

THE ROLE OF PATAN MUSEUM IN PRESERVING NEWAR CULTURAL HERITAGE

Dr. Pashupati Nyaupane ¹

¹Nepalese History, Culture and Archaeology Department, Tiibhuvan University, Kirtipur, Nepal



Received 14 December 2024

Accepted 15 January 2025

Published 28 February 2025

DOI

[10.29121/granthaalayah.v13.i2.2025.5926](https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v13.i2.2025.5926)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Copyright: © 2025 The Author(s). This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#).

With the license CC-BY, authors retain the copyright, allowing anyone to download, reuse, re-print, modify, distribute, and/or copy their contribution. The work must be properly attributed to its author.



ABSTRACT

The Patan Museum is integral to preserving the Newar people's rich cultural heritage in the Kathmandu Valley. The museum is a significant institution dedicated to conserving the historical, architectural, and cultural legacy of Nepal's indigenous Newar people. It is located in the heart of Patan Durbar Square, among a collection of medieval palaces. The rich traditions of the Newar people are represented by the numerous sacred sculptures, paintings, metalwork, and architectural elements in the museum's collection that date back to the Middle Ages. In addition to serving as a repository for these cultural treasures, the museum offers an educational platform that bridges the past and present. The museum encourages a deeper understanding of the traditions of the community, which are deeply rooted in the tangible and intangible elements of their cultural identity, by presenting the many parts of Newar life, including religion, crafts, and festivals. Furthermore, the Patan Museum is essential in protecting Newar culture from risks posed by urbanization, modernization, and natural disasters. Through collaborations with local communities, governmental bodies, and international organizations, the museum has evolved into an organizer for heritage conservation initiatives that ensure that Newar traditional practices remain in a world that is continuously changing.

Keywords: Heritage, Conservation, Indigenous community, Deteriorate, In-Situ Conservation

1. INTRODUCTION

Conserving museum objects is a highly challenging task, as it requires balancing the preservation of cultural, historical, and scientific integrity while mitigating environmental, biological, and human threats [Ashley-Smith \(1999\)](#); [Oddy \(2016\)](#). Museum artifacts deteriorate due to a number of factors, including biological, environmental, natural, and human-induced ones. Biological agents such as fungi, bacteria, insects, and rodents offer serious concerns since they breakdown down and permanently damage organic materials including wood, textiles, and parchment [Florian \(1997\)](#); [Pinniger \(2015\)](#).

Comprehensive conservation research highlights issues such as material degradation, climate change, and chemical instability in artifacts, necessitating interdisciplinary solutions incorporating physics, chemistry, and biology [Caple \(2000\)](#); [Pye \(2007\)](#). Furthermore, in order to maintain the integrity and authenticity of items without resorting to excessive restoration, museums must manage ethical

issues [Staniforth \(2013\)](#). In order to improve preventive care and restoration, conservation research keeps concentrating on sustainable materials and innovative methods [Podany et al. \(2001\)](#); [Learner \(2005\)](#), highlighting its critical role in preserving the world's cultural heritage. The Patan Museum presents a number of conservation and preservation challenges since it is situated in a historically significant area that is exposed to pressures from the environment and human activity. The fluctuating temperature and humidity of the Kathmandu Valley affect the longevity of artifacts, especially those composed of wood and metal, which can lead to splitting, fungal growth, and corrosion [Thapa \(2020\)](#). The 2015 earthquake highlighted the region's seismic vulnerability, which led to structural damage to the museum and highlighted the need for earthquake-resistant rehabilitation methods [Gutschow \(2016\)](#). Lack of funding and resources for state-of-the-art conservation technology makes addressing these issues more challenging [Tiwari \(2018\)](#). The Patan Museum is a modern museum that exhibits excellent conservation and preservation techniques. The museum employs advanced climate control systems to ensure the stability of fragile artifacts by maintaining optimal humidity and temperature conditions, as indicated by Key Informant Interviews (KII). Modern lighting minimizes UV exposure while improving exhibits' aesthetic appeal and halting photochemical deterioration. To protect collections from biological and environmental hazards, complete compliance to regular cleaning procedures and pest management techniques is maintained. Additionally, the museum uses exhibition cases and contemporary storage methods that reduce contamination and physical stress. According to insights gathered through Key Informant Interviews (KII), Patan Museum employs a structured visitor management approach, including regulated visitor flow and protective barriers. These systems are designed to balance public accessibility with the preservation of artifacts effectively. Informants highlighted that by incorporating traditional conservation techniques, the museum reaffirms its commitment to safeguarding its cultural heritage for future generations. These strategies, as noted during the interviews, not only extend the lifespan of invaluable artifacts but also enhance the visitor experience through organized and sustainable access.

