

# MODERN AMERICANNNESS

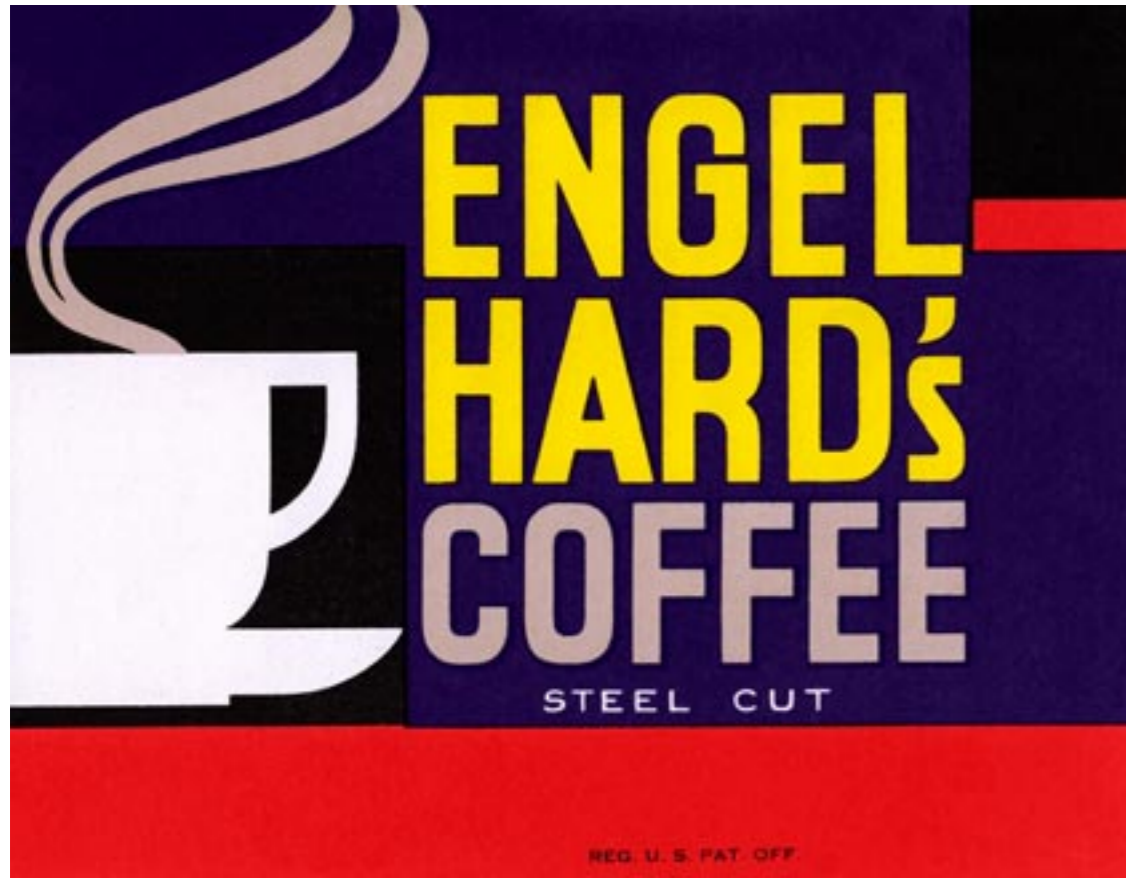
The New Graphic Design

in the United States

1890–1940

**Christopher Long**

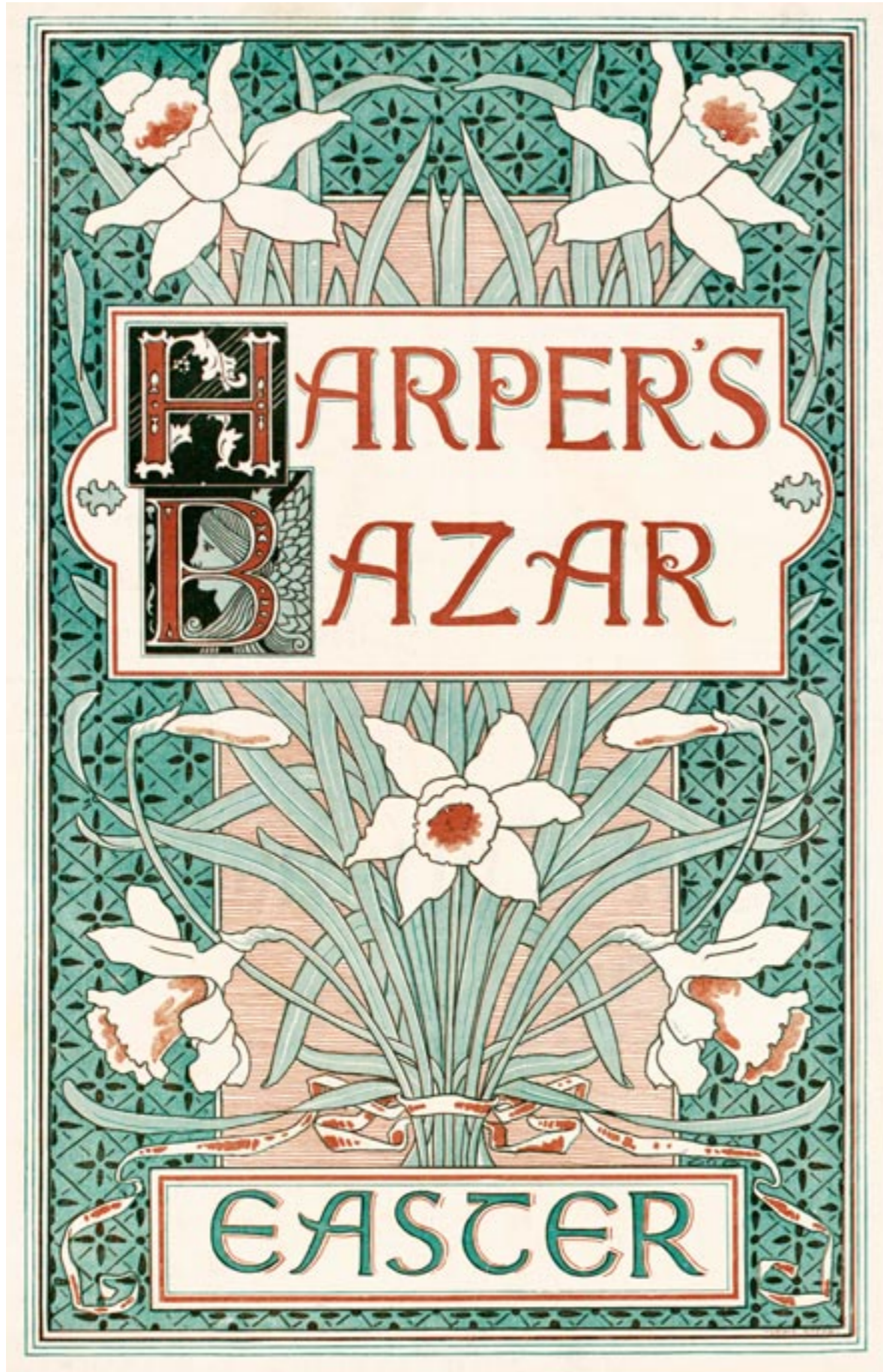




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*Engelhard's Coffee Steel Cut*, ca. 1940. Label, printed for A. Engelhard & Sons, Co., Louisville, KY. Offset print on paper, 13.8 × 17.6 cm (detail).  
Collection Christopher Long.



7 | Louis Rhead, *Harper's Bazar: Easter*, 1890. Poster. Lithograph on paper, 41 x 58 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

8 | Edward Penfield, *Harper's for April*, 1893. Poster. Lithograph on paper, 48 x 33 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.





The idea, at least as it related to magazines, was without precedent. There was no list of contents. There was no other text at all. And there was nothing about that issue that was in any way special or unusual. It was neither for a holiday nor some other important event. Its appearance suggested merely that the magazine itself was worth the effort for one to go down to the newsstand and purchase it.<sup>8</sup>

The artist who had fashioned this laconic image of daily life was Edward Penfield. Penfield, the son of a flour merchant, had grown up in Brooklyn. He received his elementary education at the local grammar school. But mostly, he studied at home, cared for by his doting mother, who had lost two of her other sons. The young Penfield's uncle was an artist and owner of an engraving studio in Manhattan, supplying "cuts" for some of the city's publishers. Edward decided to follow in his uncle's footsteps and enrolled in school of the Art Students' League. Not long afterward, in 1890, he was discovered by the art director at Harper & Brothers and hired as a staff artist and art editor.<sup>9</sup> He published his first poster for the magazine in March 1893; for the next six years, with only a tiny number of exceptions, he would devise and execute the monthly placards for *Harper's*.<sup>10</sup>

Penfield's posters were notable for their resplendent simplicity. He rarely inserted more than one or two figures, and those figures are almost always shown engaged in everyday activities. He was influenced in this by Toulouse-Lautrec and Théophile Alexandre Steinlen (of cat posters fame), who had advanced the possibil-

9 | Edward Penfield, *Harper's June*, 1898. Poster. Lithograph on paper, 23 x 40 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



ities of two-dimensional modeling, employing reduced and frank imagery. They specialized, too, in scenes of the everyday (or, in some instances, the not so everyday, as in Toulouse-Lautrec's lurid depictions of Parisian nightlife). Penfield's look was similar but decidedly WASPish: his subjects were well-to-do, white East Coasters, a nod to the magazine's readership. They were invariably well-dressed and animated—there is a decidedly activated quality to most of his scenes—yet there is little complexity to his pictures. Penfield's belief that a "design that needs study is not a poster, no matter how well it is executed," summed up his approach.<sup>11</sup>

Most of Penfield's early posters for *Harper's* portrayed a figure reading or carrying a copy of the magazine. Later, he moved on to images of leisure time or quiet moments of human interaction (figs. 9–11). After 1901, his subjects broadened to portrayals of American life—views, for example, of labor or sport (figs. 12, 13). In all these, Penfield contributed not only the idea that studied reduction could make a poster more visually affective, but that little scenes of everyday life could be a means to sell something. His posters marked the beginnings of the soft sell, of using subtle persuasion to entice consumers, the concept that would propel much of later advertising.



10 | Edward Penfield, *Harper's August*, 1896. Poster. Lithograph on paper, 47.5 x 35 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

11 | Edward Penfield, *Ride a Stearns and be content*, 1896. Poster, printed by J. Ottmann Lith. Co., New York, NY, for the E. C. Stearns Bicycle Agency, Syracuse, NY. Lithograph on paper, 152 x 116 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



12 | Edward Penfield, *Outing*, 1902. Poster. Lithograph on paper, 52 × 33 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

13 | Edward Penfield, *Cornell*, 1908. Poster, printed by Chas. W. Beck Jr., Philadelphia. Lithograph on paper, 49 × 32 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

14 | Maxfield Parrish, *Harper's Weekly Christmas*, 1895. Poster. Print on paper, 35 × 24 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



Maxfield Parrish, another young artist who for a time also made covers and posters for *Harper's*, *The Century*, and *Scribner's*, followed a closely related approach. Parrish was born in Philadelphia of good, upper-class Quaker stock. His father, Stephen Parrish, was a successful landscape painter and etcher. From an early age, the younger Parrish showed a natural talent for art. When the boy was only ten, his father took him to Europe on a tour of the great museums so that they might paint and sketch together. Parrish first tried his hand at architecture, studying at Haverford College, but he soon made the switch to painting, spending three years at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

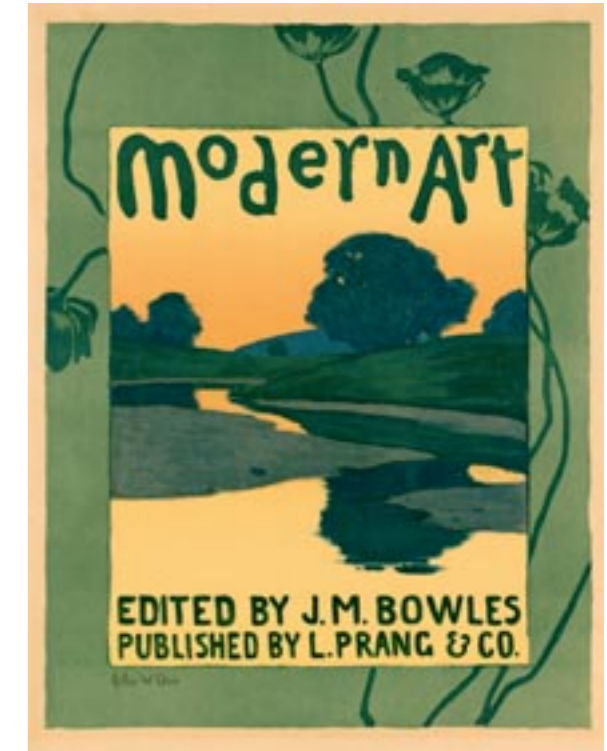
In the years after the turn of the century, Parrish became a sought-after book illustrator and muralist, known for his classically inspired fantasies and his vibrant colors. (Parrish blue is named for him.) His graphic work of the mid 1890s, though, is more restrained, following the same tendencies Penfield showed toward a distinct matter-of-factness, flatness, and large blank spaces (figs. 14–16).

Neither Penfield nor Parrish drew directly from French Art Nouveau, at least not in its more fervent and florid guise. They employed ornament sparingly, preferring to foreground the figures in their compositions, setting them against neutral or even empty backgrounds. In truth, both artists were as much, if not more, indebted to Japanese *ukiyo-e* woodcuts than the unalloyed Art Nouveau. Examples of *ukiyo-e* had begun to circulate in Europe and United States in the 1870s. They had an immediate and powerful influence on some of the early French Impressionists, including Edgar Degas and Édouard Manet, as well as painters like Toulouse-Lautrec. Of the American poster designers, Arthur Wesley Dow was the modernist perhaps most deeply touched, and he was the first to carry the influence of the *ukiyo-e* into art poster design.

Dow was another New Englander, from an old family in Ipswich, Massachusetts. His father, David Dow, held a collection of jobs—farmer, carpenter, repairman, gravedigger, and undertaker—but the younger Dow had a more patrician upbringing, attending the local grammar school and, afterward, the studio art classes of Boston artist James M. Stone and the Académie Julian in Paris.

Upon returning to the United States, Dow was appointed assistant curator of the Japanese collection at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The museum's department had assembled a significant collection of *ukiyo-e*, and Dow spent hours scrutinizing the works of Utagawa Hiroshige, Tsukioka Yoshitoshi, and especially Katsushika Hokusai (fig. 17). When he began to receive his own commissions for posters and other commercial work, he incorporated *ukiyo-e* techniques and themes, combining them with the language of the Art Nouveau. His oft-reproduced poster for *Modern Art* magazine was an updated Japonisme landscape enveloped by Art Nouveau florets (fig. 18).

Other American devotees of the art poster embraced the Art Nouveau even more unequivocally and, in some instances, a great deal more effectively. Rhead began experimenting with Art Nouveau elements around 1895. Over the next half dozen years, his poster style absorbed its sinuous lines and floriferous forms, albeit in a manner than was closer to the British interpretation of the style (figs. 19, 20).



15 | Maxfield Parrish, *Harper's Weekly Bicycle Number*, 1896. Lithograph on paper, 41 × 58 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

16 | Maxfield Parrish, *The Century*, 1897. Poster, printed by Thomas & Wylie Lithographic Co., New York, NY, for the Century Company, New York, NY. Lithograph on paper, 50.2 × 33 cm. The Resnick Collection.

17 | Katsushika Hokusai, *Kirifuri Waterfall at Kurokami Mountain in Shimotsuke*, from the series *Shokoku taki-meguri*. Woodblock print, ink, and watercolor on paper, 37.1 × 26.2 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Henry L. Phillips Collection, Bequest of Henry L. Phillips.

18 | Arthur Wesley Dow, *Modern Art: Edited by J. M. Bowles*, 1895. Poster, printed by L. Prang & Co., New York. Lithograph on paper, 52 × 38 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



19 | Louis Rhead, *Photochrome Engraving Company*, New York, 1895. Poster. Lithograph on paper, 35 × 28 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



20 | Louis Rhead, *The Century Magazine for June*, 1896. Poster. Lithograph on paper, 57 × 27 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Congress, Washington, DC



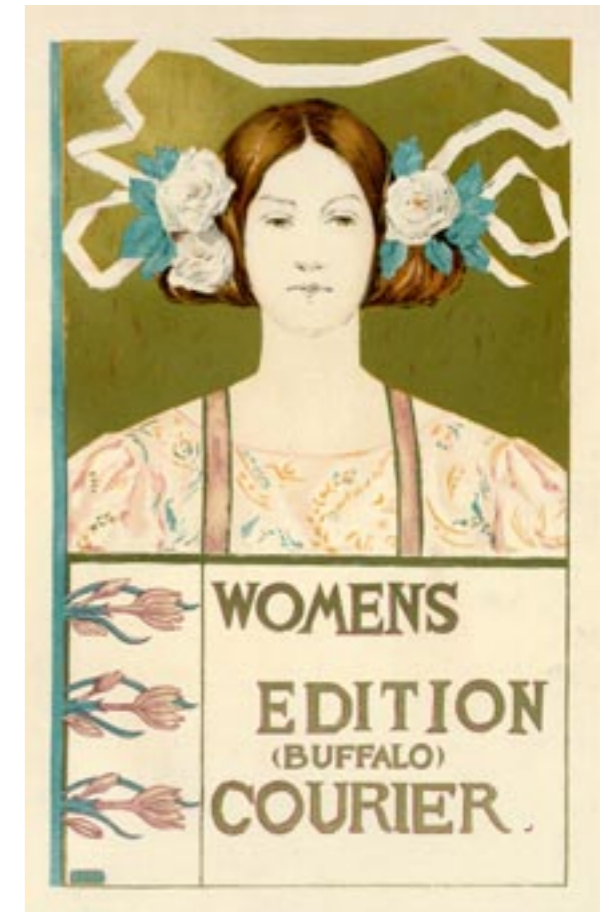
But if Penfield, Parrish, and Rhead were notably successful in the commercial realm, a small number of younger artists, mostly working for the little literary or art magazines, were more radical in their break from conventional depiction. Elisha Brown Bird, Alice Russell Glenny, Frank Hazenplug, Blanche McManus (Mansfeld), Ethel Reed, and Charles Herbert Woodbury—to list only some of the most prominent—went further in investigating how color, form, and the written word might be arranged in two-dimensional space (figs. 21, 22).

New York, Boston, and Chicago were then teeming with young artists looking to express modern life and break with the realism that had long dominated American painting. Most had some formal training in the United States or in Europe. Some drifted back and forth between traditional easel painting and commercial art. A few, like Bird, had previously worked as cartoonists or caricaturists for the newspapers.<sup>12</sup> But nearly all had come to the new art by way of their unorthodox lifestyles and a yearning sense that a new world was in the offing. They were the leading edge of what became America's first modern-age youth revolt.



21 | Florence Lundborg, *The Lark August*, 1895. Poster, printed for William Doxey, San Francisco, CA. Relief print on paper, 41 × 33 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

22 | Frank Hazenplug, *The Emerson and Fisher Company, Carriage Builders, Cincinnati, OH*, 1896. Poster, printed by Stone & Kimball, Chicago, IL. Lithograph on paper, 50 × 35 cm. The Resnick Collection.



23 | Elisha Brown Bird, *The Poster*, 1896. Poster, printed by Will H. Clemens, New York, NY. Lithograph on paper, 49 × 32 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

24 | Elisha Brown Bird, *The Red Letter*, 1896. Poster, printed by Forbes Co., Boston, MA. Lithograph on paper, 66 × 45.75 cm. Private collection.

25 | Alice Russell Glenny, *Women's Edition (Buffalo) Courier*, 1895. Poster. Lithograph on paper, 75.8 × 54.6 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Bird's 1896 design for the magazine *The Poster*, with its twin muses, “Miss Art” on the left and “Miss Litho” on the right, reprises the sinuous lines of the French and Belgian Art Nouveau, even while referencing a William Morris textile in the background (fig. 23).<sup>13</sup> Bird had his start as an architecture student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he tuned his drafting skills and turned them to graphic design, working for *The Inland Printer*, *The Chap-Book*, *The Red Letter*, and *The Century*, as well as several book publishers. One of his most compelling works was his poster advertising *The Red Letter*—surely of *The Red Letter!*—it is a tour de force of bold colors (red and black, on a white background), intertwining lines and forms, and forceful lettering.

