

“IT’S STYLED BY HELEN DRYDEN”

THE FINE ART OF GOOD TASTE

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at the University of Missouri – Columbia

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Art History)

by

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“IT’S STYLED BY HELEN DRYDEN”
THE FINE ART OF GOOD TASTE

presented by Sarah Marie Horne,

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Dr. James A. van Dyke

Dr. Michael Yonan

Dr. Elisa Glick

For Vince, Eli, and Pippa, with love.

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“IT’S STYLED BY HELEN DRYDEN”
THE FINE ART OF GOOD TASTE

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ABSTRACT

In the throes of the Great Depression the struggling automobile manufacturer Studebaker made the extraordinary decision to hire a woman to design their new model. The woman Studebaker hired was Helen Dryden, a New York based artist with an international reputation as a style authority and an arbiter of good taste. Through a combination of artistic talent, privileged upbringing, and sheer luck Helen Dryden forged a successful career as a commercial artist and became one of the founders of the industrial design profession.

This dissertation explores the complex intersection of art and consumerism, and the ways in which this intersection helped and hindered efforts by women to establish careers as commercial artists in America during the interwar years. During this period the boundaries between fine art and commercial art temporarily relaxed, encouraging experimentation and facilitating the rise of the industrial design profession. This dissertation traces the inevitable consolidation of the industrial design profession through the lens of Helen Dryden’s colorful career.

Known primarily for her magazine illustrations and theatrical costume designs the extent of Dryden’s role at Studebaker is contested. However, archival evidence corroborates Dryden’s position as a vanguard of industrial design. This dissertation

reconstructs Dryden's biography in an effort to understand why she was forgotten and to uncover new avenues for exploring the history of design. Her work sheds new light on the formation of industrial design as a profession by countering gendered stereotypes and revealing the limited conditions under which a woman could succeed.

“The longing for beauty is instinctive. It may be unsuspected but it is there. It is stronger in some who have cultivated their tastes, but we all have need and sometimes desire for a measure of beauty in our lives. Those who are called artists are more sensitive to it, and some are able to create it, but the surest guarantee of beauty in this modern mechanistic and somewhat muddled world is the growing recognition that it has economic as well as spiritual value, *that beauty pays.*”

-Ernest Elmo Calkins, “Design and Economic Recovery,” 1933

Introduction

In the 1930s, the Studebaker Corporation, a producer of mid-range automobiles, struggled to remain afloat in an increasingly competitive market. The economic turmoil brought about by the Great Depression was acutely felt in the newly established industry of automobile manufacturing. While dozens of manufacturers popped up in the 1920s to meet extensive consumer demand, the economic decline of the following decade saw their numbers dwindle until only a handful of companies remained. Nearly all of the surviving manufacturers were massive corporations offering automobiles at bargain prices that appealed to a buying public with limited financial resources. The majority of smaller companies and manufacturers of high-end luxury automobiles were unable to withstand the harshness of these economic conditions. As the decade crept passed the severity of the Depression forced more and more businesses to shutter their doors until, finally, only a handful of manufacturers remained. Studebaker was a mid-

size automobile manufacturer and could not compete with the bargain prices of the larger producers, like Ford and General Motors. This put the Studebaker Corporation in jeopardy. If the company made one wrong move they would likely face the permanent closure of the factory. The situation was dire, indeed, but Studebaker devised a plan to ensure the longevity of the company and to guarantee that Studebaker would be one of the few automobile manufacturers to emerge from the Great Depression. Studebaker's surprising and ultimately successful survival strategy: hire a woman design consultant.

The woman Studebaker hired was Helen Dryden, a New York based artist with an international reputation as a style authority and an arbiter of good taste. At the time she was known primarily for her magazine illustrations and theatrical costume designs. Studebaker not only consulted with Dryden on the design of their new models, the company also used Dryden's name prominently in its marketing endeavors. Advertisements proudly proclaimed, "It's styled by Helen Dryden" [Fig. 1]. Studebaker valued the collaboration with Dryden for her expertise as a modern designer as well as her reputation as a tastemaker. If Dryden were still around today, in the age of YouTube and Instagram, there is no doubt we would all be calling her an *influencer*. Dryden began illustrating fashions and advising women on modes of dress in the early 1900s. From there her career blossomed. Dryden developed skills in a wide range of commercial art practices and became well-known for her designs as well as her status as a style expert. Dryden's work appeared in some of the most influential ladies magazines of her day, providing her with a broad sphere of influence.

During the 1920s and 1930s, when Dryden's career reached its zenith, her personal judgments weighed heavily on the decisions of American women consumers, and not only those in New York. In 1929, *The Arizona Republican*, a newspaper based out of Phoenix, contracted Dryden to produce an exclusive weekly feature consisting of a full page of fashions that were published in the paper's Sunday edition. An announcement [Fig. 2] introducing the new fashion page to *Arizona Republican* readers described Dryden as:

*...a gentlewoman as well as an artist. Her work reflects unerring good taste. Her years with Vogue, with Harper's Bazar and the Delineator have given her a remarkable insight into the fashion requirements of discriminating American women.*¹

Indeed, women across the country consulted Dryden's vision of the ideal American woman in fashioning their own image. Given her reputation and achievements as an illustrator and designer, it is not surprising that she was once proclaimed America's highest paid woman artist, but unfortunately her success did not last. While her partnership with Studebaker helped to ensure that company's prosperity until the 1960s, her own fortunes turned for the worse shortly after her work for Studebaker ended.

This dissertation explores the complex intersection of art and consumerism, and the ways in which this intersection helped and hindered efforts by women to establish

¹ "A Message from America's Highest-Paid Woman Artist - Helen Dryden," *The Arizona Republican*, October 15, 1929.

careers as artists and designers in America during the interwar years. While art and commodity culture have always been connected to varying degrees, in the 1920s and 1930s commercial art production flourished like never before. During this period many fine artists expanded their creative production into the area of commercial design and modern art was adopted as a marketing tool for consumer goods. This allowed the boundaries between fine art and commercial art to temporarily relax, encouraging experimentation and facilitating the rise of the industrial design profession.²

Concurrently, the advertising industry came to the realization that women comprised a valuable untapped market. This necessarily affected marketing strategies, but it also affected product design.³ I examine the intersection of these various ideas through the multifaceted career of the New York based artist Helen Dryden, who, through a combination of artistic talent, privileged upbringing, and sheer luck forged a successful career as a commercial artist and became one of the founders of the industrial design profession.

It is undeniable that Dryden's skill and originality as an illustrator brought her great success. She became one of the most well-known and highest earning women artists of her time. Dryden's accomplishments as an illustrator also afforded her the opportunity to work in other branches of commercial art, which would ultimately lead

² For more on the early history of industrial design see: Carroll Gantz, *Founders of American Industrial Design* (McFarland, 2014); Jeffrey Meikle, *Twentieth Century Limited: Industrial Design in American, 1925-1939* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979); Arthur J. Pulos, *American Design Ethic: A History of Industrial Design* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986).

³ For more on the development of modern advertising and the relationship of art with marketing see: Roland Marchand, *Advertising and the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Michelle Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Neil Harris, *Cultural Excursions: Marketing Appetites and Cultural Tastes in Modern America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

her to become one of the first women industrial designers and the first American woman to design a car. But how does one navigate such a path? How does Dryden go from making paper dolls and illustrating fashions to collaborating with a major American automobile manufacturer to create a sleek and sophisticated design made from chrome and steel? The answer lies in the complex relationships between art, industry, and mass culture that characterized the era between the two World Wars.

Dryden's career provides an insightful lens into the state of art and consumerism in the early twentieth century precisely because of the way she managed to position herself (whether by design, or by happenstance) at the juncture of so many conflicting ideologies and cultural shifts that occurred during her lifetime. She was an artist working in the field of commercial design. She was a career woman and a member of society at a time when it was seen as unfit for upper class women to engage in any work outside of philanthropic pursuits. She was a true Francophile; firmly believing that the French had a superior way of doing things at a time when the United States' position as an international authority began to eclipse France. She witnessed the rise of the modern media, from the proliferation of mass magazines to the development of the film industry, and made her own contributions to each field. These mass media developments also led to the birth of modern celebrity culture that, in turn, assured Dryden's own rise to fame.⁴ Dryden's unique position at these intersections brought her national attention and a platform from which she could influence the American public,

⁴ Charles L. Ponce de Leon, *Self-Exposure: Human-Interest Journalism and the Emergence of Celebrity in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

establishing her authority as a tastemaker. Dryden's success came from her ability to navigate through this complicated historical moment by making the right connections and seizing the opportunities made available to her.⁵

In this dissertation, I aim to untangle these threads through an examination of Dryden's life and the development of her career as a commercial artist and designer in order to assess the impact of institutional forces on Dryden's decisions and her potential for achievement. It may not seem apparent, but Dryden's automotive design work grew organically out of her illustrative work for *Vogue* magazine through a series of personal choices, chance encounters, and cultural and economic influences. Through this Dryden somehow located the path that would take her from artist to designer; a path also traversed by so many of her more well-known contemporaries. As such, it is not possible to fully understand the work Dryden created later in her career without first examining what came before and the historical context guiding Dryden's decisions.

Understanding Commercial Art

The relationships between art, industry and culture have always been unstable and problematic. The industrial production of art for the masses accounts for a great deal of work that scholars and critics characterize as "commercial art," whether it is advertising, magazine illustration, posters, fabric, furniture, or automobiles. However, identifying what actually constitutes commercial art can pose some difficulties as the

⁵ Indeed, much like Linda Nochlin's assessment of nineteenth-century French artist Rosa Bonheur, one might say that Helen Dryden chose a fortunate time to become a commercial artist. Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," in *Women, Art, and Power: And Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

distinctions between commercial art and fine art have historically been quite fluid and permeable. As Michelle Bogart points out, the term “commercial art” only dates back to the end of the nineteenth century, when advances in industrial production enabled the commodification of art on a mass scale. This established an art world that some critics viewed as so diametrically opposed to the fine arts that it required its own category, and the relationship between fine art and commercial art has been continually renegotiated ever since. Each term is constantly reinvented and its borders redrawn. At different times, certain forms of commercial art have fit comfortably under the umbrella of the fine arts.⁶ At the turn of the twentieth century, for example, illustrators enjoyed the status commonly associated with painters and sculptors, or so the called “fine artists. “

In the early twentieth century, art critics critiqued commercial art for its reproducibility, association with commodity culture, and consumption by a mass audience. Generally speaking, a commodity is a product that is exchanged for money or other goods in the market economy.⁷ Critics believe that when art becomes a commodity through its reproduction and dissemination as an object of mass culture that it becomes something devalued or inauthentic. The reproduction of a work of art as a facsimile is seen as devaluing the original from which the copy derives and destroying the aura of the work of art; the unique quality that the art draws from the context of its creation that separates it from any imitations. Therefore critics believe that the commodification of art at least dilutes, if not fully annihilates, the intrinsic message of

⁶ Michelle Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 6.

⁷ Paul Wood, “Commodity,” in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 382–406.

the original. Once a simulation of a work is created and disseminated the original ceases to exist as a unique object as its meaning becomes entangled with that of its own reproduction, which establishes alternate significance through its consumption. These diluted simulations produced to appeal to a mass audience are often referred to as “kitsch.” By the mid-twentieth century kitsch came to be understood as a kind of anti-art, effectively widening the gap between commercial art and fine art.⁸

Understanding changes in arts patronage at the turn of the twentieth century further complicates the issue of commodification. In the United States, arts patronage largely shifts from wealthy elite individuals to powerful corporations, many of whom commissioned art for commercial purposes, whether for direct advertising or for building a corporate brand. This further blurred the boundary between fine art and commercial art.⁹ Art critics draw attention to the aesthetic limitations placed on artists involved with commercial patrons. For instance, they claimed that popular illustrators were incapable of artistic integrity since they operated under the auspices of the publishers and editors who commissioned their work. As these patrons concerned themselves primarily with sales figures the artist’s work is considered compromised. This perspective aligns the work of the illustrators with that of the more cooperative

⁸ Clement Greenberg, “‘Avant-Garde and Kitsch,’” in *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate* (London: Routledge, 2000), 48–59. See also: Judy Attfield, “‘Redefining Kitsch: The Politics of Design,’” *Home Cultures* 3 (2006): 201–12. Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility,” in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 19–55.

⁹ For more information regarding the blurred distinctions between fine art and commercial art in the United States see Michelle Bogart’s book, *Artists, Advertising and the Borders of Art*, which investigates the marginalization of commercial art in America and the wavering status of commercial artists during the first half of the twentieth century. Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art*.

practice of design and manufacturing, rather than the more unfettered production of fine artists, such as painters and sculptors. However, it is a fallacy to believe that artists operating outside of the system of corporate patronage were completely unencumbered. While not all art is intended for reproduction, it is often intended to be a sort of commodity in that the artist seeks out a market.¹⁰

Understanding the relationship between artists and commercial production in the United States presents an even more difficult challenge as some scholars interpret the mass reproduction of art as a nationalistic project, upholding the values of democracy through the dissemination of art to the people for the betterment of public taste. This nationalist message was readily adopted by artists of all creeds during the early twentieth century, whether considered fine or commercial, as many sought to create a genuinely American aesthetic. This theme reappears across the artistic spectrum, from painting and illustration to textiles and furniture design.¹¹ The significance of democratic values to America's national image contributed to the elevated status of commercial arts during the early twentieth century, which in turn led to a wide array of artistic output that art historians sometimes find difficult to plot into the grand narrative of great works of art.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ For more on how American art of the early twentieth-century related to nationalism, see: Charles Alexander, *Here the Country Lies: Nationalism and the Arts in Twentieth-Century America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980). Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art*, 8-11. Wanda Corn, *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915-1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). Javier Gimeno-Martinez, *Design and National Identity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

Even though artists working in the opening decades of the twentieth century produced work in multiple media for a variety of patrons and clients, many art historians have excluded them from survey texts since the history of art is typically organized according to specific media (i.e. painting, sculpture, and architecture) and, therefore, cannot easily adapt to commercial artists who produced diverse bodies of work. The established narrative generally favors artists who were prolific in a single area of production rather than those who experimented in creating works in a wide variety of media. However, commercial artists in the early twentieth century commonly cobbled together their living from an assortment of contracts and commissions. This was true for both American and European artists in the early twentieth century.

Art historians also often overlook the significance of commercial art because of its ephemeral nature. Magazine covers, newspaper illustrations, posters, and advertisements in particular were never intended to be preserved. Rather, they were created to be enjoyed and discarded. As a result, the materials used in the creation of commercial art were typically low cost and low quality, appropriate to an impermanent existence. The combination of these factors led to an art historical narrative that largely excludes commercial art. Although there have been efforts by certain scholars (particularly American art historians) to reinsert commercial art into that narrative to more accurately illustrate the complexity of the art world.¹²

The art created by Helen Dryden during the early twentieth century is subject to all of these complexities that challenge our understanding and acceptance of

¹² I am particularly indebted to the pioneering work of Erika Doss and Michele Bogart.

commercial art. Except for a brief period in which she was unemployed and painted decorative panel paintings, Dryden worked almost exclusively for corporate clients creating images and objects that are easily identified as commodities, most of which were ephemeral. However, her career as an illustrator began during a time in which illustration enjoyed elevated status in comparison to other branches of commercial art. She also looked to the “fine arts” for inspiration, drawing from Rococo and modern French art. Then again, her career was not limited to illustration, as she also created fashion designs, stage costumes, textile designs, and various industrial designs, including lamps, bathroom hardware, and automobiles. There is not a single artistic medium that accurately defines her career, it is rather the variety of her production and the manner in which her career developed that reveals the greatest truths about the artist and the world in which she operated.

Despite Helen Dryden’s fame as an artist, designer, and style authority during the interwar era, her story and her body of work have all but been forgotten. Until now, Dryden has never been the focus of a monographic study and there are few mentions of her in histories of art or design. When Dryden’s work is cited, it is most commonly in regards to her illustrations for *Vogue* or her design consulting work for Studebaker, but these references never amount to more than a short paragraph or, more commonly, a footnote. However, popular interest in Dryden’s life and career has recently resurged. Through the modern medium of blog posts and self-publishing opportunities made available by the internet Helen Dryden is inching her way back into the conversation regarding early twentieth century American art and design. The quality of these sources

ranges greatly, from museums and libraries, to specialty interest websites and personal pages. Many of these online articles contain a great deal of factual inaccuracies, as is typical of much internet content, but they demonstrate the continued appeal of Dryden's work a century later. In fact, I find that many who have never heard of Dryden recognize her work when they are shown examples of her *Vogue* covers. The unique illustrative style that brought Dryden success in the 1910s and 1920s continues to resonate with American audiences.

Although Dryden has never been the subject of a book herself, my project follows the work of a great many scholars whose work deals with the boundaries of art, commercial art practices, and the foundations of the industrial design profession. Michelle Bogart's landmark book, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art* brought new attention to the field of commercial art through her consideration of the ever fluctuating boundary that separates fine art and commercial illustration. Bogart's in depth investigation of the professional status of American illustrators in the early twentieth century demonstrates how the professionalization of the different branches of art production led to increasingly rigid boundaries and less freedom for artists to move fluidly between fine and commercial art practices. More recently, Michael Lobel's book highlighted the significant interaction between art and mass culture at the turn of the twentieth century, stressing the importance of commercial illustration to a thorough understanding of the history of art. Although Sloan is better known as a painter and a member of the Ashcan School, Lobel considers Sloan's illustrative work to demonstrate how his paintings and illustrations were both responding to similar cultural and

technological changes of the era, and to show how Sloan's experience as a commercial artist shaped his approach to painting. Bogart and Lobel both address the complexity surrounding the intersection of commercial illustration, art, and the formation of modernism. Their work is foundational to my understanding of Dryden's early career as a commercial illustrator, but I extend their enquiry to investigate how artists working in other branches of commercial art sought to traverse the same boundaries.

There are relatively few scholars who do credit to the task of examining the particular way the art world intersected with commercial practices in the United States during the interwar era, but among them are Erika Doss and Roland Marchand. In her book, *Benton, Pollock, and the Politics of Modernism*, Doss convincingly argues that the contemporary notion of artistic modernism was shaped by corporate and government influences, demonstrating that even fine art was subjected to the same institutional forces that define the practices of commercial artists.¹³ Marchand examines the opposite perspective in his book, *Advertising the American Dream*, to show how modernism influenced commercial art and to demonstrate how advertisers used modernism to encourage consumption habits.¹⁴ My project builds on these works and demonstrates how institutional practices affected Helen Dryden's career as a commercial artist making it possible for her to successfully make the leap from two-dimensional illustration to three-dimensional design.

¹³ Erika Doss, *Benton, Pollock, and the Politics of Modernism: From Regionalism to Abstract Expressionism* (Chicago: University of California Press, 1991).

¹⁴ Marchand, *Advertising and the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940*.

A great deal of scholarship exists regarding American design in the interwar era, but with few exceptions these fall into two camps: modern design as fine art influenced by European practices, or modern design as a series of achievements made by great men. Scholarship on prominent male designers such as Raymond Lowey, Norman Bel Geddes, Henry Dreyfuss, and Walter Dorwin Teague proliferate, while little is written about their female contemporaries. It could be argued that the sheer quantity of design work these men produced justify a monographic focus of their work, but this neglects to consider the extent of work designed by their respective firms as opposed to the men themselves, and the institutional sexism that invariably limited opportunities for women designers to succeed.¹⁵ It was fairly common practice for the head of the firm to take credit for design work completed by employees. Henry Dreyfuss took credit for an award winning sink designed by Julian Everett, a former partner at the firm who was demoted to Associate.¹⁶ Walter Dorwin Teague took full credit for designing the automobile known as the Marmon 16, a project actually accomplished primarily by his son while attending MIT.¹⁷ This type of design appropriation characterized all of the major design firms to some extent, and it is not difficult to imagine that a designer willing to take credit for the work of a former partner or family member would be even more likely to assume responsibility for work created by lower level female designers.

¹⁵ Cheryl Buckley, "Made in Patriarchy: Toward a Feminist Analysis of Design," *Design Issues* 3, no. 2 (1986): 3–14.

¹⁶ Conversation with Henry Dreyfuss scholar Russell Flinchum, May 10, 2016.

¹⁷ Walter Dorwin Teague, *Industrial Designer: The Artist as Engineer* (Lancaster, Pennsylvania: Armstrong World Industries, Inc., 1998). 32.

As in art history¹⁸, scholars have been slow to address women's contributions to the field of design; although there are notable exceptions, including the comprehensive catalog *Women Designers in the USA, 1900-2000* produced by the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts.¹⁹ However, such ambitious projects have inherent limitations and the catalog's short chapter on twentieth-century industrial design names only a few key women working during the critical early years of the profession. The chapter mentions Helen Dryden, but her diverse and significant career is reduced to a single sentence, indicating that she was a "graphic, set, and packaging designer [who] designed the interior of the 1937 Studebaker."²⁰ The catalog reflects the desire of design historians, such as Cheryl Buckley and Judy Attfield, to expand the definition of design to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the field and to better address the design work of marginalized persons and groups; a challenge further exacerbated by the collaborative and often anonymous nature of design and the

¹⁸ Of course, feminist art history and literature regarding women artists expanded following Linda Nochlin's landmark essay, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" in 1971. Similar calls for a feminist approach to design history came roughly fifteen years later, but the differences in art and design practice mean that each field requires its own solution. Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?"

¹⁹ See also: Libby Sellers, *Women Design: Pioneers in Architecture, Industrial, Graphic and Digital Design from the Twentieth Century to the Present Day* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2017); J. Seddon and S. Worden, eds., *Women Designing: Redefining Design in Britain Between the Wars* (Brighton: University of Brighton, 1994); J. Rothschild, ed., *Design and Feminism: Revisioning Spaces, Places, and Everyday Things* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1999); I. Anscombe, *A Woman's Touch: Women in Design from 1869 to the Present Day* (London: Virago, 1984); Judith Attfield, "Feminist Designs on Design History," *FAN (Feminist Art News)* 2, no. 5 (1985): 21–23; Judith Attfield, "Defining the Object and the Subject: Women in Design History," *Times Higher Education Supplement*, February 1, 1985; Cheryl Buckley, "'Made in Patriarchy: Toward a Feminist Analysis of Design,'" *Design Issues* 3, no. 2 (1986): 3–14; Judith Attfield and Pat Kirkham, *A View from the Interior: Feminism, Women, and Design* (London: The Woman's Press, 1989); Bryony Gomez-Palacio and Armin Vit, *Women of Design: Influence and Inspiration from the Original Trailblazers to the New Groundbreakers* (Cincinnati: HOW Books, 2008). Ibid.

²⁰ Pat Kirkham, ed., *Women Designers in the USA: Diversity and Difference, 1900-2000* (New Haven: Yale University Press, n.d.), 282.

historical marginalization of women's work.²¹ Buckley directly addressed this issue in her seminal essay, "Made in Patriarchy: Toward a feminist analysis of design," in which she analyzes how gendered stereotypes and modernist values worked together to establish a historical narrative that largely omits women designers.²² My work on Helen Dryden illustrates Buckley's point. Even a woman who rose to the very top of her field, achieving fame, wealth, status, and a large and diverse body of work that, I argue, makes her one of the significant early practitioners of industrial design, can be easily forgotten and deemed inconsequential to our history of American design. If even the most celebrated and accomplished figures are deemed unsuitable to our history books, then surely Buckley is right and there is something defective with the way our histories are written.

It may seem contradictory to reference Buckley here given that this dissertation focuses so heavily on the career of a single designer and Buckley famously denounced the monographic approach, calling it "an inadequate vehicle for exploring the complexity of design production and consumption [that] is especially inadequate for feminist design historians in that the concentration on an individual designer excludes from the history books unnamed, unattributed, or collectively produced design."²³ She further explains that the monographic approach is limiting because in the process of

²¹ One of the ways these scholars have suggested reframing design history to allow a space to recognize the work of women and other marginalized groups is through the inclusion of craft production in design history. This dissertation does not include or consider craft in its analysis of women in design. I tend to agree more with Carma Gorman's definition of design: "a designer is simply a certain type of participant in a mode of production characterized by a division of labor between planner(s) and maker(s)." As craft production does not normally involve a division of labor, it does not fit with this definition of design. I feel that craft is an important avenue for exploring the history of makers, but I think it is actually more akin to art or, more generally, material culture. Carma Gorman, "Reshaping and Rethinking: Recent Feminist Scholarship on Design and Designers," *Design Issues* 17, no. 4 (2001): 72–88.

²² Buckley, "Made in Patriarchy: Toward a Feminist Analysis of Design."

²³ *Ibid.*

design the designer is simply “the first of many who will affix meaning to design” and that understanding design history requires a more complete awareness of the historical moment outside of the designer’s intention or creative philosophy.²⁴ While I do give significant attention to Dryden’s role as a designer, I attempt to address other contemporary actors who played a significant role in affixing meaning to Dryden’s designs including the consumers of her designs and the industries that produced them.

Moreover, while biography is a contested model of scholarship it allows for the resurfacing of significant yet forgotten historical figures. When I first proposed this project I did not intend to write anything resembling a monograph, but as I researched I found that many people had trouble believing the facts of Helen Dryden’s career and my project necessarily evolved. The idea that a woman designer in the 1920s and 1930s could have held such influence and completed projects in the male-dominated field of industrial design and automotive design at the same time established pioneers were embarking on the field is apparently too unbelievable for some. It is partially for this reason that this dissertation focuses so heavily on the life and career of Helen Dryden. I reconstruct the artist’s biography within the context of her historical moment to demonstrate her congruency with the canon of design history. Dryden’s achievements place her among the “pioneers” of industrial design in the United States. Her absence from history allows me to locate the boundaries that still delineate gendered design practices and demonstrates the presence of an exclusionary bias. I agree with Carma

²⁴ Cheryl Buckley, “Made in Patriarchy: Toward a Feminist Analysis of Design,” *Design Issues* 3, no. 2 (1986): 3–14.

Gorman's assessment that the concept of the pioneer is problematic in its reinforcement of the existing biased power structures that place the designer "within a eurocentric, masculinist, modernist canon of 'greats.'" ²⁵ My goal in positioning Dryden in relationship to this canon is to demonstrate the obvious gender bias and to explore what additional factors contributed to the historical disregard of her work in the context of the interwar era. It is important to recognize the presence of women in male dominated industries in order to counter gendered stereotypes and to reveal the limited conditions under which a woman could succeed. Therefore, understanding the circumstances of Dryden's career through the inclusion of her biography sheds new light on the formation of industrial design as a profession. Her career also demonstrates that the gender stereotypes assigned to designed objects are not useful historical tools, as these notions can lead us to incorrect assumptions regarding the engagement of men and women in various design practices. ²⁶ In this dissertation I confirm Dryden's direct

²⁵ Gorman, "Reshaping and Rethinking: Recent Feminist Scholarship on Design and Designers."

²⁶ Using a list of the 50 most popular names for girls born at the turn of the twentieth century I searched through the patent records from 1900 - 1940 for examples of designs by women with these names and found a cache of interesting designs. The results include artistic designs meant to primarily serve an aesthetic purpose, as well as utilitarian designs, based on engineering and the improvement of an object's functionality. My findings include: Alice Barney's parlor car chair (1901), Alice Smith's automobile top slide (1910), Anna Anzell's automobile mirror (1927), Anna Hagstedt's flying machine (1909), Anna Logan's protective hood for airplane pilots (1918), Anna Mutschler's vehicle (1909), Anna Winter's car door safety signal (1917), Anne Boever's coffee maker (1928), Bonnie Lemm's automobile window regulator handle (1929) and radiator ornament (1933), Clara Nelson's spring tire (1919), Cora Hughes' deflector for headlights (1922), Dora Foley's automobile ornament (1931), Edith Butler's automobile sand box (1921), Edna Leonhardt's textile fabric for upholstery (1932), Elizabeth Douglas' vehicle trailer (1921), Elizabeth Gregory's buggy seat (1900), Ellen Willett Magill's vehicle bodies (1927 & 1940), Elsa Tennhardt's cigar lighter (1928), Emma Kirch's bicycle carriage (1927), Ethel Smith's deflecting shade for headlights (1927), Florence Lewis' (aka Estee Lauder) various designs for cosmetics and handbags (ca. 1930s & 1940s), Florence May's adjustable lamp (1939), Gertrude Thompson's container for use in automobile interior fitting (1930), Grace Murphy's auto semi-shade (1925), Helen and Florence Stark's lunch counter (1935), Helen Davidson's vehicle body (1913), Helen Doherty's automobile body (1930), Helen Marcin's automatic electric hand signal (1927), Helen Wilhelmy's vehicle floor mat (1935), Lois Beam's grille (1933), Margaret MacDonald's Choo-Choo Car (1921), Martha John's car fender (1905),

involvement in the field of industrial design and detail her role in designing automobiles to show that the gendered divisions of labor could be successfully breeched with the right tools given an opportune moment. It is my hope that illuminating the means by which Dryden succeeded in design will reveal the problem with viewing her career as unbelievable, which serves to perpetuate biased stereotypes rooted in patriarchy.

This dissertation reconstructs Dryden's biography not simply to rediscover what has been forgotten, but to understand why she was forgotten and to uncover new avenues for exploring the history of design. Her absence from design history despite her centrality to the canonical model requires that scholars reassess the framework from which this canon derives, to ask different questions, and to consider new kinds of historical evidence. In this dissertation I examine the variety of work available to commercial artists during the early twentieth century and trace the inevitable consolidation of the industrial design profession through the lens of Helen Dryden's colorful career. In so doing, I consider how being a woman artist at this time helped or hindered her chances of success whilst remaining ever aware of Dryden's own privilege as a white woman from an upper class family. Indeed, her success was predicated on these privileges.

The chapters are organized to highlight Dryden's development as a designer as she slowly transitions from two-dimensional illustration to the application of those

Martha Shaunessey's vehicle signal (1939), Mary Cox's air cooled seat cushion for automobiles (1923), Mary Harris' automobile bonnet (1912), Mary Little's auto hood lamp (1925), Nellie Gage's head lamp for automobiles (1937), Pearl Watson's automobile radiator cap (1921), and Ruth Chatfield's convertible carriage and crib (1928). The date following each design indicates the year that the patent was filed.

illustrations into physical objects and her eventual emergence as an industrial designer. The chapter titles signify how Dryden identified herself according to census records and reflect her gradual transition to industrial design work. In Chapter 1, "Art Illustrator," I consider Dryden's illustrative career, closely examining her work for *Vogue* as a cover designer and fashion illustrator. This chapter demonstrates how the elevated status of illustration in the early twentieth century combined with technological innovations and cultural revolutions of the era created an opening for Dryden's French-inspired, stylized illustrations to succeed with an American audience. Chapter 2, "Commercial Artist," demonstrates how Dryden gradually moves towards more applied design and the realization of her creations in a three-dimensional medium through an in depth analysis of her fashion designs, paper patterns, costumes for the theater, and printed textile designs. The fluid manner in which Dryden's career evolves towards more applied design reveals the extent to which the intersection of art and industry during the interwar era encouraged artistic experimentation. This created an environment in which artists and corporations enjoyed a symbiotic relationship, which by the late-1920s would lead to the establishment of industrial design as its own profession. In Chapter 3, "Industrial Artist," I consider Dryden's work as an industrial designer, paying particular attention to her work as the art director for the Dura Corporation in Toledo, Ohio and as a consultant for Studebaker. This focus allows me to examine how institutional practices accentuated the already pervasive gender bias in this male dominated profession, which eventually led to the discrediting of Dryden's design work. The chapters are punctuated with biographical interludes that provide a fuller account of Helen Dryden's life and

work. As this dissertation represents the first scholarly account of Dryden I felt it was important to include the information I have gathered regarding her personal biography even though a great deal of it is extraneous to the text's main purpose. Biographical information relevant to her career development, as outlined above, is also interspersed throughout the body chapters.

Biography

1882 – 1914

Born into an upper-class family in Baltimore, Maryland on November 26, 1882, Helen Dryden's early childhood upbringing was that of a girl preparing for life in society.²⁷ Helen was the youngest child of Celius Owings Dryden and Alice Fuller. She had two sisters, Elizabeth and Eugenie, and a brother, Ferdinand. The Drydens descended from an old Maryland family that could trace its roots back to seventeenth century settlers from Scotland that made their homes at Somerset. Helen grew up in the family's four-story row house on St. Paul Street in downtown Baltimore, not far from her father's place of business.

Celius Owings Dryden was an inventor and a successful businessman.²⁸ He worked in the candy manufacturing business and formed the Dryden & Palmer Company in 1880 with his partner, Noah Palmer. The Dryden & Palmer Company was one of several rock candy producers in the United States in the late 1800s that sold candies and

²⁷ There are many conflicting dates regarding the actual year of Helen Dryden's birth, but November 26, 1882 appears the most consistent according to government records and her family narrative. Social Security Administration, Helen Dryden SSN: 083-42-5051, Form OAC-790, February 11, 1966.; 1900 United State Federal Census, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Roll: T623_1464; Page: 1A; Enumeration District: 508. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc. 2004. Original data – United States of America, Bureau of the Census. Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900. Washington, D.C.: National Archives Records Administration, 1900. T623, 18.

²⁸ 1880 United State Federal Census, Baltimore, Maryland; Roll T9_501; Family History Film: 1254501; Page 138.2000; Enumeration District: 111; Image: 0457. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc. 2005. 1880 U.S. Census Index provided by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ©Copyright 1999 Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

syrups as remedies for the common cold.²⁹ Eventually the company also acquired the Maryland Steam Syrup Refinery for the production of their confections. The business prospered and afforded the Dryden family many comforts unavailable to less affluent Americans. When Helen Dryden was around twelve years-old her father's company moved its headquarters to New York and opened a branch in Philadelphia. This forced her family to leave Baltimore and start a new life in Philadelphia in support of the candy manufacturing business.³⁰

After the Dryden family settled into their new home Helen attended school at Eden Hall, a catholic boarding and day school for girls in Torresdale, and later at Mrs. Comegy's and Miss Belle's Boarding and Day School for Young Ladies and Little Girls in Chestnut Hill.³¹ Both schools were located in northern suburbs of Philadelphia. In school Helen developed a fascination with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French history and literature. Something about this period intrigued her sense of romance and adventure and she read everything she could find on the topic. Pouring over text and illustrations, she became enraptured with the style of the era. She found the elaborate

²⁹ It was also the only American rock candy manufacturer to survive prohibition and can still be purchased today as the subsidiary of another candy company. One of the primary uses for rock candy was at bars, where it was dissolved in whiskey to make a cocktail called "rock and rye." The prohibition of whiskey also curtailed the rock candy market. Dryden and Palmer made it through the prohibition era by relying on exporting their products. Dryden & Palmer Rock Candy. Richardson Brands Company. http://rbcweb.shopfactory.com/contents/en-us/d30_Dryden_and_Palmer.html

³⁰ It is not entirely clear what precipitated the move. There are vague accounts of a "crisis" in the sugar Baltimore sugar industry, but it is never made clear exactly what the crisis was or how it affected the Dryden and Palmer Company. Dryden & Palmer rock candy advertisement. *Bonfort's Wine and Spirit Circular*. November 10, 1889, 19. <https://books.google.com/>

³¹ Barbara Boggs Sigmund, "Sanctuary or Prison," *New York Times*, May 7, 1989; "A Combined History of over 300 Years of Tradition and Change," *Springside Chestnut Hill Academy*, accessed August 2, 2018, <https://www.sch.org/page/about-sch/our-history#>.

furnishings and the elegant clothing inspiring, and it was not long until their influence imprinted on her imagination.³²

Growing up Helen always had a penchant for drawing and when she was about sixteen she decided to turn this interest into a career.³³ Her formal education in the arts consisted of four years instruction in landscape painting by Hugh H. Breckinridge and one summer session at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.³⁴ Founded in 1805, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts was one of the earliest significant art schools in the United States. The Academy had always been progressive in regards to its inclusion of women artists, especially in comparison to similar European academies. The Pennsylvania Academy invited women to participate in its exhibitions from its inception. Although the school was not initially open to women students, they were admitted beginning in 1844. By the time Helen Dryden enrolled in the school in 1907 it had established itself as an important supporter of women artists with many well-known graduates.³⁵

During her summer studying at the Pennsylvania Academy Dryden created a set of fashionably decadent paper dolls that she sold to a local newspaper. This marked the beginning of her successful career as an illustrator as shortly thereafter the *Philadelphia*

³² Anne Ayres, "A Young Woman with Organized Brains: The Story of Helen Dryden, America's Highest Paid Woman Artist," *Psychology*, no. May (1930): 27–29.

³³ Hannah Stein, "Highest Paid Woman Artist," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 25, 1929.

³⁴ Philip Hillyer Smith Smith, "Girl Meets Job," *Studebaker Wheel*, October 1936, 10.; Mable Ward Cameron, "Dryden, Helen," *Biographical Cyclopedia of U.S. Women. Vol. I-II* (New York: Halvord Publishing Co., 1924).

³⁵ Anna Havemann, "Expanded Horizon: Female Artists at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts during the Course of the Nineteenth Century," in *The Female Gaze: Women Artists Making Their World*, ed. Robert Cozzolino (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 2012).

Press hired Dryden to illustrate fashion articles by Anne Rittenhouse [Fig 3].³⁶

Rittenhouse was an authority on fashion and good taste known for her editorial column “The Well-Dressed Woman.” The column began at the *Philadelphia Press*, but was bought out by the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* shortly after Dryden began illustrating the column. In 1908 Rittenhouse’s success and popularity brought her an offer to write for the *New York Times*, which she accepted.³⁷ Rittenhouse’s departure from Philadelphia left Dryden unemployed, but it was not long before Dryden decided she would also pursue a career in New York City. Dryden believed that she had a new idea that could transform American fashion illustration. Therefore, in 1909 she permanently relocated to New York City to market her idea to the major ladies’ magazines of the day.

Her first home in New York was a small studio on the top floor of a three-story apartment building in Waverly Place in Greenwich Village [Fig. 4]. The neighborhood was popular with artists and creative individuals looking to make a start in the city because the cheap rent in the area made it more affordable. Many well-known artists began their careers as residents of Greenwich Village, including Winslow Homer and Edward Hopper. Although the space was small and less than luxurious, Dryden made it her own, reflecting her refined taste for elegant simplicity. Large windows filled the space with light, accentuating the brightness of the interior trimmed with white woodwork. Through the windows one could see planter boxes containing carefully trimmed and maintained boxwood hedges, like those that could be found in an

³⁶ Dryden’s illustration were appearing alongside Rittenhouse’s editorials as early as September 15, 1907.

³⁷ “Anne Rittenhouse, Fashion Writer, Dies,” *New York Times*, August 2, 1932. Anne Rittenhouse was the nom de plume of fashion writer Harrydele Hallmark.

eighteenth-century French garden. The walls were ornamented with paintings and light tapestries. On one side of the room was a large couch printed in a peacock design and covered with plush cushions. A grand piano sat in the corner next to it. Dryden always kept her space meticulously tidy, even after her success afforded her a larger apartment.³⁸ She explained:

*I could not work in a room that was not orderly... Everything is exactly where it belongs. If it weren't, I could not start the day's work... [Y]ou cannot create anything in confusion! A place must be neat and orderly, and even if the furnishings are few and inexpensive the environment will be found conducive to creative work... When I first came to New York and opened a studio as an artist, I found there was a popular impression that the 'artistic temperament' thrived on disorder. Writers, actors, artists were supposed to be more picturesque if their rooms showed hectic disarray. If they were untidy in their personal appearance that was another phase of artistic temperament.*³⁹

Dryden contradicted this idea with the way she dressed, how she kept her home, and with her words, stating:

³⁸ "Helen Dryden: Witch of Color," *Bruno's Weekly* 3, no. 8 (1916): 888–90.

³⁹ Ayres, "A Young Woman with Organized Brains: The Story of Helen Dryden, America's Highest Paid Woman Artist."

*Never was there a more ridiculous superstition. It's all part of that psychology of environment; and no personality, any more than any large business organization, can be successful unless founded on order and system.*⁴⁰

Despite being an artist, there were no easels to be found among the things in her studio. Dryden always worked on a flat surface, either sitting at a table or kneeling down on the floor [Fig. 5]. In this case the neatness of her studio was a necessity, making it easier for her to spread out on the floor to work. While living in this small apartment she sought to contribute to the artist's community surrounding Washington Square by hosting cultural events in her studio, akin to the French salon, where guests could enjoy and discuss art, music, and literature [Fig. 6].⁴¹

Dryden spent her first year in New York working odd jobs and hauling her portfolio of drawings across the city before finding an editor willing to take a risk on her new idea for fashion illustration. During this time she met with fashion editors for many magazines, but they all rejected her imaginative and stylized drawings. Instead, they would show her examples of the popular, realistic approach to fashion illustration that predominated in the print media and asked her to submit drawings in the conventional style. Dryden described the experience in an interview:

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ No doubt that Helen Dryden attended such a salon while visiting her sister, Elizabeth, in Paris. The American Expatriate, Gertrude Stein, is the most well-known and historically significant figure associated with hosting salons in Paris during this era. For more on Stein and the salon see: Wanda Corn and Tirza True Latimer, *Seeing Gertrude Stein: Five Stories* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2011). "This Is the Life - in Washington Square," *Vanity Fair*, April 1915.

*They would look over my things then show me what they wanted, which was exactly what everyone else was doing. Still, I couldn't help feeling that there must be someone in the magazine business with imagination, some place where they would try something new... I knew that my women were smart. I knew they had chic. And being a very determined young person, I kept trying to sell them.*⁴²

One cold winter morning Dryden met with the fashion editor at *Vogue*. Although she was nearly broke, Dryden hired a messenger to carry her drawings to the meeting, an act she hoped would impress the editor, but it was all for naught. The fashion editor's secretary returned Dryden's drawings while explaining, "She doesn't like them – doesn't think they are any good." Devastated, Dryden left the *Vogue* offices with tears streaming down her cheeks, vowing never to return.⁴³

Dryden's chance finally came in 1910, following the acquisition of *Vogue* by renowned publishing mogul Condé Nast, who sought to take the magazine in a new direction. A fashion editor at *Vogue* reached out to Dryden to ask her to complete a few drawings, then a cover design, and soon after Dryden signed a contract with the magazine.⁴⁴ She continued to work for *Vogue* for more than a decade designing covers, illustrating fashions, and creating original fashion designs and whimsical costumes. The stylized illustrations Dryden struggled to sell her entire first year in New York found instant popularity with *Vogue's* audience, and she quickly developed a reputation as the

⁴² Frances Drewry McMullen, "Making a Career of Art: Helen Dryden, Illustrator and Designer, Tells Her Own Story," *The Forecast*, December 1930.

⁴³ Cameron, "Dryden, Helen."

⁴⁴ Ayres, "A Young Woman with Organized Brains: The Story of Helen Dryden, America's Highest Paid Woman Artist."; Cameron, "Dryden, Helen."

preeminent fashion illustrator in the United States. After a year of toiling away despite facing continual disappointment Dryden had found her niche, as she explained:

*Finally, I found I was right. There was a place for what I had to offer... If I had copied the others, I might have obtained work sooner, but I would have had no career. I felt I had something original to offer and refused to be talked out of it.*⁴⁵

The chic illustrations of modern women Dryden routinely designed for the cover of *Vogue* often drew comparison to the artist herself [Fig. 7]. One report claimed that she was “often called the best dressed woman in America.”⁴⁶ Dryden was known for being stylish and abreast of proper dress and etiquette. She was, above all else, a tastemaker. Her interest in fashion went beyond a fondness for fine clothing. She held deep beliefs regarding the significance of dressing well, declaring:

*Clothes and style are tremendously important... A woman's clothes reflect her mind just as her environment does. I like to see a woman dressed smartly and taking advantage of the new fashions as they come out. In America today this can be done quite inexpensively, if a woman has taste and any “clothes sense.” I like above all to see a woman dressed suitably... Our looks and environment at birth may not be our fault, but after we grow up we can make our own.*⁴⁷

Dryden, herself, was a petite woman with dark brown hair, blue eyes, and fair skin [Fig. 8]. One writer described her as “the combination of an Eighteenth Century Watteau

⁴⁵ McMullen, “Making a Career of Art: Helen Dryden, Illustrator and Designer, Tells Her Own Story.”

⁴⁶ Ayres, “A Young Woman with Organized Brains: The Story of Helen Dryden, America’s Highest Paid Woman Artist.”

⁴⁷ Ibid.

lady, with a touch of 1830 demureness, she is little, pretty and distinctly decorative.”⁴⁸ A true Francophile, Dryden preferred to wear gowns by Parisian designers.⁴⁹ Although, she chose more conservative clothing for herself than the daring ensembles often sported by the fantasy women she illustrated for so many magazine covers.⁵⁰ Dryden’s fashion choices reflected her status as a member of high society. She dressed fashionably, yet respectably, as was appropriate to her station. Dryden quickly established herself as a fixture at society events in the New York scene through her contacts at *Vogue*, her name frequently appearing in the society pages as an attendee at various elite dinner parties, fundraisers, balls, and other events.

