



Deco Dreams on the 65th Floor

At One Downtown Office, the View Plays Second Act to the Art

BY CHRIS COATES
STAFF WRITER

Lloyd Greif's window-lined office high above Downtown is not the best place for the clumsy sort. In one conference room, a \$3,000 smoked-glass Lalique vase sits atop a 1930s table. Down the hall, dozens of fragile Folies Bergères drawings once owned by Judy Garland

THE COLLECTORS

face an original glass pane from the Normandie luxury liner. The lobby, meanwhile, is adorned with antique furniture from a Berlin library.

"Most offices replace the old with the new," said Greif, CEO and president of investment banking firm Greif & Co., pointing to a \$30,000 antique table he bought at auction. "We do the opposite."

Over the past few years, Greif has turned the entire 65th floor of the US Bank Tower into a showcase of all things Art Deco, a period recognized for its sweeping curves, diagonal lines, and stainless steel and glass. But instead of just adding vintage paintings and obscure antiques, Greif has



photo by Gary Leonard

An entire hallway in Lloyd Greif's office is devoted to the Folies Bergères. The collection includes original sketches once owned by Judy Garland.

transformed the office itself, turning what was once raw space into his own vision with a modern-day-meets-Art-Deco design.

"This was my first opportunity to paint my own picture," said Greif, who housed his 25 employees in several Downtown office buildings before moving to US Bank Tower five years ago. "It's easy when you start with a blank canvas."

Greif spent about \$1 million to create a cluster of of-

fices, boardrooms and gallery space with the simple touches of Art Deco: recessed ceilings with hard edges; round and tiered ceiling lamps; even the elevator doors have playful lines. The circular layout of the tower allowed interior designers to utilize curving lines in marble floor tiles and glass panels.

"We want to make a statement right when you get off the elevator," Greif said.

Nearly every office has a



photo by Gary Leonard

Greif said he was attracted to Art Deco because of its hope and optimism. "It was a whimsical period in art history," he said.

panoramic view of the Los Angeles basin. "I like views. This is like an owl's roost," he said, referring to the bird that also serves as his company's logo.

The Big Bronze

An entire hallway is devoted to the Folies Bergères, the 19th century Parisian music hall and playhouse. Greif has collected dozens of intricate working drawings from its productions. The collection, originally owned by Garland, includes sketches of set designs, costumes and backdrops by artists Erte, Marcel DuBois and Louis Curti. "They've never been exhibited before," Greif said.

On another wall is an original painted glass panel from the grand salon of the Normandie, the French ocean liner built in the 1930s. Designed by Jean Dupas, the tall and narrow panel was a small portion of a massive mural that depicted the history of navigation.

The collection also includes

a mural study by late Los Angeles artist Jirayr Zorhian, original 1920s film magazine cover art by Charles Sheldon and works by painter Joe Jones. Most of the items are purchased through dealers or at auctions around the world.

The most remarkable entry in Greif's collection may be

"Leda with Castor and Pollux," a five-foot bronze by Paul Manship, who designed the golden Prometheus fountain at Rockefeller Center in New York City. "There are only three bronzes like this in the world," Greif said.

Although his refined tastes and an encyclopedic knowledge of Art Deco suggest otherwise, Greif has no formal art education. Instead, he has degrees from UCLA, USC and Loyola Law School. For the past 25 years, he has worked in investment banking.

After a stint with banking firm Sutro & Co., Greif started his own business in 1992. He deals mostly with corporate finance and in the complex world of mergers and acquisitions. A recent transaction was the \$137 million acquisition of Bristol Farms by grocer Albertson's last fall. In 1998, Greif do-

nated \$5 million to the USC Marshall School of Business, where he graduated in 1979, to create the Lloyd Greif Center for Entrepreneurial Studies.

Greif said he was attracted to Art Deco because of the hope and optimism it portrays. "It was a whimsical period in art history," he said. "People just wanted to enjoy life."

It's worth noting that Greif enjoys more than Art Deco. His Hollywood Hills home is decorated with 19th century European art.

Greif said he hopes the Downtown Los Angeles collection gives clients the sense he is serious about business. "They know we're a solid company and we're here to stay," he said. "It's a nice place to hold a meeting. It represents us extremely well."



photo by Gary Leonard

Greif builds his collection through purchases at art auctions around the world.