



Show Or No Show

Liberty Theatre—one of Mumbai's brightest Art Deco gems—came alive once again at the Art Deco Centenary exhibition, where curator Atul Kumar called it “one of the great jewels of Indian Art Deco architecture”. Kumar delighted the audience this past week with stories of the late Nazir Hoosein, Liberty's charismatic curator, archivist, historian and, in many ways, its guardian angel. Hoosein had an unforgettable way of deciding which film deserved a run at Liberty. The real jury which decided whether to screen a film or not was his inner circle: his driver, his cook and two helpers. The producer would wait outside, often nervously, while Hoosein and his team watched the film. “He'd then turn to them and ask, “To show or not to show?”” Kumar said. “Their vote sealed the film's fate.” Kumar explained how Art Deco in Mumbai emerged around 1925–1935. “Mumbai's Oval reclamation coincided with this and there are striking historical photographs showing brand new concrete buildings rising on one side, while Victorian Gothic structures stood on the other. Unesco even noted that they had never seen such a clear juxtaposition of two centuries—two architectural periods—standing opposite each other,” he said.