



# ART DECO

NEW YORK

Volume 4, Issue 1

Winter 2019



JOURNAL OF THE ART DECO SOCIETY OF NEW YORK

From the Vault

**East Ridge**  
at Cutler Bay  
A SantaFe Senior Living Community

WE WELCOME THE ART DECO  
SOCIETY OF NEW YORK TO MIAMI

# WHERE YOU LIVE SAYS SO MUCH ABOUT YOU

## This address says you won't compromise

East Ridge at Cutler Bay is a Life Plan Community that allows you to live beautifully - where old Florida charm meets a refined yet relaxed lifestyle. Retire to this 76-acre community with lush grounds, one-story living, resort-style amenities and impeccable service.

## LIVE BEAUTIFULLY

**Schedule a private consultation  
and complimentary lunch today**

**305-340-2021**

**[EastRidgeAtCutlerBay.com](http://EastRidgeAtCutlerBay.com)**

19301 S.W. 87th Ave. | Cutler Bay, FL 33157



Assisted Living Facility License #6091

Independent Living • Assisted Living • Memory Support

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Deco Friends,

I am delighted to share the holiday 2019 issue of the Art Deco Society of New York's *Art Deco New York* journal with you.

It is the culmination of another exciting year of more than two dozen events for our members and an expansion of our very successful *Destination Deco* tour program. This year, we offered a stellar *Destination Deco: Dallas-Fort Worth* tour and this fall hosted our first *Autumn in New York Deco Weekend* which brought local members as well as Deco enthusiasts from locations as varied as Australia, Canada, San Francisco, and Miami.

As we close the year, and the decade, we find ourselves at the dawn of the twenty-first century's Roaring Twenties. But before we welcome the next decade, we thought that it would be timely to look back at the last century's twenties and thirties through the lens of ADSNY's founders.

To begin this journey, we looked at copies of the Art Deco Society's earliest publication, the September 1981 typewritten black-and-white *Art Deco Society Newsletter*, in which ADSNY's first president, the late William T. Weber, introduced the Society:

*Art Deco in New York can best be described as "anything goes." It reveled in the exuberant. It made princes of paupers . . . In New York City, Art Deco developed under various names such as "streamline" and "Moderne." This was a time noted for its "let's pretend" attitude, which pervaded all social activities, fashions, films and theater, music, literature, architecture, interior design and art. The Art Deco Society of New York [has been] established to identify, preserve and arouse interest in the great Art Deco heritage of this city. As its president, I'd like to invite all who are already interested in Art Deco to join with our members in pursuing our goals through lecture programs, tours, discussions, exhibitions, and other events. We will, of course, give an equally warm welcome to those who are not now Art Deco devotees, but are curious about this important style and would like to learn more . . .*

As we glanced through subsequent issues of the newsletter, we came upon many articles about the 1920s and 1930s that are as relevant to Art Deco enthusiasts today as when they were written almost four decades ago. This issue pays homage to our founders and their vision of the timelessness of Art Deco. We hope you enjoy this excursion back in time.

This magazine would not have been possible without the tireless dedication and imagination of the team that made it happen. Many thanks to our journal volunteers, Harriet Abramson, Alma Kadragic, Peter Singer, and Sandra Tansky, who devoted countless hours to making this installment a reality, and to our Executive Director, Meghan Weatherby, for overseeing its beautiful design.

All our good wishes to you and your loved ones for a joyous holiday season and happiness throughout the New Year!

  
Roberta Nusim, President

# IN THIS ISSUE

## FROM THE VAULT

### 3 Raymond Hood's New York Skyscrapers

By Anthony W. Robins

*Examine how a selection of Raymond Hood's iconic midtown Manhattan office buildings make him perhaps the single most prominent figure of the Art Deco movement.*

### 8 The Stage is Set

By Peter D. Paul & Barbara Sandrisser

*Unique take on the influence of the glamour of Depression-era Hollywood films on public spaces in New Jersey.*

### 10 Wright by the Shores of Minnetonka

*Step inside the Metropolitan Museum of Art's reconstruction of Frank Lloyd Wright's 1912-14 living room from the Francis W. Little house.*

### 11 Frankart Revisited: The Fantasy Females of Frankart Incorporated

By Robert Salamone

*Explore how Frankart Incorporated inspired the sleek sculptural style of American Art Deco.*

### 14 Pacifica in 1939: San Francisco's Own Version of World's Fair Art Deco

By Glenn Loney

*Take a step back in time to travel through the one-of-a-kind style of Treasure Island.*

### 17 The View From Flushing Meadows

*Get a taste of the optimism put forth by the creators of New York's "World of Tomorrow."*

### 18 F.-L. Schmied Master of the Art Deco Book

By Leonard Fox,

Assisted by Adrienne Cochran

*Discover the opulent creations of François-Louis Schmied and his contribution to the elevation of book arts in the 1920s.*

### 22 Scents of Style: Art Deco Fragrances

By Irene Moore

*Explore how the fragrance industry came into its own at the beginning of the 1900s and blossomed throughout the 1920s.*

## IN EVERY ISSUE

### 2 What is Art Deco?

By Stephen H. Van Dyk

### 12 Global Calendar

### 20 Exploring Deco in . . .

Chelsea

Essay by Matthew A. Postal

# WHAT IS ART DECO?

BY STEPHEN H. VAN DYK

As librarian at the Cooper Hewitt Museum (CHM) for more than thirty years, I have had the unique opportunity to assist researchers studying Art Deco and concurrently to build, curate, index, and write about the Deco resources of the library. A detailed review of CHM's special and rare collections offers a path to understand and perhaps define the diverse aspects of the style.

In the late 1980s, CHM obtained more than 2,000 rare reports, guides, photo albums and written accounts of world's fairs including material on the major Deco-related expositions of the interwar period. For example, *Encyclopédie des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes au XXème Siècle*, a twelve-volume set published in 1925, acts as a comprehensive source on the theories and production of the Art Deco style. This publication provides a clear path for understanding the patterns and ornamentation and application of designs on buildings and decorative objects, fabrics and paper products; the use of materials; and artisans associated with the Deco style as exhibited at the Paris fair. The volumes feature illustrated essays on the style's evolution; architectural ornamentation and sculpture; decorative objects; furniture; hardware; textile; graphics; book design; fashion; interiors; stage set design; and, film and photography. The Paris fair along with growth of design publications in the 1920s and 1930s, helped advertise and define the emerging Deco style worldwide.

Collector Charles Fry and book dealer Edward Fox introduced me to Deco era folios that employ a stencil printing process called pochoir. My online exhibition *Vibrant Visions: Pochoir Prints in the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum Library* features works of Deco textile and wallpaper patterns, fashion plates, and architectural renderings of interiors published in the 1920s and 30s. Colorful folios, such as Benedictus' *Relais 1930*; Sonia Delaunay's 1930 *Compositions Couleurs Idées*; fashion journals such as *Gazette du Bon Ton*, published in France from 1912–25; and *La Guirlande: Album Mensuel d'Art et de Littérature*, clearly and colorfully visualize the dramatic patterns, motifs, and forms of the era.

A project to review, index, and digitize the more than 4,300 photographs in CHM's Bonney Collection provided a

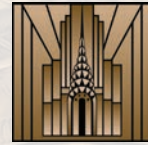
broader understanding of the Deco era. Mabel Thérèse Bonney, an American photographer and photo agent working in Paris from 1918–38, regularly reported on, and provided imagery of, French Deco and modernism to publishers in America. This collection provides a rare view of important luxury Deco objects, and modernist buildings and interiors, as well as Deco-era Paris streetscapes awash with signage, store window displays, children's barbershops, and women getting their hair bobbed.

Several years ago, former CHM Director Dianne Pilgrim spearheaded a program to expand the museum's coverage of twentieth century industrial design. To support this new direction, I discovered that the writings of an emerging group of industrial designers, including Russel Wright; George Nelson; Hugh Ferriss; John Vassos; Sheldon Cheney; Raymond Loewy; Gilbert Rohde; and Don Wallace, as well as conference reports from the National Alliance of Art and Industry, offered valuable insight into the scope, goals, and theories of streamline forms, use of new materials and mass production associated with the American Art Deco style of the 1920s to the 1950s. Of special note are the beautifully illustrated overview of streamline design in Norman Bel Geddes' *Horizon* (1932); Walter Dorwin Teague's description of designing sleek lines on a car to facilitate air flow in *The Marmon 16* (1930); and principles of effective product design in Henry Dreyfuss' *Ten Years of Industrial Design* (1939).

CHM's 2017 blockbuster exhibition *Jazz Age: American Design in the 1920s* required a thorough review of the library's Deco holdings and the acquisition of nearly 100 items. Period trade catalogs with Deco patterns, illustrated music sheets with jazz age imagery, popular novels adorned with colorful book jackets, and drawings of fixtures with distinctive Deco designs from the E.F. Caldwell lighting collection researched for the exhibition further enhanced my understanding of the style.

For the Deco scholar or serious enthusiast, CHM's holdings are a treasure trove and a wonderful way to discover the diverse and rich aspects of Deco design.

*Stephen Van Dyk was Library Director of the Cooper Hewitt Museum for more than 30 years and a librarian for nearly 40 years. He is on the Board of ADSNY.*



## ART DECO SOCIETY OF NEW YORK

### ADSNY Board of Directors

President **Roberta Nusim**  
Vice President **Anthony W. Robins**  
Treasurer **Marie Tarmy**  
Secretary **Aidan McManus**  
**Mary Beth Belts**  
**Devon Caraher**  
**Stephen H. Van Dyk**

Executive Director  
**Meghan Weatherby**

Coordinator of Outreach Programs  
**Christine Stoddard**

### ADSNY Advisory Board

**Donald Albrecht**  
**Simeon Bankoff**  
**Andrew S. Dolkart**  
**Marilyn F. Friedman**  
**Polly Guerin**  
**Pamela Hamilton**  
**Susan Henshaw Jones**  
**Joan Kahr**  
**Audrey Lipton**  
**David Garrard Lowe**  
**Frank J. Prial, Jr.**  
**Kathleen M. Skolnik**  
**John Tauranac**

### Art Deco New York Journal

Executive Editor **Roberta Nusim**  
Copy Editor **Sandra Tansky**  
Creative Director **Meghan Weatherby**  
Proofreaders **Harriet Abramson,**  
**Alma Kadragic, Peter Singer**

The Art Deco Society of New York gives special thanks to Sullivan, Admire & Sullivan, PA for their generous support of this issue of *Art Deco New York*.

Front Cover: Detail of the black and gold crown of the 1924 American Radiator Building by Raymond Hood.  
Photo: *Daniel Leventhal*

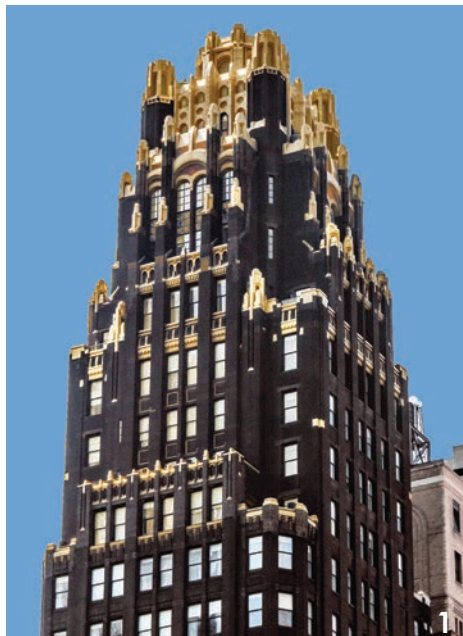
© Copyright Art Deco Society of New York, 2019. All material is subject to copyright and cannot be reproduced in any format without prior written permission from ADSNY.

The Art Deco Society of New York is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization chartered in the state of New York in 1982 for the purpose of education, preservation, and celebration of the city's Art Deco icons and heritage.

Art Deco Society of New York  
ArtDeco.org | Info@ArtDeco.org  
P.O. Box 6205, New York,  
NY 10150-6205  
(212) 679-DECO (3326)

# RAYMOND HOOD'S NEW YORK SKYSCRAPERS

BY ANTHONY W. ROBINS



It is impossible to think about Art Deco architecture in New York without the name of Raymond Hood coming to mind. His personal stature among modernist architects of the 1920s and 1930s, his midtown office buildings, and his involvement in the design of Rockefeller Center make him perhaps the single most prominent figure of the movement. Yet the four New York skyscrapers—American Radiator, Daily News, McGraw-Hill, and RCA at Rockefeller Center—are each works of such great individuality, so highly idiosyncratic, that they seem to comprise a style all their own. Where William Van Alen's Chrysler Building, Cross & Cross's G.E. Building, or Ralph Walker's Irving Trust all use a style of ornament that fits anyone's notions of Art Deco, each of Hood's towers seems somehow slightly out of the orbit. The American Radiator Building has Gothic details; The Daily News has little applied ornament; the McGraw-Hill was New York's only building to be included in *The International Style*, the definitive book by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, and the RCA, as part of Rockefeller Center, is a case apart. Can Hood's buildings be called Art Deco?

