

Jeremiah B. Lighter graphic design work, 1923-2013

KA.0009

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Kellen Design Archives
March 10, 2016
66 5th Avenue
lobby level
New York, NY, 10011
212.229.5942
archivist@newschool.edu

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Collection Overview

Repository	Kellen Design Archives
Creator	Lighter, Jeremiah B., 1921-2013
Title	Jeremiah B. Lighter graphic design work
Date [inclusive]	1923-2013
Extent	6.5 linear ft: 9 boxes, 4 small flat boxes, 6 OSx boxes, 5 OSxx boxes, 1 OSxxx box, 1 map case folder
Summary	Jeremiah B. Lighter (1921-2013) was a New York-based artist, printmaker, book and graphic designer, typographer, illustrator, and teacher. This collection contains artwork and design project materials in a

variety of mediums pertaining to his professional and personal design and artistic career. Dating primarily from the mid-1950s through the 1980s, materials in the collection include woodblocks and prints, original artwork and proofs Lighter's numerous professional book and album cover design projects, and advertisements. The collection also includes examples of Lighter's work in acrylics, pen and ink, watercolors, and pencil, as well as items of a biographical nature, such as his professional presentation portfolio and flyers and press releases for exhibitions of his work.

Preferred Citation note

[Identification of item], [date (if known)], Jeremiah B. Lighter graphic design work, KA.0009, box __, folder __, New School Archives and Special Collections, The New School, New York, New York.

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Biographical Note

Jeremiah B. Lighter--born on March 23rd, 1921 in Philadelphia to Julius and Sema Tabachnick Lighter--was an American artist, printmaker, book and graphic designer, typographer, illustrator, and teacher. After graduating from City College of New York, Lighter spent the majority of his life and career in New York City. Over the course of a career spanning from 1945 to 2008, he produced a body of work that includes advertisements, book design (for both commercial and scholastic presses), and original artworks, typically signing these works as “Lighter” or “Umy.”

Although he worked proficiently in a wide variety of mediums—including acrylics, pen and ink, and watercolors—Lighter had a special talent and inclination for woodcut prints, which he deployed across the spectrum of his design work. One of his woodcut prints was featured on the October 1954 cover of *American Artist*, while another (“Metamorphosis”) was featured prominently the catalogue of the 1956 “National Exhibition: Contemporary Arts of the United States.” His work, including both prints and watercolors, was featured in a number of exhibits and won international competitions, including the 2002 “Face to Face” competition at Stage Gallery.

During his career, Lighter was associated with a number of design firms and publishers. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, he produced advertisements and illustrations for the typography firm Kurt H. Volk, Inc. while designing book covers for trade publishers such as Random House and Emerson Books. From the 1960s through the 1990s, Lighter designed scholastic books primarily for publishers Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Schocken, and Sheridan House.

Alongside his career as an artist and designer, Lighter was an educator, teaching courses in book design at The New School, the School of Visual Arts, and Queens College. He was also an active hiker, bicyclist, chess player, kite flyer, and model boat enthusiast.

Lighter passed away on October 10, 2013 in Manhattan, having survived his wife of forty years, Gladys Spielberg. He is survived by a niece, Marina Bokelman, and nephews Jon and Andrew Bokelman.

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Scope and Content of Collection

This collection contains artwork and design projects in a variety of materials and mediums pertaining to the professional and personal career of Jeremiah B. Lighter, a New York-based artist, printmaker, book and graphic designer, typographer, illustrator, and teacher.

The first series consists of Lighter's original artworks--produced from the 1950s through the early 2000s--that could not be tied to any particular commercial design projects. Reflecting Lighter's activities as an independent artist, the materials in this series consist primarily of woodcut blocks and prints. Some of the print blocks contain writing and instructions on the back, so researchers are urged to examine all sides of these items. Additionally, Lighter's work in acrylics, pen and ink, watercolors, and pencil sketchbooks can be found here.

The second series is organized around design projects Lighter undertook while working for design firms and publishing houses. Projects consist of design materials for advertisements, book covers, and restaurant menus. There are materials pertaining to Lighter's longstanding work for the typography firm Kurt H. Volk, Inc., and the publishers Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Schocken Books, and Sheridan House. The book design materials run from the 1950s through the 1990s. Also included are original artwork and cover proofs for various record albums designed by Lighter for RCA Camden in the 1950s.

