memoriam: To The Last Potter of His Lineage", *MW+B*, p. 137-68.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 137.

synthesis of formal grace and modern practicality. Essentially, she found a way to bring elements of a naturalistic aesthetic into the geometrically inspired forms characteristic of the Bauhaus.

Her works dramatized refined proportions with simple forms and were noted for their exquisite delicacy yet perfect strength for mass-produced porcelain. Additionally, her innovative technique created models that revealed subtle traces of the wheel-thrown process, "... thus arose the serial piece that retained its 'handwork character'".⁵⁴ This synthesis of naturalistic qualities with the idealized form was unique and highly praised by critics.

WASN'T THE BAUHAUS' AESTHETIC "FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION"?

Not exactly. That simple phrase is often used but misunderstood, as though it describes a limited aesthetic. The aim of the Bauhaus training was to unify form with function. Just as the many aspects of the desired function of an object were considered, so too were the variables of the materials used as well as the production process itself. How the inherent physical, malleable, and visual qualities of structural materials could be employed in new ways to create a unity of form *with* a specific function was the crucial design issue. Both were equally important.

Architect Louis Sullivan put forward this concept of "form follows function" in 1896 when he wrote "The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered". Sullivan was the father of the skyscraper and mentor to Frank Lloyd Wright. They believed that the purpose and function of a building should inform its design and structure.⁵⁵ Sullivan criticized designs that echoed past styles by using gratuitous ornamentation and ornate structural elements of pre-industrial culture. For example, many government buildings in the U.S. were designed with a Greek or Italian Renaissance style to symbolize civic authority by using ornamented, fluted columns and grandly decorated domes. A primary function of such ornamentation is to connect to tradition and the authority of past institutions. However, modern style would instead emphasize the structure of well-proportioned elements. These were to provide space functionally helpful for living or working and avoid floor plans burdened with gratuitous elaborations of space through unnecessary decoration with columns, archways, etc. Interestingly, a building designed today in a modern style is now a choice that is often used for public buildings because impressive forms created through structural engineering reflect contemporary technical accomplishment.

The 1920s saw a new wave of buildings designed with an emphasis on their structural elements: unadorned structure was proportionally used to create both the functional space and an impressive visual statement. Think of the grand simplicity of skyscrapers! This new idea grew into the International Style, fostered by American, Dutch, French, and Bauhaus architects. Similarly, in the design of Bauhaus ceramics, the simplicity of proportions, their shapes and placement as well as their surface qualities enhanced this aesthetic. Marguerite's sleek designs for tableware flow from careful attention to their

⁵⁴Katja Schneider, "From Stoneware to Porcelain: a challenge and a triumph", *Ibid*, p. 194-7.

⁵⁵ L.Stinson, "Remembering the Legend Behind 'Form Follows Function'", Sept. 3, 2015, www.wired.com.

purposes. Unlike the traditionally colored German porcelains up to her time, Marguerite's bold use of the stark white, clear glazed porcelain and other artful qualities embodies the sophisticated aesthetic unity of form and function.

HOW WERE MARGUERITE'S DESIGNS PRODUCED COMMERCIALY?

As head of the Ceramics Department at Burg Giebichenstein in Halle-Saale, Marguerite developed the highly successful commercial production alliance with Royal Berlin Porcelain. For each design, she created porcelain models which were then used to create molds for replication by mass production. "Marguerite Friedlaender Wildenhain's simple, plain everyday dishes revolutionized porcelain design at the end of the 1920s. Between 1929 and 1933 she created 59 models for the Berlin State Porcelain Factory."⁵⁶ Three of her sets, the "Hallesche", "Burg Giebichenstein", and "Goldringe" were produced; some of the porcelains from the Wildenhain production cycle, the longest in history, are still available at the Royal Berlin sales outlet.⁵⁷ During World War II, porcelains designed by Marguerite continued to be produced by Royal Berlin, but her name was not revealed.⁵⁸ Her "Hermes Service" design was specially commissioned by the Halle-Leipzig Airport but was never sold commercially. The final piece in this set was her "Circle Mocha Cup", the "airplane cup". She designed the base of the cup to fit into an opening in the saucer to prevent the cup from sliding or tipping. Marguerite and her famous cup were eventually honored 70 years later.

In 2000 for the 70th anniversary of the Halle-Leipzig Airport, the State Porcelain Factory of Meissen (Germany), Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, and the Halle School for Art and Design collaborated for over two years to produce a limited first edition of the airplane cup. "... this small, original design idea has awakened to new life."⁵⁹ Photographs of these designs show their refinement and beauty.⁶⁰

WHY DID MARGUERITE LEAVE HER POSITION AT BURG GIEBICHENSTEIN IN HALLE-SAALE?

Marguerite was Jewish, and the Nazis were documenting all "undesirables" living and working in Germany. The Nazis threatened to close the school if she did not resign her position. Marguerite also had to cease her design work with Royal Berlin Porcelain because it was contracted through Burg Giebichenstein.

DID HER ASSOCIATES ON THE FACULTY AT BURG GIEBICHENSTEIN SUFFER BECAUSE SHE WAS JEWISH?

Yes. In 1933 Marguerite was forced by the Nazis to break her contract and leave. Gerhard Marcks, then Director of the Burg Giebichenstein, protested against her dismissal along with nine other teachers who

⁵⁶ W. Bunge, Translator, *Brochure for 70th Anniversary of the Halle-Leipzig Airport* describes M. Wildenhain's 1930 design of the Airplane Cup, which was produced as a special, anniversary edition. *MW+B*, p. 187.

⁵⁷ Dean and Geraldine Schwarz, editors' note to H. Bray's "Collaboration with Royal Berlin", *MW+B*, p. 184.

⁵⁸ Hitler, as Germany's Chancellor, was soon unchallenged by any state institutions. By the end of 1933, elimination of Jews from participation in schools and industry was underway.

⁵⁹ W. Bunge, *Op.cit.*, p. 187.

⁶⁰ Photographs of these designs are found in *MW+B*, pp. 205–20.

protested on her behalf. After she left, they were put on leave and then fired. Like many non-Jewish artists and intellectuals, Marcks suffered under the Nazis; his work was confiscated and declared degenerate, and his studio was bombed.⁶¹ Marguerite and Gerhard Marcks, who had been her Bauhaus Master of Form, remained close friends throughout their lives.

Marcks survived the war and maintained steady correspondence with Marguerite as she continued with Pond Farm Pottery. He stated his admiration for Marguerite’s accomplishments beautifully. He noted her stamina and vigor as she set up the successful new ceramics workshop for the transformation of the old trade school in Halle-Saale; that she had to start over again in Holland; and then had to flee the Nazis again to escape to the U.S. to create her own studio and school at last. Marcks wrote, “She really had the mental and physical strength of three men. ... And every beginning was for her a new step to a higher level of maturity”.⁶²

Marguerite Friedlaender Wildenhain’s Professional Timeline

1919-1925.....	1926-1933.....	1933-1940.....	1942-1952 and 1953-1985
Bauhaus	Burg Giebichenstein, Halle-Saale	Het Kruijkje, Putten	1942-1952
Apprentice, 3yrs	Master Potter, 1926	Master Potter and Owner	Master Potter
Journeyman, 4yrs	Head of Ceramics Dept.	with Frans Wildenhain	Founding Faculty
			Pond Farm Workshops
	Ceramics Designer		
	for Royal Berlin Porcelain		1953-1985
			Master Potter
			Founder and Owner
			Pond Farm Pottery

Essentially, Marguerite’s Bauhaus training brought her more than technical expertise. Idealistic as well as practical, her spirit had responded to that early Bauhaus announcement that called for dedicated craftsmen whose creations would rise “like the crystal symbol of a new faith”. Her writings reveal her dedication to many of the perspectives that her Masters, Krehan and Marcks, taught their students. They argued with other Bauhaus faculty as the school developed toward industrialization. In their view, the mission of the craftsman was to reveal the artist’s inner belief by creating forms with a close attention to nature and one’s deepest feelings, striving to improve their character and skills to express them.

Marguerite’s book, *The Invisible Core*, reveals her whole-hearted commitment to this mission. Around 1930 Gerhard Marcks wrote on his wall a sentence from the great modern sculptor, Rodin: “Let Nature

⁶¹ A. Hartog, Op. cit., p. 103.

⁶² Gerhard Marcks, “A Biography of Marguerite Friedlaender Wildenhain”, Ibid, p. 440.

be your only Goddess". Marcks used it in his teaching and recited it often until his death in 1981.⁶³ Marguerite presented her translation of Rodin's *Testament* and often cited it for her students at Pond Farm.

Excerpts from "TESTAMENT"

by Auguste Rodin

Translated from the French by Marguerite Wildenhain

You who want to be officiates of Beauty, may it please you to find here the summing of a long experience.

Love devotedly the masters who have preceded you. Incline yourselves before Phidias and Michelangelo. Admire the divine serenity of the one, the fierce anguish of the other. Admiration is a generous wine for noble spirits. Nevertheless beware of imitating your elders. Be respectful of tradition, but learn to discern what it contains that is eternally fecund: the love of Nature and Sincerity. These are two strong passions of the geniuses. All have adored Nature and they have never lied. Thus tradition hands you the key, thanks to which you can evade routine. It is the tradition itself that asks you to question reality over and over and that forbids you to blindly submit yourself to any master.

May Nature be your only goddess. Have absolute faith in her. Be certain that she is never ugly and limit your ambition to being true to her. Everything is beautiful for the artist, for every being and in every thing; the artist's look will discover the character that means the interior truth which shines through the form. And this Truth is Beauty itself. Study religiously. You cannot miss finding Beauty, for you will encounter Truth. Work Relentlessly ...

Art is only feeling, but without the knowledge of the volumes, of proportions, of colors, without the skill of the hand, the most alive feeling is paralyzed. What would the greatest poet become in a country whose language he would ignore! In the new generation of artists there are numbers of poets who, unhappily, refuse to learn to speak. Thus, all they do is stammer.

Be patient! Do not count on inspiration. It does not exist. The only qualities of the artist are wisdom, attention, sincerity, will. Accomplish your work like honest workers.

Be truthful, but that does not mean to be flatly exact. ... Art begins only with the inner-truth. May all your forms, all your colors express feelings.

⁶³A. Hartog, *Op. cit.*, pp. 106-7.

The great thing is to be moved, to love, to hope, to tremble, to live to be a human before being an artist. Real eloquence, said Pascal, laughs at “eloquence.” Real art laughs at “Art”.

Accept the fair criticisms. You will recognize them easily. They are those that confirm some doubt that has been worrying you. Don’t let yourself be hurt through those that your conscience does not admit.

Don’t be afraid of unjust criticism. When your motives are clearly discerned, a revolt by friends of truth will vindicate you.

If your talent is fresh, you will only have few partisans at first and you will have a multitude of enemies. Don’t be discouraged. The first ones will triumph for they know why they love you; the others ignore why you are odious to them. The first ones are passionate for truth and recruit new adherents without end; the others do not show any lasting zeal for their false opinion; the first are tenacious, the others turn to any wind. Victory of truth is certain.

Do not waste your time trying to know social or political ties. You will see many of your colleagues arrive through intrigue to honors and fortune; they are not real artists. Some of them are established on their terrain, and you will have to consume just as much time as they do. If that means your total existence, you won’t have a minute left to be an artist.

Love passionately your mission. There is none more beautiful. It is much more lofty than the common man believes. The artist gives a great example. He adores his profession; his most precious reward is the joy of doing it well. Actually, alas, one convinces workers to hate their work and to sabotage it. The world will not be at peace till all men will have artists’ souls, that is, when all will have pleasure in their task.

Art is also a magnificent lesson in sincerity. It is expressed at the risk of upsetting all established prejudice. Thus the artist teaches frankness to humanity. Wonderful progress would be realized at once if absolute truthfulness reigned.

When our society admits and rejects her errors of ugliness, our earth will quickly become a Paradise.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ A. Rodin, “Testament”, *MW+B*, pp. 108-9.

4.B - Challenges to Their Dream: The Herrs and Marguerite Create Pond Farm Workshops

- Gordon and Jane Herr's dedication to their utopian dreams
- Marguerite Wildenhain's relationship to the Herrs in the early years
- The Herrs' children: Gail, Jan, and Jonathan and their experiences

Why, in 1939, did Jane and Gordon Herr choose a remote old ranch, five and a half miles from a small logging town, for developing their dream home, farm, and artists' colony?

The short answer is that they hoped to provide "a sustainable sanctuary for artists away from a world gone amuck."⁶⁵ The dictionary defines "running amuck" as "in a frenzy to do violence".

By 1939 the Herrs saw the emerging world as dangerous to their future in which they intended to revitalize the ancient ideal of civilization in harmony with nature. They wanted to separate themselves from the burgeoning social culture that they felt was threatening their vision of living in a community where all would work together to sustain their creative lives. Jane and Gordon had enjoyed higher education, travel, and enough financial support to believe they could shape their lives independently from the country's rapid industrialization. For them, the U.S. ramped-up production before entry in World War II portended the advent of a "consumer society". They wanted to live un-attached to the commercialization of life that was turning toward a future of urban convenience. They saw such a culture as a major obstacle to a life fully lived and rewarded with delight inspired by nature.

While traveling in Europe to research ideas for their future, Gordon's letters to Jane reveal his determination:

... we must live beyond the reaches of the city proper. This is an ideal, and quite practically possible. We must make our life quite simply founded upon inherent rather than acquired tastes, values and judgments.⁶⁶

Gordon and Jane avidly discussed various authors' proposals for future societies. They wanted to create a place where community members would maintain basic standards and ethics by supporting an inherent sense of purpose and shared ideals. Many intellectuals at that time criticized aspects of contemporary society as promoting a rising conformity, warning that it would lead to authoritarianism. When Gordon visited the Wildenhains in Putten [Netherlands], he was also inspired by his interpretation of Marguerite and Frans' values, believing their life experiences had brought them to live as he and Jane hoped to do. He wrote to Jane, admiring Marguerite and Frans' simple life with their peasant neighbors.

⁶⁵ Jonathan Herr, Op. cit., p. 315.

⁶⁶ Gordon Herr, "Letters from Europe: Holland, 12 May (1939)", *MW+B*, p. 274.

[Marguerite] really loves these people, and rightly so, because they are 100% honest and truthful in their way of life, their values, and their relationship to each other and the world... They must tell the truth, or say what they think... . One lie and you are finished with them. Not even a lie in words, just a lie or a falsehood in your manner or way is enough. This is right.

