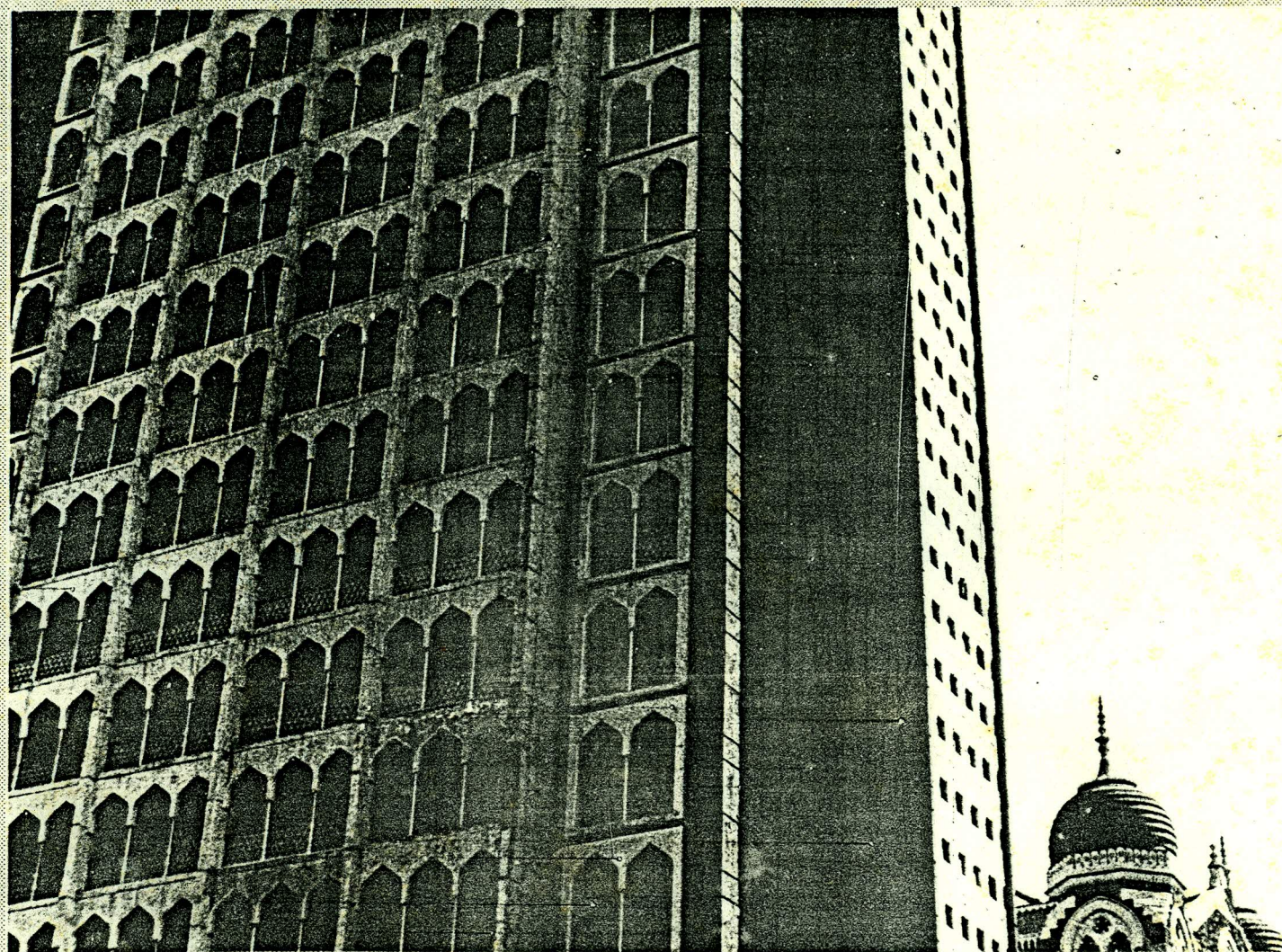




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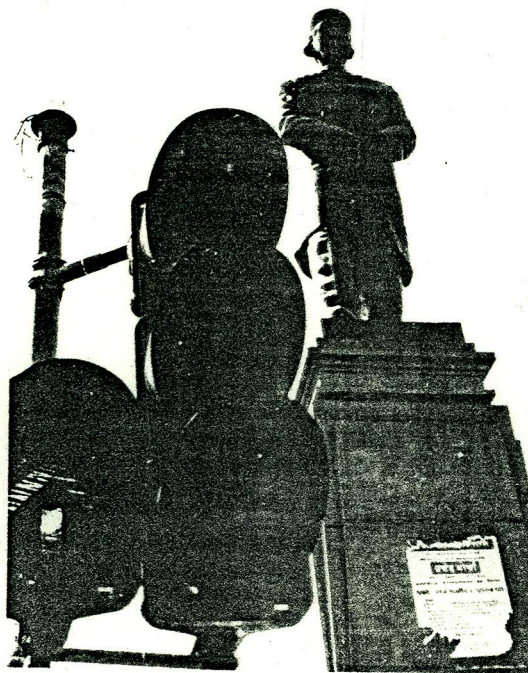
STREETSCAPES:

A Photo

Documentation

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Bombay Cityscapes: A Photo Documentation

Special Project Report

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Design in Visual Communication

by
Neelesh Kale
92625006

Guide
Prof. Ravi Hazra

