

Beiersdorf

CHRONICLE

03



**The revolution
in skin care**

The first years of NIVEA

From laboratory to daily life

A start with obstacles

Great innovations change people's routines. That is no different today than it was over 100 years ago. New discoveries in medicine, technology, electronics, and chemistry make long-term changes to our lives. Even global crises cannot hinder such developments – at best merely slow them down.

In the early 20th century, three men laid the basis for great changes in the everyday life of many people by isolating the emulsifier Eucerit and consequently using this to develop NIVEA Creme. Until that time, skin care as such had not played much of a role. Most people simply used water and soap for cleansing. The new cream could transfer moisture into skin that was frequently damaged, which led to the prevention of many dermatological problems. In addition, caring for

the skin made it easier to maintain youthfulness and beauty. NIVEA Creme was not always particularly cheap, but nonetheless it was affordable for a wider market.

One could say that this innovation was destined for success. However, the First World War began quite soon after its introduction in Germany, bringing largely to a halt the distribution of the new cream and the expanded assortment of products under the same name. The post-war period, plagued by inflation and hyperinflation, did not exactly contribute to improving market conditions. Nonetheless, the brand overcame these early obstacles to become the largest skin care brand in the world. And that is not all – a change in look and a new communication strategy led in the following years to it even becoming a brand icon.

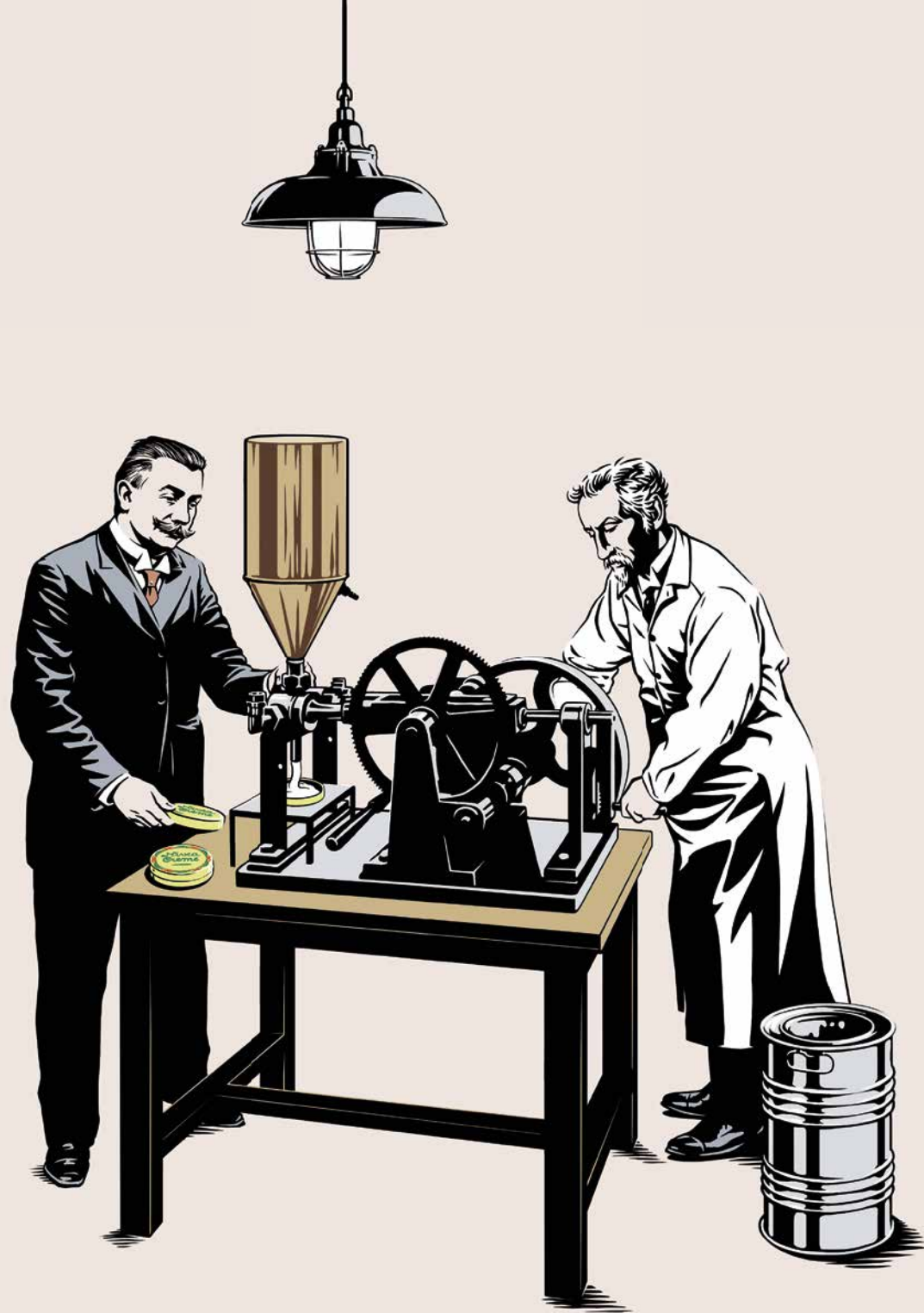
Nivea:



