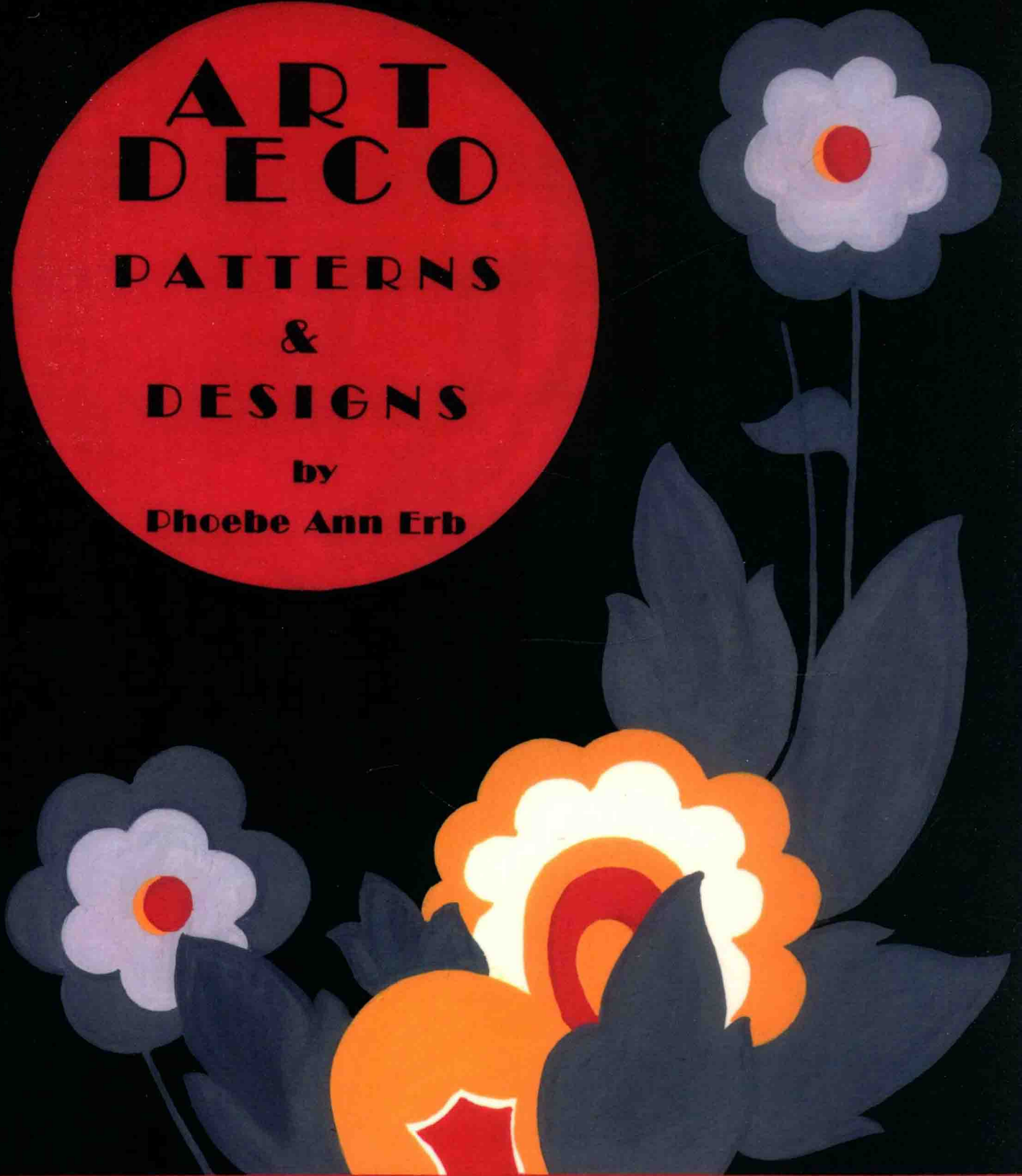


**ART
DECO
PATTERNS
&
DESIGNS**
by
Phoebe Ann Erb



ART DECO PATTERNS & DESIGNS

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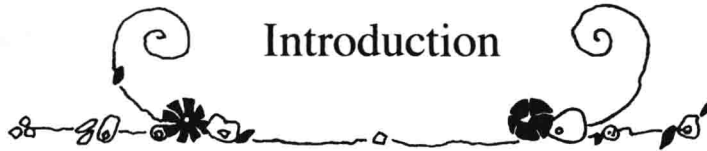
First Printing 2003
Second Printing 2012



1920s Art Deco card

Phoebe Ann Erb worked as a textile print designer from the 1970s until the mid 2000s as methods of creating and selling designs changed. She also taught a studio course, “Designing Textiles for the Commercial Industry.” She currently creates collage works, including handmade artist books, using the remnants from her years of textile designing. She collects, exhibits and writes about printed handkerchiefs and aprons of the mid-twentieth century. Phoebe is the author of four other titles in the International Design Library®, *Floral Designs from Traditional Printed Handkerchiefs*, *Medieval Floral Designs*, *William Morris Patterns & Designs*, and *Arts and Crafts Patterns & Designs*.

