



Museum of the City of New York to Showcase Iconic Art Deco Postcards from Leonard A. Lauder Collection

Press Preview: Tuesday, September 24, 10 a.m.–12 p.m.

New York, New York (July 23, 2024) — This fall, the Museum of the City of New York presents *Art Deco City: New York Postcards from the Leonard A. Lauder Collection*, an exhibition that features a collection of historical postcards that tell the story of the city’s ascendance as a global emblem of culture and modernity during the interwar years.

On view from September 27, 2024, through February 17, 2025, *Art Deco City* highlights the role of the postcard medium, through the Art Deco aesthetic and the development of modern graphics and cutting-edge technology, in broadcasting New York’s cosmopolitan allure to global audiences and positioning the city as a capital of the world. The exhibition is accompanied by objects that contextualize the postcards on view, encompassing decorative arts, fashion, photography, drawings, film, and architectural models from the MCNY collection.

Featuring over 250 postcards from the 1920s, ’30s, and ’40s, *Art Deco City* showcases the bold new look of Art Deco, a style that heralded New York’s arrival as a modern metropolis and a hub of architecture, design, fashion, and culture. During these decades, postcards fulfilled the role social media plays today; they captured the glamour of city nights through images of neon-lit streets, restaurants, and entertainment venues, and showcased the novelty of modern urban life through depictions of setback skyscrapers and new modes of transportation. The exhibition explores how this pervasive form of communication encapsulated the city’s elegance amidst the challenges of the Great Depression and the political turmoil of the era.

Through innovations in printing technology, Art Deco-era postcards transmitted vibrant images and messages of this trailblazing “skyscraper city” around the globe, making Art Deco landmarks like the Chrysler Building, the Empire State Building, Rockefeller Center, and Radio City Music Hall icons of New York architecture. Postcard artists depicted these structures with dynamic forms and brilliant colors characteristic of the Art Deco style and were instrumental in promoting the “city of tomorrow” at the 1939–40 World’s Fair.

Art Deco City is organized in collaboration with the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and is drawn from the Leonard A. Lauder Postcard Archive of over 100,000 postcards. The exhibition’s alluring, candy-colored postcards circulated during Mr. Lauder’s childhood when he began using his allowance to purchase them in multiples at the Woolworth’s five-and-dime in the Empire State Building.

"The exciting city of my childhood is brought to life through these colorful and elegant postcards, which are among the first that inspired my passion for the medium and set me on the path of being a collector. I’m thrilled that they are being shared with the public by MCNY. I

have a longtime, special bond with the Museum, and admire how its lively programming continually captures the dynamic history and energy of the city," said Leonard A. Lauder.

Alongside the works from Leonard A. Lauder Postcard Archive, objects from the Museum of the City of New York contextualize the Art Deco style and underscore its role in shaping New York City's visual identity as a modern metropolis.

"Inspired by Leonard Lauder's vision of pairing Art Deco postcards with historic objects and works of art, guest curators Anna Jozefacka and Lynda Klich together with MCNY curator Lilly Tuttle have developed a dynamic exhibition that will highlight New York City's dazzling ascendance during the interwar years," said Stephanie Hill Wilchfort, Ronay Menschel President and Director of the Museum of the City of New York.

"At the turn of the twentieth century, postcards were an essential communication tool, and the medium found new life in the '20s and '30s as a way to broadcast New York City's power, glamour, and modern ethos to the world. Leonard A. Lauder's remarkable collection of New York postcards shows how artists and publishers continually updated their printing methods and materials, always keeping up with the latest visual styles in their designs," said co-curator Lynda Klich.

"Art Deco was a look that spurred New York's identity as the capital of modernity. This exhibition not only celebrates a style of design found in the city's architecture, but also spotlights Art Deco as a cultural phenomenon that defined an era and continues to influence our perception of the city today," said co-curator Anna Jozefacka.

"What's particularly fascinating about this exhibition is how it highlights a significant paradox of the era: The world was simultaneously grappling with the downturn of the Great Depression and the looming crisis in Europe, while celebrating a moment of razzle-dazzle, romance, and style being experienced and seen in New York City," said Lilly Tuttle, co-curator.

For more information about *Art Deco City: New York Postcards from the Leonard A. Lauder Collection* and the Museum of the City of New York, please visit mcny.org.

Generous funding for the exhibition has been provided by Leonard A. Lauder.

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About the Museum of the City of New York

The country's first and largest city museum, the Museum of the City of New York fosters an understanding of the distinctive nature of urban life in the world's most influential metropolis. Through history, popular culture, and art, the Museum explores New York City's influence nationally and globally. Named the "Best Museum" in Time Out New York's "Best of the City 2021", MCNY holds a 750,000-object collection and hosts two permanent exhibitions; two

immersive films; and four rotating exhibitions in its historic building at the top of Museum Mile.

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