It specializes in bronze sculptures and religious artifacts, particularly in Keshav Narayan Chowk, which showcases the skill and history of Newari craftsmanship. Mul Chowk and Sundari Chowk also display important architectural fragments that reflect the intricate designs of Newari culture. The Tusahiti of Sundari Chowk stands as a masterpiece of architectural and artistic brilliance. The museum plays a key role in preserving local history and sharing it with visitors. The Patan Museum's lively surrounds offer visitors to a variety of architectural and cultural heritages, which significantly increases the attraction of the museum. In the distinctive setting provided by neighboring ancient sites like Krishna Mandir, Bhimsen Temple, and Vishwanath Temple, visitors are able to engage in centuries-old religious and cultural ceremonies. At this collection of historical places, visitors may enjoy a variety of experiences, that range from viewing museum exhibits to experiencing authentic cultural practices in action [Shrestha, 2017](#). Additionally, historic courtyards like Mul Chowk and historic water spouts like Manga Hiti contribute to the feeling of historical continuity by providing visitors with a tangible connection to the past [Slusser \(1982\)](#). Ancient sculptures, sacred artifacts, and traditional artwork are among the museum's tangible items that allow visitors to have a firsthand look into the past. A completely immersive, live historical experience is also provided by the neighborhood, which is made up of courtyards, temples, and continuous cultural events. This unique combination attracts tourists, scholars, and historians who are eager to spend time observing the museum's well selected

exhibits and the lively local cultural environment. The Patan Museum is a fascinating location for anyone interested in learning more about the past since it lets visitors engage with history instead of just viewing it. Lalitpur, in its entirety, can be considered a living museum, with exceptional examples of art and craft found in every corner. Additionally, the Patan Museum's outstanding display of Newari art, architecture, and cultural heritage draws a significant amount of tourists from both local and foreign countries. The museum provides a singular opportunity to examine centuries-old bronze sculptures, religious objects, and architectural features that embody the Kathmandu Valley's craftsmanship. It is located in the ancient Durbar Square, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Its carefully planned exhibitions and educational displays provide visitors, academics, and history buffs alike insights into Nepal's cultural and religious traditions. The relationship between these masterpieces of architecture and ongoing events and religious activities happening within the courtyards and temples catches visitors into a dynamic setting that is both educational and spiritually appealing [Jest, 2015](#).

The Patan Museum, which balances its difficulties with excellent preservation techniques, is a monument to the lasting legacy of Newar craftsmanship and cultural history. The museum has adopted a thorough strategy to conservation in spite of challenges such shifting environmental conditions, seismic vulnerabilities, resource shortages, and the demands of urbanization and tourists. On the one hand, its architectural structures and artifacts are under risk from environmental causes and growing visitor traffic, necessitating creative solutions to safeguard their longevity.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study employs qualitative research approaches to investigate the role of the Patan Museum in preserving Newar cultural heritage. Purposeful sampling was used to identify key participants, including museum staff, local artisans, cultural practitioners, domestic and international visitors, and community stakeholders. Data collection involved in-depth interviews to understand diverse perspectives, field observations to document community participation and visitor engagement, and an analysis of artifacts and exhibits that exemplify Newar heritage. With a focus on collaboration between the government, the museum, and the community, secondary data has been collected through desktop research. Additionally, primary data collection methods such as observations and interviews highlight the lived experiences and cultural traditions of the local population. Interviews were conducted with ten community people from different areas and five museum staff members using purposive sampling. By focusing on the interconnectedness of tourism, heritage conservation, and community involvement, the methodology provides a comprehensive framework to assess the museum's contribution to safeguarding Newar cultural traditions amidst challenges such as urbanization and modernization. The study focuses on the Patan Museum's role in preserving Newar traditions and fostering community involvement, while addressing the challenge of balancing cultural preservation with development. The objective of this research is to examine the role of the Patan Museum in preserving Newar cultural heritage by fostering community involvement, promoting traditional practices, and enhancing visitor engagement. It aims to assess the museum's efforts in safeguarding intangible cultural assets, collaborating with stakeholders, and balancing heritage conservation with the demands of urbanization and tourism. Limitations of the study include the challenge of assessing the long-term impact of the museum's preservation efforts and the potential influence of tourism on local cultural practices. The study's importance lies

in its contribution to understanding how cultural heritage can be preserved amongst urban development, and how museums can actively engage communities in safeguarding intangible cultural assets.

3. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

From a preservation perspective, the Patan Museum's key elements for maintaining cultural heritage are proper documentation, regular maintenance, community involvement, and the application of sustainable conservation techniques. Proper documentation ensures that the cultural relevance and history of objects are preserved for future generations. Regular maintenance, such as pest control, structural repairs, and climate management, can prevent deterioration over time. Even though sustainable conservation strategies combine contemporary interventions with respect for traditional methods, community engagement is crucial for increasing awareness and guaranteeing that local customs and knowledge are maintained. Collectively, these elements support the preservation and longevity of cultural resources. From an understanding of intangible cultural heritage, the results emphasize how important community involvement is to maintaining customs like festivals, rituals, and oral histories. In addition to reflecting the local community's cultural identity, customs like traditional dance, music, and handicrafts also add to the area's living legacy. The research emphasizes the importance of intergenerational knowledge transmission and the active involvement of local cultural institutions in safeguarding these intangible assets, ensuring their continued relevance in contemporary society. A few research findings are discoursed below.

