We, Richard Striner and Melissa Blair—hereafter to be named in the third person—have written this study for as broad a readership as possible. Striner, a native of Washington, DC, and the founding president of its Art Deco Society, wrote the Washington sections. Blair, a trained architectural historian and resident of Baltimore, wrote on the design of that neighboring city.

The book revisits and builds on two earlier works, *Washington Deco: Art Deco in the Nation’s Capital* (1984), coauthored by Striner and Hans Wirz, and *Baltimore Deco: An Architectural Survey of Art Deco in Baltimore*, by Sherry Cucchiella (1984). From the beginning we planned a book that would treat both cities in a single new volume. Washington/Baltimore comprises a single metropolitan statistical area, and it claims its own television market, one of the largest in the country. Each morning, many families disperse to both places for work or school, and on weekends and holidays residents can easily travel the forty-five or so miles between city centers for concerts, ball games, and other events. The cities have their own baseball and football teams but nonetheless share a region that the telephone company once took as its name, the Chesapeake and Potomac.

More importantly, the two cities—in the 1930s and 1940s the one a white-collar, New Deal nerve center and the other a gritty port city—lend themselves to comparative study. Their contrasts prove instructive. Their commonalities and affinities, among them the regional work of Baltimore’s John Jacob Zink, who designed fine Art Deco cinemas in both cities, deserve exploration.

Since the two books of 1984, new research, much of it pursuant to preservation campaigns, has added greatly to our knowledge of buildings in both cities. The 1984 studies, in part preservation manifestos, aimed to provide a prima facie case for historic preservation, that is, a literature that preservation activists could use in their efforts to save Art Deco buildings from destruction. The Art Deco Society of Washington emerged as the Washington book neared completion, and Sherry Cucchiella helped to found the Baltimore Deco Society while working on her own book. Neither volume pretended to supply the last or even the best word on the subject.

The campaigns to save Washington and Baltimore Art Deco buildings led to waves of new scholarship that make an updated study appropriate, and of course the preservation challenge remains. More threats to important Art Deco buildings will doubtless develop in both cities. We offer occasional commentary here on successes and failures of preservation campaigns to date. Complete files for the preservation case-
work of the Art Deco Society of Washington may be found in the Richard Striner Historic Preservation Papers, on deposit with the Historical Society of Washington, DC. These files contain correspondence, internal memoranda, the records of legal proceedings, and illustrations.

Throughout the book we endeavor to place the buildings in interpretive contexts: the evolution of building types, the developmental patterns of the various developers and builders, the careers of architects, and the impact of the buildings on localities and broader urban patterns. In the final analysis, however, this book focuses on a design movement and its presence in the built environment.

Our method was to update the coverage of buildings in both of the 1984 studies by assimilating all the newer scholarship. The endnotes reflect our vast debt to the work of other historians, work that led not only to journal articles but also to National Register and local landmark nominations. We did substantial “windshield surveys” to assess the condition of the buildings today. We pursued new research in archival repositories to uncover as many historical images of the buildings as possible in order to depict them in all of their original glory, as the architects designed them.

Architectural historians approach their work in different ways. Some devote attention to undisputed masterworks or clear and unambiguous examples of “style.” We seek to be as comprehensive as possible, especially in light of our view that Art Deco spans a range of overlapping tendencies. Other students of architectural history look away from stylistic exemplars, seeking ever-wider arcs of association, arcs that link architecture with national and local trends, with economics and sociology, and with other interdisciplinary issues of wide interest. We approve of such work and have sought to provide as much context as possible without straying far from our subject. But we must also note that clear-cut generalizations about builders, architects, patrons, and users of these buildings do not come easily. The builders of 1930s garden apartments, for instance, were often small-scale entrepreneurs for whom biographical data is in many cases scarce and in some cases nonexistent. We combine analysis and presentation throughout, while deferring most generalizations until the conclusion.

Above all, we hope that this book will help the residents of Washington and Baltimore to appreciate what they have. The types of buildings we present—though some may be less glamorous than the Art Deco masterworks of New York City and many do not rise to the flamboyance of South Miami Beach—illustrate what many other American cities possess. We intend here to show how an international design movement found its way into ordinary places. For this reason the book may be interesting and useful to audiences beyond Washington, DC, Baltimore, and the Mid-Atlantic region.

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