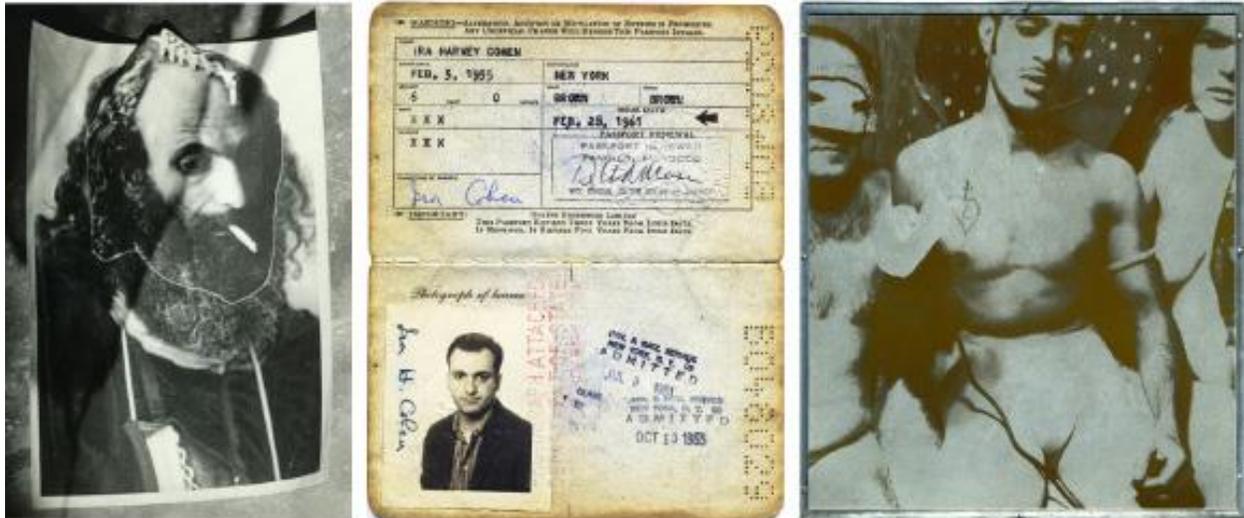


Ira Cohen:
The Bardo Matrix, Gnaoua, and The Great Society
featuring Angus MacLise, Jack Smith, and Piero Heliczer



An archive of manuscripts, correspondence, artwork, photographs, production materials, and other documents primarily related to Ira Cohen's publishing ventures in Tangier and Kathmandu in the 1960s and 1970s, offering a unique glimpse into the workings of a psychedelic expatriate community of poets, musicians and artists.

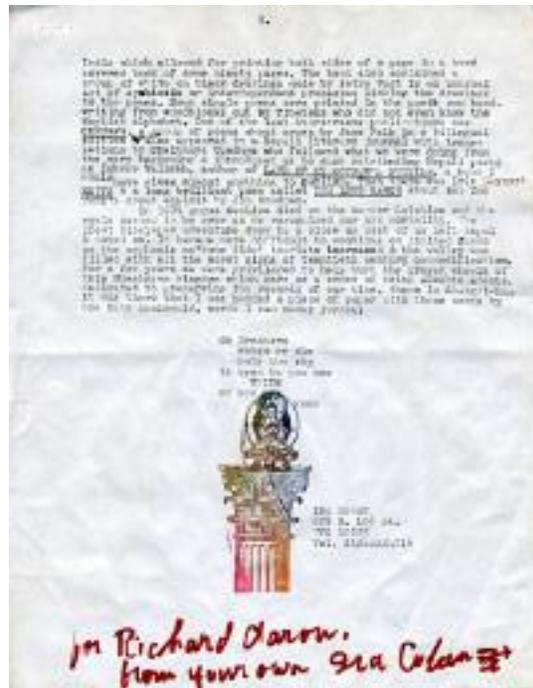
Ira Cohen Biography (excerpt)

Poet, photographer, filmmaker, editor, and publisher Ira Cohen was born in the Bronx in 1935. He was an essential part of an international avant-garde scene that included such figures as Angus and Hetty MacLise, Piero Heliczer, Jack Smith, Mel Clay, Simon Vinkenoog, and Petra Vogt, which reached from New York to Tangier, Amsterdam and Kathmandu.

Ira Cohen made his way to Tangier in 1961 where first met William Burroughs, Brion Gysin, Paul Bowles and others in the Morocco expat community.

Extended biographical information at end of document.

Selected Highlights from the Collection



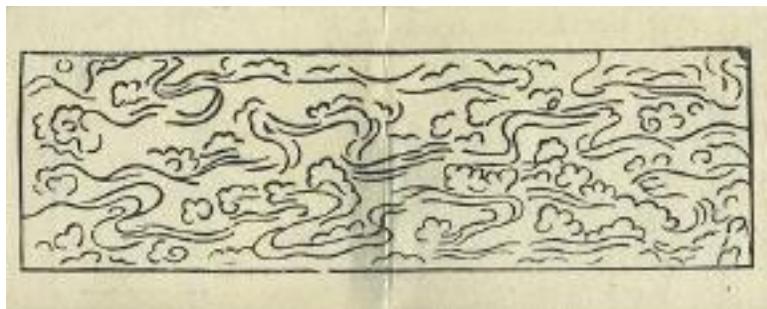
First and last pages of “The Great Ricepaper Adventure Kathmandu, 1972–1977” by Ira Cohen.

Written around the edges of the first page is a letter to Richard Aaron: “Thought you might like to have a copy of this text recently written for New Observations at request of Valery Oisteanu. / You know all these rice paper editions from DAY ONE. / All best to you & Lilian & all your barnyard friends. / Much love from Ira,” March 10, 1995.



Left top: Front of card for Spirit Catcher Book Shop with listing of Bardo Matrix and Dreamweaver publications, 9 x 3 1/2 inches.

Left bottom: Back of Spirit Catcher Book Shop card with illustration from Mahaprasad Shresta and Angus MacLise’s *Swayambhu Underground: The Maps, & Key to the Secret Chambers: The Legend*.