One of the problems in answering that question is the ambiguity of the term Art

Deco. Consider how many definitions have now been supplied by our readership! It has been broadly applied to anything from saltcellars to skyscrapers, produced anywhere in the world during the early decades of the twentieth century, in a nontraditional, modernistic style. In the case of New York architecture, a narrower definition is possible: Art Deco can be thought of as a specific style established by a series of skyscrapers built between 1923 and 1931, which then filtered down to smaller building types during the remaining years of the Great Depression. The style is often identified by ornament based on abstract design, first floral in inspiration, later geometric. But are stylized swirls and zigzags the only marks of a Deco building? They can be found in abundance on many major ones, like the Chrysler Building, and countless minor ones, like Bronx apartment houses. But on Hood's buildings? Not to any great extent.

The characteristics of Art Deco buildings in New York, however, go well beyond applied ornament. What identifies these structures as modernistic, and sets them apart from others, is a set of architectural qualities involving massing, emphasis on verticality, the handling of windows, skyline value, and the ef-

fect, as well as the motifs, of ornament. Once that is realized, it becomes clear that Hood's buildings are monuments of the style, and that the development of his architectural ideas marks the path of development for New York Deco.

Originally from Pawtucket, Rhode Island, Hood was educated at M.I.T. and at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. At the age of 41, after a dimly obscure career in New York, he suddenly found himself the winner of the most celebrated architectural competition in the country—for the Chicago Tribune Tower. His Gothic design for the Tribune catapulted him to instant fame, and during his next and last twelve years, he became known as one of New York's and the country's most brilliant architects. Hood designed several churches, an apartment house, and, during his underemployed days, Mori's Restaurant<sup>1</sup>; he introduced roof gardens to New York on a large scale at Rockefeller Center, and produced an extraordinary manifesto for rebuilding Manhattan along the lines of Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin, but his fame rests primarily on his five skyscrapers in Chicago and New York.

The skyscrapers were commissioned by a succession of practical-minded busi-

nessmen. The Tribune Tower was designed for Col. Robert R. McCormick, heir to the Medill publishing empire in Chicago, and the Daily News Building for McCormick's cousin, Capt. Joseph Patterson. The McGraw-Hill Building was built to the specifications of James McGraw, while at Rockefeller Center, Hood and his associates answered to John Todd, the developer hired by the Rockefellers to oversee the project. From Hood's occasional writings and interviews, and from his friends' recollections, it appears that he considered himself to be a businesslike architect, in tune with his employers, and that his function was to manufacture shelter, not to be an artist. "There has been entirely too much talk about the collaboration of architect, painter, sculptor," he wrote, "nowadays, the collaborators are the architects, the engineer, and the plumber . . . We are considering comfort and convenience much more than appearance and effect." Yet, his work shows conscious manipulation of

design towards very specific "effects" (his word, always, in describing his designs), and these can be traced through the rapid development that led in ten years from the Gothic Tribune to the ultra-modernistic RCA Building.

Hood's first fully modernistic skyscraper was the Daily News Building, 1929–30, so that is a good place to look for his modernistic ideas and ideals. Behind him were the Tribune Tower of 1922 and the American Radiator Building of 1924. He was in the final and most active years of his short professional life, and his position in the architectural world was being summed up as follows: "Leading the New York modernists at this moment are Ralph Walker, Ely Jacques Kahn, and Raymond Hood . . . Raymond Hood possesses the position in architecture that he wants. He is its brilliant bad boy."

Hood's own declarations about the building are not necessarily helpful in understanding its design: he credited each and every design decision to practical needs. The actions he took, however, tell a rather different story. His first move, according to his biographer Walter Kilham, was to convince Patterson to build a tower. The publisher originally wanted only a printing plant with a few offices on top. Having secured permission to proceed, he followed up on his belief that the development of skyscrapers showed up the shams of façade architecture, and that tower design should be three-dimensional. The Daily News Building's site already commanded frontage on 41st and 42nd Streets and part of Second Avenue, but it was bounded on the west by the city's Commercial High School. The Board of Education had plans to replace the school with a new office

building, and Hood saw an opportunity to make his tower completely free-standing: an arrangement was worked out in which both the *Daily News* and the Board of Education ceded 25 feet of their respective lots to create a 50-foot-wide thoroughway. The Depression ended the Board of Education's plans, and the school was demolished to make way for the Harley Hotel.<sup>2</sup>

With a freestanding tower now possible, Hood developed Plasticine models showing various design possibilities. His first notion was for a tall slab rising above a three-story base, but that gave up too much space available under the site's zoning. One day, Kilham came into the office and discovered Hood carving up the News model, while asking, "Do you mind if I do a little zoning myself?" The result was a large block with irregular setbacks on all sides, creating a tapered, stacked massing, completely different from the tall shaft he had first contemplated, and possible only in a three-dimensional conception.

Next, the windows: windows can be arranged or emphasized in many ways. The long columns of windows in Hood's design for the News Building are perhaps the single most important element defining it. They give the building its overwhelming verticality and also its basic color scheme: reddish-brown and black stripes of windows between white stripes of bricks. This was done by recessing the windows—and the colored brick spandrels between them—slightly behind the uninterrupted white brick piers; the red color was emphasized in the windows by using red window shades.

The major applied ornament on the building is at its base: an extraordinary





three-story limestone entrance with a bas-relief. The scene is a great city, with people of every profession coming and going and—of course—buying newspapers. At the top is the image of a great skyscraper—identified by its vertical stripes as the News Building itself—with the sun rising behind it. At the bottom is the inscription “He made so many of them,” a quotation from Lincoln that apparently began either as “God must have loved common people,” or “God must have loved common-looking people.” In any case, the imagery of the city and the idea of the common people represent the *Daily News*, the popular tabloid newspaper.

Inside the building, Hood created a popular-science display lobby under a black faceted-glass hemisphere. Like the three-story bas-relief, this was a symbol of the paper: popular science for the popular audience.

At the building's top, the extraordinary aspect of Hood's design is that there does not seem to be any architectural treatment: it looks like the walls simply stop, a functional expression of the architectural fact. Actually, the walls continue up well above the top story in order to conceal the elevator shafts and other unsightly utilities, which otherwise, in a truly functional expression, would have been visible. Hood, in other words, did not just stop the walls, but rather designed them to have the effect of stopping.

Are there no standard Art Deco ornamental details on the News Building? Yes, some: bronze banding with zigzags



runs around the building's base, and some of the brick patterns are stylized and geometric. But these are extras. The design of the building is based on its form, rather than its ornament. The tapered, stacked massing, the great colored stripes, the abrupt cut-off at the top, the three-story stone base with bas-relief and inscription, and, the popular-science display in lobby, all combine to form an instantly recognizable structure, unique in New York City. It is massing, verticality, applied color, and emblematic imagery that define this building, and those are in fact the marks of Art Deco skyscrapers in general.

With this understanding of Hood's effects in mind, we can go back to the 1924 American Radiator Building, designed just two years after the Gothic Chicago Tribune Tower—and one year before the 1925 Paris Exposition des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes, from which the name Art Deco is derived. On first sight, the Radiator Building seems to be Gothic in style, with slender spires framing the main entrance, little grimacing gargoyles supporting second-story balconies, and a Gothic crown at the top. Looking behind the ornament, however, it is possible to see many of the elements that we discovered at the News Building. First, even though this is a mid-block building, and not a very tall one at that, Hood gave it the appearance of being a freestanding skyscraper, separating it from its neighbors on either side. Using the zoning code's setbacks, and chamfering (or beveling) the corners, he treated the building as a three-dimensional block, designed through its massing. Verticality

is emphasized by the same recessed windows and brick spandrels seen at the Daily News Building, and, whereas the News is red-and-white striped, the American Radiator Building is dramatically black-and-gold. In other words, the American Radiator is a freestanding skyscraper, designed by tapered massing, with verticality created by long recessed window bays, and with applied color. Even though the ornamental motifs are strictly Gothic—no zigzags or stylized floral swirls on this building—here is a modernistic design, betraying most of the characteristics of the Art Deco skyscrapers shortly to follow it.

It should be pointed out that, although many critics have suggested that the modernistic aspects of the Radiator Building derive from Eliel Saarinen's runner-up design at the Chicago Tribune competition, many of its features can be found in Hood's own Tribune design, specifically the recessed windows and the beveled corners. There is a clear line of development throughout Hood's quick evolution from 1922 Gothic to 1924 Gothic-Modern to 1929 Daily News modernistic.

If the Radiator Building is transitional from Gothic to Art Deco, and the Daily News Building is the pure new movement, then the McGraw-Hill Building, begun while the News was still under construction, is transitional from Deco to the next new movement to affect New York architectural design, the International Style.

Both the News and the McGraw-Hill Buildings were designed to house ma-

for midtown publishing operations. Each was located just outside the central midtown area, the News east of Third Avenue, the McGraw-Hill west of Eighth Avenue, because publishing was forbidden by midtown zoning. To accommodate their intended industrial uses, each building was designed as raw loft space, cheaply built, which could then be adapted for offices, if necessary, by the addition of wall partitions.

The designs of the two buildings were perceived as being very different. The McGraw-Hill Building, in fact, was the only New York building included in Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson's book, *The International Style*, which grew out of the 1932 MoMA exhibition of the same name that launched the style in America. To the authors, the McGraw-Hill building "marks a significant turning point in skyscraper design. It is the first tall commercial structure consciously horizontal in design" since the early Chicago days, a slab with horizontal window bands. When looked at from north or south, that is indeed the effect the building has—but this is an effect only, and not the only one.

In fact, the McGraw-Hill Building is the result of three-dimensional massing and applied color, of skyline treatment and emblematic significance, just like the Daily News Building. It is a freestanding skyscraper, thanks to its location in an underbuilt area west of midtown. Its design, again, comes from massing and window treatment. What is different from the Daily News is the desired effect. The McGraw-Hill Building actually has two very different profiles: from

east and west, the setbacks every couple of floors create a tapered Art Deco contour, a broad base narrowing in steps, out of which a slender tower rises to a ribbed pinnacle. This is the shape seen in most photographs of the building. But the setbacks disappear when seen from the north or south, and the building gives the illusion of being a single International Style slab. The window treatment adds to the illusion: an International Style building ideally has unbroken horizontal window bands—ribbon windows. Hood created the effect of such windows by grouping traditional double-hung windows in groups of four, separated by dark panels of metal—hence the sense of horizontal design. That horizontality is broken, however, on the Deco profile facing west, where a strong central vertical row of single windows rises to the top.

The applied color of the building is strictly Art Deco in inspiration, and is achieved by the use of colored terra cotta cladding. Many different colors were considered, including yellow, orange, green, gray, or Chinese red. The blue-green finally chosen was said to have been McGraw's own choice.

Exactly what color it is was not unanimously agreed upon: Hood called it blue, while McGraw-Hill has always called it green. The romantic notion behind it becomes clear in Hood's own description of the color: "Dutch blue at the base, with sea green window bands, the blue gradually shading off to a lighter tone the higher the building goes, till it finally blends off into the azure blue of the sky. The final effect is a

shimmery, satin finish, somewhat on the order of the body of an automobile."

Where is the company's emblem, the counterpart of the Daily News grand bas-relief and pop-science lobby? Here it is joined into the skyline: a giant, crowning McGraw-Hill sign, made of eleven-foot high hollow terra-cotta blocks. Hood suggested that it was a terra-cotta version of the electric signs then prevalent on New York buildings. Other precedents would be the PSFS Building in Philadelphia and the Russian constructivist movement of the early twentieth century. Like the Daily News walls, which "stop" higher than they ought, the McGraw-Hill sign also hides water towers and elevator shafts. The ribbing at the ends of the sign is Moderne in inspiration, suggesting something of the Expressionism of the German architect Eric Mendelsohn (cf. the addition to the Rudolf-Mosse-Haus in Jerusalem Strasse, Berlin, 1921–23), but it is the only particularly Art Deco type of ornament discernable on the building.

Little zigzag ornament, the appearance of a slab, and horizontal windows—hardly what one expects of an Art Deco building; yet the most that can be said is that it is transitional, and only in effects: an International Style building *wouldn't seem* to be a slab and *seem* to have ribbon windows, it would be one and have them. The McGraw-Hill Building is as much the product of massing, window treatment, applied color, emblematic imagery, and skyline treatment as the Daily News. It is a modernistic building, even without the Art Deco vocabulary, and even with its adoption of International Style effects.

Hood's last skyscraper was the RCA Building at Rockefeller Center, built 1932–33. The largest urban project in the country, Rockefeller Center was designed by three architectural firms working in conjunction as the Associated Architects, and it is not always possible to separate the contributions of the individual designers. A quick examination of the RCA Building, however, reveals many of the design elements and effects of Hood's earlier towers.

First, the RCA Building is not merely a freestanding tower—it is the skyscraper centerpiece of a multi-block district, so arranged as to give it the three-dimensional prominence that could only be approached in the American Radiator or Daily News Buildings. Then, like







10



11

the McGraw-Hill Building, it is designed through massing and setbacks to have two very different façade effects: from north or south it is a broad, flat slab, while from Fifth Avenue, down the Channel Gardens, it appears as a slender, vertical tower. The modeling of the tower through set-backs creates a tapered, stacked massing, not unlike that of the Daily News Building, except that where the News is asymmetrically arranged, the RCA is rigidly symmetrical. Endless recessed window-and-spandrel bays create the same sense of verticality as in Hood's earlier towers.

