



People visit the opening of 'The Modern Maharajah' exhibition at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris. — AFP photos

## PARIS FALLS FOR JAZZ-AGE GLAMOUR OF INDIA'S MODERNIST MAHARAJAH



**T**hey were India's golden couple of the 1920s and 1930s, two beautiful people who cut a wildly glamorous dash across the globe, being photographed by Man Ray and sipping cocktails with Hollywood stars. The extraordinary lives and impeccable taste of the Maharajah of Indore and his maharani, Sanyogita Devi, are celebrated in a spectacular new exhibition at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris.

With the clouds of World War II darkening over Europe, the pair created a gem of an avant-garde palace on the Malwa Plateau in the heart of India. An oasis of understated but dazzling modernist luxury, it was furnished with pieces by Eileen Gray, Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret among others, with art by Brancusi.

The first building in the subcontinent to have air conditioning, it also had a ballroom where the couple could do the foxtrot to the jazz-loving maharajah's collection of 100,000 records. The aesthete prince commissioned the young German architect Eckart Muthesius to create his dream of the future.

### 'A veritable Rudolph Valentino'

Together the two men combed the salesrooms and artist studios of Paris and Berlin with art advisor Henri-Pierre Roche-author of the novel "Jules and Jim"-to find the works to fill it. Muthesius was also asked to kit out the 25-year-old maharajah's sleek new royal train, as well as a barge that was a "veritable floating modernist palace" and do the interiors of his private plane. He

