



ART

## Inside the Masters of Luxury Art List Featuring Atul Dodiya, Kiran Nadar and More Visionaries

From celebrated artists and visionary collectors to influential patrons, these individuals are shaping the future of art and culture through creativity, stewardship and lasting impact.



A new Masters of Luxury Art List profiles visionaries reshaping how India experiences art and craft. **From Left to Right:** Jaiveer Jotai, Hena Kapoor, Bharti Kher

Ela Das

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### Abhishek Poddar



As a young collector, Poddar found that some of the most compelling exhibitions of Indian art were taking place outside India. **Abhishek Poddar**

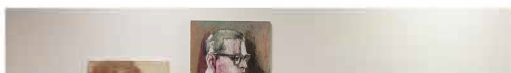
For Abhishek Poddar, luxury in art has very little to do with price, provenance or what the market dictates. If anything, he finds the sameness of it all deeply uninspiring.

“Every collection is starting to look the same,” he notes, pointing to a culture of safe choices and predictable names. For him, the real luxury lies elsewhere—in individuality, and in the confidence to stand by it. “Having the courage to make your own choices, rather than be governed by what’s expected of you—that, to me, is luxury.” It’s a philosophy that extends to how he built the Museum of Art & Photography (MAP) in Bengaluru.

As a young collector, Poddar found that some of the most compelling exhibitions of Indian art were taking place outside India. The idea that one had to leave the country to experience its own artistic legacy didn’t sit right with him. What followed was a rethinking of who a museum is for. Poddar resisted conventional advice to define a target audience. Instead, he insisted that MAP be for everyone—students, first-time visitors, seasoned collectors, the curious, and the committed alike. That decision shaped everything, from programming to design, resulting in a space that feels less instructive and more exploratory.

Technology plays a central role in the museum’s journey, with MAP opening digitally years before its physical doors did in 2023: a move that dramatically expanded its reach. “Today, the museum sees about 10,000 visitors a month, but online, we reach millions each year.” That accessibility has also reshaped who the museum speaks to. “Nearly 80 per cent of our visitors are young, which was a wonderful surprise,” he shares. The shift lies in how the museum’s physical experience is designed, which gives visitors the freedom to navigate, discover, and return on their own terms, “instead of being told what to see or think. If you make it relevant to the youth, you make it relevant to everyone,” he muses.

### Atul Dodiya





Dodiya has built a body of work that moves fluidly between the personal and the political. **Atul Dodiya**

Atul Dodiya's work has always carried the feeling of a life lived closely with art, and in constant conversation with it. Growing up in a middle-class neighbourhood in Ghatkopar, Mumbai, he was certain early on that he wanted to paint, encouraged by those around him. That clarity stayed, even as his practice expanded in unexpected directions over the years. His time in Paris, where he studied at the École des Beaux-Arts, opened up his thinking, giving him "immense freedom and thoughts that shaped my way of thinking for the coming years," as he explained to Robb Report India in December 2025, when discussing his four-decade career in contemporary art.

Dodiya has built a body of work that moves fluidly between the personal and the political. His paintings and installations bring together references from cinema, literature, mythology, and art history, often layered with wit and irony. There's also a sharp sense of observation in his work, often drawn from the everyday. Early pieces like *The Bombay Buceaneer* signalled a shift from photorealism to something more layered and self-aware, bringing together popular culture and art historical references in a single frame.

Later works, particularly his shutter paintings, responded to moments of unrest in the city, turning familiar urban objects into surfaces that carry personal and political memory. Over time, certain motifs return—Gandhi, fragments of text, the human figure—each revisited and reinterpreted across different series. His cabinet installations extend this instinct further, almost like assembling a personal museum of ideas. And yet, for all its references, his art resists becoming overly fixed or easily explained. It often leaves the viewer with a lingering feeling rather than a clear answer.

