

Press Release

Championing creativity and promoting inclusion

ADU Celebrates the 9th Edition of its Art for Autism Competition

Abu Dhabi, UAE, 05 May 2025: As part of its commitment to inclusive education and community engagement, [Abu Dhabi University](#) (ADU) hosted the 9th edition of its Art for Autism Competition on 24 April at its main campus. The event, held in collaboration with the Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation (ADMAF) and the Emirates Autism Society (EAS), aligns with the UAE's agenda for promoting social inclusion and the National Strategy for empowering People of Determination (PoD). In conjunction with Autism Awareness Month and the global "Light It Up Blue" campaign, the competition sought to spotlight extraordinary talents of individuals on the autism spectrum, fostering a deeper public understanding through the transformative power of art.

This year's competition welcomed more than 110 artworks submitted by students from inclusive schools and specialized centers across the UAE. With no set theme, artists were encouraged to explore their creativity freely, leading to a rich tapestry of unique creations. The artworks were exhibited in ADU's main atrium and carefully reviewed by a jury panel. Winners were then selected across two age categories, six to 11 and 12 to 25, and honored for their creativity, technique, and personal expression.

In the six to 11 age category, first place was awarded to Khalil Amro Barakat, Latifa Ahmed Alqaydi, and Ahmad Loikov, from the Dubai Autism Center. Second place went to Nasek Alsabah from Sharjah City for Humanitarian Services – Khorfakkan branch. Third place was shared by Selim Sarili from Dubai Autism Center and Razan Qasem from Sharjah City for Humanitarian Services – Khorfakkan branch.

In the 12 to 25 age category, first place was shared by Lance Gavin Toledo, Rawdha Al Bahrani, and Ghaith Ali Hassan, from the Dubai Autism Center. Second place was awarded to Aaliya Siddiqui Khan and Dinal Ekanayake from the Al Noor Training Centre for People of Determination, as well as Hamdan Salem Almarri from the Dubai Autism Center. Third place winners included



Rohithparithi Ramokrishan, Vaideesh Viniath from the Al Noor Training Centre, and Maha Almazroui from the Mohammed Bin Rashid Center for Special Education.

On this occasion, Her Excellency Huda Al Khamis-Kanoo, Founder of the Abu Dhabi Music &

Arts Foundation (ADMAF), stated: “We are delighted to continue our partnership with ADU through launching the ninth edition of the 'Art for Autism' competition. This collaboration reflects ADU’s strong commitment to social responsibility and development as we work together to support individuals with autism and enable their full integration into society within a nurturing environment.”

H.E added: “For over two decades, ADMAF has built platforms for creative and innovative thinking, guided by our deep belief in investing in people. Our work focuses on two fundamental pillars: investing in youth and appreciating and developing the capabilities of people of determination. This initiative forms part of our ongoing programme, *Culture of Determination: Together for Inclusion*, which features diverse artistic, community, and educational events, including the ‘Stories of Inclusion’ dialogue series, highlighting the integrated national system supporting the inclusion and empowerment of people of determination to contribute to the country’s renaissance and leadership regionally and globally.”

Professor Ghassan Aouad, Chancellor of Abu Dhabi University, said: “At ADU, we believe inclusion is not just a principle - it’s a practice that shapes thriving communities. The Art for Autism Competition goes beyond showcasing creativity; it serves as a bridge that connects people and highlights the transformative power of art and education. Through initiatives like this, we aim to inspire and empower individuals on the autism spectrum, ensuring they are seen not only for their needs but for their strengths. As inclusive education continues to advance across the UAE, we remain dedicated to cultivating environments where every student can contribute, grow, and be celebrated. We’re grateful to everyone who took part, from the young artists to the educators and families, for making this year’s competition a true reflection of creativity, collaboration, and shared purpose.”



The competition was supported by the Ministry of Education and the Emirates Autism Society, who helped expand outreach to inclusive schools and specialized centers across the UAE. Participating institutions included Dubai Autism Center, Al Noor Training Centre, Sharjah City for Humanitarian Services, Zayed Higher Organization, Mohammed Bin Rashid Center for Special Education, Rashid Center for People of Determination, and others.

In continuation of Autism Awareness Month and in alignment with the UAE's broader vision for community engagement and inclusivity, ADU also hosted the 5th Autism Spectrum Disorders Symposium on 30 April. The event brought together experts and advocates to explore new frontiers in inclusive, neurodiverse education through a series of interactive and forward-thinking sessions.

For more information about Abu Dhabi University, please visit: <https://www.adu.ac.ae/>

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