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Industrial Design Centre,
Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay
1994



Approval Sheet

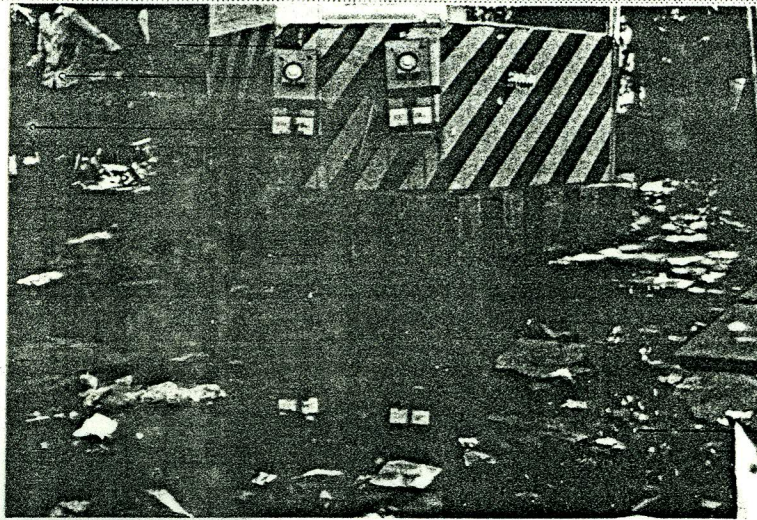
The Visual Communication Special Project- titled
'Bombay Cityscapes: A Photodocumentation'
by Neelesh Kale is approved for the partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the postgraduate degree in Visual
Communication

Guide:

