



CHICAGO ART DECO SOCIETY

Magazine



IN THIS ISSUE

Chicago Motor Club
Conversion

Michigan Square/
Diana Court

1971 MIA Deco
Exhibition

New York
Art Deco



DECO SPOTLIGHT

Exhibitions, tours, lectures & special events of interest to Art Deco enthusiasts

ONGOING

America on the Move
National Museum of American History, Washington, DC
americanhistory.si.edu
202-633-1000

Americans All: Race Relations in Depression-Era Murals
The Wolfsonian, Miami Beach, FL
wolfsonian.org/305-531-1001

Art and Design in the Modern Age: Selections from the Wolfsonian Collection
The Wolfsonian, Miami Beach, FL
wolfsonian.org/305-531-1001

Gateway to the City: Cincinnati Union Terminal
Cincinnati History Museum
Cincinnati, OH
cincymuseum.org/513-287-7000

A Long-Awaited Tribute: Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian House and Pavilion
Guggenheim, New York, NY
guggenheim.org/new-york
212-423-3575

Picasso's "Le Tricorne"
New-York Historical Society
New York, NY
nyhistory.org/212-873-3400

Art Deco Skyscrapers: Downtown, Chicago Board of Trade, and Merchandise Mart Walking Tours
Art Deco Skyscrapers: Riverfront Trolley and Walking Tour
Chicago Architecture Foundation
architecture.org/312-922-3432

Cincinnati Union Terminal Rotunda Tours
Cincinnati History Museum
Cincinnati, OH
cincymuseum.org/513-287-7000

Art Deco Walking Tours of Los Angeles and Union Station Tours
Los Angeles Conservancy
Los Angeles, CA
laconservancy.org/213-623-2489

San Francisco Walking Tours: Downtown Deco, Art Deco Marina, Coit Tower Murals, Controversial Murals of Rincon Center, Diego Rivera Mural at City College, Diego Rivera Mural at the Stock Exchange Tower
San Francisco City Guides
San Francisco, CA
sfcityguides.org/415-557-4266

Miami Beach Art Deco District and MiMo (Miami Modern) on the Beach Guided Walking Tours
Self-Guided Art Deco Architectural Audio Tour
Miami Design Preservation League, Miami Beach, FL
mdpl.org/305-672-2014

Guided Art Deco Walking, Bus, Bike, and Vintage Car Tours
Self-guided Art Deco Walking and Driving Tours
Art Deco Trust, Napier, New Zealand
artdeconapier.com
+64 6 835 0022

IN PROGRESS

Thru November 1
The Private Josef Hoffmann: Apartment Tours
Josef Hoffmann Museum
Brtnice, Czech Republic
mak.at/+420 724 543 722

Thru November 15
Promoting the Good Life: Recent Acquisitions
The Wolfsonian, Miami Beach, FL
wolfsonian.org/305-531-1001

Thru November 29
Jacob Lawrence: The Legend of John Brown Portfolio
Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester
Rochester, NY
mag.rochester.edu/585-276-8900

Thru December 6
Paul Rudolph: The Guest Houses
John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art
Sarasota, FL
ringling.org/941-359-5700

Thru January 3, 2016
Art for the People: Carl Peters and the Rochester WPA Murals
Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester
Rochester, NY
mag.rochester.edu/585-276-8900

Thru January 3, 2016
Intersecting Colors: Josef Albers and His Contemporaries
Mead Art Museum,
Amherst College
Amherst, MA
amherst.edu/museum/mead
413-542-2000



Poy Gum Lee, On Leon Tong, 83-85 Mott Street. Presentation drawing, 1948, ink and watercolor on paper. Courtesy of the Poy Gum Lee Archive.

Poy Gum Lee is revered for his work in China, but *Chinese Style: Rediscovering the Architecture of Poy Gum Lee, 1923-1968*, on view at the Museum of Chinese in America through January 31, 2016, is the first major study of his work in the United States. The exhibition examines Lee's hybrid modernist influence in New York's Chinatown and his architectural integration of eastern ideas and western technology. Architectural historian and exhibition guest curator Kerri Culhane will also address Lee's work at the upcoming World Congress on Art Deco in Shanghai.

