

WHAT IS ART DECO?

The term Art Deco (an abbreviation of "Arts Decoratif") was coined in the 1960s to define a style that evolved at the 1925 International Exposition of Modern Decorative Arts and spread to the rest of the world over the following fifteen years.

Exhibiting international artists, designers and craftsmen inspired a decorative style that culminated in a streamlined design spreading to the applied arts including jewelry, fashion, appliances, automobiles and ocean liners. However the most obvious manifestation of the style in Western Australia can be seen in its architecture. In the City of Perth examples of the genre can be found in cinemas, hotels, apartments, commercial buildings, hospitals and schools.

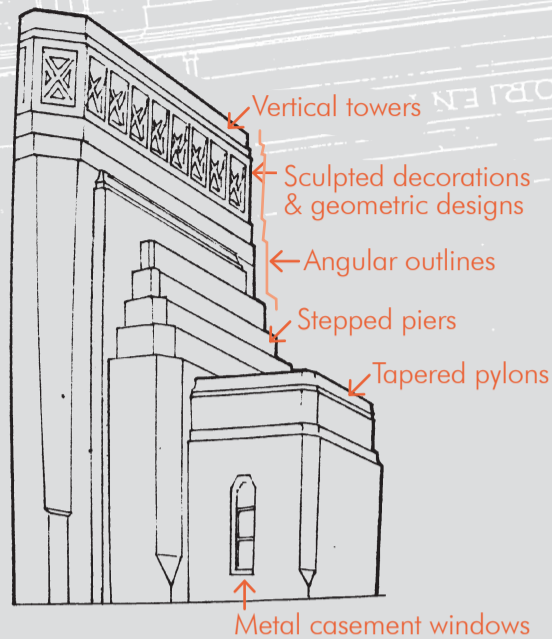
The style mirrored current progress and was evidenced in symbolism of the love of speed, the power of machines, the emancipation of women and the overthrow of old conventions.



The Art Deco built style is characterised by simplified geometric massing, crisp angles and undulating curves, often coupled with restrained, stylised columns, distinctive bold lettering and decorative panels. These can be seen to advantage in a number of Perth's buildings.

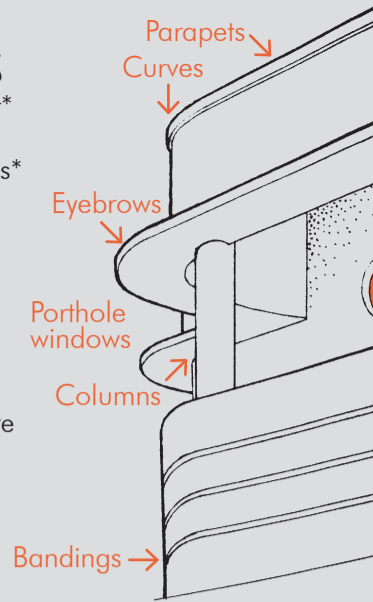
The Gledden Building lantern tower.

Many of the visual components of this complicated style, ranging from the early Egyptian influences through to the geometric stages and later streamlined characteristics are represented within the City of Perth. Below is a guide to help you identify and distinguish, the international and local architectural elements and motifs of Art Deco design that you may discover along the walk.



'STREAMLINE', NAUTICAL OR ART DECO MODERNE INDICATORS

- Roof concealed by parapet*
- Simple geometric shapes*
- Horizontal 'ribbon' windows*
- Long horizontal spandrels*
- Asymmetrical massing*
- Metal window frames*
- Horizontal cantilevered hood or balcony*
- Rounded corners
- Curved or corner windows
- Vertical counterpoint feature
- Glass block panels
- Sandblast decorated glass



A key metaphor of Streamlined Moderne is the nautical feeling expressed in the balconies resembling ship's decks, complete with curved flat roofs, iron railings and circular porthole windows. Another widely found motif is the three recessed horizontal bands that visually tie the building elements together and help to give a sense of unity.



