

THE SHAPE OF THINGS

Times Square Brilliance Suggests New Art Form

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Ritually, once a year, several hundred thousand usually rational people crowd into Times Square just before midnight. When the hands of the clock both point to the vertical, several tens of thousands of people blow horns with the intent of making noise, not music.

Newsreel cameras take in the whole performance. TV sets bring the noise and the electric advertisements of New York's Times Square into millions of homes around the nation. Newscasters ritually rant (or rave) about the New Year's arrival.

It's quite a show, I'm told. But Times Square is not a national shrine. No monument even hallows it with some reference to national purpose or national memory. It is not beautiful. It commands no grand national vista. It overlooks neither a great river nor is it flanked by great buildings whose past embody some symbol of this great country. Chaotically Ugly.

Times Square is simply ugly, chaotically. It is drab and patched by day. It is a traffic clutter surrounded by unplanned, unmeaningful, uninspiring and obsolete buildings whose principal functions is to hide behind great blank panels which support ads for familiar products.

At night these ads, randomly plastered over decrepit house fronts, light up. Neon tubes and incandescent bulbs flicker on and off. Greens dance and reds creep, whites serpentine and yellows spread. It is, everyone says, very lively. Painters even select spots of color from all this and call their works "Times Square No. 2." Or something (Mondrian reduced this chaos to rectangles and gave us "Broadway Boogie Woogie.")

In the eyes of history should we be judged by this crossroads of unplanned streets, this welter of ugly signs? We should and the judgment should be harsh.

All Part of Frontier
But, says the optimist, this is all part of the brash, vivid growth of the frontier, transplanted into urban terms. These flashing signs, these monumental arrays of flashing lights, are symbols of the raucous competition in a free society. This is the great market place and the hucksters must shout.

True, perhaps, but there is an unchallenged neglect in all this, an indifference for which history will judge us, again harshly.

Neon and incandescent lights are now a new medium. They create shapes in the great vacuum of the night. They stimulate the eye so effectively, that even when they are but a jumble of brand names, a chaos of Pizza Palace Invitations, the human eye is fascinated.

All We Choose To Do
But is this all that we can do with the resources of light? Obviously not. Unfortunately it is all that we choose to do with it.

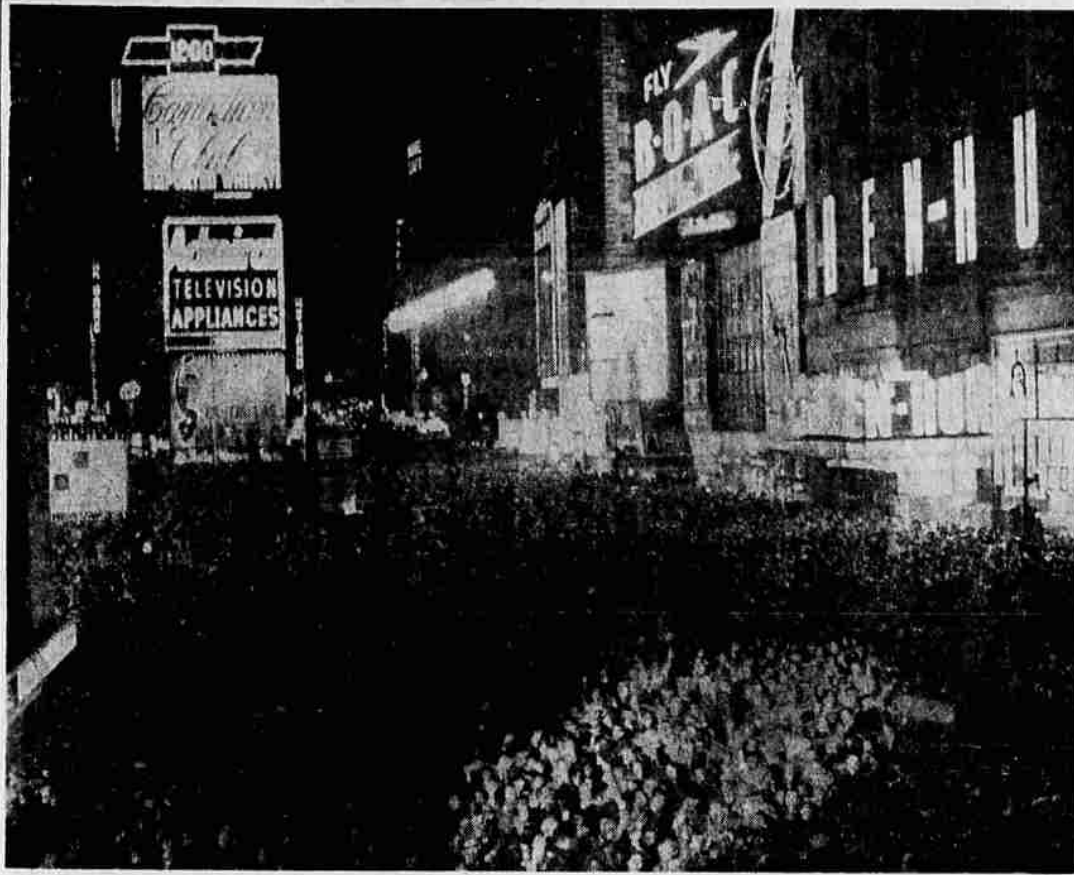
Think of the millions of Americans who use U.S. 1 from New England to Florida. At night what do they see? Neon lights for hundreds of miles, randomly flouting wares and services in a glittering assault upon the eye. The psychological assumption behind these thousands of signs is sound. The eye is attracted by light and color, even harsh lights and harsh color. But is there no other use for this fascination than to announce that you are speeding by Joe's Diner or Milton's Paint Shop?

