

# The Avant-Garde and the Conservative in Lighting Design: The Modernism of Walter W. Kantack

Walter W. Kantack had a prominent career as a lighting fixture designer in New York City in the 1920s and 1930s. While he was well known and respected for his Modernist work, he was also highly successful as a designer of period-revival fixtures. These opposing design aesthetics represent many deeper levels of contradiction in his career, and are part of the reason that Kantack has inhabited the remotest corners of the American Modernist design canon. For much of the twentieth century, Modern design in the United States was defined by the European precedent set forth by the Museum of Modern Art. In such influential shows as “Machine Art” of 1934, a Bauhausian aesthetic and grand, socialist idealism were presented as the key components of Modernist design. Those Eurocentric standards for American design were supplanted, to some extent, by scholarship in the 1970s and 1980s, when authors such as David Gebhard, David Hanks, and Jeffrey Meikle introduced the public to the unusual careers of Kem Weber, Donald Deskey, and Norman Bel Geddes, among others.<sup>1</sup> These American designers shared with the European vanguard an interest in simple, unornamented forms and a belief in the transformative power of Modern design in daily living; they also embraced the commercialism of American society and possessed an undeniable flamboyance. These features have come to represent the core of the American Modernist design canon as it is now understood.

While this canon celebrates the whimsical tastes of many designers based in this country, ultimately it is not structured to explain the complex careers of numerous American designers, such as Walter Kantack, who worked in multiple stylistic idioms.<sup>2</sup> In order to understand the entirety of Kantack’s oeuvre, and others whose work deserves closer investigation, the relationship between Modernism and the institutions of modernity must be rethought. The variety within Kantack’s productions suggests that American Modernist design may not be adequately defined by simple forms, utopian ideals, and the embrace of commercialism. An additional key component was, surprisingly, a self-conscious

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Kristina Wilson is Assistant Professor of Art History, Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts.

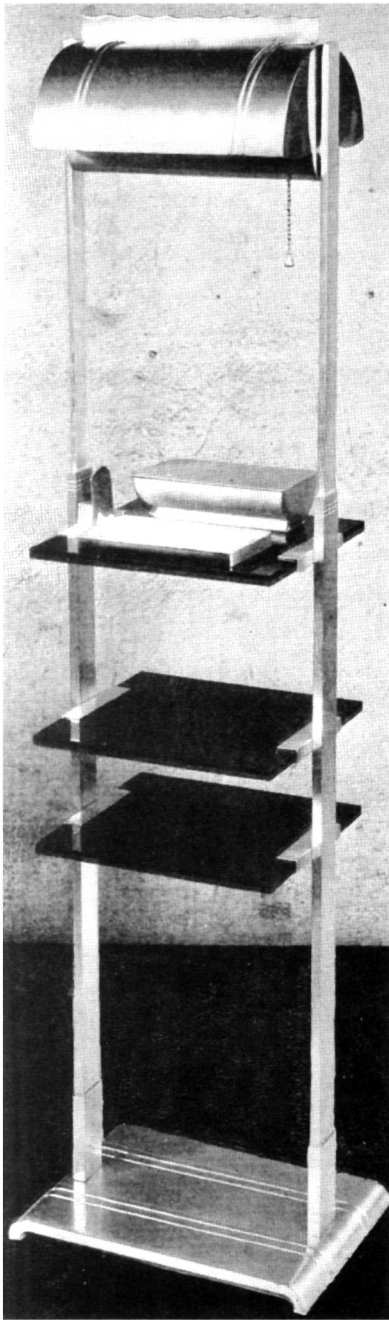


FIGURE 1  
Kantack & Company, Floor lamp, 1930.  
From *Kaleidoscope: Everchanging Lights,  
Shades, and Forms* 3, no. 4 (October 1930):  
12.

anxiety about the loss of an idealized premodern past. This anxiety was a pervasive element in American society, and it manifests itself in American design through the surface level of aesthetics as well as through the deeper building blocks of design, such as choices about materials and production techniques.

An object designed by Kantack around 1930 serves as an effective introduction to the competing issues in his career. In the October 1930 issue of his company-issued quarterly journal (1928-1932), *Kaleidoscope: Ever Changing Lights, Shades, and Forms*, Kantack illustrated a metal floor lamp of uncompromising geometric austerity (Fig. 1). The photograph here shows the light itself shaded by a large, metal half-cylinder, incised with two pairs of lines that give it the appearance of a small-scale oil drum. This half-cylinder is supported at either end by two metal poles, rectangular in section, and between the metal poles, below the light, are suspended three square black Formica shelves. In the photograph, these shelves gleam and reflect the metal of the lamp frame. The base of the lamp departs slightly from the rigid geometries above: its rectangular form is incised with two pairs of lines and its short edges curve downward to elevate the entire base off the floor. The object seems to embody the most avant-garde European design principles of late 1920s: the lamp is made of industrial materials (metal and Formica), its geometric forms seem to be readily reproducible on an industrial assembly line, and its combination of light and shelves make it multifunctional. The caption accompanying the photograph in his company journal notes, however, not only that the “adjustable reflector shade” is “designed primarily for use beside a Bridge Table,” but also, surprisingly, that “the metal structure is finished in hand rubbed silver.”<sup>3</sup>

Given the lamp’s apparently effective expression of Germanic Functionalism, this last description of handcraft detailing and precious materials seems jarring. Was Kantack unaware of the design principles behind his use of simple forms and industrial materials? To whom was he appealing with his reference to expensive finishes? Who was reading *Kaleidoscope* anyway? Kantack’s career as a Modernist lighting fixture designer—which began with his establishment of his company in 1917 and concluded with his retirement in 1943—embodies many contradictions that may seem irreconcilable to twenty-first-century scholars of Modernist design. He was thoroughly committed to electricity as a modern source of illumination energy, and believed that electric lights should be housed in appropriately Modern lamps. Yet he was also a passionate advocate for handcraftsmanship, supporting excellence in metalworking in particular. Moreover, his interest in handcraft tradi-



FIGURE 2  
Kantack & Company, "Flemish-type"  
chandelier, 1931. From *Kaleidoscope* 4,  
no. 3 (July 1931): 4.

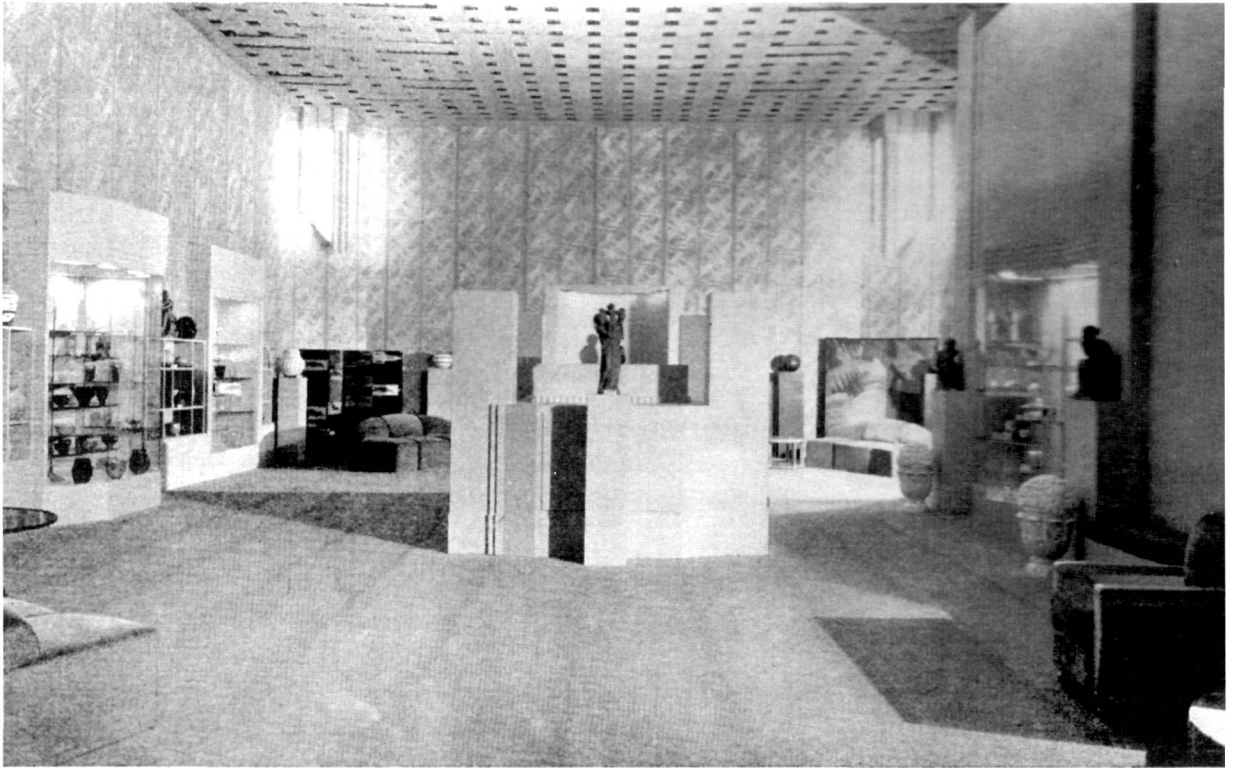
tions instilled in him a respect for handcrafted objects from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, so that alongside the mechanistic bridge lamp, readers of *Kaleidoscope* also saw chandeliers such as that installed in a private residence and described as "reminiscent of the Flemish type so frequently used in Old English homes" (Fig. 2).

