

MEDIA CONTACTS

Sarah Wertheimer ▪ 941-404-5710 ▪ sarah@embracingourdifferences.org

Su Byron ▪ 941-955-8103 ▪ subyron@verizon.net

“Enriching Lives Through Diversity and Inclusion”

Embracing Our Differences Announces

2022 Outdoor Art Exhibit and Top Winners

Exhibit is January 15-April 10 in Bayfront Park

The organization received 17,413 entries from 123 countries and 47 states in submissions for the 19th annual outdoor art exhibit celebrating diversity and inclusion.

The Best-in-Show Adult artwork award went to Samantha Miller, from Sarasota.

Mia Gonzalez, a 9th grade student from Parrish Community High School in Bradenton, won the Best-in-Show Student award for her art. Alicia Chalmers of Bradenton, won Best-in-Show for her inspirational quotation.

(December 6, 2021) Since 2004, Embracing Our Differences has used the power of art and prose to promote diversity. One way it achieves this is through its annual, juried international outdoor art exhibition comprising 50 billboard-sized works of art, each accompanied by an inspirational quotation. This year’s response to the call for artwork and inspirational quotations broke last year’s record, with 17,413 entries pouring in from 123 countries and 47 states. Students from 423 schools around the world submitted artwork or quotations to the juried exhibit. **The winning quotations and art will be showcased in the 19th annual exhibit, January 15 through April 10, in Sarasota’s Bayfront Park.** *For more information about this exhibit or Embracing Our Differences, call 941-404-5710 or visit www.embracingourdifferences.org.*

Sarah Wertheimer, Embracing Our Differences' executive director, is delighted by the outpouring of global response to this year's call for submissions. "Yet again, thousands of caring people jumped at the chance to celebrate the values of diversity and inclusion," she says. "Our art selection jury was deeply touched and inspired by their heartfelt honesty and level of artistic excellence."

According to Wertheimer, the submissions cover a broad spectrum of personal conviction and artistic expression. But one core belief unites these diverse voices.

"It boils down to respecting each individual for who they are," Wertheimer says. "Human identity is an intricate tapestry of culture, nationality, sexual orientation, personal experience, the social construct of race, and more. That incredible diversity is a beautiful thing. Embracing Our Differences honors that beauty, and we select the quotations and artwork that best express it."

Wertheimer adds that only a fraction of the powerful submissions are chosen for each year's outdoor exhibit. "What you'll see is only the tip of the iceberg," she says. "We're profoundly moved to see how many people share our core philosophy all over the world."

Selection criteria boil down to medium and message. *What is the core idea of each submission? How well is it expressed?* "Our judges try to imagine the impact the artwork will have when it's enlarged to the size of a billboard. *Will it stop me in my tracks? Will it move me and make me think? Will its truth stay with me on the ride home?* That's what we're going for."

Awards are given for "Best-in-Show Adult," "Best-in-Show Student," and "People's Choice" categories, with the last chosen by visitors to the exhibit. Adult art

winner each receive \$1,000; students receive \$1,000, which they split with their school's art program. The person who pens the winning quotation is awarded \$1,000.

2022 ART WINNERS

The **Best-in-Show Adult** winner for art is for "Cultivation" by Samantha Miller of Sarasota. The work shows a garden of flowers—some blooming, others withered or dead. The stems are illustrated with words designating attitudes and emotions, including "Love," "Hate," and "Integrity." In her artist statement, Miller says, "just like plants, we grow depending on what we feed ourselves. If we continually live with hate, jealousy, and resentment then we will fail to bloom. By feeding ourselves positive attributes we can grow and help others. If we continue to build each other up, we can create a healthy and thriving community."

Mia Gonzalez, a 9th grade student in Parrish Community High School in Bradenton, won the **Best-in-Show Student** award for her work, "Cultural Buffet," which depicts women from different ethnic heritages (Japan and South Africa) enjoying a feast of delicacies from their different cultures. Gonzalez notes that she believes that "diversity and inclusion means being able to appreciate other cultures and lifestyles. It means sharing a piece of your life in hopes of enriching another's. I decided to incorporate food, which is often used to distinguish one region from others, into my work." She adds that she spent time researching special dishes that are prominent in each culture.

2022 QUOTATION WINNER

The award for the **Best-in-Show** inspirational quotation was given to Alicia Chalmers of Bradenton for: “We are so much better united in kindness than divided in anger.”

Wertheimer stresses the importance of the statements accompanying each artwork. “Every quotation opens a window into our common humanity,” she says. “They touch us with their wit, insight, and empathy.”

Embracing Our Differences’ annual outdoor exhibits are the heart of a year-round program of activities designed to use art as a catalyst to create awareness and promote diversity.

For more information about Embracing Our Differences, call 941-404-5710 or visit www.embracingourdifferences.org.

About Embracing Our Differences

Embracing Our Differences is a not-for-profit organization that uses the transformational power of art and education to celebrate and promote the diversity of the human family. It accomplishes this through an annual, large-scale outdoor juried art exhibition and a comprehensive series of educational initiatives, programs and resources designed for teachers and students. Visit www.embracingourdifferences.org.

Photo captions:

- **EOD 2022: Best-in-Show, Adult:** “Cultivation” by Samantha Miller of Sarasota.
- **EOD 2022: Best-in-Show, Student:** “Cultural Buffett” by Mia Gonzalez, a 9th grade student in Parrish Community High School in Bradenton.
- **EOD 2022:** “Pushing Away Demons” by Celene Krempp of Washington, D.C.
- **EOD 2022:** “A Mile in My Shoes” by Madison Olszewski of Menasha, Wisconsin, 10th Grade, Menasha High School.

- **EOD 2022:** *“Out of the Box”* by Kai Smith, North Port, Florida, 9th grade, North Port High School, Teacher: Chloe DuBois.