3.1. HIGHLY LIVELY MUSEUM AREA CULTURAL UNESCO ENLISTEG MONUMENTAL SITE

The museum, originally established as the National Metalcraft Museum in 2019 B.S., was housed within the old and dilapidated palace of Patan Durbar Square. Following extensive restoration and renovation, supported by a grant from the Austrian Government, the museum was rebranded as the Patan Museum, reflecting its enriched focus on cultural and artistic heritage. The historic city of Lalitpur, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the southern Kathmandu Valley, is home to the Patan Museum, which is situated in the center of Patan Durbar Square. Lalitpur, one of the three historic cities of Kathmandu, is well known for its extensive architectural and cultural heritage. The museum itself is located in a royal palace that has been carefully conserved, making it a major destination for cultural tourism as well as a source of culture. Since its establishment, the Patan Museum has been fortunate to occupy a prime location at the heart of the UNESCO World Heritage Site. Patan Durbar Square is one of Nepal's most renowned cultural heritage destinations, attracting both domestic and international visitors daily. This area is a rich tapestry of ancient, medieval, and modern art and architectural masterpieces, reflecting the region's historical and cultural evolution. Notably, the Patan Museum stands as the only major palace within this area, providing a unique and comprehensive exhibition of the artistic and architectural heritage of the Kathmandu Valley. The museum showcases an exceptional collection of Newari craftsmanship, including intricate woodwork, metal statues, and architectural elements that have been meticulously preserved and presented in their original context [Gutschow & Kreutzmann \(2013\)](#).

An outstanding collection of ancient, medieval, and modern art and architecture can be seen in this museum, which reflects the centuries-long history of Nepalese culture and architecture. With its rich historical combination, Patan Durbar Square is home to a number of temples, palaces, and public spaces that highlight Newari craftsmanship and architectural ingenuity. Built in a former royal palace, the Patan Museum serves as a crucial archive of this artistic legacy and is the only sizable palace in the area.

Historically, Patan was a political and cultural hub during the Malla period (12th to 18th centuries), with the Durbar Square serving as the seat of royal power and a center of religious and artistic investment. The Patan Museum, by preserving the palace's architecture and showcasing the art and artifacts within, offers visitors a direct connection to this era of architectural splendor and artistic innovation. Although the museum has precisely preserved an ensemble of ancient, medieval, and modern art and architectural masterpieces, it also stands as a testament to the dynamic cultural legacy of Patan, reflecting the city's rich history and its ongoing influence on Nepalese art and architecture. This area was developed over time by medieval royal families, local communities, artists, and business people. Rich in tangible heritage, it is equally abundant in intangible heritage, making it a focal point for jatra processions, events, and a wide range of socio-cultural, religious, and economic activities. The Patan Museum, located in the heart of this historic area, benefits not only from its prime location but also from its architectural significance, which greatly influences visitors' experiences. As a result, the museum has gained renown as one of the finest in terms of its preservation of ancient architectural values and its influential exhibition of medieval palace artifacts. The museum's role in showcasing this historical richness, through both its physical structure and its collection, underscores its importance as a cultural and educational institution [Gutschow & Kreutzmann \(2013\)](#).

4. MUSEUM AND PRESERVATION

Museums are essential to the promotion and preservation of cultural heritage because they preserve artifacts, traditions, and knowledge systems for future generations. By serving as guardians of both tangible and intangible cultural assets, such as artwork, historical objects, traditional crafts, and oral histories, they secure their continuation in the face of rapid urbanization and globalization [ICOM. \(2019\)](#). Museums not only preserve these elements but also make them accessible to a diverse audience through carefully selected exhibits and educational programs, fostering identity and cultural awareness [Boylan \(2004\)](#). The documenting and preservation of endangered heritage, including the handicrafts of marginalized communities, is facilitated by museums by offering spaces for their appreciation and recognition [Smith \(2006\)](#). According to [Parry \(2007\)](#), modern museums also embrace technological advancements to digitize collections, enable broader access, and enhance preservation practices. The integration of community participation in museum activities strengthens the connection between heritage and its protectors, ensuring a sustainable model of preservation that aligns with contemporary needs [Watson, S. \(2007\)](#).

Intangible Cultural Heritage Preservation in Patan Museum

The Patan Museum protects its intangible cultural heritages by documenting and disseminating traditional Newari crafts, ceremonies, and oral histories related to the artifacts on display. The museum collaborates closely with local artisans and cultural experts to ensure the continuing existence of traditional crafts like woodcarving, manufacturing, and stone sculpture. Through cultural events and

guided tours, which encourage appreciation and understanding, tourists are also made aware of the significance of these traditions [Shrestha & Bajracharya \(2019\)](#). These initiatives are in line with UNESCO's framework for protecting intangible cultural assets, which places a strong emphasis on intergenerational transmission and community involvement [UNESCO. \(2003\)](#). The museum preserves the live customs that characterize the Patan region's cultural identity by incorporating these practices into its daily operations. According to Key Informant Interviews (KII), the rites and rituals associated with intangible cultural heritage at Patan Museum are deeply rooted in the traditions of the Newar community. The museum serves as a site for significant rituals, including daily worship, as well as the annual ceremonies dedicated to idols and religious relics. These practices involve ritualistic dances that symbolize the spiritual essence of the objects on display, traditional music performances, and offerings to the gods, all of which reflect the cultural and religious importance of the artifacts. One of the key findings of the research is the Patan Museum's role as a dynamic cultural hub that seamlessly blends tourism with local identity. The museum plays an active role in preserving and promoting local festivals, rituals, and celebrations, such as Dashain, Kartik Nacha, and Jatra processions. These events not only bring together the local community but also enrich the cultural tourism experience by fostering connections between residents and visitors. Local artists, religious groups, and cultural institutions are integral to maintaining the museum's strong ties to its heritage, ensuring the continued celebration of its cultural traditions.