On the pages of *Kaleidoscope* and in his writings elsewhere, Kantack comes across as an astute self-promoter, tirelessly defending his expertise as a professional who understands electricity and its power to shape the modern world, and amicably reaching out to both the aesthetic Modernists and the traditionalists in his audience. Indeed, the public record of Kantack's career makes evident the messy realities of practicing Modern design in the interwar years in the United States.<sup>4</sup> It was

possible, as Kantack demonstrates, to be a fervent believer in both electrical modernity and the handicraft past, and to promote both Modernist designs and intelligent period-revival pieces. These dualities were not merely possible but established the foundation for an extremely successful career: in the 1920s and 1930s, Kantack was considered one of the premier lighting fixture designers in the country, prominent in design and architectural groups and recipient of major commissions from corporations, local governments, and private individuals. Ultimately, Kantack's career indicates a broader engagement with the modern world than many views of Modernist design typically allow: he embraced modernity in his use of electricity and his Modernist designs, but he also acknowledged the fears and alienation bred by the modern world in his respect for the humanizing aspects of handicraft traditions. Kantack's Modernism was more multifaceted than mere industrial functionalism permitted, and it begs a reconsideration of the accepted definitions of Modernist design in the United States. Moreover, it is work such as his, with its richness and diversity, that argues for a more complex and layered narrative of the development of Modernist design in this country.

### Introducing Walter Kantack

Walter W. Kantack (1889-1953) began his career in lighting fixture design at the age of fifteen, when he apprenticed himself in the New York City drafting room of Edward F. Caldwell and Company. Caldwell and Company were known for their large-scale Beaux-Arts and revival-style lighting fixtures and architectural ornament, often created in collaboration with McKim, Mead, and White, the foremost architectural firm in the Northeast at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century. During his apprenticeship, Kantack enrolled in evening classes at the Pratt Institute; he eventually rose to the position of assistant to the head designer at Caldwell.<sup>5</sup> From his time at Caldwell, Kantack learned drafting skills, design philosophy, and, most important, an in-depth understanding of the principles of what was then called "illumination engineering." Electric-powered lighting was beginning to transform the domestic realm during these years, and Kantack's training and early career coincided with its rise: in 1910, ten percent of homes were electrified nation-wide, while seventy percent were electrified by 1930.<sup>6</sup> If at the beginning of his training electricity was an almost exotic concept, by the time his firm produced its *Bridge Table* lamp, electricity had permanently transformed domestic life in America's urban centers.



Kantack founded his own lighting fixture firm in 1917; it existed, with various name changes, until he retired in 1943 to pursue his Christian Science faith full time.<sup>7</sup> During these years, Kantack himself and his company's work were a part of the most influential Modern design events in the United States. For example, he served as a delegate, appointed by Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, to the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris. (Because the United States did not participate in the Paris Exposition, this delegation was appointed to report on the fair and its implications for the American design industry.)<sup>8</sup> In 1928, his firm designed, in collaboration with the architect Ely Jacques Kahn, the massive lighting fixtures in the central gallery of Lord & Taylor's influential "Exposition of Modern French Decorative Art" (March 1928; Fig. 3). His firm provided lighting fixtures and metal architectural ornament for the Modern design exhibitions held by The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1929, 1934, and 1940.<sup>9</sup> Of these, his most notable contributions were to the 1929 "Architect and the Industrial Arts": Kantack designed the overhead and desk lamps in Raymond Hood's "Business Executive's

FIGURE 3  
Kantack & Company, Wall fixtures (in corners) at "Exposition of Modern French Decorative Art," Lord & Taylor, New York, March 1928. From *Kaleidoscope* 1, no. 1 (April 1928): 8.



FIGURE 4  
Kantack & Company, Lighting fixtures,  
1929, in Raymond M. Hood, “Business  
Executive’s Office” in “The Architect and  
the Industrial Arts” exhibition, 1929, The  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.  
From *Kaleidoscope* 2, no. 1 (April 1929): 1.  
Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art,  
New York.

Office,” the vanity mirror lighting in Kahn’s “Bath and Dressing Room,” and he collaborated on the metal chairs and gate in Kahn’s “Backyard Garden” (Figs. 4-6). In the early 1930s, Kantack’s company lit the New York offices of such prominent companies as Alcoa (1930) and the Irving Trust Company (1931), and designed lighting schemes for buildings farther afield, such as the Adler Planetarium in Chicago (1930) and the Joslyn Memorial in Omaha, Nebraska (1931). In 1934 he received one of the highest honors of his career, the American Institute of Architects’ medal for craftsmanship.<sup>10</sup>

The most unusual element of Kantack’s career was his dedication to writing about illumination design. In articles for both general and professional audiences (in journals such as *Arts and Decoration* and *American*



*Architect*), he aimed to educate his readers about the powers of electrical illumination as well as basic principles of good lighting fixture design. His in-house quarterly journal *Kaleidoscope* (published from 1928 to 1932) seems to have been directed at potential clients, including architects, businesses, and wealthy individuals (the journal, averaging sixteen pages per issue, was published in New York, but no price was ever listed, implying that subscribers received it as a bonus for their past and anticipated future dealings with Kantack's firm). In it, numerous high-quality photographs of his company's work were accompanied by articles on lighting, many of which were texts adapted from Kantack's public lectures.<sup>11</sup> *Kaleidoscope* was more than a public relations vehicle, however; individual issues also included articles on metalsmithing skills, the

FIGURE 5  
Kantack & Company, Lighting fixtures, 1929, in Ely Jacques Kahn, "Bath and Dressing Room" in "The Architect and the Industrial Arts" exhibition, 1929, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. From *Kaleidoscope* 2, no. 1 (April 1929): 16. Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



FIGURE 6  
Kantack & Company and Ely Jacques  
Kahn, Side chair and gate, 1929, in  
“Backyard Garden” in “The Architect and  
the Industrial Arts” exhibition, 1929, The  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.  
From *Kaleidoscope* 2, no. 1 (April 1929): 4.  
Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

physical properties of various metals, and excerpts from books such as Charles R. Richards’s *Art and Industry* and Roger Fry’s *Vision and Design*.<sup>12</sup> In its wide-ranging scope, *Kaleidoscope* reveals grander ambitions than self-promotion. Perhaps Kantack—who reprinted letters from libraries across the country thanking him for copies of the journal<sup>13</sup>—hoped that the publication would become a compendium of practical and theoretical knowledge for illumination design for both contemporary and future designers.

Kantack’s writings on light often addressed both the aesthetic appearance of the lighting fixtures themselves and the capacity of electricity to illuminate a room through its unprecedented subtlety and power. His discussions of lighting fixtures were usually pragmatic, focusing on the style and the type of light shed by the fixture (direct, indirect, and directed-indirect). The closest he came to espousing a philosophy of



fixture design was to proclaim that modern electrical light required lighting fixtures in a Modern style. As early as 1925, when reporting on the Paris Exposition, he announced: "Only as we accept electricity as an original factor, demanding original [fixture] treatment, will we derive the full benefit of its artistic and practical possibilities."<sup>14</sup> When writing about the broader implications of interior electrical illumination rather than just fixtures, however, Kantack became expansive and passionate. Electricity, he reminded readers repeatedly, offered unparalleled opportunities for originality and control in interior illumination: "We are finding that electric light is a tangible something which we can utilize and mould and bend. That there are definite means of controlling and directing the path of light as well as its color and volume. In other words, *light can be made to do things*."<sup>15</sup> To his mind, an interior illumination scheme went far beyond the niceties of fixture design and engaged broader questions of atmosphere and lifestyle. In 1931 he wrote:

It will be readily understood that inasmuch as the vestibule, the hall, the dining room, the living room, the morning room and bedrooms have their individual parts to play and contributions to make toward the orderly conduct of the affairs of the family occupying a dwelling or an apartment, just so they present the need for individual study from the standpoint of illumination . . . in order that they may most successfully play their individual roles.<sup>16</sup>

In arguing for the broader artistic conception of electrical illumination—filling spaces with a mixture of diffused and directed light, creating subtle or dramatic shadows, applying light like a paintbrush—Kantack was not unusual. The *American Architect* published a pair of reference articles on lighting in 1925 that emphasized Kantack's arguments precisely: "The artificial lighting of an interior is much more than just the illumination of the room. . . . The shades and shadows which are created by artificial lighting can and should be made a part, and an interesting part, too, of the architectural design."<sup>17</sup> Similarly, the critics Sheldon and Martha Cheney celebrated the potential artistic effects of electrical illumination in their 1936 book *Art and the Machine*: "The final, the most distinctively machine-age element is electric light, used as the harmonizing and unifying element, now a marvelous flexible instrument in the hands of the designer."<sup>18</sup> In this period of the rapid electrification of American homes, lighting was not simply rooted in a fixture, but rather became a transcendent force that shaped the entire experience of an interior.

