Chapter Six

The Controversies of Design

Modernism and Traditional Style on the Liners

In the years after the 1912 *Titanic* disaster, speculation about the tragedy flourished. The great novelist Joseph Conrad, himself a former navigator, added to the debate and included pithy commentary not only about the structure of increasingly huge ocean liners but also about the place of decorative accoutrements within their hulls. It was apparent, in fact, that Conrad had continued to be haunted by the sea—a fact well-known to admirers of stories like *The Secret Sharer.* In criticizing the size of ships, Conrad wrote, "If that luckless ship [*Titanic*] had been a couple of hundred feet shorter, she would have probably gone clear of the danger. But then, perhaps, she could not have had a swimming bath and a French café. That of course, is a serious consideration."[1] Conrad saw his remarks as "doing a sarcasm," and obviously so in referring to experts who envisioned future liners that would have the ability to bump into icebergs head on and suffer minimal damage. With undercurrents of bitter humor he discussed this "progressive" kind of seamanship:

> The proper handling of an unsinkable ship, you see, will demand that she should be made to hit the iceberg very accurately with her

> nose, because should you perchance scrape the bluff of the bow instead, she may, without ceasing to be as unsinkable as before, find her way to the bottom. I congratulate the future Transatlantic passengers on the new and vigorous sensations in store for them. They shall go bounding across from iceberg to iceberg at twenty-five knots with precision and safety, and a "cheerful bumpy sound." . . . It will be a teeth-loosening, exhilarating experience. The decorations will be Louis-Quinze, of course, and the café shall remain open all night. But what about the priceless Sèvres porcelain and the Venetian glass provided for the service of Transatlantic passengers? Well, I am afraid all that will have to be replaced by silver goblets and plates. Nasty, common, cheap silver. But those who *will* go to sea must be prepared to put up with a certain amount of hardship.[2]

Excessively sarcastic or not, Conrad was not only dismissing far-fetched ideas about the unsinkable nature of future ships but also casting much doubt on the wisdom of placing costly, fragile, and very movable objets d'art like vases in the public rooms. His remarks about the *Titanic* catastrophe cast doubt on the creation of floating hotels and palaces by steamship companies. From Conrad's perspective, these monstrous creations were the result of upper-class pretensions requiring precious works of art and antiques set within ornate, plush salons. Steamship lines revealed themselves captive to such concerns for ornamental grandeur not paying enough attention to considerations of navigational safety—the only concern for a mariner like Conrad. As a novelist and observer of human nature cast in imperialist settings Conrad may have been brilliantly innovative and daring, but as a navigator he placed functional considerations far above decorative ones and emphasized caution and safety first and foremost in the design of ocean liners.

Related views emanating at roughly the same time from different motivations also entered the discussion. As avant-garde artists and architects fervently carried out a variety of aesthetic revolutions, the view of Le Corbusier and others was that decoration and ornament were completely unnecessary for ocean lin-

ers. Their point was that industrial products already exhibited a pure and perfect aesthetic tied to the machine age. All imposed historical decoration was like icing on the cake—only without the taste. Le Corbusier (originally named Janneau) had praised the behemoth ships of his time made possible by "the anonymous engineers, the grease-covered mechanics in the forge, [who] conceived and constructed those fearsome things, the ocean liners." As he saw it, "the ocean liner is the first step in the realization of a world organized according to the new spirit."[3] Le Corbusier's later wish to demolish many of the old streets and structures of Paris and replace them with high-rises and crisscrossing highways would be another aspect of this "new spirit," converting the ancient city along the way into a Los Angeles or Houston. As technology set the tone of twentieth-century life economically so it would shape its aesthetics. While agreeing with Conrad's dismissal of decoration, Le Corbusier very much advocated the construction of gigantic ships made possible by industrial technology and was in touch with the revolutionary changes visible in the world of architecture.

No other art was more reflective of the sweeping possibilities idealistic dreamers attributed to technology than was architecture. Two remarkable structures of the later nineteenth century haunted artistic sensitivities about the dawning century's utopian potential. One involved the steel cables used in the creation of the East River–spanning Brooklyn Bridge. Another remarkable structure was the Eiffel Tower, built in Paris to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the French Revolution as part of the Exhibition of 1889.

What made the Brooklyn Bridge and the Eiffel Tower stand out as unique architectural marvels were their undeniable statements of modernity, even as the former fulfilled a true utilitarian function and the latter seemed to serve none at all—except for the restaurant placed on its pedestal to provide diners with an astonishing view of the city as they partook of their foie gras and vintage champagnes. The bridge's powerfully direct functionalism

and the tower's overtly naked expression of the engineering processes at work in its making attracted widespread attention. Avant-garde artists saw both as modern structures serving also as symbolic beacons to those searching for aesthetic revolt and modern expression. Some critics like Michel Serres have seen the Eiffel Tower as "devoid of meaning" or felt that it "[exists] solely for the purpose of being there" with an apparent function only to stand within the Exposition before it emerged as a symbol of Paris.[4]

Even tradition-minded critics thus felt that buildings should always reveal a function. The reality was, however, that the Tower's mere presence symbolized all of the excitement felt about the modern age—steel girders, abstract design, sheer relishing of engineering know-how, confidence in modern materials, and the radio signals sent from its apex. Despite the hostility that traditionalists expressed toward it, the Tower emerged as a herald of what was to come in the next century. While its Gothic arches exuded a medieval character, the Brooklyn Bridge, impressed visionaries as a massive, monumental span over the East River, with a spectacular perspective of the bay leading to the Atlantic, and it stood as a statement of modern cultural ideals. What Roland Barthes wrote more recently of the Eiffel Tower could also apply to the Bridge if a restaurant and shops were opened on it (in our day, when the model of the shopping mall seems to invade every public space conceivable, no longer a far-fetched idea) "The Tower can live on itself: one can dream there, eat there, observe there, understand there, marvel there, shop there; as on an ocean liner (another mythic object that sets children dreaming), one can feel oneself cut off from the world and yet the owner of a world."[5] Barthes's point is that the Tower served less to function in a utilitarian manner than to inspire dreamers and visionaries. With its unprecedented height, the Eiffel Tower transcended the confines of reason in reaching the public's imagination and yet did so by displaying only its structural features according to Mies Van den Rohe's dictum "less is more." Barthes's acceptance of ocean liners

within the range of modern architectural marvels reveals the degree to which their mere presence conveyed such a large impression. Not surprisingly, ship designers felt pressure to embrace the modernist architectural creed, with French Line's *Paris*, built during the First World War, an initial inspiration. It was during the interwar years, however, that ocean liners were designed to be more streamlined and contemporary—especially their interiors, which previously contrasted with the metallic exterior highlighted by industrial funnels and ventilators.

For visionaries like Le Corbusier (as already noted), ocean liners were gigantic machines whose hulls and lines proclaimed sufficient artistic statements without need of decorative details as found on skyscrapers topped by Greek temples or Gothic spires that dominated metropolitan skylines. Prior to the First World War, Futurism and other artistic movements influenced by Cubism had stressed the need for artists to accept the beauty of the machine age and cast aside aesthetic standards derived from long-extinct civilizations. A momentary artistic protest against the forces at work in the bloodbath sweeping through Europe from 1914 to 1918 was led by the Dadaists who despised traditional cultural forms and pursued a cultural war upon them. Unlike Dadaism, Futurism itself emerged before the war and looked forward to it, finding in the war's destruction a symbol and harbinger of the new century. Futurists, in fact, glorified war, justifying the sweeping away of the past instigated by the cataclysm and admiring the dazzling speed and power of modern weapons as perfect embodiments of the new century's aesthetics. Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla, and Gino Severini in *Manifesto of the Futurist Painters,* published in 1910, vigorously tied their call for modern style to the rhythm of machines, proclaiming: "We rebel against that spineless worshipping of old canvases, old statues and old bric-a-brac, against everything which is filthy and worm-ridden and corroded by time. . . . Comrades, we tell you now that the triumphant progress of science makes profound changes in humanity inevitable, changes which are hacking an

abyss between those docile slaves of past tradition and us free moderns, who are confident in the radiant splendour of our future." In contrast, these Futurists described their awe at the creative power found in the miraculous devices of the modern age. "Living art draws its life from the surrounding environment. Our forebears drew their artistic inspiration from a religious atmosphere which fed their souls; in the same way we must breathe in the tangible miracles of contemporary life—the iron network of speedy communications which envelops the earth, the transatlantic liners, the dreadnoughts, those marvelous flights which furrow our skies, the profound courage of our submarine navigators and the spasmodic struggle to conquer the unknown."[6] While failing to distinguish between machines furthering military ends and others attached to non-violent purposes, Futurists' enthusiasm for technology extended to the great ocean liners that shared the spotlight with airplanes under their visionary umbrella. Whatever the degree of their naïveté or reckless self-abandonment to the worship of war and fascist conquest, the Futurists' ideas of change reflected a mentality still seeing in science and technology both progress and aesthetic possibilities. As evident in Le Corbusier's above statements, the apocalyptic language and sentiment of the movement spilled into other areas.

