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THE INFLUENCE OF ART DECO ON IRISH ARCHITECTURE

by

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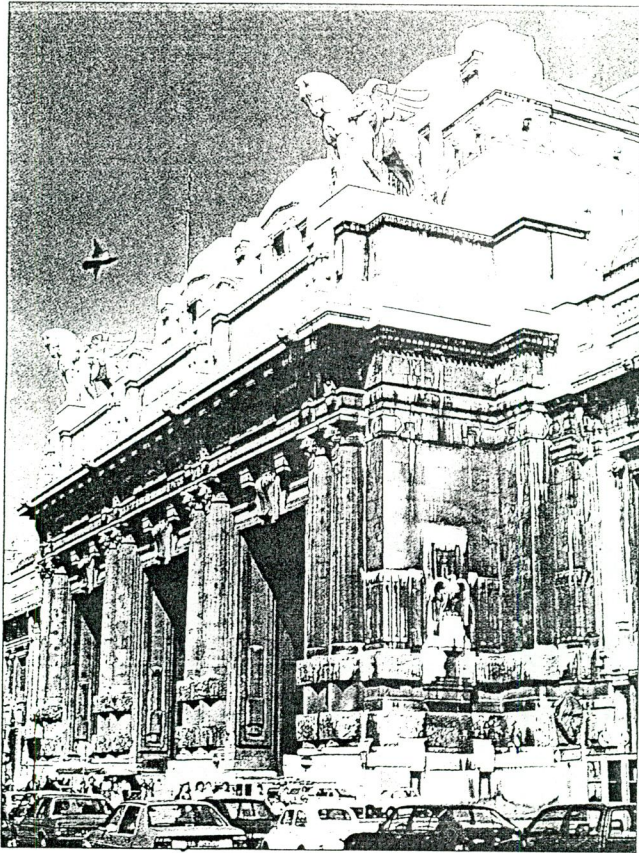
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Introduction : Art Deco and Architecture

Art Deco as a style has existed for over a hundred years. It was only during the ' twenties that Art Deco became populist and flourished in every form of design. Between the years 1925 (the year of the Paris Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs *et* Industrials *et* Moderns, from which Art Deco derived its name) and 1939 (the beginning of World War Two) , Art Deco became a major influence in all aspects of art and design. This was particularly evident in the field of architecture with big companys, and to a greater extent, political leaders using the Art Deco style to display power and wealth. Mussolini of Italy commissioned many buildings with very strong influences of Art Deco (the Central Station in Milan is a good example of this, illustration 1 & 2) to leave monuments to his wealth and power. The Rockefeller complex in Manhatten (illustration 3) is a monument to the power of commercialism and to the accumulation of one family's wealth and influence.

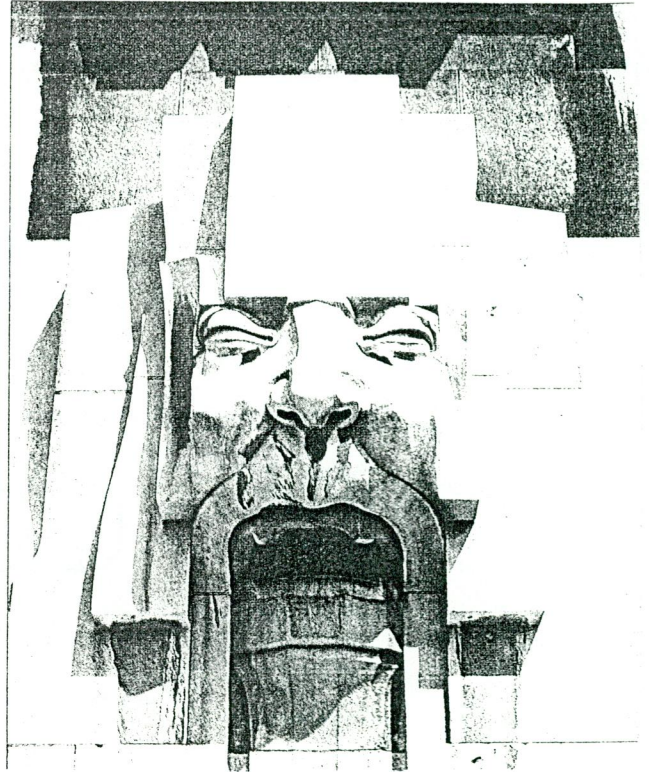
Down Fall

The Second World War broke out in 1939 and for six years architects didn't have any substantial work because money

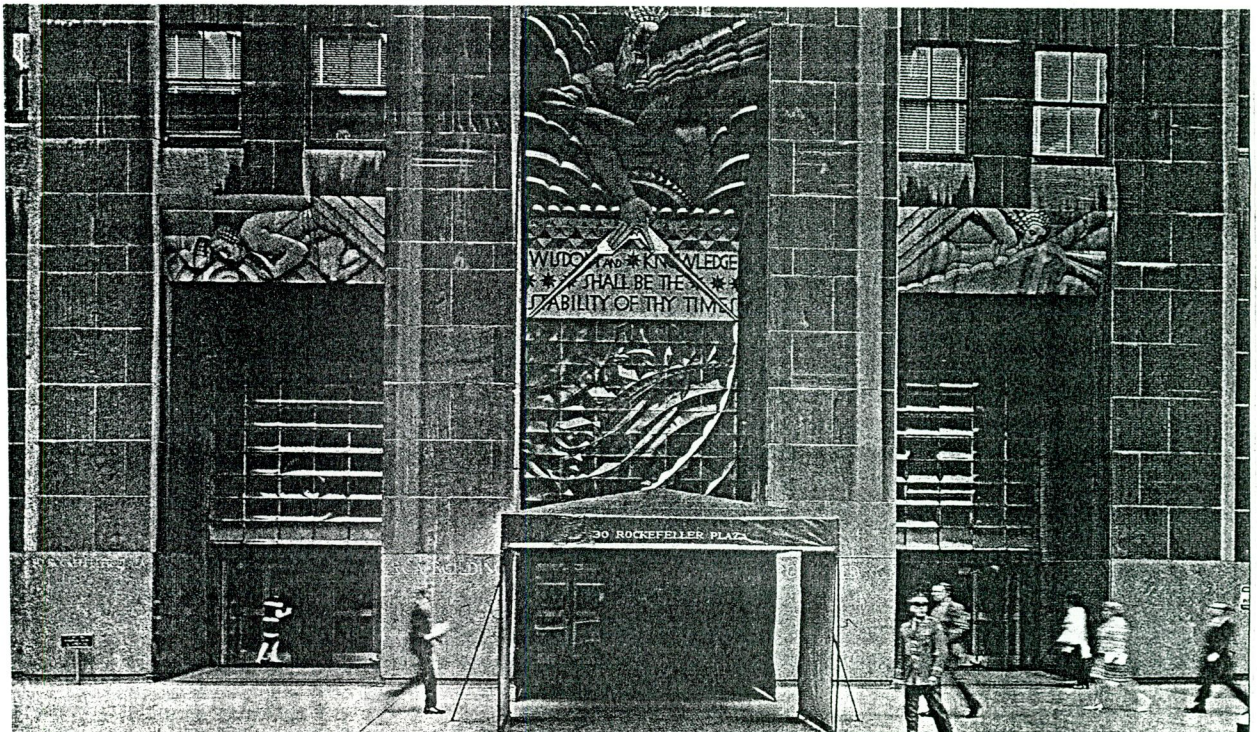


1. Central Station, Milan

2. Angular face on the front Façade of the Central Station



3. The entrance of 30 Rockefeller Plaza, part of the massive Rockefeller Center complex in Manhattan



restrictions in the war years were tight. After the war Art Deco had almost disappeared and the International Style had taken over completely. This was mainly due to the state of the developed world's economy. It was in ruin, any buildings that were being designed and built had to be cheap and easily and quickly constructed. Even during those times there was a retention of Art Deco to a certain extent in interior design where the effect of financial hardship was not so great.

Revival

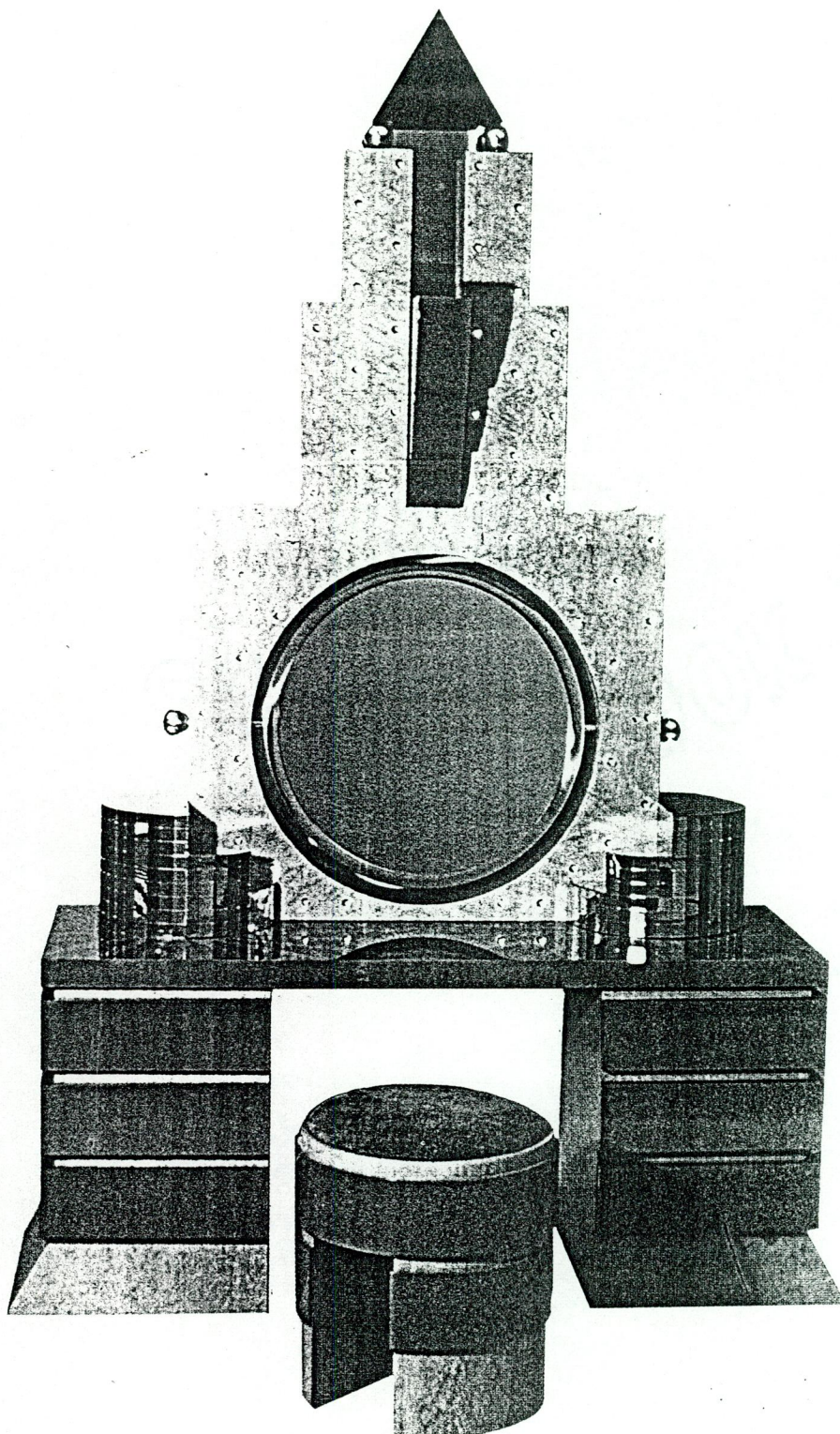
The ' sixties design saw a revival of the Art Deco style in the form of Pop, with the new innovations in plastics among others. The revival was not seen to such a great extent in architecture and even less in architecture in Ireland. There was however a similar abandonment of old ideas and an intention to create something new. But it never occurred to the same extent as in the "Roaring Twenties". The "Swinging Sixties" was more relaxed and didn't effect such a wide variety of design fields. Designers had been going back to the ' twenties philosophy for inspiration. The designs of the ' twenties still surrounded them and so the influence of the Art Deco period went on through the ' sixties and ' seventies, being developed in the form of plastic and pop art. Then the early "Eighties" saw the emergence of Anti-design. Alchymia and the Memphis group (illustration 4) all featured a strong influence of Art Deco in their approach to geometry.

' In the eighties the reaction to the so-called International Style of the preceding decades has been the creation of anti-design. In the funky creations of Alchymia and the Memphis group,

WILLIAM T. BROWN

1904

4. 'Plaza' dressing-table designed by Michael Graves for Memphis, 1981



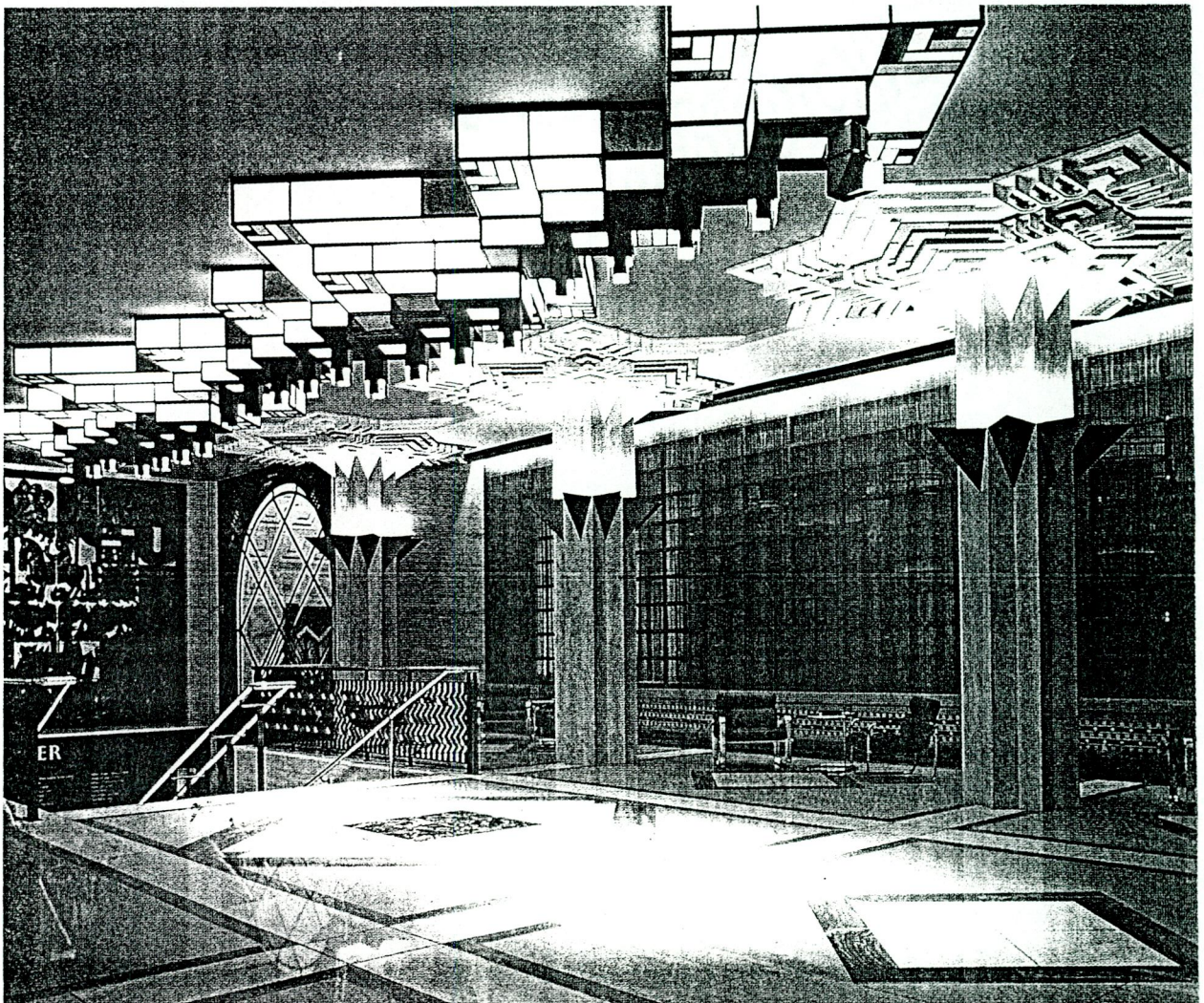
BOOK

EXHIBIT B-10

headed by Ettore Sottsass, Art Deco "quotes" feature strongly and have become one of the symbols of Post-Modernism. With only a handful of years to go before the end of the century one wonders what else designers can possibly do with Art Deco. Its longevity is truly remarkable.
(5 page 9)

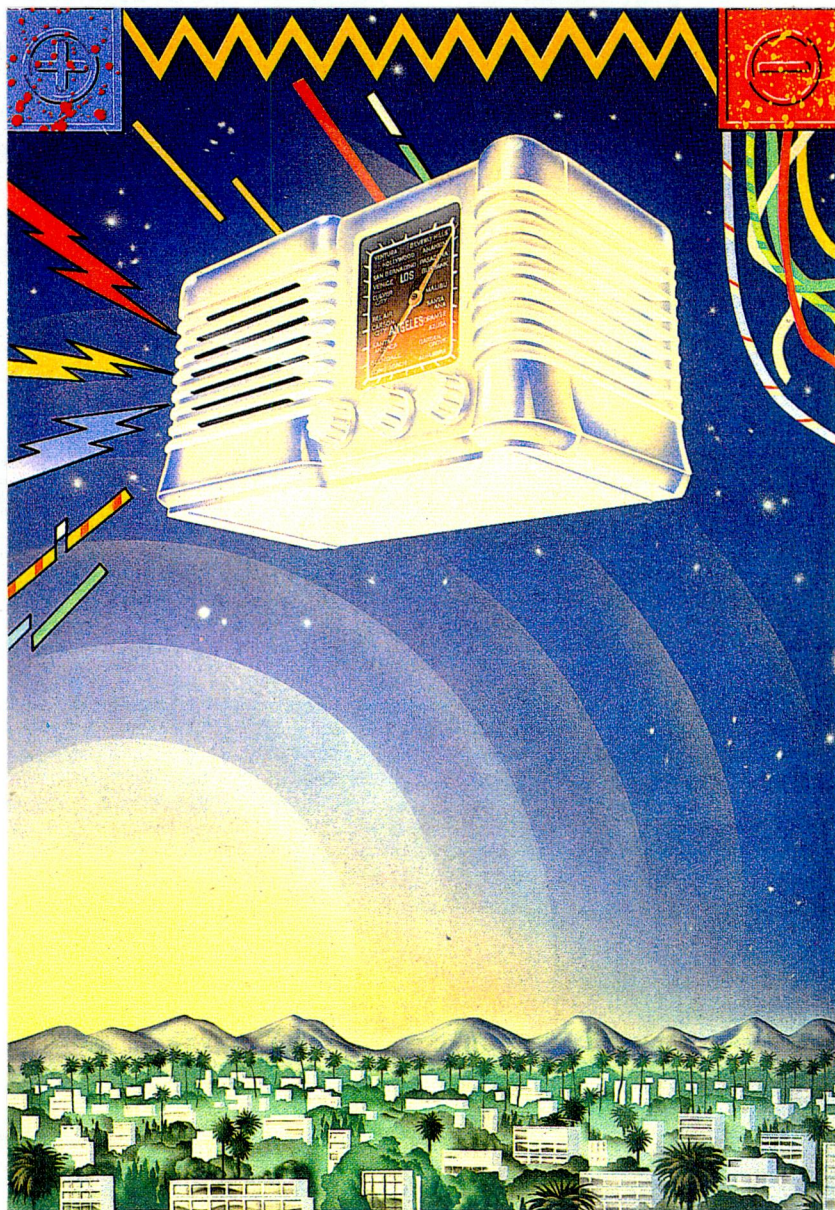
Even though architecture of the sixties saw no real revival the Art Deco influence was still being felt. Not so much in the commercial end of architecture but in the private sector; in houses and apartments, shop fronts and to a greater extent interiors. Right up until today Art Deco design motifs are still being used to adorn the interiors of modern apartments.