Kantack's presence in almost every major Modern design event in the United States between the World Wars and his extensive written legacy are evidence of his stature in the field. During the decades of the 1920s and 1930s, there was no more prominent lighting fixture designer or spokesman for illumination engineering; the general public and design professionals alike turned to Kantack for explication of the wonders of electricity and guidance about incorporating it in a wide range of interior spaces. Today, however, his name is hardly known, while that of another lighting fixture designer active in the interwar years, Walter von Nessen, is widely recognized. Both Kantack and von Nessen supplemented their lighting fixture enterprises with lines of metal furnishings and accessories, so it would be difficult to argue that von Nessen became better known because his designs were more varied.<sup>19</sup> One possible reason for Kantack's relative obscurity today may be the fact that the majority of his designs were high-end commissions, carried out for businesses, public institutions, or wealthy individuals. Because he never apparently developed an affordable line of fixtures, produced in large if not mass quantities, his material legacy is severely limited: there are few extant objects to pique the interest of collectors and establish his name in auction houses. Von Nessen, on the other hand, embraced larger-scale production, became a designer associated with affordable middle-class Modernism, and in the process left a lengthy trail of objects that can be collected and studied today. There is still another possible reason for Kantack's relative obscurity: for a supposed Modernist, he designed a considerable number of period-revival fixtures and supported the extensive use of craft skills; his output simply may not seem "modern enough" according to a narrow view of Modernist design.

### Kantack's Avant-Garde Modernism

In several aspects of his career, Kantack conforms to many of the stereotypes associated with pre-World War II European avant-garde design. Foremost among these is his unreserved embrace of the modern technology of electricity. Time and again in his writings, Kantack touted the innovations in illumination that electricity had made possible. His enthusiasm frequently sounded messianic, as he proclaimed that electricity would free society from past constraints and would broaden horizons in the future:

The candle and the lamp were limited, flickering and feeble. They required much labor to produce and constant attention to maintain.

Gas too was bound by economic and physical fetters which made its use local and static.

Electricity, however, literally has worked wonders. . . . No more need we depend upon a fixed source of light, no longer must we be satisfied with only one set of conditions. Electric lighting is flexible. Like a well-ordered painter's palette, it is capable of infinite variety in tone, color, and intensity. Yet according to our scientific friends we are but standing upon the threshold of this glorious illuminative world. We are but toddling children in our knowledge of the use of color and intensity, both reflective and direct. We are but beginning to utilize light in the several beneficial ways of which it is capable.<sup>20</sup>

Kantack's embrace of electricity also led him to argue that Modernist design was the only proper aesthetic choice for electrical lighting fixtures. This technological determinism first appeared after his visit to the Paris Exposition in 1925, and grew more strident with time. In 1931, he informed the readers of *American Architect*:

During the past few years it has become evident that we have had in our midst a new medium and element for illumination, but have been trying to handle it and dress it up in the habiliments of its predecessors, instead of becoming familiar with its nature and characteristics, and then making use of it in an understanding manner. In all the confusing turmoil, pro and con relative to contemporary expression in design, the lighting fixture designer has met the least resistance and received the most encouragement. . . . It is being realized that only by forgetting the past in lighting fixtures can full benefit and efficiency in lighting be obtained.<sup>21</sup>

The Modernist designs produced by Kantack's firm illustrate a range of interpretations of "contemporary expression in design." Some designs demonstrate an awareness of the sumptuousness and flamboyance of the French styles promoted at the 1925 Exposition. A dining room chandelier illustrated in a 1930 issue of *Kaleidoscope*, for example, features stylized nude figures and vegetal forms etched in glass that recall the work of French designers such as Jacques-Émile Ruhlmann (Figs. 7a, 7b). The four circular glass pendants were supported by a massive, four-sided, almost architectural metal base. Diffused light shone downward through a frosted glass plate in the base, while smaller, sharper lights were directed upward beneath each of the glass pendants. The smaller lights not only made the etched glass glow but also probably threw dramatic decorative shadows. On the other hand, another wall fixture, featured in 1931, exemplifies the whimsical, expressive approach to Modernity that

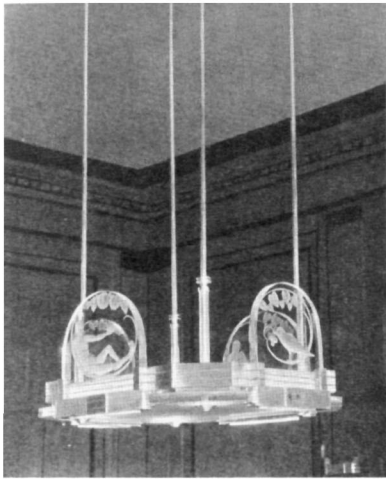
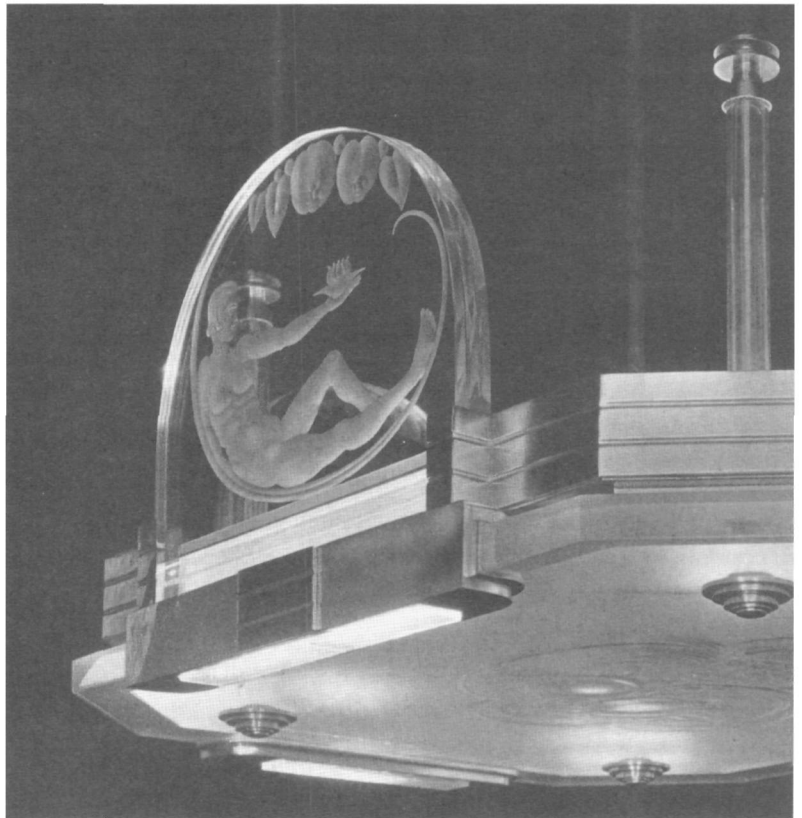


FIGURE 7a  
Kantack & Company, Chandelier, 1930.  
From *Kaleidoscope* 3, no. 1 (January 1930):  
7.

