

Waylande Gregory

ART DECO CERAMICS AND THE ATOMIC IMPULSE

May 1 - July 20, 2014



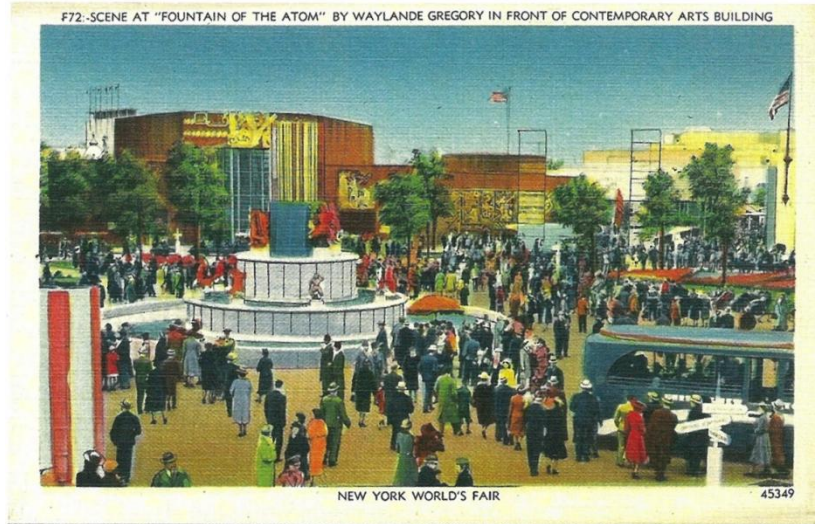
Canton Museum of Art

Educator Packet

Waylande Gregory

ART DECO CERAMICS AND THE ATOMIC IMPULSE

This is the first retrospective exhibition of the art of Waylande Gregory (1905-1971), one of the leading figures in twentieth-century American ceramics. Science and atomic energy were a specific interest of the artist, vividly demonstrated at the 1939 New York World's Fair with his "Fountain of the Atom." This major work included twelve monumental ceramic figures on display. Albert Einstein in particular was pleased with the subject matter because it was the first time that the atomic age had been explored in a monumental work of art. Gregory's figures visualized the growing international interest in atomic energy, and the fountain was fanciful, artistic, and immediately compelling.

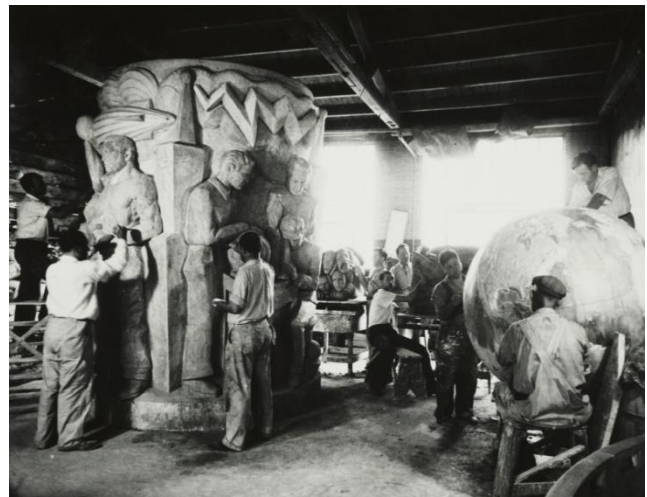


Postcard from the 1939 World's Fair of Gregory's *Fountain of the Atom*



1.1 Gregory's Honeycomb technique

Gregory was the first modern ceramist to create large scale ceramic sculptures. Similar to the technique developed by the ancient Etruscans, he fired his monumental ceramic sculptures only once. To create these works of ceramic virtuosity, the artist developed a "honeycomb" technique (fig.1.1), in which an infrastructure of compartments was covered by a ceramic "skin." Some of these figurative sculptures became very heavy, some weighing well over one ton, and were fired in a huge kiln constructed by Gregory at his home and studio in Warren, New Jersey.



Waylande Gregory at work on *Light Dispersing Darkness*

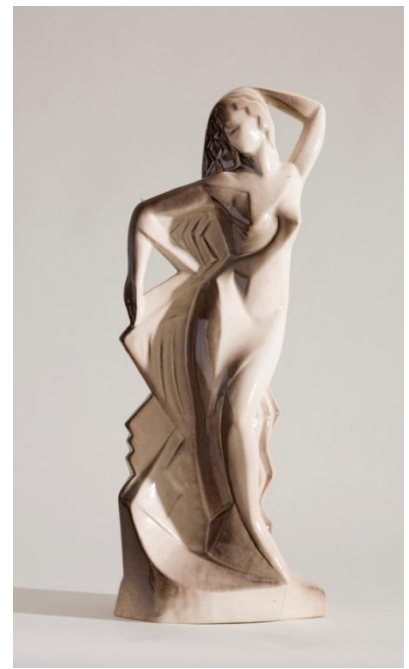
The artist's career in the 1930s mirrored the changing focus of American ceramics, from art pottery to studio pottery. From 1928 to 1932, he was the chief designer and sculptor at Cowan Pottery in Cleveland, Ohio, which was the last important American art pottery of the period. At Cowan, Gregory created some of the pottery's finest works, including three limited edition sculptures relating to dance, including: "Salome" (fig. 1.2), "The Nautch Dancer" (fig. 1.3), and "The Burlesque Dancer" (fig. 1.4) the last two works were based on the dancing of Gilda Grey, a well-known entertainer of the 1930s who posed for Gregory for these sculptures.



