Art and Industry (1962): Speech 04

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_II_2

Recommended Citation

https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_II_2/6

This Speech 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-group@uri.edu.
Dr. B-B. pointed out that it is to our national good to give the role that art can and must play in our national life. Although this is essentially true, it is nonetheless true that there now appears to be signs that our industrial heads are becoming aware of this fact by many of our leading business men. In industry and the home it may be true that it is not an aesthetic idea but an economic fact of life that has prompted this really when — the fact of the recognition of beauty and its presence of the aesthetic and ideals, but by an economic factor life — the fact of the necessity of keeping up with the economic competitors, all the implications of the European Common Market, the simple smart design of the Japanese — but to whatever the stimulus an evolution this seem to be taking place in all phases of American industry designing the product, producing it, packaging it, selling it.

Perhaps the realization that art is more than amateur recreation but has an important
role to play in our whole economy... may be traced in our strict Puritan heritage — our Yankee belief that a... cold hard practical common sense... and a distant... so soft it... any contact in beauty. Perhaps one reason for the growth in this respect on the part of a love in leisure in the general cultural renaissance we are experiencing today... Despite neutrality to business activities... are in a financial position to promote... the arts... and in collecting. It should be encouraged... I do see in many... way that the mediocres... 140 Florence. But what may have... I asked an architect... as the search for status, reality, seems to have resulted in the new... the important practical application of art...
Or perhaps it may be time that this realization has been reached not only among manufacturers, but nationally by an economic fact of life—the re-emergence of Europe and Japan as economic competitors—so the implication of the European Common Market, the remarkably efficient, low-cost factor of Germany, Italy, etc., in the market design of the Japanese product.

But whatever the reason, although future historians may look back on the 20th century (mid) as age of the atom, perhaps future philosophers may look back on it as the time when we lost our national self-consciousness about beauty.

It was not until a generation ago that a small band of pioneers set out to convince manufacturers that an attractively designed product could outsell an ugly one. In the 1930s, after Raymond Loewy re-designed one manufacturer's radio set at a re-tooling cost of $15,000, the company's sales rose 700%. One might think that such startling evidence would have sent everyone clamoring to join the industrial design bandwagon. But for 30 years top executives remained difficult to convince that design does indeed play an important role in industrial competition and that not only is good design the best business in all the visible aspects of a company's communication with the public, but that it is an intrinsic part of a total corporate entity. Today, there are approximately 300 industrial designers doing $40 million dollars worth of business yearly... but billions more are spent on the re-tooling changes necessary once a new design has been accepted.

Now of course it is a truism that design has always been the first element of production, but in the early years of
American industry we have too often conceived of design in the spirit of uniqueness, rather than in the spirit of *functional* excellence or beauty.
It might be well to make clear at this point that when referring to good design I do not refer to fanciful design, but for my mind there has always been a correlation between simplicity and good art. Plato's words: "beauty of style and harmony and grace and good rhythm depend on simplicity" are clearly reflected in the ancient Greek temples, the pyramids of Egypt as well as in the new dormitory of the RISD.

Total blame for this reliance on design for design's sake can not be assigned solely to our manufacturers. For our buying public has too often demanded the most modernistic of appearance at the cost of efficiency or even beauty.

The case of the sewing machine will illustrate this point.

For decades no changes were made in the basic design of the sewing machine. Then after World War 2 foreign in's and began to invade our market with completely new concepts and cut seriously into the competitive position of domestic manufacturers. There was a great rush among American producers to make changes in the appearance of their product without adequate testing of design and merely for the sake of producing a different looking sewing machine... it might not be a more attractive machine, and it might not be a more efficient machine, but it was a different looking machine.

These hastily conceived designs were quickly marketed, failed in performance and once again customer confidence was lost. Then however, a return to a more simple, straightforward approach--using design as an integral part of performance--has put the American sewing machine back in the competitive picture.

Again, the automobile industry typifies change for change sake. In 1955 Raymond Loewy re-designed the Studebaker with the sleek, low look. This started the entire industry on the move to lower and lower silhouettes which are still prevalent today... to the discomfort of many of us six footers, I must say.

It is true that only after considerable experiment does society arrive at a satisfying design. In that same automobile industry there are two companies which years ago arrived at
Today General Motors has 650 different standard color combinations and even more non-standard combinations. The telephone—every home had at least one phone. In the 1950s, when fashion colors were indicators of horsepower in transportation, 70,000,000 new phone lines were installed. Despite the fact that they say you can choose bleach and dye,

The telephone corp. had a problem. Because people couldn't distinguish between what was new, old, dirty was created for the package. One 100-watt bulb came in red packaging.

75 "..." 5 blue "..." 60 "..." green pack within 6 months call garbage 66 50.

S.G.

Y.G.

L.W.

P.S.

P

WB

In 1950, until recently paper tissues and hand towels came in white, identified with their sterility and cleanliness. Then Kleenex came out with colored tissues and towels. Today practically every manufacturer produces colored tissues and towels.

Even stores and refrigeration have gotten away from stark white. Today can be bright in color.
Before yellow was added to other colors, it would not sell well. Soap and not sell in gray packages—so it is good to find the soap would not have been painted.

What would have caused one identify Howard Johnson without its orange work?

1. But it is evident in the field of display that at the time of art, the recognized and adopted no longer than it was first displayed for the sake of display. But gradually it has been found that spectacle, in the eye, first, but as those who are more effective in both recall. Just as in a fine painting, a gold attraction must produce a feeling of well-being, be readily comprehensible, and need to correct an unsatisfactory situation. In other words, it seems to be a growing recognition that not only must a product be well-designed, well-attractive to look at, but presented in a pleasing manner in the face of time and constant challenges, giving more effective than a hundred screen.
must page on.

It is perhaps an economic fact of life which has started this aesthetic revolution. The fact of re-emergence of Japan as an economic competitor into the market place of the E.C. must bring the beautiful new factors — design, geometry, the simple and stern design of Japan. But whatever the stimulus, the result may not be good, for the taking place in all phases of commerce, industry, designing of products, packaging, producing, advertising, etc.

One of the more staggering problems of modern times has been that of urban decay. Millions have felt the impact of the turmoil — in urban renewal plans. But too often the human and aesthetic side of the problem has been overlooked. It is gratifying to note that about many of the Federal Home Finance Agency recently announced that the idea of going to plan for higher architectural design at an early stage in development

are sure to note that you can do something attractive at the same price you can do something dianr.