Creme ♦ Haarmilch ♦ Puder

*zur sachgemäßen Pflege der Haut
bei Erwachsenen und Kindern, zur
Erhaltung von Schönheit u. Gesundheit*

P. Beiersdorf & Co., Hamburg.

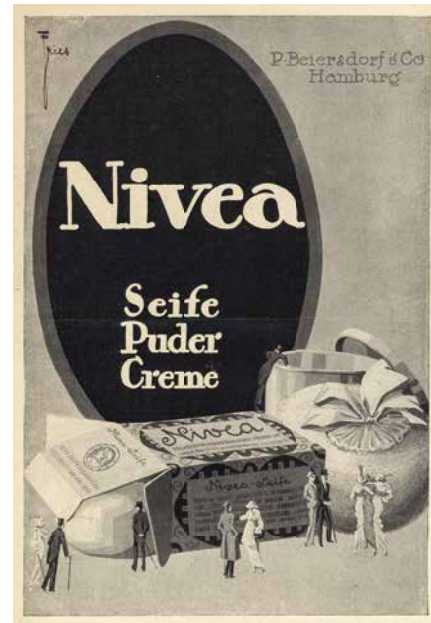


NIVEA changes skin care

Three very different people and a new kind of emulsifier were required for NIVEA Creme to revolutionize skin care forever. The snow-white cream, which first entered the market at the end of 1911 in yellow packaging, changed skin care habits in Germany and all over the world.

Tropowitz and Lifschütz at the filling of the first series of NIVEA Creme in the lab, December 1911. Previous double page: NIVEA ad from 1914 "NIVEA Creme, Hair Milk, Powder for the proper care of skin for adults and children to maintain beauty and health".

Apart from soap, which could already be found in the NIVEA assortment from 1906, many consumers used fatty creams for skin care. The ads from 1913 show the target group of the new brand next to the new NIVEA products: socially well-off women.



Text: Thorsten Finke

>> At the beginning of the 20th century, skin care was a difficult matter. In the German Empire it was mostly limited to using soap and fatty cream, and there were only a few creams available with consistent quality. Awareness of the importance of skin care was not yet very widespread, and each druggist and pharmacist had his own special mixture.

But the main problem was on another level: most creams and salves consisted of plant-based or animal-based oils and spoiled quickly. The few products that were produced based on mineral oils lasted longer, but couldn't penetrate into the deeper layers of the skin and transport moisture into the cells. This changed with the discovery of a new kind of emulsifier.

The emulsifier Eucerit

The chemist Isaac Lifschütz made the breakthrough in 1898. In a long series of tests, he succeeded in isolating a substance out of the fat of sheep's wool – Eucerit – with which water and oil could be combined to create a stable emulsion – Eucerin. Eucerit was the basis of the “method for the manufacture of a highly water-absorbent salve base” that Lifschütz was given in 1902. The name comes from Greek and means “beautiful wax.”

In 1882, Otto Braun had already patented the emulsifier Lanolin. With Lanolin it was possible to produce a water-absorbent salve base, but it had significant drawbacks in smell, shelf life, and consistency. Pharmacists had only used it because there just wasn't any other option. But those days were now

over because the new salve base possessed none of these drawbacks. Moreover, in comparison to Lanolin, Eucerin could absorb many times more water.

