

# #365 Rhombic Ash Tray

By Eric Tankesley-Clarke



Square—dull, boring. I learned that definition early in grade school, vividly illustrated. The school had just hired a new music teacher. She was noted neither for her electric personality nor her scintillating musical repertoire. In response to the age-old question, “What did you learn in school today?” I told my mother how we were learning patriotic songs such as “Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean.” She wickedly sketched a figure in the air—across, down, back across, and up again, all at sharp angles, and pronounced my music class to be “Squaresville.” Classical—great. Modern pop—fine. Plodding old tunes with little musical value—strictly rectangular, man.

On the other hand, I also learned from my mother my first appreciation for the clean, spare, elegant style of Art Deco. Among other techniques, the masters of Art Deco capitalized on the square and all its angular relatives.

For pure Art Deco form, few ash trays beat #365 Rhombic. The name, by the way, originated from researchers, not the company. You can look at it as a series of overlapping squares and rectangles. As the geometrically inclined among you will know, a rhombus is a four-sided figure with all four sides the same length, and a square is just a rhombus with all the corners at right angles. But “Squaric” wouldn’t have made a very good name, would it?

Rhombic remains one of the more 2-dimensional Heisey ash trays. Sitting very low to the ground, all its decorative energies go into the rhythmic pulse of squares radiating from the center. It’s what you might imagine if you tossed a square pebble into a square pond. The troughs between the waves of squares provide what appear to be not one, not two, but eight (!) cigarette rests. Or at least one could use them that

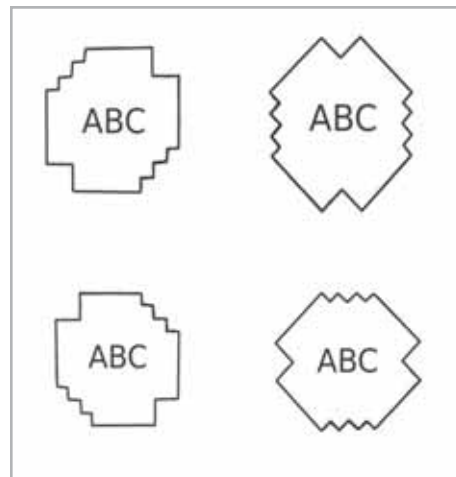


way, I suppose. Most cigarette rests allow the smoldering end to point into the ash tray. Any of these eight would let ash drop unceremoniously anywhere except, you know, actually *in* the ash tray. In truth, then, #365 Rhombic has no proper cigarette rest. Heisey seemed indifferent to building that basic function into their ash trays. You’d think by now I’d be over that. But I’m not. So sue me. The central square of Rhombic is only 2½” on a side, well within the usual limits for individual ash trays, and that’s probably how they intended this one be used.

The layout creates an outline with more than usual interest when planning a display, with two large right-angle cutouts on opposite corners, smaller stairstep cutouts on the other two corners. The consequence is the ash tray can be oriented according to taste. Some will see it as a strictly up-and-down all-square-with-the-

two? Stairsteps on the upper left? Or on the upper right, as in the monogrammed piece shown here? Perhaps you're more a diagonal sort of person. Then you could align your ash tray with the stairstep corners right and left, or top and bottom as Heisey did in their catalog illustration. So much versatility out of such a simple design. At least when it is undecorated. Speaking of which, the decoration most favored for Rhombic does seem to be monograms.

Rhombic was available from about 1928-1944. That means it came in colors, at least Moongleam and Flamingo. Crystal is far more common than the colors in my own experience, and production dates support that.



All the examples I've seen of Rhombic have been unmarked; I doubt it was ever marked. The indented undersides are usually ground and polished. Unlike in most Heisey pieces, the bottom rim doesn't exactly follow the outline of the piece; that might not have been practical in this design. This makes the #365 Rhombic ash tray almost as interesting to look at from behind as from in front. Which keeps Rhombic far from being square.

Vital Statistics of #365 Rhombic ash tray:

5 1/8" square from side to side, or 5" X 5 3/4" if considered diagonally. Height, 5/8". Unmarked. Ground and polished bottom. Unmarked.

*To the uninitiated, Heisey may be strictly Squaresville, but we know what's really cool, don't we? I want to hear about your coolest Heisey, at [heisey@embarqmail.com](mailto:heisey@embarqmail.com).*