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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

October 14, 1955

Dear Sir:

You are cordially invited to come or send a representative to the press opening of TWO GRAPHIC DESIGNERS: ALVIN LUSTIG and BRUNO MUNARI on Tuesday, October 18, from 2 to 5 p.m. The exhibition will be open to the public from October 19 through November 27 in the Museum's first floor galleries.

This exhibition illustrates two different and highly individual approaches to graphic design. The American, Alvin Lustig, is represented by designs for typography, books and magazines, record album covers, trade marks, and models of street signs, as well as a design for a small helicopter. The Italian, Bruno Munari, is represented by posters, catalogues, books - including his libros illeggibles, (books without words), a model of a fountain in Venice, and abstract designs made on glass-mounted slides to be projected at large scale. The exhibition is directed by Mildred Constantine.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Shaw

Elizabeth Shaw
Publicity Director

P.S. A full release on this exhibition will be mailed to you on Monday.

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No. 86

PRESS PREVIEW: TUESDAY

October 18, 2-5 p.m.

FOR RELEASE: WEDNESDAY

October 19, 1955

GRAPHIC DESIGN BY LUSTIG AND MUNARI AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

A wide variety of graphic design - including books, record album covers, trademarks and ice cream packages as well as three-dimensional outdoor advertising towers and road signs by Alvin Lustig, and posters, a fountain, "books without words" and abstract colored slides by Bruno Munari, will be on view in an exhibition TWO GRAPHIC DESIGNERS at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, from October 19 through November 27. Models, enlarged photographs and actual examples will be shown. The exhibition is under the direction of Mildred Constantine, Associate Curator of Graphic Design and has been installed by Arthur Drexler, Curator of Architecture.

Work by these well known designers is being shown in one exhibition to illustrate two highly individual approaches to modern graphic design. Alvin Lustig, an American, relies primarily on combinations of letter forms and geometric designs. Bruno Munari, an Italian, depends in much of his work on an emphatically physical response to the materials with which he works. In his "books without words," for example, he exploits the color, texture and transparency of paper and the linear flexibility of string.

One of the most recent booklet covers by Lustig in the exhibition is a handsome, white embossed design with bronze lettering, Trade for 375 Park Avenue, the new Seagrams Building designed by Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson. Other graphic designs in the exhibition include many book jackets Lustig has designed for New Directions including Mallarmé Poems, Lorca's Three Tragedies, and Tennessee Williams' Camino Real in which he uses a variety of methods to express the content of the book. In the paper-back book field Lustig has also contributed memorable cover designs for Noonday Press for such works as a novel by E.M. Forster and essays by James and Underhill. Examples of his designs for Alfred A. Knopf are also shown.

Scale models in the exhibition illustrate Lustig's approach to three-dimensional design; the Northland Shopping Center sign in Detroit, a 30-foot tall sign surmounted by the Center's symbol; a tall rectangular open tower that stands 75 feet tall and is now being erected in Baltimore for the Mondowmin Shopping Center; and one of the Meteor Crater roadside signs of three circles - white, black and orange - mounted on a pole designed for a tourist site in Arizona.

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Describing his use of letter forms and geometric designs, Miss Constantine says:

"He exploits their relations to each other, to the size and shape of the page with which they are composed, and to the ideas they represent. Color is used to evoke a mood or to emphasize a particularly significant aspect of the message to be conveyed.

"Perhaps the most characteristic use of these elements is the Vivaldi record album cover. Here the nervous angularity of the design suggests the composer's baroque orchestration, the shapes of the letters and their placement carrying a meaning as much as do the actual words....Embossing is also used to enhance the carefully grouped letters, as in the CVC and 375 Park Avenue brochures."

When his trade marks, designed for use on letterheads, envelopes and packages, are used in signs they are given architectural settings on a bold scale which mark a place and frequently combine an evocative symbol. His package designs specifically suggest the nature of the product by color and shape. Lustig's preoccupation with formal elements of design, combined with his ability to subordinate whatever is irrelevant to his purpose, or merely decorative, gives his work its consistent distinction, Miss Constantine says.

Examples of Bruno Munari's work, not as familiar in this country, reveal a different approach to two and three dimensional design. Examples of his "libros illeggibiles", or "books without words", are shown along with posters and Christmas cards. His abstract designs made directly on glass slides are shown in the exhibit in a continuous projection machine. A model of a fountain designed for the 1952 Venice Biennale is also included in the exhibition.

Describing his "books without words," Miss Constantine says:

"...he exploits the color, texture and transparency of paper and the linear flexibility of string. These qualities are considered not merely in regard to the individual page, but to the book as a whole. In Libro No.21, holes of many sizes and shapes in successive pages of transparent paper force the reader to experience the book both as a single design and as a sequence of separate pictorial effects, animated when the pages are turned. Occasional sequences in which string appears and disappears through the pages further contribute to this animation.

"Transparency is used by Munari for the gradations of color it can produce, as for example in the Christmas greeting of colored cellophane ribbons in a semi-transparent envelope. When held to the light this package becomes a message spoken by color and light alone.

"Abstract designs composed with a variety of materials on glass slides (to be projected on a screen) are another instance of this designer's interest in textures, as is his Fountain for the 1952 Venice Biennale with its complicated scaffold of troughs carrying thin streams of water.

"In his printed graphic design such as his own business card, Munari uses the page as a component of the total composition. This tightly curved red image seems to engage the white paper creating shapes which exist within each other.

"Munari's inventiveness has enlarged the vocabulary of graphic design through the use of the third dimension."