Lifschütz recognized that his invention opened groundbreaking possibilities in medicine. Articles published by dermatologist Paul Gerson Unna confirmed that Eucerin was wonderfully suited for dermatological purposes.

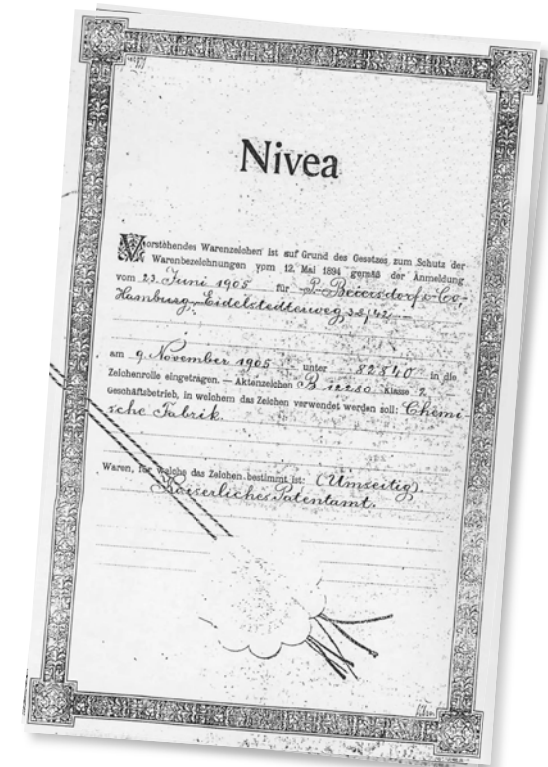
In 1909, in order to produce and market Eucerin in great style, Lifschütz joined the board of the company Hegeler & Brünings Fett & Seifenwerke AG in Aumund near Bremen. He brought the usage rights of his patent with him to this position. The Eucerin was produced in a new plant. Dres. Mielck & Runge from the Schwanen-Apotheke in Hamburg took over distribution.

Resounding success never came, however,

BACKGROUND

Trademark registration

When NIVEA Creme came onto the market in December 1911, the NIVEA brand was already six years old. In the summer of 1905, Oscar Tropolowitz registered the brand name at the Imperial Patent Office under the number 82840. On November 9, 1905, the brand was registered in the trademark registry, protecting it. The brand name was first used a few months later when “Beiersdorf's Rich Base Soap” was renamed “NIVEA Soap.” But the brand name's real first appearance was with the introduction of NIVEA Creme onto the market. With its derivation from Latin (nix or nivis, meaning snow), Tropolowitz created a pleasant name that rolls off the tongue all around the world.



Registered with the Imperial Patent Office since 1905: the brand NIVEA

which Lifschütz mostly attributed to poor marketing. But an offer that he had received a few years earlier from Oscar Troplowitz now seemed more interesting to him than ever: Troplowitz, owner of the company P. Beiersdorf & Co., wanted to develop a cosmetic product with Eucerin – skin cream. This wasn't actually the direction that Lifschütz had wanted to take with his patent, but the offer was good and the prospects promising. After long and difficult negotiations, they finally came to an agreement.

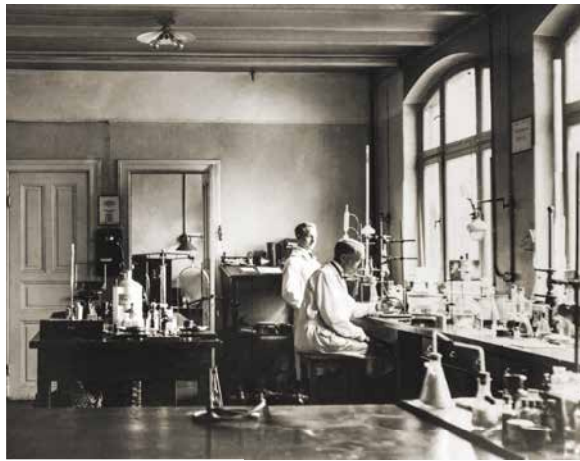
Purchase of Eucerin factory

In 1906, Paul Gerson Unna had already made Troplowitz aware of Isaac Lifschütz's patented Eucerit and the salve base Eucerin. Troplowitz had been working with the dermatologist Unna since he had taken over the company in 1890. Unna made first contact with Lifschütz, but the gentlemen couldn't come to an agreement. It was not until 1911 that Lifschütz allowed himself to be convinced by Troplowitz and sold him the entire Eucerin factory, including the patent.

