Organizational Overview

Mission
The Alliance for Young Artists & Writers, presenter of the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, identifies teenagers with exceptional artistic and literary talent and brings their remarkable work to a national audience.

History
Established in 1923 by Maurice R. Robinson, the founder of Scholastic Inc., the Awards are the longest-running, most prestigious recognition program for creative teenagers across America and the largest source of scholarships for young artists and writers. The Awards have an impressive roster of notable Alumni, including Tschabalala Self, Stephen King, Kay WalkingStick, Charles White, Joyce Carol Oates, and Andy Warhol.

The Program
The Alliance, a 501(c)(3) organization, provides creative teens with opportunities for recognition, exhibition, publication, and scholarships through the Awards in partnership with more than 100 regional Affiliate Partners—school districts, museums, colleges and universities, libraries, and other educational organizations. Students in grades 7–12 (ages 13 and up) attending public, private, and home schools, as well as U.S. schools abroad may submit work in the following 29 categories:

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Regional and National Awards
At the regional level, works earn Honorable Mention, Silver Key, or Gold Key distinction. Gold Key work advances to the national level; at this level works can earn Gold, Silver with Distinction, and Silver Portfolio, and Gold and Silver Medal.

Notable national jurors have included Edward Sorel, Wangeci Mutu, Edwidge Danticat, Billy Collins, Nikki Giovanni, and Andres Serrano. Jurors look for works that best exemplify originality, technical skill, and the emergence of a personal voice or vision. All work is judged blindly, without knowledge of the student’s gender, age, or hometown.
In 2019, nearly 340,000 works of art and writing were submitted by more than 110,000 students to regional programs across the country. Students and their educators were recognized in their communities with nearly 90,000 regional awards, and at the national level, more than 3,000 National Medals were awarded and 2,800 students celebrated at the National Ceremony at Carnegie Hall.

**Scholarships**

Although not every Scholastic Award includes a cash award, there are many opportunities for scholarships. Each year the Alliance presents $10,000 each to 16 Gold Medal Portfolio recipients, and $1,000 to 30 Silver Medal with Distinction Portfolio recipients. The Alliance also partners with dedicated funders to offer creative challenges and scholarships through other Special Achievement Award opportunities.

In addition, the Alliance partners with select colleges and universities to earmark scholarships for Scholastic Awards recipients. We send a special announcement listing all graduating National Medalists to these schools.

The Scholastic Awards Summer (SAS) Scholarship Program invites students in grades 7–11 with a Gold or Silver Key to apply for a need- and merit-based scholarship to attend a summer art or writing program.

**Other Programs**

**National Student Poets Program**

The National Student Poets Program—a collaboration with the Institute of Museum and Library Services—links five National Student Poets with audiences and neighborhood resources such as museums, libraries, and other community-anchor institutions.

**Exhibitions**

The Alliance and its regional Affiliates exhibit top works in museums, galleries, and arts institutions across the country, including the New York City regional exhibition, hosted by the Metropolitan Museum of Art; the annual Art.Write.Now. National Exhibition, and Art.Write.Now.Tour, our nationwide traveling exhibition.

**Publications**

The Alliance publishes selections from the Awards in its annual publications, *Yearbook, The Best Teen Art*, and *The Best Teen Writing*, which are distributed free of charge to schools and libraries nationwide and available online at [artandwriting.org](http://artandwriting.org).

**Workshops**

The Alliance works with partners across the country to present workshops led by professional artists and writers. Recent workshops include Editorial Cartoon, sponsored by The Herb Block Foundation; Video Game Design, sponsored by the ESA Foundation; and Healing & the Arts, sponsored by the New York Life Foundation.
**Educator Resources and Opportunities**

The Alliance creates guides to help educators facilitate discussions about art and writing in their classrooms and provide critical-thinking activities.

**Alumni Engagement**

The Alliance organizes an annual writers’ residency for selected alumni of the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards in New York City. Alumni may also apply for Alumni Microgrants—six $1,000 grants that support creative projects.
Program at a Glance

Students **create** original art and writing.

