

# TENTH ART DECO WORLD CONGRESS

By Eugenio de Anzorena

Last May I attended the Tenth World Congress on Art Deco in Montreal.

## Toronto

The Pre-Congress events were held in Toronto beginning with breakfast at the CARLU, which had been the 1939 Round Room Restaurant and the auditorium of Eaton's department store, beautifully restored as a venue for special events, including a fountain designed by Lalique.



Following this event, a morning walking tour of Deco buildings took place, culminating at the Royal Ontario Museum with its new addition designed by Daniel Libeskind.



*(Continued on page 2)*

Some of the participants took advantage of the lunch break to tour the Art Galley of Ontario with its magnificent addition designed by Frank Gehry.



The evening culminated in a dinner dance held in the Library and Imperial Room of the Fairmont Royal York Hotel, with a sumptuous meal.

The following day we took a bus tour of more of Toronto's art deco buildings, culminating in a period fashion show and tea in the garden of Parkwood, an estate one hour east in Oshawa.



## Montreal

On Sunday we traveled to Montreal for the opening reception at the Montreal City Hall, where Sandra Cohen-Rose, the organizer of the Congress, introduced us to her excellent team, as well as to the Mayor of Montreal, while we enjoyed one of the wonderful meals provided during the entire Congress. At this reception we had the pleasure to renew friendships and meet those who had not attended the Toronto Pre Congress.



For each tour we received a thoroughly researched descriptive brochure in color prepared by Mrs. Cohen-Rose and her husband, Colin. The entire Congress, including both the pre and post sessions were superbly organized and the food was truly exceptional. My only disappointment is that we did not visit any private residences, as had been the case at previous Congresses.

The next day we enjoyed a bus and walking tour of Rosemont and Little Italy, including some exceptional churches such as St. Espirit, which is the only pure art deco Church in Canada, designed by Joseph Egilde Cessaire Daoust in 1932 and Saint Jean Berchmans.



We also visited the botanical gardens designed in 1932 by Lucien M. Keroak with its wonderful bas-reliefs.

The evening culminated with a grand buffet in the Main Pavilion of the University of Montreal (1924-42) located in the tower building, designed by the most famous Canadian Deco architect of the period, Ernest Cormier.

On Tuesday we began the routine, which continued for the following two days with lectures in the morning at McGill University and tours in the afternoon. The morning lectures covered such subjects as night clubs, movie palaces and the now closed restaurant of Eaton's in Montreal. Our excellent lunches took place at the Arts and Crafts Faculty Club on campus.

The afternoon tour took us to view the exteriors of apartment houses in the Cote Des Neiges area, the Snowdon Theater designed in 1937 by Daniel John Crighton and St. Joseph's Oratory, a grand building on Mt. Royal designed from 1924-1967 by a collaboration of many architects, including Cormier.



An evening reception at the McGill University Library took place to show us Art Deco books from their collections.

Wednesday's lectures included one on the Ecole du Meuble, where furniture was manufactured from 1935 to 1958. In the afternoon we had a curator's tour of that furniture in the Montreal Museum of Fine arts, as

well as walking tour of downtown Deco, including the great Central Railroad Station (1920s to 1943) designed by John Campbell Merrett, with beautiful interior bas-relief sculptures by Charles Fraser Comfort.



Right: Train Station, Montreal

The evening event was a dinner dance at the Mount Stephen Club, a wonderfully preserved Victorian mansion. At the silent auction I bought a cup and saucer designed by England's Susie Cooper.

Thursday's lectures included Art Deco in Belgium and the Polish Pavilion at the 1939 Worlds Fair, as well as an invitation to the 11<sup>th</sup> World Congress in Rio de Janeiro.

The afternoon tours were bus and walking tours of Old Montreal and the Saint-Henri neighborhood. The highlight was the Aldred building, Montreal's most notable high style high-rise art deco building (1929, Barott and Blackader). It is Montreal's only example of a New York style "ziggurat" skyscraper. Nature and technology are reflected in the cast bronze panels depicting flocks of birds perched on telegraph wires.



Friday it was off to Ottawa for the day where we visited the Supreme Court (E. Cormier, 1939), a magnificent building with two candelabrum-style fluted metal lamp standards and bas-relief bronze doors at the entrance.



We started off with lunch and a visit to the National Gallery of Canada (Moshe Safdie). We also visited two banks (the Bank of Canada and the Bank of Montreal), but the highlight (perhaps of the entire Congress) was the French Embassy (Eugene Beaudoin, 1936-39) on a prized piece of land overlooking Rideau Falls. The interior is quite impressive with its wonderful frescos, Aubusson tapestries, superb use of materials and furnishings, particularly the Smoking Room with “new” deco furniture, perfect for the room.

*(Continued on page 8)*



Dinner was served on the run in the Fairmont le Chateau Montbello, the world's largest log lodge, built in the 1930's. Then, back to Montreal by bus.

Saturday we were on our own, but encouraged to view art deco books and Cormier drawings at the library of the Canadian Center for Architecture.

In the evening the closing gala dinner dance was held at the 1930 Lion d'Or.



Sunday was a tour to the eastern townships, primarily to visit churches where concentric arches are made of very decorative brickwork, based on the designs of Dom Paul Bellot in England and the Netherlands. He also collaborated in the design of the Benedictine Abbey St. Benoit du Las (1941-47) near Montreal. We also visited some churches that will serve other uses, such as Paroisse Ste. Marguerite that is up for sale and Paroisse St. Benoit, which will be used as a community center.



## Quebec

Early Monday morning we boarded the train for Quebec City. Upon arrival at the train station, we began a walking tour of the old city made up mainly of buildings prior to the Deco age, including a short ferry ride across the St. Lawrence River to see the city from a slight distance. We walked to the Clarendon Hotel (Art Nouveau and Art Deco) where we spent the night.

The next morning, we boarded a bus for a tour of Beauport for more examples of Bellotism, including a wonderful lunch at a restaurant overlooking the Montmorency Falls. The afternoon tour consisted of post war buildings, culminating with a visit to the Price Building (1930-31, Ross and Macdonald), an 18 floor office structure. In 2001, the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> floors became the Premier of Quebec's official residence. The design consists of a "stepping" shape to reduce the building's profile when viewed from the street, reminiscent of Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen's work.

