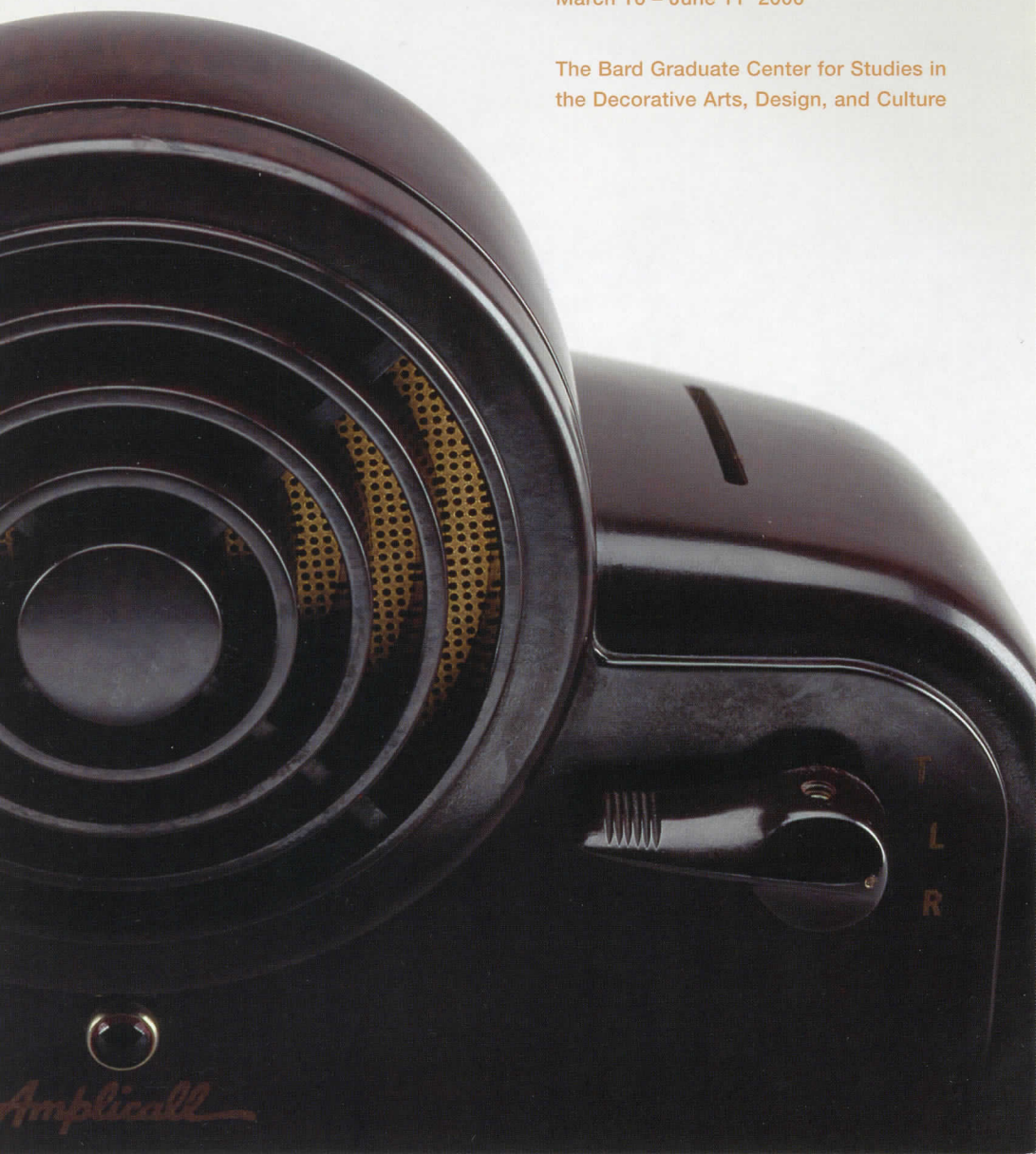


AMERICAN STREAMLINED DESIGN: THE WORLD OF TOMORROW

March 16 – June 11 2006

The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in
the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture



“A speeding automobile is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace.”

—Italian Futurist poet F.T. Marinetti (1911)

AMERICAN STREAMLINED DESIGN: THE WORLD OF TOMORROW

FROM MARCH 16 THROUGH JUNE 11, 2006, The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture is presenting *American Streamlined Design: The World of Tomorrow*, a selection of 180 objects including furniture, ceramics, metalwork, plastic, and graphic design, as well as original drawings and book designs. It is the most comprehensive exhibition ever mounted on the subject. Although it focuses on the 1930s and '40s, the period during which streamlined design developed in the United States, the exhibition also presents streamlining in design today. The curators of the exhibition are David A. Hanks, Curator, Stewart Program for Modern Design, and Dr. Martin Eidelberg, former Professor of Art History, Rutgers University.

