

# ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

## Varsity Arts Artist of the Year Top 10: Visual arts and film

2016-04-14 16:15:58



This year, 391 high school juniors and seniors were nominated by their teachers as the top Orange County students in theater, dance, instrumental music, vocal music, visual arts and film. Now, the quest is on to determine the top young artist in each discipline.

After reading application statements from the teachers and students, reviewing examples of the students' performances and artwork, and examining the artistic résumés of the nominees, we, with the help of a panel of arts teachers, have narrowed the complete list of nominees to a Top 10 in each discipline, for a total of 60 finalists.

During the past few weeks, the Top 10 artists in each category have been interviewed by a panel of experts in their disciplines. These experts include distinguished artistic professionals and faculty members from Southern California universities as well as a few representative high school teachers. During the interviews, the students present their art form, and afterward the panels decide who will be named artist of the year for each discipline.

This week, we present the Top 10 nominees in instrumental and vocal music. Initially, 25 students were nominated in film and 119 in visual arts. In profiling the artists, we have included quotes from them that refer to their artistic aspirations and submitted works.

Filmmakers include those who work as directors, producers, cinematographers, editors, writers and animators on fiction films, nonfiction/documentaries and animation. Visual artists include those who work in painting, drawing, digital and film photography, ceramics, sculpture, multimedia and graphic design.

The winners will be announced in the May 1 edition of Varsity Arts.

---

### FILM TOP 10

---

**CALEB GARRETT**

EL DORADO HIGH SCHOOL

Focus area: cinematography

“The experience that solidified my passion for filmmaking was the first video contest I won with my friends. That is when the realization that I could do my art as a living dawned on me. ... (In the future) as a director I would produce films that inspire change in the status quo and reveal truths of injustices intrinsic to contemporary society. This might entail fictive narratives with grounds in truth that reveal corruption like “The Big Short” or “Wolf of Wall Street.”

**TESSA GERMAINE**

PACIFIC COAST HIGH SCHOOL

Focus area: directing

“Being a filmmaker has influenced every aspect of my life, because I see everything from a different perspective. All of the experiences I have, people I meet and places I go instantly become cataloged in my mind as stories, characters and locations for my future projects. I don’t do this because I want to make movies. This happens because I want to share realistic stories with people.”

**NICK JACKSON**

CANYON HIGH SCHOOL

Focus area: directing

A little over a year ago I directed my first short film, "Viral." It was a buddy film about an envious student filmmaker who is trying to garner internet fame alongside his sidekick who has a speech impediment. I can say ("Viral") is the most important piece of art I've created in my filmmaking career. ... From the beginning, all I've really wanted to do is inspire people. I want to take an audience away from the troubles of life and provide an escape. I love the laughter I can impart and I love the "a-ha" moments that I myself experience in theaters. I want to create those."

**CLARE KINKAID**

CAPISTRANO VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

Focus area: screenwriting, directing

"I want to be a screenwriter as a profession and influence other people with the impactfulness and power that film has as a medium. This is extremely important to me because expression is the rawest way of communicating ... and this medium is personally very meaningful to me."

**LUKE KONOPASKY**

TESORO HIGH SCHOOL

Focus area: directing

I submitted a clip from my feature film "Nameless." In this scene, the two main characters are breaking into a neighbor's house to find packages that would connect the neighbor to a murder. This clip represents me as a director because of the way I told the story visually. It has an Alfred Hitchcock vibe to it with all of its suspense. ... In the future, I hope to master the craft of filmmaking and pursue my passion for directing. Expressing my creativity and originality in my films is essential. I want to create original films that are commercially and artistically successful."

**RITA KONOPASKY**

TESORO HIGH SCHOOL

Focus area: screenwriting

"I submitted a clip from our short film "Misgiving." "Misgiving" is about what happens to a married couple after they commit a brutal act and how regret inevitably consumes them. Towards the end of the clip, after their argument, the husband character places his hand on his wife's and they share a small, simple moment that

effectively portrays the strength of their relationship. ... I want the audience to see a part of themselves in the characters and I want them to feel hopeful that if the characters in my films can make it out of a tough situation all right, so can they.”