Applied color is missing from the tower—there is simply the natural gray of the limestone cladding, as in all the Center buildings. Applied ornament is on a wholly different scale: the RCA Building, like the whole Center, is adorned with a series of murals and reliefs related to a symbolic scheme, specifically designed for the Rockefellers and carried out by a variety of painters and sculptors. Little of it involves zigzags or Art Deco floral arrangements. Yet, as a freestanding skyscraper, designed through massing,

with strong verticality, and standing as the central emblem of Rockefeller Center, the RCA Building is the crowning modernistic tower of Hood's career.

Defining the term Art Deco may be impossible because it has been applied to many different mediums, types, and styles that, in the end, share only a certain amount of surface similarity. As a result, often only the broadest common denominators—zigzags or streamlines—are taken to be the essence of the style. Yet while stylized ornament can be found just as readily in furniture or fabric as on building façades, it is one of the less important components of the design of the modernistic skyscrapers of the 1920s and early 1930s. The characteristics of Raymond Hood's buildings, however—freestanding tower, design through massing, verticality through window treatment, applied color, emblematic significance—are architectural ideas. They can be traced through most of the other major Art Deco monuments, and finally it is they that define the nature of the Art Deco Style in architecture.



12

Anthony W. Robins, ADSNY's Vice President, is a historian, writer, and educator specializing in New York architecture. A twenty-year veteran of New York's Landmarks Commission, he has a passion for Deco that is reflected in his most recent book, *Art Deco New York: A Guide to Gotham's Jazz Age Architecture*.

All photos: Lynn Farrell

*Endotes:* (1) Now an apartment building at 144-146 Bleeker Street. (2) Now the Westin New York Grand Central Hotel.

*Images:* (1) The American Radiator Building, now the Bryant Park Hotel. (2) The RCA Building at Rockefeller Center, also known as 30 Rockefeller Plaza, or 30 Rock. (3) The massing of the McGraw-Hill Building. (4) The reddish-brown, black, and white brick color scheme of the Daily News Building. (5) Globe in the lobby of the Daily News Building. (6) The three-story limestone bas-relief above the entrance to the Daily News Building. (7) The applied ornament around the second-story balconies of the American Radiator Building. (8) Gothic inspired spires framing the main entrance of the American Radiator Building. (9) The lobby of the McGraw-Hill Building. (10) The lobby of the RCA Building. (11) The main entrance to the RCA Building. (12) Wisdom, created by architectural sculptors Lee Lawrie and colorist Leon V. Solon. Applied ornament above the main entrance to 30 Rockefeller Plaza.

*Note:* This article was originally published in the Spring 1984, Volume 4, Number 1, edition of the Art Deco Society of New York News. The inspiration for this account of Hood's work was the January–February 1984 exhibition, Raymond Hood: City of Towers, shown at the Whitney Museum of American Art at Phillip Morris, Park Avenue at 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. Anthony W. Robins—who, at the time of original publication was ADSNY's Director of Walking Tours—led two tours of Hood's New York Skyscrapers in conjunction with the exhibition.

# THE STAGE IS SET

BY PETER D. PAUL & BARBARA SANDRISSER

The year is 1934. The Great Depression is in its fifth year, and ominous rumblings of another war are sweeping across Europe. What are depressed Americans doing for entertainment? They are escaping to the movies to watch Fred Astaire dance with Ginger Rogers. They want some glamour and romance.

Astaire, wearing a tux, glides across the stage, encountering Rogers in her backless evening dress. Together they move around the elegant Art Deco stage set, designed to look like an entrance lobby of a grand hotel. They dance up and down the stairs, through the revolving doors, and over the furniture, gracefully, effortlessly. They waltz,

Jersey. Public spaces were the designer's delight. People from every walk of life could experience Art Deco elegance, just like in the movies. In downtown Newark, for example, there are two notable buildings that were strongly influenced by Art Deco design.

Newark's Pennsylvania Station was the last major structure designed by the firm of McKim, Meade & White. Conceived in 1929 and built between 1932 and 1935 at a cost of \$2 million, it was the city's major building project during the 1930s. Planned as a multi-modal transportation facility, the station organized all the early twentieth century modes of transportation—rail, subway, bus—into a complex

facility. The station building, about 300 by 80 feet, is connected to a raised train shed building, about 1,200 feet long and 300 feet wide. The public space of the waiting room, which has been restored, shows the building to its best advantage; it is a high, spacious room, classically ordered, and restrained in color. Within this envelope, the architects handled the detail-

ing and decorative forms with imagination, using the new materials and formats of the 1930s in an exemplary way. White opal glass globes, hung from flowing bronze chandeliers, bathe the space in luminous subdued light. Metal screens, trim, and medallions, plus the ornate inlay on the terrazzo floor, create a unified Art Deco ornamentation, whose inventive curvilinear forms give the building its coherence and impact.

In the immense train shed, the huge, skylighted space shelters tracks and plat-

forms. Although its exterior is sheathed in masonry, accented with Art Deco embellishments, the handling of the interior space is the most exciting. Expression of the engineering forms with steel exposed is refined in its detailing of curved flanges and fillets. The introduction of the skylights—an industrial form—and the handling of multiple levels, capture some of the period's fascination with modern technology—the infatuation with speed and power that the Italian Futurists bequeathed to the 1930s. Especially effective is the diagonal of the ramp, dropping into the waiting area from the PATH level above. The station complex is a showcase of materials and techniques of the 1930s. It reflects outstanding planning, engineering, material technology and decorative techniques of the period. Had the producers of *Shall We Dance*—an Astaire/Rogers film released in 1937—discovered Penn Station, they might have used it for a set. It would have been a perfect spot to shoot the roller skating dance number, choreographed to George and Ira Gershwin's "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off."

A few blocks away is One Washington Park, the former New Jersey Bell Telephone Company building—a twenty-story brick and pink limestone structure completed in 1929. Density of ornament is concentrated for effect at the pedestrian level, and the richer materials—bronze and limestone—are used where they can be directly experienced. The bronze Art Deco screen above the entrance doors is a taut vertical design that employs attenuated triangles. The frieze above the ground floor level is carved with florid limestone arabesques in low relief, an exemplary Art Deco presentation of lively surface detailing.

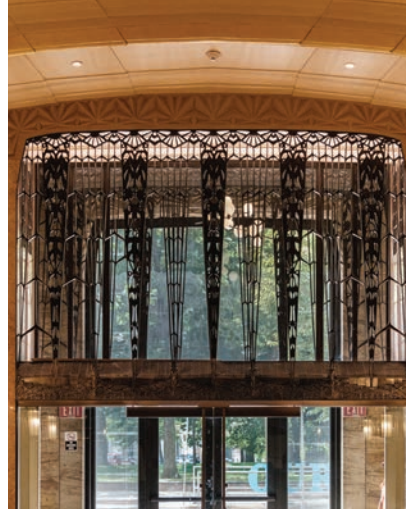
As one enters the building, the full impact of the Art Deco design becomes apparent. This is really a stage set that calls itself a lobby. The richness and excitement of the detail intensifies as one moves through the space toward the information desk. The interior space is high,



Façade of Newark's Pennsylvania Station, also known as Newark Penn Station.

they tango, then slide into some jazz, all in a number called "The Continental." This film, *The Gay Divorcee*, is only one of many Astaire/Rogers movies that epitomized Art Deco design, especially in its musical numbers.

What people saw in such glamorous movies was, in fact, also all around them. One could find Art Deco design in public spaces such as office building lobbies and train station waiting rooms, even in small cities and towns such as Newark, Passaic, and Morristown, New



(Left) Interior of Walker House, the former New Jersey Bell building. (Center) Interior grillework above the entrance to the former New Jersey Bell building. (Right) Architectural ornamentation on the façade of the former New Jersey Bell building that illustrates the building's original purpose.

drawing the eye to the subtle archways and to the ceiling. Despite proliferation of ornamental detail, a feeling of simple elegance prevails. Particular emphasis is given to the ceiling, where triangular shapes and beveled edges provide a low-key counterpoint to the intricate bronze wall detailing. Every design detail is carefully thought out. Even the original public telephone booths were works of fine craftsmanship that blended perfectly with the lobby. The bronze mailbox is an integral part of the total design scheme. Dramatic upward lighting is provided by classic Art Deco floor lamps, accented by beautifully designed wall fixtures. This fascination with incandescent lighting is central to the visual aesthetic of Art Deco. It affects the colors of materials such as marble, bronze, and the new plastics. The rich golden hues, in which metals mix, emphasize the abstract qualities of the various patterns, giving them a unified sculptural effect.

Even buildings in small towns, such as the railroad station in Morristown, use Art Deco lighting in the waiting room, combined with minimal decorative grillework. The impact is substantial. Take away the incandescent lamps that were specifically designed to fit on top of the benches and the essential character of the interior space is lost.

Passaic, another small city of lost glory, was submerged in the suburban tide that followed World War II. The tallest building in the downtown area, an eleven-story office building, is an Art Deco design. This

fact was either not understood or, more likely, ignored, when, during the 1950s—and even more recently—some of the lofty interior spaces were remodeled with eight-foot dropped acoustical ceilings and fluorescent light fixtures. Fortunately, the lobby was left intact. Except for the addition of fluorescent fixtures over the elevators, the space was left alone, showing the erosion of time and grime. The building's distinction rests on its use of materials—a black marble entrance, patterned travertine floors in the lobby, bronzed elevator doors, and an elegant central staircase leading to the second floor. Again, the perfect setting for an Astaire/Rogers dance number. Careful detailing is evident and can be seen in the design of the brass radiator grille that exactly matches the design on the elevator doors.

Dancing through the lobbies and waiting rooms of the 1930s is not as outrageous as it might seem. The music of "The Continental" captured the essence of Art Deco. In fact, another name for Art Deco was Jazz Modern, a term used mainly in the United States of America, and in some ways, quite appropriate. Art Deco was truly international in scope—a synthesis of a number of influences, including Art Nouveau, American First Nations and Mexican art, Russian Constructivism, Italian Futurism, and even Japanese art. These influences, along with an appreciation of the beauty of machines—particularly trains—and desire to use new materials such as plastics and metal, inspired Art

Deco's sophisticated designs for mass production.

Art Deco turned out to be a culminating point in design. It successfully abstracted images from different geographical locations, from different art forms, and from history. In a way, it was the beginning of the end of the concept of decorative art—Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier made sure of that. World War II clinched it. The epitome of style and the fine art of elegant understatement were replaced with emphasis on purely functional and economical solutions. Art Deco remains the last of the total styles. The irony is that people love it, and the dancing ghosts linger on.



The façade of People's Bank and Trust Company Building in Passaic.

All Photos: Daniel Leventhal

Note: This article was originally published in the Winter 1982, Volume 2, Number 4, edition of the Art Deco Society of New York News.

# WRIGHT BY THE SHORES OF MINNETONKA



The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Frank Lloyd Wright Living Room from the Francis W. Little House, 1912-1914 (Wayzata, Minnesota) (Gallery 745). Photo: © 2019 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

---

**“ON THE SHORES OF LAKE MINNETONKA,  
IN WAYZATA, MINNESOTA, THE LITTLE HOUSE WAS, IN FACT,  
NO LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE.”**

---

**A**rt Deco lovers often date the emergence of that geometric, streamlined style from 1925 and the historic Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes. But if you take a leisurely stroll at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York through the reconstruction of Frank Lloyd Wright's 1912–14 living room from the Francis W. Little house, you can see much of the geometry that was later to distinguish Art Deco design.

Wright had already repudiated the luxurious, foliated style of Art Nouveau. It may have delighted Louis Comfort Tiffany and his clients, but Wright, always a daring innovator, would have none of it. Even if Wright's work at this time could be considered a transition to the Art Deco sensibility, all aspects of this famous living room testify to his interest in clean lines, spaciousness, functional practicality, warm and light colors, and a Japanese-inspired simplicity. Before the chromium sleekness of the Chrysler Building, this room and this house were dedicated to modernity, to an early form of the streamline.

When the house was torn down in 1972, the Metropolitan Museum saved what it could from this gem of Wright's Prairie Houses. Some of its rooms have been reconstructed at other museums. The Met was waiting for the right space in which to install this sizable Wright interior. It measures 30 by 45 feet, with a 14-foot ceiling. The room is a permanent installation in the American Wing of the Met.

On the shores of Lake Minnetonka, in Wayzata, Minnesota, the Little house was, in fact, no little house on the prairie. It was quite large, built as a summer home, set on two levels into the sloping terrain by the lake. Wright's specialty in such homes

was to adapt them to the landscape and then make them even more rooted to the spot with effective plantings. They looked as though they always belonged where Wright sited them.

Mary Little was a patron of fine music, so the living room was made big enough for concerts. It was also designed so that light flooded in from both sides, giving views of lake and landscape through a series of leaded glass windows—once again, a precursor to Art Deco geometry. Beneath these two ranges of windows run window seats, and under them, run concealed heating elements. Above these two windows is an indented white oak ledge, above which are ranges of leaded clerestory windows on each side. A deeper continuation of the wooden ledge at each end of the room provides space for displaying sculpture and vases.

