



Image Courtesy: Jehangir Sorabjee





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1 IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROPERTY
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NOMINATED PROPERTY
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# I. IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROPERTY

## STATE PARTY

India

## STATE, PROVINCE OR REGION

Maharashtra

## CITY

Mumbai

## NAME OF PROPERTY

The Victorian and Art Deco Ensemble of Mumbai

## GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATES TO THE NEAREST SECOND

18°55'46.29"N ; 72°49'44.03"E

## AREA

Nominated Property	
Area of Nominated Property	66.34 ha
Area of Buffer Zone	378.78 ha



Context of the Site in Maharashtra State on a geographical map of India





# The Victorian & Art Deco Ensemble of Mumbai

Submission To UNESCO As A WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Prepared for:  
Govt. of Maharashtra  
Prepared by:  
ANL Associates, Conservation Architects & Historic Building Consultants

Source:  
MIRCHES, U.D.R.I

Supporting:  
R.M.A., O.V.A.L., K.G.A., F.O.R.T.

DELINEATION OF THE NOMINATED  
PROPERTY & BUFFER ZONE

— NOMINATED PROPERTY — BUFFER ZONE

Scale 1:18000

DWG. NO.-03

(Source: ANL Associates, 2013)

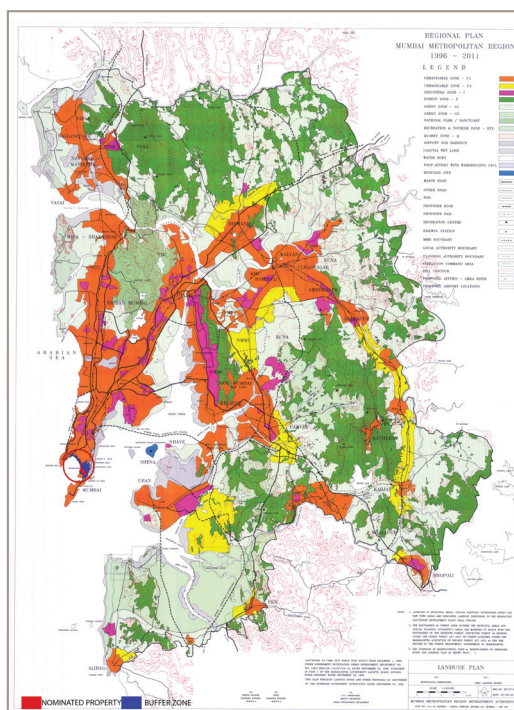
## 2 TEXTUAL DESCRIPTION OF THE BOUNDARIES OF THE NOMINATED PROPERTY

The Nominated Property is situated in South Mumbai's historic core and comprises an urban ensemble straddling two heritage precincts of the Fort Precinct and Marine Drive Precinct. The Property consists of a 19th century collection of Victorian structures and 20th century Art Deco buildings, conjoined physically and visually through a planned urban alignment by means of the historic open space of the *Oval Maidan*.

The Eastern edge of the property is defined by Mahatma Gandhi Marg and Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Chowk to the East within the designated historic precinct of Fort Area of Mumbai. This marks the edge of the 19th century fortified city of Bombay. Though the fort walls were mostly torn down in the 1860s under the Governorship of Sir Bartle Frere, the name persists in public memory and is a protected heritage precinct under the Heritage Regulations for Greater Bombay 1995.

West of the former fortifications, the expanse of land that was once called the Esplanade, is today the historic cricketing ground of *Oval Maidan*. This vast open space lies at the heart of the proposed Property. The western edge of the property is defined by the Arabian Sea that lines the 20th century Art Deco buildings of Backbay Reclamation and Marine Drive. The Northern Edge of the Property is defined by Veer Nariman Road and the Southern Edge by Madame Cama Road.

This exercise of the definition and demarcation of the boundary was undertaken over a period of several months with stakeholder consultations and public meetings in order to arrive at a succinct boundary that is well managed.



