



HER SAY
THE PROFESSIONAL

Alison Collins co-owns the most established art gallery in the UAE, The Majlis Gallery. With her infinite wisdom and experience she describes the process of building a collection

“Building an art collection is not the same as buying art as an investment. The latter demands an objective approach, the former is totally subjective and should be a joy. Art, in its multifarious forms, could be looked on as unnecessary luxury but this would be to deny the profound role creativity plays in any society. The marks on a tribesman’s body, a child’s painting of its mother, the ceiling of the Cistine Chapel, all illustrate our need to embellish, describe, annotate and communicate with others through visual language. The desire to gather around us “things” that reflect our own particular artistic appreciation is a centuries’ old habit. But how to start the collecting process and what are the criteria? Fortunately the answer can be put simply; slowly and none.

Building your collection is just that - “your” collection. The “you” might be plural, which could involve a bit of give and take but will certainly form a new common bond. When you make that first step from poster to original painting, mass-produced object to hand-crafted depends very much on your disposable income but often the heart rules the head. You are suddenly looking at something that is just speaking to an inner part of you. One that you might not even know existed. You just have to have it; more than three dinners out with friends, more than a balloon ride, more than five reproductions.

Yes, buying original art need not cost a fortune and the pleasure derived far outlasts transitory experiences. In a nutshell if you love it and can just about afford it, buy it. Not buying it will carry a lifetime of regrets. The images will rest in your subconscious as a testament to your indecision. I should know, I’ve made that mistake myself many times.

This Damascus moment can happen in all sorts of situations. A chance invitation to a private view, a walk along the fence of a city park, a shopping trip that takes you past a gallery window, a duty visit to your cousin’s art school degree show. It matters not, it’s the beginning of a journey that will bring so many rewarding experiences, friendships and above all sees you becoming part of that wonderful circle of ‘Supporters of the Arts’.

The art world needs you and your growing confidence in trusting your instinct as to what appeals to you. All these factors bring a new dimension to daily life. Art galleries, artists’ studios, craftsmen’s workshops are wonderful places to meet people and extend your knowledge and possibly add pieces to the collection. Don’t ever feel inhibited to walk in and take in what is on show or being created. Artists and gallery owners are more than delighted to welcome anyone who shares their passion. You might find that one particular artist appeals to you, following their career and creative development becomes a significant part of life. Through them you meet other artists, new galleries and gallery owners and who knows you might even take up a creative pastime yourself. Holidays take on an extra edge as you gravitate towards the cultural centre of cities. Visiting your own countries National Collections becomes more significant on the realization that you are part of the ownership. Museums and galleries often have the added bonus of good cafes and book shops where you can observe your fellow devotees. This is a world of people unafraid of wearing bright orange jumpers, pink spectacle frames and pyjama bottoms and talking over a coffee for hours.

Every purchase will be a reminder of the day you bought it. Who you were with, what was happening in your life, the joy of adding it to your growing collection, deciding where to hang or place it, packing it carefully as your life changes only to welcome it as an old friend when you unpack it the other end and hang it with its other friends in a new location. Your art collection is not static, it is an organic part of what you are, as important as any other personal aspect of your life, totally adaptable to your growth and changes of circumstances. Who knows, as long as you follow the nutshell rule you might end up with a real investment tucked within your collection, but could you part with it and what would you replace it with? Now you are a potential art investor, all by trusting your instincts.”



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Alison is photographed at the Majlis Gallery which is hosting Paul Wadsworth’s new exhibition ‘Travels through Arabia’ for the month of March. Featured is the Singing Towers above, left Doves and Henna Tree and Through the Pink Woods all oil on canvas paintings (price Dhs18,000). Alison is sitting on sofa by Nobilis which can be made to order with different fabrics. The furniture is solid limed mango wood as stocked by Majlis Gallery. Also featured is a teapot by Hennie Meyer and other ceramics by Peter Collis. For further information contact (04) 3536233

