

# Selling Design

## 27 Chicago Designers 1936–1997

Supporting Institution  
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Special Collections



**1936** Norman Andersen John Averill Joseph Carter Rodney Chirpe Oswald Cooper Ray DaBoll Robert Sydney Dickens Everett Eckland Stan Ekman Harry Farrell Henry Harringer Elmer Jacobs Egbert Jacobson Karl Peter Koch Ed McCabe R. Hunter Middleton M. Vaughn Millbourn Edgar Miller Dale Nichols Taylor Poore Douglas Rader Bert Ray Gustav Rehberger Paul Ressinger Frank Riley Ernst Spuehler Earl Uhl **1937** Martin Johnson Willard Smythe **1938** Francis Chase Josef Feher E. Willis Jones Weimer Pursell **1939** Robert Askren Ed Boehmer Jay Conley DeForest Sackett **1940** David Chapman Edward Sullivan **1943** Ken Olson Park Phipps Philip Reed **1945** William Fleming Everett McNear **1947** Rainey Bennett R. Vale Faro **1949** Cliffe Eitel James Hayes **1950** Morton Goldsholl John McKee Franklin McMahon **1951** Carl Anderson Charles Bracken Joe LaViolette Phoebe Moore Robert Sinnott John Temple **1952** Gene Douglas **1953** Joe Pearson **1954** Gordon Martin **1955** Bruce Beck Fred Steffen **1957** Franz Altschuler Larry Klein Elsa Kula Lindell Mabrey Norman Perman Herb Pinzke **1959** Randall Roth **1960** Janet LaSalle Carl Regehr **1962** Hayward Blake **1963** Robert+William Kaulfuss Lute Wassman **1965** Ed Bedno **1967** James Higa James Minnick Rhodes Patterson Henry Robertz **1969** David Burke Ed Hughes John Massey Michael Reid Wayne Webb **1971** James Lienhart Charles MacMurray Don Marvine Art Paul David Root **1972** John Carafoli Robert Lee Dickens **1973** David Lawrence **1975** Ron Bradford Susan Jackson Keig **1977** Pat Dypold Jack Weiss **1979** Joseph Michael Essex Joseph Hutchcroft Peter Teubner Robert Vogele **1982** David Anderson Jeff Barnes John Dolby John Greiner Diane Kavelaras Steve Keller Carol Naughton Wendy Pressley–Jacobs **1984** William McDowell Gregory Samata Don Strandell **1986** Bobbye Cochran Josef Godlewski Rick Valicenti **1987** Arnold Goodwin **1991** Dana Arnett Steven Bagby Michael Glass William Hafeman Ron Kovach Steve Liska Anthony Ma Kurt Meinecke Sam Silvio Jilly Simons

## 27 Chicago Designers Chronological Lifetime Roster



Volume 4, 1939

### Introduction

Early in the twentieth century, several design organizations emerged in the United States to promote design's relevance to business and public life, to establish design as a form of culture, and to produce professional standards and guidelines. The Society of Illustrators was formed in 1901 in New York. It was followed by The American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) in 1914 and the Art Director's Club in 1920. Seven years later, in 1927, the Society of Typographic Arts (STA) was organized in Chicago. All of these organizations facilitated the expanding role of the graphic arts—from a focus on printing and book publishing—to an embrace of commerce, advertising, and corporate communications.

In 1936, during a period of reduced business investment and high unemployment, a unique design organization emerged in Chicago, the 27 Chicago Designers. Composed

of a group of 27 Chicago-based designers and illustrators under the leadership of John Averill, the group assembled their collective resources and talents to market their services to business organizations, largely through their annual publication, also titled 27 Chicago Designers. The publication, through the various contributors' shifting professional titles and self-identifications, could be read as a quest for the meaning of design and for an overarching description of the designer, especially during the critical early years of the group's formation. The group promoted design as a good business investment to prospective clients and as an advanced form of communication embracing multiple practices to the public.

For the annual publication, each member of the group independently designed and reproduced a four-page insert,



4 consisting of a title page to identify themselves and three pages of recent design work. These inserts were collected and organized alphabetically by the designers' last names, with a cover and introduction typically designed and written by the organization's chairperson (a rotating position). The collection was bound and mailed to business executives and cultural leaders, to design and advertising firms, and to retail establishments in Chicago and other major U.S. cities. Client names were shared among the members of the group and the costs to produce and distribute the publication were divided among the members. The designers also paid annual membership dues to cover any additional operating expenses.