Nevertheless, the early-twentieth-century artistic world was not marked by a progressive, stylistically consistent movement toward abstraction—especially in areas where artistic and social taste met. When it came to the design of public buildings such as hotels or ocean liners, architects had to pay attention to the preferences of a mixed audience. While many may very well have favored the streamlined look of the machine age, others felt at home in traditional styles. In putting together strategies of design for ships after 1900, Cunard, White Star, and TRANSAT perceived a dual audience in terms of stylistic preferences—albeit to a different degree and accent. Perhaps ornament was necessary to balance the highly futuristic and streamlined exteriors of ocean liners that with their great size and speed were already the very essence

of modernity. Le Corbusier's euphoric vision, in fact, could provoke reaction against the sterility and anonymity of industrially dominated design, as seen in the sets of the film *Metropolis.* Decorative detail provided relief from the domineering presence of the machine—a factor needing consideration if a happy clientele was to be guaranteed. Conrad's scorn for Sèvres porcelain and chinoiserie was not the best barometer for gauging the proclivities of maritime audiences. Anti-modern attitudes had been felt as early as the early nineteenth century in J. W. M. Turner's painting *The Fate of the Temeraire* contrasting a sordid tugboat with the majestic sailing vessel it is towing to the dismantling dock. But the situation was further complicated by the diverse audiences needing to be addressed. First-class passengers could either insist on traditional decor or on the more modern styles becoming increasingly fashionable among those "who knew."

The companies were reluctant to leap into a futuristic whirlpool. A Cunard brochure for the *Aquitania,* for instance, portrayed the liner as an English country home explaining that: "English country houses are the true homes of old and distinguished families, truly 'country' houses, splendid monuments of the earlier periods of architecture and decoration softened and made lovely by reverent use. The *Aquitania* is like an English country house. Its great rooms are perfect replicas of the fine salons and handsome apartments that one finds in the best of English manor halls. . . . The ship breathes an air of elegance that is very gratifying to the type of people who are her passengers."[7] The class orientation of English society is evident here in the descriptions offered by the publicity department of Cunard, which was very conscious of the ultra-luxurious period look popularized by its national rival, White Star, in the *Titanic, Britannic,* and *Olympic.* Despite the modernity intrinsic to an ocean liner, its interior was to reflect tradition and the realities of the class system, cushioning the travel of the upper classes and providing them with their delightful visual associations in wood paneling, sculpted figures, and that certain salon setting.

Technological advance was not to be ignored, but a luxurious interior was essential. Passengers could depend on the speed and efficiency of the *Aquitania's* engines while relishing parlors and dining rooms immersed in the palace look. This liner was remarkable, as one brochure stated, "for her speed and regularity in service. She is a triumph of scientific shipbuilding and the furnishing of her beautiful period apartments and suites has been widely admired on both sides of the Atlantic."[8] Although so much paneling would later be viewed as an obstacle to speed, within maritime culture the contradiction did not then seem so obvious.

Public spaces in the *Aquitania* reflected proclivity for historicist ambience as one could ascertain in the names given to particular rooms. There were the Pompeian Swimming Bath, the Palladian Lounge, the Louis XVI Restaurant, and the Elizabethan Grill Room. The reference to the Venetian architect, Palladio, was itself acknowledgment of the historicist focus, as seen also in the shadows of Christopher Wren's architectural forms also hung over the *Aquitania*.[9]

The look of the country club, and the essential style preferred by those traveling in this "club" was "period." (See figure # 19.) If modernists thought the period to be archaic, its adherents thought differently, and Cunard was explicit in explaining its inspiration. "Historical and period styles, both French and English, have inspired some of the most successful rooms, notably the smoke room of the *Aquitania*. . . . In the case of 'period' rooms, a considerable amount of research into old documents, or among the antique dealers, is necessary to find good models of the correct date, but which are not hackneyed or spoilt by cheap repetition. These will be carefully reproduced, and other types designed in the same spirit as the old pieces."[10] One can see why modernists would see such inclinations as bordering on the concerns of the museum curator. Nevertheless, with White Star's ships grandly representing the style, Cunard was eager to display it as well in the *Aquitania*, *Mauretania*, and *Berengaria*. After the war, White Star sought to reinterpret its intentions stating, that it: "has held an unsurpassed

reputation for comfort. This term is perhaps preferable to 'luxury,' for the reason that while White Star Liners are as luxuriously equipped as any others, 'comfort' is the basic essential, and hence there is no excess of ornateness in decoration, superfluity of ornamentation, or straining after mere grandeur, factors which may appeal to the eye, but which, if carried too far, militate against the keynote of that desirable ease and cosiness which impart the home-like atmosphere to a ship."[11] Was this an insinuation that Cunard design was "gaudy"? White Star, the former apotheosis of luxury, now defined certain trends of leisure travel scornfully as "mere grandeur." Luxury sailing did not have to be equated with the period look of the country home, but only in tune with the '20s' desire for comfort. Continued Cunard–White Star competition could have yielded interesting contrasts of luxury ships, but the companies' merger in the wake of the Depression ended that possibility as Cunard came out the stronger of the two.

Arthur Davis of the Mewes and Davis Ritz Hotels team of architects delineated the problem before ship designers as he advocated the period look. Addressing the Royal Institute of British Architects, Davis perceived the choice to be "whether liners should be decorated similarly to a house or hotel, or whether the fact that they are afloat should compel their decorations into shapes and patterns expressive of the construction of ships."[12] As the decision about the design of British liners during the '30s was debated, the choices were obvious. While modernism was clearly on the ascendant elsewhere, the essential British inclination was for "period." Davis echoed an opinion by the American designer Benjamin Morris that "the opinions of some ladies of taste and discrimination should be available when the question of general color schemes and details which are essential to the artistic atmosphere of the various rooms comes up for consideration."[13] Maritime architects' archaic approach to design and the view of women's roles revealed here showed that tradition was still a mighty force.

Across the channel, French Line had already emphasized a similar approach with its celebrated *France* built before the war.

Known as the "floating Versailles," the *France* was introduced in the following manner by a company brochure: "The ship that bears the country's name across the Atlantic isn't just a boat. . . . The *France* is an institution—a creation of steel and wood and brass that has somehow managed to develop a soul, a personality, that continues to attract just those people with whom one would find it interesting to pass several days at sea. . . . Today she has become an oil burner. . . . But no ultra-modern influence has been permitted to tamper with the suave gaiety of her Louis XIV mood. New cabins have been added, but they conform to tradition. She is still as French as her name."[14] Passengers were informed of the technological improvements on the *France* put into place during the war, when it functioned as a hospital ship. But the emphasis on its "soul" and "personality" underlines a class snobbery that is evident in the following lines: "Providentially, there's something about the *France* that effectually discourages the traveler who estimates beauty in terms of gold leaf. Those companionable little groups of chairs will seldom be found to harbor the tourist in need of a Baedeker or the presuming person of doubtful antecedents."[15] Such statements are curious coming from a line that was embracing the new tourist third cabin passengers, modest in background and eager to learn about travel destinations with a Baedeker. One can sense the great discomfort of the upper classes when faced with the masses of new tourists whose dollars, pounds sterling, or francs were necessary for the lines' financial solvency following the devastating costs of the war. No doubt, the company was pursuing a two- or three-track approach to publicity as corresponded to the various class of passengers. Written in English, such statements must also have come as an affront to American travelers, who made up the majority of passengers in tourist third cabin or third-class cabin space at the time. It is not surprising that the cover of the brochure is adorned with the fleur-de-lys, symbol of royalty and antithesis to the world made possible by the French Revolution—including the reality of middle-class upward mobility.

unusual to see similar works in elite public rooms of transatlantic ocean liners.[17] They may even have served a practical purpose, providing relief from mal de mer. But their more likely effect was to give male passengers, huddled together in smoking rooms, a social and historical sense of continuity, and to reassure women descending the grand staircase who may have had royal impersonation in mind. Along the way they would pass relief panels like the one on the *Titanic* or its exact replica on the *Olympic* with classical imagery serving as monumental endorsement of the occasion. No matter how high the expectations for fast transatlantic service and a steady ride, equally high for upper-class passengers was the desire for interior spaces to exude traditional, aristocratic ambience.

As they went from place to place, travelers felt the flux and bewilderment that was commonly experienced during the 1920s.[18] Elite passengers strongly desired an environment providing escape from the outside world, and interiors echoing *l'ancien régime* life satisfied that demand. Dark paneling as dominated the *Mauretania* or the *Olympic* could remind passengers of a tranquil manor house enveloped in forests and with possible hints of medieval knighthood as British officials in India imagined they found in the club.

Notions of romantic escape could also be suggested through unique architectural settings reflecting the cultures of ancient civilizations. A craze for the ancient worlds of Greece, Mesopotamia, and Egypt (affecting even fashion), in fact, had swept through the West, set in motion by the excavations of ruins by Heinrich Schliemann, Arthur Evans, Leonard Wooley, and Howard Carter. Not surprisingly, a number of ships were designed with interiors reverberating with archaeological atmosphere. During the first phase of cruising in the 1920s, several CGM ships venturing into the Mediterranean were imbued with particular historical and archaeological characters. Among them the *Araunis* reflected the world of Minoan Crete made famous by Evans, with unmistakable Knossos-like inverted columns adorning its central rooms.

Another ship, the *Champollion*, was more Egyptian in nature with omnipresent acknowledgment of the New Kingdom (especially Luxor and Karnak). Especially enhancing the mood (and confirming the mystery suggested by Sandy Hook's posters for CGM ships cruising the Levant) were replicas of Egyptian statues posing as columns. This reflection of Orientalism and the revived imperialistic presence of European nations in the region helped stimulate the patterns of renewed travel and the public appetite for exotic decor—like movie sets of Cecil B. DeMille a part of late romantic sensitivity. The "period" look was, after all, a deliberate attempt to escape the clutches of the machine age through the manufactured exotic aura of time or place. Nevertheless, below the decks the engines rumbled on, and the speed of the massive hulls increased.