5. Unilever House, London, by Theo Crosby at Pentagram, 1984



There was also a strong revival of the Art deco style in graphics. The use of bright sharp colour, even with illustrations of original Art Deco products.

6. KFY In The Sky, greetings card by David Juniper for Heroes Stationary, 1979





Approach

This thesis will attempt to define the Art Deco style and what it represented in the field of architectural design in Ireland. Art Deco was to be the main aspect of the great design revolution which followed the industrial revolution. It was to evolve in many forms in the first decades of the twentieth century. At the 1925 Paris exhibition it was to be revealed to the world, and its popularity exploded engulfing all aspects of the design spectrum. It was to have different aspects associated with every form of design. In the field of architecture it was applied in different ways and would represent different meanings for all cultures that applied it to their design. The association of these different applications and motifs has now developed with the Culture that applied them. So too the use of new and outrageous colours was associated with Art Deco and again different colour combinations for different cultures, the graphic design of the communist party in the USSR; the architecture of Facisim in Mussolini's Italy; the cars and interior design of the well-to-do English; the skyscrapers and industrial design of the Americans. Art Deco was a free style that was used by all.

' Art Deco is already synonymous with a style that emerged after the turn of the twentieth century and expressed itself most fully during the period between the wars. Every country adapted it to suit its needs, with strikingly different results ranging from Italian Fascist architecture to the Chrysler Building in New York'
(5 page 9)

The new architect

One of the major influences that led to the ' twenties Art Deco style was found in the early 1880s, in the American studio of Irish born architect, Louis Sullivan. In his approach to the design of the skyscraper, he broke free from the restrictions of Classicism, stripping the classical decoration away and replacing it with a more rigid geometric and linear style (the Chicago Stock Exchange). Large undecorated spaces and long, rectangular windows typified Sullivan's work.

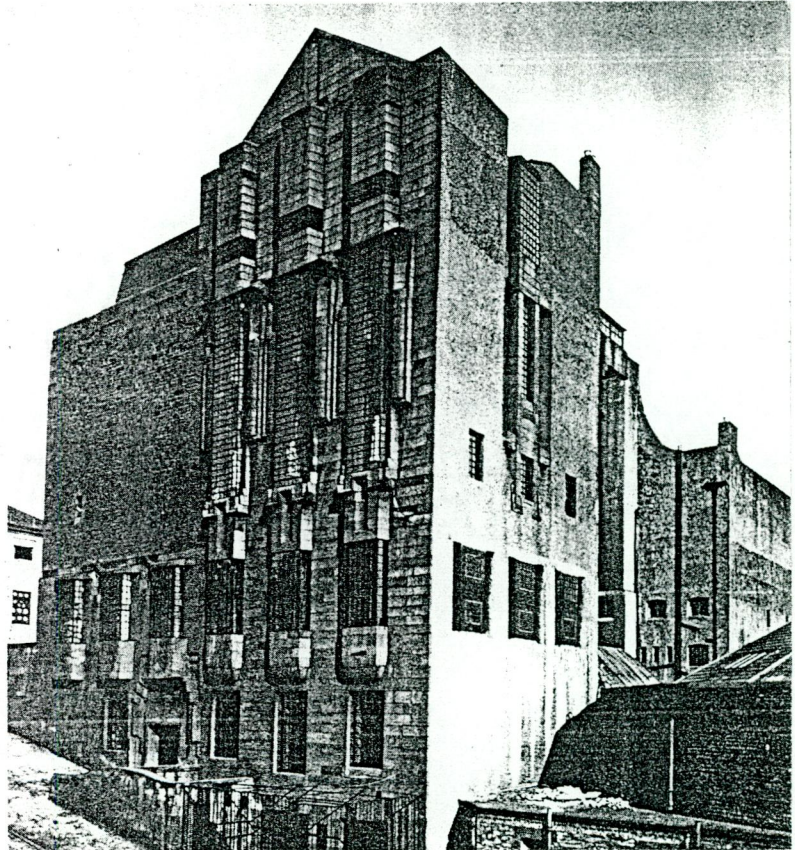
7. Chicago Stock Exchange,
by Louis Sullivan, 1894



This form of stripped Classical style was also developing in Europe at the same time, with Mackintosh designing structures based on geometric forms. From the Glasgow School this new style was to spread through Europe, not as tall as in the United States but

just as new and impressive. The Vienna Secession, a geometric style, was evolving and was used in the design of buildings and products. In the first two decades of this century, therefore, the influences of Art Deco were developing on both sides of the Atlantic. Then, mainly due to the popularity of the Paris exhibition of 1925, all these styles amalgamated and the Art Deco had evolved.

8. Library Wing,
Glasgow School of Art
By Mackintosh, 1907



The world had seen the industrial revolution, the coming of electricity and all the potential associated with it, the motor car and a influx of new products with their sleek lines and geometric shapes. With these new shapes had come a new form of design, and the architects with their old ideas and rules were rapidly falling behind. With the developments in technology building methods had improved

from cut stone to pouring concrete. There was a need for change, a need for housing these new products in a new environment and with the advantages of new building methods the architects had the tools with which to do it.

The Irish architect

Ireland and its people were in a state of turmoil after the break from England and the creation of the Free State. The Irish culture and nationalism had to be restructured. The rejection of anything new was entrenched in the reestablishment of the past. In architecture anything new was rejected and considered as anti-national. The employment of only Irish architects and the promotion of a national style was paramount.

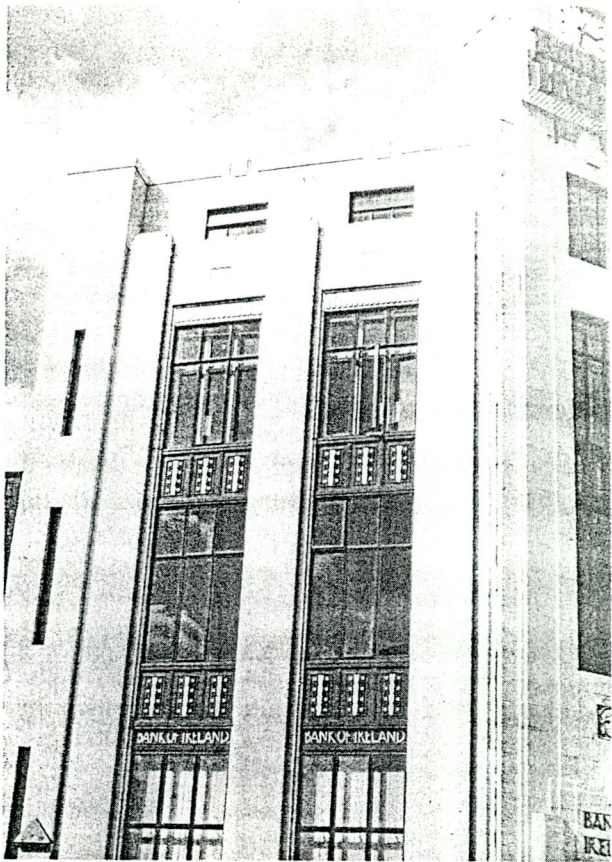
In Ireland before 1925 there were no examples of any major influence of Art Deco, or even a stripped classical style emerging. At that time there was a strong tendency to hang on to old traditional styles. Many of the leading architects and critics, R.M. Butler, Harry Allberry and Page Dickinson, attacked the new styles that were appearing in Europe and America. They went so far as to refer to it as "the work of the devil himself".

The Paris Exposition in 1925 was to be the catalyst that caused the explosion in the use of the 'twenties style or as we know it now Art Deco style. It was to engulf every form of design from architecture to ceramics and textiles. Art Deco reached its climax in the late 'twenties when many architects in Europe and America were

designing in the style.

This was when a strong Art Deco influence came to be felt in Ireland with the design and construction of the Bank of Ireland, Royal Ave, Belfast in 1928, by the architects McDonnell & Dixon (illustration 9). It still stands today virtually unchanged from the original drawings. One can see the absence of any Classical decoration and the strong influence of Art Deco with the windows running almost from roof to pavement, and with the powerful geometry that surrounds both the doorways and the doors themselves. The main feature of the building is the Art Deco clock tower that runs from the main entrance, at street level, past the roof level stepping into a dome. There is a single square clock face just below the dome.

There were some influences of Art Deco in Ireland before 1928, an example being the Transformer Station, Fleet St, Dublin constructed in 1926 by architect Vincent Kelly. There were others with slight hints of Art Deco, but the Bank of Ireland in Belfast was the first major project derived directly from this style. Later in that same year, 1928, the Gas Company Offices, D'Olier St, Dublin, by architects Robinson Keefe (illustration 10). This building was designed in two sections, one in the Tudor style and the second, the main section (front facade, main hall and building) was designed entirely in the Art Deco style and still stands today almost exactly as it did then. Robinson Keefe were the architects most influenced by what was going on in Chicago and Europe in the Art Deco style and



9. Bank of Ireland, Royal Ave,
Belfast in 1928, by the
architects McDonnell & Dixon

10. Gas Company Offices,
D'Olier St, Dublin, by
architects Robinson Keefe



were to express this in most of their buildings between the years 1928 and 1940.

The influence of Art Deco in Irish architecture was to gather momentum in the ' thirties with such buildings as Tullamore Hospital, the Theatre Royal and The College of Catering and Hotel Management. Even though the influence of Art Deco can be seen up until 1940 all through the thirties Art Deco was used in the majority of cases solely to decorate Classical and International buildings. In Irish architecture the best example of the style was built in 1928, the Gas Company building on D'Olier St. in Dublin. This building was designed totally in the Art Deco style both interior and exterior.

Chapter 1: The influences leading to Art Deco

This chapter will attempt to define the style of Art Deco. The Art Deco style is vast, covering all aspects of design from architecture to textiles and painting. It is difficult to define it exactly because it appears in many different forms in many different aspects of design, but what can be done is to highlight and explain the motifs and features commonly associated with Art Deco. In architecture these motifs change from country to country, the style is the same but the difference is in the way it was applied by the culture that applied it. There is one thing that unifies the whole Art Deco style and that is its geometry and linearity, the rational thought process that went into the design. Art Deco was the abandonment of previous Beaux-Arts and classical designs of the past and the application of the laws of science to the method of design. In Ireland there are very few examples of pure Art Deco; it is generally a combination of styles between Classical and Art Deco or some other form of stripped Classical. This is an expression of the Irish culture, a form of Art Deco combined with the Classical style. This conservatism can be seen not only in architecture but also in the Irish culture of the time, the laws and religious beliefs.

Associations

The very word Art Deco conjures up an association with "les Années Folles" or the "Roaring Twenties": sports cars, cocktail parties, the quick step and the tango; the abandonment of stuffy Victorian morality, the burning of corsets and the appearance of legs. It was loud, fast and free. One could say that the tone of Art Deco reflected a desperate attempt to forget the bereavement and horror of the war years.

' Sisley Huddleston , the Paris correspondent of The Times during most of that fecund decade, recalled some of its characteristic talking points: "Cubist and other queer paintings. typewriters cocaine, silk stockings Freudism unnatural vices aeroplanes and cocktails. " Parisian life was effervescent, bubbling with liberation and innovation. " Paris was decked with flags for ten years after the Armistice, " wrote Maurice Sachs, " I remember that decade like a perpetual Fourteenth of July. " There was a rugged determination to drown unhappy memories of the war years, the bereavement and the austerity. As well as cocktails, from America there came movies and jazz. Harry's Bar was opened in 1918, and every fashionable cafe had its pianist'
(5 page 44)

Art Deco is style of geometric stylisation and to a degree, of abstraction and streamlining, influences from such designers as Raymond Loewy. It was a stripping of the Classical style and the application of scientific thought. " It does not include total abstraction or pure geometry - hence it does not include specific schools such as De Stijl and the Bauhaus - unless these qualities are simply used with intent to decorate"
(5 page 6) and it did this freely.

James E. Blaine
for President

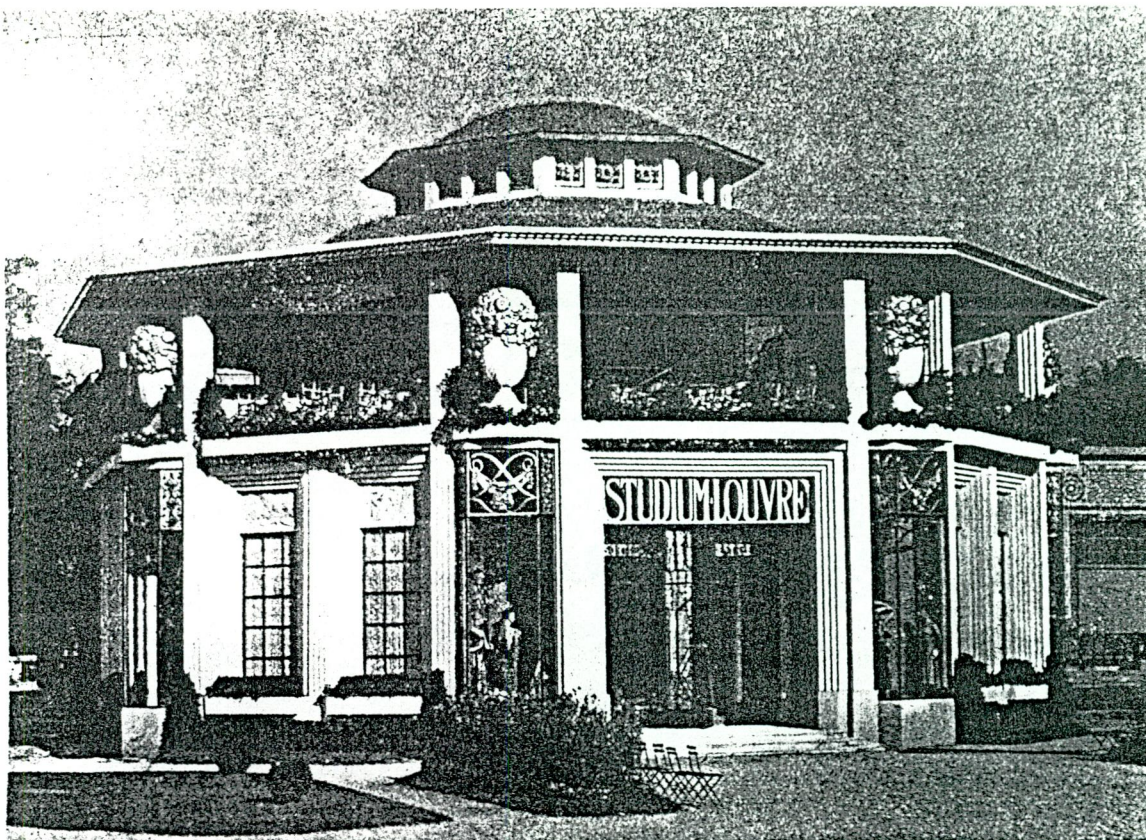
Art Deco was to take many forms in the ' twenties and ' thirties from architecture to car design, from graphic design to furniture and fabrics, wallpaper, painting and fashion - the list is endless. Art Deco reflected life of the middle and upper classes between the wars .

Theory

Art Deco was not a formalised movement. It had no founder, no manifesto and no articulated philosophy. Its evolution was initially a fad where artists and designers from all over the world flocked to Paris, the fashionable place to be after the war, a city where they knew they would get work. They brought with them their new ideas and styles from the USA, the Glasgow School, the Vienna Seccession and all over Europe. Art Deco was a synthesis of these various ideas expressed in rectilinear and geometric styles. Then, during the Paris Exposition the style was brought to the world's attention, this was a catalyst that caused the Art Deco explosion, felt through all aspects of design. It was the biggest and most influential exhibition of the past hundred years and was to set the course for design up to the present day. It was to change the whole history of design and the approach to design philosophies since the Great Exhibition of 1851. It was to bring design out of the craft era and in line with modern science and industry.

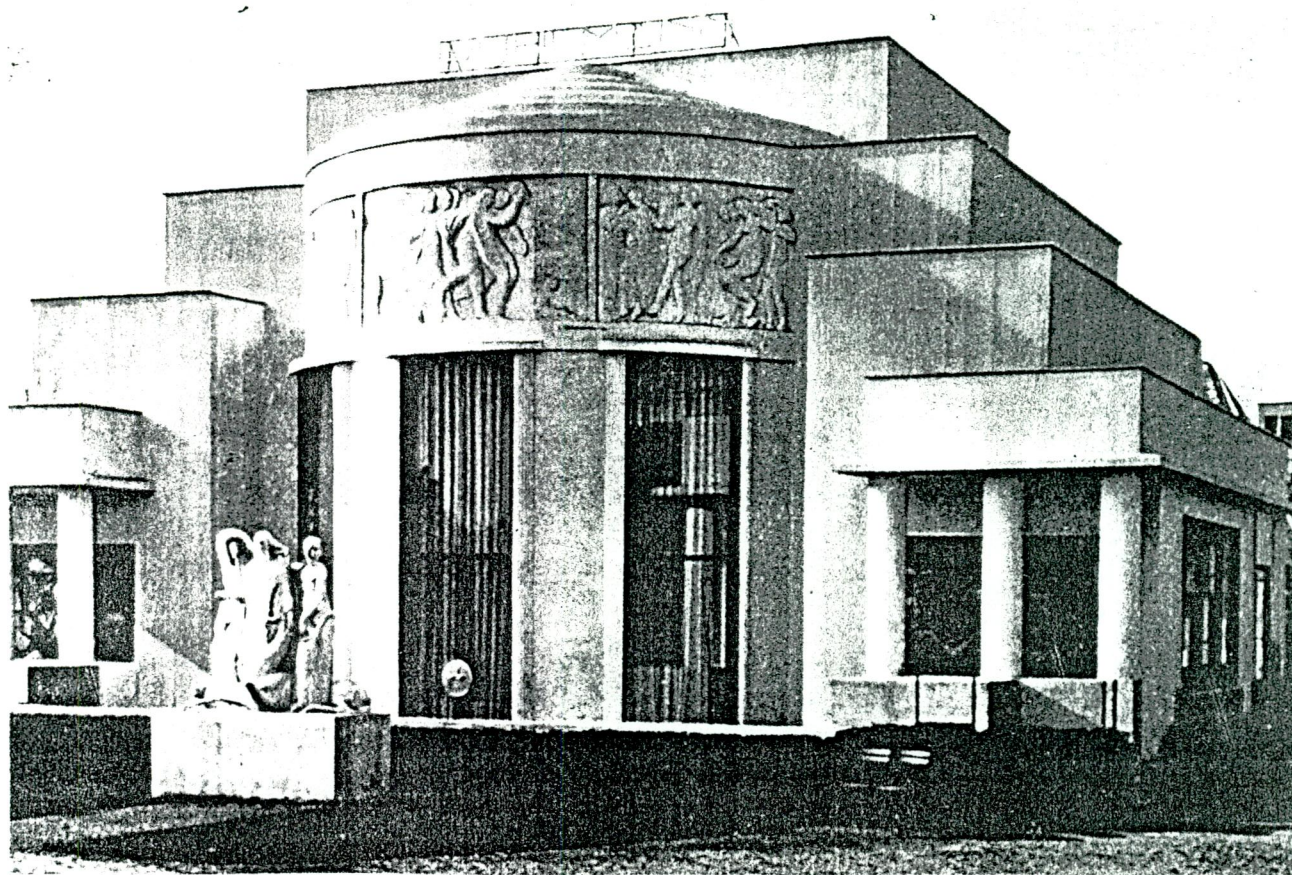
' The century before the Second World War saw perhaps the most radical changes ever to take place in the history of design; it is difficult to imagine anything further apart than the high ornament of Victorian Gothic and the stark simplicity of the Bauhaus, '