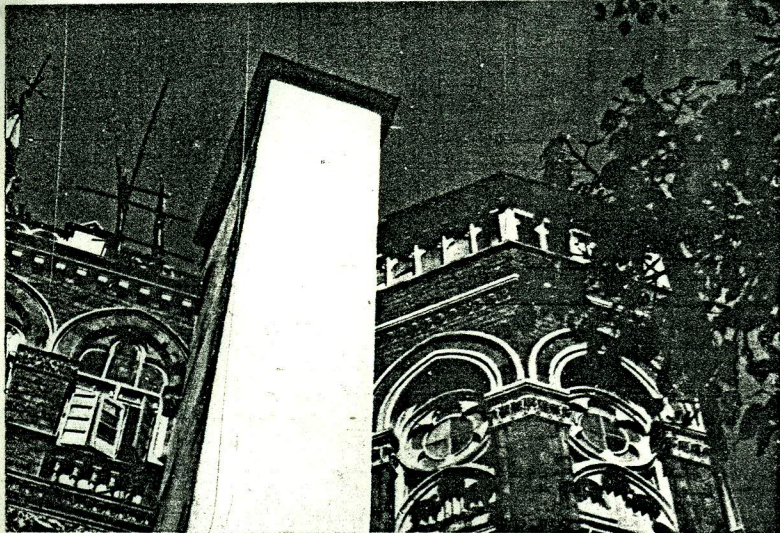
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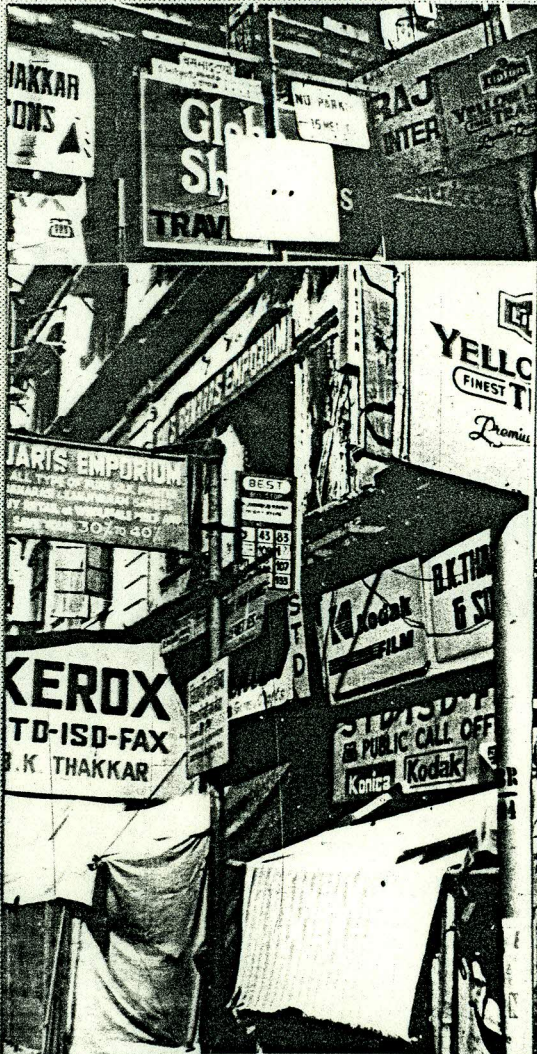
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External Examiner:

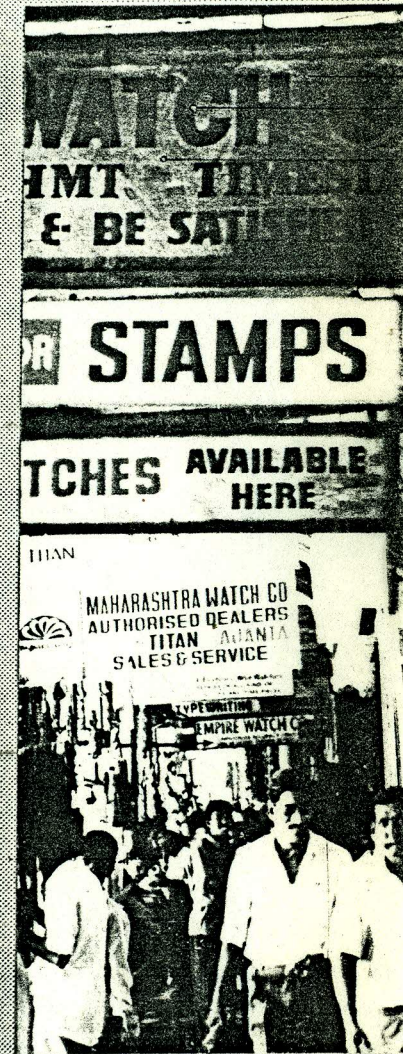


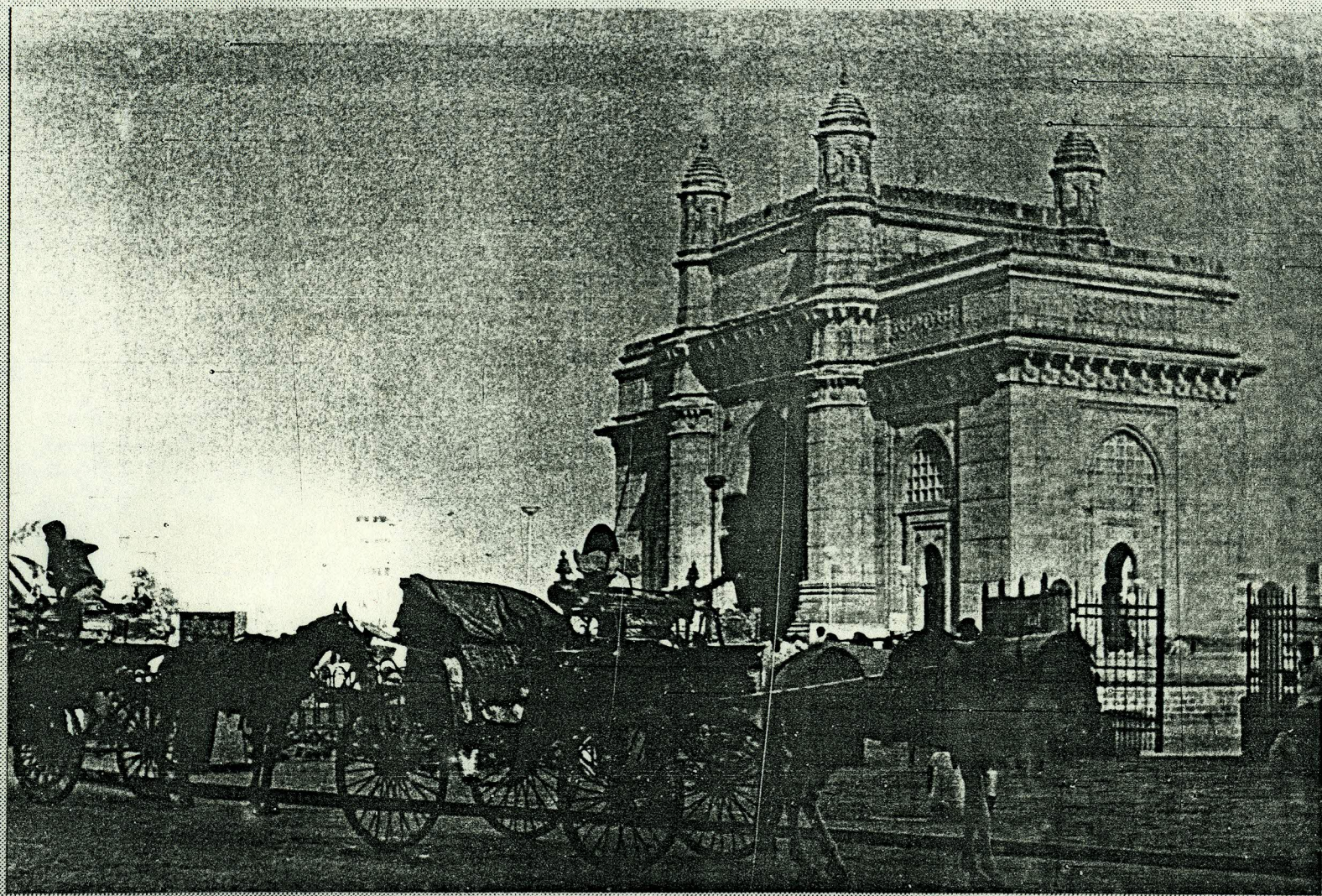
A city is a screen that reflects with great sensitivity the life and thoughts of its citizens. The form of a city is created as a reflection of changing sense of value of the people living in its various sections as time goes on. In this context, the formulation of urban image is an important element in the creation of unique aesthetics of a city. The richness and depth of a cityscape is formulated over its long years of history and the protection and efforts of its citizens. And, the quality of a given city is accumulated through the filter of sense of values of its people through the ages. The time since the independence through the period of economic growth and upto the present, has indeed been the time of confused values and today, we continue to live amidst the echos of that confusion. The elements that go to make up a city include not only such large facilities as public offices, housing and commercial architecture; there are also a number of urban facilities and tools close to the daily life of the people that work together to support the urban environment.