Works are submitted to Regional Programs at [artandwriting.org](http://artandwriting.org) beginning in **September**.

Deadlines vary by region, beginning **December 1**.

Regional Awards are presented at local **Ceremonies** and **Exhibitions**.

Gold Key works advance for judging in New York City. **National Medalists** are announced in **March**.

The **National Ceremony** is held at **Carnegie Hall** in **June**.

Select works are included in national publications and exhibitions.
Board of Directors

**Executive Committee**

Dr. Hugh Roome, *Chairman*  
Scholastic Inc.

Dr. William Walker Robinson, *Vice Chairman*  
Fogg Art Museum

Steven Merson, *Treasurer*  
Command Companies

**Members**

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Dick Blick Art Materials

Thomas K. Carley  
The New York Times, *retired*

Bryan Doerries  
Outside the Wire, LLC

Dr. Ernest B. Fleishman  
Scholastic Inc., *retired*

Dr. David C. Levy  
Objective Focus

Andrew I. Merson  
Command Companies

Gregory R. Miller  
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Olivia Morgan  
California Partners Project

Anne Morrill  
Maurice R. Robinson Fund

Suzanne Randolph  
Suzanne Randolph Fine Arts

Jan Warren  
Belin-Blank Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development, *Affiliate Representative*

Hannah Yang  
The New York Times

01/2020
2020 Affiliate Partners by State

**Alabama**
Wiregrass Writing Project

**Alaska**
Young Emerging Artists, Inc.

**California**
Community Memorial Museum of Sutter County
Pacific Grove Art Center
Writopia Lab
Yuba Sutter Arts

**Colorado**
Colorado Art Education Association

**Connecticut**
Connecticut Art Education Association
University of Connecticut

**Delaware**
Arts Center/Gallery at Delaware State University
Diamond State Branch, National League of American Pen Women, Inc.

**District of Columbia**
Writopia Lab

**Florida**
The Armory Art Center
Hillsborough County Public Schools
Miami-Dade County Public Schools

**Georgia**
Savannah College of Art and Design

**Hawai‘i**
Hawai‘i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts

**Idaho**
Boise State Writing Project

**Illinois**
Writopia Lab
Downers Grove North and South High Schools
John R. and Eleanor R. Mitchell Foundation/Cedarhurst Center for the Arts
Mid-Central Illinois Region

**Indiana**
Clowes Memorial Hall, Butler Arts Center and Hoosier Writing Project at IUPUI
Fort Wayne Museum of Art

**Iowa**
The Connie Belin & Jacqueline N. Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development, University of Iowa

**Kansas**
MARK Arts
The Western Kansas Scholastic Art Awards

**Kentucky**
Jefferson County Public Schools
Southern Kentucky Performing Arts Center (SKyPAC)

**Louisiana**
Greater New Orleans Writing Project
Northwestern State University Writing Project

**Maine**
Maine College of Art

**Maryland**
Baltimore Office of Promotions & the Arts, Inc.

**Massachusetts**
School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University

**Michigan**
College for Creative Studies
Kendall College of Art and Design of Ferris State University

**Minnesota**
Art Educators of Minnesota
Minnesota Writing Project

**Mississippi**
Eudora Welty Foundation
Mississippi Museum of Art

(Continued on the reverse side)
Missouri
Greater Kansas City Writing Project
Kansas City Art Institute

Montana
Elk River Writing Project

Nebraska
Omaha Public Schools Art Department
Hastings College

Nevada
Nevada Museum of Art
Springs Preserve

New Hampshire
The National Writing Project in New Hampshire
The Scholastic Art Awards of New Hampshire

New Jersey
Appel Farm Arts & Music Center
Montclair Art Museum
Newark Public Library

New Mexico
New Mexico Art Education Association

New York
Arnot Art Museum
CNY Art Council
Hudson Valley Art Awards
NYC Scholastic Awards
Writopia Lab

North Carolina
Asheville Art Museum
Barton College
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