On the other hand, if you are their friend, what they have is also for you... Most things in the Wildenhains' life are, so far as I have found it, equally truthful, so far as it can be when reduced from untruths (as mine have been). Unlike the peasants, they have had a complex background of semi-sophistry and "civilized" acquisitions. Kultur. So is our own case, one of reducing from the dross, the crude mass, down to the purest irreducible elements.⁶⁷

When Marguerite came to San Francisco in 1940, Jane and Gordon helped her with many contacts. They found her lodging in San Francisco and urged her to take the job that had been offered at California College of Arts and Crafts. She was hoping that the CCAC job could be transferred to Frans, which would enable his immigration to the US; but that was not to be. Before she went to live at Pond Farm, Marguerite taught a year at CCAC and wrote in her diary to Frans about the Herrs' generosity:

Jane comes often. She is a real human being, benign, understanding, gifted –with literary aptitude and full of talent; only her handicraft is not at all developed. Gordon's is very much. He and I are quite similar in terms of life's philosophy and the intensity of reaching success. Even in terms of bad characteristics we are quite similar: indomitable, tyrannical about everything that is thought to be right, otherwise easily influenced and easily cooled down.^{68 69}

Beginning in 1940 the hard work to transform the old Rancho del Lago into Pond Farm was a constant challenge. The Herrs were grateful for the help of the Walkers (the former owners) with the essentials during those first years. By raising a variety of livestock and poultry, along with fruit trees and a vegetable garden, their farm was barely productive enough to sustain them and their children. Some of the harvest was sold to the residents of Guerneville.

Gordon was not drafted into World War II because of the poultry production. He was able to make only slight headway for the future colony. He made drawings and experimented with salvaged materials such as snow fencing and prune drying racks to envision his future designs.⁷⁰

As he put up outbuildings for the farm, he hoped they might be converted to serve the art colony. When the Pond Farm Workshops finally began, only the old poultry roost and the old barn could be used. While much was accomplished to make the farm production sustainable during these lean years,

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 273-4.

⁶⁸ M. Wildenhain, "26 August", *Diary to Frans Wildenhain*, Dean Schwarz, ed.

⁶⁹ To understand more of Gordon and Jane Herrs' underlying motivations and personalities in their own words, see pages 267--96 in Section 7 of *Marguerite Wildenhain and the Bauhaus: an Eyewitness Anthology*.

⁷⁰ Prune drying racks were used effectively as deflectors of the intense sun in windows of the old barn that was eventually renovated to become the main pottery studio. They can still be seen today.

building new facilities for workshops and housing for the future colony had to be put on hold because of shortages of materials, laborers, and fuel due to the war.

During these years, the Herrs grappled with meager funds and countless obstacles to their plans, yet both Jane and Gordon held fast to their ideals of creative living and creating inspired by nature. Jane wrote poetry and many letters filled with future plans and observations with insights and ideas about her life and those around her.⁷¹ Luckily, we have a few excerpts from those that she wrote in 1941-2 to her close friend, Ann McCarrie, who lived in Windsor, 20 miles east. Gordon continued to develop housing and studio plans and his designs for Hexagon House, a large meeting hall with rooms for lodging.⁷² The Herrs invested themselves, bodies and creative souls, in their pioneering. When Marguerite arrived to live at the farm in 1942, she joined them in the ongoing physical labor as well as actively producing pots in the clay studio that she and Gordon developed in the old barn.⁷³

The Herrs and Marguerite were bonded by both their ambitions for success as well as the frustrations. They enjoyed the beauty around them and tried to share their many interests. With all the physically demanding work for the adults, Jane was the most free to guide the Herrs' daughter, Gail, and son, Jan, with play and learning. Gordon's building and architectural abilities along with Marguerite's extensive experience renovating the Bauhaus facilities and two production clay studios during post-World War I impoverishment were invaluable. They invented many solutions with simplicity by repurposing materials on hand.

The Herrs' ambitions for creating new lives added to their strength as they wrestled with the farm. Both daring and caring are revealed in these excerpts from letters to their first child:

From father Gordon to his daughter, one month before she was born:

... I hope you will be curious ... That is the one thing I want you to have – an unbounded curiosity. Your life will never be dull if you have that. I will do what I can to provoke your curiosity if I ignore everything else. Because, with that, you will have a healthy body and mind, and the world will be your home. If it is big enough.

... As you will come to know – you have a very unpredictable family. I hope that they will continue to be so. Because it is only the uncertainty of their lives that makes them keep going with any real interest. You will have your ups and downs too. For all I know — you won't have a roof over your head next year. I wouldn't be a bit surprised – but I must admit that it doesn't seem a very likely thing to expect. But just don't be too sure. The sky makes a pretty good roof, even if it does leak like a sieve a good part of the time.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Most of Jane Herr's letters are as yet unpublished. A few excerpts from her notebook are shared by her daughter, Gail Herr Steele, in *MW+B*, pp. 283-93.

⁷² When it was finally possible to complete the building of Hexagon House in 1949, the December 1949 issue of *Arts and Architecture* journal published the article, "Pond Farm and Hexagon House".

⁷³ In 1946 Marguerite's work won first place in National Ceramics USA Competition.

⁷⁴ Gordon Herr, "A Letter to Gail Herr from Her Father: Alive But Not Yet Living", *MW+B*, pp. 293-4.

From mother Jane to Gail, twelve days old:

... I hope you will remember you are half a Jew and that you will know it in your blood somewhere. The one wonderful thing the old Jews carried here and kept ... was the Holy Sabbath.

... I have inside the feeling of Sabbath, that there should be a day of holiness. You and your father and I will keep such a Sabbath not on the appointed day but as it seems Sabbath to us within.

We have always kept such Sabbaths, your father and I. And the feast may be breakfast or dinner but when it is upon us we use a new cloth and clean flowers and silver. These are our feast days and at these times we renew ourselves.

... Each Jew feels a great longing toward Athens, that other culture source – a great envy for the Greeks who lived without righteousness in the joy of the sun. It was this longing in me that led me to your father who is a satyr from the bright woods of Greece. He has magic hands out of which are made wonderful things in copper and clay and wood. So you are the joining of the Hebrew and the Hellene. Which will you be?

I am not afraid for you. There is something in the way you hold your head, in your tight-centered little mouth that makes me know you are whole.⁷⁵

in 1942 Marguerite was still hoping that somehow her husband, Frans, would be able to immigrate soon. Often, with no letters for months, she feared he had been killed. However, she kept a diary to Frans and devoted herself to her work and the tasks of the farm. The Herrs and Marguerite acted as a family during this time. Although she and Jane were close and would be lifelong friends, Marguerite's familiarity was somewhat dominating. Jane wrote:

6/20/41 ... I felt as tho' I were in a dream. She not only uses my pots, my pans, cleans my house but has my emotions. I dare say she thinks more about G than about her husband – and I must say I also was touched a little since it must be a mild agony to her.⁷⁶

Essentially, the three tried to live purposefully and maintain their well-being. However, isolated and living in close quarters increased the tensions, and some aspects of their personalities began to spark against each other -- not unlike the chert rock on the Pond Farm site. Chert, or flint, produces very sharp edges when it chips or fractures. When pieces of this stone are repeatedly scraped together, kindling bursts into flame.

The strong egos of Gordon and Marguerite clashed often. Unfortunately, as his son Jonathan remembers, even though Gordon was articulate and communicative, he would often dramatize his point:

He could also be illogical and even violently vocal. He was a marksman at throwing his hunting knife which he always wore on his belt. A bandana and a pipe were standard parts of his attire. That was the Ernest Hemingway facet of him.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Jane Herr, "Twelve Days Old: A Letter to Gail", *MW+B*, pp. 295-6.

⁷⁶ Jane Herr, "Letters from Pond Farm 1941-1952", *MW+B*, p. 287.

⁷⁷ Jonathan Herr, *Op. cit.*, p. 320.

Gordon's knife, suddenly sticking out of the floor in the middle of a conversation circle, had quite an effect. After Gordon's rages, although pleasantries might be exchanged the next day, deep recovery was difficult for all. The sharp edges of personalities would continue surfacing, testing the core synergy with the primary remedies being those interpretive and negotiating skills that only Jane could employ. She tried to ameliorate the relationship troubles between Gordon and Marguerite, yet she also suffered from their judgmentalism and inability to compromise.

Jane loved Gordon; she worried about his anger and hoped that his better side could help him balance:

I fear the peculiar reservoir G has of aimless bitterness and imagine its vast increase in time to come. He can be so radiant and softly conscious of all things small and foolish -- what one needs and dazzling to the eye (mine) sometimes one feels slightly enchanted or like a salamander in the middle of quick moving flame and then he can be so ugly in his stupid rages.

Myself, my wants are simple – I want children, which I have, and a place to live which I like... . and to work some in a garden and to read the best of what has been written (since how can I be cured of this appetite?) And to write a little – but most of all I want that G fulfill himself some way or another -- so that if he doesn't do what needs to be done for this end – I can't rest.⁷⁸

In 1940 Jane wrote this poem about Gordon:

Pond Farm 1940

And the man searched
For a homeland
After the Diaspora -- And
he found it — A land
flowing with milk
and honey and he
took upon himself a
certain bondage,
Which he loved and which
he sometimes hated.
And behold him
among his herd and flocks
thick was the grass
and studded with flowers
And the young Family grew
These were the times
golden with him
and with beginnings
And shall one be afraid
to look on the Face of him?
Everywhere he is—on the high hill with sheep
in the creek bed
in the lowering twilight—

⁷⁸ Jane Herr, "Letters", *MW+B*, pp. 292-3.

in the mornings
and he is everywhere
How shall one say he is lost?
And long long was the
winter, the oak leaf
could not fall from
the tree. And brown
were the leaves and
bitter was the fruit.⁷⁹

Tragedy struck in February 1944, with the death of Jan from eating poisonous mushrooms, and grief permeated all of their lives.

Jane wrote:

... every hour has its own fresh pain....And at night the silence, the absence of laughter, and then the long night of wretched pictures — his pale face — his little limp body in my arms — and my arms ache and my belly aches, and I feel as though I were torn out of the earth. ... Yet I will never turn against life — and death is part of living.⁸⁰

The meal Jane had prepared with wild mushrooms that Gordon had picked sickened the adults; but Jan, only five years old, died. Luckily, seven-year-old Gail was staying over at their friends' that evening and was spared.

Gordon, Jane, and Marguerite became closer in their grief, yet the differences in how they tried to cope strained and split them.⁸¹ Jane wrote:

Last night at Marguerite's for supper she read poetry. Browning and Spenser's. I felt she was translating suffering into Suffering, and in a forgetful moment started the old line "you'll understand when you're older and have Suffered." But Wordsworth, Browning, Shelley, Keats and the whole bunch can take their Souls and their Azure Skies and their pure Spirits and stuff them down the drain.⁸²

On March 8, a month later, Jane writes:

Gordon is making out lumber lists for colony houses and is at last convinced [that Jan is gone], I think. I did embroidery on the bedspread ... I slept for the first time in two weeks.⁸³

That day Jane also writes about a memorial she is planning for Jan -- a library in Guerneville:

I'm going ahead about the Library and it will be mostly a children's library and in the barber shop

⁷⁹ Jane Herr's poems from a book she made for Gordon for Christmas 1950 are shared by her daughter, Gail Herr Steele, in *MW+B*, p. 299.

⁸⁰ Jane Herr, "Letters from Pond Farm 1941-1952", *MW+B*, pp. 288-9.

⁸¹ Geraldine Schwarz, ed., "Letters, 1944-52", *MW+B*, p. 288.

⁸² Jane Herr, *Ibid.*, p. 288.

⁸³ Jane Herr, *Ibid.*, p. 288.

adjoining Lordy's... It's too small to make murals and may eventually be moved. But I've asked Pete and Deano – and Ethel and will ask Lucretia (Nelson) to make pictures for it and Marguerite to make a few tiles and pots and Gordon to make some pictures too... I don't expect much of Guerneville will be moved – but then children who are still alive to wonder will see books and pictures they could not have seen if Jan hadn't lived. There might be one was glad... I want that something should be made in stories and poems and pictures of the beauty of this place and land.

I've catalogued on cards and in an accession book four hundred and eighty volumes for the Library – a lovely collection of children's books to be compared with Santa Rosa's although not so many, of course.⁸⁴

It's wonderful to know that in the present-day Guerneville Library, Marguerite's memorial wall plaque for Jan Herr hangs in the Children's Books reading area. Take a look! Guerneville library is just down Armstrong Woods Road, one block before the intersection with Main Street.

The Herrs agreed to adopt a baby soon after Jan's death.

The following quotations about this are shared to provide a glimpse into how the Herrs and Marguerite suffered from misunderstandings of each others' needs and emotions.

At the end of August, 1944, Jane wrote to her friend,

... If I feel any doubt in the matter I have only to think of hauling out my junk when everything lifts in the caverns of the Soul! To have this place, this food, these hills and even this unexpended love and not to do something about it is wrong. I'm sure I'll be better for my family. G seems positively excited... And if there is a babe in the cradle so much the better for all my withered female parts, and maybe the hills will soon have the feet of a small boy to keep them from turning to glaciers.⁸⁵

On September 9, 1944, she describes the new baby, Jonathan Guthrie Herr, and how her daughter, Gail, is thrilled and helping with the housework, cooking, singing, and talking to her brother. And she adds,

... it's wonderful, like some sort of convalescence of the soul -- G is all soft and dewy – Everything seems so easy ... I am not thinking I replace Jan. There is no other Jan but the heart has lots of facets and I am very happy.⁸⁶

Jane felt new energy and described their household:

The old brooder house here is turning into one of Herr's more attractive residences. The inhabitants thereof seem to find each other extremely good company, and are buoyant and very pleasant to have around. I hold my breath. They feel as though they are on a lark and the various inconveniences bother them not at all.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Jane Herr, "Letters", *MW+B.*, pp. 288-9.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 289-90.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 290.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

Marguerite, however, had an extremely difficult time coming to terms with her own grief over Jan's death and accepting the Herr's new happiness with Jonathan. Jane writes that at a special dinner she had prepared shortly after the baby's arrival, Marguerite refused to toast their new son and

... stood on the porch and wept for Jan because we betrayed him. Then I broke loose into a temper at Gordon which was nothing short of demented, and I felt that I would end up in an institution. G walked out and I was left with Marguerite... Evening becomes Electra or Dementia on Pond Farm.⁸⁸

Interviewed in 2016, Gail remembered:

... what my mother went through — and now I get emotional. It's amazing that that emotion never goes away as an almost 80-year-old person [sobbing]... Marguerite was furious that Jane would so soon adopt a child. She lives in a house 100 feet away or 200 feet away, and she was [mis]treating my mother who just lost a child, who found a baby and ... and you're the only ones up there.⁸⁹

The isolation was keenly felt by Gail, especially since she was seven and of an age to realize that there was no one and nowhere close to find safety from the extremely angry adults. "For me Pond Farm was beautiful. But I was lonely and isolated, I was afraid and I could not find my way. My childhood was filled with far more pain than happiness."⁹⁰

Years later, when Gail visited Victor Ries, one of the first faculty at Pond Farm, they spoke of the interpersonal struggles there when they had to deal with warring egos and meager facilities. Victor said, "Of all the hells of Nazi Germany and all the hells of Palestine, there's no hell on earth like Pond Farm."⁹¹ This stark description helped Gail to see her past circumstances more clearly:

I felt totally vindicated because I hadn't as an adult, I hadn't known where all this pain came from but to have somebody who was there say that to me; that's what happened to me and it's hard to explain that level of emotional abuse that existed both for the adults and for the kids, or at least for me. My brother, being seven years younger, did not suffer as much as I did.

