

## From Marine Drive to Miami: Celebrate 100 years of Art Deco with exhibition

ByRiddhi Doshi

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Mumbai: In the continued spirit of celebrating women, following India's phenomenal cricket World Cup win, it's befitting to start this story with an extraordinary woman from Mumbai. Perin J Mistri (1913-1989) was India's first female architect, perhaps even Asia's, and a crucial player in the city's Art Deco movement, which has earned it a place on the Unesco World Heritage Site list.



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Mistri designed the Shengre La building, a ground-plus-one Art Deco residence at Carmichael Road, St Stephen's Church at Nepean Sea Road, the Khatau mills in Borivali, several health centres for the Salvation Army church in Byculla, and an extension to the Bombay Scottish School in Mahim. She also renovated the St Elizabeth's Hospital at Malabar Hill.

Her work, alongside that of other Art Deco designers, will be celebrated in "From Ocean Drive to Marine Drive", an exhibition at the Bhau Daji Lad Museum from November 6 to 25. It will feature

photographs of Mumbai's Art Deco and Indian Deco (a fusion of Art Deco with Indian motifs) buildings in juxtaposition with those of Miami.

“The exhibition, at large, honours the birth of Art Deco by placing two cities, Mumbai and Miami, continents apart, and known for their impressive Art Deco precincts, in dialogue with one another,” says Atul Kumar, curator of the show, and founder and trustee of the Art Deco Mumbai trust.

The exhibition is part of Art Deco Alive!, a city-wide festival that commemorates the formal emergence of Art Deco on the world stage at the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris. It includes a series of heritage walks at Marine Drive, around Oval Maidan, in Hindu Colony and other Art Deco precincts in Mumbai. There will also be documentary screenings, music and design workshops for children and adults, as well as furniture, jewellery, and fashion showcases, along with retro food and drink pop-ups.

“Far from being a single style, Art Deco became a fluid and adaptable visual language that embodied ideas of progress, cosmopolitanism,

and material innovation,” says Kumar. It touched everything from architecture and graphic design to jewellery, fashion, cinema, and home interiors.

For the festival, The Taj Mahal Palace hotel in Colaba has agreed to pull out some of its old menus and signboards from the time.

“Interestingly, these mention how a certain item could only be ordered once or was available in limited quantity, as that was the time of rationing and regulated supply,” says Smiti Kanodia, founder of the festival, along with Miami-based co-founders Salma Merchant Rahmathulla and Gayatri Hingorani Dewan. The festival was organised in the US city earlier this year.

Emerging in the aftermath of World War I, Art Deco’s cement and concrete structures gave form to a changing world shaped by technological advances, shifts in social identity, and growing global interconnectedness. Its motifs and features, such as zigzags and chevrons, streamlined and vertical forms, the use of modern materials such as chrome, glass, and exotic woods, and a sense of glamour and opulence, furthered the narrative.

Interestingly, a similar typology emerged worldwide, including in the port cities of Mumbai and Miami. In the exhibition, Mumbai's Metro Cinema is placed in dialogue with the Thomas Lamb cinema or Lincoln Theatre in Miami Beach, both of which were designed by the renowned New York-based architect Thomas Lamb. "The buildings have a lot of geometry, clean lines, hardly any curves, and are very elegant, timeless and classic," says Kumar.

Another example is the Karfule petrol pump at Ballard Estate, which finds a twin in Miami's South Beach Post Office, both civic structures that wear their Deco identity.

There will also be furniture pieces, home décor and other artefacts designed in Art Deco style. One such is a fully functional Dunhill lighter, complete with an integrated clock on its front. It was made in Switzerland and patented in both the US and England. Then, there is a silver table clock with blue enamel framing its ivory dial. Delicate silver engravings decorate the corners, catching the light beautifully. It was made by Mappin & Webb, the celebrated English silversmiths and jewellers, established in 1775.

Visitors can also explore Art Deco neighbourhoods beyond Marine Lines and Oval Maidan through curated walks. As you move north towards Mohammed Ali Road, Dadar, Shivaji Park, Matunga and Ghatkopar, the buildings become more Indian, with motifs of diyas, farmers, and women tending to the fields, among others.

Even the names here are Indian, such as Keval Mahal, Bharatiya Bhavan, and Bharat Mahal, unlike the buildings around the Oval Maidan or Marine Lines, which bear names like Empress Court, Eros, and Greenfields. “These structures in the north are Indian in spirit and western in design,” says Kumar. Indian architects Dattatray Raghunath Chowdhari, Gajanan Mhatre, and even Mistri did with these buildings what modernists of the Bombay Progressive group of artists, such as MF Husain, SH Raza and FN Souza, did with art, adds Kumar.

Sadly, many of these buildings are being lost to redevelopment, poor upkeep and lack of awareness of their incredible heritage value. When Kanodia participated in the Art Deco walk in Miami, she realised that education and awareness are among the best ways to safeguard the

city's heritage. That gave birth to Art Deco Alive! "It's all fun, yes, but at the heart of it is conservation and the future of the city," she says.

What: From Ocean Drive to Marine Drive exhibition

Where: Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum

When: 10 am to 5.30 pm, November 6 to 25 (Closed on Wednesday)

Entry fee: ₹20

To see the full schedule of other events, log onto  
[www.artdecoalive.org](http://www.artdecoalive.org)

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/mumbai-news/from-marine-drive-to-miami-celebrate-100-years-of-art-deco-with-exhibition-101762284394825.html>