

North

DELHI

ECO KITSCH

BOLLYWOOD POSTER ART MAKES A COMEBACK IN AN ECO-FRIENDLY AVATAR



PHOTO COURTESY: INDIANHIPPIE

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Gabbar is back with a new message. So is Mogambo. Helen is dancing to a new tune. And Shah Rukh Khan is going solar. Be it vamps or villains, heroes or heroines, Bollywood stars from yesterday and today have found a happy home in Delhi through an art form which was all but dead. Until just about two years ago. The once omnipresent Bollywood poster art, which silently slipped into oblivion in the early 1990s, is undergoing a reinvention. And the handful of artists and entrepreneurs who are rewriting its story say they have a lot to thank Delhi for.

“We have strong marketing in Mumbai but Delhi is where 60 to 70 per cent of our business is coming from,” says Hinesh Jethwani, the founder of Indian Hippy, a collective of Bollywood film poster and billboard artists. The e-commerce portal which offers

customised and personalised hand-painted Bollywood posters, accessories and furniture, recently saw the “height of extravagance from an Indian customer”, according to Jethwani. A customer from Delhi ordered 25 hand-painted posters on canvas as return gifts for her son’s birthday. Each poster was made with the guests’ faces painted in Bollywood film poster setting. There was a 26th poster too, the most special one, which had the birthday boy portrayed as the captain of the team that included his favourite cricketers: Sachin, Dhoni, Sehwag and others.

“India is Bollywood and cricket,” says Nidhi Singh, co-founder of the eco-friendly fashion label Indigreen. And Delhi is crazy about both. Which is why Indigreen’s message to save the planet, Bollywood style, has found plenty of takers, says Singh. The latest theme — Going Green, Patriotic Bollywood Style! — has also generated a lot of interest. Indigreen has now collaborated with The Bamboo Store and Just Around the Corner to push for the cause. The over-the-top concepts, hand-painted by poster

artists on organic cotton, lamps, mirror frames, belts and bags carry a serious message behind the kitsch.

“For example, a T-shirt depicts Amrish Puri ominously talking about global warming and saying, *Mogambo khush hua*, for this is better than his pool of boiling water,” says Minhazz Majumdar, co-founder, The Bamboo Store.

Products inspired by patriotic films like *Shaheed*, *Des Pardes* and *Desh Premee* also carry a signature tagline that declares, “Terrorists are UGLY!” In this fight against global warming and terror, Bollywood’s good and bad are once again pitched against each other. The message is loud, just like the art form. But then, when the issue is this serious, many would agree that it cannot be loud enough.

“There is a huge market for products based on Bollywood poster art in Delhi,” says Roohan Sehgal, consultant, art shop, Religare Art, which offers wrist watches, wall clocks, cushion covers and coasters with painted portraits of Bollywood legends like Madhu Bala and Amitabh Bachchan. “Besides the thrill of owning a bit of the stardom, this is a huge motivating tool for any social message,” she says.

Adding another dimension to Bollywood poster art is the extravagant Delhi wedding business. “Couples who want to go grand can have a series of gigantic hand-painted posters as their wedding backdrop,” says Jethwani. Just like a storyboard featuring the couple in a Bollywood setting. Once the wedding is over, each poster can be framed separately and kept as a memory.

The artists, who once made giant billboards, are clearly not daunted by size and scale. Besides, when the business concerns Bollywood, it’s only fair that it gets larger than life.



PHOTOS COURTESY: INDIGREEN