4.1. MUSEUM OBJECT BASED PRESERVATION IN PATAN MUSEUM

Museum object-based preservation is a systematic approach to conservation and protection to guarantee the longevity, authenticity, and cultural significance of objects in museum collections. Preserving the physical, historical, and contextual integrity of objects is a top goal through preventive conservation, which attempts to reduce deterioration by managing environmental factors including temperature, humidity, light, and pollutants. Careful handling techniques, well-planned display circumstances, and appropriate storage alternatives are all crucial practices to reduce potential risks to artifacts [Ashley-Smith \(1999\)](#); [Michalski \(1994\)](#). Museums can preserve their collections for future generations while also honoring the historical and cultural contexts of their holdings by implementing these measures. The Patan Museum, housed in the historic Sadashiva Palace Building, features galleries A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, and M, showcasing invaluable Hindu and Buddhist artifacts that reflect Nepal's rich cultural heritage. Additionally, Mulchowk and Sundari Chowk preserve architectural fragments of significant historical value. The museum employs a systematic preservation approach to ensure the longevity, authenticity, and cultural significance of these objects. Preventive conservation practices are at the core of this effort, focusing on minimizing deterioration by controlling environmental factors such as temperature, humidity, light, and pollutants. Proper storage, display conditions, and handling protocols are meticulously maintained to safeguard the physical, historical, and contextual integrity of the collections. This comprehensive strategy not only protects the artifacts but also ensures their continued relevance in educating and inspiring future generations while preserving cultural tangible heritages. The preservation of artifacts in the Patan Museum has been approached holistically, combining traditional craftsmanship with modern conservation techniques. Each artifact undergoes meticulous identification, documentation, and cataloging to ensure that

its historical and cultural significance is preserved. To maintain authenticity, traditional craftspeople carefully restore delicate items, such as metal sculptures and woodwork carvings, using safe methods that date back centuries. Everything is kept perfectly clean; bronze statues are treated with chemical solutions to prevent oxidation. In order to preserve these artifacts and prevent the degradation of materials like metal and wood, the museum employs climate-controlled environments that regulate temperature and humidity. UV-filtered lighting is used to minimize light exposure, and fragile artifacts are kept in sealed glass cases to protect them from dust, pollution, and physical handling. Preventive conservation measures, such as regular pest treatment and seismic security measures, are also in place to ensure that items stay secure in Nepal's earthquake-prone climate. Trained personnel follow strict handling protocols while regularly inspecting, cleaning, and conserving antiquities. In addition to physical preservation, the museum is deeply committed to engaging the community. Local artisans collaborate on conservation projects, blending traditional and modern techniques, while workshops and training programs ensure these skills are passed down to future generations.

5. KESHAV NARAYAN CHOWK

Keshav Naraya Chowk located within the Patan Palace Museum, is one of its most prominent courtyards. It is characterized by a Shikhara-style temple at its center, dedicated to Mani Keshav Narayan, whose sacred image is enshrined in the sanctum. The courtyard is designed in a perfect square shape, exemplifying traditional Newari architectural balance. The space reflects a combination of artistic and cultural significance, making it a dynamic part of the museum's heritage.

5.1. KESHAV NARAYAN CHOWK GALLERY

The Patan Museum's Keshav Narayan Chowk palace blocks exhibits an impressive collection of Hindu and Buddhist antiquities, including sculptures, religious artifacts and exquisite architectural elements that highlight rich cultural heritage. There are nine beautifully designed galleries and one temporary exhibition hall in the Patan Museum's Keshav Narayan Chowk royal Palace. Each gallery showcases a different aspect of Nepalese history, art, and culture, highlighting its rich past. The galleries are categorized as A to M. The galleries are designed to give visitors an immersive experience, guiding them through historic sculptures, artifacts, and magnificent structures. The gallery's displays have been carefully planned to communicate the artifacts' historical and spiritual value narrative to provide visitors with an immersive experience. Key elements of preservation efforts include utilizing preventive conservation techniques, maintaining optimal climate conditions, and ensuring that every item stays intact through careful handling and documentation. These practices ensure the longevity and cultural relevance of the gallery's items for future generations. need a bit change of writing. The following galleries can be found in these palace blocks. Complementing these permanent galleries, the temporary exhibition hall serves as a dynamic space for rotating exhibits, offering a fresh and engaging experience for visitors, scholars, and art enthusiasts. This concept exemplifies building adaptation for preservation and conservation through practical utilization. Additionally, the design of the galleries reflects a thoughtful approach to both the display and preservation of museum objects, ensuring their historical and cultural significance is safeguarded while being accessible to the public.

- Galleries at Keshav Narayan Chowk
 - 1) Gallery A
 - 2) Gallery B
 - 3) Gallery C
 - 4) Gallery D
 - 5) Gallery E
 - 6) Gallery F
 - 7) Gallery G
 - 8) Gallery H
 - 9) Gallery M
 - 10) Temporary exhibition hall

The Patan Museum features diverse galleries, each uniquely showcasing Nepal's artistic, cultural, and religious heritage. Gallery A introduces visitors to the iconography of Hindu and Buddhist deities, explaining their identification through physical features, postures, and accompanying elements, including mounts or vehicles. It includes both iconic and aniconic depictions with detailed textual explanations. This exhibition highlights traditional objects and their cultural significance, reflecting the region's rich past. While museology emphasizes the preservation of historical narratives, museography ensures effective exhibition techniques for visitor interaction.

