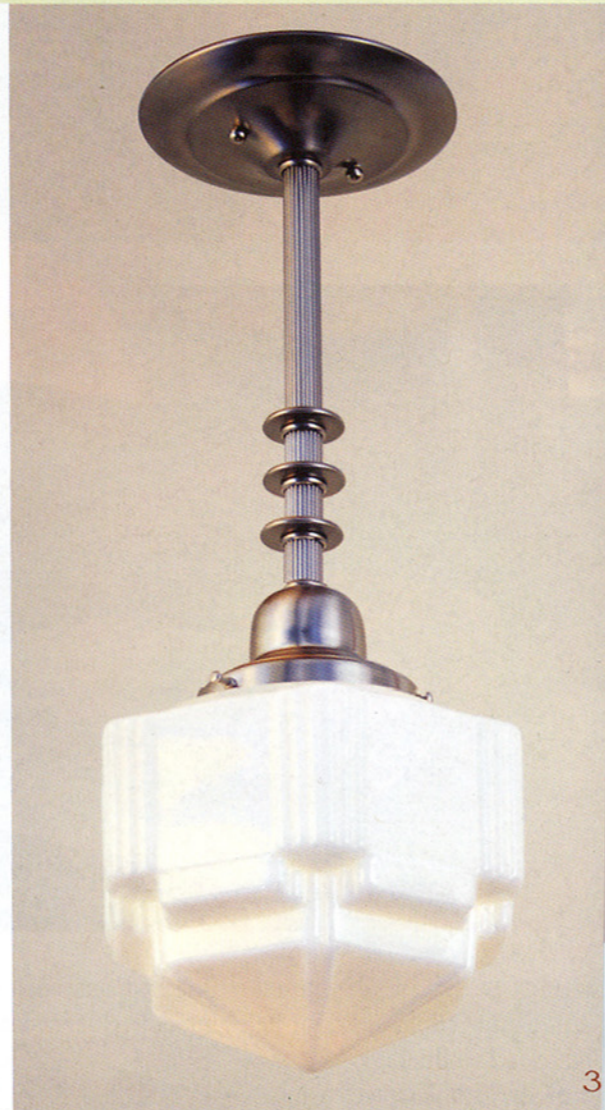


Fabulously DECO

Editorial & Photography By: Michael Rosar



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When one hears the term "Art Deco"

Images of skyscrapers, high-speed trains, and cutting-edge modernity are conjured up. Art Deco was a modern movement for a modern age which lasted from the early nineteen twenties to the late nineteen thirties. Although these styles existed prior to the coining of the term Art Deco, it wasn't until the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes took place in 1925 in France that the movement was christened with a name.

Art Deco architecture, furniture, interior design, and lighting are often identified as the iconic style of twenties and thirties urban living. Although it was predominant in cities, it was also widely used in towns throughout North America because many Deco lighting fixtures were the first electric fixtures in many rural homes. Although newer houses of

the era would be adorned with a Tudor or Georgian exterior, the interior was fitted with Deco accent pieces such as door hardware, fire places, kitchen cabinets, leaded glass windows, tile work, and, of course, lighting.

With regards to Art Deco lighting, because of mass production, this era became the age of selection. Early lighting fixtures were often made of wrought iron and fitted with decorative glass shades or centre domes with moulded Deco patterns. European makers such as Paul Daum, Marius Ernest Sabino and Muller Freres were best known for creating this early style of lighting. When the movement took root in North America, many of the European hallmarks would exist alongside a bolder North American taste. ➤

Image 1 in this article has been beautifully restored by Turn of the Century Lighting, and exemplifies the quality of workmanship by this firm. Images 2 & 3 are custom reproductions available through Turn of the Century Lighting, 112 Sherbourne St. Toronto, ON 416-362-6203. www.tocl.ca.