North Dakota
Plains Art Museum and the Red River Valley Writing Project at NDSU

Ohio
Art Academy of Cincinnati
The Cleveland Institute of Art
Columbus College of Art & Design
K12 Gallery & TEJAS
Kent State University at Stark
Lorain County Regional Scholastic Arts Committee
Youngstown State University

Oklahoma
Oklahoma State University

Oregon
Pacific Northwest College of Art

Pennsylvania
California University of Pennsylvania
Commonwealth Charter Academy
East Central PA Scholastic Art Awards
Everhart Museum of Natural History, Science and Art
Lancaster Museum of Art
Philadelphia Arts in Education Partnership
Philadelphia Writing Project
Seneca Valley School District
Western PA Writing Project & The University of Pittsburgh School of Education

Rhode Island
Rhode Island Art Education Association

South Dakota
The University of South Dakota

Tennessee
Cheekwood
Middle Tennessee State University
Memphis Brooks Museum of Art

Texas
Harris County Department of Education
SAY Si (San Antonio Youth Yes)
St. Stephen’s Episcopal School
Wayland Baptist University and the Abraham Family Art Gallery

Vermont
Brattleboro Museum & Art Center

Virginia
Arlington County Public Schools
Fairfax County Public Schools
Harrisonburg City Public Schools
The Fine Arts Center for the New River Valley
Visual Arts Center of Richmond

Washington
Schack Art Center

Wisconsin
Milwaukee Art Museum
Southeast Wisconsin Scholastic Writing Region
Scholarship Partners

Through the Scholastic Awards, students receive opportunities for recognition, exhibition, publication, and scholarships. In 2019, the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers offered students more than $300,000 in direct scholarships. Additionally, our Scholarship Partner Network, which comprises partnering colleges, universities, and related scholarship organizations, offered Scholastic Awards National Medalists nearly $5 million in scholarships.

To learn more about our scholarship partners, visit artandwriting.org/scholarship-partners.

Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design Participating Schools*

Art Academy of Cincinnati
Art Center College of Design
California College of the Arts
California Institute of the Arts
Cleveland Institute of Art
College for Creative Studies
Columbus College of Art & Design
Cornish College of the Arts
Institute of Art and Design at New England College
Kansas City Art Institute
Laguna College of Art & Design
Lesley University College of Art & Design
Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts
Maine College of Art
Maryland Institute College of Art
Massachusetts College of Art and Design
Memphis College of Art
Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design
Minneapolis College of Art and Design
Montserrat College of Art
Moore College of Art & Design
Oregon College of Art & Craft
Otis College of Art and Design
Pacific Northwest College of Art
Parsons School of Design at The New School
Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
Pennsylvania College of Art & Design
Pratt Institute
Rhode Island School of Design
Ringling College of Art & Design
San Francisco Art Institute
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University
School of Visual Arts
University of the Arts
Watkins College of Art, Design & Film

*The Alliance for Young Artists & Writers recognizes member colleges of the Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design (AICAD) as the leading, non-profit, art and design colleges in the U.S. and Canada.

Additional Scholarship Partners

Carnegie Mellon University
Kendall College of Art and Design at Ferris State University
Purchase College SUNY, School of Art & Design
Rochester Institute of Technology, College of Imaging Arts & Sciences
Syracuse University College of Visual + Performing Arts

(Continued on the reverse side)
Scholastic Awards Summer Scholarships

The Alliance partners with summer programs to provide merit- and need-based scholarships for students who have received a Gold or Silver Key in the Scholastic Awards. By providing a Scholastic Awards Summer (SAS) Scholarship, programs expand their reach to the Awards’ talented and diverse young artists and writers. Summer programs interested in becoming an SAS Partner should visit artandwriting.org/summerscholarships.