## Bharti Kher



For Kher, the real luxury now is attention. **Bharti Kher**

Bharti Kher is not interested in the obvious markers of luxury: price, rarity, visibility. What endures, she suggests, is far less visible. "The real luxury now is attention," she says. She means both the artist's, while making a work, and the viewer's, while experiencing it. That emphasis on time, depth, and attention runs through Kher's decades-long practice, with her work drawing from everyday objects and cultural symbols, translating them into forms that feel familiar yet disorienting. The bindi, perhaps her most recognisable motif, becomes, in her hands, something far more complex—an object that holds within it layers of identity, ritual, politics, and memory. Multiplied and displaced, it moves away from the body and into a new form of expression that is deeply personal and culturally charged.

Going against the illusion of certainty, she speaks of doubt and failure as essential forces behind her way of working—moments that unsettle an artwork just enough to keep it alive. "Comfort in art is a trap," she exclaims, describing the need to constantly dismantle and reimagine her own way of seeing. The decision to trust intuition over explanation marked a turning point in her practice. There is also, in her work, a persistent engagement with material itself as a medium with its own agency and presence. Objects seem to gather histories, to accumulate meaning, to behave almost independently within the work. It's a way of thinking that resists control, allowing the artwork to evolve on its own terms. In a world of rapid visual consumption, where images are produced and circulated endlessly, Kher returns to something more elusive. What allows a piece of art to endure, she believes, is ambiguity. "If it reveals itself too quickly, it risks exhaustion," she explains. "An enduring work carries a certain mystery; it keeps asking questions of the viewer and of itself."

## Dinesh Vazirani and Minal Vazirani





Dinesh and Minal Vazirani launched Saffronart as an online auction platform, a move that was seen as counterintuitive at the time. **Dinesh Vazirani**

Long before the Indian art market found its current momentum, Dinesh Vazirani and Minal Vazirani were already thinking about how to expand its reach. In 2000, they launched Saffronart as an online auction platform, a move that was seen as counterintuitive at the time; and the idea that collectors would buy art digitally was met with skepticism. But that early bet on technology went on to reshape how Indian art today is accessed, collected, and understood globally. Over the past two decades, Saffronart has built systems that are more transparent, connected, and with a significantly greater international reach than most art spaces. By bringing together collectors across geographies and providing access to information and pricing, the Vaziranis have helped position South Asian art within a global framework.

More recently, with Art Mumbai (which the Vaziranis co-founded in 2023), the focus has shifted from building a market to shaping a cultural moment. Conceived as an international art fair for the city, Art Mumbai draws galleries from India and across the globe, creating a space for discovery, exchange, and conversation. "Fairs create moments of discovery that enliven a city's cultural life," says Minal. "Unlike galleries, which present focused programmes," adds Dinesh, "or auctions centered on a moment of sale, fairs bring many galleries, artists, and ideas together, allowing audiences to experience a broader cross-section of the art world in one place." For the Vaziranis, collecting is as much about building knowledge as it is about acquisition; and in a rapidly expanding market, they return to a simple metric of value. What lasts, as Dinesh points out, is not dictated by price. "When a work stays with you long after you've seen it, and has the ability to move people, reflect the complexities of its time, and continue resonating across generations... ultimately, its cultural significance will outlast market cycles."

### Hena Kapadia



Hena Kapadia founded the art gallery Tarq in Mumbai in 2014. **Hena Kapadia**

When Hena Kapadia founded the art gallery Tarq in Mumbai in 2014, her focus was clear. She wanted to create a space where engagement mattered more than intimidation, and a viewer would stay on to look closer, ask questions and even return. And every visitor was to be treated with the same attention. It's a philosophy that has made her gallery feel inviting rather than closed off—something still rare across the art landscape.

Kapadia placed her bets on younger, emerging artists including Sameer Kulavoor, Rithika Merchant, Vishwa Shroff, and Parag Tandel; many of whom have since gone on to become some of the most compelling and collectable voices in contemporary Indian art today. "What makes an artist tick is how I know a work will endure, because of the themes of the work, and the sincerity in making the work," she says. That instinct for spotting promise early on is matched by a sensitivity to how audiences are changing. Kapadia speaks of a younger generation of collectors who approach art "in a more curious way". "Many dismiss collectors who are technology-focused," she says, "but we see younger folks who are keen to know more about the artists. They aren't just acquiring works; they're following practices, asking questions, and investing time in understanding the context in which the work is made." She remarks how the way collectors engage with art today is far more layered.