The room is a soft, warm yellow, with the light brown accents of oak in floor, framings, and decorative ceiling strips. The ceiling has six leaded glass skylights. In the museum's reconstruction, these are lit artificially, and one side of the Little living room does look out on Central Park. The other windows open out on a corridor. Wright, as was his custom, designed everything for the room, including the dried leaf arrangements—all of which have been recreated. A huge, thick, long library table is a major piece of furniture, as is an ingenious wood print table. Chairs recall the Mission Style, but Wright gave them arms broad enough to rest books and snacks on with ease. A settee has even broader arms that run around its back, providing a shelf for magazines and books.

Insiders say the reason the Little heirs had this wonderful house torn down was connected with an old animosity toward the architect. Whatever the cause, the house had been weathering and deteriorating. It was overlarge for modern needs and means. Fortunately, the Met saved much, gave some of it homes elsewhere, and did a marvelous job of restoring the most impressive part of the Little house to its initial freshness. The not-so-little Little living room is going to be at the Met for a good long time.

*Note: This article was originally published in the Spring 1983, Volume 3, Number 1, edition of the Art Deco Society of New York News.*

# FRANKART REVISITED: THE FANTASY FEMALES OF FRANKART INCORPORATED

BY ROBERT SALAMONE

All too often when we think of decorative objects of the 1920s and 30s we tend to visualize European items. Many of us are not aware that here, in New York City, small design studios and factories were busy making delightful American decorative items for our homes and enjoyment.

The design studio of Frankart Incorporated, then at 225 Fifth Avenue, was one of these small firms, whose line of delightful female “nudie girl” lamps and ash receivers has become famous and very sought after.

The earliest of chief designer Arthur von Frankenberg's ladies, Flame, dates to 1921. It has a slightly Art Nouveau base, which tapers upward to blend into the figure's ankle. A sleek, nude figure candle holder, its popularity inspired more than 85 other figural pieces, sculpted by von Frankenberg. In 1923, stepped, or pyramidal, bases were featured. This new look was likely inspired by the discovery of the Egyptian King Tutankhamen's tomb that same year.

Also produced were an animal line and a caricature series, sculpted by another Frankart artist, but they did not ever enjoy the same popularity.

Von Frankenberg's smooth lines and his subtle hints at detail show his personal reaction to the European treatment of metal figures. By his elimination of their often overly elaborate costumes, and intricately worked heads and hairstyles, we are left with clean-cut, modernistic figures, perhaps inspired by Cubist painters or by the new purist philosophy of design.

A quote from a Frankart catalogue of the period states: “Particular emphasis has been stressed on artistic conceptions of streamline designs expressing the modern vogue. Inventive ingenuity has been happily combined with artistic ability to create objets d’art of practicability.”

Within four years of Frankart's opening, other companies were imitating its designs. Though all Frankart creations were copyrighted, minor changes were all that was needed to reproduce similar designs, although often of poorer quality. Companies that made copies even went so far as to choose names with a similar flavor, such as Nu-art and Eckart.

During the period, Frankart objects such as ashtrays were used in several of the Busby Berkley musicals and in Marx Brothers films, seen in stylish American home set designs.

After approximately ten years, Frankart closed its doors, a victim of the Great Depression. In the mid-1940s, the bulk of the original Frankart molds were found in storage and sold by weight to a scrap metal firm, where they were melted down.

Reproductions of original Frankart designs are currently on the market, and originals can also be found at reasonable prices.

*Robert Salamone was a dealer/collector of Frankart Collectibles at the time of original printing.*

*Note: This article was originally published in the January–February 1982, Volume 2, Number 1, edition of the Art Deco Society of New York News, under the title Frankart Revisited: A Study of the Fantasy Girls of Frankart Incorporated.*



A Frankart-style patinated metal figural lamp with Spritzdekor Glass Shade, circa 1930. Photo: Heritage Auctions

# GLOBAL CALENDAR

## CURRENT EXHIBITIONS

**Degenerate Art**  
Museum of Modern Art  
New York, NY  
moma.org/212-708-9400

**Deco: Luxury to Mass Market**  
The Wolfsonian-FlU, Miami  
Beach, FL  
wolfsonian.org/305-531-1001

**Guggenheim Collection: Brancusi**  
Solomon R. Guggenheim  
Museum  
New York, NY  
guggenheim.org/212-423-3500

**The Whitney's Collection: Selections from 1900 to 1965**  
Whitney Museum of American Art  
New York, NY  
whitney.org/212-570-3600

**Before Midnight: Bonaventure and the Bird Girl**  
Telfair Academy, Telfair Museums  
Savannah, GA  
telfair.org/912-790-8800

**To December 31**  
*Leyendecker and the Golden Age of American Illustration*  
Reynolda House Museum of American Art  
Winston-Salem, NC  
reynoldahouse.org/888-663-1149

**To January 5**  
*Dimensionism: Modern Art in the Age of Einstein*  
Zimmerli Art Museum  
New Brunswick, NJ  
zimmerlimuseum.rutgers.edu  
848-932-723

**To January 5**  
*French Fashion, Women, and the First World War*  
Bard Graduate Center  
New York, NY  
bgc.bard.edu/212-501-3023

**To January 12**  
*The Blues and the Abstract Truth: Voices of African American Art*  
Washington County Museum of Fine Arts  
Hagerstown, MD  
wcmfa.org/301-739-5727

**To January 19**  
*True Grit: American Prints and Photographs from 1900 to 1950*  
Getty Center  
Los Angeles, CA  
getty.edu/310-440-7300

**To January 19**  
*Objects of Desire. Surrealism and Design, 1924–Today*  
Vitra Design Museum  
Weilam Rhein, Germany  
design-museum.de  
+49 7621 702 3200

**To January 19**  
*Photography+Folk Art: Looking for America in the 1930s*  
Art Institute of Chicago  
Chicago, IL  
artic.edu/312-443-3600

**To January 21**  
*Silver Screen to Mainstream: American Fashion in the 1930s and 40s*  
Chicago History Museum  
Chicago, IL  
chicagohistory.org  
312-642-4600

**To February 2**  
*Georgia O'Keeffe: Living Modern*  
Norton Museum of Art  
West Palm Beach, FL  
norton.org/561-832-5196

**To February 9**  
*Edith Halpert and the Rise of American Art*  
The Jewish Museum  
New York, NY  
thejewishmuseum.org  
212-423-3200

**To February 9**  
*Color and Comfort: Swedish Modern Design*  
Cleveland Museum of Art  
Cleveland, OH  
clevelandart.org/216-421-7350

**To February 16**  
*Weaving Beyond the Bauhaus*  
Art Institute of Chicago  
Chicago, IL  
artic.edu/312-443-3600

**To February 24**  
Charlotte Perriand:  
Inventing a New World  
Louis Vuitton Foundation  
Paris, France  
fondationlouisvuitton.fr  
+33 1 40 69 96 00

**To March 1**  
*Modern by Design: Chicago Streamlines America*  
Chicago History Museum  
Chicago, IL  
chicagohistory.org  
312-642-4600

**To March 1**  
*Artist's Rooms: August Sander*  
National Museum Cardiff  
Cardiff, Wales  
museum.wales/cardiff  
+0 300 111 2 333

**To April 2**  
*Bauhaus Chicago: Design in the City*  
Art Institute of Chicago  
Chicago, IL  
artic.edu/312-443-3600

**To April 5**  
*Jewelry for America*  
Metropolitan Museum of Art,  
New York, NY  
metmuseum.org/212-535-7710

**To April 5**  
*Herbert Bayer: Bauhaus Master*  
Cooper Hewitt,  
Smithsonian Design Museum  
New York, NY  
cooperhewitt.org/212-849-8400

May 9–17

## Destination Deco: San Francisco & Los Angeles



Join the Art Deco Society of New York in May 2020 as we celebrate the rich Art Deco architecture, design, and history of San Francisco and Los Angeles, California. The program will also include a two-night stay on the legendary RMS Queen Mary, docked in Long Beach, and a visit to Catalina Island.

Our special week-long visit starts in San Francisco. Curator-led visits and walking tours of Downtown Deco and the Marina, including visits to Coit Tower, the murals of Aquatic Park, Pflugger's stunning Deco buildings, Treasure Island and Oakland are just a few highlights of our West Coast exploration. Then we are off to Los Angeles to a tour of interiors of the former Bullocks building, the Wilshire Boulevard Temple, the historic Max Factor building and Museum, the Egyptian Theater, visits to Hollyhock House, and Pasadena's famed Arts and Crafts Gamble House. We will visit Griffith Observatory to celebrate its 85th birthday and explore Glendale and Burbank Deco treasures. Tours of Downtown LA will be led by experts from the Los Angeles Conservancy. Our final California weekend includes two nights on the Queen Mary and a ferry ride to Catalina Island for a behind-the-scenes tour of the famed Casino. Our trip is timed so that, on our final evening, those who wish can attend Catalina's annual Avalon Ball at the Casino. Our *Destination Deco: San Francisco and Los Angeles* visit ends with a gala Sunday brunch aboard the Queen Mary.

**Online**  
*Reginald Marsh*  
Museum of the City of New York  
mcny.org/212-534-1672

**Online**  
*Worth and Mainbocher: Demystifying the Haute Couture*  
Museum of the City of New York  
mcny.org/212-534-1672

**To January 12**  
*Mid-Century Master: Eisenstaedt*  
Hillwood Estate Museum  
Washington, DC  
hillwoodmuseum.org/202-686-5807

**To January 12**  
*Moderne Maharajah*  
MAD Paris  
Paris, France  
madparis.fr/+33 01 44 55 57 50

**To January 27**  
*Original Bauhaus*  
Berlinische Galerie  
Berlin, Germany  
berlinischegalerie.de

**To February 2**  
*Cuban Caricature and Culture*  
The Wolfsonian-FlU  
Miami Beach, FL  
wolfsonian.org/305-531-1001



### To August 9

*Self in the City: Highlights from the Collections of the Hudson River Museum & Art Bridges*  
Hudson River Museum  
Yonkers, NY  
hrm.org/914-963-4550

### To November 15

*A Universe of Things: Micky Wolfson Collects*  
The Wolfsonian-FlU  
Miami Beach, FL  
wolfsonian.org/305-531-1001

## UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

### February 17–May 17

*Vida Americana: Mexican Muralists Remake American Art, 1925–1945*  
Whitney Museum of American Art  
New York, NY  
whitney.org/212-570-3600

### February 9–May 2

*Dorothea Lange*  
Museum of Modern Art  
New York, NY  
moma.org/212-708-9400

### February 28–July 12

*Eileen Gray: Crossing Borders*  
Bard Graduate Center  
New York, NY  
bgc.bard.edu/212-501-3023

### March 12–June 7

*Cecil Beaton's Bright Young Things*  
National Portrait Gallery  
London, United Kingdom  
npg.org.uk  
+44 (0) 20 7306 0055

### April 21–July 26

*Dora Maar*  
Getty Center  
Los Angeles, CA  
getty.edu/310-440-7300

### April–May

*Vkhutemas: 100 Years of Design & Architecture in Moscow*  
Bauhaus Center  
Tel Aviv, Israel  
bauhaus-center.com  
+972 3 5220249

### May 3–August 23

*Norman Rockwell: Imagining Freedom*  
Denver Art Museum  
Denver, CO  
denverartmuseum.org  
720-865-5000

### June 13–September 27

*Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, and Mexican Modernism*  
Portland Museum of Art  
Portland, OR  
portlandartmuseum.org  
503-226-2811

### September 26–February 14, 2021

*Aaron Siskind*  
Museum of Photographic Arts  
San Diego, CA  
mopa.org/619-238-7559

### September–February 2021

*New York Shopping: Invention and Reinvention*  
Museum of the City of New York  
New York, NY  
mcity.org/212-534-1672

### October–December

*Adolf Loos' Modernist Architecture in the Czech Republic*  
Bauhaus Center  
Tel Aviv, Israel  
bauhaus-center.com  
+972 3 5220249

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### January 8

*Decorative Arts in Dania Beach*  
Art Deco Society of the Palm Beaches  
Delray Beach, FL  
ArtDecoPB.org/561-276-9925

### January 14

*Destination Deco: South Beach*  
Art Deco Society of New York  
artdeco.org/212-679-3326

### January 15–20

*Destination Deco: Havana*  
Art Deco Society of New York  
artdeco.org/212-679-3326

### January 17–19

*Art Deco Weekend*  
Miami Design Preservation League  
Miami Beach, FL  
artdecoworkshop.com  
305-672-2014

### January 18–20

*Sarasota Antiques Show*  
Sarasota Municipal Auditorium,  
Sarasota, FL  
sarasotaartandantiques.com  
708-366-2710

### January 24–February 2

*Winter Antiques Show*  
Park Avenue Armory  
New York, NY  
winterantiquesshow.com  
718-292-7392

### January 25

*Deco Treasures of the Avery Library*  
Art Deco Society of New York  
Artdeco.org/212-679-3326

### February 12

*Lecture: Flappers, Fashion & Fitzgerald*  
Art Deco Society of the Palm Beaches  
Delray Beach, FL  
ArtDecoPB.org/561-276-9925

### May 9–17

## New York Shopping: Invention and Reinvention



Bonwit Teller, 1930. Photo: by Sigurd Fischer; Museum of the City of New York, gift of Kahn & Jacobs, X2011.35.234

This exhibition at the Museum of the City of New York is an exploration of the glory days of New York shops and department stores.

