

1. AN ART CENTRE IN THE CITY THE LANDMARK GALLERY

In the course of the 20th century, the city of Bombay emerged as a vast global metropolis. And like most great world cities that are perceived through their vast network of landmarks buildings, streets and urban spaces Bombay, too, built institutions and urban places that gave it a distinct character. The Jehangir Art Gallery is one such landmark that has contributed significantly to the image and perception of the city both for its inhabitants as well as visitors.

The Jehangir Art Gallery is located in south Bombay in the heart of the Fort Area or the historic core of the city. More specifically, the Gallery is situated in the compound of the Prince of Wales Museum, at the south-western edge of the old Fort Area. This area has come to be popularly referred to as Kola Ghoda after the bronze equestrian statue of King Edward VII on his 'black horse', which was removed in the 1960s from its prime public location and relocated in the gardens of the Jilamato Udyan in Byculla. In spite of this dislocation, the memory of this icon has somehow sustained in the public's imagination and transformed through time in the popular reference to the area as 'Kola Ghoda'.

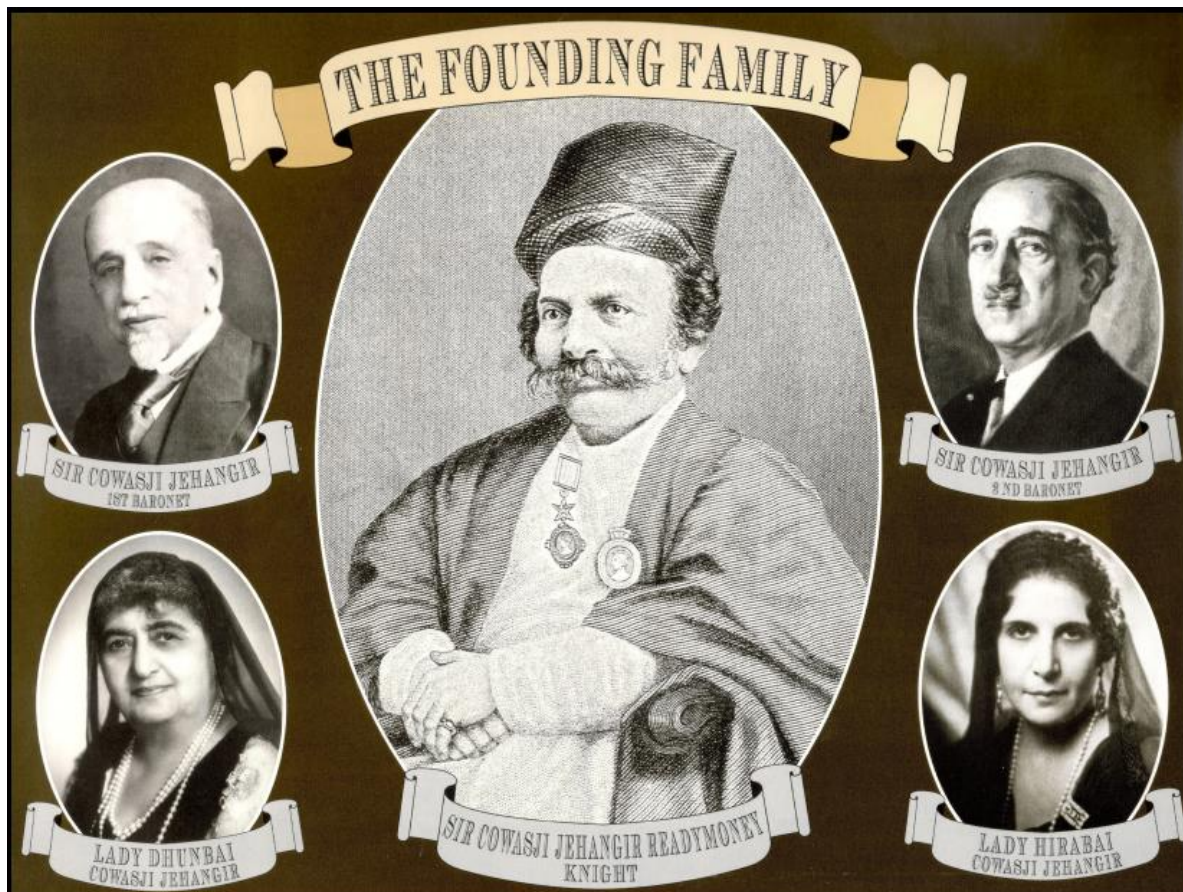
Over the years, this area has evolved as the centre of art activity in the city, a phenomenon triggered off in the early 1950s with the establishing of the Jehangir An Gallery. The Gallery provided through the decades of the 1950s to the 1980s a centre pond and on incredible and unprecedented situation perhaps in the entire minty 01 a large concentration, in a single building, of so many varied art-related bellows Moreover, being situated next to the Prince of Wales Museum it also provided a sort of counterpoint to the antiquities in the Museum by setting itself up as a centre to celebrate the production of contemporary art and culture. As a rendezvous point for artists, patrons and art lovers, the Jehangir Art Gallery complex, over the years became a nationally recognised centre of contemporary Indian art. From the 1960s onwards, many art galleries opened in the vicinity and finally with the opening of the pavement gallery or Art Plaza in the 1980s and the National Gallery of Modern Art across the road in the 1990s, the potential of the area as an Art District became increasingly evident. Starting in the mid-1990s, citizens in the area together with non-governmental organisations like the Urban Design Research Institute began working towards formally establishing the area as an Art District – a recognised resource in the city. An association was formed in 1998 which instituted an annual Art Festival between 1 to 14 February to draw attention to the area and raise awareness as well as resources for its continued restoration and improvement. The Jehangir Art Gallery, in fact, had been instrumental in triggering off a much larger phenomenon!

The Gallery, celebrating its Golden Jubilee in January 2002, was built in 1952 and was funded by the Cowasji Jehangir family — a well-known Parsi philanthropic family of Bombay. The founder of the Gallery, Sir Cowasji Jehangir, Second Baronet, whose 40th death anniversary also falls in 2002, and

earlier generations of his family were responsible for wholly or partly funding the building of a number of noteworthy institutions in the vicinity of the Jehangir Art Gallery. These include the Elphinstone College, the Cowasji Jehangir Convocation Hall in the University complex, the Cowasji Jehangir Hall at the centre of the Institute of Science and the Prince of Wales Museum.

It was precisely this philanthropy that was responsible for the creation of many parts of the city of Bombay and many years ahead of its time, was a relevant model of public-private partnership for city improvement as well as institution-building, whop eventually resulted in the creation of the very soul of the city.

2. THE PATRONS A HISTORY OF THE FOUNDING FAMILY



The evolution as well as survival of the arts is historically linked to patronage. Enlightened patronage, in fact, is critical to the perception of art as an important component in the development of cities and societies in general. In this context Bombay was extremely fortunate to have had the patronage of the Cowasji Jehangir family for the building of its numerous institutions, which together with other such

patrons synergised to make Bombay a vibrant mosaic of commerce and culture. The continuing support of the Jehangir family through many generations has helped to sustain and nurture the development of education, art and culture.

The history of the Cowasji Jehangir family in Bombay begins with Hirji Jivanji Readymoney (1713-1794), who as a young boy migrated with his family in 1717 from Navsari in Gujarat to Bombay. In 1756 he became the first Indian to visit China by the sea route and was recognised as the pioneer of the Indo-China trade, which subsequently brought great prosperity to the then Bombay Presidency. In all, he made five trips to China and 'bought an extensive estate in Bombay and became the foremost merchant of his time and country'. He acquired his unique surname from his consistent readiness to advance money — this in the coming years became the basis of the wealth of the family.

