



SUPPORTING THROUGH ART

The last in a series of three exhibitions opens this week with part of the proceeds from sold artwork going to PETRA

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In the final of a three-part series of exhibitions held with the aim of raising money for PETRA, a voluntary organisation that provides therapeutic riding for those in Oman with special needs, 18 artists, including a family of four, have come together to provide artworks for 'Art for PETRA'. The exhibition opened on May 14 and runs until May 17 from 9am to 1pm and 2pm to 9pm at the InterContinental Hotel Muscat. Prior to the launch of the exhibition, spoke to a number of the participants to find out about their work and why they chose to take part.

The participants are Aruna Chagarlamudi, Asmara Naveed, Diana Samonenko, Flora Kiss, Heena Kothary, Ingunn Heggheim-Bulteau, Marianne Olsgaard, Margarita

Lipkov, the Sweigart family, Olga Hupje, Sunita Rajvanshi, Suzanne Banning, Tania Hens, Valentina Dolgopyatova and Wendy de Plaa-Vrijen. Many of those taking part are connected to the Arts Centre of Ras al Hamra Recreation Centre, including Sunita and Tania whose works were showcased in the last show as well. Sunita said, "The previous show was excellent; we sold many pieces and received an overwhelming response and unforgettable comments from guests."

There are around 70 to 75 pieces of work, including paintings and photographs, at the exhibition and as the participants have very different styles, it is an exciting show to view. Some of the artists have been in Oman for some time, while



▶ Tania Hens and Wendy de Plaa-Vrijen work on their pieces for 'Art for Petra'; (right) some of the artists participating in the exhibition

others, such as Margarita, have been here for just four months. Margarita has exhibited and sold her work in Chile, Colombia and Canada. She said that choosing to help raise

money for PETRA was a very personal decision for her.

"It's important to me to participate in this show, not only because it is a way to expose my work, here in



Muscat, but also because I have a nephew in Calgary who was born with many disabilities. I know the struggles my sister went through in order to find places that would pro-

GIVING BACK

Ahmed al Kharusi, who has donated blood 93 times, received an award last month for his efforts towards raising awareness on giving blood



It takes just one incident to change a man's life. But in the case of Ahmed al Kharusi, 49, it took just one incident to change his and the lives of many others in Oman and the GCC. It was an accident in March 1983; Ahmed was on his way to Abu Dhabi via Sohar when he fractured his jaw and nose, and had serious injuries in his eye and head. He had to be taken to the UK for treatment and was on medication for three years. When he returned to Oman, he felt that he had to give back to society and began dedicating his life to donating blood and encouraging others to do so too.

Ahmed worked in the Royal Guard of Oman (RGO) for 28 years, during which time, "the RGO gave me the skills to do what I am doing

right now", he said. Soon after he returned from the UK following treatment, on realising that blood donations were not common in the sultanate, he made it his mission in life to change this.

When Ahmed started, it didn't cross his mind that he would become famous for donating blood. "My aim is to crash the barrier of blood donations," he said. He has also motivated his family to donate blood - his wife has donated 16 times, two daughters six times and his brother 85 times. "My whole family donates." The number of times he has donated and his enthusiasm for the cause has resulted in cooperation between him and the blood bank in Oman to help bring in more donors.

"The blood bank treats me like an official speaker for them and they are very cooperative. Dr Shahnaz al Balushi, director of the blood bank, along with her entire staff is very supportive." Together with the blood bank, he conducts workshops and conferences on donating blood. Last year, in a drive to spread awareness, Ahmed and 13 members of the

Oman Riders Club rode from Muscat to Salalah during the Khareef Festival to give blood. This year, 25 riders of the club plan to repeat the journey.

Asked why people are hesitant to donate, Ahmed said, "When a patient requires blood, the government automatically provides them with it. They don't come to realise that the blood has to come from a donor. People prefer giving money to giving blood, but we don't need their money. It is the blood that we need."