"There's a joy in experiencing a work for the first time," she shares, "and then waking up the next day still thinking about it. In returning to it again and again, you begin to find something new each time."

### Jacinta Moorthy and RK Moorthy





Walking into the Moorthy's + Pooranawalla store in Mumbai's bustling art district, Kala Ghoda, feels like stepping into a closely guarded secret spot in the Maximum City. Jacinta Moorthy and RK Moorthy

Walking into the Moorthy's + Pooranawalla store in Mumbai's bustling art district, Kala Ghoda, feels like stepping into a closely guarded secret spot in the Maximum City. Rows of seafoam-hued doors open onto their sprawling sunlit atelier, which houses their sizeable collection of antiques, objets d'art, and artefacts.

What RK Moorthy and Jacinta Moorthy started in 1978 as a warehouse-cum-store in Tardeo has evolved into one of the country's most respected destinations for quality antiques. Their collection includes campaign and colonial-era furniture, as well as Art Deco and mid-century modern pieces. Alongside these sit furniture by Danish masters Arne Vodder, Finn Juhl, and Hans Wegner; Swiss architect Pierre Jeanneret's Chandigarh ensemble; and objects from India's own material history—bronze sculptures, temple artefacts, ceremonial pieces—each studied and restored with the Moorthys' keen eye and uncompromising standard for quality. "We've created this place for talking, for dialoguing," Jacinta says of the Kala Ghoda space that they moved to in 2022. "People come in, ask questions, linger, look more closely. The exchange feels as important as the object itself."

Staying clear of speed and replication prevalent in today's market, the Moorthys continue to work at a different pace. The value of an object lies in "the stories they tell". "If you sit with these objects long enough, they begin to speak," says Jacinta, adding, "We encourage people to discover every piece on their own terms."

### Jaiveer Johal



Collecting, for Jaiveer Johal, is driven by instinct and memory. Jaiveer Johal

Collecting, for Jaiveer Johal, is driven by instinct and memory. "First, the work must move me," he describes. "Happiness, anger, sadness—anything visceral. And then it has to haunt me. You think about it long after you've seen it. That's when you know." This way of looking at art—deeply personal but never insular—has shaped Johal's journey as a collector. Over time, he has come to see collecting as a series of decisions: what to hold on to, what to let go of, and what to keep returning to. "Art is the business of what not to buy," he shares, recalling advice he once received from a friend. What marks a turning point in his journey, however, is the shift from private collecting to public engagement. With the founding of the Avtar Foundation for the Arts in Chennai in 2024, Johal began to look at his collection as something to be shared. The foundation brings carefully curated presentations of South Asian art to a city where access to such work has historically been limited, creating a space for dialogue alongside display.

Johal is also clear-eyed about the role collectors play within the ecosystem. While capital inevitably gives them a certain influence, he believes the responsibility lies elsewhere. "Collectors will always have a leading voice—we have the money," he says. "But I think we need to listen more, and create space for conversations that might otherwise be marginalised."

Beyond price or provenance, what matters is the life art gathers around it—the friendships it fosters, the conversations it sparks, the ways it continues to resonate. That, he suggests, is where its real worth lies.

### Karishma Swali



For over four decades, the textile and embroidery house has worked closely with global couture houses such as Dior, Fendi, Prada, Valentino, Celine, and Saint Laurent. Karishma Swali

When Chanakya International was established in 1984, it started with a simple belief: "Craft is a living, authored practice, and the people whose hands carry generations of knowledge, must be seen, respected, and valued as creative voices in their own right," says Karishma Swali, creative director of the Chanakya International and Chanakya School of Craft, and chairperson of Chanakya Foundation.

For over four decades, the textile and embroidery house has worked closely with global couture houses such as Dior, Fendi, Prada, Valentino, Celine, and Saint Laurent. "The most profound expression of luxury is the intimacy of handcraftsmanship," she observes. "What many overlook is the extraordinary investment of time that such work demands, where a single creation can take hundreds of hours of stitching."