(5 page8)



11. Pierre Laprade, pavilion for Studium-Louvre, Paris Exhibition 1925

12. Pierre Patout, ' Le Pavillon d'un Collectionneur ', Paris Exhibition 1925



Motifs

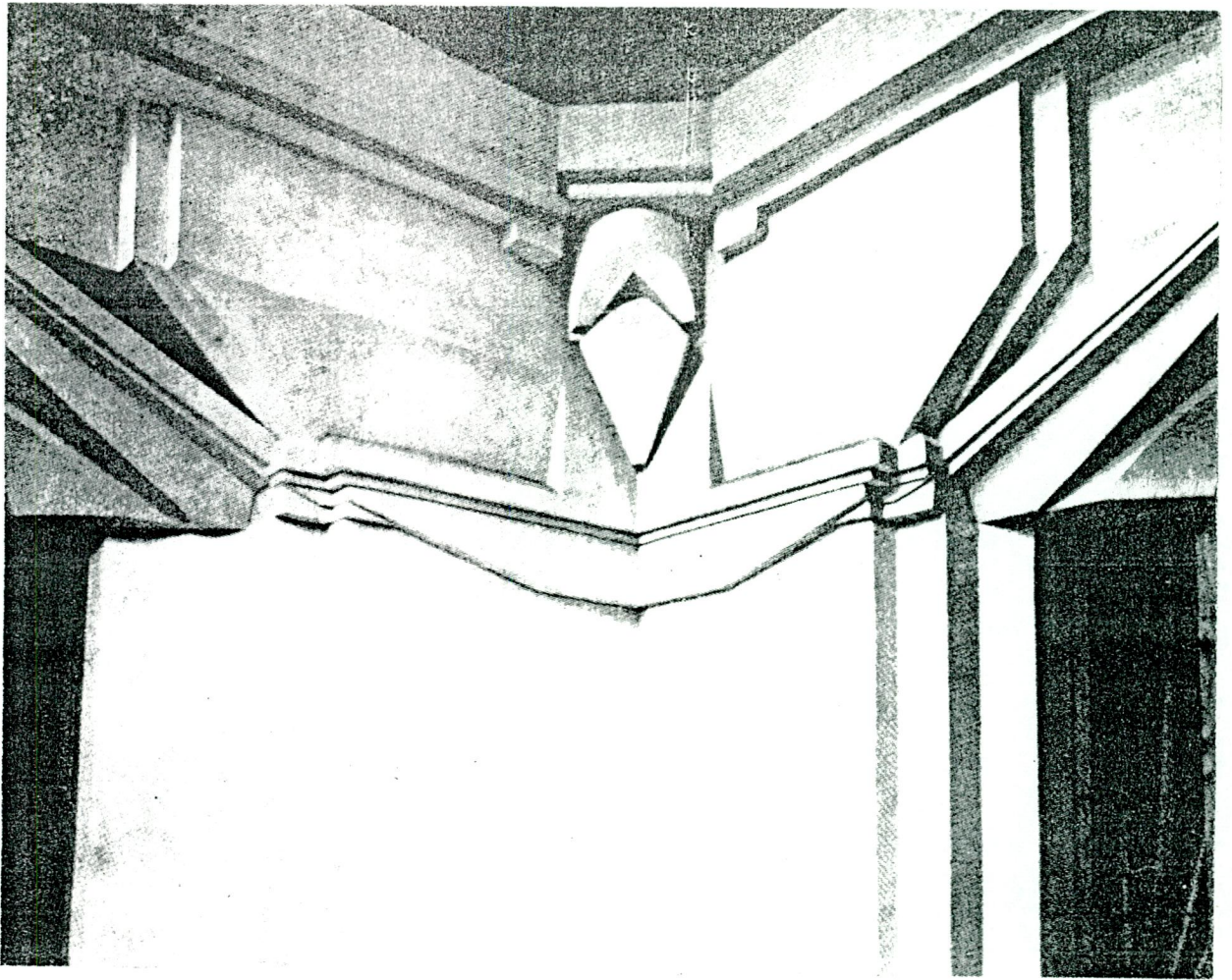
Geometry was the basis of the Art Deco style which in some ways was derived from Cubism and the Cubists approach to art and architecture.

' Cubism is a style of artistic expresion in which objects are shown in distorted, unfolded, geometric forms. Perspective is usually substituted with a view of an object taken simultaneously from several viewpoints and then fused together into one composition. The objects are broken down to their basic elements and then reassembled according to the imagination of the artist into a new whole. The aim is not to abstract the reality but to show simultaneously the fullness of its form, its different facets and the complexity and structure of its components.'
(14 page 24)

This geometry was applied to everything and this developed into a range of motifs that were used through the spectrum of design in the ' twenties and ' thirties. Some motifs were more suited to this and were used more frequently than others. These developed into the symbols associated with Art Deco, like the sunburst (a rising sun surrounded with radiating lines). These motifs featured on everything from speakers of radios, car grills, shopfronts, graphics to the interiors of houses. Another form that is directly associated with Art Deco is streamlining and "jazziness". Speed was one of the great marvels of the ' twenties with ever faster cars being designed. As the Futurist poet Marinetti put it, "speed is our god". Even when the new cars of the ' twenties were just standing still they suggested a sense of speed by the very lines imposed by the laws of aerodynamics and the geometry of the design. This went from car and automotive design through all forms of design, even streamlined staplers.

Mount Beeson

Beeson

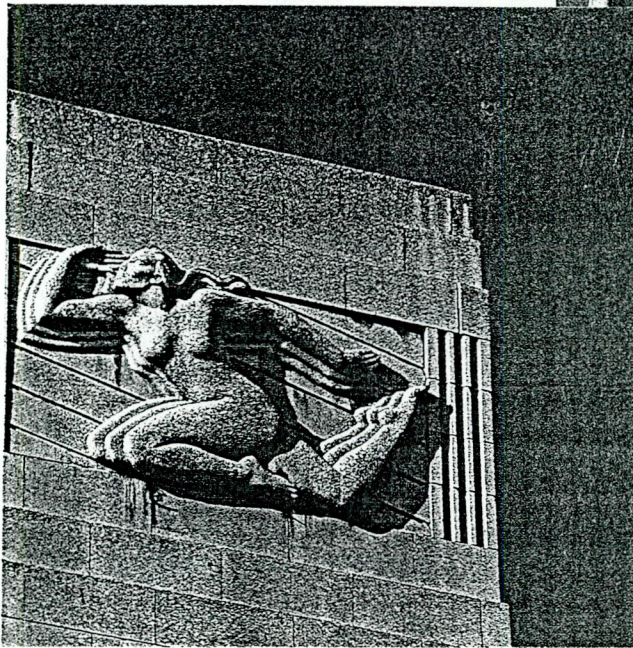
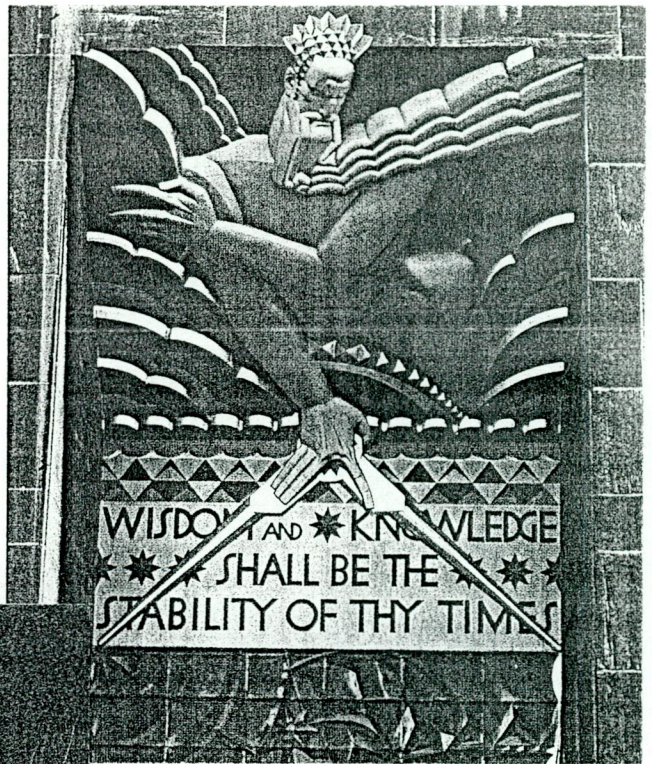


13. Maison Cubiste, detail, R. Duchamp-Villon, 1912.

14. Main Post Office Kansas City,
stylized American eagle detail,
1933.

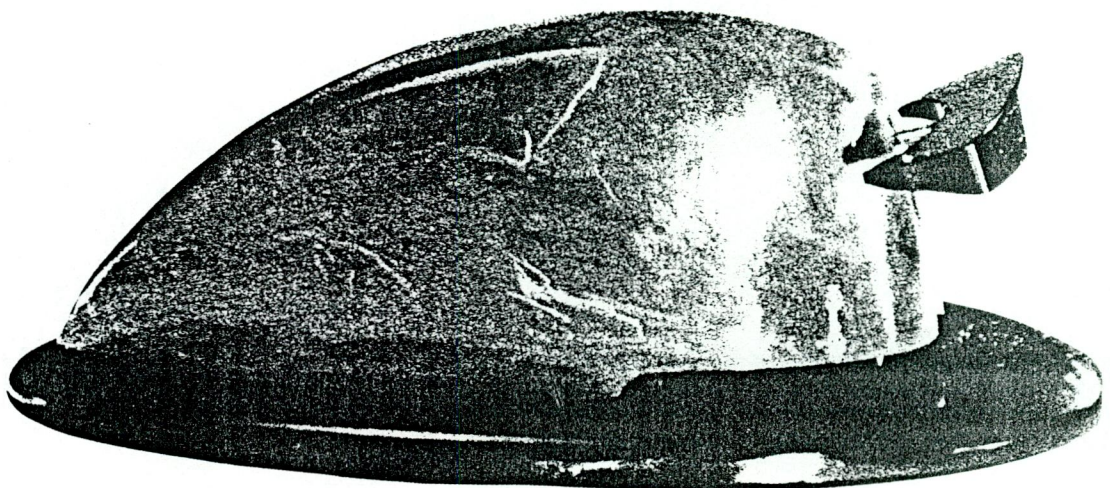


15. Entrance sculpture to the Rockefeller Plaza, Wisdom by Lee Lawrie.



16. Warner cinema, London, leaping female.

17. The streamlined "Aristocrat" stapler, designed by Orlo Heller, 1937



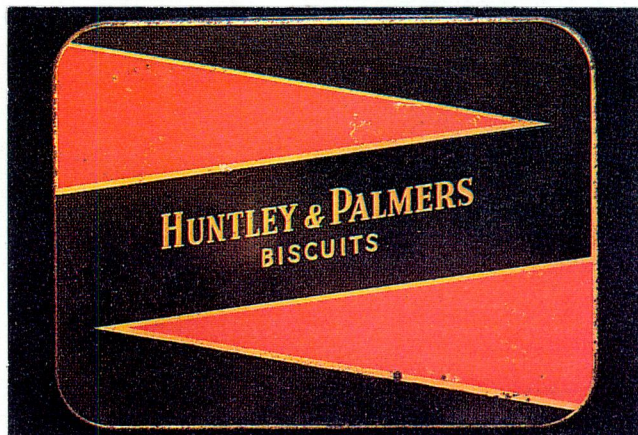
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SMITH

Colour

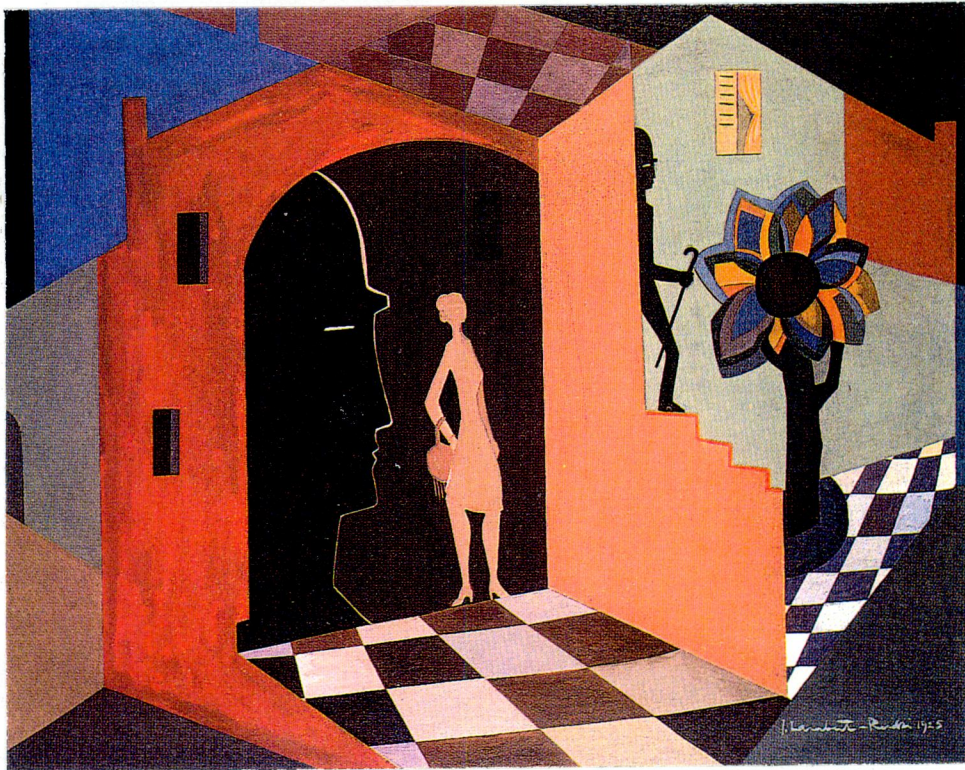
Colour played a big role in Art Deco design, using the many different colours of the spectrum. This is one of the reasons for its popularity; bright, fast and sharp objects for the jazzy people that used them. Posters for everything; plays, jazz bands, car races, were represented as exciting and fast. Colour played a strong part in this and in all of the Art Deco style. Primary blues, yellows, reds, bright and contrasting were used to define the sharp geometric shapes. Chrome was also widely used to heighten and define line and to emphasise motifs. Prior to the evolution of the Deco style if an object was to be lavish and rich it had to be gold, purples and reds; other colours were not used. Art Deco went back to primaries and went off in all directions. Black and red were used a lot as a backing colour; yellows, greens, oranges were also used in very earthy tones. The colours were combined to contrast, to emphasise a form or object. Silver and chrome brought this even further. A whole range of colours were used to decorate a whole range of products.

18. An English biscuit tin
in red and black, 1920s



SWIFT BROOK
BOND





19. Polish Jean Lambert-Rucki painted this oil-on-board, Montmartre, 1925



20. Poster by Paul Colins of Josephine Baker and two musicians, 1925



SWIFT BROOK

D

1911

1912

1913



21. Poster by A. M. Cassandre, 1935.



The free style

Art Deco was a combination of styles at that time, mainly derived from Cubism and its approach to rectilinear shapes. It also borrowed freely from trends like De Stijl and the Bauhaus.

'the Bauhaus architects stripped their buildings bare of ornament and, in an intellectual process not dissimilar to cubism, were left with a geometric skeleton. Vertical planes, horizontal planes and clearly defined curves became structure and decoration in one, and this basic geometry got stricter as the years went by.'
(5 page 8)

This also was a process used in Art deco, stripping ornamentation away to allow the natural geometry of the building to show.

Art Deco knew no boundaries or politics, from the graphics and sculpture of communism to the architecture of fascism and on to the skyscraper of New York; it was felt everywhere. In each case the linearity and geometry had totally different meanings. This incredible versatility was a big advantage to the popularity of the style due to it not being a formal movement. It had no leader to guide it on a certain path; it followed a natural development unaffected by ideological manifestos.

Advances

As Art Deco developed and the style became more geometric, the influence of Ruhlmann and Paul Follot gave way to the starker look of Pierre Chareau and Le Corbusier of the modern movement. The

move from one to the other was so slow and undefined that it is impossible to determine where Art Deco ends and the Modernist movement begins, whether Eileen Gray or Pierre Chareau can be labelled as one or the other, or even both.



22. Poster by Charles Loupot, 1926.

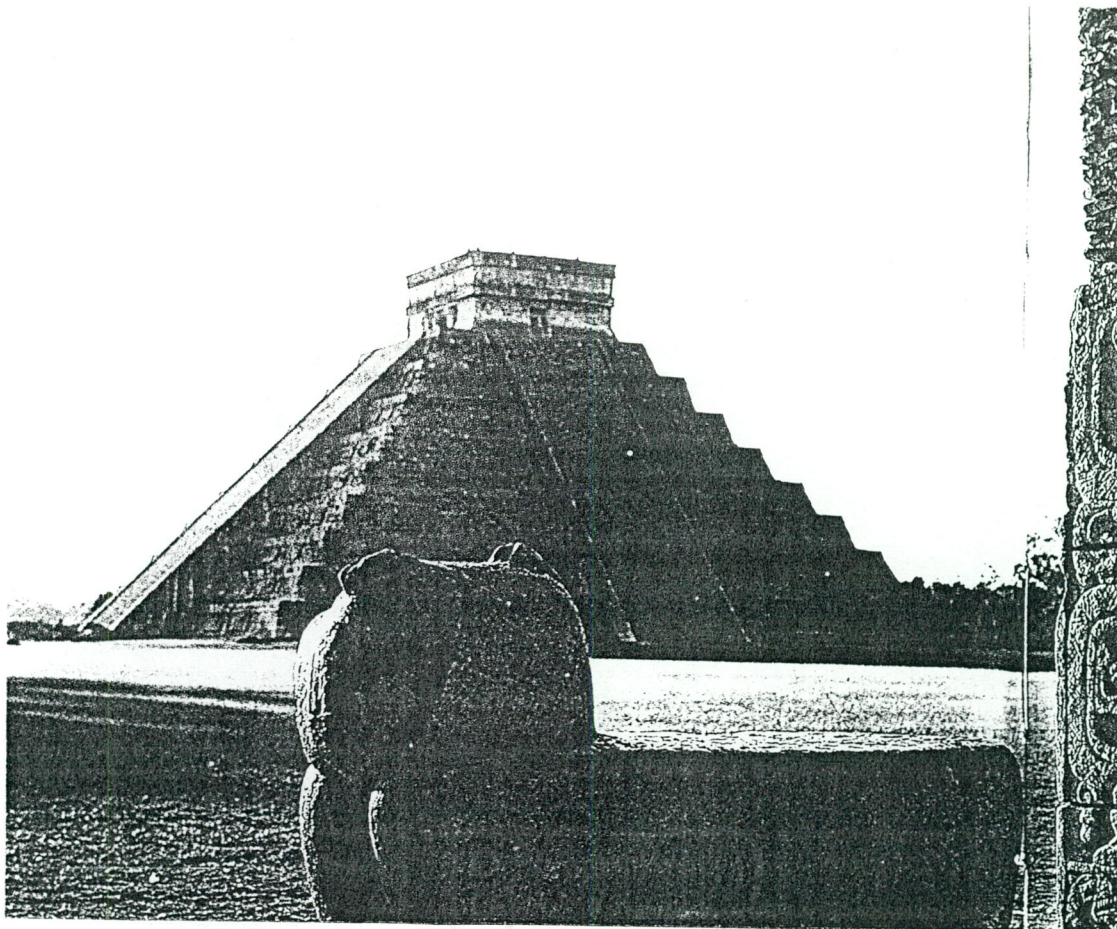


Chapter 2 : Source of the Art Deco style

It is difficult indeed to trace the exact source of Art Deco. Since the style had so many often unrelated and even contradictory manifestations, its inspiration can only be said to have been both manifold and diverse. Best known among the influences are African tribal art popularised in Europe by Picasso, who used colour that was sharp and eye catching. Central American (Aztec and Mayan) architecture in its geometric forms, and Pharaonic Egyptian art, this last was amplified by the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb in 1922. The Egyptian revival was important in the development of the Art Deco style with the use of motifs and images that was to characterise the Art Deco style. Influential, as well, were the bold designs and bright colours of the Ballet Russes,

