

THE ART of DECO

Italian book chronicles
U.S. architecture tour —
with stops in Boulder

By KAREN MITCHELL
Camera Staff Writer

With its triangular marquee and multi-colored neon outline, the Boulder Theater has often been trumpeted as a proud, local example of fine American art deco architecture.

Rarely though, has it been in such company as New York's Rockefeller Center, The Arizona Biltmore in Phoenix, or the legendary Mann's Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles.

These and other deco works — including the Boulder County Courthouse and Boulder's defunct L.A. Diner — are brought together in a new book with Boulder connections, "A Journey Through American Art Deco: Architecture, Design, and Cinema in the Twenties and Thirties" by Giovanna Franci, Rosella Mangaroni and Esther Zago (University of Washington Press, \$30.) The book is translated into English by Michael Serwatka and Daily Camera librarian Charlotte Smokler.

Printed in Italy, it contains both black-and-white and full-color photographs of deco architecture in seven regions of the country

including the Boulder/Denver area. Taken by Franci's son, photographer Federico Zignani, they feature unique perspectives of some oft-photographed sites such as the Empire State Building.

Zignani, who lives in Los Angeles and Italy, is particularly attentive to the details that define the deco style. His black-and-white photo of the Cruise Room Bar in Denver's Oxford Hotel, for instance, beautifully juxtaposes the jukebox with the divided figure of an American Indian in feather headdress on the walls.

Zago, a native of Verona, Italy, teaches in the honors program at the University of Colorado.

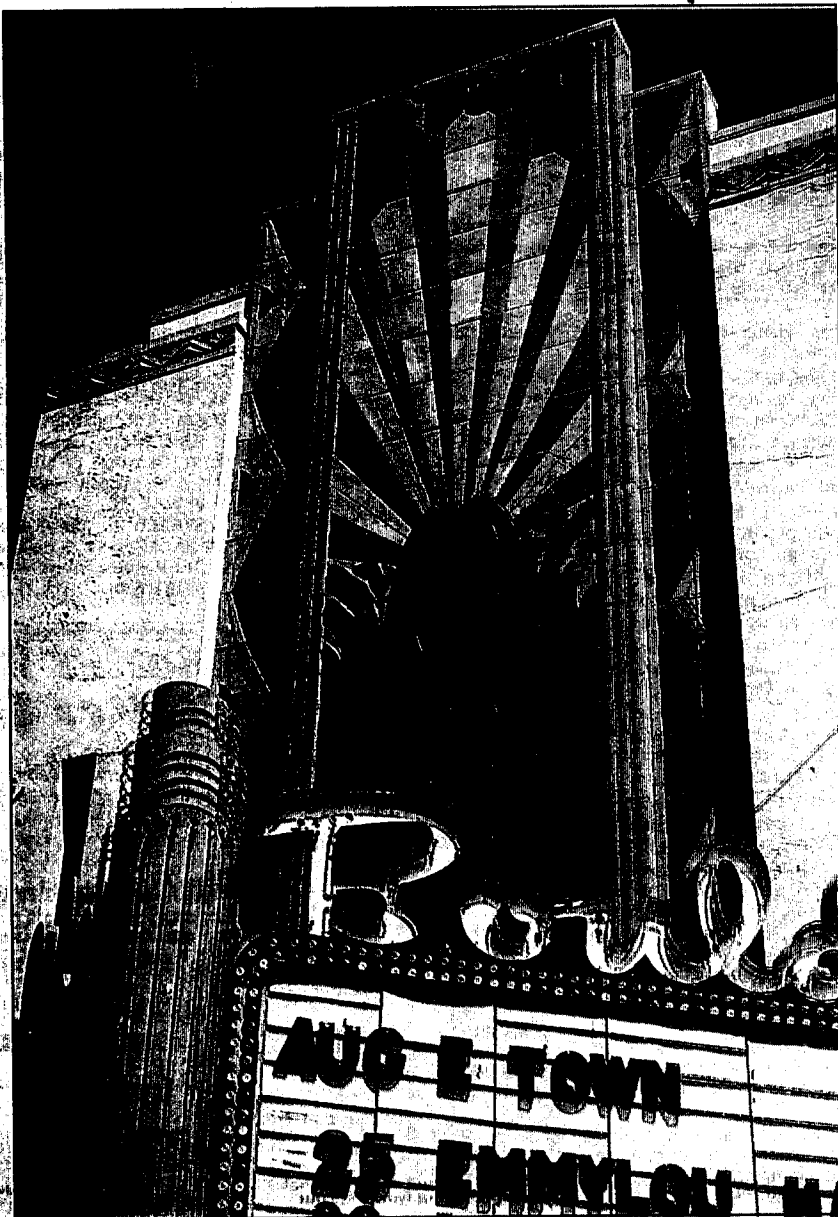
Her work-in-progress includes a social study

of medieval Aesopic fables. Franci is a professor of English at the University of Bologna, where she writes on literary theory. One of her courses is taught in collaboration with noted Italian author Umberto Eco. She has organized seminars with leading literary critics, like the American Harold Bloom.

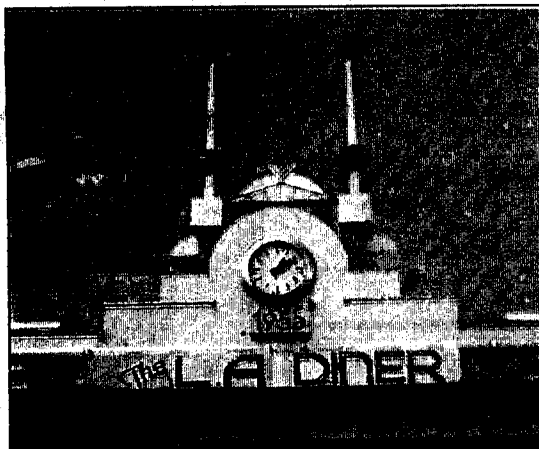
The two women met many years ago when Franci, who was visiting Boulder with her husband, physicist Flavio Zignani, went out to explore the town.

"We've been coming here for almost 20 years," Franci says. "I visited the Italian department

(See BOOK, Page 4D)



Two locally famous examples of art deco building design are featured in a new Italian book, "A Journey Through American Art Deco." The Boulder Theater is in downtown Boulder; the L.A. Diner is defunct.



Photos by FEDERICO ZIGNANI.
From "A Journey Through
American Art Deco"