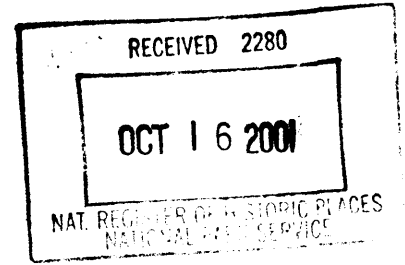


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1304



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Nu Art Theatre

other names/site number N/A

### 2. Location

street & number 516 South Main Street N/A not for publication

city or town Moscow N/A vicinity

state Idaho code ID county Latah code 057 zip code 83843

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Kenneth C. Reid 11 Oct 01  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

KENNETH C. REID, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain):

Edson H. Beall 11/29/01  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Nu Art Theatre  
Name of Property

Moscow, Latah County, Idaho  
City, County, and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Motion Picture Theater Buildings in Idaho, 1897-1949

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: theater  
COMMERCE/TRADE:  
Specialty Store

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGIOUS: religious facility  
COMMERCE/TRADE:  
Specialty Store

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT:  
Art Deco

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE  
walls BRICK  
roof ASPHALT  
other GLASS  
METAL: Aluminum

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

X See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

Nu Art Theatre  
Name of Property

Moscow, Latah County, Idaho  
City, County, and State

### 8. Statement of Significance

**Applicable National Register Criteria**  
(Mark "x" on one or more lines for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**  
(Mark "x" on all that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1935-1950  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1935  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**  
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

B. F. Shearer Company, designer  
Eisinger, John., general contractor and builder  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

### 9. Major Bibliographical References

#### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- Other State agency
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Name of Property Nu Art Theatre  
County and State Latah County, Idaho

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### Narrative Description

The Nu Art Theatre is a two story, rectangular brick building located on South Main Street in Moscow, Idaho, a city of about 25,000. Located in northern Idaho, Moscow is home to the University of Idaho, which was established in 1889. The theater, designed in the Art Deco style, is situated between adjoining commercial buildings and faces west.

The Nu Art Theatre was built in 1935. The ground floor features two, double, glass doors at the entrance, on either side of a fixed-glass panel. Large, fixed, single-pane windows are located on each side of the doors; on the outer side of each window is a new wooden door. The doors and windows are framed in variegated red and tan brick. Dark-brown brick highlights the ends of the ground floor, providing a pilaster effect. The side windows and doors are topped by modern, shallow, metal canopies. A theater marquee provides protective covering to the entrance. The marquee is rectangular with curved corners; a yellow and brown vertical, neon sign bearing the theater's name rises from the marquee to above the flat roof's, stepped parapet.

The second story features a slightly recessed center section of light-brown brick that rises above the roof line, framing the neon Nu Art sign. Strips of dark-brown brick highlight two vertical, rectangular windows on either side of the sign. Both windows have been replaced with modern casings and the window to the south contains an air-conditioning unit. The outside sections of the second story are of variegated red and tan brick with a decorative quoin design at their edges. A round window is centered low in each of the side sections. The window on the south exhibits an unequally-divided, nine-panel window, while the window on the north contains an air-conditioning unit. Each window is surrounded by a circle of light-tan bricks in a rowlock configuration. The rear facade of the Nu Art is of red brick, with rectangular doorway entrances on the north and south sides. A chimney emerges from the northeast corner of the flat roof.

The front doors to the Nu Art open into an outer lobby where film poster display cases, two on each side, still exist. The inner lobby holds a modern concession area. Curved walls lead to stairs on each side of the lobby; chrome railings rest on wrought-iron bases of geometric design that are painted mauve. The interior of the theater is painted pale blue with turquoise and silver accents. Two side aisles separate the twenty-two rows of seats into three sections; the seats are arranged in a curved pattern. Three large floral-patterned, padded fabric panels hang on each side of the theater. The fabric is a replacement to the original. Also on each side hang three light fixtures of columnar, fluted glass with chrome torchere-style shades, original to the building. Four modern silvertone light fixtures hang from the ceiling.

The movie screen dominates the east end of the building. On each side of the screen are doorways topped by silver painted wooden grills in a geometric design. The grills are

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Name of Property Nu Art Theatre  
County and State Latah County, Idaho

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approximately 3.5' wide and 5.5' tall. The sloping balcony was added to the building after the original construction. Two grills similar to those near the stage are located in the ceiling over the balcony. The projection room is located behind the balcony, and curved hallway walls lead to offices behind the projection room.