⁴⁸ Helen Appleton Read, “Helen Dryden - Who Put Chic into Fashion Drawings,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 1, 1924.

⁴⁹ Frances Drewry McMullen, “Helen Dryden’s Versatile Art,” *The Woman’s Journal*, n.d., 14–15, 47.

⁵⁰ “Helen Dryden’s ‘Private View Tea,’” *American Cloak and Suit Review* 21, no. 6 (1921): 137.

Chapter 1

Art Illustrator

Helen Dryden began her career as an illustrator. Although she had studied landscape painting [Fig. 9] for a time with the artist Hugh Breckinridge, the spark that would light the flame of Dryden's career came from the summer she spent at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts where she designed a set of fashionable paper dolls. She sold these to a newspaper and they were published in its fashion section. The designs were so well received that she soon found her first job illustrating fashions for Anne Rittenhouse's articles in the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* and the *Philadelphia Press*.⁵¹ This was a significant start for the young artist who, unbeknownst to her, had set upon a path that would lead her to become one of the most successful women commercial artists of her generation.

Mass Magazines and the Golden Age of Illustration

At the turn of the twentieth century the commercial sector came to recognize the potential for art and design to revolutionize various industries and increase profits. In the print industry this led to the period of art history that scholars have termed the "Golden Age of Illustration."⁵² Occurring roughly between 1880 and 1920 the demand

⁵¹ Anne Ayres, "A Young Woman with Organized Brains: The Story of Helen Dryden, America's Highest Paid Woman Artist," *Psychology*, no. May (1930): 28.

⁵² Helen Goodman, "Women Illustrators of the Golden Age of American Illustration," *Woman's Art Journal* 8, no. 1 (1987): 13–22. Micheal Brown, "The Popular Art of American Magazine Illustration 1885-1917," *Journalism History* 24, no. 3 (1998): 94–104. Michael Lobel, *John Sloan: Drawing on Illustration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 8.

for commercial artists during this so-called “golden age” led the number of Americans working in the arts to increase by more than 750%. This demand also drove up wages for illustrators. The most popular artists amassed fortunes from their illustrative work due to their ability to appeal to the American public at large.

The “golden age” was made possible through the creation of second-class mailing privileges and advances in print technologies, which together spurred enormous growth in the mass periodical industry. Second class mailing privileges established by Congress in 1879 helped incite growth in the periodical industry by giving serial publishers a mailing discount that allowed for a reduction in retail price. This helped make magazines available to a previously untapped market: the middle class.

Additionally, the invention of the multicolor rotary press in 1893 meant that magazines could publish full color illustrations without depending on laborious and expensive hand engraving and hand coloring, which decreased production costs and allowed for a greater quantity of illustrations. Other advancements in print technologies, such as timed production scheduling, conveyor systems, and assembly lines, allowed for mass production on a level never before achieved.⁵³ These advancements also simultaneously helped provoke the professionalization and modernization of the field of advertising. The growth of the advertising industry in the early twentieth century led to an increase in the number of ads appearing in periodicals. Eventually the money made

⁵³ For more general information regarding the history of magazines in the United States see: Theodore Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1964) and Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines, vol. 1-5* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938-1968).

from advertising came to cover the cost of production and became the main source of revenue for many mass magazines.

The combination of these factors increased production capabilities and led to the wild success of such famous publications as the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *Life*. For the first time, individual magazines reached circulation figures in the millions, and the mass-market audience attracted advertisers who sought national exposure, thus guaranteeing low cost magazines through their sponsorship.⁵⁴ The astonishing increase in circulation also meant that publishers and editors began gearing their content towards a mainstream audience in order to ensure sales.⁵⁵ The amplification of the magazine's presence and influence in the twentieth century had a profound effect on American culture. The modern magazine became the first mass media device to offer visual representations to a broad audience, establishing a national way of seeing.⁵⁶

These advancements also led to the production of a greater number of publications, creating fierce competition for readers. In this saturated market cover designs became more than artistic expression, they represented important selling tools that could quickly communicate with consumers through visual messaging. Colorful and attractive covers were one of the most effective strategies that publishers exercised to

⁵⁴ For example, the *Saturday Evening Post* increased its circulation from 2,231 in 1897, to 726,681 in 1907, and 1,833,070 in 1917; and during the same time period, its advertising revenue increased from a mere \$6,933 to \$1,266,931 to \$16,076,562. Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*, 12.

⁵⁵ Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*, 13-14.

⁵⁶ Carolyn Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001) 1-16.

gain the edge over competitors. Although photography was well developed by the turn of the twentieth century and was frequently used for images published in newspapers, magazines continued to favor the use of illustrations.⁵⁷ The significance of color was one reason for the persistence of illustrations, as the technology involved in reproducing color photographs was still being developed. Photography was also generally understood as a mode of representing truth and reality in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Therefore illustration was deemed the more suitable medium for depicting fanciful ideals like those promoted by popular magazines that sought a broad appeal.⁵⁸ Whereas a photograph of a model was understood to represent an actual person, an illustrated woman, like the fashionable ladies that graced the cover of *Vogue*, represented an ideal type. Rather than signifying an actual individual these images suggested ideas regarding the role of women in American society. The contemporary understanding of illustrations as depicting types and ideals meant that this mode of representation could more accurately reflect and appeal to consumer values.⁵⁹

In the early twentieth century, stylized female images by particular artists, such as Charles Dana Gibson's "Gibson Girl", gained immense fame and became emblems of modern womanhood [Fig. 10]).⁶⁰ Magazine covers played an important role in

⁵⁷ Carolyn Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 5.

⁵⁸ Although, as the relationships between art, industry, and commerce are renegotiated in the early decades of the century the use of photography and illustrations in magazines and advertisements also fluctuates. In the late-1920s and in the 1930s photography begins to be adopted more readily.

⁵⁹ Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art*; Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover*, 6.

⁶⁰ The Gibson Girl made her debut in an issue of *Life* published in 1890. Gibson continued to create illustrations of women based on his original drawing for approximately twenty years, until he gave up illustration to concentrate on "serious" art. The Gibson Girl could be comprised of merely a head or bust, or an entire figure, but always maintained the basic features which made her recognizable to the public as

communicating national ideals and establishing prototypes that the public eagerly imitated.⁶¹ Each popular magazine offered a varying model of this ideal, represented by the distinctive styles of their cover artists. The recognizable styles of these artists eventually became codified into types that reflected the periodical's brand identity. For instance, the Gibson Girl became emblematic of *Life* and later *Colliers'*, while Harrison Fisher's "Fisher Girl" became emblematic of *Ladies' Home Journal* [Fig. 11]. However, as social values shifted magazines also adjusted their brand identity. In the early 1920s *Life* suddenly lost half of its readership. In reaction, the Gibson Girl was officially retired in favor of New Woman imagery more in line with the flapper type that was popular during the era, like those illustrated by John Held Jr [Fig. 12].⁶² These eye-catching magazine covers featuring differing versions of idealized women prompted female consumers to emulate the ideology represented in the images and men to venerate the powerful female types. To put it simply, media representations of women captured and perpetuated models of modern American womanhood for mass consumption.⁶³

the creation of Charles Dana Gibson. Through his consistent representations of the Gibson Girl, Gibson created the "first visual stereotype of women in American mass media... [and]... Her rapid rise to fame created a blue print for the commercial uses of such a stereotype." Gibson also illustrated a male companion, the Gibson Man, for his Gibson Girl. The Gibson Man embodied the modern, masculine man. A contemporary newspaper wrote, "It was Gibson's pen which sent mustaches out of fashion and made the tailors pad the shoulders of well-cut coats..." This was in reference to the Gibson Man's lack of facial hair and brawny shoulders. This suggests that men also emulated magazine images. Carolyn Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 40-44.

⁶¹ From the book, *Norman Rockwell's People*, pg 20, as quoted in *The Girl on the Magazine Cover*.

Carolyn Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 7.

⁶² Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media*, 122.

⁶³ For more regarding representations of women in the media and the proliferation of images of women in American art at the turn of the twentieth century, see: Buszek, *Pin century -Up Grrrls*, 185.

Indeed, the masses eagerly consumed these images and it became necessary to have a skilled illustrator on staff for any magazine that sought to be competitive. Well known illustrators commanded high salaries that periodicals gladly paid. Having a cover image by a famous illustrator during the Golden Age played a large role in the actual sale of magazines. In the early twentieth century it was not unusual for an established artist to demand \$1,000 per illustration; adjusted for inflation that is equivalent to approximately \$25,000 in 2018.⁶⁴ The most popular illustrations were even available for purchase as poster prints by mail order through the publisher. The illustrators of this era were not only revered artists in the public's eyes, but also bona fide celebrities.⁶⁵

Helen Dryden began her career as a commercial artist near the tail end of the golden age of illustration, but early enough to capitalize on the increase in status and salary illustrators of the era enjoyed. Even though she eventually turned to industrial design Dryden always considered herself an artist regardless of the type of work she engaged in. Additionally, the context under which her work was often received suggests that many considered her work to be akin to that of contemporary fine artists. It was not uncommon for her work to be exhibited at galleries alongside better known artists. For instance, posters by Dryden were shown at the Folsom Gallery's "American Humor in Art" exhibition in 1915 together with works by George Luks, John Sloan and George

Bailey VanHook, *Angels of Art: Women and Art in American Society, 1876 – 1914* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

⁶⁴ It is important to note that while these high salaries were possible, they were not typical. Salaries were also dependent upon more than the artist's reputation, but also the publication the illustration appeared in and the kind of illustration commissioned. For instance, a large scale full color illustration would command more than a small pen and ink fashion sketch.

⁶⁵ Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media*, 5-6.

Bellows, among others.⁶⁶ In 1921 the Museum of French Art put on an exhibition of Dryden's watercolors portraying her costume designs for the play "Clair le Lune."⁶⁷ Her work was also included in a 1926 benefit exhibition of Greenwich Village artists along with a variety of works by both up-and-coming artists and established figures like Edward Hopper.⁶⁸ Her success is also measurable through her financial compensation. Dryden reported that her typical fee for a cover illustration was approximately \$700 (roughly \$15,000 in 2018), a handsome salary for a commercial artist.⁶⁹ After signing her first major contract with *Vogue* she was able to move out of her tiny top floor apartment in Greenwich Village next to Washington Square Park to a luxurious residence on 10th street just off of 5th avenue. Dryden lived in this apartment with her butler at a cost of approximately \$200 per month (roughly \$2,500 in 2018), which was more than four times the cost of a typical Manhattan tenement where average New Yorker's resided.

Dryden's fame also demonstrates her success as a commercial artist. Her popularity among American women, not only as an artist, but also as an expert on fashion and taste, led to her involvement in a series of testimonial ads for women's shoes and nail polish with photos of Dryden working at an easel in the late 1920s.⁷⁰ [Fig.

⁶⁶ "American Humor in Art: Works of Bellows, Young, Glackens, and Others to Be Shown," *New York Times*, April 14, 1915. "Exhibition of American Humor: 'Saon of Humorists' at Folsom Galleries Has Plenty of Fun and Art and Is Distinctively American," *New York Times*, April 18, 1915.

⁶⁷ "Random Impressions in Current Exhibitions," *New York Tribune*, May 22, 1921.

⁶⁸ "Greenwich Village Art Exhibit Opens," *New York Times*, April 8, 1926.

⁶⁹ Adjusted for inflation \$700 is equivalent to approximately \$15,000 in 2018 when taken as an average of the years in which Dryden worked as a cover illustrator. "No Title," *Daily News*, New York City, August 19, 1956.

⁷⁰ The fact that the photos were staged with Dryden at an easel is humorous as multiple interviews with the artist make it clear that she never worked at an easel, but always at a large table. "Cantilever

13] However, Dryden's success is not simply attributable to some mysterious and inherent artistic genius. She benefitted greatly from technological and social developments of the turn of the twentieth century that facilitated her career as a woman artist.

Women in Illustration

The expansion of print industries at the turn of the twentieth century created an overwhelming demand for commercial illustration that exceeded the output capacity of established artists, leading a great number of Americans to seek out careers in the arts. This also necessitated the opening up of the field of illustration to women artists. The number of women employed as artists or art teachers during the years coinciding with the golden age of illustration rose by more than 3,400%. In 1870 women made up only 10% of workers identifying as professional artists, but by 1920 that figure had grown to more than 40%, indicating that while the field was rapidly expanding in general the number of women entering the workforce as professional artists during this time rapidly outpaced their male counterparts.⁷¹

Shoes Advertisement," *Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 1929; "Cutex Liquid Polish Advertisement," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 10, 1929; McMullen, "Making a Career of Art: Helen Dryden, Illustrator and Designer, Tells Her Own Story."

⁷¹ These figures were tabulated by comparing employment numbers from 1870, the decade predating the golden age of illustration, and comparing them to employment figures in 1920, which is widely viewed as the tail end of the period. It is important to note that these figures include all artist professions and not only illustrators, but the greater demand for artists during this period in general is representative of demand for illustrators. Janet Hooks, *Women's Occupations through Seven Decades* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1947), 168, 208, 224. Employment for both men and women artists outpaced overall employment growth of 222% over the same period. Stanley Lebergott, "Labor Force and Employment," in *Output, Employment, and Productivity in the United States after 1800*, Dorothy S. Brady, ed. (National Bureau of Economic Research, 1966), 117-204.

Illustration was one of the most accessible art careers for women in the early twentieth century, providing them with the opportunity to lead lives as professional artists. Indeed, many women forged successful careers as illustrators in the early twentieth century. Drawing and painting had long been viewed as appropriate hobbies for young women to partake in as a means of cultivating personality and establishing oneself as a woman of leisure. Therefore it made sense that women would be able to capitalize on a skill deemed socially appropriate more easily than one completely outside the realm of femininity. Additionally, when this work was carried out at home it was even less likely to be viewed as disrupting society's gendered division of labor. This is partially because women artists were not taken seriously as professionals and were often considered amateurs or hobbyists. Gender also commonly affected the sorts of commission women illustrators received, as they were often expected to depict scenes that were coded as feminine, such as motherhood, romance, and other sentimental subjects.⁷²

Helen Dryden's accomplishments as an illustrator in the early twentieth century were facilitated by the wave of women artists who entered the field at the end of the nineteenth century. By the time Dryden entered the professional art scene in 1908 a number of women had already paved the way as successful illustrators of mass

⁷² While illustration may have been one of the easiest of the art professions for women to break in to, women during this period also built accomplished careers as designers, decorators, weavers, copyists, and colorists. Helen Goodman, "Women Illustrators of the Golden Age of American Illustration," *Woman's Art Journal*, 8 (1987), 14-15. For more information regarding the experiences of women artists in art schools, markets, and professional organizations at the turn of the twentieth century, see: Kirsten Swinth, *Painting Professionals: Women Artists and the Development of Modern American Art, 1870-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

publications. Among these women artists Alice Barber Stephens, Jessie Willcox Smith, Elizabeth Shippen Green, Violet Oakley, Charlotte Harding, and Rose O'Neill are notable for their technical prowess and commercial success.⁷³ Each of these women began working years before Dryden started her career by illustrating fashions for Anne Rittenhouse. They created illustrations for such prominent periodicals as *Collier's*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *McCall's*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Woman's Home Companion*, and *Life*. While these women were all pioneers in the field of American illustration with wide commercial success, the style of their work and the subjects they depicted were limited by preconceived gender stereotypes. Even Howard Pyle, an artist who taught many of the early women illustrators at Drexel University in Philadelphia, remarked that, "Girls are, after all, at best, only qualified for sentimental work."⁷⁴ The work of illustrators was viewed through a gendered lens and illustrations published in mass periodicals with a diverse audience were expected to conform to contemporary social predilections.

The work of women artists has historically been interpreted through a gendered lens that presupposes the artist's expression relates to some primal feminine force best suited for the depiction of sentimental scenes and subjects that highlight the particular experience of being a woman. These include nurturing portrayals of mothers and their

⁷³ For more information regarding women illustrators at the turn of the twentieth century, see: Goodman, "Women Illustrators of the Golden Age of American Illustration." Ann Barton Brown, *Alice Barber Stephens: A Pioneer Woman Illustrator* (Brandywine River Museum, 1984). Edward Nudelman, *Jessie Willcox Smith: American Illustrator* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing, 1990). Paul Giambarba, *Elizabeth Shippen Green* (Cape Arts Publishing, 2014). Bailey VanHook, *Violet Oakley: An Artist's Life* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2016). Ann Barton Harding Brown, *Charlotte Harding: An Illustrator in Philadelphia* (Brandywine River Museum, 1982). Rose Cecil O'Neill, *The Story of Rose O'Neill: An Autobiography* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1997).

⁷⁴ Goodman, "Women Illustrators of the Golden Age of American Illustration."

children, female friendships, interior scenes of private family life, the leisure activities of upper class women, and emotive representations that are linked to the corporeal world rather than the intellectual world.⁷⁵ These subjects accurately describe those commonly portrayed by the majority of popular women illustrators at the turn of the twentieth century. For instance, Jessie Wilcox Smith specialized in charming portrayals of mothers and children. Smith's April 1905 cover illustration for *Ladies Home Journal* showing a sleeping girl sucking on her thumb for comfort while propped up against her mother on a public bench [Fig. 14] and her April 1929 cover for *Good Housekeeping* depicting two young children in their bathing suits holding hands while walking along the beach with their sand pails [Fig. 15] are typical of the artist's work. Whether portraying children, mothers and children, or women more generally the majority of popular illustrations created by women artists during this period were believed to be emblematic of feminine experience. Helen Dryden's work also fits into this category, as she primarily portrayed images of women. Dryden also commonly illustrated boys and girls for the annual children's fashion issue of *Vogue* while she was under contract with the magazine [Fig. 16]. In sum, while Dryden's predecessors helped to pave her way as a professional artist, little progress was made in terms of the kinds of subjects women were expected to represent.

Dryden's art career also benefitted from her family's relocation to Philadelphia, which was one of the most important centers for promoting women to become

⁷⁵ This gendered bias was not limited to illustration and was equally true of the fine arts. See: Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). Corn, *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915-1935*.

professional artists in the United States in the late-nineteenth century. Of Dryden's predecessors listed above all of the women except for O'Neil attended art classes in Philadelphia, either at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, or the Drexel Institute of Arts and Sciences. At these institutions women received professional guidance from established artists, such as Howard Pyle, Thomas Eakins, and Cecelia Beaux.⁷⁶ Dryden's access to the great resources available to women art students in Philadelphia at the turn of the century could only have bolstered her chances to succeed as a professional artist.

Although Dryden's career began later than pioneering women illustrators like Stephens and Smith, her work was subjected to the same gendered expectations that encouraged the depiction of appropriate feminine subjects. Additionally, a gendered hierarchy existed within the field of illustration. This artificially imposed spectrum opposed more creative forms of illustration, such as magazine covers, with more applied forms, such as fashion illustration. The more creative forms were considered more akin to fine art and thus more masculine while the more applied forms were considered more commercial and thus more feminine. While some women did achieve great success as cover illustrators and other creative forms of illustration, this hierarchy

⁷⁶ The oldest of these artists, Alice Barber Stephens, began her career in the early 1880s and the majority of them had begun to work as artists by the mid-1880s to the mid-1890s. Goodman, "Women Illustrators of the Golden Age of American Illustration."

pigeon-holed many women into more feminized art forms, such as fashion illustration, which were also less lucrative.⁷⁷

Fashion Illustration

Fashion illustration is a field of applied art meant to convey information about the appearance of a garment. The earliest fashion illustrations date back to the sixteenth century and the detailed renderings made by European explorers depicting the costumes of indigenous people in the lands they set out to conquer. Eventually this mode of depicting dress was also applied to European fashions with artists creating fashion plates demonstrating the latest styles using the laborious processes of hand engraving and etching. In eighteenth-century France these illustrations helped to solidify the nation's place at the center of the European fashion world and spread French taste across the continent. By this time fashion illustration had already begun to develop its commercial role as a means of advertising and selling. Fashion Illustration in the United States followed Europe's lead as America was largely lacking in its own fashion designers until the twentieth century. American periodicals often sent illustrators to Europe on assignment to bring back images of the latest and greatest fashions for the American public to visually consume and attempt to replicate. These highly detailed illustrations were a valuable tool to upwardly mobile middle class women who could not afford their own custom made Parisian couture gowns, but could hire a local dressmaker to recreate

⁷⁷ For instance, *Vogue* typically compensated its fashion artists \$15-\$20 per illustration (roughly \$375 in 2018). "Magazine Fashion Artists Are Not Fabulously Paid," *The Baltimore Sun*, November 25, 1917.

a facsimile of the gown using an illustration as a model, or even sew the garment herself for the fraction of the price.⁷⁸

Due to the commercial nature of fashion illustration and the need for its images to convey detailed information about the appearance of the garment the profession was widely understood as feminine. The demands of the work were viewed to be more replicative than creative and therefore, in the context of the early-twentieth century, did not require the genius associated with the production of modern art in order to be carried out. However, even in this feminized subset of the field, it was a man who dictated the primary mode for fashion representation in the United States.

Before the introduction of Dryden's stylized approach to fashion illustration, the mode that predominated in the American print media were highly detailed, stiff figures typical of the work of Carl Kleinschmidt [Fig. 17]. Kleinschmidt was a competing commercial artist who worked for Butterick, one of the primary publishers of paper patterns and ladies magazines in the early twentieth century, including *The Delineator*.⁷⁹ Kleinschmidt's manner of illustration followed the accepted tradition that favored an accuracy of detail. Dryden, on the other hand, preferred a simplified rendering, depicting her figures in a way that gave an impression of the garment's interaction with the body [Fig. 18]. Her illustrations took inspiration from European trends in modern art and imbued the fashion model and clothes she depicted with a sense of effortless style. Dryden intended "to simplify fashion drawings to the few essential features that would

⁷⁸ Cally Blackman, *100 Years of Fashion Illustration* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2007).

⁷⁹ Theodore Dreiser, *The American Diaries, 1902-1926* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 177.

embody the essence of the mode.”⁸⁰ When Dryden first moved to New York to try to sell her illustrations to a publisher, the fashion editors often urged her to copy Kleinschmidt’s illustrative style. As Dryden recounted:

*In those days Kleinschmidt was the idol of the fashion editors. When my drawings were refused I was always shown his work and urged to throw aside what I was trying to do and work out something in the style of this man. Needless to say, I did not follow their advice. I knew I had an idea that was new to America. In Europe they understood the importance of the light touch and were applying the same technique and finish to the so-called commercial arts as to the more serious canvases. For myself I prefer a light thing well done to a more pretentious attempt crudely executed.*⁸¹

In comparing the two manners of illustration, Kleinschmidt’s figures are more rigid and reminiscent of mannequins while Dryden’s figures are softer and more individualized.⁸² Dryden’s portrayals seem to capture the personalities of the models in addition to the actual appearance of the garments they are wearing, providing her illustrations with a sense of character; an artistic decision that proved to be highly marketable in the competitive fashion world.

⁸⁰ Hannah Stein, “Highest Paid Woman Artist,” *Brooklyn Eagle Magazine*, Aug. 25, 1929, 4; According to industrial designer George Walker, Dryden was making \$35,000 annually for her position as art director for The Dura Co. alone, which would be roughly equivalent to \$500,000 in 2018. *Reminiscence from the 1985 Interview with George W. Walker. Automotive Design Oral History, Accession 1673. Benson Ford Research Center. The Henry Ford.*

⁸¹ Cameron, “Dryden, Helen.”

⁸² In contrasting Dryden’s fashion illustrations with Kleinschmidt’s McMullen described his figures as “depicted literally with intricate lines and fine shading that set their garments just so, as if they had been made of iron, not silk. They were stiff, self-important women, garnished with elaborate detail to every fold and pattern of trimming.” McMullen, “Making a Career of Art,” *The Forecast*, 362.

Characteristic of Dryden's fashion illustrations is a sketch the artist made of an evening wrap modeled by American actress Ina Clare and designed by Henri Bendel that appeared in the November 15, 1921 issue of *Vogue* [Fig. 19]. The wrap is depicted in black and white, but the accompanying text provides greater details about the garment. The wrap is described as "Venetian red velvet... edged with gold galloon and a large collar of grey fox."⁸³ In Dryden's illustration, three different materials or textures are made evident through the use of shading and contrast, but Dryden's simplified manner of representation does not create a completely accurate rendering of the garment. For instance, the lace edging does not appear rounded, as the description suggests, and instead consists of sleek straight lines that define the wide openings of the wrap's sleeves. An examination of the illustration as a whole reveals that Dryden's interest lie in creating a chic, stylish silhouette rather than a painstakingly accurate depiction of the wrap being modeled. The garment symmetrically drapes over Clare's body coming together mid-calf to create a nearly perfect oval enclosure accentuating the actress' dainty ankles, a delicate stem supporting a magnificent blossom. Dryden's fashion illustration transforms the designer garments into a sort of visual poetry.

Dryden's illustrative style of simplification as well as her tendency to take some artistic license with the actual appearance of the garments that she illustrates is evident in comparing this wrap illustration with a photograph appearing on the same page showing Clare modeling an evening wrap designed by Leon Bakst [Fig. 20]. The wraps are different, but share enough similarities to suggest how Dryden's illustrative style

⁸³ Galloon is a kind of intricate lace trim with rounded edges.

differs from a more detailed, naturalistic approach. The Bakst wrap is not made of velvet, but equally heavy green and gold brocade and trimmed with a monkey fur collar. Unlike the Bendel wrap, the one in the photograph lacks sleeves or fasteners of any kind. Clare stands poised, tightly wrapped in the gown's embrace, with only a hint of her right ankle peeking out from below the garment. The wrap creates a long rounded silhouette around the actress, but is a far cry from the practically perfect ovoid Dryden depicted in her illustration. The Bakst wrap falls to the ground in a natural, almost clumsy way, while the Bendel wrap, as Dryden depicts it, is calculated and precise in its definition of form. The photograph portrays Ina Clare wearing a wrap, whereas the illustration creates a hybrid portrait in which the wrap embodies the characteristics of poise, elegance, grace, and perfection associated with the actress. Dryden's fashion illustrations serve to flatter the garment as well as the model, thereby producing an image that was personable and encouraged readers to imagine themselves in the place of the model.

Dryden's aesthetic was highly influenced by European sources. The modernization of fashion illustration resulting in a more artistic representation of garments is credited to the French fashion designer Paul Poiret. In the early 1900s Poiret commissioned the French artists Paul Iribe and George Lepape to illustrate promotional pamphlets of his designs [Fig. 21]. The figures in the brochures broke with tradition, depicting some models from rear angles and placing them in front of black-and-white minimally defined backdrops. The pamphlets were produced in limited additions on high quality paper using the pochoir printing method; a laborious hand stenciled

reproductive technique. This elevated the artistic status of the illustrations as well as the garments they depicted. The artists used a simplified method of depiction relying on the use of line to define their figures, creating a flattened aesthetic reminiscent of some European modern painters associated with Fauvism and early Cubism.⁸⁴ Although Dryden's style was not entirely original the modern character of her fashion illustrations was new to American audiences in that it went beyond the accuracies of draughtsmanship that characterized earlier fashion illustration.⁸⁵ Dryden's innovative approach introduced creativity into the field, thereby elevating fashion illustration's status as a form of art. The recognition of her fashion illustrations as art is supported by the fact that she was commonly credited for her work, either by the inclusion of her signature or in an accompanying caption. This was contrary to the typical industry practice of naming the designer, but leaving the illustrator anonymous.

Dryden's contributions to the field of illustration were celebrated by the famous art critic Helen Appleton Read in a 1924 article profiling the artist, in which Read credits Dryden as being singularly responsible for the innovations made in the area of fashion illustration during the interwar era.⁸⁶ This sentiment was often echoed. An article

⁸⁴ Blackman, *100 Years of Fashion Illustration*.

⁸⁵ A true Francophile, Dryden proudly confessed to interviewers the influence that her French contemporaries held over her work.

⁸⁶ "The fashion drawings of the pre-Helen Dryden era were dull, supposedly lifelike, carefully rendered drawings of dresses, done for the most part in a black and white wash – every detail of lace ruffle and embroidery set down exactly in painstaking tasteless realism. So used are we now to the idiom of the fashion magazine cover which, if it is not by Helen Dryden has at least been inspired by her, that we have forgotten those dull commercial publications. The Helen Dryden innovation for magazine covers was a stylistic sophisticated combination painted in gay flat colors of French prints, the spirit of the rococo of 1830, of hoop skirts, and strapped slippers, pantalets, ringlets, patches and powder, parrots and French poodles and a dash of the Picasso technique for modern piquancy; and in the case of fashion drawings, stylistic simplifications of the current mode, the essence of the manner in which smart people wear their

detailing Dryden's career that appeared in the December 1930 issue of *The Forecast*, a popular food magazine, described the significance of Dryden's impact, stating:

*Helen Dryden ... is one of the most important women in American art. Her influence, with that of others as adventurous as she, is credited with having had a great deal to do with revolutionizing standards of illustrating and fashion design and broadening the field of art for women.*⁸⁷

Despite these innovations, as an illustrator of fashions and cover designs for popular women's magazines, Dryden's artistic output can be largely classified as feminine and appropriate subject matter for a woman artist. Like other popular women illustrators that came before her, Dryden's work depicted primarily women and children, was sentimental in nature, and commercial in application. While she may be responsible for innovating fashion illustration in the United States, that innovation is inevitably restricted to a field of work coded as feminine, and therefore limited in influence. As an individual, Dryden was not especially interested in overthrowing the status quo. She needed to work for financial reasons, but she came from an old aristocratic family. Making use of her talents as an artist enabled her to live comfortably while not upsetting her high society connections.

clothes. Many of us do not realize that it was one person who revolutionized the fashion magazine and the fashion drawing. A big revolution with many influences – all the result of the vision of a young Baltimore girl who persisted under the most discouraging conditions in peddling her idea from magazine to magazine, confident in her ultimate success because she knew she had an idea – something that no one else had thought of in this country." Read, "Helen Dryden - Who Put Chic into Fashion Drawings."

⁸⁷ McMullen, "Making a Career of Art: Helen Dryden, Illustrator and Designer, Tells Her Own Story."

Following her success as an illustrator Dryden began speaking in support of greater artistry in the commercial sector, even in the early stages of her career, and long before her later involvement with industrial design. In particular, she championed commercial art as a career for women. In 1918 she gave a talk at a women's conference in Virginia titled, "Some New Ways of Commercializing Art," that discussed professions open to women workers.⁸⁸ By 1930 the field of commercial art expanded further, offering women artists a number of opportunities to enter the workforce beyond illustration. Additionally, the often lucrative nature of commercial art drew some of America's finest artists to seek work from corporate patrons.⁸⁹ Dryden herself found great success working as a commercial artist. In 1929 it was widely publicized that she was the highest earning woman artist in the United States. This salary, rumored to be as high as \$100,000 annually (equivalent to approximately \$1.5 million in 2018), was gathered from multiple sources including industrial design work, advertising commissions, and magazine illustrations. Dryden explained to a journalist writing for the magazine *Psychology* that she did not mind being known as a commercial artist, stating:

[a]rt is the same whether the picture decorates a gallery or an advertisement for soap. Today an effort is being made to beautify everything, from shop windows to newspaper advertising. This is wonderful progress. It makes room, too, for more and more artists. Hundreds of young women are now able to support

⁸⁸ "Conference of women to be held here to-day," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Feb. 22, 1918.

⁸⁹ Although, many fine artists who chose to accept commercial commissions often did so out of necessity, because the work could be so lucrative. Often times once the artist's financial means had been met they would return to devoting themselves to "serious" art.

*themselves doing work they love, where in the old days a woman artist starved while she waited for sitters who might want their portraits done in oil.*⁹⁰

Vogue Magazine

Dryden's career as a commercial artist may not have brought her such great success if it were not for her time working at *Vogue*. Founded by Arthur Baldwin Turnure at the end of the nineteenth century, the first issue of *Vogue* was published in December of 1892. At its inception, the magazine was published weekly and focused on the activities of New York society and fashion, but also included short stories and poetry. The first incarnation of *Vogue* was envisioned as a magazine for both male and female members of society's elite class, rather than the ladies' fashion magazine it would come to be known as in the twentieth century. In its early years *Vogue* was popular with its base, but financially unstable. At the time *Vogue* featured almost no advertising and relied principally on subscriptions and the sale of individual issues to cover the cost of production. In the late 1890s Turnure was forced to borrow against his mother's estate in order to keep the publication in business. This state of financial hardship necessitated *Vogue's* transformation from a digest of the social activities of elite New Yorkers to a high-end women's fashion magazine. This new brand identity helped *Vogue* to secure more advertisers. It also enabled the magazine to appeal to readers outside of New York and to establish a base that was more easily definable, namely upper-middleclass and wealthy women with a keen interest in fashion. Soon

⁹⁰ Dryden created an illustrated program for a national advertising campaign for Lux soap in the 1920s. Anne Ayres, "A Young Woman with Organized Brains: The story of Helen Dryden, America's highest paid woman artist," *Psychology*, May 1930, 27.

eye-catching illustrated advertisements became a regular feature of *Vogue* and the magazine returned to a state of relative financial stability. However, *Vogue* entered another period of uncertainty and transformation after the passing of its founder in 1906.⁹¹

Following Turnure's passing, *Vogue's* dedicated staff kept the periodical stable under the direction of the editor Marie Harrison, Turnure's sister-in-law, until the eventual acquisition of the magazine by rising publishing mogul Condé Nast in 1909. Nast attended Georgetown University where he met fellow classmate and future publishing mogul Robert Collier. The two became close friends and later business partners at the now famous weekly magazine named for the Collier family. Nast impressed Collier with his ability to build up advertising revenue and was hired as *Collier's* new advertising manager in 1897. During the decade that Nast worked at *Collier's*, he succeeded in increasing the magazine's ad revenue from \$5,500 annually to a whopping \$1,000,000. Part of this success involved the magazine's recognition of the impact illustration could have on a magazine's profitability.⁹² This led *Collier's* to invest heavily in commissions and contracts from celebrated artists, such as Howard Pyle, Frederic Remington, and Charles Dana Gibson.⁹³ Despite Nast's success at *Collier's* and the excellent salary he received, Nast resigned from his position in 1907 in order to pursue his own business ventures. From *Collier's* Nast went to work for the Home Pattern Company, which manufactured and sold patterns for *Ladies' Home Journal*. He

⁹¹ Edna Woolman and Ilka Chase Chase, *Always in Vogue* (New York: Modern Literary Editions Publishing Company, 1954).

⁹² Chase, *Always in Vogue*, 63-65.

⁹³ Michael Lobel, *John Sloan: Drawing on Illustration*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014, 44.

stayed with the Home Pattern Company for three years, quickly building up ad revenue totaling an impressive \$400,000 annually, before leaving to devote himself to the cultivation of his new acquisition, *Vogue*.⁹⁴

Nast carefully curated every facet of *Vogue* to communicate and sustain a brand image synonymous with luxury, style, beauty and leisure. Nast conceived of the publication as one that would attract well-to-do consumers who could afford greater indulgences than the average American. By focusing on this clientele Nast established *Vogue* as an appealing site for the manufacturers of luxury products and services to advertise their goods. *Vogue* sold the items deemed necessary to lead a luxurious lifestyle to its wealthy readers and the dream of class mobility to middleclass consumers. Nast's new vision for *Vogue* eventually transformed the periodical from a relatively small operation appealing strictly to the upper class to an international success. Before Nast, *Vogue* was a weekly publication with a circulation of 14,000 and advertising revenue of \$100,000. Nast made *Vogue* bi-weekly, but more than doubled the number of pages in each issue. The cost of each magazine also rose from 10 cents to 15 cents, although the subscription rate remained the same. Nast brought in more advertising revenue and started printing the cover of the magazine in color. By the 1920s *Vogue* expanded to offices in Paris and London, each with their own editions of

⁹⁴ Chase, *Always in Vogue*, 65-66.

the magazine. However, before initiating any of these changes Nast spent months thoroughly examining the finances and economic potential of the magazine.⁹⁵

Coincidentally, Nast acquired *Vogue* the same year Helen Dryden set out from Philadelphia determined to make a name for herself as an illustrator of fashions in New York City. At the time, she was an aspiring artist in her mid-twenties living in a tiny top-floor apartment in Greenwich Village. She spent more than a year trudging through the streets of New York with her drawings in tow and working odd jobs to make ends meet. The first time Dryden visited *Vogue*'s offices the editor sent her away, but this initial visit occurred when the magazine was still largely being run under the auspices of the editorial staff that predated Nast's takeover.⁹⁶ Once Nast finalized his plans for *Vogue*'s future dramatic changes were initiated. Nast demanded fresh ideas from the editorial staff, inspiring one editor to write Dryden and ask her to do some illustrations.⁹⁷ Despite her previous rejection Dryden completed the illustrations, as requested, and this time her work was approved. Her illustrations began appearing in the pages of the magazine in early-1910, with her first cover design published in April of that year.⁹⁸ Dryden signed a contract with *Vogue* shortly thereafter and became the magazine's principal illustrator over the next decade, creating roughly 100 different covers, as well as a great number

⁹⁵ Chase, *Always in Vogue*, 63-71; Michael Lobel, *John Sloan: Drawing on Illustration*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014, 44.

⁹⁶ Cameron, "Dryden, Helen."

⁹⁷ It is likely that the person responsible for reaching out to Dryden was Heyworth Campbell, a leader in the field of commercial art, who acted as Nast's art director from 1909 until 1927. Raye Virginia Allen, *Gordon Conway: Fashioning a New Woman* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 31.

⁹⁸ Frances Drewry McMullen, "Helen Dryden's Versatile Art," *The Woman's Journal* (Feb, 1930): 15.

of fashion and editorial illustrations that appeared within the pages of the magazine over the years.⁹⁹

Dryden in *Vogue*

The women Dryden depicted for *Vogue* corresponded with the magazine's brand identity. The figures embody a persona and a style that is in line with the qualities and ambitions of the magazine in which they appear in order to successfully appeal to its readers. Under Condé Nast's leadership *Vogue* strove to be more than a ladies' magazine, but also an arbiter of good taste and luxurious lifestyles. Dryden was well suited to represent this vision of *Vogue* as the magazine's brand corresponded nicely with the artist's personal identity. She considered herself a woman of society and refined taste. Dryden not only illustrated fashions, but designed them as well, and frequently provided commentary addressing the popular fashions of dress and design. In many ways Dryden resembled *Vogue*'s target audience, a white woman of enough financial means to afford certain luxuries unattainable to the general public. This made her an excellent candidate in helping to craft the magazine's new brand.

The stylistic connection between Dryden's illustrations and those of popular European artists associated with modernism was instantly recognizable by the public. This association was desirable to *Vogue*, a magazine that considered one of its principal roles to be imparting European taste on the American people. Other companies also

⁹⁹ Cameron, "Dryden, Helen." In addition to Dryden's illustrations for *Vogue*, during her early career she created covers for other Nast controlled publications, including *Vanity Fair* and *House and Garden*, took on a number of advertising commissions, and designed posters, costumes, and sets for theatrical productions. See appendix for a list of known works.

contracted Dryden to create illustrations to advertise their wares, seeking to capitalize on her popularity with American women. For instance, in the 1920s she was hired by Lux Flakes to create designs for a national advertising campaign, but the company decided to start moving in a different direction in 1927 [Fig. 22]. Lux determined that Dryden's modern, European-inspired style was too "highbrow" to appeal to the majority of consumers and the company began replacing Dryden's illustrated ads with photographic ones by Lejaren à Hiller and Edward Steichen that the company hoped we be more relatable to the public [Fig. 23]. This marketing decision on the part of Lux reinforces the identification of Dryden's personal brand as one associated with luxury and modernism.¹⁰⁰

Women readers of *Vogue* who desired such a luxurious lifestyle sought to acquire or to copy the fashions represented by the illustrators and also to emulate the general manner of the illustrated figures gracing the covers of the magazine. For women seeking to appear as though they belong to the upper echelon of society Dryden's illustrations and similar images created by other artists served as didactic references.¹⁰¹ Dryden's illustrations are obedient models showcasing cultural ideals and contemporary fashions that the magazine supports. Much as American women aspired to the look and comportment of the Gibson Girl at the turn-of-the-century, by the interwar era women were turning to new models for inspiration, such as the fashionable women portrayed by Dryden. Helen Dryden's stylized illustrations of fashionable young women reflect

¹⁰⁰ Lux slowly transitioned to photography as their primary means of advertising and Dryden continued to make designs for Lux until the end of the decade. Patricia Johnston, *Real Fantasies: Edward Steichen's Advertising Photography* (University of California Press, 2000), 68-70.

¹⁰¹ McMullen, "Making a Career of Art," *The Forecast*, 362.

changes in women's place in society as well as developments in fashion, but her figures carefully tread the line. They appear modern without stirring controversy related to gender roles.

Dryden's *Vogue* covers typically featured women in fashionable dress, or historicizing figures wearing garments evocative of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries [Fig. 24-27 illustrate typical examples of Dryden's *Vogue* covers]. Dryden often portrayed solitary figures in her *Vogue* cover designs, but it was not uncommon for her to depict a small grouping of two or three women, or a woman accompanied by a suitor. She also occasionally featured children in her illustrations. Dryden's work for *Vogue* in the 1910s appears traditional in her depiction of women of leisure, but her work in the 1920s became slightly more evocative with her portrayal of fashion trends associated with the "New Woman" and flappers of the era.¹⁰² In these later illustrations the women have short hair; they wear cloche hats or turbans; their dresses remain long, but are the drop-waist style popular during the era; some of the women wear layers of jewelry; rows of banded bracelets extend up their arms, large jeweled rings ornament their slender fingers, and oversized earrings accompany their large beaded necklaces. However, the lavish settings of these haute couture figures serves to identify them as members of the upper-class experimenting with fashion trends rather than true flappers

¹⁰² "New Woman" is a term commonly used since the late-nineteenth century to describe the impact of social changes on the roles and behaviors of women. There are different permutations of the "New woman" throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, each representing new found gains in women's autonomy. It was also related to political movements to increase women's rights, but it was not exclusively a political movement. It is most popularly associated with the flappers of the 1920s, who visually embodied the "New woman" through their rejection of traditional markers of femininity, such as long hair and cinched waists, as well as proper female behavior, such as modesty and domesticity.

who actively subverted gender expectations. Dryden's women walk the fine line often associated with high fashion, adopting popular elements of trends considered somewhat controversial and elevating them through stylistic choices that diminish their salacious qualities.

Highly influenced by European sources, Dryden's designs have a poster-like quality. She utilizes bold, flat color fields in combination with a studied use of patterning. Dryden's depictions of printed textiles demonstrate her keen understanding of design through her sophisticated juxtaposition of contrasting colors and patterns, and her use of sinuous forms to create a tableau that is simultaneously bold and feminine [Fig. 28].¹⁰³ The primary subject of Dryden's illustrations is the modern American woman, although the style in which she portrayed these figures evolved over the course of her career. Dryden's earlier work, such as her *Vogue* cover from August 1, 1910 of a young woman on a beach, appears more conservative and true to form [Fig. 29]. Dryden incorporates Asian inspired elements, such as the parasol, that continue the taste for oriental style popular with in the west since the mid-nineteenth century. Additionally, the influence of modern poster art is apparent in the strong use of line and flat patches of color that, itself, stems from works created by the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists following the introduction of Japanese woodblock prints to the European public in the 1860s. Drawing from late-nineteenth century source material and

¹⁰³ Dryden was influenced by European artists and designers of the early 20th century. For instance, her work shares stylistic similarities with that of Leon Bakst, Gerda Wegener, Charles Martin, and George Lepape, among others.

operating in a decorative style that was also popular with Dryden's French contemporaries, her early work is quite typical of the Art Nouveau period.