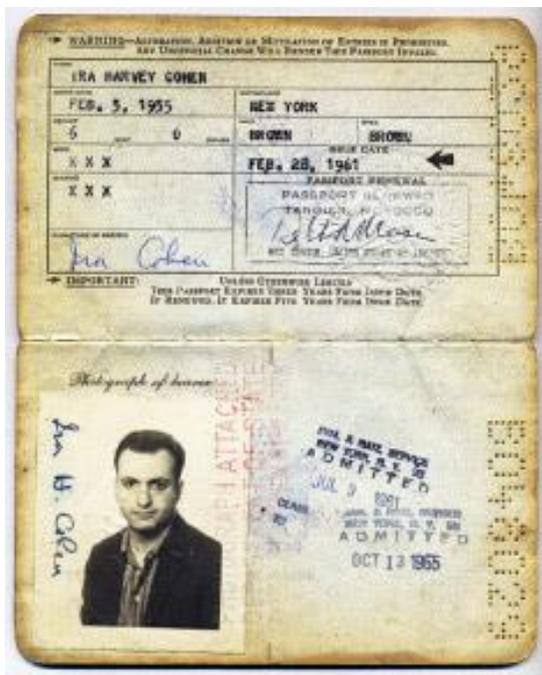
This card was sent to Richard Aaron in a November 14, 1976 letter.

The Spirit Catcher Book Shop was a vital meeting place for the expat music and poetry scene in Kathmandu.

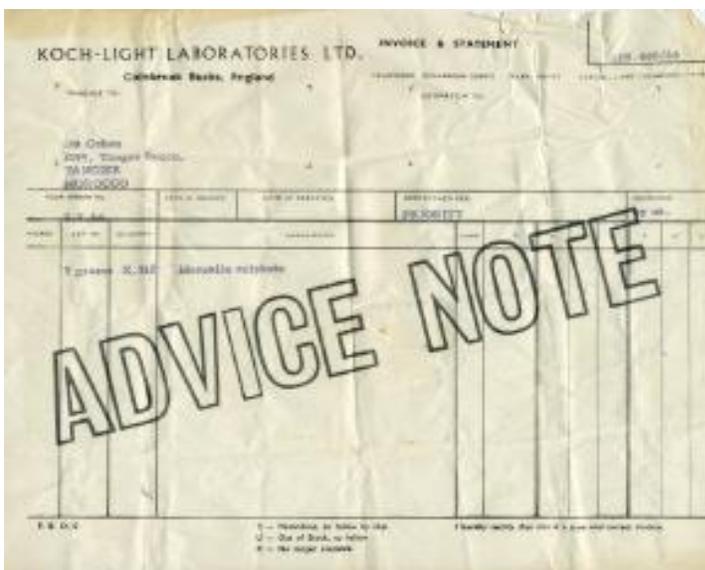


2 1/2 x 4 inch black and white photograph of a photograph of Ira Cohen, signed on verso by Cohen.

Sent to Richard Aaron with a letter, "Joint Catalogue & Prospectus of the Independent Presses of Kathmandu," 2 pages, ca. 1973. "Thought to send you these pictures for your archive," November 14, 1976.



Ira Cohen's passport, issued February 28, 1961 and last stamped in Tangier on October 8, 1965.

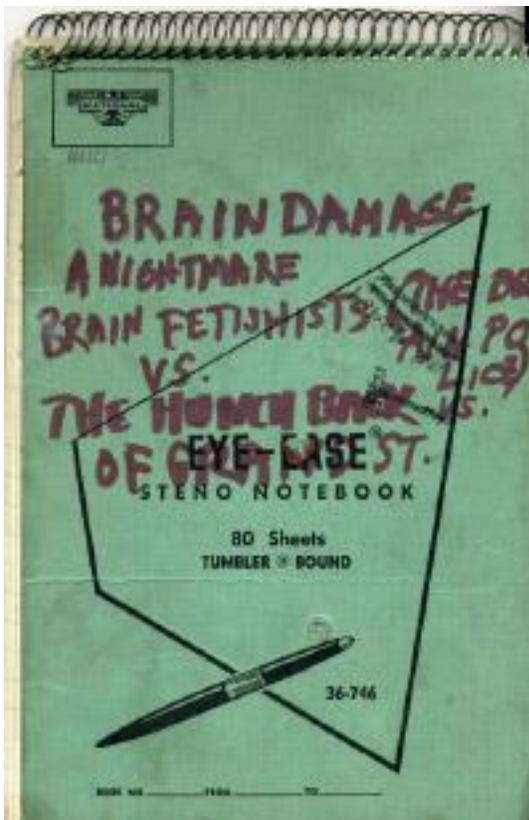


Invoice for 9 grams of mescaline sulphate sent to Ira Cohen in 1964 from Koch-Light Laboratories Ltd. in England.



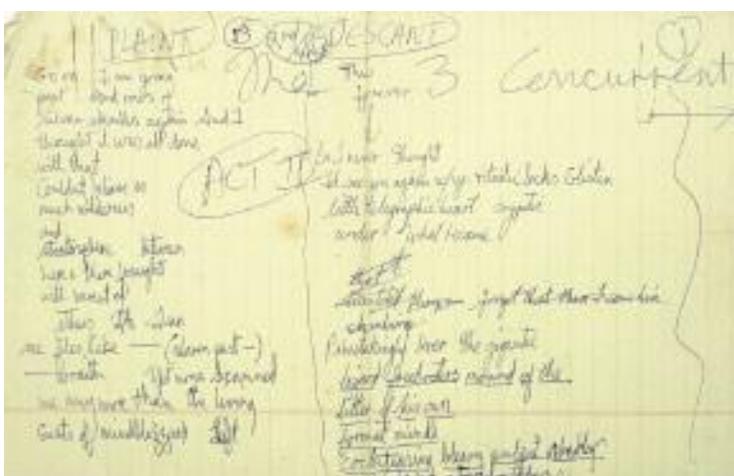
Brain Damage – Ira Cohen photograph of Jack Smith and Rosalind Schwartz.