Hirji Jivanji's scions used their wealth in a meaningful manner. The story of their philanthropy begins with his great grandson, Sir Cowasji Jehangir Readymoney, Knight (1812-1878), the first male heir in three generations. He was a leading financier and philanthropist and also a founder of the Bombay University. Dinshaw Eduljee Wacha wrote in *A Financial Chapter in the History of Bombay City*, that Sir Cowasji had 'remarkable acumen, great mercantile sagacity and keen financial talent'. In fact, during the share mania of 1864-65 he was one of the few merchants in the city who was not adversely affected by the resulting crash. His charities and donations were many and it is estimated that during his lifetime he made contributions exceeding £150,000 for a variety of causes — hospitals, dispensaries, university and college buildings and other institutions of public benefit. In 1844, at the young age of 32, he presented a collection of Oriental works to the Asiatic Society of Bombay and later in 1864, a coin collection that formerly belonged to the Hon'ble William Frere.

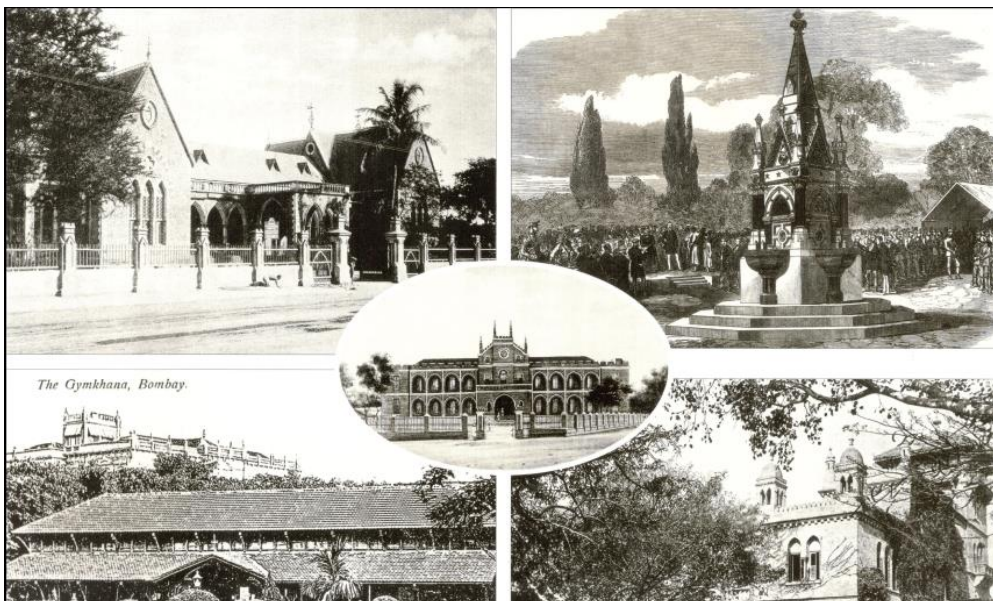
Following the demolition of the Fort in the mid-1860s, several important institutions were built in the city. Sir Cowasji, who was a member of the University's Faculty of Civil Engineering and also the Senate, funded the Convocation Hall in the Fort University complex. Designed by the eminent British architect, Sir Gilbert Scott, the Hall has splendid galleries and an exquisite round, stained glass window embellished with the 12 signs of the Zodiac. Over the windows in the western wall of the Convocation Hall are stained glass reproductions of Sir Cowasji's escutcheon and the arms of England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales and Bombay. Fronting the Hall stands a life-size statue of Sir Cowasji by Thomas Woolner (1825-1892), a leading sculptor of the 19th century, erected by public subscription in 1873.



(Statue of Sir Cowasji Jehangir By Woolner)

Surprisingly, a small bas-relief sculpture of Sir Cowasji by Woolner can also be seen at the University of Edinburgh in the Old College on the wall beside the doorway leading from the foot of the Grand Stairway to the Raeburn, Carstares, Lee and Lord Provost Elder rooms. Sir George Birdwood (1834 1917), who was born in Bombay and was an Edinburgh medical graduate, presented it to the University to honour Sir Cowasji, the great philanthropist. Birdwood held professorships in anatomy, physiology, botany and materia medico at the Grant Medical College. He was appointed Registrar of the University of Bombay and was one of the founders of the Victoria Botanical Gardens (now Jijamata Udyan) and the Victoria and Albert (now Bhau Daji Lad) Museum in Bombay. Through these involvements he obviously understood and recognised Sir Cowasji's contribution to building Bombay and deemed it fit to have him honoured in the Home Country.

Nicknamed 'The Peabody of the East' after the American philanthropist George Peabody, Sir Cowasji gifted a drinking fountain to Regent's Park in London to mark the gratitude of the Parsis in India for the protection they received under British rule. In 1869, the humorous London journal, Punch, noted that 'Parsi money, was better far than parsimony', after Princess Teck opened the fountain.

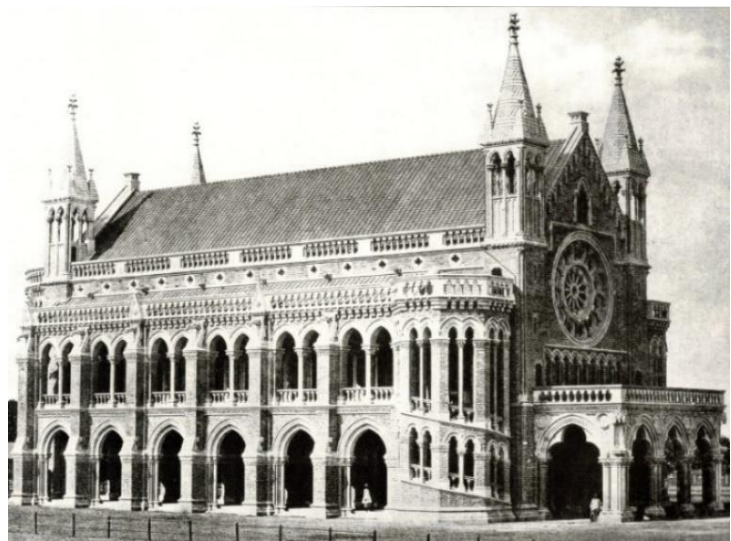


(Clockwise from top left: Ophthalmic Hospital, Regent's Park Fountain, Poona College of Science, Bombay Gymkhana and centre, Surat Civil Hospital)

In Bombay itself, Sir Cowasji donated 40 drinking water fountains including an ornamental fountain designed by J Lockwood Kipling, which stands in the angle of the two wings at the entrance of Crawford (now Mahatma Phule) Market. Another beautiful fountain can be seen at the west entrance of St Thomas' Cathedral, designed by Sir Gilbert Scott, who also designed the Bombay University Library and Convocation Hall. Christ's immortal words from the Bible, engraved on the fountain read, 'Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst'.

The Sir Cowasji Jehangir Ophthalmic Hospital within the JJ Hospital complex was built in 1866 at a cost of nearly Rs 100,000, again with a donation from Sir Cowasji. It originally contained accommodation for 28 male and 12 female in-patients, many of who came from outside the city. Lack of accommodation led to the construction of a new building that cost Rs 60,000, of which Sir Cowasji contributed half.

He also contributed handsomely to the total cost of Rs 750,000 for the building of the leading educational institution of its time, the Elphinstone College (in the Fort Area at Kola Ghoda). Designed in the 'Romanesque Transitional' style by Khan Bahadur Muncherjee Murzban, then Executive Engineer of the Bombay Presidency, and completed by John Adams, the building was originally



planned to house the Government Central Press. In 1888, half the building was given to the Elphinstone College named after Mountstuart Elphinstone. In recognition of his generosity, a medallion portrait of Sir Cowasji was executed at the School of Art in 1892 and placed on the facade of the building, surmounting the porch.

For the construction of the Bombay Gymkhana, completed in 1875, the most generous donation came from Sir Cowasji Jehangir who voluntarily contributed Rs 5,000 for the pavilion and Rs 1,000 for furnishings. The Club was then exclusively meant for Europeans and although his contribution was deeply appreciated, Sir Cowasji was not admitted as a Member. Amongst other institutions funded by him were the Engineering College in Poona, the main civil hospital in Surat and an asylum for the mentally handicapped in Hyderabad, now in Sind, Pakistan. He also funded the tower of the St Xavier's College and the steeple of the Afghan or St John's Church, both in Bombay. In addition, he donated large sums of money for several other worthwhile causes, for which he was knighted in 1872.