In contrast, Dryden's illustrations from the 1920s are more modern and daring in their abstraction of the human form and reveal a greater influence of fine art on Dryden's developing style.¹⁰⁴ In her *Vogue* cover from September 1, 1922, [Fig. 30] Dryden created a modern interpretation of Dominique Ingres' Grande Odalisque [Fig. 31] with a dark haired beauty reclining on a pile of cushions in front of an oriental screen. Unlike Ingres' famous painting, the figure in Dryden's illustration is fully clothed, wearing a fashionable drop-waist taupe gown with bell sleeves, complete with matching wrap and turban. However, both figures possess unnatural proportions, with sinuous, elongated bodies and grotesquely bent spines. While Dryden is clearly quoting Ingres with this illustration it is also evident that she has composed the image in a deliberate way to alter the meaning of the figure so that it will resonate with its intended audience. Ingres' Odalisque exists to satisfy male desires, symbolizing exoticism and sexuality. Her body is intended for visual consumption. In contrast, Dryden's figure exists to encourage material consumption. Magazine readers encountering Dryden's *Vogue* cover were not enticed by a sexual desire for the woman in the illustration, but a materialistic desire for her fine clothes, exotic furnishings, and lavish lifestyle. Dryden was an avid student of French literature and history and often looked to historical sources for inspiration for her cover designs as well as her fashion illustrations, drawing

¹⁰⁴ This includes Dryden's work for *Vogue* in the early 1920s as well as other employers, including *The Delineator*.

influence from celebrated French artists such as Vigee le Brun and Chardin, as well as Ingres.¹⁰⁵

Dryden left *Vogue* in 1924, but the modern character of her illustrative style continued to evolve. In 1926 she signed a contract with *The Delineator* that made her the principal illustrator of the ladies' magazine through the early-1930s. Dryden's *Delineator* covers reveal that she was no longer looking to the masters of eighteenth and nineteenth century painting for inspiration, but had turned her attention to new developments in Europe [Fig. 32-33]. For instance, Dryden's work for *The Delineator* demonstrated a greater influence of Avant-Garde art, with her long necked, hollow-eyed figures bearing a striking resemblance to works by Amedeo Modigliani (Fig. 34), with their cool expressions and sharp features.¹⁰⁶ These covers exclusively depict modern women rather than historicizing figures and are even more simplified in their features than Dryden's illustrations for *Vogue*. The women often appear with very pale or patently white skin, a few simple lines to define the eyes, nose, and lips, and boldly contrasting patches of pink and black to illustrate the figure's aggressive use of makeup. With their simplistically rendered features the women on Dryden's *Delineator* covers are nearly indistinguishable. They lack something of the individuality and character

¹⁰⁵ A sketch of Dryden's featuring a boy and girl with flowers accompanying a young bride was exhibited at the Maryland Institute Art Department alongside approximately 50 works by *Vogue* artists that were sent by the art director Heyworth Campbell as a means of inspiring and seeking out up-and-coming artists. Dryden indicated the source of her inspiration for each design with a note above each figure. The boy and girl from the sketch were also reproduced in the August 15, 1916 edition of *Vogue*. The girl resembles the type featured in Le Brun's 1787 painting "Jeanne Juli Louise Le Brun looking in a mirror," and the boy is similar to the one in Chardin's 1739 painting "The Governess." "Magazine Fashion Artists Are Not Fabulously Paid."

¹⁰⁶ Dryden had grown interested in what she called the "Primitive Italian Painters" as early as 1922. See *Vogue* January 1, 1923 pg.78.

present in some of Dryden's earlier *Vogue* work, and instead appear more as passionless icons of modern womanhood. This stylistic difference likely had something to do with the differing content of the magazines, as *The Delineator* was more known for its famous literary contributors and short stories than it was for couture fashion.

Dryden was a successful magazine cover artist and the preeminent American fashion illustrator during the 1910s and 1920. Edna Woolman Chase, the editor of *Vogue* (1914-1952), described Dryden as one of "the most celebrated cover artists [to ever join] the staff..." and "the ranking fashion artist of her day."¹⁰⁷ An article describing the Bohemian lifestyle surrounding Washington Square in New York stressed Dryden's status in the magazine illustration community by colorfully referring to her as "the [president] of the magazine cover trust."¹⁰⁸ Another article regarding women artists living in Greenwich Village described her as "the foremost of American fashion artists, and the creator of a school of cover designs which numbers many enthusiastic imitators all over the world."¹⁰⁹ In 1928 Dryden was cited in an article printed in the *Washington*

¹⁰⁷ Edna Woolman and Ilka Chase Chase, *Always in Vogue* (New York: Modern Literary Editions Publishing Company, 1954), 92; While Dryden may have been the most celebrated woman artist working for Condé Nast Publications in the 1910s and early-1920s, she was far from the only woman employed by the magazine empire. *Vogue* contracted a number of women to design covers during this time period, some of whom had contracts with the magazine, like Dryden, and some who were paid a commission for individual designs.¹⁰⁷ Still others created designs for Nast's other mast heads, *Vanity Fair* and *House and Garden*. The artist Gordon Conway, for instance, was one of the top illustrators for *Vanity Fair* in the late-1910s. Like Dryden, Conway also portrayed popular fashions associated with the "new woman," but Conway's illustrations were not limited to depictions of upper-class figures. More than Dryden, Conway's illustrations tended to be more risqué in their portrayal of womanhood. Conway considered herself a "new woman" and frequently depicted jazz age flappers, smoking women, and women who were sexually evocative. Conway's life and career has been exhaustively compiled by Raye Virginia Allen. See Raye Virginia Allen, *Gordon Conway: Fashioning a New Woman* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997).

¹⁰⁸ "Vie de Boheme in Washington Square," *Vanity Fair*, 1915, 36.

¹⁰⁹ As *Vanity Fair* was also a Condé Nast publication, they actively promoted their own artists over those working for competing publications, revealing an obvious bias. However, *Vanity Fair* demonstrates

Post as one of the most influential American women of the twentieth century for her contributions to the decorative arts through her innovations in illustration.¹¹⁰ In 1930 Anne Ayres of the magazine *Psychology* wrote, "...Dryden is considered an esthetic triumph, for her decorative magazine covers have revolutionized the magazine world..."¹¹¹ This narrative establishing Dryden as an innovative contributor to the field of commercial art was often repeated in the 1920s and 1930s. These profiles of the artist could be gratuitous and at times exaggerated Dryden's impact on American illustration, but they do paint a picture of Dryden's prominent position in the commercial art world during the interwar era. The time Dryden spent as an illustrator at *Vogue*, building her career and achieving international recognition, determined her ability to venture out into other creative endeavors in the field of commercial art, as her experience and connections afforded her the opportunity to undergo the transition from illustrator to designer.

Dryden's position at the top of the hierarchy within Condé Nast publications, and other sources confirm her success outside of Condé Nast. "The Apotheosis of Greenwich Village," *Vanity Fair*, February 1921, 37.

¹¹⁰ The author has largely limited herself to women's contributions to the arts, but she does briefly discuss important women in science and education. The list also includes singers, actors, sculptors, painters, and authors. Isabel Alston, "'Paris Picks the 'Princesses of Brains,'" *The Washington Post*, January 22, 1928.

¹¹¹ Ayers, "A young woman with organized brains..." *Psychology*, May 1930, 27.

Biography

1914 – 1928

Several years after starting at *Vogue*, Dryden's fashion illustrations caught the eye of producer Charles Dillingham, who invited the artist to design costumes and set decorations for the upcoming production of "Watch Your Step" starring Vernon and Irene Castle [Fig. 35].¹¹² This led Dryden to a host of other costume and set design jobs over the next seven years. Her most acclaimed work in this field was her White Peacock design for a production by Adolf Bolm of the Russian Ballet and costumes for "Clair de Lune" starring John and Ethel Barrymore [Fig. 36].¹¹³ A writer for the *American Cloak and Suit Review*, a trade publication devoted to the garment industry, stressed the significance of Dryden's "Clair de Lune" costumes, stating that they had reached "an achievement beyond theatre," and that they "should be presented at the conclusion of the run of the play as a collection to an art school for preservation behind glass cases and to serve as inspiration to the costume study class."¹¹⁴

While the demands of fashion illustration and costume design may seem similar, Dryden explained that, in her opinion, costuming is all together more difficult. Costume design requires that the artist possess a depth of knowledge regarding the period in which the play takes place. Additionally, illustrating the plan for a costume's design on paper is only the first step in its creation. Afterwards, the designer must ensure that the

¹¹² McMullen, "Helen Dryden's Versatile Art."

¹¹³ Charles Henry Dorr, "Decoration the Keynote of Stage Costuming: Helen Dryden's Work on the Creation of Beautiful Figures in the Theater," *Arts & Decoration*, 1923, 24–25.

¹¹⁴ "Helen Dryden's 'Private View Tea.'"

actors keep their fitting appointments and attend to the details of the fabrication to ensure that the design is realized according to the artist's intention, all the while trying to please the director, the stage manager, and the actors themselves.¹¹⁵

Shortly after venturing into the world of costume design Dryden married Canadian artist John Wentworth Russell (1879-1959) [Fig. 37]. The ceremony took place on March 18, 1915 at a Catholic church on Waverly Place less than a block from Dryden's apartment. Several weeks later *Vogue* published some original wedding gown designs Dryden created, no doubt inspired by her own recent nuptials [Fig. 38].¹¹⁶ Originally from Ontario, Canada, Russell moved to New York in 1904 to train at the Art Students League and in 1906 permanently relocated to Paris.¹¹⁷ Russell made a career as an academic painter, known particularly for his impressionistic portraits, genre scenes, and still lifes. The couple likely met in 1914 while Helen Dryden was visiting her sister, Elizabeth Dryden, in Paris [Fig. 39].¹¹⁸ Like Russell, Elizabeth was an expatriate. She moved to Paris in 1910 where she worked as a newspaper correspondent for more than two decades.¹¹⁹ Helen Dryden often traveled to France to visit her sister. She preferred to spend her summers abroad to retreat from her busy life in New York and to seek out

¹¹⁵ McMullen, "Making a Career of Art: Helen Dryden, Illustrator and Designer, Tells Her Own Story."

¹¹⁶ "Early Italian, 'Moyen Age,' Watteau – what you will – the wedding gown was in the beginning, is not, and ever shall be, light and flowers and lace," *Vogue*, May 1, 1915, 32.

¹¹⁷ Keith Watt, "On Pender, the Mystery of the Two Nudes," *The Tyee*, January 20, 2010. <https://thetyee.ca/ArtsAndCulture/2010/01/20/TwoNudes/>

¹¹⁸ Dryden recounted visiting Paris shortly before the beginning of World War I. "Helen Dryden: Witch of Color."

¹¹⁹ Elizabeth Dryden was an active member of the American colony in Paris. She remained in France during World War I where she assisted with hospital work and managed a canteen for American soldiers wounded in battle, in addition to reporting on the war for the American press. She also authored a book, titled "Paris in Herrick Days." Elizabeth Dryden died in 1932. "Miss Elizabeth Dryden: American Newspaper Correspondent in Paris for 25 Years Dies," *New York Times*, January 5, 1932.

fresh artistic inspiration.¹²⁰ However, Dryden's marriage to Russell did not last and by 1916 she was single again.¹²¹ Dryden's true love was always her work. The January 1, 1923 issue of *Vogue* published a feature highlighting New York artists that included Helen Dryden and a list she made of the things she liked best. She wrote, "I like the country, sincerity, to laugh, simplicity, to read, Paris, old furniture, the primitive Italian painters, beautiful clothes, the history of France, good architecture, the *Nast Publications*, to travel, outdoor sports..." and the final item on the list, underlined five times to stress her passion for the activity, was "work" [Fig. 40].¹²²

While Dryden's marriage may have been short lived, her productive relationship with *Vogue* lasted for fourteen years, during which time she designed more than ninety *Vogue* covers, received international acclaim, and became one of the most successful women artists of the early twentieth century.¹²³ Her illustrations and cover designs can also be found in *Nast's* other publications, including *Good House Keeping*, *Vanity Fair*, and *House and Garden*. Condé Nast's magazine empire functioned as a marketing machine. The magazines frequently referenced their sister publications in order to

¹²⁰ McMullen, "Helen Dryden's Versatile Art."

¹²¹ In the 1920 U.S. Federal Census Helen Dryden identifies as single, head of household. 1920 United States Federal Census, Manhattan Assembly District 10, New York, New York; Roll: T625_1202; Page: 7B; Enumeration District: 710; Image: 852, Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2009. NARA. Note: Enumeration Districts 819-839 on roll 323 (Chicago C) www.Ancestry.com Accessed: March 2, 2016.

¹²² "Our New York Artists," *Vogue*, January 1, 1923, 78. Women artists at the turn of the twentieth century often found that their careers affected their social life as they were forced to choose between their work and the demands of caring for a family and keeping a home. The American artist Howard Pyle even published an article on the subject, titled, "Why Art and Marriage Won't Mix," in the June 19, 1894 issue of the literary magazine *North American Review*. Goodman, "Women Illustrators of the Golden Age of American Illustration."

¹²³ According to the *Biographical Cyclopdia of American Women* entry on Helen Dryden, the artist resigned her position at *Vogue* to freelance, but her work (excluding advertisements) continues to appear in *Vogue* through April 1924. Cameron, "Dryden, Helen."

encourage sales of all Nast owned publications. For instance, in addition to creating covers for other Nast publications, Dryden was also a regular subject. She was frequently referenced in *Vanity Fair* articles about New York artists, and the interior design of her home was even featured in the July 1920 issue of *House and Garden* [Fig. 41].

Dryden's success with Nast publications provided her with the resources to move out of her tiny studio apartment and into a prestigious building on 10th street. Built by the architect William H. Russell in 1888, the five story apartment building was known as the Ava. Over the years the building was home to other prominent residents, including Nobel Prize winner Dr. Alex Carrel and the writer Dawn Powell.¹²⁴ The apartment, which Dryden shared with her live-in butler, was spacious by New York standards. The interior was simple and traditional, with early American furniture and sparsely decorated walls. A large painting hung above the fire place and Dryden displayed examples of her collection of silhouette portraits in her bedroom.¹²⁵ These furnishings may seem contrary to her reputation as a taste maker abreast of the most up-to-date fashion trends. However, both are related to the concerns of modernism. Dryden's furnishings demonstrate her interest in a home-grown American aesthetic, which was the concern

¹²⁴ Christopher Gray, "Streetscapes: The Ava, at 9 East 10th Street," *New York Times*, January 23, 2000.

¹²⁵ G.W. Harting, "Fireplaces and Personality," *Country Life*, October 1918. "Rooms in Miss Helen Dryden's Apartment," *House & Garden*, September 1920.

of many American artists at the time. The American artist Charles Sheeler, for instance, similarly decorated his home with early American furnishings.¹²⁶

Having achieved financial success and a position of prominence in the fields of illustration and costume design before her fortieth birthday it seemed there would be no end to Helen Dryden's triumphs. However, in 1922, Dryden decided to take a step back from her career as an illustrator, to leave *Vogue*, and pursue a career as a Hollywood costume designer following the announcement of her engagement to Hollywood actor John Davidson [Fig. 42]. Nearly six years had passed since Dryden's failed marriage to Russell, and as she approached middle-age she likely felt intense pressure to marry and conform to social expectations. It is also not difficult to imagine that she desired the companionship a husband would provide. The couple met in 1919 while Davidson was appearing on stage in New York. They courted for three years, but put off a formal engagement, as they were both dedicated to their work and their respective careers kept them busy on opposite coasts. Finally, Dryden decided to leave behind her life and career in New York in order to be with her longtime beau in California.¹²⁷

Dryden's anticipation for her impending nuptials is evident in a series of fashion illustrations she made for the November 15, 1922 issue of *Vogue* depicting designer

¹²⁶ Although, by the end of the decade Dryden grew tired of these outdated furnishings. She explained to a journalist, "The new furniture is useful, practical and it expresses our time... If I could afford to, I'd throw out all this and start over myself with only the modern. McMullen, "Making a Career of Art: Helen Dryden, Illustrator and Designer, Tells Her Own Story." Corn, *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915-1935*.

¹²⁷ Grace Kingsley, "Flashes: Film Actor to Marry. John Davidson Will Wed Artist, Is Report.," *Los Angeles Times*, March 2, 1922.

veils [Fig. 43]. The spread features eight different veils with designs by Maria Guy, Suzy, and Lanvin.¹²⁸ Among the illustrations, one stands out from the rest. Seven of the illustrations feature women in front of a plain backdrop wearing dark veils with their eyes largely hidden, but the remaining illustration depicts a woman crowned with a bright and shining veil of silver cloth draped over a matching hat [Fig 44]. Instead of a plain background, rays of light appear to shine out from behind the figure, reminiscent of Catholic images of saints and the Virgin Mary. Additionally, unlike the other fashion illustrations, this figure confronts the viewer with her gaze. Even more striking is the resemblance of this illustration to a portrait of Helen Dryden painted by the artist Orland Campbell that same year [Fig. 45].

The portrait of Dryden is reminiscent of Renaissance artist portraits, like those of Albrecht Durer, that aim to convey both the artist's profession and wealth [Fig. 46]. Ever fashionable, Dryden wears her slicked down finger curls close to the head, as was the style of the day. She confronts the viewer with her captivating blue eyes and cool expression. She is wearing a black velvet dress, just visible through the opening in the front of the extravagant seal fur cape draped over her shoulders. The contrast of the dark clothing and Dryden's milky complexion highlight the artist's face and the long, gentle curve of her neck. Around her neck is an ornate gold beaded necklace studded with pearls and bearing a large emerald pendant. At the bottom of the painting Dryden's bare right hand emerges from her furs. This is a common gesture used in artist portraits, as an artist's hands are instrumental in the creation of their work. Thus, the

¹²⁸ "The Historic Seven Veils Are Rivalled by Eight Modern Ones," *Vogue*, 1922.

prominent placement of a painter's (or in this case an illustrator's) right hand in the portrait serves to indicate their profession.¹²⁹

Comparatively, the figure in Dryden's fashion illustration of the Lanvin veil also wears a dark garment beneath heavy furs and a long beaded necklace. The pose of the figure is slightly altered so that the bottom of the necklace is not visible, so it is uncertain if the necklace worn by Dryden's illustrated figure had a similar jeweled pendant. Instead, the jewel in this image is present on the figure's prominently visible left hand. While Dryden's portrait revealed her right hand to indicate her identity as an artist, the Lanvin illustration features the woman's left hand boasting a large gem on her ring finger. Conventionally this signifies the figure's engagement or marriage rather than any professional identity. Aside from these subtle differences the images to mirror one another, suggesting that the Lanvin illustration is a self-portrait of Dryden. Each image reflects conflicting parts of Dryden's identity, her desire to be recognized for her artistic achievements and her longingness for companionship and to fulfill her society obligations.

The opportunity for Dryden to relocate to California to be with her betrothed came in the form of a commission to design costumes alongside her French contemporary Georges Barbier for Paramount Pictures' *The Spanish Cavalier* starring Rudolf Valentino and Pola Negri.¹³⁰ Barbier was a well-established designer in France,

¹²⁹ "Miss Helen Dryden, Painted by Orland Campbell," *Arts & Decoration* 17–18 (1922): 16.

¹³⁰ There were multiple factors that complicated the filming of this movie. Valentino engaged in a one-man strike against the production company before filming could begin. The movie was originally supposed to be called *Don Cesar de Bazan*, but the name was changed to *The Spanish Cavalier* and then

known for his costumes for the Russian Ballet and the Folies Bergere. Working as a costume designer for motion pictures would allow Dryden to continue the work she so desperately loved, and moving to Hollywood would allow her to be with the man she supposedly loved as well. However, Dryden never relocated to California. She never married Davidson, nor did she complete her assignment to design costumes for *The Spanish Cavalier*, which instead helped launch the career of renowned Hollywood fashion designer Howard Greer. Rather, with the engagement apparently broken off, Dryden remained in New York, but having already given up her position at *Vogue* she was now unemployed. Following this misstep Dryden spent two years networking, freelancing, and teaching costume design at the Grand Central Art School in order to rebuild her prominent position as a commercial artist.¹³¹

By 1926 Dryden's career was on the upswing. No longer an employee of Condé Nast Publications, she started receiving offers to design for rival ladies' magazines, creating covers for *Harper's Bazaar* and *Charm*.¹³² Then in 1926 Dryden received an

changed again to *The Spanish Dancer*. Eventually Valentino dropped out of the production and the film's leading role was filled by Antonio Moreno. Neither Dryden nor Barbier designed for the production. However, Barbier would go on to design for Valentino's 1924 film *Monsieur Beaucaire*. "Big Story for Pola Negri," *Ogdensburg Republican Journal*, March 10, 1923; Richard Koszarski, *Hollywood on the Hudson: Film and Television in New York, from Griffith to Samoff*, Rutgers University Press, 2008, 43.

¹³¹ In interviews from the mid-1920s Dryden claims that she left *Vogue* to pursue decorative murals and panel painting, but there is little documentation regarding her production in this area. While she does engage in more traditional fine art practices during these years it appears to be something she did to occupy her time until securing new clients for her commercial art and a suitable explanation for her unemployment. Dryden accepted a position teaching costume design at the newly opened Grand Central Art School in 1924. Notably, Dryden was the only woman faculty member at the school. "400 Enroll in 6 Weeks: Grand Central Art School Announces Instructors," *New York Times*, November 23, 1924. Dorr, "Decoration the Keynote of Stage Costuming: Helen Dryden's Work on the Creation of Beautiful Figures in the Theater," *Arts & Decoration*, March 1923, 25.; Read, "Helen Dryden - Who Put Chic into Fashion Drawings."

¹³² New York World's Fair 1939-1940 records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

exclusive contract from *The Delineator* to design covers for every issue from October of that year through March 1930 [Fig. 32-33]. During this same time frame she also designed illustrations for various advertising campaigns and submitted works to art poster competitions. Lux soap was her most significant advertising client during this period [Fig. 22]. She worked for the company continuously for two years creating advertising images and crafting a brand identity that appealed to the more affluent clientele that Dryden wooed as a *Vogue* illustrator.¹³³ She also designed a great deal of advertisements for Knox Hats, Strathmore Paper, and Aberfoyle Fabrics [Fig. 47-48].¹³⁴

By the late-1920s Dryden achieved a state of career success that afforded her the luxury of turning down work. She accepted projects from companies she felt were agreeable, respected her position as an expert, and allowed her to maintain a leisurely routine. She preferred to keep a schedule working intently from 10am until 3pm. Then she finished the afternoon with a walk, shopping, spending time with friends, and having tea.¹³⁵

¹³³ New York World's Fair 1939-1940 records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

¹³⁴ Dryden was truly an enterprising figure, juggling commissions from a multitude of clients at any given time while working on different types of projects. During this period she also designed the cover art for the novel, *The Green Hat*, and exhibited paper doll designs at toy exhibitions. "Irish March Edition," *The Pittsburgh Press*, February 22, 1925. "Other Exhibitions," *New York Times*, December 13, 1925. "Toys Made by the Hands of Artists," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 5, 1926.

¹³⁵ McMullen, "Making a Career of Art: Helen Dryden, Illustrator and Designer, Tells Her Own Story."

Chapter 2

Commercial Artist

Despite the whimsical character of the fashionable ladies Dryden created for the covers of *Vogue* her illustrations often served a practical purpose: as templates for the creation of actual garments. For example, Dryden not only illustrated couture fashions for the pages of *Vogue* but also created garments of her own design, some of which *Vogue* produced as paper patterns that were available via mail order and occasionally manufactured as ready-to-wear garments that were available at select retailers. However, the fanciful nature of Dryden's illustrations found a more enchanting outlet for their transformation into real-life garments through her work as a costume and textile designer. This phase of Dryden's career demonstrates how she gradually transitions from being an artist who creates two-dimensional representations of life, real and imagined, to a designer responsible for overseeing the fabrication of actual objects.

Fashion Design – From Concept to Reality

Dryden began designing fashions for *Vogue* as early as 1915. During her time with the magazine the pages often included a variety of garments and accessories extracted from Dryden's imagination. These included everyday dresses as well as wedding gowns, designs for fancy-dress parties, swimsuits, children's garments, capes, hats, and other accessories. Some, though not all, of these designs were transformed

into paper patterns and occasionally into ready-to-wear items. One of Dryden's earliest designs to be realized was a series of women's bathing suits featured in the June 15, 1915 issue of *Vogue* [Fig. 49]. The suits were available by mail order in pattern pieces cut to measure by consumer request at a cost of four dollars per garment. *Vogue* also released a limited addition of this series as ready-to-wear at a shop in New York. The suits were made available in store on the same day the issue featuring the designs was released.¹³⁶ However, the production of *Vogue* fashion designs as ready-to-wear garments was not a typical occurrence, as *Vogue* and the majority of other ladies' magazines were significantly invested in the production and sale of paper patterns.

The commercial paper pattern industry dates back to the mid-nineteenth century. Before the proliferation of ready-to-wear clothing in the twentieth century most women made their own clothing and paper patterns were important tools in aiding women with the fabrication of specific styles. Significantly, the printing techniques that facilitated the growth of the magazine industry also made it cheaper and easier to produce paper patterns for the garment industry. The creation of a paper pattern involved several steps. First an artist sketched a design for the garment, which would then be made into a cloth model by a dressmaker. The model was tested to ensure proper fit and then taken apart to make a master pattern. The master pattern was traced on to the top sheet of a stack of tissue and the patterns were then cut out by hand using a specialized knife.¹³⁷ This process was streamlined by improvements in

¹³⁶ *Vogue*, June 15, 1915: 30.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, 51.

printing technologies that also helped to spur the proliferation of ladies' magazines at the turn-of-the-century, as these periodicals became the primary means of marketing patterns.

Many ladies' magazines depended on the sale of paper patterns as a primary source of revenue. The major pattern companies of the era included *Le Bon Ton*, Butterick, Elite, *Harper's Bazaar*, *McCalls*, May Manton, New Idea, Pictorial Review, Royal (Le Costume Royal), Standard Designer, Universal, and *Vogue*.¹³⁸ *Vogue* published its first advertisement for a paper pattern in 1899 and continued to publish one new pattern each week until 1909, when Condé Nast's acquired the publication and began work to rapidly increase the number of patterns *Vogue* produced. Before purchasing *Vogue* Nast became familiar with the paper pattern industry while working for the Home Pattern Company where he was responsible for generating advertising revenue for the manufacture and sale of patterns produced by *Ladies' Home Journal*. This experience aided Nast in his efforts to quadruple the production of paper patterns at *Vogue*, creating more than 200 per year by 1911. This figure remained significantly lower than competitors like *Butterick* and *McCalls*, which produced three-to-four times more patterns annually than *Vogue*. However, the patterns marketed by *Vogue* were also comparatively expensive.¹³⁹ This reflected Nast's particular vision of *Vogue's* brand identity and the magazine's role in the paper pattern industry – to provide couturier

¹³⁸ Joy Spanabel Emery, *A History of the Paper Pattern Industry: The Home Dressmaking Fashion Revolution* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 73.

¹³⁹ Paper patterns for garments designed by Dryden featured in the March 1, 1917 issue of *Vogue* were offered at the cost of 50 cents each, making a two-piece shirtwaist and skirt outfit pattern cost a consumer \$1, or approximately \$20 in 2018 figures, adjusted for inflation.

style at an affordable price.¹⁴⁰ Dryden was the perfect companion to carry out this mission. She had previous experience illustrating Paris fashions for Anne Rittenhouse, and as a daughter of an old society family from Baltimore, she also exemplified the market Nast wished to reach.

Dryden's role as a *Vogue* illustrator was multifaceted. She acted as a fashion illustrator, fashion designer, and cover artist, with each of these modes of artistic production requiring a slightly different skillset. However, each art form served the purpose of solidifying the magazine's brand and marketing the magazine to consumers. Dryden's popular illustrations were a marketing device assisting in the important work of actually selling issues of *Vogue*. Dryden's ability to successfully meet the variety of *Vogue's* illustrative needs made her an indispensable asset to the publication in the early years of Nast's magazine empire. Her work illustrating and designing fashions for *Vogue* also demonstrates her ability to collaborate, a skill which she also honed through years of creating illustrated advertisements for a range of companies. Dryden's familiarity working and collaborating with businesses would become a significant aspect of her artistic identity as she continued further down the path towards a career in applied design.

Dryden's collaboration with commercial partners is evident in the fashion designs she created for the purpose of marketing textiles patterns available through a sponsor [Fig. 50]. These illustrations feature women wearing everyday dress designs imagined by Dryden that highlight specific fabric patterns available at sponsoring New

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 67-76.

York department stores, such as Wanamaker's and McCutcheon'. However, these fashion plates are simply cleverly disguised advertisements. Dryden commonly took advertising commissions, but these illustrations are unique in the way they are inserted into the editorial material of the magazine, demonstrating a collaborative effort on behalf of the store and the magazine, as well as the artist. Dryden's playful and stylish illustrations bring life and possibility into the monotonous bolts of fabric lining the aisles inside the department stores. Dryden's illustrated designs strive to achieve the advertising goal of the stores by piquing the customer's interest so that they seek out the fabrics used in Dryden's designs. Regardless if the customer actually carries through with attempting to recreate Dryden's design, her skills as a fashion illustrator and designer, as well as her own popularity at the time, helped to draw attention to her advertising clients. Dryden's ability to work with various businesses and to meet their needs as a professional artist unencumbered by notions of the legitimacy of commercial art as a respectable and worthwhile means of artistic production, and confident in the value of her work, made her an excellent candidate to help lead the American foray into the realm of industrial design. Through her career she established business partnerships and contracts that would eventually allow her to bring the products of her imagination off of the paper onto which they were born and into reality.

All the World's a Stage - Costume Design and Women's Fashion

Not long after Dryden began working for *Vogue* she became involved in designing theatrical costumes and scenery for stage performances. Upon seeing her

illustrations in the magazine, the successful producer Charles Dillingham contacted Dryden in 1914 to gauge her interest in creating sketches for costumes. Dryden jumped at the opportunity and her first costume designs debuted in the musical comedy “Watch Your Step” later that year [Fig. 35].¹⁴¹ “Watch Your Step” was a significant production for Dryden’s entry into the world of costume design. The play premiered at the upscale New Amsterdam Theatre on Broadway and starred renowned performers Vernon and Irene Castle, with musical numbers by Irving Berlin. The show’s immense popularity led to a cross-country tour with performances continuing for a number of years following its 1914 release in New York. Although this was Dryden’s first experience designing for the stage she was responsible for many of the costumes [Fig. 51-52]. She fashioned garments for the chorus as well as some leading cast members. Dryden expressed the pleasure she took in designing for the chorus as she was able to create those costumes without worrying about the preferences of the actors. In contrast, Dryden explained that she had to compromise her designs for the leading actors, to an extent, in order to satisfy their wishes.¹⁴² Although, Dryden did not design the costumes for Irene Castle, the leading lady of “Watch Your Step,” who always insisted on wearing garments fashioned for her by the British designer Lucille.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Dryden designed all of the costumes for “Watch Your Step” except for those worn by the leading lady, Irene Castle, who insisted upon wearing gowns designed by Lucille (aka Lady Duff Gordon), as was typical of the entertainer. Dryden also designed the illustrations used on the playbills and posters advertising the production. Charles Henry Dorr, “Decoration the Keynote of Stage Costuming: Helen Dryden’s Work on the Creation of Beautiful Figures in the Theater,” *Arts & Decoration*, 1923, 24–25; Charles Dillingham Papers, Humanities-Manuscripts and Archives, Manuscript Division, New York Public Library.

¹⁴² “Helen Dryden: Witch of Color.”

¹⁴³ Lucille was the professional name of the British fashion designer Lady Duff Gordon.

After Dryden's initial success with "Watch Your Step" she continued to work in the field of costume and set design through the early 1920s. She was frequently contracted to work on period pieces, especially productions set in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France, a period from which the artist drew a tremendous amount of inspiration. Dryden created opulent costumes for "Clair de Lune," starring Violet Kemble Cooper and Ethel Barrymore [Fig. 53-55]. Based on a Victor Hugo novel, the play appealed to Dryden's affection for French culture and literature that she had nurtured since she was a school girl in Philadelphia. As a testament to Dryden's success as a costume designer, her costumes were highly acclaimed, despite the mixed reviews of the play itself.¹⁴⁴ Dryden's sketches for the costumes were also exhibited at the Museum of French Art in New York City in May of 1921 alongside models of the stage settings designed by John Barrymore.¹⁴⁵

The extravagant garments Dryden created for the production were clearly inspired by French court dresses from the Rococo era, but the fabrics from which Dryden fashioned the costumes revealed an oriental influence. This included embroidered designs modeled after Chinese examples.¹⁴⁶ Orientale inspired designs are a hallmark of the Art Deco period and were common among stage costumes of the era. Additionally, Dryden's adaptation of historical fashion was not dissimilar from the artist's approach towards designing magazine covers, which often featured a beautiful woman dressed in an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century inspired gown [Fig. 56]. In fact,

¹⁴⁴ In addition to starring in the production, Ethel Barrymore was also the writer. "Costumes of 'Clair de Lune' from Looms of the Milky Way," *New York Tribune*, April 24, 1921.

¹⁴⁵ "Theatrical Notes," *New York Times*, May 12, 1921.

¹⁴⁶ "Costumes of 'Clair de Lune' from Looms of the Milky Way," *New York Tribune*, April 24, 1921.

Dryden's costume design sketches look quite similar to the illustrations she created for *Vogue*. Rather than portray the figure and garment in a literal way that stressed the accuracy of the depiction she chose to render the design simplistically in an evocative way that suggests emotion and attitude. By the time Dryden created her designs for "Clair de Lune," she had already made a name for herself as a designer of fantastic and imaginative costumes for the stage. Her gowns succeeded in transforming the actors into their characters and transporting the audience into another time, another world, even if the play itself was less well received. Dryden did not physically produce these costumes herself, but she did directly oversee their creation by professional costume fabricators to ensure the realization of her designs.¹⁴⁷

Dryden's transition from illustrator to costume and set designer was not an exceptional development in the early twentieth century. During the interwar period artists commonly put their talents to work in various commercial industries; designing costumes and sets, as well as department store window displays, advertisements, and industrial products. Celebrated designers that followed this career path include Dryden's French counterparts, Georges Barbier and Paul Iribe, both of whom illustrated for *Vogue* and created designs for the stage and silver screen. Additionally, Dryden's younger colleague, Gordon Conway, (who also got her start as a *Vogue* cover artist) began designing costumes and sets for New York cabarets in 1916. The following year, Conway's successful designs brought her commissions from Broadway, and overtime

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

she focused less and less on the creation of illustrations and graphic art. Eventually costume design became the focus of Conway's career.¹⁴⁸

Although costume design and commercial illustration may seem like disparate fields they both played a significant role in the development of women's fashion. In fact, ladies' magazines and the theater, together with the department store, represented the greatest influences on American fashion in the early 20th century. Middle class women depended upon both fashion magazines and the theater for information regarding the latest trends and styles developed by popular European courtiers.¹⁴⁹ These women sought to emulate the fantastic painted ladies found in the pages of publications like *Vogue*, as well as the glamorous actresses that performed on stage. Given the significance of both fashion illustration and theatrical costumes to the development of contemporary American fashion it makes sense that there would be professional crossover in these two fields. In the early 1900s many ladies' magazines added a regular theater section featuring images of leading ladies in their stage costumes, recognizing the influence these figures held over the public.¹⁵⁰ These women read magazines and attended the theater as part of a didactic exercise to learn how to dress and behave as someone of an upper class background. Publishing illustrations of stage costumes followed the tradition of reproducing illustrations of gowns exhibited at fashion shows put on by famous courtiers like Lucille and Paul Poiret. In fact, illustrating designer

¹⁴⁸ Raye Virginia Allen, *Gordon Conway: Fashioning a New Woman* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 12.

¹⁴⁹ These high fashion designers also took inspiration from avant-garde costumes created for the theater, most notably Leon Bakst's designs for the Russian Ballet.

¹⁵⁰ Marlis Schweitzer, *When Broadway Was the Runway: Theater, Fashion, and American Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 8.

gowns for a local newspaper is how Dryden first began her career as a commercial artist. She continued to put this skill to work during her time at *Vogue*, even illustrating stage costumes by other designers for *Vogue's* theater section [Fig. 57].¹⁵¹

The familiarity of illustrators with advertising problems and strategies for appealing to consumers helped equip them to design interesting costumes. The early twentieth century witnessed the recognition of women as an important consumer market. This led to a variety of strategic decisions by industries seeking to appeal to women, as newly released marketing studies revealed that women were responsible for the majority of household purchasing decisions. This revelation brought a wealth of ad revenue to women's fashion magazines with the hope of enticing consumers. It also brought Helen Dryden a great deal of clients seeking to utilize her popular modern aesthetic to appeal to American women. Advertising work was not Dryden's preferred means of employment, but she undertook contracts from numerous industries throughout her career, selling a variety of products, including soap, paper, fabric, hats, and even radiators [Fig. 58].

Concurrent with the recognition of women as an important untapped market, larger cultural shifts opened up new public spaces for women that they had previously been unable to navigate on their own. The theater, in particular, found itself transformed by the new found freedom of women as they quickly began to account for the majority of the audience. In response, managers planned shows to please the

¹⁵¹ Dryden illustrated a lengthy article on theatrical costumes for *Vogue* that discussed the important role costumes play in the overall success of a production. Dryden provided 13 separate sketches to accompany the article. "Stage Clothes That Play Successful Roles," *Vogue*, November 1918.

growing demographic of female theatergoers. Critics of the era often lamented this change, blaming what they viewed as the unsophisticated tastes of women for driving down the artistic quality of the productions in favor of visual spectacles with sumptuous costumes. However, managers and producers recognized that the theater depended upon its female patrons for survival and utilized their knowledge of the significant appeal of well-designed costumes to attract audiences.¹⁵² Dryden's success as an illustrator for one of the country's premiere fashion magazines demonstrated that her aesthetic resonated with the public. Just as various companies had employed Dryden to create advertisements for their products, the theater also recognized her marketability. Contracting successful illustrators like Dryden to design for the theater increased the probability that the costumes would appeal to their target audience, as women who appreciated the two-dimensional work of these artists would surely enjoy viewing their creations translated into an actual garment.

The theater's potential to influence consumers, and middle class women in particular, led the New York garment industry to enter into a partnership with the theater to attempt to reshape women's consumption habits and promote the sale of ready-to-wear clothing.¹⁵³ Women were slower than men to adapt to the mass-produced fashions available at department stores. They preferred to continue working with a dressmaker or to make their own garments, which enabled them to express a

¹⁵² Surveys from the time estimated that women accounted for 66% to 85% of the theatrical audience, depending on the show and the time of the performance. Schweitzer, *When Broadway Was the Runway: Theater, Fashion, and American Culture*, 37-41, 57.

¹⁵³ The manufacture of clothing was an essential component of New York's economy. At the turn of the century the garment industry accounted for 1/3 of all manufacturing jobs. *Ibid*, 59.

greater sense of individuality with their clothing and ensured a higher quality product in comparison to many factory produced garments of the era. Ready-to-wear clothing also struggled to appeal to middle class women consumers because they viewed mass-manufactured garments as products for the working class and immigrants. However, these same women also desired to emulate the styles of the leading ladies they saw on Broadway; a fact that manufacturers and designers readily exploited by creating garments and accessories mimicking those worn by popular actresses and sometimes even naming the product after the stage performer.¹⁵⁴ Patterns for these articles were available in various ladies magazines, or they could be purchased at a department store.

The theater, fashion magazines, and the department store were inextricably linked at the turn of the century, each one in some way reliant upon the others for driving profits. Department stores frequently provided clothing to theaters to serve as costumes for plays that required contemporary dress, which saved the production from paying expensive tariffs on clothing imported from Europe. The garments also served as product placement advertising for the department store. At times brand names were even worked into the dialogue of the performance. In New York, the mutual dependence of department stores and the theater on female consumers led both industries to establish a commercial district with theaters and stores along a stretch of Broadway that became known as the Ladies' Mile. Designers of ready-to-wear fashions also attended Broadway shows that featured exclusive fashions by European and

¹⁵⁴ Marlis Schweitzer, *When Broadway Was the Runway: Theater, Fashion, and American Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 9.

American courtiers in hopes of deriving ideas for garments that could be made available to the masses.¹⁵⁵ In effect, the department store, like ladies' magazines, helped to reinforce the theater's position of influence over American women's fashion.

The significant influence of stage costumes on women's fashion at the turn-of-the-century is exemplified by Lucille's designs for Irene Castle in "Watch Your Step" [Fig. 59]. Following the production's 1914 premiere women from all classes of society began dressing like the Broadway star. The very wealthy could afford to commission Lucille to replicate the dress in their size. For the less affluent, ready-to-wear versions of Castle's gown were available through the retailer Woolf and Shulhof for \$22.50, and paper patterns of varying designs, each clearly inspired by the general appearance of Castle's gown, could be purchased through ladies' magazines, such as *Vogue*, *McCall's*, or *The Delineator*. The paper patterns provided women an affordable way to emulate their favorite actresses.¹⁵⁶

While Dryden's costumes for the chorus and other supporting figures did not receive as much popular attention, they were celebrated in reviews of the production. *Bruno's Weekly* described Dryden's designs as fascinating and reminiscent of "French fashion plates by Bakst or Brunelleschi," [sic] and "little masterpieces in harmony of colors and grace of lines."¹⁵⁷ This preliminary success continued to bring her work as a

¹⁵⁵ Although, the proximity of the stores to the theater district in New York City became less important following the construction of the subway in 1904, which allowed for the safe and rapid transport of women and girls across the city. By the 1920s most department stores had relocated to the new shopping district along 5th avenue. Ibid, 51-71.

¹⁵⁶ Marlis Schweitzer, *When Broadway Was the Runway: Theater, Fashion, and American Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 167-168.

¹⁵⁷ "Helen Dryden: Witch of Color."

costume and set designer over the next decade.¹⁵⁸ The period nature of many of Dryden's designs meant that her costumes did not have the same impact on popular fashion as costumes for productions set in contemporary times. However, by the time Dryden had established a reputation as a costume designer, the influence of theater on the fashion world was also beginning to wane. Inexpensive and free fashion shows held at Vaudeville theaters and in department stores drew attention away from the theater proper as the most important site of experiencing the latest fashions. Additionally, the theater's impact on fashion became less significant as going to the movies became more popular and the sphere of Hollywood's influence took hold over the nation. Women now sought to emulate cinema stars rather than actresses on stage. Movies also allowed for the close up viewing of costumes in a way that was not possible in live stage performances.¹⁵⁹

Dryden contemplated a career as a Hollywood costume designer following her successful, although somewhat brief, career designing for Broadway. Movie studios began regularly retaining costume designers in the 1920s once producers and directors came to realize the significance of the costumes worn by actors in the burgeoning industry, just as the theater had done a couple of decades earlier. The tremendous growth in the field of costume design in Hollywood at this time lured many Broadway

¹⁵⁸ Productions for which Dryden was responsible for set and/or costume design include "Watch Your Step," "Clair de Lune," "The Three Musketeers," "Sophie," "The Tempest," "Jack o' Lantern," and "Lackeys of the Moon."

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 221-222.

designers to the west coast.¹⁶⁰ Dryden was not entirely unfamiliar with the film industry. In 1917 she served on a panel of artists hired to judge the auditions of amateur actresses seeking to play the role of a vampire in an upcoming film.¹⁶¹ She was also reportedly offered work as a costume designer for major Hollywood productions in the 1920s and early 1930s, but she never took up any of these projects.

While many of Dryden's contemporaries, like Gordon Conway, continued to forge successful careers as costume and set designers, Dryden's path diverged in the 1920s, and she turned towards more industrial pursuits. This was also not entirely unusual. The well-known American industrial designer Norman Bel Geddes began his career illustrating advertisements and later worked in stage design before ultimately turning to industrial design, and he is often credited as a founder in that field.¹⁶² During this transitional time in Dryden's career the artist did a great deal of freelance work and experimented with design in a way that bridged her early career as a fashion illustrator and costume designer with her later success in the field of industrial design. For example, in 1925 Dryden filed a patent for a mechanical device that she invented that could rapidly change the scenery for theatrical productions, demonstrating the artist's increased interest in the way objects are fabricated [Fig. 60]. Over the next decade Dryden continued to explore the industrial applications of her skills as a designer while

¹⁶⁰ Pat Kirkham, ed., *Women Designers in the USA: Diversity and Difference, 1900-2000* (New Haven: Yale University Press, n.d.), 247.

¹⁶¹ The artists judging the auditions included some of the most celebrated American magazine illustrators of the era; Harrison Fisher, Charles Dana Gibson, and F.X. Leyendecker. "Written on the Screen," *New York Times*, March 18, 1917.

¹⁶² Jeffrey Meikle, *Twentieth Century Limited: Industrial Design in American, 1925-1939* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979), 48.

recouping her career and the notoriety she enjoyed before leaving *Vogue*. By 1926 she had made tremendous strides in reestablishing her place in the commercial art world, securing commissions to create advertisements for Lux Soap and Knox Hats, cover designs for the popular woman's magazine *The Delineator*, and textile designs for Stehli Silk's *Americana Prints* series.

Modern American Textiles: The *Americana Prints*

The *Americana Prints* were a series of silk textiles first released in the autumn of 1925 with designs by a number of well-known American artists [Fig. 61].¹⁶³ The initial success of the *Americana Prints* led to the release of additional fashion prints in 1926 and 1927, creating a three part series featuring designs by fifteen different artists. Each artist contributed multiple designs, some available in an assortment of colorways, resulting in hundreds of different print and color combinations printed on silk crepe or chiffon. Consumers could purchase these silks by the yard and make garments themselves, or they could bring them to a dressmaker. Additionally, a limited selection of ready-to-wear designs was also available at the department store Lord & Taylor.

