

Art Deco Shanghai

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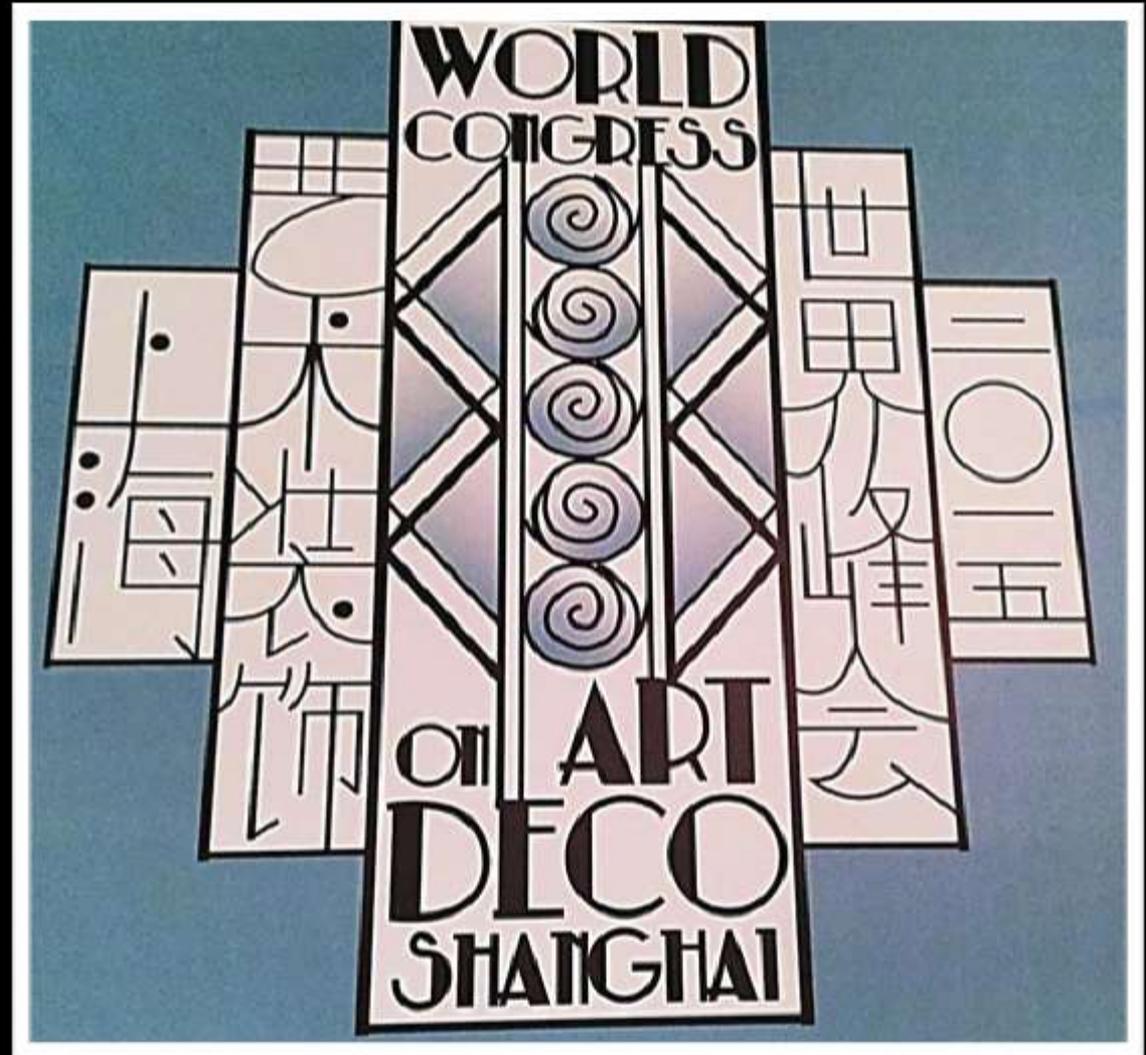
Art Deco Shanghai