Alice Russell Glenny's 1895 poster advertising the women's edition of the *Buffalo Courier* draws even more unequivocally on the French Art Nouveau, joining it with the sensibilities of the classical revival (fig. 25). Glenny's sweet and frank presentation was an exception for the American poster movement, however. Charles Herbert Woodbury's 1895 poster for the July edition of *The Century* and Charles Warde Traver's 1896 poster for *The Echo*, both hailing Fourth of July festivities, rely on lively figures and vibrant color fields set out in a manner that blends Japanese woodcuts, the Art Nouveau, and the brash graphic idioms of Toulouse-Lautrec and contemporary English artist Aubrey Beardsley (figs. 26, 27). In a similar way, M. E. (Mary Eleanor) Curran adapted a related version of the Art Nouveau to a romanticized setting of a Mexican-inspired festival in *La Fiesta de Los Angeles* (fig. 28).

The field for experimentation, though, was very large, ranging from Marianna Sloan's poster for the *Women's Edition of The Press* (which was strongly indebted to Morris and the other artists of the English Arts and Crafts movement) to Western artist Maynard Dixon's poster for *Overland* magazine and the book *Lo-To-Kah* (figs. 29–31). Dixon's designs, with their insistent lettering, aggressive colors, and large masses, were early indications of what was to come in American graphic art: a forceful, matter-of-factness that conveyed the country's rawness and individualism.

The master of this new stylistic amalgam—a hefty and distinctive form of the Art Nouveau—was Will H. Bradley. Largely self-taught, preternaturally gifted, and imbued with irrepressible energy, Bradley emerged in the mid-1890s as the most far-seeing and original of the American poster artists. Walter Dorwin Teague later remarked that it was Bradley who opened American design to the “sun and air” and made an “indigenous art.”<sup>14</sup>

He was born William Henry Bradley in Boston in 1868. While he was still a small child, his family moved to the shoemaking town of Lynn, Massachusetts, where his father drew cartoons for one of the local dailies. After his father's early death, in 1874, Bradley moved with his mother to Ishpeming, Michigan, to be with her sister and sister's husband. At twelve, forced by the family's circumstances to work, Bradley became an apprentice for a weekly newspaper, the *Iron Agitator*, earning three dollars a week.

As it had been for Calkins, the small-town newspaper office became his training ground, school, and laboratory. When the paper's job printer left, Bradley dropped out



26 | Charles H. Woodbury, *The July Century*, New York, 1895. Poster. Lithograph on paper, 48.3 x 34 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



27 | Charles Warde Traver, *The Echo*, 1896. Poster. Lithograph on paper, 33 x 24 cm. Private collection.



28 | M. E. (Mary Eleanor) Curran, *La Fiesta de Los Angeles*, 1897. Poster, printed by Los Angeles Lithographic Company, Los Angeles. Lithograph on paper, 68.6 x 48.3 cm. The Resnick Collection.

29 | Marianna Sloan, *Women's Edition: The Press Thanksgiving Eve, Nov. 27th*, 1895. Poster, printed by Philadelphia Press, Philadelphia, PA. Lithograph on paper, 88.2 x 51 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



of school and took over the position. He remained in the printing plant for the next four years, learning all he could about printing processes, machines, and typography.

He also began to draw. Along with his responsibilities for printing the newspaper each week, Bradley began making posters for the town's merchants. Despite a lack of formal training, he rendered everything with surprising facility. A visiting landscape painter from Chicago named Frank Bromley admired one of his posters and offered to help him become an artist. Two weeks later, Bradley was on a train bound for the big city.<sup>15</sup>

He first worked on a succession of small art commissions, then for mapmaker Rand McNally. He quit that job to take another position at Knight & Leonard, one of Chicago's leading commercial printers. The work paid well, but Bradley was determined to set up his own freelance art studio, and, by 1893, the year of the Chicago exposition, he had his own office in the Monadnock Building.<sup>16</sup>

One of his many commissions was to design a series of covers for *The Inland Printer*, a leading trade magazine. Another was to design a poster for a Broadway play, *The Masqueraders*, by Henry Arthur Jones. Bradley took the novel step of signing the massive twenty-eight-sheet poster, which earned him notice and an invitation to visit New York, where he saw firsthand the posters of Penfield, Rhead, and some of the Europeans.

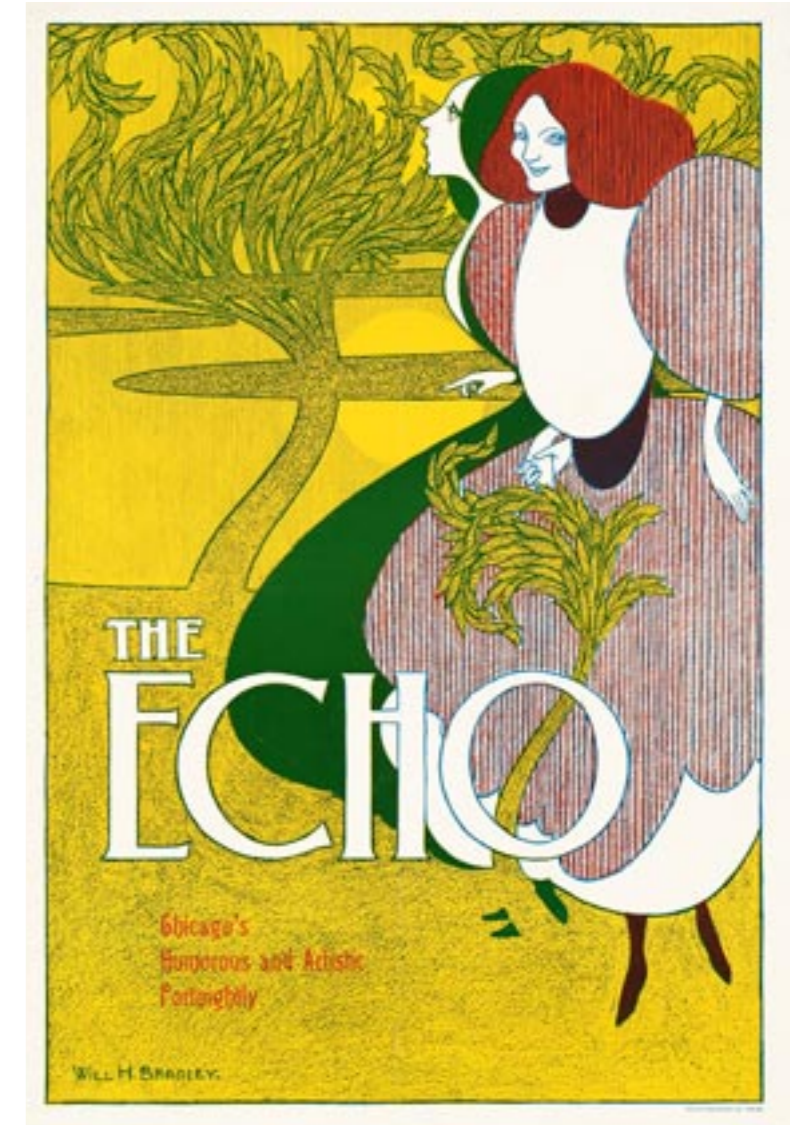
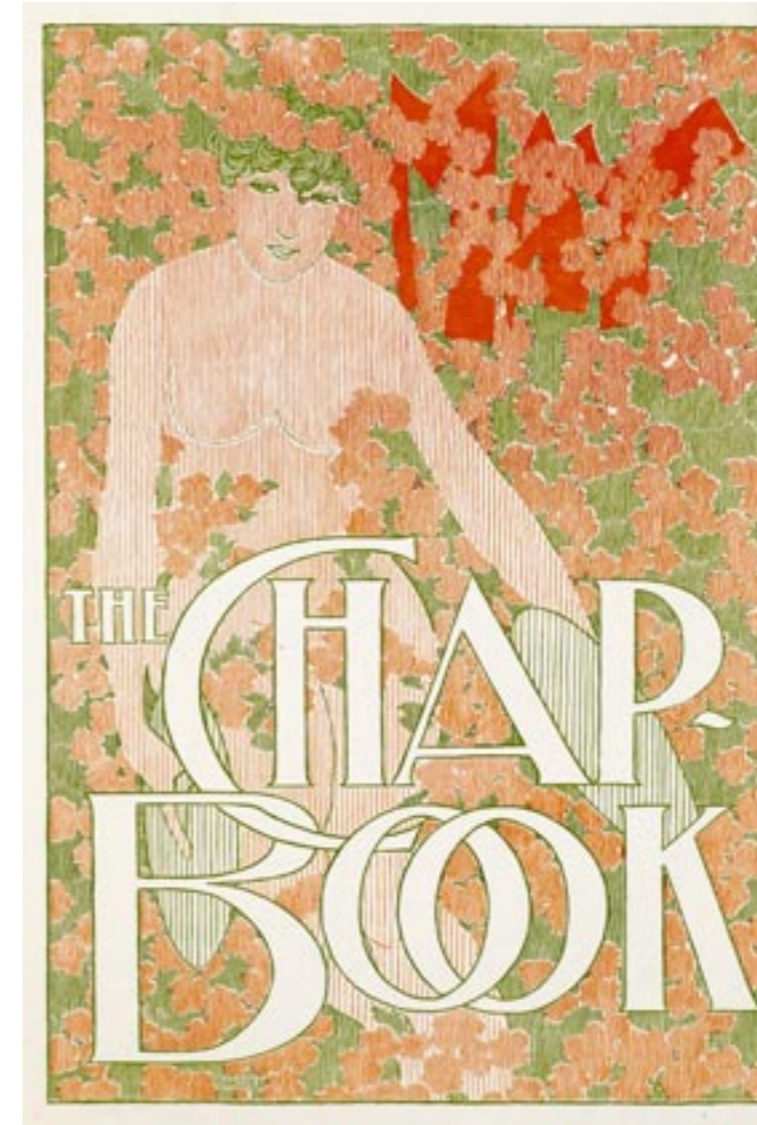
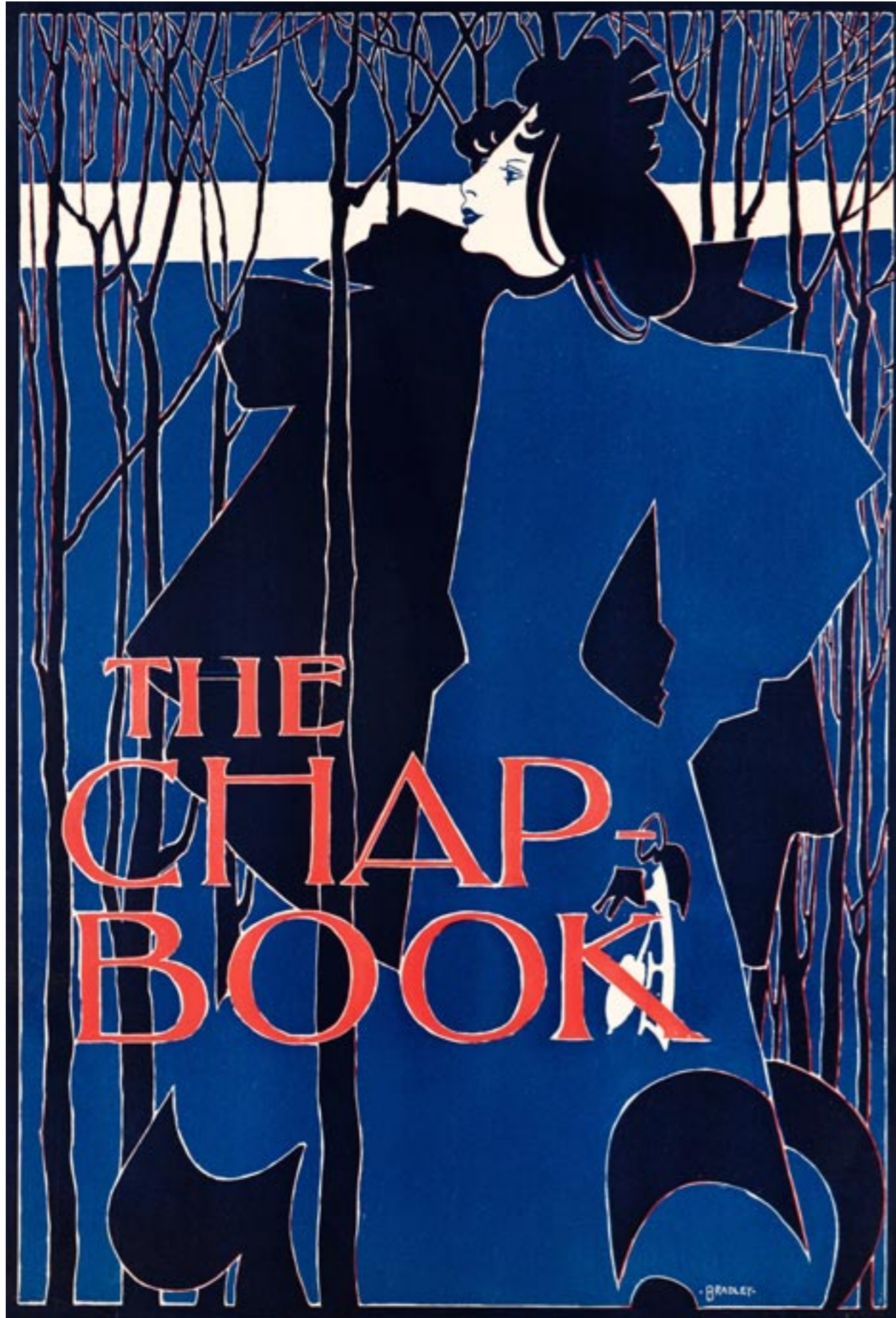
Upon his return to Chicago, he moved to Geneva, on the city's outskirts, where he set up a studio in a cottage overlooking the Fox River. There he began to transform the stylistic directions of his day into a personal and powerful idiom. *The Twins*, the May 1894 poster he created for *The Chap-Book*, one of the first of the country's little magazines, is often said to be among the earliest American graphic works to borrow directly from Art Nouveau (fig. 32).<sup>17</sup> Bradley also drew from ukiyo-e and Beardsley. Yet his arrangements were personal and distinctive, mimicking—while also transforming—his influences.

*The Twins* poster brought Bradley instant fame. New commissions soon came flooding in, by his own recounting “Holiday covers for *Harper's Weekly*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Harper's Young People*, later renamed *Harper's Roundtable*, page decorations for *Vogue*, a series of full-page designs for Sunday editions of *Chicago Tribune*.”<sup>18</sup>

30 | Maynard Dixon, *Overland January*, 1896. Poster. Lithograph on paper, 39.4 x 25.4 cm. Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. Gift of Jay T. Last.

31 | Maynard Dixon, *Lo-To-Kah by Verner Z. Reed*, 1897. Poster. Lithograph on paper, 39.6 x 37.5 cm. The Resnick Collection.

32 | Will H. Bradley, *The Chap-Book No. 1 The Twins*, 1894. Poster, printed by Stone & Kimball, Chicago, IL. Zincograph on paper, 51 x 36 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



His greatest designs, however, were the posters he made for *The Chap-Book*. After his first effort, Herbert Stuart Stone, the magazine's twenty-three-year-old editor, commissioned Bradley to create six more posters. The second, also printed in 1894, is of a woman in blue, set in a forest of saplings (fig. 33). It uses only three colors: blue, black, and red. But Bradley's adept handling of the forms, all outlined in white, subdivides the surface, creating an impression of complexity and richness, while making the whole scene appear elemental and immediate.

The fourth of Bradley's *Chap-Book* posters, which appeared in May of the following year, achieves the same effect but uses different pictorial means (fig. 34). He achieves the division of the picture through fragmentation—through the interruption or continuation of closely spaced, parallel vertical lines, which are very cleverly woven into the surface. It is much like a tapestry that has only its warp, with no weft to be seen.

Almost out of the blue, Bradley was suddenly everywhere—on walls, kiosks, billboards, covers, and magazine pages (fig. 35). The imagery he fashioned for each occasion was fresh and vigorous. *The Modern Poster* he made in 1895 for Charles Scribner's Sons

33 | Will H. Bradley, *The Chap-Book No. 2*, 1894. Poster, printed by Stone & Kimball, Chicago, IL. Zincograph on paper, 51 × 36 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

34 | Will H. Bradley, *The Chap-Book May No. 4*, 1895. Poster, printed by Stone & Kimball, Chicago, IL. Zincograph on paper, 51 × 36 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

35 | Will H. Bradley, *The Echo*, Chicago, 1895. Poster. Zincograph on paper, 59 × 40.5 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



36 | Will H. Bradley, *The Modern Poster*, No. 32, 1895. Poster, printed for Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, NY. Letterpress (relief process) on gray paper, 51 × 33 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



37 | Will H. Bradley, cover of *Bradley's Book* (Springfield, MA: Wayside Press), 1896. Poster. Lithograph on paper, 106 × 75 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

38 | Will H. Bradley, *Narcoti-Cure*, 1895. Poster, printed by Wayside Press, Springfield, MA, for the Narcoti Chemical Company. Zincograph on paper, 50.3 × 35.9 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

has about it a hint not only of Beardsley but also James McNeill Whistler and a few of the English painters of the previous generation (fig. 36). Always, though, Bradley was able to recast and refine his influences, to lend each work his own special look.

In 1896, he moved to Springfield, Massachusetts. There he founded the Wayside Press and began publishing his own monthly arts periodical, *Bradley's Book*, which featured his work alongside that of various writers of the day and his fellow artists, including Morris. One of the posters he made advertising the magazine is pure Arts and Crafts, with elements of Morris's aesthetic merged with those of Edward Burne-Jones (fig. 37). But also speckled throughout the pages of these initial issues are examples of advertisements Bradley had made for past and current clients. It was this purely commercial application of his work—far more than his art posters—that would become his true and steady occupation and constitute perhaps his most important contribution to the advent of modern American graphic design.





