

10 POWER OF TRINITY

THE SUNDAY STANDARD
NEW DELHI ♦ SUNDAY 13-19 APRIL 2014

ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

CREATIVE CUSTODIANS

Gallery Owners

Rohit Gandhi and Rahul Khanna, *PALETTE*

R&R in Art Meets Fashion

HEMANT CHAWLA



RAHUL

YOUR FAVOURITE ART PLACE: Victoria and Albert Museum, London

ROHIT

YOUR FAVOURITE ART PLACE: Victoria and Albert Museum, London



FASHION DISASTERS OF DELHI:

Men wearing colourful coordinated jackets and trousers. The printed suit is a total no no for us

FASHION DISASTERS OF DELHI:

Men go for clothes they see in magazines and end up looking like jackasses

MOST STYLISH ARTISTS:

Anjum Singh. We love the way Kangana looks (in Queen)

MOST STYLISH ARTISTS:

Subodh Gupta, Thukral and Tagra

Rohit Gandhi, dressed in a black shirt (partner Rahul Khanna claims he has 400 in his closet) and blue jeans is a master in sophisticated irony. He is happy that winter is over, because in summer Arvind Kejriwal will stop wearing his muffler. "It is disturbing. Very disturbing," says Rohit, deadpan. In 2001, fashion designers Rohit Gandhi and Rahul Khanna set up the Palette Art Gallery in Golf Links in spite of condescending questions on what fashion designers know of art. Rahul shrugs. "We took up art to celebrate it." They do it well. At their shows, Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi are often seen contemplating canvases.

Rohit finds Delhi's five star culture "claustrophobic". They are hungry for more standalone restaurants like Tres. Rahul says, "Delhi gets a trendy place every six months. It needs more roadside cafes, but the weather doesn't allow it."

Rohit says, "As gallery owners, it is essential to cultivate buyers. You have to know who buys what." In the last 10 years, several small galleries in Delhi have shut down. Natch, they have a keen fashion eye. "I get surprised seeing flabby women in body-hugging clothes. They should wear something flowy. They should experiment. You don't have to fit yourself into a stereotype," says Rahul, adding that a resort kind of a collection, somewhat zen, looks good on bigger people.

The two feel that times are changing in Delhi, for both the artists and the audience. "People visit the galleries with their children on weekends," says Rahul. But the two don't see art as child's play.

The Diva of Display

RAVI CHOUDHARY



WEAVES OR BLING IN SARIS?

Weaves. And not the usual bling

WHAT SURPRISES YOU?

People coming and telling me that artists are still very emotional about the gallery

WHAT'S COMMON BETWEEN MF HUSAIN AND MANJIT BAWA?

Music. That was the only thing they had in common

Gallery owner and collector Renu Modi's vast colourscape that extends from her drawing room to her Gallery Espace records Delhi's fascinating journey and history as a growing art hub. Her Delhi is about an open heart, candidness and clarity. "I still tell artists to their face when I don't like their work. It's not arrogance. Maybe it's what makes people come back to me," says Renu.

When she shifted base to Delhi from Modinagar in the late 1980s, the art boom had just rolled in. Over dinners at the Volga restaurant in Connaught Place, Renu Modi and her husband, the well-known industrialist D K Modi, would discuss art trends with friends and family—most of them collectors and art lovers. At the time, Dhoomimal in CP, the Village Gallery in Hauz Khas and the Garhi Studio were the creative hubs. Art initiatives like Sahmat had arrived. Art-

ist groups and coteries were well in place. "Husain had told me about the 'grouping' trend in Delhi," she remembers. "There was the Garhi group, the Triveni group, the Lalit Kala group, the Vivan Sundaram group."

Renu's idea of doing business was art minus coteries. Husain taught her the ropes. "Delhi has always been bureaucratic. Bombay had the market," Renu, however, feels that the Delhi art scene has evolved. "Private initiatives such as the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, the Devi Art Foundation and initiatives like Khoj have provided alternatives. In the old days, I would knock on the doors of galleries abroad in vain. Now they are all flocking to India, thanks to Delhi."

According to Renu, some things haven't changed; Delhi artists continue to buy each other's works and people from the performing arts fraternity never buy art.



Sunaina Anand, 48, *ART ALIVE*

Purveyor of Palettes

Artists love Sunaina Anand, the affable and knowledgeable owner of Alive Art Gallery. Her elegant art shows, where champagne and artisanal cheeses are the norm, are attended by the who's who of the art and social world. The lady with a saree collection as impeccable as the art she shows enjoys "what I do. It's not your regular nine to five job". Her shows are attended by Delhi's eclectic mix of artists, writers, diplomats and patrons. The air is abuzz with conversation and the clink of champagne flutes. "Collaborating with like-minded, artistically evolved individuals of the city gives me the impetus to get back into action every time I am down," she says. She has a bad cold.

Sunaina's connection with art is visceral; as a painter, curator and prominent gallery owner. Her daily morning walk through the verdant Siri Fort Complex is a prized ritual when she collects her thoughts and plans her day. The golden light bathing lush green trees, the glissando of birdcalls, companionable joggers, worried little children running after the school bus, friendly newspaper hawkers cycling lazily from house to house and the melody of early morning prayers that swim in the wind are the little things that Sunaina loves about living in Delhi. Domestic time is morning walks with her husband, catching up on both personal and business matters. She is particular about walking and doing yoga. Delhi has great open spaces, the air fresh with oxygen in the city's myriad parks. "I started yoga about six years ago and have seen a noticeable change in my personality. It helps me collect my thoughts well and I am able to select better projects and people to work with," she says.

A Sai Baba devotee, Sunaina prefers to be called spiritual rather than religious. In art she finds the reflection of a higher power that guides her take the hairpin bends of life well. "Like Delhi found its true character after years and years of invasions, conquests, defeat and turmoil, I too become stronger after every test. If it seems rather difficult, visiting the Sai Baba temple near Lodi always helps" she says. God willing.

BIGGEST AND HOT-SELLING SHOWS: Those of S H Raza and Paresch Maity

THE MOST DIFFICULT PEOPLE TO DEAL WITH: Wheeler dealers who pretend to be art experts

IDEA OF PERFECT HAPPINESS: Being focused and being able to follow one's dreams

WHAT IS DELHI TO YOU IN A LINE: A city of opportunities, which is expanding beautifully