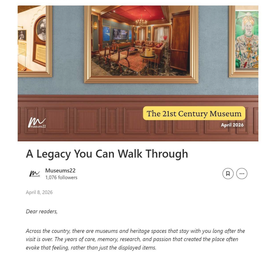

A Legacy You Can Walk Through

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Dear readers,

Across the country, there are museums and heritage spaces that stay with you long after the visit is over. The years of care, memory, research, and passion that created the place often evoke that feeling, rather than just the displayed items.

Over the last few months, I have found myself thinking about one of our clients in exactly that way. The C. Krishnaiah Chetty Crystal Museum Salon in Bengaluru is not just a beautiful collection of jewels, objects, and artifacts. It is also the sum of a family legacy and a long commitment to preserving stories that might otherwise have remained inside archives and memory.

This is the story of this month's newsletter. It is about a museum born from a jewelry house with more than 150 years of history and about how Museums22 worked to shape that legacy into an audio experience visitors can move through and remember.

With warmth,

Shalini Bansal

Co-founder, Museums22

When A Jewellery House Becomes A Museum

It is not every day that a private jewelry house opens its doors in this way. That is part of what makes the Crystal Museum Salon so special. It showcases the house's long heritage through rare gems, jewelry, collectibles, and a larger story tied to Bengaluru, the Deccan, the Carnatic, and parts of South and Central India.

It is also meant to serve researchers, collectors, designers, and visitors who want to spend time with that world more closely.

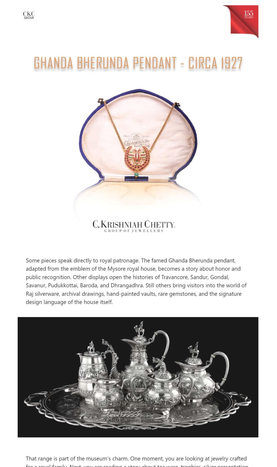
The story begins in 1869, when Cotha Krishnaih Chetty sold colored beads to British residents from a bicycle and opened a small shop off Commercial Street. Over time, that small enterprise grew into a jewelry house that served more than twenty-one royal families, including the Wadiyars of Mysore, the Nizam of Hyderabad, the royal house of Travancore, and several other distinguished patrons across India.

The company's own historical record traces that growth from bead selling to royal commissions, court appointments, antique jewelry, silverwork, and a reputation for exacting craftsmanship.

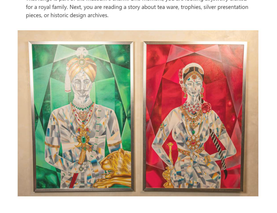
What gives the museum its depth is that it presents its collections and history as a lived world. Visitors encounter the house not only through its jewels but also through the stories of commissions, archives, royal relationships, sketches, design philosophies, ceremonial objects, and material culture that traveled through kingdoms and colonial-era Bengaluru.

A Museum Of Objects, But Also Of Memory

The Crystal Museum Salon is full of remarkable things, but what makes it memorable is how those objects are placed inside a larger historical frame.



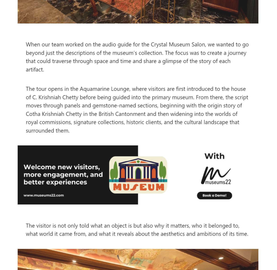
Some pieces speak directly to royal patronage. The famed Ghanda Bherunda pendant, adapted from the emblem of the Mysore royal house, becomes a story about honor and public recognition. Other displays open the histories of Travancore, Sandur, Gondal, Savanur, Pudukkottai, Baroda, and Dharangadhra. Still others bring visitors into the world of Raj silverware, archival drawings, hand-painted vaults, rare gemstones, and the signature design language of the house itself.



That range is part of the museum's charm. One moment, you are looking at jewelry crafted for a royal family. Next, you are reading a story about tea ware, trophies, silver presentation pieces, or historic design archives.

The museum has also recently acquired Reena Ahluwalia's Maharaja and Maharani of Royal Mysore paintings for its permanent collection, extending its focus from jewels and objects into painted interpretations of royal heritage as well.

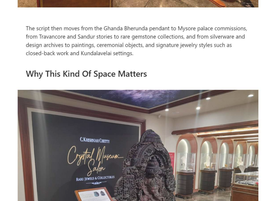
How We Approached The Audio Guide



When our team worked on the audio guide for the Crystal Museum Salon, we wanted to go beyond just the descriptions of the museum's collection. The focus was to create a journey that could traverse through space and time and share a glimpse of the story of each artifact.

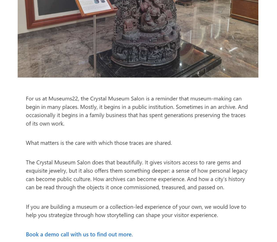
The tour opens in the Aquamarine Lounge, where visitors are first introduced to the house of C. Krishnaih Chetty before being guided into the primary museum. From there, the script moves through panels and gemstone-named sections, beginning with the origin story of Cotha Krishnaih Chetty in the British Cantonment and then widening into the worlds of royal commissions, signature collections, historic clients, and the cultural landscape that surrounded them.

The visitor is not only told what an object is but also why it matters, who it belonged to, what world it came from, and what it reveals about the aesthetics and ambitions of its time.



The script then moves from the Ghanda Bherunda pendant to Mysore palace commissions, from Travancore and Sandur stories to rare gemstone collections, and from silverware and design archives to paintings, ceremonial objects, and signature jewelry styles such as closed-back work and Kundalewale settings.

Why This Kind Of Space Matters



For us at Museums22, the Crystal Museum Salon is a reminder that museum-making can begin in many places. Mostly, it begins in a public institution. Sometimes in an archive. And occasionally it begins in a family business that has spent generations preserving the traces of its own work.

What matters is the care with which those traces are shared.

The Crystal Museum Salon does that beautifully. It gives visitors access to rare gems and exquisite jewelry, but it also offers them something deeper: a sense of how personal legacy can become public culture. How archives can become experience. And how a city's history can be read through the objects it once commissioned, treasured, and passed on.

If you are building a museum or a collection-led experience of your own, we would love to help you strategize through how storytelling can shape your visitor experience.

Book a demo call with us to find out more.