There are many sources of visual confusion around us: overhead wires, outdoor advertising, traffic signs and street furniture generally. A multiplicity of statutory, commercial and private undertakings are collectively responsible for installation of some hundreds of different objects in the street, for the most part designed and sighted wholly and independently of each other. Over them no overall authority is exercised. The resulting clutter makes the efficient communication of essential information increasingly difficult, and more and more destroys the order and dignity of urban scene.





Why was
Bombay
beautiful once,
what was
beautiful about
it, why it is not
beautiful any
more, how it can
regain its
beauty? Is it
possible? How?

Beautifying Bombay seems to be the trend for private enterprises today- a sort of soul cleansing exercise to give back the city what the effects of commercial enterprise may have taken. But what does this beautification amount to- ugly scars on Bombay's prime urban spaces?

Take for example the "Gateway of India" area. This was truly an urban space on a monumental scale- a natural, paved plaza that accommodated various functions, from highly structured parades to the more casual strolls. But look, what it has been reduced to today- a plaza fractured by ill-concieved garden and ugly fencing, which must have been designed more to the project of sponsor's logo than out of any aesthetic or utilitarian consideration. And it could have been worse- the toilet block (that was proposed a few months ago), would have irreversibly damaged this space and relationship to the water's edge.



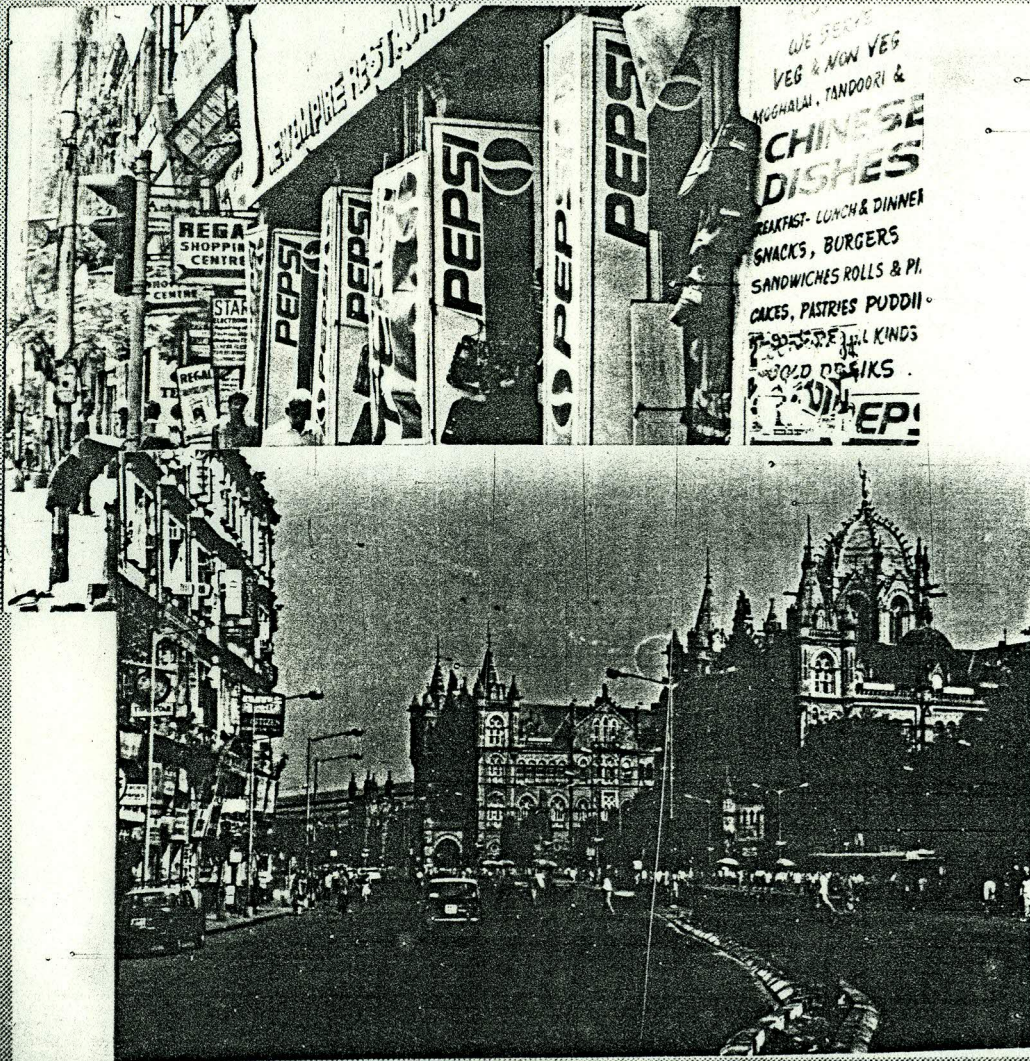
