

Short story, comic named as audience's top picks in Future Forecast contest

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Mr Xavier See submitted three different short stories for the Future Forecast storytelling competition, unsure how his entries would fare.

Two of them were written emulating the style of authors he liked, American author F. Scott Fitzgerald and local writer Simon Tay.

Surprisingly for Mr See, 21, it was his third entry – written in a more personal style instead of his literary heroes’ – that made it both to the top 10 list and won the audience’s choice in his category, for students from institutes of higher learning. Touching Grass, about a gamer immersed in a virtual world, garnered 15 per cent of the audience votes.

Mr See, a first-year National University of Singapore student, recalled: “At one point, I was really frustrated, trying to figure out the semantics of everything... I kind of poured my frustrations into the character.

“I was thinking, how might someone in the future feel frustrated at the things that are going on around them?”

The storytelling competition, held from April 21 to July 31 and co-organised by Singapore’s investment company Temasek and The Straits Times, asked students to describe their vision of the future based on one or more of four themes: digitisation, longer lifespans, sustainable living, and the future of consumption.

A two-page comic about floating cities clinched the audience’s choice award in the category for students from secondary schools, junior colleges and the equivalent, with about 19 per cent of the votes.

It was illustrated by Ms Huang Xinrui, 18, who said she was surprised to have won as she found all the entries “wonderful” and expressed the competition themes in a range of ways.

“Over the past two years, I have been growing an interest in speculative fiction and sustainability, and this competition was an intersection of these two interests. It was also a way of showing my art through imagining what the future might look like,” said the Raffles Institution JC2 student.

Mr See and Ms Huang each won an iPad Pro.

Ten winners in each of two categories were selected from 561 submissions, with each winner receiving a \$1,000 cash prize.

From Oct 16 to Nov 6, Singapore residents were asked to view the winning entries online and vote for their favourite work in each of the two categories. More than 1,500 votes were cast across the two categories.

The voter who submitted the best-written reasons for his choices also won \$50. The prize went to Mr Jeremy Yeo Shenglong, 39, a civil servant who voted for Games Of War, a story about the use of technology in warfare, and Not To My Taste, a story about a device that controls aspects of people’s lives in order to extend their lifespans.

All winning entries can continue to be viewed at futureforecast.sg/vote

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