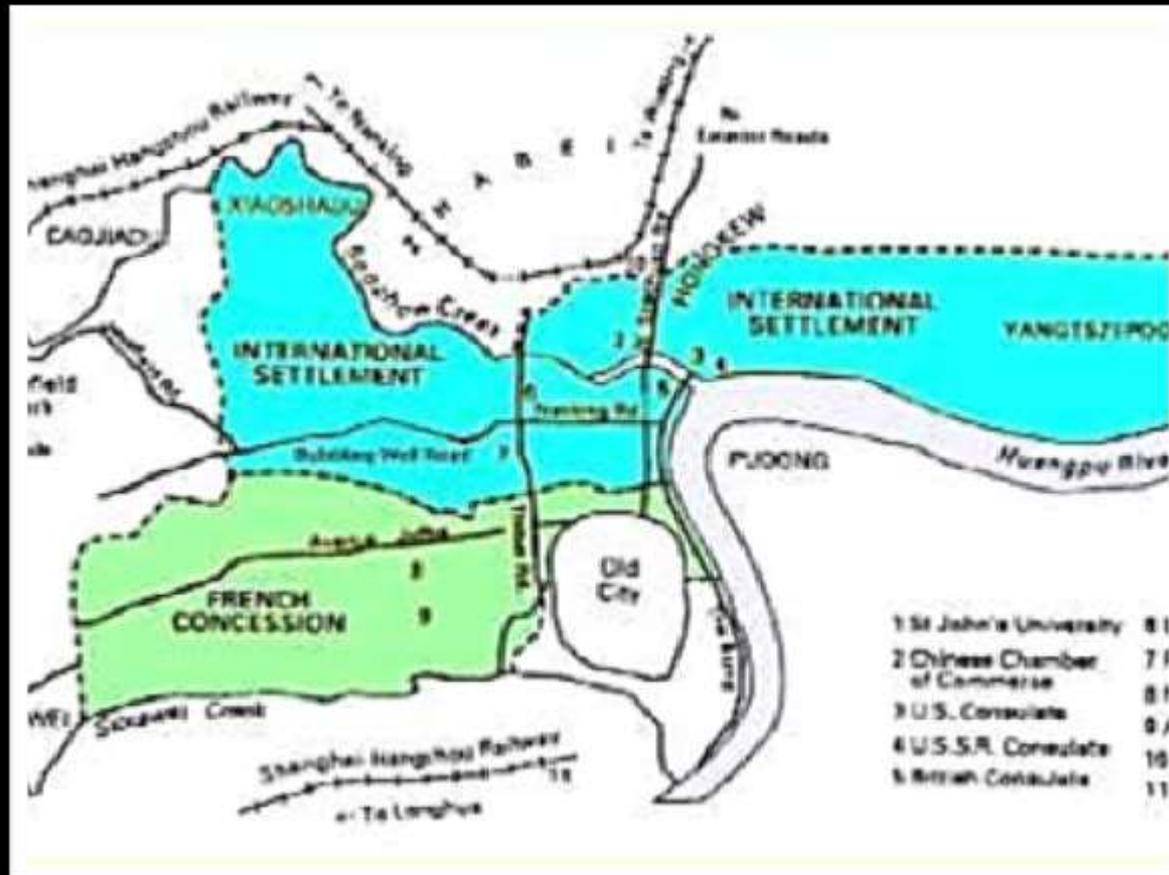
View of the Bund in the inter-war period from a vintage poster



Why Shanghai?

- China's largest treaty port and foreign concession
- concentration of capital and booming economy
- Unique in China: foreign law applied; protection for wealthy; island of stability until Pearl Harbour; always a place where money churned.
- Architectural style depended on the client; fit well with classical Chinese design
- Today, one of the largest collections of Art Deco buildings in the world.





Map of Shanghai in the inter-war period

Foreign laws applied in the International Settlement and the French Concession providing a stable business environment favoured by many Chinese. Different voltages, police, power, fire brigades, trolley systems

Until 1945, traffic on left; according to locals, chaos ever since;

Bank of China (1941), architects Luke Him Sau and Palmer & Palmer

What is Art Deco?

Romantic rather than
academic term.

Associated with terms like:
modern, streamlined,
luxurious, speed, futuristic,
hedonism.

Term dates to 1960s, but
linked back to 1925 Paris
Exposition.

Best seen as a continuum
with Bauhaus style at
extreme end.



Shanghai population

1920 - 2 million

1940 - 4.5 million

Foreigners - less than 4%

5th largest city in the world.