On even more astounding level, is the damage that has been caused by the new development of Churchgate. This urban node sets up for the city a crucial view corridor to its historic centre- a straight line that establishes the splendour of the gothic buildings on the edge of the Fort with the maidan in the foreground. Now this view has been obscured by the squat pseudo fort-like subway station and a seagull. Again, the sponsor's name is more visible than the name of the station building and subway.

Similarly, the Flora fountain. The sponsors craze for the enclosing fencing, street lights, etc. have obscured the free standing quality of the monument. This combined with altered traffic patterns, has destroyed the pivotal quality that the fountain offered to this prominent plaza.



And then there is the example of Marine Drive, another crucial urban space that has been subjected to the same phenomena: of unlashng private sponsorship without controlling norms. The essence of this urban gesture is the unrestricted quality of its sweep--a consistent promenade wall, wide pavement and dividing hedge. These have now been segmented by the city authorities in order to pay for the maintenance of the divider, for which they have turned to private sponsorship. So, besides exposing us to a variety of plant species of disparate heights, and a railing design that changes every 50 meters, they have deprived us of Marine Drives essential quality- that of a consistent single sweep.

Can we really be this insensitive and
blase about our urban spaces?



What is a streetscape?

In very simple terms, we can say that whatever we encounter on streets can be termed as streetscapes. These encounters can be with Physical contents (street furniture) and the information contents.

The items of street furniture to be considered are: Public, pedestrian and traffic signs;

Out-door advertisements and hoardings;

Posts and columns such as lamp posts, posts/ structures for hoardings, bus stops and other signage posts;

