



## The Elisabeth Lewis Archive: A European Woman Photographer in London, 1960–2011

Elisabeth arrived in London from Westphalia in 1950 to continue her graphic design and film studies. In common with many European women of her generation, embarking on a career and a life of independence, she was looking for a new life in a new country in contrast to her life in postwar Germany.

After completing several short courses she enrolled on a Diploma Course in Photography at the London College of Printing (LCP, now LCC University of the Arts

London). At the time, art and design colleges were experiencing a cultural and social awakening that satisfied her intellectual curiosity. She quickly gained a reputation as a modernist photographer and became part of the creative new wave.

Freelancing as a commercial photographer, she shared a studio in London Blackfriars with design and architectural photographer Felicia Cronin, Paris Match staffer Roy Dickens and photojournalist Penny Tweedie.

Her professional experience was eclectic, in keeping with her wide interests. She photographed families, artists, musicians, leisure activities and sport. She had notable success as a sports car photographer, unprecedented for a woman at the time, especially one who never learned to drive.

Later on she would also write and take photographs for publications such as *The Telegraph*, *19 Magazine*, *House Beautiful*, *Spare Rib* and *Nova*. In the 1970s, Elisabeth immersed herself in the rapidly developing African music scene, feminist culture and the cosmopolitan milieu that London provided. And yet, throughout her life in England, Elisabeth maintained her European perspective and her contact with Germany through visits, projects and writing – as documented in her body of work.

Beside her professional practice, Elisabeth worked as a visiting Photography Lecturer in several colleges. She was an inspiring tutor, as Sunil Gupta, one of her students and a lifelong friend remembers: ‘Elisabeth was a great tutor who challenged her students to extend their practice and spoke to us as equals. Her love of modernism was a great inspiration and extended the vision that had been instilled in me by another great European modernist photographer and teacher, Lisette Model’.

In the early 2000s, Elisabeth relocated to the South Coast where she continued to photograph, play chess and write. She exhibited regularly and socialised widely despite being diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2013.

She leaves behind an archive that forms a distinctive and fascinating view of a post-war world of optimism and rapid change. The archive of negatives, prints, transparencies, contact sheets and tear-sheets, with its wide range of subject matter, is full of insight into a woman's experience of the period as well as many informed observations on design, business, leisure and culture.

**We would like to donate the archive to an institution that can unlock its social, political and aesthetic value as modern history.**

Below are selected images from her body of work and a résumé of her practice:



TWO SHILLINGS AUGUST 1963

# small car

NEW WA  
TO DOOG  
HOLIDAY  
HOLDUPS



HOW TO SUCCEED IN THE  
SUMMER SEASIDE RATRACE  
WITHOUT REALLY TRYING  
(ACCELERATE TO PP 20-23)



**From leavens...**

# Girls Are Playing The Game Now!

Football and chess are both played professionally by men. Football is thought to be a game requiring a man's superior physical power and stamina and although the game calls for skill and accuracy—which women do not lack—men and the football fraternity tend to frown on girls playing football. Chess is different. Chess requires female acrobatics and is a more social activity. So, if you can't beat your man in playing one game this winter, why not play the other? *History and photo: Elizabeth Lewis*



...men playing again, she thinks she is too old to play. Wendy was transferred to one of the rival teams. While Elizabeth Lewis, the Hackney team.

Agree from South. Wendy likes French, which she learns at school. When she leaves school, she wants to take up an apprenticeship as a hairdresser. She plays football twice a week—training on Tuesday nights and playing matches on Saturdays.

Wendy likes travelling to away matches by train, which is paid for by the sponsored clubs. The club expenses, she says, going on them, but as they help her lose excess weight.

Wendy doesn't think there is any prize playing against boys' teams, except for that she likes watching the local boys' teams playing and she reads matches playing on television, which she finds interesting.

"You are too slow, you give away goals, and then, for the rest of the game, you have to make up for it. The stress is on them, behind the head. I could have killed you last Sunday. You know what a fine kick it was? A kick and you had to go to church without somebody else still kicking for you." said the captain's after-match talk to one of the boys I had just watched. They were all sitting around on long benches, waiting their dirty boots. Some of the girls were all smoking an cigarette, which didn't seem to attract to more than a few smokers here and there. Hearing the girls like that, it struck me what a healthy group they were. I had imagined a team of behaviour girls, slurring at each other very loudly—but I couldn't have been more wrong. The average age of the team was about eighteen.

Michelle is sixteen and the youngest member of the team. The youngest of the age of fourteen.

She is full of energy, giving the same long kick of all over the field. She played football at school in Nottingham, and played in exhibition matches, or holiday camps. This weekend the WFA was formed, which would have been three days.

It is a matter of opinion and used to be a specialty of the local football club, but several special athletes because "they were competing against each other, in a sense of against other teams," said in a playful good mood.

Phil told me how difficult it was to get sponsors for a girls' team, although Spurs ladies have two trainers.

