

DISCOVERING OUR WORLD

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JANUARY 2024

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DESTINATION | Sundarbans, West Bengal



Image Credit: © Soumyajit Nandy, CC BY-SA 4.0

The Sundarbans, situated in the southern part of the state of West Bengal, India, is a vast delta region formed by the confluence of the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna rivers. The Sundarban Reserve Forest (SRF) of Bangladesh, is the largest mangrove forest in the world. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is renowned for its unique and fragile ecosystem, characterized by a complex network of tidal waterways, mudflats, and small islands covered with these mangroves.

The name "Sundarbans" translates to "beautiful forest," and indeed, it is home to a rich biodiversity, including the famous, Bengal Tiger. The forest is also native to the spotted deer, crocodiles, and various species of birds and fish. The mangrove trees, particularly the sundari (*Heritiera fomes*), dominate the landscape and play a crucial role in stabilizing the coastline, protecting against erosion and storm surges.

The Sundarbans also hold cultural significance, as they are intertwined with myths, folklore, and the traditional lifestyle of the local communities. The delicate balance of nature in the Sundarbans faces numerous challenges, including climate change, habitat loss, and human-wildlife conflicts, making conservation efforts vital for the preservation of this extraordinary natural treasure.

ANIMATION | Fred Quimby

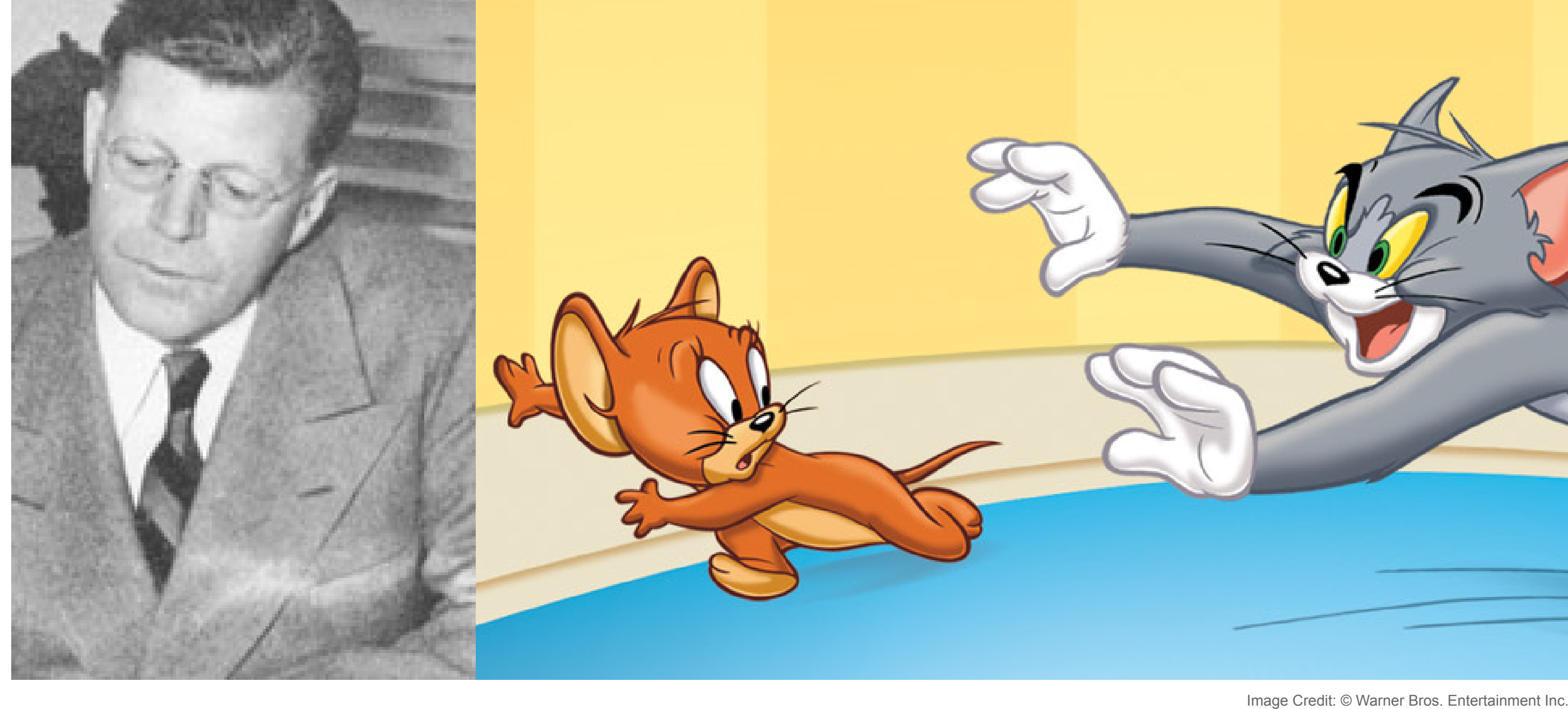


Image Credit: © Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc.

Fred Quimby was an influential figure in the world of animation, best known for his pivotal role as the producer of the iconic "Tom and Jerry" cartoon series. Born on July 31, 1886, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Quimby started his career in the film industry and eventually joined Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) in the 1930s. At MGM, he became the head of the animation department and played a crucial role in bringing the mischievous cat-and-mouse duo, Tom and Jerry, to life. Quimby's collaboration with animators William Hanna and Joseph Barbera resulted in the creation of one of the most beloved and enduring cartoon franchises in history.

Under his guidance, "Tom and Jerry" won seven Academy Awards for Best Animated Short Film. Fred Quimby's contributions to the animation industry, particularly his work with Hanna and Barbera, have left an indelible mark on the hearts of generations of viewers who continue to enjoy the timeless antics of Tom and Jerry.