Talking about the recent award that he received in Sharjah from Dr Amin al Amiri, Assistant Undersecretary for Medical Practices and Licensing, he said that the bigger prize was not the shield that he received but the reception of the people there. Ahmed estimates that he and his family may have donated around 100,000ml of blood to date. "If I get 100 people in one company to donate blood and they convince 100 more people why they should donate, then we can encourage thousands to give blood," he said.

Contributed by Janice Vaz



► Margarita Lipkov with her exhibit for the show

vide stimulating activities for her child. My little sister, my only sibling and best friend just passed away. This is a way of honouring her," Margarita said.

For some of the participants, this is their first exhibition, while others are regulars on the circuit, such as Heena who has taken part in a number of shows both here and in India.

Her decision to take part with her range of abstract pieces has to do with supporting social causes, something that she believes is a way of giving back to the community and

people for the achievements she has made with their help.

Aruna has also had a number of exhibitions in Oman and was inspired to take part in this show after seeing Sunita and Tania's previous exhibition, 'Celebration of Colours'. A botanist by education, Aruna has been painting for around nine years, and said, "After coming to Oman in 2005, I became more interested in painting and started using different mediums. In these last eight years, I have painted landscapes, still life, portraits and abstract."

This exhibition is Wendy's first show and she said that it is a privilege for her to be supporting the work that PETRA does. Oman has been an important inspiration in

Wendy's abstract work. In one piece depicting an old Omani ruin, she used 'pigments' of the sultanate within the painting. "I have been painting for many years now and I am developing my own style more and more," she said.

The previous show was excellent; we sold many pieces and received an overwhelming response

- Sunita Rajvanshi

The idea of combining the work of 15 artists started over a year ago and Tania said, "For me, it is a sheer joy to organise an exhibition together with others. In our groups, we love to share and inspire each other."

"Painting brings me peace and happiness and I like to share those inner feelings," Margarita said. A percentage of the profits from the paintings sold during the exhibition will be donated to PETRA.

The Muscat Singers concert on June 1

The Muscat Singers will perform its Spring Concert with the Muscat BrassWorks on June 1, 4pm, at the new Bosch Center for the Performing Arts in Azaiba, a press release said. The programme has been chosen by Gwen Willson, director of The Muscat Singers, and includes a wide range of American music to honour the homeland of Dr Donald and Eloise Bosch who have

been great patrons of the arts and culture in Oman and after whom the new theatre has been named. With compositions by Irving Berlin, Aaron Copland and Eric Whitacre, the concert will touch upon the most eclectic elements of American choral traditions. Attendees will be treated to classic songs from the US, including *Shenandoah*, *The Promise of Living*, *In The Mood* and *Count Your*

Blessings. In addition, the beautiful choral standard, *Gloria* by John Rutter, will be highlighted along with music from Muscat BrassWorks, a local nine-part brass ensemble.

The Bosch Center is a state-of-the-art concert theatre that seats 520 and has just been completed on the campus of The American International School in Muscat (TAISM). Tickets can be bought in advance at the TAISM main office or texting 95574887.

Indian Classical dance performance on June 7



Bharatanatyam, one of the most popular classical dance forms of India, is known for its cultural appeal and traditional values. But when explored with a contemporary outlook, while remaining within the permissible boundaries, Bharatanatyam can have a wider appeal, even for those who may not understand the finer nuances of a classical performance. 'Moods & Movements' - June 7 at Le Grande Hall, Al Falaj Hotel - is

the culmination of such an idea, a press release said. The event will be presented by Nriyjanjali, an institute dedicated to Bharatanatyam. 'Moods & Movements' will be choreographed by G Narendra, who has taken this art form to a wider audience with his experimental and unconventional approach. The show will be presented by Premila Ramesh, director of Nriyjanjali and her students. Entry is by invitation only. Call 99805965.

Mitsubishi Outlander fact number 10:

Here are 2 facts you might or might not have known. The trunk of what is believed to be Oman's oldest tree can be seen at the Natural History Museum in Muscat. It is estimated to be an impressive 260 million years old. Oman's best 4WD is the Mitsubishi Outlander and it can be purchased at a Mitsubishi dealer near you.

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