

DISPLAYING DECO

Activity Four Bonus Lesson Plan

Purpose

- Create a curated exhibit of photography from “Documenting Deco” with contextualizing captions
- Deepen participants’ understanding of Art Deco’s presence in local architecture
- Explore skills related to curation and interpretation of architectural photography

Implementation Notes

This lesson should follow “Documenting Deco,” which can either take place as an in-person session or a follow-up assignment.

Instructors should prepare physical copies of participants’ photography ahead of time. Ask participants to select and send their best photos, and print these using a pharmacy photo printing service, or else with a high quality printer. Participants will physically display their photos during this project, and a variety of different materials and methods can be used to achieve this (physically attaching photos to poster board or poster sized paper, pinning them to cork boards, using magnets to secure them to whiteboards, etc.). Instructors should coordinate ahead of time to see what materials are available and decide on a best course of action. See Adaptation and Materials notes for more information.

Background Knowledge and Materials

As part of their curated display, participants will write captions for their photographs, explaining the shots themselves as well as appropriate context about Art Deco’s history and aesthetics. They will therefore use knowledge gained in previous “Describing Deco” and “Designing Deco” sessions.

Participants should also include basic background information about the building they photographed, including the year it was built, its architect, and any other relevant history. Instructors may choose to prepare that information ahead of time, or else provide participants with resources for performing their own basic research. ADSNY’s New York Art Deco Registry & Map is a great resource in this regard: <https://www.artdeco.org/old-new-york-art-deco-registry-map>

Instruction Notes

Instructor should begin by explaining the guidelines for this activity: participants will create a curated display of their photographs by arranging pictures with accompanying captions that explain their work. Help distribute materials, ensuring that each participant group has their physical photographs and any needed supplies for putting them together.

While participants are working, the instructor can provide help and answer any questions. Ask participants to finish their projects with enough time left in the period for groups to circulate around the other exhibits. Instructors should adjust that time based on group size and the number of exhibits, but can aim for 10-20 minutes.

Adaptation Notes

Consider the following optional adaptations when adjusting the lesson for time and participant interest:

- Implementation of this project will likely differ from each group. Always coordinate to decide upon the best method for making exhibits. For example, groups with ample whiteboard space may decide to display photos and captions with magnets instead of using separate supplies. Others may have leftover posterboard or papers from other projects that can be reused. In other cases, the instructor can bring display materials with them.
- Supply participants with visual examples of photography exhibits as inspiration for their own layouts.
- As an optional wrap-up or homework activity, instructors can ask participants to write a brief reflection about the other exhibits they toured during the gallery walk.

Presentation Steps

Warm-Up

This lesson contains no wholly separate warm-up activity. Instead, give participants the physical copies of the photographs that they submitted. If participants worked in groups to take pictures during “Documenting Deco,” they should work with that same group on the exhibit. If participants took photos individually, divide the class into small groups; each group will then collaboratively choose which photos to display from each of their collections. Ensure each participant group has the other materials they need to begin.

Instruction

Establish the parameters for the assignment by explaining that participants will be creating a classroom gallery walk by turning their Art Deco photographs into a curated exhibit. They should select their favorite pictures, physically arrange them, then write and attach captions to provide context. While participants are working, circulate among groups to provide any needed assistance.

Activity

Participants will spend the majority of the period working on their exhibits. Working collaboratively, participants should agree how to arrange and display their pictures. Each group will also create captions for the photos and overall exhibit where needed. The captions should contextualize the pictures within Art Deco history and design. Their text can include basic history of the building or buildings in question, descriptions of the different Art Deco forms featured, and any other desired language. If time allows, groups can add any other desired decoration to their exhibit.

Wrap-Up

To culminate the project, participants will participate in a gallery walk to view the completed exhibits of all the participants. Allow groups several minutes at each station as they rotate through the classroom.

Materials

- Printed photographs from “Documenting Deco”
- Paper for captions
- Pencils/pens
- *Options for exhibit displays:* posterboard, poster sized paper, cork boards, whiteboards
- *Options for attaching photographs:* tape, glue sticks, staples, pushpins, magnets