Labeled on the back in Ira Cohen's hand, "Jack Smith as Electro Magneto Rosalind [Schwartz] as Lady Dope Frog in Brain Damage."

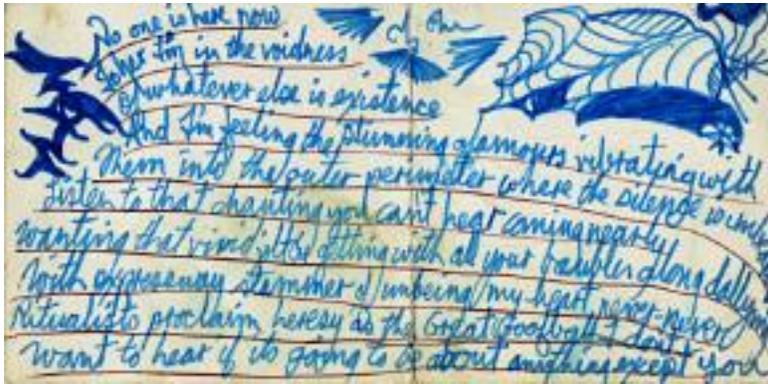


Ira Cohen's spiral steno notebook with notes and a newspaper clipping.

On the cover: "Brain Damage / A Nightmare / Brain Fetishists (The Brain Police) / vs. / The Hunchback / of Grand St."

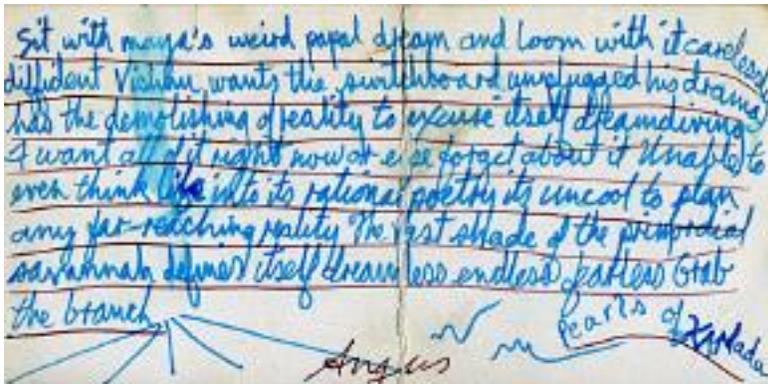


First of 8 pages of notes for an unidentified performance written by Angus MacLise, n.d.



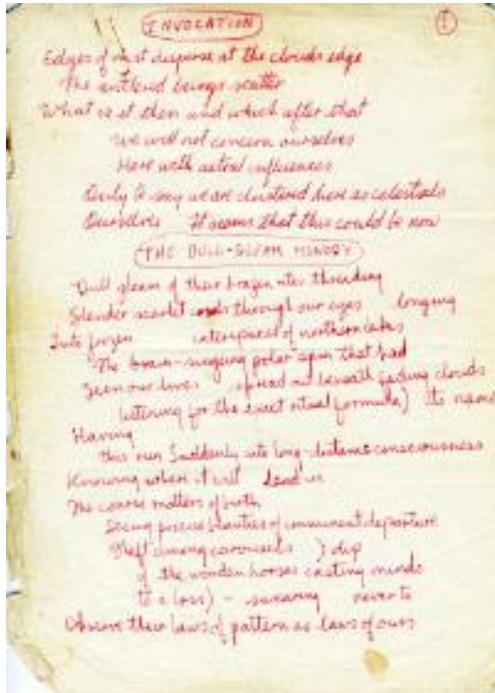
Card with poem written on front and back by Angus MacLise, n.d.

The first lines of the poem are:
 "No one is here now / To her
 I'm in the void / Of whatever
 else is existence."



Card with notes. Left: One side of card with staging notes for an Angus MacLise performance, n.d. Right: Side 2 with notes by Angus MacLise.

Side 2 appears to be a listing of recordings by Angus MacLise and others. It begins "Drone intro MacLise & Cale (The Druids Imprisoned Emerald)."



First page of a 6-page Angus MacLise manuscript with letter on the back page.

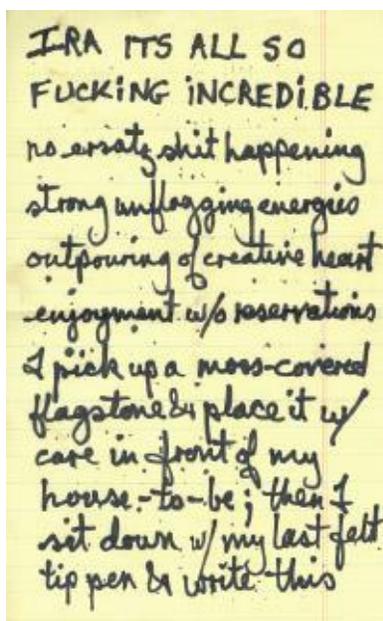
The "Invocation" begins, "Edges of mist disperse at the clouds edge / The antlered beings scatter."

On the back of the last page of his manuscript, MacLise explains, "My Friends—here is preliminary frame for opening rites of mass to give idea of..."



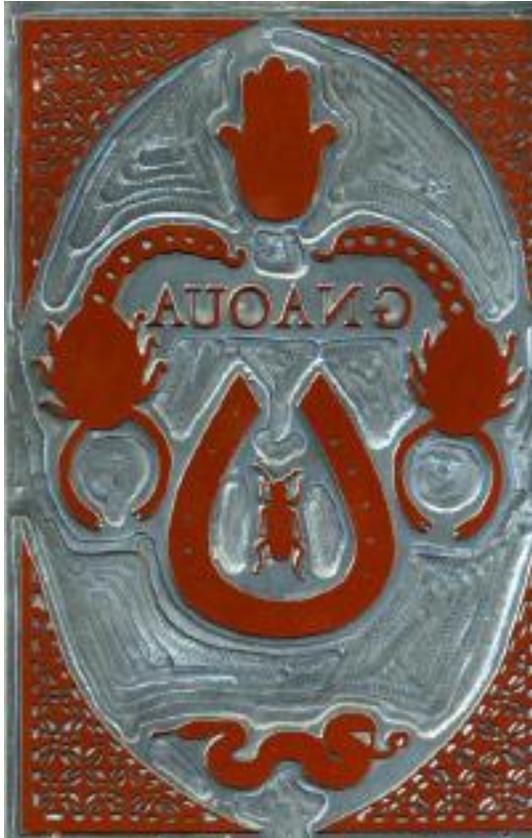
Hetty MacLise (?), rough sketch poster for the Brain Damage in Oklahoma City Gala Benefit for Angus and Hetty MacLise, May 14–17, 1968.