Scholastic Awards Summer Partners

92Y’s Young Writers Workshop
Appalachian Institute for Creative Learning
Appel Farm Arts Camp
Belin-Blank Center
Cleveland Institute of Art
Iowa Young Writers Studio at University of Iowa
Interlochen Arts Camp
Jonathan R. Reynolds Young Writers Workshop at Denison University
Juniper Institute for Young Writers
Kenyon Review Young Writers Workshop
Minnesota Writing Project Summer Youth Camp
Parsons School of Design at The New School
Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
Philadelphia Writing Project
Pratt Institute Summer Precollege
Putney School Summer Arts
Ringling College of Art & Design
Savannah College of Art & Design
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
School of the New York Times
School of Visual Arts
Shared Worlds Camp
Snow Farm: The New England Craft Program
Sotheby's Summer Institute
The University of the Arts
The Writers Circle
Writopia Lab
Young Writers Workshop at the University of Virginia
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<td>Stephen King, 1965</td>
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<td>Gary Panter, 1968</td>
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*Recipients of the Alliance’s Alumni Achievement Award.
Razan Elbaba recently made a statement about attitudes toward religion in the United States, but she didn’t need to say a word.

The 17 year old from Vienna, Virginia, photographed friends and relatives wearing head scarves that are customary in the Muslim faith. She added newspaper clippings, bits of cloth and “googly” eyes to tell more of the story.

The striking artwork, which Razan called “Covered,” won the top prize in this year’s Scholastic Art & Writing competition. She was one of 16 students in the nation — out of 320,000 who entered — to win a Golden Portfolio. She will receive a $10,000 prize at a celebration in June at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

Razan didn’t think she would win, but she said art teacher Susan Silva believed the Oakton High School senior’s talent would impress the judges.

“Ms. Silva always told me that I have something special about me, but I never had the confidence to think that I would be the one” to get a Golden Portfolio, Razan says. “It was very unexpected.”

Razan explains that she started to stutter when she was 3, not long after she learned to talk. She says her severe stutter has made it hard for her to do things that are easy for other kids, “like answer the phone or order a pizza.”

“Things that were so simple for other people were really hard tasks for me,” Razan says. “So I was always trying to find ways to express myself” without having to speak.

When she started high school, Razan says, she “set myself a goal to find a way to do that.” That’s when she discovered photography.

“I found a way to say what I want to say using a camera, not my mouth,” Razan says.

Silva helped her a lot. “She gave us random stuff and said, ‘Make art.’” Razan had an idea to take photos of women and girls wearing the hijab, a head scarf she has worn for five years as part of her religious practice. People in the United States often stare at girls and women who wear a hijab, Razan says. Being stared at can make those women and girls feel “like alien beings that don’t belong,” she says.
To help people understand those feelings, Razan began gluing “googly” eyes to some of the photographs. In other photos, she covered the scarf in newspaper articles.

“I’ve also always been passionate about social justice,” Razan told Scholastic after winning the Golden Portfolio. “I felt like it was my job to break the stereotypes and significantly express the true goal of Muslim women, which is to spark positive change in this world.”

Razan has taken photography classes with Silva all four years of high school. The two have become close. Razan calls Silva “my second mom, my best friend and sometimes even my older sister.”

Razan says she plans to use her $10,000 prize to help pay for college, where she is headed in the fall. She hopes to study art.

“I hope my work will make people be optimistic and make them not judge others,” Razan says. She wants people to look at her photographs and realize: “We’re all human. We all have a heart and a soul. We are all wanted on this Earth.”

Razan is a 2016 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards Gold Medal Portfolio Award recipient.

To see more press about current and past Scholastic Awards recipients, visit mediaroom.scholastic.com/artandwriting.
The photographer Andres Serrano’s most famous work is “Piss Christ” (1987), a picture of a crucifix submerged in the artist’s urine. Its exhibition launched a crusade by the late senator Jesse Helms to revoke N.E.A. funding for art he didn’t like. (“He is not an artist. He is a jerk,” Helms told the Senate.) The other morning, Serrano, now sixty-three, tested a new method of provocation: he was expected at the headquarters of Scholastic, Inc., in SoHo, to judge photos submitted by twelfth graders to the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards competition, and he was late.

