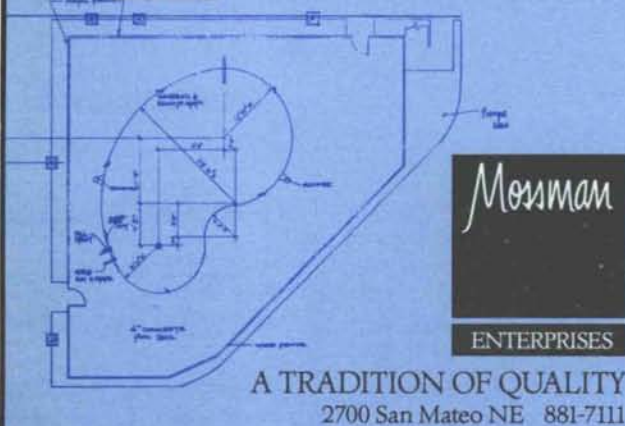


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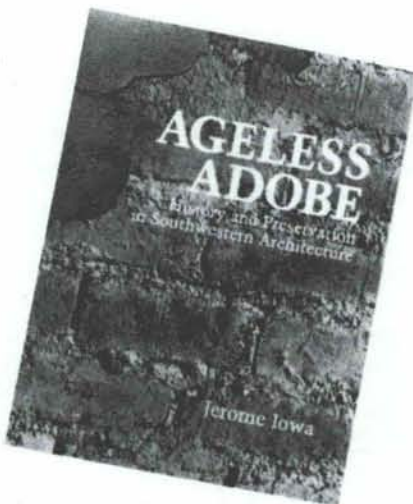
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PUEBLO DECO - THE ART DECO ARCHITECTURE OF THE SOUTHWEST

Marcus Whiffen and Carla Breeze

Photographs by Carla Breeze

University of New Mexico Press

Albuquerque, 1984

Reviewed by John P. Conron, FAIA

A small, but well researched, written and printed book addresses the southwest's unique contribution to the Art Deco architecture of early twentieth century America. Marcus Whiffen and Carla Breeze have given us a concise look at a short but important era in the ever changing, onrushing history of architecture. Originally termed Modernistic, the Art Deco style was popular throughout the United States in the 1920's and 1930's. Unlike its contemporary movement, the unadorned International Style, Art Deco was most emphatically a style making much use of ornament.

The architects of the southwest localized the style by the use of Pueblo Indian building forms and massing, and embellished their designs with the use of Indian design motifs taken from pottery, jewelry, textiles and baskets. Their successes have become known as Pueblo Deco, an apt title.

The book describes and illustrates with drawings and fine color photography twenty-seven buildings located in Arizona, New Mexico and west Texas. While not intended as a comprehensive catalogue of Pueblo and Art Deco buildings, it does emphasize the historic importance of the style and these buildings to our architectural heritage. It points out the need for their preservation as a part of our too fast disappearing historic architectural patrimony.

If there is a fault with the book, and it has nothing to do with Pueblo Deco, it is the broad use of a narrow term. Adobe, as I understand it, is a word derived from the Arabic meaning sun dried brick, a mud brick. The Indians of the southwest did not know the technique of making adobes; the Spanish introduced the adobe to the southwest. Thus the pre-conquest Indian villages could not have been "...built of stone and mass adobe...". To be sure many Indian Pueblos were of a massive mud construction, but not of bricks dried in the the sun, not of adobe.

In a brief description of the early Spanish churches of the southwest the authors make no distinction between those in New Mexico and those in Arizona and Texas, but rather, suggest, by that omission, a sameness. And they state that "they were like no other churches in the Spanish dominions...". I thought that the Spanish mission churches of Texas and Arizona were directly related in design and form to the late Baroque or Churrigueresque Churches of old Mexico. The New Mexico churches, simple, massive style predates the churches in its neighboring states by some 100 to 150 years. Bainbridge Bunting, New Mexico's eminent architectural historian, claimed that, although simplified and compromised by poverty, local material and unskilled workmen, they have their heritage in the massive fortress-like churches of northern Mexico.

Be that as it may, dear reader, buy the book. Go out, find and enjoy the buildings described in this book and discover other Pueblo Deco buildings that, so far, have survived the wrecking ball.

JPC