At Chanakya, many of the artisans come from a lineage of artists whose techniques and

ON CHANGING, HEAVY OF THE ARTISTS COME FROM A HERITAGE OF MASTERS WHOSE TECHNIQUES AND SENSIBILITIES ARE A LIVING EXPRESSION OF SKILLS PASSED DOWN THROUGH GENERATIONS. WHILE EMBROIDERY IN INDIA HAS LONG BEEN A POWERFUL EXPRESSION OF IDENTITY FOR WOMEN, THE CRAFT ITSELF HAS BEEN TRADITIONALLY PASSED DOWN FROM FATHER TO SON. ONE OF SWALI'S DECISIONS WAS ESTABLISHING THE CHANKAYA SCHOOL OF CRAFT "WHICH I DEDICATED TO SHARED AUTHORSHIP AND EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN". SINCE ITS FOUNDING IN 2016, THE SCHOOL HAS EDUCATED OVER 1,400 WOMEN, TEACHING MORE THAN 300 TECHNIQUES IN HAND EMBROIDERY, HAND WEAVING, AND MACRAMÉ. THROUGH ITS HOLISTIC CURRICULUM, THE SCHOOL FOSTERS CREATIVITY, INDEPENDENCE, AND A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR THE WOMEN IT SUPPORTS.

## Kiran Nadar



Today, Nadar sees a shift underway when it comes to collecting. Kiran Nadar Museum of Art

What began once upon a time as a private pursuit for Kiran Nadar—an instinctive engagement with art that moved her—has gradually evolved into something far larger. "Art shouldn't remain unseen," says the founder and chairperson of the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA). "It needs to be experienced and shared." That realisation went on to shape KNMA, launched in 2010, into one of India's most significant cultural institutions. In transforming a private collection into a public museum, she reframed the role of the collector: an acquirer who also becomes a custodian within the cultural ecosystem. Challenging traditional notions of where a museum should exist, Nadar focussed her vision on accessibility, and made an unconventional decision when building KNMA by locating it within a shopping mall. Her intention was clear: to remove the barriers, both physical and psychological, that often keep audiences at a distance. Art, she believes, "must be encountered as part of everyday life, not confined within institutional boundaries."

Today, Nadar sees a shift underway when it comes to collecting. "Luxury in art collecting is increasingly being understood as discernment rather than display," she notes. "It lies in the depth of engagement with the work—taking the time to understand an artist's practice, the history behind it, and the ideas it carries." She also finds optimism in the way younger audiences are approaching art today—marked by curiosity, openness, and a willingness to engage across forms and contexts. "It's very encouraging because it suggests that the next generation is looking at art with both openness and a strong sense of cultural awareness."

## Muzaffar Sadiq Wani



Established in 1840, Suffering Moses is a papier-mâché store in Srinagar. Muzaffar Sadiq Wani

Established in 1840, Suffering Moses is a papier-mâché store in Srinagar, making it one of the oldest handicraft institutions in Kashmir. The craft found its way to the valley through Persian influence, and among those who brought it was Muzaffar Sadiq Wani's family, who trace their roots to Sabzevar in present-day Iran. "For centuries, this art form has continued to evolve in Kashmir, developing a distinct identity that sets it apart from similar practices in Iran and other countries," says Wani, the eighth-generation descendant of the family and current owner of Suffering Moses.

Each piece produced in their workshop is co-created with artisans and is a blend of traditional motifs with modern aesthetics and materials. What defines a fine piece of craftsmanship, he points out, is often what goes unnoticed at first glance. "It's the weight of silence," he says, describing how an object feels in one's hand—its balance, its surface, the slight irregularities that reveal the maker's way of working.

Collectors today are drawn not just to the object, but to the layers of meaning it carries and the hands that shaped it. Technology, he notes, has played a role in this shift, opening up access and allowing these stories to travel further, even as the making itself remains firmly rooted in its place of origin. "It's time that gives this art its value. It has never been defined by branding or price. What matters is the experience of living with a piece of heritage that goes beyond material value," says Wani.

Tags: [Atul Dodiya](#) [Kiran Nadar](#)