Context of the Site on a regional landuse plan of Mumbai Metropolitan Region  
(Source: MMRDA, 1999)



### 3 CRITERIA UNDER WHICH THE PROPERTY HAS BEEN NOMINATED

The inscription is proposed under Cultural Criteria (ii) and (iv)

Justification for Inscription under these Criteria

**Criteria (ii) Exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design.**

Mumbai was colonized by the Portuguese who gifted it to England as part of Catherine de Braganza's dowry to Charles II in 1662. Subsequently, the British Crown leased the islands to the East India Company which gained a strategic foothold for its colonial expansion in India. In the 1670s, the British invited mercantile communities to settle with the assurance of liberty of religion and trade, laying the foundations of the cosmopolitan character of the mercantile city.

In 1686, the East India Company transferred its maritime activity from Surat to Mumbai. It fortified the town and in the 1700s, invited the Wadias, Parsee shipbuilders from Gujarat to lay the foundations of the ship building industry. By the 19th century, Mumbai was a leading port city trading in pearls and coffee with Basra, Muscat and Arabia, ivory and slaves with East Africa, cotton and opium with China and pepper and raw cotton with Europe<sup>1</sup>. This cultural interchange made it the "Gateway to India" welcoming global trade, industrial growth and western concepts of town planning, architecture and public institutions.

International trade, opening of the Suez Canal and the politics of American Civil War resulted in Mumbai's 'cotton boom', positioning it as a pre-eminent mercantile city. The demolition of the constricting fortifications created a new expanse of land released on the sea fronting Esplanade. This gave an opportunity to reinvent Mumbai in a planned urban gesture and with a new architectural vocabulary.

Sir Bartle Frere's vision was given tangible form by architect James Trubshawe, who prepared the masterplan for the Victorian development. Trubshawe was assisted by Muncherjee Murzban of the Public Works Department and TR Smith, lecturer at Royal Institute of British Architects who advocated creating an Indian style of architecture, modelled on Gothic Revival forms, but using Indian materials and craftsmen and adapted to Indian conditions<sup>2</sup>.

Along with the University buildings designed by England's pre-eminent architect Sir George Gilbert Scott and the pre fabricated construction of Watsons Hotel designed by Rowland Mason Ordish, most of the Victorian buildings were designed by English architects and military engineers. Indian draftsmen, overseers as well as students trained at JJ School of Art and Poona Engineering College became the first batch of Indians to be formally trained in European disciplines of art and engineering. They were responsible for the exuberant ornamentation of Mumbai's Indo-Gothic which came to characterize the vibrant multicultural city.

The theatrical assemblage of grand public buildings was consciously designed in the high Victorian style, reflecting the contemporary British discourse led by men

1 Rusheed R. Wadia, *Bombay Parsi Merchants in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, in *Parsis in India and the Diaspora*, Ed. John R. Hinnells and Alan Williams.

2 London, Christopher; 2012. *Bombay Gothic*, PICTOR Publishing Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai pg. 29



such as John Ruskin and Augustus Pugin, of Gothic being the pure English style. With moorings in Gothic revival, Mumbai's buildings create a unique blend of Indian and European elements, often borrowing liberally from Italianate Gothic and Indian architecture. Gothic elements of verticality, buttressing, spires, pointed arches, trefoils, gargoyles merged with the local architectural language of tiled roofs, carved balconies and linear verandas, responding to the local climate. The interiors were distinguished with Minton tiles, cast and wrought iron shipped from England, stained glass from English studios as also the abundant use of teak from Burma, marble from China and embellishments in polychromatic masonry of a variety of stones from the vast expanse of the Indian subcontinent.