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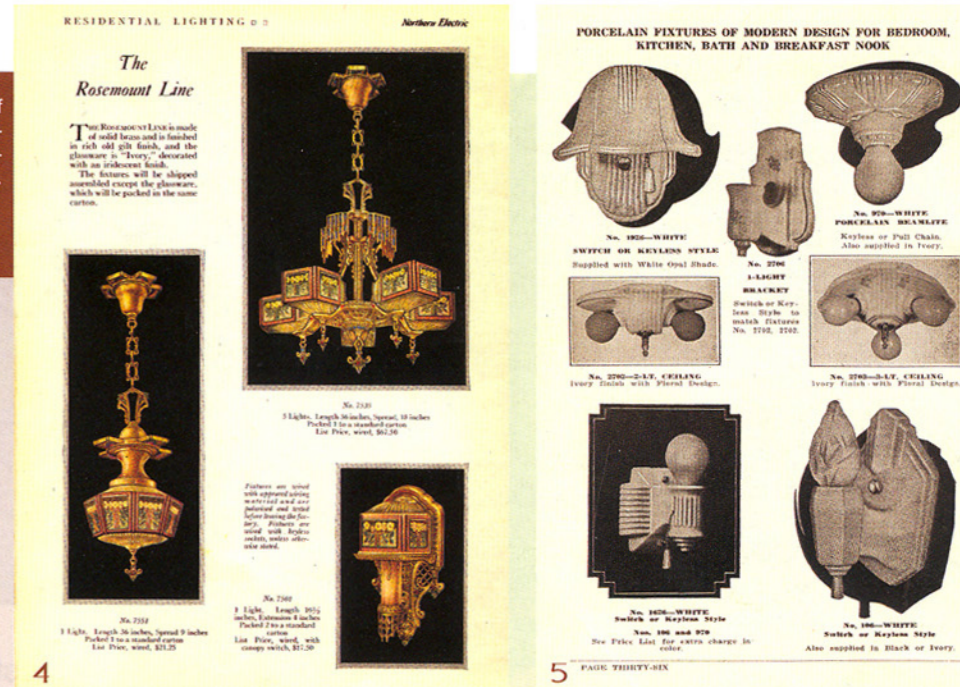


Image 4 Northern Electric Catalogue

Dating from the mid-thirties, the "Rosemount" series was sold through the Northern Electric Company based out of Montreal. Like many lighting styles of the time, the Rosemount was sold as individual lights or as an entire series for the home.

Image 5 Distinctive Lighting Equipment Catalogue

Marketed as modern fixtures for bathrooms, bedrooms, breakfast nooks, or kitchens, these porcelain fixtures date from 1939 and were distributed by the York Trading Company located at 90 Sherbourne Street in downtown Toronto. Because they are porcelain, ivory or black finishes were available on the wall sconces along with painted floral designs on the ceiling fixtures.

Because electric lighting was the standard in cities and towns, lighting designers decided to separate from conventional forms as seen in earlier gas and Edwardian lighting. With a move towards modernity, slip in or "slipper" shade fixtures were the direct result of this stylistic change. Decorative moulded glass became an integral part of the form and function of the light fixture. In image 1, we see an original slipper shade fixture fitted with the original shades. Dating from the 1930's, it features an original painted enamel finish that was applied on top of the cast iron base. Because many of these were made during the Great Depression, plated or painted finishes on cast iron were predominant since brass was both expensive to produce and to purchase. Slipper shade fixtures were featured in almost every area of the home and were available in a variety of sizes and configurations. They were often marketed as sets as seen in the excerpt from a Northern Electric Company's catalogue. This Montreal-based company mar-

keted the Aztec influenced "Rosemount" line as a complete set featuring a living/dining room fixture as well as a single hall light and matching wall sconces.

Like earlier lighting, brass, cast iron, and white metal were used along with the newly popularized aluminium. Once more expensive than gold, aluminium soon became a cost effective material that was lightweight and easy to cast. Featured in image 2 is the Zenith wall sconce that is a reproduction cast from an original. The Zenith incorporates many Deco motifs such as a radiating starburst and stylized geometric elements. It also acts as a fan-light or wall washer that provided ambient and diffused lighting in a room. This was, and is still, useful in hallways, decorative powder rooms, or flanking fireplaces in living or dining rooms.

Lighting for kitchens and bathrooms were often clean and simple utilitarian fixtures. In bathrooms, it was very common to find

porcelain wall sconces that featured a single bulb and a back plate that flared out in a Deco style. Porcelain ceiling fixtures, flush to the ceiling, often accompanied these sconces. Although kitchens grew in size and importance, they still featured very simple lighting that was either in the form of a single hanging globe or wall sconces. For modern Art Deco inspired kitchens, it is possible to really jazz it up by incorporating large stepped pendant lighting, slipper shade fixtures, or unique glass and metal dome fixtures. As seen in image 3, the Galaxy Pendant could fit in well as a series over a large island or in the centre of the room.

Whether you are restoring a period Deco interior or looking to add a contemporary edge, Art Deco lighting is one of the most versatile lighting styles available. Due to its popularity in Canada, there are still many antique lighting fixtures available as well as a wealth of reproductions. e