

Travel, art and the long story we share

Sevan Mlikyan of Wired Gallery launches Artblazing tour company

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BSP Reporter

Wired Gallery has been a fixture in High Falls since 2012, and its owner, Sevan Melikyan, has spent those years building a steady relationship between local residents and the wider world of art. In 2023, Melikyan headed to Istanbul, where he introduced a group of Hudson Valley travelers to the city where he was born and spent much of his early childhood. That trip reflected something he had already been doing informally for several years: taking small groups to places where art, architecture and long histories meet.

In 2025, Melikyan formalized that work and launched his own company, Artblazing Tours. "The company was formed late 2024, but my first tour wasn't until 2025," he says. "I did it in a very discreet way. There were travelers who wanted to be my guinea pigs. They asked me to take them to Sicily and Malta," explains Melikyan, "so I put together an itinerary for six people. It went like clockwork. It was perfection."

The timing came from a shift in his work with Artful Journeys, the company he had been curating and guiding for. "The owner was focusing primarily on classical music," says Melikyan. "My tours are physically somewhat demanding compared to sitting in a concert hall. You're on your feet going from artwork to artwork. She was becoming of a certain age, and carrying the emergency kit and everything else was becoming too difficult. She said, 'Sevan, why don't you consider starting your own company.' I hesitated, because I was enjoying focusing only on the curatorial part. But the desire of sharing this thing, and knowing how much people enjoyed it, made me say okay. Another baby!"

Artblazing, as he describes it, is centered around cultural discovery in artistically rich destinations. "We go to Istanbul, Cappadocia, Sicily, Malta, Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain and Provence," says Melikyan. "Each year I want to bring in a new tour. I want to do Venice, Paris, Prague, Vienna..." Many of his travelers are from the Mid-Hudson Valley. Others join from farther away. "The groups are small, no more than 12 people, and friendly," he says. "People come in with curiosity about art, architecture and history."

His choices of destinations reflect a long personal connection to places where cultures overlap. "Sicily is inspiring," he says. "You have the Catholic Normans adopting Greek Orthodox Byzantine traditions and involving the local Muslim populations. It's a confluence of cultures. These museums and cultures are testimony that we, as humans, are capable of creating wonders that have crossed centuries. People preserved these works through adversity. It gives hope for generations to come."

Melikyan designs his tours with a clear intention: "I wish to put these tours in the greater scheme of civilization," says Melikyan, "We're not just going to a museum to see an important work. What I present fits into a much greater narrative: where we come from, why we do things a certain way, and what we respond to. Whether it's Greek or Baroque art, it sits inside a larger story. I want to

remind people of the big picture."

Much of his philosophy comes from the way he grew up. "My tours are all about sharing," he says. "I was fortunate to be born in Istanbul, which was once viewed as the center of the world to Armenian parents, learning two languages at once. Then we moved to Paris, where I lived for 17 years. Then New York. All these experiences shaped me. I'm grateful for what I was exposed to, and I don't want to keep it to myself. I want to share it."

This idea of sharing appears throughout his tours, not only from him but from the travelers who join. "Everyone brings their own stories and expertise," he says. "That's not planned. It happens naturally." He recalls a moment in Cappadocia: "One of the travelers, George Minervini, had studied geology. The formations there are very mysterious. He explained the formation of the rocks, and it enriched the experience in a way I couldn't have planned." On another trip, in Southern France, a retired minister offered biblical context while the group looked at church art. "We felt we were discovering something together," says Melikyan.

A recent trip to Istanbul, Ephesus and Cappadocia included artists Fran Sutherland, Dion Ogust and Marcia Clark, and their presence reshaped the experience of the group. "We'd pass around sketches at dinner," Sevan says. "It was amazing to see how different artists see the world in a different way." That simple ritual became the starting point for a new project. "The idea for the 2026 exhibition came after seeing the works created by the artists during our tour," he explains. "Over dinners, we shared their sketches, watercolors and photographs, and everyone was amazed. It was a wonderful realization of how artists see the world differently and how their sharing of that vision enriches us all. I knew I had to open the gallery to share that experience with the wider public." The exhibition opens at Wired Gallery on May 23, 2026. It will feature paintings, sketches and photographs created by travelers during the tours, work he describes as "a natural continuation of the travels."

Melikyan reports that tours follow a steady daily rhythm. "We start around 9:30 or 10," he explains. "A minibus picks us up. We spend about two hours at a museum or cultural site. Around 12:30 or 1, we have lunch for 90 minutes to two hours. After that, another visit - sometimes cultural, sometimes a local experience like a winery. I try not to do two museums in the same day." Around 4 to 6 p.m., travelers return to the hotel and then meet again for dinner. "I like to choose 4-star boutique Hotels that are central and within walking distance," he notes.

He builds in unstructured time as well. "During a nine- or 10-day tour, I try to have two half days left for the traveler to fill as they wish," he says. "I also leave two dinners at their discretion, but often the group stays together." He includes one performance in every itinerary. "A classical concert, an opera, or in Istanbul, the whirling dervishes."

The groups often stay connected after the trips end. "The Istanbul group is having a lunch at Mohonk Mountain House," says Melikyan. "Some from the city, one from New Hampshire. One traveler made T-shirts with art from the trip on them for everyone."

Ahead of the tours, Melikyan offers series of educa-



In Cappadocia (Istanbul 2025)

tional lectures, a unique service for the tour industry. "I do lectures before each tour," he says. "Travelers have a chance to learn and form a first exposure. Then, when they see the work in person, the chances of that information staying with them are much greater."

Though Artblazing is new, Melikyan sees it as an extension of the same work he does at Wired Gallery. "Just as I've shared the work of local artists at Wired Gallery for over 13 years, I now share the world's artistic and cultural treasures with my neighbors and beyond," says Melikyan.

As every trip moves through places shaped by long stretches of human history, the travelers get the opportunity to step into that timeline for a short moment. They look closely, ask questions and share what they see. Curiosity builds on curiosity as a small community forms through the simple act of paying attention together. The learning grows in many directions. The group stands inside the same centuries-old story and adds a new chapter through their presence. The experience suggests that our way forward may rely on these quiet habits: noticing what came before us, valuing what remains and choosing to learn alongside one another. The hope for what humanity might become seems to sit in that combination of curiosity, appreciation and community. BSP

For more information on Artblazing and upcoming adventures, visit [www.artblazing.com](http://www.artblazing.com) or contact Sevan via email at [sevan@artblazing.com](mailto:sevan@artblazing.com) or via phone at 682-564-5613.

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