Waves of growth

following colonial powers actions and

events in Europe:

- **First Wave: 1842** - UK businessmen after end of Opium Wars and opening of Treaty Ports; **1863**: UK-USA create the International Settlement; French Concession separate;
- **Second Wave**: early 1900s: Jews fleeing Russian pogroms;
- **Third Wave**: post 1917 - remnants of the defeated White Russian Army; 25,000 by end of 1930s; «The White Russians made the city sing and dance.»
- **Fourth Wave**: 1930s - Jews fleeing war and persecution in Europe.



The Cathay Hotel (1929), architect George Wilson

Now the Fairmont Peace Hotel. The first ultra-modern structure on the Bund. Originally included shops, offices and apartments as well as the hotel.

Cathay (Peace) Hotel - Interiors

A reproduction Lalique figure



The shopping arcade



The Cathay (Peace Hotel)

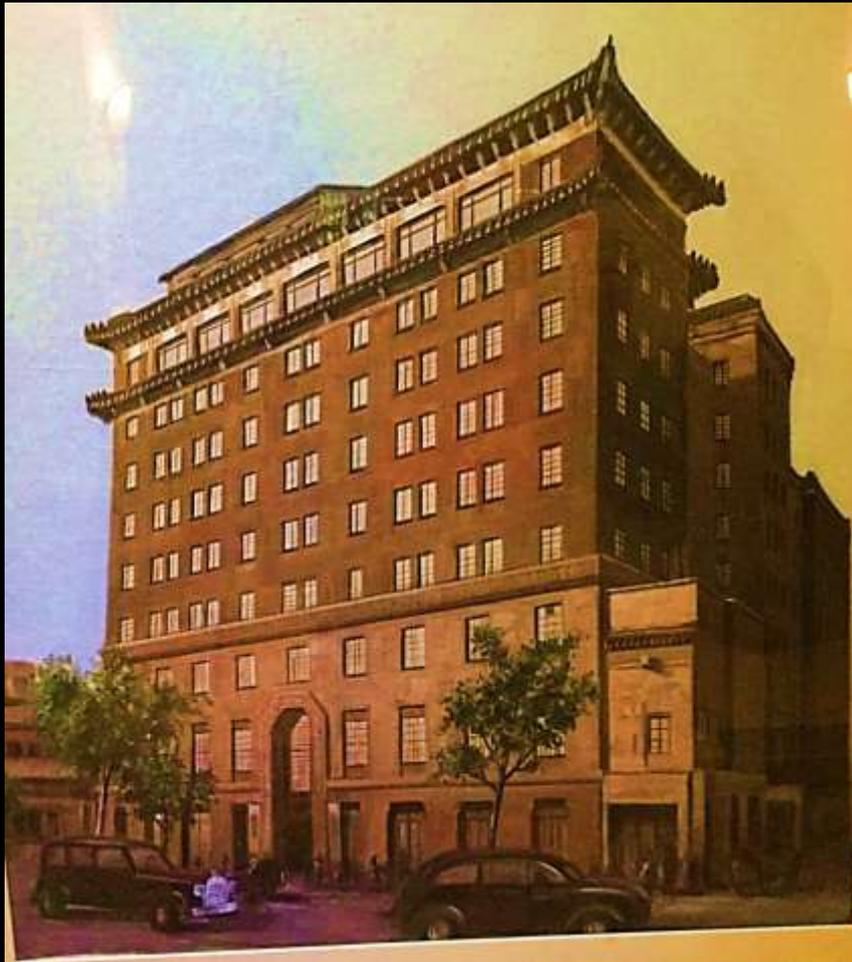
**Ballroom with original decor and
spring dance floor**



**Sir Victor Sassoon, owner, with
Greer Garson and Laurence Olivier**



Jiaqing Metropole Hotel (former YMCA) (1931) Architects: Li Jinpei, Fan Wenzhao, Zhao Shen





Yangtze Hotel (1934), architect Li Pan. One of the most important hotels designed, built, and owned by Chinese.

A Chinese clientele flocked to the ballroom to hear the all-Chinese «Clear Wind Jazz Band» and resident songstress Yau Li sing «Rose, Rose, I Love You,» virtually an anthem for old Shanghai.

The Park Hotel (1934), architect Laszlo Hudec

Inspired by the stepped
skyscrapers of New York.

