



PALLAVI PUNDIR

IF WE twist popular culture and put an automotive enthusiast of today into Marty McFly's time-travelling car (from Steven Spielberg's *Back to the Future* series), he/she would not have to make too many pit stops across centuries to see vintage mean machines. In India, such a stop is in Manesar, at the Heritage Transport Museum, a time capsule on wheels, literally. A "first in India", the museum is an auto lover's paradise—a comprehensive study of not only cars but almost everything associated with wheels.

The building is designed by Gurgaon-based Jyoti Rath Associates. Its three floors of industrial-grey interiors are reminiscent of a defunct factory, dotted with as many as 100 modes of transport from across generations. "Today, unfortunately, Indian museums don't give a modern experience. Museums need to change with time and its role is to excite the curiosity," says Tarun Thakral, the brainchild behind the museum, founder-member of Heritage Transport Trust (a non-profit trust), and COO of Le Meridian. Inspired by museum models such as the London Transport Museum, the St Petersburg's Museum of Electrical Transport and the Smithsonian Museum, the Heritage Transport Museum's 2,500 artefacts have been collected over two decades from across the country. An example is the Jodhpur Saloon, an 80-year-old metre gauge coach that was built for Palace on Wheels. Discarded by the Indian Railways, Thakral bought it for his home. Today, it stands at the museum's ground floor.

The museum first hits the historical nerve—black-and-white era of wooden wheels, carts and palanquins, lithographs and original vintage postcards among others. But before it gets too familiar, the second floor transforms into a ramp for kitsch and popular culture—cycles and auto rickshaws done up in colourful patterns, old-school scooters and trams—many of which evoked a nostalgic, "Yaad hai, ye hamare zamane me chalte the". Understated Vespas, Lambys and Salsburys indicate simpler times.

It's the basement that has the true enthusiast swooning. Thakral has created a nostalgic paraphernalia—kitschy mock-shops that display lanterns, equipments and spare parts; Bollywood posters (think *The Burning Train* or *Bombay to Goa*); or a mock petrol pump surrounded by enamel signboards, a throwback on advertising of the '20s to '60s. Amid these stand Fords, Renaults, Ambassadors, Chevrolets, Pontiacs and



Time on Wheels

The Heritage Transport Museum in Manesar drives us to contemporise the way we look at history

(From top left) Truck art graffiti; an exhibit from the two-wheeler gallery; Tarun Thakral; an enamel signboard; a vintage car; the Jodhpur Saloon

with extravagant colours and designs of truck art. Delhi-based graphic designer Hanif Kureshi of Hand-painted Type brings his fonts and more typographic works from his project. Other artist contributions come from Gigi Scaria (with a video *Prisms of Perception*), and George Martin, who has come with an auto outlined in pink fur.

The last leg of the museum is aviation, ending with an inconspicuous 4x6 inch Indian flag. Calling it the most challenging acquisition, Thakral says, "This flag was one of the UN flags that had gone to the moon on Apollo 15 (1971), which I won in an auction in Los Angeles. It's significant here because it denotes the future of travel, which is space travel." The museum will rotate its artefacts every three to six months.

Tickets are priced at Rs 300 for adults, open from Tuesday to Sunday, 10 am to 7 pm. Contact: 9991477002/9991487002. For more details, visit: www.heritagetransportmuseum.org



Beetles, among others. We spot a monstrosity red 1938 Ford V8 Phaeton, a gigantic Ford Fairline 500Skyliner from 1957 with its multiple hoods up, and a Chevrolet Impala Handtop Sedan from 1970, a volup-



tuously beauty in white. The museum also doesn't miss a quintessential aspect of transport in India—truck art. Checky "Dekho magar pyaar se" or "Dekh mat pagli, pyaar ho jayega" stand out on shutters

