

### **A Brief History on Designer Louise Fili**

You may not recognize her by name, but you may recognize one her designs. This New Jersey native is a graphic designer who specializes in designing food logos and their packaging. Before dedicating her time to food and packaging logo designs, her other specialties



include typographic designs, book jackets and covers, and even fonts. Like many in the field, she has held a variety of positions in the world of design before she decided to create her own studio and focus on the three things she loves most: type, food, and Italy<sup>1</sup>.

Born in Orange, New Jersey on April 12, 1951, Louise Fili was raised in an Italian-American household. Her interest in design started early on before she even knew what it was, she would carve letterforms into her wall when she was very young<sup>2</sup>. In her mid-teens along with her parents, a trip to their home land spiked her

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.historygraphicdesign.com/the-age-of-information/postmodern-design/534-louise-fili>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.creativebloq.com/graphic-design/louise-fili-41411313>

love and interest for Italy. When she was in high school, she taught herself calligraphy using an Osmiroid pen and a Speedball guide<sup>3</sup>. Around the same time, she was also creating illuminated manuscripts of Bob Dylan lyrics. In high school she enrolled to study studio art at Skidmore College where she eventually fell in love with typography and discovered graphic design. As a senior project she worked on a cover for an Italian cook book. After seeing all the classes in typography available at the School of Visual Arts, she decided to finish her last semester there<sup>4</sup>.

During the first stages of Fili's career she interned at the New York Museum of Modern Art under Emilio Ambasz, who was curating the idea in showing Italian furniture and industrial design<sup>4</sup>. Also the beginning of her career includes designing special project books at Alfred A. Knopf, Senior Designer for Herb Lubalin, and Art Director at Pantheon Books. She owes a lot of her recognition to Pantheon books, there she designed over 2,000 book jackets and covers during her 11-year tenure. After giving birth to a son, the company gave her 3 weeks leave and a fax machine and that was when she decided she was going to start work for herself. In 1989 she opened her own studio in which she focused on restaurant identity, food related logos and packaging. She had a simple message to her clients "If you have a problem with my being female, then I don't

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.aiga.org/medalist-louise-fili>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.howdesign.com/how-magazine/how-spring-2016/eat-travel-design-the-world-of-louise-fili/>

want you as a client”<sup>3</sup>. One of her first clients was located across the street from her studio, Prix Fixe. She focused on their restaurant designs and as form of payment the restaurant gave her an unlimited tab<sup>1</sup>. “LOUISE FILI LTD is a graphic design studio that offers unique and elegant solutions to all things related to food, books, and culture, including brand strategy and development for restaurants and specialty food packaging<sup>5</sup>”. Since opening her studio she has created and redesigned many logos known today<sup>3</sup>.

Her clientele spans from A to Z. Impossible to not recognize, Tiffany & Co. is on that list, “creating a mark for Tiffany was an interesting challenge: to design a monogram that could be small



enough for the winter of a man’s watch, or large enough for a construction shed.”<sup>5</sup> If you’re a food lover I can guarantee you



have seen many of her logos in the market, for example Sarabeth’s. Since gaining popularity for her baked goods and preserves to becoming a New York City

landmark<sup>6</sup>, Fili’s “typographic overhaul, after 25 years, gave Sarabeth’s packages a look that measures up to its exemplary reputation<sup>5</sup>”. Also on her client list,

Good House Keeping, known to America as a



<sup>5</sup> <https://www.louisefili.com>

<sup>6</sup> <https://sarabethsrestaurants.com>

seal of approval on a range of products. Though the logo had been redesigned many times over the years, Louise Fili was commissioned to redesign the emblem for its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In this design she “sought to revive its history—retaining the oval shape and signature star, while imbuing a contemporary typographic aesthetic<sup>5</sup>.” A lot of her designs include beautiful typography and well thought layouts that avoid over crowding. Fili has received many honors through the course of her career, to list a few: in 2004 she was inducted in the Art Directors Club Hall of Fame, Gold Medals in Art Directors Club and in Society of Illustrators, AIGA Medal in 2014, Type Directors Club Medal of Excellence on 2015, and in 2016 SVA Masters Series Award and Exhibition<sup>7</sup>.



Louise Fili is an appealing to the members of the communication design department for many reasons other than being a designer. From the very beginning of her career, she took every opportunity to do

what she loves most. She focuses on what most inspires her which is food, typography, and Italy. After creating a name for herself she decided to stop working under anyone and opened her own studio. Most importantly what we can take from her is that “No matter how

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<sup>7</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louise\\_Fili](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louise_Fili)

much you may love your profession, you have to be ready for a change<sup>3</sup>."

As mentioned above in her quote, as a communication design student it is important to be ready for change, to take any opportunity that comes to you and then a way to incorporate what you love to do. Louise Fili is a remarkable graphic designer and her line of work is very appealing and refreshing, especially her designs for restaurants and



food packaging. What we can really learn from Fili is that there should be a mutual understanding between you and a client on how important design is, that when working together you know you are being valued. In conclusion, Louise Fili is a great contributor to the visual world with all her timeless designs.