According to Hetty, this was the largest of the benefits held to pay for the MacLises numerous court appearances.



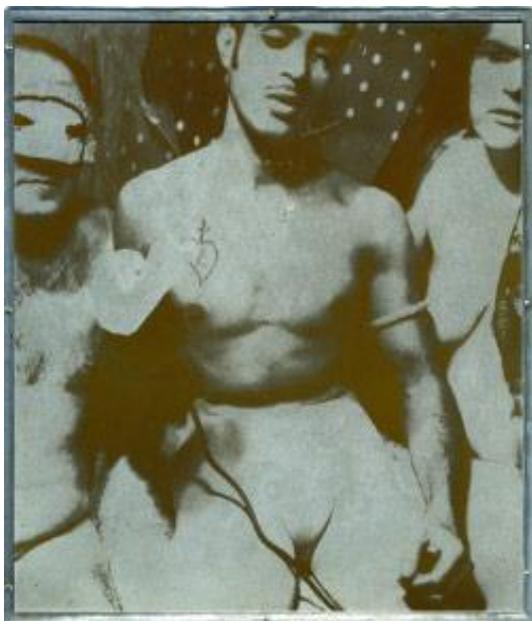
First page of 3-page letter from Hetty MacLise to Ira Cohen, ca. 1970.

"IRA ITS ALL SO FUCKING INCREDIBLE no ersatz shit happening strong unflagging energies out poring of creative heart enjoyment w/o reservations..." Believed to have been sent from Hornby Island, British Columbia.



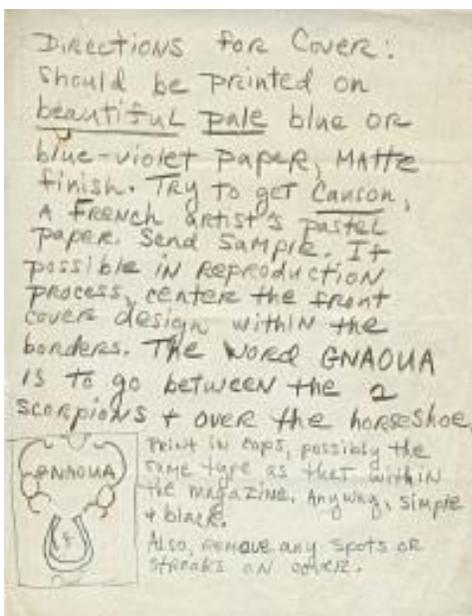
Printing plate for *Gnaoua* cover.

The archive contains a set of printing plates for the covers and photographs, including the Jack Smith "Superstars of Cinemaroc" portfolio.



A plate used for Jack Smith's "Superstars of Cinemaroc" portfolio in *Gnaoua*.

"A still from a future Carnival film to be made in slums & abandoned mansions in Rio de Janeiro."



Ira Cohen's directions for printing the *Gnaoua* cover.

"Directions for cover: Should be printed on beautiful pale blue or blue-violet paper, matte finish. Try to get Canson, a French artist's pastel paper. Send sample." The cover would eventually be printed on violet colored paper stock.

THE GREAT SOCIETY
* * *

CONTENTS

PAUL BOULES POEY
 SPENCER ROBERTSON PART ONE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
 EDWARD MUMFORD POEY
 MUHAMMAD BEN ABDELKARIM THE FIRST
 MAY BREMER ON THE ROAD TO SPANCKLAU/INCHAMU-
 LODER RIKKIN POEY
 JACK SMITH THE WHITE PIG OF THE MEDIANE
 EDWARD FRIED LETTER TO ALFRED CHESTER
 ALFRED CHESTER THE CHANGELING
 HAROLD MORSE PARADISE FROM METRO
 JOHN WISHERS WITH YOU GONE
 CARL COOPER SHORT STEAK
 JAPANESE PUNNY-VEGA POEY
 MELVIN CLAY LIFECAST, O SUCH HE, POEM IN COLOR
 CLIVE MATTHEW THE LOVER
 WILLIAM S. DUBOIS ADIOS OF SATURN
 PAUL LISMAN TEETH + DRAWINGS
 PIERO HELICER TATTOO
 RAY BACHNER POEM FROM DAZEN POEY, TAKE ONE
 ROBERT O'NEILL RED STAR, THE CAPITAL POEY
 MUHAMMAD HADJET THE GUNDRINGER
 BOB ALBERT DRAWING
 ANTHONY DE SALES DRAWING
 JACK SMITH PHOTOGRAPH + DRAWING
 PANAMA BARE CARNIVAL
 CARL MATTHEW DERMATITIS
 ROBERT FRANK/CONRAD ROOKS - CHAPPAQUA
 GUYANIAN SPINNING DRAWING
 BRADYBALL LEED DRAWING

Handwritten table of contents for *The Great Society*.



Robert Frank / Conrad Rooks, "Still from Chappaqua."

Film still from *Chappaqua* (Conrad Rooks, Director and Robert Frank, Director of Photography) that was used in *The Great Society*. The archive also contains an alternative Robert Frank film still that was considered but not used.



The Great Society, "Alcohol is a narcotic," original drawing by Jack Smith.

Full page original color abstract geometric drawing in black and green pen that says "Alcohol is narcotic" is laid in after the table of contents page of a complete unbound proof copy of *The Great Society*.



Original photographs of the *Jilala* musicians and singers pasted onto a layout for the album.

