

[ANGLES ON ARCHITECTURE]

The Vista Theater

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Ledger Columnists



One of the few remaining single screen theaters in Hollywood—the Vista Theater—originally began as “Lou Bard’s East Hollywood Playhouse.” It was renamed “Vista” in 1927. The first film shown at the location was “Tips” starring child actress Baby Peggy in 1923. The “B” for Bard’s is still visible in the facade right above the decorated central window, however a “V” is also visible in the cartouche at the very top.

The Vista was designed by L.A. Smith (otherwise known as Lewis Smith) who also designed the Beverly Theater on Beverly Drive in Beverly Hills. Smith designed more than 20 theaters of which only a handful remain intact and open.

The Spanish Mission Revival style seen in the Vista was one of the popular architectural styles of the 1920s inspired by the Spanish Missions of the

1700s, characterized by a flat facade with arches and decoration on the trim.

The entrance, lobby and interior of the theater is in the Egyptian style. The Egyptian influence started in the Western world as far back as the 19th century. However the discovery of King Tut’s tomb in 1922 influenced designs here of the early 20th century.

Egyptian hieroglyphics, images of pyramids, papyrus and desert scenes were painted on the interior lobby walls and bathrooms of the Vista Theater when designer Ronald Wright completed a restoration of the build-

ing after the 1994 Northridge earthquake. Also painted during the restoration in the alcoves of the auditorium were Pyramid block-shaped pilasters topped with gold painted busts of sheiks, a la Rudolph Valentino style.

The theater was purchased by Lance Alspaugh and 5-Star Theaters, Inc. in 1992 and is currently in pristine condition.

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