At 20 stories, it was the tallest
building in all of Asia and
remained so until the 1960s.

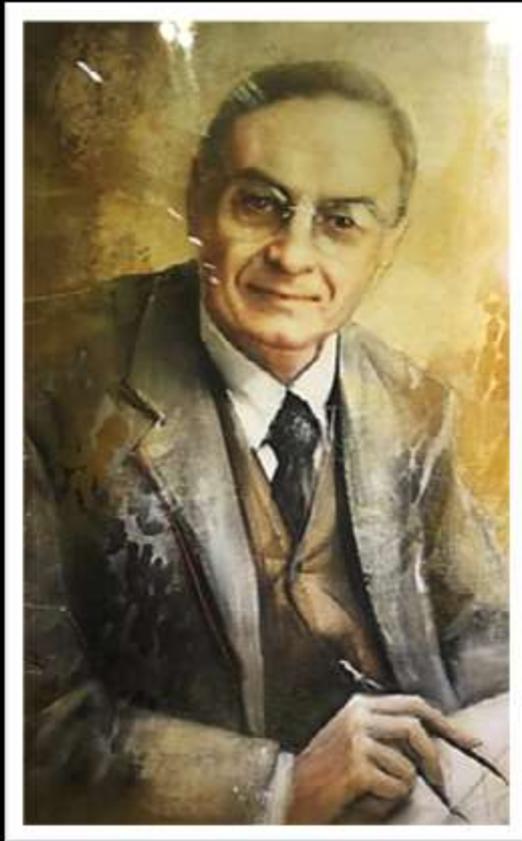
Financed by Chinese capital and a
source of pride among the
increasingly successful Chinese
business community in the 1930s.

Located across the street from the
race track, now the Peoples' Park.



The Park Hotel (contd.)

Architect Laszlo Hudek



Suite in the Park Hotel





The Park Hotel lobby (ground zero in Shanghai)

Restored to its original state and preserving decorative features such as the balcony railings.



The Park Hotel shortly after its construction showing the race track location

The race track was slated to become a giant bomb shelter in the 1960s, but fortunately was saved as the People's Park, a rare green space in central Shanghai.

Wing On Department Store – New Tower (1933), architect Elliott Hazzard

Recalls the Woolworth Building in N.Y. and visible like a beacon to shoppers. Owned by the Wing brothers, originally from Canton, who made their fortune in Australia in market gardens and fruit plantations.





Sun Company Department Store (1934), architects Kwan, Chu and Yang

Featured China's first escalator. Last of the «Big Four» on Nanjing Road and the largest and most modern of Shanghai's department stores.



Eddington House (1935), architect Eric Cumine

Horizontal and vertical lines, stepped-back shoulders, and curved balconies give a futuristic feel. Saved from destruction as it was the former residence of the writer Eileen Chang (1939-42 and 1945-7).



Avenue Apartments (1932), architect Laszlo Hudec

Using sleek curves and ornamental restraint, the architect incorporated Chinese characters in pinjun script as a decorative element and to record his name.

**Medhurst Apartments
(1934), architects Davis,
Gilbert and Co.**

Note the Vertically oriented «speed-lines» in alternating dark and light tones and culminating in five dramatic «fins» at the roofline, adding energy to the facade.

Considered a prestigious location and quality construction, but needing renovation.



