



TITLE: “Skippy-Racer” scooter

ARTIST: John Gordon Rideout and Harold L. Van Doren

DATE: c. 1933

CREATION PLACE: United States

STYLE: 20th century

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2003.126

HISTORY

The history of the kick scooter is quite interesting. Primitive scooters have been hand-made in industrial urban areas for at least 100 years. Since kids have great imaginations that are uninhibited by doubt, they can create just about anything to keep themselves occupied with fun. The first kick scooters were invented by taking roller skate wheels and attaching them to a small plank of wood.

The handle was constructed with a 2 x 4 and possibly the handlebars were made from a piece of pipe strapped to the top of the board. Crude as it was, it still worked and got kids to places that made walking seem crazy.

Some of the earliest models of kick scooters inspired the newer generation you see today. It took about 100 years for the idea to catch on because many other models of self transportation received more public demand. The bicycle was mass produced to

meet the needs of kids and adults, skateboards became more popular and kick scooters sort of lost their place in history. It wasn't until 1990 that Wim Ouboter saw a need for a push scooter because one of his sister's legs was shorter than the other. She had trouble riding a bike but she could push a scooter, he took the original idea and created a sturdier version.

Since wood scooters couldn't stand up to weather, they would rot or the metal skate wheels would rust, an aluminum version was introduced by Razor. If you ask somebody to say the first word that comes to mind when you mention the word scooter, Razor is most likely the one they say. Razor revolutionized the push scooter and gave it more stability and style. They didn't just stick with one version of their popular toy. They made many different colors and sizes, some even for adults. Some Razor scooters have three wheels so once you get going you can ride with both feet on the back and steer around objects with more control. They really are fun!

Many of today's scooters fold up and can fit into a backpack for safe keeping. They are lightweight and don't take up much space. These are reasons that contribute to the popularity scooters are enjoying. The child/person is upright while riding, they are controlling the steering and the toy is very quiet, not to mention that they are affordable.

ARTIST

Born in Chicago as Harold Livingston Van Doren, he finished high school in New Jersey and graduated from Williams College in 1917. He served in the Army during World War I, then studied at the Art Students League in New York (1920-21) and went to Paris (1922-24) with a fellowship in art history. He worked as a lecturer at the Louvre, as an artist for the Chicago Tribune's Paris edition, as an actor in a Jean Renoir film and as a translator of books. He became assistant director of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (1927-30) while continuing to write articles.

Van Doren opened a design office in 1931 in partnership with John Gordon Rideout (1898-1951) in Toledo, Ohio. Their first major clients were the Toledo Scale Company, Air King radios, American National tricycles and scooters, Maytag washing machines and a gasoline pump for the Wayne Pump Company.

Van Doren was included in a 1934 Fortune magazine article about up and coming American product designers. (Our scooter was a design of his is 1933) In 1935, Rideout left to open his own office in Cleveland, Ohio. Van Doren in 1940 wrote and had published Industrial Design: A Practical Guide. In it he wrote:

Once the industrial designer had made a dent on industry, it was perhaps natural for him to exaggerate his own importance in the scheme of things. Indeed, one might almost say that he would not be a good designer unless he had that sort of excited enthusiasm that makes

salesmen sell and designers create. But in sober moments he must have realized that, important as his contribution might seem to him, its relative importance might not be so great. As a rule, the artist is, and should be, only one of the gears in the train that includes management, sales promotion, advertising, engineering, research-all those departments making up the complex mechanism of modern commerce.

In 1944 Van Doren became one of the 15 co-founders of the Society of Industrial Designers (SID) later becoming its president in 1948. His aim was to enhance the desirability of industrial products by (1) increasing convenience and improving adaptability of form to function; (2) attracting buyers by applying a shrewd knowledge of consumer psychology; and (3) employing to the fullest the esthetic appeal of form, color, and texture.

He died in 1957 with offices in New York and Philadelphia.

OUR SCOOTER

Our Skippy-Racer scooter has a red metal body with white stripe detailing at the wheels. The footplate is black rubber, the wheels are black with white interior and a red line detail. The “Skippy-Racer” decal is on the footplate on each side.

In this world there is decoration and then there is design. We tend to use these words interchangeably, but they are actually very different ideas. Decoration focuses on issues of style and beauty, while design has more in common with engineering as it creates a solution to a problem. The history of design is an evolution of aesthetics, but the emergence of the streamline style during the 1930's was a new way of thinking.

Streamlined is rounded and curved. Our scooter is a prime example of this popular trend as it was applied to toys as well as appliances, cars, airplanes, and household objects.

TOUR IDEAS

Toys

How we live

Modern Trends

Transportation

Fun and Games

What I found in the garage