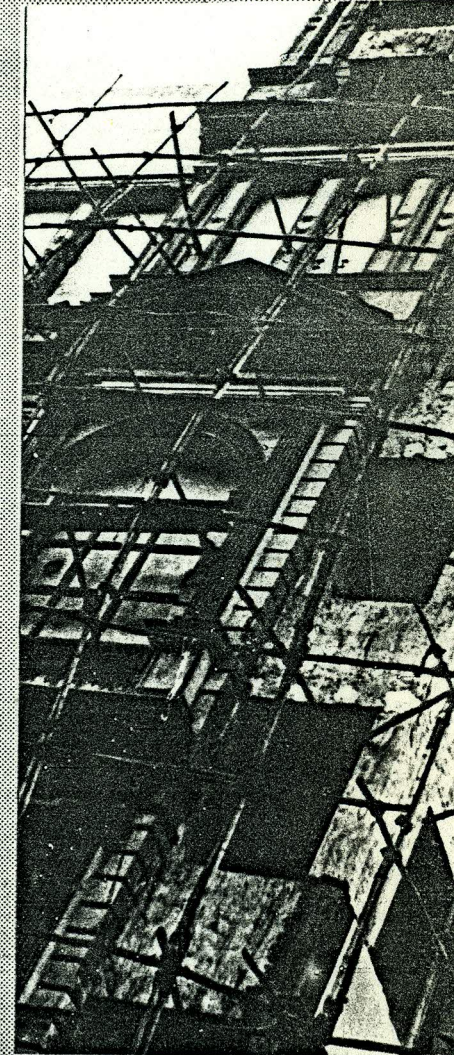
Litter bins and trash cans;

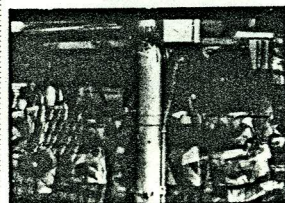
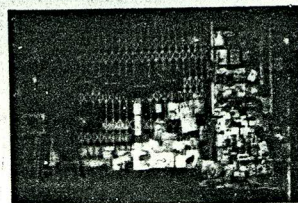
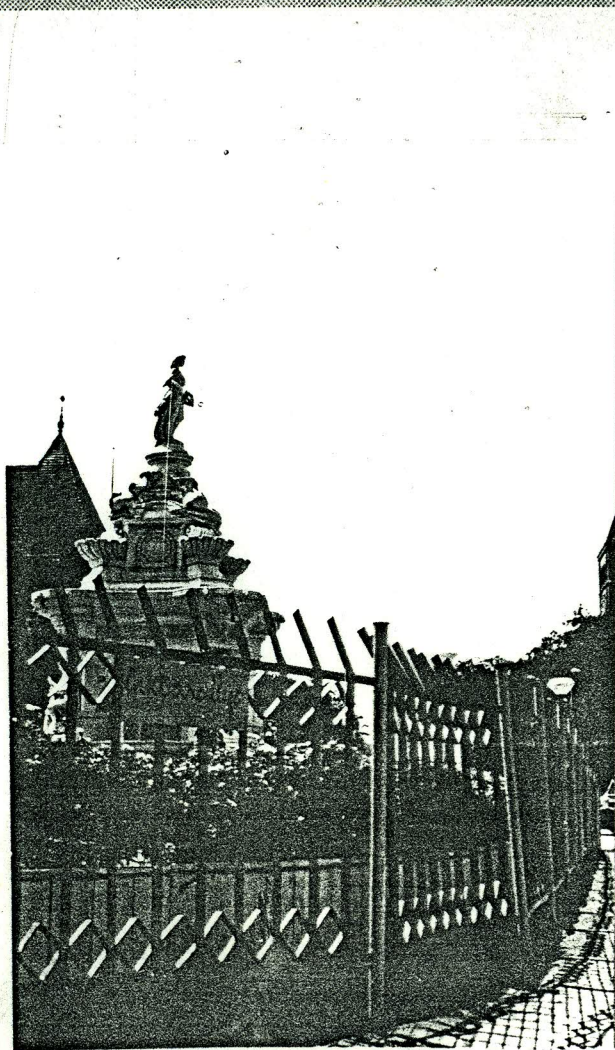
Telephone booths, milk booths,

food stalls etc.; Dividers;

Pavings for footpaths.

People are also important in streetscapes but they are the transient contents.