It's difficult to describe emotional distress. People know, understand war. They understand tragedies, but not living with intelligent, creative people who are fighting and unhappy, and need to make a move. That created a terrible stress.

Interviewer: What was the emotional abuse and why was it?

Well, it was everything. I think my father, he didn't have any money. I don't think my mother was willing to ask the relatives for too much. He wasn't getting along with people that came to this thing, he didn't manage properly. Victor Ries told me that they'd (the faculty) get together in a circle and my Father ... took a knife and threw it across the circle and it landed right in front of his feet. I remember my father had a .22 because up in the farm we had wild pigs and rattlesnakes. My father, in a party, took the .22 and shot it right through the living room house floor.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 291.

⁸⁹ Gail Herr Steele, Audio Interview, Dec. 6, 2016, by David Washburn.

⁹⁰ Gail Herr Steele, "A Daughter's Perspective", *MW+B*, p. 299.

⁹¹ Victor Ries, quoted by Gail Herr Steele, *MW+B*, p. 301.

I think you put this all together, it's very understandable, but it's very difficult to explain that kind of thing today to the world who hasn't seen it. I would make it comparable to -- It's a funny comparison because it's so different. ...Kids that get kidnapped and are raised by somebody -- held captive, in some ways that is an example of what the farm was.

I went to school and came back, but I never really got off the farm very much.⁹²

As the farm progressed and plans coalesced for developing the colony and Pond Farm Workshops, Frans Wildenhain was allowed to emigrate from Germany in 1947, and he joined Marguerite. They had been apart for seven years, and their marriage soon became troubled. Frans moved away before Pond Farm Workshops disbanded. They divorced in 1952.

Friends and faculty arrived at Pond Farm as it was readied for the 1949 summer opening of the first workshops.

The Allans moved into the Walker house with their children, Mary and John. John Allan, the father, helped Gordon to build Hexagon House. Gesina Peterhans arrived to study with Marguerite Gesina had two children, Michael and Nini.

Off the farm but close friends of my parents were *Life* photographers Otto Hagel and his wife Hansel Mieth, and Ann and Mac McCarrie. These couples often ate dinner together.⁹³

When Victor Ries, metalsmith, and his wife, Ester, arrived in 1949 with their daughter, Ayala, at Pond Farm, Gail Herr had a friend. "For two or three years, Ayala and I were inseparable."⁹⁴

By this time, Jonathan Herr was five and enjoying the love of Marguerite:

Of course, Marguerite's disdain [for Jonathan's hasty adoption]... was overcome and Jonathan became a favored child. She often quoted his cute sayings, especially his observation of the stars and his comment that all the "consternations" were out.⁹⁵

Jonathan learned astronomy from Marguerite and continued to enjoy it throughout his life. He grew up quite versed in geology and natural sciences and read many selections from Marguerite's library of world literature and history. He was free to roam and enjoyed his explorations of the land and with the ever-developing farm. Wonderful descriptions of his life at Pond Farm, a lot about Guerneville and the area, local color, and notable friends, along with many bonding experiences with Marguerite throughout her life are in Jonathan's chapter in *Marguerite Wildenhain and the Bauhaus*.⁹⁶

⁹² Gail Herr Steele, Audio Interview, Dec. 6, 2016, by David Washburn.

⁹³ Gail Herr Steele, "A Daughter's Perspective", *MW+B*, p. 298.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

⁹⁵ Geraldine Schwarz, ed., "Letters", *MW+B*, p. 291.

⁹⁶ Jonathan Herr, *Op. cit.*, pp. 308-36.

Growing up curious and observant on Pond Farm, Jonathan incorporated many of the conservation examples into his own life. He became a pioneering, highly respected “green” landscape architect throughout Sonoma and Napa counties.

Jonathan gives maps and details about how Pond Farm worked due to his father’s abilities: creating things to improve their lives, such as the water pump and installing a generator.

Pond Farm dreams were realized out of the labor of work. Gordon was a good and creative parent in this regard. And he had a quick wit when it came to machinery and the technology of his times. Basically, starting the generator was like the operation of the (water) pump. They were each the lifeline to our semi-modern living. The generator was also temperamental and ran only during the evening hours. I recall the times when the generator was running out of gas. The lights flickered and then darkness descended. It was impartial; it picked on all of us.

He also mentions some of Gordon’s control issues.

Gordon sometimes decided to retire early so he hit the “kill” button [on the generator] to save gasoline. This, on more than one occasion, became a real inconvenience to other Pond Farmers and was the cause of considerable tension.⁹⁷

Up on the hill, almost two miles of rugged road away from the intersection with Armstrong Woods Road, and then some three miles to town, Pond Farm had no phone for years.

Post cards and letters were the only outside communication other than traveling and personally delivering messages. The entertainment options of those days were shared meals with lively discussions, chess, checkers, the game of Mill, books and the richly interesting land that surrounds Pond Farm. I was never bored; especially after Gordon and Marguerite instilled in me the realization that you are only bored if you are a boring person. “We give you the tools and you have a mind.” I got it, eventually.⁹⁸

Jonathan recalls how his father had designed and built Pond Farm with attention to the environment and solar energy. He remembers that when the noted San Francisco architect, Albert Lanier,⁹⁹ designed Marguerite’s Guest House in 1962, he used Gordon’s designs for the most advantageous natural lighting, heating and cooling.¹⁰⁰ Like Walter Gropius, the German architect who started the Bauhaus and continued his influence as a U.S. citizen, Gordon stressed that architecture must embody a synthesis of art and craft and life.

⁹⁷ Jonathan Herr, Op. cit., p. 318.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 318.

⁹⁹ Albert Lanier and his wife, famed American sculptor, Ruth Asawa, were friends of Trude Guermonprez and Marguerite.

¹⁰⁰ Jonathan Herr, Op.cit., p. 320.

In July 1949, the *Christian Science Monitor* published a photograph of Gordon "... standing in front of the barn he redesigned to house his architectural practice and Marguerite Wildenhain's pottery. This image briefly thrust Herr into the national spotlight..."¹⁰¹

Interviewed for the *Monitor's* article on the Pond Farm Workshops and the various crafts to be offered, Gordon said,

The architect, by molding the outward shape, should arrive at the final value of all art: to transform and dignify the inward life of a people. Naturally, the efforts of all other craftsmen, the potter, weaver, metal smith and others are focused toward a common goal.¹⁰²

Architect Tim Tivoli Steele, Gordon's grandson, writes a very thorough analysis of Gordon's design. Tim details the building in all its aspects and suggests how Hexagon House was possibly in advance of as well as influenced by other styles of that time. He presents plans and photos in addition to his rationale for a strong influence from the regional Pomo conical structures and Miwok lodges, called "kotcha".

Anyone who visited the Hexagon House never forgot it. I saw it for the first time at the age of eight and it immediately left an indelible impression. Built by a grandfather I had never really known, the Hexagon House was a spectacle of wood and glass, soaring above a floor of concrete and slate, and accented at its zenith in copper. When you stood in the main room, your eyes were swept upward along six gigantic inward-tilting Douglas fir columns locked in a six-sided star cluster of collar beams twenty feet off the ground, holding a sheet metal chimney hanging like an upside-down chalice over a hexagonal fire pit.

The building was at once elemental and eclectic, monumental and intimate ... The language of its architecture was that of rustic sophistication, referencing local Native American domiciles, Russian woodworking, Maybeck and even le Corbusier. The Hexagon House was a striking and singular achievement.¹⁰³

With the information currently available about Gordon Herr's labor on Pond Farm, it appears that with his completion of this major project, Hexagon House, any attention he may have received from his family and Pond Farm colleagues about it, was minimal. Daughter Gail Herr notes that "... it was beautiful"¹⁰⁴, and some students remember it as impressive.

The absence of information about how Hexagon House was received by those close to Herr is troubling because it suggests a silence possibly indicating that commendations were withheld or suppressed. Surely Gordon meant his designs to reveal his passion for all that he preached; it seems that there would be at least a few documented memories or words of congratulations on the completion of Hexagon House.

¹⁰¹ Tim Tivoli Steele, "Hexagon House: Home to the Pond Farm Workshops", *MW+B*, p. 341.

¹⁰² Gordon Herr, "Craftworkshop as a Movement to Encourage Talented Young People", Carl Shapley. *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 9, 1949, p. 7.

¹⁰³ Tim Tivoli Steele, *Op.cit.*, pp. 338-9.

¹⁰⁴ Gail Herr Steele, Washburn Interview.

At present, we have only Jane's little sketch of the structure and an accompanying poem that suggest a celebratory note about its completion.

Villanelle for my Master builder

With mighty logs you pierce the sky
grappling a shape from what you long
failures and flaws of life defy
and up to heaven goes your song
and boldly columns march along
confounding all the passerby
with mighty logs you pierce the sky
grappling a shape from what you long
six logs meet a crown on high
to show machines and hate are wrong
that hands and dreams can still be strong
with mighty logs you pierce the sky
grappling a shape from what you long.¹⁰⁵

There is the additional twist to what could have been Gordon's moment of recognition when Hexagon House was reviewed in the journal *Arts and Architecture*.

The Hexagon House did not conform to canonical modernist design principles, was superficially too informal and was too eclectic to be on the architectural vanguard.

That honor would be given to a different California project first published in the very same pages of the journal that first published "Pond Farm and Hexagon House." The December 1949 edition of the journal *Arts and Architecture* presented Case Study House (CSH #8): the Pacific Palisades house designed by the legendary husband and wife team of Charles and Ray Eames. The colorful steel, glass and concrete Eames house was an instant international phenomenon. Its "brash sleekness of the design made it a favorite backdrop for fashion shoots in the 1950s and 1960s."¹⁰⁶

It is possible that the absence of recognition became for Gordon an ever-bitter poison of failure in comparison to the ongoing success of all the other artists at Pond Farm.

Born in 1937, Gail Herr saw Pond Farm develop very slowly from the ground up. Her perspective on the adults around her and the difficulties she faced are vivid and revealing about the struggles she witnessed at Pond Farm.

Who were Jane Brandenstein and Gordon Herr? They were, first of all, brilliant – dreamers, idealists, and in love with the earth. They were intensely, emotionally passionate to the extreme.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Jane Herr, "Hexagon House, Home to the Pond Farm Workshops", *MW+B*, p. 339.

¹⁰⁶ From Internet encyclopedia Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eames_House

¹⁰⁷ Gail Herr Steele, "A Daughter's Perspective", *MW+B*, p. 299.

Gordon was in fact an artistic genius. He was charming, gentle and loving to a point most men cannot imagine. He was never financially solvent on his own. He often did not finish things — like our house was overwhelmed with too much farm work, with not enough help.

... Living on a farm is difficult – worries about fire, worries about water, rattlesnakes, mud daubers, yellow-jackets. And always the extreme tensions between everyone.¹⁰⁸

In addition to the early death of their son Jan just four years after the Herrs had begun to build Pond Farm, eight years later Jane Herr died of breast cancer in 1952.

... it was a very hard life. It was hard economically, it was hard primitively. It was hard to see a dream smashed,... the idea didn't work, people were restless, that would cause the person who had the idea to not be very happy and my mother who loved him and was dying of cancer at 40. You put that all together, it wasn't a happy place.¹⁰⁹

Because Jane could no longer mitigate the clashes between Gordon and the faculty members who had not yet left, Pond Farm Workshops completely fractured apart.

As she was dying, Jane wrote to her daughter:

I have been terribly proud of you in the last few weeks... I think you have so much understanding of complicated and difficult people on account of natural tact which will see you half way through almost any human problem. Try not to worry about the deficiencies but throw your weight behind the things you can do well. ...it does matter that you understand and can bring out the best things in people that you love and this is already a big talent. You have been interfacing between G and me with absolute impartiality since you were five years old, and so already have the most necessary equipment for the daily challenge of moral choice.¹¹⁰

After Jane died, Gail went to live in San Francisco with her Grandmother, May Brandenstein. Just nine months later her grandmother died, and Gail moved to live with Joe and Ellen Bransten so that she could finish the high school year in San Francisco.

Jonathan and Gordon remained at Pond Farm with only Marguerite – the rest of the faculty had moved away. Gail comments about this:

I would say the problem with Marguerite and my father -- because those are the two that were left -- they were extremely complicated people with their own demons and their own things. They didn't fit into what we think of as normal family life. I don't think Marguerite was difficult but she was complex. If you didn't meet the criteria of her complexity or what she thought was important, she was done with you and that had nothing to do with me.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 301.

¹⁰⁹ Gail Herr Steele, Washburn Interview.

¹¹⁰ Jane Herr, "Letters", *MW+B*, p. 286.

When an adult has a passion for something, they can't always take care of the people closest to them, and I think that goes across many families. It isn't unique but the passion is more important than family needs.¹¹¹

Gail's hindsight about the development of Pond Farm and the Workshops from her experiences growing up, and later, as a mother and as an Alameda County Supervisor for 18 years, is evident in her compassionate descriptions:

What is so tragic about the whole Pond Farm story is that Gordon had so much talent and dreams in many ways that were extraordinary, and he had all of my mother's support, but for whatever reason, he could not appreciate that. I attribute a great deal of it to his own failure and the lack of acceptance of the other world-renowned artists: Marguerite, Trude, and Victor.¹¹² His own behavior made it impossible for everyone to work together...

Because she stayed and taught, the story of Pond Farm is always written as though Marguerite started it. The essence of the dream and the key seed of Pond Farm's beginnings were my father's, with my mother's support.

Dreams don't just turn into reality. They are first a vision. They are hard work, equity and determination, and if they happen it is because others had the dream too, the same value system and the same hope for a new future. If Gordon had not inspired Marguerite to come to this unbuilt place to create a school where artists could work and teach, she would not have come. Victor Ries came too, believing that the concept would work for him. I didn't know Trude Guermonprez well, but I do believe she also was intrigued by the dream.