Sandblasted decorated panels which adorned the tea room in the basement of the Gledden building which can no longer be accessed by the public. The designs featured local animals and their surrounding environments. Possums, koalas and black swans appear alongside several depictions of aborigines and native flora.

ART DECO STYLE INDICATORS

(*denotes characteristics particular to the style)

- Stepped skyline*
- Feature tower or finial*
- Emphatic vertical piers or fins*
- Ornament concentrated on upper section
- Monumental entrance
- Stylised & distinctive bold lettering*
- Low relief ornament/ figures
- Parallel line motif (threes)
- Zigzag or chevron motif
- Polished granite, marble or terrazzo
- Vitrolite glass & glazed terracotta tiling
- Patterned brickwork

ART DECO IN PERTH

Key metaphors utilised in decorative panels found on art deco buildings in Perth include uplifting motifs that reflect dramatic and exotic influences embracing the optimistic outlook of the time. The style represented all that was new and modern and was seen to express the hopes and aspirations of a new generation, changed forever by the First World War and the Great Depression.



Perth demonstrates two broad stages of Art Deco architecture through the 1930s. First there were a variety of more conservative styles that incorporated early Deco elements. Then, from the mid 1930s, the gold-based wave of affluence funded a fully modern Art Deco architecture in both new and refurbished buildings. The style extended to the interior décor. Hollywood-inspired cinemas, auto service stations and shop fronts were amongst the most fully developed examples of the style.

This unprecedented period of development came to an end with the onset of the Second World War. Many of the Art Deco buildings have been demolished as the city developed, but this guide features those that remain. The walks will also note other buildings of the 1930s to demonstrate other styles of that time.

More information on all the buildings featured can be obtained from the society.

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Australia's Founding Art Deco Society



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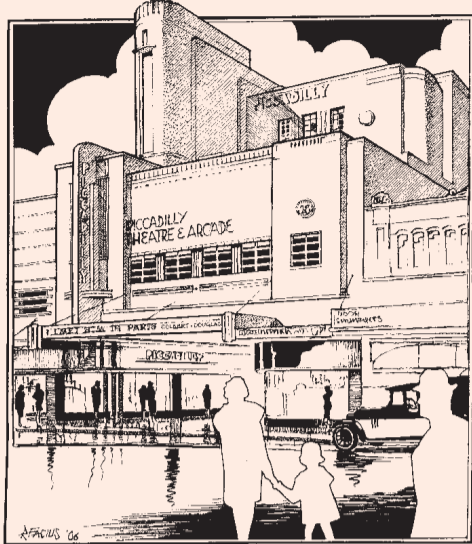
CENTRAL WALK

Gledden Building and Arcade (1937)
723 Hay Street. Architect: Oldham Boas and Ednie Browne. Built for goldmining surveyor Robert Gledden, Perth's only "skyscraper" imitates New York with vertical emphasis and tapering corner tower. Inside the arcade artwork features Australian flora and fauna, Aboriginal motifs and goldfields life. The toterop lamp warned low-flying aircraft including the Bungana mail plane.

Malaysia Airline Building (1930)
56 William Street. Architects: Hobbs, Forbes and Smith. Built for P&O (Orient) who provided a vital shipping link for Perth, this well proportioned Depression era building is stripped to essentials. The Deco interior features sandstone, marble, terrazzo and local jarrah timber, with delicate leadlights, granite dado and fine wrought iron balustrading.

Devon House (1937)
729 Hay Street. Architect: William T. Leighton. This cleverly designed structure with a single room to each floor demonstrates an harmonious balance of horizontal and vertical elements. Note the distinctive Art Deco lettering and decorative motifs.

↓ **Piccadilly Theatre and Arcade** (1938)
704 Hay Street. Architect: William T. Leighton. This nautical moderne style complex, was the most ambitious project of its day, and one of the finest Deco cinemas in Australia. Note the asymmetric architectural massing, the pylon style tower and incised lettering to both frontages to the arcade, speed motifs and relief sculptures feature inside the cinema. Look for the bas relief sporting couple near the Murray Street exit in the arcade.



