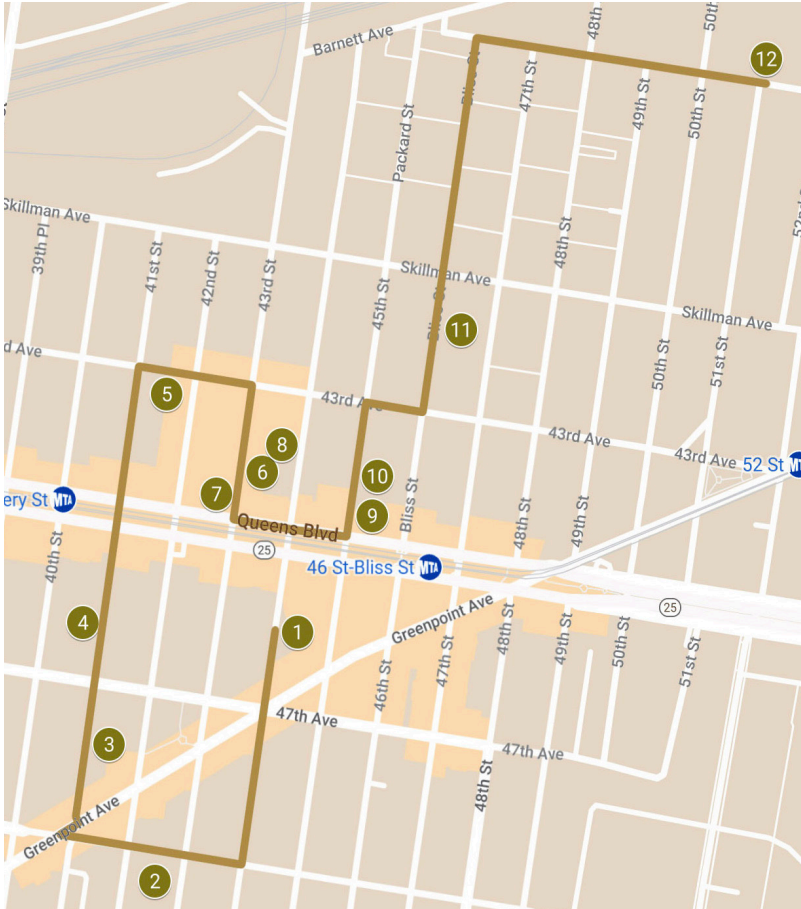


EXPLORING DECO IN . . . SUNNYSIDE

BY MATTHEW A. POSTAL



Art Deco flourished where public transit was constructed in the early 20th century. From Bay Ridge in Brooklyn to the Grand Concourse in the Bronx, old neighborhoods were transformed and new ones created. The subway to Flushing Main Street began serving this vibrant Queens neighborhood in 1917, with elevated stations at 40th Street, 46th Street, and 52nd Street. What had been open fields became a laboratory for early 20th century housing, where a remarkably varied collection of row houses, semi-attached houses and apartment buildings were erected.

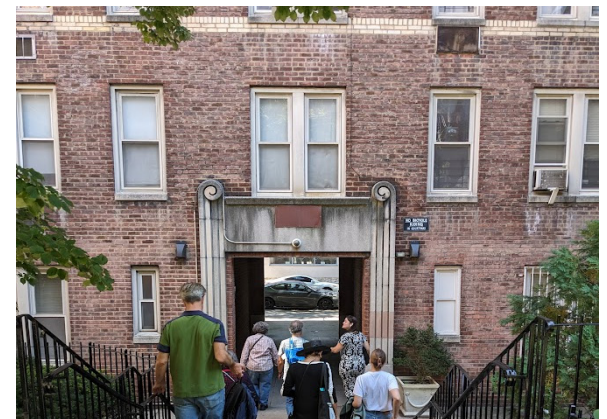
Our route emphasizes six-story apartment buildings with Art Deco and Moderne features shaped by 1920s and 1930s fashion and municipal regulations. Designed by lesser-known architects who mostly worked outside Manhattan and specialized in multiple dwellings, these stylish buildings display colorful brick and terracotta – industrial materials that were strikingly new and different from the classical and medieval embellishments of earlier decades. Some are named for former streets, such as Van Buren and Packard, while others, like the Golden Gate, reference recent events, such as construction of the California bridge, which opened in 1937.

The author is an architectural historian, specializing in 20th century architecture and the co-author of *The Guide to New York City Landmarks*.



1. Worthmore Hall, 45-35 44th Street

Similar in plan to many Sunnyside apartment houses, this regal-sounding, six-story elevator structure was equipped with “all modern conveniences.” Designed in the Art Deco style by Brooklyn architect John M. Ricca and completed in 1931, the facade has subtle beige brick and cast-stone details – angled geometric elements that draw the eye skyward.