Unlike political capitals such as Calcutta or New Delhi but in line with contemporary emerging financial centers such as New York and Shanghai, Mumbai's architecture was built on the foundations of public subscription, entrepreneurship and philanthropy. The auction of land parcels as well as Indian philanthropy funded institution building. Parsi industrialists and entrepreneurs, Hindu and Jain bankers and traders, Muslim and Baghdadi Jewish merchants, Armenians, Salsette Christians and English invested in the future of this emerging city, contributing to the urban palimpsest.

At the turn of the century, the architectural aesthetic of the buildings reflected the new political ideology. In a declaration of permanence suggesting that the British were here to stay, the architecture blended European planning with the politically motivated choice of Mughal and Indo Islamic elements in an attempt to create a fusion that came to be known as the Indo Saracenic style. This formed the transitional phase into the 20th century.

The 1920s heralded a new global aesthetic, including influences in jazz, cinema, architecture and design. Art Deco percolated through Europe as travel by steam liners opened the floodgates to international travel. The influences were not French alone in their derivation and expansively incorporated American Modernism, early Italian Futurism, and European Rationalism, soon coming to represent the new Art Moderne finding resonance internationally in the streamlined, fluid lines of the new architectural age. Mumbai's Art Deco development was manifested through its iconic cinema halls and apartment buildings. Adapting to Indian design, Art Deco imagery readily absorbed local influences, incorporating nautical designs to compliment their oceanic setting of their new-found home in far-away India.

Indian architects graduating from foreign schools and American and European architects and émigré artists – some seeking refuge in the city from Nazi oppression – created a vibrant community of designers who contributed to the melting pot of European and Indian design influences<sup>3</sup>.

The Art Deco aesthetic spread northwards from Backbay throughout Mumbai's neighbourhoods and from Mumbai, to the rest of the rapidly growing urban centres in India. This was facilitated by the royal and industrial elite who championed the new architectural style to signal their uncompromising embrace of all things modern. It was reinforced and glamorized through Mumbai's cinema that used the sweep of Marine Drive's Art Deco buildings to visually symbolize India's modern age. Art Deco absorbed Indian influences and motifs along the way, tempered in form and hybridized into a unique, recognizable 'Indo- Deco'. Through the decades since its

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3 Ramani, N. 2007. *Bombay Art Deco Architecture*. ed. Laura Cerwinske, New Delhi, India: Lustre Press, Roli Books



appearance in Mumbai in the 1930s, Indo-Deco held sway across the Indian sub continent until the arrival of Corbusier in Chandigarh with Jawaharlal Nehru, first Prime Minister of India championing modernism as the style appropriate for a strong, independent, progressive and secular India.

In Mumbai both these principal architectural genres – Victorian Gothic and Art Deco, with their moorings in Western styles and illustrating the latest technology of the times were adapted and indigenized to respond to the local climate, material and socio cultural context. They bring together not only two defining periods of international architecture in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but they also employ modern materials, technologies, structural systems, and building typologies of these two consecutive eras central to the global development of modern architectural form. Mumbai demonstrates a distinct architectural genre, Western in form, but Indian in spirit, an example of shared heritage at its best. Mumbai to this day, remains a multi cultural cosmopolitan city, with these living structures continuing in their original usage, testimony to the uninterrupted vitality of the urban scape created by the city's visionary planners and builders from distant homelands across the seas but working in tandem to build Asia's premier global metropolis.

**Criteria (iv) Be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history.**

The Victorian and Art Deco ensemble of Mumbai is reflective of urban re-engineering over two centuries – in the 19th century through the demolition of the old fort walls and the Rampart Removal Committee's urban guidelines for restructuring the Esplanade and again in the 20th century with the ambitious Backbay Reclamation Scheme. This was emblematic in Asia and the world, of a developmental stage in human history, the shift from fortified colonial towns to cities planned for the global commerce of a modernizing world.

