

## CHAPTER 5

### The Objects of the American-Way Program

#### Design Concepts

For Russel Wright, the democracy of the machine and the individuality of the craftsman were each elemental to the American character and national wellbeing. As an organizing construct of the American-Way program, the combination of hand- and machine-made products became a prescription for American homes and a merging of production processes. Singly and as a collection, they reflected the blending of professional design with amateur experimentation, rural handcraft with studio art, factory processes and traditional folkways.

A notable effect of this multiplicity of intentions in the American-Way products was a duality of nature in some of the products. Machine-made products sometimes looked like they were made by hand, and vice versa. Mary Wright's designs for Everlast Aluminum, for example, had the hand-made properties of hammered aluminum, although they were a factory production (Figure 8). Likewise, Russel's Oceana line, which predated the American-Way program but was incorporated into it, was a mass-produced series of wooden accessories carefully designed to look as if they had come from the hand of a woodworker (Figure 31). Conversely, objects considered part of the crafts program, such as Norman Beals' Lucite bowls, had slick, rigid qualities reminiscent of the machine (Figure 9).

Another material cross-fertilization resulted from the way Wright structured the program, asking designers and artists in some cases to contribute designs completely outside their fields of expertise. Thus, architect Michael Hare designed wooden tableware; movie set designer and *House Beautiful* contributor Joseph Platt did glassware; and painters Julian Levi and John Stuart

Curry supplied designs for printed drapery fabrics. The 1930s designer, capable of everything from a match to a city, was accustomed to this kind of crossing of media and object types. Having designed radios, lawn furniture, flatware, and textiles, Russel Wright himself exemplified the fluidity of design métiers in the period, and he asked designers in American-Way to do likewise. A single artist designed glass and fabric; another did baskets, ceramic plaques, and dishware; while a third contributed glass vases and bedspreads.

Across the various media, color was to be used as a unifying force for the product line. The American-Way program left amazingly little in the way of photographic documentation; much of what exists is coverage in newspapers and magazines, accompanied by black-and-white photos (Figure 10). Intriguing, therefore, are references to the color harmonies that were a part of the program's designs. The Wrights mentioned in their literature that the line was to be unified by color combinations, and sources like the *New York Herald-Tribune* of September 1, 1940 described color coordination as part of the selection of objects by what it called the "committee" of American-Way, noting

...two main color schemes which overlap. Choosing colors which have taste, distinction and mutual harmony is thus extremely simple. Significant among the colors are the yellows, chartreuse greens, soft dusty pinks, and cocoa browns so popular in interior decoration today.<sup>1</sup>

Two years later, at the very end of the program, Walter Rendell Storey, frequent design writer for *The New York Times*, mentioned that screen-printed paintings had been added to the line, a "newly devised method of reproducing artists' work at comparatively low cost," the hues of which "suggested the color schemes for the fabrics and rugs" with "elemental hues, such as the blue of

---

<sup>1</sup> Jean Joyce, "Home Furnishings Go American," *New York Herald Tribune*, September 1, 1940, Home Institute section: 14.

the sky in a landscape, the red earth and the yellow side of a painted house.”<sup>2</sup> Although difficult to analyze now, color coordination was not overlooked in the ensembling concept, both as a means of aesthetic unification and as a marketing tool to make “extremely simple” the choice of objects to bring home.

Americans were to bring home the Wrights’ brand of Modernism with these objects. The products in the American-Way industrial line, such as lamps by Walter Baerman and aluminite beverage accessories by Raymond Loewy (Figure 11), featured clean, abstracted forms and a lack of applied ornament, along with the domestication of new materials like plastic and aluminum. In true Modernist methodology, it was form, materials, and color that provided the decorative statement in Wright’s own American Modern dinnerware (which was included in the American-Way line), textiles by Marianne Strengell and Freda Diamond, and ceramics by Glen Lukens.

Although Modernism, defined by the Wrights as “good design,” was to be the underlying aesthetic root of the American-Way sensibility, the consistency of application was uneven in its products. Some real anomalies existed, such as the tea set designed by painter Audrey Buller and made by Knowles China (Figure 12) which featured large, realistically rendered roses and forms that were more Rococo than Modernistic; similar florals were featured in a tablecloth by Marguerita Mergentime. An example of historicist design was a series of unimaginative, vaguely Colonial tabletop accessories in pewter by Robert Gruen, made by Kenilworth Plating (Figure 13). The emphasis on traditional materials and methods in the craft program meant that some objects would be inherently less Modern in their sensibilities. Indeed, items such as carved wooden rodeo figures, colored-tin angels, and strawberry-shaped baskets were representational in iconography, and as purely decorative accessories, anomalous to Modernism.

---

<sup>2</sup> Walter Rendell Storey, “Home Decoration: Rooms in the American Spirit,” *The New York Times*, January 4, 1942: 4D.

As Eero Saarinen and Charles Eames were to show in their 1941 furniture for MoMA's Organic Design in Home Furnishings exhibition, a Modernist approach was increasingly defined by the blending of organic lines and materials with synthetics and machine qualities. In American-Way, a blend of time-honored and new materials and forms could be seen in Russel Wright's and Gilbert Rohde's furniture lines. Rohde's cabinet with fold-down desk (Figure 14) combined a sophisticated form of solids/voids, directional wood grain, and rounded edges, with metal and overscaled Lucite handles: a fresh, but still familiar-enough articulation of Modernism. In other disciplines within American-Way, woven textiles combined natural materials like wool and cotton with synthetics, as in the table mats in "leatherette" and cotton by Lily Berndt, while sinuous organic forms were rendered in "Shellflex" plastic and various metals in Clarissa Gross's table decorations.

The objects of American-Way showed a complex blend of ideas about what constituted American native design. In some cases, American-ness seemed to consist in iconography suggesting the Wrights' idea of "our own picturesque life." Examples include Scott Wilson's textile printed with large feathers, "inspired by eagle feathers, some colored like those in the headdress of an Indian chief,"<sup>3</sup> carved wooden bears, and pottery from the North Dakota School of Mines with traditional Native American motifs. Objects made in "our many beautiful natural materials" were also considered representative of native design. Thus, native woods from particular regions were highlighted, along with distinctive local clays and mineral glazes used to make pottery, and sweet-smelling grasses used to weave baskets. Not as overtly pictorial as many of the other products on the market in this period (Figure 15), nevertheless, American-Way, particularly in the craft program, equated familiar materials, forms, and motifs with American identity.

---

<sup>3</sup> "All-American Design," *House and Garden*, October 1940: 35.

Of Russel Wright's notions about native design, possibly the most difficult aspect to trace in American-Way products is that of the suitability to American lifestyles. Concepts of practicality and livability for informal households were demonstrated in those products designed by Wright himself: the furniture lines and lamps are simple, modestly scaled, and solidly constructed. But the attention to flexible use, easy cleaning, and simplicity in application to everyday life was not on a level with his other work; nor were these characteristics present in many of the other products in the line. The incorporation of craft seems to have led at least partially to this outcome. Baskets, woven linen placemats, and a plethora of small decorative accessories by definition do not suggest a life of "easier living." The difficulty of translating utilitarian, functional ideas to craft products seems to have been challenging for the Wrights, who were much more successful in applying them to the industrially produced products for the program.

Although in early 1940 the Wrights intended the American-Way program to begin with a limited line of "small wares, including all forms of giftware—glassware, pottery dinnerware and artware, lamps, fabrics and furniture,"<sup>4</sup> the product range grew by the opening in September to include textiles, metalware, and a wide range of "small wares." The emphasis, in terms of volume, was on small items, since the craft program did not include anything other than dinnerware, decorative accessories, and textiles. The line went through several iterations, but in 1940 it consisted of nine lines of furniture, five fabric lines, lamps by four designers, three lines of glassware and five of pottery, two each of woodenware and metalware, along with three designers' table linens and one's bedspreads. Forty "craft sources" were specified, distinct from the thirty-seven "artists and designers" in the craft program.