Fred Quimby passed away on September 16, 1965, but his legacy lives on through the enduring popularity of the animated classic he helped bring to the screen.

DESIGN | Andrea Branzi



Image Credit: © Poltronova

Andrea Branzi, born on February 30, 1938, in Florence, Italy, is a highly regarded designer whose innovative work has significantly impacted the design world. With a career spanning several decades, Branzi has made substantial contributions to various design disciplines, including furniture, industrial design, and urban planning.

He is known for his ability to blend artistic creativity with a deep understanding of cultural and societal contexts. Branzi was a co-founder of the radical design group Archizoom Associati in the 1960s, where he played a pivotal role in challenging traditional design norms and promoting experimental, avant-garde concepts. His design approach often incorporates a sense of irony and a critical examination of contemporary issues. Andrea Branzi's creations, whether furniture pieces or conceptual designs, reflect a commitment to pushing boundaries and exploring new possibilities within the realm of design, making him a key figure in the evolution of modern design aesthetics.

Some of Andrea Branzi's notable furniture designs include the Superonda sofa (1966), the Mies chair (1968), and the modular Safari sofa (1968). These pieces were created with the intention of challenging conventional notions of how we use and interact with furniture.

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<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sundarbans>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fred_Quimby
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrea_Branzi

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DESTINATION | Dakar, Senegal

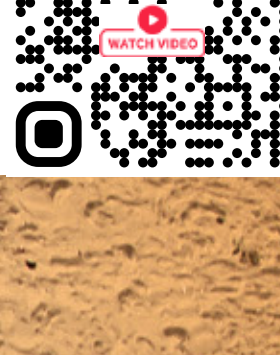


Image Credit: © Jeff Attaway from Abuja, Nigeria, CC BY 2.0

Dakar, the vibrant capital of Senegal, beckons travelers with a rich blend of history, culture, and modernity. Nestled along the Cape Verde Peninsula on the Atlantic coast, Dakar offers a unique fusion of traditional Senegalese charm and a cosmopolitan atmosphere. The city is renowned for its colorful markets, such as the bustling Sandaga Market, where visitors can immerse themselves in the lively local trade, filled with vibrant fabrics, spices, and handicrafts. The historical Gorée Island, a UNESCO World Heritage Site just off the coast, bears witness to the painful legacy of the transatlantic slave trade, offering a poignant and educational experience for those exploring Senegal's past.