“Where’s Andres?” asked Casey Kelbaugh, another judge, a photographer who runs the nonprofit Slideluck (potlucks featuring art slide shows).

“Maybe we can just start looking at the works?” the third judge, the gallerist Julie Saul, proposed.

There were twelve hundred and forty-eight images to sort through. They would be projected on a screen at the front of a very red room: red carpet, red U-shaped table, red chairs—décor inspired by Clifford the Big Red Dog. Following an elimination round, thirty-seven to forty-six of the photographs would be awarded gold medals and sixty-two to eighty-seven silver, based on originality, technical skill, and “emergence of personal vision.”

“Sorry I’m late,” Serrano said as he slunk in. He had on a white tuxedo shirt with a popped collar, a black vest, and sweatpants tucked into black Alexander McQueen boots.

A moderator clicked through JPEGs of the photographs. “There’s an Ophelia thing going on here,” Saul said, after the third or fourth image of a soggy woman.

“It’s just so high school,” Kelbaugh said, approvingly, of a photograph of a young man, his mouth stuffed with fries, getting hit in the face with a burger and soda next to a McDonald’s “I’m Lovin’ It” logo. “He’s got a big advertising career ahead of him.” (Gold.)

An image of a dead squirrel with a bouquet of flowers in its paws and a cherry stuffed in its mouth elicited laughter. “I always say, if art can be good and funny, that’s really great,” Saul said. (Silver.)

Serrano and Saul gasped at a sepia image of a wrinkly puppy. “Well, he’s adorable,” Saul said.

“All those folds!” Serrano whispered. (Gold.)

A Christmas-card-ready group portrait depicted a gaggle of young men in clingy sweaters. “I think that it has no irony, which is really disturbing,” Saul said. “Do you think he got them all dressed up as preppies and did this whole staging thing? Or do you think they’re just hanging out in their house?” (Gold.)
Maurice Robinson, the founder of Scholastic Magazines, established the awards in 1923, for writing. There are now twenty-eight categories, including video-game design, comic art, and fashion. Past winners have included Sylvia Plath and Robert Redford, both for paintings; Richard Avedon, for a poem (“You must not think because my glance is quick . . . That I shall never total up to much”); Andy Warhol; and Lena Dunham.

“This is totally Cindy Sherman, but it’s good,” Saul said of a photograph of a woman in fifties clothing.

“It’s as good as a Cindy,” Serrano said. “Certainly as good as any Cindy Sherman I’ve ever seen.” (Gold.)

When Serrano was seventeen, he enrolled in the Brooklyn Museum Art School. “It was some of the best time of my life,” he recalled. “I remember I did a conceptual piece—it was a column, and I covered it with obituary columns from the Times. I called it ‘Obituary Column.’ ”

“High school was a complete desert for me artistically,” Kelbaugh said. “I went to a public inner-city school in Seattle. The arts were abysmal, except for, like, jazz band.” Saul, who grew up in Tampa, Florida, said, “I really never did anything very creative. I made a lot of beaded necklaces.”

“Something is bothering me,” Serrano said. “There’s an image that I wanted to look at again that’s just in my head.” He went on, “I mean, if it’s lost, it’s lost . . .”

“We just ruined his life. Or hers,” Saul joked.

“It was the image of soldiers,” Serrano said. “And I feel that soldiers can be a cliché. It can also be sort of passé to take a political stance. But visually it was a good image, and I regret not speaking up for it. There’s no dishonor in recognizing people who die for your country, even though I’m not a Vietnam vet—I avoided the draft in the sixties.” The moderator pulled up the photograph: in color, rows of soldiers wearing fatigues, observed from behind.

“I see hearts in the way that they’re holding their hands,” Kelbaugh offered. “Is that corny?”

“You know what the hands are also like?” Saul asked. “I hate to say it, it’s so morbid. They’re like wings, like seraphs.” There was a unanimous vote for gold. Serrano smiled.

