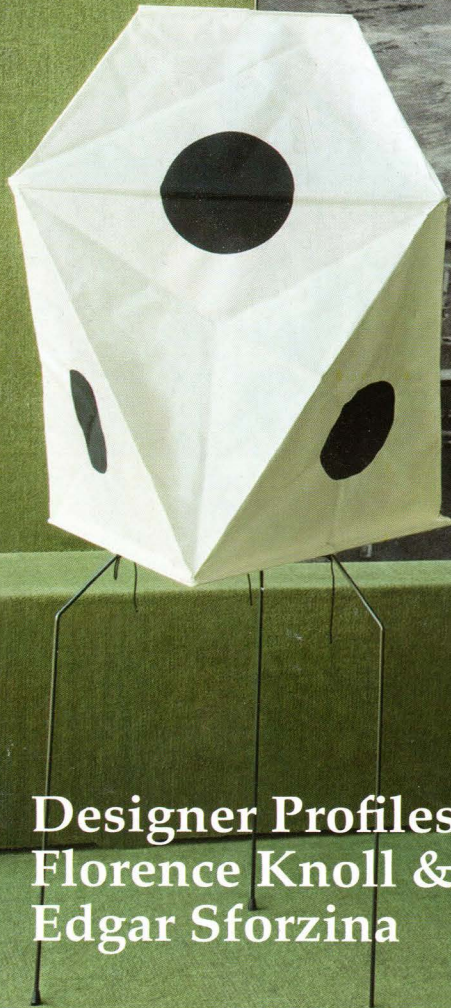


MID MOD TREASURES

Spring 2022

INSPIRED LIVING

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of old and new



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Spring Shows are Back

For the last couple of years, in-person vintage, antique, and modernism shows—big and small—have taken substantial hits. Many organizers had to cancel events altogether. Others went ahead but suffered from fewer vendors and fewer attendees. As I write this in mid-January, the big modernism shows are all gearing up for in-person events. Modernism Week in Palm Springs and 20th Century Cincinnati, both slated for February, will have already happened by the time you read this, but the Washington DC Modernism Show kicks off in late April, so there's still plenty of time to make plans to attend this event, now in its 39th year.

After going online-only for the last couple of years, the DC Modernism Show will continue its online marketplace for those who prefer to sell and buy that way. But it's now back as a live show in Alexandria, Virginia, and modern enthusiasts can browse the wares brought by vendors from the region. The online experience, hosted by Ruby Lane, begins at 9 a.m. on Thurs., Apr. 28 (early buyers can access the shopping sooner). The in-person show begins at 11 a.m. on Sat., Apr. 30 (also with an early buyers option that gets you in two hours earlier). The online show runs through the following Monday. The live show is two days only. Find all the details at washingtonmodernismshow.com.

While the show is largely a shopping experience, the organizers like to provide visitors with an educational experience as well. This year, there will be an exhibition, "Sforzina: Designs for a Modern America," which documents the work of multi-purpose designer Edgar Sforzina (he designed the lamps shown above). Jim Linz of the Art Deco Society of Washington wrote a profile of the designer for this issue of Mid Mod Treasures. If you're not familiar with his name, you might know some of Sforzina's designs, which include interiors of the Cincinnati Union Terminal and many household objects including barware, lamps, and furniture.

And, just a reminder to those of you who attend the Brimfield show in Massachusetts, the 2022 dates are set: May 10–15, July 12–17, Sep. 6–11. Not all show fields are open each day, so be sure to check websites or Facebook pages of the individual properties. Here's a good place to begin: brimfieldantiquefleamarket.com.

Happy hunting!