1.2 *Salome*, for Cowan Pottery, ca. 1929, glazed earthenware, 17 x 10 x 4 in.



1.3 *Nautch Dancer*, for Cowan Pottery, ca. 1930, glazed earthenware, 17 x 7 x 4 in.



1.4 *Burlesque Dancer*, for Cowan pottery, ca. 1930, glazed earthenware, 19 x 7 x 4 in.

At Cowan, Gregory had a full staff to assist him with all phases of production. Colleges with emerging ceramics programs in the 1930s were instrumental in creating a new role for ceramists. As a studio potter, Gregory would handle all phases of production from modeling to glazing and, finally, to firing. In 1932, he became a teacher of ceramics at Cranbrook Academy in

Bloomfield. There for only one year, Gregory had a very productive period, creating several well-known sculptures, including "Kansas Madonna" (fig. 1.5) and "Girl with Olive" (fig. 1.6).



1.5 *Kansas Madonna*, 1932, terra cotta, 14 x 22 x 23 in.



1.6 *Girl with Olive*, 1932, glazed stoneware, 14.5 x 8 x 6.5 in.



1.7 *Light Dispelling Darkness*, 1937. Roosevelt Park in Menlo Park, New Jersey

After moving to New Jersey, Gregory became very involved in the government sponsored Works Progress Administration and created his fountain, "Light Dispelling Darkness," (fig. 1.7) which features monumental ceramic sculptures and can still be seen at Roosevelt Park in Menlo Park, New Jersey.

By the 1940s Gregory began to create works in glass, as well as in a combination of ceramics and glass. In addition to becoming one of the earliest studio ceramics artists, he was also one of the first studio glass artists. He created enameled glass vases as well as stained glass windows. Gregory experimented with some controversial glass and ceramic pieces, using a process he successfully patented, much to the consternation of other American ceramists.



1.8 *Jeweled Crystals Bowl*, ca. 1942, stoneware with fused glass crystals, 3 x 8 x 8 in.

In the early 40s Gregory began to successfully produce groups of refined and highly stylized decorative wares in limited edition numbers. These works were sold in exclusive stores. His body of work in this category was immense, exploring a vast range of themes and styles yet definitively creating a distinct and instantly recognizable aesthetic.



Geometric Abstraction Plate, date unknown, earthenware, 10 in. d.in. h. x 5 in. x 4 in.



Peacock Box, date unknown, glazed ceramic, 2.5 in. h. x 5 in. x 4 in.



Mermaid Vase, 1940, 16 in. h. x 12 in. d.

During the later years of his life Gregory briefly left the world of art for a project with NASA to assist in developing the critical heat shields needed to reach the moon. He also composed music, painted, began writing a newspaper column called *Art & Living*, appeared on the television show *Creative Arts*, and taught art classes at his studio in the 60s. He continued to work until his death in 1971. By the end of his life, the artist had created one of the largest bodies of ceramic sculptural works in modern times, a body of work that represents one of the greatest legacies in American ceramics history.



ART

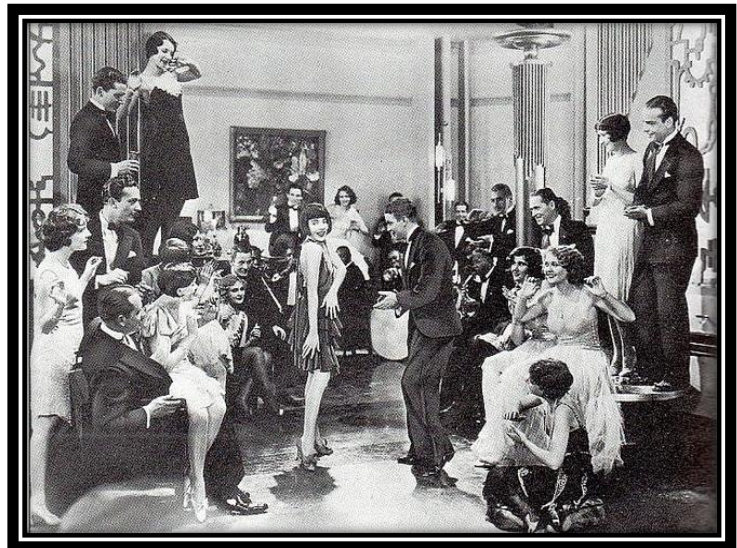
DECO

The term Art Deco was coined to describe a style of interior design, architecture, textiles, ceramics and jewelry. The name came from the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs Industriels et Modernes, held in Paris, which celebrated living in the modern world. The Art Deco period started in the early 1920's and continued to be in fashion well into the 1930's. For many, the '20s were a time of liberation and optimism — the birth of jazz, the radio, and flappers.

In its heyday, Art Deco represented luxury, elegance, exuberance, glamour, and sophistication. Characteristics of the style include symmetrical design with simple clean lines, sharp edges, and stylishness. Chrome, enamel, and highly polished stone were hallmarks of the era.