Although the individual members worked autonomously in producing their own inserts, membership was strictly controlled. In keeping with the idea that the group would hold only 27 members (the original number of designer founders), a new designer was invited to join only when an existing member left. A new member, moreover, could only be considered for membership if he (and occasionally she) was recommended as an "outstanding" Chicago designer by an existing member and was then elected in by the group.

The organization — consisting of product and packaging designers, graphic artists and illustrators, calligraphers and typographers, art directors, and an architect—pivoted its identity around the word design. All of the members were designers — a term that was beginning to take on new meaning during the 1930s. 27 member DeForest Sackett described design as "that striking quality of efficient organization, coordination and simplification in a printed piece that characterizes all successful modern printing."<sup>1</sup>

The group remained intact — certainly not without upheavals, disputes, and dramatic exits by individual members — until 1991, another period of design transformation from the print to the digital age. Communication and access to clients was enhanced by the internet and the 27 Chicago Designers disbanded, not for lack of Chicago talent, but for loss of focus when one of its founding functions — to promote samples of their work to possible clients — no longer required print distribution.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup>DeForest Sackett, STA Letter announcing annual lecture series, centered on "Design," "...a new word that has assumed a new and vital significance..." February 28, 1938.

<sup>2</sup>Conversation, Jack Weiss and Joseph Essex, September, 2016.



