

Six Young Artists Selected From 500+ Participants Featured on Nasdaq Digital Billboard in Times Square

Winning artworks and portraits from the 2026 Shining Stars International Art Competition reached audiences from a Manhattan museum exhibition to Times Square

NEW YORK CITY, NY, UNITED STATES, September 1, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Six young artists selected from more than 500 participants across North America recently had their winning artwork and portrait featured on the Nasdaq digital billboard in New York City's Times Square, bringing their creativity and personal stories to one of the world's most recognizable public spaces.



Six young artists selected from more than 500 participants across North America had their winning artworks and portraits featured on the Nasdaq digital billboard in New York City's Times Square.

The Times Square showcase marked a highlight of the 2026 Shining Stars International Art Competition, a youth arts initiative designed to give emerging artists opportunities to present their work beyond the classroom and engage with broader audiences through visual storytelling. Before reaching Times Square, selected works from the competition were also presented in a dedicated exhibition at Memor Museum on Manhattan's Upper East Side, giving young artists the opportunity to see their work displayed in a museum setting and shared with the New York community.

The 2026 competition drew more than 500 young participants from across North America, including New York, California, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Florida and Texas, as well as Vancouver, Canada. Submissions were reviewed by arts professionals with backgrounds connected to institutions including the Rhode Island School of Design, Parsons School of Design and the China Academy of Art. Works were evaluated across areas including artistic expression, creativity and thematic development. Following the selection process, six young artists received the competition's highest distinction and were named Shining Stars International Art

Ambassadors. Their winning artworks and individual portraits were then presented on the Nasdaq digital billboard in Times Square, extending their artistic journey from a museum exhibition to one of New York City's most visible public stages.

Six Young Artists, Six Perspectives

Behind the Nasdaq showcase are six young artists whose works and personal journeys explore themes ranging from life and mortality to imagination, identity, peace, perseverance and hope for the future. While their backgrounds and artistic styles differ, each has developed a distinctive relationship with art as a way to express ideas, emotions and personal perspectives.

Serena Zheng: A Garden Where Life and Death Coexist

Sixteen-year-old Serena Zheng began drawing at age two and has spent more than a decade developing art as a way to express imagination, emotion and reflection. Her winning work, A Garden Built of Bones, brings together two seemingly opposing symbols: a garden representing life and growth, and bones representing mortality. Through this contrast, Serena explores the idea that life and death can exist within the same world. "I believe life and death are not two separate entities, but a duo that go hand in hand, building off of each other," Serena said. For her, painting has become more than a technical skill. It is a way to question, interpret and understand the world around her.

Chauncey Lin: Bringing an Imagined World to Life

Twelve-year-old Chauncey Lin has loved drawing since childhood and began receiving structured art training at age 10. His winning work, Spirit Beast Beneath the Flowers, combines floral imagery with a fantastical creature, creating a vivid world shaped by curiosity, color and imagination. What began simply as a love of drawing has gradually developed into a more



focused creative pursuit. For Chauncey, art offers a way to transform ideas that exist in his imagination into something others can see and experience. Through his work, he continues to explore how visual storytelling can turn childhood imagination into complete artistic worlds.

Angelina Li: Painting What Words Cannot Say

Eleven-year-old Angelina Li began studying art at an early age and grew up with both visual creativity and language playing important roles in her development. Her winning oil painting, *The Unspoken Words*, reflects the idea that some emotions and experiences can be difficult to communicate through language alone. Through color, composition and imagery, Angelina gives visual form to thoughts that might otherwise remain unspoken. She hopes to continue developing her artistic voice and using creativity to communicate with others. For Angelina, art is both a form of self-expression and a way to connect her inner experiences with the world around her.

Zhipei Li: Finding Stillness Through Art

Zhipei Li has always been energetic and curious, with interests ranging from hosting, dance and modeling to horseback riding, sailing and tennis. Yet from an early age, her family noticed that drawing brought out a different side of her. The child who rarely sat still became remarkably calm and focused whenever she picked up a pencil or paintbrush. Her winning work, *The Migrating Me*, reflects ideas of movement, identity and personal experience. For Zhipei, art has grown from a childhood interest into a space for concentration, reflection and self-discovery, revealing a quieter and more introspective side of her personality.

Jiahan He: Believing That Peace Is Not a Fairy Tale

Thirteen-year-old Jiahan He has been interested in drawing since childhood and began systematic art training at age 11. Through continued practice and portfolio development, he strengthened his artistic skills and was later admitted to New York's Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts. His 2026 winning work, *Peace Is Not a Fairy Tale*, reflects his belief that art can communicate hope, kindness and ideas about peace across cultural and linguistic boundaries. "Use art to express yourself, and let silent paintings illuminate the heart," Jiahan said. For him, visual art is a language capable of connecting people without words.

Angela Yu: Expressing Wonder Through Color and Imagination

Angela Yu discovered her love of art at age five while living in China, where she began by drawing cartoons and scenes from her imagination. After moving to the United States, she continued drawing and later found inspiration in anime. At age nine, Angela began formal art training, developing foundational skills in shape, proportion and shading before expanding into portraiture and painting. Her winning artwork stands out for its vivid use of color, childlike

innocence and uplifting sense of hope. Through a bright and imaginative composition filled with movement, rainbow tones and youthful energy, Angela presents a joyful vision of the future. For Angela, artistic growth has also become a lesson in patience and persistence. Today, she continues exploring both realistic and anime-inspired styles while developing a creative voice rooted in curiosity, optimism and imagination.

From the Museum to Times Square: Giving Young Artists a Platform Beyond the Classroom

The competition is part of Shining Stars International Culture & Arts Week, an initiative centered on youth creativity, artistic development and cross-cultural exchange. Rather than treating competition and awards as an endpoint, organizers say the broader goal is to create meaningful opportunities for young people to experience what it means to share their creative voices with the public.

For participants in this year's program, that journey extended from having their work professionally reviewed to seeing selected pieces exhibited at Memor Museum on Manhattan's Upper East Side, and ultimately, for six young artists, seeing their winning artwork and portrait displayed on the Nasdaq digital billboard in Times Square. "Art gives young people a language that can travel across borders without translation," said Zaozao Wang, Co-Founder of the Global Youth Arts & Culture Foundation. "When young artists are given meaningful platforms, we are not simply displaying their work. We are showing them that their ideas, perspectives and voices deserve to be part of a larger global conversation." The Global Youth Arts & Culture Foundation, a New York-based nonprofit organization, works to connect young people with arts, culture, education and international exchange opportunities. Shining Stars International Culture & Arts Week is developed through collaboration among the Foundation and international media, education and cultural partners, including Zhejiang Media Group.

For organizers, the progression from museum walls on Manhattan's Upper East Side to the Nasdaq digital billboard in Times Square represents more than public recognition for six young artists. It reflects a broader mission: giving young people meaningful spaces to express how they see the world—and giving the world an opportunity to see them.

About Global Youth Arts & Culture Foundation

The Global Youth Arts & Culture Foundation (GYACF) is a New York-based nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing youth development through arts, culture, education and international exchange. The Foundation creates programs and platforms that connect young people, educators, artists and cultural institutions across communities and countries, with a focus on expanding access to meaningful creative and cross-cultural experiences.

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