For over two centuries, Mumbai has thus been the 'Gateway to India' – and to the rest of Britain's Asian empire - for the introduction of architectural innovation and technological advances. With the demolition of the old fort walls, Governor Bartle Frere's grand vision to position Mumbai as the *Urbs Prima in Indis* was realized by the creation of urban layouts of planned vistas punctuated with an array of imposing institutional and public buildings in a unified architectural vision. The public institutions so established - such as courts, post office, secretariat, university, banks, and hotels - encouraged and promoted private enterprise and commerce in the largest city in the British colonies, and marked the strategic shift of the British Empire from military Dominion to commercial Commonwealth. Modern concepts of urban design created a 'modern' town with municipal governance, modern sanitation, open spaces, gas lit street lighting and public infrastructure making good on Sir Bartle Frere promise,,

4 Sir Bartle Frere in his Reply to Address of the Bench of Justices, 1867, Speeches of Bartle Frere. ed. Pitale, 1870, p. 433. Quoted in *The Charm of Bombay: An Anthology of Writings in Praise of the First City in India*, Edited by RP Karkaria, DB Taraporewala & Sons, Bombay 1915, Pg 210

*“to make good the omissions and neglect of former ages, and to provide all the vast multitude of people with good air, good water, good roads and everything else which should distinguish the second city of of the British Empire”.*<sup>4</sup>



The demolition of the fortifications in the 19th century gave an opportunity for the creation of a modern urban statement in the Victorian architectural vocabulary globally current at that time. A second urban engineering opportunity for the reassertion of Mumbai's modernity came about through large scale land reclamation from the sea in the early 20th century, one of the largest and most ambitious land reclamation projects attempted up to that time. The Backbay Reclamation Scheme offered a new urban canvas for a model 20th century development west of the *Oval Maidan*, redefining the western edge of the *Oval Maidan* and creating the emblematic "Queen's Necklace" of Marine Drive, in the latest architectural vocabulary in vogue - Art Deco.

The new architectural vocabularies of Modernism were accompanied – indeed made possible – by the introduction of new technologies and materials deriving from the Industrial Revolution. In the Victorian era, introduction of cast iron and rolled steel introduced the latest industrial technological advancements of the West to India. A generation later, the Art Deco introduced reinforced cement concrete, air conditioning and elevators to usher in modern architecture. Reinforced Cement Concrete allowed the construction of high rise buildings with smooth curvilinear forms and a speed of construction that made dense concentrations of private housing possible.

The nominated Property represents the first Art Deco urban development in India. The area offers a chronological landscape for a modernizing India on the verge of independence between 1930 and 1947. Dictated by strict regulations enforced during this period, the urban armature is a testament to early 20th century urban planning and coastal land reclamation in colonial India. Once again, through the 1920s and 1940s, the city had renewed itself to keep pace with international trends, thus further reinforcing Mumbai's position as the Gateway of India through which the latest advances in the western world entered India and were transmitted across the subcontinent.

The *Oval Maidan*, at the center of the architectural dialogue between Victorian Gothic and Art Deco straddles the two centuries of Mumbai's history during which it was transformed from a small coastal fort to become the pre eminent colonial city of the British Empire. Despite the contrast in scale and design of the two framing architectural styles, the open *Maidan* forms the central fulcrum of the ensemble as a whole, creating a spectacular urban composition with the ocean promenade of Marine Drive presenting the transformed city's new face to the world. This urban setting with two centuries of building styles proudly fronting each other across the *Maidan*, creates a unique architectural dialogue of modern urbanity. The urban form and architectural vocabularies of the nominated Property contain the narrative of a city's growth and evolution from a 19th century colonial outpost to a global financial capital.





## 4 DRAFT STATEMENT OF OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

### BRIEF SYNTHESIS

Flanking the legendary cricketing ground of the *Oval Maidan*, the 19th century Victorian Gothic and 20th century Art Deco of the Backbay Reclamation Scheme confront each other in a theatrical architectural display that is unique to Mumbai.