It was becoming clear as well that postwar changes in lifestyle and the arrival of tourist third cabin passengers embracing the spirit of the modern world compelled steamship companies to acknowledge the modern world in some form. The *France* and the *Paris*, built by TRANSAT before the war, had their service as passenger ships interrupted during the conflict. Having been renovated, they were ready for transatlantic service at about the same time. We have already noted the *France*'s billing as a ship for those preferring traditional decor. In contrast, the *Paris* was characterized not as a futuristic, mechanical vessel perhaps, but one reflecting contemporary or recent artistic styles founded on more modern traditions. A French Line brochure wrote: "*Paris*—that paradox of ripe age and verdant youth! Enriched by the fruits of sacrifice yet reveling in dauntless gaiety; rooted securely in great tradition, yet living—artistic to the finger tips—in the gracious moment of NOW! Something of this French capacity for enjoyment, for the carefree laughter that makes one young again, enters into the minds and hearts of her visitors with unforgettable inspirations. . . . These luxurious ships of the French Line are truly arrondissements of France. Each has the atmosphere, *l'esprit de corps*, attentions complete and unobtrusive, the diversions and

conveniences 'si Française.'"[19] Homage to the dead of the Great War is certainly evident in this celebration of a new joie de vivre. Another booklet publicized the availability of modern motion pictures on board as another example of the modern character of the ship described as "a great effort of modern art" and, in fact, "a miracle of modern art."[20] Americans thinking of Paris as a mythic city thriving with the facets of modern life (for better or worse) on the boulevards found their vision confirmed on this ship—especially during the time when Prohibition cut down on the ability of some to feel as exuberant as they wished. Giving architectural shape to this view was the interior design with the curving lines of its wrought iron balustrades and railings and its overhanging domes. In echoing the Art Nouveau style, especially popular during the prewar world, the *Paris* was not to be confused with the baroque style of Versailles or the period look of the *France*. Rèné Lalique's modern glasswork displayed here and later in the *Normandie* emerged as one of the special symbols of modern style. Passengers choosing to travel on the *Paris* sought an atmosphere both more modern and removed from the "stuffiness" of traditional ships. (See figure # 20.) They aspired to the world of Montmartre or an imagined Paris as the city of the banquet years, excluding its more notorious aspects like absinthe.

The company proudly proclaimed the *Paris* to be the "ideal modern ocean liner" and the "image of the French artistic renaissance," claiming it "embodies the results of the great progress made in the past few years in marine architecture."[21] Avoiding the familiarly comfortable styles of the past, the designers of the *Paris* created an interior more in tune with the contemporary world and its intrinsic modernity embodied in the throbbing machinery and exterior.

As the *Paris* returned to service in 1923, the artistic scene was abuzz with radically new movements. Not only were Cubism, Fauvism, and Expressionism still apparent, but Surrealism expressed new ideas about reality, dreams, and the unconscious. In Weimar Germany, the Bauhaus movement affected not only the

pure arts but also the applied arts like architecture and furniture design. Emphasizing the importance of industrial methods and materials to the arts and crafts, visionary Constructivist artists in the Soviet Union paralleled the Bauhaus in towers of sculpture and stylized interiors.[22] The phrase "international style" expressed the seemingly omnipresent modern architectural style complementing the sweep of industrial life over the planet.

Since the late nineteenth century, various critics had discussed the need for the arts and crafts to express the realities of industrial production and of modern society. Among those expressing this desire from several viewpoints were William Morris, John Ruskin, and Camille Mauclair; these critics felt that the aesthetic environment of modern life was not in harmony with its character.[23] Exhibitions celebrating the wonders of modern technology publicized the possibilities for the future, but critics continued to be disgruntled. Art Nouveau, found in Paris metro stations and other places, had been the significant style of the fin de siècle expressing an industrial aesthetic. By the 1920s, however, it seemed dated and not up to audience expectations of modernism. Something more radical had to be devised. So felt Bauhaus spokesmen and adherents of others schools.

In this atmosphere, the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes was held in Paris in 1925, and the streamlined style of Art Deco came to the forefront; here was a current that would influence public architecture and interior design for several decades. Some pavilions within the exhibition highlighted the style, which was shaped by aesthetic trends coming out of Cubism and the International style. Also evident were decorative patterns (zig-zagged and angular) that were influenced by sets of the Ballets Russes and by ancient Egyptian and Native American art.[24] What most caught the eye, perhaps, were spectacular glass and light designs, which would become increasingly familiar. Almost immediately, the effects were felt elsewhere, especially in New York where skyscrapers of all kinds reflected the new style.

Steamship companies were quick to embrace Art Deco, and its influence could be seen in ocean liners launched during the next decade. Each line, however, incorporated the new style to a different degree. During the '20s, Cunard and White Star adhered to the period look—something almost impossible to avoid because the stars of their fleets had been built or designed before the war. Even while holding the speed records and exhibiting the most massive size, British ships thus remained essentially conservative. For most of the oceangoing public, Cunard and White Star vessels represented luxury in its most traditionally familiar form, especially when compared with the more modern and faster liners designed in Italy and Germany.

Considering a successor and companion to the *Paris*, TRANSAT designers sought inspiration from the 1925 Exposition, and the result of this search was the *Ile de France*. While the *Paris*'s interior space reflected recent styles, the *Ile de France* was actually constructed and designed as an expression of the latest concern for uniting art with industry as envisioned in the 1925 Exposition. In fact, it was to be a veritable floating exhibition space of modernism, even if watered down a bit to suit the proclivities of passengers not always willing to embrace radical modernism. Within its hull, passengers could wonder at the airier space with more sweeps, geometrical shapes, and columns that were contemporary or at least non-antique in essence.

French Lines described the liner as having "the same traditional comfort [familiar to travelers of the line], blended with decorative loveliness." But it went on to say that "even the details are modern, new, smart and French in daring novelties of color and design."[25] The company added that "staterooms on board the *Ile de France* are modern American hotel rooms. Attention has been given to the smallest details: roomy clothes closets, every toilet requisite, electric fans, bed reading lamps. Almost every cabin is an outside one with private bath and a charming alcove dressing room."[26] French Line's emphasis on "American" rooms are reflective here of European attitudes about America's complete immer-

sion in modern techniques and styles. For traditionalists unreconciled to the encroaching wave of modernism, the Louis XV design of the *France* was recommended as a soothing alternative if they didn't mind being typecast as stodgy conservatives.

Maritime design was obviously entering a new era, heralded by the *Ile de France's* modern design and onboard life. Combining words like "new," "smart," and "French" evoked a vision of modern interiors without excessive ornament and historical reference and shaped in streamlined, geometric, and linear settings in tune with the age. Materials such as metal, glass, and lacquered surfaces highlighted spaces formerly covered in traditional dark-colored woods. Lalique's spectacular designs of electrical lighting evoked further evidence of the possibilities of aesthetic modernism. As the writer Henri Clouzot put it, "A fine audacity was needed to apply this modern beauty." Scorning the tastes of the previous century, he stated that "all periods, except the nineteenth century, were modern in their time." While the styles and preferences attached to that century were in the 1920s still highly visible, the suggestion here was that they were archaic, backward-looking, and out of tune with the day's tastes. Such a unique way of endorsing contemporary trends would surely upset some onlookers but also please those who were most "progressive."[27]

Some compromise would be necessary. New German ships like the *Bremen* or the *Europa* would display a Bauhaus severity and upset travelers desiring both luxury and traditional decor in a setting dominated by funnels and ventilators.[28] The *Ile de France* was not designed as a mere machine but a ship enhanced by comfortable furnishings and beautiful walls, ceilings, and columns. Still, the effect was unmistakably modern, and a variety of critics have castigated the interior of the *Ile de France.* Others have attacked the ship's design for not being uniform, for lacking consistency. John Maxtone-Graham, for instance, has written: "In the lounge were two score columns, classicism's last gasp. But they were devoid of traditional capitals, lacquered blood red and clustered about the walls in groups as if recoiling in alarm from a blatant

geometric carpet. . . . It seemed less a *salon* than a hothouse, an impression reinforced by the coffered vaults above. . . . Less frantic, but monumental, was the entrance foyer. Four decks high, one ponderous arch after another, it was strongly reminiscent of the lower level of New York's Grand Central Station." As described by Maxtone-Graham, "what emerged was a riot of Establishment Modern, an extension of the International Paris Exposition of 1925, packaged in a conventional hull and delivered to New York. . . . The total effect was uncomfortable and overpowering, a preview of the architectural brutality that Europeans of a subsequent decade would call Mussolini Modern."[29] Maxtone-Graham's scorn is aimed not at the departure from traditional "period," but French Line's attempt at balanced and restrained modernism, which he tried to connect to fascist architectural trends and to some personal areas of his contempt.