Bert Ray, 1945

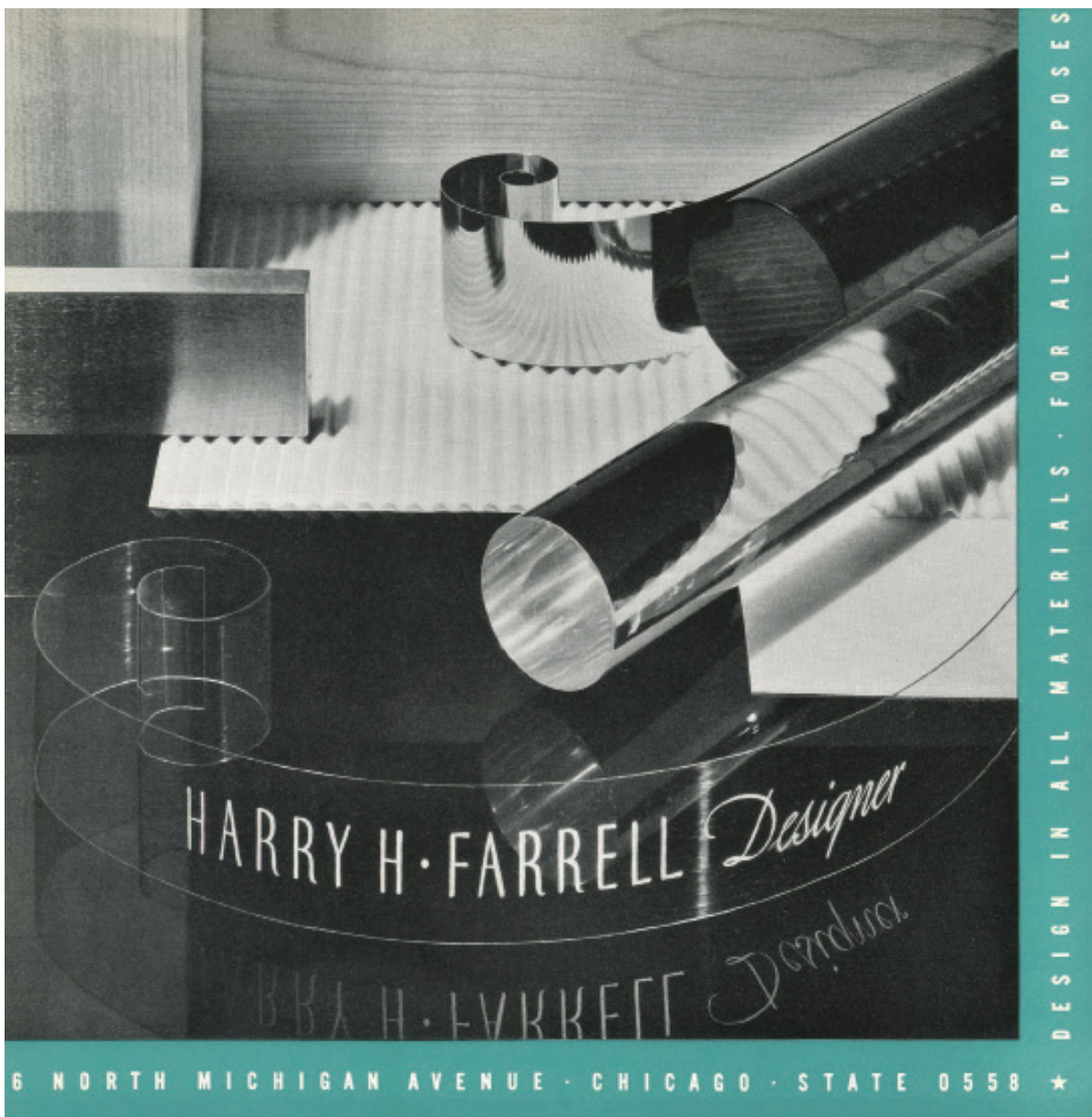
### Typography & Calligraphy

Type design—both the invention of new typefaces and the refinement of lettering and calligraphy—was recognized by the 1930s as a key aspect of commercial design. Type on advertising pages, packages and corporate documents was employed not merely to produce a message, but to be integrated with illustration, photography, and other design elements to create a unified page and express meaning through formal integration.

Some of the 27 Chicago Designers founding members were letterers, calligraphers, and type designers—Oz Cooper, R.H. Middleton, Bert Ray, Frank Riley, Ray DaBoll and Joseph Carter. They understood that their work was to produce and select specialized letterforms to “sell the world’s goods,” in the words of Middleton. The proliferation of new typefaces was directly related to the expanding role of the letter within modern commerce and advertising.

The development of modern sans serif type was a frequent topic of conversation and concern for members of the 27 Chicago Designers. What marks the designers and founding members of the Chicago 27 Designers as unique in modern design history is their critical approach to both avant-garde typefaces, as promoted by European figures such as Jan Tschichold, Herbert Bayer, and László Moholy-Nagy, and to stylish trends associated with Art Deco.





Harry Farrell, 1939

### Product, Packaging & 3-D

Founding and early 27 Chicago Designers members Harry Farrell, Douglas Rader, Sidney Dickens, DeForest Sackett, Bert Ray, Ernst Spuehler, and Rodney Chirpe designed new packaging for many Chicago-based companies' product lines. These companies included Abbott Laboratories, Walgreens Drugs, the Koller Brewing Company, Container Corporation of America, Sears, Roebuck & Co, Wrisley Soap Company, American Oil Company, Tested Papers of America, Inc., Parker Pens, U.S. Gypsum Company and Mills Novelty Company.

Product designers, including Dave Chapman and Everett Eckland, were also active 27 Designers members. Eckland employed the so-called skyscraper style to cloak machines such as golf ball and cigarette dispensers and radios in the most up-to-date and modern forms. These designers were perhaps more aware than illustrators and graphic designers of the importance of collaboration and integration among

commercial artists. They composed three-dimensional advertisements utilizing the various elements of graphic design and experimented with modern materials in the pursuit of new packaging solutions and product possibilities.



