

Discover the intricate art of collecting with the Air India Maharaja as the Muse at the National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai

“Tell me what you collect, tell me how you collect, and I will tell you who you are.”
(Belgian Artist-Collector, **Willy Mestach**)

A collection is a form of storytelling, narrated by the collector who puts together each item with its own unique history to present the larger picture. These collections ignite and inspire people to discover the beauty of things and teach them about their significance when they are shared with others, whether through museum exhibits or private repositories. Collecting is an art form in itself, motivated by a passionate interest in obtaining, appreciating, and preserving unique items that have cultural, historical, or personal importance. It often starts with one thing that catches our attention, which through affection and perseverance turns into a cherished journey of discovery with sentimental value beyond measure. From regular visits to antique shops to auction houses and even garage sales, the process of collecting becomes a reflection of personalities and preferences.

For Immediate Release:

National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), Mumbai, Ministry of Culture, Government of India, and **Avid Learning** present **The Art of Collecting: Unearthing the Stories Behind Collections**. This is Avid Learning’s last installment of the **multidimensional art trilogy** in conjunction with the ongoing **Maharaja’s Treasure: Select works of art from the famed Air India collection** – an exhibition at the **National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), Mumbai**. The invigorating panel discussion will bring together a diverse group of private and institutional collectors and curators, including *Founder, Sarmaya Arts Foundation* **Paul Abraham**, *Owner, Phillips Antiques* **Farooq Issa**, *Solicitor and Antiquities, Artifacts, & Memorabilia Collector*, **Rajan Jayakar**, and *Creative Director, Pavitra Rajaram Design* **Pavitra Rajaram**. The conversation will be moderated by *CEO, XXL Collective* **Joe Cyril**.

The panelists will share their inspirations, rewards, and challenges of creating and maintaining exceptional collections. While exploring curatorial and conservation techniques, they will look at the role that institutions and collectors play in art education. During the discussion, the panelists will also touch upon the ethical and moral issues associated with collecting, such as authenticity, provenance, and cultural sensitivity.

Come and be a part of this insightful conversation that celebrates the relationships between items, their collectors, and the tales that capture the essence of collecting.

Speakers:

Paul Abraham is an art patron and collector of historical artefacts, modern and contemporary art and living traditions from the Indian subcontinent. He founded Sarmaya in 2015 to foster a love for art and history among the young and the curious. Sarmaya is a modern, digital museum that uses a combination of online engagement and on-ground programming, including workshops, lectures and travels, to reach everyone from children to young adults, and from enthusiasts to connoisseurs. Paul works closely with Indian artists to encourage innovation in indigenous art-forms like Mata-Ni-Pachedi, Tholu Bommalata, Mithila and Bengal Patua. Paul has a Post Graduate Degree in Business Management from IIM Ahmedabad and a Bachelor’s degree in Economics (Hons) from St Stephen’s College Delhi. A banker with over 35 years of experience, Paul is an advisor at IndusInd Bank. In addition, he is President, Hinduja Foundation and on the board of Dakshinachitra Museum and Sanctuary Asia.

Farooq Issa is the third generation owner of Phillips Antiques, a keen collector of early maps and views of Bombay including photography. His works have been published in several books and has also lent them to many exhibitions.

Rajan Jayakar is an Advocate and Solicitor, practicing in the Bombay High Court since 1971. Currently, he is the Trustee of Bhau Daji Lad Museum Trust, Byculla, Mumbai, and Hon. Jt. Finance Secretary of the Asiatic Society of Mumbai, holding several other prestigious positions. He is one of the foremost collectors of memorabilia in India today with a diversely vast collection of antiquarian books, coat of arms, typewriters, and textile labels and catalogues to name a few. Presently, he is writing a coffee table book “Legal Bombay” on the history of Judicial Institutions on the Island of Bombay (1296-1947). His vast Shammi Kapoor collection includes posters, songbooks, and photographs among other rare items. He has represented India in World Stamp Exhibitions securing a gold medal in Court Fee Stamps of British India. Rajan has written for numerous magazines, journals, and newspapers and his widely appreciated lectures on legal topics, the History of Bombay (through engravings, picture postcards, lithographs, and photography), Pathare Prabhu Community, Philately, Hobbies, and Collections are available on YouTube. He is also the Limca Book of Records holder (1996) for the highest collection of matchbox labels in India.

Pavitra Rajaram is the Founder and Creative Director of the award-winning interior design firm, Pavitra Rajaram Design. It is a multidisciplinary design practice that straddles the worlds of product design, architecture & interior design, brand strategy, and customer experience. A long-time believer in the power of design-led thinking in brand strategy; Pavitra is also the Design Director of India’s leading paints and wallcoverings company Asian Paints. Pavitra was formerly the Lead Designer and Creative Strategy Head for Good Earth, India's iconic luxury lifestyle brand. Pavitra is the recipient of the INTACH Urban Heritage Award, and the EDIDA Award for Product Design, and is a six-time winner of the prestigious AD100, awarded annually to the 100 most influential designers in the Indian subcontinent. She has a degree in Political Science & Art History and received magna cum laude with high honors from Smith College, USA.

Joe Cyril is the director of Gallery XXL, a post-graffiti and urban contemporary art gallery. He is also the CEO of XXL Collective a sister company of St+art India Foundation. The company creates bespoke spatial, artistic interventions in collaboration with a global community of urban artists. He was a founding team member of Kochi-Muziris Biennale’s editions in 2012 and 2014, and went on to lead business development at India’s leading auction house, Saffronart. He is also a trustee of Palette People, an art residency and gallery based out of Kerala. Through his career he has worked on various art collections in the private, corporate, and government realms. Joe is originally from Kochi, Kerala and completed his degree in Economics from St. Stephen’s College, Delhi and currently lives and works in Mumbai.