

November 2016

## Art and Industry (1962): Article 09

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell\\_neh\\_II\\_2](https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_II_2)

---

### Recommended Citation

"Art and Industry (1962): Article 09" (2016). *Art and Industry (1962)*. Paper 24.  
[https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell\\_neh\\_II\\_2/24](https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_II_2/24)[https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell\\_neh\\_II\\_2/24](https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_II_2/24)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Education: National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities, Subject Files II (1962-1996) at DigitalCommons@URI. It has been accepted for inclusion in Art and Industry (1962) by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@URI. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@etal.uri.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@etal.uri.edu).



William Snaith (l.) and Raymond Loewy made industrial design a \$3,000,000 business for themselves using imagination and selling

## Designs by Loewy: From packages to modern stores that sell them

Among industrial designers, Loewy and Snaith have never been less than leaders — both in size and achievement. That distinction lies in the creative power of the two men, whose lives are as original as the designs they sell

Someone with a jealous tongue said last week that “Raymond Loewy invented the profession of industrial design so he could get invited to all the best parties—and wound up redesigning a large hunk of America between cocktails and dinner.”

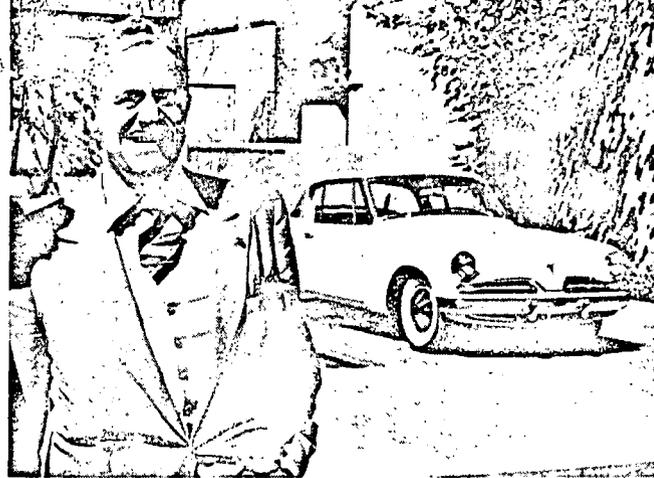
In the same vein, the person said that William Snaith, long-time Loewy partner and now president of Raymond

Loewy Associates, “invented the marketing concept as a kind of business theater to show off how good an actor he is, while also painting the scenery and directing the orchestra.”

There is just enough truth in those statements to tantalize marketing men into wanting to know what these two men have *really* accomplished in the world of selling. There is no question

but that industrial designers have had a profound influence on what the eye sees in a product today, what that product costs—and how well it works. Among the designers, Loewy Associates has either led the field or has been so close that the difference isn't worth quarreling about.

Together, Loewy and Snaith have built the nation's biggest industrial design firm. At one time, they had over 200 employees, a monthly payroll over \$100,000, and grossed over \$3,000,000 a year working for clients whose gross from Loewy-designed products was substantially over \$1-billion a year. During the recent recession, competi-



Raymond Loewy as he looks today... and with his 1953 Studebaker. As a pioneer industrial designer, his work ranges from new bottles

tors say, they were hurt more than other firms because so much of their billing came from the store-planning division. The Loewy firm claims it was not badly hurt and that it is recouping everything swiftly.

Today, with over 150 employees and a newly hired research director, it is still the biggest and is growing. Only a few weeks ago Loewy himself brought in one of the nation's biggest cosmetic companies and is now busy doing what comes naturally—making the package more appealing with a sharp eye on quality and cost.

Friends of Loewy and Snaith constantly remark at how much the two are alike. They not only think pretty much alike, they look alike. Both have wavy gray hair, large dark eyes, dapper mustaches, heavy shoulders, deep chests. Loewy was once described as the D'Artagnan of design for his Douglas Fairbanks sweep, stances and gestures. Snaith is equally swash-buckling but perhaps more in the line of Duke Snider or Captain John Paul Jones.

These many affinities undoubtedly had much to do with Loewy's turning over operational control of the firm to Snaith. While 65-year-old Loewy enjoys life among the international set in his native France for six months of the year, 51-year-old Snaith keeps

the joint jumping in the U. S. During the other six months Snaith and Loewy work closely together, almost inevitably agree on policy matters, often vociferously disagree on approach or design solutions to problems.

Loewy Associates is a "total service" company, engaging in transportation design, product design, packaging and other graphic designs, special building and store planning, and marketing. It is a program that has its physical, psychological and even philosophical origins in France.

### I. The Loewy story

Raymond Fernand Loewy seems to have planned his life to the most minute detail almost from the moment, as a French-born boy of 14, he won a model-airplane contest and promptly set up a business to market the model throughout France. After emerging from World War I as a somewhat gassed but highly decorated and well-tailored officer-engineer, he sailed to America to join a brother—and has been trying to live in both countries simultaneously ever since.

Loewy's manner and cloud-blue uniform got him into the best places and pleased the best people. He taught the fashion world the value of simplicity in display; almost by accident applied

the same values to an old duplicating machine and catapulted into industrial design in 1927. His first big job was to re-do Sears, Roebuck's Coldspot refrigerator. He changed the ugly machine into something simple, functional, attractive—and with the first non-rusting aluminum shelves ever used in a refrigerator.

