

PIONEERS OF AMERICAN INDUSTRIAL DESIGN ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Background

The Pioneers of American Industrial Design stamp pane honors 12 of the nation's most important and influential industrial designers. Encompassing everything from furniture and electric kitchen appliances to corporate office buildings and passenger trains, the work of these designers helped shape the look of everyday life in the 20th century.

Each stamp features the name of a designer and a photograph of an object created by the designer, as well as a description of the object and the year or years when the object was created. The selvage features a photograph of the "Airflow" fan designed by Robert Heller around 1937.

Industrial design is the study and creation of products whose appearance, function and construction have been optimized for human use. It emerged as a profession in the U.S. in the 1920s but really took hold during the Depression. Faced with decreasing sales, manufacturers turned to industrial designers to give their products a modern look that would appeal to consumers. Characterized by horizontal lines and rounded, wind-resistant shapes, the new, streamlined looks differed completely from the decorative extravagance of the 1920s. They evoked a sense of speed and efficiency and projected the image of progress and affluence the public desired.

Consumer interest in modern design continued to increase after World War II, when machines allowed corporations to mass produce vacuums, hair dryers, toasters and other consumer goods at low cost. Industrial designers helped lower costs further by exploiting inexpensive new materials like plastic, vinyl, chrome, aluminum and plywood, which responded well to advances in manufacturing such as the use of molds and stamping. Affordable prices and growing prosperity nationwide helped drive popular demand.

Even as streamlining gave way to new looks in the 1960s, the groundbreaking work of industrial designers continued to transform the look of homes and offices across the country. Today, industrial design remains an integral component of American manufacturing and business, as well as daily life.



Frederick Hurten Rhead

(b. Aug. 29, 1880, Hanley, England; d. Nov. 2, 1942, New York, NY)

Frederick Hurten Rhead helped pioneer the design of mass-produced ceramic tableware for the home. He is best remembered for the sleek Fiesta® line (shown on the stamp) introduced by The Homer Laughlin China Company in 1936. Moderately priced and available in five brightly colored and durable glazes, the wildly popular Fiesta® dinnerware introduced the concept of mixing and matching while also transforming the look of domestic interiors across America. For Rhead, the line's clean lines and bold colors best represented modern design. His other designs for Homer Laughlin included kitchen accessories and "Harlequin" tableware.

The eldest son of one of the leading pottery designers in the U.K., Rhead immigrated to the U.S. in June 1902, when the American art pottery movement was just beginning to develop. He worked at several commercial ceramics factories, including Roseville, where he was art director from 1904 to 1908. He also helped establish Jervis Pottery on Long Island and ran a pottery studio at Arequipa, a California sanatorium for women suffering from tuberculosis. There he experimented with the decorative potential of several types of glaze. From 1917 to 1927, Rhead was the director of research at American Encaustic Tiling Company, a large commercial pottery in Zanesville, Ohio. He served as art director for Homer Laughlin from 1927 until his death in 1942.



Walter Dorwin Teague

(b. Dec. 18, 1883, Decatur, IN; d. Dec. 5, 1960, Flemington, NJ)

Known as the “dean of industrial design,” Walter Dorwin Teague believed that good artistic design fit both form and function into a single aesthetic package. During his career-long collaboration with Eastman Kodak Company, he designed several popular cameras, including the 1934 “Baby Brownie” (shown on the stamp). Made of black Bakelite, the camera’s box-shaped body featured art deco details and a metal viewfinder that folded down when the camera was not in use.

Teague’s simple, artistic designs for other consumer goods, like household appliances and electric clocks, helped make him one of the most successful industrial designers in the U.S.

In 1927, Teague opened one of the first industrial design firms in the nation. Drawing on his earlier training in advertising, he aimed to increase sales by improving the aesthetic appearance of products and subsequent appeal to the public. Viewing industrial design as both an art and an integral part of contemporary life, Teague publicized his philosophy in speeches, articles and his 1940 book, *Design This Day*. During the 1930s, his firm developed a new streamlined look for Texaco gas stations and, following World War II, designed jet interiors for Boeing. Teague served on the board of design for the 1939 World’s Fair and designed several popular pavilion exhibits for this and other World’s Fairs. In 1940, he was one of the founders of the American Society of Industrial Designers and served as its first president.