At that time, the production of cosmetic products in Troplowitz's company was still in its infancy. Only soap, toothpaste, hand cream and a new kind of lip balm were already listed among the products of P. Beiersdorf & Co., but they were just a fraction of the assortment, which overwhelmingly consisted of plasters. The new cream supplemented the category of cosmetic products, and Troplowitz thought Eucerin had a big future as the basis for additional products. In the summer of 1911, the Eucerin factory was moved to Hamburg-Eimsbüttel, and by fall it was ready for operation.

NIVEA Creme enters the market

In Hamburg NIVEA Creme emerged out of the Eucerin salve base blended with plenty of water and subtle perfume. Many attempts were necessary to reach the perfect ratio of the water-in-oil emulsion. The scent, which is still a trademark of the cream today, ▶



At that time, scientists at Beiersdorf researched the skin in numerous laboratory rooms. With the production process for Eucerin that had been patented in 1902 by Dr. Isaac Lifschütz, research could be advanced and reached a first milestone in 1911 with the new NIVEA Creme.



CONTEMPORARY WITNESS

“Yes, the NIVEA Creme is not yet finished. The packaging isn't there yet. And I'm not sure if it'll work. ... Introducing a new product like this is a tremendous amount of work and is causing quite a lot of headaches.”

From a letter from Manager Behrens to stock keeper Böhme on November 26, 1911



BACKGROUND

The fathers of the cream

Three men revolutionized skin care with NIVEA Creme. The key to their success was the diverse skills that they each brought with them.



Oscar Troplowitz, the brand maker (1863–1918)

After graduating from high school, training to be a pharmacist, and studying chemistry at the Universities of Breslau and Heidelberg, Oscar Troplowitz made his way to Hamburg with a doctoral degree in pharmacology. There he bought the laboratory of Paul C. Beiersdorf in Altona and built it into a company. He immediately arranged for the use of technical resources for production and in 1892 had his own factory built on

Lockstedter Weg (today Unnastraße). His most important achievement was the establishment of brands like Labello and NIVEA, which are still popular today. Troplowitz was convinced that brand articles of reliable quality and whose usefulness to the consumer was well documented would be a successful concept for the future. The entrepreneur, who was both customer- and market-oriented and from the beginning thought and acted internationally, also kept in mind the scientifically based further development of his products.



Isaac Lifschütz, the inventor (1852–1938)

Lifschütz began his studies in Switzerland when he was 18 and

continued them at the University of Freiburg in Breisgau, where in 1884 he gained his doctorate in chemistry. In the following years, one of his major research occupations was with the wool wax derived from sheep's wool. In 1898 he had his breakthrough: Lifschütz isolated the emulsifier Eucerit from the raw material. In 1900, he registered the patent for the manufacturing process for a salve base derived from the Eucerit production process. The dermatologist Dr. Paul Gerson Unna recognized the significance of Eucerit for dermatology and discussed the emulsifier in his monthly dermatological journal. Despite all the scientific recognition, the greatest success of Lifschütz's discovery only became apparent when the chemist came to Beiersdorf in 1911. Eucerit became a raw material for the skin cream NIVEA, making an essential contribution to the economic rise of the company.



Paul Gerson Unna, the scientist (1850–1929)

After graduating from high school, Paul Gerson Unna studied medicine at the Universities of Heidelberg, Leipzig, and Strasbourg. In 1881, he opened a private dermatology clinic on Dammtorstraße in Hamburg. It was during this time that he first came in contact with Paul C. Beiersdorf, with whom Unna developed a process for the production of medicinal plasters – the date of the associated patent from 1882 is today still considered the day the company of Beiersdorf was born. Unna also got along extremely well with Beiersdorf's successor, Dr. Oscar Troplowitz, and continued their successful collaboration.