Gallery B focuses on Lord Shiva and his family, with highlights such as the repatriated 12th-century grey limestone image of Uma-Maheswara, which symbolizes divine unity. It includes objects like ceremonial staffs, the royal throne of Patan, and the Krishna Lila painting, reflecting the rich artistry of the Malla period. This collection highlights the function of iconography in spiritual traditions and is devoted to sculptures and religious artifacts. While museography highlights minor issues with lighting and arrangement, museology offers insights into ritualistic processes.

Gallery C emphasizes Lord Vishnu, showcasing stone sculptures of Vishnu with Lakshmi and Garuda, ivory artifacts used by Malla queens, and the mid-17th-century Krishna Lila painting by King Siddhi Narasimha Malla. Furthermore, Showcasing ceremonial tools and utensils, it emphasizes the interplay between functionality and artistry in daily life. Gallery D explores Vedic gods and Tantric deities, including repousse masks of Indra and the 11th-century sculpture of Goddess Siddhi Laxmi. Museology ensures contextual interpretation, while museography enhances spatial visualization through interactive models. Gallery E is dedicated to Buddhas, Saints, and Chaityas, featuring sculptures like the 12th-century Shakyamuni Buddha, miniature stupas, and ritual chaityas significant to Kathmandu Valley's culture. This gallery highlights artistic expressions and iconography with its paintings and sculptures. While museography employs preservation techniques to preserve hues and textures, museology examines symbolic themes.

Gallery F displays Bodhisattvas, emphasizing their dual nature as gentle and fierce guides of compassion, and Dharmapalas with detailed explanations. Gallery G employs advanced museographic techniques to enhance the visitor experience of Nepal's metallurgic arts. The use of detailed lighting highlights the textures and intricacies of artifacts created through techniques like lost wax casting and repoussé. Interactive displays, such as 3D replicas or videos, demonstrate the ancient Talaman measurement system, allowing visitors to engage with its historical application. Informative panels and digital kiosks provide layered

narratives about the processes and tools used. The layout ensures artifacts are presented sequentially, emphasizing their technical evolution and historical significance, while protective casing preserves the delicate metalworks for future generations. Gallery H Henry Ambrose and other artists have contributed to the gallery's extensive collection of historical paintings and photographs of Patan Durbar Square and its environs, which was assembled by the esteemed Götz Hagmüller. The gallery functions as a visual record from a museological standpoint, chronicling the changes in Patan's urban landscape, cultural customs, and architecture over time. Through creative and photographic storytelling, it provides visitors with a chance to engage with past of the area while highlighting the value of visual media as a vehicle for heritage preservation and interpretation. With chronological and thematic arrangements that lead visitors through the square's history, the show is carefully curated from a museum perspective to improve visitor interaction. Strategic lighting, protective frame, and high-resolution copies guarantee the artworks' preservation and aesthetic value. Finally, Gallery M is dedicated to 17th–18th-century Hindu Tantric manuscripts from Bhaktapur, illustrating the intricate use of handmade paper, ink, and watercolors. Together, these galleries encapsulate the multifaceted legacy of Nepalese art and spirituality, offering both aesthetic and scholarly insights [Lakhey 2024](#); [Hagmüller 2024](#); [Giambrone, 2024](#).

The Temporary Exhibition Hall is a animated venue for presenting changing exhibits with a variety of subjects, from regional handicrafts to international innovations in creativity. Because of its adaptability, the museum is able to stay interesting and relevant, encouraging community involvement and drawing return visitors [Ambrose & Paine \(2018\)](#). In terms of museography, it stresses adaptable arrangement and modular display systems to accommodate a variety of exhibits, while museologically, it provides a venue for investigating modern narratives alongside traditional artifacts [Dean \(2002\)](#). The Patan Museum's Temporary Gallery offers a flexible venue for holding special exhibitions that go well with its ongoing exhibits. In order to maintain visitor interest and participation, this gallery enables the museum to showcase regular matters, such as modern art, traditional crafts, or international cultural exchanges. From a museological perspective, it provides a stage for engaging narratives that allow the museum to commemorate cultural achievements or address contemporary concerns.

6. ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION MODALITY

The Patan Museum, which was once the Malla kings' royal palace and is now a museum dedicated to showcasing and preserving the architectural and cultural heritage of the Kathmandu Valley, is an excellent example of adaptive reuse. This transformation began in the 1990s as part of a UNESCO-funded restoration and reuse project that emphasized the historic palace's architectural significance and its cultural significance [Gutschow & Kreutzmann \(1998\)](#). To preserve the integrity of the original structure, the restoration effort used traditional Newar craftsmanship and materials, guided by the ideals of cultural authenticity [Slusser \(1982\)](#). Intricately carved wooden windows, brick buildings, and repaired courtyards are all skillfully incorporated into the museum's architecture, which perfectly combines traditional Newar aesthetics with contemporary museology [Tiwari \(2009\)](#). Visitors can learn about the rich history of the area and appreciate the beauty of Newar architecture through its exhibitions, which focus on Nepalese art, Buddhist and Hindu symbolism, and architectural elements [Shrestha \(2018\)](#). The restoration of the Patan Museum is an illustration of how historic structures can be used in ways

that balance preservation and contemporary use while fostering cultural sustainability and community identity. Moreover, its success as a museum has inspired similar efforts across Nepal to preserve and interpret architectural heritage within living urban contexts [UNESCO. \(2007\)](#). According to the KII from an architectural expert, the restoration of the Patan Museum successfully combines traditional Newar craftsmanship with modern museological requirements, preserving the palace's historical integrity. The curator of the museum stressed that by showcasing Newar art and religious symbols, it serves as a cultural hub and educational resource while also fostering a sense of communal pride. The renovation gave traditional crafts new life, ensuring that these techniques are preserved and passed on, transforming the museum into a live representation of the local culture, according to a local craftsman who worked on the restoration.