FIGURE 7b  
Detail of chandelier in Fig. 7a. From  
*Kaleidoscope* 3, no. 1 (January 1930): 6.



characterizes early streamlined design in the United States (Fig. 8). The fixture was formed to resemble a miniature airplane, commonly considered the paragon of modern technology at least since Le Corbusier's manifesto *Towards a New Architecture* (published in the United States in 1927): its metal body attached to the wall, while its wings were composed of two tubes of frosted glass, from which a steady glow of light was emitted. Modern architecture itself inspired Kantack, even though he announced in a 1929 lecture that he did not think stepped-back skyscrapers should be models for fixture forms: "I don't believe there is any relationship between a skyscraper and a lighting fixture, a skyscraper and a bookcase or a writing desk."<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, the tall, elegant lighting standard he designed for the lobby of the Irving Trust Company Building in 1931 had an unmistakable, if slender, stepped-back silhouette (Fig. 9). Indeed, the standard could be seen as a cross between the American celebration of technology and the French favor for stylized vegetal forms: the stem of the lamp was composed of a cluster of thin metal segments, three of which were cut back at varying heights to create the stepped-

back form; at the top, the remaining segments bent gracefully outward to hold the semi-spherical glass light. The total resembled a flower stem with tightly furled leaves, crowned by a large blossom.

In addition to these expressive, eye-catching forms, Kantack's company produced many simpler, even austere fixture designs. For objects such as an overhead light fixture created for a pharmacy in New York City (Fig. 10) or a pendant lamp hanging in the auditorium of the Joslyn Memorial in Omaha (Fig. 11), the explanatory captions in *Kaleidoscope* focused entirely on their practical purpose, leaving the reader to assume that their forms merely followed function. For the pharmacy lamp, an innocuous cylindrical form with a frosted glass base and metal louvered sides, the magazine explained: "On the stair landing . . . a lighting fixture embodying metal louvers and a glass bottom sheds brilliant illumination on the landing and steps."<sup>23</sup> The Joslyn Memorial lamps were designed to be hung at the edge of the auditorium balcony, and were needed to shed both strong light over the large central space of the auditorium and gentler light over the balcony. The lamp consisted of two lights, projecting from either side of a large octagonal aluminum plate, chosen for its reflective surface: "One aluminum reflecting plane directs the light of a 750-watt lamp over the main floor of the Auditorium, while the other plane spreads 250 watts over the Balcony area."<sup>24</sup> Fixtures such as these, seemingly the product of necessity first and aesthetics second, appear increasingly to have defined Kantack's approach to lighting design. In the final issue of *Kaleidoscope*, he described how his firm's interest in illumination problems rather than in fixture aesthetics (in short, their functionalist approach) had won them a major commission in the Midwest:

The junior member of the firm of architects . . . [said that he was] impressed by a letter written to the office, where, instead of talking about lighting fixtures, we discussed illumination. "The other fellows all went home and started to draw pretty pictures," he said, "whereas you gave first consideration to the solution of our lighting problems." During this interview the contract was awarded to us.<sup>25</sup>

This last anecdote not only reveals Kantack's philosophical approach to designing light fixtures but also indicates a larger blind spot in his practice. In a period when Modernist designers increasingly voiced grand ideals about using technology to produce affordable, well-designed goods for broad audiences, Kantack's practical commitment to the middle- or lower-middle-class consumer was notably lacking. He did recog-

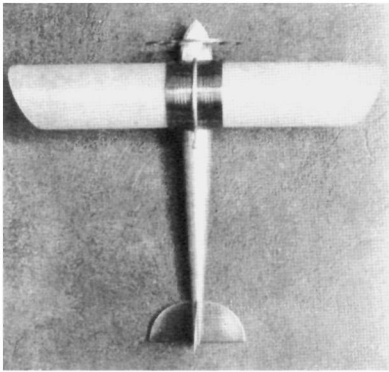
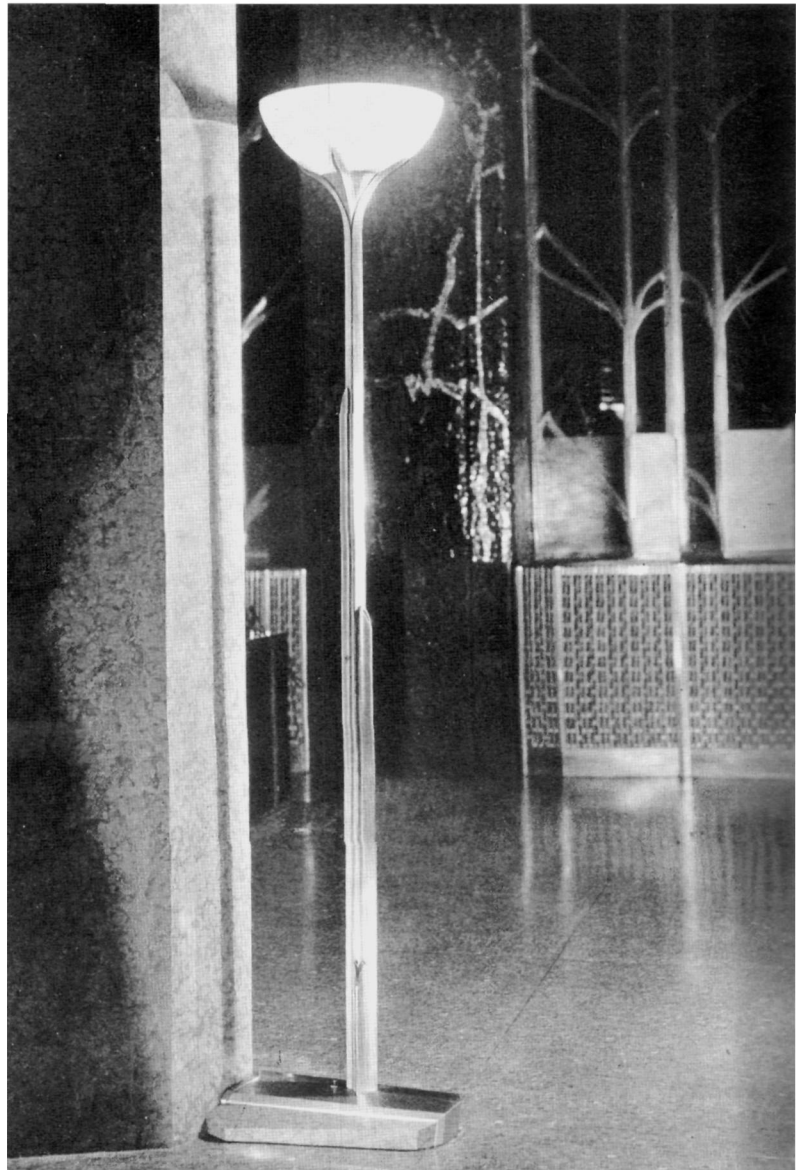


FIGURE 8  
Kantack & Company, Wall fixture, 1931.  
From *Kaleidoscope* 4, no. 1 (January 1931):  
9.

FIGURE 9  
Kantack & Company, Light standard,  
1931. From *Kaleidoscope* 4, no. 2 (April  
1931): 2.



nize the substantial improvement in everyday life that Modern design could bring: reporting on the Stockholm Exhibition of 1930, for example, he noted approvingly that “All of these modern apartments and houses were designed to display objects and articles within the reach of the working and middle classes. The percentage of exhibits in the entire Exposition which might be termed ‘precious’ was quite negligible.” He advocated the “application of similar mental qualities as is evidenced in

the splendid achievement of our Swedish co-workers, to our own problems and work," but there is little evidence to suggest that he ever found a way to include mass-designed objects in his company's business.<sup>26</sup> For the Metropolitan Museum's exhibition "Contemporary American Industrial Art: 1934," where the focus was explicitly on quantity production and affordable design, Kantack contributed no mass-producible lights, as might have been expected (and as von Nessen did); rather, he designed an elaborate metal gate for the exhibition itself. During the *Kaleidoscope* years, which spanned the dizzying heights of the Roaring Twenties and the first, grimmest years of the Great Depression, he directly considered the pocketbook of the middle-class consumer only a few times. In the magazine's second issue, an editorial stated that "Kantack products naturally cost more than those made by quantity production. They have an individuality of their own, and hand made craftsmanship, easily recognizable and always appreciated by connoisseurs." It went on to reassure readers that the company welcomed customers of more modest means: "This does not mean that Kantack products are beyond the reach of the man or woman who is furnishing a modest home. . . . Visitors and inquiries are always welcomed at our studios."<sup>27</sup> Yet the editorial did not mention any specific products for the less elite. In July 1929, in a column entitled "Art in the Home," the magazine offered its only practical advice to such consumers. Admitting that "well-made objects cost money" because "a great deal of skill and time is put into them," the author encouraged owners of "even the most modest home" simply to choose a few well-made items rather than commission an extensive refurbishing. Such careful selection would enable the consumer to experience "art in the home" but would not prove to be "inordinately" expensive.<sup>28</sup> Thus Kantack's solution to the affordability of good design was apparently to encourage certain choices by the consumer, not to restructure his own design production.

