

Margaret Calkin James, graphic and textile designer : papers, ca. 1910 - 1970

Introduction and summary description

Creator: Margaret Calkin James
Reference: AAD/2010/11
Extent: ca. 50 files

Context

Margaret Bernard James (nee Calkin), known publicly as Margaret Calkin James (1895 - 1985), was educated at North London Collegiate School and the Central School of Arts and Crafts where she specialised in calligraphy and gilded illumination. During the First World War Calkin James worked for the YMCA art department. Following its closure she took over the premises and set up the Rainbow Room Gallery. It was the first gallery managed by a woman to promote art, craft and design.

She married Charles Holloway James in 1922, the pair being known as Jane and Jimmy, and continued her work alongside a growing family. Observational drawing and watercolours underpinned all Calkin James's designs and in 1935 she designed the first ever GPO greetings telegram form. She had three solo shows in London: at Cooling Galleries (1935); at Kensington Art Gallery (1948); and at St George's Gallery (1957). She had a stroke in 1969 which left her without speech or use of her right hand. As a result, she began experimenting artistically with her left hand. Work done after 1969 was exhibited during the International Year of the Disabled (Welwyn, 1981; Central London YMCA, 1982). From the 1920s she was committed to the teachings and ideals of Christian Science, beliefs which continued throughout her life.

Scope and content

This collection contains Calkin James' designs for posters, including London Transport, book jackets, Rainbow Workshop sign, sketches and fabric samples.

Provenance

Given by Elizabeth Argent, 2010.

Access

This archive is available for consultation in the V&A Archive and Library Study Room, which is located at Blythe House, 23 Blythe Road, Olympia, London, W14 0QX. The Study Room is open Tuesday to Friday between 10.00 am and 4.30 pm, by appointment only. To request an appointment please email archive@vam.ac.uk or telephone 020 7603 7493. Access to some files may be restricted; these are identified individually with the catalogue.

Restrictions on use

For conservation reasons the photocopying of archival material is not permitted. Archives may be photographed for study purposes only, at the discretion of the archivist.

Detailed catalogue

Commissioned work, ca. 1920 - 1935

Reference: AAD/2010/11/1

Contains posters designed for London Transport, the Medici Society and the BBC, book covers and pattern papers designed for Curwen.

| Reference | Description | Dates |
|-----------------|--|-----------------|
| AAD/2010/11/1/1 | Signboard for Rainbow Workshops 1 item | ca. 1920 |
| AAD/2010/11/1/2 | Rainbow Workshops order book, continuing as Margaret Calkin James's order book 1 item | ca. 1920 - 1959 |
| AAD/2010/11/1/3 | Posters and programme for YMCA tableaux vivants | ca. 1920 |

Contains the following documents:

Four cautionary tales and a moral 1920
1 poster, ref: AAD/2010/11/1/3/1
Poster depicts illustration of the character Henry.

Four cautionary tales and a moral 1920
333mm x 212mm, ref: AAD/2010/11/1/3/2
Poster depicts illustration of the character Matilda.

Programme for tableaux vivant *Four cautionary tales and a moral* 1920
1 programme, ref: AAD/2010/11/1/3/3

AAD/2010/11/1/4 Photographs of illuminated and gilded title pages for Lloyds Loyal Address 1928; 1952
4 photographs

AAD/2010/11/1/5 Posters for London Transport ca. 1930
7 posters

Contains the following documents:

A merry Christmas 'If you haven't got a farthing, God bless you'. 1931
1 poster, ref: AAD/2010/11/1/5/1

| | | |
|-----------------|---|----------|
| | Royal Tournament, Olympia May 25th to June 11th 1 poster, ref: AAD/2010/11/1/5/2 | 1932 |
| | Boxhill 1 poster, ref: AAD/2010/11/1/5/3 | 1935 |
| | Kenwood 1 poster, ref: AAD/2010/11/1/5/4 | 1935 |
| | Trooping the Colour, Saturday 4th June 1 poster, ref: AAD/2010/11/1/5/5 | 1932 |
| | Bluebell time in Kew Gardens 1 poster, ref: AAD/2010/11/1/5/6 | 1932 |
| | Chelsea Flower Show, May 22-23-24 1 poster, ref: AAD/2010/11/1/5/7 | 1935 |
| AAD/2010/11/1/6 | Ethyl; the petrol that won the Schneider Trophy 1 poster Poster designed for Shell-Mex. | ca. 1930 |
| AAD/2010/11/1/7 | Posters for the Medici Society 2 posters | 1957 |
| | Contains the following documents: | |
| | Spring flowers 1 poster, ref: AAD/2010/11/1/7/1 Includes printed key to flowers | 1957 |
| | Summer flowers 1 poster, ref: AAD/2010/11/1/7/2 | 1957 |
| AAD/2010/11/1/8 | Keys to the continent 1 poster Poster designed for Southern Railway Advertising | 1932 |
| AAD/2010/11/1/9 | Poster and programmes for BBC Symphony concerts 1 poster and three programmes | ca. 1929 |
| | Contains the following documents: | |
| | Poster for BBC Symphony concerts 1 poster, ref: AAD/2010/11/1/9/1 Poster for BBC Symphony concerts, Queens Hall, 6th season 1929-1930 | ca. 1929 |