Erich Gaukel
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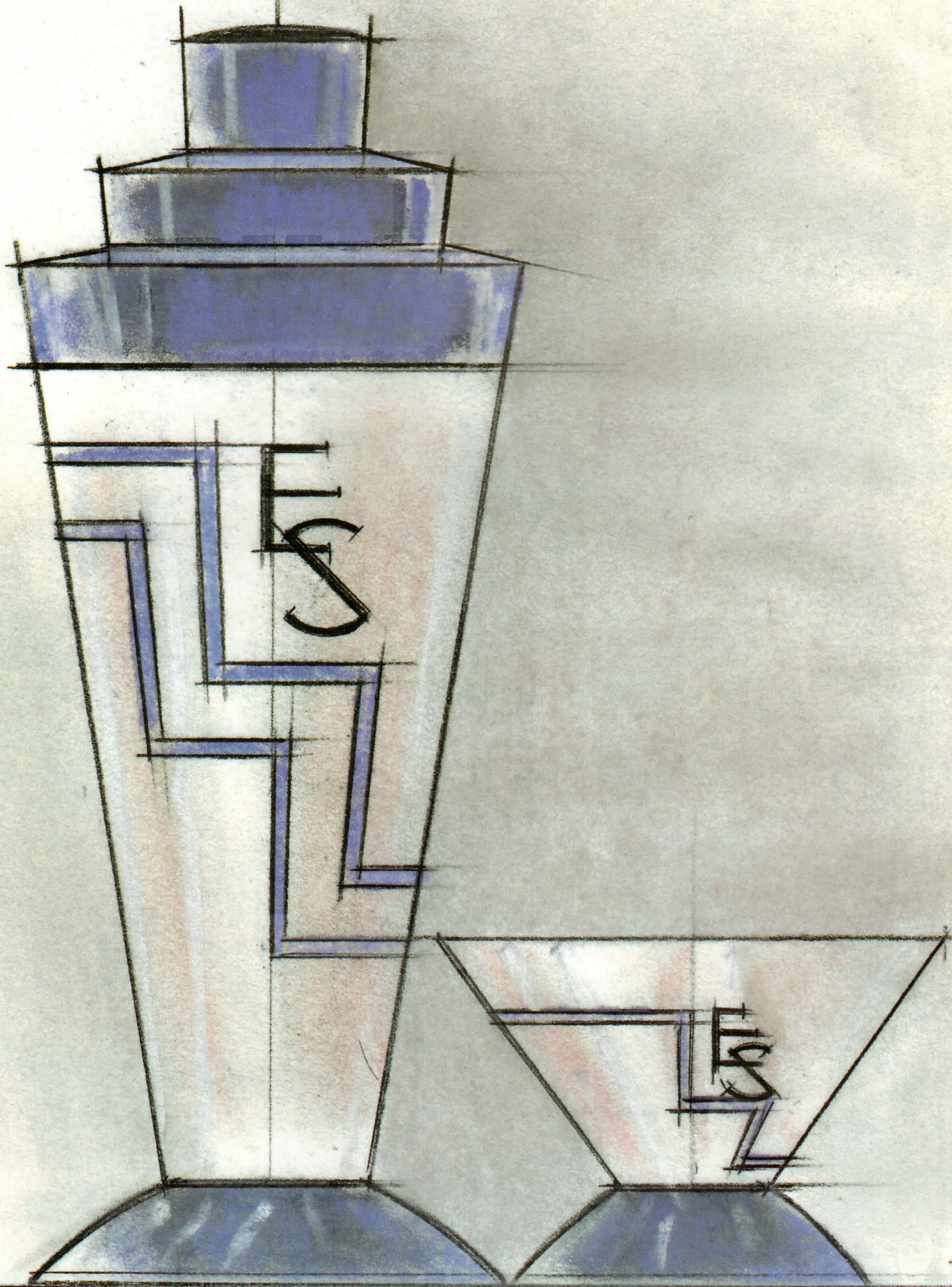
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Edgard Sforzina design for a
cocktail shaker and glass.



