

Lettering exhibition showcases one-word designs in 20 languages by students from 34 universities

SHARJAH, EMIRATE OF SHARJAH, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, May 6, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Lettering exhibition showcases one-word designs in 20 languages by students from 34 universities

A newly launched traveling lettering exhibition called FiftyFifty collects and showcases artworks by college students from dozens of countries. Premiered in Brisbane, Australia, the event is expected to make rounds across the world.

Leon Barkho, University of Sharjah

The first travelling exhibition of lettering posters, staged in Brisbane, Australia, from April 16 to 20, has generated 150 artworks from students worldwide.

Dubbed FiftyFifty, the exhibition featured 50x50cm black and white script posters designed in 20 different languages.

The students, coming from 34 different universities and spreading over 32 countries, presented typographic artworks comprising solely one word in a language script of their own. There were both manual and digital calligraphy, typography, and lettering designs.

The exhibition, supported by the University of Sharjah and endorsed by the Association Typographique Internationale (ATypI), was held under the theme of Positive Synonyms.

Founded in 1957, ATypI is a worldwide organization dedicated to type and typography design. Its annual conference has been a recurrent event since its founding. FiftyFifty was part of ATypI's 2024 annual gathering in Brisbane, Australia.



The best lettering trophy went for an animation collaboratively composed of the 150 typographic synonyms and lettering designs of the 116 participating students. This single masterpiece was displayed at ATypI Brisbane in April 2024 in Australia.

The travelling exhibition was the brainchild of Nada Abdallah, Assistant Professor at the University of Sharjah's College of Fine Arts and Design. The whole idea, she said, was using typography and calligraphy to bring different cultures and languages together as a sign of coexistence.

"Humanity, love, care, understanding, and tolerance are not just desirable but essential qualities in our challenging times. Words are powerful," she said, adding that her idea behind the travelling exhibition was to encourage students from different backgrounds "to create uplifting reflective designs" to combine the work into a multi-language mosaic of positivity, inspiring individuals to work towards a better world.

"As the founder of the FiftyFifty initiative, I am elated to witness the convergence of youthful minds from around the world, united by a shared ardor for knowledge, creativity, and innovation. The journey doesn't end in Brisbane, Australia; the exhibition will traverse the globe, visiting various cities, with the theme for the 2025 edition soon to be announced."

University of Sharjah's College of Fine Arts and Design plans to host the next round of the exhibition, according to Professor Nadia Mehdi Alhasani, the college dean. "Our college's support for the FiftyFifty initiative, while promoting internationalization, simultaneously advocates for connectivity through diversity of cultures. This unique traveling exhibit seeks to spread positivity and reverence for uniqueness of cultural identities."

Interest in the exhibition was high, said Nada Abdallah, who initially had received 1500 submissions for possible participation, of which a panel of nine judges from diverse background and countries only chose 150.

Prof. Evipides Zantides, Dean of Fine and Applied Arts at Cyprus University of Technology, was one of the judges. He said, "Through careful selection and treatment of the typography, the meanings of many positive synonyms were visualized and expressed in creative and expressive ways. The result has proven the influence Typography has in visualizing and empowering the linguistic message in ways that emotions are evoked, encouraging and inspiring people to work towards a better world."

Maha Abdullah, a senior international typography manager at Adobe, said she was impressed by the exhibition's "brilliant approach to transforming the way we look at typography...in the digital world. The ultimate beauty of these artworks and the unique designs captured all attention and inspired us to look at typography from a completely different perspective."

Commenting on the FiftyFifty animation that was displayed in the conference, Eric Q. Liu, editor of @TheType and a juror, wrote on his website that the animation played on during the exhibition was "a hypnotic video as if entering the black and white world of One Thousand and One Nights".

The judges' option for the best typographic display in the exhibition fell on an animation collaboratively composed in coordination with animator Mahmoud Kanso, a creative art director at nybl, an information technology and services provider. In it, 150 typographic synonyms and lettering designs of 116 participating students were integrated into one single masterpiece displayed at ATypl Brisbane in April 2024 in Australia.

Haneen Eljack, a University of Sharjah student, who took part in FiftyFifty with a cheerful Arabic calligraphic synonym connoting 'congratulations', said she was more than happy to learn that her submission was accepted. "FiftyFifty has been an enriching and fulfilling experience. Additionally, being selected to participate in a traveling typographic exhibition has elevated my excitement and confidence."

Another participant, also a University of Sharjah student, Habiba Elsalhy, described the exhibition as "enlightening." Her design was a lettering of the word Arabic for blessing – in which she tries to show "the meaning of proper name by displaying different weights to visualize how blessings come in different forms."

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