

CLASSIC

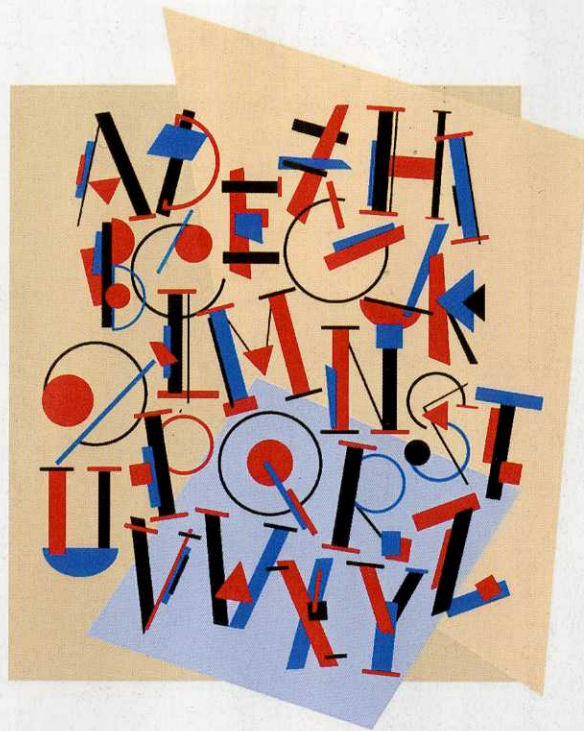
modern pioneer

In 1955, few American women designers ran their own studio. Elaine Lustig Cohen—who turned 80 on March 7—not only ran her own studio, she took over the midtown Manhattan office of her legendary husband, Alvin Lustig, after he died from diabetes at age 40. To celebrate her birthday, she has produced a series of five giclée prints, including *Homage to Malevich* (right), that celebrate and reflect on her life in graphic design.

It would have been difficult for anyone to fill Alvin Lustig's shoes; for his wife, the task was Herculean. Most of his clients, like the architect Philip Johnson, assumed she had the experience to complete the unfinished commissions and accept new ones. Little did they know that when Lustig was alive, she was not allowed to design anything.

"As a rule," she recalls, "no one in the Lustig office designed except Alvin himself." She and a couple of assistants, including Ivan Chermayeff, did the "dirty work" while Alvin Lustig sat at his marble desk with only a tracing pad, on which he made thumbnail sketches for others to render.

Elaine Lustig won the trial by fire. Specializing in book covers and jackets, she followed her husband's austere modernist aesthetic until she developed her own style that involved more layered type and imagery. For more than 10 years, she continued to earn commissions from museums,



architects, and book publishers such as Noonday Press, whose cofounder, Arthur Cohen, became her second husband.

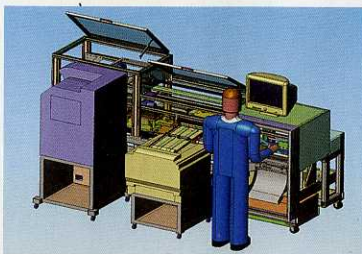
Although the studio closed in 1967, Lustig Cohen still designed catalog covers for Ex Libris, the antiquarian bookstore she and Cohen ran together. She also began making art inspired, in part, by Constructivism, Dada, and the Bauhaus.

Her current series came about as she began creating alphabets in *Illustrator*; the first one

(not included in the edition) was a yellow folding ruler on which she replaced the numbers 1–26 with the letters of the alphabet. "My eye then naturally fell on other devices on my desk that use measurements," she says, and the series evolved to encompass alphabet designs for a protractor and a checkerboard. A retrospective exhibition, which will include the new prints, will open later this year at Julie Saul and Pavel Zoubok galleries in New York. STEVEN HELLER

PRINTING

double bookaccino



The concept of the on-demand book has finally reached its apotheosis. The Espresso Book Machine is a totally automatic device that prints, collates, glues, binds, and trims any book, in any language, in several minutes—ensuring, in essence, that no volume is ever out of print. Jason Epstein, a partner of On Demand Books, the company responsible for building the machine, claims it's an alternative to both "the Gutenberg system" that has defined book publishing for five centuries and the electronic "books" that have been hyped as the digital successor to print. The book machine eliminates the physical production, distribution, and warehousing of books while still allowing readers to enjoy them as physical objects (albeit as paperbacks). Only two have been installed so far—at the World Bank InfoShop in Washington, D.C., and the Library of Alexandria in Egypt—but the company expects to install one at the New York Public Library in March, with others scheduled to surface at the University of Alberta and at an independent bookstore in Vermont later this year. Now if only it could figure out how to make some decent coffee, too. PAUL SHAW