Dryden created at least four different designs for Stehli Silks. The first, *Accessories*, appeared in the second *Americana Prints* series released in 1926 [Fig. 62]. This print featured stylized depictions of everyday items drawn from modern culture,

¹⁶³ In addition to Dryden, the artists who created designs for the *Americana Prints* series were Ralph Barton, René Clark, Charles B. Falls, Neysa McMein, Clayton Knight, Katharine Sturges, Kneeland (Ruzzie) Green, John Held, Jr., Edward A. Wilson, Edward Steichen, F.V. Carpenter, Antonio Petrucelli, Dwight Taylor, and Helen Wills. Lola S McKnight, "The *Americana Prints*: A Collection of Artist-Designed Textiles" (Fashion Institute of Technology, 1993), 6-7.

including an automobile, telephone, umbrella, clock, top hat, fan, drum, and pitcher, as well as flowers and fruit. The print forms a grid with each object contained in its own circle. *Accessories* was frequently reproduced in advertisements for Stehli Silks and articles discussing the *Americana Prints*. The company produced the print in two colorways; in shades of blue and white, as well as a patriotic red, white, and blue. These factors suggest that the print was quite popular and it has since become the most well-known of Dryden's textile designs.

The third collection of the *Americana Prints* series, released in 1927, featured Dryden's designs *Bowknots* and *Harvest* [Fig. 63-64]. In contrast with *Accessories*, *Bowknots* and *Harvest* took their inspiration from more traditional floral and botanical motifs and are more similar to French prints of the era.¹⁶⁴ Both of these prints were only available in a single colorway, with *Bowknots* printed in navy and white, and *Harvest* printed in dark grey, red, orange, pink, tan, and white. The sheer chiffon fabric that *Harvest* is printed on gives the vibrant hues of fabric a soft pastel quality and a more traditionally feminine appearance.

The final *Americana Prints* collection, released in 1928, featured a Dryden designed textile entitled *Sports Themes* [Fig. 65].¹⁶⁵ This design for Stehli Silks, like *Accessories*, also featured everyday objects from modern life, but in this case each object depicted was related to a different sport. The objects include fishing hooks, skates, golf clubs, oars, automobiles, polo mallets, and a variety of balls of different

¹⁶⁴ *Bowknots* is quite similar in design to *Soirie* by the Frenchman André Mare. Comparison courtesy of Amelia Peck.

¹⁶⁵ *Sports Themes* is also sometimes referred to as *Playthings*.

shapes and sizes. However, unlike the gridded design of *Accessories* that neatly organizes the objects into easily readable units, the objects in *Sports Themes* flood together in a wild composition of intersecting and overlapping planes, each object bleeding into the next.¹⁶⁶ This cacophonous design illustrated American modernity in both subject and arrangement, adhering to the overall aim of the *Americana Prints* series as envisioned by the Art Director of Stehli Silks, Kneeland Green.¹⁶⁷

The print designs from the collection as a whole range from floral, to geometric, to figurative, but many took objects and themes associated with modern American life as their inspiration. Ralph Barton created prints featuring entertainment themes, such as *Cinema Stars* and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* [Fig. 66]. Other artists also looked to popular culture for design ideas, such as John Held's *Rhapsody* inspired by the composer George Gershwin's 1924 song "Rhapsody in Blue" [Fig. 67]. Edward Steichen photographed everyday objects, such as tacks, matches, cigarettes, and mothballs to create semi-abstract compositions clearly influenced by modernist principles [Fig. 68]. Other artists were inspired by the modern landscape to design prints featuring

¹⁶⁶ There are no known surviving samples of *Sports Themes* and the available colorways of the print are unknown.

¹⁶⁷ Stehli Silks also contracted Dryden to create illustrations for the company's advertising campaign. By the mid-1920s, Dryden had established an impressive clientele of luxury goods manufacturers who sought out Dryden's Art Deco aesthetic for its close association with modern French illustration, which they hoped would relate their products to the sense of refinement, sophistication, and high culture associated with Paris at the time. Dryden's advertising illustrations for Stehli Silks adhere to this model. The designs are highly stylized, in favor of conveying an idea rather than the actual appearance of the fabrics manufactured by the company. In fact, throughout the mid-1920s Dryden had been contracted to craft the brand image of Lux Soap through an entire campaign centered on her Art Deco illustrations. However, Lux decided to abandon Dryden's aesthetic in 1927 because it was considered too "highbrow" for the company's regular clientele. The company switched to a photographic advertising campaign instead. Patricia Johnston, *Real Fantasies: Edward Steichen's Advertising Photography* (University of California Press, 2000), 68-69.

skyscrapers, such as in Clayton Knight's *Manhattan*, and rollercoasters, such as those depicted in *Thrills* by Dwight Taylor [Fig. 69-70]. The modern character of the *Americana Prints*, combined with their patently American subject matter, resulted in a series of textiles that fulfilled the objective of many artists and designers of the era, to create a distinctly American art.

The first series of the *Americana Prints* collection was first produced only a few short months after the opening of the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Art Décoratifs et Industriels in Paris, which Kneeland Green attended at the end of June as one of twelve delegates appointed to represent the Silk Association of America.¹⁶⁸ In the field of design, scholars often point to the 1925 Paris Exposition as the watershed moment that instigated a revolution in American design. While it is possible that the development of the *Americana Prints* series was a direct result of the exposition's impact on modern conceptions of art and design, the short timeline between Green's visit and the production of the first series of the collection suggests that other factors also played an influential role. Stehli's landmark venture was not simply inspired by the 1925 Paris Exposition. It was the slow culmination of economic influences and concerted efforts to stimulate the American textile industry through original American designs. There was not a singular impetus that inspired the creation of American modern textiles, but a host of significant developments in the production of American textiles in the 1910s and 1920s that paved the way for the success of the *Americana Prints* series. While the Paris exposition played some role in the creation of the *Americana Prints*, it

¹⁶⁸ "Delegates to the Paris Art Exhibition," *The American Silk Journal* 44 (1925): 40.

was more a concurrent development than an instigative one. Additionally, the success of the series influenced the direction of Helen Dryden's career, as Stehli Silks represents the first corporate client for which she produced a design meant to be fabricated into a utilitarian, commercial object.

The scale of the *Americana Prints* collection and its incorporation of designs by various artists made it unlike anything ever produced by American or European silk manufacturers, representing a dramatic shift in the American textile industry. Since the development of the American silk industry in the mid-nineteenth century American silk manufacturers had fought to compete with established European producers. In the 1920s American manufacturers continued to struggle with competition from the French market despite the hardships of World War I and tariff increases. Although tariffs helped to grow and protect the American silk manufacturing industry this led primarily to the success of low-cost staple fabrics rather than printed styles aimed at the luxury market. Consumers still turned to Europe for the importation of luxury fashion textiles despite the high tariffs, as they perceived American textile designs as unoriginal and derivative. In response, American silk manufacturers began devising marketing and design campaigns in the early 1910s to become competitive in the luxury market.¹⁶⁹

One of the most influential American silk manufacturers at this time was H.R. Mallinson & Company. The firm was established at the turn of the century and soon became one of the most sought after textile brands among U.S. consumers. The success

¹⁶⁹ Jacqueline Field, Marjorie Senechal, and Madelyn Shaw, *American Silk, 1830-1930: Entrepreneurs and Artifacts* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2007), xix-xxiv.

of the Mallinson brand stemmed from the innovative patented fabrics the firm produced and its ability to compete with European luxury silk producers by offering prints that imitated popular French fashions, but for a fraction of the cost. Mallinson intensified its efforts to compete with Europe in 1914 by introducing the *Mexixe* collection, a line of printed silks with designs inspired by Native American, Mexican, and Aztec motifs [Fig. 71]. The use of indigenous cultures as artistic inspiration derived from European Modernist aesthetics, but the *Mexixe* collection was uniquely American. The *Mexixe* prints differed significantly from European designs inspired by other indigenous cultures in that Mallinson's motivation to create the series stemmed from the company's strategy to capitalize on themes made popular by current events. For instance, in the year that Mallinson introduced the *Mexixe* prints the Mexican Revolution and Pancho Villa appeared repeatedly in the American news cycle. Mallinson continued to develop prints related to contemporary events, releasing the *La Victoire* line in 1919, inspired by the Allied victory in World War I, and the *Karnavar* line in 1923, which was created following the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb.¹⁷⁰ The focus on contemporary events by Mallinson and other corporations related to the fashion industry would impact the designs of the *Americana Prints* that also chose to portray aspects of contemporary life.

¹⁷⁰ Madelyn Shaw, "American Silk from a Marketing Magician: H.R. Mallinson & Co.," *Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings*, 2002, n.p. The name "Karnavar" is a synthesis of Karnak and Carnavon. Lord Carnavon was one of the archeologists on the site alongside Howard Carter. The effects of Egyptomania on the fashion world were brief, but far reaching, with a number of textile firms and dress manufacturers offering Egyptian inspired designs in the year following the discovery.

However, unlike Stehli Silks Company's designer driven campaign for the *Americana Prints*, Mallinson relied on celebrity endorsements, brand reputation, and the desirability of its patented fabric technologies to ensure consumer demand. The company rarely credited a fabric design to a particular artist. Conversely, a tremendous amount of attention was given to the *Americana Prints* as being the work of artists. The original series was first introduced at the Art Center in New York, where the textiles were hung alongside watercolors by each artist demonstrating a style of dress suitable for the printed fabric [Fig. 72].¹⁷¹ In 1927 the textiles were similarly displayed in an exhibition held by R.H. Macy and Company of New York that featured a range of artist designed objects [Fig. 73].¹⁷²

Industrial art exhibitions became common place in the late 1920s. American manufacturers began to realize the marketing potential of associating their brand with the name of a nationally recognized artist or designer. Additionally, artists themselves formed societies, such as the American Union of Decorative Artists and Craftsmen (AUDAC) and the National Alliance of Art and Industry (NAAI), to promote their designs for useful and decorative objects outside the traditional confines of fine art. It was in this moment that industrial design became formally established as a profession and, unsurprisingly, some of the artists who designed for the *Americana Prints* series would eventually come to identify as industrial designers.

¹⁷¹ Lola S McKnight, "The Americana Prints: A Collection of Artist-Designed Textiles" (Fashion Institute of Technology, 1993), 7-8.

¹⁷² "Art Works for a Living," *The Independent*, July 9, 1927.

The quest to establish a genuinely American design aesthetic was also facilitated by the outbreak of World War I. Before the war American textile manufacturers were heavily dependent upon European designers and prototypes in the planning and fabrication of their fashion lines. The war constrained relations between the United States and Europe, limiting the availability of these resources to American manufacturers, but many proponents of American industrial arts recognized this as an opportunity for American industry to claim its independence from Europe by creating products made and designed in the United States. This led to the creation of the “Designed in America” campaign in 1916, led by textile scholar and *Women’s Wear* editor Morris De Camp Crawford.

The “Designed in America” campaign aimed to bolster the industrial arts by providing training for artists and manufacturers through a series of lectures, exhibitions, and design contests. A significant portion of the program involved Crawford working with museum curators to arrange access for artists to collections of ethnographic art across New York City. He envisioned an American design aesthetic rooted in indigenous American art and had a special affinity for Andean textiles, which were the focus of his scholarly research. Lasting until 1922, the “Designed in America” campaign involved hundreds of artists and silk manufacturers, including H.R. Mallinson & Co. as well as other prominent companies. The significant focus of the campaign on ethnographic arts led to the creation of some intriguing textile designs, but they remained based on primitivizing European modernist traditions, like Mallinson’s *Mexixe* collection. However, Crawford significantly impacted the success of emerging industrial designers

through his efforts to convince the textile industry to support American artists and to respect their role in the production process.

One way in which Crawford sought to bring designers recognition was through the creation of a textile design competition sponsored by *Women's Wear* [Fig. 74]. Five contests took place between 1916 and 1920, and more than 1,000 artists submitted their designs in hopes of having their work seen by a representative from the textile industry or winning cash prizes. Participants in these contests included Ruth Reeves, Marguerite Zorach, Ilonka Karasz and many others who are all now recognized as important textile designers in the early 20th century. In the 1920s, the artists associated with the campaign began moving in different directions, but the campaign itself would have a lasting influence through its support of a genuinely American aesthetic and efforts to bring artistic recognition to the work of textile designers.¹⁷³

While American textile manufacturers, like H.R. Mallison & Co. rarely gave credit to designers, the practice of companies collaborating with artists was well established in Europe. Manufacturers of luxury silk textiles in France marketed their products as the designs of well-known artists, such as Sonia Delaunay and Raoul Dufy. These designs were popular with the American public, but the steep tariffs on imported silks made them prohibitively expensive. However, in the 1920s American silk manufacturers began

¹⁷³ Crawford's work for the Designed in America campaign also led to the formation of a design laboratory that would become the center of the collection of the Fashion Institute of Technology. It has also been suggested that the campaign, begun in 1916, influenced the development of the industrial art exhibitions held at the Museum of Modern Art from 1917 to 1929. Lauren D. Whitley, "Morris De Camp Crawford and the 'Designed in America' Campaign, 1916-1922," *Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings*, 1998, 410-414.

to realize the potential of artist designed textiles and a handful of companies commissioned French artists to design patterns that could be manufactured in the United States. This enabled them to provide consumers with French-inspired modern textiles designed by prominent artists for half the cost of the European imports.¹⁷⁴ One of the most significant figures in efforts to introduce designs by European artists into the American market was Arthur Selig, an American businessman with a long career in the textile industry. Selig arranged for Sonia Delaunay to design a line of textiles for C.K. Eagle and Company after viewing her textiles at the Paris Exhibition in the summer of 1925. The line was produced quickly and introduced by the end of the year. However, Selig's inspiration to work with European artists began before the Paris Exposition, with his business partnership with Leon Bakst.

Bakst is renowned for his costumes and set designs for the Russian ballet, but little is written about his commercial work as a textile designer. Selig met Bakst during the artist's first visit to the United States that lasted from November 1922 until April 1923. Throughout this period Bakst worked on an interior design commission for his American patrons, Alice and John Garrett, at the Evergreen House in Baltimore, Maryland and traveled across the country giving lectures on fashion and design.¹⁷⁵ There was also an exhibition of Bakst's paintings at the Knoedler Galleries in New York City during this time that Helen Dryden attended and illustrated for the society pages of *Vogue* [Fig. 75]. At one of these events Selig approached Bakst about the possibility of a

¹⁷⁴ McKnight, "The Americana Prints: A Collection of Artist-Designed Textiles," 11-14.

¹⁷⁵ Elena Bespalova, "Leon Bakst's Textile and Interior Design in America," *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 5, no. 1 (n.d.): 2-28. Yelena Terkel, "America in Leon Bakst's Life and Art," *Tretyakov Gallery Magazine* 31, no. 2 (2011).

partnership and commissioned him to create a series of simple drawings that could be adapted for mass produced printed textiles. In his initial request Selig suggested that Bakst create patterns based on Native American motifs, in keeping with the ideology surrounding authentic American source material expounded by the “Made in America” campaign led by Crawford. While Bakst did produce Native American inspired designs for the collection, he also created a series based on Russian folk traditions [Fig. 76-77]. This represents a similar attempt by the artist to explore the primitive roots of his Russian heritage. Bakst’s designs primarily feature stylized plant and animal motifs rendered in bold color combinations that are also characteristic of his costume design work. Bakst drew from a wide variety of primitive source work with other designs featuring African, Persian, and Indian inspired motifs [Fig. 78].¹⁷⁶

The actual production of the textiles was somewhat delayed, as the company Selig worked for at the time was against the venture. Thus, in the fall of 1923, Selig left the company and partnered with John Clingen who had recently opened a storefront in New York City selling novelty fabrics for the Robinson Silk Company, Inc, which also completed the actual manufacturing of the textiles. In a letter to Bakst, Selig wrote, “I’ve bought Bakst’s pictures, so I have to use them. I would loath to have your designs wasted and to keep the American public unaware of them.”¹⁷⁷ Clingen also had a long career in the textile industry and had recently resigned as the Vice President of H.R. Mallinson to work for Robinson Silks. Industry insiders considered Clingen an expert at

¹⁷⁶ K. Gibson, “Textile Designs by Leon Bakst,” *Design* 31 (1929): 109–13.

¹⁷⁷ Terkel, “America in Leon Bakst’s Life and Art.”

forecasting the popularity of novelty prints. An article from the *American Cloak and Suit Review* described him as ranking “among the foremost ‘silk psychologists’ of the country.”¹⁷⁸

The series produced through the collaborative efforts of Bakst, Selig, and Clingen appears to have been successful. In his letters Bakst wrote enthusiastically about the demand for his textile designs across the United States, telling his niece, “My textiles are in the greatest demand across America – all society ladies now sport them.”¹⁷⁹ *Vogue* published an article featuring Bakst’s designs alongside an accompanying illustration by Harriet Meserole that showed dresses created by Lord and Taylor featuring six of Bakst’s prints [Fig. 79].¹⁸⁰ The success of the prints also led to the production of a number of illegal Bakst imitators.¹⁸¹ However, this was partially countered through the repeated inclusion of the artist’s signature with every yard of fabric.¹⁸²

The production of this series of textiles by Bakst predates the *Americana Prints* by one year and was no doubt influential in Kneeland Green’s conception for the series. The textiles produced through the collaboration of Bakst, Selig, and the Robinson Silk Company demonstrated the demand for artist designed prints in the American market and the potential for American manufacturers to compete with European luxury silk manufacturers. Contracting Dryden as one of the designers for the *Americana Prints*

¹⁷⁸ “Rare Beauty and Diversity in Robinson’s Silks Offered by John Clingen,” *American Cloak and Suit Review*, 1922.

¹⁷⁹ Yelena Terkel, “Leon Bakst: ‘Dress up like a Flower!’,” *Tretyakov Gallery Magazine* 25, no. 4 (2009).

¹⁸⁰ William Packer, *Fashion Drawing in Vogue* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1983), 58.

¹⁸¹ Terkel, “Leon Bakst: ‘Dress up like a Flower!’”

¹⁸² Packer, *Fashion Drawing in Vogue*, 58.

series is indicative of Stehli Silks' efforts to attract customers who sought out imported silks because of a preference for modern designs associated with French style. The artists of the *Americana Prints* produced a range of designs capable of appealing to wide variety of tastes. Many of the prints are quite modern and daring in their design, but others, such as *Bowknots*, remain more traditional while still appealing to American tastes for all things French. Stehli silks decision to work with different artists on this project helped to ensure the series would produce a variety of patterns and styles to appeal to the diversity of American consumers. Stehli Silks was perhaps more apt than other American companies to adopt the European model of working closely with designers to develop an artist centric marketing campaign because Stehli Silks was a large corporation headquartered in Switzerland. The company first opened factories in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century to avoid the costly import tariffs on textiles. While the company had expanded during the more than two decades since first establishing a presence in the United States it remained and American branch of a larger European company.

Additionally, the involvement of Lord & Taylor in both projects is significant. While it appears the department store's role in the series of textiles designed by Bakst was minimal, and there are no known surviving records regarding the sale of Bakst's textiles or dresses fashioned from them at Lord & Taylor, the store's development of dresses featuring Bakst' prints, as seen in *Vogue*, represents a foray into the world of artist designed textiles. This helped pave the way for the department store's substantial

involvement with Stelhi Silks Co. and the sale of fabric from the *Americana Prints* series by the yard, as well as ready-to-wear dresses.

The *Americana Prints* succeeded through combined factors; the embrace of the artist's role as a designer, an understanding of the potential for the artist's name to increase the value of the product, and the art director's choice to focus the series on images associated with contemporary American life while still leaving room for more traditional imagery to ensure broad consumer interest. The *Americana Prints* appealed to the country's sense of nationalism as well as the desire for good modern design.

Dryden's involvement with Stehil Silks is significant to her career as the *Americana Prints* project represents the final step of her transition into industrial design. Dryden first took the commission from Stelhi while she was seeking out new contracts and ways to reclaim her position as an artist in New York following her false start at making a career in Hollywood. The opportunity to design textiles for Stehli Silks Company could not have occurred at a more perfect time. She had not undertaken this sort of work before, but her previous experience as a commercial artist, working with corporations and collaborating on designs for advertisements prepared her for the particular demands of designing textiles. She understood how to create a good design that adhered to the restrictions of the machinery responsible for the mass production of fabric so that it could be adequately reproduced, much in the same way she had produced illustrations capable of mass reproduction. Knowing how to collaborate with a company, to recognize the limitations of the machinery involved in fabrication, and then

to create a working design that satisfies those parameters is a particular skill, and one at which Dryden was particularly adept. Likely she also found it encouraging that Bakst, who Dryden cited as one of her biggest influences, had also recently branched out from costume design to designing textiles.¹⁸³ However, Dryden's success as a designer was ultimately a byproduct of her business savvy and industry connections. Over the years, the contacts Dryden made through *Vogue*, Stehli Silks, and other commercial employers continually led her to new ventures.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ "Helen Dryden: Witch of Color."

¹⁸⁴ In 1928 she created modern designs for pianos produced by Hardman, Peck & Co, a project that also involved the services of Edward Steichen and Kneeland Green, Dryden's colleagues from Stehli Silks.

Biography

1928 – 1938

By the end of the 1920s Dryden had fully overcome the professional setback she faced after leaving *Vogue* earlier in the decade and her career reached new heights. She made national headlines after it was purported that she was the highest paid woman artist in the United States. According to reports, Dryden's combined earnings for the various illustrating and design work she completed in 1929 totaled more than \$100,000, an impressive salary that would be roughly equivalent to \$1.5 million today.¹⁸⁵ During this period of her life Dryden experienced a level of celebrity only encountered by a handful of artists. She was featured in magazine articles, appeared on radio talk shows, and acted as a spokesperson for shoes and nail polish.¹⁸⁶ Dryden's creative output was also the most diverse during this period of her life as she was transitioning towards a career in industrial design, but continued to work as a commercial illustrator.

This transition was spurred by Helen Dryden's opportunity to design for the Stelhi Silks Company's *Americana Prints* series. Following this project, Dryden would go on to create other textile designs, including drapery fabric for Derryvale Linen Company

¹⁸⁵ Stein, "Highest Paid Woman Artist."

¹⁸⁶ Cantilever Shoes Advertisement, *Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 1929, p. B2. Cutex Liquid Polish Advertisement, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 10, 1929, p. D8. "Chic Cosmetics Accent Eyes," *Radio Digest*, March 1929. "Through the Microphone with Julia S. Older," *The Hartford Courant*, December 27, 1928. McMullen, "Making a Career of Art: Helen Dryden, Illustrator and Designer, Tells Her Own Story"; Ayres, "A Young Woman with Organized Brains: The Story of Helen Dryden, America's Highest Paid Woman Artist"; Helen Dryden, "Car Design in Modern Terms," *Automobile Topics*, 1930.

in 1929 and washable wallpaper for the Imperial Paper and Color Corporation in the 1930s.¹⁸⁷ However, her design work was not limited to two-dimensional objects.

In the late 1920s Dryden began taking design commissions from a wide array of corporations, marking her emergence as an industrial designer. She designed pianos for Hardman & Peck, packaging for Yardley, Dorothy Gray, the Lady Esther Company, and the Package Paper Company [Fig. 80-81]. She designed decorative mirrors for Liberty Mirror Works, cases for Shuron Optical Company, consulted on designs for Buick Motor Company, and created decorative home goods for Revere Brass & Copper [Fig. 82-83]. During this same period she was also the Art Director for the Dura Company, a manufacturer of automobile hardware and small die-cast decorative objects in Toledo, Ohio [Fig. 84-86]. Additionally, throughout the 1930s she acted as a style consultant for fellow industrial designer, Walter Dorwin Teague.¹⁸⁸

Dryden's decision to pursue industrial design in the late-1920s was a fortunate one. The crash of the stock market in 1929 had a tremendous impact on the art world, as it did in every sector of society. However, despite the hardships faced by the nation during the 1930s due to the Great Depression Dryden managed to find work and

¹⁸⁷ New York World's Fair 1939-1940 records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library. "Now Artists Design Your Curtains," *The Times*, June 6, 1929. "Wallpapers of Modern Types Are Washable," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 2, 1934.

¹⁸⁸ Dryden's professional relationship with Teague was a productive one that brought her many clients. Teague promoted her work in trade journals and recommended her consultant services to corporations. New York World's Fair 1939-1940 records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library. Walter Dorwin Teague, "Designing for Machines," *Advertising Arts*, April 1930. Roger M. Berkowitz et al., *The Alliance of Art and Industry: Toledo Designs for a Modern America* (New York and Toledo, OH: distributed by Hudson Hills Press Inc. for the Toledo Museum of Art, 2002), 164.

continued to live quite comfortably.¹⁸⁹ The fierce competition for consumers precipitated by the Depression ensured steady employment for industrial designers as manufacturers sought to distinguish their products and lure business away from competitors.¹⁹⁰ Dryden also found work through her industry connections. In 1933 Dryden became one of three industrial artists represented by William W. Dodge, the former editor of the trade journal *Product Engineering*. The other two artists, Joseph Sinel and Lucian Bernhard, Dryden knew through their mutual membership in the American Union of Decorative Artists and Craftsmen (AUDAC) and as co-contributors to the trade journal *Advertising Arts*, a short lived supplement to the better known publication *Advertising and Selling*. Dodge acted as a business representative for these designers as well as an advisor regarding product design.¹⁹¹

In 1935 Dryden became a consultant for Studebaker Automobiles, one of the most significant projects of her career [Fig. 87]. Aside from her work for *Vogue*, Dryden is most commonly remembered as the first woman to work on automobile design. She independently consulted on the design of the 1936 and 1937 Studebaker President. However, even as an industrial designer she continued to assert her opinions on women's fashion, writing style features for the *Studebaker Wheel* regarding the proper attire of the season and the most suitable clothing options for travel. For the 1938

¹⁸⁹ While industrial designers fared relatively well during the 1930s many artists were not so lucky. In 1937 Dryden helped to increase the relief fund for illustrators in need of assistance by contributing to a supper dance held by the Society of Illustrators. "Supper Dance in Aid of Illustrators," *New York Times*, December 5, 1932.

¹⁹⁰ Jeffrey Meikle, *Twentieth Century Limited: Industrial Design in American, 1925-1939* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979), 39.

¹⁹¹ "Dodge to Represent Industrial Artists," *Product Engineering*, no. March (1933): 114. American Union of Decorative Artists and Craftsmen Exhibition, Records of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, Brooklyn Museum Archives.

model of the President Studebaker hired Raymond Lowey to consult on the exterior styling, but the company retained Dryden as a consultant for aspects related to the car's interior. The 1938 model was well received by the public and automobile critics, but it marked the end of Dryden's career with Studebaker.¹⁹²

¹⁹² "Design of the New Cars," *Studebaker Wheel Reprinted from the Magazine of Art* (South Bend, IN, January 1938).

Chapter 3

Industrial Artist

In the late 1920s Dryden continued to move away from her roots as an illustrator and to focus on her new career in applied design, making her one of the first women industrial designers in the United States. The celebrity persona Dryden cultivated through her years at *Vogue* and the personal connections she made in the design field through her involvement with the American Union of Decorative Artists and Craftsmen (AUDAC) helped her secure commissions and find success in the male-dominated vocation.¹⁹³ Formally established as a profession in the 1920s, industrial design thrived during the economically tumultuous 1930s as it provided a marketing solution to corporations weathering the challenges of the Great Depression. The financial collapse profoundly affected industrial manufacturers who found themselves competing for a dramatically reduced pool of consumers. Hiring designers helped these industries to maximize the marketability of their products and to stimulate consumer demand. Acting as consultants, designers created mass market products enhanced by an understanding of style and appeal with lingering influences of the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Industriels et Decoratifs in Paris. These early years of the profession witnessed the surmounting importance of corporate branding, as well as the developments of

¹⁹³ Dryden's industrial design work is broad in scope. She consulted for various companies starting in the late 1920s and going through the 1930s. In addition to Stehli Silks, companies that utilized Dryden's industrial designs include: Hardman, Peck & Co.; Derryvale Linen Company; Package Paper Company; The Dura Co.; Shuron Optical Company; Liberty Mirror Works; Lady Esther; Dorothy Gray; Yardley; Imperial Wallpaper; Buick Motor Company; Marmon Motor Car Company; Studebaker Corporation; and Revere Copper and Brass.

streamlining (considered one of the first truly American design aesthetics) and planned obsolescence (a marketing scheme that saturates our modern consumer system). In this historical moment designers contributed to multiple fields of endeavor, experimented with new materials, and considered themselves artists.

Forgotten Femmes - Women in Industrial Design

The collaborative nature of design and inherently biased institutional practices often make it difficult to discern the contributions of individual artists. As discussed in the introduction, it was common practice for the head of the design firm to take credit for any design created by the firm's staff. Therefore, traditional power structures have played a significant role in shaping the historical narrative surrounding the field of design. The potential for an artist to be recognized for their design work was directly linked to the amount of power they wielded through the social privilege granted by their sex, race, and class. This patriarchal system favors white, upper-class men like Raymond Lowey and Walter Dorwin Teague, each of whom headed their own design firm. In contrast, an individual's power and potential for recognition decreases with every element of their identity that is contrary to the structure of privilege established under this system. Therefore, the contributions of artists who are women, non-white, and/or members of the middle- or lower-class are less likely to be documented.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ The contributions of minorities to the field of industrial design is another important avenue of inquiry that deserves further consideration, but falls outside the focus of this dissertation. I am looking specifically at early years of the profession and in the 1920s and 1930s there are few mentions of practitioners that are not white men. This task, if possible, will require its own archival excavation. The earliest mentions I came across of black men or women working as designers came from a 1963 article

Objects designed for industrial production rarely feature identifying marks providing attribution to a particular designer; therefore determining the commercial artist responsible for a given design can prove exceptionally difficult. Archival documents and patents can assist with uncovering uncredited designers, but these sources can be difficult to find and at times unreliable. Few industrial manufacturers from the interwar era survive today and most that do underwent various mergers and corporate buyouts over the decades that led to the purge of older records. Maintained by the government and accessible online, patent records are comparatively easy to locate. However, the history of patent law is fraught with complications. Prior to the twentieth century women often faced obstacles in attaining patents for their inventions. These restrictions resulted from cultural attitudes regarding women rather than any legal constraints, but nevertheless disenfranchised unknown masses of women inventors. These biases improved in the twentieth century and the Patent Office employed women clerks to help further eliminate gender discrimination.¹⁹⁵ However, other barriers persisted, such as the prohibitive cost of a patent in comparison to other forms of intellectual property, like copyright.¹⁹⁶ In addition, evidence exists of the work of consultants being patented with the name of the consulting company's president as the inventor and the name of the consultant entirely omitted from the patent

regarding discrimination in the field of industrial design. William McDonough, "Is Industrial Design Color Blind?" *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*, no. November (1963): 83–84.

¹⁹⁵ Deborah J. Merritt, "Hypatia in the Patent Office: Women Inventors and the Law, 1865-1900," *The American Journal of Legal History* 35, no. 3 (1991): 237.

¹⁹⁶ Carma Gorman, "Law as a Lens for Understanding Design," *Design and Culture* 6, no. 3 (2014): 278.

application.¹⁹⁷ Therefore, while patent records are comparatively easy to locate, verifying the accuracy of the recorded information presents a considerably difficult challenge.

As a woman designer, Helen Dryden created many assorted decorative and utilitarian objects, but due to the nature of design and the historical marginalization of women's contributions to the field the majority of her industrial design work remains unknown. During the interwar years Dryden achieved a career of international notoriety, stemming from her popularity as one of the principal illustrators at *Vogue*. Dryden used the momentum from her successful career as an illustrator and her valuable industry contacts to propel herself into a varied design career, becoming one of the first women industrial designers. Regardless of her documented success, the extent of Dryden's industrial design work is frequently contested. Skeptics doubt her skills as an industrial designer because of her roots as a style expert and fashion illustrator. However, this fails to account for the fact that many well-known male designers, like Raymond Lowey, also worked as illustrators [Fig.88].

This gender bias, stemming from the sex-typing of professions, significantly impacts perceptions of women's abilities and the professional opportunities available to them. While industrial design was an uncommon field for women in the 1920s and 1930s, the fact that some women achieved successful careers in industrial design at this time is less surprising when the career paths of early industrial designers are considered.

¹⁹⁷ Rayvon Fouché and Sharra Vostral, "'Selling' Women: Lillian Gilbreth, Gender Translation, and Intellectual Property," *Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law* 2 19, no. 3 (2011): 825–50.

Before turning to industrial design, Helen Dryden worked as an illustrator for fashion magazines and advertisements, and designed costumes and sets for the theater. Raymond Lowey also began his career as a fashion and advertising illustrator, as mentioned earlier. Likewise, Walter Dorwin Teague worked briefly as an illustrator and then in the art department of an advertising firm after graduating from the Art Students League in New York. Norman Bel Geddes designed stage sets for theatrical productions and worked as an illustrator and interior designer before he became known for his streamlined industrial designs, and Henry Dreyfuss apprenticed with Geddes as a set designer before turning to industrial design.¹⁹⁸ Like Dryden, the most well remembered industrial designers all began their careers working in illustration, advertising, and theater design; all fields readily open to women in the 1920s.

Many women realized productive careers as designers during the interwar era, with design representing one of the fastest growing industries for women. From 1910 to 1940 the number of women designers ballooned by 240 percent. At the beginning of the century women accounted for roughly a quarter of professional designers in the United States, but by 1940 women represented nearly forty percent of practitioners. In addition, the surge in women designers cannot be attributed solely to the growth of industry. Statistics show that in 1910 women made up more than twenty percent of all designers, comparable to the twenty percent total employment rate of women at the time, but by 1940 women comprised nearly forty percent of all designers; far exceeding

¹⁹⁸ Jeffrey Meikle, *Twentieth Century Limited: Industrial Design in American, 1925-1939* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979): 43. Jeffrey Meikle, *Design in the USA* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). 109. David Raizman, "Design, Industry, and Advertising in the United States," in *History of Modern Design*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2011), 223–53.

women's overall employment rate of 24 percent.¹⁹⁹ However, the great majority of women designers worked in subsets of the field considered well-suited to women and benefitting from a feminine perspective, such interior design. Modern disbelief and fascination with women vanguards of industrial design persist because thorough documentation of women's struggles to attain career success in any field not sex-typed as feminine during this era implies a narrative of exceptionalism. However, it appears more women practiced industrial design at this time than what is commonly believed.

While men unquestionably dominated the field, women still played significant roles as freelancers, corporate staff designers, and as team members (and occasionally even leaders) at design firms. Aside from Helen Dryden, other early women industrial designers include Ilonka Karasz, Belle Kogan, Anne Swainson, Helen Hughes Dulaney, and Ruth Reeves. The Hungarian born modernist furniture and decorative arts designer Ilonka Karasz immigrated to the United States in 1913 where she became an active contributor to the New York decorative arts scene in the 1920s and 1930s. Karasz exhibited her work at The American Designers Gallery, AUDAC exhibitions, and Macy's "Art in Industry" show. Belle Kogan, perhaps the most well documented woman designer of the interwar era, emigrated from Russia to New York City as a child, where she took art classes and worked as a freelance designer before opening her own design studio in 1931. By the end of the decade, Kogan also had three women designers on staff. Anne Swainson became the first woman executive at Montgomery Ward when she

¹⁹⁹ Although, the design profession as whole, including figures for both men and women, also increased 100 percent during this time period. Janet M. Hooks, "Women's Occupations through Seven Decades" (Washington D.C., 1947). 209, 224. Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987). 13

accepted the position of director of their Board of Design in 1931.²⁰⁰ Helen Hughes Dulaney of Chicago was known for developing new ways of incorporating glass with metal and restyling a line of stoves for General Electric. Ruth Reeves, a prolific textile designer, also frequently participated in New York design exhibitions and was an active member of design organizations like AUDAC.²⁰¹ This small sampling of women designers suggests the broad range of work women engaged in during this period despite the sex-typing of professions.

The interwar years witnessed significant strides by women towards increased opportunities for education and employment. The presence of women in the labor force increased by more than sixty percent, but gender continued to play a significant role in determining the value and context of women's work. Gender bias irrefutably characterized the dawn of the industrial design profession; however, this was accentuated in the automotive industry. While women accounted for nearly a quarter of the national labor force in 1940, they made up less than six percent of workers in the automotive industry.²⁰² As the number of women in the workforce increased, patterns of sex-typing evolved that labeled certain occupations and manufacturing responsibilities as feminine, even in the hyper-masculine automotive industry where the majority of women worked in sex-typed positions related to upholstery, trim, or the

²⁰⁰ The industrial design chapter from *Women Designer in the USA* focuses on women working in furniture, glass, and product design and its discussion of the interwar period is limited as it addresses the entire twentieth century. Kirkham, *Women Designers in the USA: Diversity and Difference, 1900-2000*. 269-

²⁰¹ Anne Petersen, "Women Rising Fast in Field of Design," *New York Times*, January 24, 1937.

²⁰² Employment of women in the automotive industry dramatically increased from 1910 to 1940 by nearly 3000 percent; however, this increase is directly related to the incredible growth of the automotive industry as a whole during this time period, in which overall employment increased by 1185 percent. Milkman, *Gender at Work*, 13. Hooks, *Women's Occupations through Seven Decades*, 206.

assembly of small parts.²⁰³ Moreover, production workers and engineers within the automotive industry viewed even the most successful male designers as outsiders. The predominant attitude among insiders was that a designer required a love of cars in order to successfully design them, often described as “having gasoline in your veins.” In this school of thought, car designers should have a professional background in custom automobile building rather than fine art, and should not desire to design anything other than automobiles. Therefore automobile designs created by men like Raymond Lowey are often dismissed by industry insiders despite the significant attention their designs receive in industrial design history. In fact, GM designer Bill Mitchell stated in an interview that Lowey was not a car designer; he was an imposter.²⁰⁴

Considering the many obstacles women industrial designers encountered, those who infiltrated the distinctly masculine field of automobiles provide an exceptional opportunity for feminist investigation. Hired by the Studebaker Corporation as a design consultant, Helen Dryden became one of the first women to work on automotive design; a fact Studebaker proudly and widely publicized in the mid-1930s. However, what led Studebaker to defy convention and hire Dryden as a design consultant?

Helen Dryden - Industrial Artist

Dryden’s interest in automotive design began in the late 1920s. She received national attention for her ideas regarding the future of automobile design after writing

²⁰³ Nancy F. Gabin, *Feminism in the Labor Movement: Women and the United Auto Workers, 1935-1975* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1990) 10-20.

²⁰⁴ C. Edson Armi, *The Art of American Car Design: The Profession and Personalities* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988). 18-19.

an article titled, “Car Design in Modern Terms” published in *Automobile Topics*. In the article Dryden addresses the state of the automotive design field and laments the tendency of some designers to appropriate motifs from stagecoach design to incorporate into automobiles.

*I wonder that someone has not risen in indignation to proclaim: “Here we have a vehicle like none other in the history of the world. Let us not adorn it with chubby cupids and their proverbial bows and arrows. Let us abandon forever those coy shepherdesses with their crooks and garlands, and invent complementary fittings and adornments sleek, straight and slim.”*²⁰⁵

Dryden calls for the elimination of ornamentation and curves in the design of automobile hardware in favor of designs that complement the feats of modern engineering that the automobile represents. She argues that the only appropriate design style for automobiles as truly revolutionary vehicles is rooted in modern simplicity. Articles and advertisements for Studebaker following Dryden’s retention with the corporation echo this call for simplicity in automotive design.

Discussions of women in early automotive design often reference Studebaker because of the corporation’s wide publicization of Dryden’s role as a stylist. However, archival evidence reveals that Dryden consulted on designs for Buick Motor Company and Marmon Motor Car Company before designing the 1936 Studebaker President. Few records remain addressing the extent of Dryden’s work for these companies, but it is

²⁰⁵ Helen Dryden, “Car Design in Modern Terms,” *Automobile Topics*, 1930, 1134.

clear that the work was of an industrial design nature. It is possible that Buick hired Dryden to consult on the interior styling for certain 1935 models. News reports regarding these models describe considerable changes to the interior upholstery and trim.²⁰⁶ In addition, an article from the July 1932 issue of *Advertising Arts* credits Helen Dryden for designing hardware used on the infamous luxury automobile, the Marmon Sixteen, designed by Walter Dorwin Teague [Fig. 89].²⁰⁷ Dryden also exhibited automotive accessories at the 1932 exhibition of the National Alliance of Art and Industry, although it is unclear if these were the designs used for the Marmon 16. Dryden became involved in the Marmon project as a style consultant for Teague, a position she held throughout the 1930s.²⁰⁸ Her close association with Teague brought Dryden many design opportunities that firmly established her career as a pioneering industrial designer.²⁰⁹

Before her work with Teague, Dryden gained practical experience designing automobile hardware employed as Art Director for the Dura Corporation in Toledo, Ohio. The Dura Corporation, previously known as Dura Mechanical Hardware,

²⁰⁶ Dryden lists Buick Motor Company as one of her industrial design clients in a promotional brochure from the late 1930s and in a biographical sketch she submitted to Ernest Peixotto, a member of the Board of Design for the 1939 World's Fair. New York World's Fair 1939-1940 records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library; "Buick Offers Buyers Choice in Four Groups," *The Washington Post*, January 13, 1935.

²⁰⁷ Ruth Fleischer, "Contemporary Industrial Design," *Advertising Arts*, July 1932.

²⁰⁸ New York World's Fair 1939-1940 records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

²⁰⁹ In addition to the Marmon 16, companies and organizations that both Teague and Dryden worked on projects for include: Strathmore Paper; Kodak; Imperial Washable Wall Papers; Executive Lounge Designs for the Ford Pavilion at the 1935 San Diego Exhibition; *Advertising Arts*; American Union of Decorative Artists and Craftsmen.

developed in the early 1910s as a subsidiary of the Milburn Wagon Company.²¹⁰ In the 1920s and 1930s Dura produced exterior and interior automotive hardware used by many automobile manufacturers that sourced parts from outside suppliers. Dura hardware flourished with the growing popularity of the closed car and the company became known for their window regulators, of which they were one of the nation's largest producers.²¹¹ Dura hired Dryden as Art Director in 1927.²¹² However, after approximately two years with the company, Dura terminated Dryden's position when they could no longer afford her \$35,000 per year salary (roughly \$500,000 today) following the stock market crash of 1929.²¹³

The full extent of Dryden's design work for Dura is unknown. No records from this time in the company's history survive and the only remaining accounts of Dura's products are in the form of design patents and catalogs of industrial design exhibitions featuring Dura Co. products.²¹⁴ In 1931 Dryden submitted hardware designs identified

²¹⁰ It is notable that the Milburn Wagon Company had close ties with Studebaker. Both companies were founded in the same region of Indiana, and Ann Milburn, the daughter of Milburn Wagon Company's founder, George Milburn, married Studebaker founder and President Clement Studebaker.

²¹¹ The term "window regulator" refers to the manual devices that can be rotated in order to raise and lower the window in an automobile. J.L. Jenkins, "Motordom Today," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 12, 1923.; conversation with retired Dura Vice President Ernie Smuteck.

²¹² New York World's Fair 1939-1940 records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

²¹³ According to George Walker, who filled the position at Dura after Dryden departed. Dura hired Walker when he offered to do the job for less than ten percent of what they had paid Dryden. Walker had also lost his position at the Graham-Paige Motor Company due to the economic collapse. *Reminiscences from the 1985 Interview with George W. Walker. Automotive Design Oral History, Accession 1673. Benson Ford Research Center. The Henry Ford.*

²¹⁴ Dura was bought out several times in the twentieth century. The company no longer exists, but what remains of Dura is under the auspices of the parent company Magna International of America. I contacted Magna in an effort to discover if any Dura records had survived. This led me to Ernie Smutek, a former Vice President of the Dura Co. who started work at the company's branch in Adrian Michigan in the 1940s. However, he had never heard of Helen Dryden and insisted that I must be looking for a

as works made by Dura Co. to the American Union of Decorative Artists and Craftsmen (AUDAC) exhibition held at the Brooklyn Museum.²¹⁵ Reproduced in AUDAC's *Annual of American Design*, Dryden's designs included a chrome hinge and latch set meant for use on a refrigerator or similar appliance [Fig. 90]. However, the same designs also appeared in the Third International Exposition of Contemporary Industrial Art, 1930-1931 with credit given to a man named George Graff, a hardware designer from Pittsburg whose relationship with Dura predated Dryden's employment at the company [Fig. 91].²¹⁶ The Third International Exhibition lists several hardware designs attributed to Graff, including plumbing hardware described as a "standard three-piece assembly."²¹⁷ However, an article from *Advertising Arts* reproduces photographs of plumbing hardware designed by Dryden during her tenure at Dura that also fits this description [Fig. 84].²¹⁸ These designs all share a simplified Art Deco aesthetic, characteristic of Dryden's work, but dramatically differ from designs patented by Graff during the same period.

different Dura, as he could not believe they ever worked with any "lady designers." Much to my disappointment, he verified that any records from that period were lost long ago.

²¹⁵ The Brooklyn Museum produced a list of exhibitors for the AUDAC show that listed her contributions as wooden boxes, metal lighter, sketch for textile, and automobile hardware. Two hardware designs patented by George Graff appear in the *Annual of American Design, 1931* attributed to Helen Dryden for the Dura Corporation. Brooklyn Museum Archives, Records of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, American Union of Decorative Artists and Craftsmen (AUDAC) Exhibition [05/02/1931-07/01/1931] (4/1931-10/1931).