Boldly, one should insist that there are other uses and better uses for devices which, appealing to the human eye, are inherently suitable for enchanting it as well. That such uses are not common is beside the point. The point is that, with light, the Twentieth century has a new visual tool, a new art medium.

As of January, 1961, it is being used only to identify Splat's Root Beer and Deckle Edge Filters. And, one adds hastily, with letter shapes that would not have seemed "modern" to a Gibson girl.

Psychological Rut
This is all, somehow, perverse. It belongs to the psychological rut that saw man's first self-propelled private conveyance not as a new thing, which it was, but as a "horseless carriage." Edison gave us a new object, the light bulb. Georges Claude gave us the neon tube. In what guise did our times choose to view these inventions and those that followed? "Artificial light," naturally, rated in candlepower.

In the meanwhile we have cheapened the use of our new light and color sources. Is it too late to do better? One hopes not. The flexibility of the neon tube with its broad color range can be sculpture and painting and stained glass. It can be even better than that: it can be itself, an art medium of great versatility, suitable for many applications. It will be found that our cheapening of concept through the hot dog stand sign will make it difficult to break new ground in the direction of art expression. This will be the early pitfall, adding to the challenge. Nothing, however, intrinsically limits this field any more than any other field of art is limited. Craft solidly applied sustaining imagination and taste, is the sole requirement and the sole limitation.



GIVES SUGGESTION—Times Square and the Great White Way in its traditional New Year brilliance of light and color. The fascination of these lights suggests that the same devices have the potential of a great art form. (AP Photo)

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First Experiments
What could one expect from the first experiments in working with light as an independent medium? Timidity and "horseless carriage" thinking. Some persistence in the face of the predictable failures, however, could produce a rich art form without precedent. Is this not a prize worth the thought and energy of some good designers and patient artists?

One feels it is. Those tin and cardboard horns which blared the other night on Times Square were noise makers and not music makers. We do not, merely because of this poor application, refuse the thought of man's breath being more modulated and controlled, to create, through other horns and mouthpieces, the disciplined sounds and harmonies which we call music.

In the same way the flickering lights of the Great White, Green, Red and Yellow Way should not mislead us into thinking that man-made light cannot, also, weave strange new patterns to enchant the eye and elevate the mind. (Copyright 1961, General Features Corp.)