Former Commonwealth Bank (1930)
Opposite the Murray St. end of Piccadilly Arcade, this building demonstrates continuation of the Classical style in the 1930s.

Plaza Theatre and Arcade (1937)
650 Hay Street. Architect: W.G. Bennett (with Taylor & Soilleux) The first purpose-designed Art Deco cinema in Perth complemented a once elegant shopping arcade. Note the symmetry around the central tower, emphasising its verticality with prominent finial and signage.



Criterion Hotel (1937)
560 Hay Street.
Architects: Hobbs and Forbes.
The site of this last remaining Art Deco hotel in Perth's CBD has been a popular hostelry from colonial days. Notice the "skyscrapers" with flagpoles bracketing grouped windows and openings emphasising vertical lines and contrasts of light. Note the doors, ceilings, stairways, light fittings and leadlight windows.

London Court (1937)
Opposite Plaza arcade in Hay St. This eccentric 'street' in the Mock Tudor style, also popular in the 1930s, was built for goldmining entrepreneur Claude DeBernales, who also financed the Piccadilly.

Lawson Apartments (1937)
4 Sherwood Court. Architects: Hennessy and Hennessy with R. Summerhayes. These apartment towers are of brick, faced with imitation stone. The simple lines and gentle colour contrast with the cinema style. Note the balanced horizontal (decorated) and vertical lines, distinctive corner entry topped by a decorative motif and placement of windows and balconies. Used in WWII as the WA State

Cabinet headquarters, it now houses the Karrakatta Club, Australia's first women's club.

↘ **Phoenix House** (1930)
8-10 The Esplanade. Architect: F.G.B. Hawkins
This classically styled building for Atlas Insurance, once topped by a sculpture of Atlas, exhibits Art Deco elements in the entry. Note the decorated bronze doors, fan-light and original marbled directory, the Deco wall tiles in the foyer, Egyptian-influenced seat, original mail box and light fittings. Door handles throughout feature the Atlas figure.



Talbot Hobbs Memorial Statue (1940)
Riverside Drive, (West of old Perth Port, foot of Barrack St.) Designers: Hobbs Winning and Leighton architects; Sculptor: Edward Kohler. Lt. General Sir J.J. Talbot Hobbs was W.A.'s most distinguished WWI soldier, and a renowned architect. Made of sandstone and granite, the unusually tall Art Deco base supports a bust likeness. Since 1940 the Anzac Day salute has been taken at this point.

Due to development resulting from WA's mining boom, many of the buildings have been altered to varying degrees and some of the interiors mentioned are not always available to the public.

WEST WALK

Harper's Buildings (1937)
810-820 Hay Street (North)
Architects: E & R Summerhayes. Created for the gold mining manager N. Harper, this unusual building features typical Art Deco designs in coloured brick. Note the stepped parapet, chrome plated lettering, horizontal bandings and steel windows. At ground level, note the sandblasted glass doors, and patterned terrazzo floors and stairs.

Newspaper House (1933)
123-135 St George's Terrace. Architects: Hobbs Smith & Forbes. Built of Donnybrook stone, this impressive stripped classical building incorporates Deco elements. Note the central tower and decorated entrance. The interior décor and small shopping arcade were distinctly Deco in character.

McNess Fountain (1931)
Cnr. St George's Terrace & Mount Street. Set in a small shady park, this early Deco Memorial fountain is made of Donnybrook stone. Note the classic art deco detailing and sculpted waterspout face.

→ **First Church of Christ Scientist** (1939)
264 St George's Terrace (opp. Old Barracks Arch) Architects: Ochiltree & Hargreave. This monumental Art Deco church is still used for its original purpose and is in fine original condition. Note the simulated stone exterior, the asymmetric massing of horizontal and vertical elements, and the restrained ornament and detail. Also noteworthy are the stepped recessed entrance, wrought iron grilles, internal fluted columns and decorative plasterwork.