Edgard Sforzina

Edgard Sforzina

Designs for a Modern America

TEXT BY JIM LINZ

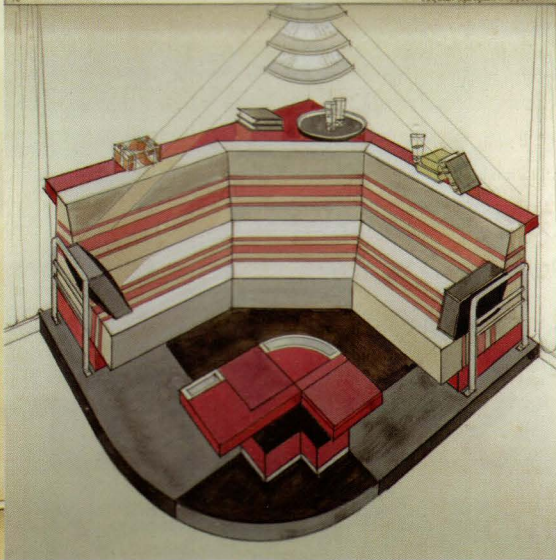
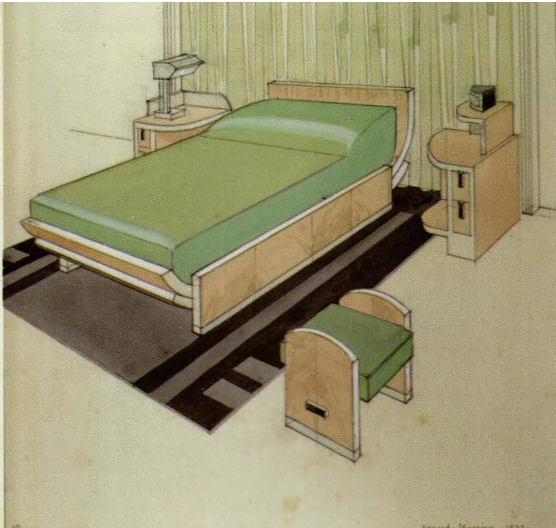
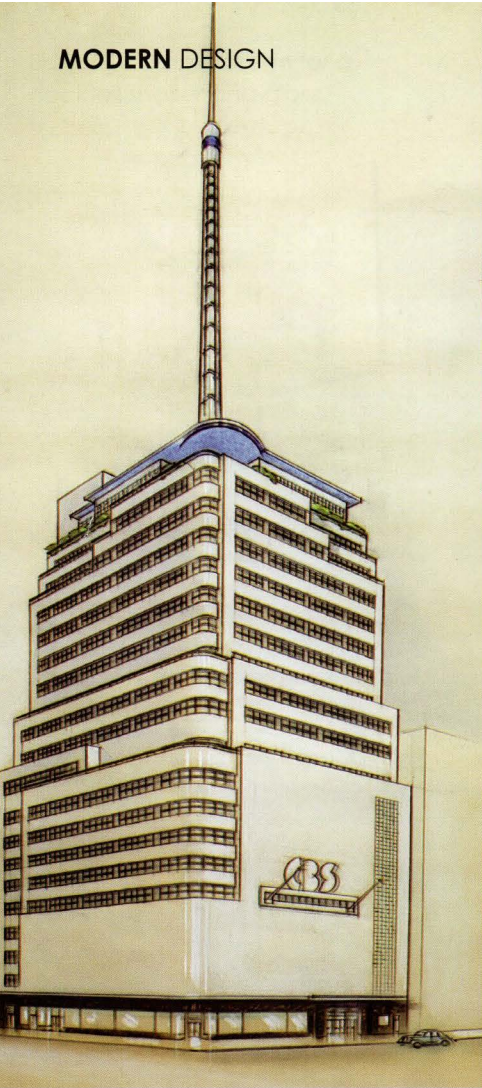
Two years before the opening of the Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris, often cited as the origin of the Art Deco movement, the roots of French Art Deco were planted in the United States. French architect and interior designer Edgard Sforzina emigrated to the United States in February 1923.

In his short but prolific career in America, Sforzina designed George Gershwin's Art Deco Riverside Drive apartment, interiors for parts of Cincinnati Union Terminal, and numerous private residences and store interiors.

