6 CEOs, 1 QUESTION

Art as anchor

Company chiefs on the artwork and books that keep them centred and forward-looking

VINEET VERMA

Executive Director, Brigade Hospitality Services Ltd

Books have been my constant companion ever since I can remember, starting from my early days in school. I used to save every penny from my pocket money and bus fare to buy my copies of famous Five by Enid Blyton, the classics, do-it-yourself books and of course, Ghostbusters, followed by Reader's Digest. Most of these books are still with me and I hope to pass them on to my grandchildren someday.

It is not a single book or work of art that has inspired me but all of these in parts. There are always pearls of wisdom one may harvest from each book and I have several hundreds of them. For years, until the advent of Kindle, I have been capturing some lines and quotable quotes that I picked up from my readings, in a notebook that I still have in my possession and to which I often refer. These have in some way laid the foundation for how I have conducted myself professionally over the years. I would like to believe that these are the very tenets that have shaped whatever little success I may have achieved in life.

RAHUL KHANNA

Director, Azure Hospitality (Managatto, Speedy Chow and Roti Mati)

I've been inspired by Richard Hogart's works. One of the point-tags, 'Hotel Room', is my favourite. They've taught us rather shown me how to take one emotion, suspension, grief, longing, etc can be beautifully shown through simplicity in complexity. It's the same with Pedro Almodovar films. These are artistes I came across while in college in Europe. I've realised that art may not always help you pursue excellence, but offers inspiration, and teaches you to question a lot of our perception of things.

ARUNDHATI GHOSH

Executive Director, India Foundation for the Arts

It's so difficult to say which artwork inspires me the most – there are just so many. But if I have to choose it would be the Mahabharata. In its context it embraces the widest possible range of disciplines – politics, economics, sociology, environment, the arts and more. It raises questions challenging caste, class, gender and sexuality. In its form it is a multi-layered leap of thousands of stories – history, myths, whispers and hearsay – altogether creating a myriad mix of many voices. There are many interrelated texts and each reading opens up new interpretations. It inspires me to keep asking questions to read layers within layers and see the world as a complex web of relations rips of power. It enables me not to take anything for granted and seek out experiences in life that more than anything else, it helps me to locate my politics and thus define my relationship with the world.

ALEEM SHEIKH

MD, Cear Lab Pvt Ltd

Photography has been an inspiration all my life. It's an amazing way of looking at life, work and everything else through a lens where the right frame is everything, though the situation differs all the time. When I get a chance to compared with work, it teaches me contain-sion. Like Vince Lombardi said: 'Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection we can catch excellence'. I feel the art of photography teaches us to be patient and capture the moment with the right frame. Photography helps me look at subjects in a unique manner, and in looking for the best possible solutions. This is why I believe the best photography equipment in our eyes. A photographic eye will never let you miss anything; even if you forget, it is always there in the frame that you have captured and all that you have to do is to just recall frame. Photography is the one thing that lets me admire everything good and forgo the bad.

GITANJALI MANI

Founder Director, Gallery g; Founder Director, Print Brew; and CEO, Raja Ravi Varma Heritage Foundation

Oscar Wilde wrote that life imitates art. I'd be mad to disagree with a line he has inspired to follow it. Especially if art is something that you've consumed by. My lifelong involvement with it began when my father gave me an MF Hussain print from the Lalit Kala Akademi. Delhi. Something about the picture struck a chord, one which wouldn't be suspended to Lalit much later though the picture itself has remained a treasured possession, given pride of place in various homes ever since.

It was a print and one of the pieces of art that aided my budget there. As I grew and the budget got larger, original works (including Husain) came along. But this print will always hold a special place in my heart as it was gifted to me by parents. As I grew up, finished school and graduated, and got on with the business of life, marrying and starting a home and family, the conviction deepened that art was something I wanted to be involved in. Today, I realise that that work was the trigger for me to become an entrepreneur and work in the business of art.

VIMAL SHARMA

CEO, Bliss Chocolates

The film Coach Carter left an indelible impression on my mind and continues to inspire me in several of my life. Inspiration takes many forms and mine stems from the belief that anything is possible. The film itself, based on a true story, follows Ken Carter who takes up the responsibility to coach a high school basketball team with rude and disrespectful athletes. However, it is his unrelenting belief in his players that takes this team to the playoffs. In life, as well, we must be guided by this kind of motivation to persevere and move forward despite setbacks. So, I'd say embrace your full potential and get going because everything that you've been dreaming of is almost within your grasp.

A quote from the film which stayed with me: "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us."

–Soumya Rajaram & Vidya Iyengar