

ART DECO

(Article by Suzanne Waters British Architectural Library, RIBA)

BUILDINGS IN ART DECO STYLE

Strand Palace Hotel foyer, London, completed 1930. Credit: Architectural Press Archive / RIBA Library Photographs Collection

New York skyline with the Chrysler and Chanin buildings, 1930s. Credit: Ralph Deakin / RIBA Library Photographs Collection

A decorative style of bold geometric shapes and bright colours, it encompassed furniture, textiles, ceramics, sculpture and architecture. The term was coined after the Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriel Modernes (International Exhibition of Modern and Industrial Decorative Arts) held in Paris in 1925. The style spread across Europe to the United States and Britain, where it became a favourite for building types associated with the modern age: garages, airports, cinemas, swimming pools, office buildings, department stores, power stations and factories. There were overlaps with Modernism, with the use of clean lines and minimal decoration, but the style also lent itself well to buildings associated with entertainment, providing glamorous interiors for hotels, restaurants and luxury apartments. Lighting was also a key feature with much made of neon strip lighting to emphasise the streamlined nature of the designs.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN AN ART DECO BUILDING:

Streamlining

Bold shapes

Colour

Geometric designs

Decoration