The exhibit highlights department stores' promotion of Art Deco design in the 1920s and investigates retail's future in New York, including the emergence of new paradigms in sustainable ways to shop. The exhibition comprises clothing, furnishings, photographs, and advertisements. Additionally, maps demonstrate the forging of how department stores forged entire retail districts such as "Ladies Mile" and Herald Square in Manhattan and Fulton Street in Brooklyn.

The Art Deco Society of New York will have a guided-tour of this exhibition for members upon its opening in fall 2020.

### February 13–23

*Palm Springs Modernism Week*  
Palm Springs, CA  
modernismweek.com

### February 14–17

*Palm Springs Modernism Show*  
Palm Springs, CA  
palm Springsmodernism.com  
708-366-2710

### February 19–23

*Napier Art Deco Festival*  
Art Deco Trust  
Napier, New Zealand  
artdeconapier.com  
+64 6 835 0022

### March 11

*Art Deco in Argentina, Let's Tango*  
Art Deco Society of the Palm Beaches  
Delray Beach, FL  
ArtDecoPB.org/561-276-9925

### March 20–21

*Parisian weekend "Ocean liners"*  
Paris Art Deco Society  
Paris, France  
Paris-artdeco.org

### March 29

*Art Deco Masterpieces: 42nd Street East to West Walking Tour*  
Art Deco Society of New York  
artdeco.org/212-679-3326

### April 19

*Newark: Architecture, Cherry Blossoms, Museum, and More*  
Art Deco Society of New York  
artdeco.org/212-679-3326

### May 9–17

*Destination Deco: San Francisco and Los Angeles*  
Art Deco Society of New York  
artdeco.org/212-679-3326

### May 16

*Avalon Ball*  
Art Deco Society of Los Angeles  
Santa Catalina Island, CA  
adsla.org/310-659-3326

### May 28

*Chelsea: Deco Walking Tour*  
Art Deco Society of New York  
artdeco.org/212-679-3326

### June–September

*Tel Aviv Sky Scrapers*  
Bauhaus Center  
Tel Aviv, Israel  
bauhaus-center.com  
+972 3 5220249

### September 19

*Gatsby Afternoon Picnic*  
Art Deco Society of Virginia  
Richmond, VA  
artdecova.org/804-869-0431

### October 9–11

## Autumn in New York: Deco Weekend, Deco in the Boroughs

Join the Art Deco Society of New York for an immersive and exciting weekend exploring Art Deco beyond Manhattan's skyscrapers!

# PACIFICA IN 1939: SAN FRANCISCO'S OWN VERSION OF WO



Early in 1939, Americans were very much aware that a major world's fair would be opening soon in New York City. National magazines carried stories about the rush to finish the buildings on schedule. Pictures of the rising needle of the Trylon and its structural escort, the Perisphere, were widely reproduced. On the eastern seaboard, fair fever was steadily mounting. All advance reports on the stunning new buildings, the innovative styles, and the futuristic designs for major displays suggested an unforgettable experience. And for those lucky enough to see the New York World's Fair, in those dark days of the Great Depression, it has remained memorable.

On the West Coast, however, few people could afford the trip east. But that was not the main reason for creating what was officially known as the Golden Gate International Exposition. On one level, the depression itself was an impetus, since the fair's organizers were convinced that building and operating such a large-scale show would provide many jobs and bring thousands of tourist dollars into the coffers of Bay Area businesses. On a slightly higher level of local self-interest was the idea that the fair would attract new industry, new investments, and new workers, not only to San Francisco, but to California—and the West as a whole—so the western states could show their talents, wares and resources to the world.

The real spur for an exhibition of international scale was, however, the projected completion of what was to be the longest suspension span in the world: the Golden Gate Bridge, and its immediate predecessor, the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. As construction proceeded on these multimillion-dollar, simple but elegant Moderne structures, mud was being dredged from the bay to build up the shoals off the mid-bay island of Yerba Buena into an international airport, catering to the Pan American Clippers bound for Asia.

San Franciscans, expedient and resourceful since the Gold Rush and through the disastrous 1906 earthquake and fire, saw a second use for the new airport. Christened "Treasure

Island," it could also provide an excellent site for a world's fair. The two huge Clipper hangars could serve as exhibit halls until the fair closed. A permanent administration building would also be constructed; all these would be designed in a no-nonsense 1930s style. Something more special had to be found for the architectural theme of the ephemeral fair.

The romance of the China Clippers, the attraction of exotic cultures across the ocean in Asia and Oceania, the recent discovery of the color and excitement of Latin America, all pointed toward the theme. The airplane would soon link all the nations bordering the Pacific Ocean in a matter of hours, if not days. Ships sailing from San Francisco were already doing that, but it took weeks or even months. Thanks to Pan American planes and some ingenious punditry, the Pacific was perceived as some kind of big lake—or puddle, to the irreverent—around which all the communities ought to be friends, linked in trade and cultural exchange. And so, the concept of the "Pacific Basin" became popular.

It wasn't a bad idea then, and it isn't now—though Seattle is currently the city that sees itself as the key American city on that basin. Unfortunately for the plans of Pan Am and the dreams of the exposition's promoters, on Sunday, December 7, 1941—a date that President Franklin D. Roosevelt said would live in infamy—the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. That put a halt to peacetime Clipper traffic, not to mention trade and cultural exchanges with Asians on the other side of that big Pacific "lake." Treasure Island, the momentary lath and plaster jewel that by night had gleamed in a rainbow of pastel lights during its 1939 and 1940 seasons, rapidly became a U.S. Navy base.

The incredible Art Deco confections, so hastily built for the two years of celebration, were even more rapidly wrecked, replaced by long rows of regulation Navy barracks. The hangars and the harbor facilities on the island proved invaluable as the



# WORLD'S FAIR ART DECO

BY GLENN LONEY



Navy prepared to send thousands of young men out into the Pacific Basin. Sadly, a number never returned.

Nor did Treasure Island return to civilian use as an airport. Owing to the nearness of the towers and spans of the two great bridges, it was not ideally sited anyway.<sup>1</sup>

But when the Golden Gate International Exposition opened on February 18—the same date the 1915 Panama Pacific Exposition opened—newspapers and magazines, at least on the West Coast, couldn't find enough superlatives to describe the wonder of the architectural vision and its glories.

In 1939, it seemed an extraordinary vision of a streamlined future, not only in buildings, landscaping and lighting effects, but also in the way we would henceforth live our previously depressed and economically blighted lives. I know; I was there, ten years old, it's true, but eager to take it all in. I'd seen pictures of the Panama-Pacific, with its fantastic excesses of stucco ornament: Victoriana, masquerading as High Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo, and Neo-Neronic. All that had survived of that enchantment was Bernard Maybeck's chastely classic Beaux Arts Palace of Fine Arts. And by that time, its lathwork and plaster were already rotting away. (Years later, it would be replaced in concrete at immense cost. Would that someone had done that for some of the 1939 Exposition!)

Even at the age of ten—with no previous exposure to any sort of arts experience, as we lived on a mortgaged, unprofitable farm—I was puzzled by the style, which the fair's architects were pleased to call "Pacifica." In its verticalities, its squares, circles, cubes, and spheres, it suggested some futuristic geometry. Thin lines of color or molding gave chunky, windowless exhibition halls a streamlined feeling, hurrying the crowds along to take in as many exhibits as possible in a day.

At the same time, there were echoes of the past, of Beaux Arts and lost civilizations. In keeping with the Pacific Basin theme,

architectural and decorative elements from Asia had been abstracted, to be wedded with those of the Aztec, Toltec, Maya, Inca, and even California Gold Rush rustic and Hispanic hacienda styles. At the time, I loved it all. Looking back, I recognize with shock, the amount of schlock, especially in the profusion of fountains and allegorical statues, surely a holdover from 1915.

Today, I can understand why this was. Arthur Brown, Jr. was the chief of the architectural commission that designed the fair and supervised the individual sculptors, muralists, painters, and lighting designers. Brown was also the architect of the Beaux Arts San Francisco War Memorial Opera House, working on that with G. Albert Lansburgh, who designed the Golden Gate and the Warfield Theatres—not to mention New York's Martin Beck (now the Al Hirschfeld) Theatre. Brown's sympathies were with the past, not with the future.

Perhaps the cleverest critique of this world's fair's architecture was made by Richard Reinhardt, in *Treasure Island, 1939–1940*: "Borrowed from Malaya, Indonesia, and the ancient jungle cities of Cambodia and Yucatan, the architectural style of Treasure Island was a peculiar product of its times. Arthur Brown, Jr.'s committee of mellow, sixtyish Beaux Arts architects vowed to avoid the influence of contemporary fashion. Ignoring new materials and organic form, they invented a unique syncretistic style that had no past and no future. But history played them an ironic trick; with its laid-on grandeur and its nostalgia for traditional decoration, Pacific Basin style resembled the 1930s fascist architecture of Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany."

That's Reinhardt's fortuitous hindsight, of course, but he's seldom off the mark in his nostalgic evocations of that wonderful fair, nor are his considered judgments of its merits unfair. But why not let Brown and his crew speak for themselves?

In the *Official Guide Book* (25¢ then; around \$10 now, if you can find a copy), they explained what they sought in an article titled "A New Style of Architecture/Designed by Californians." In their considered opinion, "An important requirement for a great Exposition is a new type of architecture, a style that will herald building design of the future or a style that will harmonize with its surrounding environment. The Golden Gate International Exposition Architectural Commission was equal to this requirement, and as a result, the new mode, 'Pacifica,' was created to embody building motifs from both the eastern and western shores of the Pacific..."

In addition to Brown, the commission included Lewis P. Hobart, William G. Merchant, Ernest E. Weihe, and Timothy L. Pflueger, whose Federal Building, with its impressive courtyard colonnade of steel beams, was much admired as a harbinger of future federal designs.

The northern part of the Treasure Island landfill was soggy and would continue to settle. It was reserved for parking. Cars drove off Bay Bridge ramps, around Yerba Buena Island, and onto Treasure Island on the edge facing San Francisco's skyline. The road to the parking lots ran in front of a huge wall. The fair was, for effect, a walled city—without a back wall. The dominant image, seen from afar, was the central Tower of the Sun, an Art Deco cinema palace fantasy topped with a golden Art Deco phoenix, symbol



of San Francisco's rebirth from the ashes. Close up, however, the most memorable architectural and decorative features of the entire fair were the "Elephant Towers," immense cubistic pachyderms, atop stepped pyramids. They, their attached wall expanses, and the ingenious wind baffles between them, all constituted a Great Wall that instantly encompassed both past and future.

In my youthful vision they certainly did that, and in the view of many other people as well. Ernest Weihe designed the wind baffles, set between the two elephantine entrance guardians, to continue the illusion of a wall, at the same time permitting visitors to enter through the unseen spaces between panels. These were set off by great metal poles with lighting high atop them, concealed under cylindrical, futuristic shades.

Each court of the fair had distinctive lighting towers, appropriate to its theme. The one thousand foot long Court of the Seven Seas, leading down from Ralph Stackpole's monumental statue of Pacifica, had crow's nest lamp poles. Pacifica looked like a modified Mayan sculpture—or a Picasso cubist portrait in 3-D.

Behind Pacifica, there was a metallic curtain of stars, and behind that were a series of colored lights that steadily ran through its changes at night. And behind that was a wonderful show, The Cavalcade of the Golden West, complete with two real-life Gold Rush locomotives to chug in from stage right and stage left on real tracks as a cast of hundreds drove the Golden Spike at Promontory, Utah, linking the nation by rail in 1869.

There was also a volcano that erupted, and this was long before Mount St. Helens. Mounts Lassen or Shasta were its inspiration. But this rustic reminder of the Old West was balanced by the Art Deco elegance of sculptures and reliefs by Jacques Schnier and others.

The Elephant Towers looked as though they'd stand forever. They were the creation of a 26-year-old designer, Donald Macky. Richard Reinhardt notes that some critics suggested they were just giant versions of Chinese wood block puzzles. As it turned out, wood they certainly were: Douglas fir planks nailed on frames, with a coating of pink stucco. The *Guide Book* was especially proud of the composition of that

stucco, by the way. It notes that it had been mixed with Vermiculite, a remarkable man-made substance that caused walls coated with it to glow like a thousand jewels.

From the *Guide Book*, there is this comment about the Towers: "To avoid the effect of too great masses, the west elevation is broken by the Northwest Passage, leading to the Court of Pacifica, and the Portals of the Pacific, leading to the Court of Honor. The ramparts of the main portals are spread in the heavy masses of stepped pyramids, which converge sharply into towers supported by formalized elephants and climaxed by elephant heads and howdahs, emphasizing the [Asian] theme."

"The huge, windowless exhibit palaces, 100 feet high, give the effect of an ancient walled city, and the interior courts, with long rows of square pilasters, are reminiscent of Angkor Wat. Mingling [Asian] and Mayan styles in the lesser masses and details, an effect of basic beauty, refinement, and richness is interwoven with a mystical touch of yesterday...."