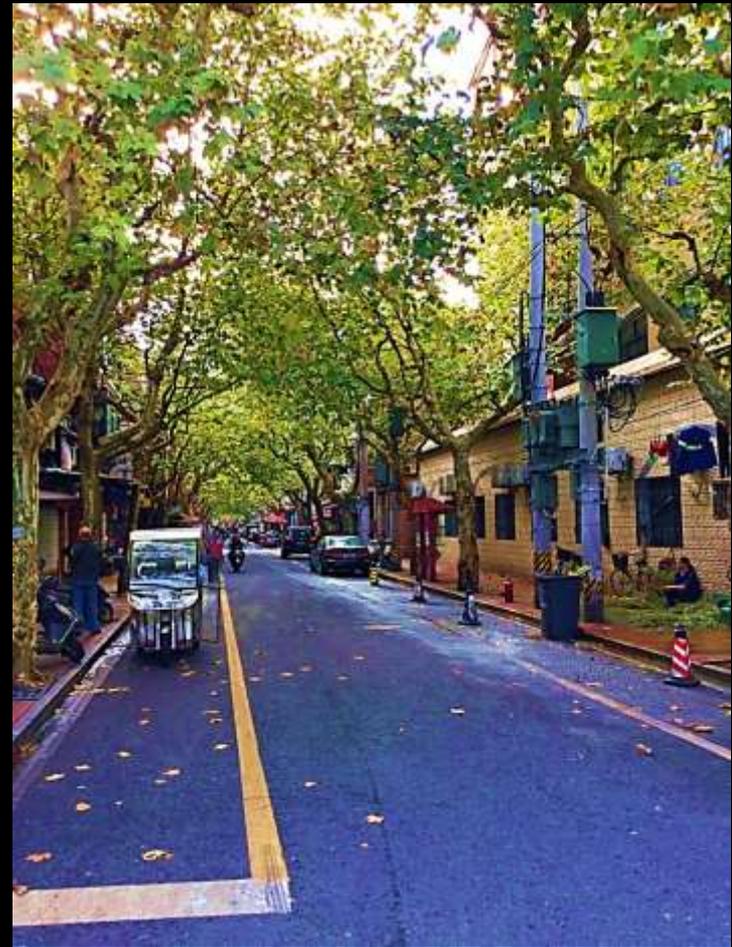
Broadway Mansions (1934), architects Palmer and Turner

A landmark for visitors arriving by ship. By far the tallest building near the Bund and in contrast to most of its neighbours, it added a new element to the skyline. Today, it is a hotel run by the government and needs renovation.



The French Concession

An area which has maintained its colonial-era streetscapes. The sycamore or plane trees are replaced as required



The former French Club or le Cercle Sportif (1926), architect Paul Vesseyre. Now the Okura Garden Hotel



Le Cercle Sportif - interior

The ballroom's ceiling verrière is unique and its survival miraculous



Interiors have been restored to their original Art Deco scheme



**Grovesnor House (1930),
architects Palmer and
Turner**

With modern conveniences, excellent location, green gardens, and gold-textured brick exterior, this was always among the most desirable addresses. Classical symmetry, vertical linearity, and stepped-back roofline are typical Art Deco features. Home to many foreign diplomats, including Canada's Consul General.



Private Homes

The Pei Family Mansion

Dragon Staircase: «The going up dragon means you will succeed.»





The «Woo Villa» (1939) , architect Laszlo Hudec

Designed as unique, luxurious, and cutting edge, Hudec's futuristic masterpiece anticipates mid-century modern. Now an urban planning institute.



Rong Densheng residence (1939), architect Alexandre Leonard

The Rong family was one of the wealthiest in China, but lost everything after the 1949 revolution. The building now serves as a music school. Located in the former French Concession.

Lane Neighbourhoods or «lilong»

These covered large areas of the downtown until the 1980s construction boom

Art Deco style found its way into the lanes by the 1930s



Art Deco in popular neighbourhoods

- Usually just one entrance to the main street leading to a matrix of internal lanes.



Popular Neighbourhoods (contd.)

Lilongs remain popular, but
under threat of re-development



Art Deco in the Old City



Shanghai's reputation as the «sin city» of the East was acquired early on. Here, one of the last houses of ill repute for sailors, now a multi-family home.