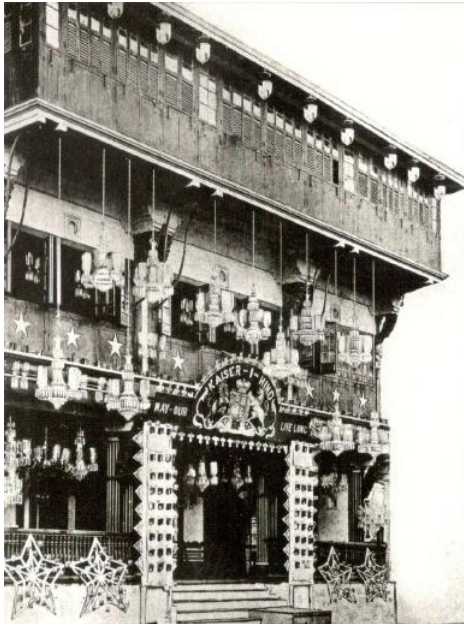
As he had no children, he adopted Jehangir (afterwards Sir Cowasji Jehangir, 1st Baronet), who was the son of his elder brother Hirji's son, Jivanji. Sir Cowasji Jehangir (1853-1934) and Sir Sassoon J David, 1st Baronet, founded the Bank of India in 1906. He was also one of the promoters and one of the first Directors of the Tata Iron & Steel Company Ltd and the Hydro-Electric Power Supply Company.

Sir Cowasji, a keen businessman, donated magnanimously to various charities. He

was knighted in 1895 and made a Baronet in 1908, the third in his community after Sir Jamsetji Jeejeebhoy and Sir Dinshaw Petit. He funded the Readymoney Wing at the Imperial Institute in London in 1895 and in 1910 founded and financed the Sir Cowasji Jehangir Hall connecting the two wings of the Royal Institute of Science, designed by George Wittet and built opposite the Prince of Wales Museum. The Hall, 100 feet in diameter, with a seating capacity of 1200, was the venue for art shows, lectures and musical performances for several years.

A portrait of his wife, Lady Dhunbai Jehangir (1860-1940), who was the motivating factor behind the founding of the Cowasji Jehangir Hall, is prominently displayed at the entrance of this building, which now functions as the National Gallery of Modern Art. Lady Dhunbai was fluent in English, Gujarati and Marathi, although she was not college-educated. She kept her accounts in Gujarati and had a very good business sense. She spent an hour and a half each day at the Jehangir office in Readymoney Mansions at Flora Fountain. The eminent Bombay architect, George Wittet designed this architectural gem with an ornate Indo-Saracenic facade in sandstone, carved balconies and iharokas. From the office, Lady Dhunbai would go to the Princess Victoria and Mary Gymkhana, a club she had helped to establish for the exclusive use of women belonging to the many Indian communities. She took a lead in women's affairs and spoke on their behalf as the Indian representative at the Wembley Empire Exhibition in England in 1924. The renowned journalist, Benjamin Guy Horniman, after whom Horniman Circle was renamed, wrote of Lady Dhunbai, heard her described by an Englishman as the cleverest woman in India; and I am quite ready to endorse that verdict'.

Sir Cowasji and Lady Dhunbai's home, Readymoney House was built on a vast estate on Nepean Sea



Old Readymoney Mansion at Flora Fountain

Road (L Jagmohandas Marg) located just below the Baroda Palace, with the sea coming right up to a large garden. The compound was filled with rolling lawns, flowerbeds, statuary and trees. The property consisted of the main mansion (the present site of the Swapnalok building), a ground plus one storey building and an adjoining one, especially built for their son, Cowasji, who became the 2nd Baronet, and his growing family. At the back was a whole village accommodating the staff of 42 servants with their families. Lady Dhunbai supervised their activities, including maintaining hygiene, the stacking of the food in the granaries or bringing in family doctors to take care of ailments.



Readymoney House at Nepean Sea Road





(Lady Dhunbai in the centre with her daughters, Cooverbai Ghasvala and Bapsy Sabavala)

Sir Cowasji and Lady Dhunbai's elder daughter was Cooverbai Ghasvala and the spirited younger one was Bapsy Sabavala who was a keen patron of art and the theatre, a patriot and social worker. She celebrated Gandhi Jayanti each year in the presence of priests and spiritual leaders of different faiths and beliefs and it was a well-known annual event in the city. She opened the first

homes for the blind in Andheri, and also started the first Swabal Stores of which one still survives in Cusrow Baug in Colaba. The laudable concept behind the cooperative stores, which sold grains and groceries, was to provide meaningful employment to idle young Parsi men. Her husband, Ardeshir Sobavala was Mayor of Bombay and both her sons have distinguished themselves in their chosen professions— Sharookh has been a Director of the Tata Group of Companies for several years while Jehangir is an internationally renowned painter, who served for several years on the Committee of the National Museum of Modern Art since its inception. Interestingly, Sharookh has in recent years been a prime mover in establishing the Kula Ghoda Association and the Horniman Circle Association, both dedicated to improving these areas, with the building of which his family was so closely involved. Sir Cowasji passed away in July 1934. While recording his many achievements, the Times of India stated, 'He won for himself a foremost place in the banking and commercial life of the city and helped in the financing of great industrial projects'.

His son and successor, Sir Cowasji Jehangir, Second Baronet (1879-1962) was the founder of the Jehangir Art Gallery and a leading citizen of his time. He made notable contributions to the business life of the city as an industrialist and banker, to the political life of the country and as a great patron of art. Unlike most Parsis of his time who collected European paintings and antiques, Sir Cowasji had a magnificent collection of rare Indian miniature paintings and Chola bronzes.

He had a distinguished career in public life. When he passed away on 18 October 1962, the Times of India wrote, 'As a successful businessman Sir Cowasji Jehangir had a good grasp of the financial and economic problems of the country as was revealed in many a debate in the legislature and his public speeches'. Sir Cowasji was a member of the Municipal Corporation of which he was President in 1920. He was also a Member of the Legislative Council, the Executive Council of the Government of Bombay from 1923 to 1928 and an elected member of the Legislative Assembly in Delhi, representing Bombay for 17 years from 1930 onwards. He was a delegate to the Round Table Conferences in 1930, 1931 and 1932. He was also a delegate to the World Economic Conference in 1933 and to the Empire

Parliamentary Conference held in London in 1935 and represented India at the Coronation of King George VI in 1937. He was on friendly terms with the great national leaders, particularly Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, M A Jinnah and Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar.

Sir Cowasji Jehangir was on the Board of Directors of several well-known companies and astutely guided the fortunes of the Bank of India of which he was a Chairman for 16 years from 1946 to 1962. He was a great patron of the arts and a keen supporter of the art and film movement in India. When Himanshu Rai founded Bombay Talkies as a joint stock company in 1934 on his return to India, the studio was built on the site of Sir Cowasji's brother-in-law, F E Dinshaw's summer mansion in suburban Malad. Sir Cowasji, together with F E Dinshaw and other distinguished lawyers and businessmen, was on the Board of Directors of the Company. Sir Cowasji also funded the King George V Infirmary in Parel for beggars and the Lady Dhunbai Home for distressed women in 1935-36.

Sir Cowasji's wife, Lady Hirabai (1893-1976) was the daughter of Hormarji Wadia. One of her sisters, Gaimai was married to F E Dinshaw and the other, Amba, to Cursetji Wadia. Lady Hirabai was a prominent figure in the field of social service and education, both within the Parsi community and outside. At the World Zoroastrian Conference held in USA in December 2000, Lady Hirabai was recognised as one of the 20 outstanding Zoroastrian ladies of the 20th century for the great social work she had undertaken for almost half a century.

