

Aao Deco

A lecture on the interiors of Art Deco buildings offers a peek into what it was like to live within its aesthetic and how it shaped daily life in early Bombay

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HAVE you ever wondered what the insides of Art Deco buildings in SoBo looked like at the peak of its era? A public lecture by Dr Abigail McGowan, presented by Art Deco Mumbai Trust and Mumbai Research Centre, The Asiatic Society of Mumbai will offer more than a peek into how this architectural style translated to its interiors. Titled Indoor Deco: Styling Bombay's Modern Interiors, 1920s to 1940s, the lecture outlines how people experienced Art Deco through lived spaces.

Dr McGowan, professor of History, and associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, University of Vermont, shares that Art Deco shaped the image of the modern city where its ideals travelled through the new visual culture of advertisements, publications, and films. It was also an inventive period with new industries and retail experiences.

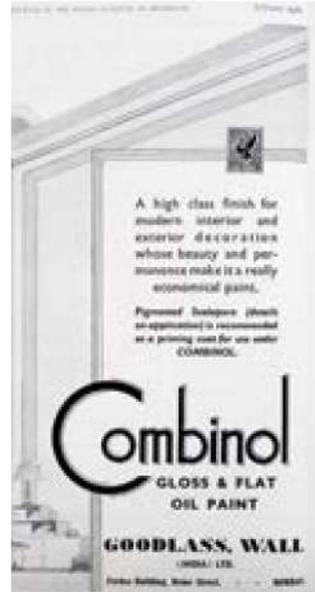
Such interiors meant much more than curved arms on a chair, she tells us. It embodied a holistic design for the interior as a whole that integrated flooring, walls treatments, furnishing, lighting and more, where each element was in conversation with the other. "This idea of totalistic design was an attempt to say

that we shouldn't just design a building in isolation or furniture on its own but instead think about how to build the entire interior as a unified whole," Dr McGowan adds. "What made Art Deco take off as a style in Bombay was the fact that so much of the city was being built anew as it expanded. Like Lincoln House or the bungalows at Malabar Hill, these were second residences for princes or new residences for those making their fortunes in the city, which meant that these spaces weren't weighed down by furniture from older generations. So they could embrace modern wholesale," Dr McGowan shares. She continues that while we have a sense of



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Dr Abigail McGowan



An ad in the Journal of Indian Institute of Architects for Combinol Glass and Flat Oil Paint. **PICS COURTESY/DR ABIGAIL MCGOWAN**

how the architecture changed the city, it's important to see how indoors through Art Deco ideals were also transformative, changing how space was used and experienced, be it a home, office, restaurant or movie theatre.

While the buildings have survived for us to see, it's a different story for the interiors. Parts and pieces of indoor furnishings won't offer the whole picture. Filling in the gaps are advertisements, newspaper clippings and people who have held onto furniture. So if you spot a piece of the past somewhere in a private or public indoor space, be sure to take a closer look.

ON January 7.5 pm; tea at 4.30 pm **AT** Durbar Hall, The Asiatic Society of Mumbai Town Hall, Fort. **LOG ON TO** linktr.ee/artdeco-mumbai to **RSVP**



Views of a dining room (top) and sitting area with Art Deco ideals