Art Deco Motifs and Patterns

- Straight lines
- Geometric shapes
- Abstract patterns
- Sun motifs
- Stepped ziggurat shapes
- Fan shapes
- Stylized flowers
- Cubist forms



Although short-lived, the Art Deco era (1925-1940) was a monumental movement that had a significant impact on aesthetics reaching out through a wide array of industries, from the arts, fashion, furniture, architecture, transportation and everything in between.



Vocabulary

Art Deco- A decorative art style of the 1920s and 1930s, characterized by precise and bold geometric shapes and strong colors, and used most notably in household objects and in architecture.

Shape- An enclosed space defined by other elements of art. Shapes may take on the appearance of 2D or 3D objects.

Geometric Shape- Shapes that have perfect mathematic measurements. (square)

Organic Shape- Shapes found in nature. (flower pedal)

Balance- The way in which the elements in visual arts are arranged to create a feeling of equilibrium in an artwork. The three types of balance are symmetry, asymmetry, and radial.

Symmetrical Balance- Type of balance in which objects or figures are repeated in a mirror-like fashion on each side of the central axis.

Asymmetrical Balance- A balance of parts on opposite sides of a perceived midline, giving the appearance of equal visual weight.

Radial Balance- A type of balance in which objects or figures are spaced evenly around a central point.

Pattern- A repeated decorative design.

Motif- A decorative design or pattern.

Ceramics- The art of making and decorating pottery.

Sculpture- The art of making two- or three-dimensional representative or abstract forms.

Commercial Art- Refers to art that is made for the purposes of commerce.

Rhythm- A type of movement in an artwork created by repeating visual elements.

Waylande Gregory:

Art Deco Ceramics

(Creating commercial art with a “modern twist” using metallic markers and black paper plates.)

Grade Level: 4th Grade

(Can be adapted to any grade level.)

Overview: Students will learn about the artist Waylande Gregory and his artwork. Students will compare and contrast Art Deco patterns and motifs with modern patterns and motifs. Students will examine the use of

commercial art in society. Students will create a commercial plate incorporating their own pattern and motif utilizing personal preferences, interests, style, personality, and popular culture to guide their design utilizing the principles of balance.

Content Standards:

PERCEIVING/KNOWING: 1PE, 3PE, 6PE

PRODUCING/PERFORMING: 2PR, 5PR, 6PR

RESPONDING/REFLECTING: 1RE, 3RE

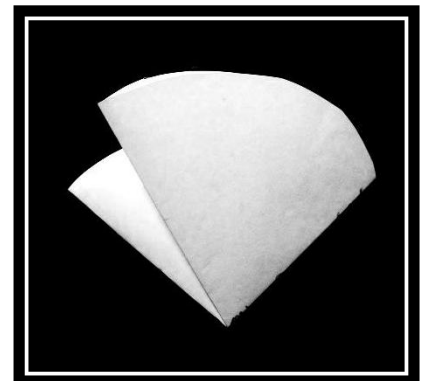
Materials: Waylande Gregory and Art Deco background information, artwork images, pencils, drawing paper, metallic markers, and black paper plates.

Background/Key Ideas:

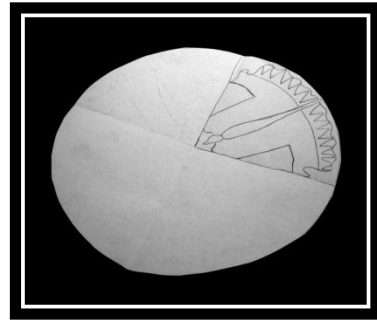
Waylande Gregory created one of the largest bodies of ceramic sculptural works in modern times, a body of work that represents one of the greatest legacies in American ceramics history. He created many sizes and types of ceramic pieces of art, but he is most recognized for his refined and highly stylized decorative wares that were sold in exclusive stores. His body of work in this category was immense, exploring a vast range of themes and styles, yet definitively creating a distinct and instantly recognizable aesthetic. His artwork is a perfect example of ceramics created in the Art Deco style.

Procedures:

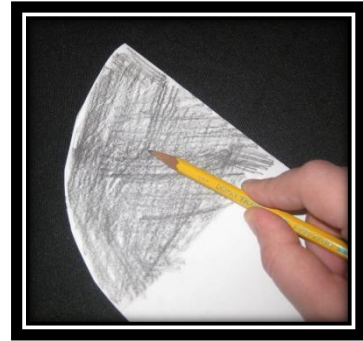
- **Introduction:** Give lecture on Waylande Gregory and his artwork focusing on his commercial decorative ceramics that were sold in stores. Use supporting materials in attached packet as needed. Talk to students about artists' careers and how making money is not always from creating an artistic masterpiece. Art can also be created, copied, and sold to consumers. Show students images of Art Deco objects and ask students to point out reoccurring styles and themes: luxury, elegance, exuberance,



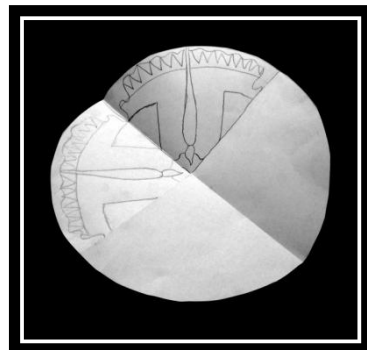
glamour, sophistication, straight lines, geometric shapes, abstract patterns, sun motifs, stepped ziggurat shapes, fan shapes, stylized flowers, cubism forms, symmetrical designs, chrome, enamel, and highly polished stone were hallmarks. List student's answers on the board. Compare and contrast Art Deco patterns and motifs with modern patterns and motifs. Explain to the students that they will be creating a commercial plate incorporating chrome metallic patterns (which are characteristic of the Art Deco movement) and their own personal pattern and motif utilizing personal preferences, interests, style, personality, and popular culture to guide their design.



