

# ARTEFFECT



## 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 9<sup>th</sup> 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. 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 two top awards (i.e., the Grand Prize, Best in Show, First Place, Second Place) across both competitions, 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. 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 two top awards (i.e., the Grand Prize, Best in Show, First Place, Second Place) across both competitions, no further financial prize 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?** No. 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?** Yes. 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?**  
No, For the summer competition, students must choose an Unsung Hero from the [Innovation Generation-Unsung Heroes Directory](#). This directory lists role models who made positive, profound, and lasting contributions to others through their innovations, inventions, and research.
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 complete submitted entries will be reviewed by the ARTEFFECT judging panel. Resubmitted artworks that were winners or finalists in previous competition years will not be reconsidered 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 use Artificial Intelligence (AI)?** No. Submitted projects must be entirely student-produced. Students may not use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools during any stage of the creative process for artworks or Impact Statements. This includes brainstorming, drafting, editing, and final production. Students will be required to certify that AI tools have not been employed in any fashion. Submitted projects will be screened for potential AI-generated content.
- 17. 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, ARTEFFECT will have exclusive rights to the work of art and winners are required to send their original artworks to ARTEFFECT (shipping costs can be reimbursed with receipts). Your work must be free to use in our publications or exhibitions.
- 18. 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 and publications from time to time, including at the [ARTEFFECT Gallery at the Milken Center for Advancing the American Dream in Washington, D.C.](#) and the [Lowell Milken Center Hall of Unsung Heroes in Fort Scott, Kansas.](#)

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