

# DOWNTOWN

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PLAY, LIVE  
IN LOWER  
MANHATTAN

**HISTORIC**  
**DESIGN** IN  
WOOLWORTH  
TOWER

**+**  
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## PLAYERS CLUB

**NACHO FIGUERAS AND  
DELFINA BLAQUIER  
LOVE THEIR INTERNATIONAL LIFE**

10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY ISSUE



# LIONHEART

*Interior designer Purvi Padia is giving back with Project Lion, a humanitarian effort that marries her professional life and personal passions.*

by Moury Khan photography by Bochun Cheng



**INTERIOR DESIGNER PURVI PADIA** has a lot to celebrate. This year marks her eponymous firm's 10-year anniversary, and she has recently taken a successful leap into humanitarian work with Project Lion.

As a first generation Indian-American, Padia recognized that she had access to opportunities unavailable to many, especially in her parents' country of origin. "Everything that I've done in life has been informed by this first generation hard-working mentality, never forgetting what my roots are and where I come from," says Padia.

Growing up, she made frequent trips to India with her family, where she quickly became aware of her privileges. She recalls seeing children on the street who had not eaten for days. "I could not reconcile why those children who looked exactly like me had such different lives." As an adult she knew she wanted to help, so she contacted government-run orphanages, intending to provide donations and assistance. Instead, she was met with a lack of transparency.

After years of feeling powerless, Padia had her light bulb moment. She was inspired by the movie *Lion* based on Saroo Brierley's memoir, *A Long Way Home*, a true story about a young boy's journey from Australia to India to find his lost family. She began speaking with humanitarian aid organizations. She connected with UNICEF and founded Project Lion to address the issue of displaced orphans in India. "Together with UNICEF, we came up with a three year plan to serve the first 200,000 of these 1.5

million orphans," she said.

Today, Padia and UNICEF are actively working together in order to not only ensure that these children are given access to sanitation, healthcare, education, and nutrition, but also that they are guaranteed human rights. UNICEF is working closely with the Indian government in order to train social workers, as well as to institute practices and regulations that ensure care for future generations of at-risk children.

Project Lion launched this May at the Highline Hotel, hosted by Sienna Miller and Jenna Bush Hager, and raised over \$850,000 for the initiative. Padia, in collaboration with Aguirre Design, created the Sinha (Lioness) Bowl, a limited-edition, hand-forged brass, footed bowl that embodies Indian design. The bowl is available on her website and 30 percent of the proceeds will go directly to Project Lion.

As Padia gears up for her first field visit to India this fall, her kids are begging to tag along. "It's very important for children to understand that as humans we have this obligation to help the rest of humanity whenever we can, and to show empathy and compassion," said Padia.

As for the future of this project, Padia has big plans, including design events coinciding with Indian holidays to raise awareness. While this humanitarian effort is an international one, Padia's passion has found a home downtown. *For more information, visit [unicefusa.org](http://unicefusa.org) or [purvipadia.com](http://purvipadia.com) DT*