- **Demonstration:** Show students how to trace their plate on white drawing paper and cut around the line. Demonstrate how to fold the circle in half two times to create four equal parts. Explain pattern, motif, repetition, and the three types of *balance*: *symmetrical*, *asymmetrical*, and *radial*. Using only one of the four sections show the students how to draw with pencil a rough draft for their final plate design. Demonstrate how to fold the piece in half and rub with pencil on the back to create an identical design. The drawing can be retraced folded over again and rubbed with pencil on the back to create perfect radial symmetry. Stress the importance of incorporating their own pattern and motif utilizing personal preferences, interests, style, personality, and popular culture to guide their design.



- **Studio Production:** Students will trace their plate on white drawing paper and come up with a design for their commercial plate. Once they are finished with their rough draft designs students may then start to draw their final design onto their plate using metallic markers. Provide students with any examples of art deco and modern patterns and motifs that might be helpful for students to look at.



- **Closure:** Participate in class critique. Have students share as a group.

Enrichment Activities: Student artwork could be put on display at the Canton Museum of Art during the *Waylande Gregory: Art Deco Ceramics and the Atomic Impulse* exhibition. The studio project can be modified to ceramic plates as well.

References

Folk, T. & Gregory, W. (2013). *Waylande Gregory: Art Deco Ceramics and the Atomic Impulse*.
Richmond, Virginia: University of Richmond Museums.

Delahunt, Michael R. "Art Deco." *ArtLex Art Dictionary* 20 January 2014.
<<http://www.artlex.com>>.

This document and other educational resources are available through the Canton Museum of Art website www.cantonart.org. All portions of this teacher resource guide may be reproduced for educational purposes.



*Special thanks to **ArtsinStark** and the **Ohio Arts Council** for their continued exhibition and operating support of the Canton Museum of Art.*



Waylande Gregory Ceramics



SEA MEDIUM CHUBBY BOWL



BIRD IN A TREE MEDIUM SQUARE TRAY



LAVA LARGE CHUBBY VASE



GRID MEDIUM CHUBBY BOWL



CONCENTRIC CIRCLES SMALL BULLET BOWL



GLAM ROOSTER LARGE SHALLOW BOWL



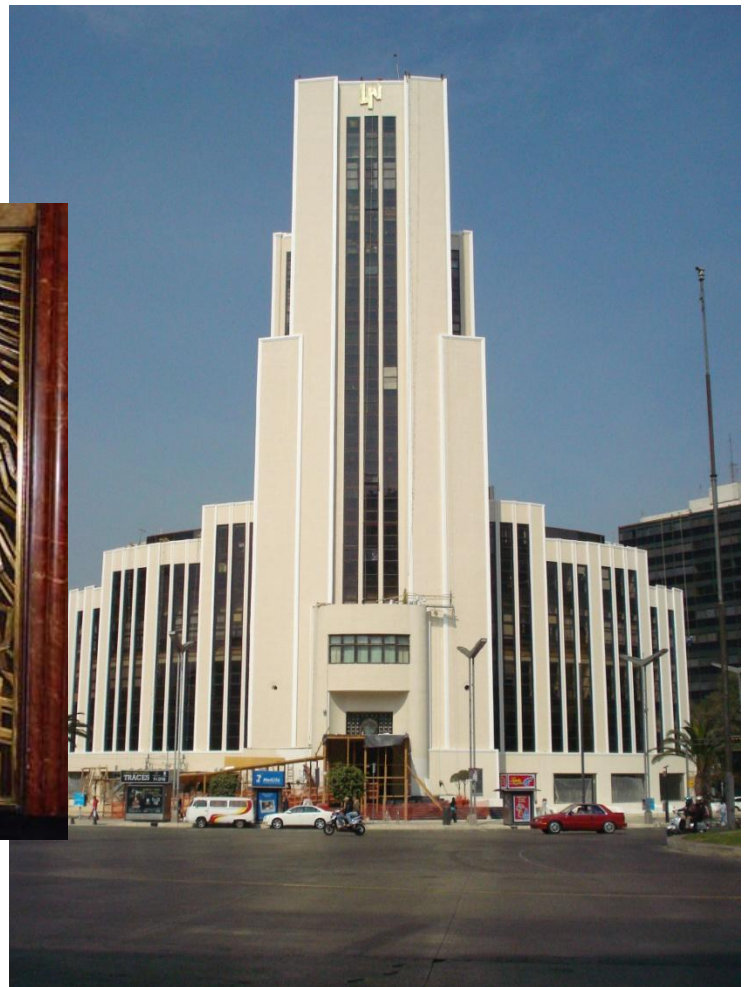
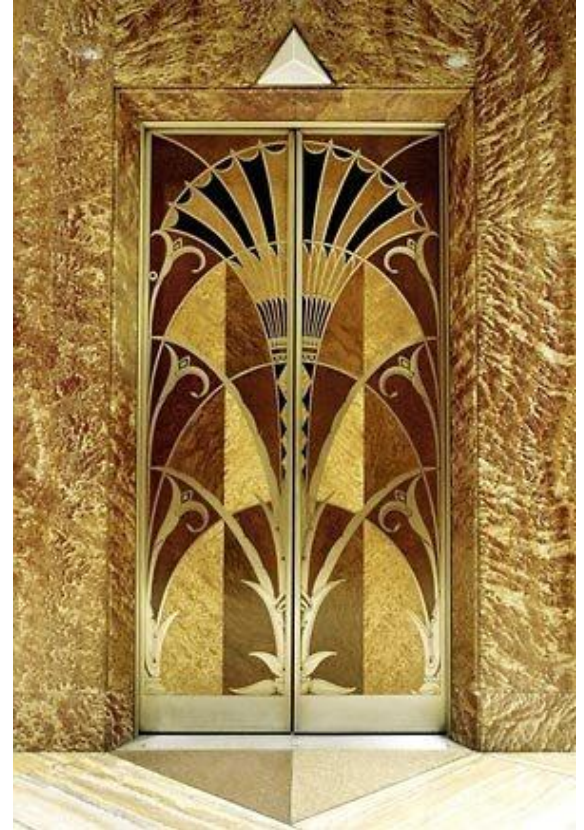
BIRD IN A TREE MEDIUM FLUTED VASE