Well, that's what they thought they were doing, breathtaking, and, as I've said, I wasn't alone in that. But, in addition to these thematic monuments, which were said to have cost almost \$7 million to build, there were the astonishing exhibits inside. (It should be remembered a double room in a hotel then started at \$2.50, so one could build a lot for a few million, especially if the structures were a twentieth century Potemkin sham.) Among the special treats was seeing oneself on primitive television, or watching the Westinghouse tin robot smoke a cigarette and talk to us. There was a see-through plastic Packard, and a clear plastic telephone as well.

Knowing where the Hormone Woman—you could also see into her—and the only escalator on the fairgrounds were located helped me win season's tickets in an *Oakland Tribune* contest. At ten, I discovered you could have three meals a day by making the rounds of the exhibits in the Foods and Beverages Building. How about a lunch of Del Monte tomato juice, Kraft Cheese, and Ritz Crackers, topped off with Diamond Walnuts?

The fair courtyards echoed to recorded and live gamelan and marimba music. Various Latin American and South Asian lands had built traditional and distinctive pavilions. There were some odd groupings: The Life History of the Redwoods was near French Indochina. Only France, Norway, and Italy represented all of Europe. The rest were in New York in the shadow of the Tylon and the Perisphere. Soon, both France and Norway would be victims of the blitzkrieg by Italy's ally, Nazi Germany. What an innocent prelude both fairs were to be to the 1940s decade of carnage.

Endnote: (1) It was closed as a naval base in 1997 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

All Postcards and map: From the collection of an ADSNY Member

Note: This article was originally published in the March-June 1982, Volume 2, Number 2, edition of the Art Deco Society of New York News.

# THE VIEW FROM FLUSHING MEADOWS

War clouds were gathering over Europe. Asia was already in turmoil. But at Flushing Meadows, construction crews were busily assembling the optimistically designed components of "The World of Tomorrow." Optimism was the subtextual keynote, rather than the often-articulated official one of the 1939 New York World's Fair, a vision of the way we would live in the peaceful technological future. The grim effects of the Great Depression still weighed on much of the nation. The Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, which would help plunge America into the worst war we had ever known, was not far off.

Yet, in the offices of Grover Whalen—a prime mover in luring exhibitors from at home and abroad and finding the funding to make the great international exposition a reality—the skies were clear and the future seemed secure. The only real questions were how long it would take before dirigibles would be regularly mooring on skyscraper spires and robots would be doing Mrs. America's kitchen chores. No one gave a thought as to how passengers would get off the Graf Zeppelin, were it indeed moored to the spire on the Empire State Building.

The incredible optimism of Whalen, and of designers such as Norman Bel Geddes—who really believed unruly humanity could be engineered into living in automated Cities of the Future—and of major American corporations is affectionately recalled in the 1984 documentary film, *The World of Tomorrow*. John Crowley wrote the script, warmly narrated by Jason Robards. Tom Johnson and Lance Bird produced and directed the 83-minute film, which is composed of media documentation of the time, much of it produced exclusively for the fair: cartoons, old newsreels, home movies, promotional films, and even the first television broadcast.<sup>1</sup>

Because so much of the design inspiration of the 1939 World's Fair was Art Deco and Moderne, this film has a wide appeal for Deco buffs. At a 1980s preview at New York's Film Forum, the program included typical 1930s film shorts, such as a newsreel and a wonderful Looney Tunes cartoon about the hazards of the new automated home.<sup>2</sup>

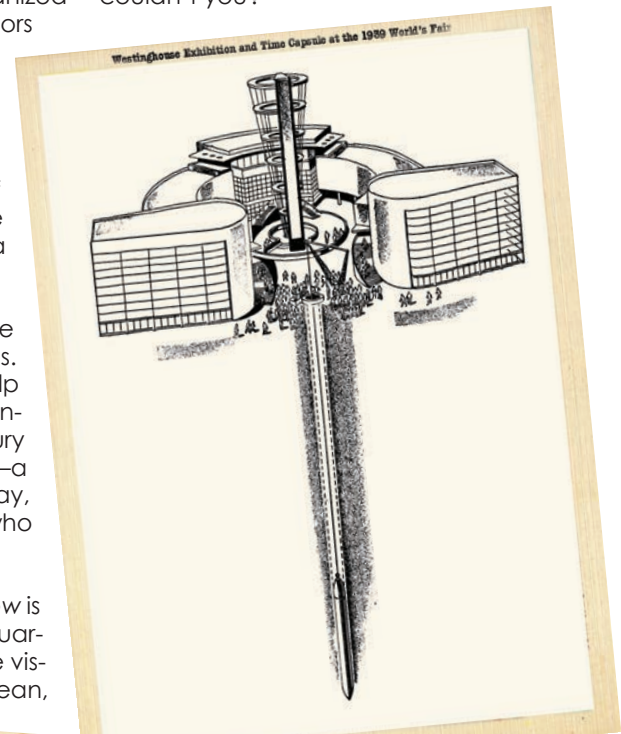
The irony in the optimism of designers like Bel Geddes in 1939 was not only that

World War II was just about to explode, but that they confidently believed their vision of the future was not very far off. It was so easy for them to envision Mr. and Mrs. North America getting into their automated automobile and zooming off down the spacious mechanized freeways of the General Motors *Futurama*. In case no one's been watching how time flies—the Long Island Expressway is still the world's longest parking lot. For that matter, it was amusing, even back in 1939, to see that one of the triumphs of modern science was a robot that could smoke a cigarette.

They buried a time capsule in the heart of the Flushing fairgrounds. One of the items that would help the folks still around in 2539 to understand what twentieth century Americans were all about was—a Lilly Daché woman's hat. (Today, there are millions of people who have never heard of Lilly Daché.)

A highlight of *The World of Tomorrow* is footage of Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia genially promising prospective visitors to the fair cheap, clean,

and safe accommodations in New York City. Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland even join in these pitches, offering metropolitan bedrooms for 50 cents a night. But then, in those days, you could have a good time for ten cents a dance, couldn't you?



#### Endnotes:

- (1) It has been shown on PBS, screened at many independent theaters, and is available on DVD at public libraries and from Amazon.
- (2) *The World of Tomorrow* is distributed by Direct Cinema, Ltd.

All Postcards: From the collection of an ADSNY Member

Note: This article was originally published in the Summer 1984, Volume 4, Number 2, edition of the Art Deco Society of New York News.

# F.-L. SCHMIED

## MASTER OF THE ART DECO BOOK

BY LEONARD FOX, ASSISTED BY ADRIANNE COCHRAN

As all connoisseurs of the 1920s know, the Art Deco period wrought a total revision in design. This design renaissance was financed mostly by the teeming profits of the Industrial Revolution. Paradoxically, the wealth spawned from the assembly line spurred the last great handcraft era.

The designer elites of this era applied their brilliance to myriad art forms. Paul Poiret shocked haute couture with his sleek creations inspired by Asia. Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann captivated the crème de la crème with elegant furniture fashioned from ebony and ivory. The opalescent glass fantasies of René Lalique and the filigreed iron works of Raymond Subes achieved immense popularity. Discriminating collectors of today continue to seek out these masterpieces.

One art form that had a dynamic transformation in the 20s, the illustrated book, is little known in the United States, although it has a venerable tradition in Europe.

The first type of illustrated book to be coveted by the cognoscenti was the illuminated manuscript. Primarily crafted by monks to elucidate religious texts, each medieval manuscript required months to years of preparation.

With the advent of movable type, invented by Johann Gutenberg in the fifteenth century, crude woodcuts began to be mass produced, and illustration techniques gradually improved. In 1796 a consistent color process, lithography, was introduced by Alois Senefeld. Thomas Bewick popularized the use of wood engravings in the early nineteenth century. The wood engraving process, which cut blocks on the end grain with a graver tool instead of a knife, allowed a

more finely detailed illustration than the traditional woodcut.

By the turn of the twentieth century the avant-garde became fascinated with superb craftsmanship and meticulous design. Inspired by illuminated manuscripts and exquisite Japanese prints, artists desired to create beautiful books where illustrations and text flowed together. To achieve this end, they created typography that matched the tone of each particular work. Also, they incorporated the decorative elements into the text with unusual spatial relationships that altered or eliminated traditional boundaries of book illustration. The stunning books that ensued were produced on hand presses and filled with pochoir illustrations—a stencil process for making colored prints or adding color to a printed key illustration—or intricate engravings on wood.

Many artists contributed to the elevation of the book arts during the 1920s, but the ultimate master was François-Louis Schmied. A renaissance man, Schmied combined the skills of illustrator, typographer and printer. He possessed an amazing capacity for observation and invention, and his artistry brought new grace and beauty to the illustrated book.

Schmied was born in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1873. After his formal training at the Guillaume Le Bé School, he studied with Barthélemy Menn, a Swiss painter. Menn's exotic circle of friends included Henri Rousseau, Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot and Eugène Delacroix. The period left an indelible mark on Schmied, manifesting itself in his invigorating use of color. Schmied's technical abilities were then honed by study with the brilliant engraver Alfred Martin.

In 1911, Schmied received his first big break when his work was brought to the attention of one of the period's most elite book clubs, *Les Sociétés du Livre Contemporain*. Unlike American book clubs of today, these French societies comprised only the *haut monde*, and their function was to sponsor the production of lavish limited editions by outstanding artists and authors. The club commissioned Schmied to collaborate as typographer and engraver with artist Paul Jouve on an illustrated version of Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*.

Like its medieval predecessors, *The Jungle Book* took years of preparation; the project had to be tabled at the outbreak of World War I. Schmied enlisted in the French Foreign Legion. While at the Battle of the Somme, he was wounded and suffered the loss of an eye. The veteran returned to Paris and worked on completing *The Jungle Book*.<sup>1</sup>

In 1919 *The Jungle Book* was finally published and won the approbation of the French book world. As a result, Schmied's reputation was assured, and enticing commissions followed in a steady stream. Always the perfectionist, F.-L. Schmied never compromised his high technical standards in his search for each book's quintessential marriage of text and illustrations.

One of Schmied's more arduous undertakings was *Salonique, la Macedoine, l'Athos*<sup>2</sup> published in 1922. As printer and engraver, Schmied was responsible for converting the paintings of Jean Goulden into 45 plates. To recreate the pointillist-inspired style of Goulden, Schmied meticulously executed the illustrations with large areas composed entirely of dots and slashes.



George Barbier, who first achieved fame for his fashion illustrations, collaborated with Schmied on two of his best works, *Les Chansons de Bilitis*<sup>3</sup> and *Personnages de Comédie*.<sup>4</sup> Both published in 1922, the books embodied Barbier's elegant Art Deco style. Barbier employed the simplicity and symmetry of classical Grecian art in conjunction with his own fluid line.

The maquette of *Les Chansons de Bilitis* was exhibited in the first joint show of Jean Dunand, P. Jouve, J. Goulden, and F.-L. Schmied in 1921. A visual feast, this subtly erotic book captures a world of serenely beautiful creatures who exist for romantic trysts and dangerous liaisons. Barbier used a distinctive palette consisting primarily of burnt sienna, teal blue, jet black, and luminous gold to convey this exotic world, which was faithfully printed in color by Schmied.

F.-L. Schmied displayed his original talent in book illustration with the publication of *Salammbô*<sup>5</sup> in 1923. This seminal work set the tone for his future books with its hard-edged geometric rendering, reminiscent of Egyptian friezes, but with an added cubist dimension.

Schmied emerged as the leading Art Deco book designer when his graphic tour de force, *Daphné*,<sup>6</sup> was published in 1924. To draw the reader into the Byzantine milieu of the book's hero, Emperor Flavius Claudius Julianus, Schmied employed a bold typeface highlighted with large, commanding initial letters. Contrapuntal to the typography, his vignettes, borders and tailpieces of an austere and geometrically abstract nature embellished the text. Schmied's use of rich somber colors and rigorous design in his full-page illustrations harmonized perfectly with the rest. The masterpiece that resulted can be compared with a Mozart sonata: take away the smallest element and the whole is irreparably diminished.

*Daphné*, together with *Le Cantique des Cantiques*<sup>7</sup>, which was published the following year, is considered by serious book collectors to be the apogee of Schmied's career, perhaps of the twentieth century book. *Le Cantique des*

*Cantiques* is distinguished by the tremulous beauty of its superb illustrations.

Schmied embarked on his smallest publishing endeavor, *Histoire de la Princesse Boudoir*<sup>8</sup>, in 1926 with J. Dunand and Jean-Charles Mardrus as collaborators. Dr. Mardrus, who worked with Schmied on many other projects, translated the text from *The Thousand and One Nights*. The work, which yielded a precious twenty copies, was designed and illustrated by Schmied and hand-colored by Dunand at his atelier.