Since then, Loewy has systematized industrial design—and its selling. He redesigned the Pennsylvania Railroad, spruced up interiors of ocean liners, made a vacuum cleaner that could fold up onto a closet wall, conned George Washington Hill into helpless submission to true genius, re-did airplane interiors and transcontinental buses with equal aplomb. As one expert put it, Loewy has a "greater influence on current design and modern living than any other designer simply because his pen is in so many different inkpots."

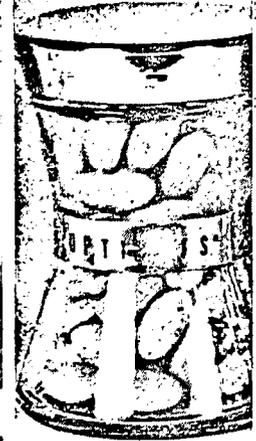
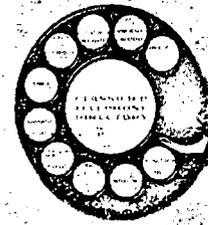
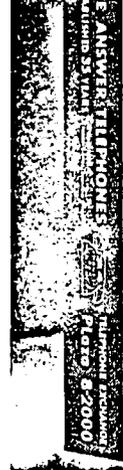
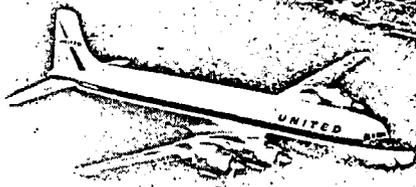
When he applied that Picasso line to the post-war Studebaker, he began the automotive move to the low silhouette that continues to this day.

As his business grew, Loewy indulged his tastes in good living, beautiful homes, a beautiful wife. He became the kind of man who would hinge a Dufy to cover his wall TV set.

Yet Loewy, as Charles Luckman once put it when he headed Lever Brothers, "keeps one eye on the im-

William Snaith in front of his own painting in his office. A serious painter in his own studio, Snaith has had three art showings





... airplane interiors, from the famous yellow pages of the telephone directory to new ways to sell vitamins. And he has fun at it

agination and one eye on the cash register."

## II. The Snaith story

William Theodore Snaith, born in Brooklyn, has in many ways been like a brilliant, obstreperous and successful son to Loewy. As a boy he dreamed of becoming a famous football player, did play some, became a muscle man and still does calisthenics daily.

Although he refers to himself as "a juvenile delinquent" when he was 12, he went to high school, then to New York University's school of architecture at night, and studied on scholarships in Paris. For a time he worked with an architect, got interested in doing theatrical set designs, joined Elsie De Wolfe in a gay, mad period of interior decoration, then went to Loewy as architect and interior design assistant in 1936.

While Loewy concentrated on packaging and transportation, combining his engineering background with artistic flair, Snaith very early caught the spirit of the marketing concept. In a way, Snaith is at war with himself. A man who likes the unfettered freedom of painting, of sailing his boat freely before the wind, or the wild joys of his beloved Dodgers on a resurgent home-run spree, he also admits

the demands of discipline and integration in providing the kinds of services needed by marketing today. Even as a painter, he demands of himself that he "lay it on the line" to sell.

Snaith led the firm into what he calls "peripheral services" and personally has come close to changing the face of retailing today. He pioneered the creation of modern department stores from decor to sales training, contends that his company is the only organization that can perform research before the product is made, design the product, the package, the carrying case, select the site for the store that sells it, design the store, and then design the interior of the store.

Snaith seriously believes the industrial designer gives a client better service today than an advertising agency. "We are at the core of the whole problem of American marketing today," he says. "We have reached a stage in America today where 40 per cent of the products bought fill no essential need—no functional need. For a long time, advertising supplied the necessary impetus to make people buy: It *told* them about the product.

"However, advertising has reached a point of almost complete saturation—the only ads that can penetrate through to people any more are the ones with gimmicks—and even at that you can

only control a gimmick so long. The point is, people are in the stores. They don't have to be talked into going any more. Now we must concentrate on the point of purchase."

Snaith enjoys ringing in sociological, psychological and philosophical references in his conversation. He knows these studies are important to his business, yet hasn't the patience to become a true scholar. Some suspect him of using these references to dazzle clients without necessarily trying to enlighten them. In any case, the firm's true strength lies in its basic sense of good design—and how to help a client market it.

The Loewy team has grown together and weathered the dangers of failure and success. Chances are good that they'll continue to grow just as far as they want to.

Their team-work operates even in social situations: Friends enjoy telling of the dinner party attended by Loewy and Snaith where the conversation became gay and increasingly Rabelaisian. A reserved and fastidious man, Loewy listened—his inscrutable face mirroring not one bit of his concern that the Loewy firm was being upstaged. Unable to stand it any longer, Loewy leaned across a woman dinner partner and seriously demanded "Snaith—say something funny."

... interests range from sailing races, many of which he's won, to the design and marketing methods of modern department stores

