

SATISH MODI

no ordinary art collector

MODI IS ALSO A PHILANTHROPIST, A WRITER AND A TRUE VISIONARY. WE MET AT HIS MAYFAIR APARTMENT TO LOOK AT HIS MOST RECENT ACQUISITION, AISHA CAAN'S BIG BANG WORK FEATURED IN THE PREVIOUS EDITION OF B BEYOND.

Modi has an art foundation, Arts for India, which exists for the purpose of supporting the Delhi-based International Institute of Fine Arts (IIFA).

A quality arts institution which educates over 375 students in art, fashion and cinema, individual students (who would not otherwise be able to pursue a creative path at all) are fully funded through the institute via the Four Year Scholarship Programme.

There are two existing educational partners for the institute – the Prince's Drawing School, President HRH The Prince of Wales, and the University of the Arts London. Both send teachers and students to IIFA to help raised education standards whilst improving the visitors own art practice. Excitingly a third partner, the Zurich University of the Arts, has just been signed-up.

Modi established *Arts for India* - an international friend and fundraising organisation to support IIFA and its objectives – in 2010. His and Arts for India's most visionary and ambitious project objective is the Universe of Art project. He has decided to bequeath family-owned lands outside of the family township of Modinagar, NCR Delhi for the development of a major art centre that will be second to none in India and rival the Qatari Museum of Islamic Art in scope, size and creative inspiration.

Having discussed the idea with H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, the Prince's Foundation for Building Community was appointed with architects Porphyrios Associates asked to come up with a design that has a WOW factor and will, quite simply, be one of the world's great architectural wonders when executed. The result is awesome on paper, so the real thing will likely be awe-inspiring.

And that's not all... alongside the art centre and a new University of the Arts, Modi is hoping to create, together with a partner developer, a new eco-city outside of Modinagar which will cater for the overspill from Delhi as the middle class expands and moves to the suburbs. The new township will have Delhi's newest golf course as well as residential and hospitality complexes that would form a spectacular enclave around the river that runs through

the area. A new expressway means that travelling time to central Delhi will be just 20 minutes.

Modi is no stranger to large ambitious projects. He comes from one of India's leading industrialist families with strong philanthropic traditions having founded India's first private airline, Modi-Luft.

He is an engaging, well-spoken man who shows unexpected depths in the course of our conversation. He has clearly spent a great deal of time reflecting on the purpose of life and its inevitable conclusion, death.

The result of his reflections is a book based on notes he has penned over a number of years, *In Love with Death*.

The book is not about death but rather, an attempt to articulate a philosophy of life in the context of its relative brevity and the legacy we each leave. It seeks to reconcile us with the inevitable and make us embrace it - to the extent that each of us can - cherishing, respecting and celebrating the time we have been given on earth. It is a very personal exploration that will resonate with many and prompt others to re-evaluate their own fears, aspirations and the way they conduct their lives.

Modi delivered this address at the inaugural function of the *Global Peace Forum*, a UNESCO initiative:

'Most of the conflicts in today's time are emerging from religious intolerance and a struggle for power. While we all know and recognize the urgent need for global peace, it is essential to find a neutral and universally accepted means of spreading this very important message. Art is a universal language where visual expression evokes raw emotions and is thus an effective medium of conveying the very important message of peace and harmony. Indeed, powerful images of paintings can leave an everlasting impact on peoples' minds. Unlike words which are spoken, heard and sometimes forgotten, art on canvas stays forever and so does the message it conveys.'

His is a hope articulated by other fellow philanthropists previously profiled in B Beyond. ■