



Frederick Loewe and Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Loewy are pictured. PALM SPRINGS HISTORICAL SOCIETY/SPECIAL TO THE DESERT SUN

# Loewy streamlined daily life

## Industrial designer built dramatic Palm Springs home in '46

### Tracy Conrad

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In the middle of the Depression, Sears and Roebuck hired Raymond Loewy to completely redesign its Coldspot refrigerator. Residential refrigeration was in its infancy and there were several

offerings on the market. The Sears model had been around for several years already, but the addition of Loewy's design caused sales to soar.

The ease of refrigeration allowed for development, even in the desert. Loewy noted, "What I had instinctively believed was being proved by hard sales figures. You take two products with the

same function, the same quality and the same price: the better-looking one will outsell the other." What seems like an obvious observation now, was revolutionary in the 1930s. The spectacular success of his design launched Loewy into a career that would define a whole new category of endeavor: industrial design.

Loewy would go on to imagine better-looking products in every aspect of American life in an unlikely career of his own invention. New York Times reporter Susan Heller wrote at the time of his death, "One can hardly open a beer or a soft drink, fix breakfast, board a plane, buy gas, mail a letter or shop for an appliance without encountering a Loewy creation." Unabashedly, Loewy himself

See **LOEWY**, Page 26A

# Loewy

Continued from Page 25A

said, "I can claim to have made the daily life of the 20th Century more beautiful."

Indeed, Loewy designed automobiles, Coke vending machines and delivery trucks, railroad engines and cars, gas station logos, cigarette packaging, toasters, furniture, refrigerators, a pencil sharpener, Air Force One's iconic coloring and interiors for NASA's Skylab.

By the outbreak of World War II, Loewy was a design consultant to more than 100 companies and had a staff of 300 in offices in New York, London, Chicago, Sao Paulo and South Bend, Indiana. And in 1946, he would build a home in Palm Springs.

That Loewy would build himself a house in the desert was testament to how swanky the town was in the 1940s. In collaboration with Swiss émigré Albert Frey, Loewy created a bachelor pad unlike any other. Situated next door to department store magnate Edgar Kaufmann's Neutra-designed house, Loewy's seemingly modest abode was actually quite dramatic.

