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## Indian steel tycoons to launch art centre near historic site of Hampi

The billionaire Jindal family will open the exhibition venue and artist residency space in February next year



Exterior shot of Hampi Art Labs  
Courtesy of JSW Foundation

Kabir Jhala

13 November 2023

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One of India's richest families—and most prominent groups of cultural patrons—will open a contemporary art centre in the country's south next year. Hampi Art Labs is being launched by the JSW Foundation, the social development arm of the JSW Group, a Mumbai-headquartered conglomerate founded and led by members of the Jindal family. The company, which has holdings in steel, energy and infrastructure, among other assets, has a reported annual revenue of \$22bn.

The 18-acre art centre, due to open in February 2024, will be located in a town near Hampi, a Unesco World Heritage site, around a six-hour drive from Bengaluru. A popular tourist destination, Hampi was once the capital of the Vijayanagara Empire, which ruled parts of southern India from the 14th to the early 17th century. During its peak, the empire was one of the world's largest in terms of prosperity and size, and its leaders erected more than 1,000 monuments across Hampi, including intricately carved stone temples, markets and gateways, a number of which remain intact. Tourists also visit the site for its striking geographical position, amid vast boulder formations and on the banks of the Tungabhadra river.



A stone chariot in Hampi  
Photo: Flickr

Hampi Art Labs will house exhibition venues, studios and a new artist residency programme. It is built with an undisclosed budget, on land owned by the JSW Group in the town of Vijayanagara, where the conglomerate operates India's largest steel plant.

"Hampi Art Labs is an institution uniquely born of place—the proximity of the JSW Plant in Vijayanagar to an ancient and distinctive world heritage site like Hampi offers unparalleled possibilities that having this residency in an urban centre could not match," says Sangita Jindal, the chairperson of JSW Foundation and the wife of Sajjan Jindal, the chairperson of the JSW Group. She will oversee the centre along with her daughter, Tarini, the creative director of Hampi Art Labs.

Hampi Art Labs artists will have access to facilities in the nearby JSW steel plant, Vijayanagar Works, in Vijayanagar, Karnataka

Artist residents will have access to the steel plant to "work on a large scale and with specialised equipment". Further production facilities include those for printmaking, ceramics and new media.

This is not the first culture initiative the Jindals have launched in the area. In 2012, JSW opened Kaladham, a ten-acre campus in Vijayanagar that houses a museum dedicated to the heritage of Hampi, along with performance venues. Sangita Jindal has also previously worked with the Global Heritage Fund to restore temple sites in Hampi.

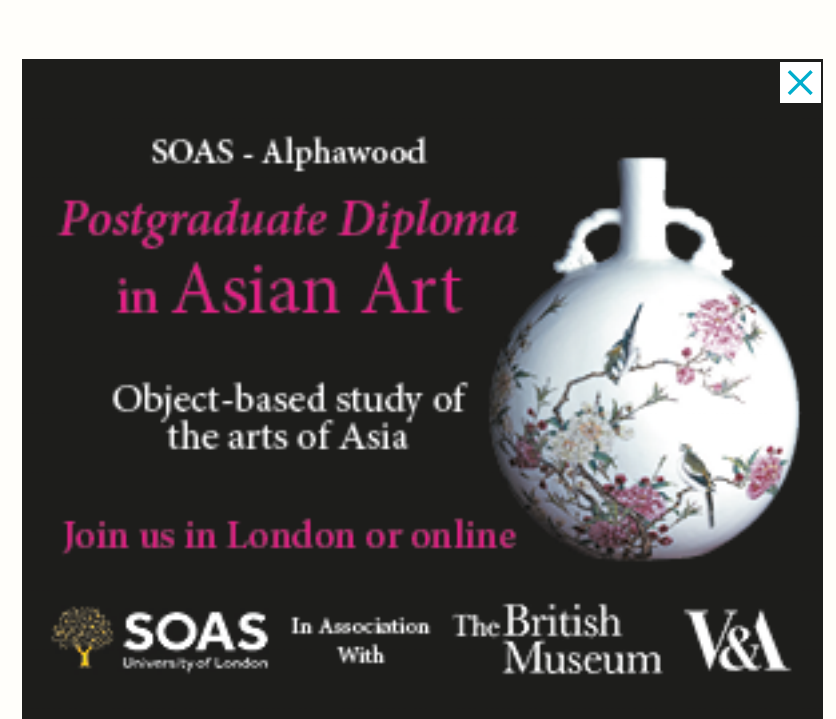
Sangita Jindal  
Courtesy of JSW Foundation

The Jindals are well known in India for funding and promoting a wide range of visual arts initiatives. Sangita Jindal is the publisher of *Art India*, a quarterly magazine covering India's art world. The Jindal collection, mainly focusing on Modern and Contemporary South Asian art, features "more than 1,000" works and is housed across a number of properties and offices owned by the family. Around 80% of the collection belongs to Sangita Jindal, with the rest owned by JSW Group. The new centre's inaugural show will focus on works from the collection by artists including Bharti Kher, Andy Warhol, Lubna Chowdhary and Ai Weiwei. Future exhibitions will be made up of new, commissioned and loans.

The first set of artists signed up to the residency programme are Bhasha Chakrabarti, Sharbendu De, Madhavi Gore, Promiti Hossain and Anirudh Singh Shaktawat. The new centre is being designed by the architect Sameep Padora and his studio sP+a.

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