Sir Cowasji was the first Indian President of the Bombay Art Society and served in that capacity for several years. Realising the great need for a public art gallery in the city he made an offer of Rs 250,000 to the Government of Bombay in 1946 for this purpose. Meanwhile, leading citizens of Poona approached Sir Cowasji to fund an urgently required charitable hospital for their city and he willingly agreed. However, since he had already committed large funds to the establishment of an art gallery in Bombay, he gifted to the city of Poona the large family mansion with a garden filled with prize-winning dahlias, chrysanthemums and cannas, located near Poona railway station. He provided Rs 300,000 for the conversion of the house into a hospital, opened in 1946 and named after his son, Jehangir who had died in 1944. He and his wife continued to subsidise the upkeep of the hospital from their personal funds until Sir Cowasji's death in 1962 the Jehangir Hospital is one of the leading ones in Poona city and is equipped to international standards. The editorial in the Times of India on his death summed up his life and career. 'Of Sir Cowasji Jehangir who passed away in Bombay at the age of 83 it may be said with complete justification that rarely in recent times has a man in the public eye lived a fuller, richer, more rewarding life. As a philanthropist Sir Cowasji contributed to the welfare of the citizens of Bombay and to the members of his own Parsi community as much as it is imaginable for an individual to give. As a patron of art, he had few equals in the country... No man has done more to encourage art and artists, and his decades-long association with the Bombay Art Society will be

remembered wherever Indian artists turn to an easel and whenever they open a one-man show at the Jehangir Art Gallery’.

Sir Cowasji and Lady Hirabai had three children — a son, Jehangir, born in 1911, a daughter, Sylla (Holmes) born in 1914, and a second son, Hirji, in 1915. Jehangir Jehangir (1911-1944), after whom the hospital and the Gallery are named, married in 1938 Mehroo Bomanji, the daughter of Sir Dhunjibhoy Bomanji, a noted stevedore and shipping magnate of western India. In 1939, Jehangir went on a trip to London, just prior to the outbreak of World War II. He decided to stay on in England and took a job as a liaison



(Mehroo Jehangir)



officer for the Indian High Commission in London, looking after the requirements of

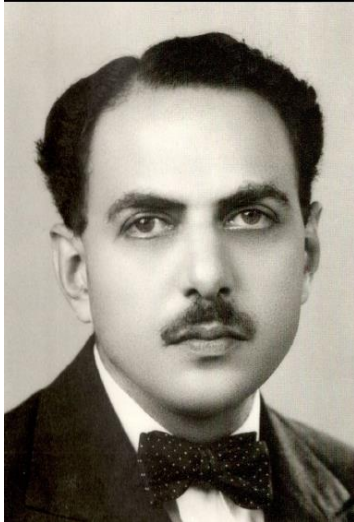
Indian troops in terms of accommodation and contacts for military purposes. Tragically, in October 1944, while he was crossing the road at Piccadilly during an air raid by German V1 rockets, a military truck ran out of control and killed him on the spot. Sir Cowasji Jehangir’s younger son, Sir Hirji Jehangir, 3rd Baronet (1915-2000) served as Chairman of the Jehangir Art Gallery for almost 40 years. Of a scholarly bent of mind, Sir Hirji had little

inclination for business and instead, devoted his time to studying history, literature and art and doing social work. From the 1940s up to the early 1960s he often gave talks on All India Radio on current topics, international affairs and local Indian politics. In 1952 he married Jinoo Coma, daughter of K H Coma, a leading city philanthropist. Sir Hirji was a dedicated patron of modern art and encouraged several artists, prominent among them being K H Ara, Raul and Satwalekar, who also became close friends, together with his cousin, Jehangir Sabavala, the renowned painter. From the 1940s until 1974, collecting paintings of promising young Indian artists became a passion for Sir Hirji. Many were purchased during exhibitions of the Bombay Art Society, where he was the Chief Guest for several years.



(Jehangir Jehangir, who died in 1944 after whom the gallery is named)

In 1974, Sir Hirji put an end to the acquisition of contemporary paintings for a rather unusual reason connected with the family home on Nepean Sea Road. The main house, Readymoney House with its carpet area of over 120,000 square feet, was where the head of the family lived while the eldest son



Sir Hirji Jehangir, Chairman of the gallery from 1962-2000

and his family traditionally occupied the smaller adjoining mansion. The Second Baronet and his wife, lady Hirabai, and their children lived in this house until 1940 when Lady Dhunbai passed away, mid they moved into the main house. During the War in 1942, the sandlot house was demolished expeditiously because the military authorities were in the process of acquiring all vacant houses.

In the early 1970s, it became increasingly difficult to maintain the large Readymoney House. A smaller house was built in 1974 on the site of the one demolished in 1942 and the grand mansion was, alas, pulled down. When he moved into the new house with his family, Sir Hirji found that there was no wall space to hang around 30 to 35 canvases from his large collection, mainly comprising the works of Husain, Ara and Royal. He wisely took the decision to start a library scheme, where like books, original works of art could be given on loan to rill lovers at a rental fee for a fixed period of time. Sir Hirji magnanimously donated all these paintings to the Jehangir Art Gallery, where they became the nucleus for a Lending Library that still functions with success.

In the 1980s, Sir Hirji took an even bolder decision when a proposal was put forward to convert the Cowasji Jehangir Hall in the Institute of Science into the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA). When his grandfather funded this building, he had included a clause in the agreement whereby the Parsi Panchayat was given priority to use the Hall free of charge. Some Panchayat members opposed the move for conversion, but Sir Hirji, as an art lover and patron, convinced them of the advantages of the project, The change of use could not be carried out without Sir Hirji's permission and signature, but he signed the agreement for the alteration by Delhi architect, Romi Khosla without any hesitation. This was an important move as with the establishment of the NGMA, not only did Bombay receive another art facility but also, its proximity to the Jehangir Art Gallery and the Museum automatically evolved an art district for the city and a unique facility in the country.

Sir Hirji's older son, Jehangir, now Sir Cowasji Jehangir, 4th Bt (b1953) and his wife, Jasmine, daughter of Beji Billimoria, a prominent construction magnate, have a son and a daughter. He serves as Hon Director of the Piramal Photography Gallery in the NCPA and as Chairman of the Jehangir Hospital in Pune. He has taken the lead to collaborate with the Apollo Hospitals to transform the Jehangir Hospital into one of the best-equipped hospitals in western India. The younger son, Adi (b1956), is married to Freny, daughter of Cowasji Dinshaw Adenwalla, whose family helped to develop the port of Aden. Adi, whose interests focus on history, music and art, is the present Chairman of the Jehangir Art Gallery.

3. FOUNDING AN ART CENTRE BUILDING AN INSTITUTION



The Jehangir Art Gallery, a non-profit organisation registered as a public trust, has had a fascinating history, inextricably linked to the development of the art movement in Bombay. The contemporary art scenario in the city really began with the founding of the Bombay Art Society in 1888. The Society's main objectives were to encourage art, especially among amateurs and to promote the appreciation of art among the citizens of Bombay. The Society's main income was from members' subscriptions, augmented by occasional grants from the Government. Initially, the Society's annual exhibitions were held at the Government Secretariat, then in the Town Hall, followed by the JJ School of Art, the Cowasji Jehangir Hall in the Institute of Science and the Chetana Restaurant on Rampart Row (now K Dubash Marg).

Since its inception, prizes were awarded for the best exhibits to encourage young artists. By the beginning of the 20th century, the Society also began promoting other art forms, exhibiting private collections of watercolours, embossed leatherwork, sculpture, pottery and porcelain. Until the 1940s, however, it was the European community in Bombay that largely dominated the Society's activities.

Under almost three centuries of British rule, with the exception of a few worthies in the field of art and architecture, there was little appreciation of ancient or contemporary Indian art. There were certainly innumerable patrons of miniature paintings and what were styled as 'Company drawings' but the works of talented Indian artists were by and large ignored. The art scenario in Bombay continued to remain in the doldrums.

It was only the fortuitous arrival in the city of several artists and art aficionados from Europe in the years prior to the outbreak of World War II that was eventually to have an enormous and enduring influence on the city's art scene. The first to arrive was Albert von Leyden, a Jewish gentleman from Germany, who had since his student days been an ardent Indophile, passionately fond of India and its art and culture. At the age of 18, he told his parents that he would like to work for a company in India and so he came to Bombay in 1922-23 to work with the photographic Company, Agfa.