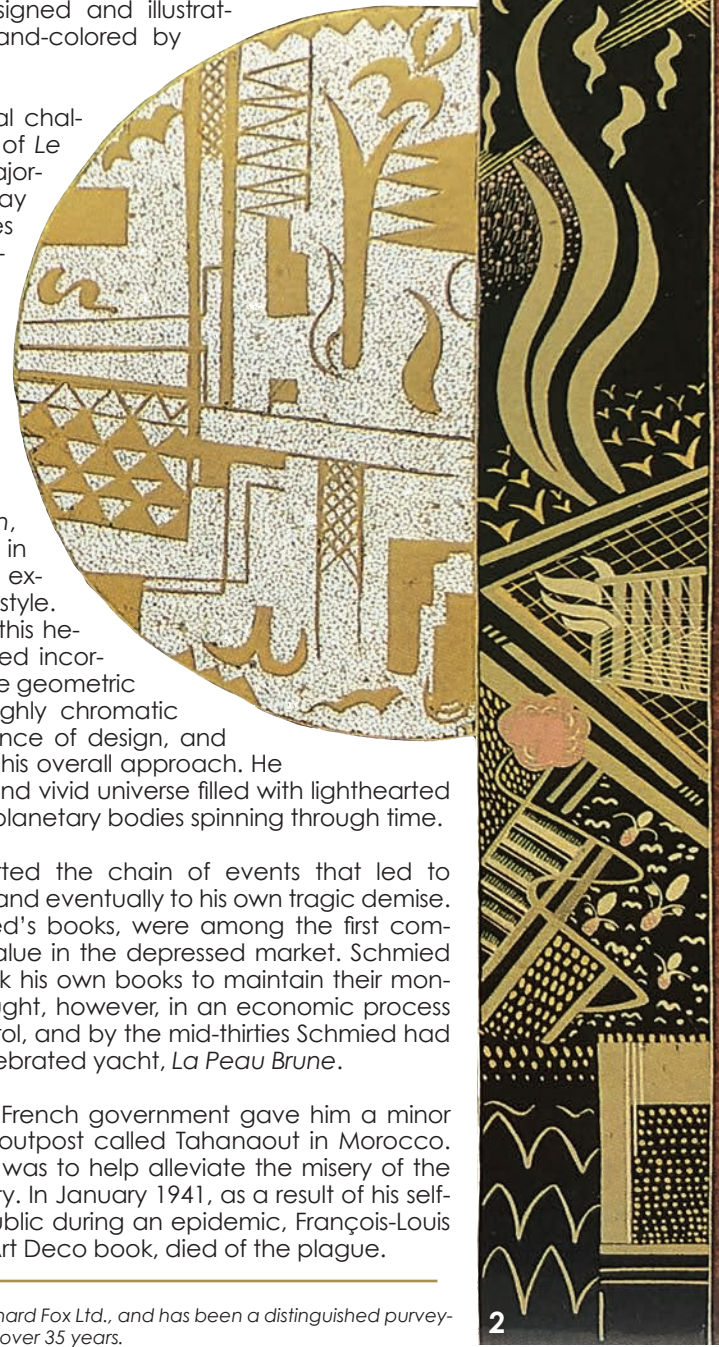
Schmied faced technical challenges in his production of *Le Paradis Musulman*.<sup>9</sup> A majority of the illustrations display a large range of textures and subtle color gradations. Ward Ritchie, who was one of America's foremost book designers, noted in his biography of Schmied that the composition for the title page required 45 engraved blocks.

*Le Paradis Musulman*, which was published in 1930, is also a wonderful example of Schmied's later style. To convey the mood of this hedonistic paradise, Schmied incorporated into his distinctive geometric compositions a more highly chromatic palette, a certain opulence of design, and even a hint of whimsy in his overall approach. He depicted an eccentric and vivid universe filled with lighthearted natives and shimmering planetary bodies spinning through time.

The Depression era started the chain of events that led to Schmied's financial ruin, and eventually to his own tragic demise. Luxury items, like Schmied's books, were among the first commodities that lost their value in the depressed market. Schmied bravely tried to buy back his own books to maintain their monetary worth. He was caught, however, in an economic process beyond one man's control, and by the mid-thirties Schmied had lost his atelier and his celebrated yacht, *La Peau Brune*.

Schmied's friends in the French government gave him a minor commission at a desert outpost called Tahanaout in Morocco. Part of Schmied's duties was to help alleviate the misery of the people under his authority. In January 1941, as a result of his selfless ministrations to his public during an epidemic, François-Louis Schmied, master of the Art Deco book, died of the plague.

Leonard Fox is the owner of Leonard Fox Ltd., and has been a distinguished purveyor of fine art and rare books for over 35 years.



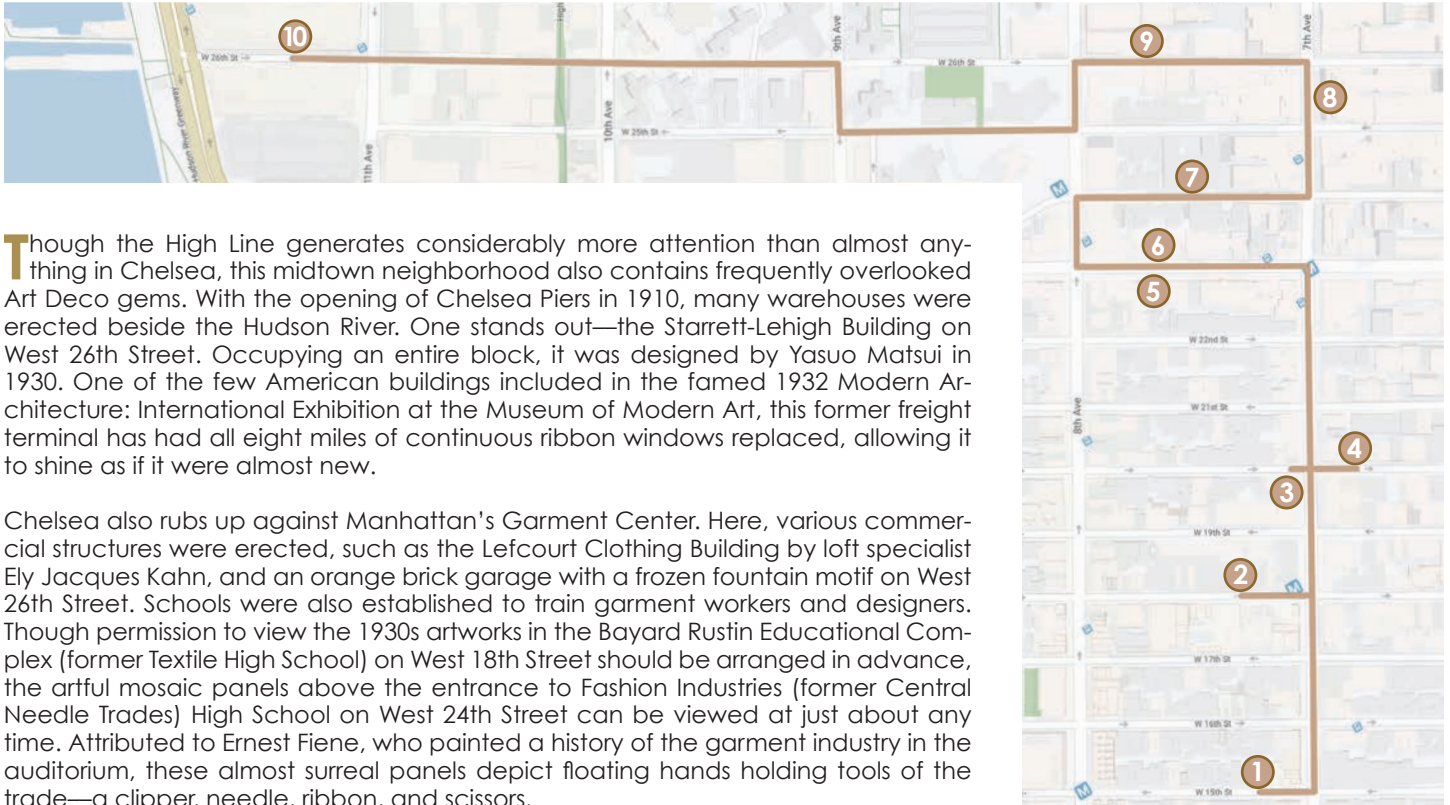
Endnotes: (1) *The Jungle Book*. By Rudyard Kipling. Illustrated by Paul Jouve. Engraved on wood and printed in color by Flashier. 1919. 125 copies on vellum. (2) *Salonique, la Macédoine, L'Athos*. Illustrated by Jean Goulden. Preface by Gustave Schlumberger. Engraved on wood and printed in color by F.-L. Schmied. 1922. 177 copies on japon. (3) *Les Chansons de Bilitis*. By Pierre Louÿs. Illustrated by George Barbier. Engraved on wood and printed in color by F.-L. Schmied. 1922. 125 copies on vellum. (4) *Personnages de Comédie*. By Albert Flament, Illustrated by George Barbier. Engraved on wood and printed in color by F.-L. Schmied. 1922. 150 copies on vellum. (5) *Salammbô*. By Gustave Flaubert. Illustrated, engraved on wood and printed in color by F.-L. Schmied. 1923. 1,000 copies. (6) *Daphné*. By Alfred de Vigny. Illustrated, engraved on wood and printed in color by F.-L. Schmied. 1924. 140 copies on vellum. (7) *Le Cantique des Cantiques*. Translated by Ernest Renan. Illustrated, engraved on wood and printed in color by F.-L. Schmied. 1925. 110 copies on vellum. (8) *Histoire de la Princesse Boudoir*. Translated by Dr. J.C. Mardrus. Illustrated by F.-L. Schmied. Hand-colored by J. Dunand. 1926. 20 copies. (9) *Le Paradis Musulman*. Translated by Dr. J.C. Mardrus. Illustrated, engraved on wood and printed in color by F.-L. Schmied.

Images: (1) Detail from the cover of *Histoire de la Princesse Boudoir*. (2) Detail of the geometric design from the cover of *Daphné*. All Photos: Art Nouveau and Art Deco Bookbinding by Alastair Duncan

Note: This article was originally published in the Winter 1985, Volume 5, Number 4, edition of the Art Deco Society of New York News.

# EXPLORING DECO IN . . . CHELSEA

BY MATTHEW A. POSTAL



Though the High Line generates considerably more attention than almost anything in Chelsea, this midtown neighborhood also contains frequently overlooked Art Deco gems. With the opening of Chelsea Piers in 1910, many warehouses were erected beside the Hudson River. One stands out—the Starrett-Lehigh Building on West 26th Street. Occupying an entire block, it was designed by Yasuo Matsui in 1930. One of the few American buildings included in the famed 1932 Modern Architecture: International Exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, this former freight terminal has had all eight miles of continuous ribbon windows replaced, allowing it to shine as if it were almost new.

Chelsea also rubs up against Manhattan’s Garment Center. Here, various commercial structures were erected, such as the Lefcourt Clothing Building by loft specialist Ely Jacques Kahn, and an orange brick garage with a frozen fountain motif on West 26th Street. Schools were also established to train garment workers and designers. Though permission to view the 1930s artworks in the Bayard Rustin Educational Complex (former Textile High School) on West 18th Street should be arranged in advance, the artful mosaic panels above the entrance to Fashion Industries (former Central Needle Trades) High School on West 24th Street can be viewed at just about any time. Attributed to Ernest Fiene, who painted a history of the garment industry in the auditorium, these almost surreal panels depict floating hands holding tools of the trade—a clipper, needle, ribbon, and scissors.

Perhaps Chelsea’s most conspicuous Deco structure is Walker Tower, on West 18th Street. Designed by Ralph Walker, this telephone company facility has recently been partly transformed into apartments. The original ornamentation has been mostly restored and the elevations gleam as they never have—even when originally built—through the addition of new, yet complementary, bronze grilles, windows, and spires.

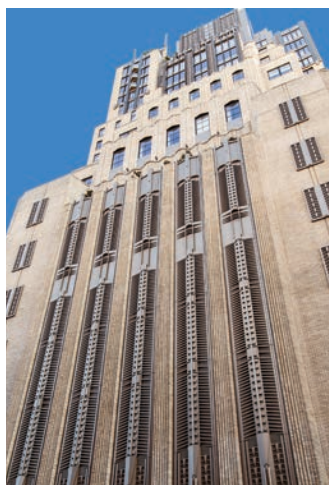
Matt Postal is a historian specializing in the architecture of New York City. He teaches in the Graduate program of the New York School of Interior Design and is co-author of the Guide to New York City Landmarks and Ten Architectural Walks in Manhattan.

All Photos: Lynn Farrell



## 1. 205 West 15th Street

The Chelsmore Apartments were designed by Horace Ginsberg in 1940. On the northwest corner of Seventh Avenue, both façades display fine staccato brickwork.



## 2. 212 West 18th Street

Designed in 1929 by Ralph Walker, who designed many memorable buildings for the New York Telephone Company, Walker Tower has a distinctive stepped silhouette. Constructed for telephone operators and switching machinery, it has been mostly converted to condominiums, adding complementary decorative grilles and spires to the exterior.





**3. 200 West 20th Street**

Emery Roth designed Kensington House in 1937–38, a late work by this noted architect. Tenants enter through an unusual concave entrance embellished with colorful mosaic bands.