Jilala is an album of Sufi trance music from Morocco, recorded October 8, 1965 by Paul Bowles and Brion Gysin. It was produced by Ira Cohen and originally released by his Trance Records in 1966. According to Cohen's liner notes "Jilala is an order of dervish musicians known for their practice of trance dancing and spiritual healing."

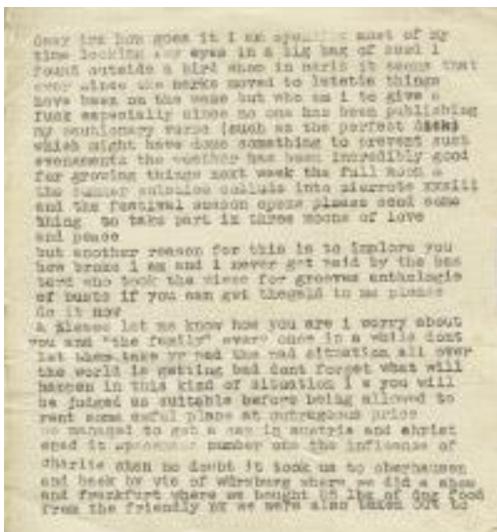


Flyer for Paris Filmmakers Coop "Piero Heliczer's Christmas Show," November 29–December 1, 1968.

"Merry Xmas / No Good Capitalist Fuck" drawing by unidentified artist. Screening of Heliczer's *Dirt* and *Joan of Arc*, parts one and two. Poetry by George Andrews, Images, Daavid Allen, and jj lebel, danse. This flyer was sent to Ira Cohen with a return address of "Aquarium Pros / Les Friches / Préaux (Orne)" and marked "please post."



Piero Heliczer "THE ADDICTION* — a synopsis of a scenario," manuscript typed with red ribbon on 11 x 17 inch lined ledger paper, n.d.

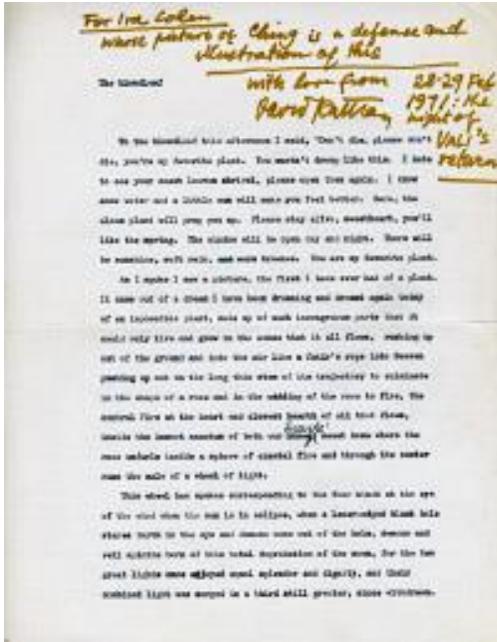


Both sides of card sent to Ira Cohen by Piero Heliczer, postmarked June 15, 1970.

Sent from Orne, France, the postcard is addressed to "Irate Cohen."

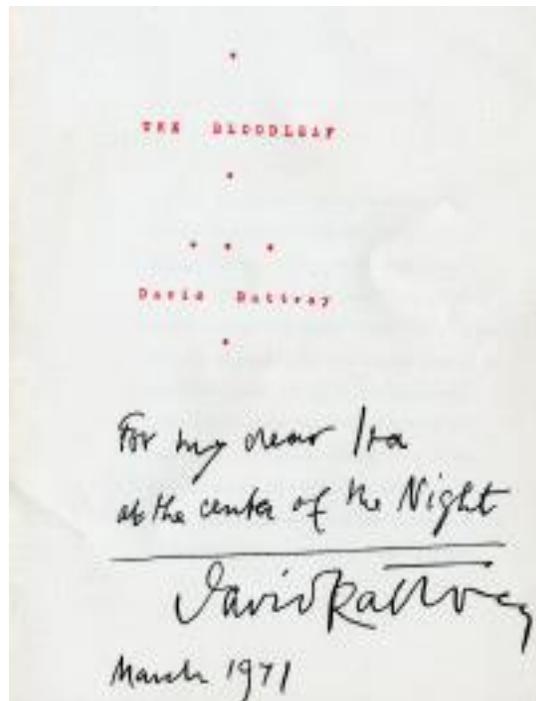
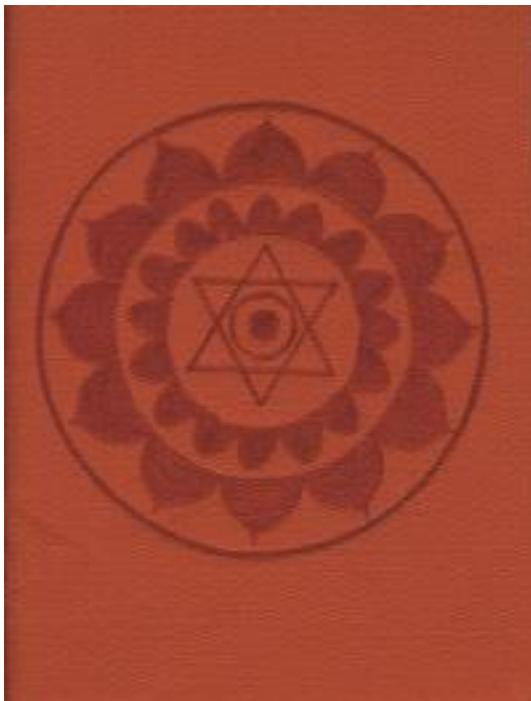
"dear ira how goes it i am spending most of my time looking for eyes in a bag of seed i found outside a bird shop in paris it seems that ever since the narks moved to lutetia things have been on the wane but who am ito give a fuck especially since no one has been publishing my cautionary verse..." After signing the card, Heliczer has typed "heliczer les friches préaux orne."





First page David Rattray 4-page “The Bloodleaf” manuscript.

Inscribed, “For Ira Cohen / Whose picture of Ching is a defense and illustration of this / with love from David Rattray / 28–29 Feb 1971: the night of VALI'S return.”