A connoisseur as also a talented painter himself, Albert or Lolly as he was fondly known, recognised the relevance of modern art in the Indian context. He guided and encouraged the young artists he met in Bombay, subscribing from his own pocket to European art magazines to show them what western artists were currently doing. In time, he became a significant inspiration for budding young

Indian artists, selectively purchasing their canvases and in the process building up a fine collection — the pick of Indian contemporary painting. Rudi von Leyden came to visit his brother, Albert in 1938. He arrived for a six-month stay but eventually lived in the city for 35 years, working first as a cartoonist and illustrator and later in the advertising department of the Times of India. Following that, he worked as an art critic for both the Times of India and the Evening News of India.

Walter Langhammer, an artist and a teacher in the Academy of Art in Vienna, came to India in 1938 after Hitler annexed his country, Austria. He stayed on to eventually become a major collector of Indian art and also the art critic for the Times of India. Further progress and development in Bombay's art scenario came when Kekoo Gandhi, doyen in the contemporary art field, could not return to his studies in Cambridge University due to the outbreak of World War II. As a *via media*, he collaborated with a Belgian frame-maker, Van Dctmme, to set up Chemould Frames, a chemical moulding company, to manufacture frames. Walter Langhammer, who had quickly recognised the potential of Indian artists like Roza, Ara, Gaitonde, Husain and Raiba persuaded Kekoo into making frames with mouldings in his Princess Street shop for the canvases of gifted Indian artists. The Chemould Gallery now began

to exhibit and sell the works of Indian artists as part of their window display. Until then, the annual sale of the Bombay Art Society was the only contact between art lovers and artists — this now began to change with direct patronage. This venture unexpectedly coincided with the progress of the escalating art movement in Bombay, again, with the further arrival in Bombay of more art aficionados from Europe.

Emmanuel Schlesinger, a cartoonist and art collector from Vienna, too, sought refuge from Hitler's Europe in Bombay — the cosmopolitan city that welcomed all migrants. Schlesinger established the Indo-Pharma Company and lived in Bombay from the 1940s to the 1960s. He patronised and encouraged local Bombay artists and assembled a remarkable collection of paintings of struggling young artists like S H Roza, M F Husain, K H Ara, F N Souza and H A Gade. He was not only their patron, but also more importantly, a guide and friend, introducing them to modern trends in European art. The firm of Volkart Brothers, established in 1851 at Winterthur in Switzerland, and in Bombay as general merchants and commission agents (now Voltas), also began collecting Indian art. Many of the artists patronised by the European visitors were young graduates of the School of Art, who soon found a shared interest and a source of inspiration in these new patrons in the city.

In 1940, Kekoo Gandhi became the first Indian to be appointed Honorary Secretary of the Bombay Art Society. As interest in contemporary Indian art grew, the artists and art patrons in the city increasingly felt the dearth of a gallery where art could be exhibited throughout the year. This lacuna led to the formation of the Bombay Art Society Salon — later called the Artists' Centre in 1945 at premises in Ador House on Rampart Row. Soon thereafter, Mrs Walter Langhammer inaugurated artist M F Husain's first major exhibition in this small gallery.

In the years after Independence in 1947, painters, sculptors and photographers around the country began seeking a new identity and a potential direction for their collective talents. Two major artists' groups were formed in the city in the immediate post-Independence era. One was the 'Progressive Artists' Group', established by K H Ara, S K Bakre, H A Gade, M F Husain, S H Reza and F N Souza who were later joined by Bal Chhabda, V S Gaitonde, Krishen Khanna, ROM Kumar, Tyeb Mehta and Akbar Padamsee.

The second to be founded was the 'Bombay Group', which comprised Chavda, Gaitonde, Hazarnis, Hebbar and Baburao Sadwelkar. Although there were factions, with many artists opting not to join either Group, the atmosphere in art circles was however, conducive to the advancement of Indian contemporary art, with little or no politics involved. A joyful bonhomie evolved between the foreign visitors, Indian art collectors like Dr Homi Jehangir Bhabha and local Bombay artists just before Independence. This unique camaraderie endured well into the late 1940s and the 1950s. Every Sunday Rudi von Leyden, his brother Lolly and local artists such as Hebbar, Ara, Gaitonde, Husain and Roza

met at Walter Langhammer's residence, where his wife, the hostess, served coffee and delicious cookies to all her guests. The conversation invariably focussed on art. The artists also met at the Art Society Salon, Chetna and the Wayside Inn restaurant on Rampart Row, bemoaning the fact that that they all needed more gallery space to show their work.

Sir Cowasji Jehangir, the 2nd Baronet, was always a willing supporter of the artists' movement in the city. For many years he was the first Indian President of the Bombay Art Society and Chief Guest at its annual art exhibitions. Whenever members of the Bombay Art Society apprised him of shortfalls in their annual accounts, Sir Cowasji invariably came to their rescue, settling the Society's losses immediately. The celebrated nuclear physicist, Dr Homi Bhabha (1909-1966), later Director of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research and Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission of India, was also a noted art collector and a patron of music. Dr Bhabha, who encouraged modern painters by purchasing their works of art, was primarily responsible, together with Walter Langhammer, the von Leyden brothers and painter Krishna Hebbar in persuading Sir Cowasji to fund a city art gallery. The primary objective of setting up such a gallery was to provide facilities to artists from all parts of India and abroad, to exhibit their work and also for organising other art activities for the promotion of a national movement in contemporary visual arts.

It did not take much persuasion to convince Sir (mask Jehangir, who astutely recognised the urgent need of a public art gallery in the city in the post-Independence era. He took the proposal seriously and immediately made an offer of Rs 250,000 in 1946 to the Government of Bombay on condition that a suitable plot of land was provided to construct the Gallery building. Sir John Colville, Governor of Bombay from 1943-48, and his successor, Raja Sir Maharaj Singh both took a keen interest in the project. The latter and B G Kher, the then Chief Minister, were closely associated with it in its various stages of growth till it took final shape. After initial setbacks a plot of land was identified near the Cooperage moulán, where the Lady Ratan Tata Hospital now stands.

Very little progress, however, was made with the project with the coming of Independence in 1947. The Bombay Government formally accepted Sir Cowasji's offer only in February 1950 and the scheme of management of the gallery was evolved. It was finally decided that the Cooperage plot was too far out of the way, since it was not in the heart of Bombay! A suggestion was then put forward to house the Gallery in a part of the spacious Prince of Wales Museum compound. The Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Dewan Bahadur Krishnalal M Jhaveri, and other Members of the Museum including Karl Khandalavala, magnanimously agreed to this proposal on the condition that Government gave a recurring annual grant of Rs 3000 towards the maintenance of the building. An area was demarcated on the western edge of the Museum property on the former site of a pool, for the construction of the Gallery.

The architects appointed for the project were Durga Shankar Bajpai and G M Bhuta, a partner in the renowned firm of architects, Master, Sathe and Bhuta. MIT-trained Durga Shankar was the son of the distinguished diplomat, Sir Girija Shankar Bajpai, who was Governor of Bombay from 1952 to 1954 and a close friend of Sir Cowasji. Durga had stayed with Sir Cowasji's family for about six months during the Second World War. The firm of Master, Sathe and Bhuta was an obvious choice as they had designed many outstanding buildings in the city. Among their projects were Laxmi Building and Bombay Mutual Life Building on Sir Pherozeshah Mehta Road, the Indian Merchants' Chamber Building at Churchgate and the Bansa Palace and Mafatlal Park complex on Warden Road. Thus, the firm of Master, Sathe and Bhuta, together with the contracting company of Shapurji Pallonji were the team put in place to design and build this new art gallery for the city of Bombay.

