



# Venice Gondolier

## Art exhibit comes to Benderson



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The best-in-show adult winner was Arya Badiyan with "Liberty Enlightening the World" from Lake Oswego, Oregon.

SARASOTA — Nathan Benderson Park will host an international art exhibit “designed to proclaim inclusion, respect and kindness.

The exhibit is coming from Embracing Our Differences out of Sarasota and is an annual, juried event.

“It consists of 50 billboard-sized works of art, each accompanied by an inspirational quote,” it said in a news release. “The international exhibit uses the power of art and prose to promote diversity and inclusion.”

It runs May 20-Aug. 8.

“We are so pleased to be partnering with Embracing our Differences and the Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation to bring this powerful public art exhibit to share with our many visitors,” Suncoast Aquatic Nature Center Associates at NBP President/CEO Tomás Herrera-Mishler said in the news release. “The messages expressed by the art are moving, springing from the artists’ experiences, joys and sorrows, coming from many nations, ages, and backgrounds.”

Nearly 16,000 entries from 48 U.S. states and 128 nations were submitted for the 2021 exhibit. Winning quotes and art end up being showcased at Sarasota’s Bayfront Park, the news release said.

The exhibit also comes through the Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation, which makes it free for the public.

Herrera-Mishler said the organization is “proud to host this exhibit at Nathan Benderson Park and welcome all to come, free of charge to enjoy and experience a unique public art display in our beautiful park.”

EOD Executive Director Sarah Wertheimer said the art selection committee was inspired by how many works they received for the event.

“Embracing Our Differences exists to proclaim the values of inclusion, kindness and respect, and we were moved to see that thousands of people around the world share these values,” Wertheimer said in the news release. “More than ever, their art and words confirm that we need to replace hostility and division with a respect for diversity. We need to honor the things that make us different and celebrate the things we have in common.”

A selection committee considers the idea of the work and how it looks when it’s put on something the size of a billboard.

“It needs to make an immediate impact,” she said in the news release. “Does the message encourage me to think? Does it inspire me to see something from a new perspective? Does the art itself stop me in my path? These are some of the reactions we’re hoping to inspire in the viewer.”

There were three awards given — for best-in-show adult, best-in-show student and people’s choice, the news release said. Adult winners received \$1,000; students received \$1,000 to split with their school’s art department.

The best-in-show adult winner was Arya Badiyan with “Liberty Enlightening the World” from Lake Oswego, Oregon.

The best-in-show student award winner was Emily Norris, a seventh-grade student from Sarasota Middle School with “Small Struggles.”

“To me, the concept of ‘embracing our differences’ means showing off what’s unique about yourself,” Norris said of her art, showing a girl of color looking at dolls all with blonde hair. “Through my work, I attempt to highlight the little struggles people of color go through every day.”

The best-in-show inspirational quote award was Temilola Aderemi from Nigeria. Her quote: “If we were to exchange shoes, would you be willing to wear mine?”

Wertheimer said the statements accompanying the artwork was important.

“Every quote opens a window into our common humanity,” Wertheimer said in the news release. “They touch us with their wit, insight, and empathy.”

For more information, visit [www.embracingourdifferences.org](http://www.embracingourdifferences.org) or call 941-404-5710.