²¹⁶ The American Historical Society, *History of Pittsburgh and Environs, Vol. 1* (New York: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1922) 74.

²¹⁷ The American Federation of Arts Third International Exhibition of Contemporary Industrial Art, *International Exhibition of Metalwork and Cotton Textiles* (Portland, Maine: Southworth Press, 1930).

²¹⁸ Ed. Kendall, Frederiick, "Glorifying the Bathroom Tap, Design by Helen Dryden," *Advertising Arts*, no. July (1930).

In fact, careful reading of Dryden's article in *Automobile Topics*, published shortly after Dura terminated her position as Art Director, suggests Dryden may have harbored some resentment. The article decries ornate, "stagecoach era" design applied to motor cars and explains Dryden's vision of a simplified modern design, but underneath the surface argument appears a sophisticated passive-aggressive criticism of an unnamed designer's unsuitable traditional designs. Furthermore, Dryden's descriptions of old-fashioned designs uncannily align with Graff's work. The hardware "garlanded with roses and ornate festoons" she describes, for example, could easily be meant to evoke a robe rail designed by Graff in 1928 [Fig. 92].²¹⁹ Given the obvious contestation that existed between these two designers and Dryden's sudden dismissal from Dura, some resentment on her part is not surprising. In fact, tension likely escalated after Graff filed design patents for several contested designs on December 2, 1929, less than two months before *Automobile Topics* published Dryden's article and just shortly after her departure from Dura.

It is impossible to ever fully know the circumstances that precipitated the confusion over who deserves credit for the contested designs created while Dryden worked for Dura. It appears as though Dryden completed these designs while at Dura, but after the company fired Dryden, her designs and the rights to them remained with the company, which were then submitted for patent review under the name of another designer. However, evidence suggests that Dryden also worked collaboratively with

²¹⁹ Dryden, "Car Design in Modern Terms." George Graff, Design for a Robe Rail, USD77827 (United States: United States, issued 1929).

other Dura employees. For example, Dryden exhibited a small lamp at the Philadelphia Museum's 1932 exhibition "Design for the Machine" that was manufactured during her tenure at Dura [Fig. 93]. Dryden designed the overall appearance of the lamp, but patent records show that the mechanical switch particular to this lamp was designed by another Dura employee, Burton Floraday [Fig. 94].²²⁰ Significantly, Floraday filed a utility patent for his invention whereas Graff filed design patents. In addition, had Graff truly collaborated with Dryden there was no legal restriction against listing multiple inventors. This further supports the argument that these designs were misappropriated.

This contestation parallels the dissatisfaction of contemporary artists with existing Design Patent law and testifies to efforts of artist associations, such as AUDAC, to support the passage of copyright protection for designers.²²¹ Established in 1842, design patents took a significant amount of time to acquire and required a greater degree of uniqueness than copyright protections. Design patents also relied on a distinction between functional design and ornamentation, with the patent only protecting the ornamental component of the design. This made it difficult for designers to obtain protections for simplified modern designs lacking extraneous ornamentation.²²² Therefore, as Dryden began designing in a more streamlined Art Deco aesthetic in the late 1920s it would have become increasingly difficult for her to acquire a design patent. This could explain, in part, why there are so few patents filed under

²²⁰ This battery-operated, modern, candle-style lamp utilized a pressurized switch that would turn on the light whenever the lamp was lifted and turn it off when it was set down. Burton S. Floraday, *Electric Light*, US1949538 (United States: United States, issued 1932).

²²¹ Nathan George Horwitt, "Legislation - for Art's Sake: The Vestal Bill: A Boon to American Artists," *Advertising & Selling*, 1930.

²²² Gorman, "Law as a Lens for Understanding Design." 278.

Dryden's name. Additionally, the apparent false attribution of Dryden's designs to a male designer represents a continuation of a long history of the institutional erasure of women's contributions to society.²²³

"It's Styled by Helen Dryden"

Dryden's relationship with Studebaker first began in 1929. The company hired her and five other women artists and style experts to form a committee with the purpose of advising Studebaker on the matter of color selection and automobile appointments [Fig. 95].²²⁴ By the end of the 1920s all of the major automobile manufacturers came to recognize that styling and design were critical components of automobile production. While the automobile industry flourished during the first quarter of the twentieth century, competition intensified in the mid-1920s when the automobile industry reached its saturation point, during which the demand for production shifted from attracting first time buyers to luring customers away from competitors, selling replacement vehicles, and convincing families to buy a second car. The saturation of the automobile market meant that manufacturers needed to appeal to consumers beyond the utilitarian aspects of automobile ownership. Even Henry Ford,

²²³ For information on the history for institutional sexism in granting of patents, see: Carroll Pursell, "Women Inventors in America," *Technology and Culture* 22, no. 3 (1981): 545–49; Merritt, "Hypatia in the Patent Office: Women Inventors and the Law, 1865-1900." Annette Kahler, "Examining Exclusion in Woman-Inventor Patenting: A Comparison of Educational Trends and Patent Data in the Era of Computer Engineer Barbie," *Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law* 19, no. 3 (2011): 773–98.

²²⁴ The members of the style committee were Helen Dryden, Mrs. Lee Simonson, Marjorie Oelrichs, Neysa McMein, Rose O'Neill, and Marlon C. Taylor. It is unclear to what extent this committee actually affected the overall appearance of the 1930 Studebaker models. "Advise Studebaker: Women's Committee Aids in Selection of Colors, Appointments for Show Car," *The Wall Street Journal*, January 6, 1930.

famous for his utilitarian perspective on automobile styling, stubbornly acknowledged the growing importance of design when market competition forced him to stop production of the Model T and undertake the production of a new model in 1927.²²⁵ As a result, the market gradually consolidated, a process amplified by the onset of the Great Depression. Relatively few automobile manufacturers withstood this economic downturn. The survivors, like Studebaker Corporation, turned to aggressive and creative marketing strategies to remain competitive and entice buyers.²²⁶

One of the largest independent manufacturers of automobiles in early 20th century, the Studebaker Corporation began as a wagon making business founded by brothers, Henry and Clement Studebaker in South Bend, Indiana in 1852. Following the Civil War the shop became the largest producer of wagons and carriages in the world. Studebaker transitioned to making automobiles at the turn of the century.²²⁷ Known for producing medium-priced automobiles, Studebaker made several attempts to expand into the lower-priced and luxury automobile markets. In the lower-priced bracket the corporation introduced the Erskine and later the Rockne, but neither model proved successful. Studebaker simply lacked the resources to produce the volume required to enable real competition with the low-price market leaders: Ford, GM and Chrysler. As a means to break in to the luxury automobile market Studebaker purchased Pierce-Arrow,

²²⁵ Jeffrey Meikle, *Design in the USA* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 102-105.

²²⁶ Harold Katz, *The Decline of Competition in the Automobile Industry, 1920-1940* (New York: Arno Press, 1977) 58-61.

²²⁷ Studebaker maintained a position in the top ten automobile manufacturers by volume from 1908-1925. The corporation's position fluctuated over the next fifteen years, peaking at 6 in 1932 and at times falling to 13. Editors of *Automobile Quarterly*, *The American Car Since 1775*, 2nd ed. (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1971) 138-141. Donald T. Critchlow, *Studebaker: The Life and Death of an American Corporation* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996) 13-65.

but this merger was unfortunately timed; having acquired Pierce-Arrow just before the 1929 economic collapse, after which the luxury market shrank tremendously.²²⁸ In fact, this merger significantly contributed to the economic hurdles Studebaker faced following the 1929 stock market crash.²²⁹

Studebaker endured the economic trials of the Great Depression by cutting costs, introducing new models at a lower price point, and hiring design consultants to enhance the aesthetic appeal of their products. These factors combined to form a marketing strategy of affordable luxury. Studebaker reduced prices by reviving the Dictator in 1934 as the company's lower-priced model and downgraded the size and price of the President to broaden appeal.²³⁰ The following year Studebaker cut expenses by closing the company forge and sourcing parts from outside suppliers.²³¹ The company took additional price reductions to all of their models in 1936, redesigned the entire line, and introduced new standard engineering features, such as independent front suspension, to remain competitive. Although most auto manufacturers cut prices, beginning with the saturation of the market in 1927 and continuing through the 1930s, Studebaker made substantial price deductions in comparison to its mid-priced competitors. Studebaker's aggressive approach played a significant role in the

²²⁸ The luxury market decreased from 5.5% of automobile sales in 1927 to 0.8% in 1934. Donald T. Critchlow, *Studebaker: The Life and Death of an American Corporation* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996) 95; Thomas E. Bonsall, *More Than They Promised: The Studebaker Story* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000) 40.

²²⁹ Critchlow, *Studebaker*, 92-93.

²³⁰ Thomas E. Bonsall, *More Than They Promised: The Studebaker Story* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000) 179-180.

²³¹ Critchlow, *Studebaker*, 111.

corporation's longevity.²³² Studebaker's efforts during this economically volatile era succeeded in turning a profit of \$2.8 million and in increasing automobile registrations by a margin nearly fifty percent greater than the industry average.²³³

The severity of the Depression necessitated Studebaker's drop in prices, but luxury marketing strategies required that Studebaker not lower prices too drastically. Consumer studies show that price significantly impacts the perception of luxury. While the cost threshold for a product to be considered luxury varies from person to person, there is a shared perspective that the desirability of a luxury brand is damaged once the price drops into a range considered affordable. This eliminates exclusivity, a major component comprising the appeal of luxury products.²³⁴ Unable to produce the same volume of cars as the low-price manufacturers, Studebaker depended upon maintaining a semi-luxury status in order to carve out a niche market of consumers who sought to set themselves apart from the masses, but could not afford a true custom luxury vehicle. Studebaker's efforts to establish the corporation as an affordable luxury producer is evident in advertisements that show Caucasian men and women wearing expensive clothing, engaging in elite activities like sailing and horseback riding, and

²³² In the 1930s the price divide between budget and luxury models narrowed as luxury manufacturers moved away from custom automobiles and, alongside mid-range producers, cut prices to attract buyers. Conversely, the cost of automobiles in the lowest price bracket began to rise as more engineering and styling features became standard. These standard features offered a competitive edge to manufacturers in the low-price class struggling to reach volume sales targets during the difficult years of the Great Depression. The importance of the low-price class grew as it became clear that automobile manufacturers needed a viable low-priced, budget model in order to survive in what was an increasingly competitive market. Katz, *The Decline of Competition*, 147, 472-479.

²³³ Bonsall, *More Than They Promised*, 183-187.

²³⁴ Cindy Klippert and Lara Leproux Jean-Noël Kapferer, "Does Luxury Have a Minimum Price? An Exploratory Study into Consumers' Psychology of Luxury Prices," *Journal of Revenue and Pricing Management* 13, no. 1 (2014): 2-11.

parked in front of grand estates [Fig. 96-97]. Additionally, corporate promotional materials refer to factory workers as “artisans” and discuss the “craftsmanship” involved in the production of Studebaker automobiles [Fig. 98].²³⁵ This kind of language is meant to directly relate Studebaker to the truly custom automobiles in the highest price bracket. Furthermore, Studebaker countered potential harm to the brand resulting from price decreases and amplified the luxury appeal of their 1936 model by contracting Helen Dryden as a design consultant.²³⁶ Studebaker’s calculated decision to hire Dryden gave the corporation an edge in a competitive market that increasingly placed importance on style. With Dryden on board, Studebaker could reap the marketing benefits of her celebrity status and reputation as a taste maker to enhance the semi-luxury reputation of their product and grow the brand’s appeal with women consumers.

The automotive industry’s recognition of women as comprising the majority of the consumer audience in the 1930s profoundly affected marketing strategies.

Advertising commentaries from the period frequently reference tropes of women as fickle and emotional, and styling took precedence in appealing to female consumers over utility and efficiency.²³⁷ The *Oakland Tribune* reported Studebaker engineers and sales executives as saying, “Women are difficult to please” ... “They either like a car or

²³⁵ Studebaker’s self-promotion of the corporation’s production quality goes on to claim, “Due to the Studebaker tradition of excellence which has pervaded South Bend for generations, that city is often called the closest modern approach to one of the famous guild communities of the long ago.” Studebaker Corporation, *The Inside Story of the 1937 Studebakers: A Manual for the Use of Studebaker Salesmen* (Hagley Museum and Library, Trade Cat.S933 1936, n.d.) n.p.

²³⁶ Studebaker’s decision to hire a design consultant followed the lead of other mid-priced and luxury manufacturers. For example, in the early 1930s Hupp Motor Car Company hired Raymond Lowey and Marmon Motor Company hired Walter Dorwin Teague as independent consultants, respectively. Meikle, *Design in the USA*. 110.

²³⁷ Roland Marchand, *Advertising and the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) 66.

they don't – and they are not easy to change, despite the old theory that women always change their minds" ... and "They say they don't like a car, but they don't tell you why they don't like it." According to this account, it was the inability of the engineers and executives at Studebaker to decipher the desires of women consumers that led the corporation to hire Dryden as a design consultant.²³⁸ However, this does not accurately portray the ascendancy of design in the automotive industry in its entirety. While the realization that women comprised a significant proportion of the consumer base emerged at this time, the desire for attractively styled vehicles was not limited to women. Men and women both wanted well designed and attractive cars, but automobile manufacturers directed marketing efforts towards women because styling and appearance were not considered masculine, even though these changes equally appealed to men.²³⁹

On the other hand, the increasing importance of design in the automotive industry and the industry's growing focus on women consumers emerged separately as a result of increased competition. Appealing to women had genuine marketing advantages aside from providing a gender appropriate avenue for selling style to the American people. Women also represented a critical target in the industry's quest to increase sales through the establishment of the two-car family, particularly following the saturation of the market in the mid-to-late-1920s. Promotional materials from the interwar period demonstrate Studebaker's genuine efforts to appeal to women

²³⁸ "Woman's Idea of Car Design in New Model," *Oakland Tribune*, December 1, 1935.

²³⁹ David Gartman, *Auto Opium: A Social History of American Automobile Design* (New York: Routledge, 1994). 98.

consumers. Studebaker advertisements prominently featured women and in the mid-1930s *Studebaker Wheel*, a magazine produced by the corporation, included a fashion section written by Helen Dryden.²⁴⁰ Studebaker also launched the Helen Dryden mail campaign in early 1936 to promote the redesigned President in which letters appearing to be from Dryden were sent to women across the country asking their opinions of the new model as women of good taste.²⁴¹

Cultural notions of gender identity highly colored contemporary understanding of the automobile as an object. The utilitarian, functional, and mechanical aspects of the automobile were regarded as masculine while any aspects relating to styling or comfort were considered feminine. This was true even when improvements supposedly made for the sake of comfort actually improved the functionality of the vehicle. The industry's switch from open roofed cars to those with a fixed roof, for example, was an improvement welcomed equally by both men and women that made the automobile into a more effective mode of transportation for all seasons. However, contemporary accounts often describe it as a concession to delicate women wanting protection from the elements.²⁴² The cultural designation of different aspects of the automobile as feminine and masculine established a gendered framework for marketing the product. It also resulted in a gendered hierarchy in which society places more value on the exterior, viewed as functional and masculine, than the interior, viewed as decorative and

²⁴⁰ Dryden wrote fashion editorials for *Studebaker Wheel* during her tenure at the company, from 1936-1938.

²⁴¹ "Dryden Campaign Will Help Sell Presidents to People of Prestige," *Studebaker News*, February 5, 1936.

²⁴² Virginia Scharff, *Taking the Wheel: Women and the Coming of the Motor Age* (New York: The Free Press, 1991) 122.

feminine. This ultimately contributed to the disregard for the significance of Studebaker hiring a woman industrial designer to work on automobiles, as most accounts claim Dryden's role in the design process affected mainly the automobile interior and was therefore considered conventional.

These preconceived notions of gender have historically devalued Dryden's consultant work for Studebaker as an aesthetic improvement rather than a functional one. Corporate promotional materials emphasize the similarities of the automobile interior to a home interior. The 1937 Studebaker sales manual proclaimed, "Living room comfort at any speed on the road," and juxtaposed photos of an older woman and a young boy (likely representing a grandmother and grandson) seated in a Studebaker President and on a living room sofa, with equal comfort [Fig. 99]. The manual stressed that the new lowered frame provided comfort and support by allowing room for seats the same height as living room chairs and stated, "Helen Dryden... gave this President interior the appealing restraint that characterizes an interesting room in a smartly appointed home." Consumers could choose either "fine cloth" or "mohair velvet" for the interior upholstery, dyed to harmonize with the exterior paint.²⁴³ Ignoring Dryden's contributions as an interiorist senselessly overlooks the value of the interior to the overall marketing of the product. Additionally, it is incorrect to assume that the interior is somehow less significant than the exterior in regards to vehicle functionality. The new instrument panel [Fig. 100] designed by Dryden relocated the gauges from the center of

²⁴³ Mohair velvet is wool that was standard on most Studebakers. Broadcloth was considered a greater luxury, and leather upholstery was available on convertible roadsters. Conversation with Studebaker archivist Andrew Beckman. Studebaker Corporation, *The Inside Story of the 1937 Studebakers: A Manual for the Use of Studebaker Salesmen* (Hagley Museum and Library, Trade Cat.S933 1936, n.d.) 30.

the dash to the driver's side of the vehicle and resulted in a design heralded as "unusually readable."²⁴⁴

Moreover, Dryden's work for Studebaker extended beyond aspects akin to interior design. Contemporary periodicals credited Dryden with designing all interior and exterior hardware and trim, ash receivers, steering wheel, and the aforementioned instrument panel [Fig. 101]. Many trade publications praised Dryden's 1936 Studebaker for its simplicity and unity of design, describing the automobile as smart, luxurious, and refined. The success of her design is evident in automobile show accounts attesting to the popularity of the design with the public and in the retention of Dryden as the interiorist for the 1938 Studebaker's designed by Raymond Lowey, which the *Magazine of Art* selected as the car of the year [Fig. 102].²⁴⁵

In contrast, the industry portrayed male automotive designers as mechanical innovators improving the performance of vehicles. In the 1930s manufacturers marketed the trend of streamlined and aerodynamic automobiles as an improvement in efficiency, increasing speed and reducing fuel consumption, epitomized by the introduction of the Chrysler Airflow in 1934 [Fig 103]. The concept of aerodynamics became a topic of great interest and investigation among engineers beginning in the 1920s, but the perception that streamlining led to better automobile performance was a

²⁴⁴ C. K. Whittaker, "C.H. Riebeling Showing Latest Models in Studebaker Motors - Famous Woman Artist Designs Studebaker," *Evening Courier*, November 1, 1935.

²⁴⁵ Studebaker retained Dryden as a consultant from 1935-1938, during which time she created differing designs for the 1936, 1937, and 1938 President models. "Design of the New Cars," *Studebaker Wheel* reprinted from the *Magazine of Art* (South Bend, IN, January 1938). URL, Z. Taylor Vinson collection of transportation ephemera (Accession 20100108.ZTV), Audiovisual Collections and Digital Initiatives Department, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE 19807, 6-7.

misnomer. In truth, streamlining was a matter of styling that gave automobiles a modern appearance and evoked allusions to speed and advancement, but in practice remained an aesthetic change rather than a functional one.²⁴⁶ The term “streamline” originated as a scientific principle in hydrodynamics, and later aerodynamics, to describe a form designed to facilitate minimum resistance. However, the use of the word in the 1930s largely ignored the implied physics principles and instead focused on its relation to things considered modern and new. As a result, “streamlined” came to describe clothing, clocks, furniture and a whole host of stationary objects for which having a design meant to minimize drag made no sense. The widespread use of the term led Norman Bel Geddes to publish an article in *Atlantic Monthly* where he explained that the scientific community understood relatively little about streamlining outside of the aeronautical field, and that concepts of streamlining involving ground or water transportation in the 1930s were merely conjecture.²⁴⁷ Dryden, herself, spoke on the trend towards streamlining despite the limitations of this design feature to radically improve fuel economy. At the New England Industrial Art Conference in 1936 Dryden described her prediction for future automobile design:

The form will adapt itself more perfectly, above and below, to the flow of air currents, and it will do this not so much in the interest of speed or economy of gas as in the interest of right appearance. We already have all the speed we can

²⁴⁶ Meikle, *Twentieth Century Limited*. 140-152

²⁴⁷ Norman Bel Geddes, “Streamlining,” in *The Industrial Design Reader*, ed. Carma Gorman (New York: Allworth Press, 2003), 135–37.

*use and it is doubtful if improved streamlining at present speeds would save enough on gas to make it worthwhile.*²⁴⁸

Regardless of the reality, the public perception of streamlining favored the contributions of male designers, considered mechanical innovators, over those of women, deemed superfluous and decorative.

Pervasive gender bias in the early years of the automotive design field contributed to the historical disregard of Dryden's work. Although Dryden is generally acknowledged for having some role in designing Studebaker interiors, accounts of her contributions to Studebaker design are inconsistent. In describing her designs for Studebaker, most contemporary newspaper articles use a variation of the same imprecise line, "designed, styled, and trimmed by Miss Helen Dryden," suggesting the authors were unsure of the extent of her work. However, others report Studebaker gave Dryden complete freedom to redesign the interior and exterior of the President.²⁴⁹ When questioned by a researcher from the trade journal *Professional Engineer* in 1936 about claims that the newest Studebaker's were designed by a woman, the company responded:

²⁴⁸ "Woman Auto Designer Thinks Passenger Comfort Will Come First in Cars of Future," *Boston Globe*, April 2, 1936.

²⁴⁹ Whittaker, "C.H. Riebeling Showing Latest Models in Studebaker Motors - Famous Woman Artist Designs Studebaker."

*Exterior styling, interior hardware, upholstery, trim, instrument board, everything that has to do with beauty, appearance and comfort in the Studebaker President of 1936 is the handiwork of Miss Dryden.*²⁵⁰

While it is unlikely that Studebaker gave Dryden complete freedom of design, it is also clear that Studebaker did not hire Dryden merely as a marketing gimmick, as some critics have suggested. On the contrary, multiple contemporary sources refer to Dryden's mechanical knowledge and her hands-on approach towards product design [Fig. 104]. When Dryden began consulting for Studebaker, for instance, Ethel M. Gold of the *International Illustrated News* reported:

*She went into a factory to study and work. She donned overalls and climbed underneath cars; examined machinery; watched various automobile parts being manufactured; saw cars assembled and tested; discussed market demands; sales; price range with company executives.*²⁵¹

Additionally, a 1937 article discussing Dryden's achievements as an industrial designer directly addressed the gendered expectations of design and stressed the significance of Dryden's involvement with Studebaker:

There are other fields – aviation, for instance – in which a woman has got to be twice as capable as the men to hold her own in a job, and it is so in industrial design. Automobile manufacturers ... want a woman to understand how the

²⁵⁰ "Are Engineers Designing Creatures?," *Professional Engineer* 21 (1936): 39.

²⁵¹ Ethel M. Gold, "Feminine Touch given to New Auto Models by Helen Dryden, Designer," *North Tonawanda Evening News*, November 14, 1936.

*instrument board can be made to look more trim, more finished, more distinguished, but only with due regard to what the instrument board means and does, in the composite of the car.... It happens that Miss Dryden has mechanical ability. She isn't an engineer and she never intends to be, but she can read all the engineer's blueprints necessary to the work she does, and talk automotive engineering language.*²⁵²

Dryden's interest in the overall design aesthetic of automobiles began during her tenure at Dura. After attending the 1930 Salon de l'Automobile in Paris she reported:

*Europe seems to give the designer a free hand in developing his ideas, and as a result the Salon was a refreshing contrast to our own very uniform exhibits... More and more carrossiers are becoming converted to the modern school of design which merely insists that a thing should be built as simply and honestly as possible... the French are building cars lower, flatter, and simpler, thereby reducing wind resistance and giving emphasis to the lines of speed... Due to my experience in designing automobile hardware... I am convinced that the French designers strike a higher level of luxury... than we have yet achieved in America... When line and proportion are perfect, only then is that illusive quality of chic to be found...*²⁵³

The extent of Dryden's role in designing for Studebaker was not absolute, but, like other early automobile consultants, she played an important editorial role in creating a new

²⁵² Janet Mabie, "A Coming Field for Women - IF," *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 20, 1937.

²⁵³ "No Title," *Automobile Topics*, 1930.

model characterized by formal unity and modern simplicity. Dryden herself asserted that she worked on both the exterior and interior design of Studebaker cars.²⁵⁴

Furthermore, the argument for Dryden's direct involvement with Studebaker design is supported by the fact that her work for Studebaker did not represent her first foray into automotive design.

The continued disregard for Dryden's design work in the history of Studebaker perpetuates gender stereotypes and fails to address the problem of privileging certain kinds of work over others based on sex-typed divisions of labor. Dryden's personal brand recognition aided Studebaker's survival as a semi-luxury automobile manufacturer in an economic climate that forced many of their competitors out of business, but the impact and value of her name cannot be seamlessly separated from her design work. A pioneer in the industrial design field, Dryden became one of the first women to work on automotive design. Yet, as a woman artist, accounts of Dryden's career minimize the extent of her design work for Studebaker in favor of a narrative that, at best, attempt to justify her involvement through the sex-typing of interior design, and at worst contend the company only hired her as a marketing gimmick. This exemplifies the unjust burden of proof women must often overcome to receive recognition in male dominated fields. As one of the first women to work in industrial design, Dryden balanced contemporary expectations of femininity with the skills required for professional success. Although she was denied due credit for her

²⁵⁴ New York World's Fair 1939-1940 records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

achievements, the circumstances of her career serve to illuminate the conditions met by other women in the growing field of design and help explain the relative lack of information regarding women's contributions in the early years of the industrial design profession.

Biography

1938 – 1972

Aside from the brief setback Dryden experienced in the mid-1920s, her career had followed a swift upward trajectory ever since she signed her first contract with *Vogue*. It seemed her new found identity as an industrial designer would ensure her continue professional success. A profile of Dryden published in the October 1936 issue of *Studebaker Wheel* celebrated her achievements and talent, stating, “Before her lies an unlimited, almost uncharted future wherein her creative impulse can contribute to the happiness of everyday living.”²⁵⁵ However, after completing her work for Studebaker in the late-1930s Helen Dryden quietly faded from public memory. In 1938 she submitted a proposal to create a decorative panel painting for the 1939 New York World’s Fair, but she was declined a commission. In 1939 she published a children’s book, *ABC: Alphabet Book*, but by the end of the decade her career was inexplicably over.²⁵⁶

It is not entirely clear why Dryden stopped working, but in 1956 she was the feature of a special interest story in the *New York Times* in which she told a journalist that “she had suffered a great ‘personal shock,’ lost her ability to work and slowly eaten

²⁵⁵ Philip Hillyer Smith, “Girl Meets Job,” *Studebaker Wheel*, October 1936.

²⁵⁶ The final mention I could locate demonstrating Dryden’s involvement with the art community was that in 1941 she served as one of the judges for the 14th Annual High School Art Exhibition in the category of industrial design. “Macy’s Invites You to the Greater New York Eliminations of the 14th Annual National High School Art Exhibition,” *New York Times*, February 9, 1941.

away her principal savings.”²⁵⁷ This “personal shock” is never identified. However, in 1939, the last year in which Dryden is known to have produced any sort of design or work, her last remaining family member, her older brother, Ferdinand, passed away at the age of 61. She had lost her older sisters, Eugenie and Elizabeth in 1931 and 1932, respectively. Dryden’s parent’s had long since passed. Her mother died in 1913 when Dryden was still making a name for herself as a top illustrator for *Vogue*, and her father passed in 1923. As she never remarried following her separation from John Russell and never had any children of her own, Helen Dryden was alone.²⁵⁸

By the 1950s she was penniless, subsisting on welfare and the generosity of her friends.²⁵⁹ She lived in a poorly lit, shabbily furnished room at the Hotel Seventeen on New York’s East Side. The room lacked a kitchen and she had to rely on hot water from the sink to warm her food or to make coffee.²⁶⁰ She kept a stack of yellowed newspaper clippings as evidence of her many achievements, but otherwise the room showed no trace of her former life as a wealthy and successful commercial artist.²⁶¹ As may be expected of someone who had fallen so far, Dryden was despondent about her

²⁵⁷ “City Relief Is Cut on 50-Cent Issue: Helen Dryden, First Highly Paid Woman Designer, Gets \$30 Biweekly,” *New York Times*, July 25, 1956.

²⁵⁸ The only one of the Dryden siblings to have children was Eugenie, who married Maurice Tyson Ellicott, a prominent businessman from Baltimore. Neither Elizabeth nor Ferdinand ever married.

²⁵⁹ “No Title,” August 19, 1956.

²⁶⁰ “City Relief Is Cut on 50-Cent Issue: Helen Dryden, First Highly Paid Woman Designer, Gets \$30 Biweekly.”

²⁶¹ “Welfare Department Rectifies Mistake; Ex-Artist’s Relief Pay Raised to \$44.72,” *New York Times*, July 26, 1956.

situation. She muttered to the *New York Times* reporter that “[n]othing good ever happens anymore.”²⁶²

Unfortunately that sentiment would continue to define Dryden’s life. In 1966 she was institutionalized at Pilgrim State Hospital on Long Island, where she remained until her eventual passing in October 1972, just one month before her ninetieth birthday.²⁶³ Without any surviving family to claim her it is likely that Dryden still remains on Long Island, on the expansive grounds of the mental institution where she spent the final years of her life.²⁶⁴

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Helen Dryden. Social Security Death Index, 1935-2014. Number: 083-42-5051; Issue State: *New York*; Issue Date: 1966. <https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?db=ssdi&h=16556174&ti=0&indiv=try&gss=pt>

²⁶⁴ It was not uncommon for patients of Pilgrim State Hospital to go unclaimed following their deaths. These forgotten souls were buried in the ten-acre cemetery adjacent to the institution, their graves left anonymous and marked simply with a small headstone displaying the patient’s identifying number. The graves were left anonymous, in part, due to privacy concerns. As a medical facility, any information regarding patients was, and is, strictly confidential. Access to information regarding specific patients at Pilgrim State Hospital, even those long deceased, is restricted to immediate family members and direct descendants. As Helen Dryden had no children, we may never know exactly how she lived out her final days. “The Shadow of Insanity,” *Life*, 1938.

Conclusion

Helen Dryden's story ended tragically and inexplicably. We will never truly know the circumstances surrounding the great personal misfortune she endured that so profoundly altered the course of her life and took away her ability to work. However, despite this mysterious tragedy it is unlikely that Dryden would have continued to persevere in the field of industrial design. As much as she was a proponent of commercial art, she always thought of herself as an artist rather than a designer. In the 1930s Dryden identified on the census as an "industrial artist."²⁶⁵ During this time she worked primarily as a consultant. While other prominent industrial designers were busy building firms and collecting clients, Dryden continued to seek out consultant gigs, as she had since leaving *Vogue* in the early 1920s. She did not endeavor to open her own design firm, instead opting to act as a style consult for Walter Dorwin Teague and his firm. She offered her advice as a style authority to others, but she did not actively seek out other designers for collaborative projects. Instead, Dryden aligned her public persona more with the mythic modern artist; a creative genius with effortless talent working out her inspiration in solitude.²⁶⁶ By stressing her identity as an artist she

²⁶⁵ Sociologist Mason Griff describes the identity crisis that faced Americans seeking to work as professional artists; caught between the romanticized stereotype of the bohemian artist and the economic security offered through a career in the commercial arts. Mason Griff, "The Commercial Artist," in *Identity and Anxiety: Survival of the Person in Mass Society*, ed. Maurice R. Stein, Arthur J. Vidich, and David Manning White (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press of Glencoe, 1960), 218–41.

²⁶⁶ Of course, this represents the public persona that Dryden fashioned for herself rather than her actual means of practice. A careful reading of interviews with Dryden over her lifetime reveals the conscious shaping of the narrative surrounding her career as an artist. Her story shifted over the years. While in early interviews she discussed her training in Philadelphia, as she got older she drew attention away from the fact that she had any experience with art before beginning at *Vogue*, instead choosing to fashion herself as a naïve artist.

effectively alienated herself from the practice of industrial design, which was fully established as its own profession by the early 1930s. As the separate spheres of fine art and design became increasingly pronounced they also became competitive, with each boasting the creation of the definitive art of new century.²⁶⁷ The art world continued to intersect with consumer demands and serve the interests of corporate patrons, but as definitions of artistic practice became more rigid there were fewer opportunities for experimentation.²⁶⁸

It is also impossible to know the full extent of Helen Dryden's work. Whether her work was misattributed, stolen outright or simply forgotten the ability of scholars to recover Dryden's history (or any artist, for that matter) is inherently limited. While this dissertation was not initially intended as a reclamation project it necessarily evolved in that direction once I realized that the details of her biography reveal inherent biases within the canon of design history. Helen Dryden's life is a compelling story and I personally find her work interesting and beautiful, but it is the repeated and institutionalized effacement of her labor and not the individual products of her design that is the most significant aspect of her career. I agree with feminist scholars who argue that recovering the biographies of "exceptional" women is problematic and generally serves to bolster the canon rather than challenge it. However, we cannot

²⁶⁷ In 1932 the designer Norman Bel Geddes "portrayed industrial design as the true art form of the twentieth century," by comparing it to such works as the Athenian Parthenon, stained glass from the Gothic cathedral at Chartres, France, and the Renaissance frescos of Giotto. He wrote, "Just as surely as the artists of the fourteenth century are remembered by their cathedrals, so will those of the twentieth century be remembered for their factories and the products of the factories." From *Horizons in Industrial Design*, 1932, quoted in Jonathan Woodham, *Twentieth Century Design* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art*.

²⁶⁸ Erika Doss details changes in corporate patronage in the 1930s and 1940s. Doss, *Benton, Pollock, and the Politics of Modernism: From Regionalism to Abstract Expressionism*.

adequately understand the ideologies and social structures responsible for limiting women's power and access to educational and professional opportunities without examining examples of the interactions that particular women had with these institutions. Within this framework, and placed within the context of its historical moment, biography can be a useful tool to critique the canon and to reveal inconsistencies in the existing narrative. Therefore, in the case of Helen Dryden, her absence from design history despite her congruency with the canon of that discipline serves to highlight its irregularities and to reveal the biased nature of its construction.

Dryden's achievements as an artist and a designer would not have been possible if not for the unstable boundaries between fine art and consumerism and fluctuations in the gendered division of labor caused by economic, political, and social developments during her lifetime. Women made great strides in the early twentieth century towards equality; gaining the right to vote, improved access to higher education, and greater numbers in the workforce.²⁶⁹ Part of this story is the hard-fought battle by impassioned, dedicated, and ambitious women to achieve a level of equality with men, but the other part of the story is how these achievements were facilitated by the American capitalist system. Enormous growth in industrial production at the turn of the twentieth century led to an increased demand for factory workers, a void that women eagerly filled. Corporations warmly welcomed the women workers, who were typically paid far less than their male counterparts. Greater production begets the need for greater

²⁶⁹ Known as the first wave of feminism, the movement was led by middle-class white women and primarily served their interests. The right to vote was not extended to all women, regardless of race, until the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965.

consumption. Thus, the needs and desires of women began to be recognized in the early twentieth century as companies came to recognize the buying power of female consumers. This created a demand for women designers.

Corporations often eagerly espouse the values of social progress when there is money to be made. Nike's recent decision to feature the controversial NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick as a spokesperson was not purely altruistic [Fig. 105]. The company carefully calculated the cost-benefit ratio before coming to the conclusion that siding with Kaepernick's political cause would bring them more business than the company stood to lose, and they were correct. Following the release of the Kaepernick ad, Nike sales saw a boost of more than 30% over the previous year.²⁷⁰ In the 1920s and 1930s corporations like Studebaker were similarly motivated to hire female designers. They sought to specifically target women consumers and, while a woman automotive designer broke with established boundaries of the gendered division of labor, the companies recognized that the move would generate more customers than it served to alienate. GM repeated this marketing strategy in the 1950s with Harley Earl's Damsels of Design, a team of women designers who essentially served in the same role as Dryden [Fig.106]. The Damsels of Design acted as style consultants to make GM cars more appealing to women consumers and, just like Dryden, the women were prominently featured in GM's marketing.²⁷¹ These corporations found an economic advantage in breaking with the status quo and bringing women into the field of automotive design.

²⁷⁰ Gina Martinez, "Despite Outrage, Nike Sales Increased 31% After Kaepernick Ad," *Time*, 2018, <http://time.com/5390884/nike-sales-go-up-kaepernick-ad/>.

²⁷¹ Libby Sellers, *Women Design: Pioneers in Architecture, Industrial, Graphic and Digital Design from the Twentieth Century to the Present Day* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2017) 84-87.

However, this gendered marketing approach is precisely what led critics to discredit the work of early women industrial designers. They maintained that the employment of these women as designers was merely a gimmick, but this incorrectly assumes that women consumers represent a less significant market than male consumers even though each group represents half of the general population. It also devalues the features women desire in an automobile as secondary to those desired by men. Although, as I demonstrated in chapter three, the gendering of different aspects of the automobile as masculine and feminine was, itself, a fabrication.

The different cultural and social experiences of men and women did have a degree of impact on the features that were sought in an automobile, but the favoring of male-centric design over a female-centric one demonstrates a clear bias. Critics often point to the contributions of early male industrial designers as significant enhancements to an object's functionality, thereby justifying the designer's canonization by the metric of innovation. However, as I demonstrated with Dryden's redesign of the Studebaker instrument panel, women did contribute to the functionality of design. Moreover, Dryden was far from the first woman to contribute to improvements in automobile functionality. In 1909, Mary Heydecker submitted the first American patent for an automotive ambulance.²⁷² In 1921, a young woman by the name of Dorothy Skelton made national headlines after inventing an open muffler that for the first time helped silence the engine noise of early vehicles.²⁷³ These are merely two examples of the

²⁷² Ryan Corbett Bell, *The Ambulance: A History* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2009).

²⁷³ "Girl Invents Open Muffler to Silence Exhaust on Autos," *Los Angeles Herald*, March 23, 1921.

many contributions women made to automotive design and innovation by that can be found through a simple search of the United States' patent records.²⁷⁴

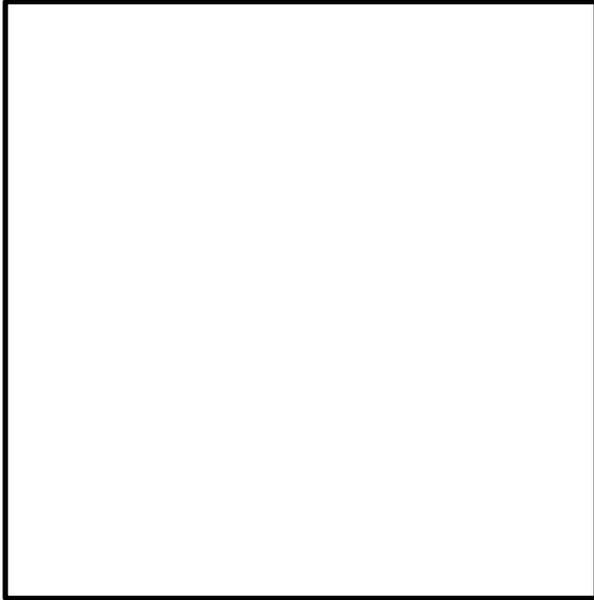
Sometimes the functional aspects of women's design are neglected precisely because they attend primarily to the needs of women consumers, and because they are concerned with functional innovation rather than aesthetic improvement. For instance, women were responsible for many early proposals for child-centered automobile safety. In the early 1920s, Amy Goldsmith, Margaret Stwalley, and Dora Cagle each patented varying designs for devices meant to restrain small children inside an automobile [Fig. 107]. In 1922, Mary Goldsmith patented her idea for a scoop-like device that could be attached to the front of an automobile that she hoped would help save lives of children who were being run over in the street. While these designs were not necessarily

²⁷⁴ Using a list of the 50 most popular names for girls born at the turn of the twentieth century I searched through the patent records from 1900 - 1940 for examples of designs by women with these names and found a cache of interesting designs. The results include artistic designs meant to primarily serve an aesthetic purpose, as well as utilitarian designs, based on engineering and the improvement of an object's functionality. My findings include: Alice Barney's parlor car chair (1901), Alice Smith's automobile top slide (1910), Anna Anzell's automobile mirror (1927), Anna Hagstedt's flying machine (1909), Anna Logan's protective hood for airplane pilots (1918), Anna Mutschler's vehicle (1909), Anna Winter's car door safety signal (1917), Anne Boever's coffee maker (1928), Bonnie Lemm's automobile window regulator handle (1929) and radiator ornament (1933), Clara Nelson's spring tire (1919), Cora Hughes' deflector for headlights (1922), Dora Foley's automobile ornament (1931), Edith Butler's automobile sand box (1921), Edna Leonhardt's textile fabric for upholstery (1932), Elizabeth Douglas' vehicle trailer (1921), Elizabeth Gregory's buggy seat (1900), Ellen Willett Magill's vehicle bodies (1927 & 1940), Elsa Tennhardt's cigar lighter (1928), Emma Kirch's bicycle carriage (1927), Ethel Smith's deflecting shade for headlights (1927), Florence Lewis' (aka Estee Lauder) various designs for cosmetics and handbags (ca. 1930s & 1940s), Florence May's adjustable lamp (1939), Gertrude Thompson's container for use in automobile interior fitting (1930), Grace Murphy's auto semi-shade (1925), Helen and Florence Stark's lunch counter (1935), Helen Davidson's vehicle body (1913), Helen Doherty's automobile body (1930), Helen Marcin's automatic electric hand signal (1927), Helen Wilhelmy's vehicle floor mat (1935), Lois Beam's grille (1933), Margaret MacDonald's Choo-Choo Car (1921), Martha John's car fender (1905), Martha Shaunessey's vehicle signal (1939), Mary Cox's air cooled seat cushion for automobiles (1923), Mary Harris' automobile bonnet (1912), Mary Little's auto hood lamp (1925), Nellie Gage's head lamp for automobiles (1937), Pearl Watson's automobile radiator cap (1921), and Ruth Chatfield's convertible carriage and crib (1928). The date following each design indicates the year that the patent was filed.

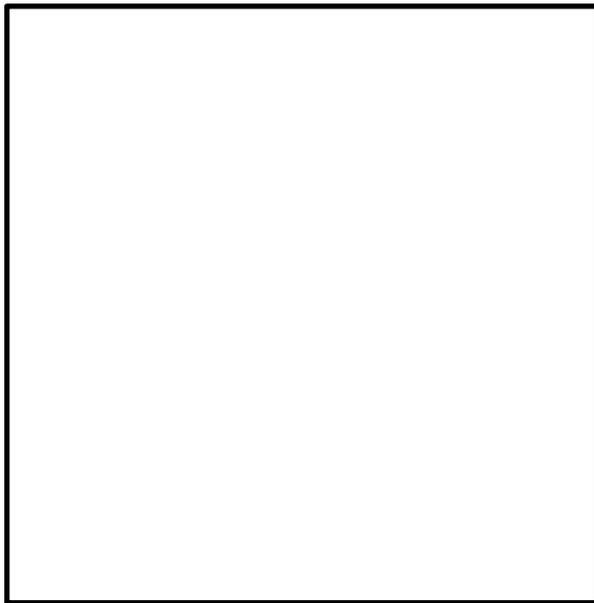
popular, effective, or beautiful they are further evidence of the active engagement of women in the field of industrial design in the early years of the field.

This suggests that the formation of a more inclusive history of design does not require a broadening of the definition of design as much as it requires a reframing to bring attention to the differing design concerns of marginalized groups. Certain exceptional individuals, like Helen Dryden, succeeded in overcoming biases to achieve careers as designers whose work satisfied the Eurocentric patriarchal aesthetic and values generally accepted as the dominant culture in the United States. However, this has never been the only culture and other accounts of American experience are equally deserving of historical inquiry and reclamation. The question of how to overcome these biases and to create a historical discipline that is feminist in nature and not merely inclusive of feminist scholarship is not a new one, and I certainly do not have a magic answer. However, I hope that this dissertation has established the continuing significance of this question and demonstrated how we can construct a more complete and diverse history of design, using tools such as primary records, consumer history and reception theory, to address the historical needs of underrepresented groups.