---

<sup>4</sup> "Prospectus for American-Way," April 1940, 3.

Overall, the designs of the industrial products were prosaic, while the craft products in the American-Way program were idiosyncratic, diverse, and in some cases downright quirky. In the end, it seemed that the machine-made furniture, lamps, textiles, and tableware became (whether intended or not) neutral backgrounds for the eclectic group of crafts objects. The ensembles, therefore, were less holistic groupings for Americans to take home, and more somewhat-schizophrenic mixes of the ordinary with the highly unusual.

Perhaps the Wrights realized that the synthesis of machine and hand products was not as successful in actuality as they had hoped. Although the plan had been to create a kind of stage set on which Americans could enact their improved lives, American-Way did not seem to be able to provide such a comprehensive implementation. Despite Russel Wright's theater background, and the participation in the program of movie set designers Joseph Platt (*Rebecca*, *Gone With the Wind*) and Emrich Nicholson (*The Magnificent Obsession*), the "ensembling" idea could not find its legs. Photographic evidence suggests that, for the most part, the crafts products and industrial products ended up being treated and even marketed separately. Just after the program opened, *House Beautiful's* coverage showed largely the craft products, each individually, not in relationship with one another as the program had promised (Figure 16). Newspaper photos documented room ensembles made up almost exclusively of the industrial products (Figure 17); even the American-Way advertisement in the November 1940 *House and Garden* featured the machine-made, with only a suggestion of the crafts (Figure 18).

Before examining specific objects and their designers, it bears mentioning some additional design incongruities in American-Way, found particularly in the crafts program. Artists of stature such as Eugenie Gershoy, Charles Rudy, and Bernita Lundy, whose work was featured in museums, designed tin wall hangings or ceramic and wood "figurines" with names like "Gay Dogs" and

“Three Little Kittens.” Renowned artists making small decorative accessories was not unheard of during the Depression; Lundy, for example, all but abandoned a fine arts career to design objects for Gumps and other retail stores,<sup>5</sup> but it is of interest that the American-Way program enlisted artists of such caliber to create seemingly trivial works. The inclusion of some products of unusual, even odd, character, belied the serious tone of the program’s prose. Among these were painted gourds by two different craftspeople, tablecloths made of actual fish net from Cape Cod, and perhaps most bizarre, slightly off-color pottery figures called “Beach Nuts” by Lester Gaba, creator of a famously risqué store mannequin known as “Cynthia.”<sup>6</sup>

Along with these, though, was the inclusion of work by members of illustrious crafts groups, like the Wiener Werkstatte (Mitzi Otten), the Milwaukee Art Project (Ann Krasnan), and the weavers (the Berndts), described as having had a large enterprise in Vienna before becoming “refugees” to the United States. Further fascination is found in actual objects that were not listed on any American-Way material, but have emerged recently, such as a Mary Wright-designed series of bird figures for Stangl Pottery, complete with American-Way stamp.<sup>7</sup>

Although full documentation for all of the products of American-Way no longer exists, enough information remains to allow analysis of its objects. Having in mind the American design context,

---

<sup>5</sup> Biography from askart.com; accessed 10/26/09.

<sup>6</sup> “Cynthia” was a sufficiently well-known figure that she was shown in a July 7, 1940 ad for McCutcheon’s department store, as part of a series of table settings by American designers with American-made products. In a similar impulse to American-Way, the store was purporting to be showing products for “the American way of life” including a Lucite table, “at which sits Cynthia—most famous of mannequins—breakfasting off vitamins and concentrated food in the manner of tomorrow.” (*New York Times*, page 12.)

<sup>7</sup> Other examples of products with an American-Way provenance but no record in the files include a patio cart by Everlast Metal Products in the collection of the Henry Ford Museum (object number 2005.121.196) and a chest of drawers with an American-Way label still attached, found for sale in an antiques store.

Russel Wright's particular contribution to it, and the ideals of his large-scale experiment in tailoring goods to the American character, it is illuminating to analyze several of the objects in more detail. In the American-Way products themselves the program's achievements and weaknesses are most tangibly seen.

The following is a series of brief examinations of nine objects from the American-Way program. The objects were chosen to be a cross-section of the types of goods and methods of production, as well as of the design sensibilities encompassed within American-Way as it was given material form. Further, objects were chosen which had sufficient photographic documentation to allow for some analysis. Each essay covers the designer(s) and maker(s), including their backgrounds and their interaction in the American-Way program, along with a short examination of the objects' appearance and representation of the ideals of the project.



## **THE ARTHURDALE ASSOCIATION OF MOUNTAINEER CRAFTSMEN/REBECCA CAUMAN**

*...the charm of American simplicity...<sup>8</sup>*

In the objects designed by Rebecca Cauman (1887-1965) and made at the Arthurdale Association in West Virginia for American-Way, there is a confluence of important program ideals in the context of the story of craft in America in 1940. Cauman, a Boston-based fine artist in metal, who had had a successful retail store on Madison Avenue in New York, was brought together in the creation of these objects with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, the New Deal, impoverished mountaineers of Arthurdale, and traditional Southern craft.

Cauman designed three items that were made at Arthurdale for American-Way: a pottery honey jar, a cookie jar, and a vegetable dish, all with pewter covers (Figure 19). The ceramic elements look to be wheel-thrown; their rounded forms had concentric ridges down their bodies and an oyster-colored glaze. The simple, almost crude pottery barrel, tumbler, and flared bowl shapes were topped with flat pewter lids. The tops had a shiny finish and each had a different centered handle: a bird on the cookie jar, a pea pod on the vegetable bowl, and a bee on the honey jar.

Rebecca Cauman studied at the Massachusetts School of Arts and Rhode Island School of Design, and was listed in 1924 as a Master Craftsman with the Boston Society of Arts and Crafts. Her work had been included in exhibitions and expositions, including The Metropolitan Museum's

---

<sup>8</sup> From the Mountaineer Craftsmen's Cooperative Association catalog describing its pewter work, as quoted in Amanda Griffith Penix, *Arthurdale* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2007), 69.

1940 “American Industrial Art” exhibition.<sup>9</sup> She designed small covered boxes and bowls of exquisite delicacy in silver, copper, pewter, and enameling. In some cases, such as in the American-Way products, she contributed the lids for vessels made by others, although the designs for American-Way were much less sophisticated than her other work. Her work featured precise, elegant geometries, distinctive finials, and interesting juxtapositions of materials,<sup>10</sup> all of these were manifested, in a simplified manner, in the American-Way objects.

In the American-Way catalog, Mary Wright called Rebecca Cauman a “pioneer of American crafts” and said that she “brought her design talents to the skilled craftsmen of Arthurdale—the Association sponsored by Mrs. F. D. Roosevelt.” Arthurdale, a controversial project born of Depression-era social agendas, began as essentially a homesteading experiment that also undertook education, employment, and community-building. In 1932, Eleanor Roosevelt, then First Lady of New York, became involved after she visited the area, near Morgantown, West Virginia, and was appalled by the misery of out-of-work coal miners and their families. Using the arguments that such situations could be politically unstable and that Arthurdale could act as a prototype for many other communities of this type, she engineered federal funding and oversight to acquire acreage and build over two hundred houses. It was decided that economic rebirth would center around the production of handcrafts. Homesteaders were to learn, practice, and sell crafts in facilities provided by the government. Mrs. Roosevelt had already been experimenting with the concept of handcraft as social and economic salvation at her upstate New York Val-Kill property, but this was to be a much larger-scale enterprise.

---

<sup>9</sup> Kardon, *Craft in the Machine Age*, 124-5; 231.

<sup>10</sup> [chicagosilver.com/cauman.htm](http://chicagosilver.com/cauman.htm); accessed 4/6/10.