Norman Andersen, 1938

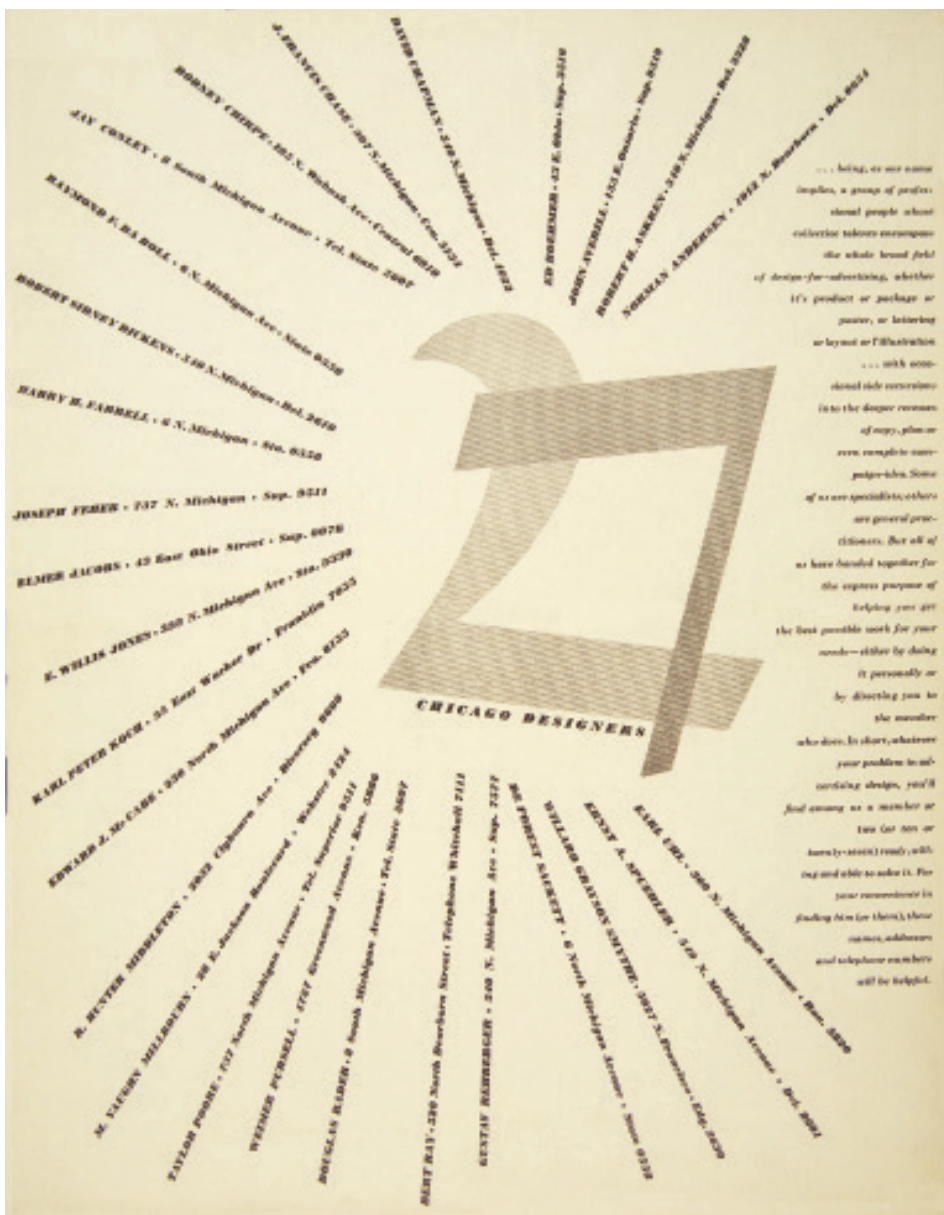
### Advertising Illustration & Photography

The 27 Chicago Designers' efforts involved bringing commercial illustration and advertising (art direction) together with printing and typography under the same broad category of design. During the 1920s and early 1930s, advertising and commercial illustration were widely considered to be separate intellectually and practically from the printing design arts (associated with books and type). The members of the 27 promoted all of these fields as design practices, stressing the interconnections of type, illustration, layout, packaging and display, printing, and product design in a commercial context.

As photography played an increasingly larger role in advertising design, illustrators still felt they had a role to play through humor, exaggeration, and employment of avant-garde or modernist composition and form. Illustrators staked out their own unique place within the field of commercial image making. Some of the representations are problematic

as they employed stereotyped figures — especially of African Americans. The illustrations from the early years of the 27's formation also reflected the interest in cubism, abstraction, and African art that was influencing European artists and designers during the first half of the twentieth century. Although some illustrators' styles remained fairly consistent over time — including those of John Averill and Elmer Jacobs — others' changed to reflect broader trends in modern art and graphic design.





