

Join us for the finale of the second iteration of Avid Learning's Multipolis Mumbai Series which will examine the origins and evolution of Kitsch in the city

OR

Avid Learning presents a #MultipolisMumbai panel on the origins and evolution of Kitsch in the city

For Immediate Release

It's eye-catching, loud and over-the-top, garish and eclectic. The general stereotype of 'Kitsch' is one that makes use of low-brow or cheap and gaudy aesthetics. However, contemporary artists today interpret it in a tongue-in-cheek manner to express their ironic and humorous take on society.

While the term 'Kitsch', which originated in the art markets of Munich, is used to describe cheap, popular and easily marketable pictures and sketches; visual artists and entrepreneurs from Mumbai have incorporated elements of the city and its vibrant culture to imbue a local context and distinctiveness into the term. From rickshaws and cutting-chairs, to the clichéd nimbu-chilly and big-mouthed vada-pao; from the crowded and chaotic streets to suave interiors, wearable ensembles, merchandise, food and beyond, diverse elements of our dynamic city have been woven in as a trademark component of kitsch design in Mumbai.

The description of the discussion is as below:

National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai, Ministry of Culture, Government of India and **Avid Learning** present **Multipolis Mumbai: Kitsch and the City**, a panel discussion that will explore the origins, trajectories and adaptations of the Kitsch aesthetic and style in Mumbai from the perspectives of art, architecture, design and the culinary arts.

Join *Creative Director, Pavitra Rajaram Design, Brand Custodian, Sarmaya and Former Lead Designer, Good Earth* **Pavitra Rajaram**, *Co-Founder and Director at Bombay Vintage* **Pankil Shah** and *Co-Founder, Plan B and Founder, Tappu Ki Dukaan* **Sneha Raisoni** who will be in conversation with *Founder, Colours India & Freedom Tree Design* **Latika Khosla**.

This panel will trace the origins and evolution of Kitsch with respect to its growing presence in Mumbai, as well as, shed light on the ever-changing nuances and aspects of this aesthetic. They will discuss Kitsch from the perspectives of art, architecture, design and fashion, and examine how colour palettes, imagery and design elements contribute to Kitsch culture, thereby taking it beyond the visual arts to encompass culinary art, experiential art, music and cinema, leaving no sphere of popular culture in our city untouched.

Kitsch is not just art; its very existence proves that it is something beyond art. It cannot be governed by any subjective law of the domain of art and it is this aspect that has contributed to making the average taxi and truck the dynamic canvas that they have become. Art itself developed over the centuries as an avenue to give expression to our hidden rebellion, and now we have Kitsch, which is rebelling against art itself to break through the boundaries imposed on various forms of art. So imagine what freedom lies when you look at an ornate design, in its full glory of mindless excessive colouring, or illogical shape, stares back at you and proclaims its glorious existence.

Closer to home, even funny one-liners are considered a part of this movement. We all have a smile on our faces when we see a funny tag line at the back of a bus or taxi. Indian Kitsch derives its inspiration from calendars, cinema visuals and posters of gods and goddesses to name a few. It encompasses popular culture, social phenomena, cultural iconography and history, thereby becoming an inherent part of the artistic dialogue.

Artists and designers often use kitsch as a lens to give a modern look to nostalgic traditions. Raja Ravi Varma was indeed a pioneer, first giving realistic imagery to gods and goddesses, freeing them from the confines of temple statues, and then through his printing press, bringing them to the masses as oleographs, reproduced into calendar art and even made brand ambassadors in advertisements for soaps and oils.

Kitsch also presents itself in fantastic architectural expressions, phantasmic decorations and much else. We call it kitsch because that's how we have been conditioned to perceive it. But is it kitsch for people who inhabit it? Would anyone do anything that is "distasteful" and then proudly proclaim it? Unlikely, since what may appear as a gaudy exaggeration to one, can be a glorious celebration for the other. For most people kitschy items are not over-the-top; they are expressions of their feelings.

In the field of culinary arts and gastronomy, chefs and food entrepreneurs in the city are experimenting with Mumbai Kitsch by opening city-themed bars and restaurants which aim to exemplify the spirit of India's crowded and chaotic city of dreams. The interiors of these spaces are covered in city clichés – Be it larger than life Bollywood posters on the walls or funky and trendy city maps. The kitsch doesn't stop there – The cocktails have a Mumbai spin and the food menu includes city essentials reimaged and recreated with a contemporary or fusion twist.

