With President Trump wanting to build a wall, this book and the exhibition it accompanied are a timely reminder of the rich cultural interchange between California (in particular) and Mexico. The exhibition, at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), was part of the Getty Foundation’s Pacific Standard Time (L.A.) programme, in which over 200 cultural institutions explored Latin American and Latin Art.

In such an0 outpouring of cultural and artistic expression, yet another book and exhibition dealing with Mexican and Mexican-American art, but LACMA is very large venue, and this book an excellent investigation of the architecture and design that these two countries share, in many ways, one cultural. The cover (shown right) teases our interpretation by superimposing Francisco Ariza’s and Amelia Luna’s House in Los Barriles, Jalisco, by Lance Wyman and Jan Stornfelt’s Sun Store in San Antonio, Texas, in the early 1970s, so clearly that heritage protection is fragmented across this vast country. It is very readable, with good quality contemporary and period photographs, but the word ‘stories’ in the subtitle indicates that it is not an architectural history or a gazetteer. It is also very much a selection from the buildings that could be included. It includes a few demolished buildings, but most are still standing, if sometimes quite altered. They are divided by type, with sections on service stations, cinemas and ‘Dominion’ or federal buildings such as post offices, largely built under the Canadian equivalent of the US New Deal. With examples in all ten provinces, this title supplements Morawetz’s earlier book Art Deco Architecture in Toronto (2009) and also Sandra Cahn-Rose’s Art Deco (1996) dealing with Montreal – architecturally the most rewarding large 20th century Canadian city in my view. It provides a counterpoint to the Society’s recent journal The Architecture of Public Service, as it contains many public buildings such as libraries, fire and police stations, markets and indoor halls, and highlights the challenges of finding new uses for these buildings that we also face in this country. There are some drawbacks in defining buildings as ‘Art Deco’ on the basis of their external surface decoration, such as zigzags, or for their streamlining or vertical window strips, though it means that one or two buildings are not unduly bound by dates. In fact there are very few pre-1930 buildings here, and instead a series of buildings included ‘Deco’ features (as opposed to ‘stripped classical’, which this book considers acceptable ‘Deco’) are omitted. This is important, as many Francophone Canadian architects studied at the École des beaux Arts in Paris, including probably the finest, Ernest Cormier, whose Supreme Court in Ottawa (which is in the book) is a real masterpiece. However, it does allow the inclusion of some more immediately post-war examples. Commercial and entertainment buildings generally best fit the book’s ‘Art Deco’ parameters, particularly Eaton’s department stores in Toronto and Montreal. With examples in all ten provinces, this title supplements Morawetz’s earlier book Art Deco Architecture in Toronto (2009) and also Sandra Cahn-Rose’s Art Deco (1996) dealing with Montreal – architecturally the most rewarding large 20th century Canadian city in my view. It provides a counterpoint to the Society’s recent journal The Architecture of Public Service, as it contains many public buildings such as libraries, fire and police stations, markets and indoor halls, and highlights the challenges of finding new uses for these buildings that we also face in this country. There are some drawbacks in defining buildings as ‘Art Deco’ on the basis of their external surface decoration, such as zigzags, or for their streamlining or vertical window strips, though it means that one or two buildings are not unduly bound by dates. In fact there are very few pre-1930 buildings here, and instead a series of buildings included ‘Deco’ features (as opposed to ‘stripped classical’, which this book considers acceptable ‘Deco’) are omitted. This is important, as many Francophone Canadian architects studied at the École des beaux Arts in Paris, including probably the finest, Ernest Cormier, whose Supreme Court in Ottawa (which is in the book) is a real masterpiece. However, it does allow the inclusion of some more immediately post-war examples. Commercial and entertainment buildings generally best fit the book’s ‘Art Deco’ parameters, particularly Eaton’s department stores in Toronto and Montreal.

The Library was renovated in 2005, without detracting from its character according to Morawetz, but it’s clear that other buildings in the book have fared less so. In the US, it’s clear that heritage protection is fragmented at provincial and municipal levels, but some background on this issue would have been helpful.

Defining buildings as ‘Art Deco’ (or not) often means that pieces of work are omitted, or at least neglected. The book does, however, contain some of Canada’s most notable inter-war religious buildings, such as St James’s Anglican Church in Vancouver by Adrian Gilbert Scott (1935-37), one of its best buildings, and St Benoît-du-Lac Abbey in Quebec province by the great Benedictine monk-architect Dom Béguin, built in 1939-41 – he died here in 1944 as he could not return to Europe because of WWII. Despite the question referred to definition of inter-war, this is a really good introduction to inter-war Canadian architecture.

Robert Drake

C20 members can get a 15 per cent discount on this title from emaion.com (not available in Canada) by entering the code 20SCock at the checkout.