The third series contains biographical and personal material of Lighter from the 1950s to 2013, including a presentation portfolio, his signature print blocks, and exhibition notices and press releases.

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Arrangement note

Organized alphabetically in 3 series.

- I [Original artwork, 1923-2006](#)
- II [Graphic design project materials, 1953-1996](#)
- III [Biographical, circa 1950s-2013](#)

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Administrative Information

Collection guide written by Aaron Winslow.

Publication Information

Kellen Design Archives March 10, 2016

Revision Description

Added images and Other Finding Aid note. November 6, 2018

Conditions Governing Access note

Collection is open for research use. Please contact archivist@newschool.edu for appointment.

Use Restrictions

To publish images of material from this collection, permission must be obtained in writing from the New School Archives and Special Collections. Please contact: archivist@newschool.edu.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Donated by Marina Bokelman, Jeremiah Lighter's niece, 2014.

External Support

The processing of this collection was supported by a gift from Marina Bokelman for the estate of Jeremiah Lighter.

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Keywords for Searching Related Subjects

Genre(s)

- Advertisements.
- Books.
- Woodcuts (prints).

Occupation(s)

- Designers.
- Educators.
- Graphic designers.
- Illustrators.
- Printmakers.

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Other Finding Aids note

For selected item-level description and images from the Jeremiah B. Lighter graphic design work collection, see The New School Archives Digital Collections at http://digitalarchives.library.newschool.edu/index.php/Browse/objects/facet/collection_facet/id/429

Collection Inventory

Series I. Original artwork 1923-2006

This series contains artworks in various mediums and materials produced by Lighter from the 1950s through the 2000s. The work contained in this series cannot be associated with particular paid or commissioned design projects.

The bulk of this series consists of woodcut print blocks and prints. The blocks and prints are housed in separate locations, and—except when explicitly indicated—each entry includes both a block and at least one print. Though the majority of the prints are undated, they all seem to date from the mid-1950s through the early 1960s.

Pen and ink drawings and cartoons make up another significant section of this series. Most of these works date from the 1950s and 1960s, although there are also a number of sketches from the 2000s.

Later in his life, in the 1990s and 2000s, Lighter began to work more in watercolors, and this series holds many of these works on individual watercolor boards, as well as his workbooks. There are also a number of reproductions of these works.

There is also a small cache of acrylic paintings on boards, one landscape from 1977 and a series of paintings from 1992.

Finally, this series holds three of Lighter's sketchbooks containing pencil sketches. Two of these workbooks represent work from early in Lighter's career, from 1949-50, while a third, containing several self-portraits, dates from 1986-90.

	Object	
Acrylic paintings, 1977-1992	1977-1992	
Ontario Richfield (North Bay), 1977	OSxx-3	1
Untitled acrylic 1, 1992	OSx-5	1
Untitled acrylic 2, 1992	OSx-5	2
Untitled acrylic 3, 1992	OSx-5	3
Untitled acrylic 4, undated	1	1
Light sculpture, undated	Archives front wall	
Pen and ink drawings, 1954-circa 2005		
General, circa 2005	3	1
Calligraphy birds, undated	3	2
Cat cartoon, undated	6	1
Chess pieces, circa 1963	1	2
Rossini-La Cenerentola, 1954	OSx-5	4

Three insects, undated

OSx-4

Prints and blocks, circa 1950s-1970s

Unless otherwise noted, each item includes both a block and a print, in separate containers.

Titles were assigned by Marina Bokelman upon accession to The New School Archives, or by the processing archivist during processing.

Adam and Eve, undated	3	3
	8	1
American Artists cover, 1964	11	
Contains 2 prints, 1 print block, and a copy of "American Artists."	3	4
	OSx-4	10
Angel ornament, undated	3	32
	3	5
Angels with instruments, undated	11	
	3	6
Apple, undated	OSx-6	
	OSxx-3	2
Babushka, undated [print only]	3	7
Ballet shoes, undated	1	3
	12	1
Baseball player, undated	C	10
	D	2
	OSxx-4	
Boxers, undated	OSx-1	
	OSxxx-1	1
Bird and moon, 1960 1960	11	
	3	9
Birds in flight, undated	12	2
	3	8
Birdwatchers, undated	4	1-2
	OSxx-3	3
Butcher, undated	1	4
	4	1
Bumblebee, undated	12	
	3	10
Cat and butterfly, undated	1	5
	4	4