Photo-shopped images of the Taj Mahal, the letters 'Horn Ok Please' in block fonts and the *baraat ghoda* – all in a bright and neon colour palette is the Kitsch that never lost its place in the contemporary visual aesthetic of our city. How have hand-painted kitschy interpretations of Bollywood posters become popular souvenirs for travellers? How have witty colloquial phrases and vintage photographs of Maharajas become hip? Is there synergy between the concept of 'camp' and Kitsch because of their ironic and humorous nature? How are kitschy colour palettes still trending in the Indian lifestyle and fashion markets? This panel will decode the various design elements and themes, inspirations and influences, styles and trends of Kitsch in Mumbai.

This talk will be part of AVID's **Multipolis Mumbai Series** that decodes the past while looking to the future and finding novel ways of engaging, interacting with and reenergizing the city that we love! The original nine-part series, which began in 2012, examined how Architecture, Music, Food, Theatre, Fashion, Environment, Literature, Innovation, and Film influenced and were influenced by the city. Our second iteration of this series, which began in 2017 attempts to renegotiate larger perspectives on the city, dig deeper and capture its essence and changing rhythms and nuances. In this second round we seek to plumb new depths and unearth more fascinating nuggets about our ever-surprising Mumbai! On our journey, we have explored how entities like businesses and brands, architects and illustrators, historians and designers, artists and poets, women writers and female theatre stalwarts have influenced our city. We have also explored how art technology and gaming, wildlife activism, philanthropy and maritime culture, alternative museums and urban subcultures, the Independence Movement, sporting and dance culture have all played a role in enriching Mumbai's cultural fabric. We've also held workshops that looked more closely at iconic Mumbai architecture (namely Art Deco, Indo-Saracenic and Victorian Gothic).

Join us for an exclusive and intriguing glance into the world of Kitsch in Mumbai!

WHERE: The National Gallery of Modern Art, Sir Cowasji Jahangir Public Hall, M. G. Road, Fort, Mumbai, 400032

WHEN: Wednesday, 20th November 2019 | 6:00 PM – 6:30 PM – Registrations | 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM – Discussion

RSVP: www.avidlearning.in/

PRESS EMAIL / CALL: Ayesah Dadachanji on ayeshah.avid@gmail.com / +91 9820155297

Mumbai

NATIONAL GALLERY OF MODERN ART

15 YEARS OF CELEBRATING THE INDIA

AVID LEARNING
An ESSAR Initiative

10

KITSCH & the City

National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai, Ministry of Culture, Government of India and Avid Learning present a panel discussion that will explore the origins, trajectories and adaptations of the Kitsch aesthetic and style in Mumbai from the perspectives of art, architecture, design and the culinary arts. *Creative Director, Pavitra Rajaram Design, Brand Custodian, Sarmaya and Former Lead Designer, Good Earth, Pavitra Rajaram, Co-Founder and Director, Bombay Vintage Pankil Shah and Co-founder, Plan B and Founder, Tappu Ki Dukaan. Sneha Raisonni* will be in conversation with *Founder, Colours India & Freedom Tree Design Latika Khosla*. This panel will trace the origins and evolution of Kitsch with respect to its growing presence in the city, as well as, shed light on the ever-changing nuances and aspects of this aesthetic while decoding the various design elements and themes, inspirations and influences, styles and trends of Kitsch in Mumbai.

DATE: Wednesday, 20th November 2019
TIME: 6:00 PM - 6:30 PM - Registrations
 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM - Discussion
VENUE: The National Gallery of Modern Art, Sir Cowasji Jahangir
 Public Hall, M. G. Road, Fort, Mumbai, 400032
RSVP: www.avidlearning.in (Prior registration required)

[@avidlearning](https://twitter.com/avidlearning) [/avidlearning](https://facebook.com/avidlearning) [@avidlearning](https://instagram.com/avidlearning) [/avidlearning](https://youtube.com/avidlearning)