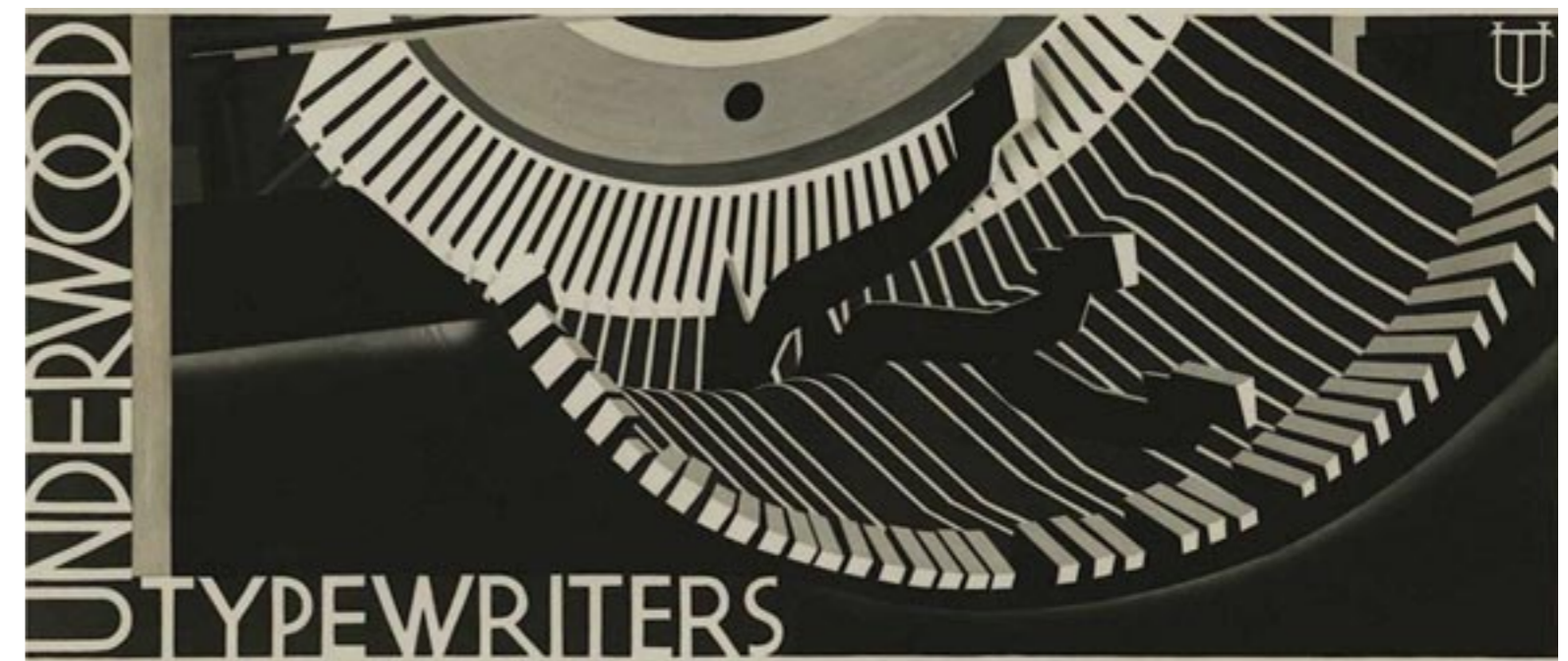
Brodovitch's billboard could have readily appeared in France or elsewhere in Europe in this period. More American in spirit—because of its content *and* form-language—was the work of Otis Shepard and his wife, Dorothy. Otis Shepard had begun working for Foster & Kleiser in the San Francisco office in 1917. By 1928, he was head of the art department, and he hired the young Dorothy Van Gorder as a staff artist. They married the following year and spent their honeymoon in Europe, where they met Austrian poster designer Joseph Binder, whose smooth and understated airbrush technique they both adopted. Shepard used it to convincing effect in a 1933 “practice” beer ad (fig. 192). Even before that, the couple had collaborated on an ad campaign for Chesterfield cigarettes, producing one of the signature billboards of the era, a stylish young “flapper” set into black and red geometrized frame (fig. 193). The couple decided around that time to move to New York and set up a freelance practice. Dorothy, who was an excellent designer in her own right, designed billboards for several clients. One of the standouts is her billboard for Underwood Typewriters (fig. 194). With its distinctive precisionist language, it is among the masterworks of the era.

The Shepherds, if leaders in the field, were not the only Americans pursuing such ideas. One novel strategy was a form of fracturing—splitting a set of images, like the pseudo-film sequence in an ad for Harold Lloyd's first “talkie” *Welcome Danger* (1929) (fig. 195). The notion of setting out multiple images at once worked as an effective preview of the film itself; it had the added advantage of making the whole page more fluid and dynamic. It reads like a film (a string of “cells”), and a wonderfully animated one at that. In a related way, an unknown designer relied on a simple visual trick for a luggage label for the short-lived New York Airways in 1928 (fig. 196). Here, a diagonal bifurcates the field, flipping what is either black or white in the image. Another new tactic was repetition, especially of lines or shapes—for example, in an advertisement by Winold Reiss for the Hotel St. George in Brooklyn (fig. 197). Designers at the time also achieved a similar effect with perspectival distortion, an idea that appears on a luggage label for the Barbizon Hotel in New York (fig. 198).

Among the most popular representations of the realities of the machine age—so much so that they even made their way onto a label for an apple crate—were symbols of force—gears, cogs, radio waves, lightning bolts, and the like—which became an almost ubiquitous way of conveying the new (fig. 199). Yet perhaps more quintessentially American in those years was a rhythmic dynamism—a visual language of form and movement that was closely wedded to jazz.

Many of the best examples can be found in movie posters or sheet music from Tin Pan Alley. Some are about pure line and movement, often depicting figures dancing ecstatically. A brilliant example of this is the sheet music cover for “Underneath the Harlem Moon” in 1932 (fig. 200). Its creator was Sidney Leff, who produced hundreds of covers in those years.

Many of the most accomplished works associated of this jazz-age aesthetic came out of the Harlem Renaissance, the flowering of African American arts and culture in Upper Manhattan. One of the best early designs was Winold Reiss's cover for *Oppor-*



191 | Alexey Brodovitch, *Van Raalte Flextoe*, 1931. Design for a billboard, from Art Directors Club, *Tenth Annual of Advertising Art* (New York: Book Service Company, 1931), 18. CL.

192 | Otis Shepard, *here's how Platz*, 1933. Sample advertisement, from *Advertising Arts*, May 1933, after page 17. Half-tone print on paper, 17.2 × 21.7 cm. CL.

193 | Otis and Dorothy Shepard, *Chesterfield After all - It's TASTE*, 1930. Design for a billboard. Private collection.

194 | Dorothy Shepard, *Underwood Typewriters*, 1931. Design for a billboard. Private collection.

**Now HEAR**  
**Harold Lloyd in his**  
**first talking picture!**

You'd think he couldn't possibly be any funnier, but you'll hear he is when you see him in "Welcome Danger," Harold Lloyd's first sound and talking picture. "Face the laughs that ever before!" "See" him all eyes and ears when you see it -- it has laughs, thrills, romance, youth, gaiety, everything! And what a treat for the children -- more fun than a thousand times! "Don't miss seeing and hearing Harold Lloyd in "Welcome Danger." See" him at every minute of it, and he will give you something to talk about for weeks ahead!



**HAROLD LLOYD**  
 IN  
**"WELCOME DANGER"**

**TUNE IN!**  
Paramount Pictures, Inc. presents "Welcome Danger," a Paramount Sound and Talking Picture, with Harold Lloyd, in the title role, and a cast of stars, including: ...

**Produced by the Harold Lloyd Corporation, a Paramount Sound and Talking Picture -- one of Paramount's super entertainments of the New Show World. Also presented about the theaters not yet equipped for sound. "If it's Paramount Pictures it's the best show in town!"**

**Paramount Pictures**  
PARAMOUNT PICTURES, INC. 1500 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, N.Y.

THE INTERIOR OF THE FOLLOWING ROOMS AT  
**HOTEL ST. GEORGE** BROOKLYN  
 WERE CONCEIVED AND DESIGNED BY  
**WINOLD REISS**

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 INCLUDING THE LIGHT EFFECT  
 GRAND FOYER TO BALL ROOM  
 BALL ROOM VESTIBULE AND COAT ROOM  
 GRAND SALON AND FOYER  
 SUITE OF FIVE BANQUET ROOMS AND FOYER  
 SUITE FOUR PRIVATE DINING ROOMS  
 CLARK GALLERY  
 THE CHINESE AND TOWER ROOMS AND FOYER  
 THE ROOF DINING ROOM 25<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR  
 THE EGYPTIAN ROOF AND COLONNADE  
 THE CAFETERIA AND COFFEE SHOP  
 THE POOL LOBBY AND LUNCH ROOM  
 ALL LADIES AND MEN'S RESTROOMS

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 SPECIALIZING IN HOTEL RESTAURANT AND CLUB INTERIORS

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**NEW YORK ATLANTIC CITY**  
**BALTIMORE WASHINGTON**



**B P BARBIZON-PLAZA**  
 CENTRAL PARK SOUTH NEW YORK CITY

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PRODUCE OF  
 U.S.A.

**DYNAMAMO**

CONTENTS  
 ONE U. S. BUSHEL  
 BY VOLUME

**APPLES**

PACKERS, SHIPPERS & DISTRIBUTORS  
**JUSTMAN-FRANKENTHAL CO.**  
 WENATCHEE, WASH.

195 | *Harold Lloyd in Welcome Danger*, 1929. Magazine advertisement for Paramount Pictures, New York, NY, in *The Saturday Evening Post*, October 19, 1929, 56. Halftone print on paper, 33 x 25.5 cm. CL.

196 | *New York Airways, Inc.*, ca. 1928. Luggage label, printed for New York Airways, Inc., New York, NY. Offset print on paper, 9.7 x 7.2 cm. CL.

197 | Winold Reiss, *Hotel St. George*, 1929. Advertisement. Offset lithograph on paper, 29.5 x 21.6 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

198 | *B P Barbizon-Plaza Central Park South New York City*, ca. 1930. Luggage label. Offset print on paper, height: 10 cm. CL.

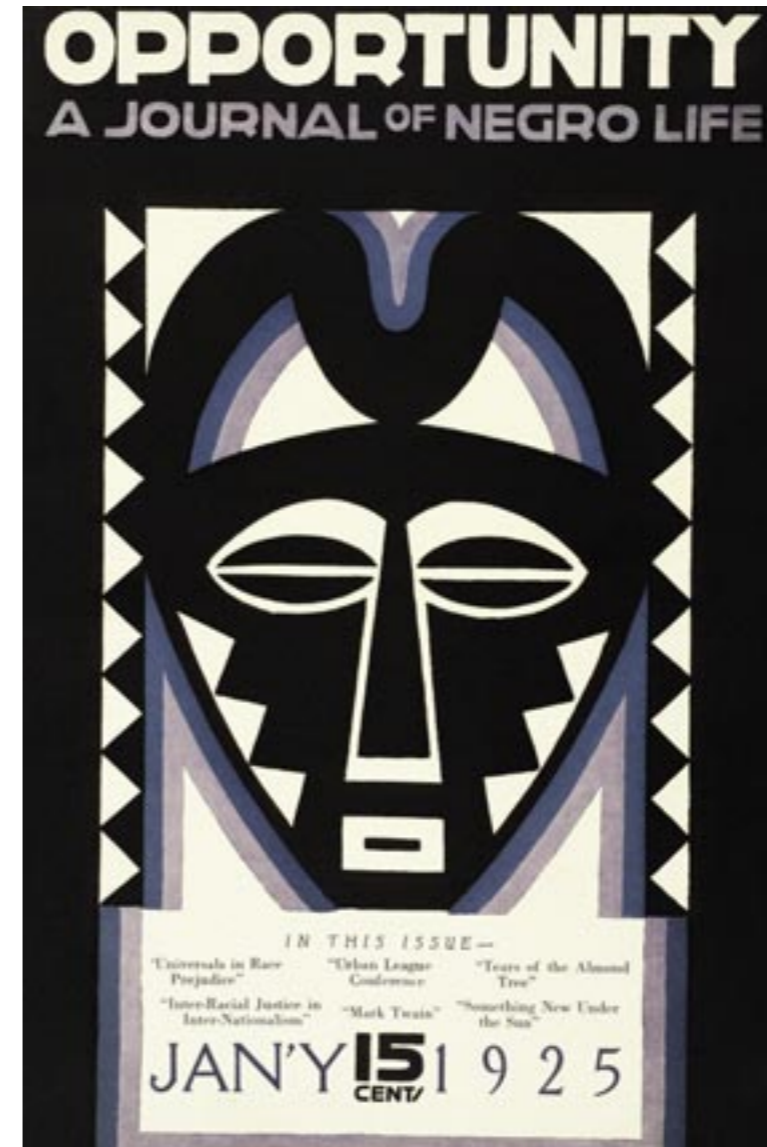
199 | *Dynamo Apples Produce of U.S.A.*, ca. 1935. Label, printed for Justman-Frankenthal Co., Wenatchee, WA. Halftone print on paper, 22.8 x 26.1 cm. CL.



200 | Sydney Leff, "Underneath the Harlem Moon," 1932. Cover for sheet music, published by De Sylva, Brown and Henderson, Inc., New York, NY. Half-tone print on paper, 30.7 × 23.2 cm. CL.

tunity: *A Journal of Negro Life*. It was based on African masks, a popular theme for modernist artists going back at least to Picasso's 1907 *Les Femmes d'Alger* (fig. 201).

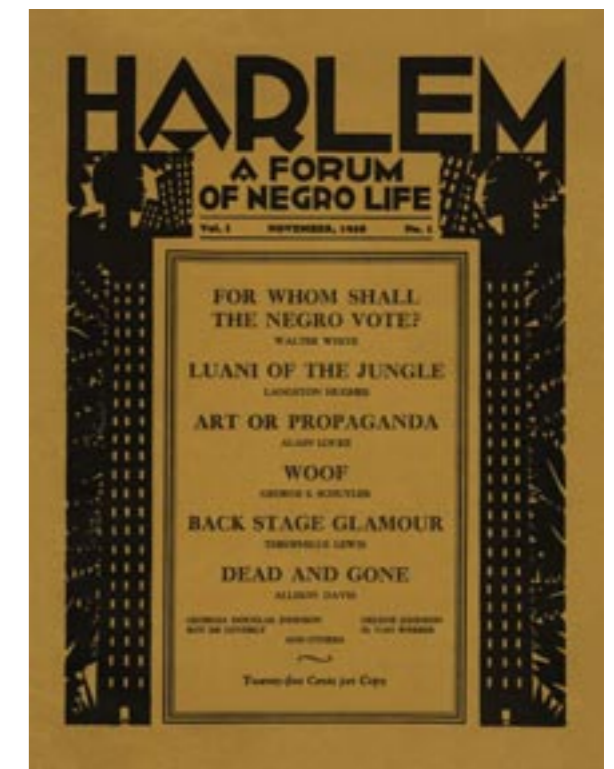
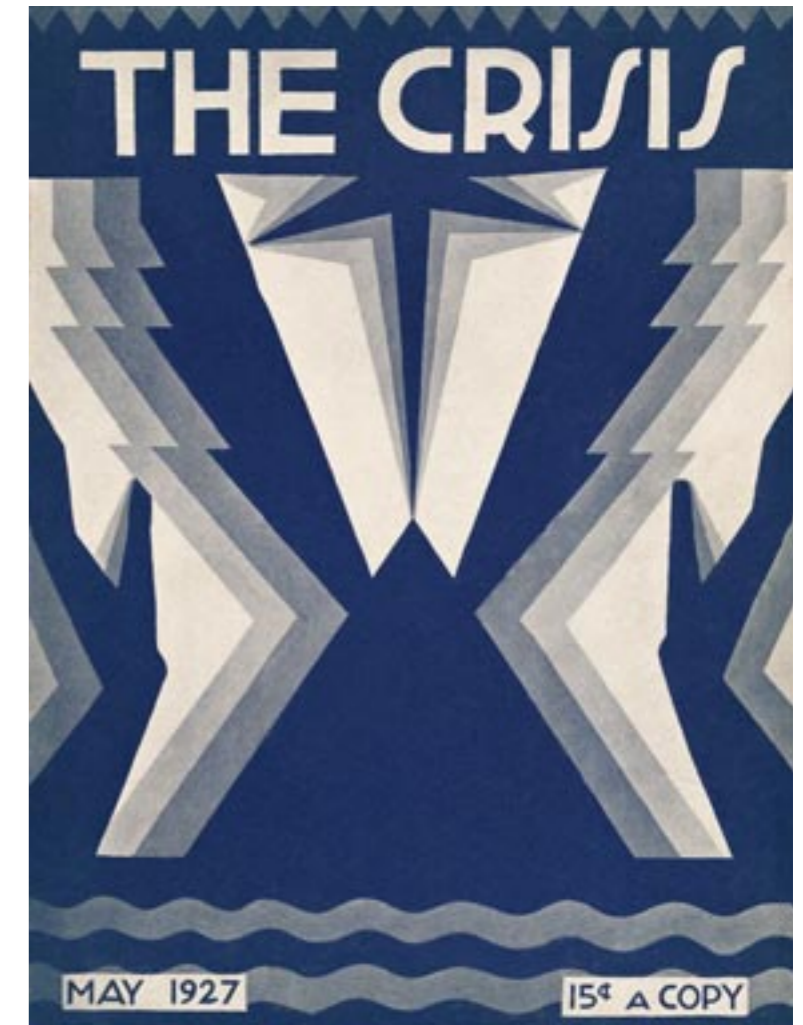
But the most captivating and original designs of the Harlem Renaissance came from Aaron Douglas. It was the African American Douglas, much more than any of his white contemporaries who forged the graphic language of interwar Harlem. Born in Topeka, Kansas, in 1899, Douglas graduated from the University of Nebraska with a degree in fine arts in 1922. He moved to Harlem in the mid-1920s and quickly made his mark with his powerful geometric forms and figures (fig. 202). His many magazine and book covers, with references to African masks, sculptures, and evocations of African dance, formed a distinctive synthesis, merging European modernism and African heritage (fig. 203). Douglas's work was widely influential; the language of a Black liberation he and others had invented was picked up by commercial white artists like Albert Wilfred Barbelle, another prolific sheet music designer (fig. 204).

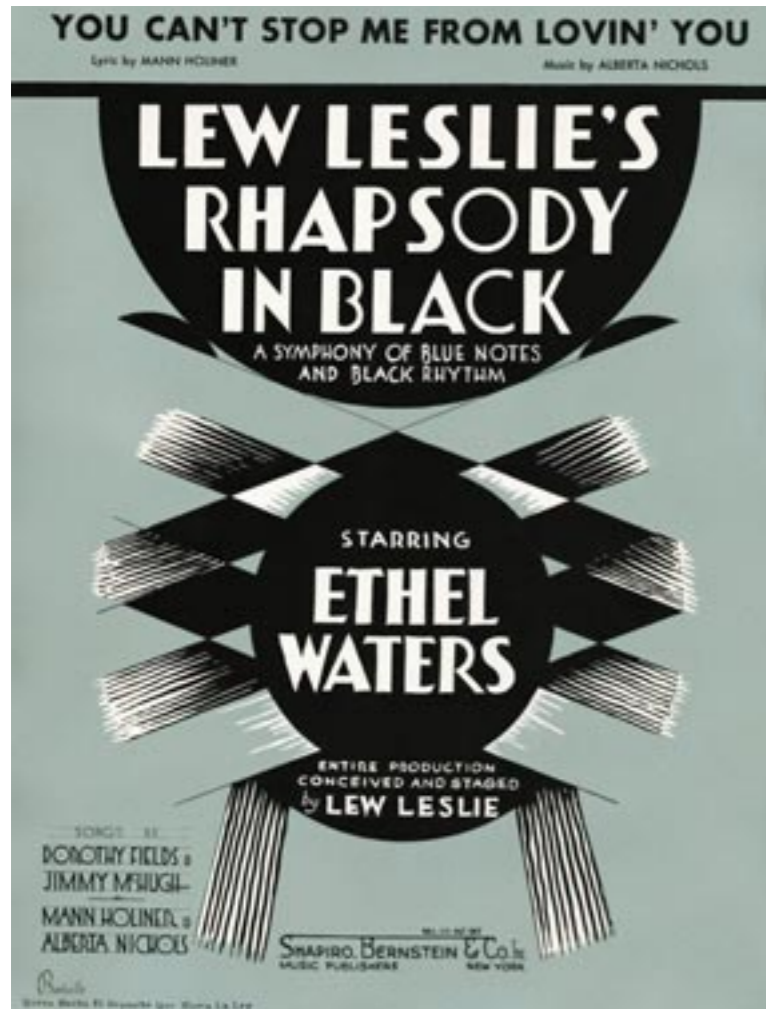


201 | Winold Reiss, cover of *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life*, January 1925. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, The New York Public Library, New York, NY.

202 | Aaron Douglas, cover of *The Crisis*, May 1927. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, The New York Public Library, New York, NY.

203 | Aaron Douglas, cover of *Harlem: A Forum of Negro Life*, November 1928. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, The New York Public Library, New York, NY.





