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## MARION DORN: THE AMERICAN YEARS

by  
Whitney Blausen

Marion Dorn, (1896-1964) was an American-born designer of both printed and woven furnishing fabrics and of rugs and carpets. Dorothy Todd, writing about Dorn in 1932 for the *Architectural Review*, called her the “architect of floors”.

Like many of her contemporaries, Dorn’s earliest textiles were batiks. She learned to design for industry by participating in the textile contests and classes championed by M.D.C. Crawford and sponsored, in part, by the trade paper *Women’s Wear*.

In 1923 Dorn emigrated to England, where she designed on a regular basis for such firms as Warner & Sons and the Wilton Royal Carpet Factory. With the on-set of World War II, Dorn moved back to the United States. Her reputation preceded her and Dorn was able to secure commissions from Greef, Jofa and the carpet manufacturer Edward Fields, among others. For Fields, Dorn produced more than 100 designs between 1949 and 1962.

Although she died over 30 years ago, some of Dorn’s textiles are still being produced. The carpet she designed for the Diplomatic Reception Room in the White House is still in place.

Marion Dorn’s career in England has been thoroughly documented by Dr. Christine Boydell of the University of Central Lancashire. Her career in America, however, which lasted longer, remains almost an unknown.

Using the archives of the Edward Fields Company, personal reminiscences by members of the Fields family and other company archives, this paper will attempt to shed new light on Dorn’s career in America, placing her in context with such colleagues and competitors as Dorothy Liebes, Ruth Reeves and Tammis Keefe.

Whitney Blausen received her M.A. in museum studies from the Fashion Institute of Technology. Her Master’s thesis was on the American textile designer Ruth Reeves. She has presented papers on Reeves for a variety of organizations and her essays on Reeves have appeared in *Surface Design Journal* and in the *Dictionary of Woman Artists*. She contributed 15 essays to the book *Contemporary Fashion*. Other publications include the *Dictionnaire de la Mode au XXe Siecle*, *Fiber Arts*, *Theatre Crafts International* and the forthcoming book *Disentangling Textiles*.