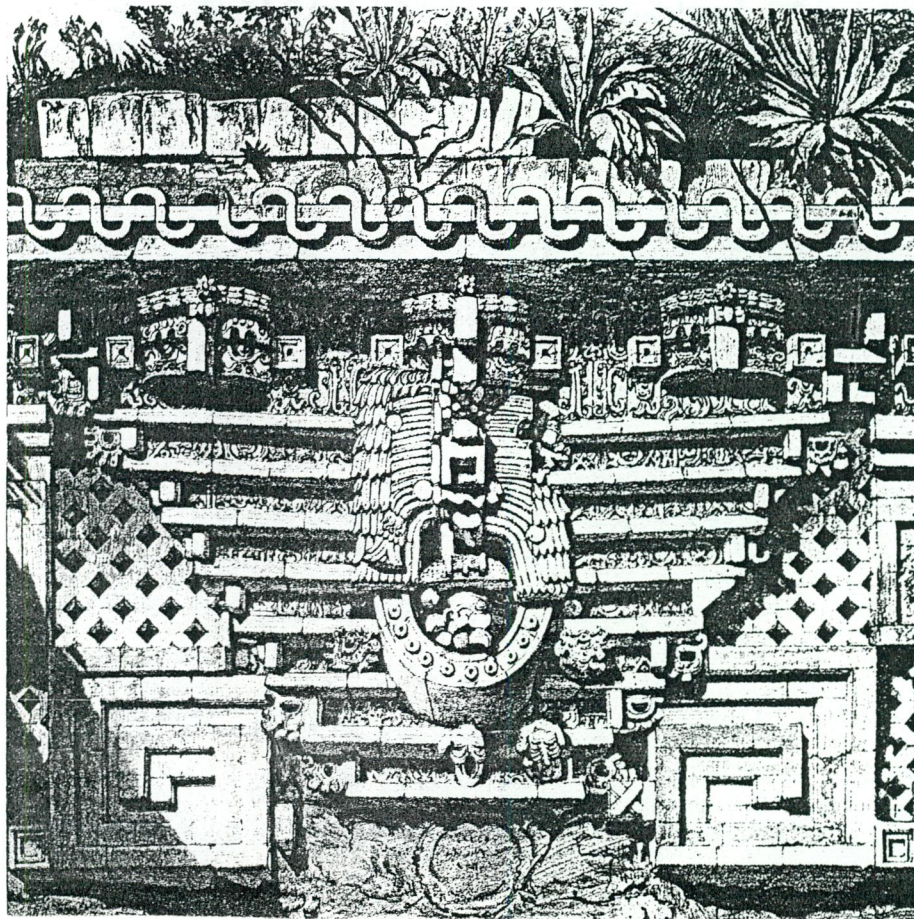
' The bright colours imported by the Ballets Russes, who first danced in Paris in 1909, had an influence upon the mature decorative style of the 1920s.'
(12 page 156)

the glazes and lacquerwork of the Far East and the imagery and metalwork of classical Greece and Rome. Even French furniture forms of the Louis XV and Louis XVI periods contributed. Also contemporaneous fine art such as Constructivism and Cubism played a large part mostly in terms of colour and structure of shapes.



23. Aztec architecture.

24. Mayan detailing



BOND

WILLIAM D. BOND



25. Costume design by Natalia Goncharova for a Russian peasant woman in *Le Coq d'Or*, a Ballets Russes production of 1914.





26. Red-blue chair designed by Gerrit Rietveld a member of the De Stijl group, around 1917



SWIFT BOOK
BOND

Development

It was the strong lines and sharp edges of rectilinear shapes that were to be the outstanding features of the Art Deco style. This is represented very well in modern architecture at the turn of the century. Mackintosh designed buildings with large areas of flat surfaces with little decorative features, and tall windows, sparingly used. Joseph Maria Olbrich designed buildings as an arrangement of cubic shapes. Josef Hoffmann employed an even more severe geometric style to many of his designs. He designed the Palais Stoclet, the Brussels mansion of a Belgian coal magnate, Adolphe Stoclet. He designed not only the house, but also the garden, the furniture, the lighting and the cutlery. It was started in 1905 but not completed until 1911.

For many of these new avant-garde architects and designers at the turn of the century the freedom to create these exciting new shapes was facilitated by modern technology and recently introduced materials, this was the development of Futurism. These new materials, reinforced concrete, plate glass, aluminium, ebonite, linoleum and plastic, were accepted enthusiastically and used with a vigour, not previously seen in architecture. In a world of motor cars, telephones, elevators and domestic appliances powered by electricity, the classical style of architecture and ornamentation seemed to many designers to be inappropriate and irrelevant when they were to be filled with all these new and exciting objects that were designed in totally different geometric styles.

1800

1800

' but it was soon perceived by the architects that this was a novel form of building , born of technological progress and new materials, and therefore it should be decorated , if at all, in an original style. So early in the twentieth century skyscrapers were bedecked in ornament symbolizing the dynamic of science and commerce, rather than the forces of the natural world which ornament had traditionally represented.'

(5 page12)

Needs

The need for a style suitable to the modern age was particularly pressing in America. Designs had origins in the country of every immigrant designer which created great confusion and gave American architecture, in the mid 19th century, no direction.

This is where the first recognisable forms of Art Deco started taking form, in Chicago, with the architecture of Louis Sullivan in the early 1880s. He joined the firm of Dankmar Adler in 1880 as chief draftsman and designer. He was only 24 years old. Three years later, on May 1st 1883, he became Adler's partner. Almost immediately upon his arrival, the firm's work was transformed. His style of designing buildings was to strip them of traditional classical decoration replacing it with his own (more linear and geometric) decorative forms. So in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Sullivan's skyscrapers were bedecked in ornament symbolising the dynamic of science and commerce, rather than the forces of the natural world which ornament had traditionally represented.

Sullivan was a very influential man and passed his styles and ideas on to his students, one of whom was to take them much further and was to become very well known and popular because of it, even more so than his teacher: this was Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) who came to Europe and brought the teachings of Sullivan with him. This was the creation of a new and modern style, the idea of geometric decoration.

In Europe a form of stripping traditional classical decoration, similar to that of Sullivan, was being developed with the designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868-1928) of the Glasgow School of Art, and Otto Wagner (1841-1918), Josef Hoffman (1870-1956) and Kolman Moser (1868-1918) are part of the Vienna Secession. Modernism in Vienna was starting to lean towards rectilinearity which was to be adopted, via the Avant-garde, either consciously or not by the French and Germans and later by the Americans in their industrial design. At this time Mackintosh was creating furniture, interiors and buildings in a very modern and rectilinear style. Even before Mackintosh, in Britain, Christopher Dresser (1834-1904) was creating mass-produced pieces with startlingly modern looks. His silver ware, pitchers, candlesticks, tureens and tea services were designed in the 1880s using none of the classical organic decoration but instead a more linear and modernist design.

These small sparks that would build up to form the Art Deco style were happening all over the world almost simultaneously. But initially the lead came chiefly from the United States with Sullivan and then Frank Lloyd Wright. Some of their late designs were quite streamlined and Bauhaus-like.

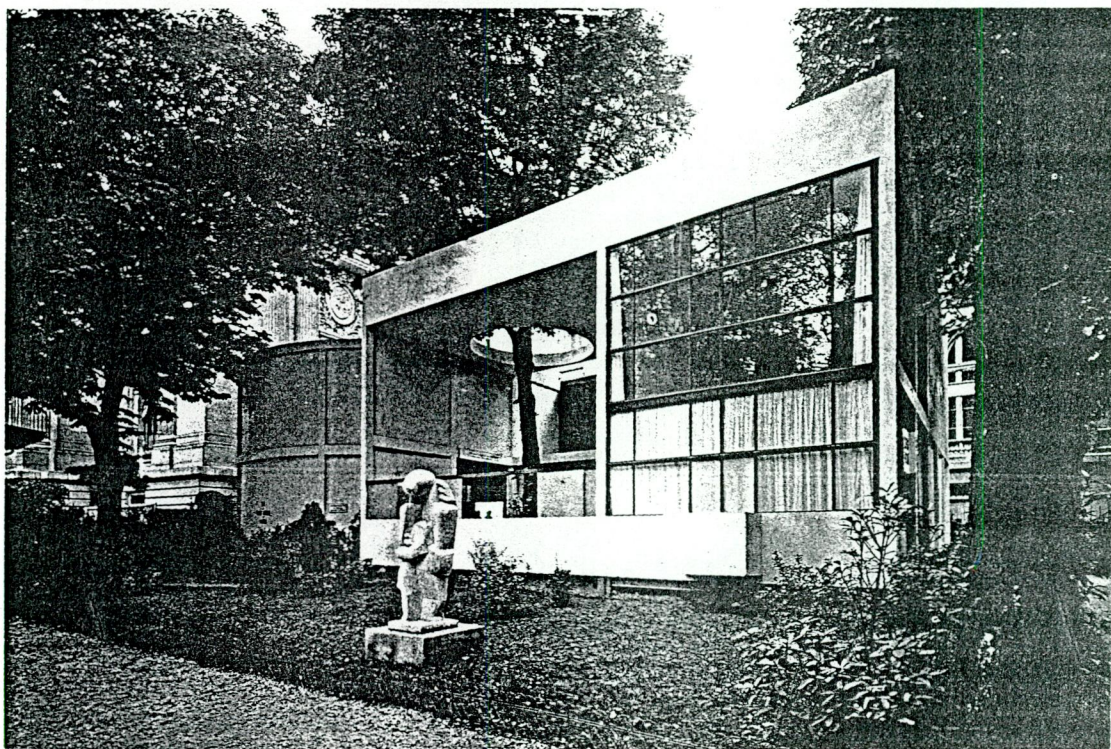
James B. Thompson

1900

But it was the work of French designers, in the years following the First World War, which have come to exemplify Art Deco : Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann, Jean Dunand, Armand-Albert Rateau, Sue et Mare and Rene Lalique were all influenced less by their immediate European predecessors than by earlier periods and even by far-off exotic places, if they can be said to have been influenced by outside factors at all.

Le Corbusier (1887-1965) and his associate Charlotte Perriand (b. 1903), created functional furniture, or "equipment" as they termed it, that was sharply reductionalist. They are still popular and very influential today. Le Corbusier was to design the Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau at the 1925 Paris Exhibition. It was strongly modern with its stark all white exterior.

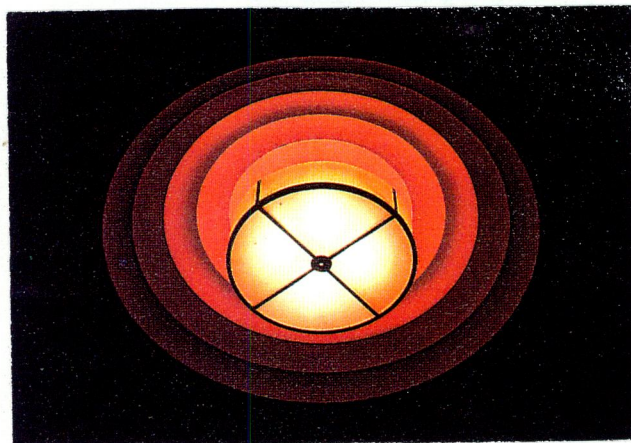
27. Pavillon de L'Esprit Nouveau designed by Le Corbusier for the 1925 Paris exhibition.



Streamlined Art Deco was a truly American school, where industrial designers such as Ramond Loewy, Walter Dorwin Teague and Walter van Nessen helped to define modern culture with their household appliances, products and automobiles designed around the theory of the teardrop. This streamlined shape was even applied to architecture with buildings such as the Guggenheim Museum in New York, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1942 but not built until the mid fifties. Americans also borrowed colourful, decorative elements from their French counterparts; and there was a constant flow of new ideas flowing across the Atlantic. They would apply these new ideas to their modern architectural creations, structures such as the Chrysler and Chanin Buildings in Manhattan.

The Art Deco period is not just renowned for its architecture and industrial design but also for its contribution to textiles and carpets, graphics, lighting and cinema, glass and ceramics, painting and a host of other media. When all combined they became a temple devoted to industry and business of the day.

28. Ceiling light, Esher Embassy theater, Surrey.



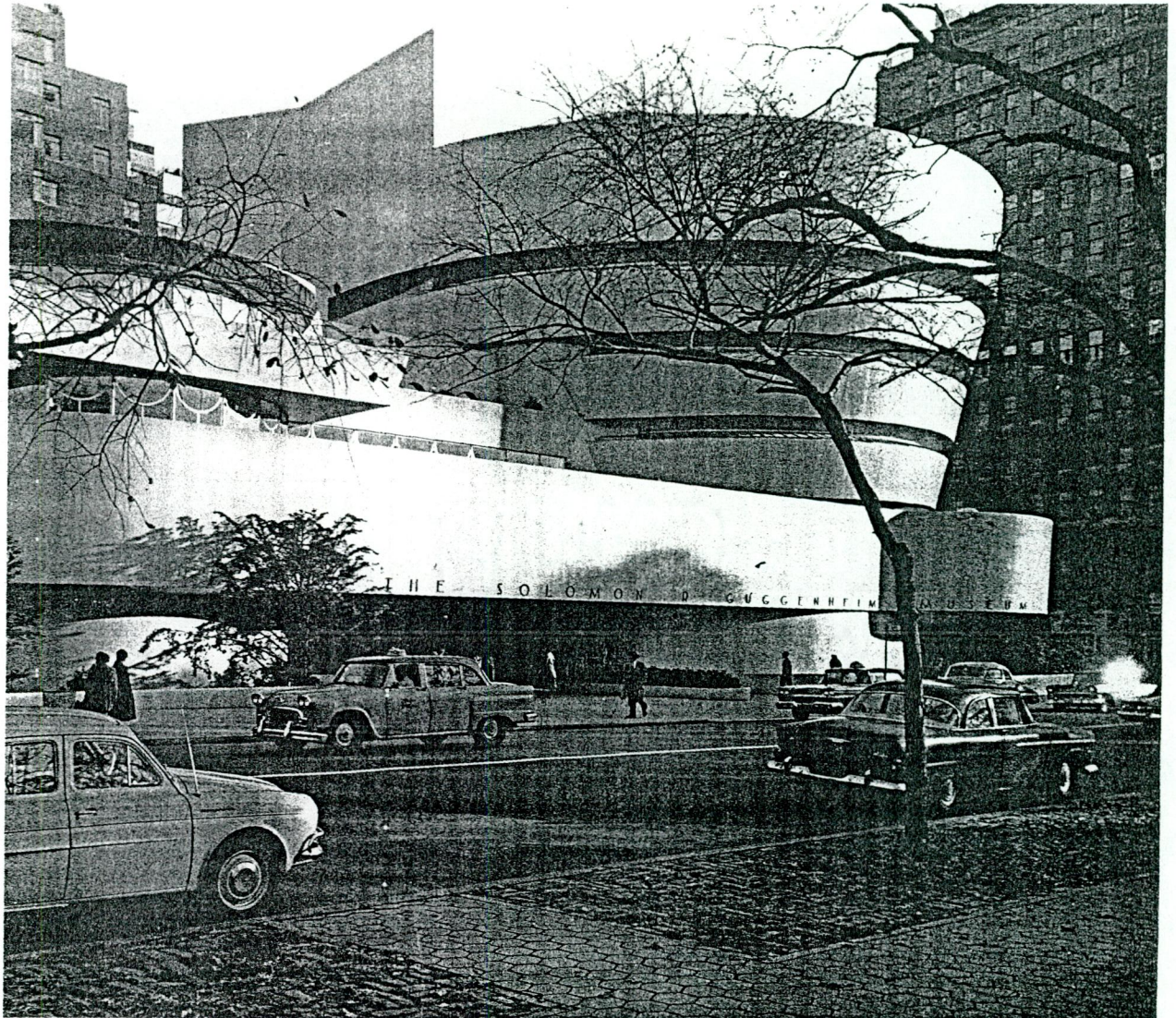
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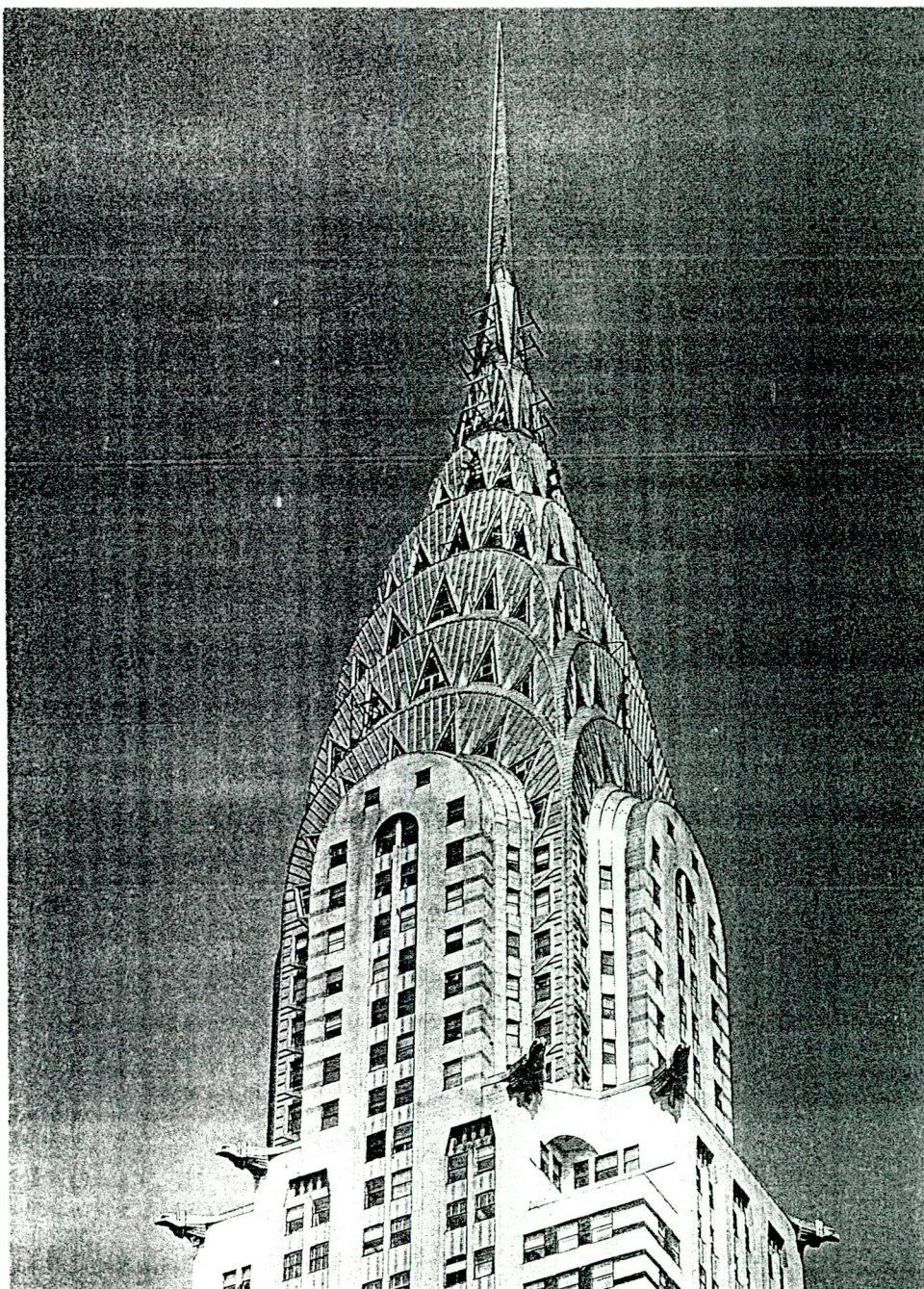


29. Poster for the 1925 Paris exhibition by Robert Bonfils.



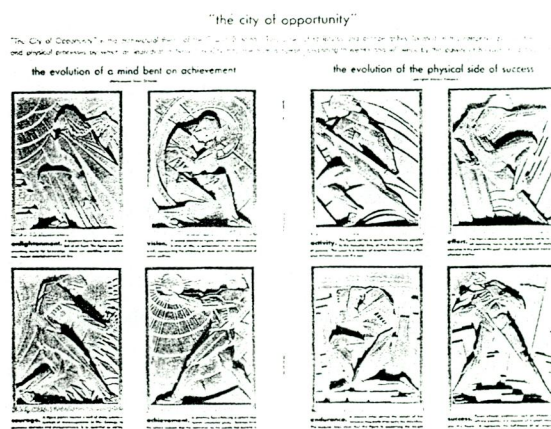


30. Guggenheim Museum, New York, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1942.



31. Chrysler Building,
New York, designed by
William Van Alen 1930

32. Reliefs from the
Chanin Building, New York



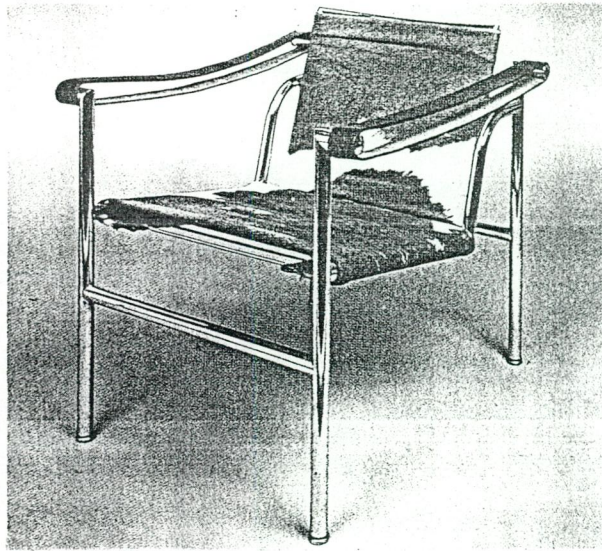
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SMITH & CO.

