



06.11.2025

Marine Drive meets Ocean Drive as Miami-Mum Deco festival opens

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Mumbai: Inside Mumbai's oldest museum on Thursday, municipal commissioner Bhushan Gagrani acknowledged the city's disappearing past. "The entire city has been going through a transformation in the last few years," he said at Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum (BDL).

"Be it public infrastructure or private development, Mumbai's skyline is changing. In this scenario, how to preserve its soul is a key question requiring a participatory

process." Gagrani was speaking at the inauguration of Art Deco Alive, a festival celebrating 100 years of Art Deco heritage in Mumbai and Miami. The event also marked the opening of 'From Ocean Drive to Marine Drive: The Art Deco Centenary Exhibition, Mumbai-Miami Beach (1925-2025)', curated by Art Deco Mumbai Trust in partnership with the Miami Design Preservation League, Art Deco Alive! and BDL. "The showcase is not only about preserving our Art Deco legacy but also about driving tourism," said Tasneem Zakaria Mehta, manag-

ing trustee and director of BDL, adding that "Mumbai has the world's largest collection of Art Deco structures."

Often described as second only to Miami, Mumbai has 1,523 documented Art Deco buildings. "Of these, 73 have been demolished," said Atul Kumar, founder trustee, Art Deco Mumbai Trust and exhibition curator for Art Deco Alive!, whose display places two entertainment structures—Mumbai's Metro Cinema and Miami Beach's Thomas Lamb cinema—side by side, along with two civic structures: Fort's octagonal Karfule

petrol pump and the South Beach Post Office.

"Art Deco in both cities emerged at a moment of economic flux and transformation," said Kumar, pointing out that the coastal cities were hubs of commerce and immigration that underwent an urban evolution sculpted by reclamation and reinforced concrete cement—the medium of Art Deco architecture.

When festival co-founder Gayatri Hingorani Dewan moved to Miami three years ago, she immediately "felt a sense of home." "Both cities used Art Deco as a language of



Sanjay Hadkar

This diorama of an Art Deco compound wall is among the exhibits

optimism and confidence, as a way of saying 'we're modern, we're global'," she said, noting

that the showcase explores how the style continues to inspire architecture, jewellery

and photography "as a way of thinking."

"We mature as a society when we are in constant dialogue with our environment," said cultural affairs minister Ashish Shelar, urging that the exhibition be digitized and released as a book. Against the backdrop of climate stress and redevelopment pressure, the founders hope the showcase sparks civic pride. "Both Mumbai and Miami show that heritage can coexist with innovation," said Dewan. "The challenge is to build cities that evolve without erasing what makes them soulful."

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