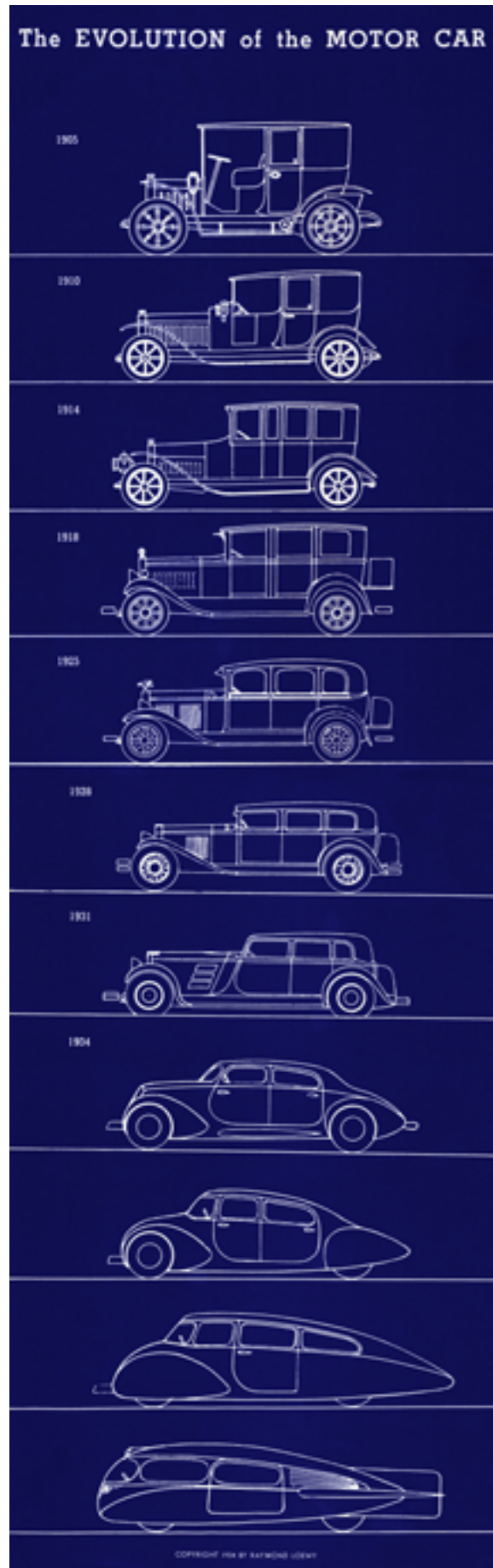
These concepts—the syncopated rhythms of jazz, bold contrasts, and an affinity for jutting and angular geometries also carried over to other areas of mainstream commercial art. In some examples, such as Weimer Pursell's excellent poster for the 1933 Chicago World's Fair, the influence comes out mainly in its brilliant color scheme (fig. 205). The restless feeling of movement and form, however, is expressed fully in *Go!*, another poster advertising the fair (fig. 206). It is unsigned but was very likely the work of Joseph B. Birren, who made other, related designs for the fair.<sup>16</sup>

The hallmark of American design in the later 1920s and 1930s, though, was less about specific strategies than it was about formal variety. The language of Art Deco persisted well into the 1940s—and beyond. There were still faint echoes of it in popular advertising in the 1950s and 1960s. But by the early 1930s, a new and even more energized expression had made its appearance.

204 | Albert Wilfried Barbelle, "Lew Leslie's Rhapsody in Black," ca. 1931. Cover for sheet music, printed for Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., New York, NY. 30.6 x 23.2 cm. CL.

205 | Weimer Pursell, *Chicago World's Fair*, 1933. Poster, printed by Neely Printing Co., Chicago, IL, for *A Century of Progress Exposition*, Chicago, IL. Lithograph on paper, 105.4 x 69.5 cm. The Resnick Collection.

206 | Joseph B. Birren [attrib.], *Go! Chicago World's Brightest Spot A Century of Progress*, 1933. Poster. Printed by The Cuneo Press, Inc., Chicago, IL for *A Century of Progress Exposition*. The Resnick Collection.



Yet most commercial graphic artists were slow to take up the idea—in part because they lacked a ready visual language for depicting motion. The first responses to this problem—from the early years of the century—now seem risible: automobile advertisements at times showed the cars with wings, a less than subtle, and rather technologically challenged, means to indicate that they were being propelled forward (fig. 209). The matter was simpler for ships. One could paint the prow of a ship slicing through the waves, as one unnamed artist did around 1928 on the cover of a brochure advertising the Great White Fleet’s summer cruises, a fleet of “banana boats” operated by the United Fruit Company (fig. 210). Here, at least, one gets the sense that the ship is steaming at high speed.

In 1929, Wesley Neff, a Canadian-born freelance illustrator then living in Detroit, devised one set of answers to the problem of projecting speed in graphic form. For an advertisement for Bohnalite pistons, Neff introduced bold figural imagery, clever perspectival elongation, and “speed lines” (essentially, an indication of air movement) to generate a look of dynamism (fig. 211). Neff’s lively portrayal of a sporty couple hurtling down the road in their convertible stands in distinct contrast to a Hupmobile ad of the same year, which was all about a staid stylishness (fig. 212). The couple and their car, set in the elegant Place de la Concorde, in Paris, appear as if they part of a fixed display, almost motionless in their perfection.

Other designers also worked out how to make speed readily perceptible—beyond the simple imposition of “speed lines” (fig. 213). Otis Shepard’s 1929 advertisement for Plymouth offers an especially adroit solution (fig. 214). It depicts a car that is “de-formed,” as if rapid motion itself were reshaping it. Even more compelling is a series of ads made by Walter Dorwin Teague for the Marmon Motor Company. Teague not only introduced extended and dramatic speed lines to call attention to the idea that Marmon’s automobiles were very fast, but he also distorted the car’s bodies, partly dissolving and warping them (fig. 215). In one exceptional ad, he went a step further, showing the car climbing steeply, as if it were an airplane taking off (fig. 216).

The next step in this projection of speed is evident in the work of John Vassos. Vassos, a Greek-born immigrant living in New York, had garnered acclaim as an illustrator before he became a noted industrial designer (especially for RCA). In the late 1920s and early 1930s, he illustrated a series of books, with texts written by his wife, Ruth. *Contempo*, which appeared in 1929, and *Ultimo*, which came out the following year, are replete with images of streamlined buildings and places. Vassos’s most admired book is his 1931 classic *Phobia*, a dystopian work consisting of twenty-four plates expressing an unease with modernity. One of the plates, “Dromophobia,” or the fear of crossing streets, is a forceful essay on motion itself. In its portrayal of two cars, one smaller, one quite enormous, careening down the street and sending the pedestrians running for their lives, is an evocation of speed in its purest—and most menacing—form (fig. 217).

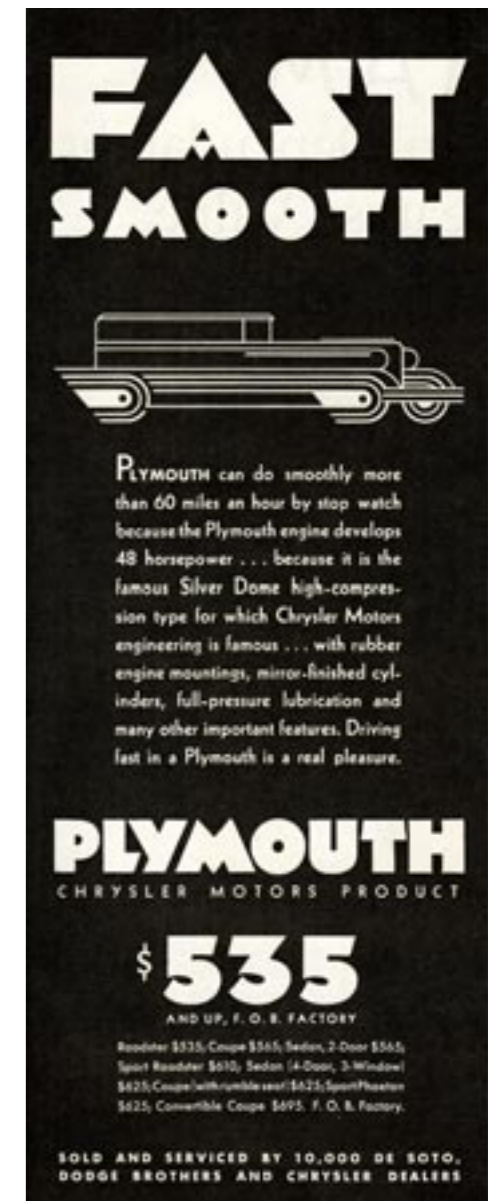
What is not developed in Vassos’s remarkable image is the styling of the cars themselves. The surroundings are streamlined; the cars are not. And that was also true for a magazine advertisement Vassos created for the Packard Motor Car Company in



207 | Raymond Loewy, *The Evolution of the Motor Car*, 1934. From *Advertising Arts*, March 1934, after page 36. Offset print on paper, each sheet 29.2 x 21.2 cm. CL.

208 | Raymond Loewy, [attrib.], *Menu Pennsylvania Railroad*, 1931. Masthead for printed menu, used onboard the Pennsylvania Railroad. Offset print on paper, 4.4 x 16.3 cm (detail). CL.

209 | *Winton Six*, 1909. Magazine advertisement for The Winton Motor Carriage Co., Cleveland, OH. Halftone print on paper, 34.7 x 26.7 cm. CL.



210 | *Great White Fleet Summer Cruises*, ca. 1928. Brochure, printed for the United Fruit Company, Boston, MA. Offset print on paper, 22.8 x 10.3 cm. CL.

211 | Wesley Neff, *Snap! Bohnalite Nelson Pistons*, 1929. Magazine advertisement for Bohn Aluminum & Brass Corporation, Detroit, MI, from *The Saturday Evening Post*, March 2, 1929, 58. Half-tone print on paper, image: 32 x 23.9 cm. CL.

212 | *Creators of the Mode The New Hupmobile Century Six & Eight*, 1929. Magazine advertisement for the Hupp Motor Company, Detroit, MI, from *Good Housekeeping*, April 1929, n.p. Half-tone print on paper, 29.8 x 21.4 cm. CL.

213 | *Pennsylvania Airlines, Inc., "Capital to the Lakes,"* ca. 1930. Luggage label. Offset print on paper, 9.3 x 12.2 cm. CL.

214 | Otis Shepard, *Fast Smooth Plymouth*, 1929. Magazine advertisement, for the Chrysler Motors Company, Highland Park, MI. Half-tone print on paper, 30.4 x 11.7 cm. CL.



215 | Walter Dorwin Teague, *Marmon Big Eight*, 1930. Magazine advertisement for Marmon Motor Company, Indianapolis, IN, from *Vanity Fair*, January 1930, n.p. Half-tone print on paper, 28.8 x 21.2 cm (trimmed). CL.

216 | Walter Dorwin Teague, *Marmon Big Eight*, 1930. Advertisement, printed for the Marmon Motor Car Company, Indianapolis, IN. Half-tone print on paper, image: 25.9 x 17.8 cm. CL.

1932 (fig. 218). A Packard deluxe model, shown at the bottom of the page, sits at the end of a winding road leading up and through a futuristic metropolis. The bridge and other structures are sporting the new streamlined language, yet the car itself has not been reimagined. It stands in notable contrast to its surroundings. Vassos, though, knew very well how to contrive a scene of pure streamlining. In a magazine layout from a few years before, an ad for the Cammeyer shoe company, he employed a consistent and elegant image: an impossibly thin and attenuated couple dancing through a swirling celestial setting (fig. 219). In the clearing of the “clouds” are two ghostly representations of a woman’s shoes, as if the whole vision were a fever dream.

By the 1932, the language of streamlining was becoming almost omnipresent, apart, it should be stated again, from the machines themselves. In an advertisement for Medusa Portland Cement Company, the work of an unknown designer, we even see it applied to an abstracted human figure, his hands dripping concrete to form a “constructed” landscape (fig. 220). Another 1932 ad, for a ball bearing company, takes a different approach: it combines a car with an enormous machined and glis-



217 | John Vassos, “Dromophobia,” 1931. Plate from *Phobia* (New York: Covici Friede Publishers, 1931). Half-tone print on paper, 30.4 x 22.5 cm. CL.

218 | John Vassos, *Packard, Aristocrat of the Metropolis*, 1932. Sample magazine advertisement, printed for the Packard Motor Car Company, Detroit, MI. Half-tone print on paper, 25.3 x 17.4 cm. CL.

219 | John Vassos, *Cammeyer Salon de Luxe Fifth Avenue at Fifty Third New York*, 1927. Sample magazine advertisement, printed for A. J. Cammeyer, New York, NY. Half-tone print on paper, 25.3 x 17.4 cm. CL.





220 | *White Portland Cement*, 1932. Magazine advertisement for Medusa Portland Cement Company, Cleveland, OH, from *Fortune Magazine*, April 1932, 13. Half-tone print on paper, 35.7 × 27.8 cm. CL.

221 | *New Departure Ball Bearings*, 1932. Magazine advertisement for the New Departure Mfg. Company, Bristol, CT. Half-tone print on paper, 35.7 × 28.4 cm. CL.

222 | *Chrysler Royal Imperial Airflow*, ca. 1936. Brochure, printed for the Chrysler Motors Company, Highland Park, MI. Lithograph on paper, 20.3 × 24.2 cm. CL.

223 | Peter Helck, *1936 Pontiac Built to Last 100,000 Miles*, 1936. Magazine advertisement for Pontiac Motor Company, Pontiac, MI. Half-tone print on paper, 17 × 18 cm (trimmed). CL.

224 | Joseph B. Birren, *A Century of Progress Chicago*, 1933. Brochure, printed by Gunthorp-Warren Printing Company, for *A Century of Progress Exposition*, Chicago, IL. Offset print on paper, 15.7 × 7.7 cm. CL.

tening bearing (fig. 221). This early example of photomontage—a technique that would become ever more important for the new graphic design as the decade went on—was all about how new mechanisms themselves were transforming the look of modernity. (Two years later, a lone ball bearing would grace the cover of the Museum of Modern Art’s epochal 1934 *Machine Art* exhibition.<sup>3</sup>)

For American commercial art, the decisive moment came in 1934 with the appearance of the Chrysler Airflow, the first full-size production car in the United States to employ streamlining. Chrysler also marketed a companion model under the DeSoto brand, the DeSoto Airflow. Both cars became hugely popular—even beloved—by the public.

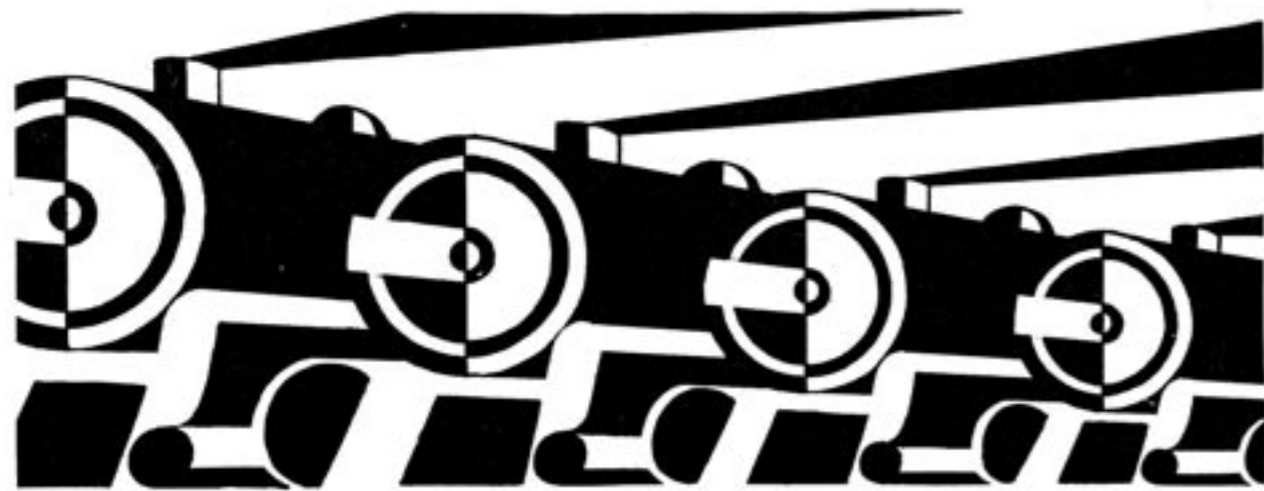
The advent of the Airflow spawned a series of ads and brochures in the new style (fig. 222). The competing automobile companies quickly launched their own streamlined models, and with them, a cascade of ads, signs, and printed ephemera. Often, the new cars were shown flying, or even in outer space, as in a Pontiac magazine ad, by Peter Helck, which displayed the company’s new model circling the earth (fig. 223).

The language of streamlining was not only applied to cars. Refrigerators, stove, washing machines, scales, and other “durable goods” were soon transformed through streamlining. The smoothed, sweeping contours also became a form of graphic shorthand for newness itself—applied to an array of posters, handouts, and other printed

works. Chicago-based Joseph B. Birren’s many variant designs announcing the city’s 1933 World’s Fair offer an early and consummate example of this new idiom (fig. 224). Each featured Saturn with swirling rings—as if we ourselves could see the planet hurtling through the sky.

This poetics of swift movement became a means to sell almost anything. Loewy famously streamlined a fully stationary pencil sharpener, producing a product that was silly and beautiful in equal measure. When Futura, a new sans-serif typeface created by German designer Paul Renner, was released in the United States around 1930, it too was marketed with the imagery of movement, a fact that is all the more confounding because Futura’s strong geometric shapes were in fact quite static in appearance (fig. 225).

The moving trains of the Futura ad, however, were prophetic. Many of the best “dynamic” graphic designs of the mid-1930s were associated with trains or airplanes—modes of transportation for which streamlining and its aeronautical advantages—carried the most sense. The major railroad companies developed their signature streamlined trains—“The Mercury,” “The 20th Century Limited,” and the “Daylight,” among them—to drum up business, and they advertised each service relentlessly with posters, magazine ads, and brochures—each conveying the distinctive look of that company’s train (figs. 226–229).



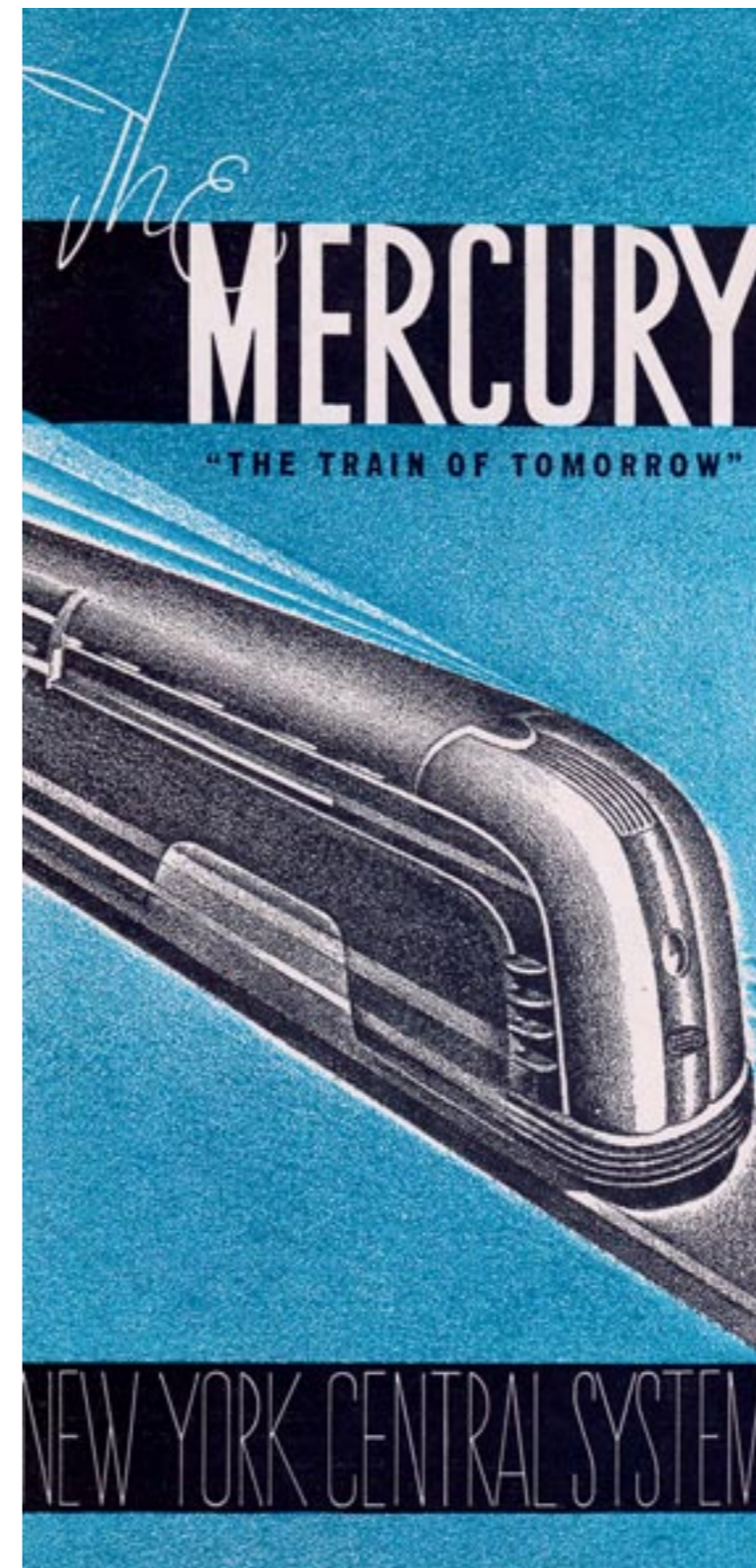
The Century...The Broadway...The Overland...The Golden State...Four of the dozens of superb trains operated daily over American Railroads. • To express these four and their many sisters, in type as powerful, as clean cut, as distinguished as the trains themselves, has hitherto been rather a problem. • With FUTURA BOLD, however, conveying the same energetic, abstract and logical qualities, this problem fades to the vanishing point. • Never was there a type face better suited to present the message of not only the railroads but also the entire heavy industries, than this...



