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## Raymond Loewy

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# Raymond Loewy

**Raymond Loewy hat wie kein anderer das amerikanische Design in der Mitte des letzten Jahrhunderts geprägt. Ihm verdanken wir die klaren, oft stromlinienförmigen Linien des postmodernen Produktdesigns, die bis heute nachwirken.**

The late Victorian era was rich in many things – prose literature, *manufacturing*, science. But it also had its pockets of *poverty*. It produced little poetry that's lasted. And Victorian design, in particular, was heavy, *ornate*, and claustrophobic.

All the while, the Arts and Crafts Movement was rising in reaction to all this. By the turn of the twentieth century it'd *spawned* the new design school of *Art Nouveau*, with its back-to-nature themes – its graceful organic *whirls* and *tendrils*.

Then designers *pared* away the ornate *trim*. Art Deco replaced *vines* with elegant, if inorganic, straight lines. Finally, when cars, trains, and airplanes began moving fast enough to *incur* air resistance, *streamlining* found its way into popular design. The vertical linearity of Art Deco *fused* with horizontal streamlining, and we finally had a design style to truly *embody* the word modern.

One person almost *single-handedly* created this fusion. He was design consultant Raymond Loewy, born in France in 1893. When WW-I interrupted Loewy's design studies, he *joined* the artillery. He won the Croix de Guerre in *combat*, but he had more to say about how he had redesigned his own uniform. After the war he joined his brother, a doctor, who was called to New York to work with poison-gas *victims*.

Loewy was *stunned* by New York. The immensity, intensity, and *lack* of any design order offered a *clean slate* for him to write upon. At first he did *freelance* product design for Wanamaker's Store and Condé Nast. Then he was given the task of redesigning a *mimeograph machine*. When he was done, something that looked like a piece of industrial machinery had become Art Deco office furniture.

From that beginning, Loewy went on to create the design style of modern America. Everyone used him. He gave us the vertical lines of *refrigerators* we use today. His streamlined diesel locomotive design *swept* the American imagination. He designed the 1934 Hupmobile – the streamlined *precursor* of the Chrysler Airflow.

He began giving streamline motifs to everything from clothing to *pencil sharpeners*. He helped to shape the modern luxury cruise ship as well as the city bus. We even find *lingering* elements of Loewy's streamlined design in today's farm tractors.

	<i>struggled</i>
production	
*see list	<i>momentum</i>
decorative	<i>submerged...whirlwind</i>
started	
*see list	
<i>swirls ... twines</i>	
<i>cut ... decoration</i>	
<i>climbing plants</i>	
experience	
*see list	
<i>united</i>	
represent	
<i>on his own</i>	
enlisted in	
battle	
sufferers	
<i>fascinated</i>	
<i>absence</i>	
<i>fresh start</i>	
<i>independent</i>	
*see list	
*see list	
ancestor	
*see list	
remaining	

Look at any of the many lists of Loewy designs, and you'll realize that, without him, we wouldn't be using the word postmodern. By 1960, he'd defined modern America with such clarity and finality that we had to go looking for something different.

Indeed, we've *floundered* for a half-century trying to find something strong enough to follow that wild design *impetus*. Late in life Loewy wrote that he'd come here sixty years before and "immersed myself in the American *Vortex*." Wonderful line. But then we wonder: just how much vortex would there have been without Loewy there, swirling the waters. ■ *John Lienhard*

Dieser Text ist Teil der Radioserie „Engines of Our Ingenuity“ und wird hier mit freundlicher Genehmigung des Autors und der Radiostation KUHF wiedergegeben. Den Originaltext und weitere 2600 Kurzberichte über die Geschichte der Technik finden Sie unter [www.uh.edu/engines](http://www.uh.edu/engines)

<i>Art Nouveau</i>	<i>Jugendstil</i>
<i>clean slate</i>	<i>Neuanfang</i>
<i>combat</i>	<i>Gefecht, Kampf</i>
<i>embody, to</i>	<i>verkörpern</i>
<i>flounder, to</i>	<i>sich abquälen, strampeln</i>
<i>freelance</i>	<i>freiberuflich, freischaffend</i>
<i>fuse, to</i>	<i>verschmelzen, fusionieren</i>
<i>immerse, to</i>	<i>eintauchen, untertauchen</i>
<i>impetus</i>	<i>Anstoß, Schwung</i>
<i>incur, to</i>	<i>geraten in, erleiden</i>
<i>join, to</i>	<i>eintreten, beitreten</i>
<i>lack</i>	<i>Mangel, Fehlen</i>
<i>linger, to</i>	<i>bleiben, verweilen</i>
<i>manufacturing</i>	<i>Fertigung, Produktion</i>
<i>mimeograph machine</i>	<i>Vervielfältigungsmaschine</i>
<i>ornate</i>	<i>verziert, verschnörkelt</i>
<i>pare, to</i>	<i>abschneiden, schälen</i>
<i>pencil sharpener</i>	<i>Bleistiftspitzer</i>
<i>poverty</i>	<i>Armut</i>
<i>precursor</i>	<i>Vorläufer, Vorreiter</i>
<i>refrigerator</i>	<i>Kühlschrank</i>
<i>single-handedly</i>	<i>im Alleingang</i>
<i>spawn, to</i>	<i>hervorbringen</i>
<i>streamlining</i>	<i>Stromlinienform</i>
<i>stunned</i>	<i>verblüfft</i>
<i>sweep, to (swept, swept)</i>	<i>hier: hinreißen</i>
<i>tendril</i>	<i>Ranke</i>
<i>trim</i>	<i>Verkleidung, Zierleiste</i>
<i>victim</i>	<i>Opfer</i>
<i>vine</i>	<i>Kletterpflanze</i>
<i>vortex</i>	<i>Wirbel, Strudel</i>
<i>whirl</i>	<i>Wirbel, Strudel</i>