6.1. ARCHITECTURAL SHOWPIECES AND ADJOINING APPEALING

Thus, this palace itself functions as a living museum, showcasing medieval art through its artistic struts, tympanums, idols, and various artifacts. Museum architecture is an area of expertise that expands beyond the basic ideas of structural quality, aesthetic appeal, and use to handle unique opportunities and challenges. Its purpose is not only to preserve and display antiquities but also to offer visitors an interesting and educational experience. The incorporation of technology to enhance visitor interaction, sustainable design, and adaptability to changing exhibition needs are all highly valued in contemporary museum architecture, according to [MacLeod, \(2018\)](#). According to experts, museum settings should encourage interaction between the artifacts on display and the visitors, resulting in situations that are both emotionally and intellectually engaging [Giebelhausen \(2006\)](#). Furthermore, museums are becoming more and more cultural landmarks, and their distinctive architectural styles enhance the local economies and sense of identity [Hein \(2010\)](#).

The Patan Palace was transformed into the Patan Museum in the 1990s with help from UNESCO and the Austrian government, and it officially opened its doors in 1997. The goal of this renovation was to preserve the palace's architectural heritage while updating it to satisfy the needs of a modern museum. The restoration of ancient Newari architectural elements, like intricately carved windows, doors, and courtyards, to their previous state was one of the most significant modifications. In order to highlight the museum's collections of bronze sculptures, religious artifacts, and historical demonstrates, new features such as galleries and exhibition rooms were carefully incorporated. To satisfy modern museum requirements, new facilities were also added, such as visitor amenities, security measures, and lighting systems [Slusser \(1982\)](#); [Tiwari \(2009\)](#)). The Patan Museum is a well-known example of adaptive reuse in heritage preservation according to its comprehensive restoration and renovation.

This medieval palace exemplifies these qualities, particularly through its aesthetic appeal, showcased in the intricate carvings adorning its doors, windows, columns, struts, tympanums, beams, and pinnacles. These artistic elements highlight the exceptional craftsmanship and visual elegance that make the palace an architectural masterpiece. It features several iconic courtyards, such as Keshavnarayan, Mul, and Sundari Chowk, which serve as functional spaces embodying both tangible and intangible heritage. These courtyards not only showcase architectural brilliance but also preserve cultural traditions. Additionally, elements like hitis (water spouts), ponds, and dabalīs (raised platforms) induce the ambiance of a medieval palace, offering visitors a deeply immersive experience. These functional components are intrinsically linked to intangible cultural values,

such as daily worship practices, events, jatra processions, festivals, and rituals, creating a harmonious blend of utility and tradition.

6.2. COURTYARDS AND GARDEN: IN-SITU CONSERVATION AND MODERN MUSEUM GALLERIES SHOWCASING ARCHITECTURE ELEMENTS

This museum features Mulchowk and Sundarichowk courtyards, showcasing artifacts preserved in their original locations through in-situ conservation principles. Additionally, the courtyard's first floor houses modern museum galleries, preserving architectural elements.

In-situ conservation refers to the process of conserving natural resources or cultural assets in their original site while maintaining their contextual, historical, and environmental integrity. This approach is commonly used to ensure that monuments, archeological sites, and ecosystems remain in their native habitats, preserving their cultural and scientific value. Strategies include controlled public access, environmental monitoring, and structural stability to prevent degradation while allowing for continued pleasure and research [ICOMOS. \(1993\)](#). In-situ conservation is crucial for preserving history while respecting its original context and significance.

The multifunctional courtyards seen in Kathmandu's medieval palaces, particularly those constructed during the Malla dynasty, were crucial to the aesthetic and cultural architecture of the complexes. Enclosed by intricately carved temples and buildings, these outside enclosures served as the center of the palace's religious and social life. The original Newari architectural style was reflected in their concentration on proportionate building, water features, small temples, Dabali, and elements that create a livable sociocultural environment. The courtyards also provided air and light, critical for the tropical climate of the Kathmandu Valley [Slusser \(1982\)](#); [Tiwari \(2001\)](#). Beyond their aesthetic worth, they are a living legacy that narrates the story of the interwoven heritage of architecture and culture.

6.3. SUNDARI CHOWK

The Patan Museum complex's Sundari Chowk is a well-known courtyard renowned for its artistic and architectural magnificence. Built during the Malla era, it is a prime example of Newar craftsmanship, with struts, elaborately carved wooden windows, and a magnificently designed royal bath (Tusha Hiti) at its core. The Sundari Chowk is the smallest of the three courtyards of the Patan Palace, located at the south end of the compound. It is famous for a historic bathhouse in the middle that was once used by the royal family and features animal-shaped water spouts. The courtyard's architecture is rich in symbolism, fusing religious and cultural themes with the principles of Vastu Shastra. It was custom-built in 1628 by Siddhi Narasimha Malla and is particularly notable for the elaborately carved Tusa Hiti (step stone tap) at its center. Originally used for private gatherings and royal events, Sundari Chowk is now a museum gallery that displays artifacts and architectural models that tell the story of the area's rich past. This change guarantees the preservation of Newar art for upcoming generations and emphasizes its lasting impact.