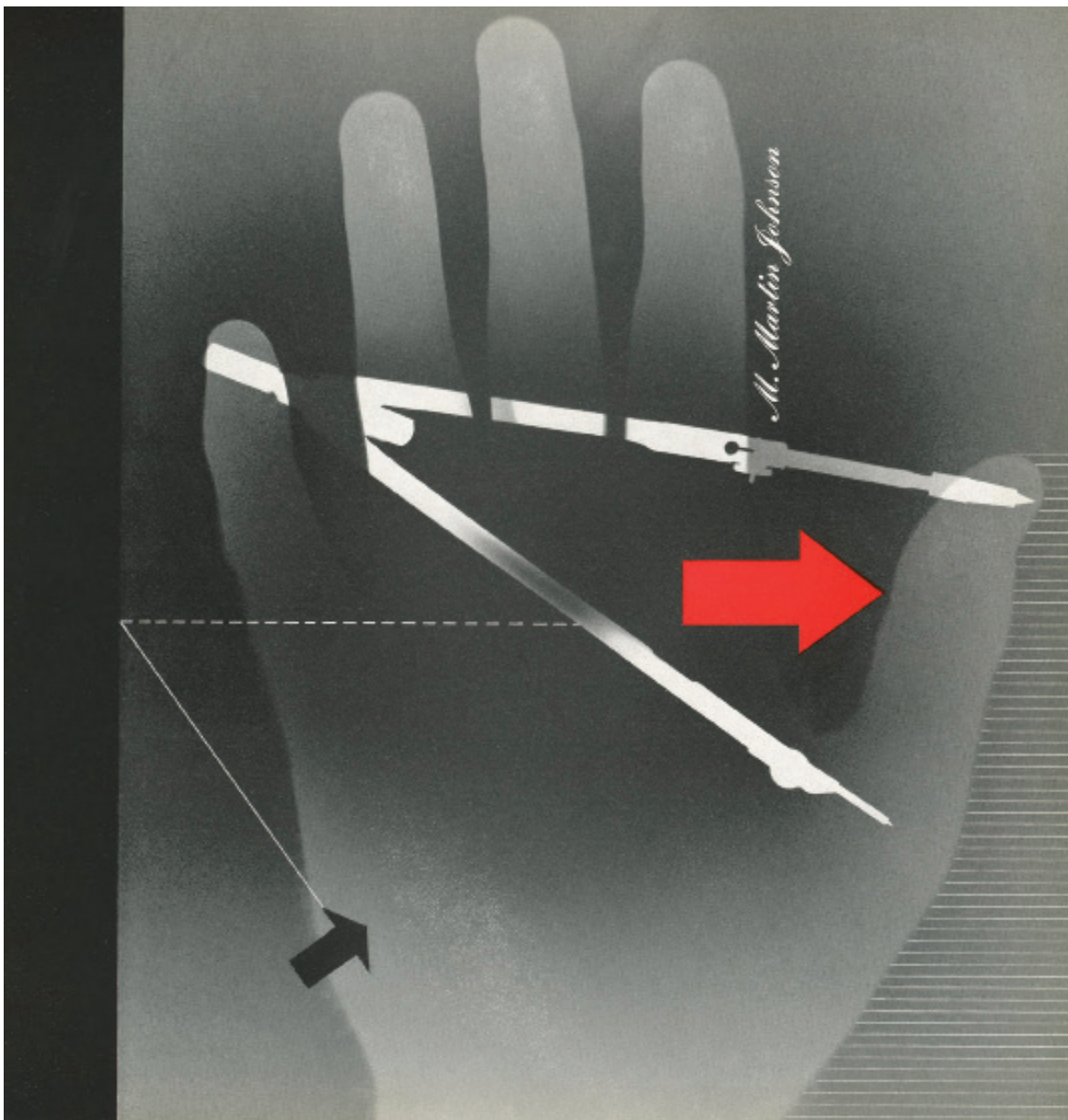
R. Hunter Middleton, circa 1940

## Collaboration

Collaboration was a cornerstone of the 27 Chicago Designers. Instead of viewing each other as competitors in a difficult economic environment, the designers believed that through showing their work together—in a single annual publication—they could enhance their professional profiles, gain new clients, and promote themselves more broadly. The members respected one another's work, recruited each other for inclusion into the group, worked together on client accounts and assignments, shared studio space, and even formed design partnerships or practices.

The collaborative model established by the 27 Chicago Designers was emulated in splinter organizations, such as *The Nine Illustrators*, and playful work, such as *Mother Goose*. Above all, this model established the importance of integration—that art, illustration, type, exhibition, packaging, product design and architecture—were all aspects of design and all enhanced one another in successful communication.





M. Martin Johnson, 1937

### Influence of the New Bauhaus

Just as the 27 Chicago Designers were forming, the Association of Arts and Industries was making plans to set up an American Bauhaus school in Chicago. Although the school, first called the "New Bauhaus" under the direction of László Moholy-Nagy did not represent the first exposure of Chicago designers to modern and avant-grade design, it had a structural and long-lasting impact on Chicago designers, and members of the 27. Moholy and his associate from Europe, György Kepes, taught courses at the school on advertising and design. Faithful to the principles of the German Bauhaus model of art and design education, Kepes encouraged his students to return to the basics: form, color and composition. He introduced them to experimental photography, and the perceptual and psychological aspects of layout, texture, and scale.

