

2026 SUMMER ART COMPETITION

Rules, Eligibility & FAQs for Students

1. How is the summer competition different than the annual competition?

While the annual competition explores all Unsung Heroes, the 2026 ARTEFFECT summer competition, themed Innovation Generation, focuses on a subset of Unsung Heroes who made positive, profound, and lasting contributions to others through their innovations, inventions, and research. The submission period at four months is shorter, running from May 15–September 15, 2026. The summer competition is open only to students in grades 9-12 whereas the annual competition is open to students in grades 6-12.

2. Who is eligible to enter? All students in grades 9-12 are eligible including rising high school freshmen (students entering 9th grade in Fall 2026) and students who graduated high school in 2026.

3. Am I eligible to participate if I've won a financial prize in the ARTEFFECT annual competition? Yes. The 2026 ARTEFFECT summer competition is separate from the ARTEFFECT annual competition. While the recipient of a financial prize from the ARTEFFECT annual competition can also win an award in the summer competition, once an individual has won one award in each competition, no further financial prizes can be awarded to that individual.

4. How many prizes can I win? The 2026 ARTEFFECT summer competition award categories include a Grand Prize, Best in Show, First Place, Second Place, Spotlight Prizes (Style and Media categories), and Certificates of Excellence. Each submission is considered for all award categories but can only win one financial prize.

5. If I win a financial prize in the summer competition, am I still eligible for awards in future annual competitions? Yes, if you have not already won an award in the annual competition. While the recipient of a financial prize from the ARTEFFECT summer competition can also win an award in the annual competition, once an individual has won one award in each competition, no further financial prizes can be awarded to that individual.

6. Can I enter a group project? No. ARTEFFECT does not accept group entries.

- 7. Do I need to have a sponsoring classroom teacher to enter the summer competition?** Your classroom teacher does not need to approve your project or serve as an official sponsor, but you must list the name of your classroom teacher and school to ensure you are enrolled in an accredited high school. If you completed your ARTEFFECT project outside of school, please indicate on your submission form whether you created your project as an independent project or under guidance from a studio instructor/private tutor.
- 8. Do you accept submissions from students in alternative classroom settings, like a home school or non-campus institution?** Yes.
- 9. I live or attend a school outside the United States. Can I participate?**
Yes. ARTEFFECT accepts international entries.
- 10. Do I need parental consent if I am over 18 years of age?** Because the legal age varies by geographic region, we ask all entrants in grades 9-12, along with rising high school seniors and college freshmen, to include a parental signature.
- 11. Can I create an artwork based on an Unsung Hero that I find by myself?**
The summer competition focuses on the theme of innovators. The [Innovation Generation-Unsung Heroes Directory](#) lists individuals who made positive, profound, and lasting contributions to others through their innovations, inventions, and research. For the summer competition, students must choose an Unsung Hero from the Innovation Generation Directory.
- 12. How many artworks can I submit?** The ARTEFFECT competition accepts one entry per student.
- 13. Can I submit a project that I have already submitted to ARTEFFECT in previous years?** Yes, all submitted entries will be reviewed by the ARTEFFECT judging panel. Keep in mind that a re-submitted entry that has not been significantly altered will likely achieve the same result as when it was first submitted. We encourage you to create a new project for the 2026 ARTEFFECT summer competition. Re-submitted artworks that were winners or finalists in previous competition years will not be re-considered for additional awards, prizes, or recognition for the 2026 ARTEFFECT summer competition.

- 14. What criteria are used to judge my project?** Judging is based on three key elements: Creative Interpretation (40%), Aesthetic Quality (40%), and your Impact Statement (20%). Be sure to review the [Rules page](#) and the [Judging Rubric](#) for additional information.
- 15. Can I use source images from the internet?** You may use historical source images from the internet, although we discourage entrants to copy source material directly. Existing and known historical portraits and images of the Unsung Hero can be used for inspiration and general reference within an artwork, but judging will consider your originality and creative interpretation of the story.
- 16. Can I enter ARTEFFECT with work that has been previously published, exhibited, or recognized by another program?** If your work has been previously published, exhibited, or recognized by another program, confirm that they do not hold exclusive rights to your work before entering ARTEFFECT. If your project receives an award, you will be sending your artwork to ARTEFFECT, and it must be free to use in our publications or exhibitions.
- 17. How will ARTEFFECT use my project?** All finalists and winners will be featured on the ARTEFFECT website. Selected award-winning projects will be showcased in ARTEFFECT exhibitions, including at the [ARTEFFECT Gallery at the Milken Center for Advancing the American Dream in Washington, D.C.](#) ARTEFFECT will have exclusive rights to the projects, and winners are required to send their original artworks to ARTEFFECT (shipping costs can be reimbursed).

For other questions, please contact arteffect@lowellmilken.org