

#### 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'.

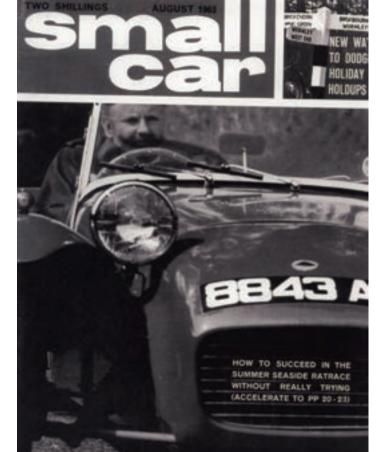
In the early 2000s, Elisabeth relocated to the South Coast where she continued to photograph, play chess and write. She exhibited regularly and socialised widely despite being diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2013.

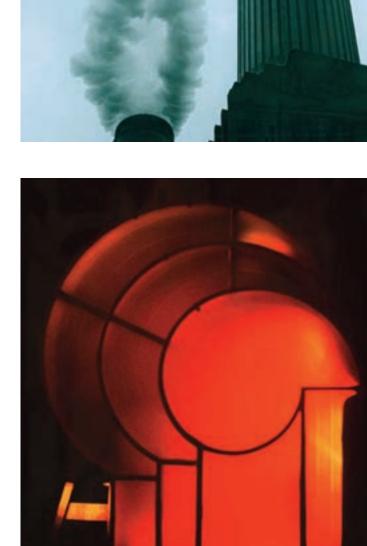
She leaves behind an archive that forms a distinctive and fascinating view of a post-war world of optimism and rapid change. The archive of negatives, prints, transparencies, contact sheets and tear-sheets, with its wide range of subject matter, is full of insight into a woman's experience of the period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













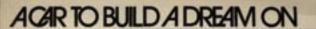
# From levenses.

# Girls Are Playing The Game Now!

















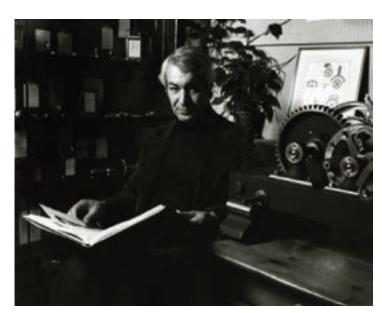






















## Elisabeth's Professional Profile Name Elisabeth Buchmeyer Lewis Nationality German

#### Study

#### Early 1950s

Enrolled in a Bauhaus based foundation course at Dortmunder Werk – Kunstschule, 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, parttime Postgraduate Diploma course on German Society: Politics, Sociology, Economics and Literature (CNAA).

#### **Practice**

On finishing the photography course succesfully, 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 womens' 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: Felicia Shanahan felicia\_shanahan@yahoo.co.uk or Eugenie Dodd eugenie@typographics.co.uk