

From BBC Travel, The Passport Blog, November, 20th 2012



Dubai art gallery Carbon 12 is showing an exhibition from American multi-media artist James Clar through 8 December.

Dubai's industrial arts scene

By Georgina Wilson-Powell

In a city that is often called cultureless, creative types have finally found themselves a home in the Al Quoz industrial zone, where dust blows across pot-holed roads and trucks rumble past on their way to warehouses on unidentifiable backstreets.

The maze-like, shambolic area has housed a few art galleries for some years now, but they were lost and unconnected among the industrial laundries, wood importers and uniform manufacturers. Going to see an exhibition took determination and patience, as the streets, quite literally, had no names.

But with the twin developments of Dubai Marina and Downtown (the area with Burj Khalifa at its centre) in recent years, this industrial zone now sits halfway between two popular residential areas and is being reborn as cultural and arts centre, thanks to cheap rent and creative vision.

Over this past year, Dubai's artistic minds have collaborated to bring about Al Serkal Avenue, a one block radius of interconnected back roads in Al Quoz that is the focal point of this cutting-edge arts movement. Warehouses are being dusted off, repainted and revitalized; new galleries, installations and music spaces are springing up; and the arts scene finally has a recognizable -- and locatable -- home. Today there are almost 40 creative and industrial businesses here, including more than 20 art galleries.

And there are exciting things going on for visitors to the city. Carbon 12 is showing an exhibition from American multi-media artist James Clar through 8 December; Ayyam Gallery is hosting Syrian artist Tammam Azzam's Syria exhibition until 31 December, fuelled by the political upheaval in the country over the last year; and musical space The Fridge is holding the 48 Hour Film Project, the world's largest filmmaking competition, with the best being screened starting in mid-November.

Georgina Wilson-Powell is the Dubai Localite for BBC Travel. She also writes the hotel review blog sogoodtogetoutofthecity.wordpress.com