

# Le Monde

## DES FONDATIONS

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A portrait of Ariane de Rothschild, a woman with blonde hair pulled back, wearing a dark blue pinstriped blazer over a light purple top. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a blurred indoor setting with a window showing a view of a building.

**Ariane de Rothschild**

*“There is a real connection between building and giving in what we do.”*

We spoke to Ariane de Rothschild about the Edmond de Rothschild Foundations and the inspiration behind their work, “The Rothschilds are philanthropists as well as bankers. There is a real connection between building and giving in what we do,” she explains. In this exclusive interview, Ariane de Rothschild discusses the growing popularity of philanthropy worldwide, highlights the tremendous accomplishments of the Foundations’ teams led by Firoz Ladak, and shares her steady belief in the power of giving to challenge, innovate and build the future.

# Ariane de Rothschild



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**“Philanthropy will be the focus of**

**tomorrow’s economic efficiency and civic leadership.”**

**What words best define the Edmond de Rothschild Foundations, which you co-chair with your husband Benjamin de Rothschild?**

- Social responsibility, because it’s been a part of our family’s DNA for over two centuries; innovation, as each generation has found new solutions to the challenges of their day; humanism, because the breadth of relationships and human experiences enriches the Foundations daily in their work to promote progress and knowledge sharing.

**Philanthropy is deeply rooted in your family’s history. How did this strong and visible commitment begin?**

As you say, our family has a long-standing tradition of giving as much as it does business. The Rothschilds are philanthropists as well as bankers, and there is a real connection between building and giving in what we do. In the 19th century, for example,

they played a key role in Europe’s industrial revolution, but also created innovative models of social progress alongside other influential families. James de Rothschild, founder of the French branch of our family, was a pioneer in developing government-subsidized housing. Julie de Rothschild is another example. In 1905, during the explosive Dreyfus affair, she opened one of the first hospitals in Paris free for all patients regardless of religious and political affiliations. Over a hundred years later, we still take pride in the Fondation Ophtalmologique which has become a first-rate hospital. Similarly, my husband’s great-grandfather Edmond James bequeathed an extraordinary collection of old master drawings to the Louvre which spurred the creation of the museum’s Department of Prints and Drawings. We believe that philanthropy is a matter of civic engagement be it French, European, or international.

**Would you say your own personal commitment is also based on your background and individual values?**

- Absolutely. I was born in El Salvador and grew up in Colombia and Africa before studying in France and, later, in New York. My own life experience shaped me immensely, as did the values passed on to me by my parents: pushing oneself and being receptive to others. My upbringing was an incredible opportunity to encounter other cultures and relate to anyone – a farmer in Colombia, a businesswoman in Kinshasa, a restaurant owner in Manhattan, or an artist acclaimed as a national treasure in Japan. I’ve always viewed these multiple reference points as a privilege – one I hope to pass on to my four daughters.

**“Modern philanthropy builds bridges.”**

Today’s deep economic malaise is causing marginalization, stagnation and what I refer to as “entrenched identities”. This is where active philanthropy becomes essential not only in helping find solutions to social upheavals but also in driving the development of a more humane and inclusive form of capitalism. I am at the same time a mother, a banker and a philanthropist. On the one hand, when the Foundations submit a project proposal, I also study it from a financial standpoint and by doing so, I hope, with the help of our teams to foster professionalism in the social sector. On the other, I share with all those who work in the Edmond de Rothschild financial group the values and insights inspired from philanthropy. I support the drive of the Foundations in promoting bro-bono work with bankers and other professionals in our Group.. Some call it philanthro-capitalism – I see it simply as a global approach to leadership.



Giving Day for l' Ecole de la Philanthropie – La Sorbonne University, Paris

**You often discuss your innovative vision of philanthropy. What does this mean in the 21st century?**

- The Foundations are an extraordinary space for freedom and exploration; they also carry a serious responsibility in the construction of sustainable models for impact in education, the arts and social entrepreneurship, to cite a few. They are not cut off from the world; they learn from their grassroot exposure, from their closeness to projects and from sharing their experiences.
- One example: the support we provide to the Guggenheim Museum in New York for arts education in schools in the Bronx inspired the program we are building in partnership with the Ecole Nationale des Beaux Arts in Paris, the City of Saint Ouen and the French Ministry of Education for training young artists to run workshops in at-risk schools. In another domain, the success of a social business incubator program we launched in India has helped us better understand what scaling up and training implies for entrepreneurs, whether they are in India, France or Tunisia.