Nightlife, Fashion and Film



Nightlife, fashion and film

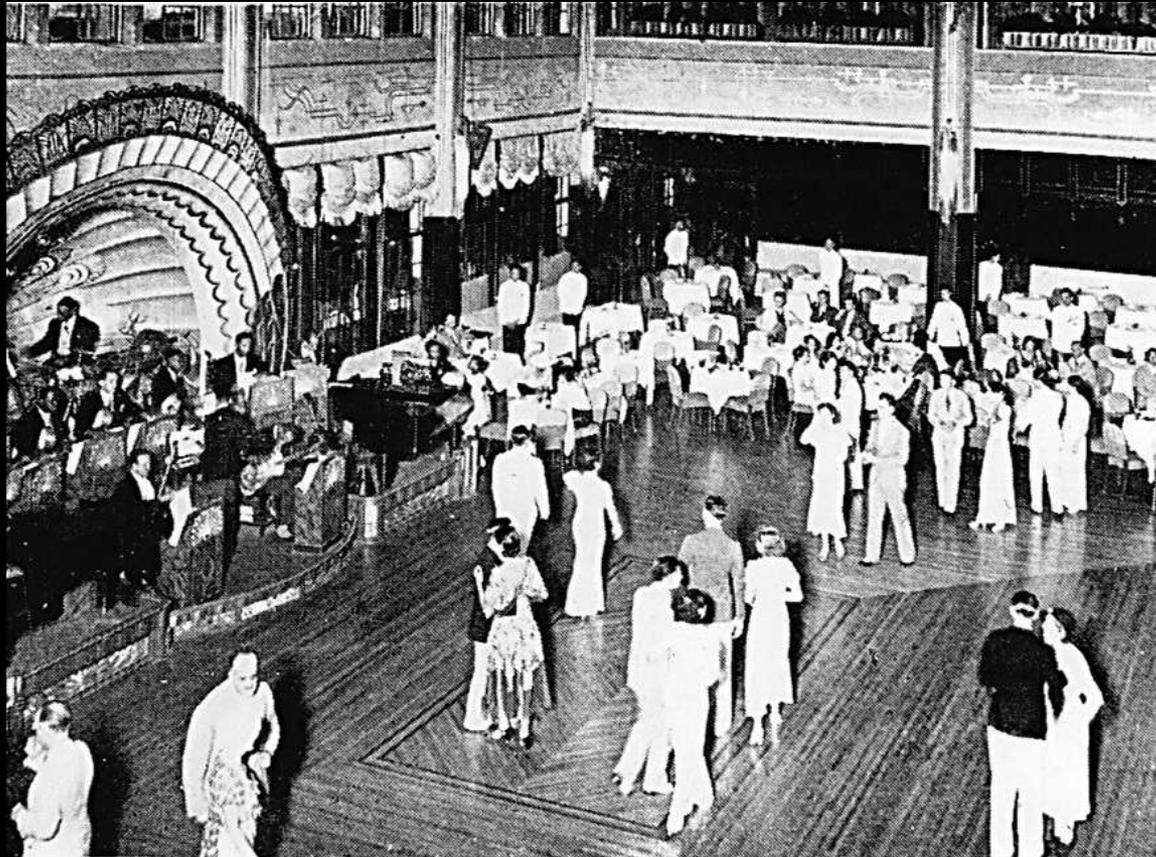


The Hollywood image: Mother Gin Sling's gambling establishment in Josef Von Sternberg's 1941 film *noir* «The Shanghai Gesture»



Paramount Ballroom, (1933) Architect S.C. Young

The glitziest nightclub in the city with a glass dance floor, rotating mirror balls, and flashing coloured lights. Now under renovation, little of the original interior remains.



Dancing the foxtrot at the Majestic Hotel 1929

According to author Andrew Field, this shows Whitey Smith's band playing "Nighttime in Old Shanghai."

See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6g8yjzPD5cs>



Majestic Theatre (1941), architect Robert Fan

The architect studied at the University of Pennsylvania, graduating in 1921. One of the premier performance venues in old Shanghai.



Chekiang Theatre (1930s), architect Laszlo Hudec

Assymetrical facade. The railings evoke thunderbolts.



Interior of the Grand Theater, architect Laszlo Hudec

The architect took into account the irregular lot to create a «cashew» shaped lobby, which has maintained its grandeur.

Fashion - the *qipao*

Contemporary



Vintage Poster



The Chinese term for this style of furniture was «mo deng» or «modern»

