

*New York University and The Kramer Studio
Announce the Opening of*

THE EDITH KRAMER ARCHIVES



Kramer posing in her NYC studio, circa 1948

The Kramer Studio is proud to announce the formation of The Edith Kramer Archives. This collection is housed in the New York University Archives in the Bobst Library on Washington Square, under the direction of Nancy Cricco, University Archivist. After five years of collecting, cataloguing and digitizing, this comprehensive collection of papers, personal photographs and rare examples of client art work has undergone archival preservation. Hundreds of pieces of Kramer's own art, including drawings, paintings, sculpture, and prints are all available for study. This material will provide students and scholars with original documentation on the fascinating life and prolific work of the co-founder of our field.

The collection begins with her early years, with personal photos and her only surviving childhood drawings—an illustrated series depicting the characters of the French Revolution. A rare early self-portrait reveals Kramer as a brooding young artist, having been created after completing her studies under Friedl Dicker-Brandeis. Friedl was a

renowned artist of the Bauhaus who was deported in 1942 to the Nazi propaganda camp of Terezin. As an inmate she organized secret art classes for the camp's children but eventually perished, along with more than 500 of her child artists during the holocaust. The loss deeply affected Kramer, as their intense decade-long mentoring relationship would remain a life-long source of inspiration. The collection holds one of the few drawing exercises done under Friedl's tutelage. By 1939 Kramer had fled to the US and began teaching at The Little Red School House, a progressive school still flourishing today in Greenwich Village. During WWII, Kramer worked as a machinist's assistant where she sketched the workmen after her 12 hour shifts—these deft drawings are also part of the archive. In 1946 she returned to war-torn France where she backpacked and painted plein-air, often working at her easel from atop the rubble. Kramer was always committed to artistic realism, which recorded unflinchingly, both the 'beauty and horrors of the world'.

Back in the States, Kramer began her seminal work with 'troubled' children at the Wiltwyck School for Boys. Working with these deprived urban youth led to Kramer's first book and its central tenet: That the libidinal and aggressive drives could be harnessed through the therapeutic art experience. She theorized early on how the power of the art process could partially neutralize potentially destructive drive energy—through the transformational defense known as 'sublimation'. The archive preserved many of the children's original large-scale paintings that are depicted and analyzed in her texts. Painted in tempera often on found materials, these still formidable works miraculously survived some 60 years in Kramer's SoHo loft.

Her closest associate, Elinor Ulman and she, then founded the Bulletin of Art Therapy—the field's first professional journal. The collection holds Kramer's personal copy of the Journal's first printing of every volume in hardbound edition. She also began her long-standing and forceful presence within the American Art Therapy Association. Eventually Kramer began training art therapists, establishing the storied program at New York University, where she would become the pre-eminent Professor of Art Therapy for over twenty five years.

Many of Kramer's teachings are preserved in the archives, including DVDs of interviews, AATA presentations, as well as a 20 hr intensive version of her flagship course, 'The Psychodynamic Processes of Art Therapy'. With the addition of this voluminous video material, we are assured that the teachings, her colorful character, wisdom and the legacy of our founder will be preserved in perpetuity.