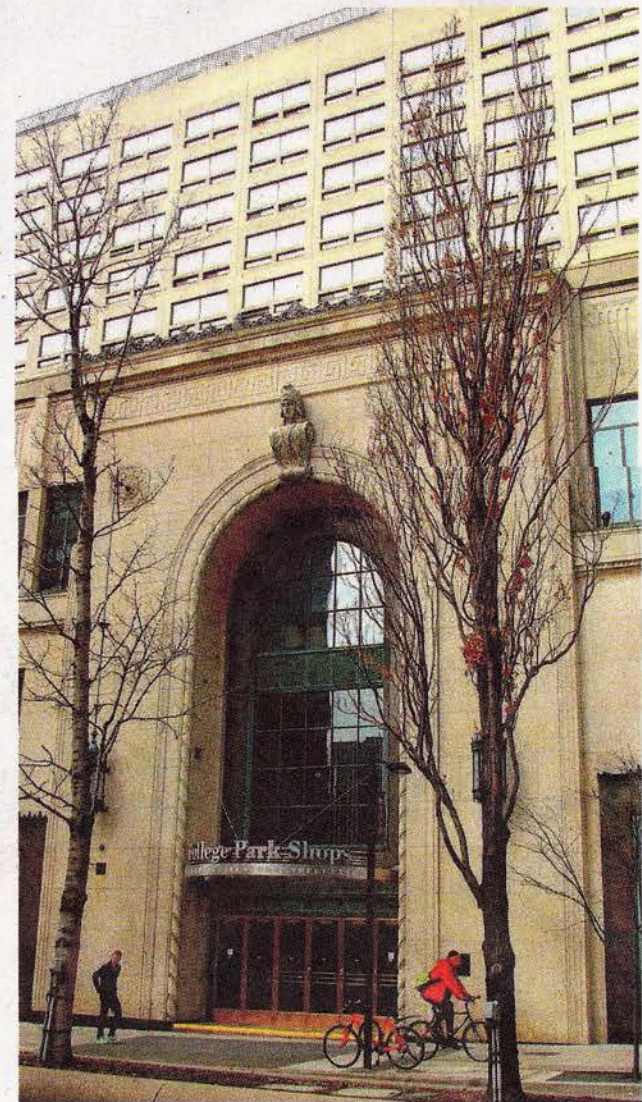


# CONDO LIVING



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## Art deco enjoys a comeback

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Special to QMI Agency

Some say the first use of the term Art Deco was attributed to the pioneering French architect, Le Corbusier. Toronto has many fine examples of Art Deco-styled buildings from a bygone era, several of which have been converted to modern condo residences.

The Montreal architectural firm of Ross and MacDonald was prolific in Canada during the early 20th century and brought Toronto many of its finest examples of Art Deco, such as the Maple Leaf Gardens, Union Station and the Royal York Hotel.

What exactly is Art Deco?

According to architect Stephen Teeple, "Deco" is "a decorative art that tries to embrace the dynamics of modernism into its aesthetic."

Teeple is well known for his modern condominium designs such as Picasso on Richmond and Origami Lofts, and when it comes to Toronto he knows the lay of the land. Deco motifs try to convey progress by "Bringing the machine agent to play in materials and construction."

It depicts the machine, modern materials and speed, as opposed to organic motifs, says Teeple. "Things that were supposed to be fast, were supposed to also look fast. You get the notion of streamlining."

Deco has a distinct look and the decorations tell the story.

"You can interpret it pretty quickly by noting the type of decoration; if it brings in a more modern set of aspirations like modern production, that kind of embracement of technology over the organic would be a key defining feature."

Another fine example of art deco in Toronto is the Tip Top Lofts conversion; a 1920s-era building that has been transformed into condominium residences. At the site near the waterfront at 637 Lake Shore Boulevard just west of Bathurst Street, the structure was built to house the Tip Top Tailors factory and warehouses.

Dylex sold the unique building in 2002, and it underwent a complete makeover by Context Developments. Alex Spei-

gel was director of development on the project and says that such undertakings are fraught with complexity, "especially when you have to deal with historical designations, the project is carefully monitored. It has to go through a whole process with the city of Toronto heritage department and in doing the conversion you go through a process called designation."

Designed by Bishop and Miller architects in the 1920s, the ornate edifice was saved at the last moment from becoming a computer data centre. "It would've been a real shame because it's in such a wonderful location and when the dot-com bust happened, they decided that wasn't a viable use and they decided this

would make a great residential building."

The Art Deco Imperial Lofts was developed by Plazacorp in 1997 and houses 60 residential suites. Located on Sherbourne Street, just north of Adelaide, it was home to the original Imperial Optical warehouse. The six-storey, mill-style conversion features exposed wood beams, brick walls and 10.5-foot ceilings while the three-storey building features 10-foot concrete ceilings and columns.

Another magnificent example of downtown Deco is the College Park complex, comprising a shopping mall, residential and office complex located on the southwest corner of Yonge Street and College Street. The site of the old T. Eaton flagship store, it was

originally built in the 1920s and designed by Ross and MacDonald in association with Henry Sproatt.

College Park was expanded through the addition of a residential apartment building in 1978 and the 30-storey, mirrored Maclean-Hunter building in 1984. A separate residential structure resides behind the Deco façade on Yonge St. The College Park Suites offer luxury rentals at the site of Toronto's original Eaton Centre. The spectacular 7th floor event space has undergone a grand renovation and renamed The Carlu after French architect Jacques Carlu who was retained to design the original interior of the floor, including the 1,300-seat Eaton Auditorium.