She often asks the point that women are incapable of working, or even playing together, that they have to make up for the lack of loyalty to each other in the way men have. If that is so, then football is exactly a game that will never be played.



## A CAR TO BUILD A DREAM ON

Elizabeth Lewis talks to six people about the cars they would most like and finds some have already had their dreams come true.

For that matter, dream cars—like reality, gender-specific and often equally impractical. But I asked half a dozen people, all of whom need good cars, just what they would really have from heaven. Or what, in fact, they already have it.

William Froehman, for example, is a very successful engineer and has a Jaguar XK8 to prove it. He is well pleased with his job, just as he was with the Bentley he had before that.

David Ormrod drives a Lotus Europa. He discovered it while looking for a house and car together for an advertising job, and ended up buying the car from his camp.

Ange Smith is a sportswoman who needs a powerful car to tow her trailer. She would love to have a Jensen, but does not think she will ever be able to afford it.

Steve Goddard, a cartoonist, actually owned the car he likes best, an old Alfa Romeo. But it was too impractical to run.

Elizabeth Francis and her husband, Michael, love sports cars. Michael has an MG30, and Elizabeth uses a small van to transport her kids. They would love an Alfa Romeo, but the accommodation is just not up to that sort of equipment. But her husband is seriously thinking of giving up the job anyway.

John Speed, who runs a specialist car buying firm, bought a Fiat Dino coupe with the intention of having the car built to order, complete with his wife to drive it.



Elizabeth Lewis, author of a book of advice for children, helps with her husband's Mercedes. Carriage Miss Tom, sports specialists in sports cars, new and old. She remembered and expert driver she chauffeurs the company's Fiat Dino.





## Elisabeth's Professional Profile

Name **Elisabeth Buchmeyer Lewis**

Nationality **German**

### Study

#### Early 1950s

Enrolled in a Bauhaus based foundation course at Dortmunder Werk – Kunsthochschule, German Art School.

#### Mid 50s

While on a short stay in England, Elisabeth studied Drawing and Printmaking at two London colleges: at the Regents Street Polytechnic under the constructivist Anthony Hill, and at the Central School of Arts and Craft with the writer and artist Mervyn Peake.

#### 1958/59

After a brief return to Hamburg she came back to London to study photography. She chose a 3 year Diploma course at the LCP, London College of Printing, (now LCC at The London University of the Arts) under the irascible head of department, Mr. Cooke.

#### 1980–1987

Open University at Ealing College, part-time Postgraduate Diploma course on German Society: Politics, Sociology, Economics and Literature (CNA).

### Practice

On finishing the photography course successfully, Elisabeth joined three other photographers in a London studio off Fleet Street. They were all involved in some area of photojournalism, clients ranged from *Architectural Review*, *Interior Design*, *House Beautiful*, *Nova*, *Paris Match*, *Spare Rib*, *Terence Conran*, *The Telegraph* magazine, *19 magazine* and a new popular magazine called *Small Cars* (now *CAR magazine*) which Elisabeth worked for on a regular basis, photographing dream cars like the Morgan and the Jensen.

Almost immediately after finishing her course at the LCP, Elisabeth was invited back to do part-time lecturing at the college. She was involved in education most of her photographic life. She was a regular visiting tutor at the LCP (LCC) and John Cass School of Art, and in Guildford and Farnham (later the West Surrey College of Art & Design).

Meantime her photojournalistic work took off, she acquired new clients and extended her practice to supplying packages to publications on women's working lives.

She also did a good many portraits for professional writers and musicians, classical as well as rock stars like Ian Dury.

She took photographs of African Jazz at the 100 Club and the Base Clef, where amazing musicians, including the venerated enthralling Dudu Pukwana held court.

In 2004 Elisabeth relocated to St-Leonards-on-Sea in East Sussex where she continued to photograph, write and exhibit, but now her focus was on her German origins, her heritage and childhood memories. She created photomontages of her memories and produced a limited edition of her book *Elisabeth with an 'S'*.

### Exhibitions

'Pieces of Eight' at the Pennybank Gallery, London (1980).

'Rockmusic' West Surrey College of Art & Design (1982).

'Musicians' as well as 'Children in the Media' and 'Portraits' at Sir John Cass School of Art, London (1982).

'Pieces of five' at the Pennybank Gallery, London (1983).

'Who Are They' at the Seven Dials Gallery, London (1985).

'Walls can come down' the New Europe with Felicia Cronin, Brighton (1990).

'Unlimited Leisure' Islington Central Library (1995).

'Cars and Me' shared space with Felicia Cronin at the Hastings Arts Forum (2008).

'Iconic Structures' Battersea Power Station & Odeon Cinema Leicester Square, London (2006) and later at the Electric Palace Cinema in the Old Town, Hastings (2009).

'Elisabeth with an 'S'' (space shared with Rachel Lever and Felicia Cronin) at the Hastings Arts Forum. Her published childhood memoir book was launched at the exhibition (2011).

For further information and to register your interest please contact:  
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