Red Sky Building (mid 1930s)
471 Murray Street (South) Once a motor showroom, built to meet the rising demand for motor vehicles. In true Art Deco style there is asymmetric massing, eyebrow sills above the windows, a parapet with central finial, and horizontal banding.

Milligan and Murray Street Intersection.
Here can be seen distinctly different 1930s styles, built to take advantage of corner sites.

a) NW Cnr: **Home Apartment Building** (1927/2008) This imposing Inter-War Chicago style warehouse was built for the tobacco company WD and HO Wills. The style anticipates the Art Deco period. Note the curved corner parapet with original details, the fine balance between vertical and horizontal elements and the refined arrangement of window shapes.

b) SE Cnr: **West End Apartments** ↓ (1933/1995) Only a façade remains of commercial premises utilised by the Pearl and Dean film company, who made local advertisements to show in local cinemas. The ornamented entry is flanked by Art Deco columns and a typical "eyebrow" stepped parapet above.



c) Milligan Street looking North:

↘ **Former Motor House** (1937/1990)
This bold structure on a triangular block, represents the nautical streamlined Art Deco style, echoing the form of ocean liners. It was originally a garage and motor showroom. Note the curves and the smooth undecorated surface. Recessed horizontal bands originally linked the windows to create a horizontal ribbon effect.



Nine Mary's Restaurant bldg. (1936/2003) Cnr. Hay & Milligan Streets. The façade of the old Hugh Howling pharmacy is now incorporated into a new structure. Note the corner entry, typical raised parapet and sarcophagus shaped windows reflecting an Egyptian influence.

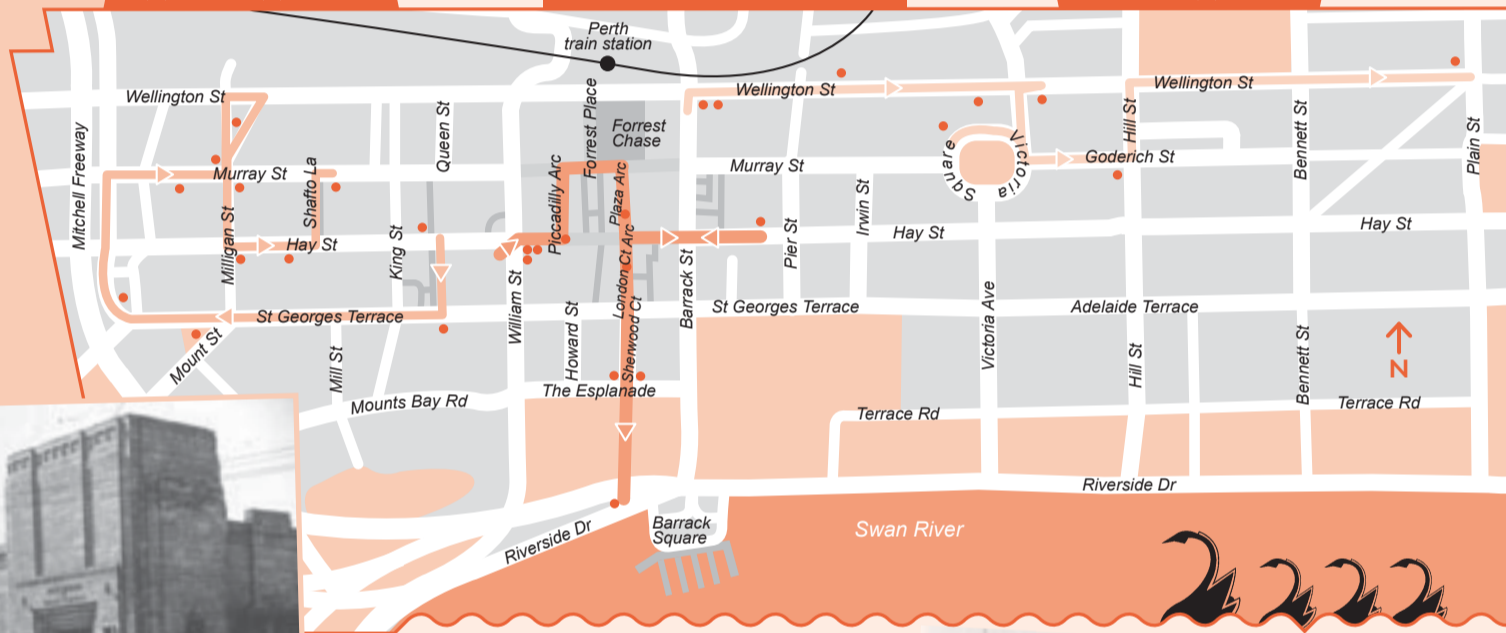
Former Bank of New South Wales Building (mid 1930s/2003) 899-901 Hay Street (South) This elegant building is in the stripped classical style, still popular in the 1930s. Note the Art Deco details in the entrance frame and the simplified Corinthian columns.