John Malcolm Brinin was only slightly more receptive, writing that the *Ile de France* "possessed a warmth, a palpable sense of aristocratic reserve, a sort of *laissez-faire* grace that hid her touches of ugliness and mellowed the strains of the *brut* and the stridently *moderne* that were evident throughout the length of her."[30] Bemoaning the "great slabs of laminated wood polished to a clinical glossiness," Brinin admitted that there was much to admire in the liner's public spaces. A definite dignity and grace (as he quoted from an unattributed source) was felt in the structure and decor of the ship. What he took aim at was the hesitant modernism that characterized the ship and gave it a conservative aspect. Still, he conceded the liner's importance. This ship, he wrote, "may be the first of ocean liners—in a succession leading to the final *France* of 1962—to embrace the modern at the very moment when steamship history was becoming a romance of the past."[31] Maxtone-Graham also acknowledges the liner's fatal blow to historicism: "Eclecticism was dead; there was almost no panel, fabric, railing or motif identifiable with an earlier age."[32] Adding to the modern style were the varied pleasures available on board that gave the liner an amoral character: "the emissary of 'les temps

moderne'—in decor and amenity as well as in the hedonistic post-war spirit which embraced luxe, volupté, and left the sobering profundities of calme to poets and the curators of *les beaux art* and *la belle epoque*. . . . [Americans saw the ship filled with] Gallic élan combining laissez-faire with café socialibility and a whiff of naughtiness associated with the raunchier side of French domestic life."[33]

The *Ile de France* arrived on the scene with great fanfare, *Syren and Shipping* naming it ship of the year.[34] Americans most vocally developed a love and attachment for the ship, described as the "rue de la Paix of the Atlantic," with alcoholic beverages available almost from the moment they boarded. So far did they feel from the clutches of Prohibition politics that they imagined themselves in Europe already when New York harbor was just a few hours behind them. The plane standing near the stern augmented the sense of the *Ile de France*'s futuristic image and TRANSAT's claim to be the company of the modern. As *Syren and Shipping* wrote, "There is no other steamer on this route so representative of latter-day tendencies as the *Ile de France*."[35] Along these lines, French Line officials and publicists saw the *Ile de France* as a model for future designers "for the success of the *Ile de France* is but a stage and not an end."[36]

After the appearance of the *Ile de France*, steamship companies included patronage and sponsorship of the arts as part of their mission—a much-needed gesture, one writer said, since the "state [was] oblivious of its former role as protector of the arts"—as when French salons dominated the artistic scene during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[37] Times had changed. Only a company could gather together an ensemble of diverse artists willing to dedicate themselves to so massive a project as decorating a transatlantic steamship. While criticism of the state's abandonment of artistic patronage is explicit here, the reality was that avant-garde artists struggling to express individual styles, could no longer look for support from the salon. Developments in industrial arts and crafts since the last decade of the nineteenth century,

in fact, owed much to the avant-garde's defiance of artistic convention. Design of the *Paris* and the *Ile de France* seemed to follow up on that promise following the great splash of the 1925 Exposition, and the resulting sensation revealed popular taste as no longer a uniform current but one splintered into traditionalist and modernist fragments whose adherents were fiercely vocal.

By the late '20s, Cunard, White Star, and French Lines were conscious of the need to build newer, faster, and larger liners that would be more competitive in the world market—especially on the New York run. With the arrival of the *Bremen* and *Europa* on the maritime scene, contrasts with the relative antiquity of the Cunard and White Star ships were striking. It was a matter of a traditional format running up against the minimalist, streamlined look of the future. The *Mauretania* was aging, having captured its last Blue Riband, and in several years, the *Bremen* would become a model for the future. Though a few years younger than the *Mauretania*, the *Aquitania* was also showing its years of service. White Star's old companion ship to the *Titanic* and *Britannic*, the *Olympic*, was ready for scrapping.[38] Ships handed over to Cunard and White Star as part of Germany's reparations payments to Britain were nearing the end of their runs—as with the *Berengaria* (formerly *Imperator*) of Cunard and the *Majestic* (formerly *Bismarck*) of White Star. (See figure # 21.) An anonymous White Star report of 1920 in fact cast doubt on the value of *Imperator* and *Bismarck*. Admitting their possible threat to British dominance of transatlantic travel if allowed to remain in German hands, the report stated that they were too large and, thus, not cost effective. Cunard and White Star, it was stated, would never have ordered such ships themselves, and "we regard it as very unfortunate that circumstances should now arise which make it necessary that our Companies should have to consider acquiring them."[39] There was no questioning their seizure as part of the compensation to Britain for ships lost during the war. In the process, the damage to Germany's maritime competitive edge would add more benefits. New-

ertheless, to the writer of the report, the value of these two ships for the long run seemed dubious.

What was clear were the challenges to prewar propensities for grandiosity and luxury. Public discussion revealed a growing inclination for three funnels instead of four, found in praise for the three smokestacks on the *Imperator-Berengaria* and *Bismarck-Majestic*, which avoided the waste of valuable space.[40] These considerations were especially related to the consequences for a ship's speed. A Cunard engineer wrote in the *Commodore* of the *Aquitania* that "Great Britain . . . must, if she intends to lure passengers from her rivals, build a vessel both stately and speedy. Her engines must be capable of driving her faster than any of her competitors, and to do this will require engines capable of developing 150,000, horse-power or even more. The probabilities are she would be over 1,000 feet long by 110 feet, built to suit Atlantic conditions. . . . A speed of 33 knots when fully loaded is forecast by the experts. . . . The faster vessels . . . apparently attract the larger number of passengers."[41] This was essentially a description of the *Queen Mary*, not a pointless exercise at prediction.

TRANSAT perceived the transatlantic scene in a similar light with executives also wondering about the threatening implications of Nordeutscher Lloyd ships, competition from White Star's envisioned *Oceanic* project (never fulfilled), vigorous upstart ships from Italian Lines and United States Lines, and speculation about new Cunard moves.[42] Special concern was expressed about the modernity of German liners since the *Ile de France* did not have the tonnage or the speed to dominate the transatlantic area of travel as had been hoped. In addressing the entire situation, René La Bruyère wrote: "we cannot do less than Cunard. . . . In the realm of commerce, our nation should prove the worth of its industry."[43] Despite its influential modern design, the *Ile de France* was regarded as a disappointment and not measuring up to future standards of massiveness and great speed. Even an article promoting the soon-to-be-realized *Normandie* stated: "France is behind in speed and tonnage vis-à-vis its rivals on the New York run."[44]

A similar tone was found in White Star's second *Britannic*, launched in 1929, which had none of the aura of its ill-fated but majestic predecessor in name but rather was built simply to take up the slack obvious in a decaying fleet. (See figure # 22.)

French Line explicitly expected transatlantic steamships to travel at 28 knots—a speed not achieved by the *Ile de France*. With the influx of tourists and businessmen traveling in either direction, the New York line was most lucrative to companies. To keep the traffic and profits at a steadily growing level it was essential for companies to make ships larger and crossings faster, a combination that would spur ever larger numbers of people to travel—especially those wanting to be in Paris less than five days after leaving New York.[45] With liners becoming so much larger and monumental in scale state support of company efforts would be ever more crucial.[46]

The aim of revitalizing TRANSAT and Cunard was obvious in two secret projects begun in the late 1920s, known simply as *T6* and *534* respectively. Both projects were envisioned as solutions to the stagnating passenger ship building sector perceived in France and Britain with hopes great that each liner could help overcome the difficulties of the times as ultimately caused by the costs, losses, and sacrifices of the First World War. Officials of both companies believed that German shipping reparations had not been sufficient to make amends—part of the ongoing nationalistic animus pushed by the steamship companies. Thus *T6* and *534* would enable TRANSAT and Cunard to improve their situations and, in fact, leap into the future in a revolutionary manner. *T6* was commissioned to the Atelier et Chantier of Penhoët at St. Nazaire while *534* was given to John Brown at Clydebank. They would respectively become known as the *Normandie* and the *Queen Mary*. As noted earlier, the size of the new liners would be so monumental as to merit comparison with ancient temples, cathedrals, and even small cities.

Ironically, both liners would be stalled by the Depression and left in embarrassing states of half completion, beset with relentless

rust. With both companies portraying the skeletal liners as vital to national renewal, they made new calls for completion and proposed permanent partnership with a new player—the state. After the initial onslaught of the Depression, Cunard and TRANSAT revived interest in their projects. In France, the mood was enhanced by the 1931 Exposition Coloniale in Paris, which represented a unified approach to art and industry as a matter of vital importance to French imperial interests. French artists like Eugene Delacroix, Ingres, and Henri Matisse had previously reflected the arts of such territories and meanwhile renewed fascination with ancient and archaeological motifs grew—as seen on the *Aramis*. Such cultural fixations gave the 1931 Expo both a modern and traditional character as ongoing interests in industrial arts and exotic themes were attached to the bolstering of imperialism and nationalism. As two sides of the same coin, the artistic decorative scene of the 1930s, they figured largely in the *Normandie*'s design. (See figure # 23.)

As with socialism, "the international style" did not exclude national traditions or trends. Its artistic forms had universal rather than merely national or local appeal, but the reality was that this style was rarely present in a pure form. National, ethnic, and local mannerisms complemented the formula, and the tension between the international style and French variations in the *Normandie* provided evidence of a balancing act, accentuated by the contrast of the French concern for progress and deep-seated nationalistic beliefs in a special destiny for France, the thirst for power, and irrational feelings of grandiosity. This dramatic and gripping situation evoked a variety of responses and was but another example of the unclear relation existing between modernism and nationalism.[47]

Once the work of converting the immense hull of 76 into the *Normandie* began, the complex task of designing its public and private spaces was intensified by the challenge of artistic decoration. TRANSAT offered commissions for statues, murals, and other artistic pieces as well as those for electrical units, and for wall and ceiling materials. Bathroom fixtures, kitchens, even

surgical environments had to be considered carefully. Much expectation was placed on the liner designed by Vladimir Yourkevitch, an employee of Renault in Paris who had been a naval engineer in St. Petersburg, which he fled after the Russian Revolution. Under the direction of such TRANSAT officials as Jean Marie, Henri Cangardel and others, Roger-Henri Expert and Richard Bouwens de Boijen were put in charge of the interior decoration. Both had already made a mark with their modernistic work in the *Paris* and *Ile de France*. Now faced with the impressive exterior of *T6*, they had to come up with an interior worthy of the surging bow, amazing lines, thick modern smokestacks (making their appearance after the launch), and a weight that would measure some 80,000 tons. This hardly miniscule aim demanded a unified style expressing the excitement of the age and historical acknowledgment and reverence for France and the province of Normandy. Such a swelling of national pride led to plans for another 80,000 plus-ton *paquebot* honoring Brittany, the province that was home to St. Nazaire shipyards where TRANSAT liners were built.