Ton of Top Resources Costs Only 10 Cents

Washington—(Science Service)—The world's most important natural resource, water, sells for about 10 cents a gallon but nearly 100 billion dollars will have to be spent by the United States to meet the demand for it in the next 20 years.

Dr. A. L. Miller, director of the Interior department's Office of Saline Water, said this about water at the American Institute of Chemical Engineers meeting here. He reported that his office has 54 different contracts with private industry, universities and technical institutions dealing with the problems encountered in the conversion of saline water to fresh water.

Forty million Americans are on the verge of a serious water shortage. The water supplies of 42 per cent of the cities of the United States are considered inadequate. Yet the oceans have an unlimited supply of water estimated at 320 million cubic miles. Low-cost salt water conversion processes would provide an inexhaustible water supply.

Great Entertainers Names Imbedded in Hollywood Sidewalk

Hollywood—UPI—Some 1,550 stars are imbedded in the sidewalks of Hollywood, bearing the names of the great entertainers of the past and present.

And if the number of plaques is any indication, the two greatest performers in show business history are Gene Autrey and Tony Martin. They have been honored with four each.

They scored in all categories—movies, television, radio and recordings.

This week the full list of names was revealed, and Charlie Chaplin still is among the missing. But Charlie Chase is there.

Sponsored by the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce, in cooperation with the Hollywood Property Owners Association and the Hollywood Improvement Association, the "walk of fame" has someone for everyone.

Many muddled-aged tourists will be puzzled when they come upon a star bearing the name of Ferlin Husky, who made the trade in the recording business.

Honor Many Stars

And more than one of them

New Fibre Retains Strength After Heat

St. Paul, Minn. (UPI)—Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Co. has developed a fiber which retains its flexibility and part of its strength after exposure to intense heat.

The new fiber, available as a fabric, will not char or melt. It's possible uses include fire-protective curtains and linings for the motor compartments of missiles.

Makes Getaway By Three Story Leap

San Francisco (UPI)—A San Francisco burglary suspect stood guard at the door. Baca, who was supposed to be taking a bath made a "clean" getaway by leaping three stories to freedom from a window at San Francisco General Hospital.

John Baca, 43, clad in pajamas and a robe, jumped out the window as a policeman stood guard at the door. Baca, who was being held on a burglary charge, was recuperating from an arm infection.

When the policeman failed to hear water running in the bathroom, he looked inside and found his charge had disappeared.



STARS IMBEDDED—Some 1,500 stars are imbedded in the sidewalks of Hollywood, bearing the names of great entertainers of the past and present. Stars in movies, television, radio and records are honored, with some listed in all four categories. (UPI Telephoto)

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Lean, Meaty—Country Style
SPARE RIBS 49¢ lb
Very Lean—3 to 4½ Lbs.
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PORK SAUSAGE 1.00 3 POUND ROLLS 35¢ lb.
ARMOUR BANNER **SLICED BACON 55¢** LB.
SPECIAL FOR SEASONING NEBERGALL SMOKED **BACON SQUARES 27¢** lb
PLUS ADDED SAVINGS ON ALL MEAT WITH
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BACH FULL BOOK.
WORTH ONE DOLLAR
MOST CASH VALUE OF ANY TRADING STAMP

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Enjoy a Fresh Cup of Coffee While You Shop Anytime at Eastside

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SNOWWHITE Jumbo Heads 19¢ each CAULIFLOWER
SOLID CRISP 2 heads for 19¢ LETTUCE
RED SOLID RIPE TOMATOES 19¢ Pkg.
NO. 2 CELLO PACK POTATOES 10 Lbs. 39¢
SUNKIST LEMONS 39¢ Doz. HELP CURE OR PREVENT COLDS
MORTON SALT 25¢ 2 26 oz. box Plain or Iodized
SCHILLING—Black—4 oz. can PEPPER 39¢

THIN SKIN Avocados 2 for 39¢ Good Large Size
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