But when all is said and done, it was Gordon's vision for such a school; it was his appreciation for the arts (all of them), his dream of a Bauhaus in this country. The elements of human harshness, disease, poverty, and hard work totally overwhelmed him as the dreams of something beautiful slipped away from him.¹¹³

Gail has participated generously in the effort to bring out the entire Pond Farm story. She sheds light on the contrasts of her experience growing up at Pond Farm:

... Marguerite, when I went back to her 100th birthday, there were a whole bunch of students who came. I sat there and listened to everyone talk and it was amazing. ... They would bring up the issue [that] she didn't like somebody because she didn't like their handwriting; all kinds of stuff. I didn't know the students -- but the issue I knew. I thought to myself, they came from this "normal" Midwest environment for a summer. They didn't live there year-round with it. They were tied together through their art, not tied together through living with her.

I don't know why Marguerite was the way she was. I think part of it, though, is being the first woman to get a master's degree at the Bauhaus. People looked up to her. And then she always knew that she was famous somehow. She just threw herself into her pots and her friends, and her students. To get such a nice, warm response... Because she was very wise, she had all kinds of ideas and could articulate them. People don't hear that every day.

¹¹¹ Gail Herr Steele, Washburn Interview.

¹¹² The faculty included: metals artist Harry S. Dixon; modernist jewelry artist Merry Renks; muralists Stephen Pope Dimitroff, Lucienne Bloch Dimitroff; collagist Jean Varda; and sculptor Claire Falkenstein -- all well-known for their innovative art; the faculty and friends such as Otto Hagel and Hansel Mieth were part of a network of prominent artists, photographers, and writers of the time who visited and added their interest to the Pond Farm effort.

¹¹³ Gail Herr Steele, "A Daughter's Perspective", *MW+B*, p. 301.

To have her talk about not only art but how you incorporate nature with art ... is very different than being a ... little girl who yearned for social stuff. She was like a second mother to my brother and me... . It was hard as a child. It's because there were no kids...When you feel as a child you don't measure up to the main adult in your life -- which I didn't measure up to my father or Marguerite -- that creates a bad self-image and a loneliness.

One of the things from Marguerite that stayed with me all my life is that you look at life -- you look at each day as your life. You always keep going ... to have a goal, and to have a behavior that, every day, you do what you should be doing so that in the end, you will have accomplished something. That stuck with me. ... I actually put together a youth center. It's still going to this day.¹¹⁴

While her parents had labored to create a community of creative artists, Gail worked to fund and organize a supportive community by creating services for children who suffered from physical, emotional, and behavioral disabilities.

It's a very similar concept but around people and children's needs. I think that also I learned something by osmosis, about pulling people together. One of the things that I think is so important, that was part of my parent's dream, is how you pull people of like-minds together to build community.¹¹⁵

Gail's precise summary of the contrasting elements that caused so much contention during the beginning of the Pond Farm colony and the Pond Farm Workshops' years is quite clear:

Every artist had a direct pipeline to God. They wouldn't work together collaboratively. My parents wanted the *collaborative-ness* [editor's italics]. But it's just hard to get that. It's a concept that is very hard: To give up your egos and who you are for the good of the whole. That's what I think their other dream was.¹¹⁶

Current plans (2017) are to bring the Pond Farm site up to California State Parks' standards so that groups of visitors can see what Marguerite developed for her Pond Farm Pottery: the Old Barn potting studio; Marguerite's house, and the Guest House. Marguerite had the Guest House built in 1962 for the visit of her long-time friend, Gerhard Marcks, one of her Bauhaus Masters and mentors. There are also plans that the site may offer an artist residency program.

When asked her feelings about this project, Gail said,

Having the farm revert now back to being a place where artists can come for the summer to work with other artists to improve their skills and to be part of nature and away from the complexities of life would please my parents so much. It's fascinating because you don't have to tear anything down, it is back to nature. It is already sort of how it was founded in the first place with them improving the barn and Marguerite's house. They can see what a little space she lived in; our house wasn't much bigger. The

¹¹⁴ "We got an old school building and we put in all these different agencies. We had a health clinic, a school for disabled kids, child care and all different programs in one school." The Gail Steele Wellness and Recovery Center in Hayward, CA, opened in 2012. It was named in honor of Gail when she retired in 2011 after supporting its services for almost 40 years, including those 18 years she served as the Hayward area representative on the Alameda County Board of Supervisors.

¹¹⁵ Gail Herr Steele, Washburn Interview.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

simplicity of life, which I think even artists today don't know and don't have a chance [to experience]. The summer school up there, or whatever they decide to do would be just wonderful.

I am thrilled to see them want to take my parents' vision and what they tried to do to be reestablished in the same place. I would love to live long enough to go see some classes taught up there by anybody and the students enjoying the farm as they did in the '50s. That's half a century ago. To be able to see that in your lifetime is pretty special.¹¹⁷

4.C *Marguerite's Commitment and Impact: Pond Farm Pottery, 1953-85*

Looking at Marguerite Wildenhain's life and work from the perspective of her contributions to the dream of developing the Pond Farm Workshops and then her own Pond Farm Pottery, we chronicle some of the history of her efforts and the relationships with others who were involved.

Misunderstandings, disappointments, tragedies, and emotional upheavals abounded in those first nine years, and ultimately only Marguerite remained at the site of the abandoned Workshops. Why did she stay and begin again? Continue for over 30 more years? The key question is: what was the source of her tenacity?

Well educated in Germany and England, she had confronted many challenges. When she had to leave her home and husband for safety in the U.S., other options were available to her. Her brother was living in New York, her reputation as a potter was well-known, and she was offered teaching positions at Black Mountain College in North Carolina and the California College of Arts and Crafts. Yet she chose to accept Jane and Gordon Herr's offer to join them in developing an idea: Pond Farm Workshops.

Why did she come to a rugged place on a rocky hill to begin her life again? Was she looking for just terribly hard work? Why did she continue after such difficulties with the Pond Farm Workshops? To answer such questions, consider the following:

- Marguerite was well aware of the work necessary to develop the future she envisioned. Instead of strategies that might have brought convenient studio facilities, comfortable living accommodations, and wealth, she chose to repeat her past experiences and create yet another future in a new, inspiring countryside.
- From her earlier experiences of successful training, teaching, and enjoying the camaraderie of fellow artists, Marguerite likely anticipated a similar period of hard work to establish and then enjoy accomplishing her goals, eventually together with Frans, when she accepted Jane and Gordon Herr's offer to develop Pond Farm Workshops.
- She had discussed concepts for a colony with the Herrs, and she looked forward to working with and living near artists and craftsmen of similar minds – sharing common interests, like her experiences in Germany and Holland. She recruited her old friend, Trude Guermonprez, to leave Black Mountain College and join Pond Farm. As craftsmen, she knew they would be intent on

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

their work, without any arrangement such as a stipend; so their lives would be simple, such as she and Frans had enjoyed with their pottery in Holland. As she worked with Gordon Herr to clean out the old barn for a studio area and build her small house, it was obvious that Pond Farm life would serve just basic needs. During the nine years she helped to develop the Farm, she coped with the impacts of isolation on her studio work: setting up a kiln, shipping out her work for exhibit, and ordering in supplies for her pottery.

By the time Pond Farm Workshops opened in 1949, the Herrs and Marguerite were moving forward, in spite of their personality conflicts, hoping that the arriving faculty and students would help balance their interpersonal struggles and that the activity of the Workshops would bring new energy to realize their dreams. While the students apparently appreciated the sessions, there were definitely hardships between the faculty and the Herrs. Financial troubles and serious disagreements, along with Jane's death led to closing the Workshops in 1952. Yet Marguerite stayed at Pond Farm after it fell apart.

EARLY YEARS: BUILDING A STRONG COMMITMENT

Several experiences inspired Marguerite's positive vision for her future and spurred her into action:

- As World War I was ending, Marguerite was 23 years old. In 1919, hoping to find training as a potter, she chanced upon the proclamation that architect Walter Gropius had pinned to a wall announcing what was to become the world-famous Bauhaus:

Architects, sculptors, painters, we must all turn to the crafts. Art is not a profession; there is no essential difference between the artist and craftsman. In rare moments of inspiration, moments beyond the control of his will, the grace of heaven may cause his work to blossom into art. But proficiency in his craft is essential to every artist. Therein lies the source of creative imagination.

Let us create a new guild of craftsmen without the class distinctions which raise an arrogant barrier between craftsmen and artist. Together let us conceive and create the new building of the future, which will embrace architecture, sculpture and painting in one unity which will rise one day towards heaven from the hands of a million workers like the crystal symbol of a new faith. [Walter Gropius]

I stood ... moved to the quick, read, and re-read. "That's it," I said ... It was that simple. ¹¹⁸

- From the beginning of her training, she responded to the idealistic and somewhat heroic spirit that ran through the early Bauhaus and that of her mentors, Gerhard Marcks and Max Krehan. The implicit sense of contributing to a common cause, creating a new unity that would "rise like a crystal symbol of a new faith", promised a purposeful and exciting future.
- As a member of the first group of Bauhaus students who worked with clay, Marguerite had participated wholeheartedly in developing the Bauhaus pottery studio and living facilities as well as her own technical skills within the relatively small "family" of her fellow craftsmen and teachers. Within this group, many other creative activities were pursued and shared. Poetry and literature were both written and recited, musical evenings and philosophical discussions

¹¹⁸ M. Wildenhain, *The Invisible Core*, pp. 20-2.

were enjoyed as much as picnics. It was an environment with freedom to entertain ideas along with rigorous studio training.

- After the first six years, as she was completing her Bauhaus training, Max Krehan died, and Marguerite vowed to live for the *Craft* she had learned from him, and she would continue to honor throughout her life the concepts of *Form* that she had first studied with Marcks.
- Marguerite expanded her vow as she moved on from the original Bauhaus, repeating the work of setting up a new ceramics workshop in Burg Giebichenstein in Halle-Saale, as she began to teach the craft. Her extended mission now included her dedication to transmitting the skills and knowledge she had received from her mentors to her students.

The strength of her early training and successes carried Marguerite through when the Pond Farm Workshops closed. Alone, Marguerite once again decided to create a place where she could continue working to fulfill her goals. “If I were to be alone, I would try to encompass the whole world in my work. My dedication to it would be total, and my compassion for those who are miserable immense.”¹¹⁹

Marguerite’s Pond Farm Pottery developed as a program to echo not only the components of the intense training that had shaped her abilities and strengths as a potter, but her use of examples from many cultures, readings and metaphors from classical literature, as well as history, geology, and astronomy were also shared to awaken students to new ideas. Accommodations were meager, as those during Marguerite’s Bauhaus days had been; but reports by former students testify to a convivial enjoyment, [like the Bauhaus students before them], of the natural environment, such as ocean bonfires and summer swims in the Russian River.

Marguerite repeated her most valued experiences, formed by the purposefulness and creative spirit she had found as a student, teacher, and potter; they accompanied her into the future with a deepening faith in her practice.

Looking back on Marguerite’s career decades later, Marcks admired her for her strengths, “... every beginning was for her a new step to a higher level of maturity”.¹²⁰ Not only had she become a superior craftsman with technical skills that produced forms strong enough to support any innovation she might choose; she worked alongside students with the conviction that the training would bring them a similar foundation and creative freedom. Her fervent insistence was that unique creations were the result of a potter’s total responsiveness to transforming clay with *feeling*, not just skillful techniques. While her work received awards throughout her life and she was recognized for years as one of the top ten ceramicists in the United States, it is also evident that as a devoted teacher, she continued her early vow to her former mentor, Max Krehan, “...I must live for You, for your idea, our idea – for your Craft.”¹²¹

During the months when she was not teaching at Pond Farm Pottery, Marguerite was invited to give lectures, demonstrations, and workshops at conferences, many schools, and universities. She traveled

¹¹⁹ M. Wildenhain, *The Invisible Core*, p. 97.

¹²⁰ Gerhard Marcks, “A Biography of Marguerite Friedlaender Wildenhain”, *MW+B*, p. 440.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

extensively and wrote three books that reveal her intense concerns about contemporary arts education and pottery as well as her deep pleasure in the various experiences which inspired her work and life.

In this overview, excerpts from student testimonials and other documentation, along with some from her own writings, have been chosen to show Marguerite in action.

HER IMPACT: STUDENTS' VIEWS ON MARGUERITE'S TEACHING

The first of the practical skills that she taught was how to create incredibly strong forms on the pottery wheel.

"It Changed My Life", by Gerald Scoggin, Pond Farmer 1975, '76, '77

In 1975, I was a high school teacher who had taken two semesters of junior college extension evening classes in 'beginning ceramics.' I could wedge and thought I knew how to throw.... That first summer was rough for me. My ego and my unresolved baggage were in my way big time. ...The tension in the room was palpable and obviously emanated from my seat. Plus at all the other wheels was somebody who had either been to Pond Farm before, had studied in college from someone Marguerite had trained or both.

On the next to the last day of the summer session, I had a row of teapots up on my board and knew I had to take them up to the front and put them on the sawhorses for Marguerite to critique. Very reluctantly I did. "Vell, they aren't very elegant, are they!" As I started to hang my head she said, 'No! It is no shame! Some people can't dance, some people can't sing. It is no shame."¹²²

I didn't know for sure what was being said to me. I was hurt, very angry and confused. Back at my campsite that afternoon I filled a page of a large pad with a drawing of Pond Farm with a huge witch hovering above (and it had Marguerite's face)! ...Some of the other students who had heard ...what she said to me seemed embarrassed and avoided me. Others tried to offer words of comfort and condolence. "You know, she has mellowed a lot. She isn't nearly as bad as she used to be." It didn't help much.

...On the drive home I bought pottery studio equipment. (Was I getting back up on the horse?) I know that for all of the next year I was on a kick wheel – after and between classes, evening, weekends. ...In June, before driving back to Guerneville, my wife asked what that was on my bottom. It turned out to be calluses from my time on the kick wheel that year.

The second summer I was 'head down and do my best'. I think it was the second week when I had a row of teapots up on my board and she paused while walking by my wheel and said, "Vell! You couldn't do that a year ago, could you?" Before I could respond..., she said "No! It gives me great pleasure!"

After that, things were different. She would stop at my wheel and talk to me as though in confidence. "See those young girls across the aisle? They are wired like jet pilots. They learn to throw readily. But THEY have nothing to say!" Another time she stopped, paused, and said, "You know, when you think less and feel more you will make better pots."

Somehow I felt accepted, included, validated. I felt I was one of them, one of the group that was respected and admired. At the end of that summer, when I stepped up to say goodbye to Marguerite, I couldn't keep from weeping. When she said, "There, there! Big men don't cry!" I could only manage, "Yes they do." I was filled with such strong feelings around the contrast between my distracted paltry level of

¹²² M. Wildenhain, as quoted by Gerald Adam Scoggin, "It Changed My Life", *MW+B*, pp. 592-3.

passion for art and her integrity, dignity and lifelong commitment—both to art and to sharing herself. I loved her for being my teacher.

