

THE PUBLIC EYE

BY MORTIMER CHATTERJEE



AN INSIDER'S LOOK AT MUMBAI'S FINEST CORPORATE AND INSTITUTIONAL ART COLLECTIONS

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# There's accounting for taste

SATISH MALVADE

**S**angita Jindal is determined to use her position in society for good. Each day is carved into thin precise slices, each slice devoted to one of the myriad projects that she supports. Arts and culture has always figured prominently in her outlook, and her most recent project may well be one of her most ambitious. A significant number of works from her personal art collection have now found a permanent home at the new headquarters of the JSW Group located in Bandra Kurla. In the execution of this process she has set the standard in the region for the display of art in corporate settings.

She was first exposed to art growing up in Kolkata where her mother, Urmilla Kanoria, was an active patron of the arts (and was also responsible for the Kanoria Arts Centre in Ahmedabad). Early in her art journey Sangita had the chance to work with the legendary arts administrator Jamshed Bhabha, at the National Centre for Performing Arts (NCPA). Out of this interaction was born the Jindal Arts Creative Interaction Centre (JACIC) in 1994. It was later established as the cultural arm of JSW Foundation, known in those days as the Jindal South West Foundation. JSW Steel is one of India's leading private sector steel producers. It is spread over six locations in India and has a footprint that extends to the US, South America and Africa. As honorary director of JACIC, Sangita's aim was to promote interdisciplinary arts activity with a view to support and develop appreciation of art and culture.

The next major initiative was the launch of the publication *Art India* in 1996. Having worked with Anupa Mehta at JACIC, Sangita invited her to become the first editor of the magazine. Over the intervening 19 years, *Art India* has borne witness to the changing landscape of Indian contemporary art and has been crucially important in providing a



Artist Dhruvi Acharya's mixed media on canvas, *JSW* (2013), at the office cafeteria features scenes from the typical workdays of employees across the company

voice to art critics operating in the region. Whilst her commitment to the magazine continues unabated, Sangita is aware of the changing nature of the media and sees an inevitable switch *Art India* will have to make from print to the online space.

Collecting began early; some of her first purchases were works by Anjolie Ela Menon and M F Husain. As her exposure to art grew the collection began to reflect her maturing taste. When asked how she selects works, Sangita remarks, "It is mostly my personal choice. I buy art based on my instinct, how a work of art speaks to me. Most importantly, a work of art should allow me to get in touch with my inner self. If I connect with the artist, it's great — I like them involved."

The grand architectural statement that is the new JSW Centre (built by renowned architects Burt Hill, now Stantec) has allowed Sangita free reign over a huge space, much of which is conceived as open plan in form. To encounter an Anish Kapoor installation upon entering the build-

ing is an exercise in shock and awe. Other major statement pieces that have been installed onsite include Shilpa Gupta's constellation of steel books, Rana Begum's meditative installation and a massive mural canvas by Dhruvi Acharya, that occupies the entire back wall of the company's all day dining restaurant. Spanning an incredible 32 feet, the canvas, entitled *JSW*, features scenes from the typical workdays of employees across the company. These vignettes are woven together by a complex pattern of detailed drawings that portray every conceivable aspect of the JSW world — from factories, to trucks, to the component parts made from the company's steel. Acharya's *JSW* is a tour de force and must rank as one of the artist's most significant works to date.

The floors occupied by senior management include paintings by significant artists, both modern and contemporary, including M F Husain, S H Raza, Laxman Shrestha, Atul Dodiya and Jagannath Panda. Preeti Sanghi, an architect by training, undertook much of



Jaganath Panda's *Wizard of the Wasteland* (2014)

the coordination for this herculean project. Preeti's indefatigable spirit proved crucial in maintaining deadlines and budgets in the face of challenging circumstances. The results have been gratifying.

When asked what next for JSW's relationship with art, Sangita dashes off an impressive list that includes architectural projects in Vijaynagar, near Hampi (which also houses Kaladham, an arts complex), as well as the start of classes for drawing and painting at SNTD Kanyashala, now named The Jindal Centre for the Arts in Mumbai. The Jindal art collection is, in this sense, one node in a much larger network.

In the absence of state and union level engagement with the arts, it is patrons such as Sangita who are being called upon more than ever to plug the gaps in the cultural life of the country.

— (Mortimer Chatterjee is a gallerist and writer)



The Jindal workplace at Bandra Kurla Complex also houses significant works (left to right) such as Avinash Veeraraghavan's *Village Voice* (2012) and Shilpa Gupta's *Someone Else* (2011)