

**VARSITY ARTS**

# Who's the 2017 Artist of the Year 3D Visual Art? Meet Ze Zoe Zhou



2017 Artist of the Year for 3D visual arts: Ze Zoe Zhou, Crean Lutheran High School.  
(Photo by Leonard Ortiz, Orange County Register/SCNG)

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Here's the kind of generosity Ze Zoe Zhou embodies as an artist.

She's outstanding at painting and drawing. The best at her school. But Zhou suggested that her art teacher at Crean Lutheran High, Anna Bloomfield, nominate her in 3D visual arts for this year's Artist of the Year awards.

"She wanted to give other 2D students a chance in that area," said Bloomfield. "It speaks highly to her character."

Zhou has only recently been dabbling in 3D art. But her work demonstrates her all-around ability and earned her the top honor from the Register's panel of 3D judges.

An interactive art project she undertook on her high school campus particularly wowed the panel.

Zhou installed a large wooden loom on the school grounds to serve as a frame for a canvas she created from thickly woven yarn. Then she invited her peers to attach colorful strings of yarn and other material wherever they wanted and in whatever shape to represent something of themselves.

It's unusual enough to attempt an interactive piece on a high school campus, the judges said. But the work Zhou put into it really left an impression.

"She made the loom, which is pretty amazing," said Alicia Archunde, 3D art teacher at Buena Park High.

Zhou is 19 and headed for the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

An international student, Zhou plans to remain in the United States for a few years pursuing her life's work once she finishes her degree and then return to China to be with her mother. Her father died a year ago and she doesn't want to leave her mother alone for too long.

As a child, she traveled to Africa with her mother and visited places where the suffering of other children found a permanent place in her soul. One of the sculptures she showed the judges depicted a little boy – stick-thin arms crafted from Plastimake jut from a black wire frame, a swollen area where his belly would be is stuffed with grass.

An only child born prematurely, Zhou spent a lot of time indoors in her youth, dealing with her own poor health and isolation. She feared the unknown, she said.

"I was the type of girl who always needed to check what was under my bed before going to sleep. Some of the monsters came from my nightmares, but all of them originated from my own mind – a place filled with fears."

Art classes gave her an outlet – to be around other children, to express her fears. Later, when she came to the United States to live with a host family while attending high school, she felt that isolation and fear again, partly because of her language skills. So, again, she spoke through her art.

"With a pencil in hand, I showed the world what was in my mind without having to worry about my accent or poor vocabulary. My paintings were more than just beautiful pictures on a canvas; they gave me a voice, a way to uniquely illustrate my point of view."

## Honorable mentions

### [Connor Jordan](#), 18, St. Margaret's Episcopal School

His portfolio includes a series of life-size plaster cast hands interacting with mini 3D printed humans that express physical emotions. When asked about the inspiration for the hands, he explained that they were an easy way for him to illustrate how he was feeling during the day at school.

He plans to major in business at Indiana University and minor in 3D art.

### [Cailyn Templeton](#), 18, El Dorado High School

She joined a ceramics class last year and became consumed by her love for it. She'll start at Fullerton Junior College, with plans to transfer to Cal State Fullerton or Long Beach because both offer a glass-blowing program.

"She's explored and experimented. She's tried everything at this stage. I like that," said Brian Schultz, selection panelist and ceramics teacher at Capistrano Valley High.

## THE TOP 10 SELECTION COMMITTEE:

**Anna Bloomfield**, Crean Lutheran High School; **Caroline Davies**, Mater Dei High School; **Heide Janssen**, Orange County Register; **Michael Millam**, Western High School; **Rick Rickman**, Magnolia High School; **Sherri Sieb**, El Toro High School; **Jesse Standlea**, St. Margaret's Episcopal School

## ARTIST OF THE YEAR SELECTION PANELISTS:

**Dan Finley**, executive director, Muzeo; **James Galindo**, faculty, Laguna College of Art and Design; **Jon Ginnaty**, lecturer (ceramics), Chapman University; **Heide Janssen**, varsity arts editor, Orange County Register; **Irin Mahaparn**, assistant curator of education, Laguna Art Museum; **Brian Schultz**, ceramics teacher, Capistrano Valley High School; **Christina Smith**, professor and program coordinator (crafts/jewelry/metalsmithing), Cal State Fullerton; **Steve Venz**, visual and performing arts coordinator, Orange County Department of Education

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## Theresa Walker

Theresa Walker is a Southern California native who has been a staff writer at The Orange County Register since 1992. She specializes in human interest stories and social issues, such as homelessness. She also covers nonprofits and philanthropy in Orange County. She loves telling stories about ordinary people who do the extraordinary in their communities.