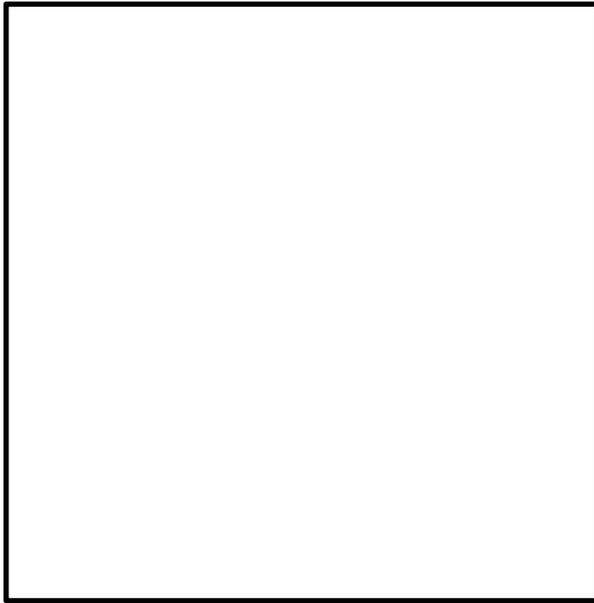
Illustrations



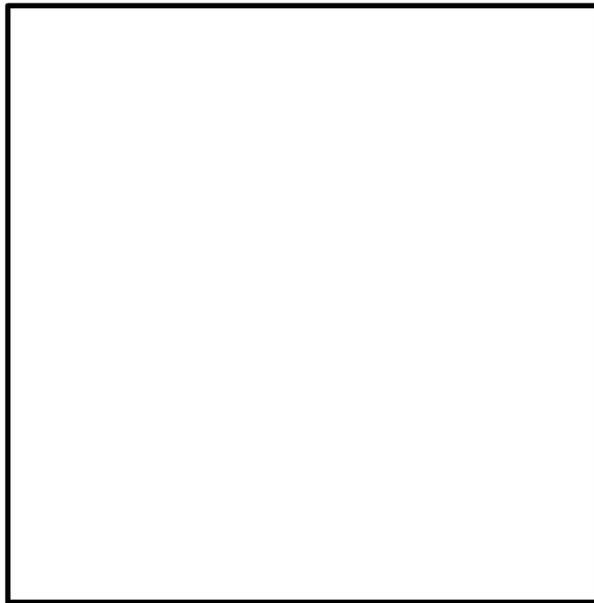
1. Studebaker President advertisement, 1936.



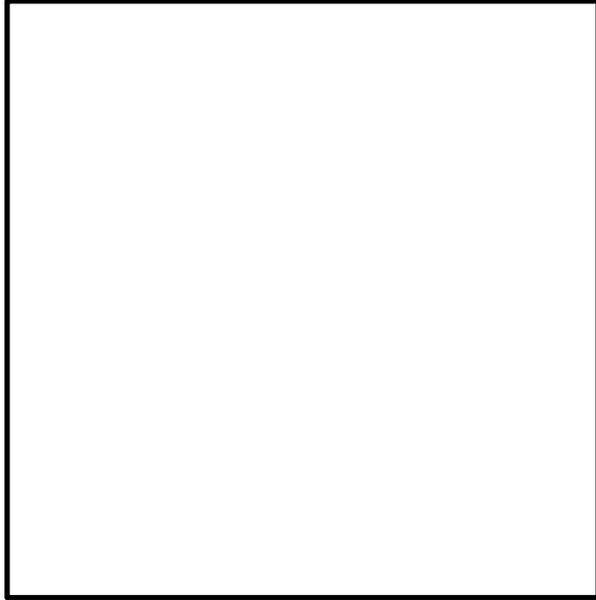
2. Advertisement, *Arizona Republic*, October 15, 1929, p. 12.



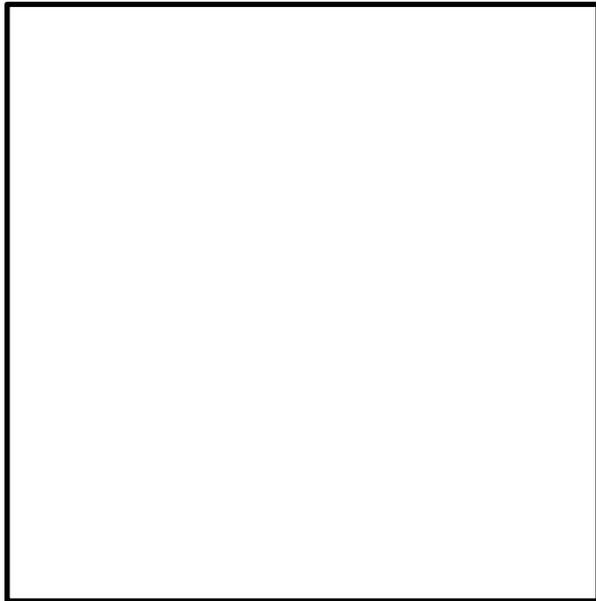
3. Anne Rittenhouse, "The Well-Dressed Woman: Costumes for Bridesmaids," *The Inter Ocean*, September 15, 1907, illustrated by Helen Dryden.



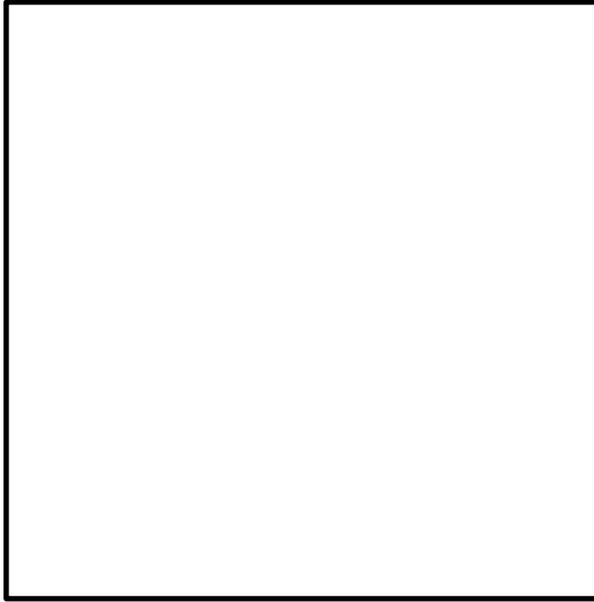
4. Illustration depicting Helen Dryden looking out the window of her third story apartment. Illustration by D. and H. Ferriss, pictured in "Vie de Bohême in Washington Square," *Vanity Fair*, August 1915.



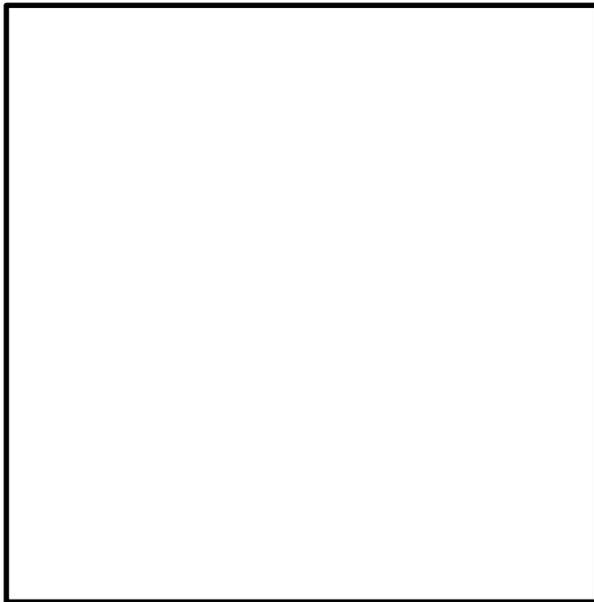
5. Helen Dryden at her work table, ca. 1929.



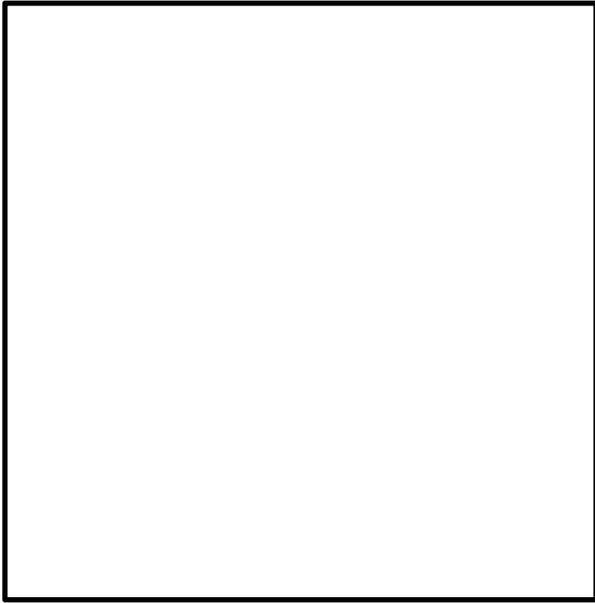
6. Illustration depicting a salon style gathering at the studio of Helen Dryden . Dryden is reading from a book by Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore. She is accompanied by a man playing music by the French composer Claude Debussy. Illustrated by Anthony Euwer. Pictured in "This is life - In Washington Square," *Vanity Fair*, April 1915.



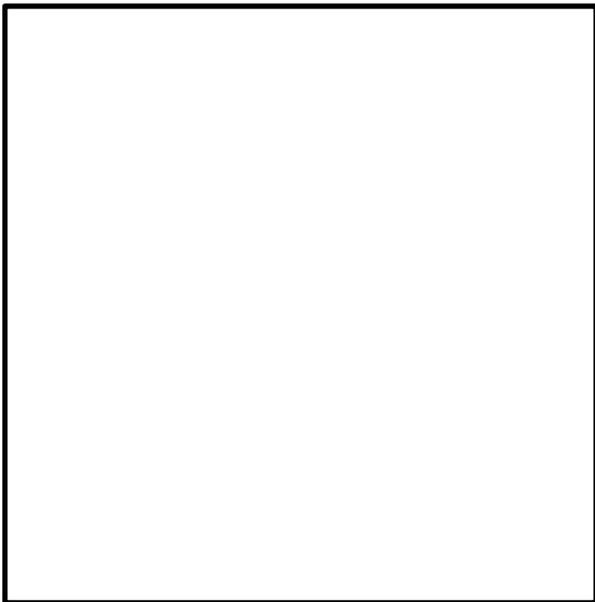
7. Helen Dryden, cover illustration, *Vogue*, November 15, 1920.



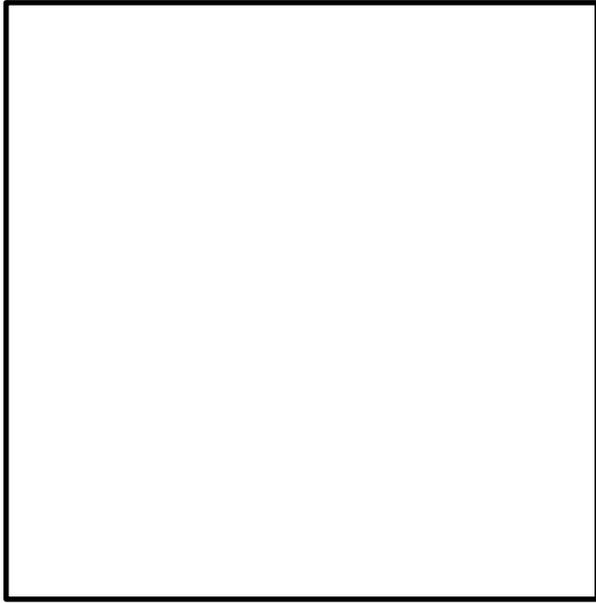
8. Arnold Genthe, *Portrait of Helen Dryden*, photograph, 1921.



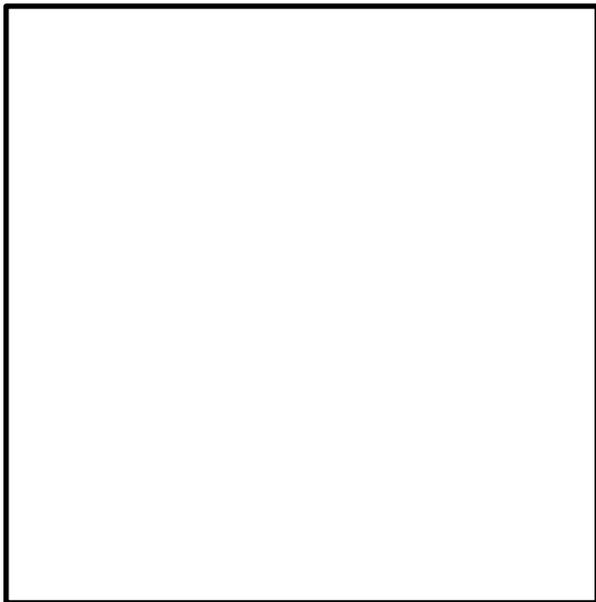
9. Helen Dryden, *Untitled*, Oil on Canvas, n.d.



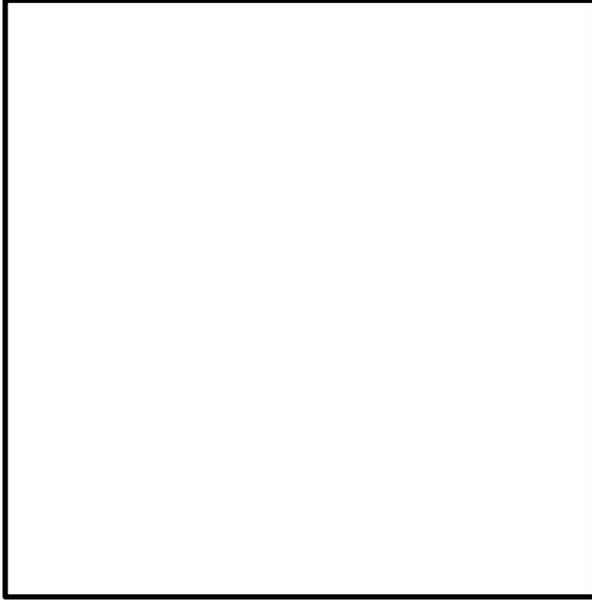
10. Charles Dana Gibson, *"The Eternal Question,"* ca. 1900s.



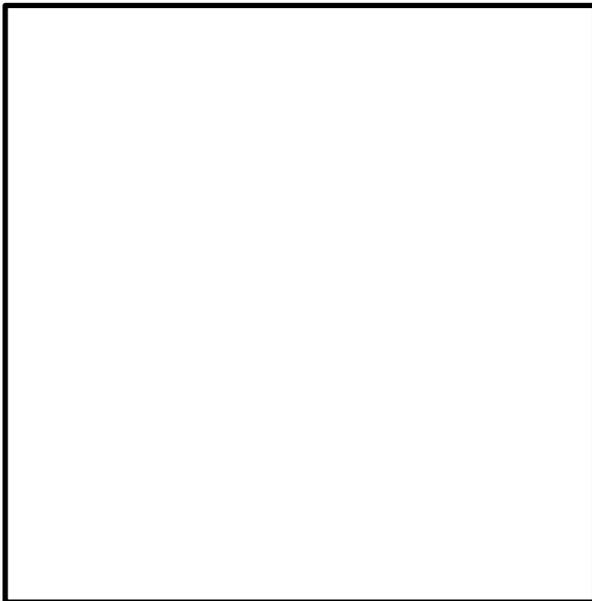
11. Harrison Fisher, "A Girl's Number," *The Ladies Home Journal*, May 1909.



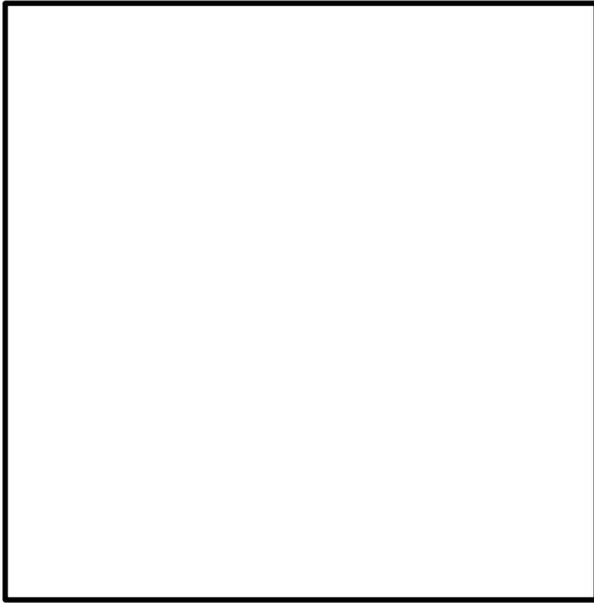
12. John Held Jr., "Teaching Old Dogs New Tricks," *Life*, Feb. 18, 1928.



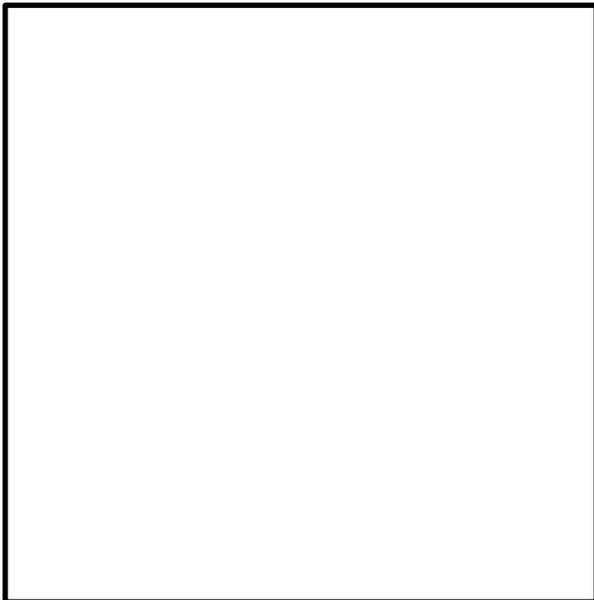
13. Cantilever Shoes advertisement, *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 3, 1929, B2



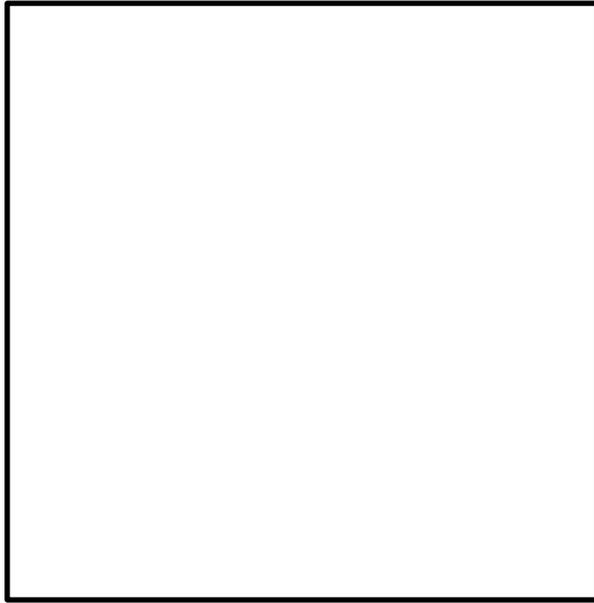
14. Jessie Wilcox Smith, cover, *Ladies Home Journal*, April 1905.



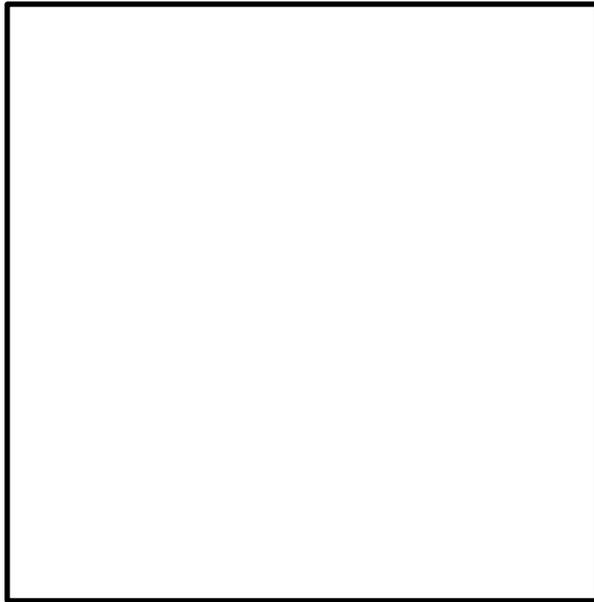
15. Jessie Wilcox Smith, cover, *Good Housekeeping*, April 1929.



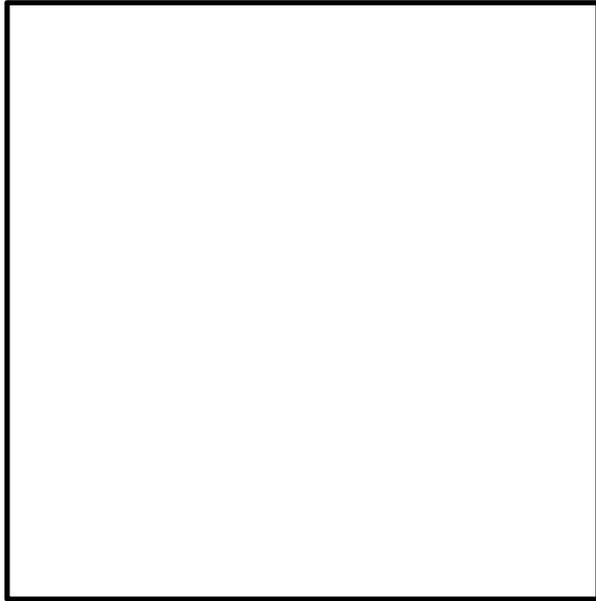
16. Helen Dryden, cover, *Vogue*, August 15, 1917.



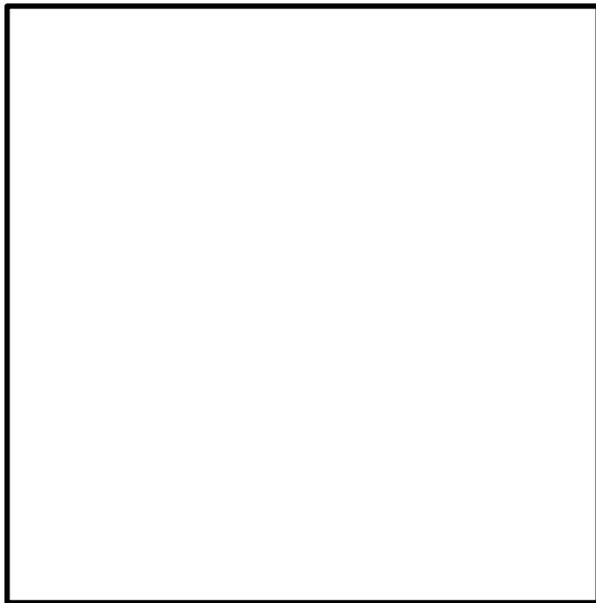
17. Carl Kleinschmidt, fashion illustrations, *The Delineator*, March 1912.



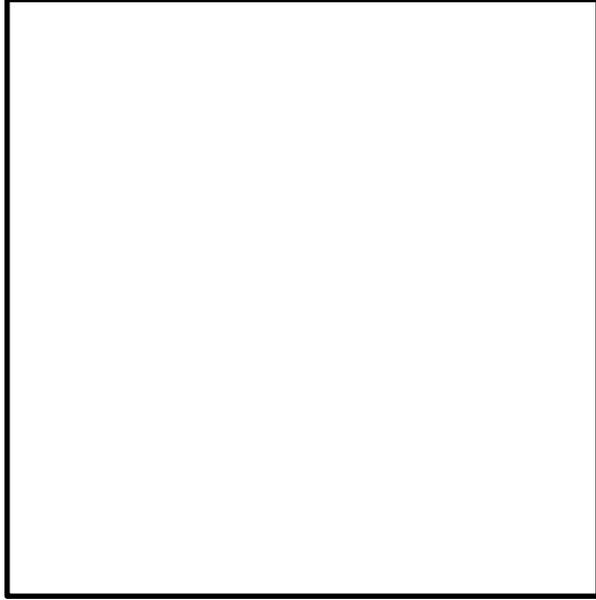
18. Helen Dryden, gowns by Jenny and Worth, fashion illustration, *Vogue*, March 15, 1922.



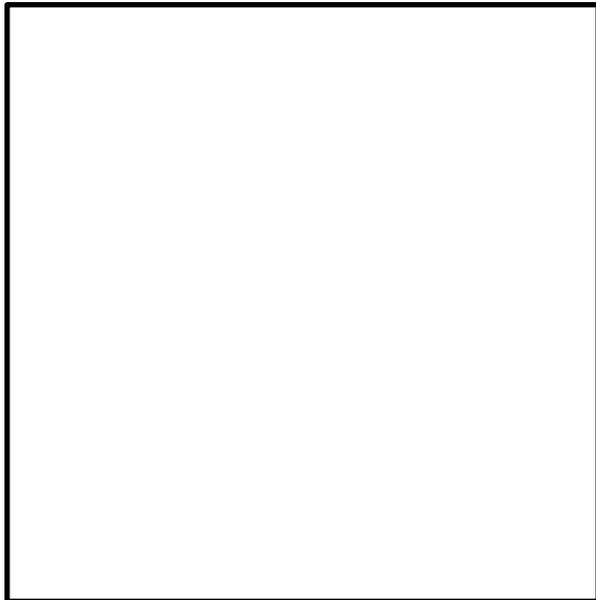
19. Helen Dryden, wrap by Bendel, fashion illustration, *Vogue*, November 15, 1921.



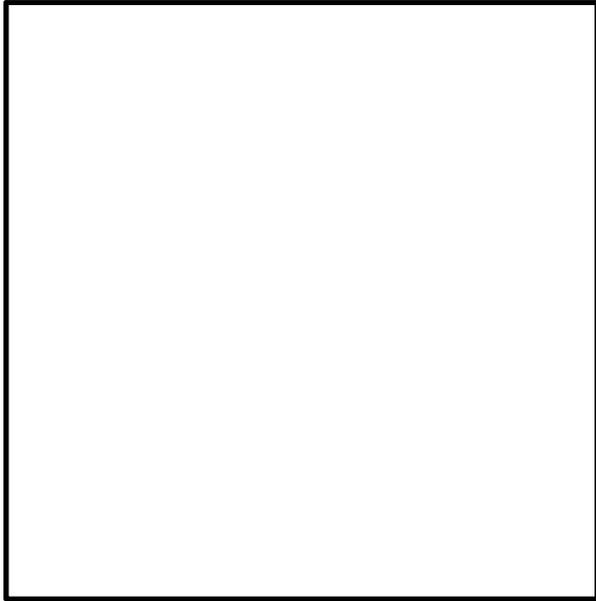
20. Wrap by Bakst, photograph, *Vogue*, May 15, 1921.



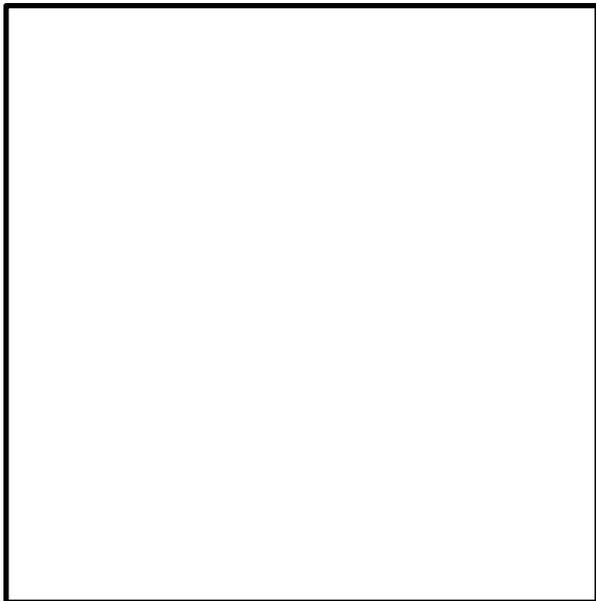
21. Paul Iribe, fashion illustration, *Les Robes de Paul Poiret*, 1908.



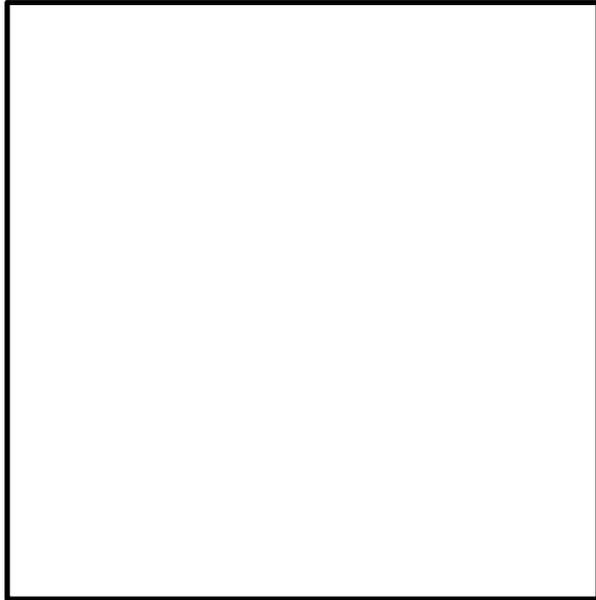
22. Helen Dryden, advertisements for Lux, *Gebrauchsgraphik*, September 1, 1928.



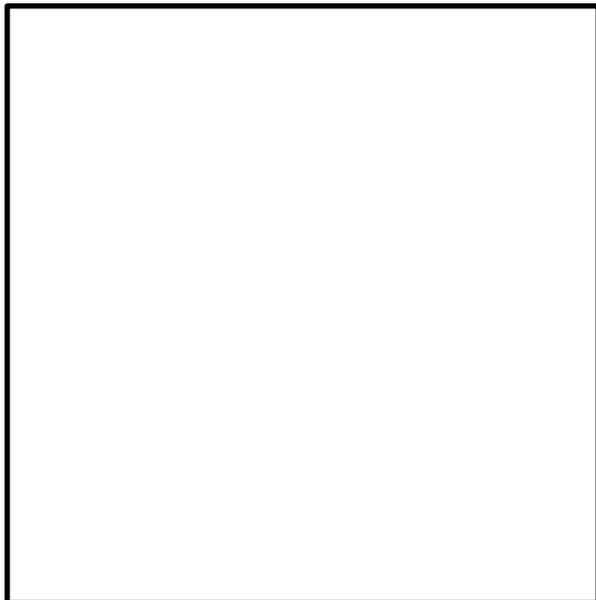
23. LeJaren à Hiller, advertisement for Lux , *Ladies Home Journal*, September 1927.



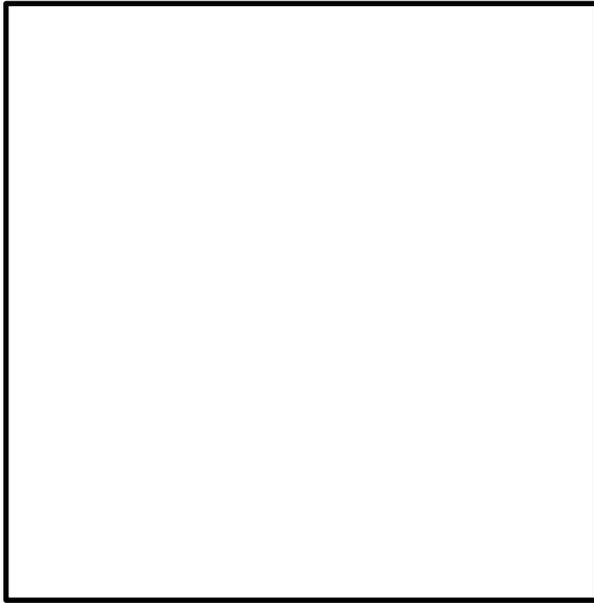
24. Helen Dryden, cover illustration, *Vogue*, May 1, 1916.



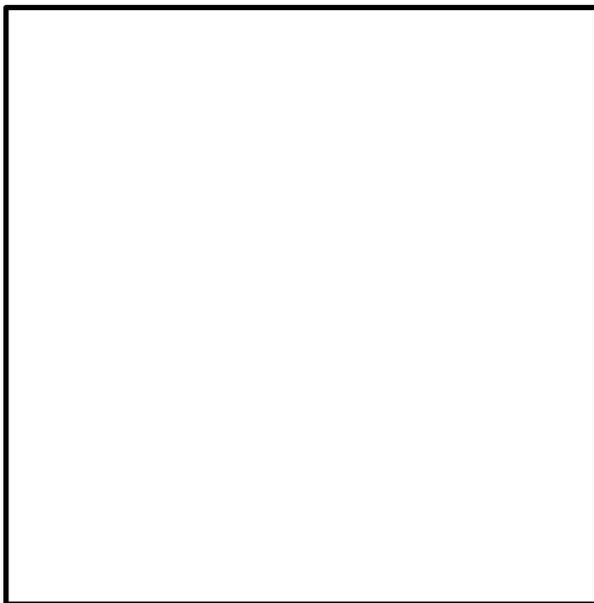
25. Helen Dryden, cover illustration, *Vogue*, December 1, 1917.



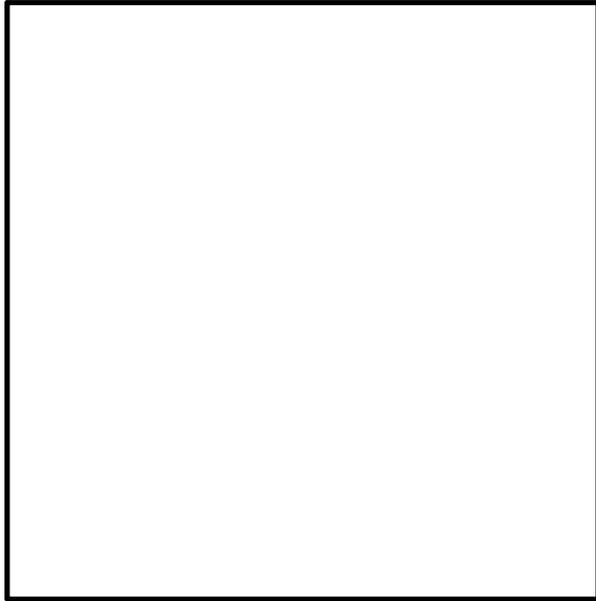
26. Helen Dryden, cover illustration, *Vogue*, June 1, 1920.



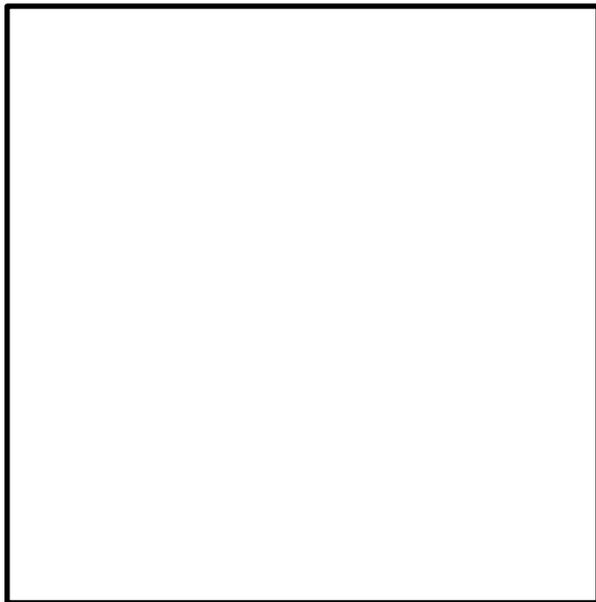
27. Helen Dryden, cover illustration, *Vogue*, November 1, 1921.



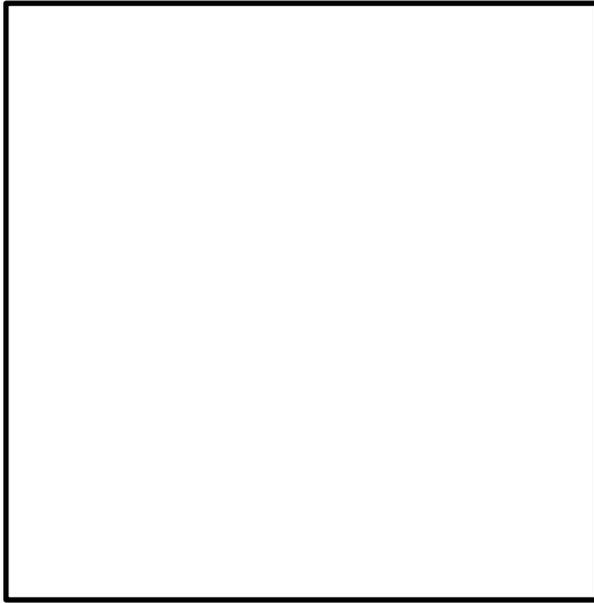
28. Helen Dryden, cover illustration, *Vogue*, October 1, 1914.



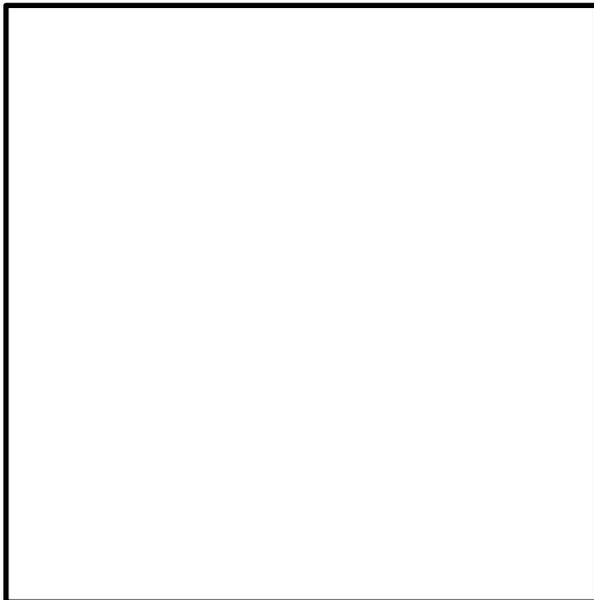
29. Helen Dryden, cover illustration, *Vogue*, August 1, 1910.



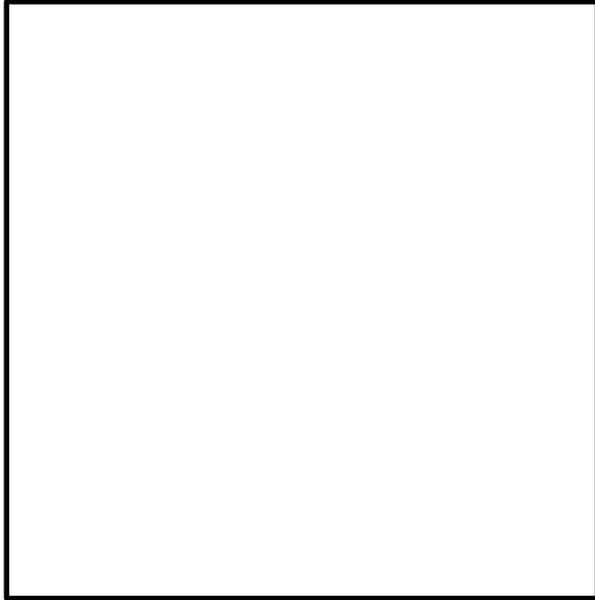
30. Helen Dryden, cover illustration, *Vogue*, September 1, 1922.



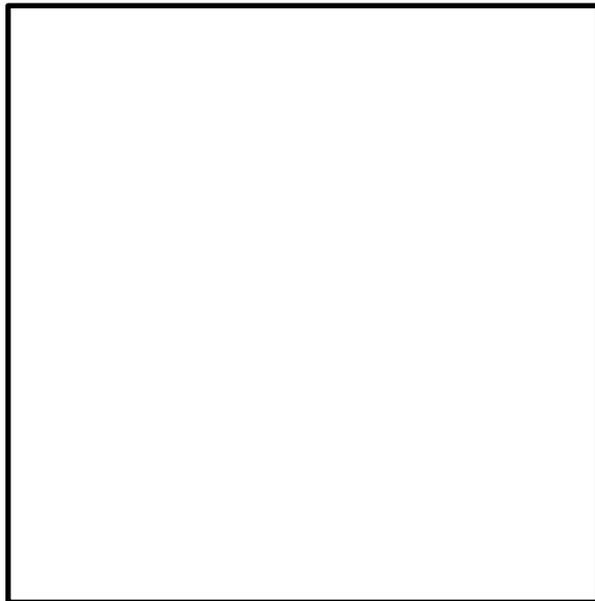
31. Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, *Grande Odalisque*, 1814, oil on canvas, Louvre.



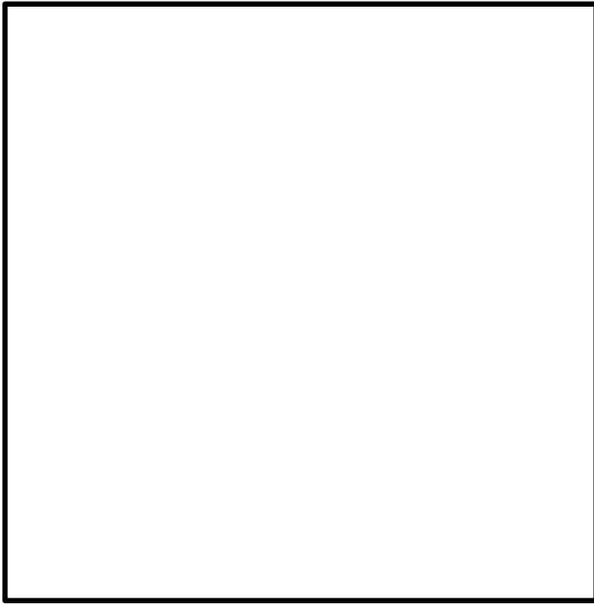
32. Helen Dryden, cover illustration, *The Delineator*, July 1929.



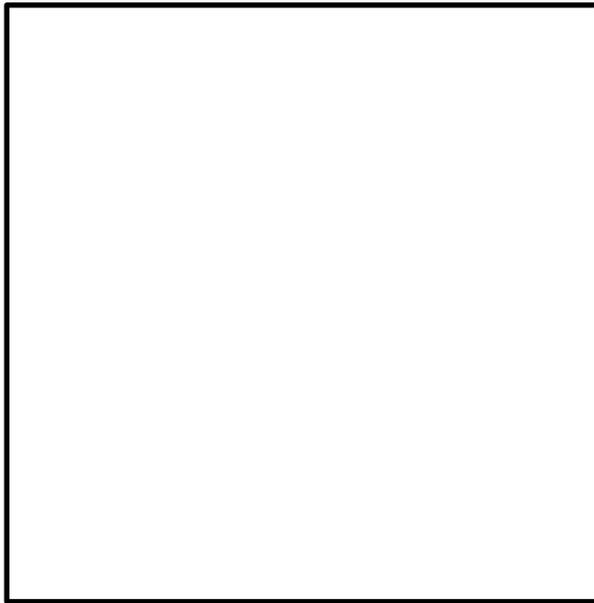
33. Helen Dryden, cover illustration, *The Delineator*, October 1929.



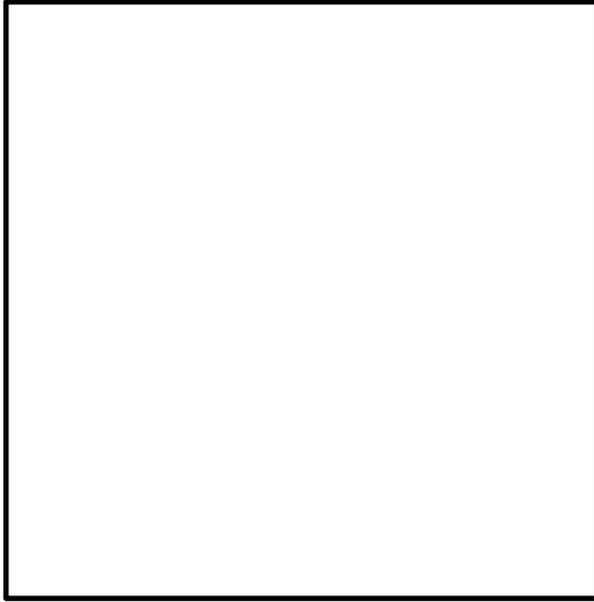
34. Amedeo Modigliani, *Jeanne Hebuterne*, 1919, Oil on Canvas, The Metropolitan Museum of Art



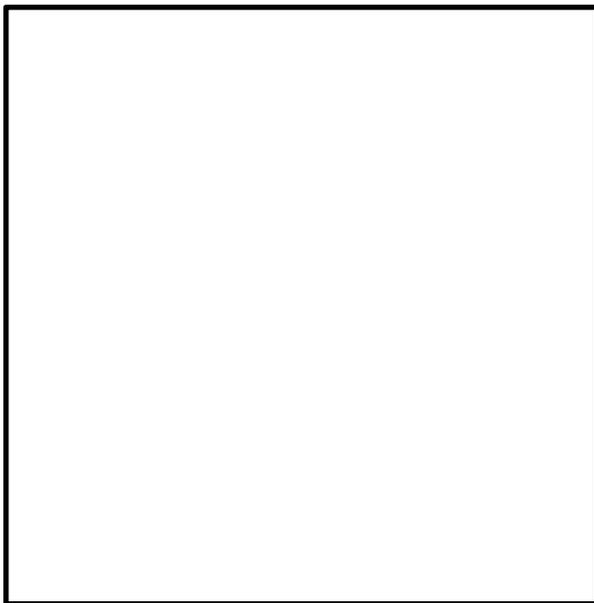
35. Sheet music for Watch Your Step, written by Irving Berlin, published by The General Publishing Society, lithograph, ca. 1915 (published), Gabrielle Enthoven Collection, The Victoria and Albert Museum, S.3844-2013.