Norman Bel Geddes

(b. Apr. 21, 1893, Adrian, MI; d. May 8, 1958, New York, NY)

A founding member of the American Society of Industrial Designers, Norman Bel Geddes was a noted champion of streamlining. “Speed is the cry of our era,” he once said, “and greater speed one of the goals of tomorrow.” The author of highly influential books on design and urban planning, Bel Geddes created visionary new looks for cars, trains, planes, buildings, even entire cities. He also designed a wide range of practical items such as typewriters, stoves, household furnishings and other everyday objects like vacuums. The “Patriot” radio manufactured by Emerson Radio and Phonograph Corporation featured a red-and-white grille that echoed the stripes of the American flag. Although not all of his designs were manufactured, they nevertheless helped shape the look of 20th-century America.

Bel Geddes worked in theater and illustration before developing a distinguished career as one of the leading and most innovative theatrical set designers on Broadway. In the mid-1920s, he established his own industrial design firm, and for the next three decades designed for IBM, Chrysler, RCA, Shell Oil and other corporations. His design for the extremely popular “Futurama” exhibit at the 1939 New York World’s Fair dramatically imagined a future of towns and resorts linked by superhighways to cities filled with skyscrapers, elevated sidewalks, streamlined cars and lush public parks.

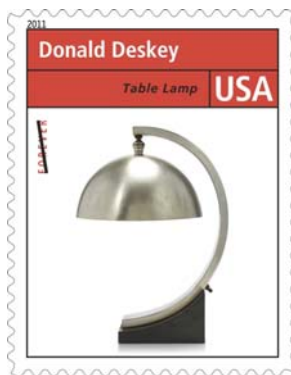


Raymond Loewy

(b. Nov. 5, 1893, Paris, France; d. Jul. 14, 1986, Monte Carlo, Monaco)

Raymond Loewy arguably did more to define the look of modern America than perhaps any other industrial designer. He believed that products should be simple, functional and appealing, and this vision came to permeate nearly every aspect of American life. Loewy and his firm, which became the largest of its kind in the world, designed everything from trains and cars to household appliances, corporate logos and even office tools like the pencil sharpener prototype shown on the stamp. “I can say of myself,” he once said, “that I have made the mundane side of the 20th century more beautiful.”

Loewy emigrated to the U.S. in 1919 and by the mid-1930s had become one of America's leading industrial designers. His landmark redesign of the 1934 "Coldspot" refrigerator for Sears Roebuck & Company featured rustproof aluminum shelves and a sleek, streamlined look. Later projects included buses for Greyhound, tractors, sales buildings and the logo for International Harvester. Loewy also created the distinctive look of Air Force One (featured on the 2007 Air Force One Priority Mail stamp) and worked with NASA on the interiors of America's first space station, Skylab. He designed the President John Fitzgerald Kennedy Memorial stamp issued in 1964, and in 1971, he created the logo for the newly formed U.S. Postal Service. Issued in 1999, the All Aboard! Twentieth Century Trains stamps included the "Congressional," which featured the GG-1 electric locomotive designed by Loewy for the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. Another of his designs, the 1953 Studebaker Starliner, was featured on the America on the Move: 50s Sporty Cars stamps issued in 2005.



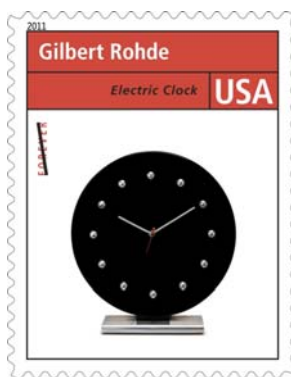
Donald Deskey

(b. Nov. 23, 1894, Blue Earth, MN; d. Apr. 29, 1989, Vero Beach, FL)

Donald Deskey is best known for the lavish art deco interiors he designed in 1932 for Radio City Music Hall in New York City. However, he was also one of America's most innovative industrial designers. A staunch advocate of modernism, Deskey exploited advances in mass production and other technological developments. His groundbreaking designs for furniture and lighting, like the table lamp shown on the stamp, made bold use of chrome, cork, linoleum, wood veneer, aluminum and other nontraditional materials.

A founding member of the American Society of Industrial Designers, Deskey was instrumental in winning public acceptance for modern design.

Trained as an architect, Deskey worked in painting in Paris, France, before settling in New York City. In 1926, he and business partner Phillip Vollmer established Deskey-Vollmer, a design consulting firm that specialized in furniture, textiles and lighting fixtures. Following the dissolution of the company in 1931, Deskey exhibited at the 1939 New York World's Fair and The Metropolitan Museum of Art. He also taught a course in industrial design at New York University. Around 1943, he formed Donald Deskey Associates, whose clients included Proctor & Gamble and Johnson & Johnson. Deskey's package designs for Crest toothpaste and Tide laundry detergent remain familiar to consumers today.



