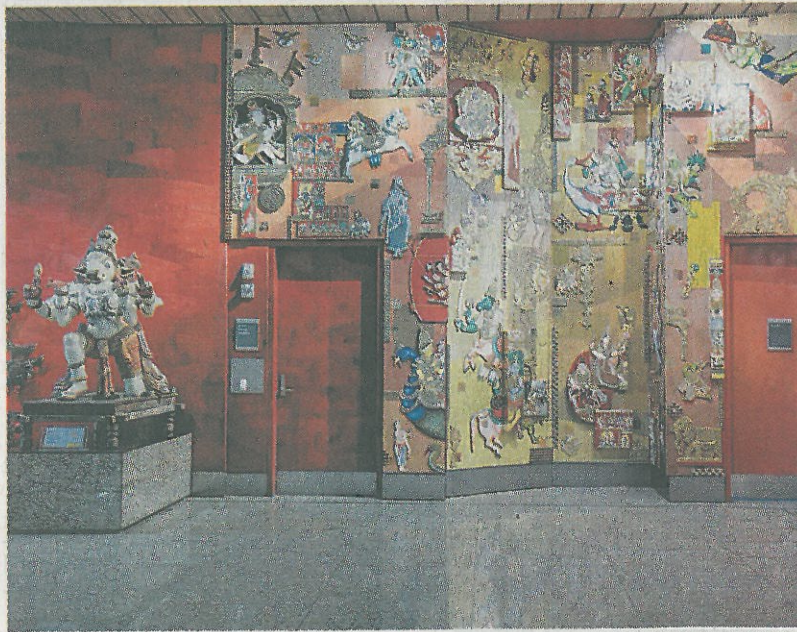


Did you catch the art show at Terminal 2?



ATUL LOKE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

“Moving Constant,” a gilded depiction of gods and goddesses by N. Ramachandran and V. Anamika, is the most popular piece at the Mumbai airport’s museum.

MUMBAI, INDIA

Passengers in a hurry at Mumbai’s airport often overlook its huge museum

BY VINDU GOEL

You could easily pass through the most sprawling art museum in India without realizing you had even been there.

Scattered throughout the four levels of Terminal 2 of Mumbai’s international airport are more than 5,500 pieces of Indian art and handicrafts, including tribal totem poles and a 3-D map of Mumbai built from recycled chips and circuit boards. Together they make up the Jaya He, GVK New Museum.

The X-shaped, ultramodern terminal handles all international and many domestic flights for the country’s commercial hub. So it is foremost a working airport, and the 50 million people who come through every year are there for

one primary purpose: to get to and from their airplanes.

“There is anxiety built in,” said Rekha Nair, who oversees the museum and customer experience at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport. “People think, I just want to get to the gate.”

As a result, the art is spread through the hallways, baggage carousels and check-in counters so as to avoid disrupting the movement of passengers and the nearly 30,000 people who work at the airport. Angelic figures perch above the elevators. Treelike sculptures stand sentinel over the luggage belts. A mural accompanies passengers up the escalator after they step off the arrivals bus.

The most prominent installation is “India Greets,” a 60-foot-high display that wraps around the center of the terminal. It starts with real doorways and balconies from around India mounted to the wall, then progresses horizontally to a series of portraits by Andrew Logan, Robyn Beeche and Anjolie Menon as passengers walk toward the gates. Once **AIRPORT, PAGE 2**

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an hour, a life-size white peacock slides along a wire in front of the works.

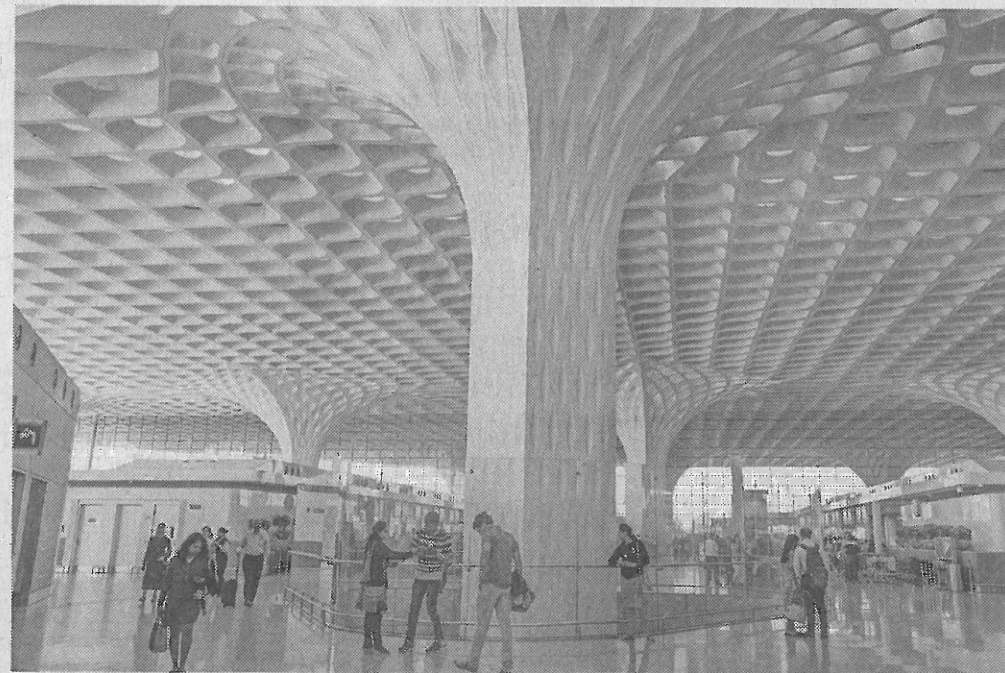
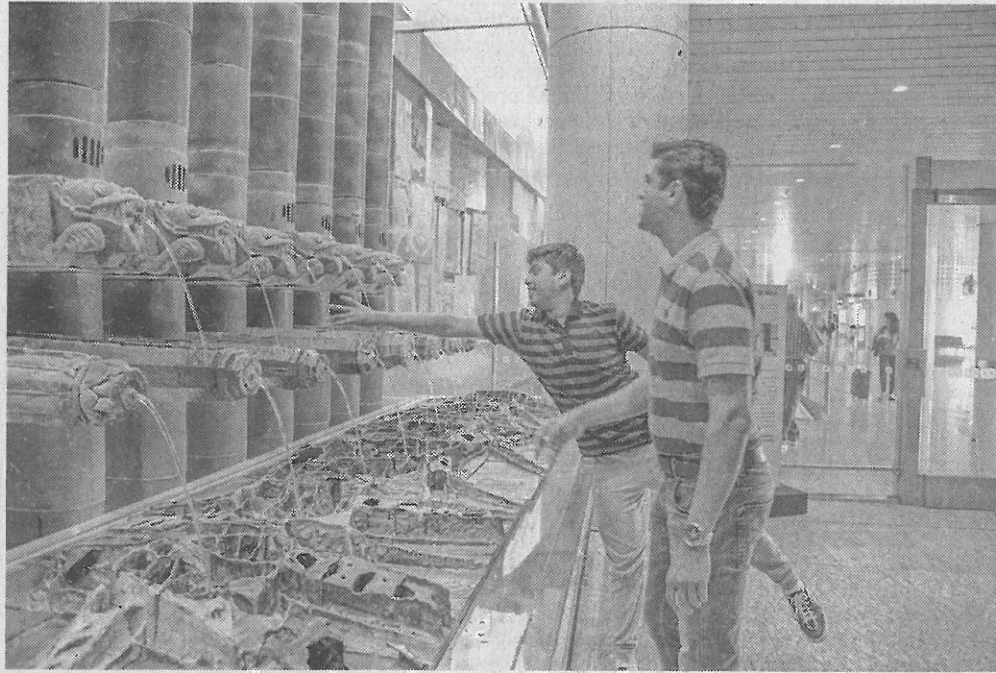
But on a recent weekday, few people seemed to notice the doors or the flying peacock, which were across from a bookstore and a lounge for premium passengers.