With the cotton boom in the wake of the American Civil war and the opening up of the Suez Canal, Mumbai (formerly Bombay) emerged as a global port city in the 19th century. The demolition of the fort walls in the 1860s created a vast expanse of open space west of the fortified town, giving the British an opportunity to implement an ambitious urban design scheme as part of Governor Bartle Frere's grand vision to position Mumbai as *Urbs Prima in Indis*, 'the first city of India'. In a planned urban gesture, a monumental assemblage of public edifices was strategically positioned along the sea facing Esplanade, framing the eastern edge of the *Oval Maidan*.

As a counterpoint to the Neo Classicism of Calcutta, Mumbai's edifices were designed by decree in the high Victorian Gothic style in vogue in Britain, advocated by Victorian theorists as the true English style. In contrast to Calcutta and New Delhi, political capitals built through imperial funding, Mumbai's architecture was realized through public subscription and philanthropy. Land auction to private entrepreneurs funded this urban scheme and many of the public institutions were funded by Parsi, Hindu, Jain and Jewish philanthropists. Entrepreneurs and settlers from different communities— Parsis, Gujarati Bhatias, Hindu Banias, Jains, Bohras, Khojas, Memons, Baghdadi Jews, Konkani Muslims<sup>5</sup>, Armenians, Salsette Christians and the English contributed to the urban palimpsest of this cosmopolitan city. This was among the earliest examples of public private partnership in colonial India, laying the foundations for this multi cultural financial capital.

Following the 1920s land reclamation, Backbay Reclamation Scheme created a new canvas for urban renewal west of the *Oval Maidan*. This set the stage for Art Deco in India. With its modern technology of reinforced cement concrete and streamlined architectural forms, it posed a striking visual contrast to the carved stone of the Victorian buildings, announcing India's embrace of modernity. Extending from the *Oval Maidan*, this new development stretched westwards to the Arabian Sea, creating along the sweep of the coastline, a spectacular sea facing promenade, Marine Drive – the Queen's Necklace.

Whereas British architects and military engineers in the 19th century introduced Victorian architecture, international travellers brought the Art Deco aesthetic to Mumbai in the 1930s. European émigré artists, British planners and American architects as well as the first generation of Indian architectural firms created a generational shift in India's architecture and a cultural shift from traditional community housing to apartment living in Asian cities.

Together this ensemble constitutes the proposed World Heritage Property, creating a formidable architectural dialectic that influences the narrative of modernism in Asia. Both these principal architectural genres, with their moorings in western ideas and illustrating the latest technology of the times, were adapted

5 Rusheed R.Wadia, *Bombay Parsi Merchants in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, in *Parsis in India and the Diaspora*, Ed. John R. Hinnells and Alan Williams





and indigenized to the local climate, material and craftsmanship. They bring together not only the modern aesthetics of two successive styles, but also reflect the materials, technologies, structural systems, and building typologies that enabled the architectural transition between the 19th and the 20th centuries. The result was a distinct architectural genre, western in form, but Indian in spirit, an example of shared heritage at its best.

Uniting these two disparate architectural genres, the *Oval Maidan* as the centre-piece, anchors this spectacular composition in a compelling demonstration of urban engineering by European powers in the context of colonial mercantile cities. This urban ensemble, embodying international modernities of the 19th and 20th centuries is intact today, with its buildings in continuous living use as vital assets to the city.

The Victorian buildings are amongst the finest and most cohesive group of 19th century Victorian Gothic in the world. The 20th century Art Deco is representative of one of the largest and most homogenous Art Deco constructions anywhere in Asia and the world. While individual clusters of Victorian or Art Deco buildings may be seen across the world, collectively, this ensemble is unparalleled. No other city can boast of a more dramatic urban confrontation between the two architectural styles straddling the 19th and 20th centuries, engaging in a unique architectural dialogue. This is singular to Mumbai.

