

Art Deco Alive! celebrates centenary of design movement in Mumbai

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THE YEAR 1925 marked the birth of Art Deco — a design movement defined by dual-toned facades, rounded corners, nautical details like porthole windows and ship deck-style balconies, and motifs such as sunbursts and waves that reflected Mumbai's identity as a port city. Built for Indians with modern sensibilities, the style also emerged in response to the plague.

“In the plague, the major problem was overcrowding and density. In the old city, which is Fort, there were issues like poor hygiene, lack of sewage and clean water facilities, and extreme congestion, so when the plague came, it spread like fire,” said Atul Kumar, founder-trustee of Art Deco Mumbai, adding that Art Deco design was a response to this crisis. “We needed open spaces, buildings that focused on light and air, and planned neighbourhoods. That’s how



The festival was inaugurated in Mumbai, Thursday. AMIT CHAKRAVARTY

Churchgate, Marine Drive, Matunga, Dadar Parsi Colony, and Shivaji Park came up — all designed with plenty of light, air, and green spaces.”

Celebrating this architectural legacy is Art Deco Alive!, a cross-continental collaboration between Miami and Mumbai marking 100 years of the global Art Deco movement. Founded by Mumbai-based entrepreneur Smiti Kanodia, along with Miami-based co-founders Salma Merchant Rahmathulla and Gayatri Hingorani Dewan,

the initiative commemorates the centenary of the 1925 International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts — regarded as the origin of Art Deco worldwide.

After debuting in Miami in October, the second leg was inaugurated on Thursday in Mumbai, home to one of the largest clusters of Art Deco buildings in the world, by Ashish Shelar, Minister of Cultural Affairs of Maharashtra. The three-week celebration, on till November 25, explores the

shared and distinct legacies of Art Deco in both coastal cities.

“The fulcrum of the exhibition in Mumbai is at the Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum. It’s open to the public. There are walking tours across the city from Shivaji Park to Marine Drive. Eros is doing a cinema tour. There will be film screenings, sketching tours, and a symposium with about 20 participants from Miami,” said Kanodia.

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