**JACKIE LEE**

BECKMAN HIGH SCHOOL

Focus area: directing

“The piece that I have submitted is titled “Le Cirque Du Formal.” It is a silent film based around a lonesome mime who finds hope and companionship through the help of an enchanted (and rather demanding) balloon. ... As an artist I have two goals – to create and to move. We live in a society where we’ve become so adaptive to the idea of being innovated in a fast-paced manner that we never truly tend to genuinely “live in the moment.” However, with film, I hope to create pieces that will allow one to sit down and forget about the stress in their life.”



**CLAIRE OFFENBERGER**

ORANGE COUNTY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

Focus area: directing

“There are some people in your life that you know you are meant to cross paths with. My friend Serika is one of those people. This documentary about her quickly became a shared emotional outlet for both of us. I chose to shoot the documentary on Mini DV tapes in order to establish a safe, unpretentious environment as well as sustain a more authentic and natural aesthetic. I hope that people who watch this film, whether or not they also have endured similar circumstances, find solace in it. This film helped me to realize that the best thing we can do is try to grow from our pain and move forward. My hope is that those who watch my film will realize this too.”



**KATIE ANN O'KEEFE**

EL DORADO HIGH SCHOOL

Focus area: directing

“I made “Los Ninos Exploradores,” a short narrative comedy about Boy Scouts in the local woods trying to earn their survival badges. The production took a total of four months. After working every day on the production, seeing the final product really made me feel accomplished of myself, and it made me really see that I can create something great. From this point on, my ambition has increased and I fully believe in myself in succeeding in this industry. ... As I continue to grow as a filmmaker in the competitive world, my focus will remain constant. I endure to effect change on the world.”



**KENNEDY SMITH-KUTYLA**

## ORANGE LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL

Focus area: directing

“The film I submitted is a short documentary titled “Childhood.” It highlights my personal journey and struggle to find myself as I’m growing up and reaching my dreams. I wanted to capture a vulnerable yet ultimately uplifting lesson that I’m learning in my own life currently. ... Film is such a powerful medium of art, and it can be used to tell meaningful stories that can touch people’s lives. This means that this art form cannot be taken lightly, and that each opportunity to make a film should be taken with purpose and confidence.”

---

## VISUAL ARTS TOP 10

---



### NOAH CARR

FOUNTAIN VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

Preferred medium: digital photography

“The double-exposure images I submitted were inspired by the work of Antonio Mora and done for my AP Studio Art 2D class’s concentration assignment. The others were done on my own, as documentation of my exploration of the world. One thing I appreciate most about photography is the deceiving “simplicity.” Behind the images lie an immense knowledge about shutter speed, aperture, light and composition that gives them their aesthetic quality. I’ve carefully scrutinized all of these elements until, finally, all that’s left to do is release the shutter. One “click,” and I not only have an image; I’ve captured a moment, immortalizing it forever.”

**SARAH DING**

BECKMAN HIGH SCHOOL

Preferred medium: drawing

“Many of my artworks incorporate elements of insects. I wanted to portray an overall relationship between the bugs and humans, starting from the repulsive state of bugs to the appreciated and human-like aspects of bugs. ... Insects are despicable and annoying, but if scrutinized, they actually appear to be something interesting and mesmerizing. I want people to understand that we should not see life in a superficial way – there are features of beauty in every single thing, whether or not it appears so on the surface.”

**BRIAN DINH**

ORANGE COUNTY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

Preferred medium: painting

“The pieces I have submitted are a small selective portion that best represents who I am inside, who I am past my skin color, my clothes, my intellect. ... “C.A.(N).O.E,” is personally the piece that I feel is my strongest. ... The meaning behind this painting is based on being a millennial, being a child in today’s society. The idea is how teens today over-analyze or read too much in between lines when really it was meaningless.”