The architects designed the new Gallery with RCC columns, beams, slabs and portal frames with steel trusses over the larger spans. The entrance had the first cantilevered portico in India — considered an architectural feat at that time. The interiors were equipped with two large halls an Auditorium Hall and an Exhibition Gallery, with a combined total of 3,400 square feet of floor area and approximately 550 running feet of hanging wall space. The Exhibition Gallery was planned for showcasing exhibitions of the visual arts whereas the main Hall was designed such that it could also be used for concerts and conferences. The hall and the gallery were designed to together accommodate over 1700 people and the acoustics and lighting arrangement, both natural and artificial, were carefully considered.

The plan of the Jehangir Art Gallery is a wonderful fusion of classical planning and space conception with the plasticity of modernism. The circular entrance lobby with the flanking wings housing the auditorium on the north and the gallery on the south are reminiscent of classical buildings sans the symmetry. Here the plan is infused with the fluidity of a modern gesture that is inspired and governed by the profile of the site and is acutely aware of the urban context the building is set in. Most importantly, the fact that the Gallery was built up to the street-line not only made it easy to access, but also gave definition to the corner on which it is located. This was a precursor for other buildings that were constructed in later years in the compound of the

Museum, where gradually an urban edge evolved along the boundary of the large green compound of the Museum, without compromising the dense greenery and open space within.

The building itself, at the time of its conception, was the epitome of architectural innovation. Some outstanding features were the use of diffused natural light, the reinforced concrete portal frame structural system (that allowed a column-free span for the Gallery) and the folded plate cantilevered porch at the entrance. The exterior walls of the building were faced with Malad stone, a gesture acknowledging the use of this stone in the buildings across the street. Also, the subtle articulation of the Malad stone cladding that allows a play of shadow and texture on the facade together with the

subtle composition of the overall scale and form of a gently curved corner site makes the Jehangir Art Gallery a unique building of its time.

The Chief Minister, B G Kher, laid the foundation stone on 22 March 1950 and Sir Cowasji personally supervised all details of the project and paid in full the final cost, which ultimately amounted to Rs 7,04,112. This expenditure was shown as a donation to the Trustees of the Museum, and hence the ownership of the building vested with them. The Government, the Trustees of the Museum and Sir Cowasji Jehangir signed a tripartite agreement on 25 July 1951 with the State Government agreeing to make a regular grant towards the upkeep of the Gallery building.

On 21 January 1952, The Chief Minister, Mr B G Kher formally inaugurated the Jehangir Art Gallery, dedicated to the memory of Sir Cowasji's late son, Jehangir. Among the distinguished gathering was B Narsing Rau, eminent jurist who was responsible for framing the Constitution of India and then Judge of the International Court of Justice with his brother B Rama Rau, Governor of the Reserve Bank of India. Mr Welinkar, Dean of the JJ School of Art, Mr Justice Gajendragadkar, Sir Jamsetji Jeejeebhoy and the Raja of Bhore were also present. Among established artists and critics gracing the occasion were the internationally renowned Russian painter, Nicholas Roerich and his wife, the legendary actress, Devika Rani and Professor Walter Langhammer.

In his speech, the Chief Minister advised artists, critics and art lover, not to enter into bitter and fruitless controversies, which, he said would only beget bitterness. Mr Kher stated that 'Criticism is meant to be a corrective and should have this worthy object. So long as critics evoke better appreciation of art and their criticism acts as an incentive to better efforts on the part of the artists, criticism is desirable and necessary'. Describing the Gallery as unique, not only in the city but in the State, the Chief Minister said he was not aware of the existence of another fine hall and gallery of these dimensions anywhere else in the country.

Paying glowing tributes to Sir Cowasji Jehangir for his and his family's munificence, Mr Kher unveiled a bust of the donor, the cost of which was contributed by artists, art lovers and friends of Sir Cowasji in token of appreciation of his services to the cause of art. He also unveiled a portrait by Langhammer of his son, Jehangir, after whom the Gallery was named. Mr Kher recalled the generous donations made in earlier decades by the family. He stated that by 'some unknown law of distribution and descent, the gifts of buildings, among other gifts of the noble donors of the same family have come up generation after generation in close proximity of one another in the Fort area'. Apart from the importance of the close proximity of an art gallery and a museum, he further said this was the reason why he readily consented to have the building in the premises of the Museum.

He highly commended the donor's proposal to keep the doors of the gallery open to poor artists. 'I understand that the donor is anxious to give full facilities of a thoroughly well-equipped gallery, particularly to poor artists who can present their shows in a bay of the Gallery for Rs 7 a day'. Welcoming the Chief Minister and other guests, Sir Cowasji Jehangir said that but for the keen and persevering interest taken by Mr Kher in the project, it would not have come to fruition and on such a prominent site. He congratulated the architects and the contractors for a fine building worthy of a great city. In concluding, he said that only a great city could provide the patronage without which art could not flourish. He was sure that Bombay would lead the way as the centre of art in the country. Thanking all those who helped him in the project, he hoped that the building would become a centre of cultural activities in the city. Mr V V Oak, Honorary Secretary of the Bombay Art Society and the Gallery, gave a resume of the efforts of artists and art lovers for 21 years to have an art gallery in the city. He said that in addition to the statue presented by them, the artists were now collecting a fund, from the interest of which an annual cash prize of Rs 500 would be given along with the Society's Gold Medal to the best exhibit. He disclosed that of a target of Rs 21,000 a sum of Rs 3000 had been collected.

An interesting aside occurred at the inauguration after a lady fainted in the overcrowded and hot Auditorium Hall. As the guests were departing, Kekoo Gandhi's wife, Khorshed, asked Sir Cowasji why he had not thought of air-conditioning the Gallery. Sir Cowasji was not amused. He pointed out that air-conditioning would probably have cost him as much as the entire expenditure incurred on building the Gallery! It was only four decades later that Khorshed Gadfly's suggestion became a reality.

Ten days later, on Thursday, 31 January 1952 the Governor of Bombay, Raja Maharaj Singh opened the inaugural exhibition at the Jehangir Art Gallery, the 61st Annual Exhibition of the Bombay Art Society. Sir Cowasji welcomed the Governor and told the large gathering that he had received news from Paris that two members of the Society, Akbar Padamsee and S H Raza had earned 'high reputation for themselves and for their country' at the art exhibition held in the French capital. He informed the audience that 1,550 pictures from about 500 artists were received for the inaugural annual exhibition at the Jehangir Art Gallery, against 1,300 works from 400 artists the previous year. 'Art must advance along with the times', he said, but I do hope it will advance in proper channels and that grotesque figures which represent nothing on earth and pictures which no one can understand will not be examples to be followed by our young artists'.

Inaugurating the exhibition, Raja Maharaj Singh thanked Sir Cowasji on behalf of the citizens of Bombay for his munificent donation, which enabled the Art Society to have its annual exhibition in such an imposing structure. He congratulated Mr Durga Shankar Bajpai, the architect, on his brilliant

work and paid tribute to the Jehangir family for their many charities. Raja Maharaj Singh gave away the prizes to the artists participating in the exhibition. The Society's

Gold Medal and the President, Sir Cowasji Jehangir's prize of Rs 1000 for the best work in the exhibition were awarded to Mr K H Ara, for his painting, 'Two Jugs'. Since then, innumerable renowned as well as promising young artists and sculptors from India and abroad have shown their work in the Gallery.

In 1963, the then Honorary Secretary, Soli Batlivala decided to raise funds for the cash-strapped Gallery by giving on a leave and license basis some of the unused spaces on the premises. On the ground floor, one area was rented to an antique shop, Natesan's, and another to the Rajbans family for running a restaurant called Samovar, which, in time, became a popular meeting place for visitors to the Gallery. The first floor of the Gallery was leased to Kekoo Gandhi for Gallery Chemould, a sponsoring art gallery where artists were spared the expense of hire charges, printing catalogues or holding receptions. Over the years this Gallery has promoted the work of established and budding artists with Kekoo Gandhi taking a keen personal interest. The Honorary Secretary simultaneously took the bizarre decision to rent out the gallery space for wedding receptions and other celebrations. This resulted not only in total chaos, with art lovers and wedding guests jostling to get to their respective venues in the Gallery, but also built up considerable resentment within the local community of artists. After several months of protest from this group, this facility was finally discontinued.