Chinese Deco furniture for the salon and office



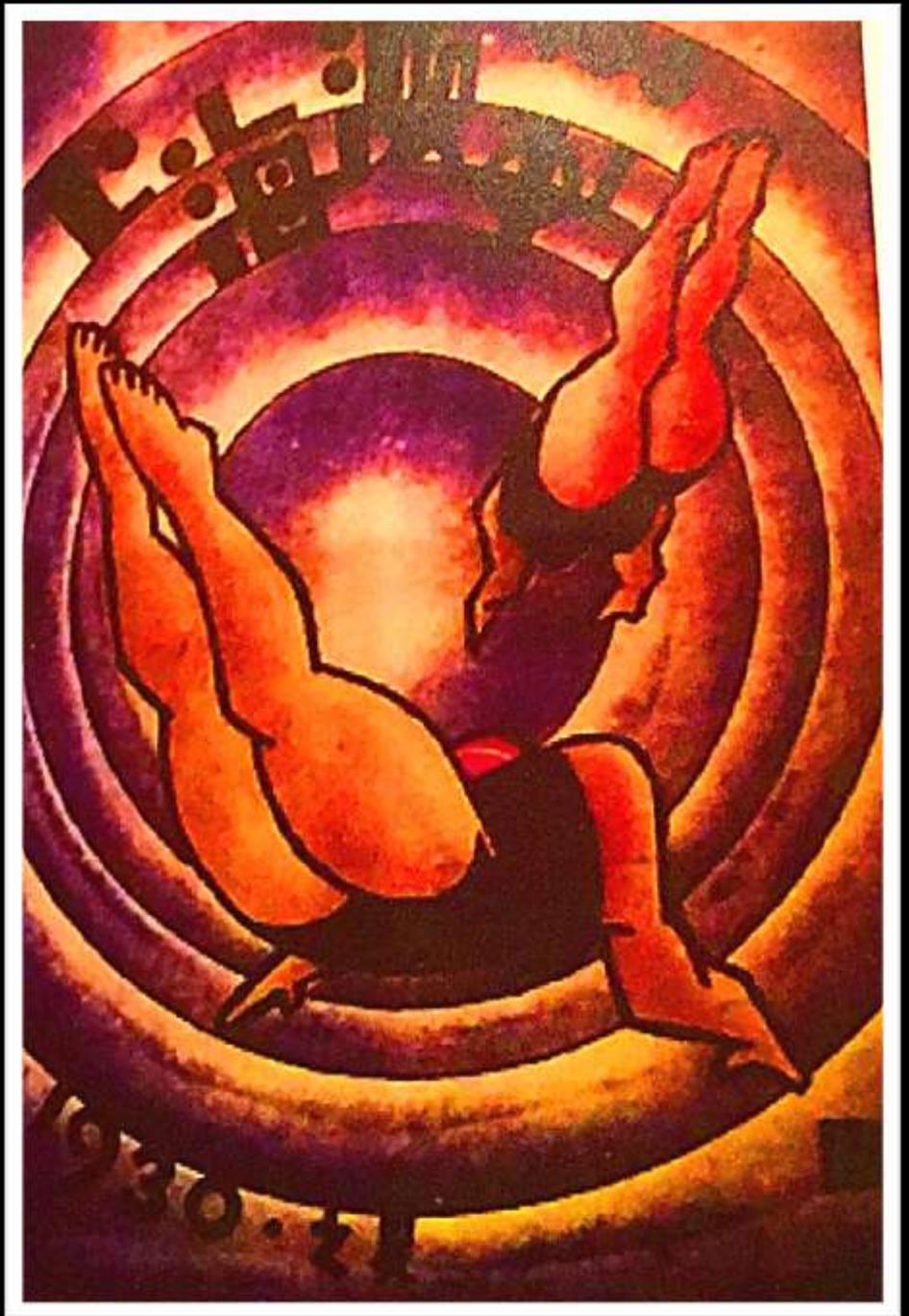
**Entrance to the Denis
Apartments (1928),
architect Eric Cumine**

Bronze Deco elements
embelish simple entrance
halls.



Chinese Graphic Art in Deco Style

Cover of Shanghai's
Manhua magazine
(1930) showing the
new «sporty» woman
and Chinese
characters in a Deco
style.