Gilbert Rohde

(b. Jun. 1, 1894, New York, NY; d. Jun. 16, 1944, New York, NY)

Gilbert Rohde was one of the most influential and innovative furniture designers in the U.S. His designs for Herman Miller in the 1930s and 1940s were based on simplicity and practicality and marked the beginning of modern design at the company. Created for the Herman Miller Clock Company in 1933, his design of polished chromium and black Carrara glass abstracted the clock face – its most essential elements. His work included modular and sectional furniture made of wood, chrome, Bakelite, Plexiglass and other new materials, as well as clocks such as the one shown on the stamp. Rohde's emphasis on compact, functional, and affordable pieces for both home and office anticipated consumer needs and became the model for furniture design after World War II.

Rohde opened his own interior and furniture design firm in the late 1920s, and by 1931 he was designing furniture for mass production. His association with the Herman Miller Furniture Company, where he took on the role of design director, began in 1932. Instead of the period reproductions popular at the time, Rohde's work drew on contemporary styles in art and architecture like functionality, minimalism and biomorphic shapes. He also successfully guided the company's marketing and promotion efforts, including writing and designing advertisements. Rohde designed exhibits for the 1939 New York World's

Fair, and his designs were shown at the Museum of Modern Art and The Metropolitan Museum of Art. His association with Herman Miller continued until his death in 1944.



Greta von Nessen

(b. circa 1900, Sweden; d. Aug. 27, 1974, Murrysville, PA)

Greta von Nessen specialized solely in lighting, and none of her designs is better known than the “Anywhere” lamp (shown on the stamp). Introduced in 1951, the lamp featured a tubular aluminum base and an adjustable shade made of enameled metal. Inventive and versatile, the lamp was available in a variety of colors and could be used on a table, mounted on the wall or suspended from the ceiling. This and several other of von Nessen’s lamps have been featured in industrial design exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art.

A graduate of the School for Industrial Arts in Stockholm, Sweden, von Nessen settled in the U.S. with her husband, architect and industrial designer Walter von Nessen, in 1925. Two years later, they established Nessen Studio, a New York-based firm that concentrated on lamps and lighting fixtures. Soon the studio was also designing furniture, appliances and other household objects for the city’s leading architects and manufacturers. After the death of her husband in 1943, von Nessen closed the studio. She reopened it after World War II and renewed the production of earlier lighting designs while also introducing innovative new lamps of her own.



Russel Wright

(b. Apr. 3, 1904, Lebanon, OH; d. Dec. 22, 1976, New York, NY)

Specializing in household products, Russel Wright revolutionized the way we live at home. He designed at a time when growing numbers of Americans were shedding the prim conventions of the early 20th century in favor of simple and informal practicality. During his career, Wright created affordable modern furniture and tableware characterized by minimal but elegant forms. Each stainless-steel piece of Highlight/Pinch flatware (pictured on the stamp) featured an organically shaped handle and no applied ornament. Wright designed the flatware in 1950 to complement his many lines of tableware.

Educated in painting and sculpture, Wright began his career designing for the theater. In 1930, he opened his own industrial design studio in New York City, and within just a few years he was setting the standard for contemporary domestic products like lamps, tables and small kitchen appliances. Introduced by Macy’s in 1935, the American Modern furniture line featured bleached wood, rounded corners and simple silhouettes. Its success with consumers made Wright a household name. Four years later, Wright created the economical and even more popular American Modern line of ceramic tableware, whose pieces could be mixed and matched. With his wife and design partner, Mary Wright, he wrote *Guide to Easier Living*, published in 1951, which offered advice and suggestions for making everyday life comfortable.



Henry Dreyfuss

(b. Mar. 2, 1904, New York, NY; d. Oct. 5 1972, South Pasadena, CA)

Considered by many to be the first designer to apply ergonomics systematically to product design, Henry Dreyfuss considered the user to be the center and focus of his industrial design work. During a career that lasted more than 40 years, he designed products that touched all corners of American life, from household appliances like clocks, sewing machines and vacuum cleaners to tractors and even the comfortable interiors of trains and planes. Dreyfuss also set the standard for telephone design in the U.S. His design for the 1937 Model 302 Bell telephone (shown on the stamp) featured

a new handset and base that improved the balance and appearance of the nation's most popular telephone. His revolutionary design for the "Trimline" telephone was the first to combine the dial and handset.

Dreyfuss opened his own consultant industrial design firm in 1929. His clients included Hoover, Polaroid, Honeywell, Singer and the New York Central Railroad Company, for whom he designed the "20th Century Limited," a streamlined train both inside and out, in 1938. He also enjoyed longstanding relationships with Deere & Company, Bell, AT&T and Hallmark, among others. In 1944, Dreyfuss became the first vice president of the American Society of Industrial Designers, and in 1965, he was named president of the newly formed Industrial Designers Society of America.