She told me one day, “I don’t teach people to make pots. I teach people, and clay is my medium.” For me that was so clearly true. I am grateful I got to spend three summers at Pond Farm. To say “It changed my life” would be a bit of an understatement.

At 76 and a half, I love myself and my life the most I ever have. Most mornings I wake up knowing clearly the reason to get out of bed and push past my arthritic aches and pains. That reason awaits me in the studio.¹²³

Marguerite was invited to give workshops and demonstrations at many colleges and schools during the time she was free from teaching at Pond Farm Pottery.

There was no question about Marguerite Wildenhain’s formidable skill as a craftsman and her ability to train students to master the techniques that would enable them to create freely with the wheel and clay.

Val Cushing, a highly recognized potter, author and professor at Alfred University, described her visit to Alfred University in 1952, to give a demonstration and workshop for him and other advanced students.

“A 1952 Workshop at Alfred University, Part One”, by Val Cushing

Marguerite walked into the building, and immediately we started to work. Just bam, like that. ...So there was something about that that got everybody’s attention right away. Here was this woman with this incredible skill and ability but without much except her hands to make all this. She had a kind of passion that is hard to describe if you’ve not met a person like that, a kind of charisma, almost a guru-like effect. ...She had such absolute conviction...she had about her life and the life of a potter that did it for me. I said, oh, wow, I’ve got to do this.¹²⁴

Marguerite was explicit with her step-by-step process, insisting the students follow each demonstrated step, from centering and onward. The students’ teacher, Dan Rhodes, had earlier advised them about Marguerite’s demanding method.

Dan Rhodes had prepared us for this because he knew Marguerite and he knew what we were going to do, so we were expecting it. But it was still a bit of a shock. ...He showed us some of her pots which he owned. He handed me one of her pots and said, “Pass it around.” And my reaction was WOW, because the pot had virtually no weight. She threw incredibly thin walls.

She would lift any piece off the wheel, including large platters, and she would cut them with a wire, lift them up and then put them down in that motion and they would just snap back on center because they were so tightly thrown. It was really quite amazing. She was born in 1896, and this was 1952, so you know she wasn’t at her absolute prime at the time I saw her, but she was still an incredible thrower. Technically even at this point in her career she was able to do anything with clay.

¹²³ Gerald Scoggin, “It Changed My Life”, *MW+B*, pp. 592-3.

¹²⁴ Val Cushing, “A 1952 Workshop at Alfred University, Part One”, *MW+B*, p. 634.

The Character of Drawing Lesson Wednesdays:

First Week: ROCKS—Get the most characteristic things to show—volcanic, sedimentary, crystals and others. Be sure to draw the most characteristic side.

Second Week: LEAVES—cabbage, lettuce, many varieties of trees. Lecture on the development of fig leaves from same tree. Showed about ten different leaves from one tree, from an immature one through several stages until a very well developed one. The ‘artist’ would pick this well developed one. I was such a remedial student that I had to collect 100 fig leaves and place them in order from the least developed to the most characteristic —“that’s the one Adam used to change his image.”

Third Week: TEXTURES—bark, scraps from pencil sharpener, twine, rag soaked in clay, steel wool, cement. Also free-movement drawing to show how mood or movements of certain types influence line and to show how the use of lines can give life to decorated pots.

Fourth Week: --Collected and drew textures.

Fifth Week: --Shells.

Sixth Week: —Bottles, glasses. Make both sides of the bottle have the same curves. Find the differences in the curves and profiles.

Seventh Week: --Lecture on Gerhard Marcks’ drawings and prints.

I think it’s important to keep her in your mind as an influence in American ceramics that again, I want to say, not just through her work to whatever value you place on that, but through her example as this passionate, intense, motivated, devoted person that represented to young people like myself at the time this idea that you could go out and do this. She managed to communicate that possibility somehow, the excitement of that possibility.¹²⁵

WHAT WAS A TYPICAL CLASS LIKE?

“Are You Ready to Understand?”

From teaching assistant Dean Schwarz’ 1965 notes (his second summer at Pond Farm) --

Monday: On the first day of class we were all asked to throw two pots exactly alike for each of the pottery making steps. Marguerite passed around the room and observed this process. Then she determined where to start her teaching for each student individually. Some had to start at the very beginning with the lowly doggy dish. I was asked to make twenty pitchers, no two alike.

Tuesday: Marguerite picked four from the twenty pitchers and suggested I develop these. “The rims are weak. They must act as if they are a period at the end of a sentence.” Some looked as if they were two pots stacked on top of each other. This occurs when the top and bottom are about the same size. “Fingers of the left hand should go all the way through the rim to form a sculptural spout.” Many of “theese advahnced” were assigned even more exciting projects.

Wednesday Morning: Continued work of making pitchers.
afternoon: Drew rocks. (Marguerite taught drawing in much the same way that Johannes Itten had taught her in his introductory course at the Bauhaus).

Thursday: Started covered jars. “Be sure to make good sockets for lids. Small jars should remain open at the top for hand to enter. Covered jars usually should have some part small enough so that they can be held with one hand.” In the afternoon I pulled handles for my best pitchers. The form did not fit the pots until repeated efforts finally began to approach solving this.

Friday: Pulled two or three more handles and decorated pitchers.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 635.

¹²⁶ Dean Schwarz, “Are You Ready To Understand?”, *MW+B*, pp. 523-4.

The following story about Pond Farm Pottery student Peter Deneen was posted online by his son, Niles Deneen, with excerpts from *Marguerite Wildenhain and the Bauhaus: An Eye Witness Anthology*.



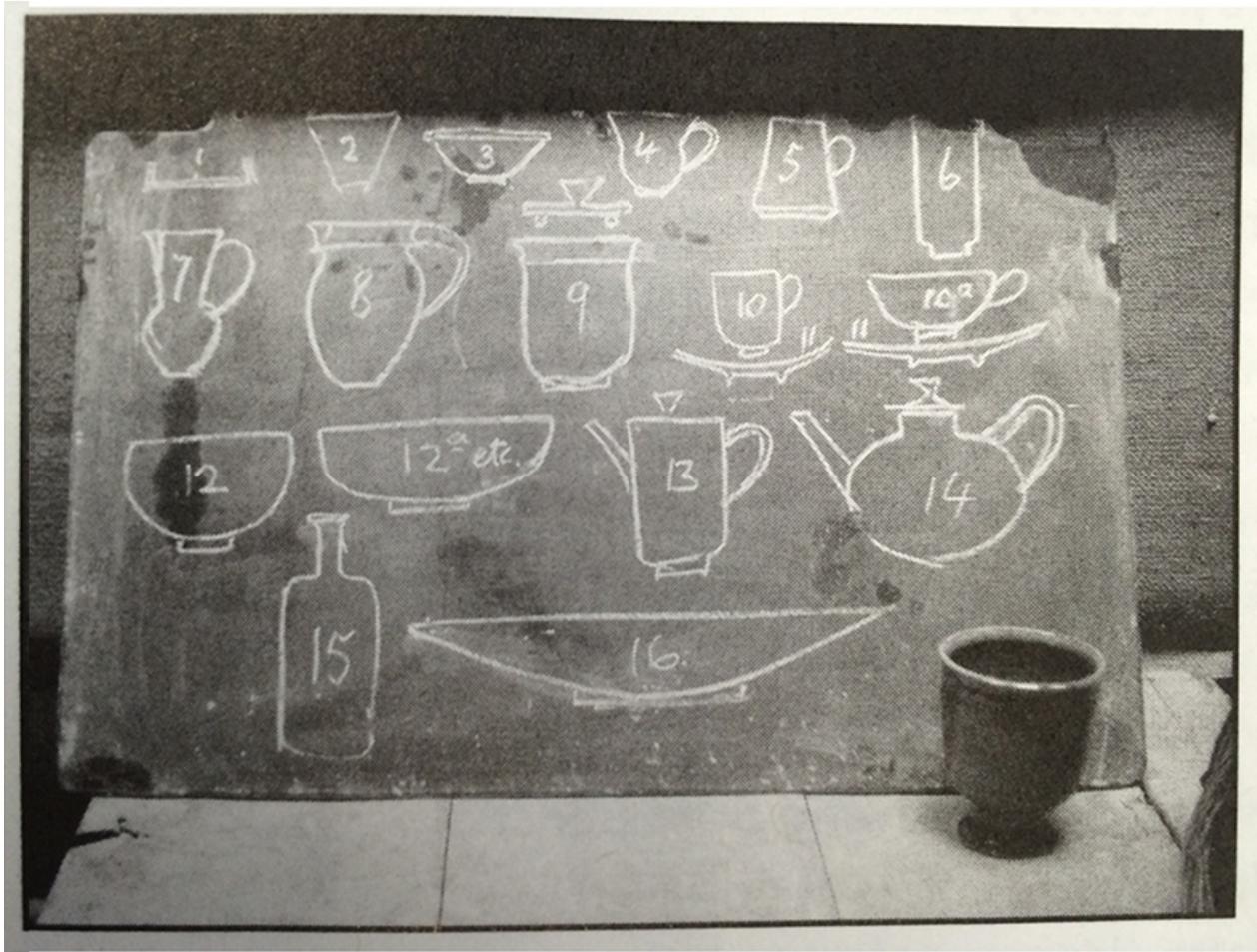
Peter recalls,

It was during that workshop that Marguerite had a cancellation for her summer class at Pond Farm, in Northern California. She asked if there were any students that would like to come. I was doing well with my throwing and enjoyed working with clay, so I asked to be considered. Another former student, Dennis Christian, who had taken a week off from his teaching job to attend Marguerite's workshop, also wanted to fill the opening. Marguerite decided that she could find space for both of us to attend.

I flew from St. Paul to San Francisco and took a bus to Santa Rosa, which was as close as I could get to Guerneville. My plan was to hitchhike the last few miles from Santa Rosa to Guerneville and then somehow find my way to Pond Farm. Hitchhiking was not my forte as I stood and walked on the side of the road for hours, not getting one ride. After dark, I went into a local pub on the road for some food, drink, and to look for a kind person who might give me a ride to Pond Farm. After several hours of mingling with the locals, I finally met that stranger who knew where it was and offered to give me a ride all the way there. Because I didn't want to be late for class in the morning, I asked him to drop me off at Marguerite's gate. I crossed the road and wandered off in the field, rolled out my sleeping bag and fell asleep. In the morning, I waited until a few other students arrived, not wanting to be the first, and then rolled up my bag and joined the others. As we gathered around the tree to start class, one of Marguerite's first questions was, "Who slept in the field last night?" I was sure I had been quiet and I was amazed that she knew I was there.

I told her that it was me and was informed that it was not legal to sleep there and that I should not plan on doing that again. I explained my hitchhiking adventure and that it was not my plan to spend the night on her doorstep. She assigned me to work at her wheel, so I felt that my enthusiasm must have struck a good chord with her. I only had had one semester of pottery at Luther and felt pretty intimidated by all the advanced students she had accepted. Because I was new to her workshop she had me start with dog dishes and go through all of the throwing steps again. This was a relief for me, as I knew I could do the steps and I wouldn't be called upon to be creative for a few days.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ P. Deneen, "A Production Workshop School at Pond Farm", *MW+B*, pp. 552-3.



THE BASIC THROWN FORMS THAT MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN TAUGHT AT POND FARM POTTERY (Beginning with the “Doggie Dish” #1)

That creativity was eventually called upon and by the end of the summer Marguerite challenged Peter to take five separate thrown forms to be assembled into a single vessel that can pour. It was when Peter took this piece [pictured at beginning of article] and successfully watered plants around Pond Farm that Marguerite said to him, “You can be a potter.”

We are not sure who it was that told him he could be a business owner, employer, grandfather or dad – but he does it all with grace and ease. As today is Peter’s 67th birthday (2015) we are all enamored with his creative spirit, eye for quality and detail, and above of all – his generosity. Happy Birthday Dad!

Niles Deneen CEO, Marketing, Deneen Pottery

<http://deneenpottery.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/peter-deneen-marguerite-pondfarm.jpg>

HOW WERE CRITIQUES OF ADVANCED STUDENTS' WORK DONE?

"Eros Anikate Machan", by Hunt Prothro

My fifth summer..., in 1978, I knew would be my final one. I'm not sure I told anyone. It was the last week or so of work and I had been doing some sculpture and some of the famous relief tiles and some drawings, but I wanted to throw for a couple of weeks too, so I made a series of covered jars and pitchers. The forms were pretty radical, distinctly not Pond Farm, but definitely renderings of the tradition.

On the morning of my critique, I organized everything on my clean wheel in the shop on the... side of the studio..., along the long wall of windows looking out onto the sculpture area. I remember feeling completely at peace, if a bit nervous. Marguerite and David Stewart came in and started talking about each pot and on the overall concept of the series; I noticed people being very quiet, and a few people started hanging in the windows, but I was so focused on Marguerite and David and the work that I really didn't pay much attention to anything.

The talk went on for nearly an hour. I really don't know how it took so long, but it did. In many ways it was brutal, especially on David's part. But in some ways I began to realize that everything they were saying was beyond criticism, that in some mysterious way, without rendering exact praise, they were approaching the work as though a thing of nature. In the mysterious way in which life renews itself, I had entered a new land. So the tide of conversation turned to this, and to the nature of knowledge as it is manifested in the things of the hand. I became aware of the moment as one of the high points of my life at Pond Farm. In the quality of my work I had created a world within which to live and to talk, that the work was alive, and that my teachers recognized this. Finally, Marguerite cut David off saying, "Well, you know, that's just the way Hunt would do it. I would do it another way and so would you, but this is his way, and it is OK." From Marguerite one could never hope for more. The critique ended and I noticed that every student at the school was assembled in the room and that not a sound had been made. The windows were full of arms leaning into the room and all the doors and wheels were filled. No one was working...

Years later... Rol Healy asked me if I remembered that moment.... He said it was one of the most profound moments in his experience at Pond Farm, in the intensity and openness of the contact with Marguerite. Once again, I was really shocked. I wasn't aware of the quality of that moment for anyone else.

...Years earlier, even before Pond Farm, I was a surfer in Santa Cruz, CA. I was fourteen years old and one day I borrowed a friend's ...really sensitive board...and toward the end of the day..., I caught the perfect wave. After dropping in and cutting back and forth endlessly on the glassy wave, I kicked out and slid gently to rest on the back side of the wave, suspended perfectly, for an instant, on the tilted board.

