

**Elaine Lustig Cohen collection**  
**CARGDA.001**

**Cary Graphic Design Archives**

**Finding aid prepared by Amy Vilz**

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This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit

February 22, 2013

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Cary Graphic Arts Collection  
08 February 2012  
RIT Libraries  
The Wallace Center  
90 Lomb Memorial Drive  
Rochester, New York, 14623  
(585) 475-2408  
skgtwc@rit.edu

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	Cary Graphic Arts Collection
<b>Creator</b>	Cohen, Elaine Lustig, 1927-
<b>Title</b>	Elaine Lustig Cohen collection
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	circa 1955-2008
<b>Extent</b>	4.67 Linear feet 5 manuscript boxes, 2 oversize boxes, 1 slide box
<b>Location note</b>	Graphic Design Archives, Cary Collection Annex
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Graphic materials [Box]</b>	6
<b>Container</b>	7-8
<b>Graphic materials [Box]</b>	1-5
<b>Graphic materials [Map-case]</b>	1.3
<b>Abstract</b>	Collection of materials from graphic designer and artist Elaine Lustig Cohen, including brochures, catalogs, letterhead, and book covers.

### Preferred Citation note

[Description and dates], Box/folder number, Elaine Lustig Cohen collection, Cary Graphic Arts Collection, RIT.

## Biographical/Historical note

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How do I divide my time? During the 1950s and early 1960s mostly graphic design, interior design and signage. Painting, collage, works on paper from the mid-1960s to the present, with some graphic design from time to time. <sup>1</sup>

Elaine Lustig Cohen was born in Jersey City, New Jersey in 1927. She attended Tulane University, and earned her BFA in 1948 from the University of Southern California. After graduation, she met and married graphic designer Alvin Lustig, and from 1948 until his death in 1955, she managed his studio. As Lustig's health and vision deteriorated, Cohen expanded her experience and carried out his ideas for clients. One such project was a 1955 catalog for Lightolier (see folder 2.6).

Cohen's earliest solo work was in finishing a number of Lustig's commissions after his death. These projects included signage for the Seagram Building in New York and a series of book covers for Meridian Books. Heavily influenced by European design, specifically Bauhaus and Modernism, her work has been described as having a "...typographic playfulness." <sup>2</sup> Cohen's clients included book publishers (Meridian, George Braziller, Farrar, Straus and Cudahy), galleries (Jewish Museum, Kootz Gallery, Museum of Modern Art), and architects (Eero Saarinen, Philip Johnson). Because she was the sole proprietor of her studio, much of her work was in smaller-scale projects, such as book covers, building signage, and letterheads. Of this last type, she is not only a designer, but a collector as well, stating:

This small-scale object is one of the most challenging design problems. It must be personal and strong, using minimal means to reflect the spirit of an individual or company. It is a direct encounter with a piece of paper that is usually more sensual and luxurious than the stock for other printed pieces.... At Ex Libris we offered the letterheads in our catalogues along with books and other works on paper, but they rarely sold. Greedily, I kept them for myself. <sup>3</sup>

Since the late 1960s, Cohen moved away from designing for clients and focused on painting, having several exhibitions of her work since that time. In 1956, she married Arthur A. Cohen, and together they opened Ex Libris in 1973. The bookstore and gallery specialized in the avant-garde and included books, prints, artist archives, and all manner of printed material. Ex Libris closed in the late 1990s. Cohen continues to paint and exhibit her work.

1 Gomez-Placio, Bryony and Armin Vit. *Women of Design: Influence and Inspiration from the Original Trailblazers to the New Groundbreakers*. Cincinnati, Ohio: How Books, 2008, pp.22.

2 Heller, Steven, "A Place on the Map." From *I.D.*, vol. 42, no. 3 (May/June 1995), pp.51.

3 Cohen, Elaine Lustig, "Forward." From *Letters from the Avant-Garde* (written with Ellen Lupton). New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996.

## Scope and Contents note

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The Elaine Lustig Cohen Collection contains two series: Clients and Personal. The Clients series encompasses most of the collection and focuses on Cohen's work as a graphic designer from the mid 1950s to the late 1960s, with much of the documentation consisting of letterheads, book covers, and catalogs. Her book cover designs for Meridan Books are well represented. Cohen counted cultural groups and galleries as her main clients, with these chiefly represented by Kootz Gallery, Jewish Museum, Sona, and the Museum of Modern Art. Other notables include architects Eero Saarinen and Philip Johnson and consist of letterheads and signage for buildings (GM Technical Center and Seagram Building, respectively). Lastly, the collection includes a small number of graphic identification projects that were never realized: Federal Aviation Agency (photocopies), Lincoln Center (designed with Ivan Chermayeff and Tom Geismar), and Monsanto (photocopies).