With news circulating of the construction, interior design, and furnishing of the *Normandie*, TRANSAT received countless requests for commissions of work. Advanced modern techniques and materials were clearly demanded for conveniences and items of comfort increasingly found ashore like telephones, cinema, air conditioning, and novel forms of electrical lighting. Aluminum, a scorned metal in our day, was then viewed as progressive and appropriate for practical uses and design considerations. Certainly, even the period ships of Cunard, White Star, and TRANSAT like the *Mauretania*, *Titanic*, and the *France* displayed unmistakable modern features made possible by industrialization. Still, the massive displays of wood and traditional style hid the mechanical reality behind the surface, a compromise seen even on the *Ile de France* with its modernistic refraction of streamlined traditional motifs. The *Normandie* would be modern to an extent not seen before in French and British ships, and modern conveniences on

board would reveal the most "state of the art" inventions available at the time.

Its interior design would reflect the overall modern nature of the *Normandie* and avoid the omnipresent tension between the ship's design and the reality of the mechanical age. Bouwens and Expert demanded that most furnishings and art on board the *Normandie* express the modern world's streamlined aesthetic. In some cases, period furniture was allowed. Samples of work, however, that did not seem to complement the overall design were politely but firmly rejected. Such was the case when M. Broudarge Joailler requested the commission for the carpeting of the grand salon that was to include ancien regime furniture. As Bouwens and Expert wrote to the director general of TRANSAT after visiting Broudarge's shop, "this room [the grand salon] is rather modern in execution but its decor is 17th century . . . the dimensions, the design and color of the carpet do not, however, harmonize with the decoration."[48] The grand salon's furniture simply did not mesh with Broudarge's design.

Unemployment forced many artisans to seek commissions for work on this monumental ship. La Miroiterie Moderne, in offering to create glass and window work on the liner, emphasized that its glass was found in certain cathedrals. Sagot, a glassmaker from the historic Norman town of Bayeux, requested the commission for windows with religious and civil scenes, perhaps intended for the liner's chapel.[49]

Foreign firms also expressed interest in contributing to the interior design. Waring and Gillow, a British firm that later contributed to the design of the *Queen Mary*'s interior, formally expressed its desire to provide furnishings. Since its artisans had also created chairs and sofas for the *Ile de France*'s first-class smoking room, it is clear that foreign artisans were not precluded from work on such nationally focused ships.[50] Nationalism had its own limits in an international age, and companies, whether French or foreign, that obtained commissions proudly displayed their success by placing ads in prominent books and magazines, as did

French Aluminium.[51] Further padding archival files are requests for work in parquet flooring, ceramics, *serrurerie*, ironwork, and other departments.[52] Maison Jules Leynaert, a Dunkirk firm involved in *rayons meubles*, emphasized the high unemployment rate found there.[53] Despite the reality of such social problems, TRANSAT was not moved and instead emphasized the need for all areas of the ship, even the chapel and the smoking room, to exhibit modern style. In seeking work or exhibition space on the *Normandie*, artists and craftsmen did not hesitate to obtain outside help. Such was the case with Jacques Leudet, who wanted to display his watercolors on board the ship in an attempt to gain publicity and was supported by Paul Reynaud, a member of the Chamber of Deputies and future prime minister, a post he held at the time of the fall of France in 1940. Reynaud's support was fruitless as company managers would not consent to using lounge space to exhibit canvases or statues not directly a part of the ship's design.[54] TRANSAT also received letters from artists like Jean Dupas and Jean Dunand and accepted their bids, giving in to their explicit demands for monetary compensation, work conditions, and individual freedom in deciding on style and choice of subject.[55]

With all the different nuances (as in the grand salon), the *Normandie* presented an astonishingly modern statement, perhaps not in the same uncompromising manner of rival ships like the *Bremen* or *Europa* but certainly on a more monumental note. Its large public spaces, especially the first-class dining room were reflective of the artistic trends of the day as no other ship could have been. The unifying note as with the *Ile de France* was Art Deco, a style by then known to larger audiences because of their familiarity with Hollywood sets for the Astaire-Rogers films and others.

In addition to its modernist high-art character, Art Deco was intended to infuse modern styles into everyday settings. As with Art Nouveau, the movement saw possibilities for transforming urban environments and popular tastes as banks, post offices, apartment buildings, hotels, and other structures were constructed

of negation and an ultimately overwhelming tendency toward accommodation. Modernism exists in the tension between these two opposed movements. And the avant-garde, the bearer of modernism, has been successful when it has found for itself a social location where this tension is visible and can be acted upon."[58]

Art Deco can now be viewed as a period movement, although one could begin to apply this *ad absurdum* and extend it to the Akhnaton era of New Kingdom Egypt. The style was more immediately embraced by high society than were the purely avant-garde movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Art Deco could even provide the sets for the upper-class style of living as defined by the Rainbow Room in Rockefeller Center and other establishments. Its accommodating character is striking. As the steamship companies catered to first-class passengers as well as tourist third cabin, they tended to promote a style that defined sophistication and status in the new modern manner. As the war had changed Western society forever, it was necessary to update notions of luxury and interior design to match the times.

Every stretch of the *Normandie,* including its cabins, reflected the infatuation with Art Deco. Dark, rich woods were replaced by lighter colored materials to create an airier, lighter ambience. With traditional decor increasingly giving way to directly linear and curved space, the eye encountered few obstacles as it swept down a salon or dining hall. The effect was both streamlined and striking, and Lalique's spectacular electric lighting fixtures set the mood. Modernity had arrived on board both to enhance the comfort and convenience of passengers and to provide novel forms of aesthetic delight in interior space.

The first (cabin) class "salle à manger" was the pièce de la resistance of the *Normandie.* (See figure # 24.) Its great length was enhanced by a combination of Art Deco elements (what the TRANSAT official Dal Piaz called the "Transat style"). Along the sides, the glass lighting fixtures of Lalique, referred to as the "poète de verre," served as columns, giving impressions of an electrified Athenian Parthenon afloat at sea.[59] The ceiling's coffers,

another source of electrical light, reinforced the effect of antiquity even further. Placed at the same relative position at the far end of the hall, the statue to "Paix" recalled Phidias's monumental sculpture of Pallas Athena. If any public space within the *Normandie* could epitomize the trend toward monumentality, glorification of the modern, and the high lifestyle of the upper classes, it was the salle à manger with its near-religious ambience. Consecrated here, however, was Chateau Lafitte-Rothschild, Dom Perignon, foie gras, caviar, Chateaubriand, and all the other delicacies attached to the luxurious high living of first class passengers. Finding confirmation and near perfection in the *Normandie* was the proclivity to reconceive luxury within contemporary forms, already evident in the *Paris* and the *Ile de France*, which added modern edges to elite lifestyles.

As Bouvens and Expert emphasized in letters and memos, all artistic works, pieces of furniture, lighting fixtures, carpeting, and other articles were to have a unified presence on the *Normandie*. No space or object was to interfere with the overall design. As Bouvens wrote of a certain painting of Charles Walhain that he had rejected: "We can appreciate the artist's talent. But such a work hasn't a place either in the main reception area or any other. It also seems to me that the work . . . should be in the same spirit as the decor of the grand areas."[60]

Numerous stylistic and iconographic motifs found in Art Deco were the chief inspirations for TRANSAT's distinct maritime art and the *Normandie*'s design. At the same time, they reflected subjects that were greatly important to French nationalism and Norman pride. Walking through the *Normandie*, in fact, one would have been struck by the large bronze doors leading to the first-class salle à manger created by Raymond Subes. Circular medallions commemorating the historic towns of Normandy were affixed to the door and displayed the chief highlights of each, whether religious, civic, or commercial in nature. Included on the doors were Le Havre and Cherbourg (the ports of departure of the great French *paquebots*), Lisieux, Saint-Lo, Rouen, and Caen,

all of which held great religious and social significance to Normandy. In le halle superieur, symbolic representations of Normandy's maritime legacy were evident in bas reliefs by artists like Georges Saupique. One could recall Norman expertise on the high seas, a reality long before France became a nation. William the Conqueror's massing of ships on the shores of the English Channel as he embarked on his successful invasion of England in 1066 was the most famous instance of this history. Carrying the Norseman theme even further, Saupique's sculptural relief accorded the Vikings themselves an important place with homage to Odin and other Viking deities.[61] Related images were also found on TRANSAT publicity brochures.[62] Perhaps the appropriate conclusion to draw was that the barbaric energy of the Norsemen had contributed to the increasingly advanced art of navigation that Normandy furthered so greatly. Granted, the statue of Paix did not exactly mesh with the violence that drove those Viking expeditions.

Art Deco was not only another modern crystallization of twentieth-century forms. Despite its obviously modern character, Art Deco absorbed themes and styles connected to the past, including those of antiquity. The relief panels of Jean Dunand and Jean Dupas gave resonance to this combined use of modern and ancient. Their gold lacquered finish and presentation were modern. Yet their portrayal of African scenes in reed-covered settings suggested ancient Egyptian art with frontal presentations of the chest and profile views of the head.