...A cold, light froth of spray fell upon my back as I righted the board and started to paddle back.... I have rarely felt so at home.... I never think about that critique at Pond Farm without thinking about the cold spray on my back, the endless horizon to the west and a green-grey sea under an infinity of sky. I've always known that Pond Farm was the right place to have been in the summers of my youth.¹²⁸

CRAFT: ESSENTIAL TO TRUTHFUL EXPRESSION

Marguerite's allegiance to Krehan's *craft* was to far more than just adhering to the tradition of expert technical skills. For her, in addition to the necessary physical skills, was a searching mind, open with constant curiosity about how best to reveal a unity of the forms she created with contrasts in volume, proportion, profile, and surface. She learned to see in different ways and find meaning in carefully

¹²⁸ Hunt Prothro, "Eros Anikate Machan", *MW+B*, pp. 587-588.

observed qualities of textures, shapes, spaces, lines, and colors. As she matured from her innovative Bauhaus and Royal Berlin designs, her pottery explored many new expressive forms inspired by close observation of nature as well as drawings of people.

To see creatively is one thing, but it is quite another to be able to convey this emotion in a valid form. As I see it, it happens in the following way: All human and aesthetic emotions and experiences seem to accumulate in some mysterious way, quite outside of our control or our consciousness, in the deepest layer of our subconscious. There they lie as in a pool of ideas, of forms and feelings, from which one draws when the need seems to urge one and to require it. Many of these experiences may lie forever forgotten; others suddenly emerge with their initial force, but not as they originally were. Rather they emerge transformed ...through the power of your imagination and creativity. This is the moment when your original vision comes to a spark again, and rises to a new life, one that *you* have formed.

The strength of the original impact may be exceedingly strong, but the period of gestation can be so long that it might take not eight months, but eight years or more, before the picture of your initial emotion can be reborn out of your depth, and in your own personal form. Apparently it is not enough to have seen, to have been moved and deeply stirred, and also not enough to have the best will to express all that the original picture conveyed to you. The ultimate forming of this experience out of your own powers cannot be forced, and may still elude you.

I believe that the original spiritual experience has to be broken down first to the point where it can unconsciously be translated into the concrete material of one's craft ...into techniques, methods, craftsmanship, and tools. This has to be achieved without losing any of the original essence and life. Not to be able to do this with your technical knowledge is a frustrating impediment, but there is a worse one, of another nature, and it has to do with one's frame of mind. What you have experienced must somehow correspond to the state of your inner being, or the experience cannot mature and be transformed into a creative piece of art. In a mysterious way, *you* have to become what you have *seen* and *felt*, so that what you create is both *It* and *You*. It is evident that one cannot command this symbiosis at will, this losing oneself to find oneself in his work, but one can aspire to this inner correspondence with all the openness of one's mind and heart. Then, when the moment of inspiration comes, one will be able to transfer the original vision through one's techniques and creativity to the exterior world. Ultimately this powerful change from the inner world to visible form will have expressed and formed your own emotion, so that it has meaning to the outside world and to yourself also.

"Creation is a patient search," says Le Corbusier. It begins with an absolute and selfless commitment to a serious and truthful expression of the vision of life that has moved you. Without this passionate dedication, there is no universal art, and never has been.¹²⁹

Marguerite's careful description of this dedicated search and striving with "open mind and heart" lays the foundation for her definition of the "truth" of "real art": the vulnerability of the artist, creating with every skill available, beyond self-absorption and personal vanity:

Nothing, thus, could be farther away from art and alien to its very meaning than a superficial indulgence and artificial search for "self-expression." On the contrary, the artist must completely forget himself; in the ultimate act of creating, he has to control and master all his abilities, skills, knowledge, so that he can say what he wants to say, with his total human and artistic potential. Only then can he reach the point of art ... without consciously having searched for it. He reaches this point mysteriously through the quality of his work only, and that without preconceived pattern or restriction. This is why real art is always new, always personal, and in the truthful sense, self-expressive.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ M. Wildenhain, *The Invisible Core*, pp. 126-8.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

MARGUERITE'S AESTHETICS: HOW DRAWINGS INFLUENCED HER WORK

Although some would see the lines, textures, glazes, and imagery on a pot as just its “surface decoration”, Marguerite’s intention in her work was to create a synthesis, a unification of the pot’s form with the qualities of its exterior surface. She mastered this early and held to it as her style matured.

Let us imagine ...you have made a broad bowl or a large bellied vase around which you might want to use a theme of people, like a garland... You might not want an abstract linear decoration, even an ornate one, but would like to try your luck with a scene of people that you had imagined or seen. ...the main issue would be to make the design not conflict with the form of that pot, but rather accentuate it so that form and design become *one* single unity and have *one* character. This is not easy, because the bowls and vases are sculptural forms with a definite life and expression of their own, and your decoration must not conflict with or destroy any of those elements. Rather it has to become, so to say, the expression of the pot’s “inner life” in its totality; form, color, lines, character, and expression must become one single unit: namely, that pot.

In contrast, sometimes a single figure may be the inspiration not only for a decoration, but actually for the whole form of a pot. ...It is the design that actually invents the required form for [the pot]. In both cases it is the same problem in the end, namely to make form and design a unity that has a special character of its own.¹³¹

Plate 15 Guataemala Woman Nursing Child¹³²



Plate 16 Guataemala Woman Nursing Child, sculpture¹³³



Marguerite emphasized drawing as a way to find the essential qualities one sees which evoke a particular personal response. She traveled extensively throughout the U.S., Europe, the Middle East, and South America. Rather than using a camera, she practiced drawing to sharpen her observation and heighten her responses to the qualities of images that moved her.

In her book, *...that We Look and See*, she shares some of the sketches she made of the people who impressed her, explaining that she had to learn to see and note the most important characteristics quickly in her drawings.

The people that I drew were all drawn out of memory for several reasons. First of all whatever moved me was often the impression of only a second perhaps; a person I saw walking in the street or sitting on a

¹³¹ Marguerite Wildenhain, *...that We Look and See*, p. 69.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

ramp of a church wall, as I passed while I was in a bus. There was not time to get paper and pencil, just time enough to look as closely as I could and to try to remember the essence of what I had seen and felt. I had also found out that as soon as the person I was looking at noticed me with paper and pencil in hand, he would get restless, self-conscious, turn around and leave. So that did not work. I just had to learn to see rapidly, and had to train my eye not only to see but to remember; so that later at home, even several days or even weeks later perhaps, I still could remember all the essential forms, movements, expressions of what had excited me at that time.

That this required practice, not only in looking, but especially in remembering and in drawing, will be obvious. I soon found out that all details that were not important for the main expression had to disappear and that I had to concentrate on the impression that had struck me and try to do nothing else than to translate this emotion into my own language with lines or with form, or lights and shadows, etc., as simply and as truthfully as I could. I often nearly despaired of ever reaching such a goal, namely to convey “feeling” with lines, but little by little the eye grew quicker at seeing, the mind at understanding and choosing, and the hand more capable of conveying emotion and life through a few forms, or lines, and light and dark.¹³⁴

Marguerite’s practice of concentration through drawing became quite influential as a powerful expressionistic force for her “more personal” work:

I began to see those figures related to the architecture of some imaginary pots that I would make. I could see some symmetry between the lines of a figure that I had drawn to the outline of a vase or bowl that I could imagine, or I felt some balance of masses in what I had seen and what I could imagine as a formed object. ... A whole new world seemed to have grown into my pots through the intense effort I had put into my drawing.

The lines themselves seemed to have developed and had gotten precise characters of their own. They were not just an abstract connection between two points, they became alive. Some were hard and exact, cut deeply into the clay, some meandered leisurely around the belly of a vase, some were charged with emotion to convey a face or a figure that had touched me, some were pure architecture, dividing planes and forms, some were actually humorous, some deeply and painfully moving. In one word, those lines were beginning to have “Life” in them. This was for me a great discovery, and I decided that more than ever I would try hard to use this knowledge to make better, more alive and more personal pots.¹³⁵

Many quick drawings were made of heads and faces as well as whole figures -- not posed, just seen in casual positions or in simple movement such as walking, reaching, turning, etc. Marguerite’s written descriptions also reveal that her glimpses of subjects often unexpectedly surprised and delighted her. She enjoyed seeing how variations of clothing or living in unfamiliar cultural settings opened new insights into her own feelings about the lives of those she encountered.

There is a purposeful drama in her translation of the forms and contrasts that she describes in the following example of her experiences -- first seeing, then drawing, and finally striving to imbue a clay sculpture with the moment of her original encounter with three women in Iran:

... I had come to another town, Isfahan, and was promenading down the main street full of people ... when my attention was attracted by a group of three Persian women, dressed in their local dresses, coming toward me. An older one in the center was dressed in stern black and two younger ones in lighter and more frivolous, even though traditional, garb. I also noticed at once the highly pointed toes of their silk shoes. The group excited me, so I approached it as slowly as possible and looked. They, too, looked at me, the foreigner.... As soon as we had passed each other, I turned around quickly to see how they

¹³⁴ M. Wildenhain, *...that We Look and See*, p. 12.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.21.

looked from the back; and to my amusement I found out that the two younger women had also turned around to scrutinize me. All three of us looked at each other and smiled ... and that was the encounter.¹³⁶

The drawing I made that day became, perhaps half a year later, a sculpture of the three women. I remembered especially the large total forms of those women as the younger ones had turned back.

With coils I built up the three hollow forms as best I could but soon found out that with two women looking in one direction, the back view with only one woman looking ahead left too little to give life and balance to that group. It was then that I added the child, that little girl wrapped up like the grown women in her traditional dress, she too, looking outwards. Now, from wherever one looked, there were at least two faces turned towards you and that seemed better all around to me. The forms of the wrapped women were truly abstract and so the faces ... had to convey the essence of what those forms carried in inner life. One hand and two pointed feet were also a small but characteristic help.

The real work began when I had to give those large bodies form, not only from the front but from every side so that each of them rounded itself out: front, back, top and bottom, right and left sides, and in relation to [each] of the others. These forms had to come to life through the relation of light and shadow, and the more precise and expressive I could make those, the more convincing and alive the forms became. Here, thus, a drawing had given me an idea for a sculpture, not a relief only, for the group had obviously been three dimensional in its essence and expression.¹³⁷



Plate 22 Three Iranian Women, sculpture¹³⁸

¹³⁶ M. Wildenhain, *...that We Look and See*, p. 31.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

A POND FARM POTTERY STUDENT COMPARES THE PHILOSOPHIES OF HIS TEACHERS

Comparing the approach of other sculpture/ceramics teachers that he admired, Douglas Olmstead Freeman shares a comparison of his experiences studying at Luther College in Iowa with Professor Dean Schwarz, who was Marguerite's Pond Farm summer session teaching assistant; then post-graduate study with Mustafa Naguib¹³⁹; and, finally, with Marguerite at Pond Farm in 1977 and 1979:

Tradition is the ground that we stand on and the ground we push off from. The door opened for me one evening at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. Marguerite was presenting a lecture to the community. ... Of course it was exciting to see the film of Marguerite throwing pots at Pond Farm. I remember there was a truth and honesty in her work that you could feel.

This was a turning point for me. I ran down to the art building after the lecture to find out about the pottery classes. The pottery classes were full so I joined the sculpture class with Dean Schwarz as teacher.

Dean had just returned from Korea as a Fulbright scholar. He began the class reading Rodin's *Testament* translated by Marguerite Wildenhain: "You who want to be an officiate of beauty, may it please you to find here the summing of a long experience... Love devotedly the masters who preceded you."¹⁴⁰

We learned that engaging in creative work is sacred. There is a spirit inside of the work.

Dean also talked about our connection to a tradition, speaking with reverence of Marguerite and her teachers, sculptor Gerhard Marcks and potter Max Krehan. They came across sounding like saints, but in time we learned that they had many trickster-coyote qualities, as did Dean. The philosophy and discipline of working under a master was clearly the way to learn a craft.

...Two weeks after graduation from Luther College I was working under master sculptor Mustafa Naguib. It seemed a very natural step after working with Dean

Naguib studied under Angelo Zanelli in Rome as a young man. The tradition he taught is primarily Italian with some influence of the French school and ancient Egyptian sculpture.

At Naguib's school, the beginning steps included clay studies of plaster casts: a nose, ear, eye and mouth. Then clay studies of plaster heads, hands and torso. From these steps we progressed to portrait sculpture with a live model and life size clay figure studies with live models. In addition we studied mold making, armature building, drawing, anatomy, enlarging, plaster casting, stone carving (with a pointing machine), and bronze casting.

Sculpture requires quite a bit of technical knowledge. That was Naguib's focus for students—gaining skills and learning a craft. When you join a tradition like Naguib's, you become a part of a family. ...His total energy at this stage of his life was dedicated to us. He told us, "Look, son, I cannot teach you to be an artist; that is in your soul. But I can teach you everything about sculpture."¹⁴¹

... [Naguib] would weave lessons on life, while I sat with my sketch book and wrote down these guiding words:

"Art for art, it is misery – art for people, it is life."

"Don't hesitate – don't think too much! Let the depth of feeling control you."

"The eye and the hand are controlled by feeling."

"The power of creation is controlled by feeling."

"It is not to live for yourself, it is to live for others."

¹³⁹ Mustafa Naguib located his Naguib School of Sculpture overlooking Lake Michigan in Indiana. Naguib had been the king's sculptor under Egyptian King Farouk. He joined the revolutionary council that overthrew Farouk and was given refugee status in the U.S. Naguib relied upon his skills as a notable sculptor and teacher for his livelihood.

¹⁴⁰ Auguste Rodin, "Testament", translated by Marguerite Wildenhain from the French.

¹⁴¹ Mustafa Naguib, as quoted by Douglas Freeman, "Working from Two Traditions", *MW+B*, p. 600.

“You must put a seed of love inside of you and let it grow into a beautiful tree. And you must be the ground in which it can grow. Go and dance with your work.”¹⁴²

In 1977 when I was nearly finished with formal study with Naguib, I attended a workshop at Luther College with Marguerite. In addition to doing the assigned work, I did a clay portrait from life [of another student]. I asked Marguerite for a critique, and here are some of the things that she said:

“Proportion is the character.”

“Character lies much deeper than technique.”

“There is no limit to imagination – technique has a limit.”

“It is not by having your points right, your forms right, that you make a portrait. A photograph can do that.”

“A sculptor, as one who draws, must bring life – emphasis — to the important forms ...”

“The character is in the form, but not in every little detail.”

“You have to feel from your heart and not think so much – feel.”

“It’s the people who count; do your best for them.”¹⁴³

I am struck by the similarities in their philosophy. On paper, they agree: listen to your feelings and give your best to people.

I studied again with Marguerite at Pond Farm in 1979. It was a struggle. The skills I had learned with Naguib were a liability in that context. Each tradition brings its own way of seeing. It has taken some time for Marguerite and Naguib to smile at each other in my mind.