- Programme for BBC Symphony concerts ca. 1930
1 programme, ref: AAD/2010/11/1/9/2
Programme for BBC Symphony concerts, Season 1930-1931,
Series B
- Programme for BBC Symphony concerts ca. 1931
1 programme, ref: AAD/2010/11/1/9/3
Programme for BBC Symphony concerts, Season 1931-1932,
Series C
- BBC broadcasts for Scottish schools 1929
1 booklet, ref: AAD/2010/11/1/9/4
- AAD/2010/11/1/10 Book jackets mounted on card ca. 1925 - 1935
3 boards
3 boards displaying book and pamphlet covers designed by Margaret Calkin James for Curwen and Jonathan Cape, mounted on card for display at the Exhibition of British Art in Industry (ca 1935). Board 1 contains book and pamphlet covers with patterned papers designed by Margaret Calkin James plus pasted-on typographic titles: On workmanship, a lecture by H. Wilson; Norway Cruises R.M.S.P. Araquaya list of passengers (1926); The first exhibition of British artificial silk goods inaugural luncheon; My Ladye Nevells by William Byrd; Angola: an eastern tale by Jacques-Rochette de la Morliere; The Clio by L.H.Myers. Board 2 contains book jackets designed for Jonathan Cape: General Crack by George Preedy; The life of HRH the Duke of Flamborough, Benjamin Bunny a footnote to history arranged, expurgated and edited by Laurence Housman; Lothian Cameron by John Carruthers; The bullfighters by Henry de Montherlant; The autobiography of a super tramp by W.H.Davies; Juan in America by Eric Linklater; Mary Queen of Scots by Margarete Kurlbaum Seibert; Rose Anstey by Ronald Fraser. Board 3 contains book jackets: Queen Elizabeth by J.E.Neale; Modern Chinese civilization by Dr. A.F. Legendre; The labouring life by Henry Williamson; Ben Jonson and King James by Eric Linklater; The fool hath said by Beverley Nichols; General Crack by George Preedy; Black Sparta by Naomi Mitchison; Juan in China by Eric Linklater.
- AAD/2010/11/1/11 Books with jackets designed by Margaret Calkin James ca. 1920 - 1940
3 books
7 books with jackets designed by Margaret Calkin James: M.C.J. Dimnet, My old world, Jonathan Cape, 1939; Henri de Montherlant, The bullfighters, Jonathan Cape, 1928; Barbara Noble, The years that take the best away, Heinemann, 1930; Clifford Bax, Polite satires, Medici Society, 1922; Christmas and New Year greetings 1927-1928, Scholartis Press, 1927; Victoria and Albert Museum, 100 masterpieces, Early Christian and mediaeval, Board of Education, 1930; Victoria and Albert Museum, 100 masterpieces, Mohammedan and oriental, Board of Education, 1931.
- AAD/2010/11/1/12 Book with text handwritten by Margaret Calkin James ca. 1916
1 book
Emile Cammaerts, The adoration of the soldiers, Longmans, Green and Co., ca. 1916. Printed red and black text originally handwritten in French and English by Margaret B. Calkin.
- AAD/2010/11/1/13 Pattern papers for Curwen ca. 1922
4 pattern papers

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| AAD/2010/11/1/14 | Greetings telegram designed for GPO 3 telegram forms | 1935 |
| AAD/2010/11/1/15 | Manchester Guardian coronation issue 3 May 1937, cover designed by Margaret Calkin James 1 item | 1937 |
| AAD/2010/11/1/16 | Photographs of designs for the Loyal Address for the British subjects of the Christian Science Movement. 15 photographs 517 Christian Scientist churches and societies, listed in groups under the relevant coats of arms or badges. | 1953 |

Original artwork, ca. 1912 - 1940

Reference: AAD/2010/11/2

Contains original watercolours, sketches and designs and 3 illuminated manuscripts.

