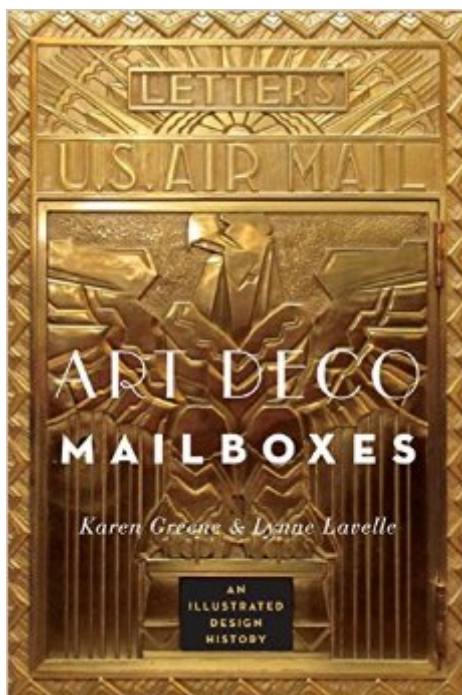


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# Art Deco Mailboxes: An Illustrated Design History



## Synopsis

A great gift book for lovers of unsung urban decorative art and unique architectural details. Mailboxes and their chutes were once as essential to the operation of any major hotel, office, civic, or residential building as the front door. In time they developed a decorative role, in a range of styles and materials, and as American art deco architecture flourished in the 1920s and 1930s they became focal points in landmark buildings and public spaces: the GE Building, Grand Central Terminal, the Woolworth Building, 29 Broadway, the St. Regis Hotel, York & Sawyer's Salmon Tower, the Waldorf Astoria, and many more. While many mailboxes have been removed, forgotten, disused, or painted over (and occasionally repurposed), others are still in use, are polished daily, and hold a place of pride in lobbies throughout the country. A full-color photographic survey of beautiful early mailboxes, highlighting those of the grand art deco period, together with a brief history of the innovative mailbox-and-chute system patented in 1883 by James Cutler of Rochester, New York, *Art Deco Mailboxes* features dozens of the best examples of this beloved, dynamic design's realization in the mailboxes of New York City as well as Chicago, Philadelphia, Indianapolis, Cincinnati, and beyond. 150 color illustrations

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The invention and installation of elevators made skyscrapers possible. All those people and offices up in the air, though, presented a new problem: how to get mail from the offices out to the postal system. There's a good chance you have never used the gadget invented to solve that problem,

the mail chute. Many skyscrapers have in their lobbies, however, the box into which those vertical chutes fed. Because the box was in the lobby and was a point of interest to those going in and out, it was not the sort of mailbox you see on the street, all practical sheet metal painted blue. Instead, sculpted and gleaming, it might have been a point of pride for the managers of the building. Those are the specimens documented in *Art Deco Mailboxes: An Illustrated Design History* (W. W. Norton) by Karen Greene and Lynne Lavelle, a fine-looking small volume that shows one box after another with polished brass and intricate casting. It was a peculiar small-scale realm for artwork, but the designs reflected the optimism of their times and locales, and it is instructive to see the pictures here. The inventor who is most responsible for the mail chute was the architect James Gould Cutler (1848 - 1927), who installed the first one in 1884. Its success spread widely. Often the architect of a building would be the one to design the mailbox. A feature included in almost every model here is an eagle, sometimes holding an American or postal shield. It is fun to see how many variations can be made on stylized representations of the bald eagle. The Gothic versions look as if they could have been lifted from the flag of some ancient European sovereignty. There are very few examples of eagles that look as if they were drawn from life.

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