The building was originally constructed with two small retail outlets flanking the theater entrance. These were always leased by outside vendors and were never part of the theater operation. Currently, a Christian Science Reading Room occupies the small retail space to the south of the entrance; the space to the north of the entrance is rented by Vegan's Juice Bar.

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### Narrative Statement of Significance

The Nu Art Theatre is being nominated at the local level under Criterion A for its significant role in the recreation, entertainment, and culture of the community of Moscow and the University of Idaho during the Great Depression and World War II years. It is eligible under the criteria established for this property type in the *Motion Picture Theater Buildings in Idaho, 1897-1949* Multiple Property Documentation Form. The Nu Art, built by Milburn Kenworthy in 1935, was one of several theaters that Kenworthy developed in Moscow. Along with the Kenworthy Theater, two lots north, the Nu Art served Moscow residents and University of Idaho students during the years of motion picture entertainment's greatest popularity.

Unlike the architectural traditions of legitimate theater, trends in the design and decoration of motion picture theaters changed rapidly. During the 1910s and 1920s, silent movies were unrealistic adventures and romances, often set in exotic locales. Movie theaters featured equally exotic motifs and styles featuring historic references, mirroring the role of the movies in spiriting people away from their everyday lives. During the late 1920s and the 1930s, talking pictures replaced silent films and modern designs replaced historic references in new theaters.<sup>1</sup> The Nu Art Theatre reflects this transition from elaborate theaters with historic references to modern design in the city of Moscow.

Milburn Kenworthy, a native of New Jersey and later a resident of Denver, performed in the United States with the Woodward and Jefferson stock companies and in Canada with the Rialto Players of Ottawa. He eventually headed his own touring company, the Kenworthy Players. In 1918, he left live theater because of his conviction that movie entertainment would take its place. Drawn by the presence of the University of Idaho and the potential audience it represented, Kenworthy came to Moscow, leased the Strand Theatre at 122 East Third, and purchased the theater's equipment. He renamed the structure the Kenworthy.<sup>2</sup>

In 1919 Milburn Kenworthy married Marjorie Duffy, the sister of one of his leading ladies. She worked with her husband in operating the theater, taking tickets and ushering clients. She also assisted in developing the theater's atmosphere, designing and producing lobby displays to complement current features. On one occasion, Mr. and Mrs. Kenworthy hired a man to lead a white horse down the aisle during the showing of a western film. During a showing of Theda Bara in *Salome*, they burned incense to add an exotic touch to the presentation. They also presented live talent, including professional shows such as the Royal Canadian Kilties Band, The Musical Vaughns vaudeville act, and local performers from the University of Idaho faculty and student body. Mr. and Mrs. Kenworthy proved equal to the task of providing atmosphere for movie theater patrons at the original theater. Mr. Kenworthy also operated the Idaho and the Liberty theaters on South Main in the early 1920s; this may have been one theater, operated under different names at different times.<sup>3</sup>

In the mid-1920s, Kenworthy developed a new theater that reflected the era's attention to historical elements and exotic atmosphere. He acquired the former Crystal

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Theatre building on South Main, lengthened it by adding a stage area to the rear and remodeled it to reflect Spanish Colonial Revival elements. He changed the name of building on East Third to the Vandal; the new theater became the Kenworthy. In 1929, Kenworthy installed equipment for sound movies in his theater, allowing Moscow citizens to enjoy "talkies" for the first time.<sup>4</sup> The Kenworthy Theatre provided the latest in movie entertainment in an attractive, novel setting.

Nationally, the movie and movie theater industry suffered a decrease in growth during the early years of the Great Depression, but began to recover by the mid-1930s. The combination of the advent of sound pictures, with less need for live music and atmosphere to engage customers, and the financial constraints of the Depression, encouraged a new trend toward less elaborate, more modern theaters. Milburn Kenworthy responded to this trend, and to his own continuing success in the theater business, by building the Art Deco-style Nu Art Theatre just two lots south of the Kenworthy. He acquired Lot 4 of block 5 from W. P. Zumhof, owner of a blacksmith shop, in 1935. Kenworthy razed the shop and built the new theater on its site. B. F. Shearer Company of Seattle designed, decorated, and equipped the theater. John Eisinger was general contractor and builder; H J. Becker did the brick work; H. D. Powell supplied the plumbing, heating, and ventilating equipment; and Moscow Electrical Company completed the wiring.<sup>5</sup>

