

HOME FRONT JETSET

BY ANDREW MYERS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DEKE ERH AND PATRICK WACK



ART DECO-ED OUT! Shanghai's individual knock on the Art Deco beat.

SHANGHAI SURPRISE! Who knew? The world's fastest growing city is also home to prime Art Deco finds

Shanghai in the 1920s and '30s: a global capital of money markets and cosmopolitanism, vortex of vice, and, far less known, mecca of that era's most modern architectural style—Art Deco.

With its clean lines, distinctive colors, cool curves and defined geometry, Art Deco took the world by storm upon its debut in 1925 at the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in

Paris. It was a hot shot heard 'round the world that hit Shanghai during a building boom less interrupted by the Depression than the Japanese occupation and World War II. The style returned in the mid- and late 1940s, ending in 1949 with the communist takeover, which initiated a Sleeping Beauty slumber that lasted until the end of the People's Republic's isolationism in the 1980s.

But while modern-day Shanghai's pedal-to-the-metal growth gets all the headlines—a population of 20 million-plus, more skyscrapers than Manhattan, a regional GDP over half the size of India's—the city also has more Art Deco buildings than anywhere else in the world, a unique aesthetic leitmotif that contributes to the city's rhythm and romance, and which influences artists, artisans and aesthetes old and new, foreign and domestic.

THE READ

With 320 pages and over 1,000 photographs of residences, municipal buildings, hotels and movie theaters, *Shanghai Art Deco*, published in 2006 by Shanghaiese photographer Deke Erh and expat American writer Tess Johnston, is the definitive tome capturing the style's richness, pervasiveness and breadth in the city once known as the "Paris of the East" and "New York of the West" (depending on your perspective). It's also either a historical record and guide or a cautionary chronicle, depending on how assiduously these buildings are protected going forward. www.hanyuan.com/zhongguotong/tongguotongshu/artdeco/artdeco.html.

THE STAY

The world-famous Bund, the banking and business center of colonial Shanghai, is a 52-building bonanza of architectural styles—neo-classical, beaux-arts, amalgams of Romanesque, gothic and Renaissance revival, and Art Deco. That said, many of the buildings that aren't orthodox Art Deco, such as the neo-classical Customs House, have Art Deco elements and details. The biggest and most beautiful Bund behemoths—those that housed the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited, North China Daily News, Cathay Hotel and Bank of China—are along the Huangpu River, and best seen from Pudong, Shanghai's 21st-century banking and biz center on the opposite bank.

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DECO DEETS: Furniture in the Moganshan La district.



CHAIRMAN NOW: Classic Deco with a twist.

The ne plus ultra of Bund views is from the rooms and restaurants of the Pudong Shangri-La hotel. Comprised of an Art Deco-influenced river building that opened in 1998 and a 36-floor tower that opened in 2005, both have the five-star luxury, not-a-detail-missed service and superlative food for which the hotel family is famed (Jade on 36, an epicurean's innovative delight under chef de cuisine Paul Pairet, was designed by Adam Tihany, who imaged a deconstructed rice bowl, and whose finished interior seems distinctly Deco-ish in shape, color and combination of materials).

Further separating the Shangri-La from its luxe competitors, however, is pride of place: It's directly on the water, with uninterrupted city panoramas. Equally important, the rooms and restaurants also enjoy an ideal perspective: high enough for picture-perfect vistas, but not so high that the Bund's scale is lost or hidden in seasonal mists, low clouds or, gulp, pollution. From RMB 2250 (approximately \$300), www.shangri-la.com, 011.86.21.6882.8888.

THE GUIDE

An MBA from Austin who moved to Shanghai in 1995, Spencer Dodington speaks fluent Mandarin and Shanghaiese, and studied architecture at Shanghai's Tongji University. Through Luxury Concierge China, which he founded with Italian business partner Jonathan Hasson in 2005, he leads design and architecture tours throughout the city—from the 19th- and early 20th-century marvels (the Art Deco) to up-to-the-second skyscrapers. And no worries if you're looking to combine a little old-fashioned mercantilism with your historical education: Dodington can also devise shopping itineraries for bespoke and custom furniture as well as vintage Art Deco dazzlers (one of his passions). He even advises on the best way to ship purchases back to the U.S. www.luxuryconciergechina.com, spencer@luxuryconciergechina.com, 011.86.1368.167.9980.

THE GET

Complementing the city's abundance of Art Deco buildings is a plethora of local Art Deco furniture. Designers and manufacturers, once numbering just under two hundred, gave their own twist to Euro and U.S. Deco, creating a unique, recognizable Shanghai style that is increasingly



DECO DE FORCE OPERATOR: Spencer Dodington.

appreciated by contemporary Chinese, U.S. and European collectors. Differences include the use of local woods and the incorporation of traditional Chinese design iconography, such as those for clouds and water, as well as of-the-period variations.

Top shops specializing in vintage Shanghai Deco furniture and decorative arts? Shanghai Art Deco (Building 7, #50 Moganshan Rd., 011.86.21.6277.8927), owned by well-known Shanghaiese

artist Ding Yi, and Number D Atelier Depot (also at #50 Moganshan Rd., 011.86.21.6266.2109). Both have the advantage of being in the heart of Shanghai's contemporary art gallery scene. A third stop in another part of town? Tai Gu Art Deco Home (370 Xinguo Rd., 011.86.21.6280.2228).

E-CHINA COMMERCE

Like the look of vintage but not its actual age? A Shanghai-based web alternative is Shanghai Deco. With its Bund Collection, the company takes old wood (mostly teak and balau, an equally hardy local hardwood) salvaged from old buildings, then creates new custom models. Pieces range from decorative stands and étagères to sofas and club chairs. The most popular repro is the Peace Couch and Club Set, a roomy sofa and two armchairs made from teak with hand-carved side panels in a diamond pattern. The trio is based on furniture from the Bund's Peace Hotel (formerly the Cathay Hotel), and its leather is hand-cut, sewn and tacked. www.shanghaideco.com.

SHANGHAI ART DECO IMAGES BY DEKE ERH/ER DOUGLASS

IMAGES BY PATRICK WACK