As noted earlier, fascination with archaeology had already shaped the interior design of CMM (Confédération Messageries Maritimes) ships like the *Aramis*. At the same time, increasingly abstract, symbolist, and expressionistic artistic trends complemented the new interest in pre-Renaissance art. Dunand and Dupas thus reflected contemporary aesthetic developments, and, in this instance, their work meshed perfectly with the *Normandie*, whose modernity was rounded at the edges by older forms and subjects. At times, such reliefs seemed more reflective of the an-

cient world. In other works like Dupas's *Poseidon*, the metallic sheen and contours of the subjects were nearly Leger-like in representing the mechanical rhythms of the twentieth century even in a mythological framework. As has been said of the *Normandie*:

> The dominant impression given by pictures of the interior is one of lavish decorative luxury, with notions of modernity given a flamboyant setting designed for conspicuous consumption. The lighting and furniture represented the development of a conservative Art Deco idiom, but although simple shapes, the decoration often reverted to natural forms. . . . Some of Dunand's 133 feet of gold lacquer and 92 square feet of coloured incensed lacquer decoration were moderately stylized, but both Dunand and Dupas consistently rejected images of modernity in favour of those of tradition. Gone were suggestions of speed, mechanization and abstraction; they were replaced by exotic but traditional maritime scenes.[63]

Art Deco's fashionable smartness was intended to further the "high living" of the opulent by conveying impressions of modern style without the enigmatic, challenging, and thorny images of the avant-garde. If elites had been in the forefront of those sponsoring modern artists, many within their ranks desired tamer art. Egyptianesque works thrown into the modern linear spaces of the *Normandie* only reinforced this feeling, which was one reason for celebrities to feel at home on what was called the "Ritz-sur-mer."[64] As one French Line brochure stated, "A liner is neither a museum nor a palace: it is both a means of transport and a hotel. . . . Art then must serve to divert and charm people. . . . Its decorative art should allude to the fantasies of the present than to absolute forms of beauty." Roger-Marx also felt that as a product of the industrial age, a liner's artwork had to be seen in a different light and could not be as avant-garde as that to which gallery owners were accustomed.[65]

With all the accents added to give the *Normandie* a familiar human aura and offset the dominance of the machine, the liner was still overwhelmingly modern in character. Built on such an

enormous, monumental scale and able to travel at great speed, the *paquebot* seemed an ultimate symbol of the merging of science, technology, and modernism. It was far removed from the chateau model of the *France;* its comforts and luxuries were accessible to the masses of third-class passengers but at the same time satisfied first-class passengers that they were going in "modern style." As Roger-Marx said of the *Normandie,* "it is not a copy or aggrandizement of the past: it is something new . . . it is the ship of tomorrow."[66] Later observers would come to view it as one of the great signs and symbols of civilized progress.[67]

The style of the *Normandie* was reflected also in the new Gare Maritime (maritime station) in Le Havre, which was planned to display a unified TRANSAT style along the pier and on the ship. Further evidence of this form was found at the 1937 Paris Exposition International, where a miniature model of the *Normandie*'s dining room was on display. Even in this artificial environment visitors could admire the design of the room and obtain a sense of what it might be like to inhabit the liner. As is evident, design of French Line ships directly connected the two expositions of 1925 and 1937, with 1931 as a transition. In the Exposition of 1937, the company managed the restaurant of the Palais de la Marine Marchande situated on the Quai d'Orsay between the Pont de la Concorde and the Pont Alexandre III. French Line's publicity magazine boasted that the restaurant, A Bord de Normandie, gave visitors a taste of "the elegant, charming atmosphere on board both our transatlantic and cruise liners."[68] Not surprisingly, the French pavilion at the New York World's Fair of 1939 would be focused, once again, on the *Normandie.* Events leading to the Second World War gradually closed in irreversibly on the great liner, but up to the outbreak of the war it remained a symbol of French achievement rivaling the Eiffel Tower, the palace at Versailles, and Chartres Cathedral.[69]

In Britain, the *Queen Mary* was envisioned as a challenge to the *Normandie*—in terms of tonnage, speed, and artistic design. Cu-

nard placed great hopes in hull *534*, but the economic crisis of the time compelled it to seek massive state assistance and to merge with its domestic rival. Only under such a condition would the British government grant the type of support that would enable the company to rescue *534* from rust and to complete it as the *Queen Mary*.

The *Mary* was to rival the *Normandie* in representing the new era of ocean liners. As noted already, publicity for the liner focused on its modern technology, materials, and comforts. Air conditioning, for instance, was seen by the company as key to avoiding complaints from perspiring passengers about the pitfalls and horrors experienced during the *Mauretania*'s summer cruises in the Caribbean (not the best of itineraries). As discussed earlier, the presence of communications devices on the ship were also promoted since "The ultimate symbol of modernity is the telephone beside the bed ready to order a midnight supper from the never-closed kitchen or to call up a friend for cocktails, or to bridge the wide Atlantic to your own home or office."[70]

Under the direction of Percy Bates, Cunard planned the liner on an unprecedented scale in terms of speed and tonnage. Like TRANSAT, it was motivated by fears of competition to come from Germany, Italy, and the United States. With news leaking out about the building of the *Normandie* on an epic scale, the decision was made to create a liner that would incorporate not only all the technological prerequisites for modern comfort but also the artistic and decorative currents reflective of twentieth-century life. TRANSAT and Cunard sought to leave behind former conceptions of grandeur and style and to present a more sophisticated, updated, and streamlined example of luxury. The *Queen Mary* was Cunard's answer to the *Normandie*.

Nevertheless, the *Mary* was not to be a mere duplicate of the *Normandie*. The British had always operated at a cultural distance from continental models and were suspicious of French, German, or Italian influences. The *Mary*'s creation would be marked by formative English cultural influences, suspicion of trends from its

cross-channel neighbors, and partial adherence to some of the features that highlighted previous Cunard and White Star liners. Yet the *Queen Mary* was a product of its age and had enough resemblances to the *Normandie* to make comparisons inevitable.

The American architect Benjamin Morris was selected to head the *Queen Mary*'s interior design. In turn, he chose to work closely with Arthur Davis, who had utilized the hotel-palace style to design the *Aquitania* and other liners of the prewar years. Morris himself was accustomed to working with artists and decorators who experimented with new forms. The result of this collaboration would be an unwieldy combination of new and old, defined as "stately."

The selection of Davis speaks volumes about the demand by English travelers for traditional decor. Certain constraints still confined Cunard White Star even as it constructed a liner with a modern character. Questions of modernity focused on technological, not artistic, concerns, as seen in the references to the telephone. Even in defining "modernism" and offering views of the "avant-garde," the company revealed an entrenched conservatism: "Ultra-modernity, however, does not imply what might be called ultra-modernism aboard the *Queen Mary*. In the B-deck staterooms, as throughout the ship, the best work of the younger school of British artists will be appreciated . . . but the instinct of their race, the tradition which they share with the Line itself, has kept them from exaggeration. Passengers will find much to marvel at . . . but nothing to mar the sense of serene comfort."[71] Modernism," then, is to be kept within limits avoiding "exaggeration," and not "marring" comfort, which again is given a racial twist. Describing the smoking room and shopping center, the publicity writers continued: "You will know how much this spirit means. The serenity you feel is akin to that of an ancient English inn. . . . [T]he stewards might be old retainers of a lordly manor-house in which you are the honored guest. Despite the modernity of the setting, the latest ingenious provisions for your comfort, you sense that all this has been going on for a very long time, perfected from

generation to generation . . . as indeed it has within this same Line. Progress . . . must never be permitted to alter the feeling of being at home, of sharing the warm hospitality that has always been Britain's own."[72] An overwhelming cover of wood veneer found in most of its prominent spaces gave the *Queen Mary* an almost immediately recognizable decor. Seemingly infinite varieties of veneer grain patterns and color tones served as substitute murals as wood took on a life of its own. One particular area of veneer even resembled the figure of a person or a gargoyle, making the need for a portrait there altogether superfluous. Perhaps, when compared to the woods on the *Mauretania,* the overall effect was lighter and airier. Nevertheless, the connection to earlier currents of Cunard and White Star design was clear, with wood setting the dominant note in first-, tourist-, and third-class areas and enhancing the sense of English maritime tradition—only this time within a vaster and more monumental interior space.[73]

Even within this traditional context, however, transformations were apparent. Public spaces and cabins were highlighted by the Art Deco style in streamlined linearity and curvature as well and in the use of modern materials like aluminum. Metallic sheens reflected the same reality of the machine age found on the *Normandie* or in New York City skyscrapers. Walking through the central shopping area of the *Mary* might remind one of the main lobby of a modern office building where, before taking the elevator to the desired floor, people first stopped to buy a newspaper or cigarettes. Columns and lighting fixtures in the first-class dining room bore the same unmistakable Art Deco stamp. Covering the wall at one end, the transatlantic map by MacDonald Gill with its silhouetted continents and contemporary clock transmitted the modern age's dazzling nature as a crystal model of the *Mary* moved across the ocean to represent the ship's changing position. While various shades of wood softened the tone, the use of silver, bronze, and other metals reflecting the electrical illumination projected modernistic echoes in a manner not too far removed from the dining room on the *Normandie.*[74]

Further hints of modernism were also found in Doris Zinkeisen's mural in the Verandah Grill. Her portrayal of circus and street performers has the air of an Henri Rousseau work or at least a derivative naive canvas, with a playfulness contrasting to the solemnity of typical maritime art, and a social character more popular in scope.[75] This Chaplinesque air challenged the expectations of passengers desiring murals like those on the *Aquitania*. Also commissioned to paint canvases for certain private areas of the ship were artists of the Bloomsbury circle like Vanessa Bell. As Bell was the sister of Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury renowned for its unique cultural and intellectual character, Cunard White Star was clear in its partial acceptance of modernism. Nevertheless, as evident in some of the above quotations, company managers also were very eager to impress the stamp of tradition on the decor. Kenneth Shoesmith, for instance, painted the *Madonna of the Atlantic* as part of the decor in the chapel. Though undeniably linked to the ship's larger design, its gold background with a few modern flourishes looked back to a revered, iconic religious tradition connected to the British fad for "medieval modernism."[76]

As the directors went about considering and even hiring certain artists, the limits of their tolerance for the modern came into focus. Benjamin Morris himself had to intervene in some matters. Stephen Bone, son of the well-known medieval modernist Muirhead Bone, was turned down for any consideration for the library's decoration after Morris described preliminary sketches as "crude." This view had circulated among managers like Bates and Lord Essendon, who found the younger Bone's paintings too unbalanced in color and form and clashing with the restful atmosphere necessary for the room. Despite adamant protests from Bone's father, the paintings were rejected. Essendon then urged Bates to send personal letters to all prospective artists and craftsmen "emphasizing the fact that they are engaged in the greatest marine work in history, and appealing to them for the sake of the prestige of the British Mercantile Marine to put their whole heart and soul into the work, and to cooperate in every way in making the ship a

success."[77] This appeal could be interpreted as an endorsement for traditional art over radical modernism, but Bone's fate and the stress on "marine work" revealed the directors' mind set.