At the point where differences intersect there is an opportunity for creativity. You are not bound by one philosophy. You can listen to both in restless moments and transform them through the fire of your own spirit. For it is in finding one’s own true voice in your work that the tradition lives.¹⁴⁴

“Art for people, it is Life.”¹⁴⁵

A STRONG VOICE FOR INSPIRED FREEDOM

Marguerite’s professional role as one of the most important potters in America often found her in public debate with other well-known potters over issues about their craft and its authenticity as an art within evolving traditions.

The foremost English potter, Bernard Leach, with the notable Japanese masters, Shoji Hamada and Soetsu Yanagi, first met Marguerite in England in July 1952 at the International Conference of Potters and Weavers at Dartington Hall. There, they debated the future of the modern studio pottery movement within the challenging post-war industrialized world and the aesthetic standards of the crafts of pottery and weaving. Bernard Leach stated the key issue:

With the extraordinarily large number of people taking up one craft or another after the war, the general standard is not high [in America], nor for that matter is it in any other country. One must concede that at

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 600.

¹⁴³ M. Wildenhain, as quoted by Douglas Freeman, Op. cit., p. 601.

¹⁴⁴ Douglas Freeman, Op. cit., p. 601.

¹⁴⁵ M. Naguib, as quoted by Douglas Freeman, Op.cit., p. 600.

no period in history has so low a standard existed. Too much has happened in too short a time and we are suffering from aesthetic indigestion.¹⁴⁶

During the conference, Leach, who had lived and trained as a potter in the Far East, expressed his core belief that a modern potter must assimilate the best of both Western and Eastern traditions. This was,

... not only possible but necessary in order for the modern potter to be successful, or as he referred to it, fully integrated. ... As Mike Sanderson points out, Leach "... looked back to tradition and tried to dissociate himself from modernization and industrialization."¹⁴⁷

Popular as a lecturer, Leach defined a number of conditions that he deemed the cause of the low standards of the American potter:

Americans have the advantage of having many roots, but no taproot, which is almost the equivalent of having no root at all. Hence American pots follow many undigested fashions, and in my opinion, no American potter has yet emerged really integrated and standing on his own two feet ... America as a new amalgam of races does not provide a craftsman with traditions of right making born on its own soil. Secondly, its contemporary movement is, by and large, a post-war growth in a setting of high industry.¹⁴⁸

Leach did not regard Native American craft traditions as influential because, though evolved, they were not part of the mainstream of American arts and crafts.¹⁴⁹

The American Indians, of course, together with the folk anywhere, do not proceed on individual choice, and the root in their case is the race root. It is a humbling fact that so very few of our own evolved, educated, self-conscious, world-conscious potters can stand the test of comparison, and yet real judgment in pottery must be based on the highest standard of the past while constantly being checked by the present as in all art.¹⁵⁰

Marguerite gave her lecture after Yanagi spoke of Buddhist aesthetics and the Mingei movement as Shoji Hamada demonstrated, and Leach "...characterized the American potter as over-intellectualized and a failure [in] his efforts to integrate elements of the world's best traditions into an evolved American tradition."¹⁵¹

Marguerite countered Leach's characterizations that blamed intellectualization and lack of tradition with her perspective on modern society and the temperament of modern craftsmen:

... as I see it, we have lost that intimate correlation of the mind and the hands as a philosophy of life, as it was in the centuries when crafts were all important ... Don't we [now] have all the technical knowledge, all the machinery and expensive external equipment, all the materials, costly or common, finely ground or coarse as we choose? ... as we are today, we have no real faith in ourselves, nor our work, nor our values... . We have lost a deep relation with nature, and with that it seems, our natural instinct. ... Our difficulties thus lie apparently in the field of ethics and human expression and not in technique. To make hand pottery valid again so that it becomes a virile and creative activity again, it is urgent to raise anew the standards of the crafts, both away from a sentimentality towards their traditional standards in former

¹⁴⁶ Bernard Leach, *Beyond East and West: Memoirs, Portraits and Essays*, p. 238.

¹⁴⁷ Brent Johnson, "A Matter of Tradition", *MW+B*, p. 399.

¹⁴⁸ Bernard Leach, *A Potter In Japan*, p. 34.

¹⁴⁹ Brent Johnson, *Op. cit.*, p. 400.

¹⁵⁰ Bernard Leach, "American Impressions," *Craft Horizons*, Winter 1950, pp. 18-20.

¹⁵¹ Brent Johnson, *Op. cit.*, p. 404.

centuries, but also out of untraditional intellectualism and tightrope walking, fearlessly giving the craftsman a new, more complete and deeper relation of his work to his life ...¹⁵²

The arguments about these issues continued two months later when Marguerite hosted a two-week seminar at Black Mountain College as Leach, Yanagi, and Hamada began their U.S. tour there with lectures and demonstrations.

When their tour brought them to San Francisco, the three men drove up to visit Marguerite and Pond Farm.

There, Leach, Hamada, and Yanagi gave Marguerite a memento of their visit by leaving their handprints and signing their names in slip (watered clay) on the white-washed barn wall... . Perhaps the gesture of visiting Marguerite at Pond Farm could have soothed any bad feelings stemming from their disagreement over tradition. But that was not the end of the debate. Marguerite would have the last word in an open letter to Bernard Leach in the June 1953 issue of *Craft Horizons*.¹⁵³

Potters Dissent

An open letter to Bernard Leach from Marguerite Wildenhain of Pond Farm Workshops Associates, Guerneville, California.

Dear Bernard Leach:

Ever since your first long visit to the United States and your article in *Craft Horizons* (Winter 1950), so many voices have risen in opposition and in doubt as to the value of what you are trying to convey to us, that I feel the problem needs to be discussed frankly and in public. No one could possibly doubt your sincerity or deny that you wish to foster high standards of craftsmanship. Still, if to arrive at that, you start from a wrong premise, it is obvious that your conclusions must necessarily be erroneous.

It is understandable that you should stress the importance of roots in tradition. So do we all. But tradition is only good when it is alive, when no one is conscious of it and when it needs no praise. The minute, however, that tradition needs artificial bolstering because its design elements no longer have any relation to the present generation, then let us have the courage to throw it overboard.

It is time then to search honestly for those forms that are related to us, that express what we feel, think and believe.

It is equally evident that we cannot take over the techniques and forms, the way of life of another culture, no matter how excellent. No, we have no choice but to find our own way to what may become a new tradition for generations to come. No one but ourselves can do that for us; and this is a fact that we must face clearly and unemotionally.

¹⁵² M. Wildenhain Lecture, "The Potter in the New World," *Conference Proceedings*, Dartington Hall, 1952.

¹⁵³ Brent Johnson, Op. cit., p. 405.

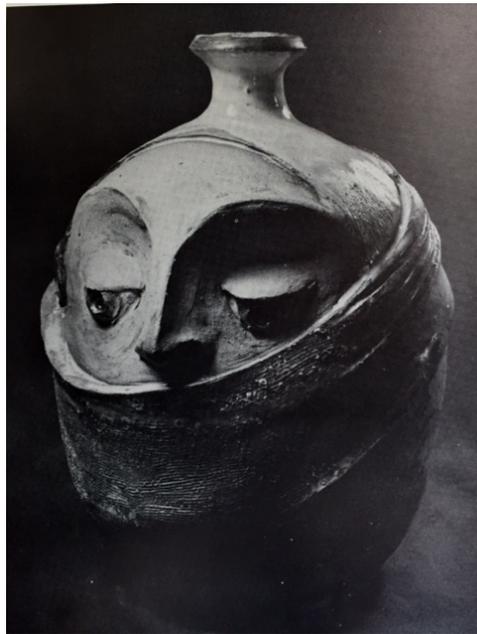
Roots are, of course, wonderful to have, but who has that one, single "taproot" you talked of? That single taproot no longer exists in our day. It is probable that it has never existed. No country, no single individual has only one root from which he draws strength.

Roots grow when one lives according to what is right for him, when one's life and work are deeply related and when both are closely connected with the country, the society, the ideas of the people around one.

America has roots too, but they are many and come from all over the world, from all races. In this lies its uniqueness, its grandeur — this cementing together of a thousand parts. A country like America cannot have just one expression, one way of doing things. It must perforce have as many forms of expression as the sources of its life as a whole. That is America's beauty and greatness, and nobody would want to see just one single form, one single way of thinking grow on this continent. For our tradition is just the opposite: it stands for the free choice of each individual.

It ought to be clear that American potters cannot possibly grow roots by imitating Sung pottery or by copying the way of life of the rural population of Japan. Conscious copying of the works of a culture, unrelated to the mind and soul of our generation, would only produce dubious makeshifts and turn our struggling potters into either dilettantes or pure fakes. As creative craftsmen, we reject the tendency to force our generation into a mold that does not belong to it.

No, if we want the crafts to remain alive, and even perhaps to grow roots again, we must give young craftsmen all the freedom and education, all the honest experimentation, using every technique and material in any way he chooses. Man needs to find room in the world for growth;



he cannot have his mind, his work, his taste and his ideas restricted at the start by taboos and preconceived formulas and rules. We are all eager and willing to learn and to try, but no spirit can brook restriction.

On the contrary, open up the whole world to us; show us the beauty of all races so that we may learn to see the different elements that have gone into the making of our own background: we have excellent traditions closer to us than the Chinese or Japanese, of equal merit and just as inventive.

For these are the qualities we aspire to. In art as in life, the main thing is the divine spark. We cannot quench it in the student without killing it in the man.¹⁵⁴

March 23, 1953
(Signed) Marguerite Wildenhain

Plate 47. *Ecuador Woman, Wrapped Up*, facepot.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ M. Wildenhain, "Potters Dissent", *Craft Horizons*, 13:3 (May/June 1953), 43-44.

¹⁵⁵ M. Wildenhain, *...that We Look and See*, p.61.

Appendices

Appendix A

Chronology

Prepared by Janet Gracyk

Date	Event(s)	Source of Information
1867	Walker land settled	Susan Alvarez research and <i>Marguerite Wildenhain and the Bauhaus: An Eyewitness Anthology</i> , edited by Dean Schwarz and Geraldine Schwarz. Decorah, IA: South Bear Press, 2007.
1870	Walker barn built	Ibid.
1877	Walker property shown in the <i>Historical Atlas</i>	Historical Atlas of Sonoma County
1896	Marguerite Friedlaender born, Oct. 11, Lyon, France.	Jane Kemp and Luther College Archives
1914	School of Fine and Applied Arts, Berlin	Luther College Archives
1915	Apprentice in wood sculpture Porcelain designer in Thuringia	Luther College Archives
1919	Apprentice - Bauhaus. One of the first students to join the school.	<i>American Studio Ceramics, 1920-1950: An Exhibition</i> . Minneapolis : University Art Museum, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1988
1926	Chair of ceramic department at the School of fine and Applied Arts in Halle-Saale	Wildenhain, Marguerite, interview by Hazel Bray. Archives of American Art Interview, Transcript 63 Archives of American Art, (Mar. 14, 1982)
1926	Master Potter status certified - first woman to receive status in Germany	Ibid.
1930	Marguerite and Frans married	1929, per Luther College Archives
1933	MW moved to the Holland, Frans followed the same year	<i>American Studio Ceramics, 1920-1950: Op. cit.</i>
1935	Resettlement Administration	"School of the Pond Farm Workshops: An Artists' Refuge." <i>A Report: From the San Francisco Craft and Folk Art Museum</i> . Issue 10, no. 2 (1992)
1937	Marguerite received Grand Prix for a porcelain tea and dinner service at the World Exhibition in Paris in 1937, and won a second place award for a pottery piece in	Dr. Billie Sessions, in conversation with Janet Gracyk; Arizona State University Art Museum

	the same exhibition	
1937	Gail Herr Steele born	<i>Marguerite Wildenhain and the Bauhaus: An Eyewitness Anthology</i> , edited by Dean Schwarz and Geraldine Schwarz. Decorah, IA: South Bear Press, 2007.
1938	Gordon travelled to Europe to find artists.	"School of the Pond Farm Workshops: Op. Cit.
1939	Herrs bought land. (Research at County Assessor shows they bought and sold several parcels over the years - JG.)	Ibid.
1940	MW sailed from Holland, landed NY. Stayed with brother there then traveled across the country	Ibid.
1940	Frans conscripted into German army	Luther College Archives
1940	MW taught at California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, CA	Luther College Archives
	MW turned down a job at Black Mountain College, date not certain.	Helen Molesworth. <i>Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College 1933-1957</i> , 2015
1941	Herrs built their house on the property and began raising their children there.	"School of the Pond Farm Workshops: Op. Cit.
1942	Traveled to take job at Appalachian Institute of Arts and Crafts in N. Carolina. Death of founder means end of the school	Luther College Archives
1942	MW moved to Pond Farm in Guerneville	"School of the Pond Farm Workshops: An Artists' Refuge." <i>A Report: From the San Francisco Craft and Folk Art Museum</i> . Issue 10, no. 2, 1992
1942	Gordon and MW converted barn	Ibid.
1942	MW built her house.	Ibid.
1944	Jan Herr dies of mushroom poisoning.	<i>Marguerite Wildenhain and the Bauhaus: Op. Cit.</i>
1946	MW wins first place in Ceramics National competition	Ibid.
1947	Frans arrived	"School of the Pond Farm Workshops: Op. Cit.
1947	MW visited Black Mountain College to see Trude Guermonprez	<i>Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College 1933-1957</i>
1949	Trude Guermonprez and Victor Ries arrived	"School of the Pond Farm Workshops: Op. Cit.
1949	Workshops built (Hexagon and wings)	Ibid.
1949	First Workshops classes	Ibid.
1949	Other artists arrive: Bloch and Dimitroff	Ibid.