Arthurdale's Mountaineer Craftsmen's Association was primarily known for its furniture-making in simple traditional forms and materials (Figure 20). Pottery, such as that for American-Way, was also a product of Arthurdale, along with weaving and metalwork. Pottery was taught in classes, sold at local fairs, and made by a group of approximately thirty men and women.<sup>11</sup> Although marketing of Arthurdale goods, especially its furniture, was a nationwide enterprise, the Association was never profitable, and when federal funding ended around 1941, so too did the crafts-making business.

The three pottery vessels with pewter lids that were included in the American-Way product line represented the studio craft movement in Rebecca Cauman, along with the anonymous rural craft production of a small-scale organization formed for purely economic reasons. Here, craft was a mixture of local tradition with outsider influence on its form and its marketing. In these objects, the threads of individual design, national mass-marketing, rural folkways, and the work of the hand were woven into the quintessential expression of the Wrights' ideals of production synthesis.

---

<sup>11</sup> Jeanne S. Rymer, "Arthurdale: A Social Experiment in the 1930s," in Alan Axelrod, ed. *The Colonial Revival in America* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1985), 328.

**HENRY GLASS/MOLLA INC.**

*Try to become conversant with the age-old task of solving problems, concerning form and function of manmade things, employing all means, offered by state of the art technology and unfettered imagination.* –advice from Henry Glass to young industrial designers, 2001<sup>12</sup>

Henry Glass’s participation in American-Way is not precisely documented; he was not listed in the 1940 project description, however he clearly contributed a significant design, as it has been subsequently attributed. Further uncertainty follows from the possible addition of the name Walter Sobotka to that of Glass in this design.<sup>13</sup> Whatever the exact circumstances, Glass, a newly-graduated Viennese architect, was a very recent émigré (1939) when he designed for American-Way. While working for Gilbert Rohde, through what he called a “stroke of luck,” Glass met Russel Wright, who asked him to design wrought-iron patio furniture for the program.<sup>14</sup> The furniture, which featured removable sailcloth covers, was manufactured by Molla, Inc., a Long Island-based company known for high-quality patio furniture. The company used a cast aluminum and magnesium alloy that would not oxidize in salt air<sup>15</sup> to manufacture a newly-developing furniture type for the outdoor living spaces of American mid-century homes.

For American-Way, Glass designed two lines, one of which included five different tables, three types of chairs, and a settee, all in wrought iron. Credited as the first instance of the “hairpin” leg,

---

<sup>12</sup> Henry Glass, “Henry P. Glass, FIDSA Interview,” Conducted October 18, 2001 by Victoria Matranga, quoted in Carma R. Gorman, “Henry P. Glass and World War II,” *Design Issues*, 22:4 (Autumn 2006), 23.

<sup>13</sup> Ann Kerr, in her *Collector’s Encyclopedia of Russel Wright* (2002) includes Sobotka in this design for American-Way. While Kerr was not a scholar, she was thoroughly familiar both with the career and products of Russel Wright and his papers at Syracuse University. Sobotka was a Viennese architect who emigrated to the U.S. in 1938 and apparently worked with Wright in some capacity subsequently. (<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/avery/da/sobotka.html>)

<sup>14</sup> Glass interview, quoted in Gorman, 23.

<sup>15</sup> [ironrenaissance.com](http://ironrenaissance.com) (Accessed 4/15/10)

this line featured slender iron rods bent into rounded angles to form table legs, and the arms, legs, and back stiles of the chairs (Figure 21). As told by Glass,

I created a rather startling group of tables, chairs, sofas, etc. which commanded immediate and favourable attention in the trade press, particularly in the weekly "Home furnishings." [sic] Its editor in chief, Alfred Auerbach, coined the name "Hairpin Group" because of the shape of the "steel wire" legs. It was a great success, mainly in the media, I don't know how much of this furniture was actually sold in stores. It certainly created a trend, countless furniture pieces of all kinds were put on "hairpin" legs for several years.<sup>16</sup>

The idea was widely used after World War II, by Florence Knoll and Charles and Ray Eames, among others;<sup>17</sup> in fact, the hairpin leg is today so associated with the period that they are now sold individually to retrofit mid-century furniture.

Although designed by a newly-minted American, Glass's furniture for American-Way expressed key elements of Wright's ideas about distinctive American lifestyles. Using practical materials in a minimalist way, the "Hairpin Group" represented Americans' new interest in expanding the domestic interior to outdoor spaces. In Glass's subsequent career, he focused on issues like multi-use, flexible, small-scale, and economical designs. As Victoria Matranga recounted in a history of Glass's career,

Henry's ideas were often ahead of the times. He designed inflatable furniture in the 1930s, innovative production methods for plywood and Masonite furniture during the 1940s war-time materials constraints, a collapsible accordion-folding camper for Alcoa in 1960 and a titanium chair in 2001.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Carma R. Gorman, "Henry P. Glass and World War II", *Design Issues* 22:4 (Autumn 2006): 10.

<sup>18</sup> Victoria Matranga, "Henry P. Glass, FIDSA," posted ) October 3, 2006, [idsachicago.org/2006/10/chicago-design-history-henry-p-glass.html](http://idsachicago.org/2006/10/chicago-design-history-henry-p-glass.html) (Accessed 4/15/2010).

Henry Glass was acutely aware of a phenomenon that seems to have eluded the Wrights and that profoundly affected the fate of the American-Way program: the increasing rationing and shortages of materials in the years leading up to America's entry into the World War. As Russel Wright was planning American-Way in the summer of 1939, the federal government was already beginning to stockpile certain materials.<sup>19</sup> By 1940, Glass was "creating much more materials-conscious designs that could be produced economically and shipped and stored compactly,"<sup>20</sup> and he made a career out of designing for these needs, the results of which appealed to American consumers even after the War.

Whether the Wrights saw the impending materials shortages also and looked to Glass to design for American-Way with them in mind is unclear. In any case, the group of patio furniture Glass designed for American-Way was an elegant and functional addition to the product line, representative of the best of the ideals of the program.<sup>21</sup> Although, like most of the American-Way products, few were produced, a chair from the line is now in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago.

---

<sup>19</sup> Gorman, 10.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Of further note is the fact that a set of the Henry Glass furniture was used by the Wrights on the patio of their New York apartment in the postwar years, as seen in magazine spreads featuring the apartment.

**GLEN LUKENS**

*...the new in art is incredibly old and the old is still vastly new.*<sup>22</sup>—Glen Lukens

The two ash trays and two bowls made by Glen Lukens for American-Way marked, according to the catalog, his entry into “the commercial field—his pieces having formerly been sold only to museums and bought through art galleries.” Indeed, Lukens was nationally well known as a regionally-rooted ceramist and teacher working in southern California, using local materials emblematically in his work. The American-Way catalog emphasizes the regional nature of Lukens’ work:

...California’s Death Valley—the desert and the sea, provide not only the material for clay and glazes, which Mr. Lukens secures, prepares, and grinds himself (often going into the desert at night to avoid the heat of day,) but also inspiration for his ideas.<sup>23</sup>

Lukens’ work was deceptively simple in appearance, with rough-textured, heavy bodies and thick, opaque glazes often applied to drip over the edges of vessels. With a deep sensitivity to natural influences, and an appreciation of traditional Southwestern culture, Lukens was also a technical innovator in the areas of modeling, glaze application, and firing.<sup>24</sup> His emphasis on the plasticity and hand-modeling of the medium of clay has been compared to Russel Wright’s approach to the design of American Modern dinnerware;<sup>25</sup> these affinities, along with Lukens’ associations with a particular American landscape, made him a natural addition to the American-

---

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Kardon, *Craft in the Machine Age*, 239.

<sup>23</sup> “American-Way Sales Manual,” circa 1940, C7.

<sup>24</sup> Elaine Levin, *The History of American Ceramics, 1607 to the Present: from Pipkins and Bean Pots to Contemporary Forms* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1988), 172-3.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

Way program. As a celebrity craftsman, his contributions were often highlighted in coverage of the program.