FLOWER MEDIUM SQUARE TRAY



Art Deco Architecture



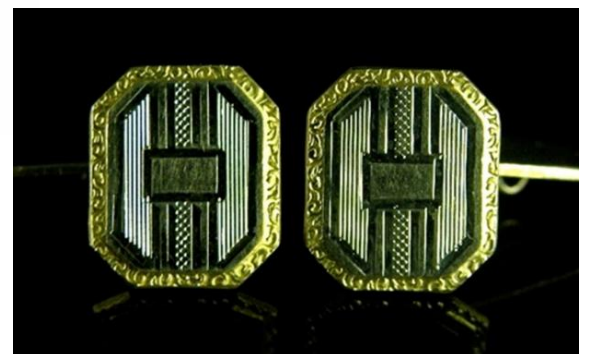
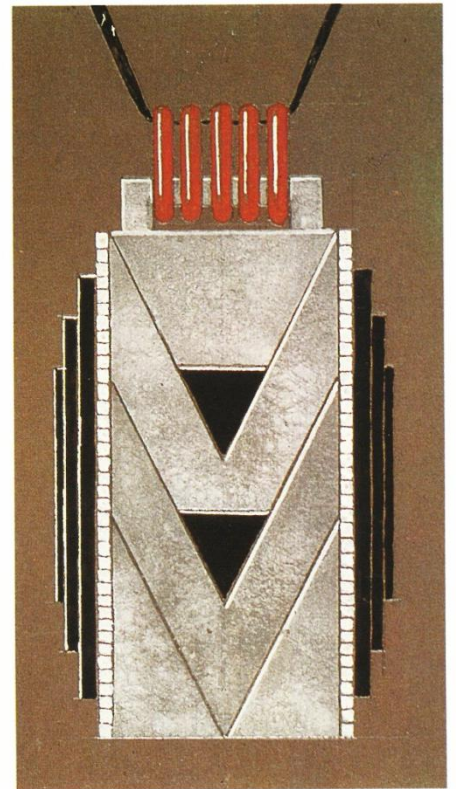
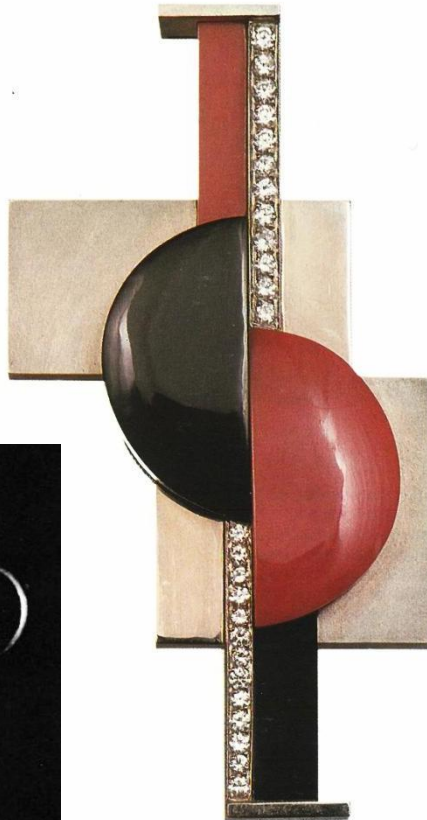
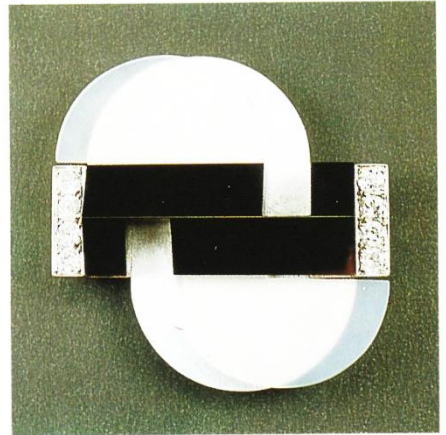
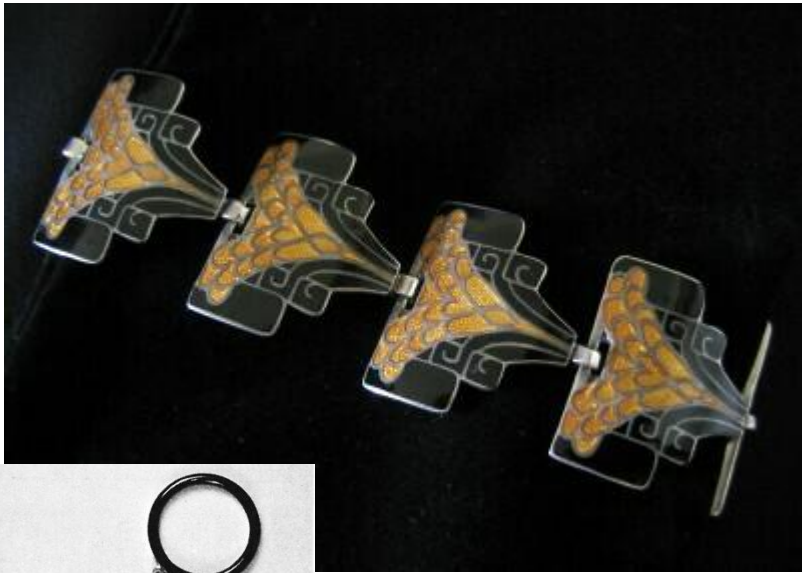
Art Deco Artwork



