

The 53rd International Art Exhibition – the Venice Biennale

12-10-2009 , 15:09 GMT

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Photographer Ozant Kamaci has won the top prize in the UAE Pavilion's nationwide art design contest and is now set to jet off to Venice for an in-depth contemporary art and cultural experience, at the 53rd International Art Exhibition – the Venice Biennale.

Kamaci, a 36-year-old Turkish national and resident of the UAE, has been awarded two return economy class tickets to Venice with Emirates, a three-day stay at a four-star hotel in the Italian city and two tickets to the Venice Biennale after submitting the winning creation to the graphic design contest organised by the UAE Pavilion in association with Emirates airline.

Aimed at giving talented local artists in the UAE national recognition, the contest invited submissions from UAE citizens and residents 18 years and over to create an artwork representative of the nation's art scene for the banner image of the recently-launched UAE Art Archive (www.uaeartarchive.org).

Competing against a total of over 50 entries submitted to the contest from July 22nd to September 30th, 2009, Ozant Kamaci came out victorious with his entry called The Best is Yet to Come.

Describing the inspiration of his artwork, Kamaci said, "This piece represents the concept of a blank canvas, whereby, anything is possible. It conjures anticipation for what is coming next. These are the values which underpin the UAE Art Community. This piece aims to represent the UAE Art Community by drawing on parallel themes which the art community holds in common with the country itself."

"The UAE is both refined and developed, and conversely, unfinished with endless opportunity. Similarly, the Art Community has built a tremendous foundation with emerging artists. However, this is only the beginning. The overriding belief is: 'The best is yet to come'," he added.

Khalid bel Jaflah, Emirates' Vice President of Commercial Operations for the UAE, said, "Emirates has always supported and nurtured the careers of UAE Nationals and we are honoured to have been part of a competition aimed at highlighting the incredible talent of our local graphic design artists."

"The Venice Biennale, attended by visitors from all over the world, is an excellent place to showcase the artistic ability of the UAE. We are pleased to have been a part of this exciting initiative and wish Mr. Ozant Kamaci every success in his future endeavours," he added.

Rashid Shabib, one of the competition's judges and a leading figure in the local art scene, lauded the winner for his inspired creation, saying, "Congratulations to Ozant Kamaci, who has had the opportunity to showcase his artistic talents by capturing the UAE art community in one image. The UAE Pavilion has provided a unique platform for artists and designers to come forward and be recognised as well as compete for grand prize of an all-expenses-paid trip to experience the Venice Biennale."

Furthermore, runners-up Priscilla Dankwa (The Branch of Creativity) and Glenn Roxas (Archiving Art in Paper) have been awarded a one-month membership at Tashkeel, an independent resource for artists and designers in the UAE. Their membership gives them access to studio facilities including painting, photography darkroom and printmaking, a library of art journals, and invaluable workshops lead by professional artists which can help them improve their knowledge of contemporary art.

The competition was judged by the Ambassadors to the UAE Pavilion: Sultan Al Qassemi, Alanood Al Warshaw, Jack Persekian, **Nadine Kanso**, Rashid Shabib, Ahmed Shabib, Sunny Rahbar, Maliha Tabari, Paula Askari, and Hannan Sayed.

The conclusion of this exclusive competition comes as part the UAE's vigorous efforts in introducing the nation's artistic capabilities and deep-rooted cultural traditions to the rest of the world. Breaking ground as the first Arabian Gulf state ever to participate in the Venice Biennale since the event began in 1895, the UAE Pavilion was

established in recognition of the nation's emergence as a cultural hub worthy of attracting global attention. Universally recognised as the world's most prestigious contemporary art event, the Venice Biennale currently presents its 53rd International Art Exhibition, which began on June 7th and will be staged through to November 22nd, 2009.