Most controversial, however, was the case of the Bloomsbury Circle artist Duncan Grant, who had been gaining some renown as a modern painter. Because of Grant's reputation, the bitterness and rancor over his selection would embarrass Cunard White Star for several years—even returning as the 1939 New York World's Fair approached. The turmoil from the controversy would provoke other well-known artists, critics, and art historians to tackle the company head-on. Morris himself recommended Grant, persuading him to create two paintings for the main lounge for a payment of 300 pounds each and asking him to consider designing some of the carpeting.

Grant and Bell met frequently as they confronted the Cunard White Star management regarding the terms of their contract. Leech sent Grant the contract compelling him to agree to such points as the following: "Materials which I am to furnish are to be the best and most enduring of their respective kinds and my work is to be done with my best care and attentions to conform with the importance and dignity of the setting and the nature of the surrounding work. . . . If desired by the Company's Architects I will submit preliminary studies which shall be discussed with the object of securing a mutually satisfactory procedure. . . . I agree to work in a spirit of helpful cooperation with the Company's representatives."[78] As the paintings came more into view, Cunard managers became increasingly critical. Debate about the worth of the panels to company intentions intensified, and Leech was asked to communicate to the artist the company's concern: "My directors have been reviewing the present situation concerning the Company's commitments with painters of the *Queen Mary* and I have been instructed to modify and cancel these agreements, as may be necessary, to bring them into line with a definite policy. It is felt that too high a proportion of the murals would appeal only to a limited coterie interested in the development of modern painting

and, that this condition must be changed to provide these pictures with wide general appeal."[79] Furthermore, he felt that Grant's figures were out of scale. Leech was reflecting Cunard's suspicion and scorn of avant-garde modernism, which did not complement the social character and "country club" setting desired by the line. Grant's prospective work, in particular, while not strikingly modernistic as many works of the day (especially across the Channel), was not seen as fitting in with the overall decor of the main lounge, which was conceived along traditional lines. Elite passengers, whiling away their time in undisturbed composure, might, it was thought, have their calm jarred by unfamiliar forms of art.

Grant, responding to Leech, expressed consternation. He pointed to support from Morris, who "never mentioned the possibility of interference by any other persons." In another letter, he suggested that the company chairman was breaking an already existing contract made with ship architects, and justified his expectation of full payment according to the contract's stipulations.[80] Grant not only defended artistic freedom but also his right to the proper monetary compensation for his work, which had an unquestionable financial value. Like other artists of his day, Grant was fully aware of a market value attached to works of contemporary art, a lesson Picasso taught so successfully. Art was not only a pure sphere but a commodity. Artists accordingly were to be considered not only geniuses but also career-minded people.

Cunard's response was not encouraging. Leech received a memo from the secretary's office urging him to see "Mr. Grant and explaining to him that the paintings are not considered to be in harmony with their surroundings, and it has been decided not to have them."[81] Bates' office approved Grant's request for immediate payment—but not in the full amount. One can surmise that the true tenor and nature of managerial opinion was rather more animated behind the scenes. Lord Essendon, for instance, congratulated Bates on his decision to reject the Grants saying, "I am tremendously relieved at your decision about the pictures in the Lounge. I think that that they were simply appalling." Essendon

went on to recommend instead that a full-length painting of Queen Mary fill the space, a change which would assuage Cunard concerns for the harmony of the rooen.[82] Bates himself revealed his strong dislike for Grant's work by writing "I told you so" to Major Hardinge who backed the artist.[83] Grant's fellow Bloomsbury associate and director of paintings at the National Gallery, Kenneth Clark, later wrote that Bates's wife, who especially disliked the panels, had said, "we must have little deer, you know, gazelles."[84] Since Clark initially recommended Grant for the job, he became especially upset.

In pressing for full payment, Grant used language that also revealed other important considerations for artists writing, "I take it that you are not proposing to do this great damage to my reputation and to my fully justified expectations without some offer of substantial compensation."[85] With all the press coverage generated by the *Queen Mary*'s decoration, Grant feared severe damage to his career. A project of this magnitude by a giant like Cunard placed well-known artists in the harsh glare of publicity and exposed them to unprecedented risks.

Grant further requested the return of his canvases, but Cunard refused to comply for the time being, and a new tug of war commenced. In the process, another instance of the condition of art as a commodity became evident. Cunard's motivation at this time, however, was also to prevent any possible damage to its reputation from Grant's exhibition of such highly publicized works elsewhere. Realizing that it may not have acted in the most artistically progressive manner, Cunard feared embarrassment coming from public perception of it as an unsophisticated company not up to the aesthetic astuteness of, for instance, French Line. Further reminders of that controversy would only fuel memories. After rejecting Grant's canvases, the company was not willing simply to return them and utter a relieved tone of "good riddance." Instead, Cunard hoped to "sweep things under the rug" and avoid embarrassment by maintaining their possession of the paintings.

Morris himself expressed an ambiguous position. Writing to John Brocklebank, Morris talked about the need for more regular inspections of "the artist's work while in progress of completion, which gives the opportunity of constructive criticism."[66] Given the degree of antipathy to Grant's panels among Cunard board members, it is doubtful that any truly constructive criticism would have been offered or any genuine accommodation between the artist and the line reached. Artists seldom accept interference in their work, and the well-known dispute over Diego Rivera's frescoes in Rockefeller Center during the 1930s was one such instance of an artist's refusal to comply with a patron's requests, although it was then exacerbated by political overtones. Grant also strongly defended his artistic decisions, though they were not affected by any strongly left wing political inclinations as was Rivera when he included Bolshevik tributes in his work. Morris was anxious about the controversy and wrote a conciliatory letter to Grant stating that he was:

> greatly distressed to hear . . . that your panels for the Main Lounge had been rejected. . . . Having the highest personal regard for your talent and cognisant of your reputation, I was happy to suggest your name for one of the most important rooms on the Ship, and it is a matter of deep regret to me that the Committee has been unable to accept your paintings. Not having seen anything but the earliest sketches, you will realize that it is impossible for me to comment upon their character, but judging from the improvisations which I have already received, I am not able to be optimistic about a reversal of the decision.[67]

Morris's effectiveness was hurt by his being in New York while the key decisions were being made in Liverpool, but it also seems clear that he never had complete control over artistic decisions as Grant had been led to believe. The Cunard inner circle did.

Despite Cunard's efforts to restrict the damage, the controversy's range soon reached into the legal, journalistic, and greater artistic worlds. In fact, its flames threatened to fan an artistic con-

flagration. Further negotiations were necessary before either side could find satisfaction. Nevertheless, the line braced itself for legal action taken by Grant's lawyers, Field, Roscoe, and Co. Cunard's lawyers, Hill, Dickinson, and Co., expressed confidence that Grant's claims had no foundation and that the company would prevail in court. Of more concern was the adverse publicity beginning to permeate the English art world. A variety of articles critical of Cunard's decision appeared in papers like the *Daily Express*, the *Evening Standard*, and *News Chronicle*, suggesting that Cunard White Star was backward in its view of modern art.

Cunard managers were mindful of protest against its decision. An internal and anonymous memo sent to Lord Essendon explained "that there is a good deal of indignation in London about it [the Grant controversy], and prominent people in the Art World are setting upon a protest."[88] Bates subsequently received a collective letter of protest from Grant's supportive friends in the larger art world (including the prominent Clark, Clive Bell, Samuel Courtauld, Augustus John, and John Maynard Keynes—his lover). A company official noted that Clark's address was at the head of the letter.[89] The petitioners protested Cunard's last-minute rejection of Grant's panels, which, they said, had embarrassed him and undermined his status as an artist. There was also praise for Grant:

> There can be few men in England today whose work is more widely and sincerely admired. No one denies his charm and power as a painter of landscape and still life, but . . . his real gift is for decoration . . . and a commission by Duncan Grant on a scale worthy of his talents would be a most important event for English art. Such an important opportunity seemed to have been provided by the decoration of the *Queen Mary*, and in the opinion of those of us who have seen them, the panels which he executed on your behalf are the most important and successful examples of his work. . . . We hope that the names appended to this letter will convince you that our protest does not come from a small cliqûe or faction, but from lovers of art representing almost every state of

opinion. In the interest of justice and of English art we ask you to reconsider your decision.[90]

The depth of passion regarding this controversy can be gauged by the reference to justice. Perhaps this should not surprise readers too much since the near-religious adoration of "art for art's sake" is common to the aesthetic scene. Also striking is the insecure stress on "English art," particularly when one considers Clark's praise of the *Normandie* as the greatest ship ever built—a judgment based in part on its decorative art[91] Clark clearly wrote most of the language in the petition, and the feeling that a great "opportunity" to raise the level of English art had been lost was connected to a sense of rivalry with the French—whose accomplishment with the *Normandie* he already praised. Such national consciousness was echoed by Clark's own judgment expressed in his autobiography, that "Duncan was the only living English painter who could hold a candle to the French."[92] As Clark was Scottish, his concern for English art reveals a new level of national pride, heightened even further by Samuel Cunard's Scottish origins and the existence of the John Brown shipyards near Glasgow. Nationalism, even in a more restrained form, was evident even in the world of art and ship decoration. Bell, who was going through a row over her work for the *Mary*, wrote in a personal letter of Keynes's attempts to persuade his friend, Bates, to reconsider the company's decision—to no avail.[93]

Such back-and-forth legal proceedings went on with Bates asserting Cunard's position that it had kept to the terms of Grant's contract. Fallout from the press articles, however, caused the line considerable concern. Bates was warned by a business associate (a dealer of wheat who shipped his grain on Cunard ships) not to snub the advice of prominent people in the art world, prompting Bates to admit that public proclamation only worsened the situation.[94] Lord Essendon meanwhile urged Cunard to excuse its rejection of Grant by pointing to the need for a portrait honoring Queen Mary in the lounge—something that would both ac-

knowledge the company's important relationship with Buckingham Palace and state assistance and convince the public.