Ariane de Rothschild Fellowship – Cambridge, United Kingdom

- In my mind, modern philanthropy builds bridges; not only between countries and people but between professional fields as well. The world isn't segmented into opposing spheres, with wealth and skills developed at one end and giving at the other. The speed at which information travels today means for instance that architects, sociologists and investors will have to cross-fertilize their abilities to design the social housing projects of tomorrow.

**"Philanthropy has matured."**

**Do you think that philanthropy is facing a new beginning?**

- The philanthropy sector has undergone sweeping changes – not only in terms of financial means but in terms of rigor, transparency and impact. As I mentioned, cross-sector collaboration is a good thing. Philanthropy hasn't been rejuvenated so much; rather it has matured. The sector has realized what was missing and is adapting to the current climate. Philanthropy is no longer "just" about giving or patronage. It will be the focus of tomorrow's economic efficiency and civic leadership. This is how we're innovating, by knocking down walls between sectors, tools and methods so that, with our partners, we can imagine a world in which excellence and pluralism flourish together.

**The Edmond de Rothschild Foundations form a unique international network. What insight does this offer?**

- I'm very pleased to see the growing interest in philanthropy in France and, more significantly, in developing countries. Everywhere – in India, Africa, and the Middle East – families such as ours are looking at how to enhance social impact and design innovative education systems and practical tools to improve dialogue between communities. While there are underlying similarities between these different regions of the world, it is interesting to see how each

culture and community expresses generosity differently. Just as economic realities are shifting in favor of southern countries, philanthropy will have to incorporate new models developed from places like Kenya and India.

**Much is said of philanthropy in the United States and of its leading figures Bill Gates and Warren Buffet. Is it really a whole other world?**

- There is indeed a fabulous tradition of both community and individual activism in America. The sector is huge, because of a lesser welfare state, because civic responsibility goes hand in hand with charity, and because of a longstanding favorable tax structure. Whole segments of society – schools, religion, and healthcare – are financed this way, which does raise issues as to the impact of philanthropy on public policy. I have met Bill Gates and Warren Buffet. I admire their professional accomplishments and the philanthropic commitment for which they've rallied the support of primarily American fortunes. Yet the European tradition of philanthropy is based on a different legacy: the role of the State, capital preservation and the passing on of values.
- In this respect, I identify more closely with the Asian tradition although much can be learned from certain practices in the US – how the sector supports academia, for example. Every day we learn from our partnerships with the Guggenheim Museum, Carnegie Hall and the Juilliard School in New York. However, I understand that philanthropy must be adjusted to fit each country, each community, each family, even.

**How would you describe the situation in France?**

- The social sector in France has undergone significant change in recent years. Foundations and other charitable entities are playing a complementary role in underwriting the common good alongside an ever-dynamic non-profit sector and in close collaboration with the State. In my view, this dynamic of sharing skills, experience and talent is a positive trend that should be encouraged. Philanthropy is a forum for both freedom and responsibility where models and solutions can be tested and shared. In that regard, I commend the excellent work done by the Centre Français des Fondations and the ESSEC Business School Research Chair in Philanthropy, which we support. The French Government should resist the pitfall of a shortsighted policy that would endanger fiscal incentives. With the exception of a few inevitable opportunists, today's philanthropists work with sincerity and intelligence, as will, I hope, those to come.