Colored flowers, undated [print only]	3	11
Conference, undated	D	2
	OSxx-1	
Delicate flower, undated	11	1
	3	12
Dying King, 1961 1961	10	
	OSx-4	2
Early etching prints and plates, undated	3	13
Elephant, undated [print only]	C	11
Fantail, 1961	3	14
	8	2
Flower, undated [print only]	OSxx-3	4
Flute player, undated	OSx-2	
	OSxxx-1	2
Friends in a rowboat, undated	1	6
	13	1
Frog, undated	C	12
	OSx-1	
	OSxxx-1	3
Hawk and lion, undated [block only]	12	4
Herald angel, undated [print only]	3	15
Iron car, undated	10	
	OSx-5	5
Little cowboy, undated [print only]	3	16
Man in jail, undated [print only]	3	17
Metamorphoses, 1956		
Print featured in the catalogue for "A National Exhibition." Contains print, print block, and a copy of the catalogue.		
A National Exhibition: Contemporary Arts of the United States 1956 catalogue, 1956		7
Prints and block, 1956 1956	11	
	C	13
	OSxxx-1	4
Mother holding up child, undated [print only]	1	8
Motorcyclist, undated [print only]	1	9
Nutcracker, undated	9	

	OSx-4	3
Old couple, undated	C	14
	OSx-6	
	OSxxx-1	5
Owl, undated	10	1
	3	18
Pascal, undated	5	1-2
	C	11
	OSx-4	4
Pear, undated	OSx-3	
	OSxx-3	5
Pencil sharpener print negative, undated	3	19
Rooster and sun, undated [print only]	1	10
Rats, 1955-1956	D	2
	OSx-2	
	OSxxx-1	6
Russian dancers, undated [print only]	OSx-4	5
Scavenger, undated	OSxx-2	
	OSxxx-1	7
Seagulls, undated [print only]	OSx-4	6
Single rose, undated [block only]	12	5
Stringed instruments, undated	OSx-3	
	OSxxx-1	8
Swimmers, undated	1	11
	13	3
Three fishermen, undated	9	
	OSx-5	6
Three musicians with horns, circa 1953	1	12
	13	3
Two sad ladies, undated	1	13
	13	4
Varsity jackets/boys on corner, undated [print only]	6	2
Winter Tree, undated	10	
	OSx-4	7
Zoo, undated	1	14

	13	5
Reproductions of watercolors and pastels, 2000-2006	3	20
Sketchbooks, 1949-1990		
General, 1949-1950	1	15
	7	1
'Self Portrait,' 1986-1990	1	16
Watercolors, 1992-2003		
Originals, 1992-2003	1	17
Workbook, 1992	1	18

Series II. Graphic design project materials 1953-1996

This series contains materials created by Lighter in his capacity as a professional designer and illustrator. Lighter's book and textbook design contributed to a movement away from cheap book design and embraced a renewed aestheticism and artistry in the field, following the lead of modernist German artist and designer George Salter. Along with designers such as Tom Suzuki, Lighter's textbook design helped to bring a new emphasis on design to textbooks.

Lighter's early career is represented by the materials he produced while working for the typography firm Kurt H. Volk, Inc., consisting primarily of prints and illustrations for sample brochures. Though much of this material is undated, they appear to be from the mid-1950s and 1960s.

There are also several advertisements originating from this period: a General Electric advertisement--featuring photographic self-portraits of Lighter--and a brochure for the Raymond-Whitcomb Cruise Club.

Also in the 1950s, Lighter designed a number of album covers for RCA Camden, a budget label of classical recordings under RCA Victor. Materials relating to album covers include woodcut print blocks, sample prints, and album cover proofs.

Materials from Lighter's work as a book designer constitutes the majority of this series, which includes several examples of his designs from the 1950s for Emerson and Random House. From the 1970s through the 1990s, Lighter designed book covers primarily for scholastic textbooks published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Schocken Books, and Sheridan House. Included herein are a large amount of book cover proofs, original art and cover mock-ups, as well as several sculptures made for use on book covers.

Finally, there are several metal print plates, one for a book cover and two of photographs. Because they are dated from the 1920s, it is unclear what project they were used for.

