

URBAN CLUTTER: SIGNAGES VS HOARDING

Vikas Dilawari

The decision of BMC (Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation) certainly needs to be complemented. It is one of the very bold steps to improve the aesthetics of the city. This was really long due. If implemented the island city would really benefit from visual clutter and there is no doubt about it. But is it that enough is the vital question!!

I have my reservation whether it's a complete victory to the conservationist fraternity of which I am a member.

As the hoardings are gone but signage on building are equivalent or larger than the hoardings are still on historic buildings (see attached snaps). Many of them like the hoardings are back lit, wrapped around completely as in case of Standard Charter Bank on 90 MG Road or Citibank on junction of DN Road and PM Road. These signage occupy same or more area than hoardings and have metal supports drilled in the historic fabric covering very interesting details. I am sure a true conservationist will agree, like incase of hoardings that there is no point conserving the façade of a historic building, if monstrous wrap around back lit signage keeps defiling it anyway.

It is really sad to see that how they have come up in first place, have they got the NOC of the MHCC, is what needs to be probed as they are a visual clutter a buzz word used matters the most here.



Source: Author

Taking example of DN Road in a true sense, it is one of the most significant spines and is listed as grade II A buildings, and the pink booklet of Heritage listing rightfully describes the Scope for chances of grade II buildings as : "Internal changes and adaptive reuse will be generally allowed, but external changes will be subjected to scrutiny. Care would be taken to ensure the conservation of all specials aspects for which it is included in heritage grade II. And this is totally contradictory when it comes to signage.

The most unfortunate part is that many of these signage are of Banks which are housed in historic buildings for decades and they are a landmark in itself. Many of these institutions have had their building, so called restored but have ruined the character of the entire area with these large wrapped or small signage filling each and very arch



Source: Author



opening available, and, this really makes one wonder that these international Banks, who can really make a difference by setting good standards, are they seriously concerned about heritage, as they do, in Europe in historic areas, or is it sheer commercialization and as rightly said by R A Rajeev - AMC "don't Ad Owners need to get responsible". I guess same stand true for signage owners too.

The citi bank hoarding on DN Road which came up about 8-10 years ago - the first one with blue wrap around covers three most interesting Art Deco bas relief's, of the facade the reason detre of that building being significant. Further the blue colour is in total contrast to its Art deco character, which has red bands. However, as the evil was not nipped in the bud, it started the mad chain reaction of copying, as each bank does the same as recommended by its HR department to compete with others. Sadly no intervention came from conservation NGOs or MHCC and now days those we are seeing double wrap around signage.

The really victory would be when these en-lightened banks and other such large corporates take it as their collective responsibility and remove such loud

signage, or we wait for the BMC or MHCC to ban it completely, or tame it, if that's difficult. That would be a true victory.

D N Road, Colaba Causeway, Princess Street, M G Road to be restored to Victorian splendour; civic body invites tenders for survey of roads

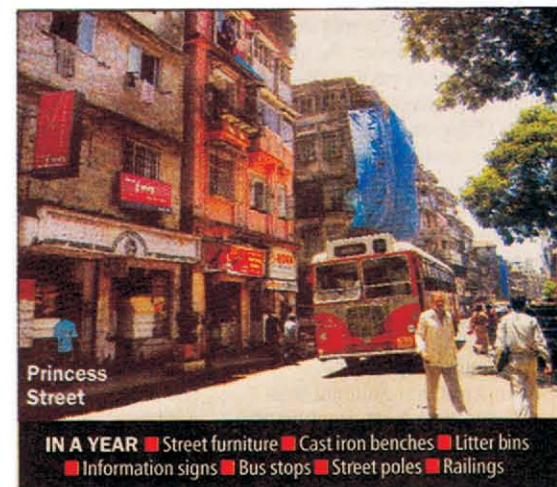
SHWETA DESAI
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A SHOPPERS' paradise for kitsch art with matchbox-like stalls dotting the street, the Colaba Causeway, a link between Colaba and the Old Woman's Island, isn't even a shadow of its Victorian splendour. The Princess Street, passing through colonial and Victorian structures, is cluttered with gaudy signage, which end up defacing the buildings.

To restore the lost glory of Fort area, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) will soon initiate its 'heritage streetscape' project. In a year from now, D N Road, Shahid Bhagat Singh Road (Colaba Causeway), Princess Street and M G Road will have street furniture, cast iron benches, litter bins, information signs, bus stops, street poles and railings to enhance the beauty of the area.