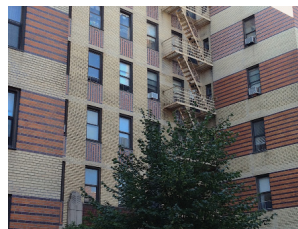
2. Celtic Park, 43-10 50th Avenue, 48-10 43rd Street

Constructed in phases between 1931 and 1937, this apartment complex was the last project commissioned by City & Suburban Homes, a pioneer in the creation of affordable housing. Named for the prominent Irish-American athletic club that once occupied the two-block site, it was designed by Ernest Flagg (east) and Springsteen & Goldhammer (west). Of particular note are the entrances, courtyards, and a monumental chimney stack.



3. Van Buren Apartments, 47-21 41st Street

The Cohn Brothers designed numerous apartment houses in Brooklyn and Queens. The 1937 Van Buren apartments has many typical Art Deco motifs, such as patterned brickwork and uninterrupted six-story piers – a major reason why Deco was called the “vertical style.”



4. Beverly Hall, 45-42 41st Street

Also designed by the prolific Cohn Brothers, an early real estate brochure for this 1939 building promised a “careful and restricted selection of tenants,” a likely euphemism for racial or religious discrimination.



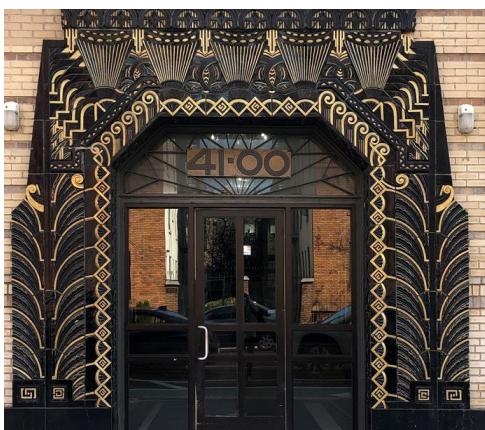
7. Center Theater, 42-25 Queens Boulevard

This Sunnyside cinema opened in 1940. Designed by Harrison G. Wiseman, a prolific theater architect, there were originally 600 seats. Divided into a multiplex starting in the 1960s, recent plans to redevelop the site suggest its days are numbered.



8. Concord Hall, 43-30 44th Street

Like its sister building, directly behind it at 43-25 43rd Street, this handsome yellow and brown brick structure retains many original Art Deco elements, including etched glass windows and unglazed terracotta trim.



5. Golden Gate Apartments, 41-00 43rd Avenue

Perhaps the most theatrical entrance in Queens, the Golden Gate was designed by Israel Crausman in 1931-32. As memorable as it, the black-and-gold terracotta decoration was hardly unique, appearing on other apartment houses in the Bronx and Brooklyn. Each building, however, was by a different architect, suggesting that an unsung workshop deserves credit for the exuberant black and gold panels.



6. 43-25 43rd Street

Kavy & Kavovitt, a Brooklyn firm, was responsible for this tan and amber brick beauty. Dating to 1940-41, it retains the original streamlined marquee and entry, both distinguished by the use of white metals, a new and fashionable material in the 1930s.

9. 45-01 Queens Boulevard

This modest Art Deco commercial structure was erected in the early 1930s. Located on an L-shaped lot, the upper story is accented by layered cast-stone shields.



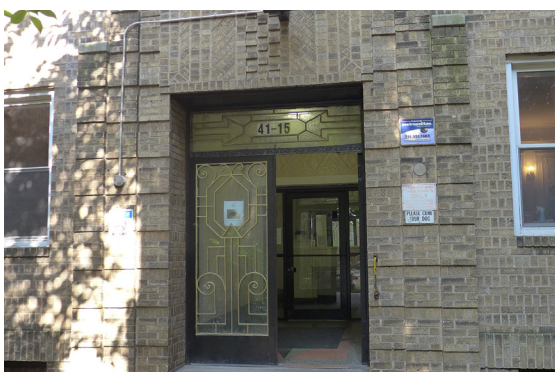
10. Packard Towers, 43-31 45th Street

This tan brick structure was built by the Cohn Brothers in 1930-31. In addition to skillful brickwork and ziggurat-like side windows that flank the entrance, tenants enjoyed the luxury of “standing showers” and “automatic refrigerators,” a clear improvement over the icebox.



12. Phipps Garden Apartments, 51-01 39th Avenue

The Phipps Garden Apartments, near the Sunnyside rail yards, is one of the area's finest multiple dwellings. Designed in 1930-31 for “workers of moderate incomes” by the architect of Sunnyside Gardens, Clarence Stein, this full-block complex has intricately-detailed brick facades and chrome metalwork, as well as covered passages that open to lush landscaped courts with elegant fire escapes that double as private terraces.



11. 41-41 to 41-15 Bliss Street

Istanbul-born Benjamin Braunstein designed this modest trio of apartment houses in 1930-31. Clad with tan brick, these buildings have corner windows and deep entry courts that lead to entrances with stepped enframements. Of particular note are the entrance doors, which retain their lively metal grilles.

About the Art Deco Society of New York

The Art Deco Society of New York is a non-profit organization that advocates for the appreciation, understanding, celebration, documentation, and preservation of Art Deco architecture, design, and culture in New York and around the world. To learn more please visit ArtDeco.org

