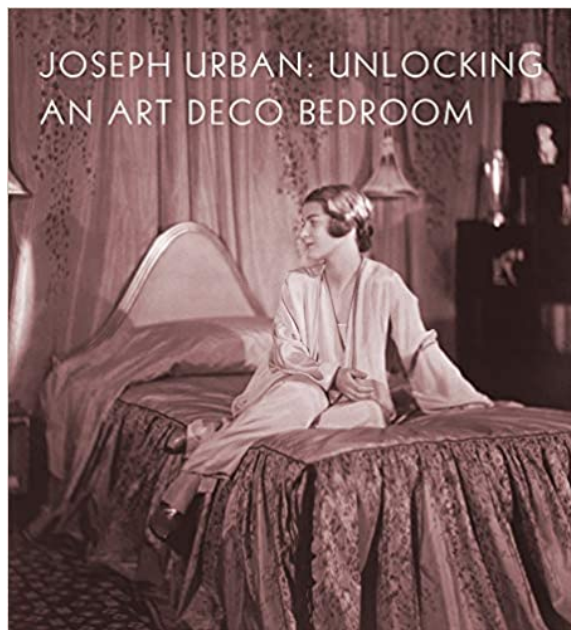


Review: Joseph Urban: Unlocking an Art Deco Bedroom

by Amy Miller Dehan. Cincinnati Art Museum in association with D Giles Limited, February 2022. 128 p. ill. ISBN 978-1-911282-56-3 (h/c), \$49.95.

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With ninety images and five essays, a reader should anticipate a detailed and lush rendering of the Chicago, Illinois bedroom designed by Joseph Urban in 1929. Editor Amy Miller Dehan, produces just that in her book *Joseph Urban: Unlocking an Art Deco Bedroom*. Miller Dehan, the curator of the Cincinnati Art Museum exhibit of the same name, sets out to encapsulate both the Wormser bedroom commission and Joseph Urban's design career.

In addition to recording the process of building the exhibition, Miller Dehan includes essays that help flesh out the life and career of Joseph Urban. University of Texas architecture professor Christopher Long uses his expertise in modern architectural history to provide the necessary background on Urban's career and influence on

American modernism. In short, Urban was able to re-package modern design in a manner that persuaded an American public clinging to classical design into embracing modernism.

Elizabeth McGoey, the decorative arts curator at the Art Institute of Chicago, delves even deeper into the proliferation of modernism in America. Explaining how the advent of "model rooms" bedecked in the modernism flair drew crowds of the general public who could see how the "interior decoration in the new manner may be adapted to the home."

Amy Miller Dehan uses imagery throughout the book to maximum effect. From the enlarged close-cropped photographs of ornaments found in the room to the images of the rendering process used to recreate the room in situ, the book is filled with images to complete the

narrative. The book also effectively uses the Wormser bedroom as a vehicle to provide a thorough yet concise biography of Joseph Urban. Connecting the bedroom design to his previous work in a vast array of media provides a fascinating pictorial timeline of his career.

Readers are also gifted with commentary from the original inhabitant of the bedroom, Elaine Wormser Reis. Miller Dehan appropriately weaves into the essays quotations from interviews between herself, Mrs. Wormser Reis, and other museum staff from 1997 and 2007. Those bits of nuance and color add to the overall story of the commission. Mrs. Wormser Reis donated the contents of her room to the Cincinnati Art Museum in 1973. Knowing this exhibit has been slowly coming to life since then adds to the exceptionalism of the endeavor.

Joseph Urban: Unlocking an Art Deco Bedroom is appropriate for undergraduate and graduate audiences. It includes a selected bibliography and index. The book is engaging, beautiful, accessible, and would be suitable for a myriad of interests including interior design, architecture, and museum studies. It would be a welcome addition to academic and museum libraries.