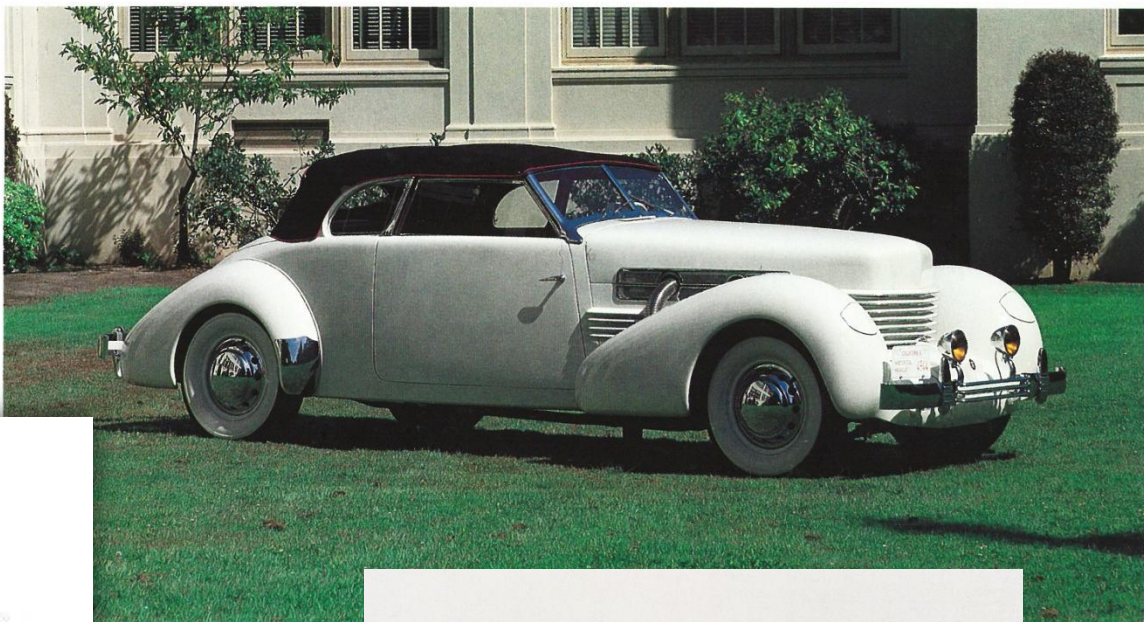
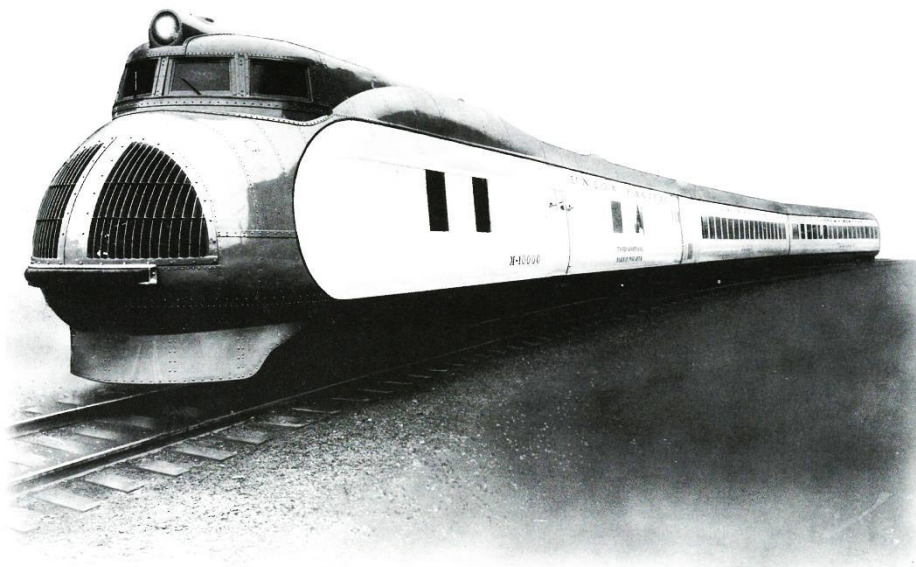
Art Deco Fashion