Despite sustaining damage in several earthquakes, including those in 1934 and 2015, both the fountain and the surrounding walls have been fully restored to their original form, as indicated in the restoration gallery at Mulchowk. The central

placement of the Tusa Hiti within the Sundari Chowk suggests that the courtyard was specifically designed to accommodate it. Architectural historian Niels Gutschow describes the courtyard and fountain as “the most significant structure within the former palace complex” [Gutschow \(2001\)](#).

The courtyard has undergone numerous repairs, particularly after the 2011 restorations increased its structural stability. The courtyard is an essential part of Patan's cultural heritage despite preservation challenges, like as damage from past earthquakes. The royal family used to use the historic bathhouse in Mulchowk, Patan Palace, which has a central bathing room with water spouts designed like animals. These spouts are shaped like mythological animals, such the crocodile-like Makara, which is a common design element in Nepali stone spouts and represents protection and a bond with water deities. The Patan Museum's Sundari Chowk is renowned for both its historical significance and architectural beauty. One of its most notable features is the underwater royal bath, Tusha Hiti, which is center to the courtyard and exhibits outstanding stone craftsmanship. Deities like Vishnu, Laxmi, and Garuda are depicted in the area's sculptures and carvings, which showcase the Malla period's creativity. Sundari Chowk, the site of the magnificent Tushahiti, is a remarkable example of in-situ preservation because it has managed to preserve both its historical surroundings and its beauty. By presenting the Chowk's intricate carvings and symbolic symbols in their authentic physical and cultural setting, this approach fosters a deeper understanding of its artistic and historical significance. From the museum's perspective, keeping Tushahiti in-situ preserves the site's integrity and authenticity while also transforming it into a "living exhibit," which lets visitors experience the historical site as it was intended. This method highlights how important it is to protect cultural resources in their natural environments so that their historical narratives can be preserved.

6.4. MULCHOWK

Mulchowk, an integral architectural, historical, and religious courtyard within the Patan Royal Palace complex, was constructed in 1666 under King Siddhinarasimha Malla. It is one of the three main courtyards of the palace, alongside Sundari Chowk and Keshav Narayan Chowk. Renowned for its exquisite wooden carvings and statues, Mulchowk exemplifies the exceptional craftsmanship of Newar artisans of the era. As the largest courtyard in the palace complex, Mulchowk is dedicated to Taleju Bhawani and serves as a vital socio-cultural, spiritual, and religious hub. It gained prominence during the Malla period as the venue for significant royal events, including the coronation of kings. The annual Dashain festival, marked by special worship of Taleju Bhawani, has been celebrated here since its inception and continues to this day, preserving its historical and religious heritage. This courtyard exemplifies the Newa civilization's holistic architectural approach, deeply rooted in Vastu Shastra and integrating religio-spirituality, socio-economic structures, and ethno-technological traditions. The coordination between royal family members and local communities ensured Mulchowk's central role in sustaining cultural heritage and community life. Mulchowk, the heart of Patan Palace, is adorned with intricately carved architectural elements, including columns, bars, tympanums, struts, doors, and windows, all of which display the exquisite craftsmanship of the Newar artisans. These features were not merely decorative but symbolic, representing the fusion of spiritual and artistic expressions in Newar culture. Even the hardened stone surfaces are brought to life with carvings that reflect mythological themes, religious icons, and socio-cultural narratives.

To preserve and showcase its artistic and architectural legacy, Mulchowk now serves as a home to museum galleries that celebrate its rich heritage. The Mulchowk Gallery offers visitors a comprehensive understanding of the courtyard's history, design, and cultural significance through detailed exhibits and interactive visual aids. Within this block lies the Architectural Gallery, encompassing sub-galleries dedicated to specific elements such as windows, struts, columns, tympanums, and projects. Each sub-gallery highlights the intricate craftsmanship and design techniques that define Newar artistry. These galleries play a crucial role in making the heritage of Mulchowk accessible for education and appreciation, fostering a deeper connection between past and present. By preserving the architectural brilliance and disseminating knowledge about the spiritual, socio-economic, and technological aspects of Newar civilization, the museum promotes cultural tourism and ensures the continued legacy of this historic site.

6.5. BHANDARKHAL GARDEN

The Bhandarkhal Garden in the Patan Museum complex is a peaceful historical site that exemplifies the creativity of native Newari water management systems. Built in the late 17th century beside the royal residence, it served as the Patan royals' main source of water. The garden's main feature is a 16-by-16-meter tiered pond that is intricately built of stone and brick. Statues of the goddess Ganga and a dragon-headed spout surround the reservoir, which gets its water from the Lohan Hiti spout. Adjacent to the pond lies the restored Bhandarkhal arena, a historically significant structure that was lost and then rebuilt in 2010 using historical materials.