Working with Sforzina's granddaughter, Denise Ellison Allen, the Art Deco Society of Washington catalogued and archived hundreds of original designs and prototypes created by Sforzina and organized the first retrospective of his work. "Sforzina: Designs for a Modern America, 1924–1941" will open the weekend of April 30 and May 1 during the 39th annual Washington DC Modernism Show. The Show and Exhibition will be held at the landmark George Washington Masonic National Memorial in Old

Town Alexandria, Virginia. The Exhibition will continue at the Memorial through July 9.

The Exhibition displays the breadth of Sforzina's work. As an artist Sforzina created dozens of graphic designs for use on textiles and other products. Examples of his graphic designs include fabric designs created for Cincinnati Union Terminal. As an artisan Sforzina designed and built custom furniture, lamps, and other household items. As an industrial designer Sforzina created designs for individual items such as barware, clocks, lamps, and furniture as well as designs for coordinated groups of furniture including bedroom, living room, and dining room sets. As an interior designer, Sforzina created and executed coordinated designs for individual homes and commercial environments. (The exhibition identifies many of Sforzina's residential and commercial clients, including period advertisements and reviews.) And as an architect, Sforzina created portfolios of designs of modern houses and developed proposals for construction of a new headquarters for the Columbia Broadcasting System and for remodeling the Cloud Club in the Chrysler Building.



Far left: 1939 Design Development drawing for proposed Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) studio at 49 East 52nd Street, New York City. **Top middle:** 1932 Edgard Sforzina design for a bedroom. **Above:** Circa 1941 plans for a midcentury-modern house. Sforzina was apparently infatuated by helicopters and either added them to many drawings or added the phrase "The helicopters are coming." **Left:** 1932 Edgard Sforzina design for a Living Room.

Edgard Desire Sforzina was born and raised in Paris, graduating from the L'Ecole des Decorative Arts about 1901. Following his graduation, Sforzina worked as a designer for Carthian & Beaumetz, primarily for the famed Art dealer Joseph Duveen of London.

Sforzina's career was interrupted by military service during World War I. Following the war he joined the Parisian firm Lucien Alavoine & Company, one of the world's leading interior design firms. Alavoine subsequently assigned Sforzina to its Fifth Avenue office in New York City. He arrived in New York on Nov. 17, 1922. Sforzina briefly returned to Paris to bring his wife and infant daughter to their new home in America.

Sforzina initially continued his work for Alavoine, but by the late 1920s, had established his own design firm, dropping the "S" from his name to form Forzina, Inc. He was also employed by the architectural firm Fellheimer & Wagner to work on the interior design of Cincinnati Union Terminal.

Among work commissioned in New York was Fashion entrepreneur Hattie Carnegie's shop and personal residences for architect Alfred Fellheimer, industrialist and philanthropist F. Lewisohn, and composer George Gershwin.

Although Sforzina's roots were firmly planted in Manhattan, commercial projects soon sprouted in such cities as Boston, Baltimore, Chicago, and Cincinnati. Sforzina designed Slattery's Millinery shop (described in a 1928 advertisement as Boston's first salon in "L'art Moderne"), the "Salon Moderne" in Hutzler Brothers department store in Baltimore (opened in 1928), a ticket booth in an unidentified building in Chicago, and the stationmaster's office and conference room in Cincinnati Union Terminal.