**"Education is a pillar of all our projects."**

**The Edmond de Rothschild Foundations are active in several areas: the arts, social entrepreneurship, intercultural dialogue and health. What is the general thrust of their work?**

- When Benjamin and I asked Firoz Ladak to oversee the strategic restructuring and development of the Foundations in 2005, it was important to us that both continuity and innovation remain central. We carefully studied the Rothschilds' philanthropic heritage and decided that education would be a pillar of all our projects. This provides flexibility and consistency and, where possible, promotes collaboration across the areas we work in. One example is the Ariane de Rothschild Fellowship, a training program

## Firoz Ladak, an unusual profile



Firoz Ladak is a French and Canadian citizen and a graduate of McGill University and the University of Oxford, where he was an Aga Khan Foundation scholar. He then spent 12 years with Paribas and Société Générale in investment banking. He is specialized in project finance, privatization operations and setting up private-public partnerships. Firoz focused his banking career on emerging markets in the Middle East, Africa and Asia, where he gained considerable experience in different approaches to economic development by working with the World Bank, the finance sector and government institutions. He was also one of the youngest managers to lead the Paribas Group's international expansion, particularly into the new South Africa under the leadership of Nelson Mandela.

In 2005, he was appointed Executive Director of the Edmond de Rothschild Foundations, in charge of financial management and international strategy. Working closely with Benjamin and Ariane de Rothschild and the professional team he has brought together, Firoz Ladak promotes the Foundations' reach and influence in education, social entrepreneurship, health, intercultural dialogue and the arts.



Learning Through Art program - Guggenheim Museum, New York

we developed for social entrepreneurs from Jewish and Muslim communities and led by management and social sciences professors at Columbia Business School and Cambridge University. The program offers a fresh approach to intercultural dialogue and promotes social entrepreneurship as a drive for change.

- Philanthropy is a wonderful learning and teaching tool to bring down barriers, take risks, and imagine the world through a different lens. It provides support to the arts, sciences, politics, economics and education. Our desire to share the social potential of philanthropy pushed us to break into a new field in France – philanthropic education – and to create a dedicated NGO: L'École de la Philanthropie. This unique program, which was initiated with the Fondation Culture et Diversité and the Paris-region education authority, introduces children to philanthropy during their last two years of primary school and provides an incentive to take part in local community projects. L'École de la Philanthropie aims to cultivate a new generation of citizens and entrepreneurs, better equipped to tackle the social challenges of tomorrow.

**You chose a professional team to run the Foundations. What guided your decision?**

- Firoz Ladak built a successful career in investment banking. His profile fits the bill in several ways: he trained in an Anglo-Saxon environment, is an expert in financial matters, and has experience in handling complex projects mostly in emerging markets. Beyond his qualifications, though, Firoz shares our humanist values – a result, no doubt, of his multicultural background. It's not surprising that he has assembled a team of young and dynamic graduates from the best schools to work with him. This team is helping all our partners, in France and abroad, and in

every sector, to cultivate professionalism. The support they provide is similar to venture capital and requires a close involvement to achieve targeted results. Firoz's team aims to achieve a true return on commitment. Our Foundations are a place for learning where people can express themselves and be creative. This is another aspect of Rothschild tradition: we invest in exceptional teams. The Foundations convey our family's values and must reflect that excellence.

**"It is an immense privilege to be able to give."**

**What have been some memorable events in your philanthropic career?**

- It is an immense privilege to be able to give – one that comes with responsibilities. You have to be attentive, sincere and forthcoming. Involvement must be based on a long-term, results-oriented commitment.
- The launch of our Scale Up program for social sector businesses in France in 2010 was a great source of personal pride and hope, for example. Meeting the men and women who were selected, people who are passionate about their work and eager to learn, showed me that we are on the right track.

**If your contributions to philanthropy were to be summed up one day, what would you like to be said?**

- The world must be approached as a whole. It moves at a fast pace which can lead to the deepening of inequalities and requires urgently the emergence of new models. Resources are ever more scarce, and further cooperation will be needed between the public, private and philanthropic sectors.
- The goal is to build a virtuous system in which a new form of leadership can take root. On a personal level, I'd like to instill a respect for pluralism in my four daughters and in our financial group. Philanthropy is a part of who I am as a woman, a mother and a professional. It is a powerful way to challenge, innovate and build the future!

[www.edrfoundations.org](http://www.edrfoundations.org)



Fondation Ophtalmologique Adolphe de Rothschild - Paris