The American-Way pieces featured unglazed exteriors and Lukens' signature deeply-colored "crackle" glazes on the insides and outer rims (Figure 22). These pieces were Modern in their abstracted simplicity, organic in their approach to materials, with the clear impression of the maker's hand: the exact synthesis that the Wrights sought in American-Way's craft program. These items, of a more utilitarian nature than most of Lukens' studio-pottery work, also expressed functional ideals, albeit of a less obvious practicality than some others. Further, they represented a far remove both geographically and ideologically from European sources. Lukens' style was individual within a regional context, widely seen as a startling break from existing cultural influences, and stemming from a "primary interest centered on nurturing the creative needs and potentials of the individual" as opposed to "design and techniques growing out of industrial considerations."<sup>26</sup> This "lone ranger" approach was quintessentially American according to the Wrights, and made Lukens' designs for American-Way even more representative of the program's ideals.

---

<sup>26</sup> Paul S. Donhauser, *History of American Ceramics: The Studio Potter* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt, 1978), 76.



**JOSEPH PLATT/IMPERIAL GLASS CORPORATION/CABIN CRAFTS**

...applied design including everything from the painting of candy boxes to mural decoration...  
--Russel/Mary Wright, on Joseph Platt's background

Two very different genres of design were provided to American-Way by Joseph Platt: one, a line of twenty-one glass bowls, vases, and similar tabletop ware; and second, a line of cotton bedspreads. Platt was a design consultant as well as a designer of furniture and interiors. In his role as Decorating Consultant for *House and Garden*, Platt's design sensibility seems to have leaned more toward the traditional. In 1941 Platt directed the Pendec collection, a program of period-design furniture called "truly American in conception" and shown in model rooms with particular colors and floral motifs coordinating the whole.<sup>27</sup> His personal collections of antique European glass, needlework, and bric-a-brac were featured in July 1941. In 1939 and 1940 Platt was in the midst of two of the largest projects of his career, the set designs of the movies *Rebecca* and *Gone with the Wind*. The Wrights' choice of Platt to design products for American-Way is rather curious in terms of his background, but it may have been in the creation of fictional settings that there was more of a connection. Platt certainly understood the concept of ensembling a complete environment around a particular message, the marketing and aesthetic method of American-Way. Hollywood, that most American of popular culture media, had an active cross-fertilization with design in this period, each affecting the other in profound ways.

In both *Rebecca* and *Gone with the Wind* Platt was creating an atmosphere to evoke a sense of history and narrative. In some of the clear glass pieces he designed for American-Way, there was a similar whiff of times past. The "early samples" of vases he was contemplating in an article

---

<sup>27</sup> "Coordinated Merchandising," *House and Garden*, September 1941, iv.

about American-Way in *House and Garden* of November, 1940 were variations on a theme of draped fabric (Figure 23). Although the article describes them as “very fresh,” the forms are top-heavy, the folding of the glass is bulky, and the designs derivative. The 1941 American-Way prospectus mentions other pieces in the line having stars and leaves as motifs, but their appearance is not known. The glass was produced by Duncan Miller, a small factory in Western Pennsylvania known for decorative objects such as its most famous piece, a clear-glass bowl in the shape of a swan. This factory did not make the common low-market pressed glass known as Depression Glass, and in fact most of their products had a high degree of hand-finishing, but it was not known as a design innovator. Steuben Glass in the 1930s, by contrast, hired designers such as Walter Dorwin Teague and Henri Matisse; their work in the period included vases of similar scale and with pleated surfaces like the American-Way vases, but with a great deal more grace and originality.

Much more aesthetically successful was a line of stemware that Platt designed for American-Way, made by the Imperial Glass Company of Ohio. This factory was known for its glassware with Colonial-evocative names like Candlewick and Old Williamsburg. The American-Way clear-glass stemware (Figure 24) had tall bowls on bell-shaped hollow stems, giving an elegant but substantive hourglass form, which was the whole of its decorative concept. Designed for both American-Way price brackets, the stemware had the qualities of practical grace and simple form that the Wrights purported to be seeking.

Platt’s work for American-Way also included a line of bedspreads made by Cabin Crafts, including one called “Rebecca.” The bedspreads have been described as having “designs from modern to traditional” and in pastel colors “conformed to the correlated color scheme” of the

program.<sup>28</sup> Small multi-colored flowers, swags, borders, and bands with looped corners were included in the designs of the bedspreads.<sup>29</sup> Tufted chenille bedspreads, generally with floral patterns and motifs abstracted from quilts, created using a technique called candlewicking, were extremely popular throughout the 1930s. Most were made in the area around Dalton, Georgia, employing home-based women to do the tufting as piece-work.<sup>30</sup> Cabin Crafts was one of the largest manufacturers of these bedspreads, with a business of about \$1 million in 1940.<sup>31</sup>

Although the exact appearance of the spreads for American-Way is not known, the nature of their manufacture is of interest, as an industrial product with a significant hand-crafted labor component making use of traditional textile craft techniques. The spreads, like the drapery-motif glassware by Platt for American-Way, were more reflective of prevailing aesthetic preferences. By not contributing anything new to the program's designs, products such as these diluted its ideals and made American-Way more of a potpourri of existing products than an innovative design program.

---

<sup>28</sup> Kerr, 279.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Becker, 39.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 140.

### OREGON CERAMIC STUDIO

Of the forty-seven lines of products listed in the Spring 1940 prospectus for the American-Way crafts program, fifteen were pottery or ceramics; additionally there were ten ceramics groups in the industrial design area, including Russel Wright's American Modern dinnerware. The range of the pottery products included reproductions of Colonial-era jugs from Jamestown, Virginia; decorative accessories and figurines such as flowers by Mary Wright and painted wall plaques with scenes from Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*; eggshell demitasse sets by Antonin Raymond; and heavy peasant-type pottery from the Rowantrees and Jugtown groups, among others. The pieces by the Oregon Ceramic Studio were, according to the catalog, "characterized by [their] interesting textural combinations and brilliant glazes." There were bowls, a covered flask, a cookie jar, and beer steins with an abstracted snake design. A combination of one large and four small bowls was called a Dessert Set, while a wide low pitcher, sugar shaker, and small narrow pitcher were sold together as a "Waffle Set," creating a group identity suggestive to consumers of a need they didn't know they had, in characteristic Wright sales methodology. There was in addition a large round "relish wheel." All of these were done in rough-textured clay with what were described as "magnificent" and "glowing" colored glazes over all or part of each piece (Figure 25.)

Several small sculptural accessories were included as well: lambs with separate tiny daisy heads, blowfish-shaped salt and pepper, and a "famous duck, a really fine piece of sculpture" of rough terra cotta with multi-colored drops of glaze to indicate feathers. This last object was featured in a greatly enlarged photograph and given the adjective "handsome" in the coverage of American-Way by *The Magazine of Art* in November, 1940, and was featured in advertising for the program as well. These small items of a purely decorative nature were not atypical of the American-Way crafts program, which included a number of such, but they represent a disconnect

with some of the Wrights' ideological concepts for the program. Tiny bric-a-brac pieces such as these (the daisy heads, three separate elements sold with each lamb sculpture, were miniscule) may have been "charming" and "amusing" as the catalog copy suggests, but they were hardly consistent with "easier living" and good design as delineated by the Wrights: "a cluttered over decorated home create[s] an impression of tawdriness and confusion."<sup>32</sup>

The Oregon Ceramic Studio, founded in 1937 and now the Museum of Contemporary Craft, was and is an important regional craft center, whose original facility was built as part of a WPA project. The center featured a vital artist-in-residence program, along with a large kiln accessible to local artists, a museum collection, and a library. In addition to ceramics, the studio housed looms, which were used in the crafting of their other product for American-Way, natural linen table mats and napkins. These open-weave pieces were said to be made of the "first home-grown Oregon flax." Flax, which was made into linen thread in an extremely labor-intensive process, was a traditional American fiber that had largely been supplanted by other, more modern materials. The showcasing of the use of flax in these American-Way pieces is anomalously old-fashioned.