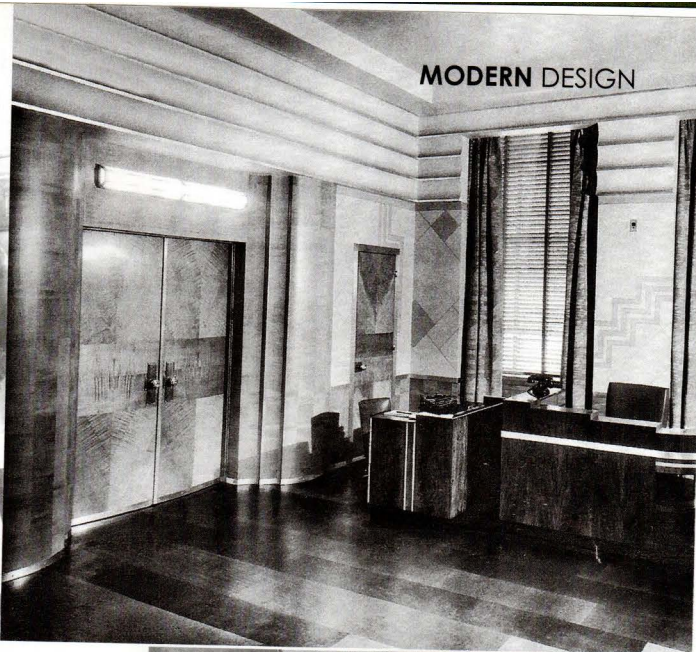
Sforzina was among the designers featured in a 1929 exhibition of the new modernistic style held at the American Designers Gallery in New York. Author Mary Fenton Roberts noted that "In the main room...there was a fine display of decorative fittings for use in a Modernistic room. And these included...table silverware by Ilonka Karasz, photographs by Steichen, furniture by Edgard S. Forzina as well as Paul T. Frankl, and many other things that would be essential in the home of anyone wishing a Modernistic interior." (Quotation from *Arts & Decoration*, February 1929).

The Sforzina exhibition also shows some of the innovations incorporated into Sforzina's designs, among which were use of washable-fabric-covered walls, upholstery fabrics



Above: Edgar Sforzina (second from left) in his office.

Above right: The Secretary's Office in Cincinnati Union Terminal. Edgard Sforzina appears to have designed the office, including the desk. **Right:** Lilly Dache, Inc. (485 Madison Avenue, New York City) Light in Architecture and Decoration, 1934. Note the concealed overhead lighting and the sofa in the middle of the photo.



containing rayon, concealed overhead lighting, and extensive use of decorative metal trim.

The Dupont Magazine reported in 1929 "that leading architects, artists, and decorators are endorsing [Dupont's new Muralart] washable fabric for use in hotels, clubs, and the like." Three of the 18 projects cited in the article were Sforzina's. He was in good company. Also cited were Joseph Urban, Winold Reiss, Wolfgang Hoffman, Eugene Schoen, and Raymond Hood.

In 1930, The Dupont Magazine similarly praised the use of upholstery fabrics containing Dupont's newly developed rayon on a Sforzina-designed chair, stating that "Rhinoceros hide, a rayon and cotton fabric, is used for the body of this chair and serves as a background for the more ornate rayon and linen lace design used on the cushions."

In its 1934 report "LIGHT in Architecture and Decoration," the Illuminating Engineering Society of New York praised Forzina, Inc. for its "extremely simple though very effective lighting system," in its design of the Lilly Dache millinery shop on Madison Avenue pointing out that "...a series of eight symmetrically placed rectangular openings were made in the ceiling. These were 2 feet by 4 feet in size and the opening covered by a single sheet of frosted glass. Above is placed a light reflecting box with three 100-watt Mazda lamps."

The report notes that the "...resultant distribution is uniform and the quality of the general illumination very pleasing."

Sforzina even drew the attention of the Australian trade press. The Construction and Local Government Journal (Sydney, New South Wales) commented in its November 20, 1929, issue that "...we see large places like the new Milgrim Shop in New York, as designed by Architects Forzina, Inc., making such an extensive display of ornamental metal work. In the Milgrim Shop, the elevator doors, stairway, and lamp standard are very rich, whilst the cost of the stair newel would be as much as some complete stairs."

In 1940, Sforzina became a naturalized United States citizen. Shortly thereafter, he died unexpectedly following a short illness. He was 59.

"Sforzina: Designs for a Modern America" is a traveling exhibition. Schools and museums interested in hosting the exhibition or acquiring the collection should write to sforzina@adsw.org. Learn more at washingtonmodernismshow.com.