

## Meet the man who is giving Mumbai's many architectural marvels a new life

Atul Kumar started creating awareness about the beautiful architectural marvels that Mumbai boasts of by posting pictures on Instagram and Facebook.



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New India Assurance, Fort: A traditional Indian relief sculpture on the building facade

Millions of Mumbaikars walk past some of the city's most remarkable buildings without ever realising that they're prime specimens of the art deco style. Now, though, thanks to art enthusiast Atul Kumar's efforts on the internet - under way now for a bit over a year -- that's starting to change.



Teejokaya Park, Matunga: A clock tower at the entrance of the housing complex

With their nautical designs, geometrical patterns, rounded balconies and ziggurats (rectangular stepped towers), The New India Assurance Building, Moti Mahal Building, Regal Cinema in South Mumbai and Pai Hospital in Dadar (and dozens more such in Bandra, Chembur and Mohammed Ali Road) make Mumbai one of the best cities in the world to admire the whimsical Arts Decoratifs style -- which first appeared in France just before World War I. Only Miami Beach, Florida, can lay claim to a higher number. And Mumbai boasts some particularly beautiful specimens.

In May 2016, Kumar -- founder of the non-profit Art Deco Mumbai -- started posting pictures of these beautiful buildings on Instagram and Facebook to create awareness among locals about the city's rich cultural heritage. This June, he expanded the project to a dedicated website as part of an ongoing push for UNESCO World Heritage status he began in 2012. "I decided to move away from dealing with policymakers and the state and instead have a connection between built spaces and people who live in them," Kumar says. "Our posts are simple and visually appealing and the explanations are devoid of any jargon. We want to draw people in and prompt them to explore more. This ultimately leads to a conservation of a powerful kind."



The website features stunning photographs with detailed captions and an interactive map to assist fans to see these buildings in person. The site also provides a brief history of the art deco architectural style in various countries across the world and its later influence on automobile design and even the theatre.

For Kumar and a core team of architects, it's a painstaking process. After dividing a neighbourhood into zones, they further divide it into blocks of ten buildings. An architect and a photographer then visit each block and inspect every building to identify and

photograph its art deco features.

Importantly, the art deco buildings are spread throughout the city, giving tourists a reason to explore and potentially help to revitalise new areas. "We didn't want South Mumbai to be an iconic showpiece. That's why we have focused on areas such as Matunga, Dadar, Chembur, Bandra and Mohammed Ali Road too," says Kumar. "In these areas, there are Indian motifs, designs, fonts and diverse naming conventions. We want to present Mumbai in all its glory to people across the world."



Nalini Kunj, Matunga: A window grille on the front of the building.



Empress Court, Oval Maidan: A steep stairwell combining curved and straight sections, designed by G.B. Mhatre

<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/architecture-mumbai-atul-kumar-regal-cinema-art-deco-unesco-world-heritage/1/1058090.html>