

BACK TO SCHOOL

# DOCUMENTING DECO

BY SUTTON PLACE RESIDENT **ROBERTA NUSIM**,  
ADSNY PRESIDENT

## WE'RE GOING BACK TO SCHOOL WITH ART DECO.

Now in its tenth year, the **DOCUMENTING DECO PROGRAM** brings the thrill of New York City's famed Art Deco icons to students in NYC schools, including those in our own Sutton neighborhood at The High School of Art & Design.

The Art Deco Society of New York (ADSNY), a nonprofit volunteer organization founded in 1981 to preserve, celebrate, and educate the public about New York's great Art Deco Jazz Age legacy, has been headquartered in our community since 2013, when Sutton resident Roberta Nusim became its volunteer president.

"Everyone knows New York's great Art Deco icons — many in and close to our neighborhood. The Beekman Tower, Waldorf Astoria, the GE Building, Rockefeller Center, as well as the Deco gems along 42nd Street: the Daily News, Chrysler and Chanin buildings. But there are many lovely residential and commercial buildings in the Sutton area and throughout the city boasting the Art Deco style, buildings that we pass each day but may never notice. Through classroom lessons and neighborhood walking tours, Documenting Deco is designed to open the eyes of youngsters and their families to this distinctive architectural movement that makes New York City so special," Nusim explains.

ADSNY's teaching artist, Rachel Sanchez, has been bringing Documenting Deco to students in schools throughout the city, including The High School of Art & Design, which has participated in Documenting Deco for the past five years. Lessons teach design elements, motifs, and features of Art Deco buildings and motivate students to think about factors that architects must consider when designing a building.

According to Sanchez, "The students at Art & Design high school never cease to amaze me. When I ask them



ABRAHAM LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL  
STUDENTS ON A DOCUMENTING DECO  
WALKING TOUR OF MIDTOWN DECO ICONS  
WITH THE ADSNY TEAM

to sketch a building at the beginning of the lessons, they take out their rulers, compasses and T-squares, and begin working. But once the students learn about and are shown examples of Art Deco design in buildings throughout New York City, they go back to their original sketches and redesign their buildings by including elements of Art Deco. Their designs may feature wrap-around windows, chevrons, massing, sunbursts, streamlining, and other typical Deco elements. Mrs. Singh, their instructor, is as enthusiastic as the students, as she circulates the room, providing students with suggestions on how to improve upon their drawings. This spring, Mrs. Singh's students did such a magnificent job designing their Art Deco buildings that many of them appeared in a school-wide art show. It's always an honor to work with the students at Art & Design high school."

Art & Design is one of many K-12 schools that have participated in Documenting Deco over the past decade. This free ADSNY program is funded by donations from its generous members, as well as grants from New York City's Cultural Development Fund and New York State's Council on the Arts. During the pandemic, a generous donation from one ADSNY member helped the Society transform the program from in-person to online, with Art Deco Dream City's engaging interactive materials for teachers and families to use with children of all ages, from preschool tots to high school teens.



HSAD TEACHER MAHTU SINGH  
DISPLAYING STUDENTS' DOCUMENTING  
DECO WORK THIS PAST JUNE



Today, both the school program, Documenting Deco, and the family activities of **ART DECO DREAM CITY** are available free online on the Art Deco Society of New York's website at [www.artdeco.org/learn](http://www.artdeco.org/learn). Both programs give young people the opportunity to make a personal connection with the visual world around them and see their neighborhoods through new eyes in our ever-changing city.



If you would like to suggest a school to participate in this program, contact the Art Deco Society of New York at [info@artdeco.org](mailto:info@artdeco.org).

[WWW.ARTDECO.ORG](http://WWW.ARTDECO.ORG) | [WWW.ARTANDESIGNHS.ORG](http://WWW.ARTANDESIGNHS.ORG)



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