1939 Lincoln Zephyr – another survivor of the period

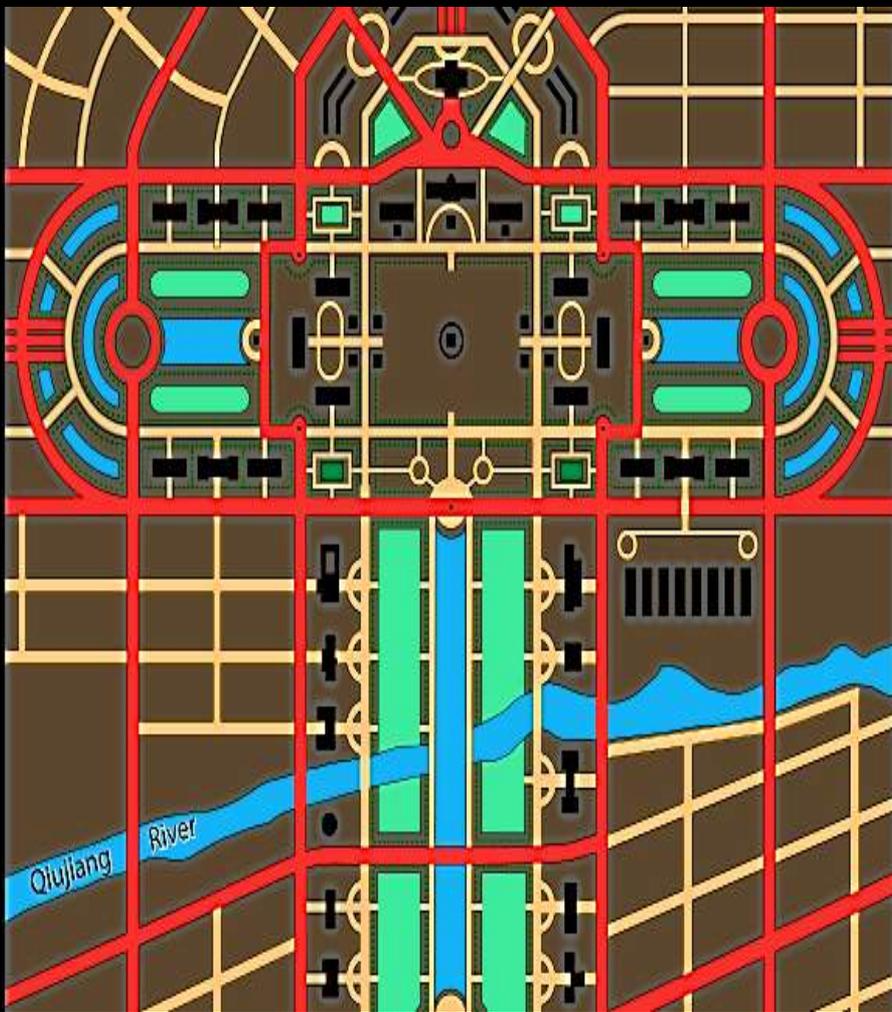
Considered the first popular streamlined car, accounting for 80% of Lincoln's sales in 1939. Note the headlights and running board integrated into the body, conveying a classic look among cars of its generation.

Chinese Art Deco - The Greater Shanghai Plan

In July 1927, the Nationalist Government headquartered in Nanking established the Shanghai Special City Govt. The area had been earmarked in 1922 by Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Chinese Republic, with a view to Shanghai becoming a global commercial centre.

The former Shanghai Municipal Museum (1935), architect Dayou Dong.





East Meets West: The Greater Shanghai Plan

The urban planners and architects included Americans, Germans, and Chinese trained abroad. Their inspiration came from the planned urban utopia of Ebenezer Howard's *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*. But the guidelines were to design in traditional Chinese style. <http://www.shanghaiartdeco.net>

Greater Shanghai Plan (contd.)

**Jiangwan Stadium – 1935, architect
Dayou Dong (capacity 35,000)**



Gymnasium





The China Civil Aviation Association building.

Photo: John Meckley

<http://www.shanghaiartdeco.net> .



Contemporary Art Deco: Planters along the Bund with Deco Wave Pattern

Compatible with the architecture, they also prevent unauthorized parking and preserve space for the 140 million tourists who crowd into Shanghai annually.

The Peninsula Hotel (2005) – luxury in a contemporary Art Deco design on the Bund



Contemporary Art Deco: The Peninsula Hotel (2005)

Bronze Elevator Doors



Lobby Area



Conclusion

- Shanghai's Art Deco built heritage forms an integral part of the history of China's modernization.
- There is growing interest within China in preserving this architecture. Some laws and regulations are in place.
- The threat of demolition, however, remains for many of the buildings noted here.

- A unique blend of foreign and Chinese influences, Shanghai's Art Deco buildings have enriched the city's architectural heritage. Their stately presence serves as a tribute to the Chinese architects, engineers, and workman who laboured on them. They have become a source of civic pride.