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MMA's *Paris Moderne* Exhibit Showcases Art Deco Years

by Nickolas Furr
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Patrons of the arts are in the midst of a boon time in Mississippi. Across the state, several major exhibits are showing or have been announced. In Jackson, the Mississippi Museum of Art is displaying a collection from arguably the most influential artistic movement of the twentieth century.

The exhibit, *Paris Moderne: Art Deco Works from the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris*, opened Saturday night at the Mississippi Museum of Art. This is the seventh presentation in the Annie Laurie Swaim Hearin Memorial Exhibition series.

Paris Moderne showcases the lifestyles of affluent Parisians during the formative and important Art Deco years of the 1920's and 1930's. By combining paintings and decorative arts with sculpture and furniture, it captures the atmosphere of the artistic-influenced lifestyle of urban Europe.

Dominique Gagneux, of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (MAMVP), is the curator of the exhibit. She explains what sets this apart from others.

"It's a very focused selection of works. What we're presenting are fixtures, pieces of furniture, paintings, and drawings of the same spirit, in order to create an atmosphere that I think the visitors will be able to feel."

Jackson is the only place outside of Paris that visitors will be able to absorb this feeling. For the first time since its inception in 1937, the MAMVP has allowed a group of works from their significant selection of Art Deco objects to leave France.

Many pieces of original art by influential and important artists such as Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Pierre Bonnard, Raoul Dufy, André Derain, Maurice de Vlaminck, Albert Marquet, and others are on display. The artwork reflects the styles of the day: landscapes, still life, and abstract paintings, as well as images of women in portraits, nudes, and specialized settings.

The original works are used to accent and enhance the fixtures, furniture, and decorative arts in order to immerse the visitors in the unique era that existed between the two world wars.

"It's the lifestyle of the 30's in Europe," Gagneux says. "Of course, in the 30's, there were many, many wars. We already had war in Spain. We had fascists. We didn't want to show that. We show an optimistic way of life. It's urban and it's wealthy. The atmosphere reflects a luxury, a style of life. It's in the spirit of Art Deco."

Art Deco, a concept created by combining both art and decoration, first appeared in Paris at the 1925 International Exhibition for Decorative Arts and Modern Industry. By combining function with streamlined, elegant design and a perfectionist-level quality of craftsmanship, Art Deco swept through Europe immediately and the United States within a few years. Few artistic styles are as instantly recognizable.

The decorative arts represented in *Paris Moderne* are crafted from various refined materials ranging from crocodile skin to lacquered gold. The objects were specifically chosen to depict the manufacturing techniques of Paris at the time. Artisans represented in the exhibition include Jacques Adnet, André Arbus, Maurice Champion, Gerard Saddier, Michel Dufet, and Louis Midavaine.

One of the highlights of the exhibit is a display of golden lacquer panels by Jean Dunand. These unique, mammoth panels were created for the ocean liner *Normandie*. This is the first time they have left Paris since being acquired by MAMVP.

Organized by International Arts & Artists, Washington, D.C., the exhibit will show until July 11 at the Mississippi Museum of Art, 201 E. Pascagoula in Jackson. Call 1-866-VIEW ART for more information.