

Art & Culture

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Inspired by the Burj Khalifa

To celebrate Dubai's iconic landmark, More Café and *Time Out* teamed up to organise a local art contest and send one lucky home-grown artist on a trip to Paris. *Nyree Barrett* meets the finalists, the winner and their works

A few months ago, we asked *Time Out's* readers to create an artistic interpretation of the Burj Khalifa, promising the winner a trip to Paris. The response was impressive, mostly from the UAE's youngsters; we received a huge haul of school artworks, plus a few adult entries. After much deliberating, we narrowed it down to a shortlist of seven – one of which was too big to leave the artist's house. These artworks (minus the mammoth one) then went on a travelling roadshow around More Café's branches, where we asked Dubai's diners to choose their favourites. Here's who you voted for.

Finalists

The engineer ▶

James William Douglas, 10, English/Kiwi

Tell us about your tower.

We used 878 cards to build it – it has a piece of wood in the middle joined to other planks, with straws coming off it to keep the structure correct. It took me a week to build: it's in two sections, so we did one section first, then put the second on top.

Is that a gecko inside the tower?

Yes; my brother and I were playing around and this plastic gecko accidentally fell in. [That's what we call a beautiful accident in the art world].

What do you think of the Burj Khalifa?

I've never been up it, but I like its height, spiral shape and the way it reflects things around it.

What do you want to be when you grow up?

A pilot.

The perfectionist ▼

Afra Mattar Al Tayer, 12, Emirati

Tell us about your piece. I started drawing the sizes and figured out the scale to make it the same as the levels of the building, then I shaded it with pastels. When I was drawing this, they were still working on the top of the building, so the point was hard to draw – I didn't know how it would look.



What do you want to be when you grow up? An artist. I love working with acrylic and pastels, and I love making art because it shows what I'm feeling inside.



The prodigy ▲

Francesca Horton, 6, English

How did you create your work?

I cut a piece of paper into the shape of the Burj, then I put it onto a blue piece of paper and coloured it in.

Do you want to be an artist when you grow up? Yes, because I like being creative.

Do you like the Burj Khalifa?

Yes, but I don't really know why.

The adult contender ▼

Nathaniel Alapide, 32, Filipino

What do you do for a living?

I'm an aquarium specialist at Atlantis; I swim with sharks all day.

Tell us about your work. I started the work before I heard about the competition – I only heard about the Paris trip two months later. The brush strokes in the green background show the passing of time; the further from the Burj the buildings are on the canvas, the more uniform they are.



The multiculturalist ▶

Sreyas Dhavileswara, 13, Indian

Tell us about your work.

Dubai has become a place full of people from so many different nationalities and all walks of life, so I put the different colours on the Burj Khalifa to represent this. I created the background at school using a special airbrush spray, which mixes acrylic with water. I tried it once on a draft canvas to practise, then I did it again for the final draft. I didn't work out the scale of the building exactly – I just worked on it until it looked right.

Do you want to be an artist when you grow up? Yes, because I love doodling all the time.



◀ The winner



Megan Spellman, 13, American

Megan is a sparky young thing who claims to be more interested in pursuing a career as a lawyer than as

an artist: she had originally planned to make a sugar cube model, but time restraints meant she decided to go for a magazine collage piece instead.

Her work is not the most technically proficient, but it obviously spoke to Dubai's audience, perhaps because of the presence of people, birds and even a UAE flag, as well as its bold colouring and sunny feel.

Megan is a student with special needs and attends the British Institute: one of the few places that will accommodate her in Dubai. Her father, Dr Robert Spellman, is passionate about the need for stronger education of children with different learning styles in the UAE, and cites the fact that More Café's customers in their thousands voted for Megan's work as a true milestone moment for him.

So what will Megan do during her prize trip to Paris? Well, she's been there once before, but during winter, so she's keen to see the Versailles Gardens when there are flowers in bloom and to climb the Eiffel Tower in better weather. 'When we were there, you'd get blown off it if you climbed up!' she says.