The first tin for NIVEA Creme
- 1911 -



These two early ads from 1912 artistically put the target group for NIVEA products at center stage.

took a particularly long time to develop. After the first series was successfully tested in the lab, mass production could begin. Because the packaging wasn't finished at the same time, the cream was first advertised in December 1911 and then became available in drugstores.

The first print ads for NIVEA Creme advertised it as "indispensable for daily skin care for adults and children, and for massages." This first advertising

came out without illustrations; it simply explained the use and composition of the new product. Starting in 1912, there were illustrated ads and posters, which primarily displayed the product and the female target group.

Initially the cream entered the market in three tin and two tube sizes. The large, yellow 150-milliliter tin decorated in art nouveau style cost one mark, which in 1911 in Hamburg was the equivalent of two loaves of

bread or eight glasses of beer. The brand name NIVEA – derived from the Latin nix or nivis, meaning snow – perfectly suited the radiant white cream.

Assortment expands

After NIVEA Creme had become available in drugstores from the end of 1911, 1912 quickly saw the expansion of the cosmetic assortment to include hair

milk and powder. The first luxury packaging made of porcelain with a special scent came onto the market. Starting in 1914, Beiersdorf expanded its products to include special products for the sensitive skin of children and enlarged the powder assortment. After the First World War began, there were no more new NIVEA products, only a powder packed in small paper bags for field soldiers was launched in 1915. In 1922 with the introduction of NIVEA shaving soap, men



Soap

1906



Creme

1911



Hair Milk

1912



Powder

1912



Porcelain Luxury Packaging

1914



Children's Powder

1914



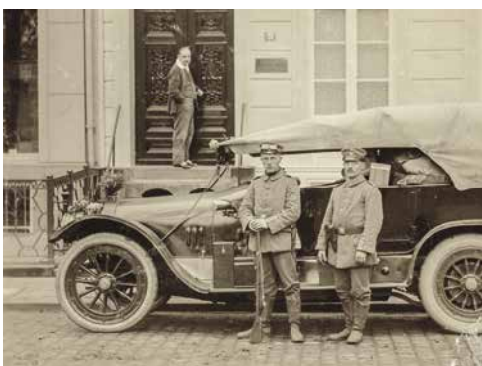
Complexion Powder

1914



Sport and Massage Powder

1914



Shortly after the war, inflation hit Germany. At its height in 1923, ludicrous sums of money were printed that were often already worthless on the next day. NIVEA prices also climbed to dizzying heights.



November 10, 1923

120 billion marks



November 1, 1923

25 billion marks



November 20, 1923

800 billion marks



In 1915, German soldiers confiscate a car from the Beiersdorf vehicle fleet. Something that was probably also in their baggage – NIVEA foot powder for soldiers, which appeared in that year.

took center stage, having only been on the margins of the target group until then.

In the 1920s, Beiersdorf devoted more attention to hair care as well, introducing liquid chamomile and coal tar soap from NIVEA. In 1924, there were already 18 NIVEA products in about 60 types of packaging on the pricelist. At trade fairs and exhibitions both at home and abroad, the products were brought closer to consumers and druggists.

War and inflation

The First World War threw Europe into great turmoil. Many factory workers were drafted into military service, metal packaging and raw materials for the production of NIVEA products were almost impossible to supply, and prices had to be increased several times. Moreover, people in Europe had greater concerns than the care of their skin. Sales of NIVEA

Creme stagnated at a modest level, and despite the assortment's expansion, success remained below expectations. And nothing changed when the war ended, because the next problem was already at the door: economic crisis and hyperinflation once again put the brakes on the success of NIVEA products. At the height of inflation in November 1923, a tin of NIVEA Creme in Germany cost 800 billion marks.

The end of NIVEA?