The new technology

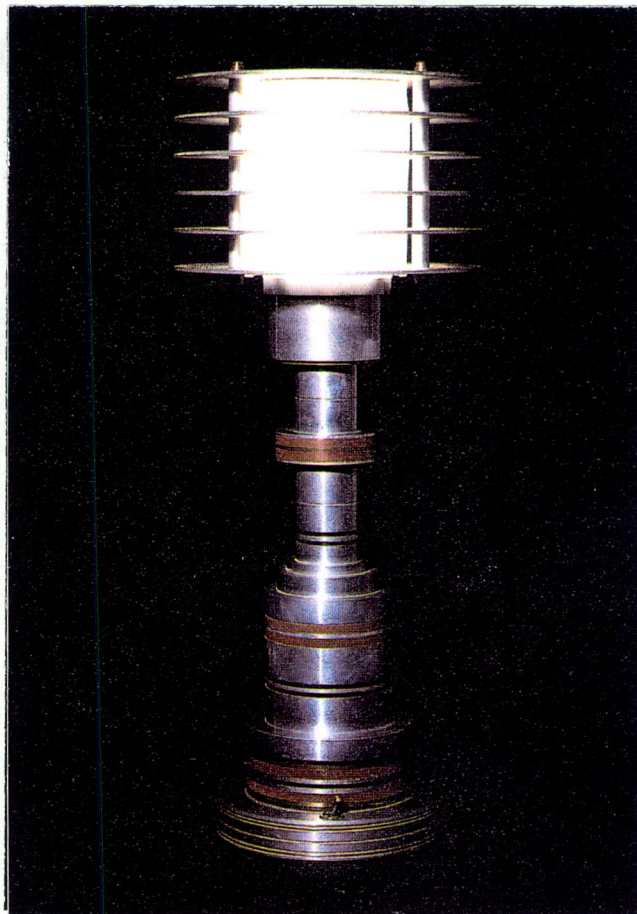
As new building methods and materials were discovered and developed (eg. steel frames, concrete, plate glass, aluminium) buildings became much taller, cheaper and easier to construct. Steel frame and concrete, which was inexpensive, quick and easy to use and very versatile, was to give the architect a new and wondrous tool to use in the method of design. This gave architects more freedom to express their ideas causing the evolution of new styles. Elevators were made safer and stronger, steel frames were used and huge buildings were constructed that became the temples for modern day business. The people who flocked to the cities for work were met by these all powerful buildings in both size and style. In these buildings they were to live, eat, and work, worshipping the new gods of business and industry of the time.

With these new materials came new industrial products with the widespread availability of electricity came the labour-saving devices of the American market. Also furniture design had a radical turnabout due to the developments in technology. Metal furniture designed by Le Corbusier in tubular steel and leather were to become timeless.



33. Tubular steel chair by Le Corbusier, 1928

34. Aluminium, glass and
Bakelite lamp by Walter
von Nessen, 1925



Chapter 3 The initial reaction in Ireland

The first three decades of this century saw the introduction of a new form of architecture into Ireland that was totally different to that of the previous century. It was described as "revolutionary" by both sides of the critical fence. Denounced by some as being bizarre and grotesque and by others hailed to be logical and rational. More often than not Art Deco was rejected and ignored as architects held on to the assurance that the classical style gave them.

Culture block

For the first two decades of Irish architecture remained with the elaborate styles and decoration of the last century. The reasons for this lay mainly in the cultural and political turmoil of the time. Ireland had been dominated by England for hundreds of years, in culture, in politics and religion. Most influences of modern society from outside Ireland came through England. During and after the Civil War in Ireland, and the subsequent creation of the Free State, the Irish people were trying to reestablish themselves as a nation with its own distinct culture. The rejection of anything remotely associated with England and English culture was strong. Any influx of architectural styles from England were quickly rejected as being anti-nationalistic. There was an outcry for a national style of

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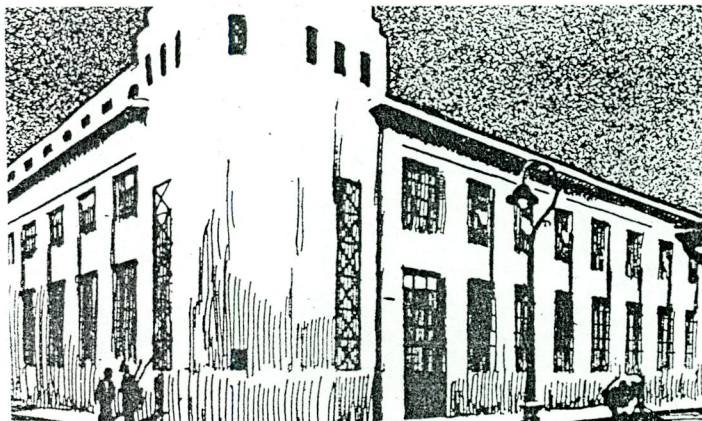
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architecture to be formed from the classical styles, by some of the more conservative architects. A formal complaint was sent to the government about the hire of English architects for the design of public buildings. It wasn't until the mid-'twenties, awoken mainly by the reaction to the Paris exposition and its apparent popularity, that architects broke free from the self inflicted disciplines of classicism. In 1926 the first building with an influence of Art Deco was built. The ESB transformer station on Fleet st. Dublin, designed by arch. Vincent Kelly, had a strong linear style running through the building, especially the windows with their jazzy look, (since been replaced). This was followed in rapid succession by buildings that demonstrated even stronger aspects of the Art Deco style. In 1929 one of Ireland's finest examples of Art Deco architecture, the Dublin Gas building, was built. It remains intact almost exactly as it did 60 years ago. Despite the popularity of Art Deco with some architecture most still rejected it, determined to stick with traditional ideas tried and tested for centuries.

34. ESB Transformer Station,
Fleet St., Dublin



Rejection to acceptance

At the turn of the century Dublin and Cork were becoming major cities and architects were in great demand. There were six major architects that were practicing in Ireland from the turn of the century to the outbreak of the Second World War. Some were regular writers and had the ability to sway the opinions of the general public and the Irish architectural community by means of articles in journals, papers and speeches in colleges and at association meetings. Such architects as R.M. Butler, Harry Allberry and Page L. Dickinson used this power of communication, over the Irish building community, to voice their strong anti-modernist opinions on the influx of new avant-garde architecture, holding back what could have been a new and exciting time for talented young architects .

" Let us not adopt the low standards of jazz music and forget the high standards set by Bach and other great masters," (6 page178) , said the President of the RIBA, Walter Tapper when he addressed the architectural students of UCD in 1923. This was the reaction towards the revolutionary style in Ireland from the majority of the conservative architects at the time.

But there was also the defenders of the evolution of style. Architects such as J.V. Downes who though he wrote only a few articles, his travels and architectural photography made him one of the most important propagandists for these new modern styles. Also the partnership of J.Robinson and R.C. Keefe, whose practice was one of the busiest and most successful in the country, used some forms of Art Deco in almost all of their buildings between the years

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1945

1928 and 1940. We also will see a beautiful building of theirs with very strong Art Deco characteristics that sadly was never built. These men were to bend and shape the style of Irish architecture, the very character of our towns and cities.

R.M. Butler

R.M. Butler was the major opponent to the new "jazzy" style of Art Deco. Having the position of editor of The Irish Builder gave him a prominent platform from which to undermine the possibilities of a new style having much influence in Ireland. There was a noticeable ambiguity in early articles by Butler. He was on one hand conservative, a believer in taking from the past; on the other an advocate of innovation and new building techniques, integrating them into the classical style. Through the ' twenties and on into the 'thirties the publicity of Art Deco and Modernism rose to the extent that it overwhelmed the press's anti-modernism architectural coverage. Butler's style all the same, was forceful and he was not afraid to take a strong stand on certain issues. He became confused in the light of the rapid change in ideology during the ' twenties, but stood by his original philosophies. He said "Styles were never invented, but represented an inevitable growth; they arose from the natural habits and aspirations of the people". (6 page 97), defending the classical style that had been used and was slowly developing in Ireland.

W. B. RICE
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Harry Allberry

Harry Allberry was also an active writer for The Irish Builder from 1900 until his death in 1952. Allberry joined the Office of Public Works and eventually became Deputy Chief Architect until his retirement in 1935. Because of this, most of his contributions to the journal were anonymous. Allberry wrote as did Butler on The Irish Builder, and their opinions were very similar though often about different topics. Butler wrote the leaders and the "Topical Touches" columns while Allberry engaged in collecting the more everyday news of the profession. Allberry also wrote most of the critiques of new buildings which regularly featured in the journal. Allberry like Butler was very conservative in his outlook on new architecture but also like Butler was open-minded about modern constructional methods. So there were two people almost running, and writing, everything for the country's major architectural journal with the same conservative ideas on the new modern styles and this must have surely retarded the influx of new and fresh ideas from abroad.

Page Dickinson

Another opponent of Art Deco architecture (though his opposition was short lived) was Page Dickinson. He wrote humorous books and articles in his early professional life on a very wide variety of topics. Initially Dickinson also shared the same views as Butler and Allberry castigating these new styles. In an article for the Irish Architect and Craftsman in 1911 he condemned the work of

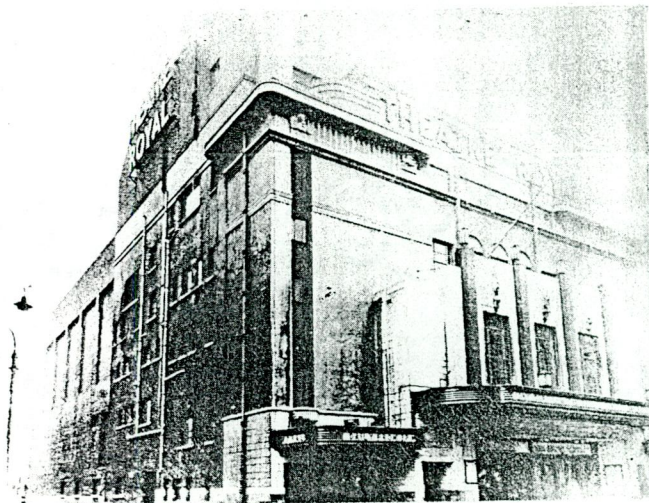
the Post-Impressionists, then on exhibition in Dublin. He referred to them as "incompetent people". But gradually Dickinson's attitudes changed and his views of modernist tendencies in art and architecture became more approving. His first article in The Irish Builder was not published until 1923, due to Butler's disapproval. The article was entitled "The Style of Future Public Buildings in Ireland", in which he gave a strong argument promoting the new rational architecture as a national style. Dickinson was to go on, the following year, to have another article published entitled "Architecture and Insularity" for The Irish Builder.

'The sentiments expressed here show that Dickinson's anti-nationalism was not confined to architecture. Ireland had always been "dreadfully insular" and seemed to be "getting more so every day since the Free State came into being" '. (6 page 109)

Dickinson was to go on to write about Futurism and the Marinetti theories in The Irish Builder. In 1926, he stated that "Ferro-concrete provided new opportunities and demanded a new expression ". This was one of the first articles in Ireland to give positive, if cautious, views on modern architecture. His writings carried on promoting the new modern style, especially with reference to buildings being designed and built in Ireland. Dickinson went on to say that " the arrival of new building types such as cinemas would give the modernist ample scope for original experiment ". By the 1930s the cinema in Ireland was to become possibly the main outlet for designs in the modern style. The Regal Cinema, Hawkins St., Dublin, 1934,

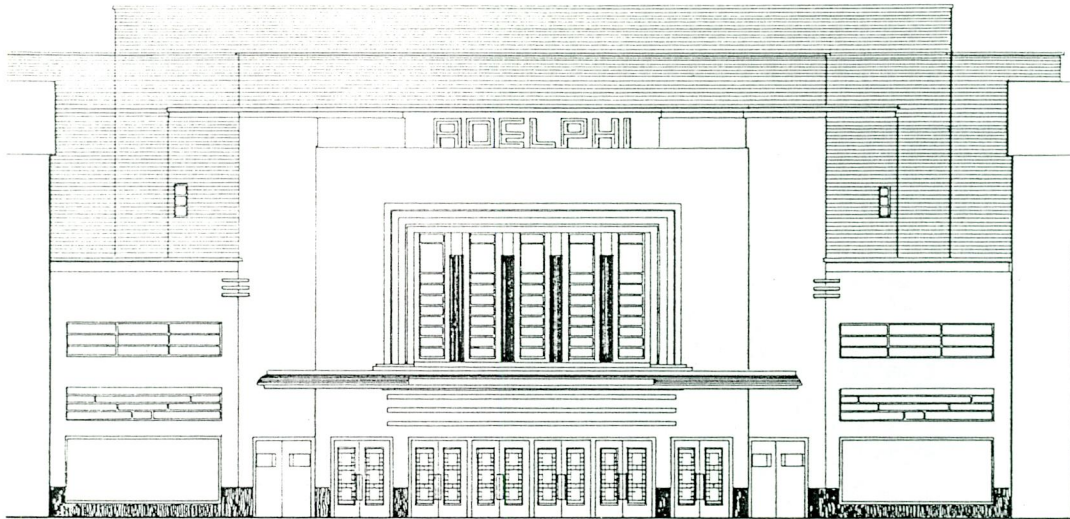
by arch Leslie Norton, was in a more relaxed Art Deco style to its giant neighbour, the Theatre Royal in a very powerful example of Art Deco style. The Curzon cinema, Ormeau Rd., Belfast, 1935, arch J.McB. Neill, was to show strong influences of both the Classical and Art Deco styles as to was the Carlton cinema, O'Connell St., Dublin, 1935, architect Robinson Keefe. The Adelphi cinema, Middle Abbey st., Dublin, 1938 arch W.R. Glen and the Ritz cinema, Athlone, Co. Westmeath, 1938, Michael Scott, showed a strong influence from the later International style with Art Deco motifs.

35 Theatre Royal, Dublin

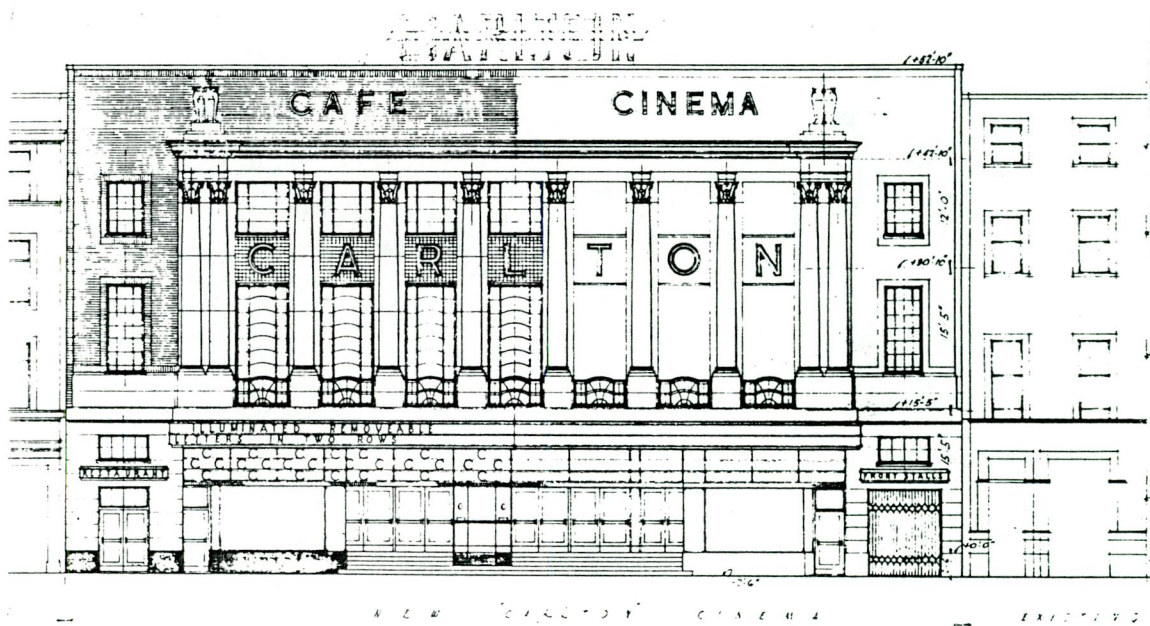


36 Regal cinema, Hawkins St,
Dublin





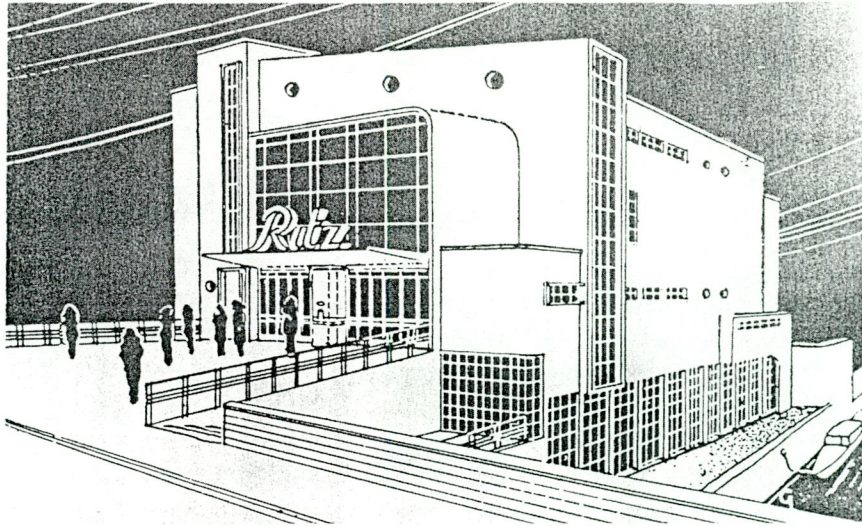
37 The Adelphi cinema, Middle Abbey St,
Dublin



• O'CONNELL STREET ELEVATION •
... REVISED ...