Art Deco Architecture across Canada: Stories of the country’s buildings between the two World Wars
Tim Morawetz
Halsbury, 320pp, £69.95

This new book on Canadian ‘Art Deco’ buildings documents some of the best inter-war (and immediately post-war) buildings across this vast country. It is very readable, with good quality contemporary and period photographs, but the word ‘stories’ in the subtitle indicates that it is not an architectural history or a gazetteer. It is also very much a selection from the buildings that could be included. It includes a few demolished buildings, but most are still standing, if sometimes quite altered. They are divided by type, with sections on service stations, cinemas and ‘Dominion’ or federal buildings such as post offices, largely built under the Canadian equivalent of the US New Deal. With examples in all ten provinces, this title supplements Morawetz’s earlier book Art Deco Architecture in Toronto (2009) and also Sandra Cahn-Rose’s Art Deco (1996) dealing with Montreal – architecturally the most rewarding large 20th century Canadian city in my view. It provides a counterpoint to the Society’s recent journal The Architecture of Public Service, as it contains many public buildings such as libraries, fire and police stations, markets and indoor halls, and highlights the challenges of finding new uses for these buildings that we also face in this country. There are some drawbacks in defining buildings as ‘Art Deco’ on the basis of their external surface decoration, such as zigzags, or for their streamlining or vertical window strips, though it means that one or two buildings are not unduly bound by dates. In fact there are very few pre-1930 buildings here, and instead a series of buildings included ‘Deco’ features (as opposed to ‘stripped classical’, which this book considers acceptable ‘Deco’) are omitted. This is important, as many Francophone Canadian architects studied at the École des beaux Arts in Paris, including probably the finest, Ernest Cormier, whose Supreme Court in Ottawa (which is in the book) is a real masterpiece. However, it does allow the inclusion of some more immediately post-war examples. Commercial and entertainment buildings generally best fit the book’s ‘Art Deco’ parameters, particularly Eaton’s department stores in Toronto and Montreal. With examples in all ten provinces, this title supplements Morawetz’s earlier book Art Deco Architecture in Toronto (2009) and also Sandra Cahn-Rose’s Art Deco (1996) dealing with Montreal – architecturally the most rewarding large 20th century Canadian city in my view. It provides a counterpoint to the Society’s recent journal The Architecture of Public Service, as it contains many public buildings such as libraries, fire and police stations, markets and indoor halls, and highlights the challenges of finding new uses for these buildings that we also face in this country. There are some drawbacks in defining buildings as ‘Art Deco’ on the basis of their external surface decoration, such as zigzags, or for their streamlining or vertical window strips, though it means that one or two buildings are not unduly bound by dates. In fact there are very few pre-1930 buildings here, and instead a series of buildings included ‘Deco’ features (as opposed to ‘stripped classical’, which this book considers acceptable ‘Deco’) are omitted. This is important, as many Francophone Canadian architects studied at the École des beaux Arts in Paris, including probably the finest, Ernest Cormier, whose Supreme Court in Ottawa (which is in the book) is a real masterpiece. However, it does allow the inclusion of some more immediately post-war examples. Commercial and entertainment buildings generally best fit the book’s ‘Art Deco’ parameters, particularly Eaton’s department stores in Toronto and Montreal. With examples in all ten provinces, this title supplements Morawetz’s earlier book Art Deco Architecture in Toronto (2009) and also Sandra Cahn-Rose’s Art Deco (1996) dealing with Montreal – architecturally the most rewarding large 20th century Canadian city in my view. It provides a counterpoint to the Society’s recent journal The Architecture of Public Service, as it contains many public buildings such as libraries, fire and police stations, markets and indoor halls, and highlights the challenges of finding new uses for these buildings that we also face in this country.
In this truly inspired book (which is tied to an ongoing exhibition at LACMA) the deep but too often overlooked connections between Mexico and California in the 20th century are given their due.—The Daily Beast.

About the Author. Wendy Kaplan is Department Head and Curator of Decorative Arts and Design at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Publisher: Prestel; Illustrated edition (August 11, 2017). In organizing Found in Translation, we have made it a priority to acquire for LACMA’s collection Mexican and California objects that speak to a dialogue between the two places, Wendy Kaplan and Staci Steinberger said in a statement. Highlights include Modern Mexican design gems like posters from the 1968 Mexico City Olympics, a Hand Chair by Pedro Friedeberg, Felix Tissot's ceramics, and enamels by Miguel Pineda. The Modernism theme covers the impacts of California architects like Richard Neutra and John Lautner in Mexico, and vice versa with Mexican architect Ricardo Legorreta, who began re (Los Angeles—July 5, 2017) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art presents Found in Translation: Design in California and Mexico, 1915–1985, the first exhibition to explore the full range of design and architecture dialogues between California and Mexico from 1915 to 1985. Found in Translation features more than 250 objects including furniture, metalwork, ceramics, costume, textiles, paintings, sculpture, architectural drawings and photographs, mural studies, posters, ephemera, and film by over 200 artists, architects, designers, and craftspeople. Start by marking Design in California and Mexico, 1915-1985: Found in Translation as Want to Read: Want to Read saving… Want to Read. This groundbreaking book looks at the influence California and Mexico have had on each other's architecture and design in the 20th century. The histories of Mexico and the United States have been intertwined since the 18th century, when both were colonies of European empires. The word translation originally meant “to bring or carry across.” The constant migration between California and Mexico has produced cultures of great richness and complexity, while the transfers of people and materials that began with centuries-old trade routes continue to resonate in modern society, creating synergies that are “found in translation.” ...more.