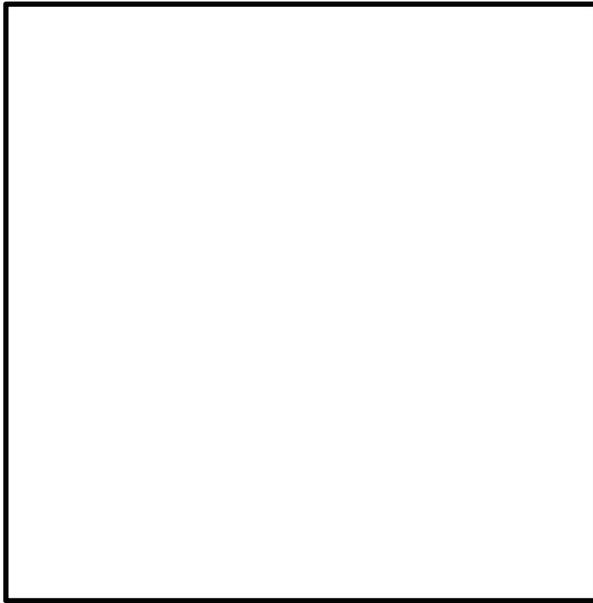
36. Ethel Barrymore and Henry Daniel in Clair de Lune, pictured in *Vanity Fair*, July 1921, p. 20.



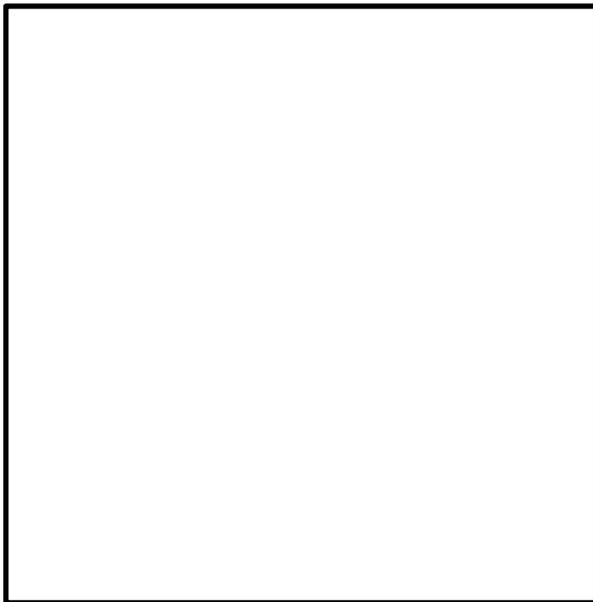
37. John Wentworth Russell, *Self-Portrait in an Artist's Smock*, oil on canvas, ca. 1930.



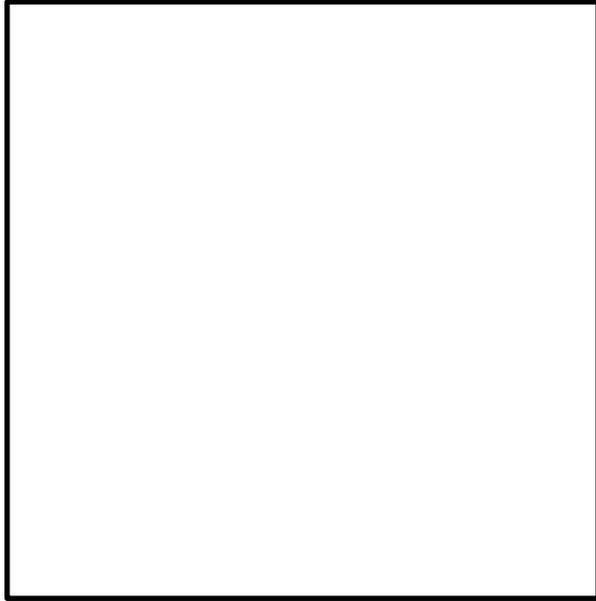
38. Illustrations by Helen Dryden. Pictured in "Early Italian, 'Moyen Age,' Watteau – what you will – the wedding gown was in the beginning, is not, and ever shall be, light and flowers and lace," *Vogue*, May 1, 1915, pg. 32.



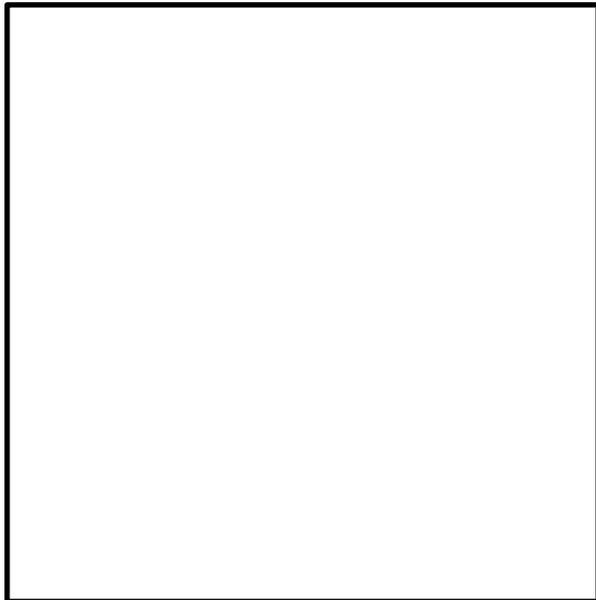
39. Elizabeth Dryden, passport photo, ca. 1914.



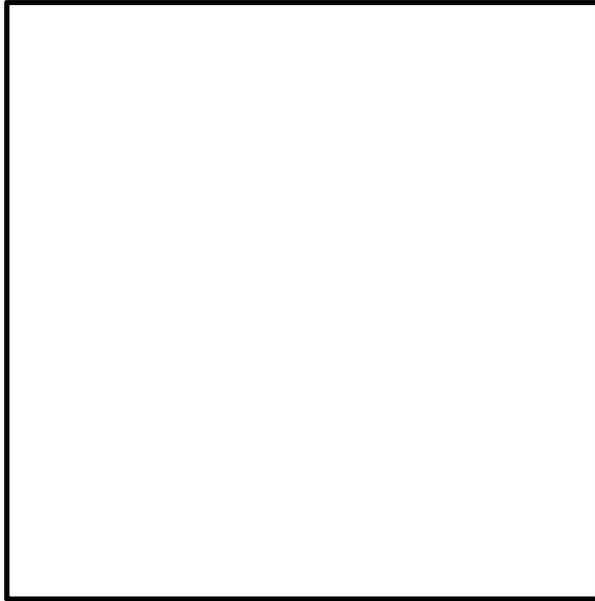
40. Photo of Helen Dryden accompanied by a list of things she likes, from "Our New York Artists," *Vogue*, January 1, 1923.



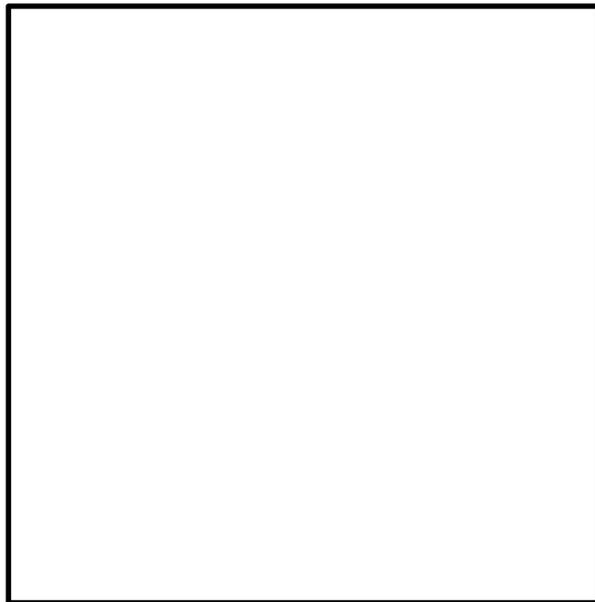
41. "Rooms in Miss Helen Dryden's Apartment," *House and Garden*, July 1920, p. 38.



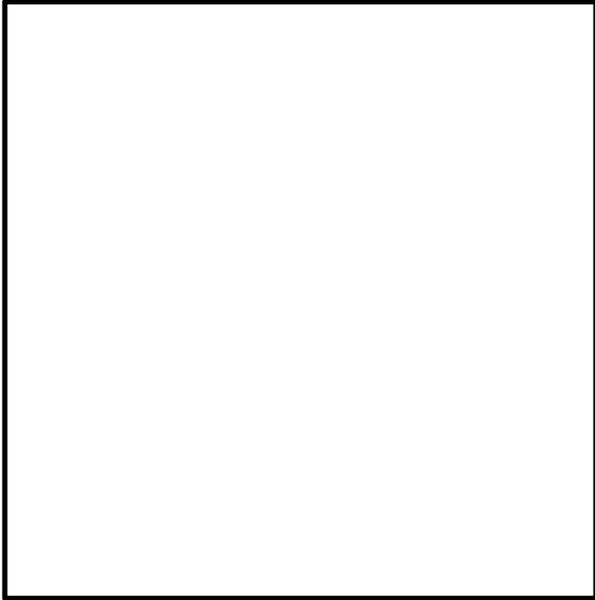
42. John Davidson, ca. 1920.



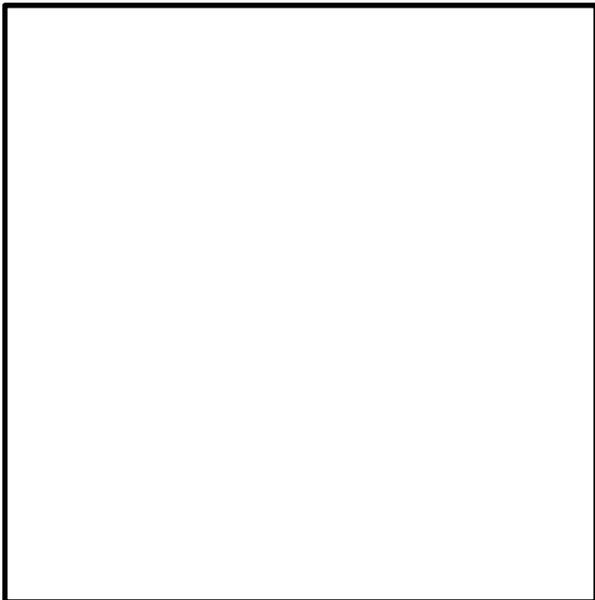
43. Illustrations by Helen Dryden. Pictured in, "The Historic Seven Veils Are Rivalled by Eight Modern Ones," *Vogue*, November 15, 1922.



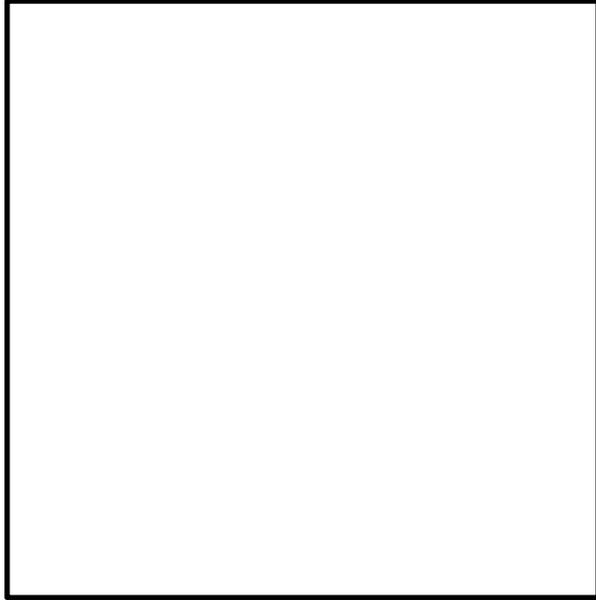
44. [Detail] Illustrations by Helen Dryden. Pictured in, "The Historic Seven Veils Are Rivalled by Eight Modern Ones," *Vogue*, November 15, 1922.



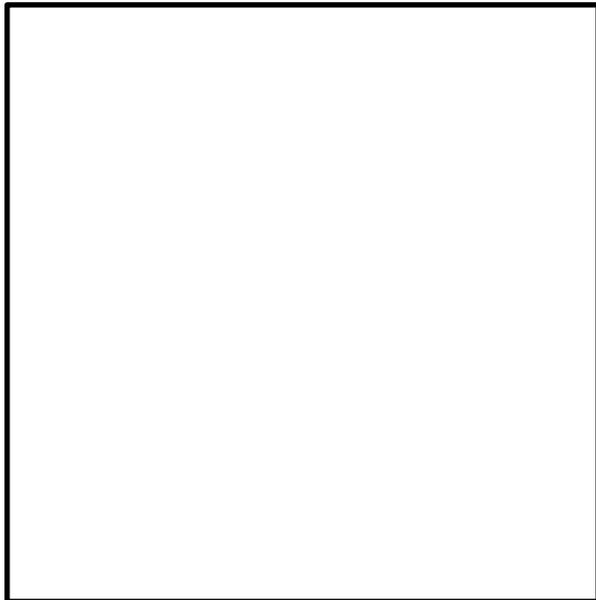
45. Orland Cambell, *Portrait of Helen Dryden*, 1922.



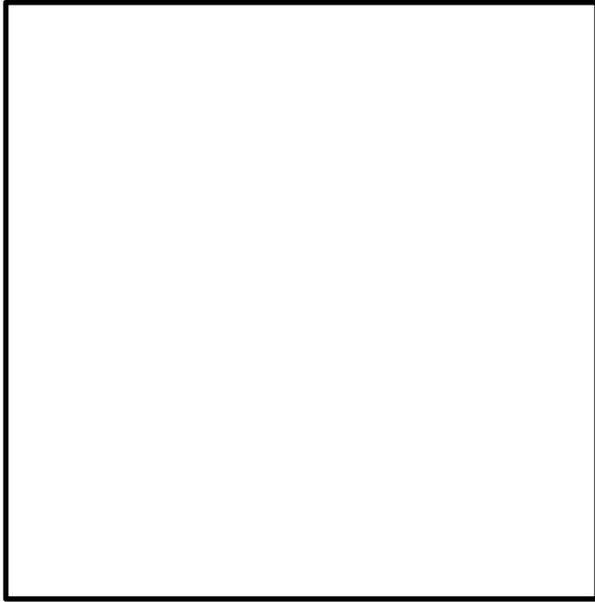
46. Albrecht Durer, *Self-Portrait*, oil on panel, 1500, Alte Pinakothek, Munich.



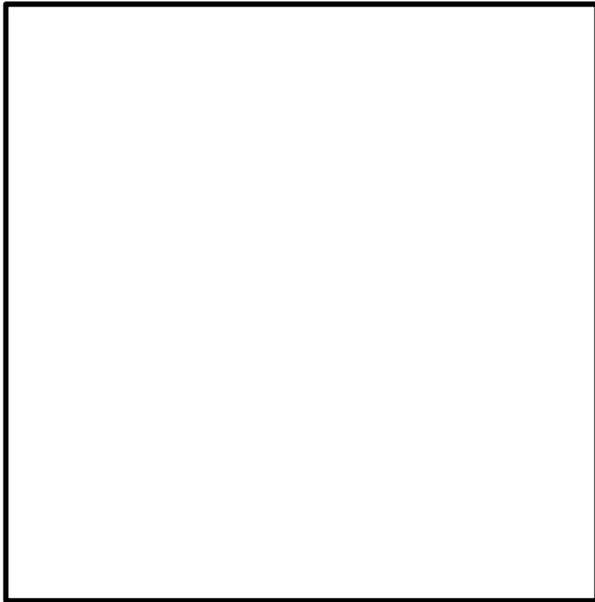
47. Helen Dryden, Advertisement for Knox Hats, *Vogue*, October 1, 1924.



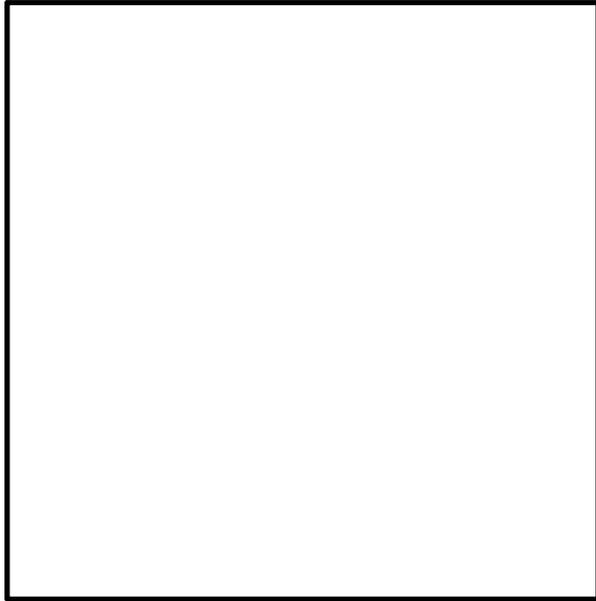
48. Helen Dryden, Advertisement for Aberfoyle Fabrics, ca. 1928.



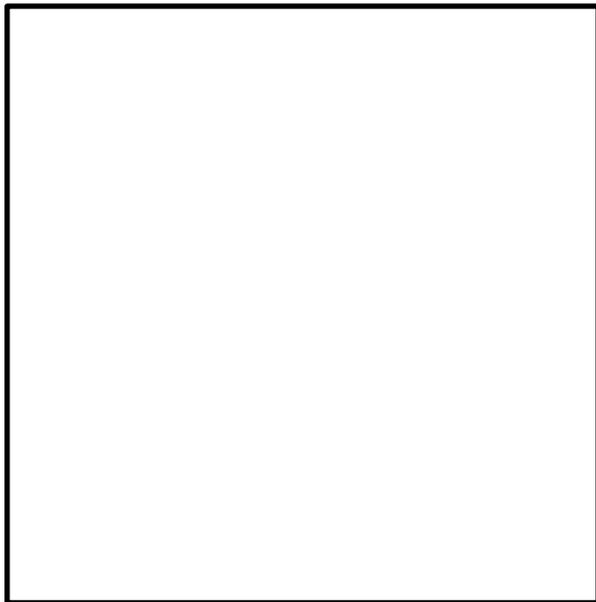
49. Helen Dryden, fashion designs, *Vogue*, June 15, 1915.



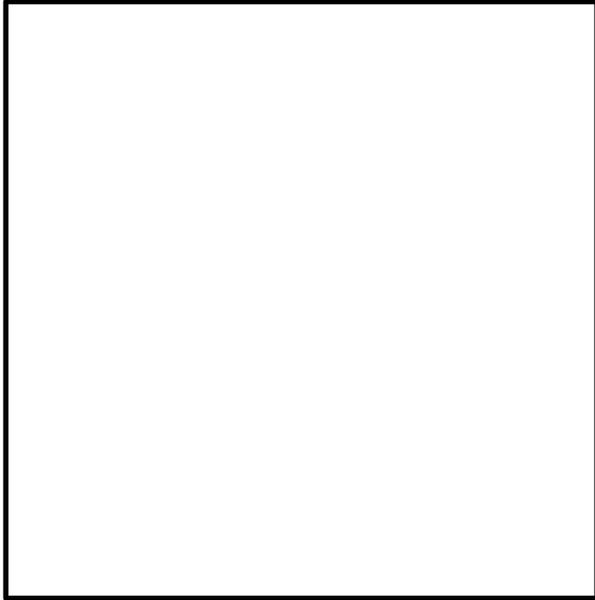
50. Helen Dryden, fashion designs, *Vogue*, January 15, 1921.



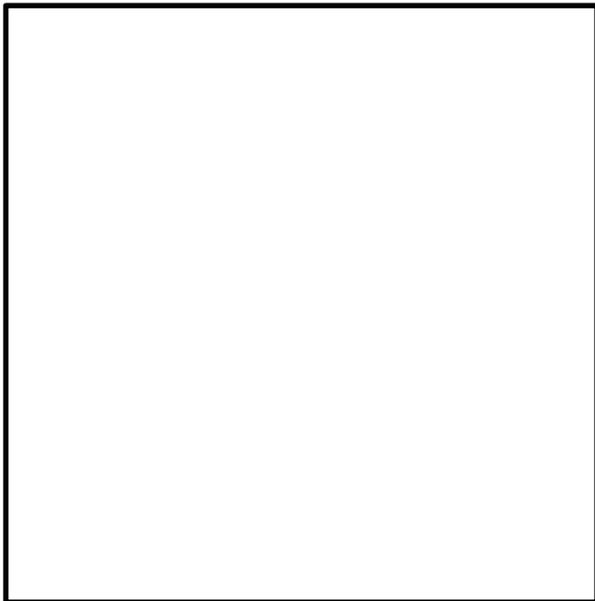
51. Helen Dryden, poster, *Watch Your Step*, 1914.



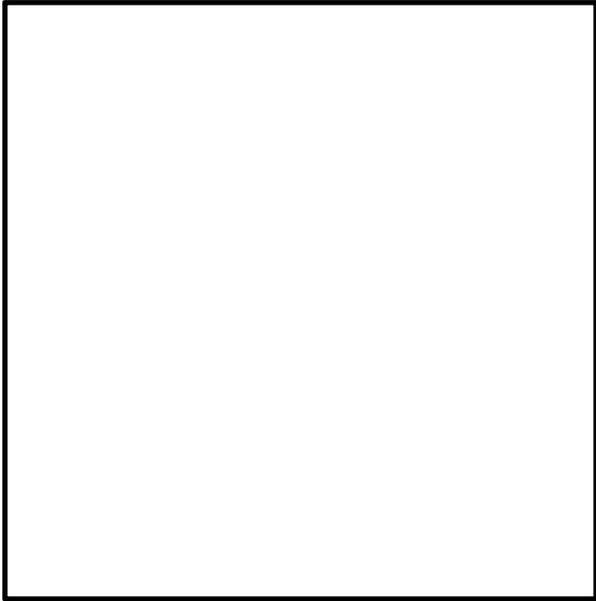
52. Helen Dryden, costume design for Vernon Castle's character in "Watch Your Step," *Vogue*, February 1, 1915.



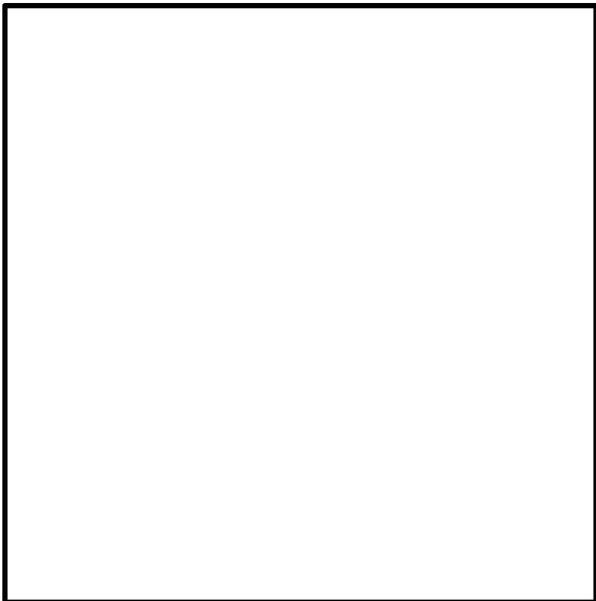
53. Helen Dryden, costume designs for "Clair le lune," Vogue, May 15, 1921.



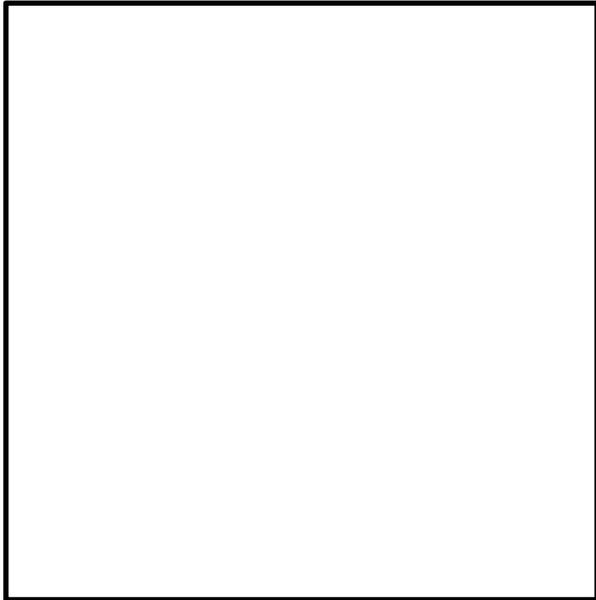
54. Violet Kemble Cooper in a costume designed by Helen Dryden for "Clair le Lune," design fabricated by Schneider-Anderson, 1921.



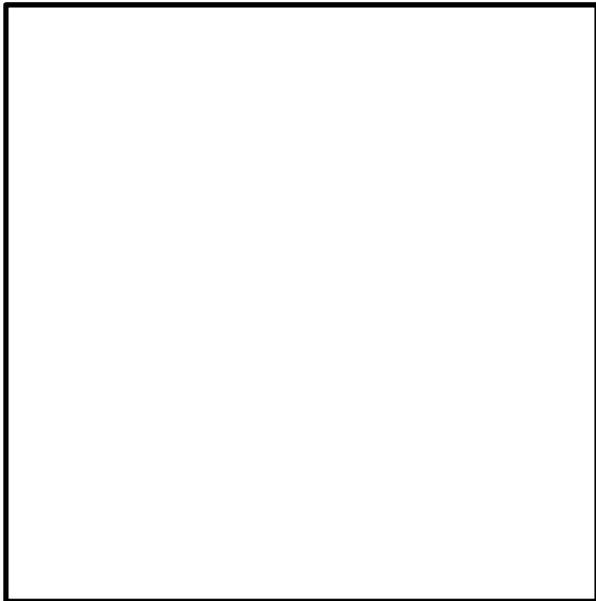
55. Ethel Barrymore in a costume designed by Helen Dryden for "Clair le Lune," design fabricated by Schneider-Anderson, 1921.



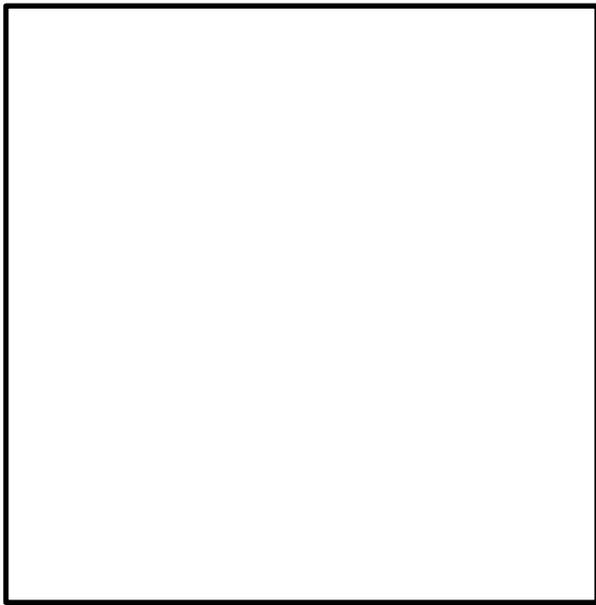
56. Helen Dryden, cover illustration, *Vogue*, January 15, 1920.



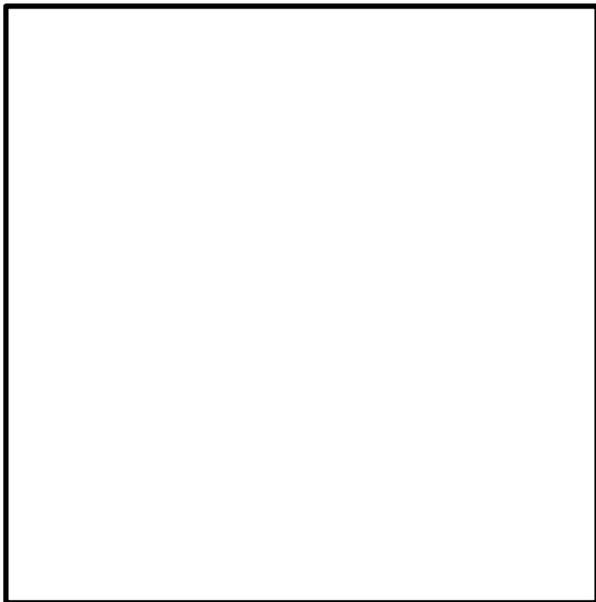
57. Helen Dryden, fashion illustration of a stage costume designed by Lady Duff Gordon (Lucille), *Vogue*, November 15, 1918.



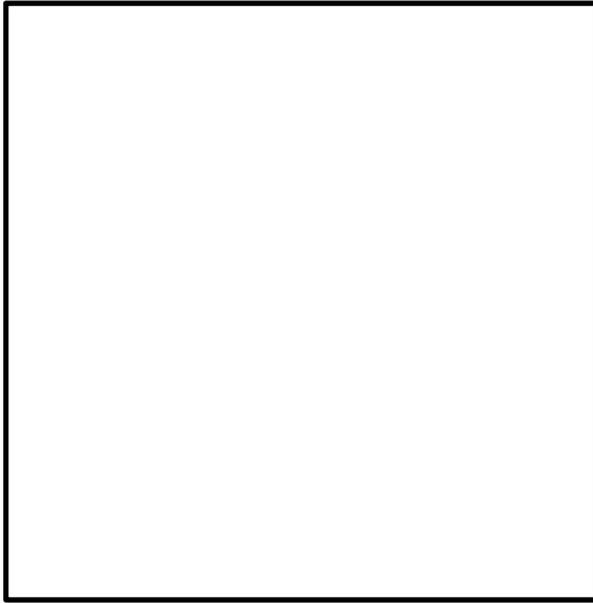
58. Helen Dryden, American Radiator Company advertisement, *Vogue*, April 1, 1924.



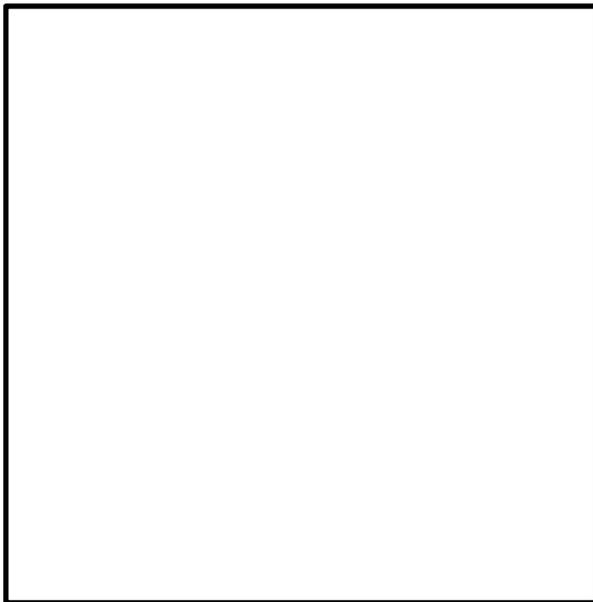
59. Lady Duff Gordon (Lucille), costume worn by Irene Castle in "Watch Your Step," photograph by Ira L. Hill. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.



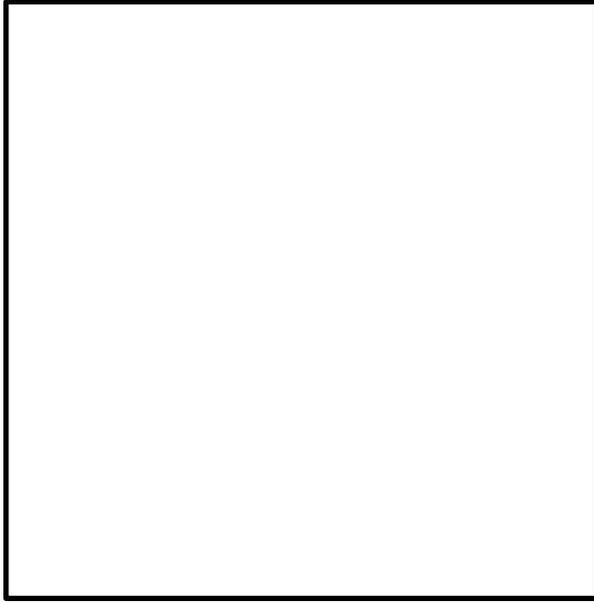
60. Helen Dryden, "Theatrical scenery," design patent 1,612,858, filed January 28, 1925, patented January 4, 1927, United States Patent Office.



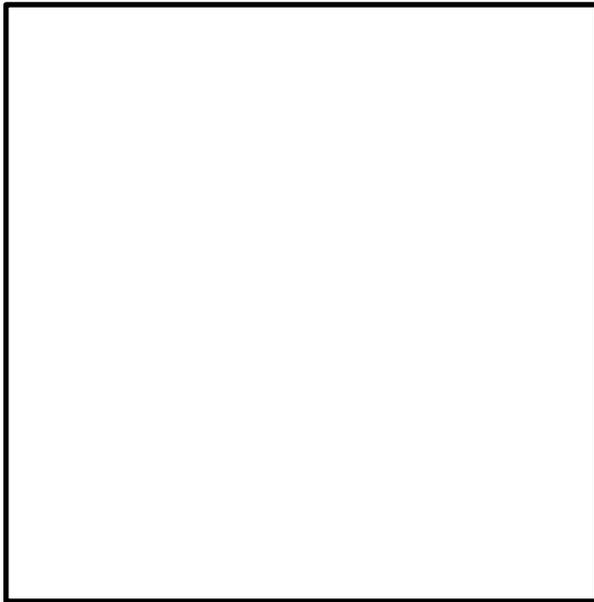
61. Advertisement for Stehli Silks, *Amercana Prints*, Series II, available at Lord & Taylor, *New York Times*, November 22, 1926, p. 11.



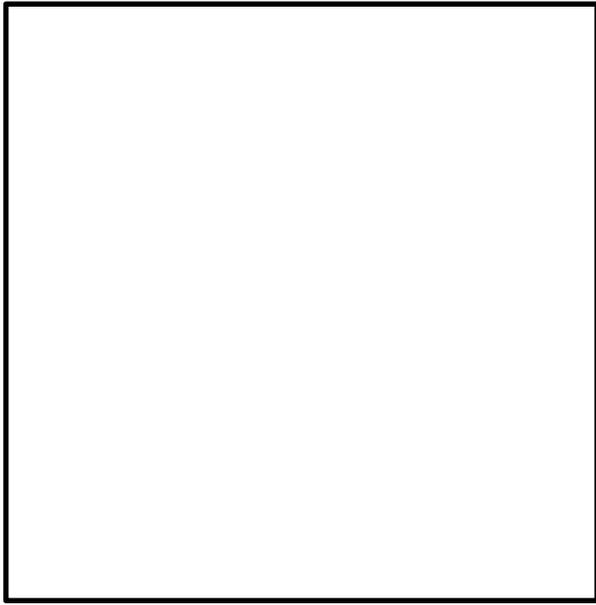
62. Helen Dryden, *Accessories*, printed silk, 1926, manufactured by Stehli Silk Corporation, Newark Museum.



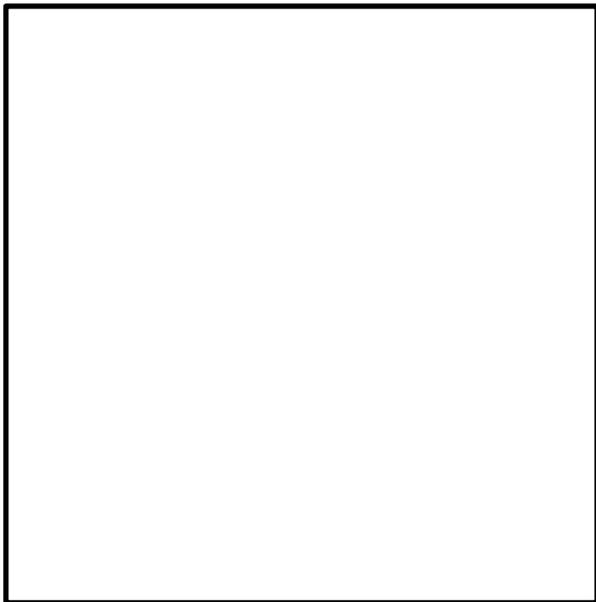
63. Helen Dryden, *Bowknots*, printed silk, 1927, manufactured by Stehli Silk Corporation.



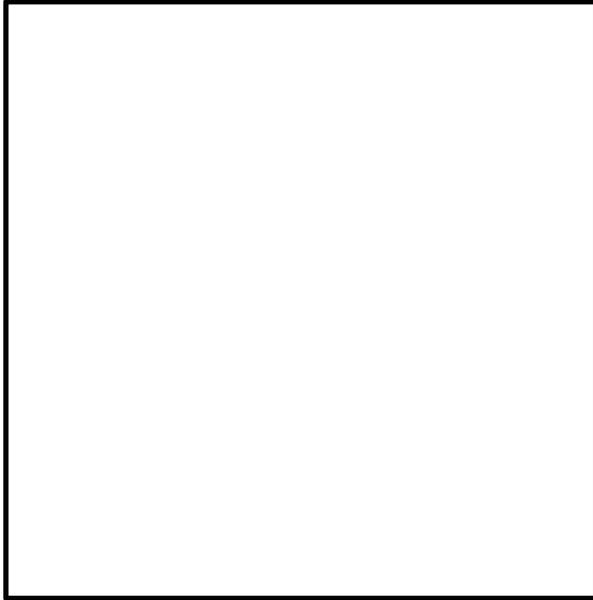
64. Helen Dryden, *Harvest*, printed silk, 1927, manufactured by Stehli Silk Corporation, Metropolitan Museum of Art.



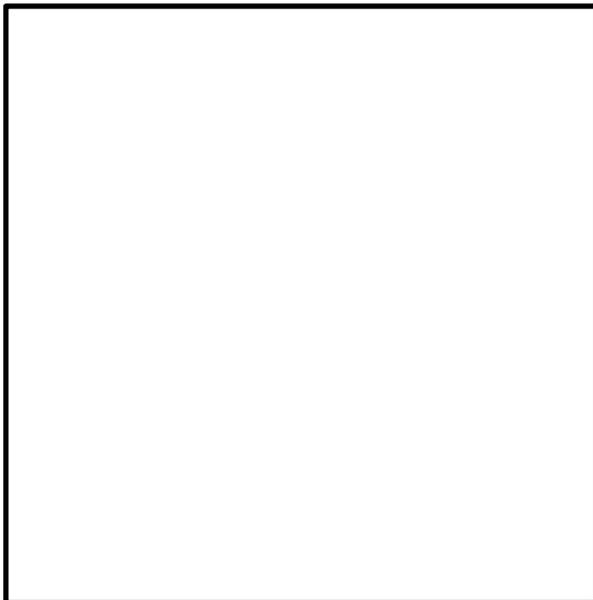
65. Helen Dryden, *Sports Themes*, printed silk, 1928, manufactured by Stehli Silk Corporation.



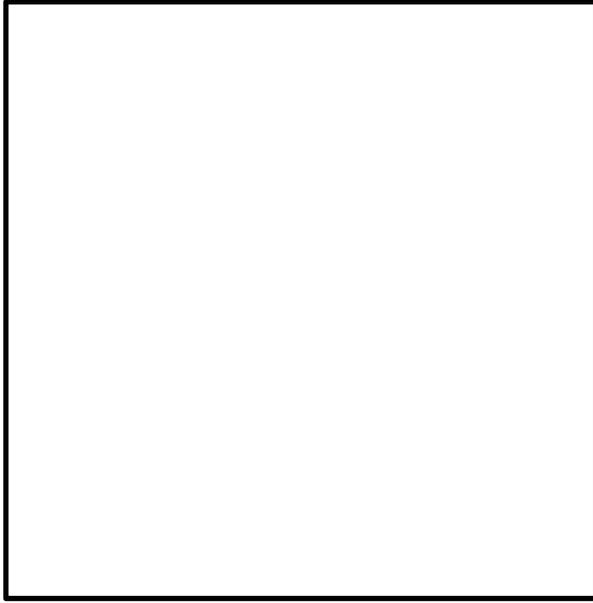
66. Ralph Barton, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, printed silk, 1925, manufactured by Stehli Silk Corporation. Metropolitan Museum of Art.



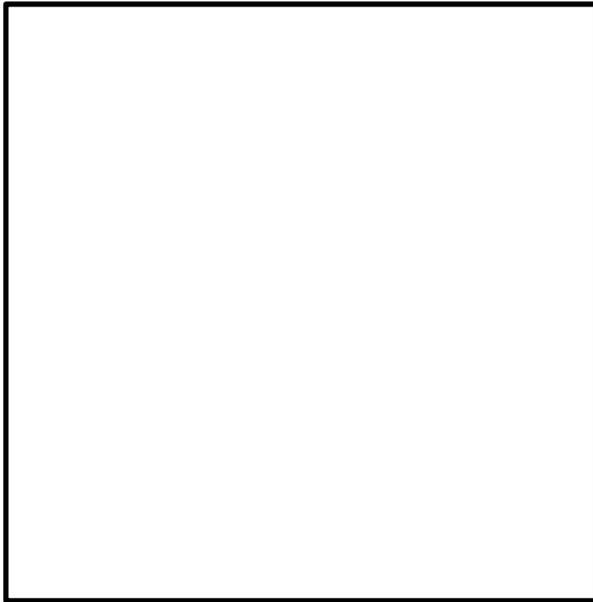
67. John Held, *Rhapsody*, printed silk, 1927, manufactured by Stehli Silk Corporation, Newark Museum.



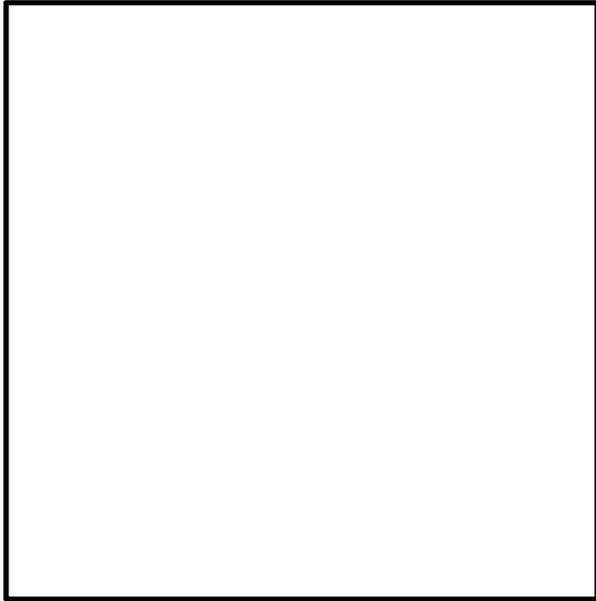
68. Edward Steichen, *Matches and Matchboxes*, printed silk, 1927, manufactured by Stehli Silk Corporation, Metropolitan Museum of Art.



69. Clayton Knight, *Manhattan*, printed silk, 1925, manufactured by Stehli Silk Corporation, Cooper Hewitt Design Museum.