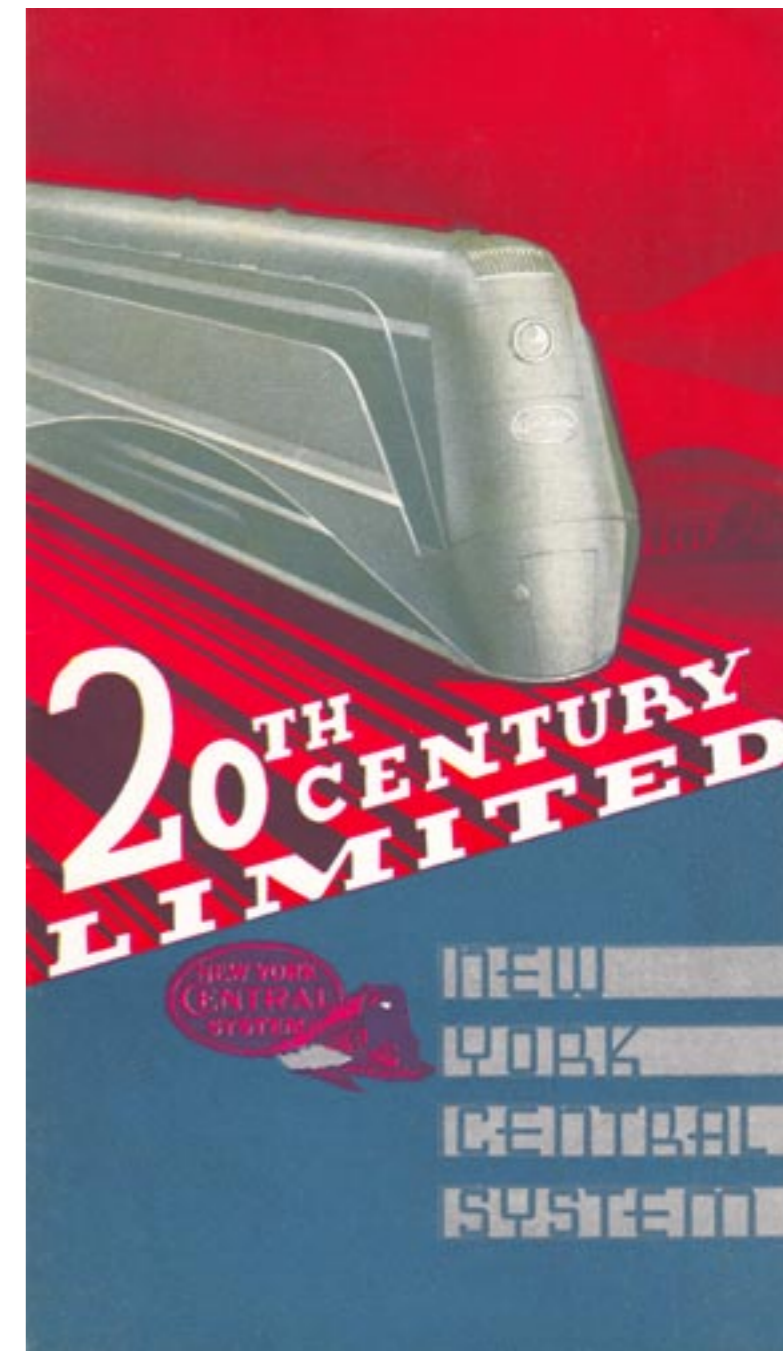
**FUTURA**

the type of today  
and tomorrow

THE BAUER TYPE FOUNDRY, INC., NEW YORK  
At Two-Thirty-Five East Forty-Fifth Street

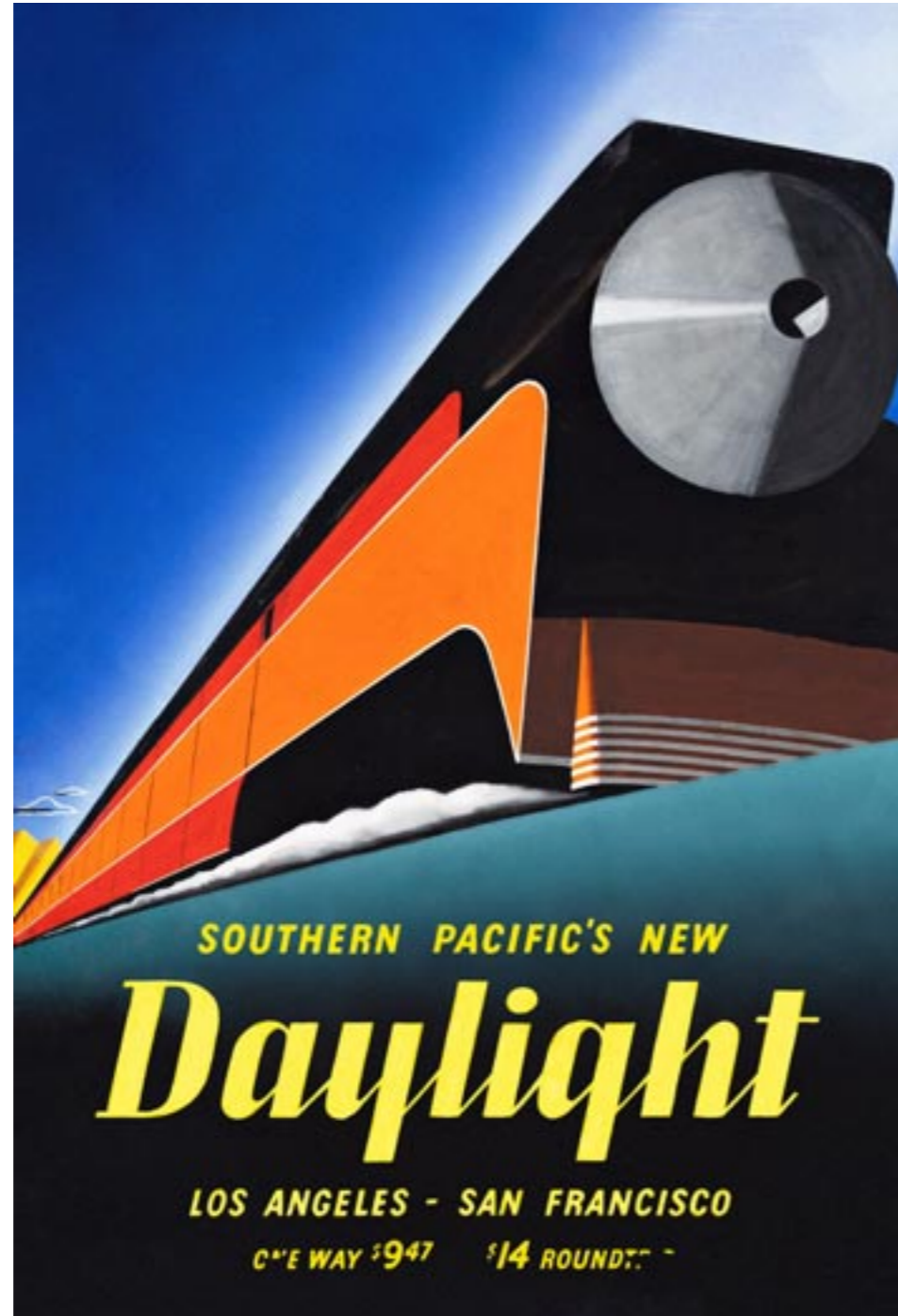
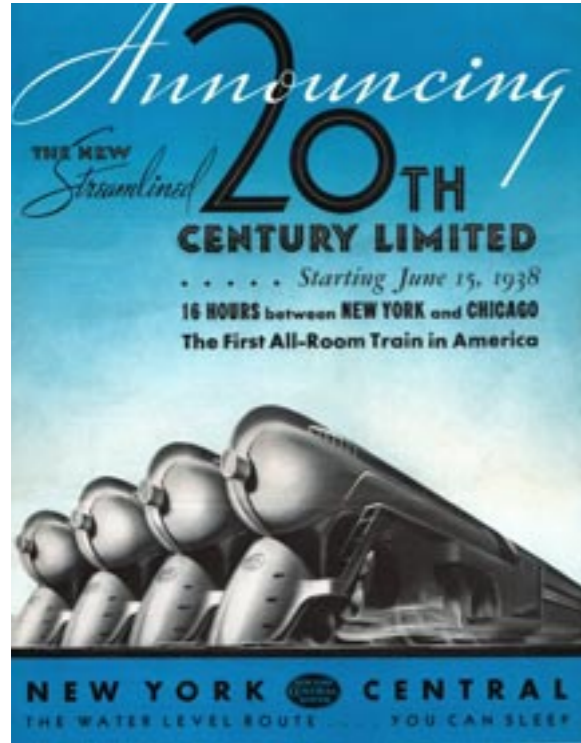


225 | Futura, the type of today and tomorrow, ca. 1930. Advertisement from Frank H. Young, *Modern Advertising Art* (New York: Covici, Friede, Inc., 1930), 121. Offset print on paper, 26.2 x 18.8 cm. CL.



226 | The Mercury "The Train of Tomorrow," 1936. Brochure, printed for New York Central Railroad System, New York, NY. Half-tone print on paper, 21.3 x 10.1 cm. CL.

227 | 20th Century Limited New York Central System, 1937. Brochure, printed by Bodley Printers, Inc., New York, NY, for New York Central Railroad System, New York, NY. Half-tone print on paper, 18.2 x 10.3 cm. CL.



228 | *Announcing the New Streamlined 20th Century Limited*, 1938. Brochure, printed for the New York Central System, New York, NY. Half-tone print on paper, 27.7 x 21.2 cm. CL.

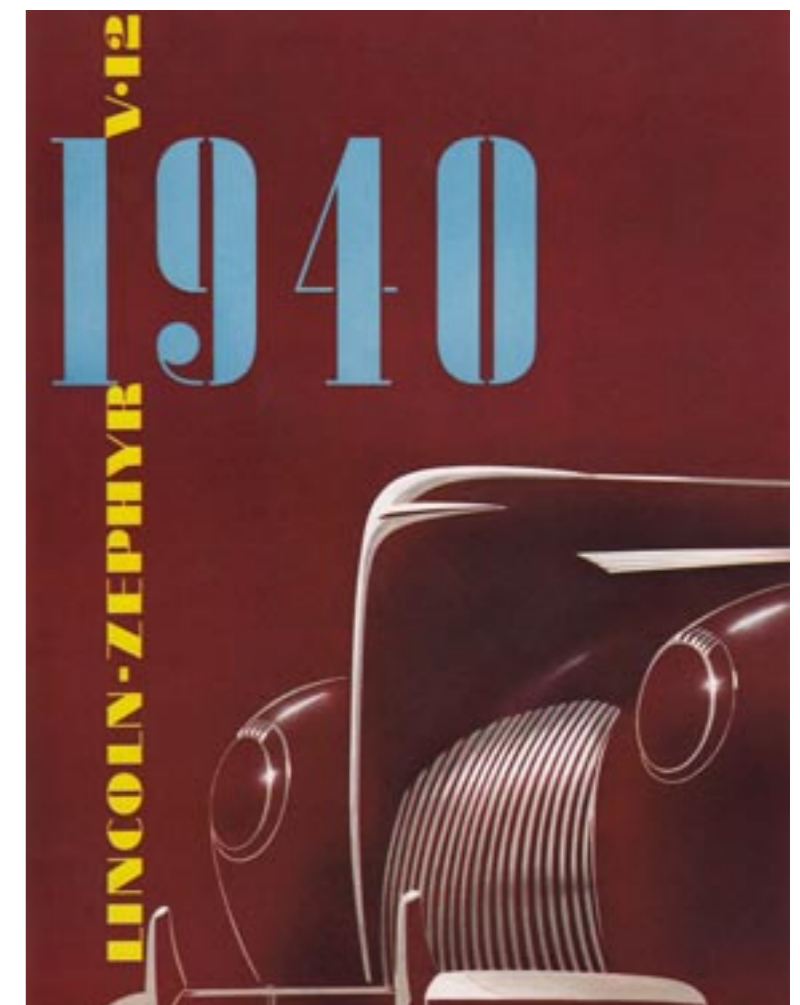
229 | *Southern Pacific's New Daylight Los Angeles-San Francisco*, 1937. Poster, printed for Southern Pacific Railroad, San Francisco, CA. Lithograph on paper, image: 57.1 x 39.7 cm. The Resnick Collection.

230 | Fred Ludekens, *American Airlines Inc.*, 1936. Timetable, printed by Calvert-Hatch Co., Cleveland, OH, for American Airlines, Chicago, IL. Half-tone print on paper, 23.1 x 10.2 cm. CL.



The new airline companies were not far behind. By 1936, new streamlined airplane models were in service, and the airlines were keen to promote their look and advantages. And it wasn't only the aura of the gleaming metal aircraft skins they sought to plant in potential customers' minds; they were eager to exhibit their up-to-date attitude through graphics. A 1936 American Airlines timetable by the California-born designer Fred Ludekens is an early masterwork of modernist restraint (fig. 230).

The phenomenon of streamlining and projecting speed was so pervasive that even an ordinary fruit company embraced it, rebranding their product as "Streamline Pears." The company's crate label is a brilliant essay on speed and futurism, a perfect statement of "freshness" in both senses (fig. 231). The aura of a bright, lustrous future also carried over to magazine covers, especially those for *Popular Science*. One especially evocative work came from William John Heaslip (who later become well-known for his paintings of space travel): a flying rocket ship that appeared on the cover of *American Boy* magazine (fig. 232). More prosaic, though no less lovely, is a luggage label from Transcontinental & Western Air (TWA) featuring one of its new Stratoliners (the same model that would become the B-17 in the war) making its way across country (fig. 233).



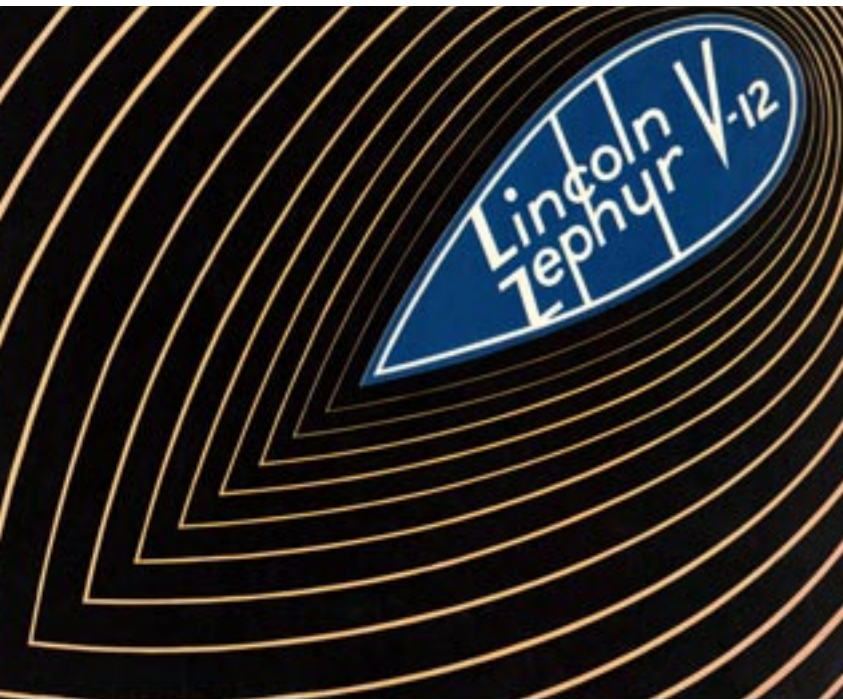
231 | *Streamline Selected California Pears*, ca. 1937. Label, printed for Day & Young, Santa Clara, CA. Lithograph on paper, 19.1 × 27.2 cm. CL.

232 | William John Heaslip, cover of *American Boy*, November 1937. Half-tone print on paper, 33 × 24.4 cm. CL.

233 | *Route of the Stratoliners Shortest Fastest Coast-To-Coast*, ca. 1940. Luggage label, printed for Transcontinental & Western Air, Kansas City, MO. Offset print on paper, diameter: 9.8 cm. CL.

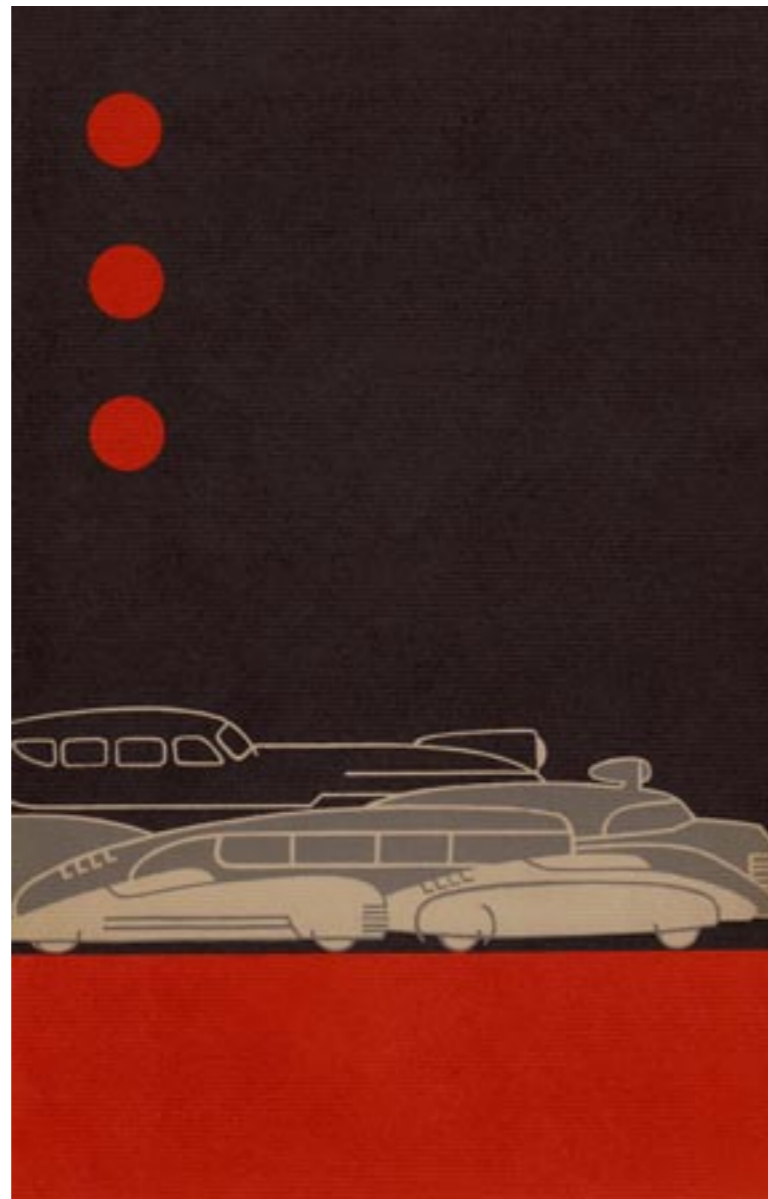
234 | *Lincoln Zephyr V-12*, 1936. Brochure, printed for the Lincoln Motor Company, Detroit, MI. Offset print on paper, 21.2 × 27.3 cm. CL.