American Streamlined Design offers a fresh appraisal of its subject, placing the achievements of its best-known exponents—among them Norman Bel Geddes, Henry Dreyfuss, Raymond Loewy, and Walter Dorwin Teague—squarely alongside the contributions of lesser-known but significant designers such as Lurell E. Guild, Clifford Brooks Stevens, Harold Van Doren, and newly discovered practitioners such as John R. Morgan, William B. Petzold, and Louis Vavrik.



The exhibition posits that the streamlining of the 1930s is properly understood as a unique stylistic expression. Criticized as early as 1932 by modernists, the idiom evolved in defiance of both art deco and functionalist modernism. Objects celebrated today as design icons came in for explicit criticism in the 1944 catalogue for the Museum of Modern Art exhibition, *Design for Use*, with these words: “The desire to make objects look ‘up-to-date’ by borrowing forms from unrelated modern machinery often leads to absurdities such as this pencil sharpener streamlined to resemble an airplane.”

“Perhaps a core difference in how American scholars received art deco and Bauhaus functionalism, and how they regarded streamlining,” says David A. Hanks, “lies in the fact that the former arose from an artistic vanguard, while streamlining aimed at the widest possible public and was based on an admiration for industry and speed.”

Supporting this case are products ranging from a humble computer card hole-puncher, roasting pan, and chrome-plated iron to a lounge chair created of welded tubular steel and leather, boldly canted as if straining into the future. Although this armchair would



look perfectly at home on the deck of an ocean liner, its daring simplification of line belies the engineering bravura of its California designer, Kem Weber.

Other objects in the exhibition, fabricated in such modern materials as aluminum and Bakelite and other plastics, speak to the birth of American consumerism, when time-saving new products spurred spending and promised a better world for everyone. The streamlined mixers, blenders, juicers, rotisseries, toasters, and oven-to-table casseroles that were flaunted by housewives; the bullet-like soda siphons, torpedo-shaped power drills, and pipes with speed lines enjoyed by suburban husbands; the jukeboxes, portable radios, and model

airplanes of the younger sets—all are represented in *American Streamlined Design*, as are patent drawings and large-scale photographs that reveal the conception and use of these up-to-date designs.

The exhibition also makes a case for the vigor of streamlining in today's design. Among the contemporary designers represented are Jasper Morrison (*Thinking Man's Chair* 1986); Ross Lovegrove (*Go Chair* 1999); and Scott Patt (*Air Max Contact* sneakers for Nike, 2001).

The exhibition dramatizes six themes. The first five examine streamlining in specific areas of the home, the workplace, and domestic life. The sixth section considers how streamlining has been revived in recent years and has again become a dominant force in the design world.

Most of the furniture, graphic design, and products made of metal, plastic, and ceramic on display are drawn from The Eric Brill Collection, which comprises nearly 800 examples of American industrial design assembled by one individual over the last three decades and donated in 2003 to The Liliane and David M. Stewart Program for Modern Design in Montreal. Although the Brill Collection concentrated on American industrial design of the 1930s and '40s, the Stewart Program has steadily acquired later objects that reflect a modern aesthetic. Brill himself undertook prodigious research into the United States Trademark and Patent Office records to identify the inventors

and designers of many of the patented objects in his collection. The exhibition and its accompanying catalogue present these findings for the first time.

The accompanying catalogue is published by Flammarion, Inc. It offers a scholarly account of the history of streamlining from the 1930s to the present, chronicles the social and stylistic thought of the period, and provides detailed analyses of all the objects featured in the exhibition. The 280-page book, which is available in English and French editions, features 400 illustrations with essays by David A. Hanks and Anne Hoy, Adjunct Associate Professor, New York University. The catalogue chapters are "To Grace the Finest Desk": Streamlining the Commercial World; "Power at Your Fingertips": Streamlining Manual Labor; "Amazing Appliances": Streamlining the Kitchen and Bath; "Flash-and-Gleam Beauty": Streamlining the Living Space; "Won't You Have Fun": Streamlining Recreation; "The World of Tomorrow Today": Streamlining Now.

The catalogue is among the first to explore U.S. patent records to document 20th-century design dates and the names of previously unidentified designers, and to analyze their mechanical and design innovations. Biographies of each of the designers in the exhibition are included to document the lives of these Americans.



RELATED PROGRAMS

An array of lectures, panels, and other offerings will be presented in conjunction with *American Streamlined Design: The World of Tomorrow*. For further information, please call 212-501-3011 or e-mail programs@bgc.bard.edu.

EXHIBITION TOURS

Group tours of *American Streamlined Design* may be scheduled Tuesday through Friday between 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., and on Thursdays until 7:00 p.m. Reservations are required for all groups. For further information, please call the Bard Graduate Center

Gallery at 212-501-3013 or TTY 212-501-3012, or e-mail gallery@bgc.bard.edu.

This exhibition was organized and is circulated by The Liliane and David M. Stewart Program for Modern Design, Montreal.