Dakar is also a cultural hub, hosting the renowned Dakar Biennale, an international arts festival that attracts artists and art enthusiasts from around the globe. Visitors can explore the Dakar Grand Mosque, a symbol of Islamic architecture, or take a stroll through Independence Square, surrounded by colonial-era buildings. For nature enthusiasts, the impressive Dakar Monument and the scenic Mamelles Lighthouse provide panoramic views of the city and the Atlantic Ocean. With its warm hospitality, diverse cuisine, and a vibrant music scene, Dakar stands as a captivating destination for those seeking a unique African experience.

DESIGN | Aston Martin .1R Bicycle



Image Credit: © J.Laverack Bicycles

The J.LAVERACK ASTON MARTIN .1R is the world's most bespoke, most advanced and most meticulously engineered road bike. It's frame was conceived in the same studios as Aston Martin's cars. The hand-built frame of the .1R is a flawless fusion of titanium and carbon fibre tubes, using manufacturing techniques more commonly seen in Formula One cars. The .1R is finished in the same herringbone-patterned carbon fibre as the Aston Martin Valkyrie, giving its sculpted tubes mesmerising symmetry.

It takes over one thousand hours to create each .1R bicycle, including a staggering 515 hours of CNC machine time to create this high precision engineering masterpiece.

"The J. Laverack Aston Martin .1R is essentially a titanium hypercar on two wheels, elevating bespoke bike design to unprecedented heights and re-writing the rule book of their development and customization. The simple, clever genius is how we've fused the engineering advancements throughout the bike with a purity of performance design, delivering a viscerally exhilarating riding experience." - Marek Reichman, Aston Martin Chief Creative Officer.

PHOTOGRAPHY | Girls in the Windows



Image Credit: © Ormond Gigli

Girls in the Windows is a 1960 photograph by Ormond Gigli, a freelance photographer aged 35 at the time, who went on to be a celebrated American photojournalist with a career spanning over forty years. He has worked for the world's leading magazines including TIME, LIFE, PARIS MATCH, COLLIERS and other international publications.

The photo depicts 41 colourfully dressed women standing in the windows of a brownstone building on East 58th Street on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, and two other women on the sidewalk near a Rolls-Royce car. It has been estimated to be the most commercially valuable photograph and one of the most collected, on account of the great number of signed copies that have been sold at auctions.

Gigli created the image on his own initiative. He wanted to preserve the memory of the distinctive brownstone houses across from his home studio that were slated for demolition. Just days before this was to happen, Gigli arranged for 40 models from an agency. They were paid \$1 each (equivalent to \$10 in 2024) for the entire shoot, and told to bring their own dresses and arrange their own hair and make-up. To these, he added two more women: his wife, Sue Ellen Gigli (in the second row, far right), and the wife of the demolition supervisor who allowed Gigli to use the building in exchange for including her (on the third floor, third from the left). Shouting through a bullhorn, Gigli arranged the women from his studio across the street, telling them to "pose as if they were giving someone a kiss".

The photograph did not become commercially available until 1994, when Sue Ellen Gigli offered it to a gallery. Since then, more than 160 signed prints have been sold at auction at a total price of around \$12 million.

Auction house experts have estimated it to be the most-collected and highest-grossing photograph of all time. Unlike most other fine art photographs, of which few reproductions are sold in order to create scarcity, Ormond Gigli made and signed dozen of prints of the photograph in each of 12 sizes. About 100 remain to be sold as of 2023, according to Gigli's son and estate manager.

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MARCH 2024

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DESTINATION | Parule, Maharashtra

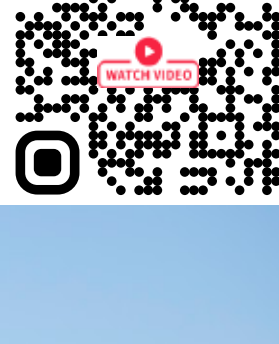


Image: Adobe Stock

Parule, nestled in the verdant landscapes of Maharashtra, India, is a hidden gem waiting to be discovered by those who yearn for a blend of serenity, culture, and natural beauty. This quaint village, located in the Sindhudurg district, offers an authentic glimpse into the rural life of the Konkan region, away from the hustle and bustle of city life. Tourists are drawn to Parule for its untouched beaches, historical temples, and lush greenery, making it an ideal destination for those seeking peace and relaxation amidst nature. The village is surrounded by coconut and betel nut trees, and the air is filled with the aroma of spices, as Parule is also known for its spice farms where visitors can learn about the traditional methods of spice cultivation and processing.