### Kantack's Conservatism

In addition to his embrace of modern electrical technology and Modernist aesthetics, Kantack's career was defined by two other areas of commitment that typically have been labeled conservative<sup>29</sup>: he was an ardent advocate of traditional handcraftsmanship, and he created an extensive collection of electrical fixtures in period-revival styles. In this surprising mixture, Kantack's career does not follow the pattern scholars have come to expect from early twentieth-century Modernists.



FIGURE 10  
Kantack & Company, Ceiling fixture,  
1930. From *Kaleidoscope* 3, no. 4 (October  
1930): 14.

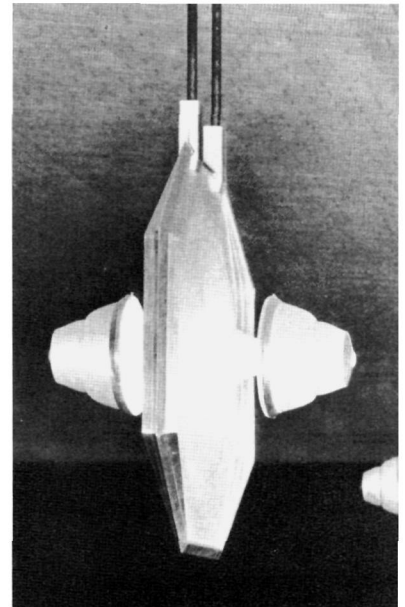


FIGURE 11  
Kantack & Company, Lighting fixture,  
1931 Joslyn Memorial Auditorium, Omaha,  
Nebraska. From *Kaleidoscope* 5, no. 1  
(January 1932): 9.



FIGURE 12  
Kantack craftsman. From *Kaleidoscope* 2,  
no. 2 (July 1929): 8.



FIGURE 13  
Kantack craftsman. From *Kaleidoscope* 2,  
no. 3 (October 1929): 8.

As his comments about the expense of Kantack products indicate, a central feature of Kantack's company philosophy was to support and maintain skilled craftsmanship. The firm seems to have supported craft skills in metalwork and glass in particular, presumably because of their centrality to lighting fixtures. Two issues from *Kaleidoscope's* second year of publication featured full-page photographs of Kantack craftsmen, absorbed in their work as they hammered various pieces of metal into required shapes (Figs. 12, 13). These photographs were no mere set pieces to affirm the Kantack company's commitment to skilled labor; an article in the *New York Times* in 1926 described the experience of visiting the Kantack studio: "You can, if you choose, go through the shop where these things [iron gates, grilles, standards and chandeliers . . .] are made and watch every step of the process of forging the iron, hammering the brass and even bending the sheet glass for the lanterns."<sup>30</sup> In 1934, the American Institute of Architects recognized Kantack's ongoing support of skilled manual work by awarding him a medal for craftsmanship. Only a few years before his retirement, he became involved with the Society of Designer-Craftsmen, exhibiting a pair of wall fixtures in their 1940 exhibition at the Artist-Craftsman Gallery in Manhattan. The reviewer



for the *New York Times* described the potential benefit of craft products in an age when “most of our home furnishings are produced to best advantage by large-scale methods”: “The craftsman, since he makes only one piece at a time, can vary his design at will; he can respond more sensitively to new ideas than the large-scale manufacturer. He may therefore become an originator of new modes and a leader in the improvement of design.”<sup>31</sup> Kantack, described in the article as the “designer” of his wall lights, did not make the objects with his own hands, since there is no evidence to suggest he himself had any training in metalsmithing; rather, he presumably designed the objects based on his knowledge of the physical properties of the materials involved, and had the design carried out by a craftsman in his company.<sup>32</sup>

In supporting craft skills, Kantack was not just advocating a particular model of high-quality production. He was also explicitly linking his twentieth-century goods to the craft skills behind high-quality objects of past centuries. An article on metal chasing in *Kaleidoscope* opened with a typical historical gloss that tied Kantack products to an esteemed craft tradition:

The art of chasing . . . artistic designs on metals, is almost as old as the history of man. Attaining great prominence in the earliest centuries of the Christian era, artisans became exceedingly expert as early as the twelfth century. But the beauteous products of later workmen have maintained a high standard ever since. The work is still being carried on in its primal faithfulness in Kantack shops.<sup>33</sup>

Kantack attempted to link his company to the “beauteous” handcrafted products of the past in other ways as well. First, he described his company as “A Guild for the reproduction of ancient and the development of modern art objects, conducive to harmony, expressed through illumination and ornamentation for interiors and exteriors.” The use of the word “guild,” made popular by the Arts and Crafts movement, evoked images of medieval fraternal organizations where years of systematized, intensive training ensured the perpetuation of craft skills. Second, Kantack stamped each of his products with a maker’s mark, just as guild-registered silversmiths from the seventeenth century onwards were obliged to do (Fig. 14). Introducing the mark in 1929, a brief text in *Kaleidoscope* explained that the letter “K” should be “obvious” in meaning, that the number below the letter “represents the year in which the article is made,” and that the parallel lines above symbolized the firm’s “uniform high standard of quality, workmanship and design.”<sup>34</sup>

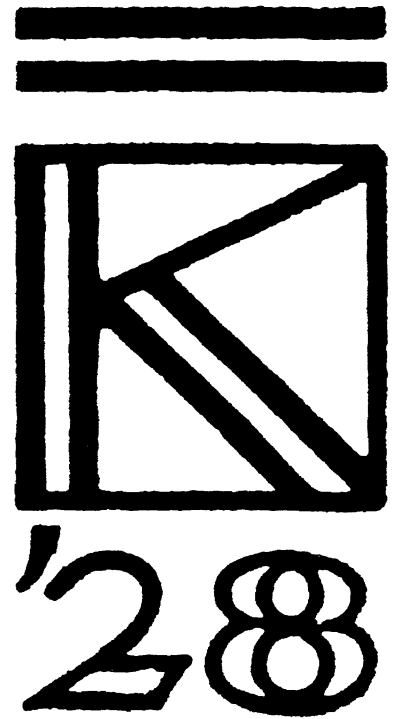


FIGURE 14  
Kantack mark. From *Kaleidoscope* 1, no. 4  
(January 1929): 15.



FIGURE 15  
Kantack & Company, “Gothic-Design”  
chandelier, 1931. From *Kaleidoscope* 4, no.  
1 (January 1931): 6.

Because of his focus on the tradition of skilled craftsmanship, it is not surprising that a considerable portion of the Kantack company’s products were designed in period-revival styles: from venerating the casting and forging skills of a medieval metalsmith, it is but a short step to using those same skills in the creation of a “Gothic-design” chandelier (Fig. 15). While Kantack repeatedly argued that Modern designs were most appropriate for electricity, he seems to have been drawn to period reproductions for two reasons. First, his interest in craftsmanship led him to an appreciation of pre-electrical-era designs; and second, through countless private commissions, he became aware that many people would not embrace Modern design in their own homes. Thus, although he never denied his preference for Modernism in lighting fixture styles, he developed a theory to guide clients to a more intelligent use of electrical

lighting in their period-revival decorated homes. The centerpiece of this theory was the term "consistency," which he defined for the upscale readers of *Arts and Decoration* magazine in 1931:

It follows that if one is endeavoring to create the atmosphere and decorative characteristics of a period several centuries old, it would seem right to at least take into consideration the capacity of the lighting media of the time, even if one did not actually employ the primitive source of illumination. By this statement I mean to stress the incongruity of placing high wattage electric bulbs within enclosures designed for the shielding of the flame of a single candle.<sup>35</sup>

Achieving consistency meant not only researching and learning about period-appropriate fixtures but also thinking creatively about how to integrate the powers of electrical lighting with a period's aesthetic sensibility: using lower wattage bulbs, perhaps, or designing bolder metal forms than might be historically accurate in order to balance the power of the electrical illumination. Kantack ultimately did not advocate slavish copying of period lighting fixtures, but rather the intelligent amplification of them: "In the writer's own experience he has endeavored, wherever possible, to approach a current problem in lighting and interior design when related to the historic periods from the standpoint of his conception of how the designer of that period would have applied electrical illumination had it been in use at the time."<sup>36</sup>

