

Book chronicles architecture tour

(From Page 1D)

visited the Italian department where Esther was teaching and we met. We're 'friends for life.'

Franci and Zago have worked on several previous projects together, including the publication of an Italian edition of Horace Walpole's "Essay on the Modern Garden."

With Mangaroni, an Italian biographer, and Federico Zignani, they collaborated on "The Other Shore of Byzantium/The Imagination of America."

But "A Journey Through Art Deco" focuses on what Franci calls "the most interesting American art with characteristics all its own."

"In Italy, this style is called Modernistic, or Novecento," she says. "In the '30s, it was connected to fascism, which everyone is trying to forget. Some of our friends in Italy looked at the photographs of the (Boulder County) Courthouse and their reaction was, 'This is Mussolini's style.'"

American Deco, Zago says, is adopted from European architecture and transformed on these shores with "a happy disregard for tradition."

"There's a symbiotic relationship, which is shocking in Europe but works well here," she says.

Zago and Franci spent a day in Denver armed with a map and list of potential deco subjects suggested by friends.

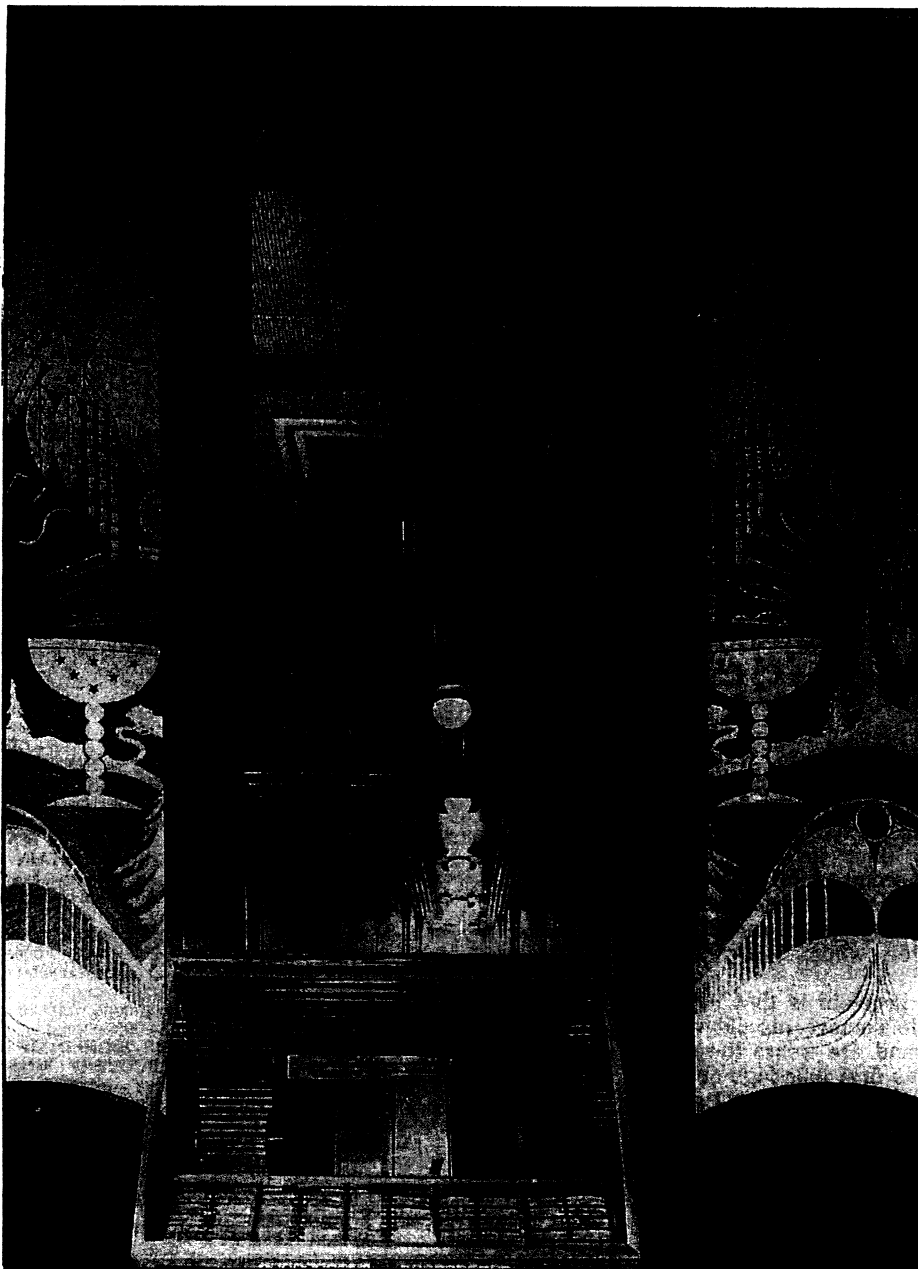
Among their discoveries was that the Oxford Hotel still has four rooms decorated in the original deco manner.

The authors' interest in the American cinema and its place in deco is reflected in both the movie posters it reprints ("King Kong" and "Cleopatra") and its text.

"Beginning in the Twenties" they write, "... and with the rise of Art Deco, America communicated to the world and projected on movie screens the moment of her birth as a 'new' country which no longer needed to look at the past or to worry about the future."

Perhaps it's this exuberance of the "new" that lends such a special fascination to authors from an older, more-venerable continent.

"A Journey Through American Art Deco" is available at area bookstores, including the Boulder Bookstore and The Tattered Cover in Denver.



Photos by FEDERICO ZIGNANI, from "A Journey Through American Art De

The Cruise Bar Room in Denver's Oxford Hotel features a uniquely American twist (art deco, with an American Indian design).