Cover of *The Bloodleaf* by David Rattray, 1971. / Inscribed title page of *The Bloodleaf*, 1971.

Saddle-stitched handmade book. Pages are typewritten, rather than printed and the cover is drawn by Rattray. Inscribed to Ira Cohen, “For my dear Ira at the center of the Night / David Rattray / March 1971.”

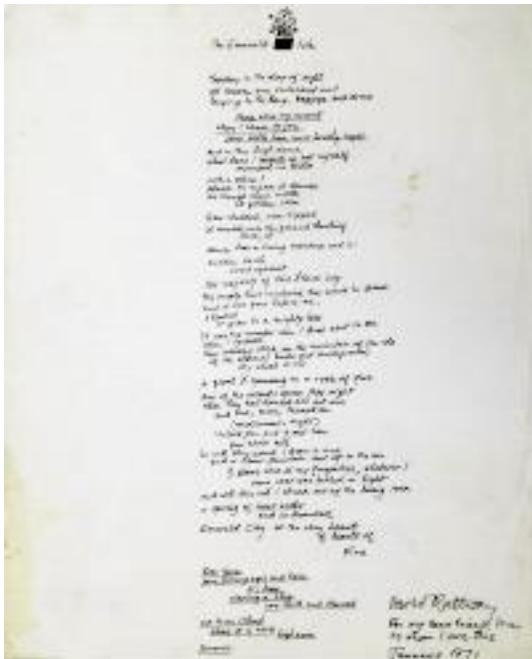
A letter from David Rattray to Alejandro Jodorowsky (in the archive) explains in great detail how Ira Cohen will be publishing the opening section (“The Bloodleaf”) of *Emerald City* “as a sumptuous pamphlet combining my text with a progression of orange, red, and yellow papers culminating in the color photograph of Ching that forms its frontispiece.” This book was never published by Ira Cohen.

Rattray also provides an exegesis of the cover's meaning. He begins by saying, “Summing it all up is the yantra I chose for the cover design of the pamphlet, copied from the book of TantraArt [sic] you revealed to me...On the orange cover this yantra is all red, with the central sphere and the 28 petals filled in solid red.”



Title page of David Rattray manuscript *Six Poems for the Red Flag on the Birthday of President Ho Chi Minh (May 68)*.

The manuscript is bound in a 3-clasp report cover. There are actually only five poems, however there are two versions of the same poem with corrections by hand.

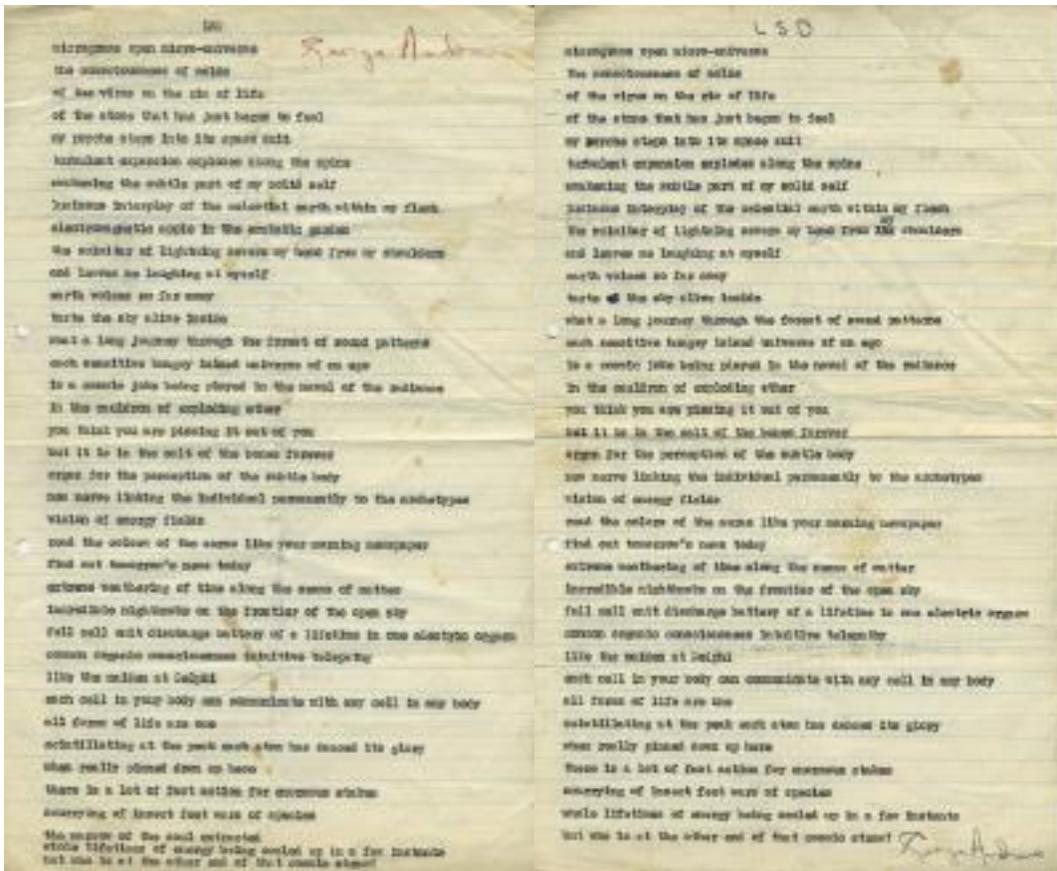


David Rattray, "The Emerald Isle."

Handwritten in black ink by Rattray on 23 x 18 1/2 inch sheet. Inscribed to Ira Cohen by Rattray "For my dear friend Ira / to whom I owe this / January 1971." The poem is written on the verso of a printed color poster for "Year One." Art credited to O;R. Herbst." Printed text along the bottom edge reads, "Heaven Earth Rock Beatles Sound Time come together at Thee Kingdom of Rock."



Photograph of Jack Smith by William Devore.



George Andrews, "LSD," 2-page carbon manuscript on lined paper, signed by Andrews, n.d.