FOR DETAILS OF
REVISED FRONT SEE
DNG. NOS. 25, 26A & 26B. AND 27.

38 The Carlrn cinema, O'Connell St,
Dublin



39 The Ritz cinema, Athlone

Robinson Keefe

The Partnership of J. Robinson and R.C. Keefe was to take the major initiative of popularising and developing Art Deco and all their buildings between 1923 and 1939 had some influence of this style. They were to design almost all of the major cinemas that were to be constructed in Ireland in the late ' twenties and ' thirties .

Robinson started the practice with Keefe in 1913, but it wasn't until 1920 when the firm became officially Robinson Keefe.

In 1928 the partnership produced an outstanding example of Art Deco for the Gas Company offices on D'Olier St. Dublin. This design, as will be see in chapter 5, had many of the characteristics of the Paris Exposition : shiny surfaces using highly polished stone façade, symmetry of the elevations with the stepped low relief door surround, and zig-zag motifs for the window glazing bars (now partly removed).

The area where Robinson Keefe gained the admiration of the architectural world and also the general public, was in their tackling of the cinema. The cinema was a totally new medium in which the architect could explore. There was no sense of obligation to the classical style which gave them the confidence to express themselves in the style as they saw fit. Since there were no cinemas in the past to relate to they used the most modern style for the most modern of buildings at that time.

1890
BOND

Chapter 4 The buildings

The Irish culture was still trying to find its feet in the mid 'twenties. National identity was slow in reforming partly due to the loss of a national language and the English protestant upper class holding the higher paid jobs. The Irish were turning to other countries in Europe and America for inspiration. With the massive developments in technology the domination of a national style of architecture was short lived. The introduction of electricity, the motor car, new industrial products from America and Germany with their new functional looks; geometric shapes with their geometric style and decoration. The traditional organic decoration and craftsmanship was an expensive thing of the past and there was an influx of cheap affordable products. These new products accompanied with the new advances in building materials created a hole in the world of architecture. It seemed inappropriate to design classical buildings using concrete, steel, chrome, plate glass and to fill them with electrical products, modern furniture and park a car outside. There was a growing demand for a new style of architecture to accommodate this sky-rocket in technology.

The Transformer Station

The first building in a new style to represent this modern technology was the ESB. Transformer station, Fleet St., Dublin, designed in 1926 by the architect Vincent Kelly. This was Kelly's first significant building and its design was a direct result of the influence of the new technology.

Even though it was two decades behind the rest of the world, the building was in a simple modern manner and finished in white plaster. The striking thing about the building was its large white areas and lack of decoration. The classical influence is still apparent in the arrangement of windows and the projecting cornice along the top of the building. With its flat roof it is very geometric in structure with strong lines running both horizontally and vertically.

A strong feature of the building is the tower at the street corner that rises a further floor above roof level and stepped towards the top. This stepped tower shows the influences of the Aztec and Mayan architecture. There are long narrow windows in the tower that run from ground to first floor level. The Art Deco style is most evident in these and the other window-bars. Zig-zag motifs and coloured glass decorate the walls in a geometric and linear manner. Sadly the windows have since been removed and replaced.

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Bank of Ireland Belfast

In 1928 J.V. Downes was to design the first building showing a major influence of Art Deco. The Bank of Ireland, Royal Ave, Belfast, architects McDonnell and Dixon. The finished building has changed very little from the design drawings.

The style is well in advance of simple stripped classical and there is a strong influence of Art Deco in the arrangement of the front façade. The work of Louis Sullivan has been a factor in the design. This can be seen both in the construction of the entrance and tower and also in the arrangement of the windows and cladding; the use of splayed corners with the fenestration taken around to unite the two elevations; the strong vertical expression of the frame with its windows and cladding set back, give the building a distinct Art Deco style.

The corner again, as in the ESB building, is strengthened with a tower, but in this case a much stronger effort has been made to decorate in a geometric manner. The tower is finished with a single square clock face in typical geometric Art Deco style. This could be regarded as a good example of an Art Deco motif. The main and side entrance also reflect strong Art Deco influence with powerful vertical lines stepping out from the façade to surround the doorway. The doors themselves have metal frames with a metal zig-zag pattern throughout.

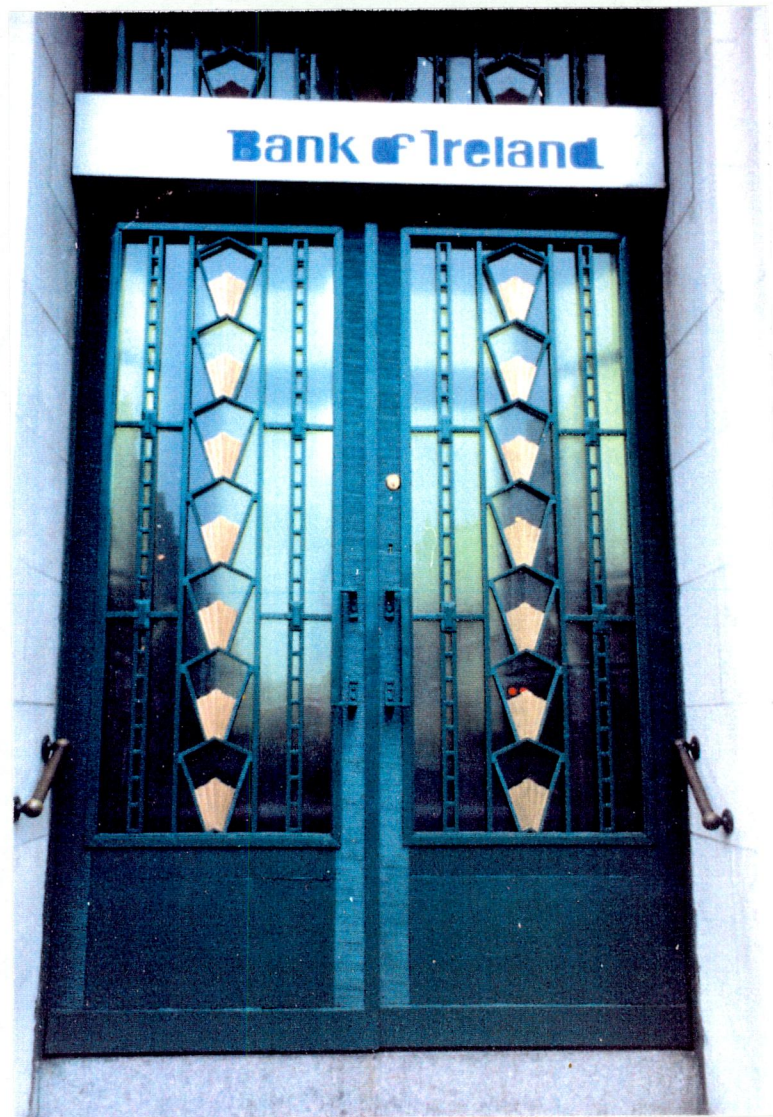
Both J.V. Downes and Vincent Kelly had been the first students to emerge from the School of Architecture in UCD.

ST. BRONCH
BOND

The Bank of Ireland in Belfast was J.V. Downes first building of importance as a partner with Mc Donnell and Dixon. At the formal opening of the bank the Irish Builder described it as " frankly modern in design " the most modern building in Belfast.

40 Bank of Ireland, Belfast

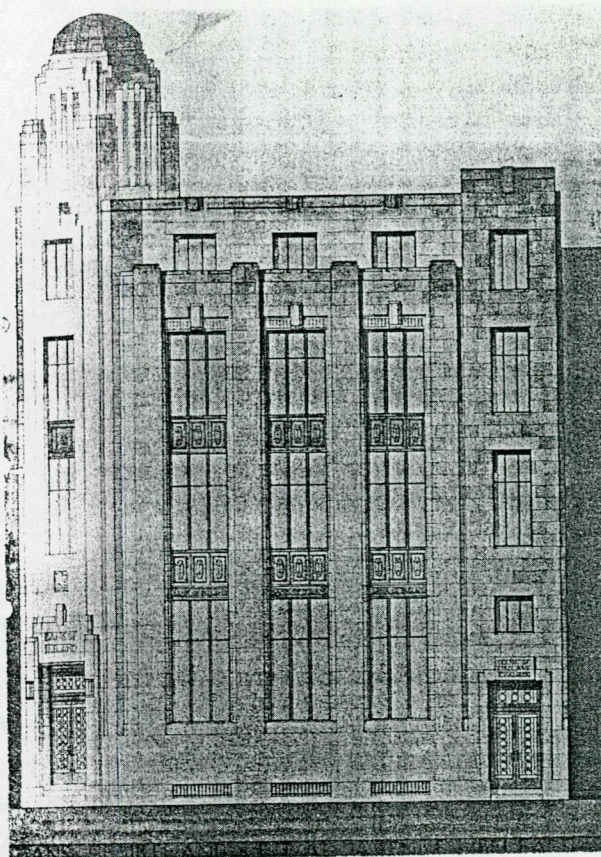
Main Entrance





41 Bank of Ireland, Belfast

Front elevation

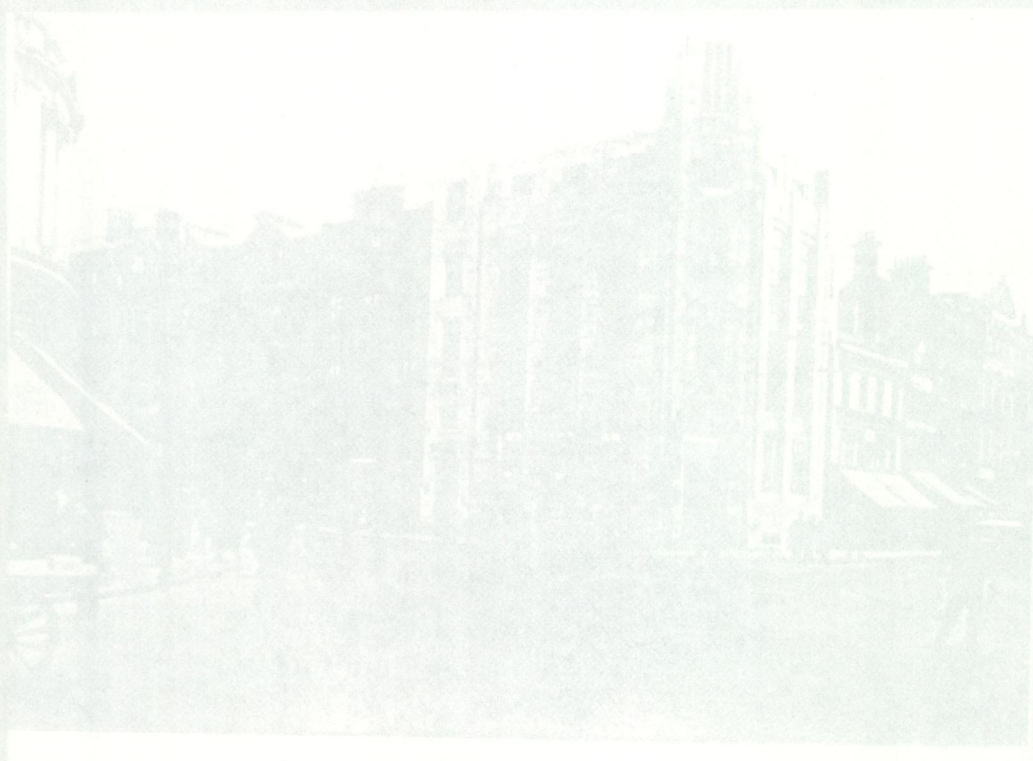


42 Bank Of Ireland,

Belfast



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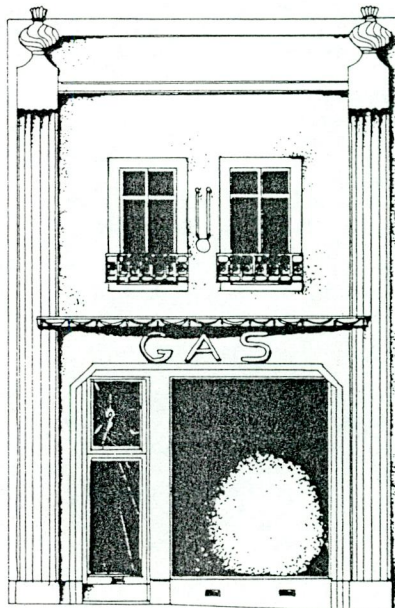


Smaller Buildings

Styles in architecture not only influenced the design of large buildings, they also affected the design of small shops and shop fronts.

Like the Gas company offices and showroom on D'Olier St. Dublin, which will be analysed in the following chapter, the Gas company office and showroom in Bray Co. Wicklow was designed by Robinson Keefe in the following year 1929. Even though it is on a much smaller scale than the D'Olier St. building, the Art Deco style is closer to the spirit of the Paris exhibition. The fluted piers, with ornamentation tops flanking the elevation, are reminiscent of the Lafayette Pavilion at the 1925 exhibition.

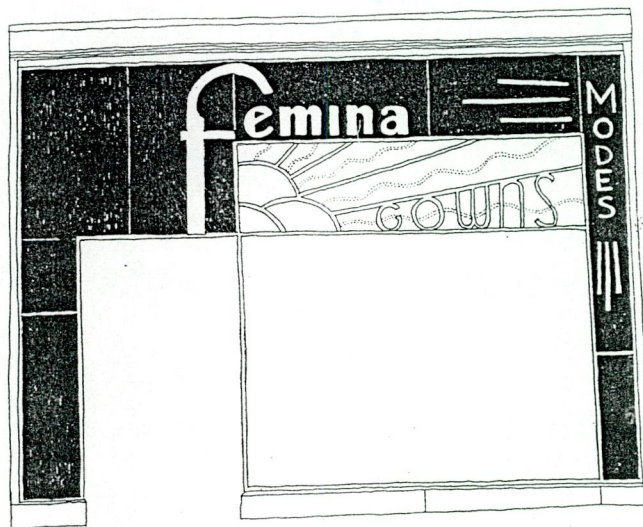
43 Gas company office
and showroom, Bray



The Femina shop Wicklow St., Dublin was designed in 1929 by a firm of shop fitters called Squires that employed architects specialising in design of high quality shopfronts. Squires designed this shop front in the De Stijl manner with Art Deco motifs. The shop front stayed intact exactly as it had been designed until the late 1980s, when it was demolished. The all glass front was partly in the fashionable black " vitrolite" and the etched design in the form of a sunburst was unmistakably Art Deco, as was the splendid polished metal lettering.

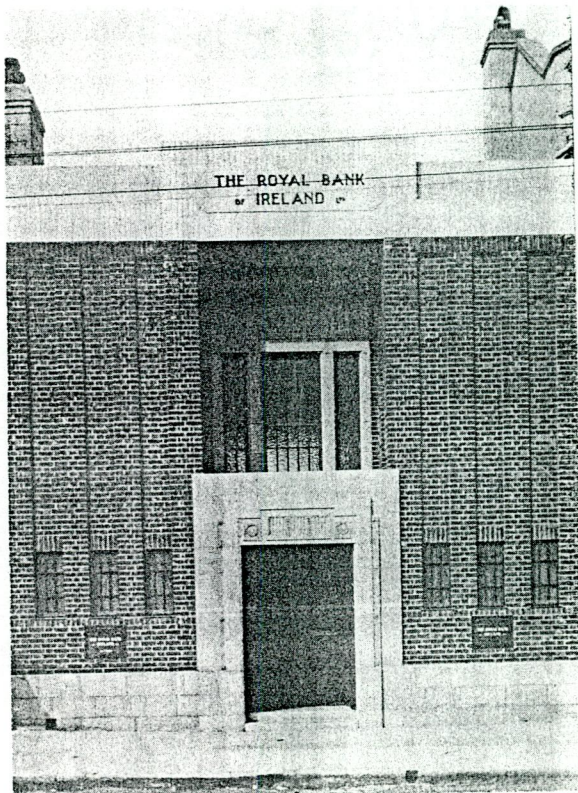
The use of Art Deco

44 Femina shopfront



Generally throughout the history of Art Deco in Ireland the style was used as a decorative feature, with its metals and motifs, used in conjunction with a Classical or Stripped Classical style. Then after the mid-' thirties the new International style was to become the more popular style. The Royal Bank, Bray, Co. Wicklow, designed in 1930 by architects Bradbury and Evans is a good example of this. The Style is conservative and largely traditional. Mild Art Deco features were used to make some response to the modernity of the time. The Art Deco entrance with its blocky linearity and decoration; the vertically parallels that run the width of the façade.

45 The Royal Bank, Bray

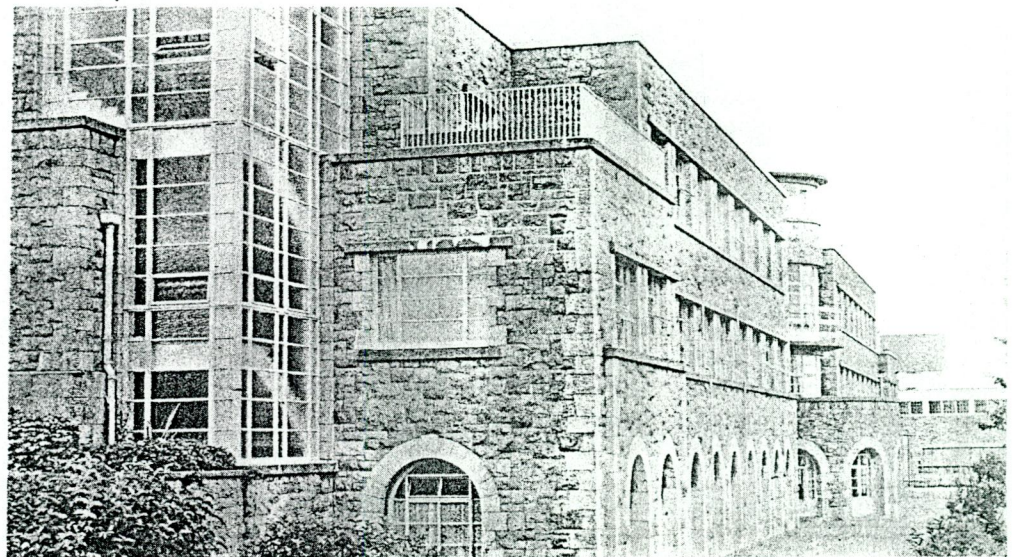


The Classical style was still the most popular style until the mid 1930s and still had an influence up to the end of the decade. This can be demonstrated while discussing some buildings built during this time. The Carlton cinema, O'Connell St, Dublin, designed in 1935 by architects Robinson Keefe, has strong features of Art Deco in the decoration of the façade, the windows and to a great deal, in the interior. The exterior façade still conforms to the laws of the Classical style.

The Regal cinema, Hawkins St, Dublin designed in 1934 by architect Leslie Norton, in association with Michael Scott and Norman Good. This building in the interim stage had influences from both Classical and International in its structure and influences of Art Deco in the decoration of interior and exterior.

The Tullamore Hospital designed in 1934 by architect Michael Scott and Norman Good. This Hospital is a strange mix of Art Deco and International Style, further complicated by being built entirely in impeccable limestone masonry. Even though built in the same year as The Regal cinema it was designed in an entirely different way.