The rich-colored glazes and textured pottery of the Oregon Ceramic Studio ceramic pieces would have been nicely juxtaposed with the simple linen-colored woven mats and napkins in American-Way ensembles. However, these designs lacked a connection with many of the fundamental aims of the program. Typical of what could be found in a high-quality regional craft store but without design innovation or even real visual interest, pieces like these showed some of the Wrights' difficulties in acquiring crafts that represented unique and compelling American design.

---

<sup>32</sup> "American-Way" prospectus, January 1941, 1.

**DOROTHY LIEBES**

*Don't stand too close to that loom; she might weave you into it!*<sup>33</sup>

In the category for the \$5000 annual salary group is listed woven upholstery and drapery fabric by Dorothy Liebes, to be made by Louisville Textiles as part of their “Fincastle” line of ready-to-hang draperies. A black and white photograph shows a moderately textured ribbed loop weave with heathered coloration, consistent with the type of work of this famous and prolific textile designer, but by no means as artistically energetic as most of her textiles (Figure 26). Liebes, a prominent California weaver, was charting new territory in Modernist weaving, industrial textile production, and the place of women in these fields. By 1940 she had created textiles integral to the designs of public buildings and houses by architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Edward Durrell Stone, had worked on adapting handweaving to mass production, and had organized the decorative arts section of the 1939-40 Golden Gate Exposition in San Francisco.<sup>34</sup> Although her studies at the Rodier firm in France had been formative, Liebes was deeply concerned with the American expression of Modernism, and the role of textiles in the American interior.

Liebes’ major contribution to textile design in this period was the experimental and imaginative use of non-traditional materials in her weaves, which gave them deep texture and coloration that enlivened and enriched Modernist interiors.<sup>35</sup> She provided luxurious hand-woven pieces, often of an architectural nature, such as the 1952 sample room divider now in the Metropolitan Museum’s collection, incorporating wood, Lurex, and chenille, made for the United

---

<sup>33</sup> Comment made by visitors to Liebes’ studio, from Alexa Griffith Winton, “Weft and Warmth: The Textiles of Dorothy Liebes,” *Modernism Magazine* 7:3 (Fall 2004): 70.

<sup>34</sup> Kardon, *Craft in the Machine Age*, 239.

<sup>35</sup> Winton, 68.

Nations Delegates' Dining Room (Figure 27).<sup>36</sup> But Liebes was also committed to mass production of fabrics with great textural interest, and this was where she fit into the American-Way program.

In contrast to the fabrics supplied by Curry and Wilson, Liebes' design had no print, using instead texture and materials as the decorative message. The "Fincastle" textile could be seen as Modernist in its simple, non-figural approach and mass production, but it was also read as having associations with traditional American modes:

In the fabric used for curtains, upholstery and bedspreads, the American taste is again expressed in a return to early hand-weaving techniques. Yet here is no archaic imitation of the homespun linsey-woolsey or the blue and white coverlets of a century and a half ago. These newly designed textiles use chenille yarns, a modern development, or original looped pile techniques or other contemporary style rough surface effect, and yet retain a delightful simplicity.<sup>37</sup>

Dorothy Liebes represented in her work the synthesis of craft and machine production that the Wrights propounded in the American-Way program, and her textiles were the warm Modernism that they sought for American homes. Her less-than-thrilling design for American-Way was a lost opportunity, but her very presence in the program was a boon for its public relations and ideological message.

---

<sup>36</sup> Gift of Dorothy Liebes Design Inc., 1973 (1973.129.7)

<sup>37</sup> Walter Rendell Storey, "Home Decoration: Rooms in the American Spirit," *The New York Times*, September 4, 1942, 4D.

**JOHN STEUART CURRY/COHN HALL MARX CO.**

*...there is art right here...in our rolling green hills, dotted with the white of farm houses and the red of barns. We have art, also, in the shine of brown earth as it rolls from the plowshare, in the swing of the fork as the hired man scatters hay-cocks after an untimely rain, and in the healthy gusto with which threshers eat their food.*      –John Steuart Curry<sup>38</sup>

John Steuart Curry may have been exactly the type of artist that Russel Wright had in mind when he formulated the American-Way project. Curry, a painter of Midwestern genre scenes, was a member of the school known as Regionalists, along with Grant Wood and Thomas Hart Benton, whose work has been seen as “a conscious effort to strengthen national unity through the collective embrace of that which is uniquely American.”<sup>39</sup> Although born in Kansas, Curry painted robust farmers and everyday rural life from his studio in Connecticut, far from the reality of the Depression-era Midwest. Like Russel Wright, Curry was a transplanted Midwesterner who came to national prominence in the 1930s, while working out of the worldly East Coast. Curry became known for his murals, including a series in the Kansas Capitol building depicting abolitionist John Brown, as well as his easel paintings with titles like *Hogs Killing a Rattlesnake* and *Baptism in Kansas* (Figure 28). For American-Way, Curry was asked to contribute the design for a textile which was shown and possibly sold as draperies.

The American-Way fabric was a large-scale print depicting the foliage and fruit of the osage orange, a tree with much association and history in the middle United States. Planted in rows as a cattle hedge and prairie windbreak, the osage orange was a familiar, useful, and particularly Midwestern plant form. It was the primary tree used in a WPA project that by 1942 had planted

---

<sup>38</sup> From interview quoted in Charles C. Eldredge, “Prairie Prodigal: John Steuart Curry and Kansas” in *John Steuart Curry: Inventing the Middle West* (NY: Hudson Hills Press, Inc., 1998), 90.

<sup>39</sup> Kardon, *Craft in the Machine Age*, 105-6.



220 million trees as shelter and for erosion control;<sup>40</sup> its wood was known for making good hunting bows and its fruit for producing a golden-yellow dye. The iconography of the printed fabric Curry designed for American-Way was a direct reference to regional American culture and natural history (Figure 29).

The inclusion of Curry in the American-Way program was an obvious choice for his overt associations with the region known as The Heartland and America's Breadbasket. He represented American-ness in one sense of Russel Wright's definition--a native son working in regional idioms and using the local landscape as source material. While not as explicit in the fabric for American-Way as in his paintings, Curry fulfilled the Wrights' requirement for direct American references. The design of the textile was a bit more puzzling, however, in terms of their ideals of progressive design, informal lifestyles, simplicity, and freedom from European sources. The busy and realistically rendered print, screened onto the fabric and not woven into it, was not particularly innovative, nor was it made with modern materials or intrinsic ornament. Like another printed fabric in American-Way, one by Scott Wilson that featured Iroquois feathers, the osage orange print employed American-associated iconography, but not the American character as Wright saw it.

In a 1942 effort to explicate and endorse American-Way one last time, Walter Rendell Storey tried in *The New York Times* to reconcile the design of these fabrics with other objects in the program:

Printed chintzes are gay with roses, but here also one finds a return to the direct effects which preceded by fifty years or more the naturalistic and abundant blooms of Victorian times. The old-new effect of these American

---

<sup>40</sup> R. Douglas Hurt, "Forestry on the Great Plains, 1902-1942," [personal.ksu.edu/~jsherow/hurt2.htm](http://personal.ksu.edu/~jsherow/hurt2.htm); accessed 4/13/10.

way [sic] fabrics is due in part to bright colors as well as restraint in the number used.<sup>41</sup>

If the only thing “new” was the small number of colors used in comparison with Victorian counterparts, the Curry textile was not going to be a strong participant in ushering “good” Modern design into American homes. The Wrights’ allocation of a painter to the task of designing a fabric may have been misguided. The prevailing notion of “art in industry” that assumed the ability of any practitioner to successfully navigate between media did not always produce winning results.

---

<sup>41</sup> Storey, *New York Times*, September 4, 1942, 4D.