Thru January 3, 2016
Roman Vishniac Rediscovered
Museum of Fine Arts
Houston, TX
mfah.org/713-639-7300

Thru January 3, 2016
Going Places: Transportation Designs from the Jean S. and Frederic A. Sharf Collection
Norton Museum of Art
West Palm Beach, FL
norton.org/561-832-5196

Thru January 4, 2016
Berlin Metropolis: 1918-1933
Neue Galerie, New York, NY
neuegalerie.org/212-628-6200

Thru January 10, 2016
Lyonel Feininger and Alfred Kubin: A Friendship of Artists
Albertina, Vienna, Austria
albertina.at/+43 1 534 83-0

Thru January 10, 2016
Expressionist Impulses: German and Central European Art, 1890-1910
Smart Museum of Art
Chicago, IL
smartmuseum.uchicago.edu
773-702-0200

Thru January 17, 2016
Gypsy Coeds Ride the Silver Streak
Peoria Riverfront Museum
Peoria, IL
peoriariverfrontmuseum.org
309-686-7000

Thru January 17, 2016
Archibald Motley: Jazz Age Modernist
Whitney Museum of American Art
New York, NY
whitney.org/212-570-3600



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Thru January 17, 2016

Designing Home: Jews and Midcentury Modernism
Museum of Jewish Heritage
New York, NY
mjhnyc.org/646-437-4202

Thru January 17, 2016

Heroism in Paint: A Master Series by Jacob Lawrence
Taft Museum of Art
Cincinnati, OH
taftmuseum.org/513-241-0343

Thru January 31, 2016

❖ *Chinese Style: Rediscovering the Architecture of Poy Gum Lee, 1923-1968*
Museum of Chinese in America
New York, NY
mocanyc.org/855-955-6622

Thru January 31, 2016

Ernest Hemingway: Between Two Wars
Morgan Library & Museum
New York, NY
themorgan.org/212-685-0008

Thru February 14, 2016

Jacques Doucet-Yves Saint Laurent, Living for Art
Fondation Pierre Bergé-Yves Saint Laurent
Paris, France
fondation-pb-ysl.net
+33 (0)1 43 31 64 00

Thru February 21, 2016

An American Modernism: Painting and Photography
New Mexico Museum of Art
Santa Fe, NM
nmartmuseum.org/505-476-5072

Thru February 21, 2016

Superheroes in Gotham
New-York Historical Society
New York NY
nyhistory.org/212-873-3400

Thru March 13, 2016

Seven Masters: 20th-Century Japanese Woodblock Prints from the Wells Collection
Minneapolis Institute of Arts
Minneapolis, MN
artsmia.org/888-642-2787

Thru March 20, 2016

Frank Gehry
Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Los Angeles, CA
lacma.org/323-857-6000

Thru March 20, 2016

Irving Penn: Beyond Beauty
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.
americanart.si.edu
202-633-7970

Thru June 24, 2016

Who's Afraid of Women Photographers? Second Part: 1918-1945
Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France
musee-orsay.fr/en
+33 (0)1 40 49 48 14

Thru August 15, 2016

Satchmo: His Life in New Orleans
The Old U. S. Mint, New Orleans, LA
louisianastatemuseums.org
504-568-6993

COMING IN 2015

October 24–January 31, 2016

1920s Modernism: Montreal, the Beaver Hall Group
Montreal Museum of Fine Arts
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
mbam.qc.ca/514-285-2000

October 28–November 1

Pre-Congress Program
Beijing, China

November 1–6

14th World Congress on Art Deco
Shanghai, China

November 7–10

Post-Congress Program
Nanjing, China
shanghaiartdeco.net

November 6–March 19, 2016

Music of Freedom: Jazz Through the Lens of Herman Leonard
Brigham Young University
Museum of Art, Provo, UT
moa.byu.edu/801-422-8287

November 9

Lecture: Chicago: The Glory of Deco, David Garrard Lowe
Art Deco Society of New York
New York, NY
artdeco.org/212-679-3326

November 20

Exhibition Tour: Superheroes in Gotham, New-York Historical Society
Art Deco Society of New York
New York, NY
artdeco.org/212-679-3326

November 21–March 14, 2016

Silver to Steel: The Modern Designs of Peter Muller-Munk
Carnegie Museum of Art
Pittsburgh, PA
cmoa.org/412-622-3131

December 17

Lecture: Chrysler Building: Holiday Celebration for a New York Icon, David Stravitz
Art Deco Society of New York
New York, NY
artdeco.org/212-679-3326

COMING IN 2016

January 15–17

39th Annual Art Deco Weekend
Miami Design Preservation League, Miami Beach, FL
mdpl.org/305-672-2014

February 9–May 8

Dressing Downton: Changing Fashion for Changing Times
Richard H. Driehaus Museum
Chicago, IL
driehausmuseum.org
312-482-8933

February 11–21

Palm Springs Modernism Week
Palm Springs, CA
modernismweek.com
760-799-9477

February 12–15

Palm Springs Modernism Show and Sale
palm Springsmodernism.com
708-366-2710

April–September

Artek and the Aaltos: Creating a Modern World
Bard Graduate Center Gallery
New York, NY
bgc.bard.edu/212-501-3023