George Andrews is perhaps best known for editing, with Simon Vinkenoog the countercultural cult classic *The Book of Grass: An Anthology of Indian Hemp*, Grove Press, 1967. Andrews had a house on the medina and was one of the first people Ira Cohen met in Tangier. He contributed a translation of Alfred Jarry's "The Other Alcestis" to *Gnaoua*.



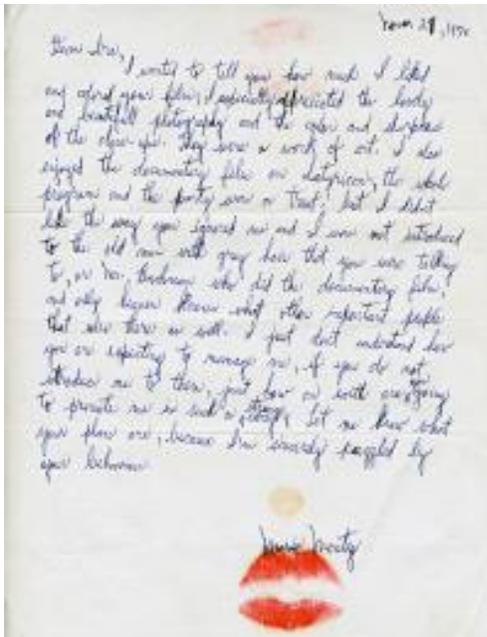
Julian Beck, 1-page letter, May 29, 1970. Along with the letter is "daily light," a 9-page manuscript, and this photograph of Beck.

The archive also contains manuscripts of poems and manuscripts of performances (including "Paradise Now" with the handwritten notation, "Collective creation of The Living Theatre written down by Judith Malina and Julian Beck"). Ira Cohen formed a close relationship with The Living Theatre. It resulted in his traveling with member Petra Vogt and producing Marty Topp's film, *Paradise Now: The Living Theatre in Amerika*. In 1968, Cohen was arrested and fined \$10 for obstructing a police officer trying to shut down The Living Theatre at Yale University.



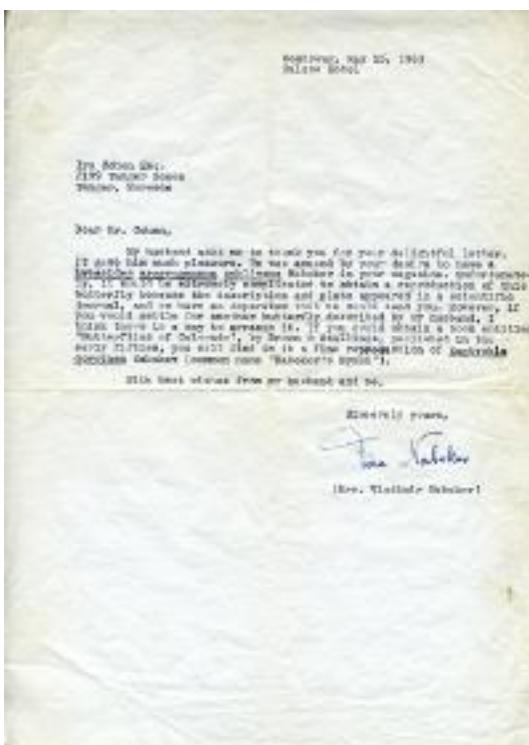
Mario Montez headshots, 1970.

Mario Montez sent this 8 x 10 inch glossy photograph and a 3-page signed resume to Ira Cohen, who was supposed to be acting as Mario's agent, in December 1970.



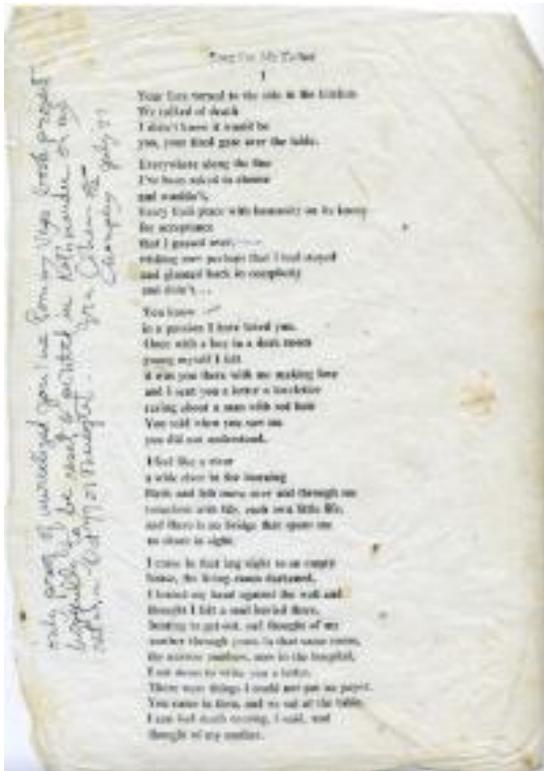
Letter to Ira Cohen from Mario Montez, 1 page, November 29, 1970.

Mario has sealed the letter with a red lipstick kiss. He writes about attending a party with Ira Cohen after viewing Gideon Bachman's *Cia Federico: Fellini Directs Satyricon*: "I didn't like how you ignored me and I was not introduced to the old man with gray hair that you were talking to, or Mr. Bachman who did the documentary film, and only heaven knows what other important people were there as well."



Letter from Vera Nabokov (Mrs. Vladimir Nabokov) to Ira Cohen in Tangier, May 15, 1963.

Mrs. Nabokov writes to Ira Cohen, "My husband asks me to thank you for your delightful letter. It gave him much pleasure. He was amused by your desire to have a *Lycaeides argyrognomon sublivens Nabokov* in your magazine." Ira Cohen took a writing class from Nabokov when he attended Cornell University.



Proof of "Song for My Father" by Janine Pommy Vega on rice paper.