Many of the period-style designs featured in *Kaleidoscope* demonstrate Kantack's ideas of consistency. A pair of wall sconces designed for an early nineteenth-century American interior were diminutive, in keeping with the airy classicism of the room's furnishings (Fig. 16). Designed to provide ambient lighting to the room, rather than to serve as its central light source, the low-wattage, flame-shaped bulbs were an appropriate complement to the scale of the fixtures. Two large chandeliers, on the other hand, were designed to provide central illumination in the entrance halls of their respective houses (see Figs. 2 and 15).<sup>37</sup> The "Flemish-type" chandelier boasted twenty flame-shaped bulbs, whose cumulative light would have created an extremely bright sphere of illumination; to balance this strength, Kantack's firm designed a central baluster-form spine with a large, egg-shaped globe anchoring its lower end. The nine candle lights of the "Gothic" chandelier complemented the verticality of the overall design, with its animal-headed lower terminus and spiral-fluted top, while the foliated arms provided sufficient horizontal visual interest to keep the chandelier balanced. The complex-

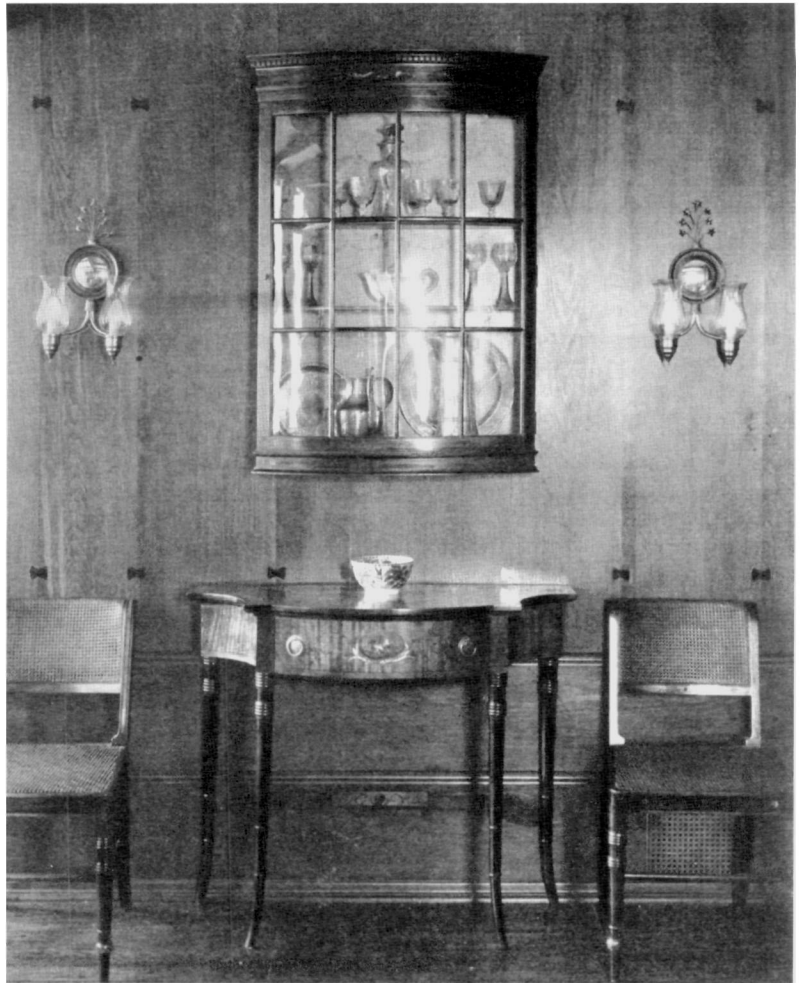


FIGURE 16  
Kantack & Company, “Colonial” wall  
sconces, 1931. From *Kaleidoscope* 3, no. 3  
(October 1929): 12.

ity of this metalworking firmly grounded the brilliance of the lights themselves.

### Reconciling the Avant-Garde and the Conservative

Did Kantack fail to understand the full ideological implications of avant-garde Modernist design—that to promote Modernism and all of its innovations meant to refuse to indulge the public in its romance with the past? Or, was he a mere opportunist, preaching both Modernism and historical styles simply to reach the widest possible audience for his business? Is there any way to reconcile these apparent contradictions within the career of a single designer? There are, in fact, two lenses through which Kantack’s multifarious interests can be brought into

harmonious focus. The first is the language of advertising and the marketplace, which shaped American culture and the public dissemination of information with extraordinary power in the post-World War I years. The second is the language of spiritual anxiety, which grew in symbiotic relationship to the increasingly commercialized and technologized American culture of the 1920s and 1930s. By placing Kantack's career within these two larger cultural contexts, it is possible to see him as a designer who engaged multiple facets of the modern world and who thus occupies a place in an expanded canon of American Modernist design.

As Roland Marchand has documented, in the 1920s the United States advertising industry achieved an unprecedented level of sophistication.<sup>38</sup> Companies that had previously thought of advertising as simply the promotion of products began to hire firms that specialized in advertising. These agencies prided themselves on researching what consumers wanted in their daily lives, and then devising advertisements that would situate the product within a constellation of psychologically compelling fantasies. Thus, the primary difference between advertisements of about 1900 and those of the 1930s lay in the increased emphasis on speaking to the consumer, rather than simply speaking of the product.

Kantack founded his own company just as the advertising industry blossomed; his first full decade of work, the 1920s, coincided with a booming consumer market. As the successful modern businessman he clearly was, he doubtless thought about how to make his products known to potential customers, and, more importantly, *who* his ideal customers were and how best to reach them. Because Kantack's clients were not run-of-the-mill housewives, his approach to "advertising" did not involve buying ad space in *Good Housekeeping*, for example. Instead, he had to find venues for attracting the well-known architects who built both important public structures and elaborate homes for the wealthy. His participation in such high-profile exhibitions as the Lord & Taylor Exposition of 1928 or the Metropolitan Museum's "The Architect and the Industrial Arts" of 1929, and his articles in a range of journals, can all be seen as elements of an elite advertising strategy: getting his name and his firm's work known to a circle of discerning potential consumers.

If Kantack's public exposure is understood as part of an advertising—or more broadly, a public relations—campaign, then the differences in his message become understandable: as he talked about lighting and illumination in these different venues, he shifted emphasis depending on his intended audience and what he thought they wanted to hear. In contexts in which the primary audience came from the design and

architecture professions, such as that for the exhibitions or his articles for *American Architect*, Kantack positioned himself as an avowed Modernist. He featured his most progressive work, and unflinchingly proclaimed that Modernist designs would most effectively harness the new powers of electricity. For a more conservative, wealthy audience, such as the readers of the expensive *Arts and Decoration* or *Interiors*, however, he emphasized the ways that period designs could be intelligently integrated with electric lighting. For generalist audiences, he tended to adopt a sympathetic pose in which he argued for the importance of Modern styles and modern electrical lighting (skeptics of which were still numerous in the 1920s),<sup>39</sup> but he presented such newness as a logical outgrowth of historical trends. For example, at a public lecture given at the Metropolitan Museum in 1928 (published in *Kaleidoscope*), he presented the development of electric lighting as an unsurprising next step in the history of illumination technology:

In 1783, a Swiss, named Aimé Argand, developed a new wick for the burning of oil, and discovered the possibilities offered by the use of glass chimneys. From this point developments and changes ranging from the use of so-called fluids, to kerosene, gas, natural and artificial, and culminating in the discovery of electricity as a source of light, followed in rapid succession, until we are now well along in our conquest of the darkness.<sup>40</sup>

In a magazine on lighting engineering put out by General Electric—whose readers would have embraced electricity, but may have been less certain about the value of Modern aesthetics—Kantack similarly presented Modernist designs as intimately related to fixture styles of the past. He admitted that “at the present time [there is] a mad groping and grasping after novelty and startling effect,” but he predicted that shortly a more mature Modernist aesthetic idiom would appear, “a more rational, thoughtful assortment of fixtures, having these characteristics of refinement, grace and gentility so requisite to lasting pleasure.”<sup>41</sup> By describing Modern design as a new style that would contain the essential qualities of older, valued styles, he assured his readers that Modernism was not as alien to their way of living as they may have thought.

*Kaleidoscope* was the publicity vehicle for all of Kantack’s varying audiences: the avant-garde designers, the individual scions eager to demonstrate their old-world wealth, and the general public, which might not yield clients immediately, but whose education about illumination and fixture design would establish an intelligent sympathy for future products. From this vantage point, *Kaleidoscope* should not be written off

as a collection of conflicting ideas about Modern design, but instead can be appreciated as an index of the many constituencies that Kantack, the consummate modern businessman, attempted to reach. He could be considered two-faced, as any advertising person might. On the stage of the newly emergent public market, however, his endorsements of both Modern and period fixtures can be reconciled simply as varying elements of his larger modern business.