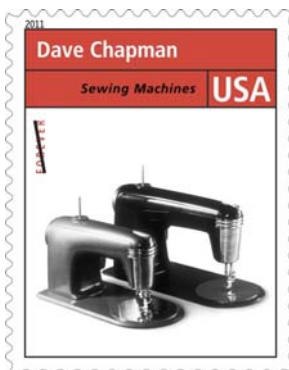


Peter Müller-Munk

(b. Jun. 25, 1904, Berlin, Germany; d. Mar. 13, 1967, Pittsburgh, PA)

Peter Müller-Munk is best remembered for the "Normandie" pitcher featured on the stamp. Introduced by the Revere Copper and Brass Company in 1935, the mass-produced pitcher was made of chromium-plated brass, an alternative to silverware that was affordable and easier to care for. The pitcher's simple curves, teardrop shape and unornamented form embodied the streamlined style. Müller-Munk also designed the 1937 Waring blender, a now-classic combination of chrome and glass initially dubbed the "Miracle Mixer."

Müller-Munk studied as a silversmith in Berlin before emigrating to the U.S. in 1926. He designed silver pieces for Tiffany & Co. in New York City then opened his own studio in 1929. Several of his designs were exhibited at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. In 1935, he became an associate professor of industrial design at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh. Three years later, he opened his own consulting industrial design firm, Peter Müller-Munk Associates. Clients included Westinghouse, Texaco and U.S. Steel. A champion of industrial design as a profession, Müller-Munk served as president of the American Society of Industrial Designers from 1954 to 1957 and as the first president of the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design from 1957 to 1959.

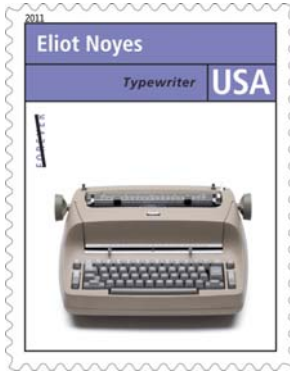


Dave Chapman

(b. Jan. 30, 1909, Gilman, IL; d. May 20, 1978, Chicago, IL)

Honored by the Industrial Designers Society of America for his "vigorous sponsorship and backing of design research and high standards of industrial design education," Dave Chapman is probably most known for his innovative and award-winning designs for classroom furniture. He also designed household appliances like refrigerators, hairdryers, radios and electric heaters. Shown at the first exhibition of the American Society of Industrial Designers in 1947, Chapman's streamlined sewing machines (shown on the stamp) featured a chrome grille that evoked the sleek look of contemporary automobiles.

Chapman studied architecture at the Armour Institute of Technology (later known as the Illinois Institute of Technology). In 1933, he joined Montgomery Ward, first as an architect and then as head of product design. He left in 1936 to open his own industrial design office, with clients that included Corning Glass, Maytag, Hamilton Beach, Parker Pens, Johnson Motors, Inc. and Sears. In 1950, Chapman served as the president of the Society of Industrial Designers. Four years later, his firm designed a line of classroom furniture for Brunswick-Balke-Collender Company. Made of tubular steel and plywood, the furniture earned the highest honor bestowed by the Society of Industrial Designers. Chapman was named a Benjamin Franklin Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in 1960.



Eliot Noyes

(b. Aug. 12, 1910, Boston, MA; d. Jul. 18, 1977, New Canaan, CT)

Eliot Noyes bridged the gap between business and art, transforming the industrial design profession into more than just a commercial venture. Rather than continue the practice of changing a product's design every year, Noyes persuaded his corporate clients to adopt long-lasting design principles instead. He is best remembered for his long working relationship with IBM, for whom he designed buildings, interiors and a range of office equipment, like the iconic 1961 "Selectric" typewriter pictured on the stamp. He also helped IBM and other companies develop a distinct and consistent identity.

In 1940, two years after earning a master's degree in architecture from Harvard University, Noyes became the first director of industrial design at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. His relationship with IBM began after World War II, when he designed the company's 1947 Model A electric typewriter as design director for the Norman Bel Geddes design firm. When the Bel Geddes office closed, IBM retained Noyes as a consultant designer, eventually appointing him the consulting director of corporate design in 1956, a position he held until his death in 1977. Noyes also ran his own office in New Canaan, Connecticut, serving as consulting director of design for Westinghouse and Mobil. He served as advisor to the president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology from 1972 to 1977.

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