



Ahmedabad, January 30th 2017: In the midst of family and friends, the Kasturbhai Lalbhai Museum was inaugurated on the 29th of January 2017. Set amongst tall trees and lush gardens, the complex houses two buildings - an old colonial building, constructed in 1905 and a relatively later building designed by Claude Batley in the 1930s. The colonial building was home to the extended Lalbhai family till the time families grew large and members moved away finally leaving this complex unoccupied for almost two decades.

Deciding to restore and renovate the ancestral property, Jayshree and Sanjay Lalbhai decided to get renowned architect Rahul Mehrotra of RMA Associates to undertake the restoration of this complex. Keeping the integrity of the original buildings intact, Mr. Rahul Mehrotra restored the building to its past glory. The Lalbhais had decided to use the building to showcase the art and antiquities collection that their grandfather Kasturbhai Lalbhai had acquired in 1935. The collection, eclectic in nature, perfectly balances art with historical merit and personal favourites all the while retaining the essence of the family home. The paintings on view are from a range of traditions and styles, from the Persian, Mughal, Deccan, Pahari and Rajasthani schools, Tibetan Thangkas, Company School portraits, modernist paintings from the Bengal School, and painted postcards from pre-independent India. Art in stone, metal, wood and Bidri covers a span of more than a thousand years.

In the adjacent building, the Claude Batley house, space has been created to house temporary exhibitions, retrospectives of artists and display of works by young artists. Leaving the beauty of the older building untouched and unmarred, Mehrotra, has constructed a unique and distinctive glass gallery, to create extra display space.

The complex also has a small amphitheatre with a seating capacity of 250 that can host small performances, musical soirees, talks and discourses. Thus with different and changing events being planned through the year, we hope to create a dynamic and vibrant atmosphere to draw people for a cultural treat.

Speaking on the occasion, Mrs. Jayshree Lalbhai said, “The museum is a loving tribute to Shri Kasturbhai Lalbhai. For us preserving the house and showcasing Dadaji’s collection were uppermost in our minds and today both Sanjay and I are very happy at the way it has turned out. The collection displayed here is modest in size but it has allowed us to showcase some wonderful specimens of our traditional art while still maintaining the essence of a home. Creating a space for changing exhibitions and a space for performances, lectures, musical events, will ensure that the people of Ahmedabad will come to the complex again and again for newer cultural treats.”

When the museum throws open its doors to the public on the 16th of February we plan to have two guided tours - one in the morning and one in the evening. We are trying to enlist young college students to conduct these tours. Bringing Art within the purview of all is what we want to do.

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