Although in the modern language of marketing Kantack's diverse design styles may be harmonized, that language does not reconcile the deeper, ideological conflicts in his practice. Kantack passionately claimed that electricity and Modernism heralded a new, exciting phase for Western society, yet he also asserted that emotional connections to the past were meaningful. Such an attempt to straddle future and past was far from unusual in the interwar years, when new technologies were dramatically changing everyday life—when movies, mass magazines, and radio bred a new species of popular culture, manufacturing efficiencies made more goods affordable to more people, and indoor plumbing and electricity changed the hygienic substructure of the home. While this radical transformation of personal patterns of existence was liberating, it was also, in its utter difference from lifestyles of thirty years earlier, profoundly disorienting for some. The alienating newness of culture after World War I inspired social trends that are reflected in Kantack's work, including a renewed fascination with the past and the growing popularity of various religious practices. Both of these trends reasserted human connections—to ancestors and to contemporaries—in the face of an increasingly atomized, fast-paced modern world.

The rhetorical flair and passion that underlies many of Kantack's pronouncements about the modern world would seem to be evidence of his belief in the beneficial opportunities it afforded. In his 1928 lecture at the Metropolitan Museum, he extolled the virtues of electricity using two sophisticated metaphors. First, he compared the transition from night to dawn to full daylight with the history of artificial illumination. The moment of earliest light he compared to the discovery of fire; the long semidarkness of dawn he likened to the centuries of development in candles, oil, and gas light. Finally, he compared the arrival of full daylight—"At length there came a great flood of light which annihilated the lingering darkness, and the full light of day reigned supreme"—to the discovery of electricity, with which "we can, and do, achieve an approximation of continuous daylight." A second metaphor likened the discovery of modern lighting with the freedom of the human race:

When we consider the mental bondage to which the greater part of mankind was subjected until our Revolutionary War established man's inalienable right to think for himself, we can readily understand the general lack of progress in all lines of mechanical invention and achievement. History shows that there was little or no invention and that the crudest and most primitive implements and utensils were universally employed, in all fields of human activity, prior to the last quarter of the Eighteenth Century. . . . Immediately, however, man's right to think and act according to the dictates of conscience were established; this liberation was felt universally, and invention, which is always the expression of free thought, advanced by leaps and bounds. . . . How closely the darkness is synonymous with ignorance—and light with enlightenment!<sup>42</sup>

It is worth noting that even as Kantack celebrated modernity in these passages, he did so through references to nature and history, thus firmly situating the modern world in a non-alienating context.

When writing about handicraft traditions, Kantack seemed to be no less passionate. Since the Arts and Crafts movement, the revival of craft skills had been celebrated as an alternative means of producing goods for the home; the English reformer William Morris had argued that workers, rather than submitting to an alienating division of labor, should learn complex skills that would allow them to create an object in its entirety.<sup>43</sup> Morris believed that such labor would be both creatively and spiritually satisfying for the individual. The association between craft skills and a deeply rejuvenating concept of work persisted throughout the twentieth century; reviewing the Society of Designer-Craftsmen exhibition in the summer of 1940, the *Christian Science Monitor* described the designer-craftsmen as “speaking eagerly through various materials, each with his own point of view, each with a compelling impulse to express his thought.”<sup>44</sup> In *Kaleidoscope*, a similar rhetoric appeared. Accompanying one of the portraits of company craftsmen was the following caption (see Fig. 13): “Good craftsmen sometimes like to work in a small scale. This diminutive suit of armor was wrought by a Kantack workman as a labor of love in his leisure hours.”<sup>45</sup> More evocative than any of the articles on craft skills and craft history that laced *Kaleidoscope* was the regular column “In Grandfather’s Day,” in which an unnamed author (presumably Kantack, since his personality formed the core of the magazine) reminisced about the honest physical labor that drove life on his grandfather’s farm. Sweetly sentimental, these memoirs discussed the chores of a child: “Even now I can remember the many trips it took to fill that old wood box and how I often lingered between trips to ask grandmother



about the old fireplace in front of which the stove stood”—and painted a picture of an earlier time when physical work was tied to family and community.<sup>46</sup>

Kantack also made religious references when discussing light, tapping into the contemporary interest in spirituality as a source of revitalizing connection in the modern world. In an article for *House Beautiful*, he invoked Genesis in his discussion of electrical light:

Few are unfamiliar with the divine decree, “Let there be Light,” which the Scriptures record as the first mandate of the Creator. . . . it seems as though we are standing on the threshold of . . . an era which literally promises to turn night into day, and wherein many wishes and moods will be gratified by the pushing of a button or the throwing of a switch.<sup>47</sup>

By likening electrical light to sunlight decreed by God, Kantack appealed to a particular segment of society and also revealed his personal spiritual commitments. He had been healed, he believed, through Christian Science in 1915, and he joined the church in 1916; in 1943, at the age of fifty-four and at the height of a career that had been, by any account, highly successful, he retired to practice Christian Science full time. (His full-time practice included, unsurprisingly, writing nine articles for Christian Science publications.)

Kantack's turn to an alternative religion was part of a larger cultural phenomenon in the first decades of the twentieth century, as the historian Philip Jenkins has documented.<sup>48</sup> Mainline Protestant denominations were embroiled, during these years, with doctrinal schisms, and to many members of the public they seemed more concerned with interpretations of the Bible than with offering spiritual sustenance. Partly as a consequence, alternative religions and sects that emphasized emotional experiences and connections with God—from Christian Science to the Jehovah's Witnesses—blossomed. That Kantack found solace in his longtime practice of Christian Science casts his commitment to craft skills and his love of history in a particular light: he was clearly in search of ways to locate authenticity and community in the modern world, and these facets of his career can be understood as attempts to do just that.

Ultimately, Kantack's design practice was deeply informed by both his fervent embrace of the modern present and his awareness of its alienating potential. This curious mixture of optimism and worry demonstrate that Kantack was engaged with multiple levels of modern culture. In more general terms, this profound ambivalence about the

modern technological world must be seen as a key feature, often overlooked, of much American Modernist design.

## Conclusion

Kantack's multifaceted career does not readily fit into most accepted definitions of Modernist design. Although he embraced both electricity and Modernist aesthetics, he was also committed to craft production and he happily designed in various period-revival styles. When his career is removed from the narrower confines of technological determinism and style, however, and considered instead within the cultural contexts of the marketplace and the alienating anxieties of modernity, Kantack's status as a "Modernist" is not only without doubt but actually becomes richer. The bustling, consumer-oriented marketplace of the 1920s, as well as the various cultural practices that attempted to secure human and spiritual focus despite the cosmopolitan hubbub, are both constituent elements of modernity. They shaped how Kantack thought of his work, and enabled him to investigate many different aspects of design. From this perspective, his celebration of electricity and Modern styles are not the only features of his Modernism; his interest in craft and in historical styles, as symptoms of his commercial savvy and his existential fears, are thus aspects of his Modernism as well. A full consideration of the complexity of Kantack's career thus obliges scholars to reconsider the distinctions they draw when allowing a historical figure into the accepted canon of American Modern design. Kantack embodies the accepted qualities of American Modernism in his embrace of industrialism, Modern styles, and commercialism, but these qualities taken together do not explain many facets of his career. It is his ambivalence about the modern industrial world that brings these diverse strands together; this ambivalence is a key, if often overlooked, component in the American interpretation of Modernist design. More broadly, Kantack's work forces scholars to recognize that the early history of Modern design in the United States was complex and variegated, not driven by a simple aesthetic mandate, but shaped, rather, by innumerable cultural factors. The objects created in this period were as nuanced and contradictory as the historical moment itself.

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## NOTES

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| <p>My work on Walter Kantack originated in a 1996 seminar at Yale University taught by Edward S. Cooke Jr. I presented papers on Kantack at the</p> | <p>1997 Hagley Fellows' Conference, Delaware, and the 1997 Boston University Symposium on the History of Art. I am grateful to Christopher Long,</p> |
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Sarah B. Sherrill, and Anne H. Hoy for comments on earlier drafts of this manuscript.