Exploring Parule provides a unique opportunity to immerse oneself in the local culture and lifestyle. The Bhogwe Beach, with its pristine sands and clear waters, offers a tranquil escape, while the Nivati Fort, perched atop a hill, presents a panoramic view of the Arabian Sea. Ancient temples like the Shree Devi Sateri Temple and the Shree Dev Rameshwar Temple, showcase the exquisite architecture of the region. Visitors can enjoy traditional Konkani cuisine, known for its distinctive flavors and seafood delicacies. Parule's warm hospitality, coupled with its scenic beauty and cultural richness, makes it a must-visit destination in Maharashtra's coastal region.

DESIGN | Martin Brudnizki



Image Credit: © Oli Kearon

Martin Brudnizki is a renowned Swedish interior designer and product designer, based in both London and New York. He is the founder of Martin Brudnizki Design Studio (MBDS), which has left a significant mark on the global design landscape. Brudnizki has cultivated a sophisticated and distinctive style that seamlessly blends European elegance with a modern sensibility. His work spans a wide range of projects, including luxurious hotels, restaurants, private clubs, and residential developments. Brudnizki has the ability to create spaces that are both visually stunning and deeply comfortable, earning him a prestigious reputation in the design world. His projects feature rich textures, eclectic furnishings, and a keen eye for historical details, all of which come together to create immersive and memorable environments.

Throughout his career, Martin Brudnizki has been involved in the design of some of the world's most celebrated spaces. His portfolio includes the iconic Annabel's in London, The Surf Club in Miami, and Soho Beach House in Miami, among others. Each project showcases Brudnizki's ability to adapt his vision to the unique character and history of the space, while also pushing the boundaries of traditional design. His work is characterized by a vibrant mix of colors, patterns, and materials, which together create a signature aesthetic that is both opulent and inviting. Beyond his design practice, Brudnizki has also launched And Objects, a product design studio, further extending his influence into the realm of furniture and lighting design. Through his contributions to the field, Martin Brudnizki has become a symbol of excellence in contemporary interior design, celebrated for his innovative approach and the enduring beauty of his creations.

ARCHITECTURE | The Invisible House, Joshua Tree, California

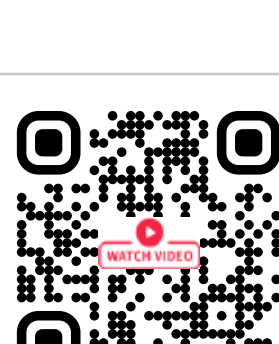


Image Credit: © Brian Ashby

The Invisible House in Joshua Tree, California, stands as a striking testament to innovative architectural design, harmoniously blending with its desert surroundings. This remarkable structure, designed by film producer Chris Hanley and architect Tomas Osinski, is a 5,500-square-foot, three-bedroom house that resembles a skyscraper laid on its side. Its exterior is clad in mirrored glass, reflecting the vast desert landscape and sky, which renders the building almost invisible at certain times of the day. This mirroring effect not only minimizes the visual impact on the natural environment but also plays with the perception of space and existence, making the house blend seamlessly with its surroundings.

Inside, the Invisible House features a minimalist yet luxurious interior, with a 100-foot indoor swimming pool that runs down the center, acting as a striking visual axis and a practical cooling element. The interior design is characterized by clean lines and modern aesthetics, emphasizing simplicity and integration with the natural beauty outside. Floor-to-ceiling windows offer unobstructed views of the surrounding desert, including the iconic Joshua trees and rugged mountains, further blurring the lines between indoor and outdoor spaces. The house not only offers a unique living experience but also serves as a reflective canvas, capturing the changing moods and colors of the desert landscape, making it a masterpiece of contemporary architecture and environmental integration.

