ART DECO WALLS

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ART DECO: A STYLE EPITOMISING GLAMOUR, PROGRESS AND OPTIMISM

Shimmering skyscrapers that appear to reach the heavens, luxurious cinemas with twinkling lights, geometric patterns and lavish materials, such as marble and chrome – this is the world of Art Deco. Yet, this style is about much more than just glitz and glamour. It originated in the Roaring Twenties, a time of contradictions: optimism after a devastating war, rapid technological progress alongside social uncertainty, and opulence amid economic crises. Art Deco embodies elegance, modernity and an unshakeable belief in progress. To this day, this style continues to fascinate people across the globe.

A NEW WORLD AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Art Deco's roots lie in the early 20th century, a period in which the world was rapidly changing. Cities were expanding, industry was blooming and new technology – such as electricity, cars and aeroplanes – had a profound effect on daily life. At the same time, the First World War had left its mark. Millions of people had perished, and former certainties were on shaky ground.

The end of the war set a strong desire for innovation, beauty and optimism in motion. People wanted to look ahead and celebrate life. Instead of nostalgically drawing on historic styles, such as was common in the 19th century, designers sought a contemporary visual language befitting the new age. Art Deco offered exactly what people were yearning for; it was a modern, elegant style that broke with the past and embraced a glittering future.

TO EVERY AGE ITS ART, TO ART ITS FREEDOM

'Der Zeit ihre Kunst, der Kunst ihre Freiheit' articulates the idea that every age should develop its own art forms. The motto advocates innovation, autonomy and modernity. At first glance, the statement appears to align closely with Art Deco, but surprisingly it is the slogan of the Vienna Secession, an Austrian Art Nouveau movement that Art Deco would later partly oppose. Whereas the Vienna Secession and Art Nouveau still strongly reacted against academic art traditions, Art Deco translated the ideal of freedom into a world of industrialisation, mass production and international culture.

Art Nouveau, popular around 1900, is characterised by decorative, wavy lines and nature motifs, such as flowers and plants. The style was innovative in its use of nature as a starting point. However, when technology became increasingly widespread in the 1920s, fixed, universal design principles became more important. At a time when attention was firmly focused on a rosy future, there was a growing aversion to 19th-century historicism, in which architecture and art continually drew on past styles. Although this was something that Art Nouveau also sought to break away from, many designers ultimately found the style too romantic and unsuitable for the industrial age.

Art Deco took a radically new direction. Art Nouveau's organic forms made way for clean lines, clear geometry and abstraction. Nature remained an inspiration but was highly simplified and stylised, reflecting an age dominated by speed, technology and modernity.

THE DNA OF ART DECO

The history of Art Deco illustrates how a style born in the interwar period could develop into a global phenomenon. Yet Art Deco is more than just a historic design movement. The style continues to inspire through its unique balance between luxury and simplicity, between ornamentation and structure. This distinctive interplay of elements remains a rich source of inspiration for contemporary architects, interior designers and enthusiasts.

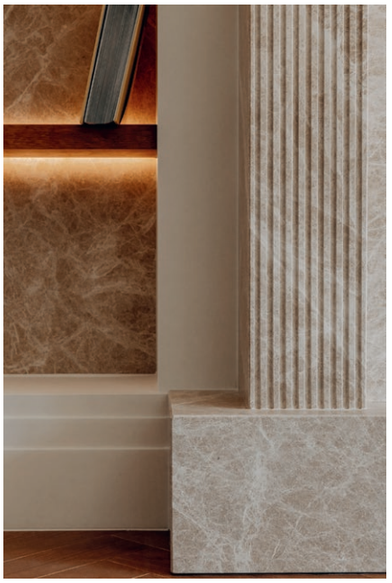
A close look at the projects in this book reveals five fundamental principles, each applied in different ways. Together, they create the DNA of an architectural language that continues to captivate and inspire so many today.

1. COLOUR

From deep emerald green and peacock blue to soft, neutral hues, Art Deco is not confined to a single colour palette. The various interiors are connected by a sense of richness, contrast and layering. Colour is used to create character and depth.

2. MATERIALS & TEXTURE

Velvet, lacquer, natural stone, glass, decorative wallpaper, inlays and bas-reliefs create the tangible opulence that epitomises the style. Art Deco engages not only the eye but all the senses. Materials are purposefully combined to express contrast and refinement.

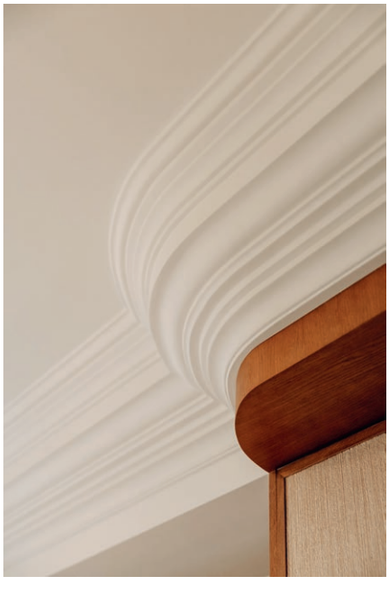


3. RHYTHM & GEOMETRY

Vertical lines, stepped compositions, graphic patterns and geometric shapes form the unmistakable interplay of lines so characteristic of Art Deco. They inject structure into a space and add a sense of movement. Their repetition creates a carefully orchestrated rhythm that recurs throughout the projects featured in this book.