The box the girl is holding is left blank purposefully to represent anything that could cause these feelings like frustration, moodiness, envy. It has no identity; it is up to the viewer to decide.”



**HEINSON EVANDER**

LOARA HIGH SCHOOL

Preferred medium: digital photography

“My dream is to become a fashion photographer for international publications like Vogue and Vanity Fair. I would love to work with fashion design houses like Valentino and YSL to shoot their campaigns, as I am an avid lover of fashion and its design processes. ... (In my portfolio) I included a work titled “Fall.” This is a visual representation of my own struggles as a rising artist. Many times in my career, I’ve had to take a fall to get back up stronger. This photo signifies the beauty in the fall. It paints the fall in a positive light and concentrates on the moment of floating weightlessness, not the moment of impact.”



**MADISON HARVEY**

ORANGE LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL

Preferred medium: mixed media

“The pieces I have submitted best represent who I am as an artist and what interests me. A large part of my

work has to do with natural elements, earth tones, texture and living things. I think nature is the ultimate blank canvas and can give us as artists so much inspiration just because of its beauty and diversity. I love working with unconventional materials and the throwaway items littered about. Whether it be tree bark, soda tabs, rusted whisks, wild flowers or wooden beads, everything can be used and reused in multiple imaginative ways. My pieces show how interesting aspects of nature look in a different setting.”



**HESOO JOO**

CREAN LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL

Preferred medium: painting

“The hard work and dedication that goes into each and every one of my artworks made me realize that nothing in life comes quick and easy. You must put enough time into something in order to create something beautiful and worthwhile. As an artist, I want to show and convince others of our world’s beauty. Through my artwork, I hope to show the beauty of nature through utilizing various media as well as my own unique style of art.”



**MADELINE LIVERMORE**

ORANGE LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL

Preferred medium: ceramics

“I would like to do more clay sculptures of horses, specifically full body sculptures of them in different gates of motion and standing still. I’d like to explore different styles and objects of interest. ... Many things inspire me. It could be something ordinary, it could be someone, or even a life event. There really is no limit on inspiration, so I try not to limit myself. Sometimes I get an idea and I think it’s too complicated, but when I go for it and challenge myself, I seem to like my results more. I want people to see me taking risks in my work and I want them to feel something.”



**CHAE YOUNG PARK**

CREAN LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL

Preferred medium: drawing

“Each time, I must break through the boundaries of my imagination. The 3D piece “Acquainted Memories” is my first 3D work, which depicts various components of my childhood. The outside border is filled with mementos sprayed in white, depicting how my once childlike imagination has faded away. The hands depict this loss of innocence, which blocks my imagination time to time. This piece is especially meaningful to me because it was the first time I explored unconventional mediums.”



**SONGWOO PARK**

## CREAN LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL

Preferred medium: drawing

“One prominent example from 2D drawing is “Verbal Abuse.” I have used charcoal on orange paper. This is (my) first art piece that represents the emotional wounds people get from friends, family or society by verbal abuse. Violence is not only defined as hitting someone, it could occur verbally. People can become psychologically destroyed, believing the abusive words to be true, and struggle to steer themselves. ... I chose this as a prominent example because it described me during adolescence.”



## YEO JEAN SONG

### ORANGE COUNTY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

Preferred medium: graphic design

“I want to be a conceptual artist. I would love to explore new ways to spread information through art with other professionals. I want my art to do something for someone. Make someone feel better, make someone consider an idea, make someone do something they haven’t done before or often. ... For my two digital paintings featuring red hands, I was inspired by a book that I recently read, a story of a town haunted by a spirit with red hands. I connected that to how muses haunt us. Muses follow us everywhere, and they’re impossible to ignore.”

© Copyright 2016 Freedom Communications. All Rights Reserved.

[Privacy Policy](#) | [User Agreement](#) | [Site Map](#)