After the currency was stabilized, the Beiersdorf Board faced the question in 1924 whether the brands in their current form could be saved at all. The toothpaste brand Pebeco was much more successful and had already left NIVEA far behind in cosmetics sales. This presented a logical solution to the problem. The toothpaste Pebeco, part of the Beiersdorf assortment since 1905, was well accepted by consumers and sold brilliantly before and after the war. So why not from this point forward market the NIVEA assortment under the name Pebeco, which also pointed to the company that manufactured it, P. Beiersdorf & Co.? This marketing strategy would make it possible to unify a majority of the cosmetic products under one favorably seen brand umbrella. In some countries new pricelists

were printed with the changed brand names, including Great Britain, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the Scandinavian countries. Because the renaming wasn't executed in all markets, it was evident that the countries were able to make this decision independently.

However, just a few years later, products all over the world were once again brought under the NIVEA brand. In 1925, Beiersdorf changed the design – this brought success and saved the brand. After the "yellow era" of NIVEA's initial years, the new beginning radiated in a powerful blue. <<



By no means just a theory: a cardboard display from Great Britain from 1925 shows that the renaming of NIVEA to Pebeco took place in some countries.



Sweat Powder

1914



Compact Powder

1920



Shaving Soap

1922



Gold-Creme

1923



Bath Soap

1923



Coal Tar Soap for the Head

1923



Oil-Free Cream

1924



Children's Cream

1924

NIVEA and art

The art-lover Oscar Tropolowitz understood how to acquire the outstanding artists of his time for NIVEA ad campaigns.

At the beginning of the 20th century, product advertisements began to be thought of as able to increase sales and the degree of brand awareness. For Oscar Tropolowitz, however, the aesthetic requirement was as important as the advertising message. For this reason, he had many campaigns created by the outstanding advertising artists of his time – a path that the company continued even after his early death in 1918.

Tropolowitz and his successors contracted leading graphic artists in the advertising industry via the Berlin agency Hollerbaum & Schmidt, artists like Hans Rudi Erdt and Julius Gipkens, whose posters document the zeitgeist and are of extraordinary artistic quality. Even the internal graphics department of Beiersdorf created many designs that are in no way inferior to the big names. Today the rare original posters from the early NIVEA days can be found in museums and graphic collections all over the world.

In addition to creating poster art, **Julius Gipkens**, born in 1883, also designed furniture, among other things. He was a member of the *Deutscher Werkbund* (German Work Federation) and one of Berlin's most outstanding ad artists. This representation of an athletic, active woman reflects a changed, modern image of women. Gipkens died in 1968 in New York.