235 | *The New Lincoln-Zephyr V-12 for 1938*, 1937. Brochure, printed for Lincoln Motor Company, Detroit, MI. Offset lithograph on paper, 23.5 × 31.3 cm. CL.



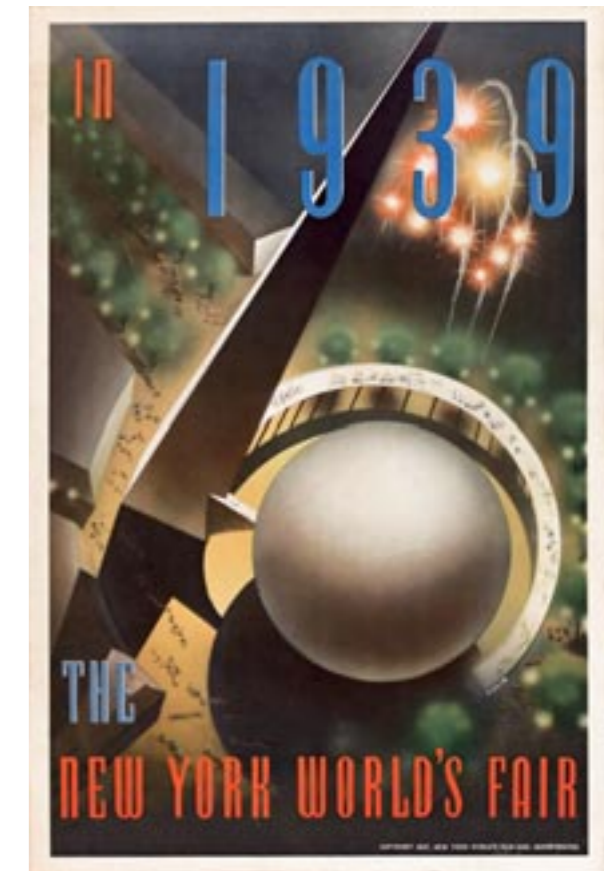
236 | 1940 Lincoln-Zephyr V-12, 1939. Brochure, printed for Lincoln Motor Company, Detroit, MI. Halftone print on paper, 27.8 x 21.6 cm. CL.

237 | *Modes and Motors*, 1938. Booklet, printed for General Motors Corporation, Detroit, MI. Offset print on paper, 21 x 13.3 cm. CL.



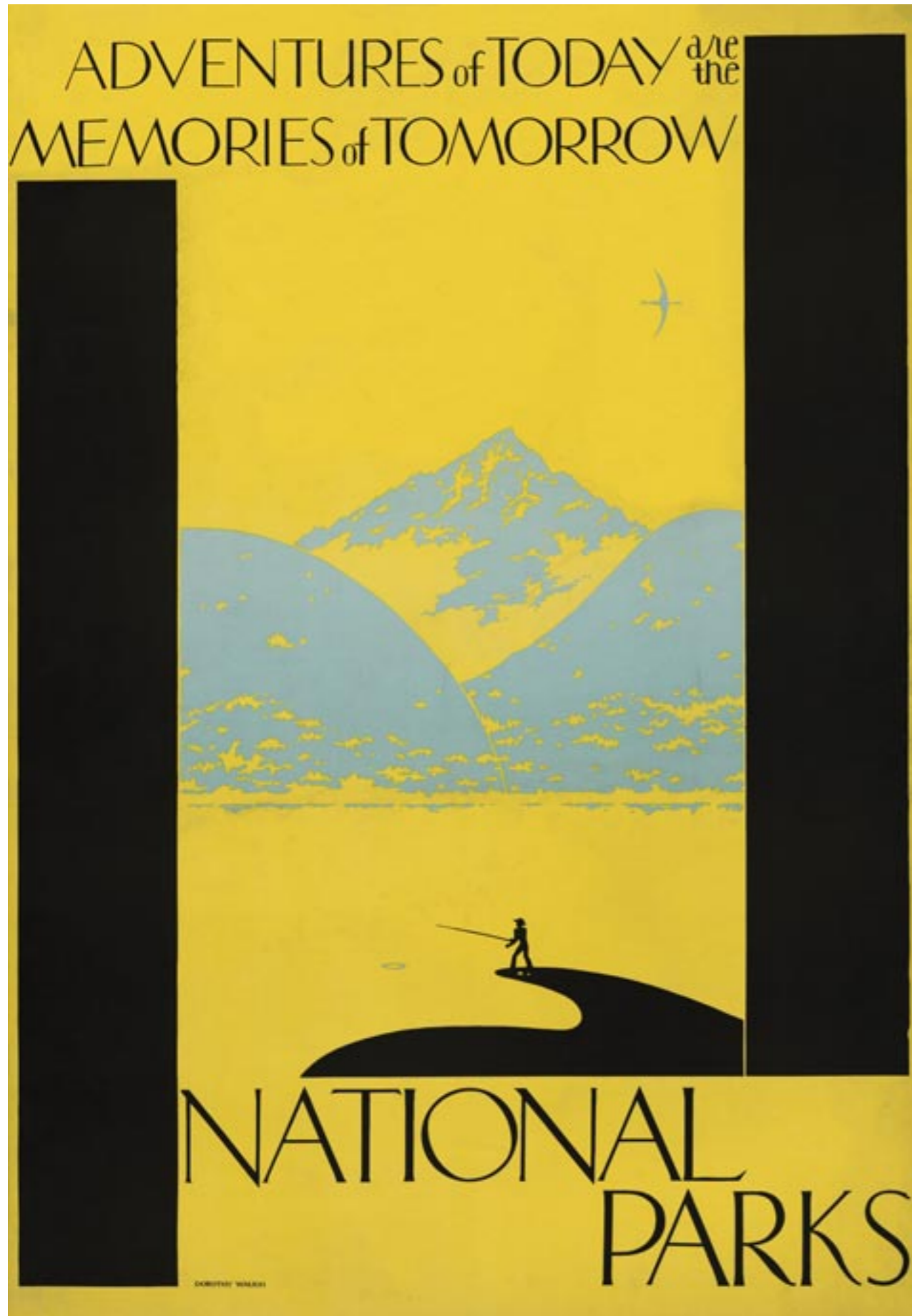
In 1935, the Lincoln Motor Company released its own streamlined model, the Lincoln Zephyr, its competitor to the Chrysler Airflow. Lincoln's new car was not only more upscale, but the sales materials the company prepared (all by an unnamed designer or designers, as was standard for the big Detroit automobile manufacturers) are among the signal works of the era. An especially "resonant" design of the late 1930s is a brochure for the 1936 Zephyr V-12 model (fig. 234). Borrowing from the motion studies then being conducted in the aircraft industry, it depicts "flow lines" sweeping around a wing-shaped logo—a visual confirmation of how the car's form was supposed to enhance its aerodynamic performance. More customary for Lincoln's ads and handouts, however, were pictures of the cars—or some detail. But they were always set out in such a manner that the sleek, sinuous contours of each model were emphasized (figs. 235, 236).

General Motors Corporation, equally keen to show the inherent modernity of their cars, distributed brochures (at the 1939 New York World's Fair and at various



238 | Joseph Binder, *New World's Fair The World of Tomorrow*, 1939. Poster. Offset print on paper, 50.7 x 34.1 cm. Private collection.

239 | Nembhard N. Culin, *In 1939 the New York World's Fair*, 1937. Poster, printed for the New York World's Fair Corporation, New York, NY. Photolithograph on paper, 99.7 x 70.2 cm. The Resnick Collection.

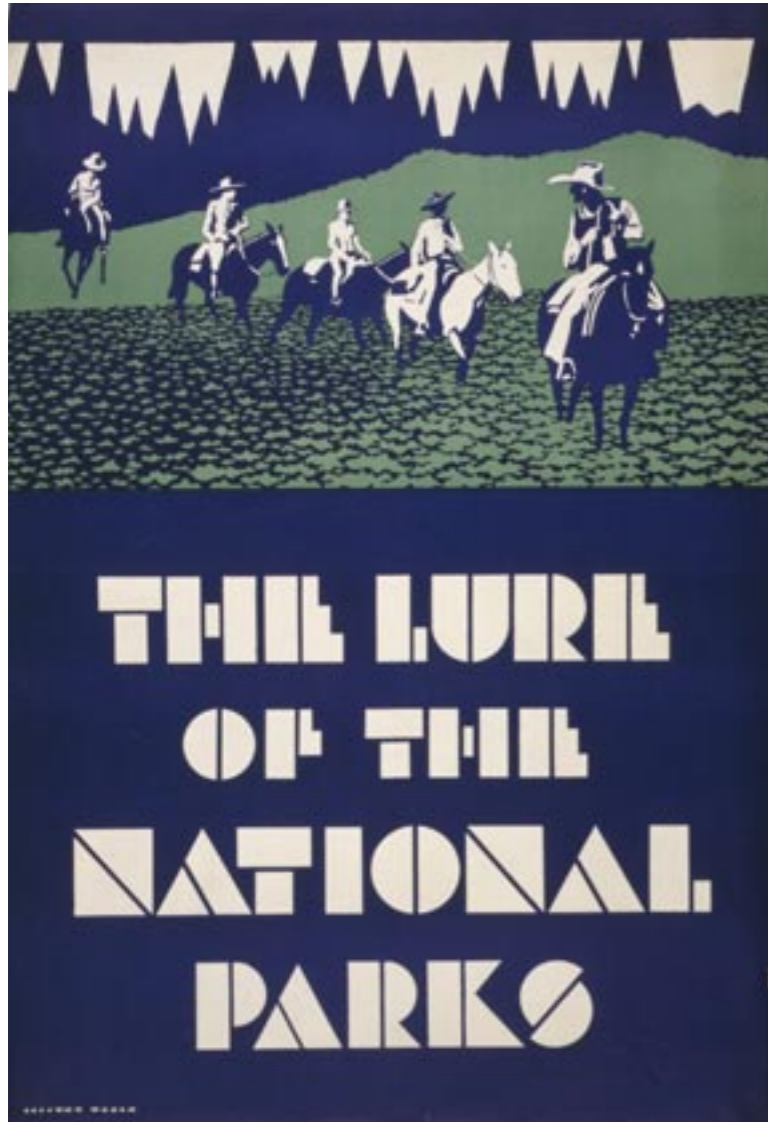


rains, a lone bird in flight, the ripple of the lake where the man is fishing—is both serene and sophisticated. And yet, for all that, the poster is activated: by setting the black bars on either side at different heights, she creates a visual tension that stands in sharp contrast with the quiet majesty of the setting.

Waugh's understanding of the power of two-dimensional space is announced in another of her 1934 posters, *Mystery Veils the Desert* (fig. 245). We again see a solitary figure, a man, in profile, seated on horseback. He is framed by two impressive cacti. The rest of the scene is taken up with a resplendent night sky. Some stars are mere points of light; others are twinkling crosses. It is the sheer contrast of light and dark (for the entire poster is only in black and white) that is so affective. There is again a studied quietude—except for the two different fonts, both in the manner of the “modernistic.”

244 | Dorothy Waugh, *The Adventures of Today are the Memories of Tomorrow National Parks*, 1934. Poster, printed by the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., for the National Parks Service, Washington, D.C. Lithograph on paper, 101 × 69.5 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

245 | Dorothy Waugh, *Mystery Veils the Desert National Parks*, 1934. Poster, printed by the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., for the National Parks Service. Screenprint on paper, 101 × 69 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



246 | Dorothy Waugh, *The Lure of the National Parks*, 1934. Poster, printed by the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., for the National Parks Service, Washington, D.C. Screenprint on paper. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



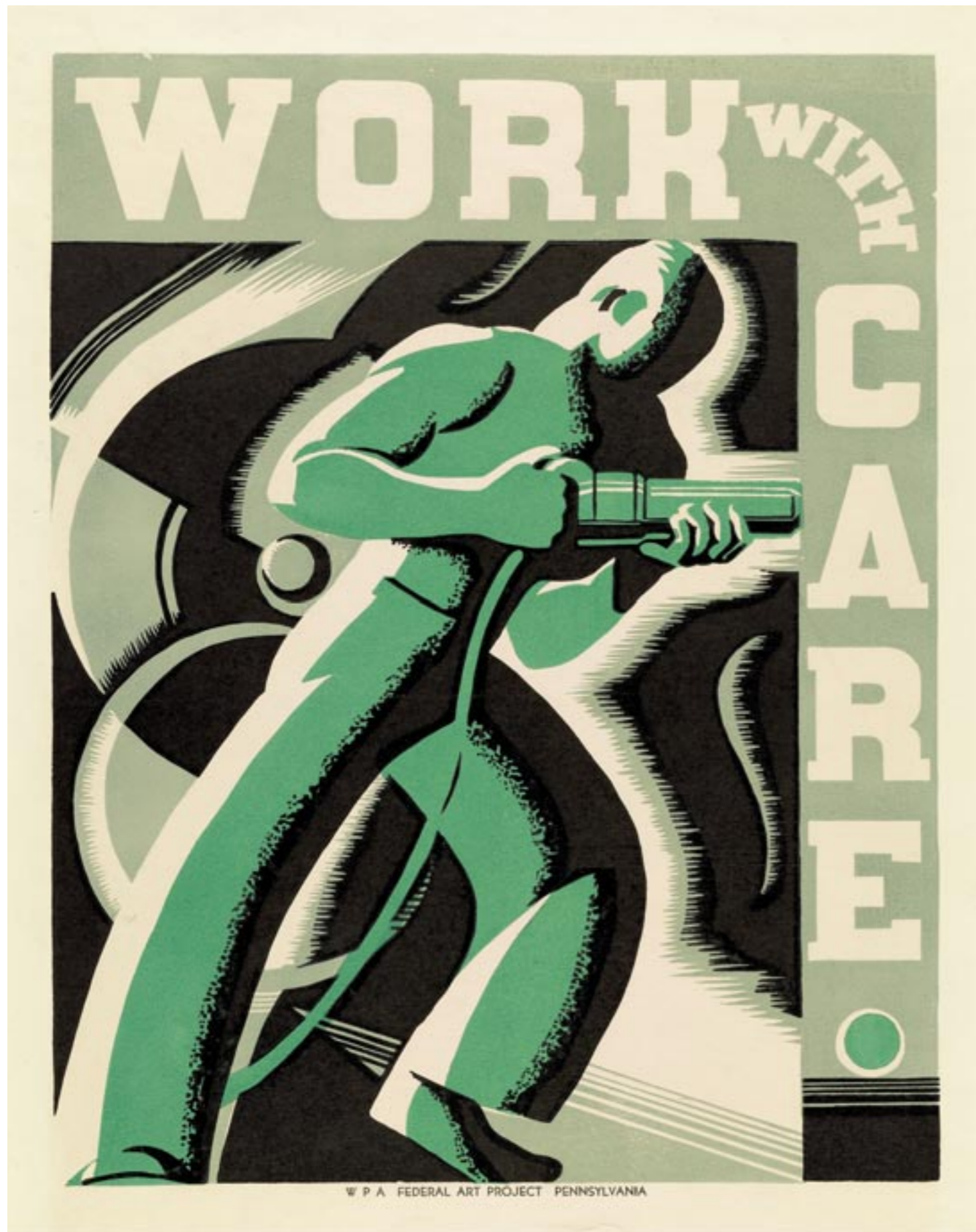
247 | Dorothy Waugh, *National Parks and Monuments, Pueblos of the Southwest*, 1935. Poster, printed by the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., for the National Parks Service, Washington, D.C. Lithograph on paper, 101.6 x 69 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

248 | Dorothy Waugh, *National and State Parks*, 1936. Poster, printed by the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., for the National Parks Service, Washington, D.C. Lithograph on paper, 101.6 x 70.2 cm. The Resnick Collection.

Another of Waugh's posters, *The Lure of the National Parks*, reads like a fresh-air *pièce de théâtre* (fig. 246). We see five figures on horseback, riding single file through a stream at the edge of a forest. It is all recognizable, yet nothing seems quite real. The trees are jagged shapes forming a continuous backdrop; the horses appear to hover oddly above the water. Much of the surface is taken up with a blue field of color, with decidedly "Deco" lettering presenting the message. Waugh treads between conventional portrayal and modernist restraint: we can read the scene as if it were realism, though it already belongs to a very different domain of art.

One of Waugh's 1935 posters, *National Parks and Monuments, Pueblos of the Southwest*, is about a very different form of projection (fig. 247). It is also a landscape, if a mostly manmade one. Waugh carries out two operations, a decided flattening—everything in the scene is reduced into sharply delimited blocks of color—and a re-making of the color scheme into shades of red and blue. The resulting scene is still "objective" (or realistic), but if one focuses on a specific area of the image, it reads almost as an exercise in abstraction.





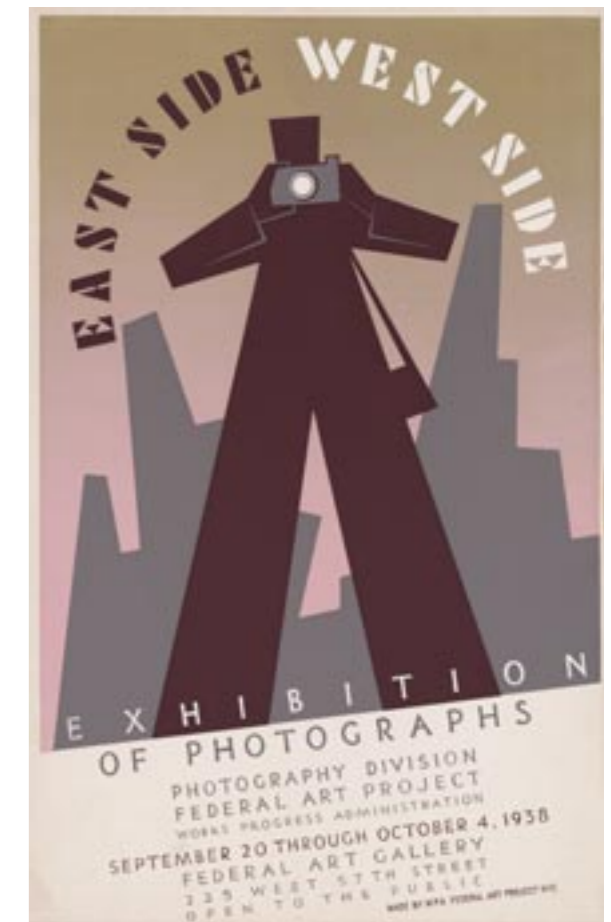
Waugh's masterwork came a year later, in 1936. *National and State Parks* was intended to promote winter sports—skiing, skating, sliding, and sleighing (fig. 248). At its center is a figure holding a pair of skis, and across the middle, in two parallel black bands, “National and State Parks” is written out. The “skier” is reduced to mere lines and shapes—in places, such as the face, it is almost fully geometrized—so much so that the figure could be interpreted as either human or machine, male or female. The vivid color scheme—red, yellow, black, and white—only enhances the artificiality of the image. It is stridently modern and transfixing.

The inventiveness of Waugh's posters was only occasionally matched by the artists of the WPA poster division. It is sometimes claimed that Waugh was part of the Federal Art Project. She was not. She was employed throughout the mid-1930s by the Park Service, and she resigned in 1937 to take a position as the head of the children's book department at Alfred A. Knopf, in New York City.<sup>9</sup> Some very good artists were part of the Federal Art Project, among them Will Barnet, Stuart Davis, Lee Krasner, Louise Nevelson, Alice Neel, Jackson Pollock, and Willem de Kooning.<sup>10</sup> But most of the posters were the work of lesser talents, and a large percentage of their designs suffered from a tendency to put too much on the surface—too many words, images, or colors—and, not infrequently, all three. They often worked far better as instruments of public messaging—of propaganda for the government's efforts—than they did as art.

The very best of the WPA posters, however, contributed to the rise of a distinctly American graphic style. Robert Muchley's *Work With Care*, of 1937, borrows from the look shaped by the artists of the political left. A beefy worker is operating a riveting machine, with enormous, spinning machinery set behind him (fig. 249). The man is fully engaged; every sinew of his body and his full concentration are given over to the task—precisely what the poster was intended to convey. Muchley's skill for drama is evident: it is literally a riveting image, and he no doubt might have gone on to find real fame had he not died shortly later, in France.<sup>11</sup>

Muchley's poster was relief printed, a printmaking technique in which the surface of the plate or block is cut away so that the image alone appears raised on the surface. Relief printing, which includes woodcut, linoleum cut, and letterpress, was an old technique; by the 1930s, newer methods—especially rubber stamping—were coming into standard use. Some of the WPA posters were also lithographs. But by far the largest number were made employing screen printing.