Among those who lingered were three tourists from Britain. "It's the most beautiful art I have ever seen in an airport," said Judith Wolfram, who had lived in India for seven years as a young woman and had returned for a two-week visit with her daughter and daughter's boyfriend. Ms. Wolfram was so impressed by the airport's all-India art collection that when their flight was delayed, she decided to give the younger generation a quick tour of Indian art history.

Sanjay Reddy, the vice chairman of GVK, the family-led conglomerate that built the terminal and museum and has managed them since they opened five years ago, said he knew it would be a challenge to create an art museum in a place where people are always in transit. But he said he had wanted to do it anyway to introduce the country's artistic heritage to Indians.

"Even if we are able to catch one out of 100 people, we have done our job," said Mr. Reddy, who hired the Delhi artist Rajeev Sethi to select and arrange the works. "A lot of this is subconscious. When you go through any place, it becomes a part of you."

Indeed, art and architecture go together in the terminal, which has 4.7 million square feet of built-up space, more than double the footprint of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The airport's check-in hall, for example, is covered by a giant canopy in the shape of a peacock's tail, with skylights to let in natural light and nooks where pas-



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ATUL LOKE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Left, "Water," an installation at the airport; and right, a view of Terminal 2, which includes four levels of artwork in a space that is double that of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

sengers can sit before going through security.

Mukeeta Jhaveri, who lives in Mumbai and advises companies and private collectors on art purchases and cultural philanthropy, said that the airport's collection stood out among both India's museums and other public art installations at airports around the world.

"It's a heady and kitschy mix of the contemporary, folk, antiquity, tribal, crafts, you name it," she said. "Even when I am rushing through the corridors, there is such a wonderful sense of both discovery and also that of meeting familiar friends."

About 25 percent of the passengers who pass through the airport are blue-collar workers traveling to and from jobs in the Middle East, and the museum very deliberately sought to include Indian crafts along with contemporary fine art.

More than 75 women from the slums near the airport, for example, were enlisted to make a giant, colorful Godhadi quilt, Mr. Reddy said.

The earthiest work is undoubtedly "Fortress of Clay," Mr. Sethi's homage to rural India. It features animal and human figurines made of mud and cow dung, which is still used as fuel, con-

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struction material and even as insect repellent in the countryside. Airport staff members periodically reapply the fecal mixture to keep the figures looking fresh.

Ashok Kumar, a Mumbai bank manager who is originally from the farm state of Bihar, said that he would always take a moment to look at the exhibit on the way to his gate. "It's the most familiar to me," he said. "It's down to earth."

By far the most popular piece, according to museum officials, is "Moving Constant," a gilded depiction of Indian gods and goddesses by N. Ramachandran and V. Anamika that nods to the traditional Tanjore style of painting.

Domestic passengers frequently stop to take selfies in front of the floor-to-ceiling artwork, while airport workers slip through a door in the corner to visit the employee restrooms.

Although a great deal of effort went into putting together the museum, far less has been put into helping the public enjoy it. Upon passing through security, travelers are hit with shops and restau-

rants, with little indication of the art that is deeper inside the terminal.

Free tours for passengers can be arranged online, although the "art safaris," which last 15 to 45 minutes, need to be booked at least two days in advance.

School groups can also make special arrangements to get through security and see the collection on the domestic level of the terminal.

"I wish the airport management could find ways to engage the traffic more," Ms. Jhaveri, the art adviser, said. "It breaks my heart to see people rushing by without stopping."