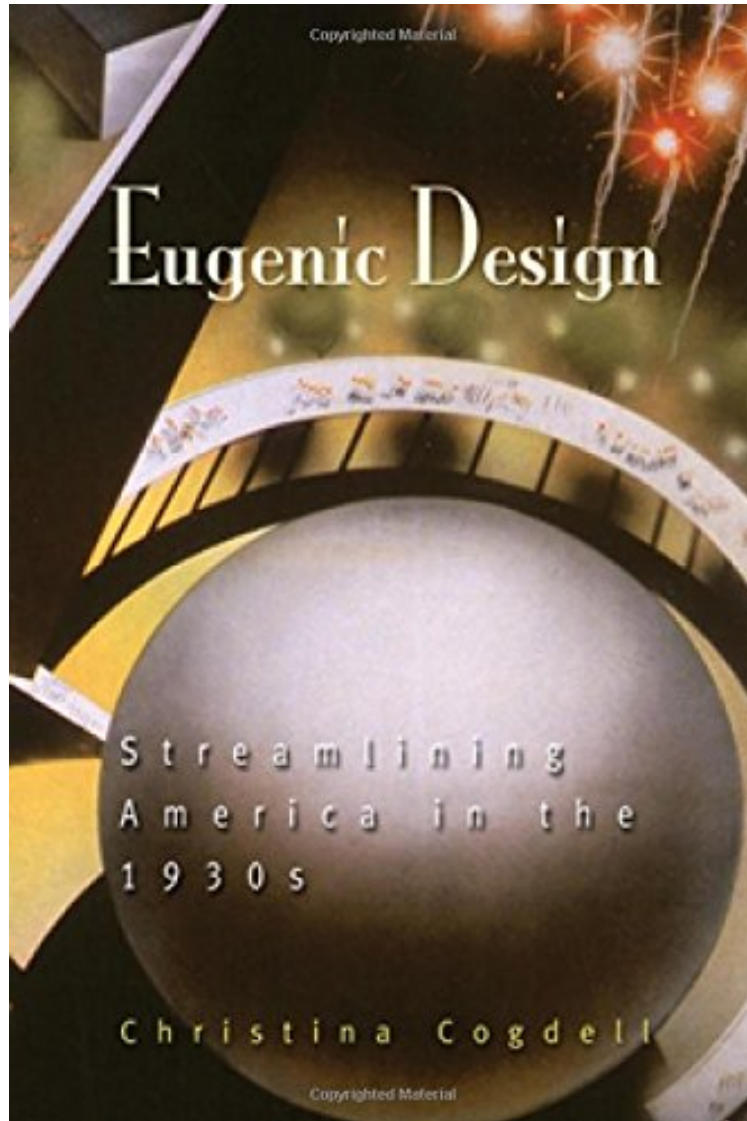


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## Eugenic Design: Streamlining America in the 1930s

*Christina Cogdell*

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**Christina Cogdell : Eugenic Design: Streamlining America in the 1930s** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Eugenic Design: Streamlining America in the 1930s:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Eugenic Design provides an exciting new analysis about the reach of eugenic ideology...By Milton E. ReynoldsI've been meaning to read Christina Cogdell's book, Eugenic Design: Streamlining America in the 1930s for a few years and am delighted I finally picked it up.Though I've just started with the book I'm finding it a thoughtfully and well written piece that posits some exciting and unique perspectives about

the degree to which eugenic ideology has influenced our society. Design theory is a stretch for me in terms of my own knowledge base, but I'm appreciating the stretch very much and will come away with lots of new ideas to explore. I found the transaction w/ the seller to be smooth and efficient and had my book within days of ordering it. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Sandra Antunes Very interesting. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Excellent and innovative! By Nikopol This is a fabulous book that makes imaginative and utterly persuasive connections between the eugenic drive to create more "efficient" machine-like bodies and the "streamlined" industrial design that pervaded American culture in the 1930s and 40s. After reading this book adolescent fantasies about "Superman" seem to be not so adolescent or fantastic, especially since the dream of creating superior specimens of humanity was so widespread. I only wish a paperback edition were available so I could assign it more regularly to my students. In the meantime I recommend it to anyone looking for an innovative cultural history of the body and technology.

In 1939, Vogue magazine invited commercial designer Raymond Loewy and eight of his contemporaries including Walter Dorwin Teague, Egmont Arens, and Henry Dreyfus to design a dress for the "Woman of the Future" as part of its special issue promoting the New York World's Fair and its theme, "The World of Tomorrow." While focusing primarily on her clothing and accessories, many commented as well on the future woman's physique, predicting that her body and mind would be perfected through the implementation of eugenics. Industrial designers' fascination with eugenics especially that of Norman Bel Geddes began during the previous decade, and its principles permeated their theories of the modern design style known as "streamlining." In *Eugenic Design*, Christina Cogdell charts new territory in the history of industrial design, popular science, and American culture in the 1930s by uncovering the links between streamline design and eugenics, the pseudoscientific belief that the best human traits could and should be cultivated through selective breeding. Streamline designers approached products the same way eugenicists approached bodies. Both considered themselves to be reformers advancing evolutionary progress through increased efficiency, hygiene and the creation of a utopian "ideal type." Cogdell reconsiders the popular streamline style in U.S. industrial design and proposes that in theory, rhetoric, and context the style served as a material embodiment of eugenic ideology. With careful analysis and abundant illustrations, *Eugenic Design* is an ambitious reinterpretation of one of America's most significant and popular design forms, ultimately grappling with the question of how ideology influences design.

"An ambitious attempt to link the professionalization of industrial design with the popular eugenics movement of the 1930s. . . . A bold and truly original thesis." *Technology and Culture* "This is history that is relevant." *Design Issues* "A significant contribution to the field of cultural history broadly defined. Cogdell's argument is compelling, and the evidence makes a strong case for linking an important modernist artistic movement with an important and nefarious scientific doctrine. This book will be widely read and discussed." Robert W. Rydell, author of *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions* "Christina Cogdell provocatively locates the ideology of streamlining in the popular eugenics movement of the 1930s. Tracing complex connections between personal philosophies of industrial designers and the visual rhetoric of their public design work, her cultural reading of design situates it dramatically at the intersection of science, technology, and popular culture. This book could well revolutionize the field of design history." Jeffrey Meikle, author of *Twentieth-Century Limited: Industrial Design in America, 1925-1939* "This highly original, well written, carefully crafted, and vigorously argued volume is a notable addition to American intellectual and cultural history." *Enterprise and Society* "Engaging, thoughtfully researched, and well written." *Journal of Social History* "Cogdell does much to advance our understanding of an anomalous 1930s aesthetic that has befuddled several generations of the best design historians. Her thesis is provocative, her writing is well paced, and her argument is convincing." *Journal of American History* About the Author Christina Cogdell is Associate Professor at the University of California, Davis, where she teaches art, design, and cultural history.