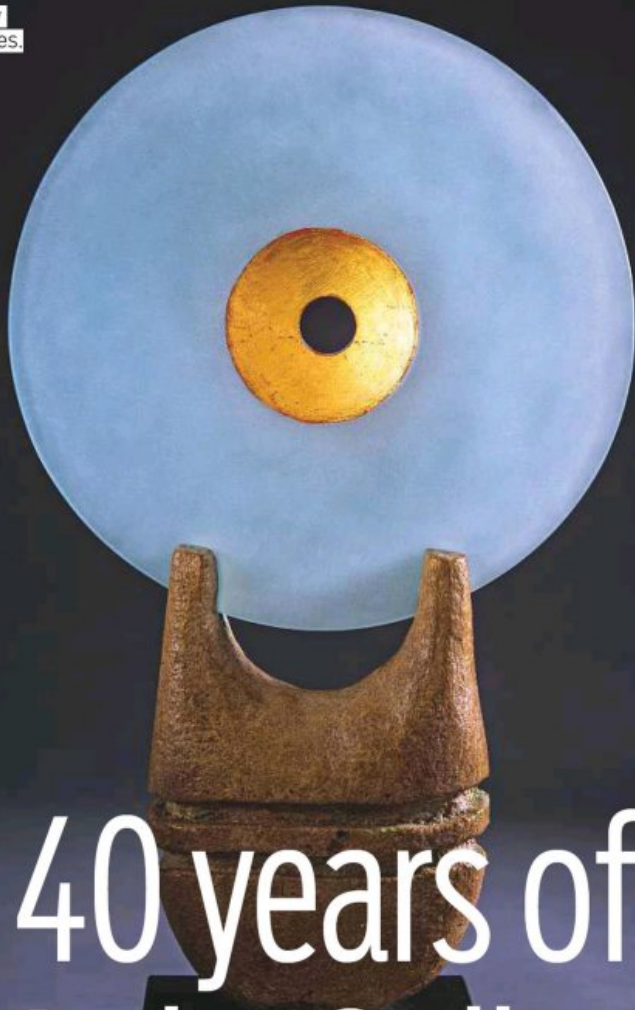


ART AND CULTURE

A piece by
Peter Hayes.



40 years of Majlis Gallery

A new exhibition celebrates four decades of Dubai's first gallery

By **Jyoti Kalsi**
Special to Weekend Review

In 1979, Alison Collins hosted a soiree at her wind tower home near the Dubai creek to showcase the paintings of British traveller artist Julian Barrow. She sent out hand-written invitations to everyone she knew and displayed his oil paintings of Dubai in the majlis of her home, which in 1989 became the Majlis Gallery, Dubai's first art gallery.

As part of the 40th anniversary celebrations of that first art exhibition, Collins recently hosted a special soiree to mark the opening of *40 Years On*, an exhibition of artworks by 52 artists represented by the gallery over the last four decades. These include the many traveller artists or New Orientalists who have lived, worked and exhibited at Majlis, documenting the historic neighbourhood and the changing socio-cultural landscape of Dubai through their paintings. The show also features sculptures, calligraphy, etchings, photography, handmade jewellery, works in ceramic, glass and silver and wooden furniture by artists from the UAE and around the world.

Many of the artists were at the soiree and spoke fondly about their relationship with Majlis.

Recalling his first trip to Dubai in 1990, British artist John Harris said, "I did not even know that there was an art gallery here. It was a coincidence that on my way back to the UK Alison happened to be on the same flight, we got talking and a few months later I

"I have returned every year since then because I love the energy of this city and enjoy staying at Majlis..."

JOHN HARRIS ★ Artist



SCAN ME

French artists play surreal 'beach ball' during creative performance

Artist's garden reflects on interconnected world

Dubai's multicultural community includes people of various nationalities with diverse culinary habits. In addition, about 90 million people from around the world travel to the city or transit through the airport every year.

Spanish artist Asuncion Molinos Gordo has found an interesting way to highlight the cultural and culinary diversity of Dubai and our intercon-

nected globalised world with her artist's garden at the Jameel Arts centre.

Her project titled, *IN TRANSIT: Botany of a Journey* features a variety of flowers, fruits and vegetables such as tomatoes, watermelon, chillies, eggplant, muskmelon, zucchini, amaranth, mustard, lemons, sunflowers, pomegranate and pumpkin all grown from

seeds present in the sludge obtained from the sewage treatment plant in Al Aweer.

Commissioned and produced by Art Jameel, the project has been developed with the support of Dubai Municipality, American University of Sharjah, Sia Landscaping, Al Zahra Farm, horticulturist Kumar Palanisamy. Accion Cultural Espanola and

the Art Jameel team. We spoke to Gordo about her project. Excerpts:

What is the idea behind this project?

This project explores ideas of mobility, cohabitation and the interconnected reality of the human condition. It shows us that nature is not some external element, it is part of us. We always think of bees and birds as disseminators of seeds, but this garden is proof that we are an integral element of this chain. It is a poetic re-enactment to reconfigure our understanding of a world without an 'inside'

and an 'outside'. We have organised a programme of talks, workshops and events to discuss these concepts.

How did you think of growing a garden from sewage?

A few years ago, I visited a sewage treatment plant in Sharjah as part of my research for a project about recycling and sustainability. I was amazed to hear from an engineer that during cooler weather many plants grow in the sludge because most seeds ingested by people survive the process of digestion