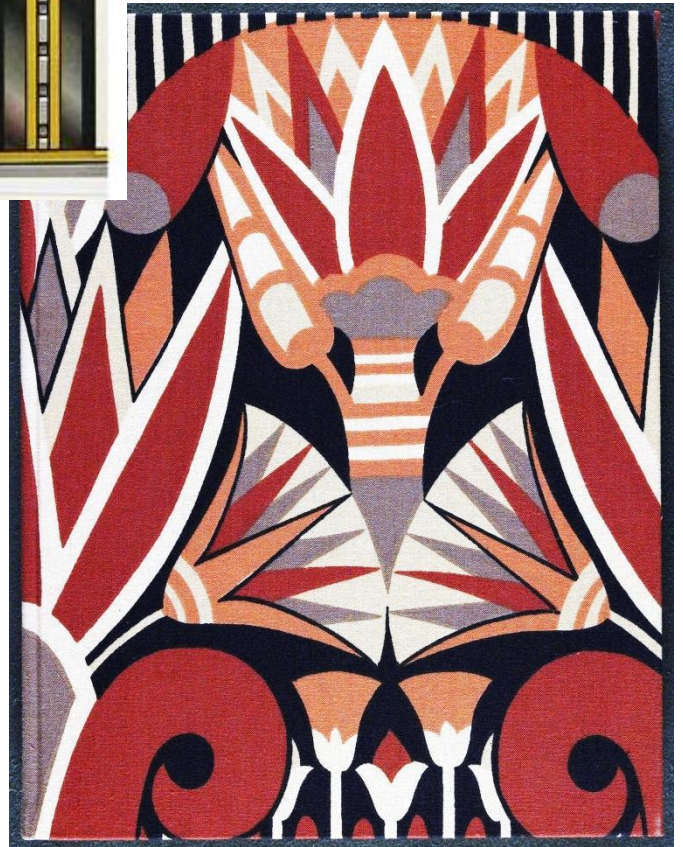
Art Deco Jewelry



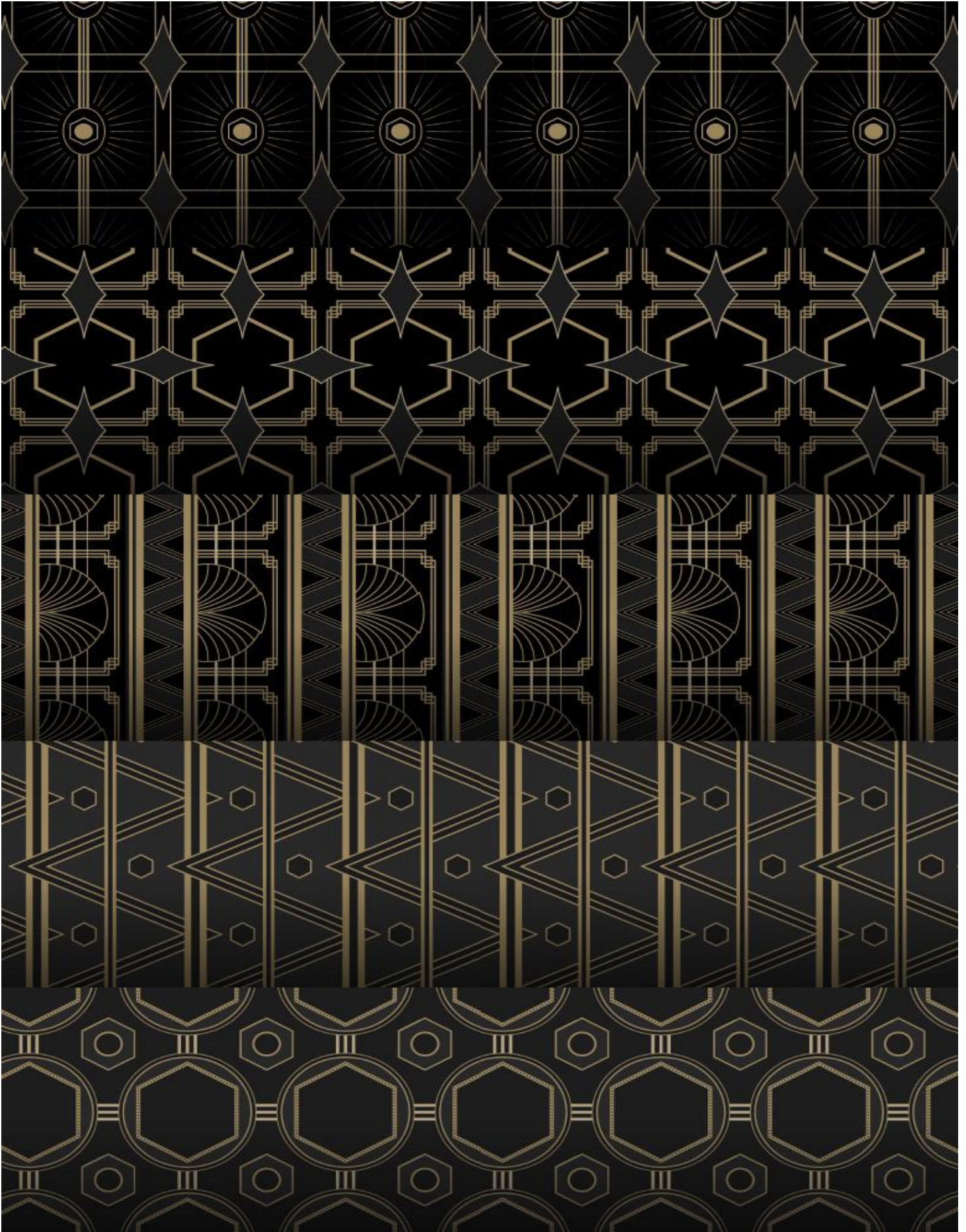
Art Deco Inspired Objects



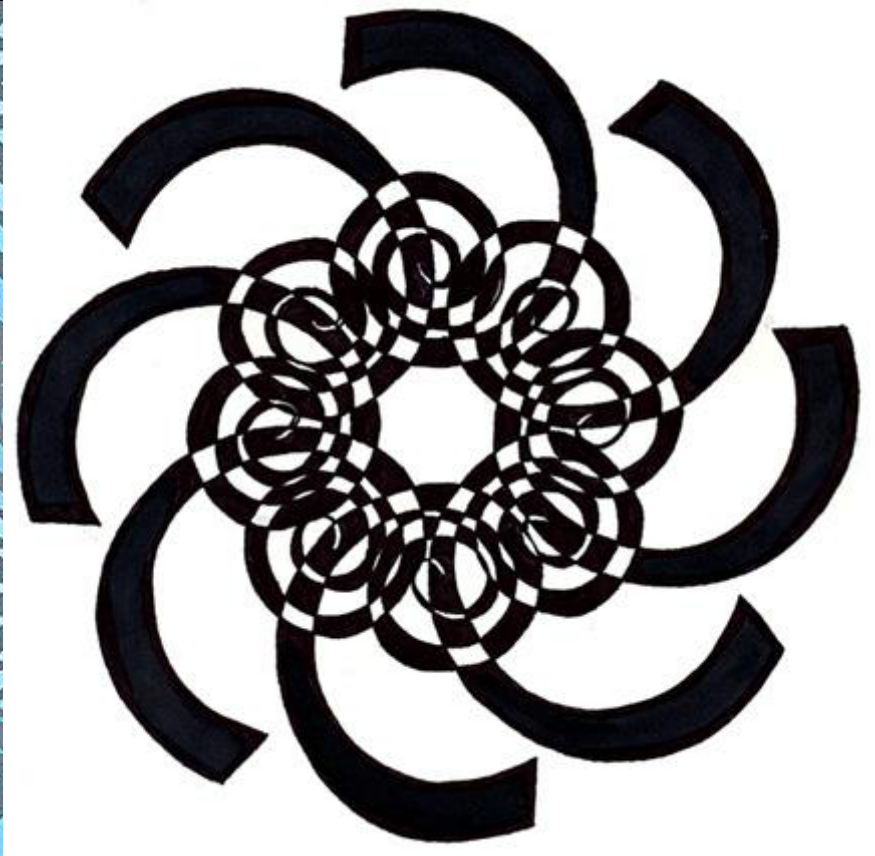