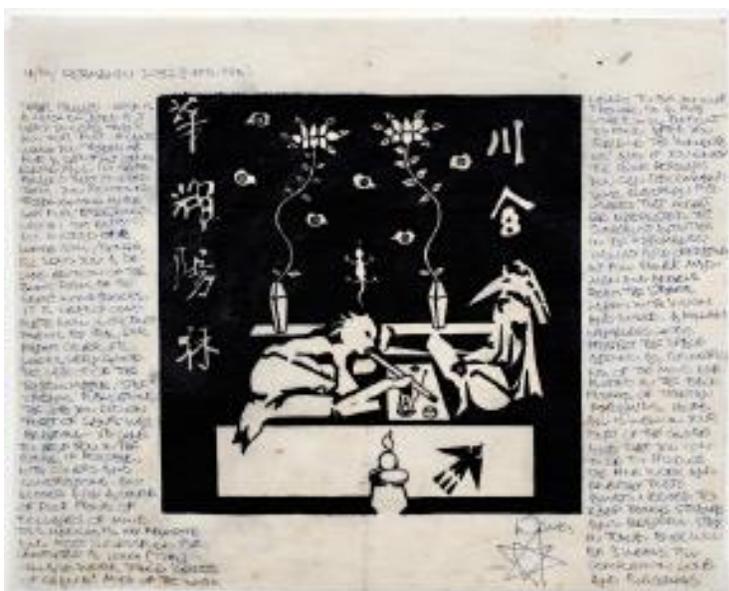
Ira Cohen has written in the margin, "Only proof of unrealized Janine Pommy Vega book project hopefully to be reset & printed in Kathmandu on my return in Oct 77 or thereafter."



Pencil drawing by Rosalind Schwartz.

The drawing is in a folded piece of paper with the following written: "This is a drawing of Irving Rosenthal as he might look if he doesn't watch out."

Rosalind Schwartz was Ira Cohen's girlfriend and is the author of *The Hashish Cookbook* (Gnaoua Press, 1966) writing under the pseudonym "Panama Rose."



Dana Young to Richard Aaron, November 16, 2032 (Nepal Era) [1975], 12 x 10 inches.

The letter is written around a woodblock print of an opium smoker printed on rice paper.

Ira Cohen 1935–2011

Poet, photographer, filmmaker, editor, and publisher Ira Cohen was born in the Bronx in 1935. He was an essential part of an international avant-garde scene that included such figures as Angus and Hetty MacLise, Piero Heliczer, Jack Smith, Mel Clay, Simon Vinkenoog, and Petra Vogt, which reached from New York to Tangier, Amsterdam and Kathmandu.

Ira Cohen made his way to Tangier in 1961 where first met William Burroughs, Brion Gysin, Paul Bowles and others in the Morocco expat community.

Three years after arriving in Tangier, Cohen produced the now classic one-shot magazine *Gnaoua* in 1964. According to his introduction: "GNAOUA after Black African sect in Morocco known for ecstatic dancing and procession trances...Each spirit which possesses the dancer has a specific gesture and musical phrase associated with it. The object is EXCORCISM." *Gnaoua* was a reflection of the expatriate Beat community in Tangier with which Cohen was associated. Its contributors included William S. Burroughs, Ian Sommerville, Brion Gysin, Harold Norse, Allen Ginsberg, Michael McClure, J. Sheeper (Irving Rosenthal), Jack Smith, Stuart Gordon, and Alfred Jarry (translated by George Andrews).

The archive comprises all aspects of *Gnaoua's* production, including artwork, manuscripts, correspondence, mailing list, plates, and proofs.

In 1964, Cohen visited Amsterdam on route to Antwerp to arrange the printing of *Gnaoua*. While there, he met the Dutch poet, writer, and "lifelong hippie" Simon Vinkenoog, who would become a close friend and translator of Cohen's poetry.

Cohen's Gnaoua Press published *The Founding Pig* by Aymon de Roussy de Sales in 1966 (included in the archive is a copy of the book inscribed by the author, along with the mock-up containing original artwork of the entire book), and the underground classic *The Hashish Cookbook* (1967) by Panama Rose (Rosalind Schwartz).

While living in Tangier, Cohen met Living Theatre member and writer Mel Clay. The two experimented making cut-ups together. It was through Clay that Cohen formed his close relationship with The Living Theatre that resulted in his living and traveling with member Petra Vogt and producing Marty Topp's film, *Paradise Now: The Living Theatre in Amerika*. In 1968, Cohen was arrested and fined \$10 for obstructing a police officer trying to shut down The Living Theatre at Yale University.

In 1966, Cohen produced the album, *Jilala* on his Trance label, field recordings of Sufi trance music made by Paul Bowles and Brion Gysin. Production material related to the album's cover and liner notes are included in the archive.

In 1967, Cohen joined poet Robert Richkin to produce the second issue of *The Great Society*, a Heddaoua Publication. Featuring a cover by Jack Smith, it included contributions by Paul Bowles, John Wieners, William Burroughs, Ray Bresmer, Aymon de Roussy de Sales, Ray Bremser, Robert Richkin, Edward Marshall, Edward Field, Panama Rose, Hakim Khan (Ira Cohen), Harold Norse, Mel Clay, Janine Pommy-Vega, Clive Matson, Diane and Sheldon Rochlin, Piero Heliczer, Paolo Lionni, Jean-Jacques Lebel, Mohammed Mrabet, and Robert Frank (a still from Conrad Rooks's film *Chappaqua*). The archive reflects all aspects of *The Great Society's* production, including artwork, plates, and manuscripts.

While in Kathmandu in the 1970s, Cohen became close friends with poet and musician Angus MacLise (who also published the Dreamweapon imprint). Together they participated in the Bardo Matrix collective publishing pamphlets, broadsides and ephemera. Cohen published the first Bardo Matrix Starstreams poetry book, *Way Out*, by Gregory Corso, with the help of John Chick in 1974 while living in Kathmandu. Beautifully printed on delicate rice paper by the Sharada Printing Press in Nhusal, Kathmandu, Cohen also published Angus MacLise, Charles Henri Ford, Paul Bowles, and Dana Young, among others.

The archive also includes extensive correspondence from Cohen (and others) to Richard Aaron, proprietor of Am Here Books, then based in Switzerland. Cohen sent material to Am Here in the 1970s for safekeeping and eventual sale. It's been in storage for decades and only emerged recently.