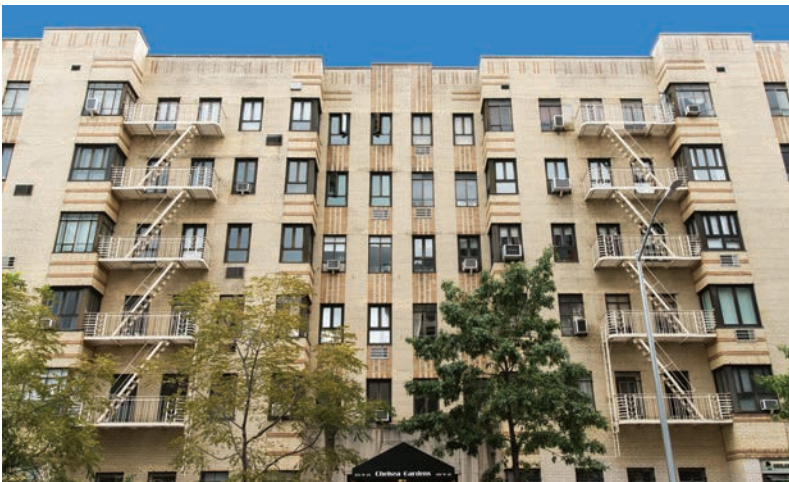
**4. 155 and 165 West 20th Street**

On the northeast corner of Seventh Avenue, the Warren Apartments feature ornamental brickwork, corner windows, and handsome lobbies with brightly colored terrazzo floors. It was designed in 1938 by Horace Ginsbern, architect of the “Fish Building” on the Bronx’s Grand Concourse.



**5. 250 West 23rd Street**

Built in 1948, Broadway Savings Bank, designed by Harold Reeves Sleeper, is monumental in scale. The bold façade incorporates delicate floral ornament and aluminum spandrels.



**6. 255 West 23rd Street**

The 1937 Chelsea Gardens is a rare garden apartment building in Manhattan. The main entrance features an ornate surround and apartments overlook a central garden.



**7. High School of Fashion Industries, 225 West 24th Street**

Originally called Central Needle Trades High School, this 1940 school incorporates four mosaics by Ernest Feine, as well as a remarkable mural inside, depicting the history of the garment industry.



**8. Lefcourt Clothing Center, 275 7th Avenue**

One of many speculative structures in Manhattan designed by Ely Jacques Kahn, this block-long 1928 garment industry building has distinctive brickwork and tiered massing. Though the elevator lobby has unfortunately been modernized, some original Deco details remain.



**9. 241 West 26th Street**

Slee & Bryson designed this delightful parking garage in 1930. Faced with tawny brick, the base incorporates frozen fountains, a familiar Art Deco motif.



**10. Starrett-Lehigh Building, 601 West 26th Street**

An architectural masterpiece designed in 1930 by the Japanese-American architect Yasuo Matsui for Cory & Cory, this massive freight terminal and warehouse structure combines Art Deco and modernistic features. Not only could trains pull directly inside, but trucks could be driven from the street to any level.

# SCENTS OF STYLE: ART DECO FRAGRANCES

BY IRENE MOORE

The allure of perfume and its intoxicating aroma have intrigued our olfactory senses in numerous ways for centuries through mythology, medicine, religion and anthropology. However, the perfumery, or fragrance industry as we know it today, started to come into its own at the beginning of the 1900s.

The early part of the century marks the birth of Coty, one of the great fragrance houses. Several new perfumeries were established during this time, including Guerlain and Caron, firms that introduced fragrances that are still popular today. The fragrance industry became firmly established during the Art Deco era, which was the most prolific creative period in the history of perfume, when the long-lasting bond between haute couture and perfume merged into a richly productive business.

## PAUL POIRET'S ROSINE

Paul Poiret, whose name is synonymous with early Art Deco, was the first French couturier to market fragrances with his designs. His unconstrained, elongated fashion silhouettes liberated women from their corsets, allowing them more comfort and freedom of movement. In 1911, Poiret founded Les Parfums de Rosine (named after his daughter), the first perfume company created by a couturier. During this decade, Poiret launched several other perfumes under the Parfums de Rosine name. Poiret's exclusive clientele naturally wanted to wear his perfumes, the perfect accessory to his fashions.

Towards the end of this era, American troops returned from the First World War in Europe, bringing with them expensive French fragrances. American enthusiasm for fragrance took

off and the U.S. market was born and flourished. Perfumery entered an era marked by the constant search for new tonalities and original, often audacious harmonies.

## THE ART DECO ERA

Following the example of Poiret, many other Parisian couture houses introduced high-quality perfumes. In the 1920s and 1930s, the couturiers Coco Chanel, Jeanne Lanvin, Felix Millot, Jean Patou, Charles Worth, Nina Ricci, Pierre Balmain, Marie-Louise Carven, and Elsa Schiaparelli all launched perfumes to complement their couture fashion collections. The creators of these tony perfumes were not very concerned with the mass market, because the woman who could afford to purchase high-fashion garments from these houses also bought the designers' fragrances.

## CHANEL NO. 5

By the mid-1920s Coco Chanel was considered to be the most important designer in the world of haute couture. She had made an ingenious entry into the haute couture world by freeing women from fussy, pre-war clothes, creating a more sporty, comfortable look. In addition, she wanted to create a bold fragrance for the new, liberated woman, and commissioned Ernest Beaux, her Russian-born parfumeur, to create several fragrances.

In the fifth (No. 5), his assistant made a mistake, using a tenfold number of fatty aldehydes in the formula. (Aldehydic-type fragrances are characterized by a rich, opulent, recognizable top note. A note in fragrances, just as in music, indicates a single impression.) Recognizing its unusual quality, Chanel picked this composition and took the distinctive





design for the bottle's stopper from a mirror in her Rue Cambon apartment. She launched the perfume with her couture collection in 1921, under the name Chanel No. 5. This beautiful, flowery and strongly aldehydic perfume became an overnight sensation, and caused a revolution in the perfumery world. Chanel No. 5 is considered the leader of a totally new olfactory trend—brilliant fantasy accords, which give great character to a fragrance.

### LANVIN'S MY SIN

Jeanne Lanvin was one of the founders of La Maison Couture, the small Paris fashion group that was among some of the most influential in the fashion world. In 1924, Lanvin launched My Sin, an aldehydic floral, which became rapidly successful.

### WORTH'S DANS LA NUIT

That same year the long-established fashion house of Worth introduced its first perfume, Dans la Nuit, and employed René Lalique, the famed glassmaker-artist from Fontainebleau, France, to create the classic bottle design in frosted blue glass with shimmering stars.

Though Lalique had designed many pieces of jewelry and objets d'art in the early part of the century, he is also very well known for his numerous perfume bottle designs in the Art Deco era, and his elegant and distinctive creations were often copied by other perfumeries.

### ORIENTAL FRAGRANCES

Throughout the 1920s the new world demand for perfume encouraged creative diversity in perfume innovations. By the mid-twenties Oriental notes were becoming fashionable. Orientals, in some cases, are heavy, often sweet tonalities with rich, tenacious bases like musk, civet, amber, even vanillic.

Corday launched Toujours Moi, a warm, woody, amber fragrance (1924). Guerlain created the delightful Shalimar (1925), a beautiful, sweet Oriental fragrance that is still a highly successful perfume today. It is the inspiration for many of today's popular Orientals. The Millot couturier house had been founded at the end of the nineteenth century, and until 1925 was of minor importance. In 1925, however, it found

fame with Crepe de Chine, a fragrance with a lovely green, woody note. This technical masterpiece is considered one of the great classics.

### COTY'S L'AIMANT

François Coty was also fascinated by aldehydic notes and experimented with their use in new perfumes. Not to be outdone, in 1927 he presented L'Aimant, remarkably similar to Chanel's No.5. Lanvin explored the aldehyde theme, launching Arpege in 1927, a rich, flowery, aldehydic, woody fragrance, both light and tenacious, but with great diffusion. This perfume did not meet with success, however, until after the Second World War.

In 1928 the prestigious couturier Jean Patou launched two new fragrances, the flowery, aldehydic Amour Amour and the flowery, spicy, Moment Supreme. The furrier Weil created the flowery, aldehydic, ambery Zibeline in 1928 in honor of his clients, and it immediately became a hit because of its technically bold notes. Encouraged by his success, Weil opened a perfumery branch to augment his fur business.

### THE GREAT FRAGRANCES

After the crash of 1929 and the world recession that followed, for those lucky enough not to have been devastated by the Great Depression, fashion and its aromatic partner, perfume, provided a buffer from the harsh realities of the world.

It is an enigma that out of the Great Depression, a period of deepest gloom, so many great fragrances were created that still endure. The 1930s to the 1940s marked a period of Oriental fragrances and a return to the classics. Tabu by Dana (1930), a legendary Oriental blend, was well received.

Lanvin's Scandal (1932) was equally successful. This perfume, with its leather-iris note, came out several months before the house's Rumeur, whose amber, fruity complex has inspired many compositions since.

Je Reviens, also launched in 1932, was without question Worth's greatest creation. This elegant and tenacious perfume has been a continuing success despite very little advertising, and its popularity has never diminished.



## GUERLAIN'S VOL DE NUIT

In 1931, Antoine St. Exupery's novel, *Vol de Nuit*, captured the excitement of early aviation explorers. In 1933, Jacques Guerlain borrowed the title from the book by *Little Prince* author and aviator Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, and introduced *Vol de Nuit*, a lovely perfume whose green top note was quite bold for the time. That spirit of adventure inspired this spicy, Oriental fragrance dedicated to women passionate about their quests. In that same year, Caron launched *Fleurs de Rocaille*, a very innovative floral-carnation complex that is considered to be the great classic of all floral perfumes, and the inexhaustible Guerlain produced the subtle and delicate *Sous le Vent*.

## DANA'S CANOE

In 1935 Dana, whose perfume *Tabu* was still successful, launched a new, surprising tonality. There was a general passion for sports and sportswomen in the 1930s. *Canoe*, as its presentation and name indicated, was created for a sporty type of modern woman. *Canoe* was based on a spicy, warm fougere. (A fougere is an interpretation of the scent of ferns; the green foresty fougere is created with natural ingredients and aroma chemicals.) The perfume's unusual character originally caused it to receive a cool welcome, but enjoyed a renaissance in the U.S. in the 1960s as a fragrance for men.

## ELIZABETH ARDEN'S BLUE GRASS

In the U.S. in 1935, Elizabeth Arden deviated from her usual specialty, cosmetics, and launched *Blue Grass*, a warm, spicy, musky floral. The perfume was distinctly reminiscent of *Moment Supreme* by Patou with its strong spicy aspect.

Until that time, women had not worn spicy fragrances, considering them masculine. But *Blue Grass* was instantly a big success, and the first great American fragrance.

*Le Galion*, until then a small, practically unknown firm, launched *Sortilege* two years later. The parfumeur who had made *Arpege* ten years earlier created this flowery, aldehydic and very tenacious perfume. In 1937, Schiaparelli introduced *Shocking*, an extremely modern aldehydic fragrance that was subject to much controversy in the world of perfumery. She also created a new color, *Shocking Pink*, which was the color of the graphics on the perfume box.

## JEAN PATOU'S JOY

Since the foundation of his perfumery branch, Jean Patou had been longing to invent a unique perfume, regardless of price, which would be a blend of two beautiful perfumery bases, *jasmine absolute* and *Bulgarian otto of rose*. After a long search, Maurice Chevrion of *Firmenich* in Paris, a fragrance supply house, submitted some new bases to Patou. They were the foundation for the heavenly, flowery blend known as *Joy* (1938), the last great perfume created during the Art Deco era. The luxurious perfume was highly concentrated and initially reserved exclusively for Patou's haute couture clientele. *Joy* is still exceptionally popular and its distinctiveness has inspired many other perfumes.

The great creations were to end with the Second World War, which brought the French perfume industry almost to a standstill. It was the end of an epoch. An extensive creative period in perfumery was over, never again to be rekindled in quite the same way.



Images: From the collection of an ADSNY Member unless otherwise noted (1) Czechoslovakian crystal, 1930s. (2) Rosine Pierrot, 1922. Photo: Perfume Passage (3) Czechoslovakian crystal, 1930s. (4) Rosine La Veritable, 1920s. Photo: Perfume Passage (5) Czechoslovakian crystal, 1930s. (6) Jean Patou Amour Amour, 1925. Photo: Perfume Passage (7) René Lalique for Worth, *Dans la Nuit*, 1924. (8) Czechoslovakian crystal, 1930s. (9) Guerlain *Shalimar*, 1925. (10) French opalescent glass, 1940s-50s. (11) Czechoslovakian crystal, 1930s. (12) René Lalique for Nina Ricci *L'Air du Temps*, 1948. (13) Czechoslovakian crystal, 1930s.

Note: This article was originally published in the 2000 Millenium issue of the Art Deco Society of New York's *The Modernist*.

# CLAUS PORTO

S I N C E 1 8 8 7





# DISCOVER ART DECO TREASURES WHEN EXPLORING NEWARK WITH NEWARK WALKS

Newark Walks is a self-guided architectural  
walking tour of Newark

Visit

[www.newarkwalks.com](http://www.newarkwalks.com)

for more information or to download  
the mobile app



**NEWARK WALKS**  
explore our city