Introduction



IN ITS HEYDAY between World Wars I and II, Art Deco influenced the design of everything from perfume bottles, cigarette cases and tea pots to book bindings, movie marquees, skyscrapers and ocean liners. With its clean, simple shapes, Art Deco was in sharp contrast to the languid, intertwining floral images of Art Nouveau in its waning years, just before World War I.

After that devastating war came a resurgence of optimism and creativity, particularly in the decorative arts; and the bold geometric trend continued, reaching its zenith in 1925 at the Exposition des Arts Décoratifs in Paris. At the beginning, it was simply called “modern.” Today, all the world knows it as “Art Deco.”

When the war was over, the French government, wanting to reassert Paris as world arbiter of fashion, proposed an international trade show. The organizers decided that the show should cover a wide array of industrial products and decorative arts. The entry requirements specified wares that displayed genuine originality and expressed both a modern sensibility in design and use of new materials like chrome, rayon and plastics. Reproductions of historical styles were not allowed.

France, with pavilions of opulent objects—furniture in ebony and ivory by Jacques Émile Ruhlmann, works in gold, silver and bronze by Jean Puiforcat and Edgar Brandt, for example—dominated the Exposition. Germany was not invited and the United States, claiming a lack of avant garde products, declined to attend, but thirteen other European countries, plus Japan, participated. The show was a great success, and crowds, including American buyers, flocked to visit the alluring displays.

The 1925 Paris Exposition spawned many illustrated publications. Art publishers released stimulating portfolios of designs by surface designers such as E. A. Seguy and Jacques Camus. Magazines published the fashions of Paul Pioret and the chic illustrations of George Barbier, Paul Iribe and others. The Art Deco mode rapidly spread far and wide. As a result, though Art Deco is at heart a French fashion, it evolved in different places and directions at the same time. Today, Art Deco societies concerned with preservation are active in places as far apart as Miami Beach, Florida, Napier, New Zealand, Durban, South Africa and Boston, Massachusetts.

Art Deco, a complex style, drew its inspiration from a buffet of eclectic ideas. The Ballets Russes had arrived in Paris in 1905. The intense colors of the costumes and stage settings of Leon Bakst, the unfamiliar music of Rimsky-Korsakov and the dazzling choreography had a transforming effect on fashion and decor. Naively drawn flower shapes, painted without shading in flat brilliant colors, and other stylized motifs such as sunrays, fountains, gazelles, ibex and the human form appeared soon on fabrics and home furnishings.



The 1922 discovery of King Tut’s tomb, three years before the Exposition, inspired the Art Deco Nile vogue, especially in jewelry and architecture. Westernized Egyptian motifs graced entrances, and movie palaces were decorated in the Egyptian manner. The ziggurats of ancient Assyrian pyramids and designs from the Mayans and Aztecs are recurring themes in Art Deco.

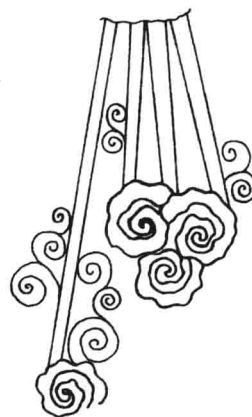
Art Deco is also replete with broken abstraction and geometric concepts borrowed from Cubist painters. Swept away by Fauvism, colors were wild and bright, as epitomized in the ceramics of Clarice Cliff in England. The old dull hues of gray and drab navy blues, prune, khaki and olive turned to begonia rose, cerise, jonquil, Delft blue, jade, emerald, silvery white and a shade of orange called tango.

A free-spending, well-to-do class in love with the automobile had emerged from the war, and it sparked the let-loose attitude of the Roaring Twenties. Frenzy infused the age. As the poet Edna St. Vincent Millay put it:

My candle burns at both ends;
It will not last the night;
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends,
It gives a lovely light!

The Art Deco fashion reflected the rebellion against staid proprieties and was often deliberately outrageous. Modern women wore long, elaborate Cleopatra earrings, with their hair cut daringly short at the barbershop. Men wore two-toned shoes embellished with sunburst motifs. Motion and speed are felt in the soaring curves, streamlined chevrons, hard-edged straight lines and lightening-bolt zigzags of Art Deco.