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DESTINATION | Mallorca, Spain



Image: Adobe Stock

Mallorca, the crown jewel of Spain's Balearic Islands, is a destination that mesmerizes travelers with its stunning blend of natural beauty and cultural richness. The island is renowned for its diverse landscapes, ranging from the rugged Serra de Tramuntana mountains to the tranquil turquoise waters of hidden coves and expansive sandy beaches.

Mallorca's climate, with over 300 days of sunshine a year, makes it an ideal spot for outdoor enthusiasts. Whether it's hiking, cycling, or simply lounging on the beach, there's an activity for every type of traveler. The island's capital, Palma, is a vibrant city with a bustling marina, Gothic cathedrals, and a historic old town filled with charming lanes and excellent dining options, offering a perfect mix of leisure and exploration.

Beyond its natural allure, Mallorca boasts a rich cultural heritage that reflects a blend of Moorish, Roman, and Spanish influences. The island is dotted with picturesque villages like Valldemossa and Deià, where visitors can immerse themselves in the local way of life, taste traditional Mallorcan cuisine, and explore ancient monasteries and art galleries. The island preserves its traditions through its vibrant festivals and markets showcasing a lovely mix of flavors, colours and sounds.

COFFEE TABLE BOOK | East End Pubs



Image Credit: © Hoxton Mini Press

"East End Pubs" is a captivating photo book that takes readers on a visual journey through some of the most iconic public houses in East London. Crafted by photographer Tim George and Alistair Von Lion, known as the 'London Pub Explorer', this book celebrates the distinct character and enduring charm of over sixty classic East End pubs.

Tim George's photography captures the essence of these pubs, many of which act as time capsules of London life, reflecting histories that span decades and even centuries. The interiors of these pubs, often managed by independent owners referred to affectionately as 'guv'nors', are a focal point, showcasing the unique architecture and the community life that thrives within their walls. The book also delves into the rich social tapestry of the pubs' landladies and lords, their stories adding a personal dimension to the visual exploration.

Alistair Von Lion, with his deep connections to the pub owners, provided invaluable access for George to photograph these locales, often during quieter times to highlight their architectural beauty without the bustle of patrons. From a technical standpoint, George utilized a full-frame mirrorless Canon camera and a range of lenses to adeptly capture the ambiance of these spaces, often dark and intimate, in stunning detail. This 256-page hardback book is a testament to the East End's pub culture and a call to support these local institutions facing the pressures of economic change. With its carbon-neutral commitment, the book offers a heartfelt tribute to a vanishing world and stands as a reminder of the community hubs that have long been a vital part of London's cultural history.

ARCHITECTURE | Hampi Art Labs, India

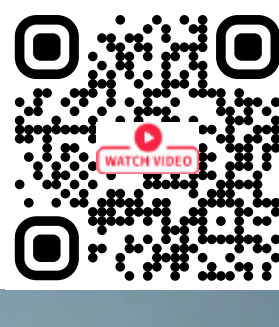


Image Credit: © Hampi Art Labs

Hampi Art Labs, inaugurated in February 2024, is a pioneering arts center located near the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Hampi in Karnataka, South India. The center is a sprawling nine-acre complex offering state-of-the-art production facilities, residency apartments, studios, gardens, and a café, designed to foster contemporary art-making and display. It is characterized by its interdisciplinary foundation, drawing inspiration from the rich historical context of Hampi, which thrived as a nexus of art, architecture, and learning from the 14th to the 16th centuries. This location is strategically chosen for its natural beauty and cultural significance, aiming to be a hub where art, heritage, and nature intertwine.

The architectural design of Hampi Art Labs, conceived by renowned Mumbai-based architect Sameep Padora, pays homage to the surrounding landscape through organic forms and the use of local materials such as soil, stone, and steel. It includes facilities for various artistic practices like printmaking, stone and metal sculpture, ceramics, and new media. The proximity to JSW Vijayanagar, India's largest single-scale and specialized equipment. With a vision to create cultural links across the Global South, Hampi Art Labs aims to engage both the local community and international visitors through residencies, workshops, and exhibitions, thus contributing significantly to the cultural and artistic landscape of South Asia.

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