| Reference | Description | Dates |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| AAD/2010/11/2/1 | Partial eclipse of the sun, April 17, 1912. 1 item | ca. 1910 - 1912 |
| AAD/2010/11/2/2 | Watercolours 7 items | ca. 1935 - 1955 |

Contains the following documents:

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| Unfinished study of Tenby 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/2/2/1 | ca. 1935 |
| Bosham, Chichester harbour 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/2/2/2 | ca. 1947 |
| Papaver orientalis 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/2/2/3 | ca. 1935 - 1955 |
| 'Cambridge House Camberwell', suggestion for stage 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/2/2/4 YMCA Art Department | ca. 1935 - 1955 |
| Repeat design of stylised flowers 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/2/2/5 | ca. 1935 - 1955 |
| 'Perpetua' preparatory drawing 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/2/2/6 Preparatory drawing for 'Perpetua', a trompe l'oeil window on a plain brick wall at Margaret Calkin James's home in Hampstead. | ca. 1954 |

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|--|--------------------|
| AAD/2010/11/2/3 Christmas card designs 3 designs | ca. 1954 |
| Contains the following documents: | |
| Mistletoe 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/2/3/1 | ca. 1954 |
| Snowdrops 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/2/3/2 | ca. 1954 |
| Christmas roses 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/2/3/3 | ca. 1954 |
| AAD/2010/11/2/4 Illuminated books 4 items | ca. 1920 - 1950 |
| Contains the following documents: | |
| The first epistle general of John 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/2/4/1 Leather-bound volume with slip case, embossed on front cover '15 June 1922 M.B.J. to C.H.J. 15 June 1947'. | 1947 |
| Rabindranath Tagore, <i>When I bring you coloured toys</i> 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/2/4/2 Vellum, 16pp, inscribed 'Written out and illuminated by Margaret Calkin James, October 1925'. | 1925 |
| H. Van Dyke, <i>Work</i> 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/2/4/3 Calligraphy with gilded title letter. | ca. 1920 - 1950 |
| The gospel according to St John 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/2/4/4 Illuminated manuscript. | ca. 1921 |
| AAD/2010/11/2/5 Sketchbooks 3 items | ca. 1930 - 1940 |
| Contains the following documents: | |
| Green sketchbook with watercolour flower studies 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/2/5/1 | ca. 1930 - 1940 |
| 'Wiro' spiral-bound sketchbook 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/2/5/2 | ca. 1930 - 1940 |

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|--|--------------------|
| Winsor and Newton spiral-bound sketchbook 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/2/5/3 | ca. 1930 - 1940 |
| AAD/2010/11/2/6 Sketches and tracings 16 items | ca. 1930 - 1950 |
| AAD/2010/11/2/7 Designs 5 items | ca. 1920 - 1960 |
| Contains the following documents: | |
| Audience as seen from stage 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/2/7/1 | ca. 1920 - 1960 |
| Putney Fire Brigade, cut-out design. 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/2/7/2 | ca. 1920 - 1960 |
| Snowdrop design in four colourways 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/2/7/3 | ca. 1920 - 1960 |
| Mermaid rose, tempera study 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/2/7/4 | ca. 1950 - 1970 |
| Lino-cut squares, including Mermaid rose and Cyclamen 8 squares, ref: AAD/2010/11/2/7/5 | ca. 1965 |

Student work and professional qualifications, ca. 1910 - 1940

Reference: AAD/2010/11/3

Contains student notebooks, a book bound as part of student work and Margaret Calkin James's certificate of registration as a designer for industry, 1938.

| Reference | Description | Dates |
|------------------|--|--------------|
| AAD/2010/11/3/1 | Student sketchbook 1 item Inscribed on first page: Margaret B. Calkin, Central School of Arts and Crafts. | ca. 1914 |
| AAD/2010/11/3/2 | Notebook with lecture notes 1 item Inscribed on front page: Margaret B.Calkin. | ca. 1914 |
| AAD/2010/11/3/3 | Book binding, student work. 1 item Hewitt, Graily, Handwriting, everyman's handicraft. Quarter leather binding and hand-marbled papers by Margaret Calkin James. | ca. 1914 |

AAD/2010/11/3/4 National Register of Industrial Art Designers certificate, 1938
January 1938.
1 item

Textiles, ca. 1930 - 1980

Reference: AAD/2010/11/4

This collection contains examples of Margaret Calkin James's block-printed designs on linen, silk and velvet. It also holds needlepoint samples made after she suffered a stroke and lost the use of her right hand.