**MARY WRIGHT/EVERLAST METAL PRODUCTS/THREE MOUNTAINEERS**

*Mary Wright's chief claim to fame is that she is Russel Wright's wife.* –American-Way crafts catalog

In addition to her labors in developing and marketing American-Way, Mary Wright was the designer of record for several of its products, in a variety of media. With members of the Penobscot Indians, she designed a basket in the shape of a three-dimensional Red Cross (“as a symbolic reminder of work to be done”); she also did a series of pottery flowers for William Maddux, and designed frosted oak bowls and serving pieces said to be “inspired from American Indian chopping bowls”<sup>42</sup> for Klise Manufacturing Company.<sup>43</sup> In conjunction with architect Douglas Maier and artist Miles Aborn, Mary designed items of woodenware, nineteen pieces including bowls, trays, cigarette boxes, and small hurricane lamps.

The documentation of one of these pieces, a cheese board, gives indication of the evolving nature of the design and production of some of the American-Way products over the course of the program’s short lifetime. The cheese board is attributed in the 1940 crafts catalog to Maier, with the comment that it is “one of the cleverest cheese boards to date...the names of practically all varieties of available cheese are burnt in the solid maple panel.” Listed in the catalog as being by Mary Wright is a square cheese board with a round center, in frosted oak and made by Klise. Photos (Figure 30) of these pieces show a cheese board of the exact description of the one by Maier, with the name of “American” cheese incised in the largest type; apparently Mary Wright’s

---

<sup>42</sup> “Snapshots: Russel and Mary Wright”, *Interiors*, December 1944, 60.

<sup>43</sup> According to Ann Kerr, Mary Wright also designed a series of tablecloths for Leacock and Company, at least one of which, “Marine Gardens” was part of the American-Way line. (Kerr, 245.)

signature was burned into the back.<sup>44</sup> Who exactly designed these pieces, whether any were made in maple by Three Mountaineers (who were also listed in the catalog entry), and even if there was more than one cheese board design by any combination of these designers and makers, is unclear. In objects like this/these, one senses the behind-the-scenes scramble on the part of Russel and Mary Wright to get objects into production and into marketing materials.

In addition to woodenware, baskets, and textiles, Mary Wright contributed interesting metalware designs. Again, exact attribution of design is difficult here. In some materials, Mary was listed as collaborating with Raymond Loewy on a group of heavy gauge aluminum buffet accessories and “drinking accessories” for Everlast Aluminum, whereas in publicity such as the *House and Garden* spread of November 1940, Loewy was given sole credit. Drawings in Mary Wright’s hand in the Syracuse University archive show drawings of leaves that were very similar to the hammered-aluminum finished product called “Fallen Leaves” known to have been made in at least a small quantity (see Figure 8). These pieces, very different in decorative language from the spun aluminum the Wrights had been producing in the early 1930s, nevertheless partook of the decade’s interest in new uses for this material, which was by 1940 beginning to be rationed for military production. The Fallen Leaves group, using the technique of hammering, had texture and representational decorative language not a part of the earlier Wright Accessories line, but very much in keeping with what is known of Mary’s design aesthetic. Raymond Loewy’s contribution, primarily the beverage accessories (Figure 11), was described as having “the clean-cut beauty of the machine”<sup>45</sup> in contrast to the handmade look of the leaf-form group.

---

<sup>44</sup> Kerr, 276.

<sup>45</sup> *House and Garden*, November, 1940, 34.

Hammered aluminum was a product that fit nicely within the hand/machine synthesis idea of American Way, in that it employed industrial techniques of stamping or embossing to create a hand-made effect. In the 1930s, aluminum was a new material that was domesticated to give a middle-class alternative to more expensive options such as silver and pewter; an enormous variety of accessories was produced, largely in the Grove City, Pennsylvania area by a handful of companies, and it quickly became a widely-sold mainstay. Everlast's products were often hand-hammered, making it unclear in this case which type of process was used to make the Mary Wright designs.

**RUSSEL WRIGHT/OLD HICKORY/SPRAGUE AND CARLETON/KLISE**

Russel Wright's own designs in several categories were added to the American-Way product group, including existing lines like American Modern and spun aluminum accessories, possibly in an effort to fill out the program in areas where certain types were lacking. Lamps, furniture, glass, woodenware, and even designs for decorative accessories in Vermont marble as part of the craft program, were among his contributions. Three lines in particular have references to important American-Way concepts: the "Oceana" group for Klise Manufacturing, along with furniture produced by Old Hickory and Sprague and Carleton.

The Oceana line had begun in 1935 when Wright designed a series of organic-form bowls, trays, and other objects in shapes taken from marine motifs like shells and seaweed, for Klise Wood Working Company of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Made from a variety of solid American woods, these decorative and tableware accessories were carefully designed for the constraints of machine production but with a distinct hand-carved appearance. Production of this line was expanded for its inclusion in the program, and ended when the American-Way project did.<sup>46</sup> One of the most sculptural of its pieces is in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art (Figure 31) and was featured on the cover of its *Bulletin* in January, 1940 as an example of the items in the "Useful Objects Under Ten Dollars" exhibition. Among the criteria for the choice of the exhibition's objects was "suitability to purpose; suitability to material; suitability to process of manufacture; and aesthetic quality." Like Wright, MoMA apparently did not see a conflict within the uncertainty of the process/product relationship in this case.

---

<sup>46</sup> Kerr, 119.

While the Oceana line represented mass-produced objects with a hand-crafted appearance and Modernist aesthetic, the line of furniture for Old Hickory was from a small production facility, with much hand-work entailed, and with overt American traditional associations. The company, in Martinsville in southern Indiana, was a nineteenth-century firm which had a tradition of making furniture of hickory saplings, including, it was said, the original chairs for Andrew Jackson's house, The Hermitage. "Old Hickory," the nickname of the populist frontiersman President, became the company's name as well. Iconic chairs like those in the Old Faithful Lodge in Yellowstone National Park were supplied by the firm as well. These connotations of American-ness must have consciously appealed to Wright for the American-Way line. Although not in the 1940 list of products, the group that he designed for Old Hickory was clearly highlighted in a print ad for the program in the summer of 1941 (Figure 32), and continued as part of the company's production after the end of American-Way (Figure 33).<sup>47</sup> While conjuring images of spinning wheels and covered wagons, this hickory furniture was also graceful and simple in line, responsive to its materials, and textural like a Dorothy Liebes textile. The Old Hickory pieces brought together American character, hand and machine, tradition and modernity in exactly the manner Wright had planned for all of the American-Way products.

One of the other furniture lines, made by Sprague and Carleton and consisting of living room, "dinette," and sun room pieces designed by Russel Wright for American-Way, was seen in an ensemble photo that was published in magazine and newspaper coverage of the program (Figure 34). These pieces had his by-then signature solid maple construction, modest scale, rounded edges, and adaptability. Particularly successful was the small dining table with its gracefully arcuated legs, and the chairs which featured similarly gently flowing curves in seat, leg, and back,

---

<sup>47</sup> Kerr, 74.

and flush-pegged construction. These pieces had more refinement of form than some of Wright's other, more widely-sold furniture lines, particularly the Modernmates (1949) and Modernage (1951) groups. The rounded and curving forms of Wright's furniture for American-Way led to contemporary comparisons with ox-bows and hand-whittling<sup>48</sup> while the native wood, pegged construction, and simplicity of outline inevitably suggested to many an inherent American-ness.

Wright's own designs for American-Way, especially in comparison with some of the work by others, is indicative both of the strength of his concept for the program, and the difficulty of communicating it to other designers. Naturally Wright was able to translate into objects his ideas about native design, American character, and modern lifestyles. His and Mary's ability to transfer these ideas to their fellow creators was more problematic, however, giving the program's products an unevenness of concept and execution. The variety within the products of American-Way, intended in concept as a program strength, became in actuality an overly eclectic mixture, preventing the program from achieving cohesiveness. The problems inherent in a large group of designers seeking to represent a single vision became one of the reasons for American-Way's lack of aesthetic and marketing success.

