

Art

A prize for out-of-the-box thinking

By FAYE BRADLEY

The Sovereign Asian Art Prize 2024 results were announced at a gala dinner at the Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong on May 17. Sameen Agha, an artist from Pakistan, won the \$30,000 Grand Prize for her sculpture *A Home is a Terrible Place to Love*. Carved out of red marble, the piece shows a house falling apart like a cardboard box in the process of being dismantled. The Vogue Hong Kong Women's Art Prize went to Hong Kong's Michelle Fung for her mixed media work *Red Bean Stalk*, while Demet, an artist from the Philippines, won the Public Vote Prize for his *PPE, Paint Palette Emulation*.



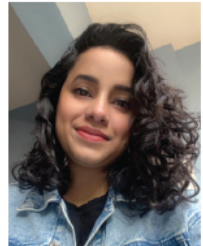
The Public Vote Prize at the Sovereign Asian Art Prize 2024 went to Demet from the Philippines for their mixed media collage *PPE, Paint Palette Emulation*.



Noormah Jamal's painting *Did the Seed Grow?* was on the Sovereign Asian Art Prize 2024 shortlist.



Sameen Agha from Pakistan won the Grand Prize at the Sovereign Asian Art Prize 2024 for her sculpture, *A Home is a Terrible Place to Love*.



artists from 15 countries and regions. Hong Kong had nine artists on the shortlist, which makes it the most represented city at the Art Prize this year. What's more, nearly two-thirds of the shortlistees were women, a first in the Art Prize's history.

SAF's co-founder and director Tiffany Pinkstone sounds pleased with the Art Prize's growth over the past 20 years. "There are now so many more artists, so many more galleries supporting Hong Kong artists and a good collectors' base collecting those artists."

Different strokes

Fung, who took home the Vogue Hong Kong award, was shortlisted last year as well. For her winning piece, she recycled a block of wood

carving, using Chinese ink and color pencils to dress it up. The piece is a manifestation of a "lifelong project to portray a futuristic world," Fung says. "There are so many elements in the works: the sky, the dragon and elephants, mille fleurs background and red bean motifs," Fung says. "Each tells a story of Polluta." According to Fung's website, Polluta is a fictional "futuristic ecotopian/dystopian artist colony" created as a result of air pollution.

Ho Sin-tung, also from Hong Kong, was shortlisted. Her entry, *What Can I Hold You With*, is a pencil drawing on paper, showing two Muay Thai fighters locked in combat against a natural backdrop. The artist draws from her own experience of practicing Muay Thai in different parks of

Hong Kong at a time when gyms were off-limits because of the pandemic-related restrictions. She hopes that viewers will find "a common language and framework" in her depiction of martial arts, and share her journey in the process.

Noormah Jamal from Pakistan made the shortlist as well. Called *Did the Seed Grow?*, her acrylic-on-canvas painting shows two figures holding potted plants in their hands, sitting on a brick wall, with a fire burning in the foreground. The artist says that the vacant expressions on the faces of her subjects underscore the fact that no attempt is being made to engage the viewer's attention.

Supporting special people

Proceeds from the charity auctions held this year will help bolster SAF's Make It Better program, which, since 2013, has been offering expressive arts workshops to children from Hong Kong's disadvantaged communities.

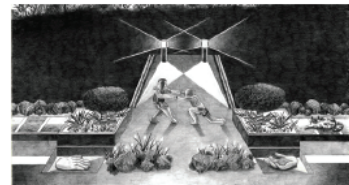
The workshops are tailored to address the social, emotional and behavioral challenges faced by children with special educational needs, including those suffering from autism and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder among other learning difficulties. Facilitated by a professional team of registered art therapists, such

sessions often see parents joining their children.

Pinkstone remarks that family-oriented workshops are extremely effective. Participating parents get to vicariously relive their childhood and share the experience with their children. The children, on their part, feel secure in the company of their parents. And that, says Pinkstone, "is really valuable".



Red Bean Stalk by Michelle Fung won The Vogue Hong Kong Women's Art Prize 2024.



Ho Sin-tung's pencil sketch of Muay Thai fighters, *What Can I Hold You With*, made it to the Sovereign Asian Art Prize 2024 shortlist.