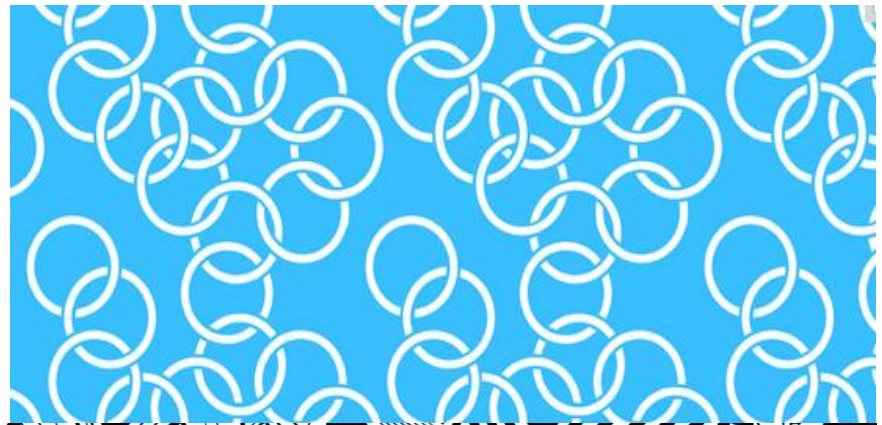
Art Deco Designs



Art Deco Patterns



Modern Patterns And Motifs



Modern Patterns And Motifs

