MAIJA GROTTELL

CRANBROOK ARCHIVES
SUBJECT GUIDE
INTRODUCTION

Maija Grotell was born in Helsinki, Finland on August 19, 1899. She studied painting, sculpture, design, and pottery in Helsinki before emigrating to the US in 1927. She continued her studies at the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University under Charles Fergus Binns.

She later taught ceramics at a number of schools in New York, and then became the head of the Ceramics Department at the Cranbrook Academy of Art from 1938 to 1966. It was here that she became known as a gifted artist and teacher, influencing students such as Toshiko Takaazu, John Glick, Suzanne Stephenson, and Richard DeVore. In her own pieces (primarily bowls and vases) Grotell was known for using geometric designs and brushed-on colored slips and glazes. She also developed pioneering glazes, including those used on bricks for the exterior of the General Motors Technical Center and a copper blue glaze developed with student Martha Lauritzen.

During her career, Grotell received over twenty-five major awards, including the Diploma di Colabrador at the Barcelona International Exhibition (1929), the silver medal at the Paris International Exhibition (1937), the Charles Fergus Binns Medal from Alfred University (1961), the Cranbrook Founders Medal (1964), and the Cranbrook Academy of Art Faculty Medal (1966). Her works are represented in the permanent collections of many museums including the Museum of Art and Design, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Everson Museum (Syracuse, NY), and Cranbrook Academy of Art.

She died on December 6, 1973, in Pontiac, Michigan. Maija Grotell Courtyard at the Cranbrook Academy of Art was dedicated in her honor.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


COLLECTIONS

1) **Maija Grotell Papers (2002-08)**
   Includes biographical information (including her vitae), correspondence, a glaze recipe, her apron, drawings and photographs of a potters’ wheel design, and a portfolio of Grotell’s work that was presented to the American Institute of Architects nominating her for their 1972 Craftsmanship Medal. This is an artificial collection of materials gathered from various sources.

2) **Martha M. Lauritzen Papers (1999-11)**
   Includes correspondence between Maija Grotell and Martha Lauritzen from 1948 until Grotell’s death in 1973, as well as color photographs of some of Grotell’s ceramics and information about Grotell’s memorial service. Also includes a manuscript of an article co-authored by Grotell on “Stoneware Copper Blue Glazes” with a small sample of the glaze. Transcripts from oral history interviews with Martha Lauritzen and Maija Grotell can be found in the collection.

3) **Nancy Leitch Papers (2007-04)**
   Includes notebooks and writings of Leitch, a student and later studio assistant, of Grotell’s. Also includes correspondence with Grotell, notes, and glaze formulas.

*Ceramics Group (four vases and a plate)*
*Maija Grotell*
4) Cranbrook Foundation RGI: Office Records (1981-05)
Includes records related to Grotell’s work for the Academy of Art, a department under the auspices of the Cranbrook Foundation until 1942.

5) Cranbrook Academy of Art: Records of the Administration (1981-09)
Includes reports, correspondence, and records of works and merit of Grotell after 1942, when the CAA became an autonomous educational, policy-making and administrative unit.

6) Doris Corbett Papers (2010-08)
Includes an oral history of Nellie Beveridge Gray, who studied with Grotell at the Cranbrook Academy of Art.

7) Margueritte Kimball Papers (1991-03)
Includes correspondence pertaining to Maija Grotell from former students, as well as candid scrapbook photographs.

8) Cranbrook Founders’ Day Records (1996-09)
Papers relating to Grotell’s 1964 Founders’ Day Award.

9) Maija Grotell Handmade Book
Created by Phil Sutz and Tom Lang of Singing Bone Press, edition 16 of 70, features quotes by and about Grotell.

E&M FILES
Maija Grotell
Features catalogues of her exhibitions, as well as correspondence and news clippings. It also includes copies of her papers at George Regents Library in Syracuse, NY.

FILM
Cranbrook Academy of Art historical films ca. 1939-1942)
Tape 110, film of Maija Grotell at the potters’ wheel. (VHS)

IMAGES
The collection includes portraits of Grotell alone or with her ceramic pieces as well as photographs of her teaching and throwing on the potters’ wheel. There are also numerous photographs of Grotell’s ceramics, including those that are in the collection of the Art Academy.
**MICROFILM**
Rolls 12 & 13, Copy of Maija Grotell Papers at George Regents Library (Syracuse, NY)
Includes biographical materials, correspondence, news clippings, photographs, and other memorabilia. [http://library.syr.edu/digital/guides/g/grotell_m.htm](http://library.syr.edu/digital/guides/g/grotell_m.htm)

**ORAL HISTORIES**
Tapes # 253 & #254 Interviews with Maija Grotell.

![Maija Grotell signing a vase.](image)