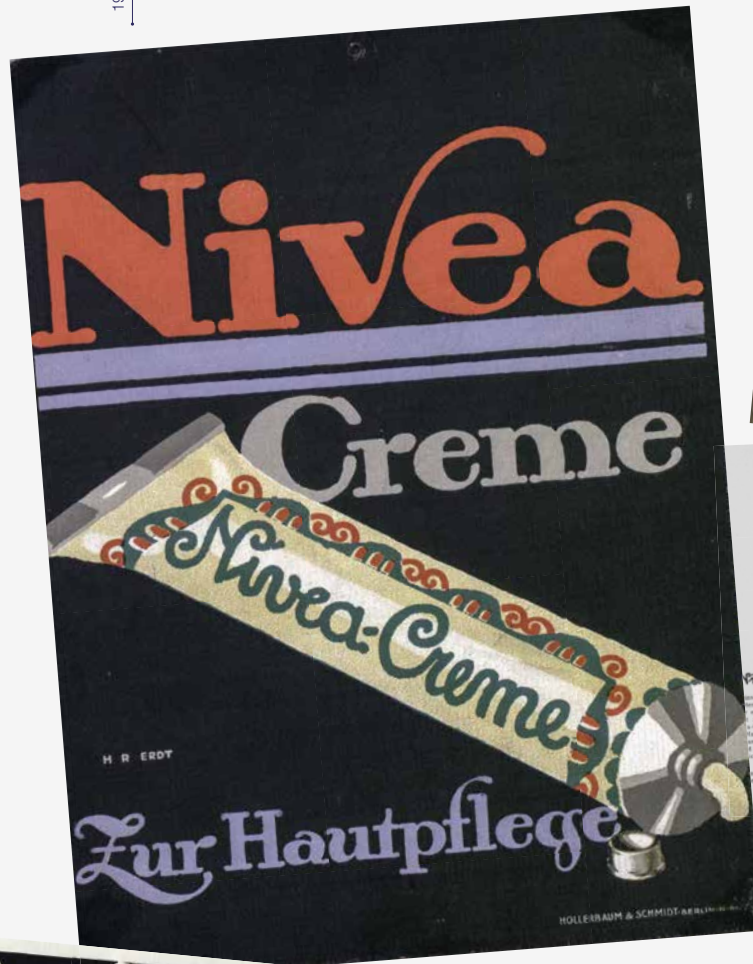
1922



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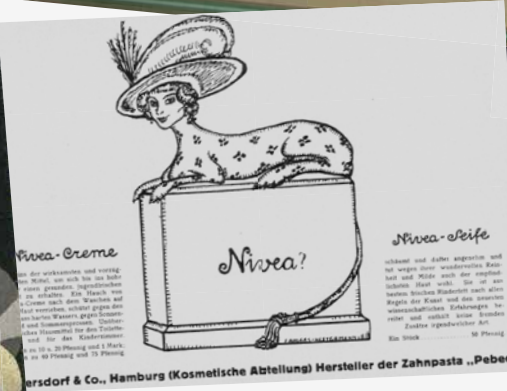
Hans Rudi Erdt (1883–1925) was one of the leading designers of artistic advertising posters of his time. He was based in Berlin and his design commissions included work for Opel, as well as film posters. His special focus was on the so-called object poster, which was devised to place the product in the foreground.

1913



1913

The Berlin graphic artist **Josef Löwenstein** signed his poster designs for numerous German companies with the name "JOE LOE." His elegant work made him one of the best-known poster artists in the Berlin scene. He did work for NIVEA between 1912 and 1914. Biographical details such as his date of birth and date of death are unknown.



1912

The painter **Friedrich Ahlers-Hestermann** was a friend of Oscar Tropolowitz, whom he met in Paris. He designed a humorous advertising motif for NIVEA in which he depicted the modern woman with elements of Egyptian culture. This piece remains his only foray into the advertising world. Later he became director of the Hamburg School of Arts. The artist died at the age of 90 in 1973.

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1913

1922

Little is known about the Hamburg-born artist **Anna Lünemann**. She developed numerous motifs for Beiersdorf in the early 1920s. The poster shown here reflects the French Art Deco style that was emerging at that time.

Graphic artists from the **Beiersdorf Advertising Department** also designed many advertising campaigns. Their unsigned works are also of high quality. This object poster very likely comes from the company's own studio.

Personal care at the turn of the century

Skin and body care at the beginning of the 20th century were quite different from our customs today in this area of hygiene. People had neither the financial means nor the opportunities in their daily lives and households to consciously devote time to their bodies.

01 The daily wash

It was typical to quickly wash in the morning, usually with cold water, using soap. Very few households had a bathroom with running water. Many only had washbasins and washstand pitchers, which stood on dressers in bedrooms and were normally only used in the morning; the water had to be collected from outside from the pump or cistern. Often during the winter there was even a thin layer of ice on the water in the unheated rooms.

02 The morning shave

Whether the water was icy or not, men used it for cleaning after grooming their beards. Men shaved almost daily with shaving soap and a razor, which they sharpened on their own leather belts. In order to soothe and care for their skin, there was powder or wool fat salve, which was becoming more and more affordable.

03 Applying cream

Before NIVEA Creme came onto the market, there were already other creams. But they didn't have any skin-nourishing properties and were not made of a stable water-in-oil compound. Moreover, they didn't keep for very long before spoiling. But not every consumer could use this new kind of cream right away. At the time, applying cream had not yet become a part of our general cosmetic or hygiene repertoire. Only a small, well-situated group could afford to regularly use cosmetic products.

04 Hair care

For special occasions, like going to church once a week, hair also became part of the grooming routine. From the beginning of the 20th century, shampoo was available in powder form, which dissolved in water. Alternatively, there was also shampoo that could be used without water. For example, after treating the scalp with hair milk, this could easily be rubbed out with a towel.

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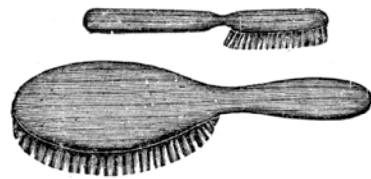
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