Despite the shortage of finances, the Committee finally took the decision to modernise the Gallery in 1987. The catalyst in this resolve was an international agency that proposed to exhibit an art show in India. However, the lack of security and air-conditioning in the Jehangir Art Gallery did not make this exhibition feasible. To carry out the renovations, it became imperative to raise the necessary funds. Ram Chatterjee, the Honorary Secretary, initially approached the Municipal Commissioner, Sharad Kale. It was fortuitous that during a visit to Stuttgart, Bombay's sister city, Sharad Kale met the Mayor, Manfred Rommel, son of Field Marshal Rommel and put forward the proposal for funding the renovations at the Gallery. The Mayor forthwith agreed that the City Council of Stuttgart would provide Rs 1,000,000 as a gesture of goodwill, amounting to one third of the estimated total cost. The only stipulation made was that the first show in the renovated gallery should be that of a German artist.

Additional donations came from a number of sponsors. These included the Tata Group of Companies, the A H Wadi^o Charity Trust, the Cowasji Jehangir Trust, Piroisha Godrej Foundation, Mr and Mrs Dilip De, the Municipal Corporation of Greater Bombay, the Great Eastern Shipping Company, M Pallonji & Company Pvt Ltd and Proctor & Gamble India. Since the funding was sufficient to renovate only one portion, the Committee decided to air-condition only the gallery.



Finally, in August 1990 the Bombay firm of architects, Rahul Mehrotra Associates, was appointed for the project, which was completed by November 1990. The Gallery was

renovated to include air-conditioning, humidity control, lighting and a security system to meet standards necessary to accommodate international travelling exhibitions. The main Gallery space of 40 x 9 metres was designed in such a way that it could be used either as a single gallery or be divided

(Karthiayani G Menon shows foreign visitors around the gallery)

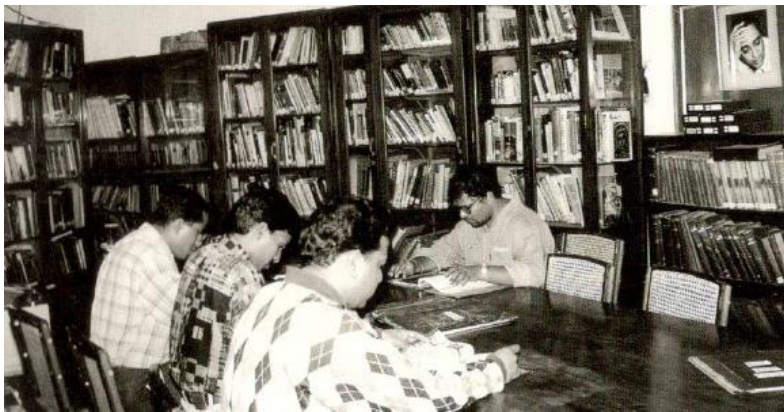
into three or four spaces to accommodate smaller exhibitions.

Here, the constraint was a single entry at one end since the Samovar restaurant occupied the entire verandah outside. In order to achieve the flexibility of partitioning the gallery, three sets of screens were installed, thus giving artists the option of renting anywhere between 70 square metres or 25 running metres of hanging space, to 330 square metres. The partitions were designed to rotate 360 degrees to enable a number of combinations of positions for display, as well as to consciously increase or decrease the levels of transparency within the gallery, simultaneously ensuring that the screens would not completely close off any area from the main entrance. The portal frames, which gave the space its profile were retained, as their rhythm helped define the individual bay serving as a module of space. The portals were also designed to support a space above the false ceiling to function as a service floor for electrical wiring and ducts. Of the 11 structural bays of the gallery, the last was used to house the 40-ton air-conditioning plant. The hanging space thus lost was compensated for by the additional surfaces that the partitions offered. Before the renovations, the portal frames had interrupted the wall surface. To modify this, the wall was thickened up to a height of 2.6 metres to create an uninterrupted surface. In addition, this allowed for the creation of a channel on top of the wall to accommodate up lights, plug points, security camera sockets and emergency lights. The new lighting system employed incandescent track lights, halogen lights as well as indirect tube lighting. All track lights were on dimmers so that the light quality could be modulated.

The inaugural exhibition of the renovated gallery was that of two German artists, organised with the German Consulate and Max Mueller Bhavan. The rental rates were raised to cover the extra costs, however, the Committee decided to keep the charges much lower than commercial rates to ensure that the intentions behind the setting up of the Gallery in 1952 would not be vitiated.

4. THE GALLERY TODAY AMENITIES & AMBITIONS

Since the 1990 renovations, the Managing Committee with its Secretary, Mrs Karthiayani Menon, has consolidated its many activities and evolved several strategies for the future. The Jehangir Art Gallery now has two halls with modern amenities, suitably equipped for exhibitions of the visual arts — the Auditorium and the Exhibition Gallery. The Auditorium Hall has about 2,700 square feet of floor area and hanging wall space of approximately 180 running feet. The Exhibition Gallery, with a floor area of about 3,700 square feet and hanging wall space of about 370 running feet is equipped with climate control and a security system. This Gallery is normally divided into three sections and can be hired fully or section-wise. A special Booking Committee consisting of senior artists and art critics, meets



(The Jehangir Art Gallery reference library)

twice a year to make allotment of the galleries.

The maintenance costs of the building and administrative expenses are met out of the rents earned from the galleries and from other spaces given on leave and license basis at a time when

the activities of the Gallery had not developed sufficiently to make full use of the total area. However, although the revenue earned by the Gallery has become inadequate to meet rising upkeep costs, the Managing Committee is reluctant to increase rents for the artists for it would vitiate the very purpose of the founding of the Gallery. Efforts are constantly underway to improve the financial situation by obtaining funding from outside sources together with some enhancement in Government grants. The Gallery has launched different projects to augment funds without diverging from its objectives.

The Gallery also generates some income from its Lending Library of original works of art. The genesis of this Library started with the collection of paintings donated by Sir Hirji Jehangir in 1975-76. To this, the Gallery has added a number of unsold paintings and sculptures that have been collected from artists who receive the amounts of rent or sale proceeds after a deduction of a small commission. The library gives original paintings and sculptures to its members on rental or on a hire purchase basis. Individuals as well as institutions can join the library as members and rental charges are fixed on the price of the work. The lending scheme is intended primarily for those who value original works of art but are unwilling or unable to invest large sums to acquire them.

A Sales Room of prints and publications was established some years ago within the Gallery, which aims at providing gallery-goers with art publications and reproductions of outstanding merit published by various renowned publishers. The entire stock of the sales room is taken on a sale and return basis from publishers who pay commission according to their individual terms.

Art Appreciation courses, aimed at strengthening rapport between the artists and the public, have been designed mainly for laymen who enjoy art. The Gallery has organised several programmes on Art Appreciation, Art History and Art Criticism, with a small fee charged to participants.

The Dr. Homi Bhabha Art Reference Library was started for reference and research on the visual arts. The library has a collection of rare and valuable books on art and also subscribes to leading international art journals. Normally available to members only, the library also allows casual readers on payment of nominal fees on a monthly basis.

The Gallery often sponsors an annual exhibition known as the Monsoon Art Show to showcase the works of artists of proven merit. A scheme of honouring senior artists of distinction through prestigious shows has also been initiated as a source of enjoyment or inspiration for art lovers and artists. A beginning was made with an exhibition entitled 'The Art of Hebbur since 1938'. In 1981 the Gallery sponsored an exhibition entitled 'Indian Painting Today', inaugurated by the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. In 1983 the Gallery sponsored an exhibition titled 'Indian Drawing Today', opened by the Governor of Maharashtra, Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma followed in 1989 by an exhibition, 'Creative Crafts of India', inaugurated by the Governor, Shri K Brahmananda Reddy. The Gallery also earns a nominal commission on the sale of exhibits from all these exhibitions and on books covering the artist's work.