May 6–August 21

❖ *Paradise Found: Cuban Allure, American Seduction*
The Wolfsonian, Miami Beach, FL
wolfsonian.org/305-531-1001

May 14

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

COMING IN 2017

February 16–June 11

Revolution of the Eye: Modern Art and the Birth of American Television
Smart Museum of Art
Chicago, IL
smartmuseum.uchicago.edu
773-702-0200



Advertisement for Bacardi Rum and Hatuey Beer, c. 1930. The Wolfsonian-Florida International University, Miami Beach, Florida, Vicki Gold Levi Collection, XC2002.11.4.33.

Images from a newly acquired photographic archive are featured in *Paradise Found: Cuban Allure, American Seduction*, on view from May 6–August 21, 2016 at The Wolfsonian, Miami Beach. *Paradise Found* looks at what President William McKinley called the close “ties of singular intimacy” that once existed between the United States and Cuba from the 1898 Spanish American War through the pre-revolutionary 1950s and revisits this now-distant relationship that left lasting traces in each country, from baseball and American-made cars to rumba and rum. Glamorous celebrities, the exchange of goods, and thriving tourism generated many of the artifacts, advertisements, media images, music, performances, and films that will appear in the exhibition, shaping the way Americans and Cubans imagine one another.

At the Intersection of Art, Design,
and Technology:

THE REBIRTH OF THE CHICAGO MOTOR CLUB

BY PAUL ALESSANDRO

All photos © Patsy McEnroe Photography

NO ONE SETS OUT to design an historic building. In every case, the buildings we now call historic were, at one time, gleaming examples of modernity. Each began as a dialogue between designer and client, an interaction so relevant that it remains valid today. It is this conversation we endeavor to continue when we consider an old building for renovation. By examining this built history and the intersection of art, design, and technology that created it, we learn about our past and ourselves.

For as long as man has walked upright, there has been a symbiotic—and at times competitive—connection among the three disciplines of art, design, and technology. Each influences the others and fuels their respective advances. From cave paintings that depicted the technology of the day as art, to the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans who treated art as a direct extension of design, continuing on into the Renaissance, we find these intertwined disciplines driving cultural advances. Perpetuated by the elite, the ruling class, and by artists themselves, each new style would wipe the slate of the old and introduce new ways of thinking about how we interact with the world.

Through the late 1800s, these generational shifts happened slowly. But with the advent of the Machine Age and advertising, styles flew fast and furious. Impressionism, Fauvism, German Expressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Constructivism, Dadaism, Surrealism, Abstract Expression-



Entrance to the Chicago Motor Club, now the Hampton Inn Chicago Downtown.



The Chicago Motor Club emblem displayed above the entrance to the Hampton Inn Chicago Downtown that now occupies the club's former headquarters.

ism—each flowing from, and yet rejecting, the previous one. In many instances, these schools of thought were correlated to architectural styles. Classical, Gothic, and Medieval passed, leading eventually in the late 1800s to the Vienna Secession, which promoted a union of artists and craftsmen and spawned Art Nouveau and eventually Art Deco.

In the heyday of modern design, the 1930s through the 1950s, some of the most famous designers applied their skills to the most mundane of objects. Art Deco was the seed that started a design transformation that brought good design to the masses. It encompassed all manner of art and craft, but above all reflected modern technology. Influenced by many of the styles of the day, including Art Nouveau, Cubism, and the new fascination with all things Egyptian and Aztec, Art Deco was not born of philosophical ideas. It was the first purely decorative style and was meant to unify all aspects of design under a consistent language of modernity that integrated technology into daily life. Although Art Deco was initially a style of luxury and a Hollywood staple, early industrial designers quickly delivered this same elegance and glamour to a wider audience. Everyday objects such as cars, toasters, furniture, and tableware all benefited from the application of design, which made these objects desirable and highly commodified.

Art Deco lasted through the Great Depression. During that time, its traits of practicality, design simplicity, and streamlining reflected the austerity of that era but at



Detail showing the lane line pattern of the terrazzo floor and the legend for the major automobile routes in the U. S. in 1929 shown on the Norton mural.

the same time hinted at the better times that hopefully lay ahead. It embodied scientific progress and developments in commerce, technology, and transportation directly tied to a fascination with automobiles and motoring in this country. Faster commercial transportation and its connotations of freedom, opulence, mechanization, and modernity made Art Deco an appropriate style of design for interiors of buildings related to travel. Within this milieu, the Chicago Motor Club building came to be.