“It was one of those things that I didn’t want to regret forever,” he said.
If I were somehow 17 years old again and a photograph I took was selected a winner of the 2014 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards and was painted giant-size onto the side of a building in Williamsburg, I can think of lots of ways I’d try to leverage the recognition.

Such is the fortuitous situation that Steven Paul, a 17-year-old 12th-grader at Edward R. Murrow High School in Brooklyn, finds himself in with “Lost Time,” an arresting photographic portrait of classmate Nina Attal.

For starters, I’d try to attract the attention of girls who had heretofore denied me the time of day: “Hey, feel like checking out my artwork? No, it’s not in my apartment. It’s in Brooklyn and you can see it from outer space.”

Or better yet, we’d just happen to walk by the spot, at Bedford and Broadway, on a first date: “Yeah, that’s mine. No big deal. I couldn’t care less about the recognition, even if it’s the size of the Nasdaq electronic billboard in Times Square. For me, it’s all about the process.”

I’d also use it in arguments with my parents: “Obviously, I must be doing something right. Andy Warhol, Richard Avedon, Truman Capote, Sylvia Plath, Ken Burns and Lena Dunham won the award, too. And they didn’t have curfews.”

Finally, I’d host events at the site. There’s a lovely set of chairs and tables on a traffic island that’s a perfect viewing distance from the artwork. Part of the joy of being a high school senior in New York City, especially one who’s already been accepted to college, is that the spring and summer of senior year is all gravy.

(Continued on the reverse side)
I wouldn’t try to cause any trouble. Or even litter. But it would be kind of neat if the cops pulled up at 3 a.m. and asked what I was doing, and I could glance over my shoulder and say, “Having an opening.”

As impressive as Mr. Paul’s accomplishment is—and even more so Scholastic’s decision to honor him with a wall mural of heroic proportions—I fear he’s not taking full advantage of the opportunity.

“I brought a few” of his friends to see it, the photographer explained nonchalantly when I met him in front of “Lost Time” a few days ago. “They’ve come to see it on their own. They’ve tagged me on Instagram.”

Mr. Paul seemed appropriately humbled by the recognition. However, the photograph of his classmate won’t be there forever. Colossal Media, the company that hand-painted it, changes the art every so often.

Also, when you’re 17 you might have a tendency to think this is just the beginning. That there may be even larger-format photographs in your future. I’m just saying—as talented and charmingly awe-struck as the young man seems—this could be as big, literally, as it gets. Seize the moment.

That goes for Ms. Attal, too. She might want to lead tour groups of Europeans desperate to partake of Brooklyn culture, and charge a small fortune to let them know what she was thinking at the moment the image was shot.

“She was thinking at the time, ‘I was really upset with you for not letting me take my bangs out of my face,’” Mr. Paul revealed. “She was just here earlier. She’s still shocked. It’s weird to have your face that big anywhere.”

The photographer said he started shooting Ms. Attal, also 17, at school during a free period. “I get them to sit for a really long time,” he said of his subjects. “After a while they get tired and irritable: ‘I don’t want to do it anymore.’ They’re distracted. They’re thinking about other things. Generally, towards the end of the sessions I get that honesty and emotion.”

Mr. Paul’s mother, Donna, admits she was surprised by her son’s recognition—Steven decided to enter the competition at the last moment, the deadline literally minutes away—not to mention its monumentality. But she isn’t surprised by his determination.

“As a child, he was mature beyond his years,” she explained. “He’s a hard worker. When I’m sleeping, he’s up.”

The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, established in 1923, received more than 255,000 submissions in 2014. National medalists such as Mr. Paul, who will be attending Occidental College in California, are also eligible for some of the quarter-million dollars in scholarships the organization distributes annually. (They also receive an attractive gold medal.) Five-hundred seventh- to 12th-graders, as well as their parents and teachers, were recognized at a Carnegie Hall ceremony on June 6.

