

A walkthrough of CSMVS' new Mumbai Gallery that pays tribute to Mumbaikars

Story by Devashish Kamble • 4d • 3 min read



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What makes a city? Its infrastructure, administrative boundaries, high population density and municipal governance? "Yes, but more importantly, its people," notes

Himanshi Kampani. The proof is in the aisles and booths of CSMVS' new Mumbai Gallery. Its first exhibition, People of Mumbai, opened to the public on October 14. Kampani, research and project coordinator, gives us a walkthrough of the space.

We begin with a permanent exhibition display in the orientation room. "We plan to keep this exhibition permanent because it summarises the history of Mumbai, right from the Stone Age," Kampani shares. Housed here are digitised maps of the city, from the 16th century Seven Islands of Bombay to the modern ages, ancient coins, IXth rock edict installed in the mid-third century by Emperor Ashoka Maurya, a small flight of stairs where people can sit and read books, and a mural by XXL Art Labs giving a glimpse into what to expect from the exhibition inside.

"We will change the exhibition inside annually. People of Mumbai is curated by Nandini Somaya Sampat. The idea was to open this gallery with what lies in the centre of the spirit of Mumbai — the people," Kampani shares. The exhibition is divided into three neon zones: Yellow zone for the city of opportunities, orange zone for the city of migrants, pink zone for the city of cosmopolitanism. Interestingly, each concept doesn't begin where the other ends.

Almost like a Venn diagram, the booths overlap with stories of the people — the first people of Mumbai, opportunity seekers, trailblazers and migrants alike — who continue to strengthen the foundation of the metropolis we know today. "Mumbai continues to welcome and accept people wholeheartedly. These booths reflect the same," Kampani signs off.

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At Mumbai gallery, 1st floor, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Fort.

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Cost Rs 150 (museum entry fee)

The guide's fave halts

1 Virar Fast by artist Valay Shende is installed at the start of the exhibition. Crafted from stainless steel discs, the installation is a unique take on urban commuting. The installation is placed between a landscape photograph of the city, which transitions from a chawl to a shoreline.

2 Another installation in the orange zone brings to life a pani puri cart. In the centre, a monitor plays documented videos of the making of the various chaats available on the streets of Mumbai.

3 Koli artist Parag Tandel's installation, How to cook 'Bombay Duck' in various ways, aims to memorialise the iconic Bombay duck fish, which is now disappearing from the city's waters. "Soon, we will add a recipe of how to cook Bombay duck to this installation," Kampani informs.

4 Patron flip panel in the yellow zone commemorates people who have contributed to the city's growth, including Ratan Tata, Cornelia Sorabji, Dinshaw Maneckji Petit and Sir David Sassoon. These panels can be flipped to learn about their life.

5 Itinerants Mumbai's nomads by Charmayne and David de Souza feature portraits of the nomads of the city who form an inseparable part of the city. This section in the orange zone also displays a borrowed chabuk.

6 The exhibition ends with artificial intelligence, a subject of curiosity and intimidation. AI artist Varun Gupta's artworks, Cyborgbay, blend the Bombay of the early 90s with a futuristic, techno-ascendant age.

7 Pink zone ranges from stories of mill workers, cotton production boom in the city, chawl residents to the undying Bollywood dream. An entire aisle in this section is dedicated to the trailblazing costume by designer Bhanu Athaiya. This alley displays some of her original costumes, including the iconic dress-saree worn by Mumtaz.