The theater opened on November 14, 1935, showing a comedy, *Hands Across the Table*, with Carol Lombard and Fred MacMurray, along with a musical short, a news reel, and a *Popeye* cartoon. Movie-goers entered a thoroughly modern theater with Art Deco-inspired decor. From either end of the foyer, chrome and wrought-iron stair rails led to second floor lounges, rest rooms, and smoking rooms. The lounges were decorated with tubular furniture purchased from David's Department Store in Moscow. Five hundred upholstered seats filled the main theater space. The walls and ceilings were painted in pastel shades of green, blue, orange, and yellow, with geometric designs near the ceiling. Long, perpendicular, fluted, glass lights with chrome shades were spaced along the walls, which were covered with wool padding under fabric; this padding served to improve the quality of sound. The building was completely air conditioned.<sup>6</sup>

The Hunter Candy Store, managed by Mrs. Ray Hunter, occupied the commercial space on the south side of the theater's entrance. New equipment included a counter freezer which allowed the store to prepare and freeze ice creams and sherbets. Moscow citizens could also purchase soft ice cream for the first time at the candy store. An all-electric candy kitchen was located in the basement of the building. Western Union established its Moscow branch in the commercial space north of the Nu Art's entrance. William Simpson, the manager, announced that new equipment in the office would allow the company to handle three times the amount of business as in the past, including news and communications about athletic events at the University of Idaho. Mr. Simpson assured Moscow that its citizens would benefit from a Western Union office in such a central location.<sup>7</sup>



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Name of Property Nu Art Theatre  
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The Nu Art was an immediate success, selling 3,179 tickets in its first full week of operation. Bills changed twice a week, with a feature and one or two shorts, including news reels. Attendance patterns dipped during the University's spring break in March, then dropped off again in the summer months. During the summer of 1936, weekly attendance ranged from 512, when the theater was closed for part of the week, to 2,948. By October 25 of that year, attendance had climbed to 3,391; the week's first feature was *Girl's Dormitory*.<sup>8</sup> Attendance at the Nu Art declined after World War II, when television began to compete for people's entertainment interests. During the early 1960s, Mr. Kenworthy began closing the Nu Art during summers and Christmas vacation. Later in that decade, however, attendance began to increase. The Kenworthy family leased their theaters to large movie theater companies in 1984, and the Nu Art continued to operate as a movie theater until the summer of 1999. The building is owned by the Kenworthy Limited Partnership and presently is leased to the International Church of Moscow.<sup>9</sup>

Milburn Kenworthy's theaters dominated the movie theater industry in Moscow during the period of significance, 1925-1950. His theaters reveal his instincts about that industry's trends. He used exotic atmosphere and elaborate architectural details to attract customers in the 1920s, introduced talking pictures to the community in 1929, and built the Art Deco Nu Art in 1935, reflecting changes in movie theater design and the tastes of patrons. His theaters not only provided entertainment for local citizens, but also provided employment; until World War II, most employees in his theaters were University of Idaho students.<sup>10</sup> The Nu Art Theater is significant as a part of the city's entertainment history.

### Criteria Consideration A

The Nu Art Theatre is currently the home of a local religious group that leases it for their services, and as such, it must meet Criteria Consideration A. Even though the property is used for religious purposes, it is still eligible for the National Register of Historic Places because it derives its significance for its association with the history of recreation and culture in the City of Moscow, Idaho, and not because of its current affiliation with the religious group.

### Endnotes

1. Linda Morton-Keithley, "Motion Picture Theater Buildings in Idaho (1897-1949)," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Form, July 30, 1998, Idaho State Historical Society, pp. E/1-9, F-1; Maggie Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk: An Architectural History of the Movie Theatre, Starring S. Charles Lee* (Yale University, 1994), pp. 5-7.

2. Wilma Sprague, "The Idahoan with 'Theater' in His Blood," *Spokane Spokesman-Review*, July 30, 1950; Interview with Bethine Kenworthy, February 8, 2001; Receipt, R. S. Tucker and Mary G. Tucker to Milburn Kenworthy, February 28, 1918, Kenworthy Family Collection, private papers (hereafter cited as KFC).