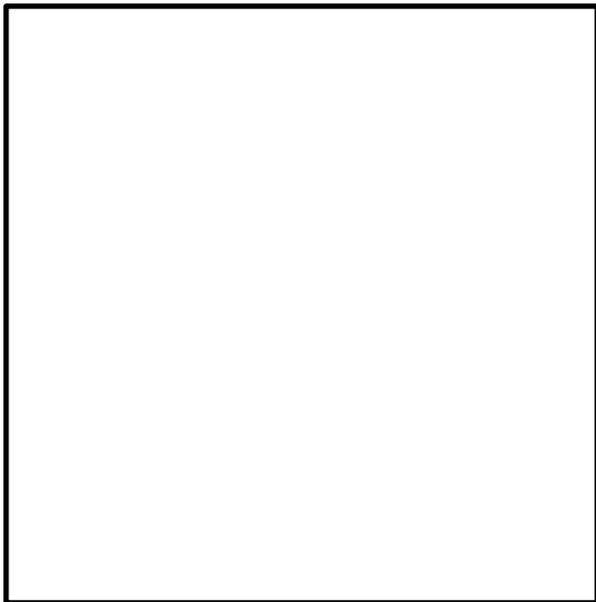


70. Dwight Taylor, *Thrills*, printed silk, 1925, manufactured by Stehli Silk Corporation, Cooper Hewitt Design Museum.

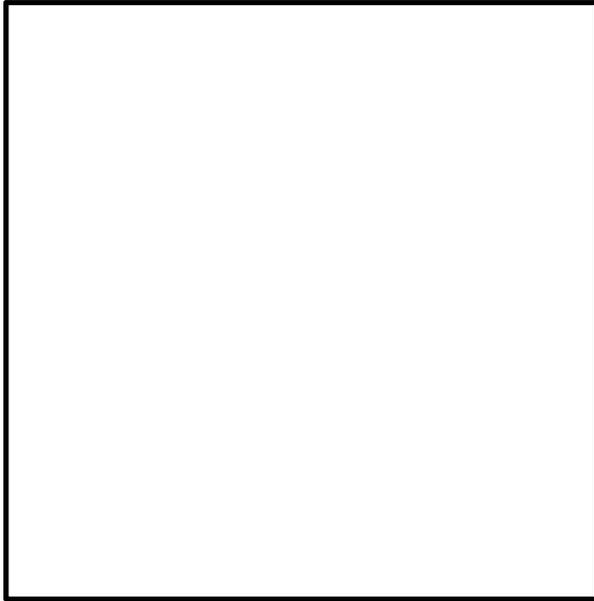


71. H.R. Mallinson & Company, *Mexixe* sample card, 1914, Department of Textiles, NMAH, Smithsonian Institution.

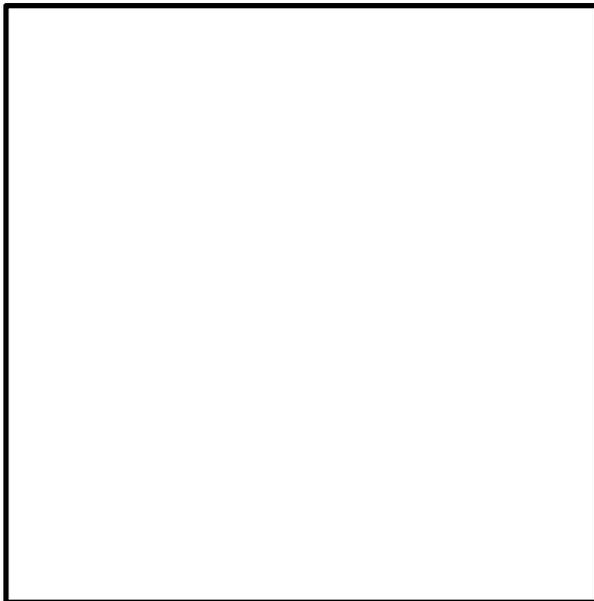
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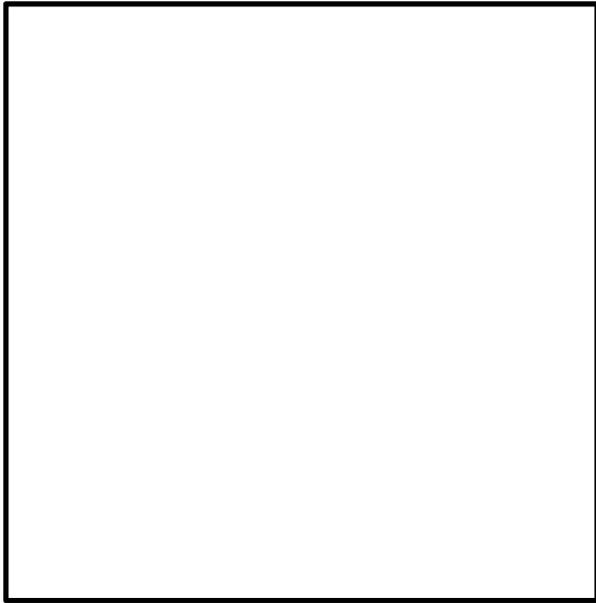
72. Invitation to a private showing of exhibition at the Art Center, Friday November 6, 1925. Metropolitan Museum of Art.



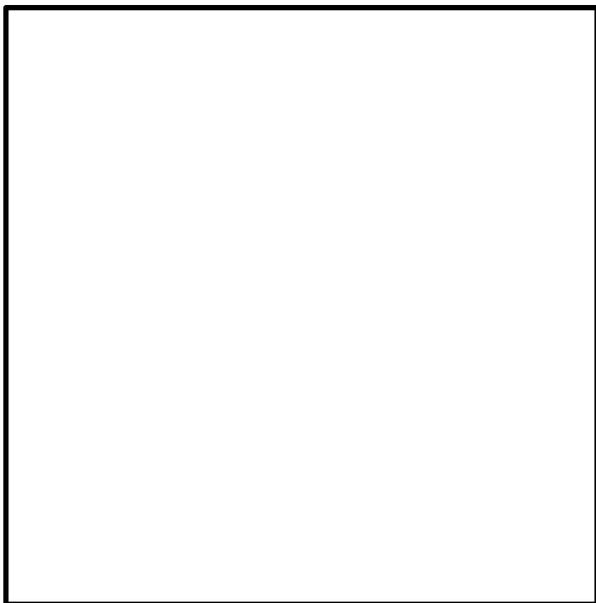
73. View of the modern design exhibition held by R.H. Macy & Co., New York, 1927.
Manhattan pattern visible on right.



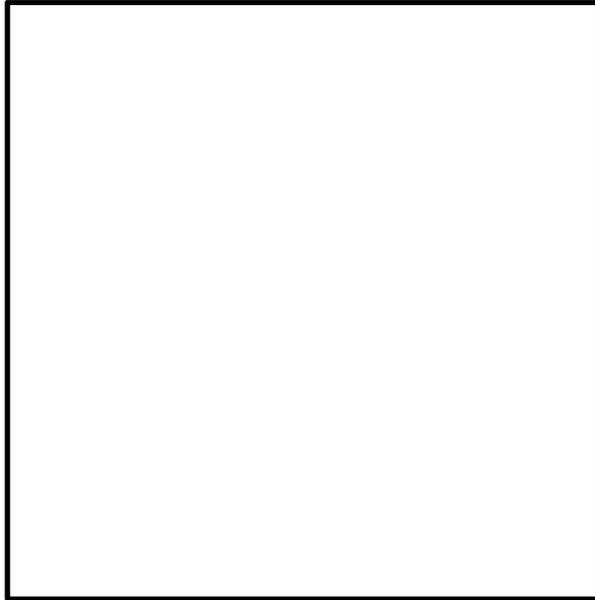
74. Announcement for Women's Wear design contest, ca. 1920.



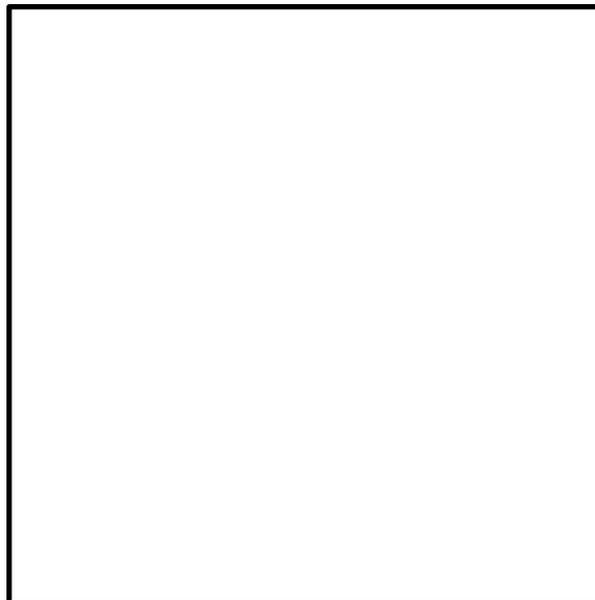
75. Helen Dryden, illustration depicting the opening of Leon Bakst exhibition at Knoedler Galleries in 1923, *Vogue*, February 1, 1923.



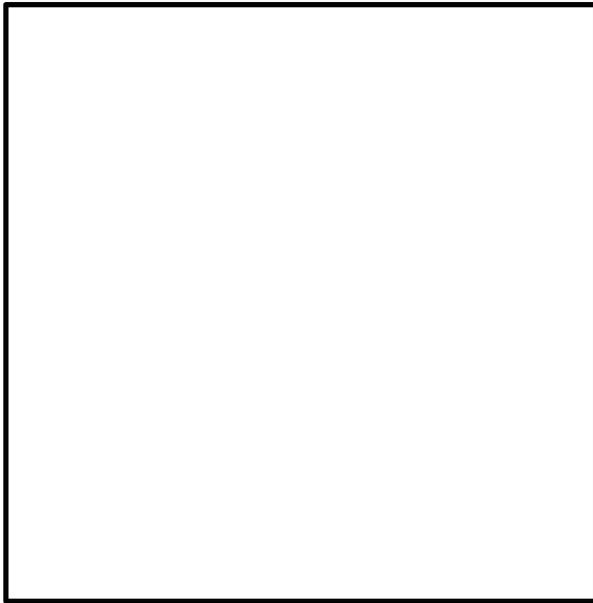
76. Leon Bakst, textile design, ca. 1924.



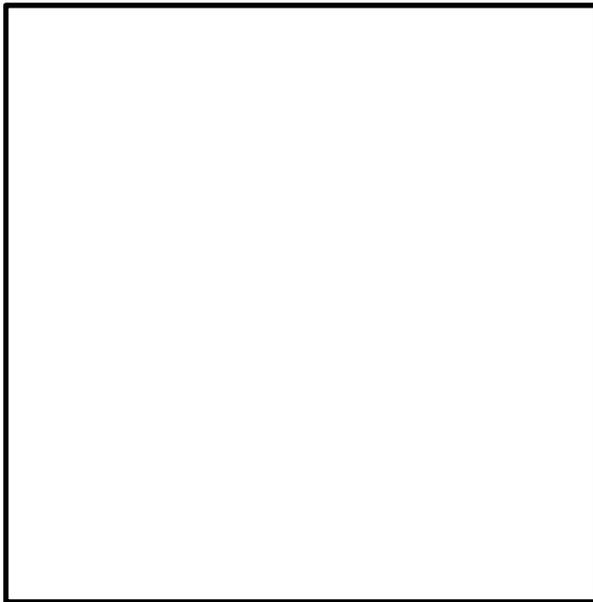
77. Bakst, printed silk, 1924, manufactured by Robinson Silk Co. for Clingen and Selig, Art Institute of Chicago.



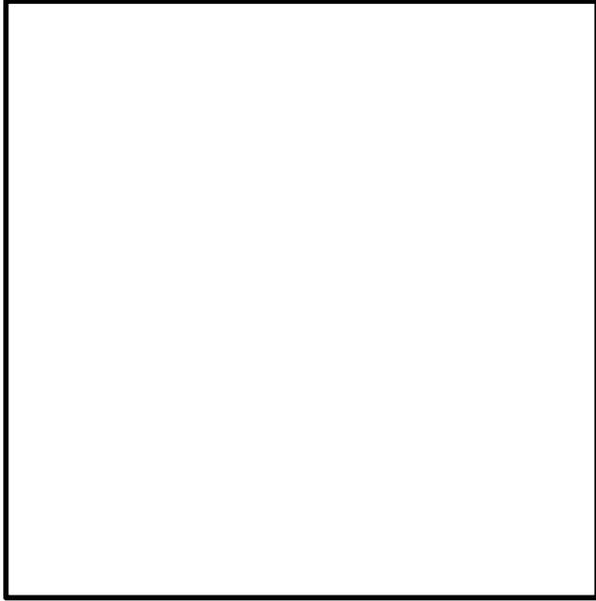
78. Leon Bakst, textile design, ca. 1924.



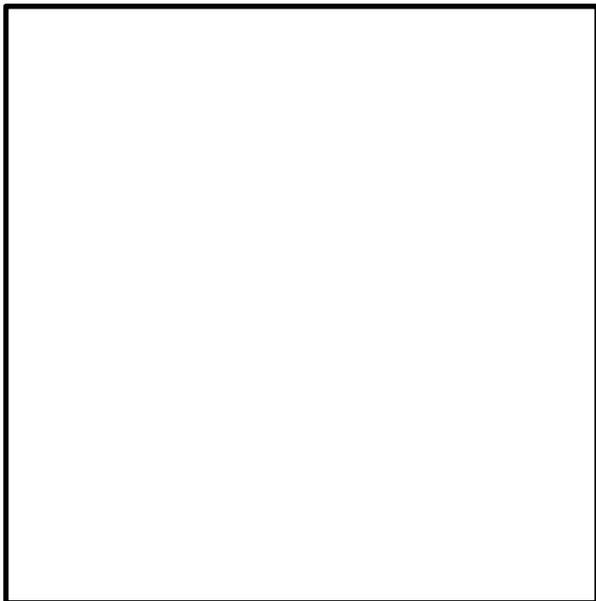
79. Harriet Meserole, illustration showing models wearing dresses made by Lord & Taylor from Bakst textiles, *Vogue*, 1924.



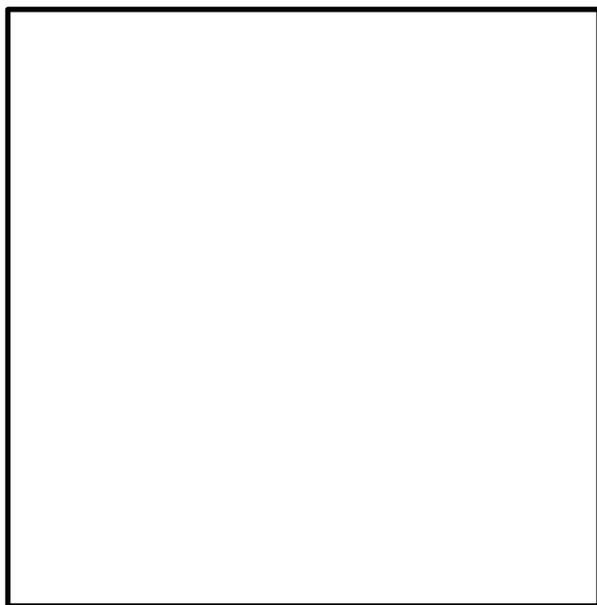
80. Helen Dryden with her design for a piano manufactured by Hardman & Peck, 1928, pictured in Frances Drewry McMullen's article "Helen Dryden's Versatile Art," *The Woman's Journal*, vol. 15 (1930), p. 14.



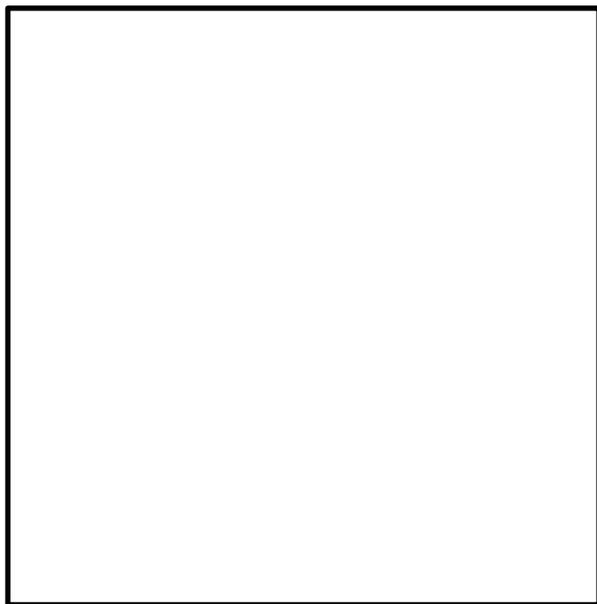
81. Helen Dryden, package design for Lady Esther face powder, ca. 1935, Pictured in *Advertising Arts*, March 1, 1935, p. 18.



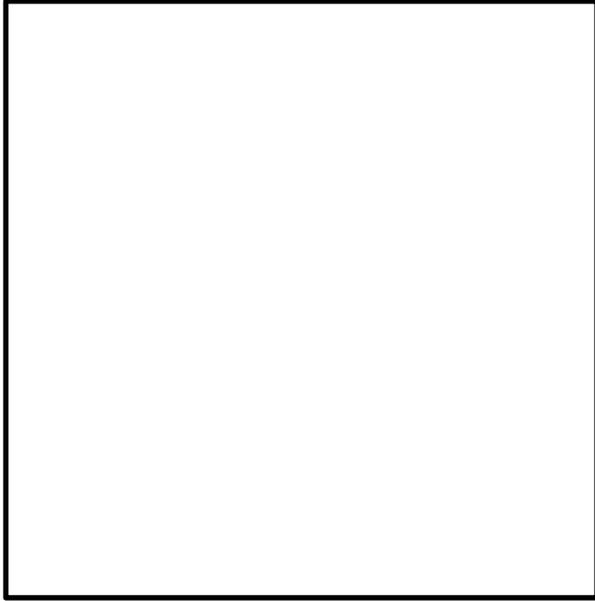
82. Helen Dryden, *Candlesphere*, manufactured by Revere Copper & Brass, ca. 1937, Pictured in the 1937 Revere "Gifts" brochure, no. 162.



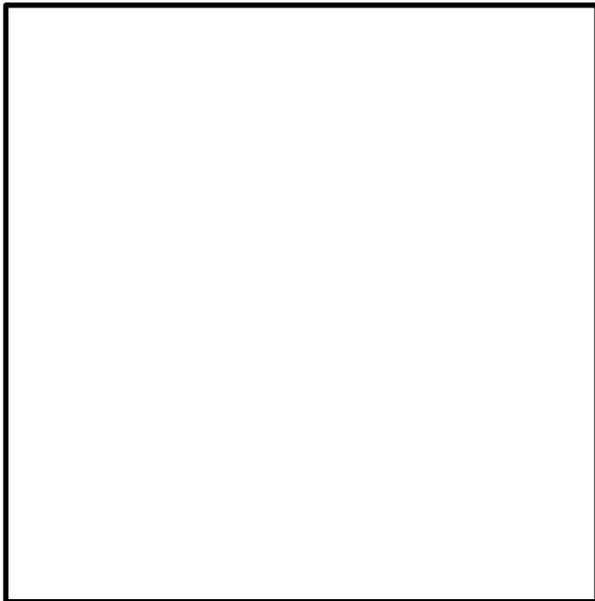
83. Helen Dryden, *Masque* lamp, manufactured by Revere Copper & Brass, ca. 1937, Pictured in the 1937 Revere "Gifts" brochure, no. 126.



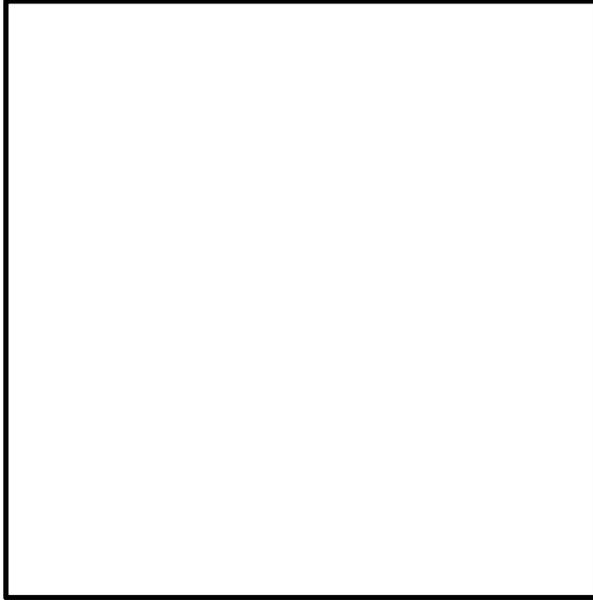
84. Helen Dryden, bathroom fixtures, manufactured by The Dura. Co., ca. 1929, Pictured in *Advertising Arts*, July 9, 1930, p. 48.



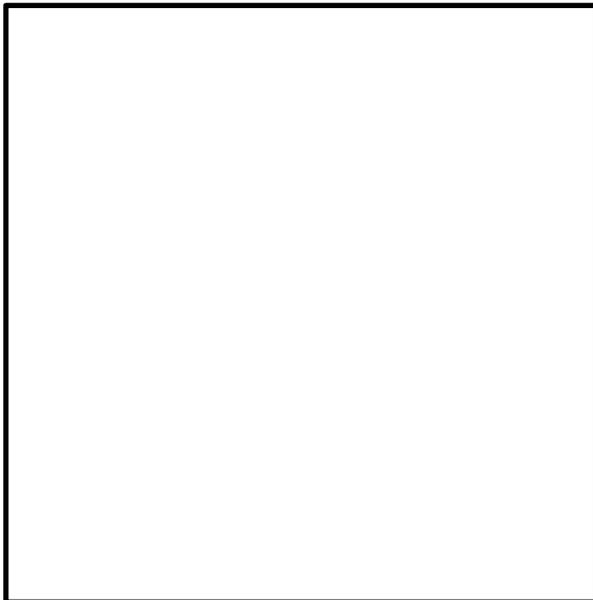
85. Helen Dryden, metal hinge, manufactured by The Dura. Co., ca. 1929, pictured in *AUDAC Annual of American Design*, 1930, p. 98.



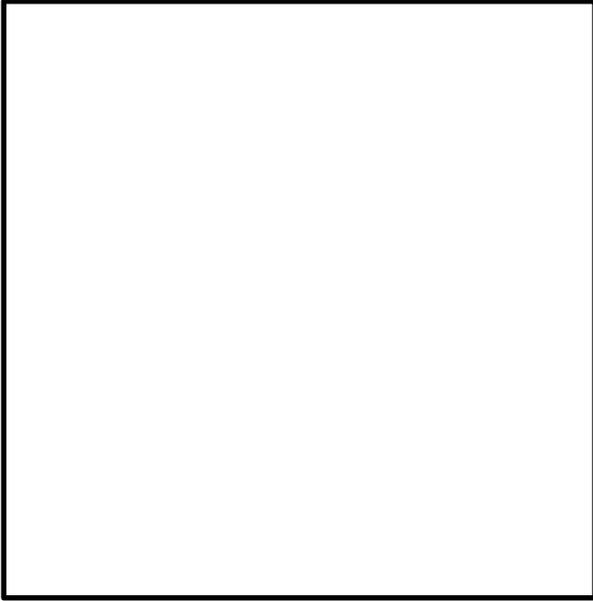
86. Helen Dryden, lighter, manufactured by The Dura. Co., ca. 1929, pictured in *Advertising Arts*, April 2, 1930, p. 19. Photograph by Edward Rehnquist.



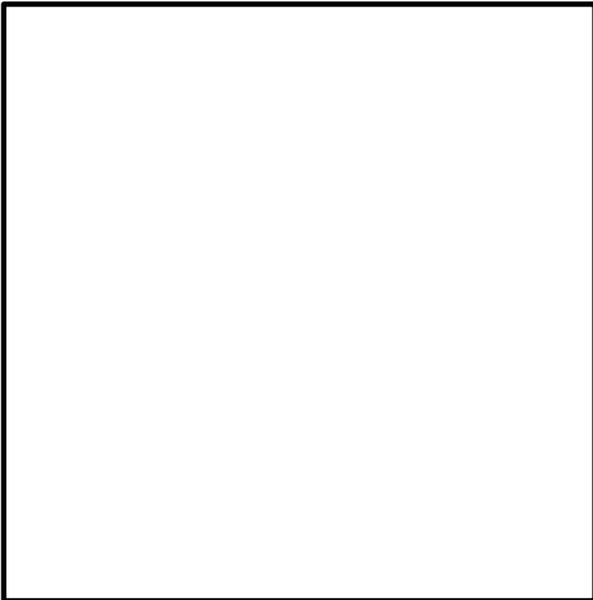
87. Helen Dryden standing in front of a Studebaker President, 1937. Photograph courtesy of the Richard Quinn Collection.



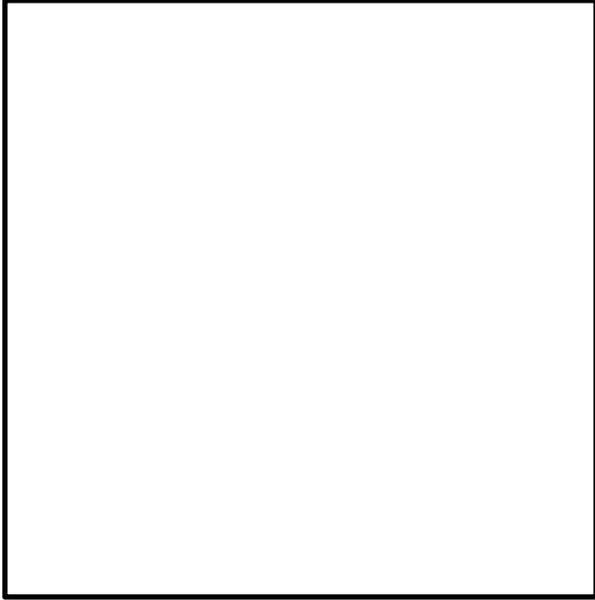
88. Raymond Loewy, Advertisement for Kayser Lingerie, 1928.



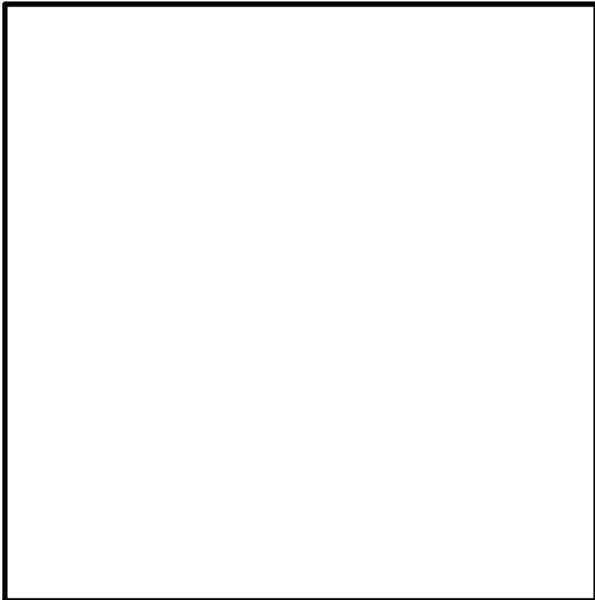
89. Walter Dorwin Teague, illustration of the Marmon Sixteen, 1930, Collection of Smithsonian Institution Libraries.



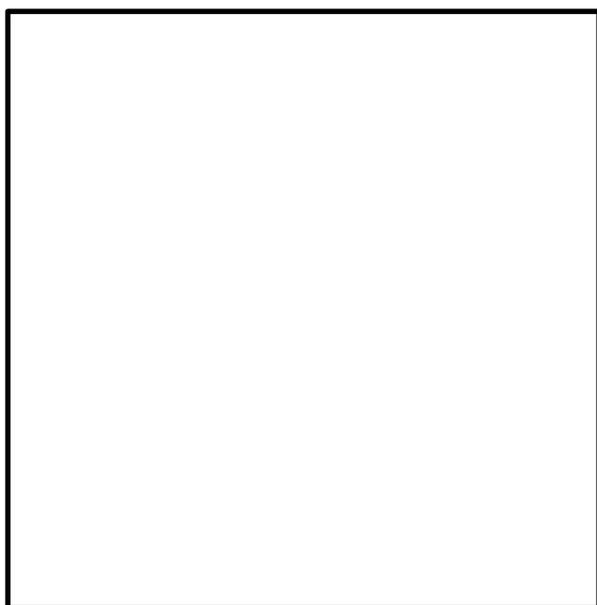
90. Helen Dryden, hardware manufactured by The Dura Co., ca. 1929, pictured in *AUDAC Annual of American Design*, 1931.



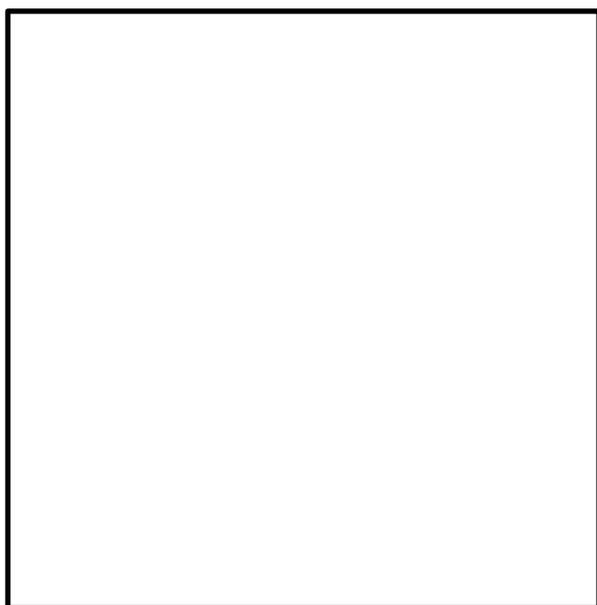
91. George Graff (attributed to), hardware manufactured by The Dura Co., ca. 1929, Pictured in *Third International Exposition of Contemporary Industrial Art*, 1930-1931.



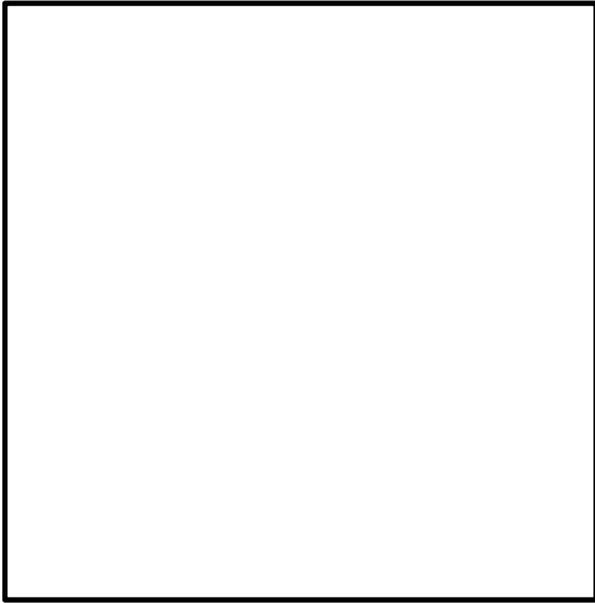
92. George Graff, Robe Rail Patent, filed October 29, 1928.



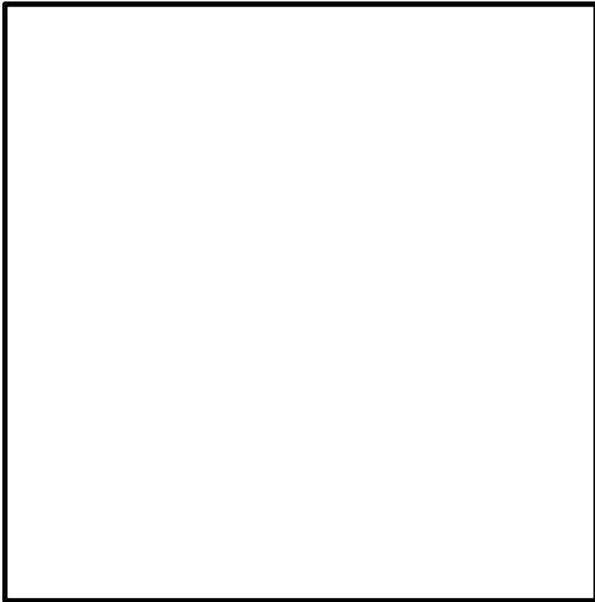
93. Helen Dryden, lamp manufactured by The Dura Co., ca. 1929.



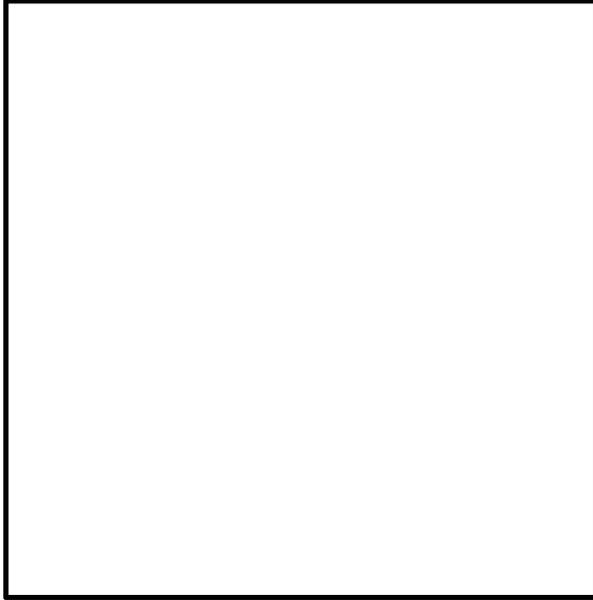
94. Burton Floraday, Electric Light Patent, Filed January 11, 1932.



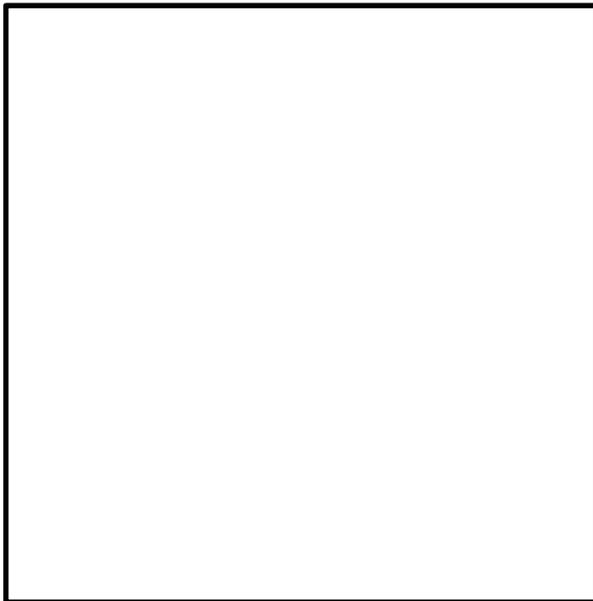
95. Studebaker Advertisement, *Vogue*, October 12, 1929, p.25.



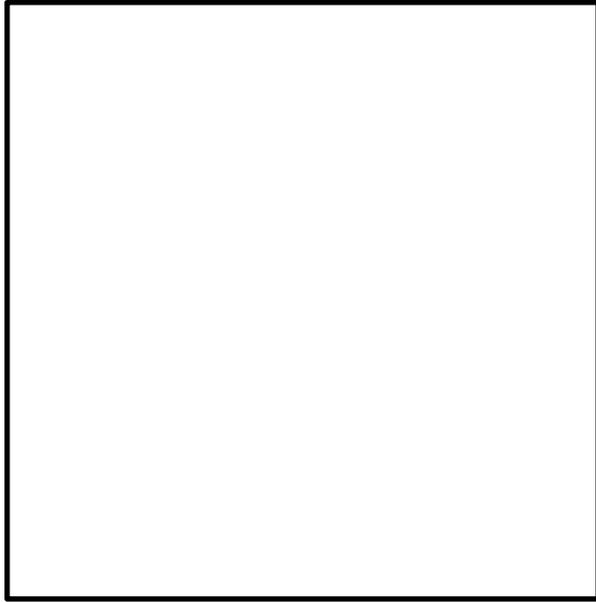
96. Studebaker President advertisement, 1936.



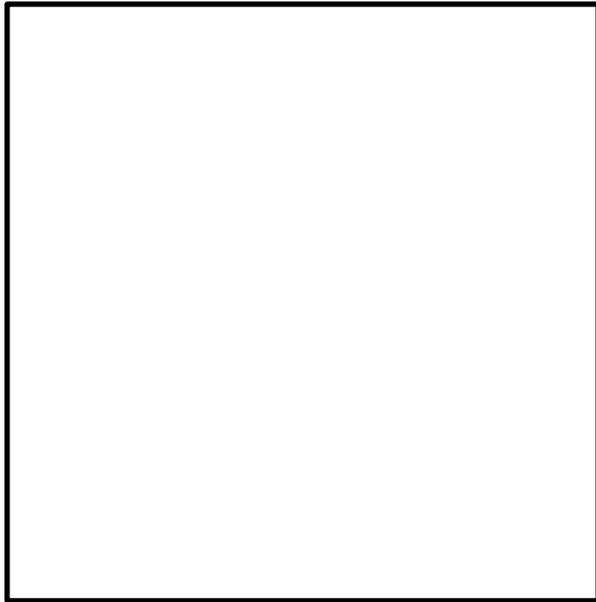
97. Studebaker President advertisement, 1936.



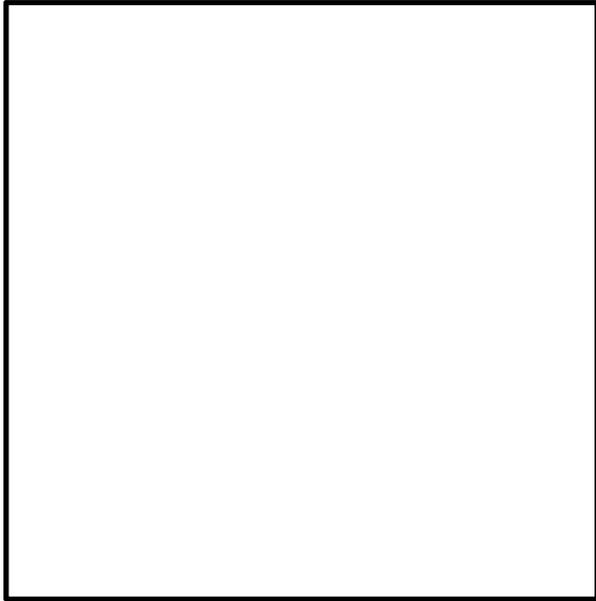
98. "Studebaker Craftsmanship," Studebaker sales manual, 1937, Courtesy of the Hagley Museum and Library.



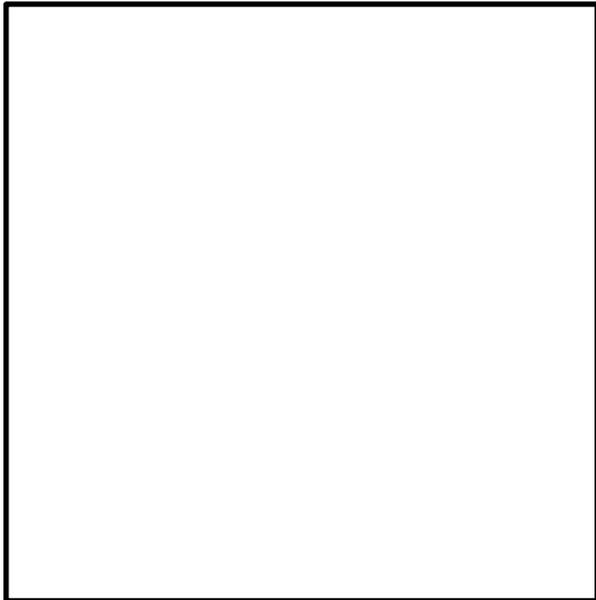
99. "Living Room Comfort at Any Speed on the Road," Studebaker Sales Manual, 1937, Courtesy of the Hagley Museum and Library.



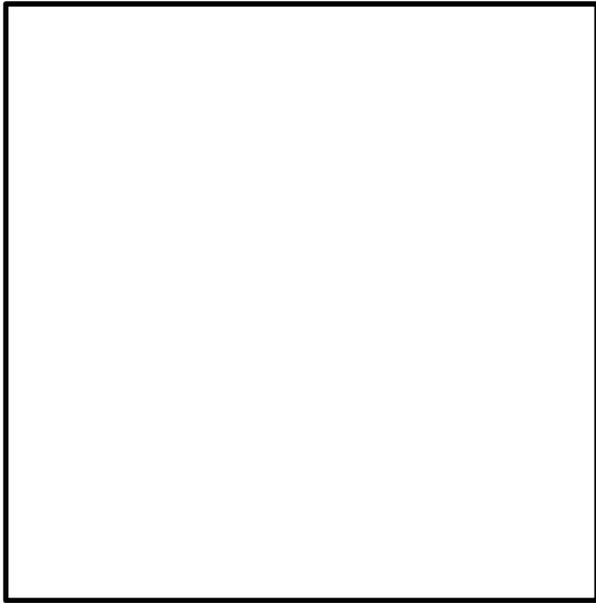
100. Instrument Panel, Studebaker President Interior, Studebaker Sales Manual, 1937, Courtesy of the Hagley Museum and Library.



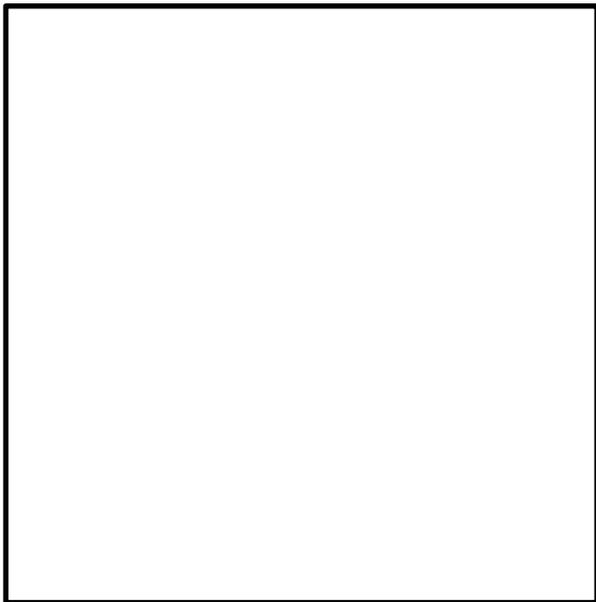
101. Studebaker hardware, 1936, Courtesy of the Studebaker Museum.



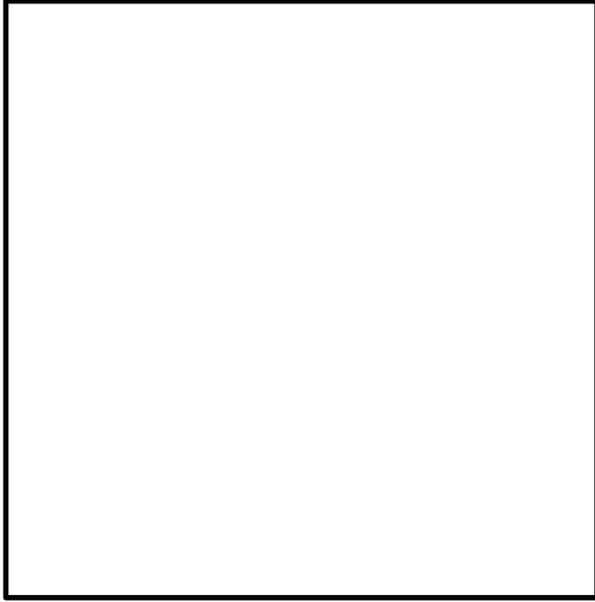
102. Raymond Loewy and Helen Dryden, 1938 Studebaker, Courtesy of the Studebaker Museum.



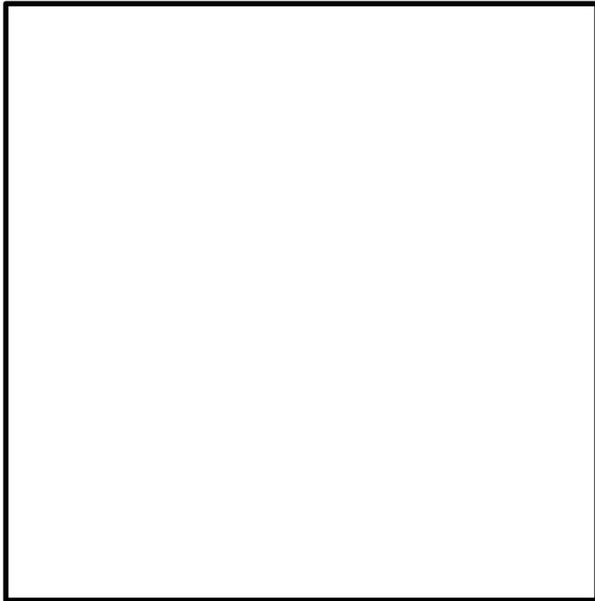
103. DeSoto Airflow Sedan, 1934, The Henry Ford, Dearborn, MI, 86.52.1



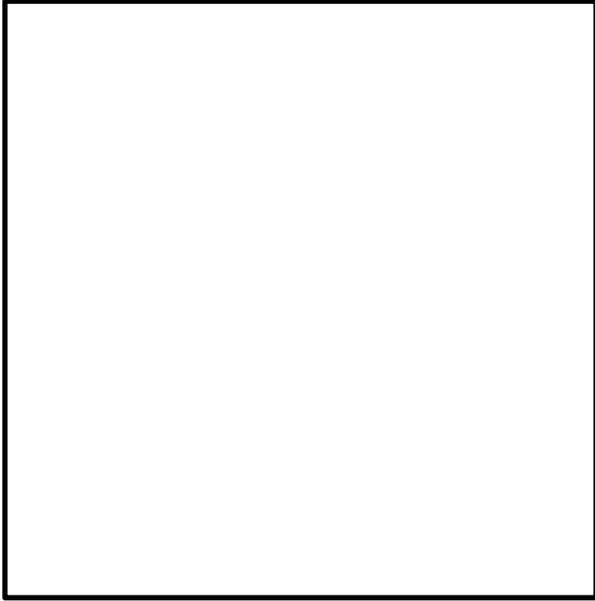
104. Helen Dryden visiting the Studebaker plant in South Bend, IN, 1935, press photo, courtesy of Ed Heys.



105. Advertisement for Nike, 2018.



106. Six of GMs "Damsels of Design" with lead designer Harley Earl, ca. 1955, General Motors Archive and Special Collections.



107. Amy Goldsmith, Removable Chair Attachment Patent, filed December 17, 1921.

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