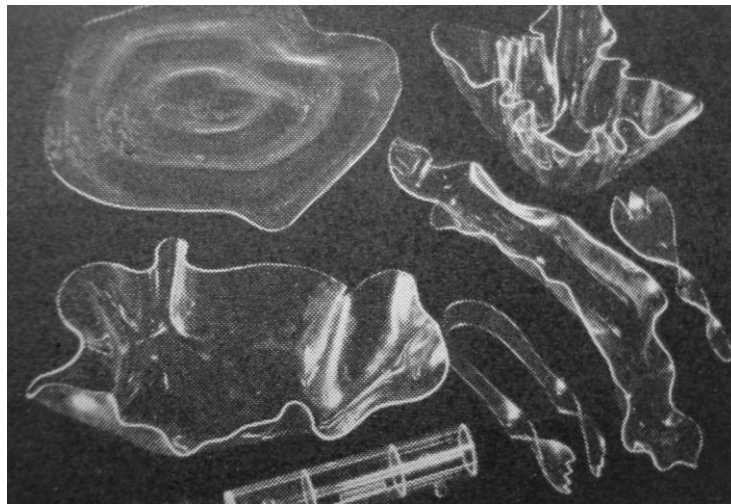
---

<sup>48</sup> Walter Rendell Storey, "Home Decoration: American Design Comes to the Fore," *The New York Times*, October 6, 1940, D9.



**CHAPTER 5 FIGURES****FIGURE 8.**

**MARY WRIGHT "FALLEN LEAVES" HAMMERED  
ALUMINUM DISH (EVERLAST METAL PRODUCTS  
FOR AMERICAN-WAY, 1940**

**FIGURE 9.**

**NORMAN BEALS, LUCITE PRODUCTS FOR  
AMERICAN-WAY**

From *The American Way* (see October issue) comes this furniture, these fabrics. Many of America's foremost designers are represented. Sofa by Robert Heller with upholstery by Dorothy Liebes. Heller armchair with Freda Diamond upholstery. Drapery fabric by John Stewart Curry. Glass curtain fabric by Isabel M. Crook. The two tables and the desk are by Gilbert Rhode. The table lamp is by Arno Scheiding and the floor lamp is by Russel Wright. A wooden bear on the lamp table is Chas. Rudy's. Yellow, green, yellow and blue are the colors used here against chartreuse walls, very excitingly indeed. All at R. H. Macy and Company, including the modern, and beguiling, blue hostess gown



★ ★ ★ ★ **THE AMERICAN WAY** ★ ★ ★

**FIGURE 10.**

**HOUSE BEAUTIFUL, DECEMBER 1940**



**FIGURE 11.**

**RAYMOND LOEWY AND METALWARE  
(EVERLAST ALUMINUM) FOR AMERICAN-  
WAY, 1940**



**FIGURE 12.**

**AUDREY BULLER, TEA SET (KNOWLES  
CHINA) FOR AMERICAN-WAY, 1940**



**FIGURE 13.**

**ROBERT GRUEN, PEWTER TABLEWARE  
(KENILWORTH PLATING CO.) FOR AMERICAN-  
WAY, 1940**



**FIGURE 14.**  
**GILBERT ROHDE AND DESK/BOOKCASE FOR**  
**AMERICAN-WAY, 1940**

88 JUNE, 1940 Total pages this section 90

**AMERICANS...**  
**Here Is Your Dinnerware!**  
*of America . . . by Americans . . . for Americans*  
 Designed by the Famous Artist, **ROCKWELL KENT**

OUR America as we know her today — vital, vibrant, alive! Our America, her scenic beauties and man-made wonders, lives in a new fresh art form. Embodied in fine dinnerware, more than 30 powerful drawings by Rockwell Kent picture the scenes and activities of modern America—from the fishing banks of New England to cotton picking in the Carolinas; from the skyline of New York to the Big Trees of California.

**POWER**—A mighty dam brings new hope and life to millions.

**PROGRESS**—To house the workers of the city, a skyscraper rises.

**FOOD**—Fertile land fulfills itself in golden harvest.

**HISTORY**—As in years ago, the Hopi Indians herd their sheep.

**ROMANCE**—A stately gentleman looks on the cotton fields.

"OUR AMERICA" is sold by leading stores throughout the country. Sets priced from \$8.00. Shown here are but a few of the different pieces in the "Our America" series. For free booklets illustrating this and other distinctive patterns of Vernonware, write Vernon Kilns, Department 34, 2500 East 52nd Street, Los Angeles, California.

*Authentic* **VERNONWARE**

**FIGURE 15.**  
**HOUSE AND GARDEN, JUNE 1940**




**FIGURE 16.**  
**HOUSE BEAUTIFUL, JUNE 1940**




**FIGURE 17.**  
**NEW YORK TIMES, JANUARY 4, 1942**

for the first time <sup>OCT. 11, 1940</sup> leading  
 American design talent combines  
 to provide a background  
 for the American way of living.  
 AMERICAN-WAY announces  
 the contemporary furnishings  
 you will want and can afford



*with American-WAY products every other label  
 used by the American's name*



The AMERICAN-WAY program of  
 selected homefurnishings designed  
 by many important  
 artists and industrial designers  
 is available in many stores  
 and featured by the following:

We. Fisher & Sons Furniture, Boston, Mass.  
 S. Fox & Co. Hartford, Conn.  
 H. W. Hunt & Co. Inc. New York City  
 The Metropolitan Shop, Philadelphia, Pa.  
 Joseph Horne Co. Pittsburgh, Pa.  
 Brownriggs & Bennett, Philadelphia, Pa.  
 J. J. McKean Company, Detroit, Mich.

The Walter Gropius, Cleveland, Ohio  
 Charles Rayburn, Inc., Milwaukee, Wis.  
 Paulownia Co. Inc. Memphis, Tenn.  
 J. H. Jones & Co. Buffalo, N. Y.  
 Walter & Frank Co. Inc. American Design  
 P. A. J. Brown, New Philadelphia, Pa.

*American Design, Inc., 1 East 58th Street, New York City*

FIGURE 18.

**HOUSE AND GARDEN, NOVEMBER, 1940**



FIGURE 19.

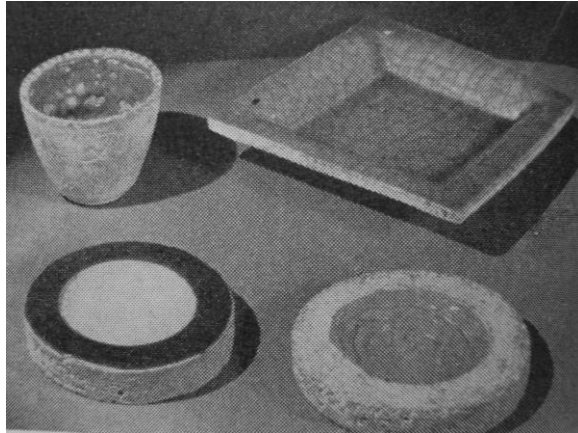
**REBECCA CAUMAN, PEWTER AND EARTHENWARE SERVING  
 PIECES (ARTHURDALE ASSOCIATION OF MOUNTAINEER  
 CRAFTSMEN) FOR AMERICAN-WAY, 1940**



**FIGURE 20.**  
**ARTHURDALE ASSOCIATION OF MOUNTAINEER CRAFTSMEN, PAGE FROM CATALOG, CIRCA 1939**



**FIGURE 21.**  
**HENRY GLASS, OUTDOOR FURNITURE (MOLLA) FOR AMERICAN-WAY, 1940**



**FIGURE 22.**

**GLEN LUKENS, POTTERY FOR  
AMERICAN-WAY, 1940**



**FIGURE 23.**

**JOSEPH PLATT WITH GLASSWARE (DUNCAN  
AND MILLER) FOR AMERICAN-WAY, 1940**



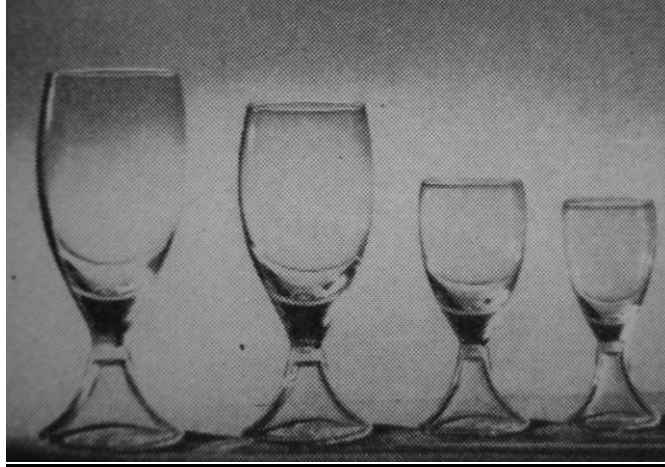


FIGURE 24.