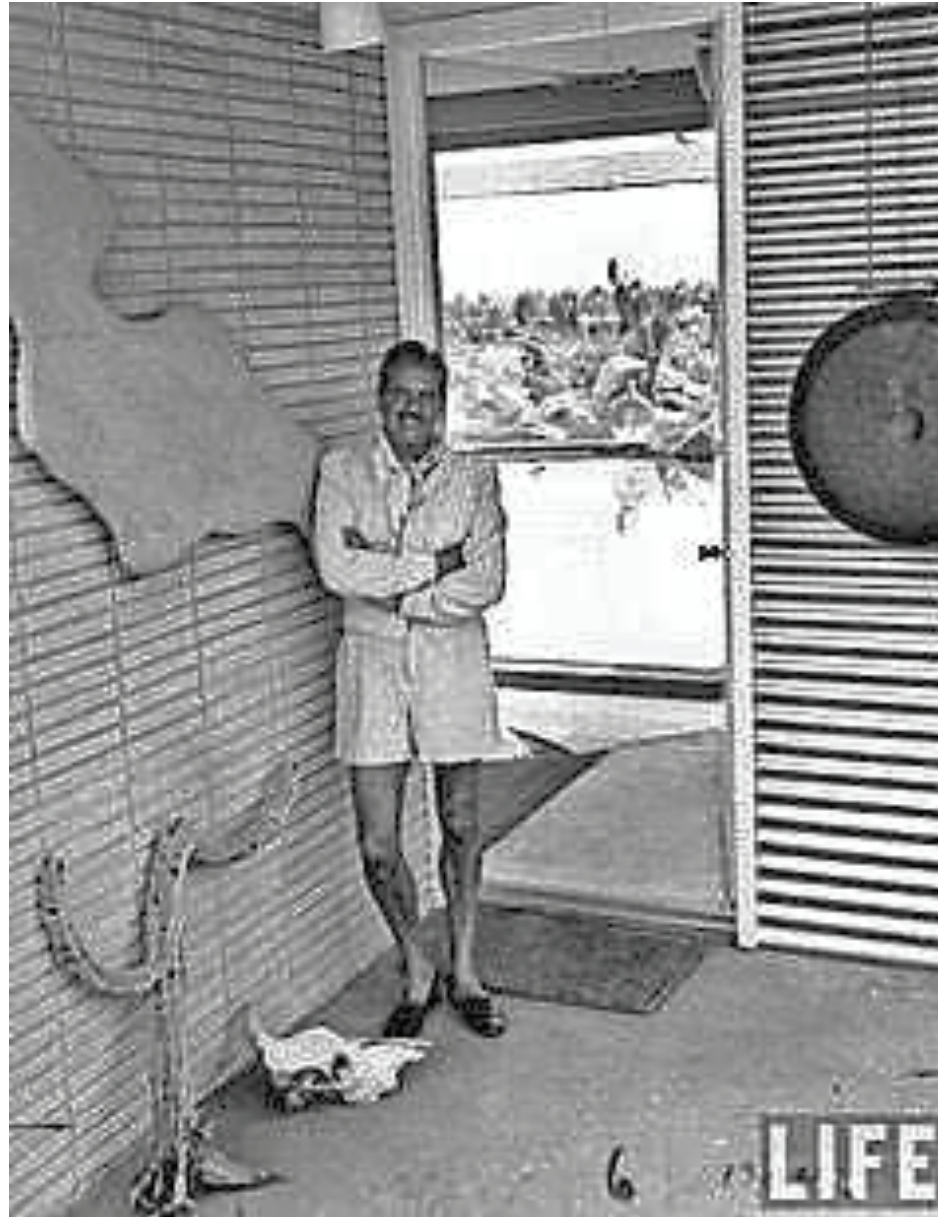
The living room was made small by the intrusion of the swimming pool, a portion of which could be enclosed by a great sliding glass door. William Powell, the impossibly elegant Thin Man himself, famously fell in with his cocktail in hand, managing not to spill, prompting Loewy to graciously jump in himself and call for another round of drinks.

The pool was literally central to the house, with protruding boulders and a framed the desert beyond. A large, pink, glass jug filled with water was placed just so at the water's edge to punctuate the view, in a tableau designed like a painting.

Loewy's musings on proper design and aesthetics read like philosophy and his aphorisms ring true today. He lived by his own maxims and his book published in 1951. "Never Leave Well Enough Alone" recounts his adventures in streamlining almost every aspect of American life.

His philosophy was profound and interestingly, Loewy did not appreciate its degradation by trivialization of its principles. He criticized the appropriation of streamlining, "There is a frantic race to merchandize tinsel and trash under the guise of 'modernism.'"

That modernism has become synonymous with Palm Springs today

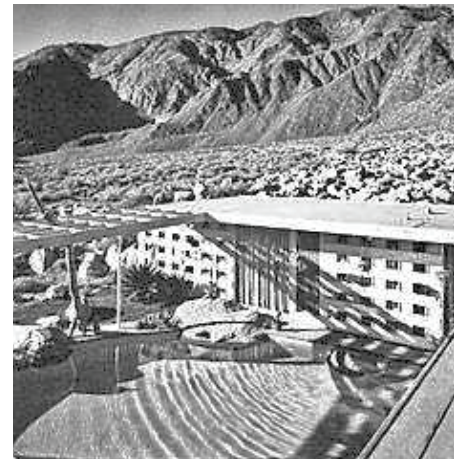


Raymond Loewy built a home in Palm Springs.

might amuse Loewy. One of his ardent admirers, Jacques Caussin, transplanted to the desert after operating a gallery in New York's SOHO district and founding the Miami Modernism Show created an event in Palm Springs, dedicated to modern design as first promulgated by Loewy.

Caussin's modern furniture show on a weekend in February in 2006 exploded – not unlike the sales of Loewy's Coldspot refrigerator decades earlier – into the Palm Springs Modernism Week of today. Caussin is expert in the amazing life of Raymond Loewy and will recount its highlights on January 23rd at 6 p.m.

Tickets are available at [palmspringshistoricalsociety.org](http://palmspringshistoricalsociety.org).



The Loewy House is pictured.

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