4. LIGHT & SHADOW

Art Deco brings surfaces to life. Reliefs and architectural details catch the light in various ways, creating a continual play of light and shadow. This gives walls and ceilings added depth, while allowing the space to evolve with the rhythm of the day.



5. ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

Beyond colour and material, architectural elements often define the identity of an interior. Wall panels and mouldings, cornices, ceiling compositions and other architectural interventions add proportion, depth and character. They form the framework around which an Art Deco interior is composed. This idea of architecture as ornamentation lies at the heart of the design philosophy of Orac, expert in architectural elements, and is visible throughout the projects that follow.

ART DECO SOUL IN A EUROPEAN RETREAT

On the stately De Lairessestraat in Amsterdam, in one of the city's most popular neighbourhoods, this house is tucked away among wide avenues in a quiet, natural green setting. When it was purchased, this 100-year-old flat bore little resemblance to the modern Art Deco gem it is today. It was more like a run-down student flat, stripped of all character. There were also very few elements worth preserving. Yet it was precisely that lack of character that proved to be the perfect blank canvas for a new owner with a keen eye for colour and art, and a great passion for Art Deco.

From San Francisco – where he resides part of the time – the owner established a transatlantic collaboration with designers Joyce and Dax from the design studio Nicemakers. The brief was clear: this flat was to become a modern Art Deco fairytale, a space that reflects the owner's personality and provides a home for his collection of treasures.

And it has become a fairytale. Joyce and Dax scoured flea markets, auctions and antique fairs throughout Europe searching for characterful Art Deco pieces. Among the finds were a striking 1960s stained-glass lamp in Art Deco style, which adorns a corner of the drawing room, and the French Art Deco sideboard in the dining room. The modern lamp above the dining table and the chairs by Fausto Bontempi blend beautifully with the historical pieces, as if they were made for one another.

The original doors, windows and a stained-glass skylight that had stood the test of time were preserved. Geometric and stepped mouldings, as well as rosette detailing, were added to the ceilings. New inlaid parquet floors were installed along with a revised layout that enhances, rather than interrupts, the sense of a living museum from room to room. Each space was given a carefully curated colour palette, with furniture in exotic woods and the occasional jewel tone providing contrast. The designers were given carte blanche when it came to the colour palette, as long as they steered away from green, which to the owner felt too reminiscent of 1960s hospitals.

The bas-relief on the fireplace in the drawing room can rightly be called a pièce de résistance. Handcrafted in plaster of Paris by an Italian artist, it depicts the Amsterdam landscape in a characteristically stylised Art Deco manner. A second relief in the dining room presents a contemporary interpretation of the sunburst, a signature element from Art Deco.

The result is an interior that seamlessly combines the elegance and stylisation of Art Deco with a contemporary collection of art and design, creating a sophisticated and deeply personal sanctuary.

GEOMETRIC AND STEPPED MOULDINGS, AS WELL AS ROSETTE DETAILING, WERE ADDED TO THE CEILINGS.

A HOMAGE TO ART DECO

Historical charm can be the decisive factor when buying a house, yet sometimes that charm comes with a historic layout and sparse daylight. This Parisian flat, built in 1930, had a solid architectural foundation but required extensive renovation to turn it into a home for the young family who had fallen in love with it. Interior designer and scenographer Léonie Alma Mason, head of LA.M Studio, got to work.

The layout was completely reworked to maximise natural light throughout the interior, with the reception rooms now forming a harmonious whole. Entertaining guests plays an important role in French culture, which inspired Léonie to create a rotunda as a place to meet and gather in the house. The private areas, such as the bedroom and bathrooms, are arranged around the rotunda, which can itself be used flexibly as a study or reception room.

In the vestibule, she created three generous openings, framed by elegant, stepped cornices and wall mouldings that both break up the neutral walls and inject character. Additional stepped moulded frames around the door jambs create a strong play of shadows, injecting depth and texture. This gives the door openings an architectural and monumental allure. The door is framed as an object in space, as it were, making the transition between the two rooms more deliberate. Stepped skirting boards and cornices add detail and rhythm, further elevating the finish.

The black and red palette honours the Art Deco aesthetic, while soft white hues, bespoke rugs and warm walnut accents form a welcoming counterbalance. Every element in the flat – from the bespoke bedside tables to the bathroom furniture on stylised columns – exudes the timeless elegance of Art Deco and forms a wonderful homage to the design style of the building in which the family has now found a home.