### JUSTIFICATION FOR CRITERIA

The inscription is proposed under Cultural Criteria (ii) and (iv)

Justification for Inscription under these Criteria

Criterion (ii): The Victorian and Art Deco Ensemble of Mumbai exhibits an important interchange of human values through the vibrant cosmopolitanism of its settlers who built its edifices on the foundations of entrepreneurship and philanthropy. A host of global factors led to Mumbai emerging in the 19th century, as *Urbs Prima in Indis* and the second city in the British Empire. As the pre-eminent port city, the Gateway of India, it welcomed people and ideas into the Indian sub-continent and this interchange is reflected in its urban planning and architectural development over a span of a hundred years. Mumbai's Victorian Gothic and Art Deco developments, with their moorings in Western styles and illustrating the latest international trends and technology were adapted and indigenized through a collaboration of European and Indian architects, engineers and craftsmen in an example of shared heritage at its best.

Criterion (iv): The Victorian and Art Deco Ensemble of Mumbai forms an architectural development of Outstanding Universal Value embodying urban re-engineering in the context of colonial cities over the 19th and 20th centuries. With the demolition of fortifications to restructure the Esplanade followed by the ambitious Backbay Reclamation Scheme, this was emblematic in Asia and the world, of a developmental stage in human history, the shift from fortified colonial towns to commercial cities in a modernizing world. Collectively, this ensemble of Victorian and Art Deco buildings is unparalleled in its reflection of international modernities of the 19th and 20th centuries and influences the narrative of modernism in Asia.



## STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

The Nominated Property retains a high degree of visual, spatial and planning integrity. It retains its integrity as an urban ensemble representing 19th and early 20th century town planning and architectural development. The original layout, scale, massing and skyline survive, conforming to the principles laid down in the planning covenants.

The clearly defined urban layout in case of both the Victorian and Art Deco buildings is legible even today. The sweep of buildings facing a promenade, vital to the complete viewing of the Victorian and Art Deco buildings is clearly intact. The might of the composition and the sheer monumentality of the Victorian public structures in contrast to the more human scale of the Art Deco section is evident. The fact that both these architectural genres have survived in their most complete form along with the retention of the original intent of the urban form indicates the high degree of integrity of the Site.

## STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY

Together, the Victorian and Art Deco buildings continue in their authentic use as originally envisaged. The Victorian Buildings continue to serve as living institutions, courts, offices, banks, public libraries and the Art deco buildings continue their authentic use as apartment buildings and cinemas.

The Nominated Property retains authenticity of architectural form, design and material. It continues as a vital and robust part of the city, retaining its multi cultural essence. It is a testament to cultural interchange and continues to retain the design elements, motifs and architectural features that exhibit this interchange. The Victorian buildings are testimony to Indian craftsmanship and the blending of western and eastern design. The Art Deco buildings exhibit the blending of European, American, Egyptian and Indian elements in an exuberant flowering of the Indo Deco. These design elements continue to survive in the exteriors and interiors of the buildings and retain their authenticity

## REQUIREMENTS FOR PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT

With the pioneering Heritage Regulations for Greater Bombay 1995, Mumbai became the first city in India to give legal protection to heritage buildings and urban precincts, establishing the first management system for urban conservation in India. It recognized modern and colonial heritage, expanding the idea of conservation from a 'monument centric' approach, to that of urban and living heritage.

The Victorian buildings are individually designated as heritage structures and the Fort area is a Heritage Precinct with Oval *Maidan* designated a historic open space. By public notice in 1999, the Art Deco Marine Drive Precinct was proposed as a heritage precinct, bringing it within the ambit of scrutiny by the Mumbai Heritage Conservation Committee. It is mandatory for any development proposal in the Property and Buffer to obtain the approval of the Heritage Committee. Economic incentives for privately owned heritage as well as a review of development policies in heritage precincts would make for a compelling urban management system in the long term. The city has ably demonstrated citizen's participation in conservation. Mumbai has thus demonstrated, over two decades, a robust system of management and protection of its urban heritage.





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