The Bard Graduate Center is located at 18 West 86 Street, between Central Park West and Columbus Avenue, in New York City. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Thursday from 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Admission is \$3 general, \$2 seniors and students (with valid ID), and free on Thursday evenings after 5:00 p.m. For

further information about the Bard Graduate Center and upcoming exhibitions, please visit our website at www.bgc.bard.edu.

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

Summer 2006

Medieval Aquamanilia from the Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art

This is the second in a series of student participation collaborative exhibitions organized by the Bard Graduate Center and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It is the first examination of the aquamanilia collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Sheila Hicks: Miniatures

Organized by the Bard Graduate Center, this is the first New York City exhibition in 20 years of work by this revolutionary textile artist.

Fall 2006

James Athenian Stuart: Neoclassical Pioneer

The first comprehensive study of Stuart's remarkable career as an architect and designer.



IMAGES

Inside left to right:

Gad-Jet CO2 Toy Racer c. 1948. Glen Periman.

Toy Train Engine, c. 1938. Designer unknown.

Sterling Streamline Iron, c. 1930–40. Designer unknown.

Thermos Pitchers, 1935. Henry Dreyfuss.

Eskimo Hair Dryer c. 1935–40. Designer unknown.

Mixall Jr. Portable Electric Mixer 1945–55. Designer unknown.

Air Max Contact Athletic Shoes, 2001 Scott Patt. The Liliane and David M. Stewart Collection.

Lounge Chair 1934. Kem Weber.

Go Chair c. 1999. Ross Lovegrove. The Liliane and David M. Stewart Collection, gift of Bernhardt Design.

Outside left to right:

Vacuum Cleaner c. 1935. Henry Dreyfuss.

Fiestaware Juice Pitchers, c. 1936. Frederick H. Rhead. The Liliane and David M. Stewart Collection.

Table Radio, 1954. Raymond Loewy.

Airflow Table Fan, c. 1937 Robert Heller.

Skippy-Racer Scooter (back cover), c. 1933. Harold L. Van Doren and John Gordon Rideout.

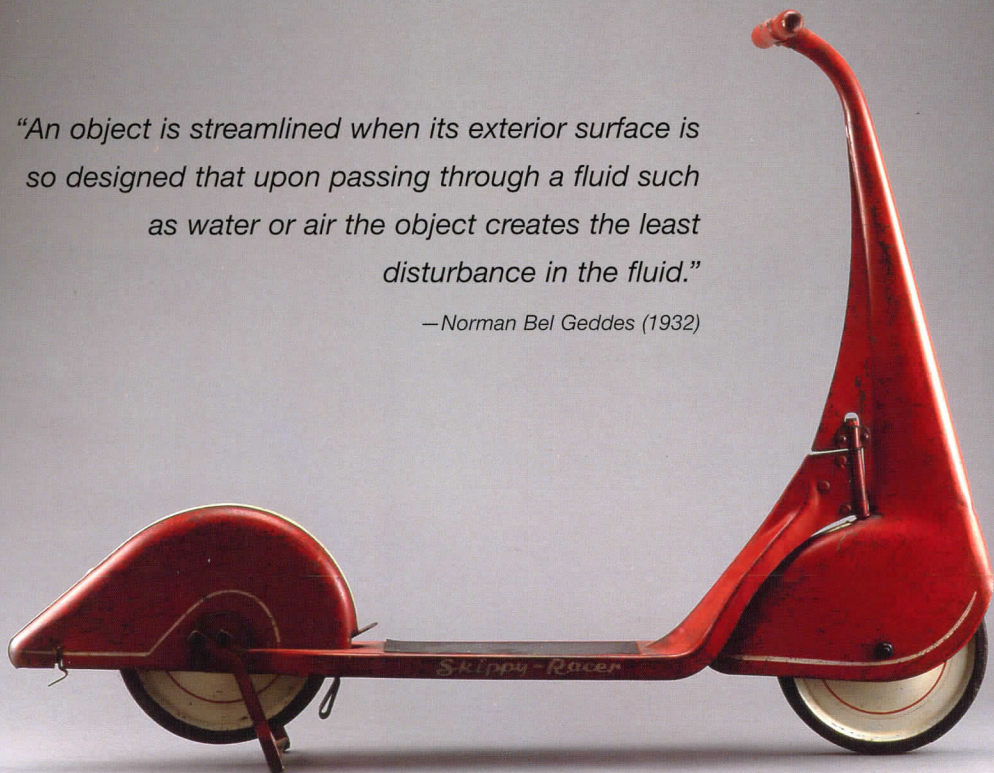
Amplicall Intercom (cover), c. 1947 Joseph Palma, Jr.

All objects shown here are from The Eric Brill Collection unless otherwise noted.



“An object is streamlined when its exterior surface is so designed that upon passing through a fluid such as water or air the object creates the least disturbance in the fluid.”

—Norman Bel Geddes (1932)



BGC

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