27 members Joseph Feher, Clifford Eitel, Morton Goldsholl, M. Martin Johnson, Taylor Poore, and R. Hunter Middleton had their work included in *Language of Vision*, Kepes's influential book on graphic design education. This new design education had a strong impact on Chicago designers. It offered a new approach to composition and type, experiments with new materials, a playful attitude towards abstraction, diagonal layout, and the basic shapes of the Bauhaus in spreads by Eckland, Farrell, Jacobson, and Middleton.



Egbert Jacobson, 1937

### **Corporate Design**

The 27 Chicago Designers provided support for many Midwestern clients, working primarily as consulting art directors and designers. In 1936, 27 founder, Egbert Jacobson was hired as an internal director of the newly formed design department at Chicago-based Container Corporation of America. In this position, Jacobson oversaw advertising campaigns and orchestrated the entire visual unification program, designing a logo, redesigning trucks, factories and offices for the company. Towards the middle of the century, other companies increasingly followed this development: hiring designers to develop designs that could sell not merely products, but corporate images and messages as well.



## Exhibition Credits

### Typography & Calligraphy

Ray DaBoll, "Calligraphy's Flowering, Decay, and Restoration." First engravers proof. Reproduction courtesy of the Newberry Library. Published in *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 9, 1947.

R.H. Middleton, "Roman Type," from *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 5, 1940. Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Oswald Cooper, "Cooper Black Condensed is Ready," Barnhart Brothers & Spindler. Reproduction courtesy of the Newberry Library, Chicago.

Joseph Carter, "Lettering," *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 3, 1938. Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Ludlow Typeface Specimen Book, c. 1936. Ludlow Typography Company, Chicago. Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Oswald Cooper, "An Experiment: 15 Serifs Applied to stems of similar weight to test serif influence in letter design."

Bertsch & Cooper, *Typographers*, Chicago. From *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 1, 1936. Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

R.H. Middleton, "Typefaces from Ludlow Matrices," *27 Chicago Designers*, vol. 16, 1955. Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Bert Ray, Runkle, Thompson, Kovats, *27 Chicago Designers* volume 8, 1945. Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

### Product Packaging & 3-D

DeForest Sackett, "Packages for Tomorrow." *27 Chicago Designers*, vol. 7, 1943. Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Everett Eckland, "Art in Industrial Design out to be taken for Granted. Lets Glorify the commonplace with an eye on Profits." *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 1, 1936. Collection of Jack Weiss.

Rodney Chirpe, "Recent Projects in the Fields of Package and Product Design." *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 2, 1937. Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Dave Chapman, "Effective Packaging, Sound Advertising, but First of all Good Product Design." *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 5, 1940. Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Robert Sidney Dickens, "Providing a Solution to the Varied Design and Styling Problems of a Limited Number of Agencies and Manufacturers," *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 3, 1938. Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Harry H. Farrell, "A Package by Farrell Spotlights your Product." *27 Chicago Designers*, volume. 8, 1945. Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

### Advertising Illustration & Photography

Norman Anderson, "Advertising, Design, Posters, Layouts," *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 3, 1938. Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Norman Anderson, Double spread illustration, *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 2, 1937. Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Stanley Eckman, "United, All America is on the March," reproduction of full color poster for the U.S. Army, Sixth Service Command, *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 7, 1943. Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Dale Nichols, cover illustration and layout, *The Printing Art Quarterly*, volume 66, no. 2, Winter 1936. Courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

John Averill, Drawings for art directors in New York, Philadelphia, Rochester, Detroit, Minnesota, St. Paul, South Bend, and Chicago. *27 Chicago Designers*, vol. 6, 1942. Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

M. Vaughn Millbourn, Layout for advertising of services. Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Everett McNear, "Design and Pictures for Printing," *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 15, 1954. Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Gustav Rehberg, "Sears, Roebuck & Co.," cover design for Sears catalogue, Spring/Summer 1942. *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 6, 1942. Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Elmer Jacobs, "Illustration, Layout, Planning," *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 6, 1942. Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

### Collaboration

R.H. Middleton, Advertising Specimen for the *27 Chicago Designers* showing designers' contact information. Courtesy Newberry Library.