"Each street will have its distinct heritage flavour. For Colaba Causeway, we will bring uniformity in the stalls so that the visual appeal of the surrounding buildings is not lost," said Abha Narain Lambah, who is providing free consultancy services to the BMC for the project with the help of JJ School of Architecture students.

Last week, the civic ad-



Princess Street

IN A YEAR ■ Street furniture ■ Cast iron benches ■ Litter bins
■ Information signs ■ Bus stops ■ Street poles ■ Railings

ministration invited tenders for the survey of all roads and junctions in the A ward of the city to identify types of structures, heritage buildings, their alignment with pavements, length and width of pavements, ground-level features and building elevation. The base map survey will enable the BMC to introduce street furniture, street poles and set up bus stops in keeping with the heritage look.

"The idea is to make the environment surrounding these buildings lend a distinct flavour of the older times," said Deputy Chief Engineer (traffic) A D Nagarkar, who is in charge of the survey.

The survey will also help the civic body frame guidelines for signage and street furniture to be displayed in the Fort area. Lambah said currently the shop owners

displayed boards that were not uniform or consistent with the heritage look of the area. "After studying the type of the buildings, their structure and material, we will give suggestions on boards and signage which will be in uniform and consistent with other signs and shops of that building," she said. Lambah has been involved in a similar project earlier to restore the Dadabhai Nowrojee Road.

The BMC's proposed hoarding policy, which is yet to be approved, also states that no hoardings or mobile vans will be permitted in the A ward. But permission will be given to other forms of advertisements like neon signs, bus queue shelters, backlit back-to-back advertisements, it says.

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A grand vision
"No finer monument, no better nuzzar could I conceive... than the construction of a temple of science containing the wonders of literature, science and art... where all classes of Her Majesty's subjects, high and low, rich and poor, shall be able to meet in pursuit of common objectives..." Thus did philanthropist Bhau Daji Lad exhort citizens to donate to the building of the new museum.



The museum the city forgot
A view of the hall before restoration work on it began. Since the building used a variety of old materials, the restoration had to be carried out after careful research. In addition to the building itself, there was also the delicate task of restoring and preserving the many ancient objects in the museum. Fund-raising for the project started around 10 years ago.



Talking heads
Artisans brought in from Lucknow, aided by students from the JJ School of Arts, created clay models of the various communities - from Khatiwasa Members to Bhoirpada Jews - that were drawn to Bombay, as it morphed from seven warring kingdoms into an imperial centre of trade and commerce. Several of these models have now been carefully reborn and are back on display.

Text: Chitrangada Chaudhary
Photos: Rajanish Kakade
MUMBAI

It has been waiting 10 years for this restoration. It has been scraped, peeled, painted and polished till it now gleams like a jewel. Its new found glow set off by the lush green of the ornamental garden that frames its restored beauty.

The 135-year-old Bhau Daji Lad museum, Mumbai's oldest, has emerged after decades of neglect and is now preparing to open its doors to the city once again.

Over 4,000 artefacts showcasing Mumbai's communities and India's distinctive art have been lovingly restored, calling on the skills of over hundred artisans from around the country - from Vijaya's gold artisans and Rajasthan's silver carvers to Kashmir's carpet weavers.

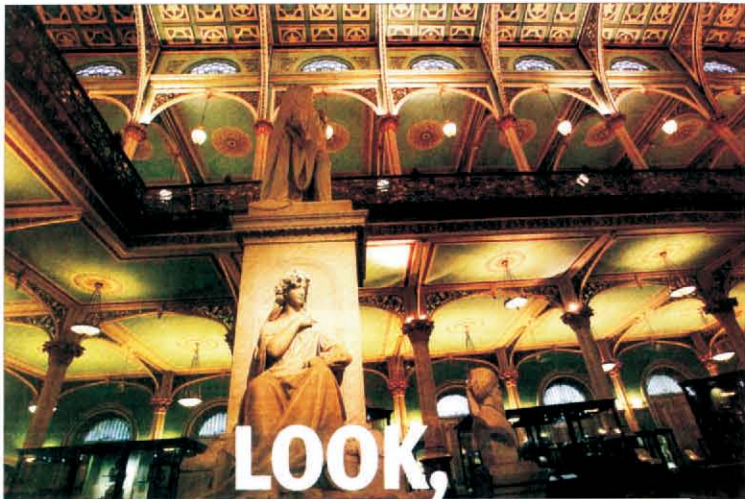
The restoration of the museum - attracting enough to win an UNESCO award - has been due in large part to the efforts of the Indian National Trust for Art & Cultural Heritage (INTACH), the NGO that spearheaded the museum's restoration.

