

Leadlights of Artarmon by Helen Wheeler

What are leadlights?

Leadlights are decorative windows made from small sections of glass supported in lead comes (frames). The glass used is sometimes bevelled, textured or etched and may be coloured or clear.

The History of Leadlights

Leadlights have been in existence for hundreds of years, the earliest versions created by the Romans and Byzantines. From the thirteenth century churches and public buildings in Europe had elaborate leadlight windows such as the rose windows of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. In Australia, leadlight windows started to feature in public buildings such as the Sydney Town Hall from the 1880s. They were introduced into homes in the 1890s and were used extensively until 1939 when war time austerity led to less ornate domestic architecture.

Artarmon's Leadlights

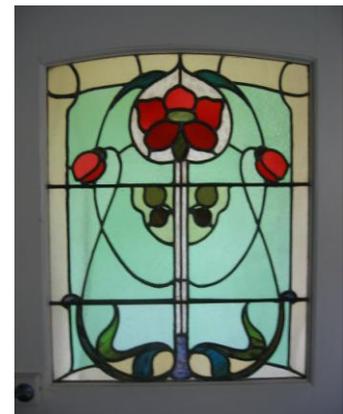
Artarmon is extremely fortunate to have so many houses that have conserved their original leadlights, some over one hundred years old. Many decorative styles are represented including Victorian, Art Nouveau, Art Deco and Modern designs. As most houses in Artarmon were built in the 1920s and 1930s, Art Deco is the most prevalent style but there are also many Art Nouveau leadlights.

Art Nouveau Leadlights

Art Nouveau style leadlights feature either in Federation (c. 1900-1915) style homes or the first Artarmon Californian Bungalow homes built between 1915 and 1925.

The characteristic designs of Art Nouveau are elongated curving lines with plant-inspired motifs such as leaves, petals, flowers and stems. A large proportion of the sections were made from coloured glass.

The growth of a national identity in the 1890s, culminating in Federation in 1901, was reflected in designs from this period that portrayed Australian flora and fauna such as waratahs, wattles, kangaroos, kookaburras, possums and emus as well as the rising sun to symbolise the dawn of a new nation.





Art Nouveau leadlights were usually concentrated on the front door and its sidelight and fanlight to make a good first impression on visitors. To complement the ornate front door, the front windows frequently featured margin panes of rose, amber, blue, green or violet textured glass.

Art Deco Leadlights

Art Deco style leadlights feature in Californian Bungalow homes built in the 1920s and 1930s.

The intricate curved line designs of Art Nouveau gave way to Art Deco's classic abstraction, distortion and simplification of shapes. Art Deco leadlights are characterised by straight lines and geometric shapes such as chevrons, stepped forms and sunburst patterns. There was a minimal use of coloured glass sections and a move towards textured and bevelled glass to reflect the light.

The focus shifted from the front entranceway to the windows and fully glazed verandah doors of the front rooms. This was to supplement the interior decoration of Californian Bungalows which was less ornate than Federation homes.



Californian Bungalows often had small, high windows, called highlight windows, on the side of the house. These were made of mainly clear glass to let in light but the glass was textured to maintain privacy. The designs of these windows complemented the leadlights on the main windows of the room.

Look at these heritage features

As leadlights are usually located in the front windows and doors of Artarmon houses most are able to be seen from the street, so take the opportunity to have a look at these striking and well-preserved features of our heritage – the Leadlights of Artarmon.