Grant's attorneys argued that Cunard White Star Line's publicity campaigns and advertising in the press had caused the artist undue damage and emphasized that the decision was "in the highest degree injurious to Mr. Duncan Grant's reputation as an artist" since the *Queen Mary* was "a work of national importance" known to all. They demanded both full payment and return of the panels.[95]

All of the wrangling eventually led Cunard to agree to full payment for Grant's work but not for any injuries to his reputation. Grant also was to exhibit the same panels only after receiving Cunard's permission and, in fact, "to use the paintings only in such manner and on such occasions as the Company should approve with a penalty stipulated at a fixed sum for default."[96] Although this wording reflected more accurately the opinions of the lawyers and not the reservations of Cunard White Star, a consensus was reached. In the interim, the panels were to be turned over to the Tate Gallery for safekeeping, fulfilling, apparently, Cunard's hopes for avoiding future exhibits where references to the *Queen Mary* would spread further adverse publicity.[97] The company's claim to own the paintings was made exactly because it wanted to ensure that their display would not reignite the controversy through press coverage.

These expectations were tested in 1939 as preparations for the New York World's Fair began. Clark helped organize part of the British Pavilion and, in planning to display the Grant panels as part of the exhibit, sought Cunard White Star's permission, which was promptly denied. Despite the British Council's backing for Grant, the line was still concerned that displaying the panels in such a public arena near its own exhibit would revive controversial memories and cause embarrassment.[98] Reassurance from the British Council that mention or reference to the *Queen Mary* would be avoided did not reassure Cunard White Star, which responded: "There is no doubt that the Press and those in art circles

generally would recognize the paintings as the work commissioned for the *Queen Mary*, and we can foresee the possibility of a revival in the Press or elsewhere of the controversy as to the rejection of the pictures for our ship. We feel, therefore, that it would be undesirable on our part to do anything which would re-awaken these old controversies."[99] The view of New York as a modernism-wise city dominated artistic perceptions, and Cunard White Star was very sensitive to the possibility of any fallout from a public forum that would have it deemed a company behind the times especially as it prepared for the launch of its next liner—the *Queen Elizabeth*.

Although surpassing the *Mary* in tonnage, the *Elizabeth*'s cost was to be less—especially in regard to the decoration. Flourishes of Art Deco as found on the *Mary* were to be restrained on the *Elizabeth* and overall design much plainer. Wood again dominated the interior of the ship with the familiar aim of providing hints of manor life. There were resemblances with the *Mary* on this score, but the effect was far less cosmopolitan.

Some lingering bad feeling from the time of the *Mary*'s construction also erupted. For one, nationalistic concerns came to the forefront. Since Morris was American, the British saw the *Mary* as more American than British in inspiration even while sharing characteristics with the *Normandie* as a 1930s transatlantic liner. Company officials accepted the *Queen Mary*'s dual American and British inspiration as a part of the long Cunard maritime tradition connecting the two worlds.[100] Yet letters among political figures revealed great reservations about the wisdom of choosing Morris for the new liner. MP Alfred C. Bossom wrote to Neville Chamberlain (then chancellor of the Exchequer): "As you may know . . . Morris, an American naval architect had charge of the interior fitting of the *Queen Mary*, and as there are very great numbers of equally competent architects here in this country who are by no means overworked, do you not think it would be desirable to see that in this second ship a Britisher has this work under control? . . . [Morris's] connection with the work of the *Queen Mary*

has led to a very considerable amount of feeling among our people here."[101] Unemployment and the public's resentment of foreign competition prompted MPs to pressure Cunard to hire British architects and designers—who in no way were as economically vulnerable as riveters and dockworkers. The Cunard general manager wrote to Bates: "Would it not be better for us to select the British man we are to have before Morris comes into the picture? . . . When we started the *Queen Mary* it was purely a Cunard ship and we were entitled to employ whom we liked. This second one is perhaps more definitely a British ship . . . therefore it behooves us not to bring in at too early a date any American or other non-British influence."[102] Rarely was British nationalism in maritime questions more noticeable.

Morris himself expressed his willingness to collaborate with a British architect although he expressed his dislike of J. E. Whipp of Mewes and Davis. Much debate flourished among Cunard managers as to who should be the collaborating decorator of hull *552*, as the *Elizabeth* was first called. Despite the fact that Brocklebank saw him as "rather colorless," Grey Wornum was chosen to work with Morris, but Whipp was to provide an assisting role.[103] Determined to avoid some of the problems encountered in the *Mary*'s decoration—most notably the problems of the sort that arose with Duncan Grant—Cunard asserted direct control over key decorative decisions. Such an insistence stemmed, in part, from a belief that Grant's hiring was mishandled from the start. As Bates wrote to Sir Hugo Cronliffe-Owen, "I ran into much criticism when I was obliged to take a line of my own in rejecting a work by Mr. Duncan Grant which he had executed for the *Queen Mary*."[104] Things would be different now as Cunard decided to play it safe and make design more a matter of maritime tradition than of artistic statement, and Morris was now to work within a more restricted and defined British context. While getting his wish to work with Worum rather than J. E. Whipp, Morris had to endure Whipp's sniping behind-the-scenes letters (can we call this "Whipping"?) attacking Morris for, among other

things, "taking too many liberties of design." Morris also had to face an old issue from earlier days: Lord Ashfield, chairman of London's Passenger Transport Board, insisted that a portrait of the queen be placed in a prominent area.

It was no easy matter to choose between modernistic styles and more traditional ones. Maritime design was becoming amorphous. In the end, the *Queen Elizabeth* would not have the chance to be displayed as a liner of the '30s in the way that the *Queen Mary* and the *Normandie* had. The outbreak of the Second World War meant that the liner would find its first use as a troop carrier painted in battleship gray rather than the black, white, and red of Cunard tradition, though as a result, it would acquire a more patriotic aura in the long run. This halo, however, did not prevent the *Queen Elizabeth* from acquiring tarnished status as a means of transatlantic travel as competition from the airplane increased in intensity.

It was a long way from the sailing of the *Titanic* in 1912 to the first passenger voyage of the *Queen Elizabeth* after the Second World War. Much had changed, not only in the size and speed of ships but also with their design. As steerage class ended and the new space allocations for tourist third cabin became apparent, decorators began to envision new avenues. While for a time during the '20s, the taste for historical art and decoration was still evident especially among first-class passengers, the interest in modern streamlined styles grew, as seen in the *Paris* and the *Ile de France*. It was not that class identity had been at the heart of the period look of the *Mauretania*, *Aquitania*, or the *France*. After all, the middle and lower classes were also awed by the plush period look and expressed reverence for it. People from all classes were still drawn to the new styles, a fact that did not prevent designers from recasting upper-class exclusivity and sophistication in the context of Art Deco or the International style. That snobbishness continued to flourish on the *Normandie* is all too apparent. And for all the change, it is also remarkable just how strong was the

pull of tradition in matters of decor. Even as the *Queen Mary* exhibited the modern transatlantic look, the "ship of the wood veneers" also emanated a historical resonance reaching all classes. Traditional ambience still exerted its influence as any works out of keeping with the anticipated aura of the liner were excluded.

If modernism and decorative traditions were polar opposites in the art world, the fact was that their application to ocean liners could never be a straightforward and simple dichotomy. Too many varieties of people, emerging from the complex social realities of the modern world, were on board to make unanimous taste a possibility. And part of modernity's paradox involves the persistence within it of the past, to which many in modern society still feel kinship. Such was the case in the interwar years as well.

There clearly were designers and architects with intentions of spreading styles that uncompromisingly reflected the modern age, regardless of how remote these styles were from the tastes and mentalities of the people whom they targeted. Sometimes, the designers managed to make artistic statements in a revolutionary setting. They also confronted company directors sensitive about social predispositions to certain styles and reacting to statements made in boardroom meetings or in letters about this or that painting or statue. The result was sometimes a compromise, perhaps outraging the visionaries and seeming too undefined or conservative. Since modernist style was thought transportable to all kinds of settings, museums or private homes were not alone in displaying it. On the other hand, expectations for the palace look were still strong and were being met in grand hotels. Memories of the splendor of the earlier liners also lingered. One had to accommodate the many. Even today, in the wake of the renewed fascination with the *Titanic*, nostalgia for that style is strong. Perhaps some passengers found enough modernism in the shape and size of the liner's exterior and thought something more traditional should await after they mounted the gangway and passed through the entrance. Maybe. But others didn't think so. They hoped to connect the interior to the exterior in a more dramatic way. As we have

seen, the results of all this dialogue and effort were mixed. The one remaining fact is overall reverence for the liners' appearance from the piers. No interior could ever mar those initial impressions made by an ocean liner either as it stood by the docks or came into harbor accompanied by the necessary fleet of tugboats.