One of Chicago's early Art Deco buildings, the club's headquarters embodied the newfound freedom to travel that the automobile made possible. The affordable motor car represented a seismic shift in how people lived. As history has demonstrated, groundbreaking shifts in technology are often followed by advancements in art and design.

The Chicago Motor Club was designed by Chicago architects Holabird & Root. Construction began on the 16-story steel and masonry Art Deco building in 1928 and was completed in January 1929 at the onset of the Depression. It was originally designed as home for the eponymous automobile driver assistance organization. At its opening, advertisements hailed it as "the most



Chandelier and silver-leaf ornamentation of the upper lobby.

beautiful, complete and efficient plant in the world devoted to the service of motorists." The Chicago Motor Club and its successor organization, the American Automobile Association (AAA)-Chicago Motor Club, occupied the building until 1985 when the club sold it and moved to suburban Aurora. Commercial tenants occupied the structure for the next two decades. Several plans to redevelop and reuse the building were considered but never implemented. The most recent, a planned incarnation to luxury condominiums, was halted in 2008 by the recession. When Hartshorne Plunkard Architecture arrived in 2010, the building had been vacant since 2004.

Repurposing the building into its new use as a hotel presented us with several issues: Could we modernize the building and adapt it for contemporary use? How could we reuse the lobby for both hotel check-in and as a public space? How could we fit guest rooms into a small and narrow floorplate? How could we retain the building's unique sense of place and modernity?

The restoration of the magnificent lobby's focus, a beautiful mural by John Warner Norton, was a major concern. The mural depicts new scenic routes and destinations for the automobile travel the building was intended to promote. So essential to the space, it represents that synthesis of art, design, and technology that is simultaneously art and decor, subject and illustration. The mural represented the mission of the Chicago Motor Club, but over time and as a result of some less than sensitive restorations, it had lost its place as a suitable heart for the new hotel.

The lobby was once a bustling hub of activity, crammed with guests waiting at the counter for a TourBook (later TripTik) that would guide them on their journeys over the newly paved roads depicted in the mural. Yet the condition in which we found it failed to convey that excitement and activity. Originally designed as a temple to travel, the lobby had become a way station for the elevators. The space had been covered with several coats of thick, white paint, the original light fixtures had been packed away for storage, and the original terrazzo floor, with its stylized nod to lane lines speeding past drivers headed down the highways, had been covered with white granite tiles. What remained of the original exuberant design had been replaced by a dull sameness and stagnation that masked the original sense of enthusiasm and movement.

Ironically, the peeling lobby paint provided us with the first clue to the direction we would need to take to return the space to an intersection of activity, a place where people could relax, refresh, and enjoy the surroundings. Underneath the layers of white paint we found evidence of the earlier taupe and warm grey colors that appeared to be an extension of the mural. It was clear that the mural held the key to the original color scheme as well as the concept throughout the design; its angular motifs were repeated in the details of the balcony railings and the silver-leaf trim. Additional allusions to travel, freedom, and nature included eagles and cranes adorning the columns, stylized chevrons and waves representing mountains and water depicted in the mural, the kinetic floor, and floating clouds of light hanging from the ceiling.

Once the mural was cleaned and stripped of earlier, ill-conceived repairs, the original colors became warmer and sharper. With its original sheen restored, the mural balanced the weight of the shiny nickel and silver-leaf details, which in turn reflected the warmer colors applied to the walls and ceiling. With polishing, the dull green floor we first uncovered came back to life, contrasting and coordinating with the newly restored colors of the walls and the mural. In this building that was once a temple to the ideas of design and technology as represented through art,



Mural by John Warner Norton on the west wall of the lobby.



Staircase with Art Deco railing.

we utilized all three of those disciplines to guide us through the restoration and rebirth of the building. Once we knew we could restore life to the lobby, the transformation of the remainder of the building became straightforward and inevitable.

The modern ideas of the original designers of the Chicago Motor Club, as a temple to art and technology, allow it to remain relevant today. Behind the beautifully restored surfaces of a bygone era beats a modern heart—a heart that will give the

building another 100 years of useful life. We are all masters attended by silent servants who appear to us at the intersection of art, design, and technology; we are lucky to share a moment with this building that will let others continue to experience it after we have gone. ✦

Paul Alessandro is a partner with Hartsborne Plunkard Architecture and lead architect for the conversion of the Chicago Motor Club to the Hampton Inn Chicago Downtown.



P.O. Box 1116
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*1928 Ford Model A on the lobby balcony of the Chicago Motor Club, now the Hampton Inn Chicago Downtown.
Photo © Patsy McEnroe Photography.*