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Name of Property Nu Art Theatre  
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3. Sprague, "The Idahoan with 'Theater' In His Blood"; Kenworthy Theatre advertisement in the *Moscow (Idaho) Daily Star-Mirror*, October 10, 1925; *Polk's Whitman, Garfield and Latah County Directory, 1921-22* (Seattle: R. L. Polk and Co., Inc., 1921); Moscow telephone directories, December 1923, July 1924, February 1925, University of Idaho Library Special Collections.
  4. Instrument Number 108015, Portland Trust and Savings Bank to Milburn and Marjorie Kenworthy, December 1, 1927, Deed Transfers, Grantors and Grantees, Auditor's Office, Latah County Courthouse, Moscow, Idaho; Historical Photograph Collection, University of Idaho Library Special Collections, Moscow, Idaho, #92-3525, #72-81, #3529, #90-3-8-76-6; Vandal Theatre advertisement, *Moscow (Idaho) Daily Star-Mirror*, January 4, 1926; "Sound Movies Make Their Bow to Moscow Tonight," *Moscow (Idaho) Daily Star-Mirror*, August 9, 1929.
  5. Joseph M. Valerio and Daniel Friedman, Nancy Morrison Ambler, ed., *Movie Palaces: Renaissance and Reuse* (New York: Educational Facilities Laboratories, 1982), p. 29; Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk*, pp. 78-83; Instrument Number 124586, Warranty Deed, W. P. Zumhof and Mary E. Collins to Milburn Kenworthy, December 6, 1934, Deed Transfers, Grantors and Grantees, Auditor's Office, Latah County Courthouse, Moscow, Idaho; Nu Art opening advertisements and notices of congratulations, *Moscow (Idaho) Daily Star-Mirror*, November 13, 1935.
  6. Untitled Ledger, 1935-1936, KFC; "Fine Picture is First at Nu Art," "Mr Kenworthy's Nu Art Theatre Opens Wednesday," and David's' Department Store advertisement, *Moscow (Idaho) Daily Star-Mirror*, November 13, 1935.
  7. "Candy Store Will Move to Nu Art," and "Western Union is in New Building," *Moscow (Idaho) Daily Star-Mirror*, November 13, 1935.
  8. Untitled Ledger, 1935-1936, KFC.
  9. Untitled Ledger, 1935-1936 and Nu Art Ledgers for 1955 and 1962-1963, KFC; Interviews with Bethine Kenworthy, February 2, 2001 and May 21, 2001.
  10. Sprague, "The Idahoan with 'Theater' in His Blood."

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Name of Property Nu Art Theatre  
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## Major Bibliographic References

Deed Transfers, Grantors and Grantees, Auditors Office, Latah County Courthouse.

Historical Photograph Collection. University of Idaho Special Collections. Moscow, Idaho.

Kenworthy, Bethine. Interview with preparers. February 8, 2001.

Kenworthy Family Collection, private papers.

*Polk's Whitman, Garfield and Latah County Directory, 1921-22.* Seattle: R. L. Polk and Co., Inc., 1921.

Morton-Keithley, Linda. "Motion Picture Theater Buildings in Idaho (1897-1949)." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, July 30, 1998. Idaho State Historical Society.

*Moscow (Idaho) The Daily Star-Mirror .*

Moscow Telephone Directory, December 1923, July 1924, February 1925.

*Spokane Spokesman-Review.*

Valentine, Maggie. *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk: An Architectural History of the Movie Theatre, Starring S. Charles Lee.* Yale University, 1994.

Valerio, Joseph M. and Daniel Friedman. *Movie Palaces: Renaissance and Reuse.* Nancy Morrison Ambler, ed. New York: Educational Facilities Laboratories, 1982.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Photos Page 1

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County and State Latah County, Idaho

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## Photographs

Photographer: Diane Krahe

Negatives on File at the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office

1. April 29, 2001  
Nu Art Theatre, South Main facade, looking east.
2. April 29, 2001  
Nu Art Theatre, setting, looking northeast.
3. April 29, 2001  
Nu Art Theatre, theater area.
4. April 29, 2001  
Nu Art Theatre, light fixture in theater area (one of six).
5. April 29, 2001  
Nu Art Theatre, wooden grill on interior wall (one of two).