Capitol Building / Former Magnet House (c 1930) 393 Murray Street (South) An industrial Art Deco building in which, it is believed, electric motors were made. The simple geometric façade makes clever decorative use of ventilation grids, incised lettering and the relief magnet sculpture on the parapet.

WEST WALK

CENTRAL WALK

EAST WALK



EAST WALK

→ **Taka Japanese Restaurant Cafe** (c1938) Cnr. Barrack and Wellington Streets. The corner curve echoes the original Art Deco styled Masel building. This commercial block with offices above featured a stepped design with balanced vertical and horizontal lines and incised lettering.

Grand Central Backpackers (1884, refurbished c 1930, 1993) 379 Wellington Street (South) The original Grand Hotel was 'modernised' with a minimal Art Deco façade and fine detailing in the interior.

Perth City YHA (1939)
298-300 Wellington St (North)
Architects: Ochiltree & Hargreave.
Once the St John's Ambulance Building, this symmetrical structure is faced with simulated stone in the Monumental Art Deco style. Note the prominent central tower and stripped back sculptural detailing. The Art Deco interior is mostly intact.

Royal Perth Hospital, Block A (1939-1956) opened June 1948. Wellington Street (South) Architect: A.E. Clare (Govt. Archt.) This was the largest government building project of its time. The essentially simple form features a large Deco entrance portico featuring ceramic tiles on curved wings and cinema-style recessed light fittings. Note the continuous horizontal line of the cantilevered balconies balancing the verticals.

Country Health Services Building (1936) 189 Wellington Street (South) This dignified building, (the Perth Dental Hospital until 2001), is of red brick with terracotta tiled roof, typical of Perth domestic architecture. The simple, symmetrical façade features an impressive entry with Art Deco columns, relief sculpture panels and grilles.

UWA School of Medicine Building (1934) Victoria Square (adjacent to hospital entrance) This modest brick building hints at a conservative Art Deco style. Its simple classical proportions incorporate decorative materials in the tapestry brick arch and the rusticated brick quoins. It was originally the Cancer Clinic for Royal Perth Hospital.

Mercedes College music rooms (1937) →
Cnr. Goderich & Hill Streets
Architects: Cavanagh & Cavanagh. This was once a splendid block of flats when inner city apartment living was a new phenomenon. The building features a bold curve to the corner. Note the intricate sculpted panels with geometric Art Deco designs. The place was given conservation award for its sensitive conversion in 1995 with most internal structure and detailing retained.



↓ **WA Police Traffic Branch** (1934)
Cnr. Wellington & Plain Streets.
Architect: A.E. Clare (Govt. Archt.)
Built as Perth Girls' School, this building received an architectural award for workmanship and use of local materials. The monumental style brick building is rendered to simulate stone, and the pyramidal roofs show Art Deco 'Egyptian' influences. Note the symmetry around the central tower and the balance of vertical and horizontal elements.