	Box	Folder
General, 1971-1973		
Book cover for <i>Selections from the Victorian Poets</i> , 1923	5	3
Photographic negatives		
Richard Yates and David Davis, undated	5	4
Unknown, undated	5	5
Pietro's menu, undated	1	19
Contains sample menu's and print blocks. Probably from the 1950s. Looks like a sample design but is, in fact, a real restaurant still in operation in Midtown Manhattan.	3	31
<i>The Production Bulletin</i> , 1971	3	21

Harbrace newsletter containing illustrations by Lighter, then Harbrace College Art Director.

Advertisements, 1953-1959		
General Electric, 1959 Photographs in advertisement are of Lighter.	OSxxx-1	9
Raymond-Whitcomb Cruise Club, 1953	3	22
Contains 2 prints of Viking Ship and multi-page ad mock-up and 1 print block.	8	3
Album covers, circa 1950s		
<i>Richard Crooks Sings Songs of Faith</i> , circa 1950s	3	23
Contains 2 prints, 2 45rpm record covers, and 1 print block.	8	4
Schumann, <i>Carnaval</i> , Op.9, 1955	9	
Contains prints, album cover proofs, and print blocks.	OSx-5	7
Stravinsky, <i>Song of the Nightingale</i> --Camden/RCA, circa 1950s	12	6
Includes 2 album cover proofs, 3 nightingale prints, and 1 print block.	OSx-4	8
Tchaikovsky, <i>Symphony No. 2 in C minor</i> , Op.17--Camden/RCA, circa 1950s	OSx-4	9
Book covers, 1954-1996		
<i>American Values in Transition: A Reader</i> , 1972	3	24
<i>Fact and Fancy</i> , 1979	6	3
<i>Fanaticism</i> , 1983	OSx-5	8
<i>Handbook for Business Writers</i> , 1978	7	2
<i>Let Me Survive</i> , 1996	1	20
	10	
	6	4-5
<i>New England Cookbook</i> , 1954	3	26
Includes original pen and ink illustration of a cookstove, and cover proofs. Book published by Random House.		
Proofs, 1954-1996		
<i>The Golf Secret</i> by H.A. Murray, 1954 Published by Emerson Books	3	25
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, circa 1966-1981	3	24
	6	6-11
	7	3
	OSx-4	11
Schocken and Sheridan House, circa 1970s-1996	7	4

<i>The Secretary's Handbook</i> , 1978	OSx-5	9
<i>Spice of Life, Writing to the Point, Reading for the Point</i> , 1974-1979 1974-1979	OSx-5	10
<i>Styles for Writing</i> , 1972		
Book cover proofs, 1972	1	21
Copy of book, 1972	5	6
Cover sculpture, circa 1972	2	
Note on cover sculpture, circa 1972	1	22
<i>Writing in Context</i> , 1976 probably 1976		
Book cover proofs, 1976	1	23
Book cover photographic negatives, 1976	1	24
Book cover sculpture, circa 1976	2	
Kurt H. Volk, Inc., Typographers, circa 1950s-1960s		
Materials created by Lighter during employment by the typography firm, Kurt H. Volk, Inc., Typographers.		
Advertisements, undated	3	27
Print block associated with the ad that begins "There was an AD who told his PM."	8	5
Dancing man, undated	4	5
1 block of Dancing man--tail coat. An additional print advertisement can be found in J. Lighter presentation portfolio	7	5
'Fat Lady' and 'Fat Lady with Pearls,' undated	7	6
'Volk (Attn. M. Wagman),' undated	OSx-4	12
Includes untitled, multi-color woodblock print of instruments.		

Series III. Biographical circa 1950s-2013

This series contains material of a biographical and personal nature. This series documents Lighter's gallery exhibition efforts, and includes notices and press releases for his shows, including material he designed himself (for the Wilburt Inc exhibit). Of note is Lighter's presentation portfolio from the 1950s, which groups together work found elsewhere in the collection and encompasses prints, advertisement and menu designs, and illustrations. Lighter's signature woodcut print blocks are also found in this series.

	Box	Folder
Exhibition notices, 1973-2002		
Stage Gallery, 2002	3	28
Wilburt Inc, 1973	OSx-4	13
Materials relating to exhibition of Lighter's artwork. Includes exhibition flyer and porcupine print.		
J. Lighter, presentation portfolio, circa 1950s	1	25
Letterhead, undated	3	29
Obituary, 2013	3	30

Signature print blocks and plates, undated

5

7

Wood print blocks and metal print plates used for signing artist's name to prints.

Wood Type of the Angelica Press boxed typeface sample collection and OSxx-5
book, 1975