1952	Jane Herr died	Ibid.
1952	MW divorced from Frans (He went on to teach at Rochester and died in 1980)	Luther College Archives
1952	International Conference of Craftsmen in Pottery and Weaving, Dartington Hall, England.	<i>Marguerite Wildenhain and the Bauhaus: Op. Cit.</i>
1952	Began conducting workshops (Scripps first one)	Dr. Billie Sessions. <i>Marguerite Wildenhain: A Woman of Choice Substance</i> , 1997
1952	October, taught a workshop at Black Mountain College. Shoji Hamada, Bernard Leach, Soetsu Yanagi also were there	<i>Helen Molesworth. Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College 1933-1957, 2015. See American Craft Council website for photo of the four: http://craftcouncil.org/content/shoji-hamada-black-mountain-college</i>
1953	Final Workshops classes	"School of the Pond Farm Workshops: Op. Cit.
1953	Pond Farm Pottery classes started	<i>MW+B: Eyewitness Anthology</i> , p. 443
1953	Gordon Herr moved away	"School of the Pond Farm Workshops: Op. Cit.
1955 - 56	MW received deed to section of Herr land. Two deeds recorded, in 1955 and 1956	Sonoma County Recorder's office
1959	<i>Pottery: Form and Expression</i> published	Published by the American Craftsmen's Council in 1959. Enlarged edition published in 1962. Reissued in 1973 by Pacific Books
1960	MW travelled to Peru for World Crafts Meeting	Luther College Archives
1962	Lanier remodeled house, designed guest house	<i>M W & B: Op. Cit.</i>
1963	Property condemned and taken as State Parks land	Page and Turnbull, Inc. Pond Farm Pottery Studio, Guerneville, CA
1966	CA Dept. Parks and Recreation purchased Herr land (157 acres)	Susan Alvarez research and Sonoma County Recorder's office
1966	CA Dept. Parks and Rec. purchased Wildenhain land (7.83 acres), recorded 1/12/67	Ibid.
1970	Gordon Herr died in Mexico	<i>Hexagon House</i> . Gaye LeBaron, Santa Rosa Press Democrat. July 22, 1979
1973	<i>The Invisible Core</i> published	Published in 1973 by Pacific Books
1980	Last summer class at Pond Farm Pottery	<i>Marguerite Wildenhain, Bauhaus to Pond Farm. Selected Works from the Forrest L. Merrill Collection</i> . Sonoma County Museum, 2007.
1980	Frans Wildenhain died 1/25/80	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frans_Wildenhain

1985	MW died (Feb. 24) - 89 years old	"School of the Pond Farm Workshops: An Artists' Refuge." <i>A Report: From the San Francisco Craft and Folk Art Museum</i> . Issue 10, no. 2, 1992
2008	Jonathon Herr died (April 18)	Laura Parent, Park Maintenance Worker 1

Appendix B – Sample Tour/Talk for Docents – See handouts with tour script, themes and interactive questions

Template

Notes

- I. Greeting – At Stewards office
 - Introductions
 - Video
 - A map of the location of the Hexagon House
 - Miscellaneous info on access difficulties at the site

- II. Gate – (Old Photos)
 - Walker Ranch
 - Purchase by Gordon and Jane Herr- original boundaries
 - Where the pond is located
 - Significant plants - Palm Tree etc.

- III. Inside the Gate - Pond Farm Complex (historic photo of barn, etc.)
 - Century Plants
 - History of the sign
 - Acres Marguerite purchased from Gordon

- IV. Barn Entrance
 - Kick Wheel Demo
 - Snow Fencing and Drying Racks
 - Rock Floor
 - Gordon’s design

- V. Inside the Barn (Large photo on canvas, photos of MW throwing)
 - Stabilizing Features
 - Skylights - 1996
 - Kick Wheels, Tools, boxes, throwing progression samples
 - View side room where glazing took place and Marguerite had her wheel and one electric wheel.

- VI. Upstairs in Barn – showroom (photo of showroom)
 - Cost for Marguerite’s pots
 - Showroom and Cases

- VII. Kiln Room – (photo of kiln full)
 - Wayne Reynold has her last kiln
 - Talking Point

- VIII. Behind the Barn – ceramic features (wall and firepit)
 - Used to be an awning under which they drew and had lunch

- IX. Peach Tree Site/memorial
 - Place where they met and told stories

- X. Marguerite’s House
 - Rocks
 - Gardens
 - Addition built when Frans came
 - Walkway built with chards of pots

- XI. Shady area
 - MW frugal lifestyle
 - Breck Parkman info
 - Storytelling
 - Worldly travels

- XII. Guest House
 - Al Lanier/Ruth Asawa
 - Built for Gerhard Marcks visit
 - Talking Point

Emergency Information

If there is an emergency while on site at Pond Farm there is a phone inside the Guest House that is available for use. ATandT cell service is also available at Pond Farm.

For a life and death emergency always call 9-1-1.

If it is a park-related emergency call:

Armstrong Ranger Station/Stewards Operations Staff – (707) 869-2231

State Park Dispatch – (916) 358-1300

Appendix C – RAPPORT Self-Evaluation form

State of California - The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

SELF-EVALUATION OF INTERPRETIVE PROGRAM

INTERPRETER	DATE PROGRAM PRESENTED	SITE	
THEME STATEMENT			
ITEM	YES	NO	IDEAS TO TRY NEXT TIME
<p>RELEVANT: Did I use the pre-program time for assessing my group's interests, capabilities and prior knowledge of the park? Was my introduction meaningful to the group? Was the presentation appropriate to the age and ability of the group? Did I hold the interest of the group members? Was the program length appropriate? Did I use comparisons to relate new ideas to familiar concepts? Did I relate the DPR mission and park significance to the visitors' lives?</p>			
<p>ACCURATE: Did I show a good knowledge of the subject matter? Was I fully prepared to answer a variety of questions? Do I have any doubts about any statements I made? Did I give a balanced presentation of conflicting theories?</p>			
<p>PROVOCATIVE/ENJOYABLE: Did I get my group involved? Did I provoke them to care about the park? Speech: Was my volume appropriate? Did I vary tones for emphasis? Were my words clearly pronounced? Was my speaking rate varied for emphasis and feeling? Gestures: Did I use body motions such as pointing for direction and gesturing for emphasis? Did I avoid distracting postures such as folded arms, hands in pockets, rocking, leaning or slouching?</p>			

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1

ITEM	YES	NO	IDEAS TO TRY NEXT TIME
<p>Was I using facial gestures as positive responses to my group, such as nodding and smiling?</p> <p>Was I facing my group when listening?</p> <p>Poise:</p> <p>Was I available for conversation before and after the presentation?</p> <p>Was I supportive when my group responded to my presentation?</p> <p>Did I handle strange questions gracefully?</p> <p>Did I answer the most frequently asked questions as if it were the first time the questions were asked?</p> <p>Did I keep my group under control?</p> <p>Was I positive toward my group at all times, expressing warmth, interest and enthusiasm?</p> <p>Did I use humor appropriately?</p> <p>Was I attentive to visitor comments, questions and replies by acknowledging the speaker?</p>			
<p>PROGRAMMATICALLY ACCESSIBLE</p> <p>Did I provide a thorough orientation with ground rules and safety tips clearly and graciously explained?</p> <p>Did I offer services that are available for people with disabilities or limited English?</p> <p>Did I explain the length of the program, rest stops, and exit options?</p> <p>Were key concepts illustrated through the use of objects, media and/or site features?</p> <p>Was my mouth clearly visible to assist possible lip reading?</p> <p>Did I speak slowly enough to be understood by everyone in the group, including people with hidden disabilities?</p> <p>Did I wait for chatter and distracting noises (such as from an electric wheelchair) to subside before beginning?</p>			
<p>ORGANIZED</p> <p>Did my presentation have an introduction, body and conclusion?</p> <p>Did I introduce myself and California State Parks?</p> <p>Did I organize what I said so that the visitor could understand the major points I was making?</p> <p>Did I manage the time well?</p> <p>Did I use good transitions?</p> <p>Was the progression of ideas smooth and logical?</p>			

ITEM	YES	NO	IDEAS TO TRY NEXT TIME
<p>RETAINED</p> <p>Were my questioning strategies successful in encouraging participation and leading visitors to learn?</p> <p>Did the visitors' questions reflect an understanding of the subject?</p> <p>Did I use questions to check for understanding?</p> <p>Did I summarize?</p> <p>Did I review my theme for visitors?</p> <p>Did I leave them wanting more?</p>			
<p>THEMATIC</p> <p>Did I use a clearly stated theme?</p> <p>Did I select appropriate facts to accomplish the objectives and illustrate the theme of my program?</p> <p>Did my theme address the significance of the park and help bring the park to life?</p>			
<p>How can I improve my presentation?</p>			
<p>How can my supervisor or other staff assist me with improving my presentation?</p>			

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Prepared by Jenni Sorkin, edited by Michele Luna

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Marguerite Wildenhain Fellows Files, American Craft Council Archives, Minneapolis, MN.

Frans Rudolph Wildenhain Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

Marguerite Friedlaender Wildenhain, March 14, 1982. Reel 3199. Interview by Hazel Bray, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

The Letters of Gerhard Marcks and Marguerite Wildenhain, 1970-1981: A Mingling of Souls. Ruth Kath, ed. Ames and Decorah, Iowa: Iowa State University Press and Luther College Press, 1991,

Marguerite Wildenhain, "Potters Dissent: An Open Letter to Bernard Leach from Marguerite Wildenhain," *Craft Horizons* 13:3 (May/June 1953), 43-44.

Marguerite Wildenhain, *Pottery: Form and Expression*. Photos by Otto Hagel. Palo Alto, CA: Pacific Books, 1962, rpt. 1973.

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Exhibition catalogs:

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Billie Sessions, *Ripples: Marguerite Wildenhain and Her Pond Farm Students*. (San Bernardino, CA: California State University, 2002).

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*An Annotated Bibliography of Chapter 4, 4A, 4B, 4C for Docents
Prepared by Natalie Robb-Wilder*

Schwarz, Dean, and Geraldine Schwarz, *Marguerite Wildenhain and the Bauhaus: An Eyewitness Anthology*. Decorah, IA: South Bear Press, 2007. (767 p.)

This book is an amazing labor of love and scholarly dedication to honor the life and work of Marguerite Wildenhain. It offers definitive research beginning with the roots of German folk pottery of Thuringia to the period of the Weimar Bauhaus and beyond, elucidating many of its facets with historical documentation, interviews, photos and other primary sources. The chapters explore the journey chronologically through Marguerite's life and work, revealing much through the words of those close to her, about the seeds of her determination to live in accord with her ideals and the actions she took to realize them. Reproductions of Marguerite's work as well as her colleagues and students are plentiful, often in color, as are many of her drawings, from sketches to compositions to diagrams for commercial pots. The editors describe the book as an international collaboration, with writers from Germany, Holland, Austria, Zimbabwe, Canada, and the United States. There are also many, many memoirs by former students and friends who describe her personal influences. Technical information regarding clay, glazes, firing, and studio processes is available in some of the notes from Pond Farm students, and Marguerite's book, *Pottery: Form and Expression*.

The editors have also provided depth to the saga of Pond Farm's origin with the vision of Jane and Gordon Herr who purchased the property in 1939 and invited Marguerite to build it with them into a colony of craftsmen. Excerpts from their letters about their plans and concepts, along with background notations on ideas they found motivating are referenced. Maps, photos and architectural drawings document Pond Farm's development and its buildings, especially the impressive Hexagon House. The strengths that the Herrs and Marguerite contributed are evident as well as the challenges that developing Pond Farm entailed. Testimonials from the Herrs' children chronicle their experience growing up on Pond Farm and provide some understanding of the personal difficulties among the adults.

The section "Continuing and Tradition" presents the lineage of Marguerite's training and her teaching. Pond Farm links with Iowa's Luther College and Marguerite's teaching associate, Dean Schwarz, which led to the creation of South Bear School, Iowa, and then to an Alaska connection, and another school, Adamah, in Wisconsin.

The final sections highlight the many notable photographers who have so beautifully documented the life of Pond Farm, its people, and surrounding beauty.

Dean Schwarz, ed., *Marguerite: A Diary to Franz Wildenhain*.
Decorah, IA: South Bear Press, 2004. (156 p.)

Marguerite and her husband Franz were separated for seven years after she was forced to leave their home in Holland for the U.S. in 1940 to flee the Nazi takeover. During the first months of their separation they had no contact. Since he was not allowed entry as only a German citizen, she attempted to find a college teaching position for him that would enable his immigration into the U.S. Finding no position for him on the East coast, she then traveled across the country to look in the San Francisco area of California. During this bus trip west, she kept a diary of letters to him of her thoughts and feelings as she became acquainted with the land. ...etc

Wildenhain, Marguerite, *Pottery, Form and Expression*.
American Craftsmen's Council, 1959. (149p.)

Marguerite speaks frankly, as if the reader is an aspiring craftsman, and begins with a careful orientation to describe her overview of a craftsman's dedication. She shares her perspectives on stages of learning, and gives short illustrations using many photos of work from a variety of world cultures. Photographs detail her throwing techniques and exercises that she gave to her students. She includes photos of her own work. This is an excellent book; quite unique!

Wildenhain, Marguerite, *The Invisible Core: A Potter's Life and Thoughts*.
Pacific Books, Palo Alto CA, 1973. (207 p.)

Written after twenty years of Pond Farm Pottery, this book reveals much about the intensity of Marguerite's personal experiences, and feelings about her life and her work. She also addresses her lifelong concerns about the contemporary craftsman/artist and arts education with great detail.

Wildenhain, Marguerite, *...that We Look and See: An Admirer Looks at the Indians*.
South Bear, Decorah IA, 1979. (127 p.)

Written later in her life, Marguerite dedicated this book to her friends and students to share drawings made during her travels and because she had "...found it increasingly essential, yes, actually indispensable to be able to draw, and so to express with lines that which interested and moved me." This is not a book on how to draw, but to share how she worked to capture the essential qualities that she saw to translate them into clay. She has included many reproductions of drawings and pots with detailed explanations. She addresses the reader candidly, revealing why she made certain design choices by referring to practical examples as well as her own philosophical perspectives.

Leach, Bernard, *A Potter in Japan 1952-1954.*, Faber and Faber, Sheval Press, 1960.

An influential teacher and celebrated British potter, Leach was a peer of Marguerite's with a very different background. Born in Japan, he moved to England at age 10. He attended art school in London but then returned to Japan at age 22 where he became a potter in the raku style for ten years. In 1920, Leach traveled throughout Asia and Europe, settling in England. This is an enjoyable book that brings depth and breadth to Leach's own history of East-West culture. Memoirs and diary entries from his return tour of Japan in the early 50's.

Leach, Bernard, *Beyond East and West: Memoirs, Portraits and Essays.*, Faber and Faber, London, 1978.

This book is possibly out of print, however many books are available about Bernard Leach and his work and teaching philosophy. He has other books in print as well as books about him. More connections can be found with the work and writing about the Japanese potters, Shoji Hamada and Soetsu Yanagi. Leach's ideas were too mired in the traditions of Sung pottery for Marguerite. However, if you study her thoughts, you will find interesting intersections with Leach and similarities with her appreciation for other cultures as well as ancient pottery. To further your search about contrasting philosophies and aesthetics, look at contemporary artists (start with Voukos) and craftsmen and you will find spectacular swings of the pendulum between style and tradition and the questions of meaningful artistic expression!

OTHER SOURCES: The sources below were quoted within the book *Marguerite Wildenhain and the Bauhaus: An Eyewitness Anthology*, by Dean and Geraldine Schwarz, described above.

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