1. David Gebhard, *Kem Weber: The Moderne in Southern California 1920 through 1941* (Santa Barbara, 1969); David A. Hanks, *Donald Deskey: Decorative Designs and Interiors* (New York, 1987); Jeffrey L. Meikle, *Twentieth Century Limited: Industrial Design in America, 1925-1939* (Philadelphia, 1979). The 1980s also witnessed several publications that wove the careers of individual designers together into a synthetic narrative, thus building the foundation for the American canon as it is currently understood: Karen Davies, *At Home in Manhattan: Modern Decorative Arts, 1925 to the Depression*, exh. cat. (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1983); Alastair Duncan, *American Art Deco* (London, 1986); Bevis Hillier, *Art Deco of the 20s and 30s* (London, 1985); and Richard Guy Wilson, et al., *The Machine Age in America, 1918-1941* (New York, 1986).
2. A few other designers whose professional careers encompassed both Modern styles and the veneration of historical skills and styles are Lurelle Guild, Henry Chapman Mercer, and Samuel Yellin. While their work is known to scholars, the contradictory aspects of their careers have yet to be fully explored.
3. *Kaleidoscope* 3, no. 4 (October 1930): 12.
4. Unfortunately, Kantack's public record is all that is known at this time. No personal or business papers have been located in New York or with his family.
5. "The Institute Awards," *Architectural Forum* 60, no. 6 (June 1934): 5; "Annual Meeting of the Mother Church," *Christian Science Journal* 69, no. 7 (July 1951): 345.
6. David E. Nye, *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology, 1880-1940* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), 16.
7. Kantack, Heath & Warman, Inc. (1917-c. 1927); Kantack and Company, Inc. (c. 1927-1933); and Kantack Inc. (1933-1942).
8. See Marilyn F. Friedman, "The United States and the 1925 Paris Exposition: Opportunity Lost and Found," *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 13, no. 1 (Fall-Winter 2005-2006): 94-119.
9. *Kaleidoscope* 2, No. 1 (April 1929): 2, 4, 6, 16; "A Parade of Contemporary Achievements at the Metropolitan Museum," *Arts and Decoration* 42, no. 2 (December 1934): 25; "Contemporary American Industrial Art," *Architectural Forum* 72, no. 6 (June 1940): 9.
10. "The Institute Awards," 5.
11. Among the venues cited for Kantack's public lectures were: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (January 22, 1928; December 14, 1930); the Illuminating Engineering Society, New York (February 14, 1929); the Association of Arts and Industries, Chicago (December 13, 1929); the Westinghouse Lighting Institute (no date given).
12. *Kaleidoscope* 3, no. 2 (April 1930): 14, 15.
13. *Kaleidoscope* 2, no. 3 (October 1929): 13; and 3, no. 1 (January 1930): 15. In the wide range of technical advice and theory contained within its pages, *Kaleidoscope* resembles the French lighting journal *Lux*, which Alistair Duncan has argued was an influential resource for French lighting designers. *Lux* brought technical ideas about illumination—lumens, reflective sources, direct versus indirect lighting strategies—to designers, who were then able to incorporate these into their fixtures. It is possible that Kantack hoped his company journal would ultimately serve a similar purpose for the United States design community. See Alistair Duncan, "Art Deco Lighting," *Journal of the Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 1 (Spring 1986): 23-24.
14. Walter W. Kantack, "Lighting at the Paris Exposition," *American Architect* 128, no. 2,482 (October 5, 1925): 304.
15. Walter W. Kantack, "Fundamentals in Providing for Good Lighting," *American Architect* 140, no. 2,599 (September 1931): 49. Other examples of this type of description of the importance of illumination over single lighting fixtures can be found in Walter Kantack, "Light and Decoration," *Kaleidoscope* 4, no. 3 (July 1931): 5; and idem, "As We See It," *Kaleidoscope* 5, no. 1 (January 1932): 5-7.
16. Walter W. Kantack, "A Study of Fine Lighting Today," *Arts and Decoration* 35, no. 4 (August 1931): 48.
17. "Interior Architecture: The Design of Lighting Fixtures," *American Architect* 128, no. 2,480 (September 9, 1925): 221. See also "Interior Architecture: Shade and Shadows in Interior Design," *American Architect* 127, no. 2,470 (April 22, 1925): 373-78.
18. Sheldon Cheney and Martha Candler Cheney, *Art and the Machine: An Account of Industrial Design in 20th-Century America* (1936; repr., New York, 1992), 190.
19. Interestingly, the varied products of Kantack's and von Nessen's studios reflect the diagnosis made by Charles R. Richards in his 1922 *Art in Industry* about the necessary structure of a lighting designer's business. He noted that designers would never be able to sustain a business solely devoted to lighting fixtures, and "must be prepared in related lines of metal or other work." Richards may have been in communication with Kantack when he wrote this section of his book, since his description of the necessary training and shop structure seems to describe exactly what is known about Kantack; however, the book was published one year before von Nessen emigrated to the United States; Charles R. Richards, *Art in Industry* (New York, 1922), 193. For von Nessen's career, see Duncan, *American Art Deco*, 54-55, 67-70; Kimberly Sichel, "Walter von Nessen: Early Postmodernist," *Industrial Design* 31, no. 3 (May-June 1984): 38-41; and Davies, *At Home in Manhattan*, 24, 111.
20. [Walter Kantack] "Lighting Progress," *Kaleidoscope* 3, no. 2 (April 1930): 11. Although this item is unsigned, several aspects of its tone and vocabulary are very similar to those in signed pieces by Kantack, hence my attribution.
21. "Fundamentals in Providing for Good Lighting," 48.
22. "Some Remarks on Lighting" (from a talk given to the Illuminating Engineering Society, New York), *Kaleidoscope* 2, no. 1 (April 1929): 5.
23. *Kaleidoscope* 3, no. 4 (October 1930): 14.
24. *Kaleidoscope* 5, no. 1 (January 1932): 9.
25. Walter Kantack, "As We See It," *Kaleidoscope* 5, no. 1 (January 1932): 5-7.
26. Walter Kantack, "Stockholm 1930," *Kaleidoscope* 3, no. 4 (October 1930): 5.
27. Editorial, *Kaleidoscope* 1, no. 2 (July 1928): 14.
28. "Art in the Home," *Kaleidoscope* 2, no. 2 (July 1929): 11.
29. Kantack's appreciation of the handicraft past could be interpreted as a part of an "antimodernist" ethos present at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, identified by T. J. Jackson Lears. As Lears notes, antimodernism was itself a phenomenon of great ambivalence, predicated on the improvements of the modern world yet wary of that world nonetheless. T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (Chicago and London, 1994).

30. H. I. Brock, "Artists Begin to Inspire Machines," *New York Times Magazine* (January 24, 1926): 18.
31. Walter Rendell Storey, "Home Decoration: Handicraft Strikes a Contemporary Note," *New York Times*, June 23, 1940, D7.
32. Kantack would have undoubtedly known the properties of various metals, since over the course of *Kaleidoscope's* history, he published articles about the physical characteristics of copper, brass, silver, aluminum, and pewter.
33. "Meral Chasing," *Kaleidoscope* 2, no. 2 (July 1929): 9. The magazine also ran articles on blacksmithing, enameling, and armor-making.
34. "The Kantack Mark," *Kaleidoscope* 1, no. 4 (January 1929): 15.
35. "A Study of Fine Lighting Today," 48.
36. Walter Kantack, "Let's Consider Modern Lighting," *Interiors* 100, no. 4 (November 1940): 43.
37. The "Flemish type" chandelier was created for the F. James Sensenbrenner residence in Neenah, Wisconsin; the house was described as in "Old English" style. The "Gothic" chandelier was created for the Alvan Macauley residence in Grosse Point, Michigan, which the Detroit architect Albert Kahn designed in "Cotswold Gothic" style. *Kaleidoscope* 4, no. 3 (July 1931): 4; *Kaleidoscope* 4, no. 1 (January 1931): 6.
38. Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity* (Berkeley, 1985).
39. Nye, *Electrifying America*, chap. 4.
40. Walter Kantack, "Lights and Lighting, Past and Present," from a lecture in the Gillender Series, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, January 22, 1928, repr. in *Kaleidoscope* 1, no. 1 (April 1928): 5.
41. Walter Kantack, "Modern Art Enters the Fixture World," from *Light*, "a monthly magazine of the National Lamp Works of General Electric Company," repr. in *Kaleidoscope* 2, no. 3 (October 1929): 3-5.
42. "Lights and Lighting, Past and Present," 3-5.
43. A good overview of Morris's radicalism in an American context is Eileen Boris, *Ruskin, Morris, and the Craftsman Ideal in America* (Philadelphia, 1986).
44. Helen Johnson Keyes, "Summer Exhibition of Designer-Craftsmen," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 3, 1940, 6.
45. *Kaleidoscope* 2, (October 1929): 8.
46. [Walter Kantack], "In Grandfather's Day," *Kaleidoscope* 1, no. 1 (April 1928): 17.
47. Walter Kantack, "Light and Decoration," originally written for *House Beautiful*, repr. in *Kaleidoscope* 4, no. 3 (July 1931): 3-5.
48. Philip Jenkins, *Mystics and Messiahs: Cults and New Religions in American History* (Oxford, 2000).