About the Speakers

Pavitra Rajaram is the former lead designer, director of visual merchandising and head of content and creative strategy at Good Earth, India's iconic luxury lifestyle brand. As part of the founding creative team, she played a significant role in establishing the distinctive creative footprint of the brand. She is also the founder and creative director of Pavitra Rajaram Design, an award-winning interior design firm. A long-time believer in the power of design led thinking in brand strategy; Pavitra also advises India's leading paints and wallcoverings company Asian Paints on their décor strategy. Since 2017, Pavitra has been involved in setting up and managing a not for profit arts and culture archive called Sarmaya that focuses on experiences and programming both offline and online to engage younger audiences in the art of the Indian Subcontinent. Pavitra has been a recipient of the INTACH award for space restoration, the EDIDA award for product design, and is on the prestigious AD100 list of the 100 best architects/interior designers in South Asia. Pavitra has a degree received magna cum laude from Smith College, USA.

After completing her Chartered Accountancy, **Sneha Raisonni** spent five years working in Mergers and Acquisitions at a boutique investment bank. In December 2009, she founded Tappu Ki Dukaan, a one-stop quirky gift store, which was born out of the need for a fun and affordable shop followed by a lifestyle store cum café, Roti Kapda Makaan. In 2015, she co-founded a brand called Plan B (www.yougotplanb.com), which is India's first design

focused children's innerwear brand making comfortable and affordable underwear, boxers, vests and more with a USP of - What's On the Inside Counts.

Pankil Shah has been a part of the dynamic hospitality industry for over 12 years establishing brands such as Woodside Inn, The Pantry, Miss T and Bombay Vintage.

Pankil believes that each space needs to have its own identity as opposed to copy pasting interior designs. Interiors have been a strong brand extension for all of his brands, be it the warm and comforting interiors at Woodside Inn with visuals that pay homage to the neighborhood or the French inspired space at the Pantry Cafe that speaks for its philosophy as a charming Café. At Bombay Vintage, colourful and bright design details have been carefully put together to capture the vibrancy of the cultures that came together to create Bombay.

Latika Khosla is the Design Director of Freedom Tree Design, a colour and trend studio based in Mumbai, India. The studio undertakes colour consultancies and design assignments in India and Internationally. Latika is on the board of the Color Marketing Group USA. She is the founder-organizer of Colors India, a cross industry open sharing platform where designers meet and discuss trends for the Indian marketplace. She is also the founder director of 'Freedom Tree', a wholly-Indian, colour-led lifestyle brand taking baby steps! Latika is an alumnus of the National Institute of Design and has conducted trend workshops, in the far east, for middle eastern clients, in Europe and the US.

About Partners

The National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) Mumbai, Ministry of Culture, Government of India is a repository of the cultural ethos of the country and showcases the changing art forms through the passage of the last 160 years starting from about 1857 in the field of Visual and Plastic arts. The first NGMA was opened in New Delhi at the historic Jaipur House, in the presence of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and artists and art lovers on March 29, 1954. The National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai was opened to the public in 1996. It hosts various exhibitions and also has its own art collections comprising paintings, sculptures and graphics with a focus on Indian and International artists. It is located in the precinct of the former auditorium the Sir Cowasji Jehangir Public Hall and the Institute of Science. This architecturally marvellous building was designed and built by the famous British architect George Wittet which has been completely redesigned keeping only the facade edifice that was Public Hall. It has hosted eminent artists like, K.H. Ara, F. N. Souza, Gaitonde, S.H. Raza and M.F. Hussain and contemporary artists like, K.G. Subramanyam, Sudhir Patwardhan, Nalini Malini, Atul Dodiya and Sudarshan Shetty. The NGMA in Mumbai is run and administered as a subordinate office to the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, which has two branches one at Mumbai and the other at Bengaluru.

Avid Learning, a public programming platform and cultural arm of the Essar Group, has conducted over 1000 programs and connected with more than 125,000 individuals since its inception in 2009. Driven by the belief that Learning Never Stops, AVID's multiple formats like Workshops, Panel Discussions, Gallery Walkthroughs, and Festival Platforms create a dynamic and interactive atmosphere that stimulates intellectual and creative growth across the fields of Culture & Heritage, Literature, Art and Innovation.

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Avidlearning; Twitter: www.twitter.com/Avidlearning; Instagram: @avidlearning
