Doing Deco, Y’All, in Jackson

By LAILA COHEN
Special to The Washington Post

ART DECO, from P1

the world was, is from the Confederate
bridegroom.

That’s no surprise to the native,
whom-grandparents-who-lived-on-the-city
Chimneyville,” after Gen. Sherman
burned it (three times). Of the major
civilian War buildings, only the Old
Capitol, the Governor’s Mansion
and City Hall remain. That war
brought devastation and then the
period named, ironically, Reconstruction.

Fortunes turned, however, in
1903, when the legislature moved in
to a new neoclassical Capitol. Soon
powerful banks and insurance companies
brought the will and means to rebuild on all these white walls.

They fancied them into something
with the world’s progressive look of
deconstruction, and moved to the Works from the Art Musée
moderne de la Ville de Paris” provides
a gateway for a new beginning. It

The show, a most dazzling display,
is an 18-by-18-foot wall of 25
clear-golded-leaf panels, all low reliefs
by Swiss master artist/designer
Lesl Durand. The subject: the Olympics,
a series of robust images
designed for the first-class liner
Norway, one of the longest
steamers in the world. Each panel
reflects a particular
Swell. In one, a
dropped-deco chaise plays off
the suit of 100 yards of paper
by the windows, with
even more gilded bronze
Diana confirms
a 1950s gilded bronze with

Another room teems with things
can be, such as a table of a
cardinal bird of paradise and a
tanzanian bowler’s portrait of an
artritic woman. Juxtaposed
to the paintings is a group of
masters (Leger, Braque, Matisse,
Modigliani, Delaunay, Picasso, a
1-foot-tall (20 cm) and famous
collectors like Jules Leke and
Jacques Kohlbrahim. In all, there are
more than 80 objects, including
20 paintings.

For those pursuing deco merchandising,
Jackson’s the place to go. Victorian
antiques are more likely to
meet of the Biltmore’s architectural style
are, the landscape promised enough
Depression-era-moves to send us
of in a rental car. In a matter of
hour, we scoped downtown and hit
a few neighborhoods. And deco! We
found it high and low.

Throughout the sleepy city center,
we discovered skyscrapers of medium
size (10 stories or less) and impres-
sive scale. The geometric, earth-
toned Plaza Building (120 N.
Corinth) looms on the east side of

Wherefore Art Deco? Jackson, Miss.

By LAILA COHEN

Smith Park with the panache of
New York’s Bantam. Nearby, the gleaming
white neo-Gothic Lamar life building
(313 E. Capitol St.) rises 10 stories
to a clock tower that looms a lot like
London’s Big Ben. The citizens of
Jackson still set their watches by that
tower on 100 years.

The 1929 Standard Life building
(206 W. Pearl St.), now the offices
of city bureaucrats, dominates a corner
of Koch’s and Pearl streets. Its step-
pyramid silhouette is echoed in
giant-stage windows and parapets. We
entered an eye-popping layer of
choreovators and stripes and then a nir-

The former greyhound bus station is one of many
buildings in Jackson, Miss., with art deco designs.

Derek Emerson gave the former
drive-in-a safe bright turquoise-paint
job but kept the doors with porthole
windows.

Adams lives just east of Fondren
in Woodland Hills, and his house,
uncharacteristic, merits a drive-by (but don’t knock). Even though it’s
almost invisible nestled against a slope
in a wooded glen, its copper roof and
shingled chimneys declare “Prank Foye Wright.” Yes, the great archi-
tect designed it (though he never
came here) for a “wicked” oldman
named J. W. Adams. It’s an
intriguing, admittiedly high-mainte-
nance house that Adams says “just
grows out of the ground.” He reli-
nishes its outer walls angled to match
the slope, its Prairie roof and interior
walls aligned as parallels, and the
gate, composed of triangles
in a matrix of bars. “It’s subtlt, but
there are no ‘90-degree angles.’

To find the house, go north on Old Car-
thron Road, then right on Gervais to
No. 506.”

South of Fondren, the Belhaven
district boasts its architectural variety
and history. Elvira Weyt spent
most of her life at 111 Furiman St.
in a 1925 Tudor Revived house.
After a restoration overseen by Adams, it’s a
“liberally restored heritage home.”
Nearby, at 801 Parchment, a 1939 Art
moderne house showcases its origi-

The most impressive deco structure
in Belhaven is the Baker
Magnet School (1900 N. State St.),
which came to the
cover of a 1938 Life magazine for
its school’s forward look and its
revolutionary design of formed-in-
place concrete. But the real dra-
ma is in the details: flankings the
front steps are carved stone reliefs
of Andrew Jackson (the city’s name-
sake) with his troops and Chief
Peshalwah with his braves, allies
in the Indian wars. On a schoolday,
visitors enter terraced halls and
a lofty auditorium with ornate
columns and a stylized horse-
rider sculpture.

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