46 Tullamore Hospital



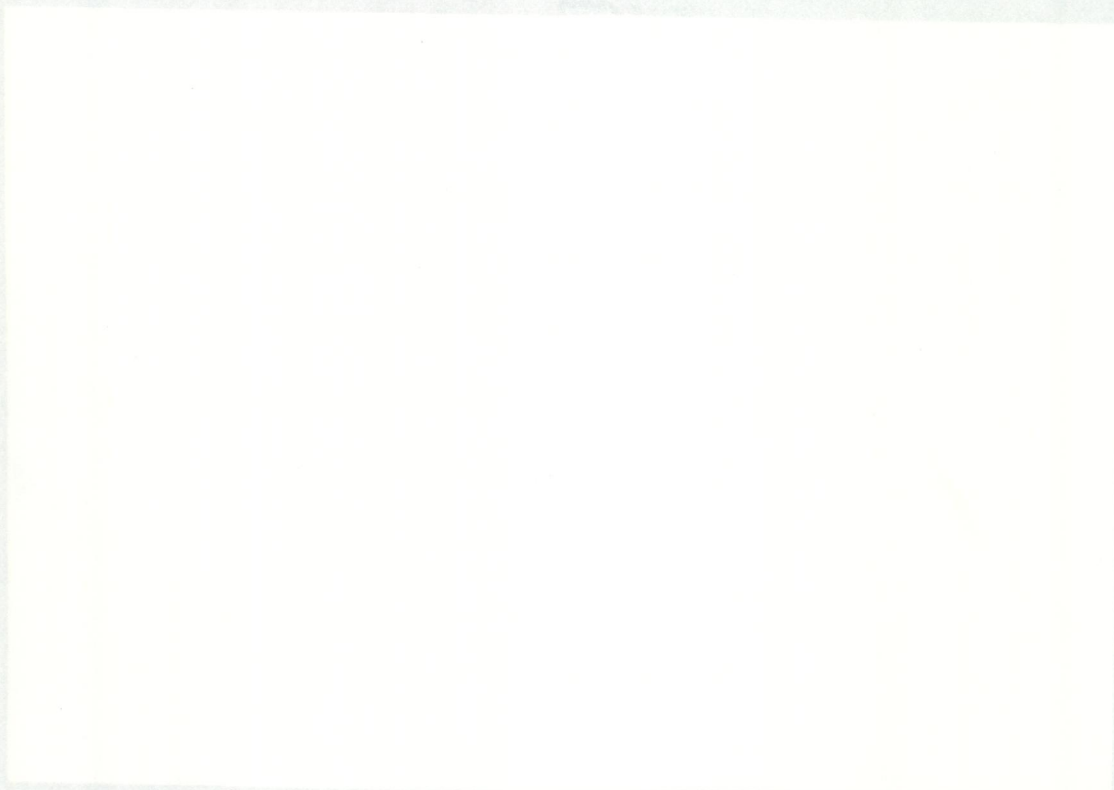
As the ' thirties come to a close the architectural structures are totally dominated by the international style relying to a lesser extent on decoration in any way. The Ritz cinema, Co. Westmeath designed in 1938 by architect Michael Scott, shows the lack of decoration used. The Ritz must have seemed an exotic, exciting and even bizarre newcomer to this old market town.

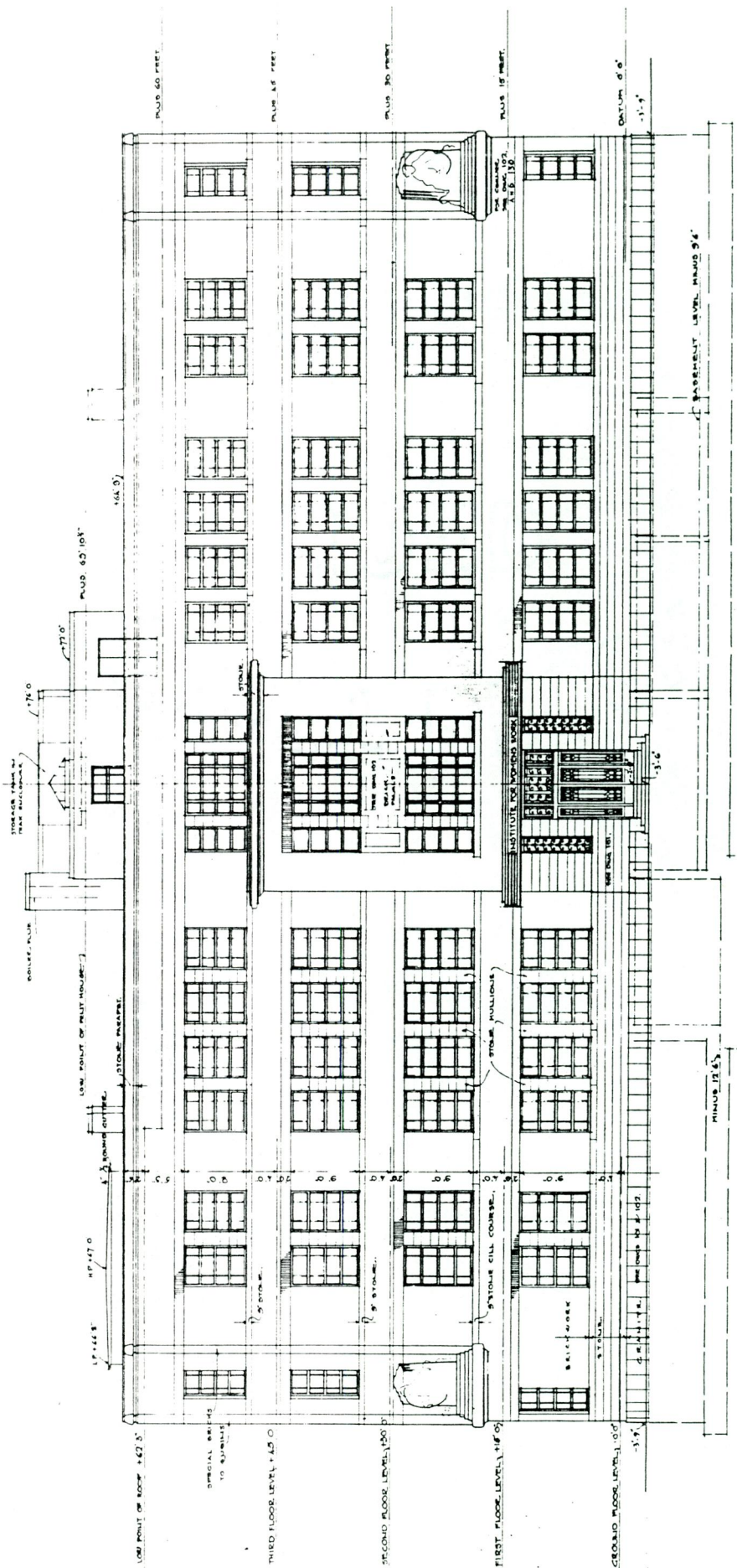
The College of Domestic Economy (now College of Catering and Hotel Management), Cathal Brugha St, Dublin designed in 1938 by architects Robinson Keefe, has an exterior totally in the international style leaving the Art Deco decoration for the interior only.

47 Cathal Brugha St.
exterior



SWIFT BROOK





ELEVATION TO GLOUCESTER STREET.

LEK MAY



49 Cathal Brugha St.
interior





BROOK
ID

From these few buildings we can see that the Art Deco Influence in Ireland was short lived and sparse at the best of times. The Classical style was the major influence used up to the middle of the ' thirties showing a reluctance to let go of the past rules and ways, a reluctance to embrace the new and by most misunderstood, dismissed as being 'Architectural madness', 'comparable with cubism at its worst'. (6 page 96)

Chapter 5 The Gas Company Showroom & Offices, D'Olier St. Dublin.

This building was designed and built between 1928 and 1930 by one of the oldest and most conservative architectural firms in Ireland, Robinson Keefe. It is probably the most expert and elaborate exercise of the Art Deco style of architecture in Ireland. The building was designed in two sections. The first was the rear entrance and offices that were designed in a traditional Tudor style, with rough cut granite, brick and steep slated roof. The second section was the front façade, showroom, offices, reception area and lecture room. This was by far the larger of the two sections and its design had been largely influenced by the Paris Exhibition of 1925; shiny surfaces using highly polished stone and steel; symmetry of the elevations with stepped low relief door surround; zig-zag motifs for the window glazing-bars which were also used through out the interior. The interior of the building is a mixture of many influences from the Art Deco style.

Façade

The front façade was split into its functional areas on two main levels. The first was the showroom level with its large windows and recessed main entrance. The second level of the façade consists of three floors used for a lecture hall on the first floor, and

offices on the second and third. The two levels are separated by Art Deco windows with their zig-zag motifs and futurist representation of " heavily-muscled men and gleaming machines frantically producing gas", " the flood lighting makes it look like an out-take from a Batman movie ". (21 page 2)

Surrounding the showroom windows and the decorative windows above are highly polished heavy horizontal and vertical lines in steel. Outside this again is polished stone that frames the whole frontal display. Set in the top centre of this frame is the Gas Company sign.

50 Dublin Gas Company,
D'Olier St,



THEY WERE NOT THE ONLY ONES WHO WERE
IN THE HOUSE AT THE TIME OF THE
KIDNAPING. THERE WERE OTHERS WHO
WERE ALSO THERE AT THE TIME.

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Upper Level

The upper half of the façade has a totally smooth surface in one plane without any projecting sills, string courses or cornice. Even though the surface is smooth and flat there is still a very geometric order about the façade, This was achieved by using colour, contrasting light and dark grays of polished stone that articulate the windows in vertical groups, and in the way the stone has been arranged, the dark gray stone stacked running the full way up the façade and the light gray arranged as brick would be laid, vertically between the windows. Although the windows were set back in the conventional manner of the classical style, the treatment of the façade as an unbroken surface is firmly in the image of a modern building for a clean modern industry. Also the use of colour to create vertical linearity on a flat surface was to typify the Art Deco style. The windows are rectangular in shape and have a geometric pattern used in the bars, with zig-zag motifs and swirls, an influence of the not so distant geometric Art Nouveau style. These have since been replaced.

51 Upper level



Lower Level

There are four main windows in all, two on either side of the main entrance. Each window has a thin polished steel frame. The main entrance is recessed from the plane of the windows. The doors are surrounded with a frame of polished stone and glass and polished stone. The inner stone frame is topped with a chrome motif centred with the Gas Company emblem. The original doors were made in polished chrome with narrow glass windows crossed with three steel bars at the top and bottom. The door handles were heavy angular bars also in chrome. Unfortunately these have since been removed and replaced with light aluminium and glass doors.

Directly above the entrance and display windows are decorative windows with geometric stained glass representing work men making gas. There is an elaborate use of bright colour. These are best viewed at night when they are lit from behind. Both the Decorative and display windows and the entrance are surrounded firstly in polished chrome bands and then in polished light and dark gray stone, framing the front. These strong horizontal lines of the lower section of the façade oppose the vertical lines in polished stone of the upper section. The gas company sign is placed directly over the entrance. In red, it is best viewed at night when lit from behind.

The upper level is treated as one plane, a flat surface with the only change being the recessed windows. At showroom level there are frequent changes both in material and in the surface plane, stepping into the windows and again into the entrance, always in a

strong rectilinear style, with the changes in level always being accompanied with a change in material, from polished stone to polished steel and glass or vice versa. In this we can see the strong cubist influence in the style, the change in colour being accompanied by strong black vertical and horizontals, strongly featured in the Paris exhibition of 1925. This method of breaking up the façade into functional sections was used in 1909 by J. Gocar in the design of the Wenke Department Store in Jaromer.

52 Lower level



Interior

Just as impressive an example of Art Deco as the exterior, the interior of the Gas Company building is designed completely with the new modernist approach. The building has four floors in total, from



basement to the second floor. The top floor is designed for office use. The first floor consists originally of a lecture room, both ladies and men's toilets, small storage room and a conference room. The ground floor is divided into two sections, the showroom area and the reception area. Connecting the two is a short narrow corridor. The basement is used for storage and the ducting of air, electrical cable, gas and heating pipes. The floor plane for all these areas are laid out in a very geometric and rational way. The weight distribution and layout of the ground floor has a modernist approach. Taking the weight away from the four corners, by a series of columns and centre walls, the weight is distributed throughout the centre of the building.

The showroom

The first thing that meets you when entering the showroom through the main entrance is the rectangular clock that hangs from the ceiling. It is hung by a chrome frame with its parallel bars curving outwards when approaching the ceiling (echoing the octagonal columns that lead away from the entrance through the showroom). Made from tanned woods the clock is rectangular in shape, stepped at top and bottom. There is a circular clock face on either side. The clock face has hands and roman numerals in brass, inlaid with black lacquer. Inside the surround of numbers is set in walnut. (see illustration 53)

There are four columns that lead away from the entrance, two on either side. They are a typical example of stripped classical and replaced with a geometric form of decoration. They are octagonal in

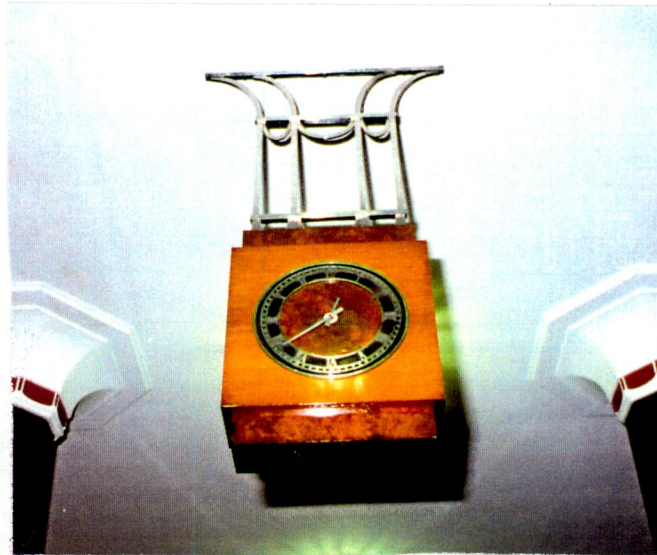
section, a feature of roman pillars, but the column is made or panelled in deep, rich mahogany wood. The tops of the columns have no decoration , they fan out to meet the ceiling. This curved ending of a parallel line is also a decorative feature of the chrome frame that suspends the clock from the ceiling at the main entrance. There are a further four columns at the far end of the showroom, at the entrance to the reception area. They support a circular dome, and both are stripped of all decoration. (see illustrations 54 & 55)

The show room is surrounded in wood panelling that runs three quarters up the wall (since covered with modern displays). Inlaid in different types of wood to form a linear and geometric pattern. Wood is use in a geometric and rectilinear way throughout the showroom as decoration on the walls, the columns, the doors and the stairs (see illustration 56). It becomes one of the main visual textures that strikes the eye when in the showroom. This creates a warm and relaxed feeling to the room. This use of woods shows a strong influence of the work of Frank Lloyd Write from 20 years earlier. For example the interior of the Kauffman department store (see illustration 57).

Both the use of materials, the height of the ceiling, and the texture of the floor changes when moving around the showroom, creating different environments for displaying products of the gas company. On the ceiling in the area for displaying kitchen products, (the far left corner of the showroom), is a repeated white square pattern separated by thick black lines (see illustration 58). A similar

pattern is repeated in the floor tiles, showing the influences of Mackintosh and the cubist style. A similar pattern can be seen in the ceiling and chandelier of the Wenke Department store, Jaromer of 1909 (see illustration 59).

53 Ceiling clock



54 Columns at entrance





55 Columns at
entrance to
reception



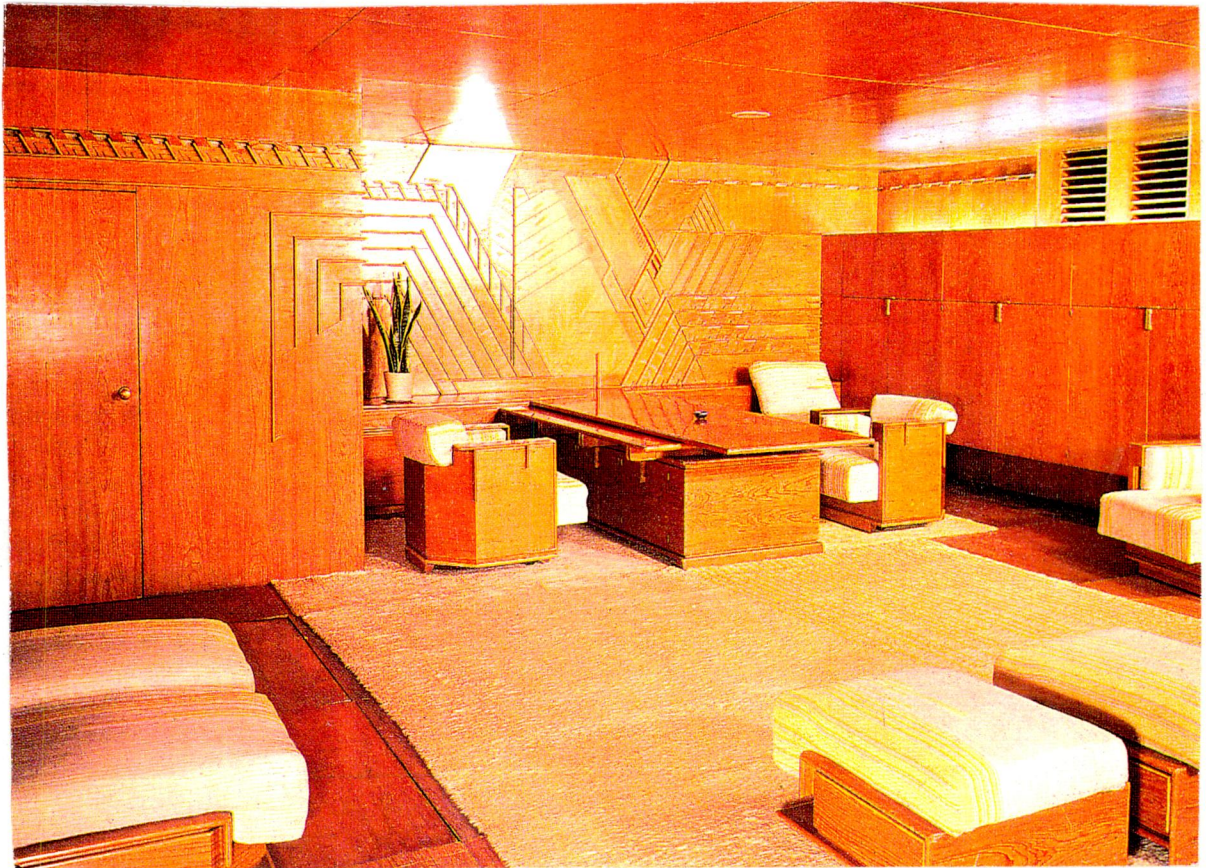
56 Wall panelling





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57 The Kauffman department store

