

What's On



(From left) AUK President Dr Tim Sullivan giving the opening remarks; Prof Rita Merheb, Professor William J. Andersen; Dean Ali Charara, Dr Bashar Zogheib; Alumna Eman Eltaki with Dean Ali Charara, and Dr Bashar Zogheib; Professor William J. Andersen, chair of GDES during his speech.



(From left) AUK Alumni, Bashayer Al-Zayed, sharing her experience and success story.; Alumni showcasing their art; Alumna displaying her work.; AUK Alumni, Lamees Nijem, sharing her experience and success story.

AUK Art and Graphic Design Dept hosts first alumni reunion

The Art and Graphic Design Department (GDES) organized the GDES alumni reunion to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the program at AUK. The event was held on Nov 29 with activities spread across the university campus that included GDES alumni presentations, exhibitions, and booths promoting alumni businesses, all in an effort to inspire, empower and reflect on both the growth of the program and the alumni who have come back to showcase their work.

A packed auditorium housed students, staff and faculty who have gathered to support the alumni

presentations. Following the opening remarks by AUK President Dr Tim Sullivan, and Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences Dr Ali Charara, a number of acclaimed alumni including, Ghaneema Al-Qudmani, Lamees Nijem, Bashayer Al-Zayed and Ahmed Al Terkait relayed particular personal and professional experiences and highlighted their success stories in their respective fields of magazine, motion graphics, environmental conservation, and filmmaking. A prominent theme was how quickly they had to adapt to the demands and opportunities of the real world, all whilst

remaining original and authentic to their passion and message.

As the presentations concluded, the audience was invited to the multipurpose room to visit the alumni exhibition that showcased photographs, paintings and other forms of art endeavours.

The event concluded with an open buffet where alumni mingled with current students, and rekindled old friendships with other alumni, faculty and staff.

Associate Professor William J. Andersen, Chair of the Department of Art and Graphic Design, emphasized how proud AUK was of its graduates for the positive impact they have added to society.

Assistant Professor Rita Merheb, chair of the organizing committee, said that "This event is the program's first attempt to re-establish ties with its Alumni, our Alumna who are the program's and the institution's ambassadors to the outside world. And having them back on campus to share their experiences and accomplishments, served as an inspiration to our current students who also attended the event."

An iconic symbol of Japan

Koi carp story: priceless Japanese fish makes a splash

KAZO, Japan, Jan 7, (AFP): Hand-reared for their colour and beauty, koi carp have become an iconic symbol of Japan that can sell for hundreds of thousands of dollars and even participate in fishy beauty contests.

The nation's koi carp were brought to the world's attention when visiting US President Donald Trump was snapped unceremoniously dumping the last of a box of feed into a palace pond in Tokyo.

But the fish have for decades been popular in Japan, where top breeders take their most prized specimens (known as "nishikigoi") to highly competitive "beauty parades."

At one such competition in Tokyo, judges in sharp suits, notebooks in hand, stride around tanks lined up along a pedestrian street where the valuable koi strut their stuff.

They come in all the colours of the rainbow: pearl white, bright red, cloudy-grey, dark blue, gleaming golden yellow.

But it is the curvature of the fish that



This photo shows nishikigoi koi carp swimming in a water tank at the Kurihara Fish Farm in Kazo, Saitama prefecture. (AFP)

accounts for 60 percent of the final score, explained competition organiser Isamu Hattori, who runs Japan's main association for breeders of koi carp.

Colour and contrast make up another 30 percent, he told AFP.

And the final 10 percent? "Hinkaku"

— a concept that is tricky to define and even harder to judge, best translated as the "presence" or "aura" of the fish.

"Hinkaku". It's either there in the genes at birth, or it's not," mused Mikinori Kurikara, a koi breeder in Saitama, north of Tokyo, who says he

can spot it in fish when they reach eight or nine months old.

"Put it this way, it's like looking after your own children every day. You care for your kids and want them to grow healthy. In the same way, you take care of these fish, appreciate them and adore them," he told AFP.

At his farm, thousands of tiny "nishikigoi" (coloured carp) dart around deep basins of carefully purified water, meticulously divided by age and colour.

A less glorious fate awaits the other koi who have not been fortunate enough to catch the eye of the breeder: they are sold off as feed for tropical fish.

"It's a really delicate job, really difficult. Everything matters: the ground, the water quality, the food," explained the 48-year-old, who took over the farm from his father and is training his son, half his age, in the subtle arts of koi breeding.

"We have many secrets," he adds mischievously. "But even if we let them slip, it wouldn't work. You have

to be able to feel it."

These days, any self-respecting traditional Japanese garden has plenty of colourful koi gracing its ponds, but it is a relatively recent tradition.

Around 200 years ago, villagers in the mountainous region around Niigata (in the north-west of Japan) started to practise genetic engineering without knowing what they were doing.

For the first time, they began to cross-breed rare colourful carp, not for food but for pure aesthetical value.

The craze for nishikigoi gradually took over the whole of Japan and then spread into other parts of Asia.

They are especially popular in China, where carp swimming against the tide symbolises the idea of perseverance leading to riches — rather like people climbing the social ladder, said Yutaka Suga, professor at the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia at Tokyo University.

Today, koi is big business and Japanese exports are booming — 90 percent of domestic production is exported and

sold at auction.

In 2016, Japan exported a record 295 tonnes of koi carp, generating turnover of 3.5 billion yen (\$31 million), an increase of almost 50 percent from 2007, according to Japan's agriculture ministry.

As for individual carp, "the prices have become insane," said carp association boss Hattori. "Today, a two-year-old carp can sell for 30 million yen each (\$265,000) whereas 10 years ago, two million yen was already a very good price," he told AFP.

Like racehorse owners, many foreign owners leave their prized possessions in their home Japanese farms so they can compete in the most prestigious fishy pageants, which are only open to domestic rearers.

One such owner, Chinese koi collector Yuan Jiadong, was in Tokyo to cheer on some of his own carp.

"It's not a way of making money. It's a way of spending it for fun," laughed the pharmaceutical boss from Shanghai.

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This week we will travel to China



1. Hong Kong

Delectable dim sum, floating islands, and a one-of-a-kind skyline are just some of Hong Kong's unique features. Get an eyeful of traditional Chinese architecture in Ngong Ping village, then take the tram to the tippy-top of Victoria Peak for unparalleled views. The rocks and gentle hills of Nan Lian Garden will bring you inner peace, as will a calming cup of tea in a Stanley café. Become one with everything at the Chi Lin Nunnery, a serene Buddhist complex.



(Chairman Mao Memorial Hall, Tiananmen Square). For the best market experience, choose the Dirt Market over the touristy Silk Market. A visit to the Great Wall, the longest manmade structure in the world, is absolutely essential.

3. Shanghai

The largest city in China is also its most cosmopolitan, offering visitors a chance to experience the past, present, and future all at once. The Huangpu River splits Shanghai into two districts: Pudong and Puxi. The Pudong skyline looks like it was ripped from the Jetsons, with the bulbous Oriental Pearl TV and Radio Tower looking a bit like a two headed lollipop. On the Puxi side, you can walk the Bund riverside district to get a taste of old Shanghai.

2. Beijing

Welcome to a capital city whose story goes back at least 3000 years. In Beijing, you'll find a wealth of history, both ancient (the Hall of Preserving Harmony, Summer Palace, Forbidden City) and more recent

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