Our interaction with physical and information constituents of streetscapes can be while walking or driving that is, when we are in motion; as well as when we are standing on the streets.

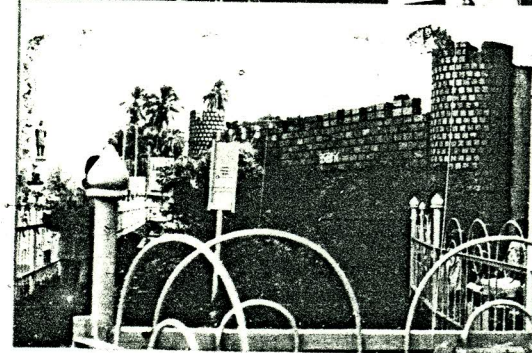
Understanding the behaviour of people on the streets is important in terms of analysing the facilities provided on streets, information content on the streets and also in terms of safety on the streets.

Streetscape is also a product of time. At different times such as in mornings or in afternoons or in the late nights, the same location can be dramatically different. Take for example of V.T. station. During rush hours, the station looks very congested and small. The same place in late nights or on holidays looks extremely huge. The streetscapes also reacts to seasons for that matter. In rainy seasons people walk through the corridors, otherwise they prefer to avoid the hawkers on footpaths and in the corridors.

The streetscapes also have different layers of information on vertical scale. Different types of informations are at different heights.

With a view to understand present scenario with respect to street scape, facilities and amenities, IDC conducted a study consisting of:

1. Survey and visual documentation of various situations in the city, focusing on the causes and extent of loss of facilities.
2. Various items of street furniture as they exist today, their merits/ demerits and validity in present context.
3. A dig into the nostalgic past of the city, there were several situations of urban design and street furnitures which gave a character of some kind to some places.
4. Various possibilities to improve open and public spaces, footpaths, pavements etc. together with list of new street furniture items to be introduced.





➤ This special project forms a part of the survey and documentation conducted by IDC. The documentation can be narrative, by drawings, such as plans and elevations or by still or live photography. Scope of this project was to do photographic documentation of various situations in the city. Various cityscapes were shot basically to find out, compare and to understand the existing problems of street furniture at different places at different times.

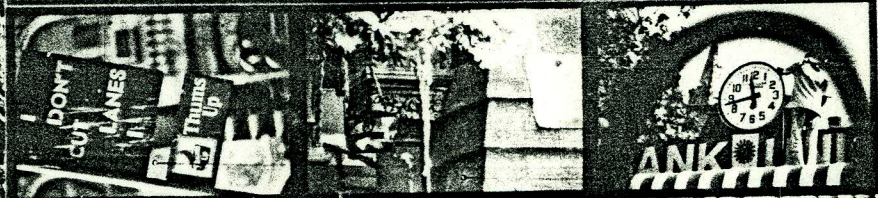
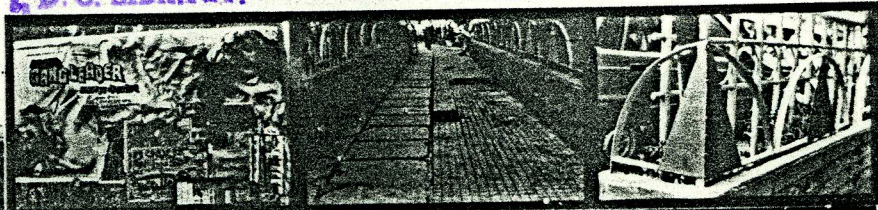
Data collection helps designer to analyse the present situation at his own convenience. Human perception is like compound images. Because of this many problems are overlooked by a cursory inspection of the site. Such documentation also helps to observe things more minutely and deeply. Photographs are frozen images. Designer can record events or places for reference may be at different times and can compare them simultaneously to distinguish problems in that place at all different times. It helps the designer in analysing the situation in greater detail and helps in communicating his ideas to the concerned authorities in a better manner.



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