As the leadhead has been JTC TACH's Mumbai Convenor and the project's director, Tasneem Mehta, who has helped raise the funding, conceptualised and designed the project and started the objects.

Conservation architect Vikas Dikawar has done the museum project with his pioneering restoration work and the project has been funded by Rs 2 crore each from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation and the Bajaj Foundation. The latter has, in addition, constructed a 2 crore store. Says Mehta, "We would like to turn the museum into Mumbai's foremost cultural and educational space."

Chitrangada Chaudhary/Bhau Daji Lad Museum

The Bhau Daji Lad Museum in the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya will be open from 10 am to 6 pm. The entry fee will be Rs 10 for Indians and Rs 140 for foreigners. School children 10% after free.



LOOK, it's changed

Mumbai's 135-year-old Bhau Daji Lad museum will reopen its doors to the city soon. A preview

Fit for a prince

This statue of Prince Albert, flanked by female figures representing Art and Science, dominates the museum's central hall. Earlier on display in London's Victoria & Albert Museum, the marble statue was shipped to Bombay in the 1870s. The Bhau Daji Lad Museum was originally named the Victoria & Albert Museum, after its counterpart in London. Efforts are on to start exchanges between the two museums.

STILL COUNTING

Rs 6,000
The museum's funds in 1855, when work on it started. The curator was authorised to draw just Rs 86 per month.

Rs 1.1 lakh
Amount collected in donations for the new museum. The figure was matched by the government.

Rs 7 crore
Funds committed by the Bajaj Foundation for the restoration project.

Rs 2 crore
Amount contributed by the BMC for the restoration project.

4,000
Number of objects in the museum.

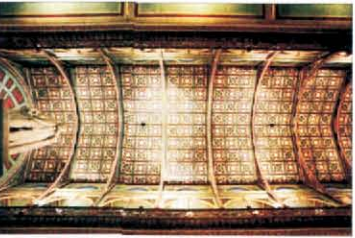
19
The number of volumes in one of the museum's prized books, *Taxidermy of India*, which has nearly 800 samples of fabric, sourced from clothes of the 19th century.



The last stand?
One of the Bhau Daji Lad's many old statues stands in the garden, waiting to be installed in a more appropriate setting. Some other worthies can be seen further down, encased in packing, waiting similarly for a better display. These statues, of Englishmen who contributed to the city's growth in varying ways, are forgotten reminders of a colonial past that are being exhumed after being buried under neglect for decades.



A new chapter
The museum's library houses a 125-year-old collection of books, which includes several rare copies that chart the development of the metropolis of Bombay. Pride of place belongs to the 19-volume *Taxidermy of India*, which has nearly 800 samples of various types of fabric, that have been sourced from clothes of the 19th century. There is also a 15th century Tibetan manuscript telling the region's history and two 17th century copies of the *Panchatantra*.



Look at the upside
The faithfully restored, colourfully ornate ceiling of the museum. The six-pointed star that forms the dominant motif was a tribute to Jewish philanthropist David Sassoon, who was a major contributor to the museum. Work on the ceiling, which forms an equivalent to the floor, was particularly difficult. The flying arches, made of wrought iron, were specially imported from England.



Grand old BHUJ
Bamburda's Vithal Lad, better known as Bhau Daji Lad, was not merely a philanthropist, but Bombay's first native scientist, a scholar of ancient history and even a physician of some note. The museum was renamed after him in 1925.



We would like to turn the museum into Mumbai's foremost cultural and educational space.
TASNEEM MEHTA
Mumbai Convenor, INTACH



Booked
A Conservation Laboratory has been set up in the museum's rear, where a team of conservators like Madhura Joshi (left) and Anant Shinde (right) work. Here, they give little rare manuscripts a new life with some tender loving care.

A FUND OF KNOWLEDGE: Minal Bajaj (of the Bajaj Foundation) (left) and Tasneem Mehta. "We would like to ensure that the museum does not slide back into decline," says Bajaj.