Screen printing, too, was not exactly new; it had originated in China during the Song dynasty, a thousand years before. Screen printing in Europe and the United States, however, dates only to the beginning of the last century. An Englishman named Samuel Simon patented the modern form of screen printing in 1907 that involved using squeegees to push the ink through a screen mesh. Others, including Roy Beck, Charles Peter, and Edward Owens, revolutionized the commercial screen-printing industry with photo-imaged stencils. The screen printing of artistic images was developed mid 1910s, mostly in California.<sup>12</sup> But the introduction of screen printing to the WPA program—and its elevation to a fine art



249 | Robert Muchley, *Work with Care*, 1937. Poster, printed by the Graphic Arts Workshop, WPA Federal Art Project, Philadelphia, PA. Relief print on paper, 63.2 × 47.3 cm. The Resnick Collection.

250 | Anthony Velonis, *East Side West Side Exhibition of Photographs*, 1938. Poster, for the Works Progress Administration, Washington, D.C. Screenprint on board, 56 × 35.6 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



form—was very largely the achievement of one artist employed in the New York office, Anthony Velonis.

Born to poor Greek immigrants in New York City, Velonis began to experiment with the silkscreen process around 1932. Working with another artist, Fritz Brosius, in Velonis's brother's sign shop, he gradually developed a mastery of the process.<sup>13</sup> In 1934, he was hired by the New York City Mayor's Poster Project, instituted by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, to publicize city projects. The following year, the Mayor's Poster Project became the New York Poster Division of the Federal Art Project.

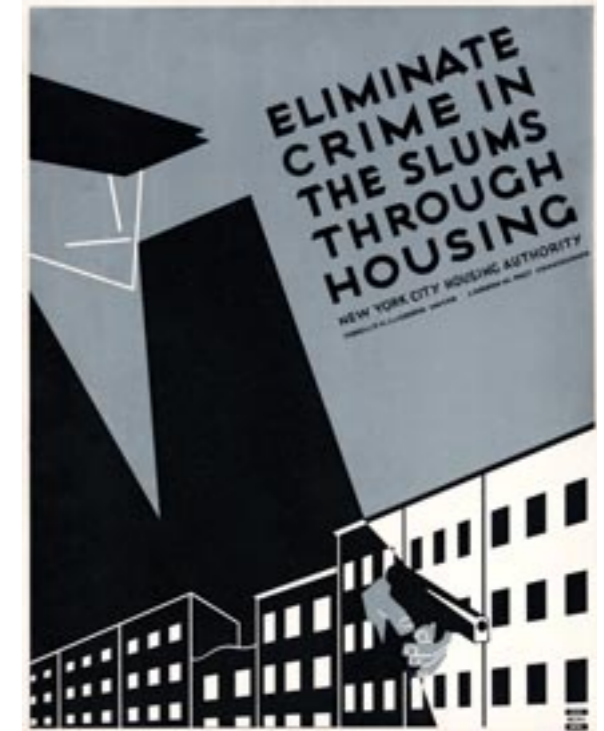
With several others, including Louis Lozowick, Velonis began researching new methods for screen printing. He produced a short pamphlet on the subject providing explicit how-to instructions for others in the program to make their own prints.<sup>14</sup> It was distributed to the WPA art centers around the country, and soon, screen printing, also called silk screening, became the preferred method for the program's artists. Velonis coined his own term for the result: serigraph, or "silk drawing."

Velonis's own works, both those at the Poster Division and the Graphic Arts Division, were highly advanced stylistically (figs. 250, 251). And that was true of many of the posters that he and others produced in the New York office, which was headed up by Richard Floethe. The German-born Floethe had attended the Bauhaus before moving to the United States; he was already a renowned designer and book illustrator before he assumed the leadership of the group, and his influence—especially a tendency toward restraint and the use of bold pictorial imagery—is apparent in many of the works of the New York artists.<sup>15</sup>

Floethe strongly supported Velonis's effort to spread screen printing to others in the New York division. Rapidly, other FAP groups across the nation also picked up the technique, including the Illinois branch in Chicago. One of the best designs to come out of that office, the work of an unknown artist for a local poster exhibit, was a splendid bit of modernist compression and abstraction (fig. 252).<sup>16</sup>

Still, most of the best silkscreen designs were issued from the New York office. The 1936 poster *Eliminate Crime in the Slums Through Housing*, now attributed to Herman Kessler, relies not only on the new reductivism coming from Europe, but it also suggests the influence of the Hollywood movies—the bold chiaroscuro effect that lighting technicians were then achieving (fig. 253). Another of the New York artists, Jack Rivolta, made two of the strongest (and now most frequently reproduced) WPA posters, *United States' First Foreign Trade Zone* and *Up Where Winter Calls to Play* (figs. 254, 255). Rivolta's works are essays on simplification, bold color blocking, and repetition. Most remarkable, though, are the contrasts he engenders, between large, essentially inert forms and scenes that are alive with movement and action. His portrayal of a four-man bobsled hurtling down the run at Lake Placid, all diagonals, splotches, and sinuous forms, is fully vitalized, even while the means he deploys are surprisingly basic.

Another poster, *See America Welcome to Montana*, made by Jerome Henry Rothstein, is a related design, but it is also an advance on what Rivolta was doing (fig. 256). Rothstein, then still in his teens (he was the youngest of all the program's artists), contrived a complete montage—of mountains, a lake, a forest, and Native American tipis



251 | Anthony Velonis, *The only safe weapons against cancer are surgery, x-rays [and] radium Do not trust your life to other methods*, 1938. Poster, for the Works Progress Administration, Washington, D.C. Screenprint on board. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

252 | *Poster Exhibit*, ca. 1937. Poster, printed by the Illinois WPA Art Project, Chicago, IL, for the WPA Federal Art Project Illinois. Screenprint on paper, 55.9 × 35.6 cm. The Resnick Collection.

253 | Herman Kessler [attrib.], *Eliminate Crime in the Slums Through Housing*, 1936. Screenprint on paper, 71.1 × 55.9 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



and symbols—to represent the state and express why one should visit it. (The United States Travel Bureau commissioned the poster.) The motion here, though, is not in the scene; rather it comes through in the way the eye is made to travel across the surface, “visiting” each feature or place. The individual elements are pulled apart; it’s only when we recombine them in our minds that the poster becomes “whole.”

A contrast between movement and stasis is also what underlies the effectiveness of another very good WPA poster, for a marionette performance of the Karel Čapek play *Rossum’s Universal Robots* or *R.U.R.* (fig. 257). The robot, looking fittingly the part of a machine-age monster, is both fixed and activated, his helmet firing off light beams like a weapon. The oppositions of bold color and jagged and curving forms only further enhance these effects.

Not every accomplished design was so “doubled”—i.e., part stasis, part movement. Perhaps the most arresting of all the WPA posters, *Keep Your Teeth Clean*, is effective precisely because it is so very fixed and rudimentary (fig. 258). The unsigned poster is now known to be the work of Erik Hans Krause, who was one of the supervisors of the Rochester unit of the New York State Art Project.<sup>17</sup> Everything in the image—the human figure, the teeth, the toothbrush, the toothpaste—is presented so matter-of-factly that it almost comes off as a child-made still life—until one registers how supremely well the scene is condensed and presented.

A similar expression of considered restraint also underlies another WPA poster of note, *Know for sure—get a blood test for Syphilis* (fig. 259). Its maker, Leonard Karsakov, used an airbrush, which allowed him to contrive the impression of an “every-

254 | Jack Rivolta, *United States’ First Foreign Trade Zone*, 1937. Poster, printed by WPA Federal Art Project, for City of New York, Department of Docks. Screenprint on board, 27.9 × 54 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

255 | Jack Rivolta, *Up Where Winter Calls to Play Olympic Bobsled Run Lake Placid*, ca. 1937. Poster, printed by WPA Federal Art Project, for the New York State Conservation Department. Screenprint on board, 63.5 × 41.9 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

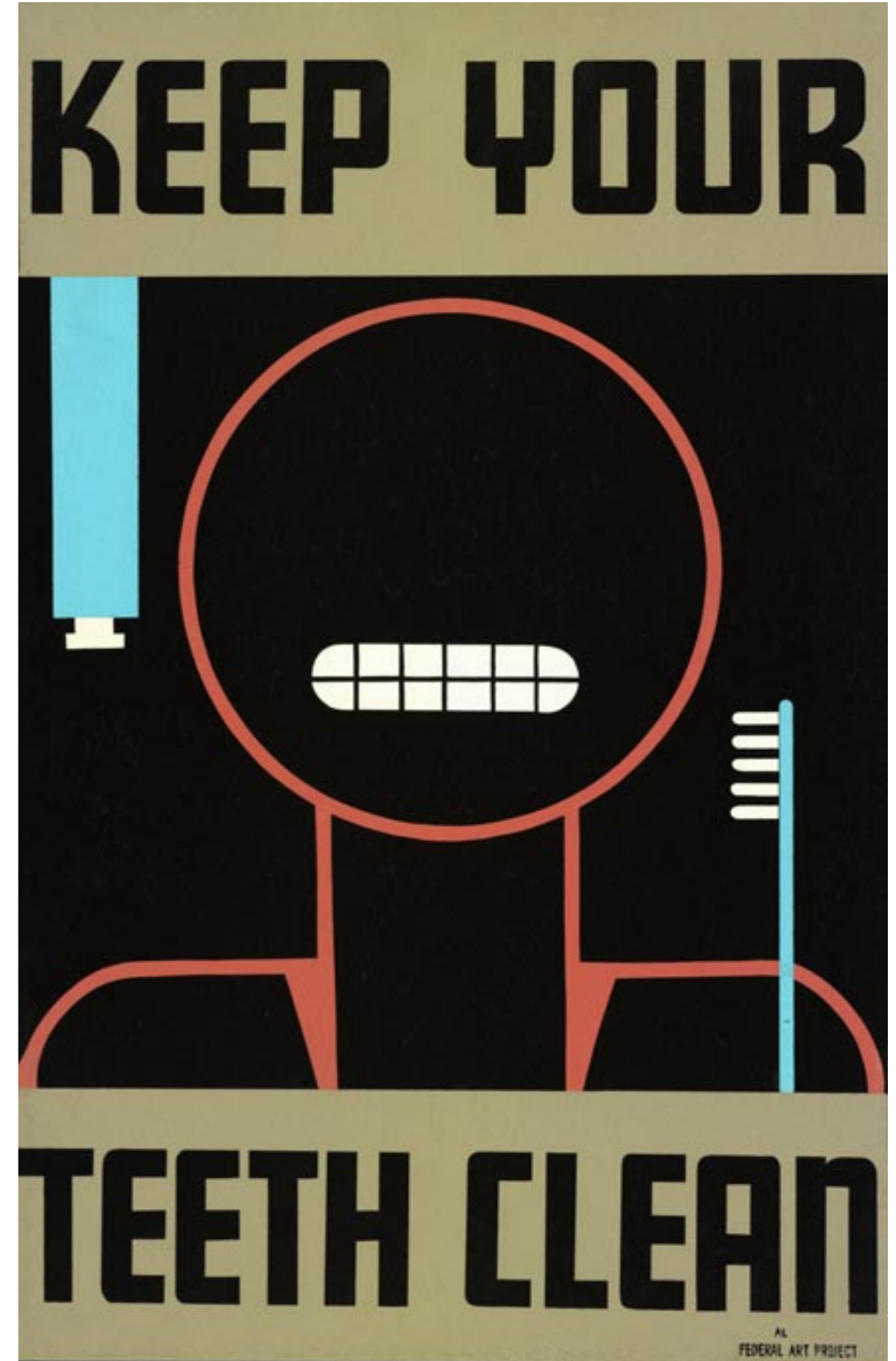
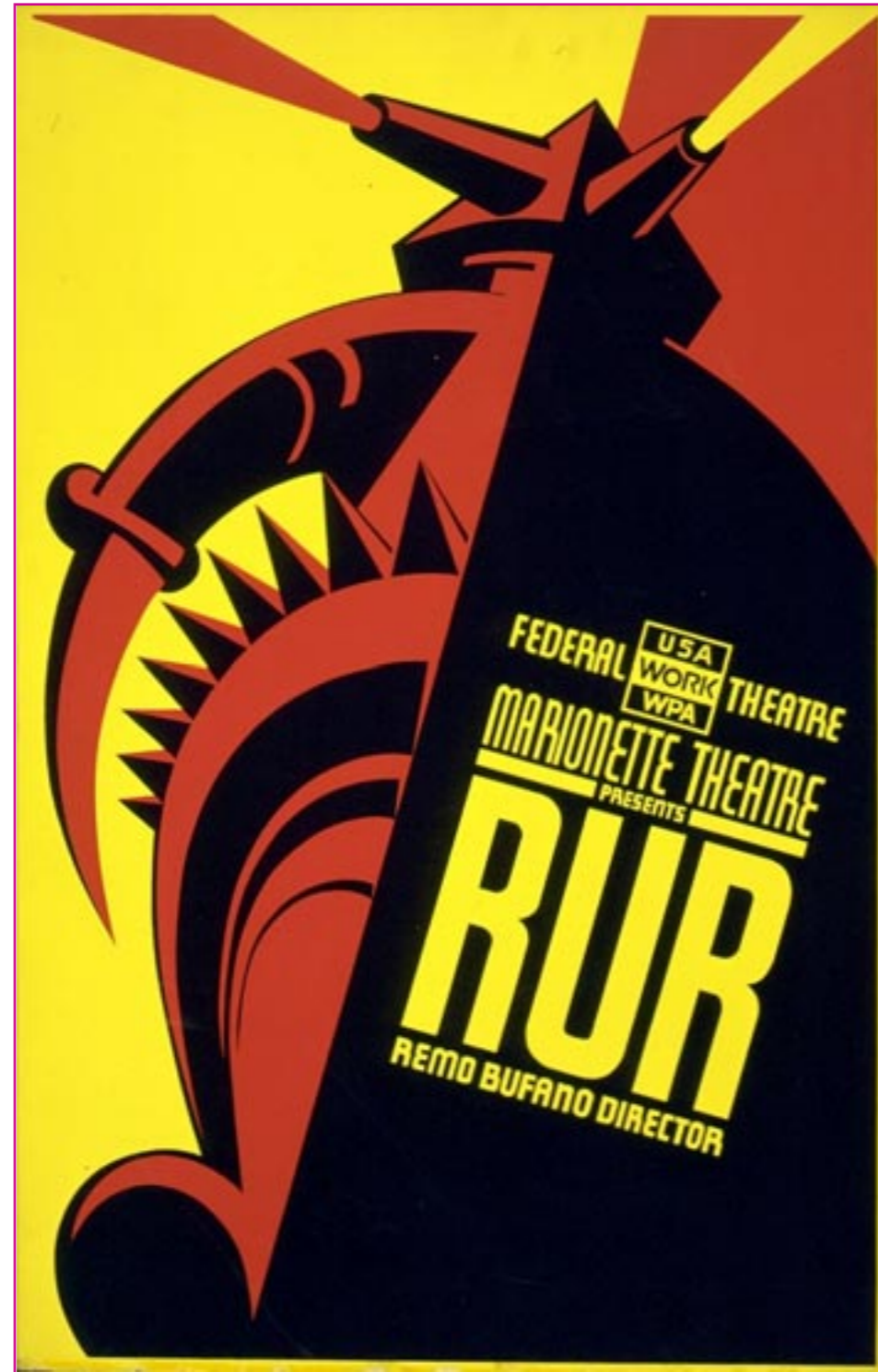




256 | Jerome Henry Rothstein, *See America Welcome to Montana*, ca. 1937. Poster, printed for the United States Travel Bureau. Screenprint on board, 71.1 x 55.9 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

257 | Charles Verschuur, *R.U.R.*, ca. 1939. Poster, printed for the Federal Theater Project, Marionette Theater. Screenprint on board, 55.9 x 35.6 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

258 | Erik Hans Krause, *Keep Your Teeth Clean*, ca. 1938. Poster. Screenprint on board, 55.8 x 35.3 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.





259 | Leonard Karsakov, *Know for sure—get a blood test for Syphilis*, 1941. Poster, printed for the U.S. Public Health Service. Lithograph on paper, 71.1 × 55.8 cm. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

260 | John Atherton, cover of *Advertising Arts*, May 1934. CL.



one”—the perfect vehicle for suggesting that syphilis did not discriminate. But the design even more deft than that, for what we see above all is the tourniquet on the arm, a visual stand-in for the blood draw itself. Everything is expressly modern: the imagery and its presentation, the mode of messaging, and the typography.

Karsakov's poster, printed in 1941, marked an end, however. A short time later, with the United States' entry into World War II, the Federal Art Project was transferred to the Department of Defense and renamed the Graphics Section of the War Service Division. The move effectively spelled the program's end.<sup>18</sup>

What had begun as a work-relief program became over time something else, a concerted attempt to change the nature of visual communication. The best of the posters did precisely that. Still, the foremost accomplishment of the program was

less the creation of new examples of modern design than their dissemination, for a broad swath of the American public was exposed to advanced modern design, many for the first time.

Even before the Federal Art Project was established, the transformation of the graphic arts in America was already taking place, and much of this activity was in venues most Americans didn't see. The full liberation of the page and poster—its separation from traditional modes of representation—was evident as early as 1934.

That year, Earnest Calkins, now retired from Calkins & Holden but, as always, irrepresible, wrote an op-ed for *Advertising Arts*, the leading organ for print advertising and the package “styling” industries. At that moment, at the very depth of the Depression, Calkins complained about the “pressure of the need to sell, more insistent now than in the gilded age.” The result, he observed, was “advertising design that was pleasant to contemplate, but also much that was merely extravagant, bizarre.” It was, in his pointed phrase, “a false modernism that was bound to be ephemeral.”<sup>19</sup>

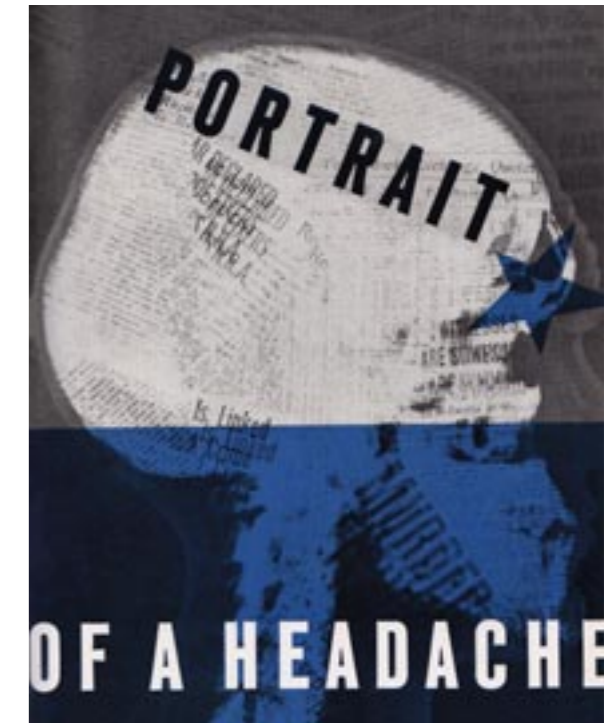
Calkins was reacting to the modernistic—the Art Deco, as we would say now. Prescient as ever, he detected the appearance of its replacement, a new realism, which he ascribed to the advent of documentary photography.<sup>20</sup> He wasn't entirely correct, however, because, as it would turn out, he was missing a vital part of the new synthesis.

It was fully on display on the cover of another issue of *Advertising Arts* from just four months later (fig. 260). The image was the work of John Atherton, a Scottish-born artist who had arrived in New York from California in 1929. Atherton would go on to make advertisements for General Motors, Shell Oil, Container Corporation of America, and Dole, as well as covers for *The Saturday Evening Post*. At that time, though, he was still establishing himself.