Personal records include catalogs for posthumous exhibits on Alvin Lustig, Cohen's own exhibits, and giclée prints of her artwork ("alphabet series"). Also included are letterheads (for Cohen and family members), as well as invitations to the annual New Year's Day parties she held with her second husband, Arthur Cohen. Promotional materials designed for her bookstore Ex Libris comprise the main portion of records in this series, and consist of catalogs, shortlists, brochures, and letterheads.

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## Arrangement note

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The collection is arranged in two series: Series I. Clients, circa 1955-2001; and Series II. Personal, circa 1956-2008.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Information

Cary Graphic Arts Collection 08 February 2012

### Conditions Governing Access note

This collection is open to researchers.

## **Immediate Source of Acquisition note**

The Elaine Lustig Cohen collection was donated to the Graphic Design Archives by Cohen's daughter, Tamar Cohen, in October, 2008.

## **Processing Information note**

Collection processed by Amy Vilz, January 2012

Finding aid encoded by Amy Vilz, February 2012

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## **Controlled Access Headings**

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### **Corporate Name(s)**

- Ex Libris (Firm).

### **Genre(s)**

- Brochures
- Catalogs
- Commercial art
- Covers (gathered matter components)
- Graphic design -- 1950-1980
- Letterheads
- Promotional materials

### **Subject(s)**

- Book cover art
- Commercial artists -- United States -- History -- 20th century
- Designers -- United States -- History -- 20th century
- Graphic artists -- United States -- History -- 20th century
- Graphic arts -- United States -- History -- 20th century
- Women artists

## Series I. Clients, circa 1955-2001

## Collection Inventory

### Series I. Clients, circa 1955-2001

#### Scope and Content

Includes work created with Alvin Lustig, Richard Meier and Elaine Lustig-Cohen Associates, and Lustig and Reich. Most contain letterhead, publications, or other promotional material. Some files contain photocopies of client work, and are noted as such.

#### Arrangement

Alphabetical.

#### Box-folder

Albany Report, 1961; letterhead.

1.1

American-Israel Cultural Foundation, 1962; letterhead.

1.2

Arthur L. Loeb, 1960; letterhead.

1.3

Bioquest, 1964; label, card.

1.4

Columbia University, 1965; "8: Newsletter of 8mm Film in Education," no. 1 (March 1965).

1.5

Series I. Clients, circa 1955-2001

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	1.6
Cordier and Ekstrom, 1965; book announcement card [book designed by Lustig-Cohen].	
	1.7
Delighted Eye, undated; artwork labels.	
	1.8
Educational Audio Visual, 1960; letterhead.	
	1.9
Eero Saarinen and Associates, 1958; letterhead.	
	1.1
Emily S. Nathan, 1962; letterhead.	
	1.11
Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1958; letterhead.	
	8.1+
Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1958; book cover.	
	1.12
Federal Aviation Agency, 1962; cards, photocopies of proposed graphic identity [never realized].	
	1.13
Frederick Lunning, 1962; letterhead.	
	1.14
Furman Gallery, 1961; catalog.	
	1.15
General Motors, 1957; signage for Technical Center Service Station [photocopies].	



## Series I. Clients, circa 1955-2001

Georg Jensen, 1962; bag design [photocopy].	1.16
George Braziller, 1962-1963; books: "Makers of Contemporary Architecture" series: Eero Saarinen, Philip Johnson; book cover designs [photocopies].	1.17-1.18
George F. Scheer, 1969; letterhead.	1.19
Globe Leather, 1962; letterhead.	1.2
Holt, Rinehart, and Wilson, 1963-1967; catalogs, book: <i>God's Own Junkyard</i> . 1963-1967	1.21
Holt, Rinehart, and Wilson, 1964, 1966; book cover; book: <i>Philip Johnson: Architecture</i> .	7.1+
Home Security Life Insurance, 1961; letterhead.	1.22
Isadore M. Cohen, 1960; letterhead.	1.23
Jewish Museum, circa 1962-1968; invitations, brochures, letterhead, bags, exhibit catalogs: 1964 Venice Biennial (USA), Ben Benn, Nicolas Schoffer and Jean Tinguely, Robert Rauschenberg, Philip Gaston, Jasper Johns, Max Ernst. [7 folders]	1.24-2.3
Jewish Museum, 1963-1964; broadsides.	8.2+

## Series I. Clients, circa 1955-2001

K-C Art, 1962; envelope, brochure.	2.4
Kootz Gallery, 1958-1962; brochures, catalogs.	2.5
Kootz Gallery, 1958-1960; posters, exhibition catalog.	8.3+
Lightolier, 1955; catalog [with Alvin Lustig].	2.6
Lightronics, 1959; business card.	2.7
Lincoln Center, 1961; logo designs created with Chermayeff and Geismar [never realized].	8.4+
Lindenmeyr Schlosser, 1961; promotional cards.	2.8
Meridian Books, circa 1956-1961; letterhead, catalogs; book covers; books: <i>The New Science, A History of Militarism</i> [Greenwich editions].	2.9-3.4
Meridian Books, circa 1958-1961; book covers [includes Greenwich editions], broadsides, newsletter.	8.5+
Metropolis Brewery, 1962; beer label.	3.5