In the United States, Art Deco developed as a populist style, permeating all levels of society. Designers of the era attempted to bridge the gap between art and industry that had earlier concerned William Morris and others who essentially rebelled against mass production. Consequently, their goods were too expensive for most people. In the 1920s and '30s, manufacturers realized the value that artistic design added to their machine-made products and established design departments. They hired artists who were trained at new industrial art schools to understand the demands of assembly line mass-production. This new breed of artists—the commercial in-house designer—generally was not given credit for the designs. Instead, mass market products were primarily known, as today, by brand name. In-house artists copied high-fashion Art Deco—some say they vulgarized the style—in myriad goods made of cheaper materials and sold in Woolworth's and similar stores.



American culture—the energetic rhythms of jazz, the glitzy illusions of Hollywood and the grandeur of American skyscrapers—had a lasting effect on the look of Art Deco. Although the United States had not participated in the 1925 show, today many American examples of the period between the two World Wars are considered Art Deco icons: Miami Beach, Radio City Music Hall and, most beautiful of all, the Chrysler Building in New York City, completed on the eve of the October 1929 Wall Street crash.

During the Depression, Art Deco forms became more stark, blocky, stripped-down and streamlined. This “Depression look” came to symbolize the so-called machine age. Henry Dreyfuss, Norman Bel Geddes and Raymond Loewy were industrial designers who perfected the idiom, and their household appliances, cars and locomotives are considered landmarks of twentieth-century design.

By 1939, on the brink of World War II, Art Deco suddenly went out of fashion and in the next decades the style was derided as frivolous and superficial. It was dismissed as kitsch and commercially driven with no guiding artistic principles, in contrast to those espoused by contemporary movements like the Bauhaus in Germany, de Stijl in Holland or Le Corbusier. Le Corbusier, in fact, had participated in the 1925 Paris Exposition, but had remained aloof, setting

his pavilion in a far corner and writing a diatribe against the entire range of decorative arts, especially those shown at the Exposition.

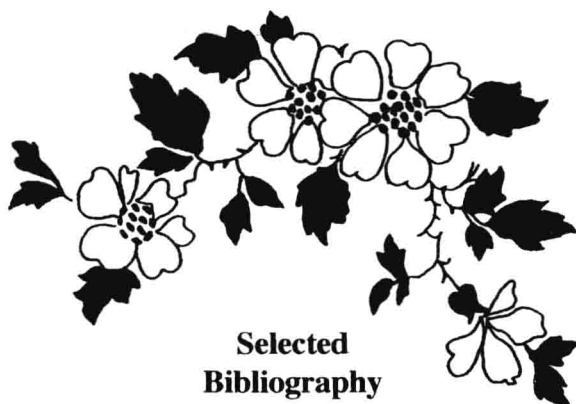
In 1966, the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris held a retrospective of the 1925 Exposition, which heralded an Art Deco revival. Almost overnight, Art Deco went from being an embarrassment, as one writer put it, to becoming a historical period worthy of study. In a review of the museum exhibition, a British journalist abbreviated the title Exposition des Arts Décoratifs to coin the term Art Deco, which has been used ever since.

A second exhibition, assembled largely from the private collections of Barbara Streisand and Andy Warhol, was held in 1970 in New York. Then, in 1971, the Brooklyn Museum installed a permanent Art Deco period room. In the same year the Minneapolis Institute of Arts displayed nearly 1500 items—furniture, ceramics, silver, textiles, costumes, paintings and graphics from the years between the wars. And in another decade scarred by strife, the Vietnam War of the 1970s, Art Deco enjoyed another go-around as “mod” fashion in the Pop Art Age of Aquarius.

In March 2003, “Art Deco 1910-1939” opened at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, traveling afterwards to Toronto, San Francisco and Boston. Billed as a “blockbuster” show, Art Deco was happily bound, yet again, to influence trends in art and design in upcoming years.

P.A.E.

For T, K & G



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Note: The images on the following pages were culled from books as well as trade journals, magazines and art manuals of the era, including *Arts and Decoration*, *Design* and *The Ladies Home Journal*, among others. The drawings represent details from architecture, advertising graphics, ceramics, furnishings, textiles, jewelry, fashion plates and product packaging.

Most of the drawings have been enlarged or reduced for the purposes of this book. Identification includes source, designer and country of origin, if known, and exact or approximate dates.

Plate Descriptions



Front cover Metal talcum tin.

Woolworth's. Late 1920s

Back cover Rouge-and-powder metal compact.

Woolworth's. Late 1920s

Copyright page Design from *Collection Décors et Couleurs*, Album I.G. Valmier, c. 1930

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