JOSEPH PLATT, STEMWARE (IMPERIAL  
GLASS CORP.) FOR AMERICAN-WAY, 1940

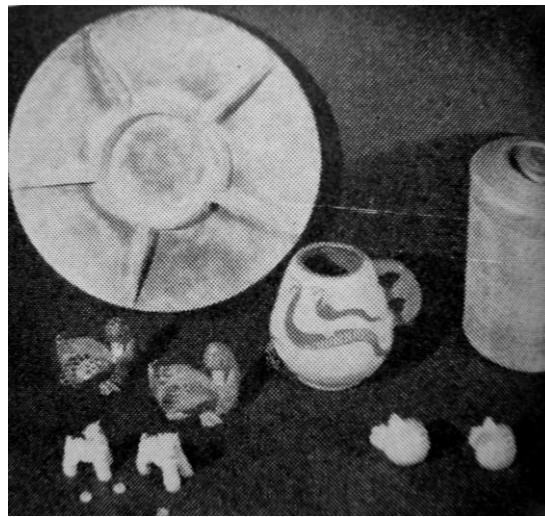
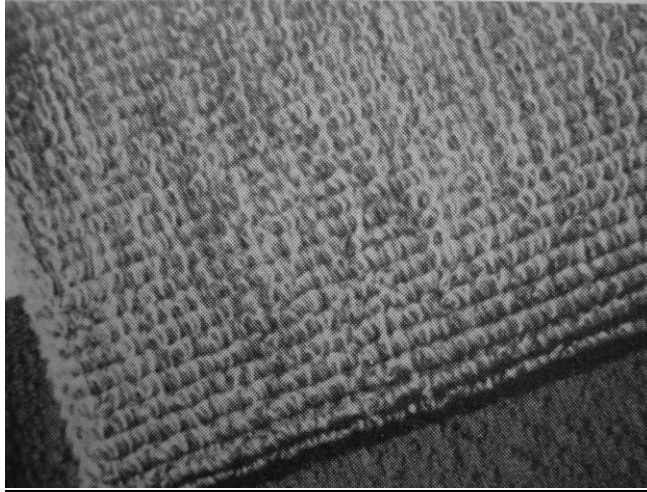
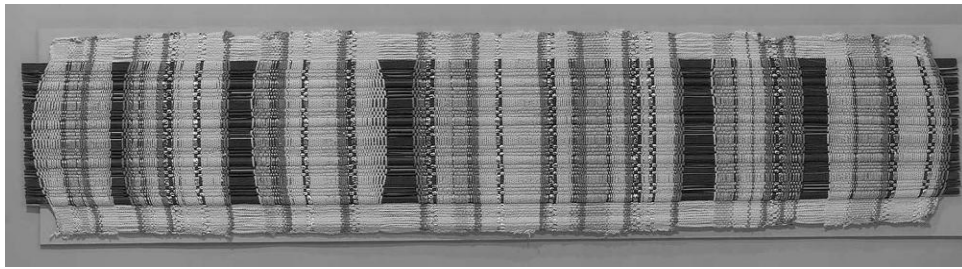


FIGURE 25.

OREGON CERAMIC STUDIO, "WAFFLE SET"  
AND FIGURINES FOR AMERICAN-WAY 1940



**FIGURE 26.**  
**DOROTHY LIEBES, TEXTILE**  
**(LOUISVILLE TEXTILE INC.) FOR**  
**AMERICAN-WAY, 1940**



**FIGURE 27.**  
**DOROTHY LIEBES, SAMPLE ROOM DIVIDER,**  
**CIRCA 1952 (METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART,**  
**1973.129.7)**



**FIGURE 28.**  
**JOHN STEUART CURRY, "BAPTISM  
IN KANSAS", 1928**



**FIGURE 29.**  
**JOHN STEUART CURRY AND TEXTILE DESIGN  
FOR AMERICAN-WAY, 1940**



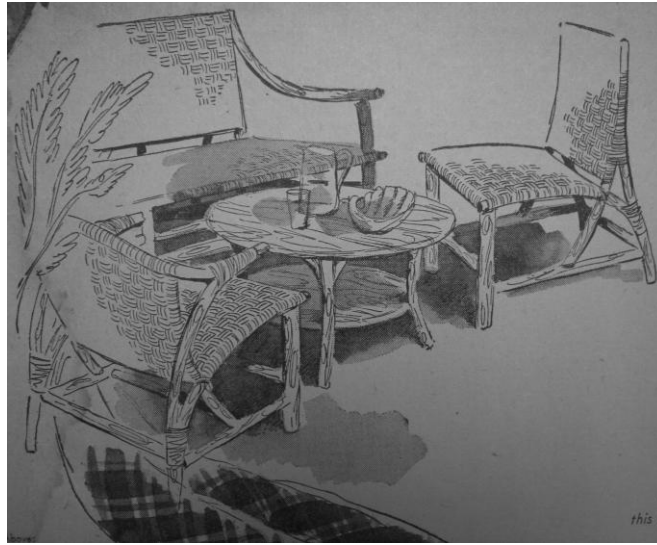
**FIGURE 30.**

**MARY WRIGHT, WOODENWARE (KLISE  
MANUFACTURING) FOR AMERICAN-WAY, 1940**



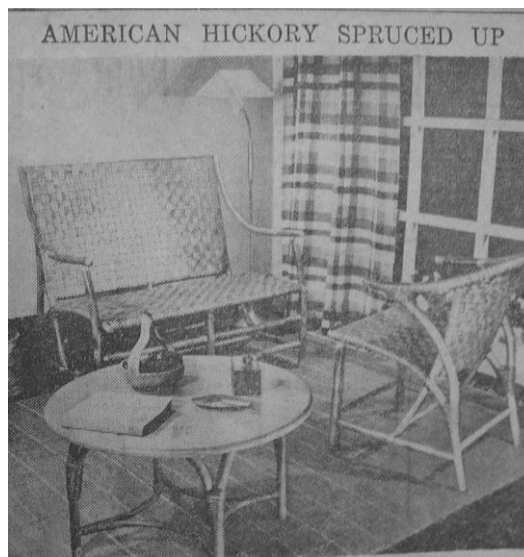
**FIGURE 31.**

**RUSSEL WRIGHT, "OCEANA" BOWL (KLISE  
MANUFACTURING), CIRCA 1940**



**FIGURE 32.**

**AD FOR AMERICAN-WAY, DETAIL OF OLD HICKORY  
FURNITURE BY RUSSEL WRIGHT, CIRCA 1940**



**FIGURE 33.**

**COVERAGE OF AMERICAN-WAY IN *THE  
NEW YORK TIMES*, APRIL 6, 1941**



FIGURE 34.

COVERAGE OF AMERICAN-WAY IN *THE MAGAZINE OF ART*, NOVEMBER, 1940