



Smithsonian
Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum

Henry Dreyfuss collection, 1927-1972

2011

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Libraries
Title:	Henry Dreyfuss collection
Identifier:	SIL-CH.1972-88-332-4
Date:	1927-1972
Extent:	130 Cubic feet
Creator:	Dreyfuss, Henry, 1904-1972
Language:	English
Summary:	<p>This material does not cover all clients and projects undertaken by Dreyfuss. This collection consists of theater design materials, industrial design materials, primarily, though not exclusively, from the 1950s and 60s, draft copies of his books, including extensive research files for the "Symbol Sourcebook," texts of lectures delivered by Dreyfuss, and biographical material. Included is Dreyfuss's Brown Book which provides an outline of his achievements. Photographs and slides of many of his designs are included. Materials relating to three publications include original drafts of the books with author notes, drawings, photographs, correspondence, and research materials. Also contains materials relating to the symbols exhibition held at the Hallmark Gallery in New York City in 1972. This collection was the source of many of the objects and issues addressed in Cooper-Hewitt's 1997 exhibition, "Henry Dreyfuss: Directing Design", and companion book, "Henry Dreyfuss, Industrial Designer: The Man in the Brown Suit", both conceived by Russell Flinchum. 311 reels of microfilm documenting most of the projects undertaken by Dreyfuss Associates were created by the firm and added to the collection later.</p>

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Henry Dreyfuss and Doris Marks donated his papers to Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, in the fall of 1972.

Additional materials were transferred to the museum in 1973 from the University of California at Los Angeles, which held a small collection of material deeded by Henry Dreyfuss in 1962.

311 reels of microfilm were donated to the museum in 1992.

Location of Other Archival Materials Note

Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Applied Arts Department. Models and realized objects including control knobs for GM and Deere vehicles, plastic plates and various ceramic

pieces with international symbols, Trimline telephones, an RCA Victor radio, a Westclox "Big Ben" alarm clock, and a Presco "AirClip" hair clipper.

Location of Other Archival Materials Note

Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Drawings and Prints Department. Hundreds of drawings of designs for tractors, train, plane, and ship interiors, television and radio cabinets, product labels, logos, packaging, office buildings, and costumes.

Location of Other Archival Materials Note

Other archival repositories containing Dreyfuss materials include: AT&T Archives, Warren, New Jersey; Deere & Co. Archives, Moline, Iowa; Honeywell Archives, Minneapolis, MN; Hoover Company, Canton, Ohio; Polaroid Archives, Cambridge, MA; Billy Rose Theater Collection, New York Public Library; Ethical Culture/Fieldson School Archives, New York; New York Central System Historical Society, Inc.

Location of Other Archival Materials Note

United Scenic Artists Local 829 Archives, New York; New York World's Fair 1939-40 Archives, Manuscript Division, New York Public Library; and San Diego Aerospace Museum Archives.

Other Finding Aids

71-page Research Guide.

Available Formats

A portion of this collection is available on microfiche.

Restrictions

Unrestricted research use onsite by appointment. Permission of staff required to photograph material.

Biographical Note

Industrial and stage designer. Born New York, March 2, 1904. Attended Society for Ethical Culture High School in New York. Apprenticed to designer Norman Bel Geddes, 1922-1924. Established his own industrial design firm in 1929. His clients included Bell Telephone Laboratories, Deere & Company, Honeywell, Inc., Polaroid Corporation, General Electric, the 1939-40 and 1964-65 New York World's Fairs, New York Central Railroad, Hoover Company, Singer Sewing Machine Company, Royal Typewriter Co., Lockheed Aircraft, McCall's magazine, and others.

Dreyfuss was a founding member of the Society of Industrial Designers, and the first president of the Industrial Designers Society of America. He is best known for his designs for the Bell 500 and Trimline telephones, the Westclox Big Ben alarm clock, Deere & Company tractors, Polaroid's Automatic 100, Swinger, and SX-70 Land Cameras, and New York Central Railroad's 1938 Twentieth Century Limited. In the 1950s, Dreyfuss was one of the pioneers in the application of anthropometrics (the study of human dimensions and capabilities) in his designs. In 1969, Dreyfuss retired from his firm, but remained active as a corporate consultant. He was the author of several important books including: "Designing for People", 1955; "Measure of Man", 1959; and "Symbol Sourcebook", 1972.

Arrangement

Materials are arranged into four record groups: 1) Biographical information; 2) Theater design; 3) Industrial design; and 4) Publications.

The biographical material is arranged into four sub groups: 1) Lectures and Articles by Dreyfuss; 2) Articles about Dreyfuss; 3) Dreyfuss firm promotional mailings; and 4) Other material (photos, awards, etc.). Each sub-group is filed chronologically.

The Industrial Design records are divided into two sub groups: Early Industrial Design, 1929-1935, and Industrial Design, 1936-1969, and are arranged alphabetically by client name.

The publication materials are arranged alphabetically by title of publication.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- 20th Century Limited (Express train)
- Design, Industrial -- United States
- Designing for People
- Human engineering
- Measure of Man
- Set design -- United States
- Signs and symbols
- Symbol Sourcebook
- Thermostats
- Tractors -- United States -- History
- Trimline telephone
- anthropometry
- telephone

Types of Materials:

- Biographies
- Book drafts
- Client lists
- Clippings
- Correspondence
- Drawings
- Journal
- Mechanicals
- Photographs
- Renderings
- Reports
- Slides
- Speeches

Names:

- Bell Telephone Laboratories

Cooper-Hewitt Design Archive
Deere & Company
Dreyfuss, Henry, 1904-1972
General Electric Company
Henry Dreyfuss Associates
Honeywell Inc.
Hoover Company
Industrial Designers Society of America
Lockheed Aircraft Corporation
New York Central Railroad Company
Polaroid Corporation
Royal Typewriter Company
Singer Sewing Machine Company
Westclox

Occupations:

Industrial designers -- United States
Theater designers -- United States

Preferred Titles:

McCall's magazine