## Series I. Clients, circa 1955-2001

Mitten Letter Company, circa 1958-1962; letter design [photocopy]. <i>Note:</i> Plaster letter prototypes in Box 6.	3.6
Monsanto, 1962; logo design [never realized] [photocopies].	3.7
Munson Williams Proctor Institute, 1959-1960; catalog, invitation, building signage [photocopies].	3.8
Museum of Contemporary Crafts, 1959; invitation.	3.9
Museo de Arte Moderna [Rio de Janeiro], 1959; brochure.	7.2+
Museum of Modern Art, 1961, 1975; catalogs, greeting card.	3.1
	<b>Map-case</b>
Museum of Modern Art, 2001; poster: "Mies in Berlin."	1.3
	<b>Box-folder</b>
Museum of Primitive Art, 1957; letterhead, catalog.	3.11
New Canaan, Connecticut, 1959; map.	7.3+
New Directions Books, 1957; book cover, book: <i>The Sorrows of Priapus</i> .	3.12

## Series I. Clients, circa 1955-2001

Other book publishers, circa 1959-1976; Ardis, Ediciones Iberica, Jewish Publications Society, Reinhold, Dutton, Harper and Row, Schocken, Random House, Russian Literature Triquarterly.	3.13
Other book publishers, circa 1960-1986; David R. Godine; Harcourt, Brace, and Company, Crossroad Publishing, Pantheon Books, unknown Russian publisher.	8.6+
Philip Johnson and Richard Foster, architects, 1967; letterhead, building signage [photocopies].	4.1
Robert Lee Blaffer Trust, 1958; letterhead.	4.2
San Francisco Museum of Art, 1965; catalog.	4.3
Schlumberger, 1958; advertisement tear sheets.	4.4
Seagram, circa 1957-1960; brochures, advertisement, signage [photocopies].	4.5
Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, 1963-1964; catalogs.	4.6
Sona, 1965; invitation, bags, images of store [photocopies].	8.7+
Spartan Shipbuilding, 1957; letterhead.	4.7

## Series II. Personal, circa 1956-2008

TJ Art, 1974, 1977; letterhead, book: <i>The Wine Cellar</i> .	7.4+
Union Theological Seminary, 1958; broadside.	4.8
United Mills, 1957, 1961; logos, packaging design. [photocopies]	4.9
WAMV, 1957; letterhead.	4.1
Washington Gallery of Modern Art, 1967; catalog.	4.11
Water Resources Council, 1958; brochure, letterhead, program.	4.12
Westbeth, 1967; letterhead.	4.13
Whitney Museum, circa 1960-1975; brochure, booklet cover.	4.14
Yale University Library, 1980; bookplate.	4.15

**Series II. Personal, circa 1956-2008****Arrangement**

Alphabetical by subject.

**Box-folder**

## Series II. Personal, circa 1956-2008

<p>Alvin Lustig, 1977, 2007; exhibit mailer, article: "A Lustig for Life," <i>Dwell</i>, vol. 7 no. 2 (December/January, 2007), pp. 129-132.</p>	4.16
<p>Artwork, 2006-2007; "alphabet series:" giclee print, photocopies.</p>	8.8+
<p>Birth announcement, 1960; Tamar Cohen [Elaine Lustig-Cohen and Arthur Cohen's daughter].</p>	4.17
<p>Ex Libris, circa 1978-1990; catalogs, shortlists, letterhead, exhibit catalogs, brochures.</p>	4.18-4.21
<p>Ex Libris, 1982, undated; broadside, bag.</p>	8.9+
<p>Exhibits, circa 1973-2008; promotional cards: "Against the Grain," "Elaine Lustig Cohen: Collages;" catalogs: "The Book Stripped Bare," "Elaine Lustig Cohen: Paintings, Wood Constructions, Works on Paper 1979-1985," "The Geometry of Seeing: the Art of Elaine Lustig Cohen, 1966-2007."</p>	5.1-5.2
<p>Invitations, circa 1962-1968; New Year's Day parties at Arthur Cohen and Elaine Lustig Cohen's home.</p>	8.10+
<p>Letterhead, circa 1956-1979; includes Elaine Lustig Cohen, Arthur A. Cohen, Richard Meier and Elaine Lustig Cohen Associates.</p>	5.3
<p>Lustig and Reich, 1962-1963; letterhead, promotional booklet.</p>	5.4

Series II. Personal, circa 1956-2008

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8.11+

*On the Marionette Theater*, 1988; book essay by Arthur Cohen [design by Elaine Lustig Cohen].

5.5

Publications, 1966, 2006; "Teachers and Writers," vol. 37 no. 4 (March/April, 2006);  
*Variations on a Theme: Fifty Years of Graphic Arts in America*.