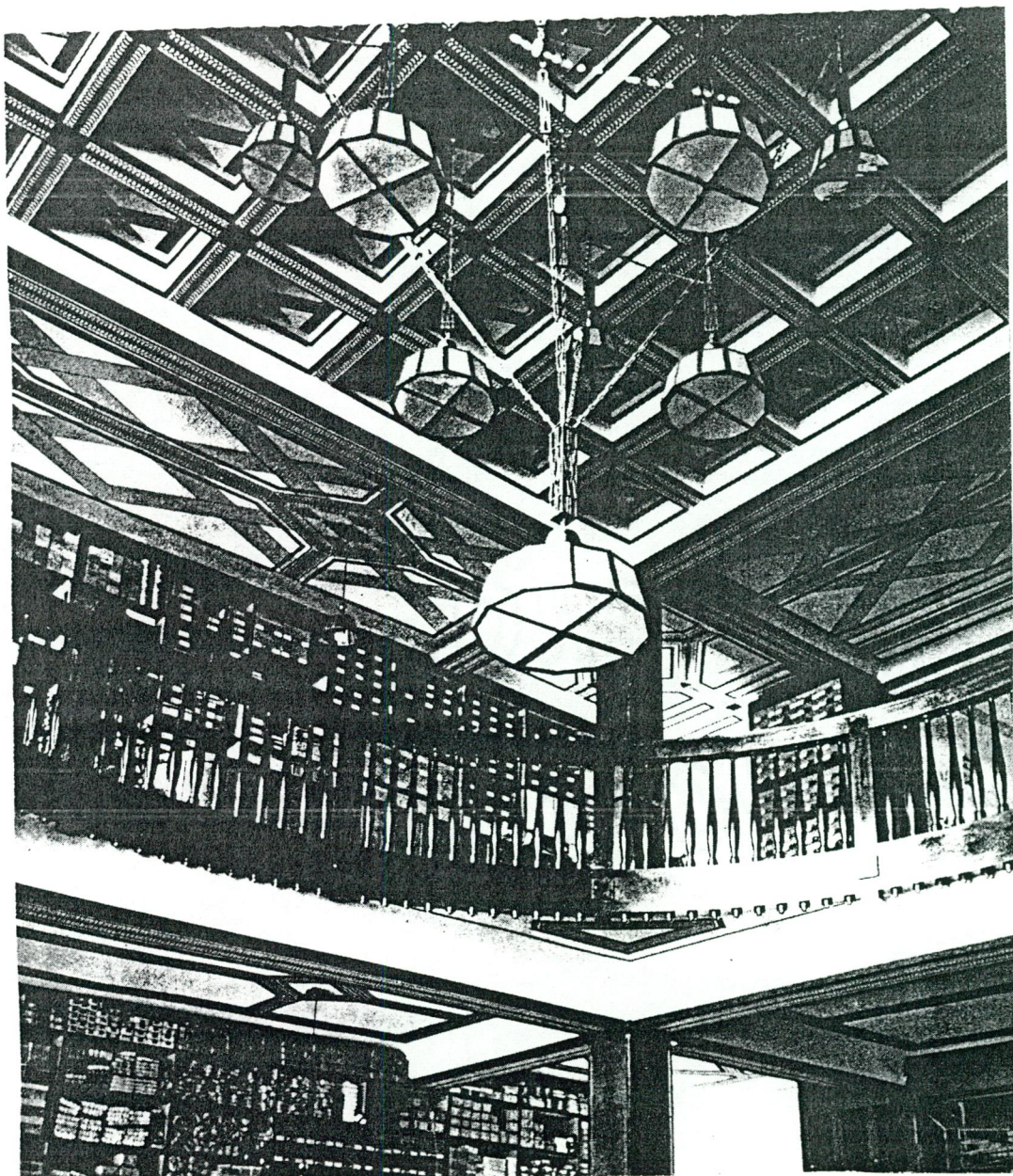
58 Showroom ceiling





SWIFT BROOK





59 Interior of Weke department store, Jaromer.

There is linear plasterwork used to create geometric archways, when going from one area of the showroom to the next, on the wall formed by the difference in ceiling level. The geometric archway motifs repeated in the showroom area are used as arches

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which form a corridor when you leave, to go up the steps to the reception area (see illustration 60). These geometric arches with their five sides relate directly to those of Aztec and Mayan architecture. The plasterwork stepping into the geometric arches defines and emphasises the transition from the showroom area to the reception area. When going under the arch you enter a small corridor with a low ceiling and narrow walls, confining the space and guiding you to the next area.

60 Wall plaster
work





61 Corridor between
Showroom and
reception areas



The reception area

When you come out of the corridor you enter into a bright reception area with a high spacious ceiling where the stepped geometric arch is also repeated, but to a much greater extent. This arch is used in the door surrounds and around the central dome in the reception area and also in the windows in the high walls (see illustration 62 & 63). Between the arches in the central area columns are created that support the high walls. This form of column and arch can be seen in the exterior of houses on Tycho de Brahe Street, Prague designed by J. Gocar in 1911. These buildings also have a strong influence from Aztec and Mayan architecture in its strong blocky features and use of sharp angles (see illustration 64 & 65).



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62 Door surround



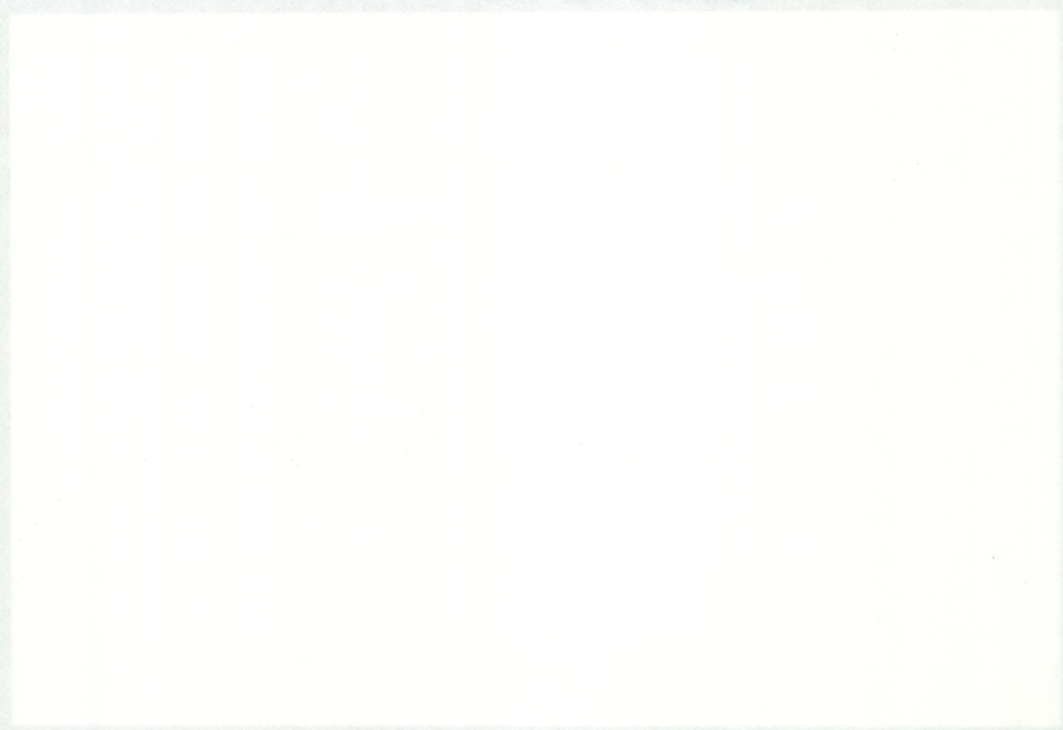
63 Interior wall

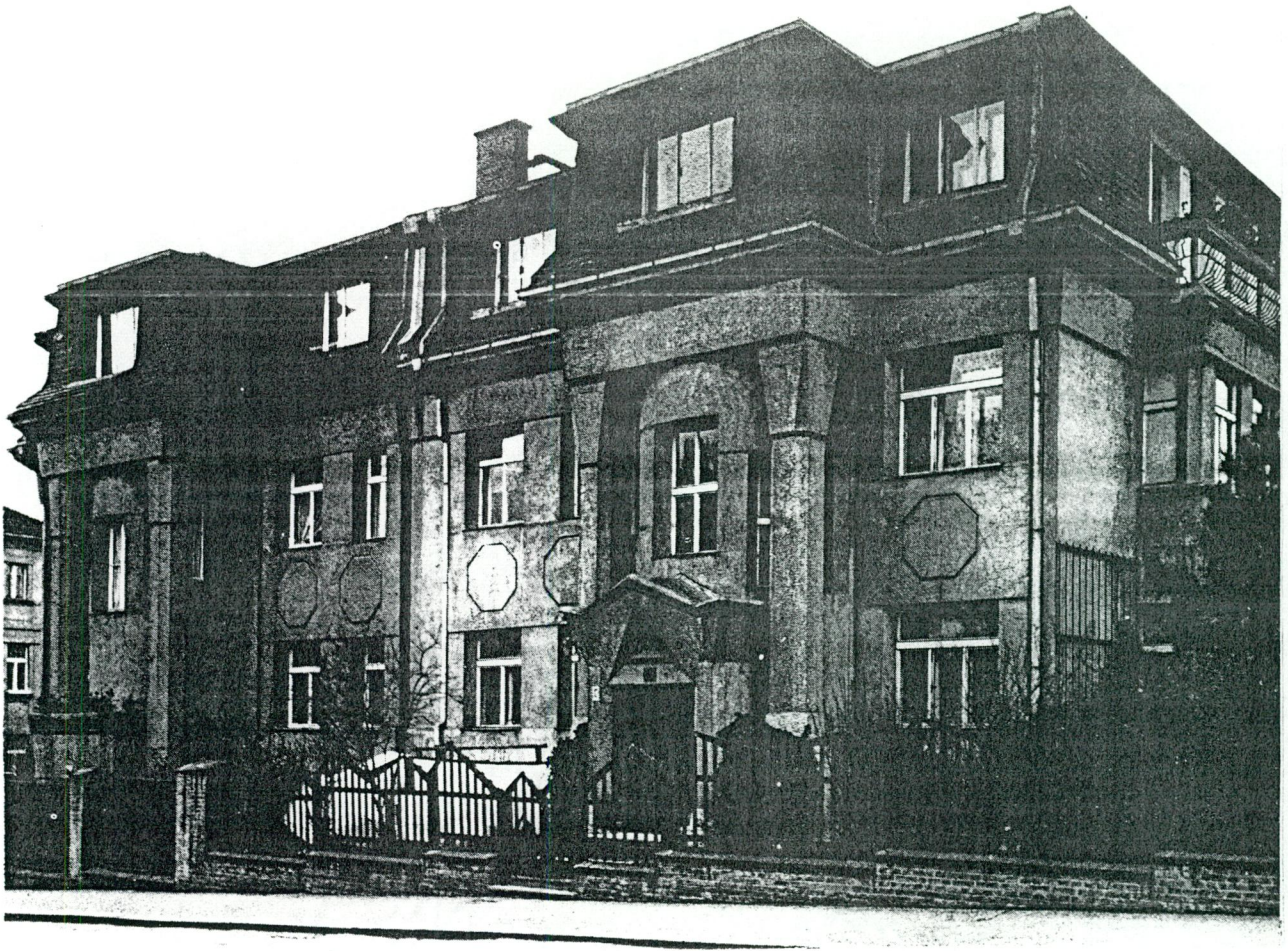




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64 Tycho de Brahe Street, Prague

A second clock is hung from an arch, after the corridor when entering the reception area, similar but not as elaborately decorated as the first, at the main entrance. It is shaped, like the first, relative to its surroundings and in the geometric form of the arch (see illustration 65).

The windows in the high walls have bars in the same geometric pattern as the windows of the upper level of the façade. Even the air vents have a distinct geometric pattern (see illustration 63).



65 Clock in reseption area

These two areas are used for two totally different purposes. The showroom is used to present the products of the company. They are presented in a comfortable and warm area that encourages the customer to buy the product. The reception area however is used for customer services. Paying bills, getting advice and finding out details on gas supply. The room is divided into intimate small sections and is more business like and efficient.

As you go upstairs from the showroom the stair railings made in polished brass echo the zig-zag pattern that was used in the window bars in the upper floor exterior windows. This repeated use of geometric patterns in totally different applications, and the use of motifs to decorate everything interior and exterior was a well known trait of the Art Deco style (see illustrations 66 & 67)



SWIFT BROOK
BOND

66 Brass interior
railing



67 Stairs





Upper floors

The lecture hall at the top of the stairs, since converted into open plane office space, continues in the Art Deco style but in a variation of the style more associated with the cinemas of the day (see illustration 68). The use of geometry in the stepping from the ceiling to the wall, uses sweeping curves to interrupt the corners of the room and the of the stage. The geometric motifs used in the windows are also used but as decorative features on the walls.

In the stairwell and top floor offices there are skylights, again repeating the zig-zag pattern of the railings and exterior windows (see illustration 69 & 70).

68 Lecture hall



Finally the washrooms and W.C.'s are in blue-gray tiles from floor to ceiling (see illustration 71). The ceiling is a repeat of the a section of the ceiling found in the showroom with its shiny white tiles. The mirrors have the same form of the arches in the showroom and reception area.

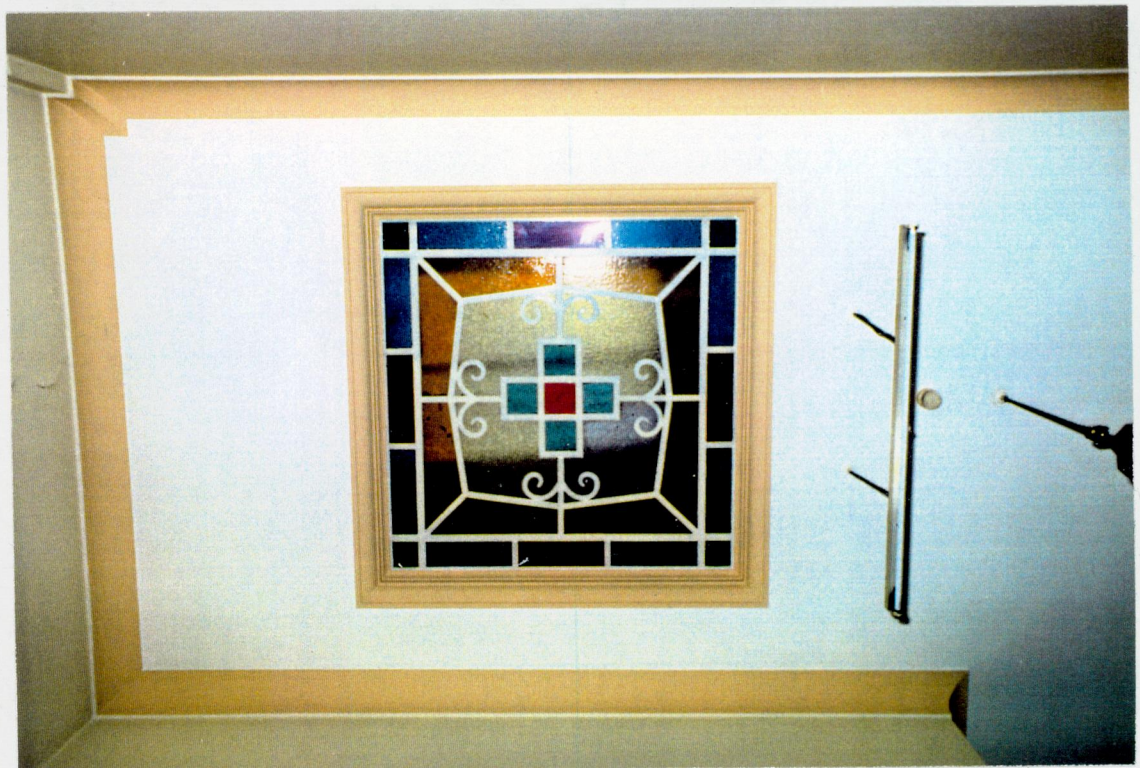


OK

69 Skylight



70 Skylight in
stair well





ROOM

71 W.C.





Conclusion

A sense of unity is created throughout the building with the use of patterns and motifs (in conjunction with different influences of the Art Deco style) both on the exterior and in the interior. Features on the exterior are seen on objects decorating the interior. Clocks are used not just as a functional item but also to decorate. The form of the clocks and door surroundings relating to the architectural features of the building. The same patterns and motifs are used throughout the building in window bars, skylights, railings, walls decoration and right down to the air vents. The architect has been able to design a building using many different sources and used them in the design of all aspects of the building, creating a unity throughout the whole design. Even so the different areas still relate to the purpose that they are used for; office space, lecture hall, showroom, reception area and even the washrooms.

72 Wall Vent



SWIFT BROOK

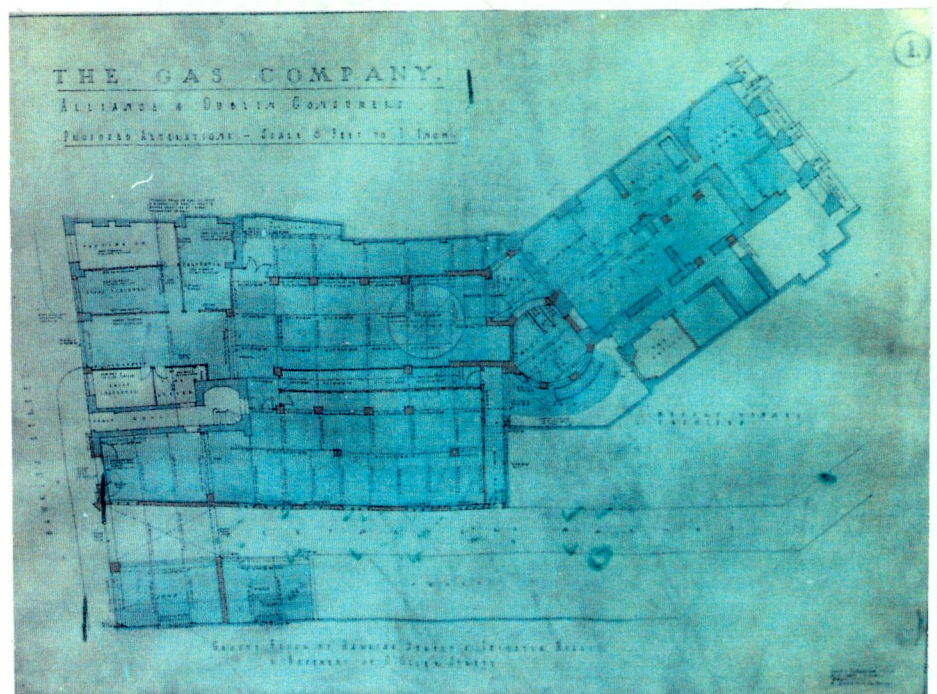
1900



73 Gas Company Building
floodlit



74 Floor plan





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Conclusion :

The Art Deco style is a huge area in the history of design, having sources from many different times and parts of the world. To define Art Deco using these sources then becomes a difficult job, but what can be shown is the motifs that represent Art Deco.

This geometric style of Art Deco was applied to all forms of design from architecture and interior design, to jewellery and graphics, and many areas of product design. Its use in architecture was to be promoted by the development of new building materials and subsequent new building methods. With the lack of traditional decoration and the use of geometry and materials such as chromed steel, plate glass and concrete, buildings became crisp and sharp. The buildings were logically designed for their environment and use. They made a statement to the public about the use of these new materials, a statement of power and wealth for all to see.

The influence of Art Deco on Ireland was slow due mainly to the earlier political turmoil in the country and to the Irish culture. The creation and establishment of the Free State took priority in the minds of the Irish people along with the revival of Irish culture and language. The style was rejected by the conservative architects of the time who regarded the old laws and methods of architecture the right and proper way to conduct the practice of designing new buildings.

It wasn't until a year after the Paris exhibition of 1925 that the first influence of Art Deco was seen in Irish architecture. This was a direct result of the development of technology, the process of

developing electrification in Ireland. The ESB Transformer Station was to be the first building in the new era of technology.

Art Deco struggled to be recognised in Ireland towards the end of the 'twenties and throughout the ' thirties. It is in buildings from the late ' twenties that the best examples of Art Deco can be found. In one building in particular, the Dublin Gas Company offices and showroom on D'Olier St., Art Deco appears in many guises. It is used throughout the building, unifying it as a whole. The combination of influences can be seen here: the use of Cubist ideas with influences from the Aztec and Mayan culture in the interior structure; the use of standard geometric Art Deco motifs both outside and inside to decorate the stair rails and windows and in the walls of the lecture theatre; the use of colour in the windows of the exterior; and different woods on the interior. The combination of these visual elements in the interior and the exterior create a strong and beautiful impact on D'Olier St. expressing the distinct Art Deco style that set it apart from all others in the Dublin of that time.

In the ' thirties Art Deco was used in the simplest forms, solely for decorative means. A certain amount of geometric styling was used in conjunction with, the Classical style, in the early ' thirties, which then developed into the International style in the mid to late part of the decade.

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