Peter Karl Koch Architecture at 153-156 West Burton Place, 1930s. Photography courtesy Lauren Whitney Photography.

Edgar Miller Architecture at 155 West Burton Place (Carl Street Studios), 1920s-1930s. Courtesy Lauren Whitney Photography.

Dale Nichols (illustration) and Bert Ray (typography), *What's New*, Abbott Laboratories. Reproduced in *Printing Arts Quarterly*. Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

[Prob.] Raymond DaBoll, cover design for *Mother Goose*. Reproduction courtesy of the Newberry Library.

*Nine Illustrators*, volume 10. Includes illustrators belonging to the *27 Chicago Designers*, including Phoebe Moore, Elmer Jacobs, Everett McNear, Joe Pearson, and Franklin McMahon. Collection of Lara Allison.



### Influence of the New Bauhaus

Cliff D. Eitel, "Functional Design in Editorial and Advertising Illustration," *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 10, 1949.

Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Taylor Poore, "Advertising Designer," *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 2, 1937. Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

M. Martin Johnson, "Layouts, Photograms, Lettering, Packages, Booklets, Direct Mail, Posters," *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 4, 1939. Reproduction courtesy of University Archives and Special Collections, University of Illinois at Chicago.

László Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion* (Chicago: Paul Theobald Press, 1947). An Institute of Design Book. Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

György Kepes, *Language of Vision* (Chicago: Paul Theobald Press, 1944, orig.; repr. 1969). Courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Ken Olson, "Display, Interior, Product Design," *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 7, 1943. Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Egbert Jacobson, "Studies Made at the New Bauhaus," *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 3, 1938. Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Egbert Jacobson, "Hand sculpture and Cubist drawing; studies made at the New Bauhaus," *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 3, 1938. Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Harry Farrell, "Design in All Materials; for all Purposes," *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 4, 1939. Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

### Corporate Design

Ernst A. Spuehler, "Funk's Hybrid," trademark for Funk Bros. Seed Company, Bloomington, Illinois. *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 14, 1953. Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Dave Chapman, "Design for Industry," *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 13, 1952. Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

A.M. Cassandre, "Strength and Beauty" and "Diversification," illustrations for Container Corporation of America, 1937. Art director: Egbert Jacobson. Advertising firm: N. W. Ayer & Son. Reproduced in *The Printing Art Quarterly*, volume 67, no. 3, 1938. Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Rodney Sidney Dickens, Product design for Kimberly Clark, *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 16, 1955. Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Harry Harringer, "Color and Design," *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 2, 1937. Reproduction courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Egbert Jacobson, photograph of Permanent International Package Exhibit and Reception Room in New York Office of Container Corporation of America, *27 Chicago Designers*, volume 2, 1937. Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Egbert Jacobson, *Basic Color* (Chicago: Paul Theobald Press, 1948). Collection of Lara Allison.

## 14 **Acknowledgments**

This catalog is published on the occasion of the exhibition, *Selling Design: 27 Chicago Designers, 1936-1991*. The exhibition celebrates the 80th anniversary of the founding of the 27 Chicago Designers. Focusing on the founders, the exhibition charts the development of a collaborative approach to design, the incorporation of modernist and experimental materials and practices into commercial design culture, and the promotion of Chicago as a center for progressive design and advertising.

**Curated** by Lara Allison and Jack Weiss

Lara Allison, Ph.D., teaches art and design history at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Jack Weiss, past president and fellow of the Society of Typographic Arts, is president of the Chicago Design Archive and was a member of the 27 Chicago Designers from 1977 to 1991.

**Concept** by Jack Weiss

**Exhibition** by Lara Allison, Ron Kovach and Jack Weiss

**Catalog** design by Steve Liska and Ciana Frenze, printing donated by Blanchette Press

**Book** design by Joseph Essex, printing donated by Blanchette Press

**Videos** by Erin Borreson, *The 27 Chicago Designers*, 2012; Christopher Blake, *Homage to the 27*, 2016; Jack Weiss, *27 Chicago Designers: Selling Design*, 2016 and *27 Chicago Designers: Current Work*, 2016

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**Selling Design:**  
27 Chicago Designers, 1936–1991

An exhibition celebrating the 80th anniversary of the founding of the 27 Chicago Designers.

**October 21, 2016–February 28, 2017**

**University of Illinois at Chicago  
Special Collections & University Archives  
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Chicago, Illinois 60607**

