

Norman Ives:  
Constructions & Reconstructions





As a student, Ives painted and produced woodblock prints, including the portrait of classmate Sheilagh Coulter, which shows the influence of Japanese prints and an interest in exploring color combinations.

*Sheilagh Coulter, 1952*  
Woodcut on mulberry paper, signed  
16 x 11 5/8 inches  
Norman Ives Foundation

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## Constructions & Reconstructions

Norman Ives was a pioneer in using type and letterforms as primary subjects for his designs. On graduating Wesleyan University, Ives was recruited for Yale's first class in its bold new graphic design program led by Josef Albers, Alvin Lustig and Alvin Eisenman. Albers, who included letterforms in his teaching at Yale, became Ives's preeminent mentor at Yale University's School of Art.

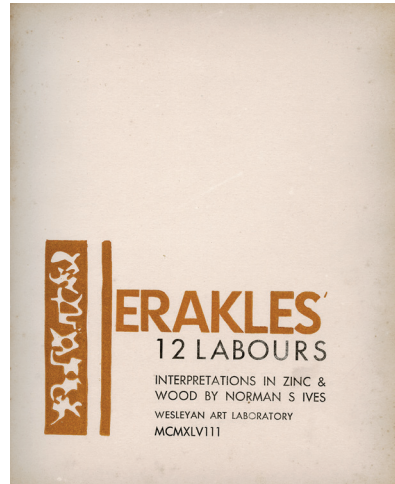
In 1973 Ives became a professor in the University's Department of Graphic Design. Alvin Eisenman, the director of that department, had collected a stellar faculty who aided in reshaping the field, transforming graphic design into a more demanding profession.

Ives is a rarity, succeeding in multiple fields: artist, designer, publisher and teacher. We see an effortless transition from one to another. Corporate symbols and murals were natural extensions of his love for letterforms in their whole or in fragments.

His work was continually evolving as he created paintings, collages, prints, bas-reliefs and murals. His innovations were a seminal influence on the field of design.

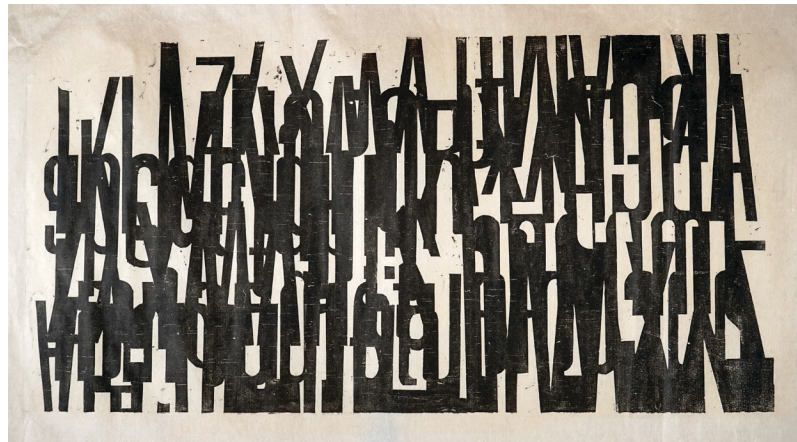
This exhibition illustrates the range of his brilliance and diversity.

Presented by the Lyman Allyn Art Museum  
Curated by John T. Hill



Following his military service, Ives began undergraduate studies at Wesleyan University in 1948, focusing on printmaking and painting. Ives produced *The Labours of Herakles* as part of his thesis, with copper plate etchings showing the influence of European modernism.

Left: *Hydra*, ca. 1949  
etching, signed  
6 1/16 x 4 3/8  
Lyman Allyn Art Museum, gift of  
Mrs. Hamilton Smyser, 1969.115.



As Ives experimented with letterforms, he juxtaposed and overprinted bold letters, obscuring the identity of individual letters and using them as structural, abstract elements.

Left: *Untitled*, ca 1951  
Letter press on mulberry paper  
16 x 32 inches  
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Right: *Untitled*, 1959  
collage, signed  
9 3/4 x 8 inches  
Private Collection

Ives also embraced collage, producing more work in collage than in any other media. Working within a grid, he used triangles precisely cut from vintage posters and other materials to produce pieces such as *Untitled*, 1959, at right.





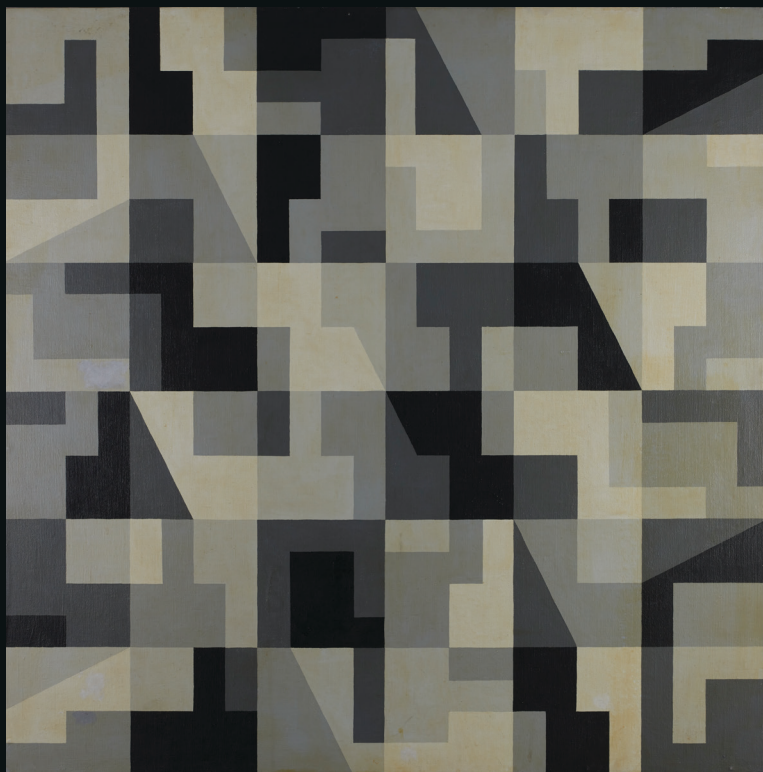
*Mural Study, 1970*  
Liquitex on canvas  
15 1/4 x 15 1/4 inches  
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Two events mark the breadth of his work. In 1967 Ives's 8-foot square painting, *Number 3-L*, was exhibited at the Whitney Annual Exhibition of American Artists. In the same year, the Museum of Modern Art mounted an exhibition titled *3 graphic designers* — which were Norman Ives, Massimo Vignelli, and Almir Mavignier. It is difficult to name other artists who have accomplished this level of recognition spanning two distinct fields — modern art and graphic design.

Right: Facsimile of *3-L*, 8 x 8 foot painting reduced to 42 inches square  
Courtesy of The Children's School  
Stamford, CT

Ives's painting and his ideas have become an integral part of the school's teaching.





*Reversed Ground*, 1970  
Liquitex on canvas, five values  
36 x 36 inches  
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Ives's interest in construction and reconstruction was a thread running through his career. His passion for letterforms, letter fragments, and abstract forms can be seen from his student days until late in his life. He returned to some motifs again and again, including *Reversed Ground*, which he rendered in a variety of colors, materials, and formats over time.

Front Cover  
*Centaur*, 1973  
Screen print  
17 3/4 x 17 3/4 inches  
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