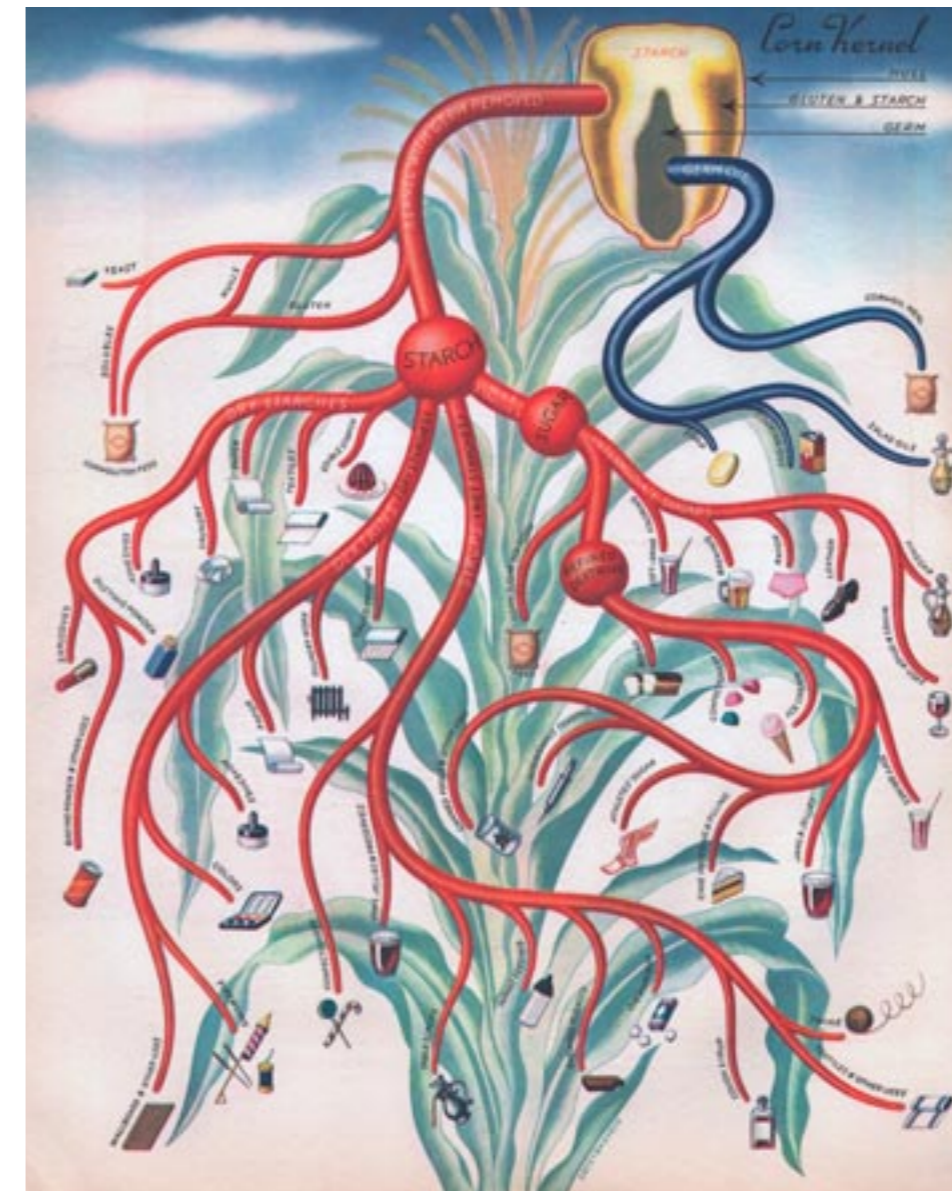
The cover he designed for *Advertising Arts* is about visual fracturing. It is—very directly—a metaphor of the graphic artist. We see a man, his drafting triangle, his hands, his brush. Atherton also places a megaphone in the artist's mouth, a symbol of his role as a broadcaster of messages. Yet the image is ruptured, the man's face split apart, the hands are joined to each other but not to the body. Half of the man's face is a photograph, the other half a crude rendering, and the megaphone looks as if it has been cut out and merely affixed to the surface. Surrounding it all are air-brushed blotches and very advanced typography.

The sources Atherton drew upon are all too obvious. We can detect, especially, the spirit of postwar French Cubism and Russian Constructivism. It is Atherton's introduction of realism, in the form of the half-photographed face, however, that makes it all so predictive. Within four or five years, everything he is doing will become a key constituent of the new design (fig. 261).

But Atherton's design was only one of many new approaches. The mid-1930s was a period of extraordinary and varied experimentation in American design. One current was the language of geometry that had evolved out of Art Deco, which were at the center of Robert Foster's twenty-four-sheet billboards for White Flash gasoline (fig. 262). Then there was the bold play of form and type in Alexey Brodovitch's magazine ad for the New Jersey Zinc Company (fig. 263). And more striking still was the



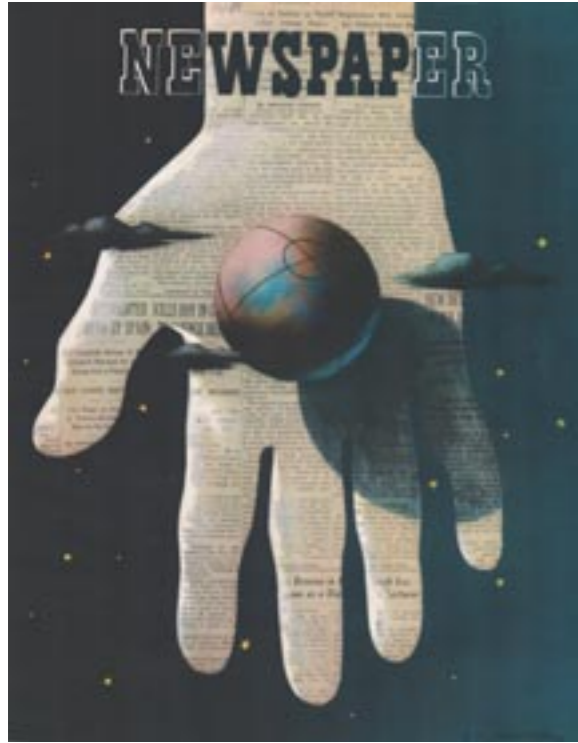
261 | Paul Smith, *Portrait of a Headache*, 1934. Sample advertisement from Art Directors Club, *Thirteenth Annual of Advertising Art* (New York: Book Service Company, 1934), 72. Halftone print on paper, 24.9 × 20.2 cm. CL.



262 | Robert Foster, 24-sheet posters for White Flash gas, 1934. From *Advertising Arts*, March 1934, after page 24. CL.

263 | Alexey Brodovitch, *The New Jersey Zinc Co.*, 1934. Sample advertisement for New Jersey Zinc Co., New York, NY, from *Advertising Arts*, March 1934, after page 41. Offset print on paper, 10.2 x 20.9 cm. CL.

264 | Boris Artzybasheff, *Corn Kernel*, 1937. Magazine advertisement. Half-tone print on paper, 35.5 x 28.3 cm. CL.



But the lessons of Cassandre's revolutionary design were not lost on the art directors and artists in New York and elsewhere: art, even cutting-edge art, it stated, could be adapted to sell products. Modernism, far more than Madison Avenue or its designers had imagined, had the potential to bring about real change, not only in terms of how messages might be communicated, but also how new imagery could function to entice consumers.

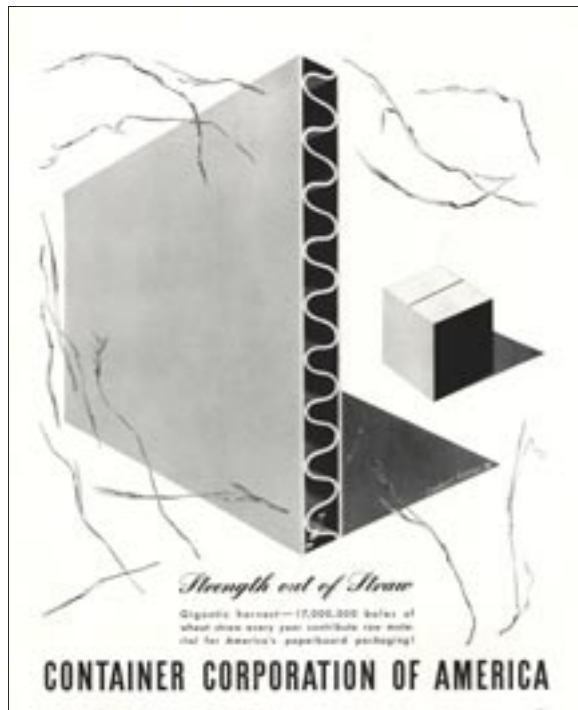
Calkins had foreseen this possibility and even advocated for it. "Artists," he wrote in 1934, "are being selected more and more for the specific styles of work, because they are what they are" and because the art directors were "reaching farther and farther into the world of art for its most novel, striking and arresting creations."<sup>31</sup> By 1937, the truth of this had fully hit home.

What Calkins couldn't predict was the impact a veritable flood of European émigré designers would have on American advertising art. By 1938, it was not only Cassandre who was reshaping American modes. A large coterie of Germans, Austrians, Czechs, and others—most fleeing Hitler and the Nazis—would quickly bear upon American advertising, changing it radically and forever. Cassandre's "trial poster" for the newspapers was just one of many new and experimental designs reaching the American public (fig. 276). Even more advanced designs for the CCA campaign were coming from others, including Austrian-born Herbert Bayer.

Bayer had been central to the outpouring of new graphic ideas from the Bauhaus; he, too, was already very well known when he arrived in New York. Bayer's 1939 CCA ad, *Strength Out of Straw*, is particularly notable example of the new design, though less for what it says than what it does with so few means (fig. 277). It consists of little more than a single, small swatch of cardboard, a box, and a few bits of straw. The text, explaining that the new packaging was made from straw, was almost incidental; the images, spare as they were, made the point.

The important narrative of this period, though, is not about the impact of the Europeans or European modernism—or only tangentially so. It is about how the Americans responded. The most astounding aspect of this story is how rapidly—and broadly—the new impulses were felt and how very quickly the Americans translated them into everyday life. One can witness this in, of all places, fruit crate labels. They were ubiquitous at the time, one of the lowliest forms of commercial art. Most of these labels were made by large printing firms in Los Angeles and San Francisco—companies like Crocker-Union, Lehmann, and Western Litho. These firms employed staff artists—many of them old-timers, to be sure, but also young aspirants, just out of the art or trade schools. The great share of this work was hackneyed at best, but some of the artists—they were almost always anonymous—took the time and care to make something better.

Some of the more ambitious had no doubt recently been exposed to the newest currents in art. In those years, when the Depression still made a job, any job, worth holding on to, these younger artists worked—probably almost subversively—to translate these ideas into labels for the most prosaic of food items: apples, oranges, lemons, and all sorts of vegetables. Thus, an unnamed artist, around 1938, made an extraordinary label for *Hi Yu Brand Apples*, a brand of the Northern Fruit Co. in Wenatchee, Washington (fig. 278).



276 | A. M. (Adolphe Mouron) Cassandre, *Project for a Newspaper Poster*, 1937. Magazine advertisement. Half-tone print on paper, image: 32.8 × 25.7 cm (trimmed). CL.

277 | Herbert Bayer, *Strength Out of Straw*, 1939. Magazine advertisement for Container Corporation of America, Chicago, IL. Half-tone print on paper, 35.5 × 28.1 cm. CL.



278 | *Hi Yu Brand Apples*, ca. 1938. Label, printed by Crocker-Union Lithographers, San Francisco, CA, for Northern Fruit Co., Inc., Wenatchee, WA. Lithograph on paper, 22.4 × 26.4 cm. CL.



What defined Americanness in early American graphic design? Erwin Panofsky's ready definition of Englishness was that it was the romantic fused with the rational, the Arcadian blended with the classical. I have long thought he was being flippant, engaging in a little game of harmlessly poking the British for their sensibilities. But whether he was being serious or not isn't a useful question for us here. And Panofsky's suggestion that disparate formal directions were at the heart of British design doesn't seem to apply to the American context. We must search elsewhere for answers.

One response to the Americanness question is easy—too easy. Americanness could be said to be about specific symbols—the star-spangled banner, Uncle Sam, red-white-and-blue crests, and bald eagles. Or that could be expanded to the American lifestyle—hard work and leisure, the suburban dream, the suburban landscape. These things—these glimpses at American life or American mores—do indeed show up in many American designs of the fifty years before World War II, and more so afterward. Yet that answer, too, seems shallow. The presence—especially, the branding—of quintessential American products, from Coca-Cola and Wrigley's Chewing Gum to the big cars made by General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler, gets us a little closer to an answer. They, too, are intrinsically American, though they do not define the course of American graphic modernism, at least not entirely.

When I wrote that Americanness crept into the designs of the European émigrés of the late 1930s and early 1940s, I was stating something observable and real. Very quickly, they learned to sell products, American products, in a way that appealed to American consumers. They had to, for their very economic survival depended on it. I have come to wonder if that's not the answer: that it is the relentless selling, not the products, that defines Americanness, and that the selling, in turn, was what drove the development of American graphic identity.

To state my point differently—and more directly—I now see that the rise of modern American graphic design was only occasionally about pure artistic experimentation. The selling nearly always came first, the language through which the items were sold was mostly secondary. That was certainly true for the big advertising agencies. Design in these houses was not entirely an afterthought, but it was rarely the primary driving force. That is why the copywriter remained king for so long in American advertising. Even with Calkins's persistent urgings for a new advertising art, his firm, just like all the others, was bound to the idea that the visuals mattered, just not quite as much as the necessity of relaying the message.

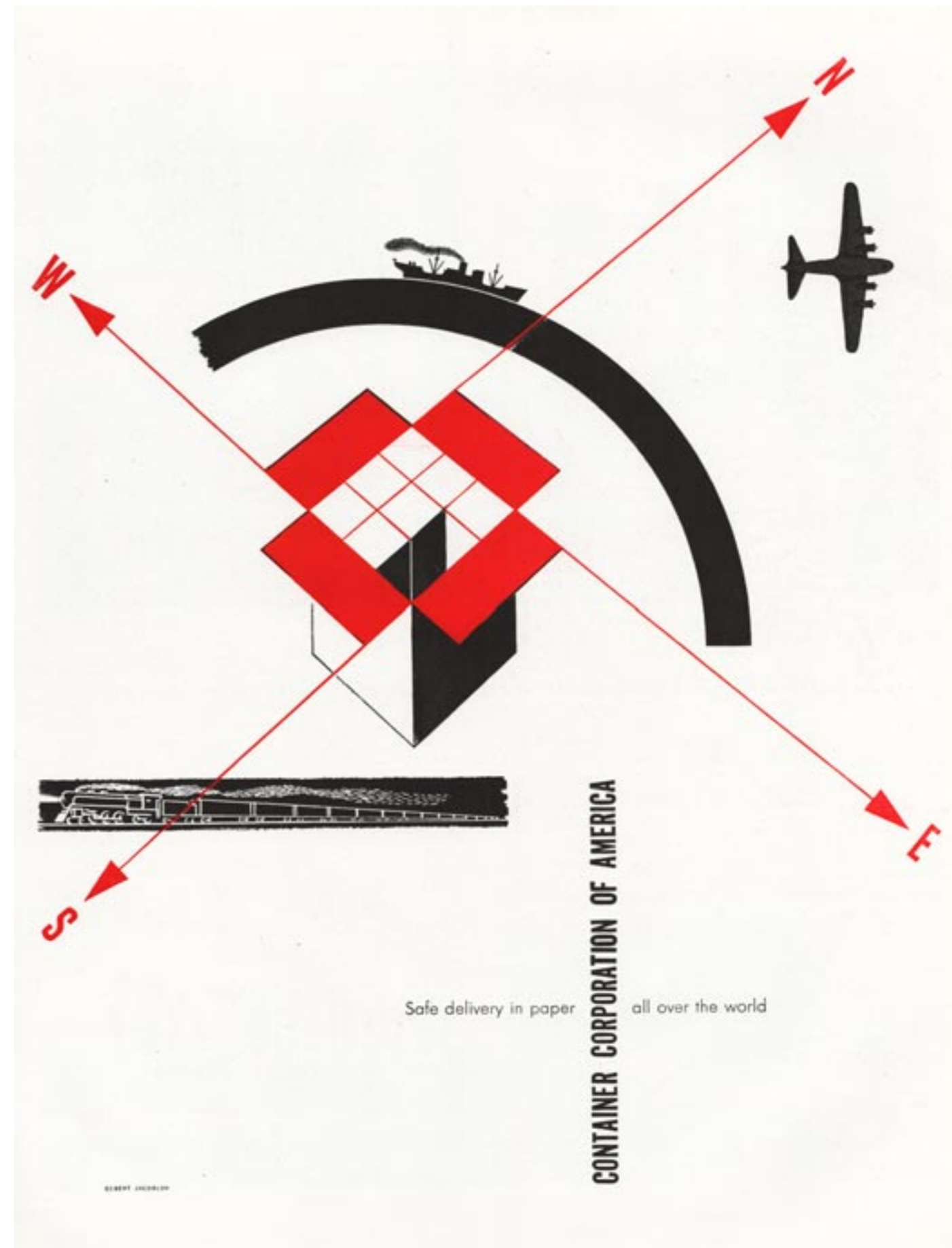
Modern American graphic design in its first blush—at least a very great part of it—grew out of the exigencies of advertising, not the other way around—as was the case in Europe where aesthetics prevailed—at least a little more often. There were, to be correct, brief periods when “art” reigned in American design: during the decade of the poster craze, around the beginning of World War I, in the political and cultural ferment of the early 1920s avant-garde, and in the time of the Harlem Renaissance. Also, in the world of the fashion magazines, style did sometimes eclipse popularity. Yet for most graphic artists, even ambitious and farseeing ones like Beall and Rand, their daily labors were filled with compromise—how far they could go and still *sell*. Beall became the early virtuoso of this double life, always pushing ahead, but never

307 | William H. Campbell, *More of These*, 1943. Design for a magazine advertisement for the Container Corporation of America, Chicago, IL. Gouache and paper on paperboard, sheet: 48.5 × 40.3 cm. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Container Corporation of America.

so far ahead that he lost his audience (or his commercial clients). Rand was slower to figure out where the boundary line between art and selling lay, but he, too, would become highly adept at discerning its precise position.

Still, selling isn't the full answer. At the risk of falling into the snare of a *reductio ad finem*, I am tempted to say that American Modernness was always about two other things (beyond the necessity of selling): it was a statement of the conditions of modernity—new lifestyles, new products, new ways of finding meaning in the world—and it was a visual spectacle of how these things played out in American reality. I not referring to the clichés of the American experience, but the truths of day-to-day living: a set of codes and practices that were distinctive to the United States in era of late industrialization. I recognize that this all may be far too nebulous, too pat, but for anyone who cares to look closely, that's a reasonably good description of American visual culture in the half decade before World War II.

There is a second point to be gleaned from this story. American modernism had its own trajectory, its own distinctive development. The many accounts that state either that nothing (or almost nothing) important was happening in the United States in terms of modern graphic art before the mid-1930s are simply wrong. And those that suggest that when there was something happening it was solely because of European influences are equally as mistaken. It is correct that American designers at times were keen to borrow from the new art coming out of Europe. And it is unquestionably true that some of the significant shifts in American design came from European émigrés. But American design had a lane of its own. And what the best American designers made was *sui generis*. Will H. Bradley was a unique phenomenon. So was Dorothy Waugh. And that was also the case for Lester Beall, even with his large library of European publications. Many of the foremost American designers—Parrish, Penfield, Dixon, Cooper, Phillips, Heinrich, Baker, Flagg, Purcell, Clarke, Walts, Douglas, Teague, Vassos, Radebaugh, Coiner, Velonis, Rivolta, Rothstein, to name only some—created individual and affecting works, while having little or no interaction with their European peers. Their achievements—and the achievements of many I didn't name or whose designs were and remain anonymous—constitute a full and rich history of its own.



308 | Egbert Jacobson, *Safe delivery in paper all over the world*, 1944. Magazine advertisement for Container Corporation of America, Chicago, IL. Offset print on paper, 32.7 x 25 cm. CL.

- 1 | Paul Rand, *Thoughts on Design* (New York: Wittenborn Schultz, 1947).
- 2 | *Ibid.*, 9.