7. CONCLUSION

Because of its excellent preservation techniques, the Patan Museum, despite its difficulties, is a monument to the lasting legacy of Newar craftsmanship and cultural history. A thorough conservation strategy has been put in place at the museum despite challenges such as shifting environmental conditions, seismic vulnerabilities, resource shortages, and the demands of urbanization and tourism. Its architectural structures and artifacts are at risk due to environmental causes and growing tourist numbers; therefore, creative solutions are required to maintain their longevity. However, in order to safeguard its priceless collections, the museum has effectively implemented contemporary preservation methods like climate-controlled spaces, UV-filtered lighting, pest control, and seismic reinforcements. It incorporates community involvement, careful handling procedures, and preventive conservation measures. Traditional craftspeople are also involved in restoration projects, and training programs are used to promote knowledge transmission. In alongside protecting the museum's material and immaterial heritage, this compatible combination of traditional practices and modern science strengthens its function as a center for education and culture. The museum, a cultural establishment located within Patan Durbar Square's UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a prime example of how heritage protection can be skillfully managed to maintain authenticity while meeting the needs of contemporary urban growth and tourism. Community engagement is essential for raising awareness and ensuring that local customs and knowledge are preserved, even though sustainable conservation techniques blend modern interventions with respect for traditional practices. When taken as a whole, these components promote the longevity and conservation of cultural assets.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

REFERENCES

- Ambrose, T., & Paine, C. (2018). *Museum basics*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315232898>
- Ashley-Smith, J. (1999). *Risk Assessment for Object Conservation*. Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Boylan, P. J. (2004). *The Role of Museums in Preserving Cultural Heritage*.
- Caple, C. (2000). *Conservation Skills: Judgement, Method and Decision Making*. Routledge.
- Dean, D. (2002). *Museum Exhibition: Theory and Practice*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203039366>
- Florian, M. L. E. (1997). *Heritage Eaters: Insects and Fungi in Heritage Collections*. Routledge.
- Giebelhausen, M. (2006). *The Architecture of the Museum: Symbolic Structures, Urban Contexts*. Manchester University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470776230.ch1>
- Gutschow, N. (2001). *The Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley*. Shambhala Publications.
- Gutschow, N. (2016). *The Restoration of the Kathmandu Valley after the 2015 Earthquake*. Springer.
- Gutschow, N., & Kreutzmann, H. (1998). *Heritage in Transition: Changing Contexts of Architecture and Society in Nepal*.
- Gutschow, N., & Kreutzmann, H. (2013). *Architecture of the Newars: A History of Building Typologies and Details in Nepal*. Ratna Pustak Bhandar.
- Hein, H. (2010). *The Museum in Transition: A Philosophical Perspective*. Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Houghton, N. (2017). *Museums and their Visitors: Challenges and Strategies in the Postmodern Era*. Routledge.
- ICOM. (2019). *ICOM code of Ethics for Museums*.
- ICOMOS. (1993). *Guidelines for the Conservation of Monuments, Sites, and Cultural Landscapes*. International Council on Monuments and Sites.
- Learner, T. (2005). *Analysis of Modern Paints*. Getty Publications.
- MacLeod, S. (2018). *Reshaping Museum Space: Architecture, Design, Exhibitions*. Routledge.
- Michalski, S. (1994). *A systematic Approach to Preventive Conservation of Museum Collections*. Proceedings of the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works.
- Oddy, W. A. (2016). *The art of the Conservator*. British Museum Press.
- Parry, R. (2007). *Recoding the Museum: Digital Heritage and the Technologies of Change*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203347485>
- Pinniger, D. (2015). *Pest Management in Museums, Archives, and Historic Houses* (2nd ed.). Archetype Publications.
- Podany, J., Garland, K. M., Freeman, W. R., & Rogers, J. (2001). *Paraloid B-72 as a Structural Adhesive and as a Barrier within Structural Adhesive Bonds*:

- Evaluations of Strength, Reversibility, and Aging Properties. *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*, 40(1), 15-33.
<https://doi.org/10.1179/019713601806113120>
- Pye, E. (2007). *The Power of Touch: Handling Objects in Museum and Heritage Contexts*. Routledge.
- Shrestha, M. (2018). *Heritage Preservation and Community Involvement in Nepal: A Case Study of Patan Museum*. Tribhuvan University.
- Shrestha, M. (2019). *Preservation of Intangible Heritage Through Museums: A Case Study of Patan Museum*. *Kathmandu Journal of Cultural Heritage*, 5(2), 45-58.
- Shrestha, M., & Bajracharya, R. (2019). *Challenges of Heritage Conservation in Kathmandu Valley: A Case Study of Patan Museum*. *Heritage and Conservation Journal*, 14(3), 45-58.
- Slusser, M. S. (1982). *Nepal Mandala: A Cultural Study of the Kathmandu Valley*. Princeton University Press.
- Slusser, M. S. (1982). *The Art and Architecture of Nepal*. Princeton University Press.
- Smith, L. (2006). *Uses of Heritage*. Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203602263>
- Staniforth, S. (2013). *Historical Perspectives on Preventive Conservation*. Getty Publications.
- Thapa, S. (2020). *Environmental Impacts on Museum Artifacts in the Kathmandu Valley*. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 26(2), 135-148.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2020.1695273>
- Tiwari, S. R. (2001). *The Brick and the Bull: An Account of Handigaun, Nepal's Ancient Capital*. Himal Books.
- Tiwari, S. R. (2009). *Tiered Temples of Nepal*. Ratna Pustak Bhandar.
- Tiwari, S. R. (2018). *Architectural Heritage of the Kathmandu Valley: Preservation challenges*. Vajra Publications.
- UNESCO. (2003). *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- UNESCO. (2007). *World Heritage Report: The Kathmandu Valley*.
- Watson, S. (2007). *Museums and their Communities*. Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203944752>