| Reference | Description | Dates |
|--|--|------------------------|
| AAD/2010/11/4/1 | Scrapbook with textile samples 1 item This scrapbook contains samples of block-printed textiles and notes on dye recipes. | ca. 1936 - ca. 1950 |
| AAD/2010/11/4/2 | Silkscreen-printed scarves and handkerchiefs 9 scarves, 6 handkerchiefs | ca. 1940 - 1950 |
| Contains the following documents: | | |
| | Silkscreen printed scarves 9 scarves, ref: AAD/2010/11/4/2/1 Triangular scarves printed on parachute silk: 2 dianthus design in 2 colourways; 5 formalised flower and fruit design in 5 colourways; 2 bird design in 2 colourways. | ca. 1940 - 1950 |
| | Silkscreen printed handkerchiefs 6 handkerchiefs, ref: AAD/2010/11/4/2/2 4 men's handkerchiefs in 2 colourways; 2 ladies' handkerchiefs in 2 colourways. | ca. 1940 - 1950 |
| AAD/2010/11/4/3 | Fabric sample lengths 6 items | ca. 1936 |
| Contains the following documents: | | |
| | Fritillary woodblock print on linen 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/4/3/1 | ca. 1936 |
| | Rope and thistle woodblock print on velvet 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/4/3/2 Tortoiseshell colourway. | ca. 1936 |
| | Rope and thistle woodblock print on velvet 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/4/3/3 Grey colourway. | ca. 1936 |

| | | |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| | Campion and bluebell woodblock print on linen 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/4/3/4 | ca. 1930 - 1950 |
| | Rope and dandelion woodblock print on velvet 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/4/3/5 | ca. 1930 - 1950 |
| | Buttercup woodblock print on linen 1 item, ref: AAD/2010/11/4/3/6 | ca. 1930 - 1950 |
| AAD/2010/11/4/4 | Dress, woodblock print on voile 1 item Previously owned by M. McEachran. | ca. 1936 |
| AAD/2010/11/4/5 | Needlepoint and embroidery samples 95 items 85 needlepoint sample squares on canvas and 10 wool embroidery and applique circular pieces worked by Margaret Calkin James with her left hand after she was disabled with a stroke in 1969 | ca. 1969 - 1985 |

Photographs, ca. 1940 - 1980

Reference: AAD/2010/11/5

| Reference | Description | Dates |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| AAD/2010/11/5/1 | Contact prints of Margaret Calkin James 2 sheets of prints These contact prints of Margaret Calkin James were taken by the Stevenage Gazette for an article on an exhibition of her wool embroideries at the Central Library, Welwyn Garden City, 1981. | 1981 |
| AAD/2010/11/5/2 | Photograph of watercolour of Shepherd Market, Mayfair. 1 item Stamp of R.B. Fleming and Co., photographer, on the back. Photograph in black and white. | ca. 1940 - 1980 |
| AAD/2010/11/5/3 | Photographs of 'Perpetua', trompe l'oeil window 4 photographs Photographs in black and white. | ca. 1955 |
| AAD/2010/11/5/4 | Photograph's of Margaret Calkin James's work table 4 photographs These photographs are of Margaret Calkin James's work table, reassembled by her daughter, Elizabeth Argent. There are also three accompanying pages of explanation. Photographs are in colour. | ca. 1980 |

Personal items, ca. 1915 - 1970

Reference: AAD/2010/11/6

| Reference | Description | Dates |
|-----------------|--|--------------------|
| AAD/2010/11/6/1 | Letter from Karl Parsons 1 item Letter dated 1 July 1915 from Karl Parsons, teacher of stained glass at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, congratulating Margaret Calkin on her success in the Queen's Scholarship Competition. | 1915 |
| AAD/2010/11/6/3 | Artist's smock and pattern 1 item Blue artist's smock and envelope containing French smock pattern. used over many years by Margaret Calkin James. | ca. 1915 - 1970 |
| AAD/2010/11/6/2 | Card from C.F.A. Voysey 1 item Card, dated 1 April 1935, from C.F.A. Voysey congratulating Margaret Calkin James on her Bond Street exhibition. | 1935 |
| AAD/2010/11/6/4 | Pencil sketch of a girl 1 item Pencil sketch, not attributed. | ca. 1915 - 1970 |

Publication featuring work by Margaret Calkin James, ca. 1959

Reference: AAD/2010/11/7

| Reference | Description | Dates |
|-----------------|--|-------|
| AAD/2010/11/7/1 | La revue moderne 1 item La revue moderne 1 October 1959, photograph of a watercolour by Margaret Calkin James on p8. | 1959 |