As the area round the Gallery has gained greater significance as an Art District and other facilities are being established in the vicinity, the Jehangir Art Gallery will have to continually reinvent its services and amenities in response to contemporary needs. Today the Gallery faces a huge shortage of space for its own facilities and expansion plans — especially as it recognises that support facilities such as the shop or the lending library are also committed to the encouragement of art itself. How it juggles these aspirations within the constraints of space pressures is the challenge the Gallery faces for the future.



(Clockwise from top left: Mrs Indira Gandhi open a show in 1981 with Jehangir Nicholson at extreme left, a sculpture exhibition and the gallery before renovation)

5. THE KALA GHODA ART DISTRICT FUTURE ROLE OF THE GALLERY

Bombay, not surprisingly, has become the first city where citizens have got together to establish an Art District — Kala Ghoda. This is a vibrant locality in the Fort area, which itself was declared a Conservation Zone under the Heritage Regulations of 1995. This momentous event of establishing an Art District took place largely due to the tireless efforts of a few dedicated individuals, art aficionados, non-governmental organisations and local residents who worked in collaboration with Government authorities and have been supported by corporate funding to achieve their goals. The potential of the area was apparent: like many other international art districts the ‘Kola Ghoda’ area has long been a meeting place for artists, sculptors, photographers, musicians, writers, publishers, journalists and students. Over the decades, these groups have met to exchange news and views at the many cultural and educational institutions, art galleries, crafts centres, book and music shops and the numerous restaurants and cafeterias that dot the area.

Historically, the Kala Ghoda area informally evolved as a cultural node from the 1860s after the removal of the Fort ramparts when several institutions were built in the vicinity on newly laid out plots. Watson’s Esplanade Hotel (now Esplanade Mansion) was the first to be constructed in the late

1860s and it was here that cinema was introduced to India in 1896 with the historic screening of the Lunnier Brothers' Cinematographer. The David Sassoon Library, the University Library and Convocation Hall and Elphinstone College (both funded by the Cowasji Jehangir family) were also completed in the closing decades of the 19th century. In the early 20th century came the Prince of Wales Museum and the Royal Institute of Science anchored by the Cowasji Jehangir Hall (now the National Gallery of Modern Art) in the centre. In later decades, the K R Cama Oriental Institute, Hornbill House — headquarters of the Bombay Natural History Society, Jehangir Art Gallery and Max Mueller Bhavan Bombay were also built in the neighbourhood.

A critical mass of art galleries and cultural institutions was thus already in place. Additionally, there were also a number of restaurants, antique, book and music shops in the locality, south of which lay an entire belt of tourist hotels for the area to be fittingly and formally designated an Art District. When the Urban Design Research Institute (UDRI) measured the indoor gallery space within the area, it amounted to an astonishing 110,000 square feet, including the vast Prince of Wales Museum complex.

To catalyse the process of evolving an Art District, local residents, corporate houses and gallery owners formed a public trust, the Kale Ghoda Association in 1998. The intention was not only to promote the idea of an Art District, but also to organise sponsorship for the improvement and conservation of this heritage area, its buildings and street furniture. Plans were immediately set afoot to organise a physical upgrading of the area as well as to host an arts festival from 1 February to 15 February every year. In the course of the following months, funds were raised through membership drives and sponsorship from the corporate sector. The UDRI formulated a comprehensive improvement scheme for the entire area and its interstitial spaces as well as for individual buildings and a scheme for pedestrianising some streets in the area.

In the first year the Association supported the restoration of the Sassoon Library and parts of the Esplanade Mansion, in addition to formulating a conservation plan for Elphinstone College. Signage explaining details about the art district and plaques on listed heritage buildings depicting their history and architecture were also installed with corporate aid, as were a number of new stands for pavement art galleries.



(Roopak Kulkarni's Flute Recital enthral the audience during the 1999 Kala Ghoda Art Festival)

The first festival in 1999 was a celebration of 64 events; the second had 84. All events were open free of charge and included art, sculpture, pottery and photography exhibitions, street plays, film, dance and music shows, bookshops, open air cafeterias, crafts workshops, lectures,

nature trails and heritage walks, and proved popular with a large section of the city's population as well as with tourists.

The aesthetic use of public and semi-public spaces hitherto overlooked was an important achievement of the two artsfests. The lobby of the Army & Navy Building, for example, provided room for bookshops whereas that of the Sassoon Library displayed works of photographers and artists. Both these and other foyers like those of the National Gallery of Modern Art, Rhythm House and HSBC were used for art installations and performing arts concerts. The beautiful garden behind the Sassoon Library served as a wonderful area for a cafeteria and as a venue for musical concerts, puppet shows and play and poetry readings. The Jehangir Art Gallery Auditorium served as a venue for various debates and discussions on different forms of art. An open-air amphitheatre has now been planned and will be located at the end of the main road (K Dubash Marg) behind the Museum.



(M F Husain paints a "Kala Ghoda" on an immense canvas)

Perhaps the most interesting setting at both festivals was the parking lot opposite the Jehangir Art Gallery, where at weekends, film shows, and musical concerts were held. One evening in 1999, the enchanting strains of Roopak Kulkarni's flute delighted the audience_ In the year 2000, M F Husain painted a colossal black horse (kola Ghoda), which served as an amazing backdrop for the tabla wizard Zakir Hussain's extraordinary performance.

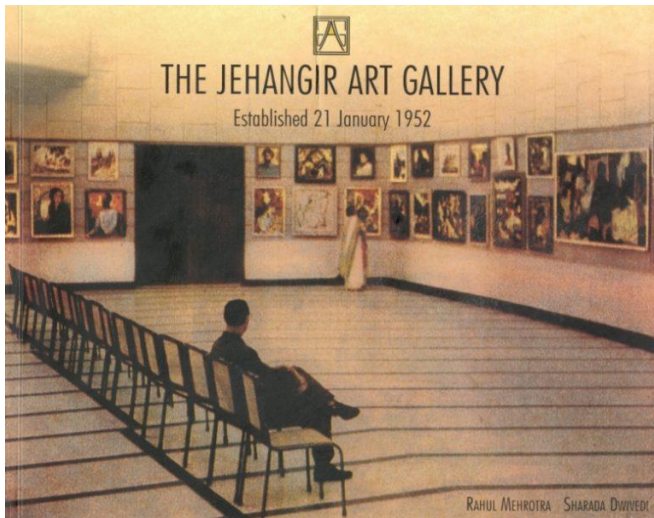
In this context of the larger emerging art district, the Jehangir Art Gallery has a crucial role to play in the coming years. Not

only is the Gallery situated at the geographical centre of the Art District but is also literally the hub for the activities in the District. In fact, the steps of the Gallery are probably one of the most popular rendezvous points in south Bombay, establishing and reinforcing the fact that both literally and metaphorically the Gallery is the Gateway to the Ari District.

Recognising this important role that it plays both at the level of the District as well as the city, the Jehangir Art Gallery plans to expand its present activities to establish a permanent gallery of contemporary art, a graphic studio and a ceramic kiln for the benefit of freelance artists. It also plans to set up a technical service cell for providing display and other services to gallery users. A library of slides as an adjunct to the art reference library with facilities for projection and duplication is also on board. The Gallery intends to start a programme of consultancy in the areas of conservation, preservation and restoration of the valuable works of art executed during different periods. All these projects should be of great value to artists, art critics and scholars in the city as also the country as well as enhancing the Kola Ghoda area as a node for art facilities.

Over the years the Jehangir Art Gallery has served as the hub of a significant amenity in the city — a depository of contemporary art. Since it was founded in 1952, the Institution has helped establish a platform and demand for the works of innumerable artists and an identity for their patrons. Most importantly, over the past five decades the Gallery has brought art free of charge to the common man. The Gallery is easily and unconditionally accessible to a wide spectrum of art lovers, regardless of their age, faith or social standing as also to the physically challenged, being one of the few institutions in the city that provides a wheelchair ramp for their needs. It has identified and established itself as a truly remarkable entity that has contributed immensely to the image and spirit of the city.

Reference



Photos and data taken from- *The Jehangir Art Gallery- Rahul Mehrotra & Sharada Devi*

Get your copy from our Art Store