For Mr. Paul, the most important aspect of the attention may be that he’s having an easier time getting people to pose for him. “People were like, ‘Is it going to take a long time?’ They’re a lot more open to the process. ‘Are you going to put me on a billboard? Oh my god! You can make me famous.’”

—ralph.gardner@wsj.com
What started as a hobby has now become a passion coupled with several prestigious awards.

Vista High School senior Jonathan Olivares is one of 16 high school students to be recognized by the Alliance for Young Artist and Writers for his photography portfolio titled “Mi Vida Mexico.” With the recognition, he also receives a $10,000 scholarship and a trip to Carnegie Hall in New York City on June 6.

By earning a national gold portfolio, Olivares also received the Maurice “Robbie” Robinson Vision Award from Scholastic, which is given to one student each year.

His collection captures Mexican culture through black and white photos, a preferred style for Olivares. Submissions for the Alliance for Young Artists and Writers award numbered more than 340,000.

Also, three of his photos will be part of a national exhibit touring the country for the next year.

“I was scared and excited at the same time,” Olivares said through a translator upon hearing the news. “I’ve never had an experience like this, with a prestigious award and scholarship. There are all these people watching me. I’ve never liked putting myself out there too much. People are going to look at me and think that I’m better than everyone.”

Olivares was born and raised in Tijuana, but moved with his family to Vista several years ago to pursue a better education and life. He first began taking photographs as a child at the encouragement of his mother.
Over the past two years, however, Olivares has fully committed to his art and learning more skills from his teacher, Laura Olden. As a result, the Vista High senior has blossomed and become a force in his own right.

“With a picture, people think you just take a picture,” Olivares said. “But there is a lot more to a picture. One person can see an image, but there is so much more depth that you can capture. All the background that goes into a photograph.”

Olivares said what draws him to photography is the depth one can capture with a single image. It delivers background, expression and interpretation on a different scale than video or writing.

Olden, in her eighth year as the photography teacher at Vista High, said when Olivares first came to her class last year he was shy and reserved. He often struggled to deliver presentations, she said and adding the language barrier was a challenge.

But as time wore on, Olivares has become more comfortable and confident through his work.

“He’s improved so much over the course of the year and his transformation,” Olden said.

One inspiration for Olivares came from an assignment by Olden. Once per year, she has her students select a photographer to study, which she dubs, “Photographer as mentors.”

Olivares landed on Manuel Álvarez Bravo, a Mexican photographer who is credited as having been one of the most important and influential Latin American artists in the 20th century.

Some of Bravo’s work includes street life and culture, Olden said, which is the same avenue Olivares pursued with his collection.

“Jonathan was drawn to his work and drew inspiration from his work for his own series,” Olden added. “It was drawing inspiration from them, but then making their own story and incorporating their own lives.”

Above:
One of the images submitted by Vista High School senior Jonathan Olivares depicts Mexican culture and life. Olivares recently won two national awards and several photos will be displayed on a national tour. Courtesy Jonathan Olivares

To see more press about current and past Scholastic Awards recipients, visit mediaroom.scholastic.com/artandwriting.
A photo by Wichita Southeast High School senior Markel Randle, as part of his “MOVIE STILLS” portfolio, which recently won a national Gold Medal Portfolio award.

A budding photographer from Wichita Southeast High School recently won national acclaim for his work.

Markel Randle, a 17-year-old senior at the school, was selected as one of 16 students nationwide to win the Gold Medal Portfolio award as part of the 2019 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards.

Randle submitted a portfolio called, “MOVIE STILLS,” which draws inspiration from cinematic images. The works “explore how photo documentation relates to self-worth,” according to a news release from Scholastic.

He wins a $10,000 college scholarship, and his photography will be displayed as part of the Art.Write.Now National Exhibition in either the Pratt Institute or the Parsons School of Design in New York City later this year.

Randle, along with the other winners, will be honored at a ceremony at Carnegie Hall on June 6.

The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, in its 96th year, is the longest-running awards program for creative teens in the United States. It recognizes young talent in art and literature from grades 7–12.

Award-winners over the years have included now-famous artists like Tom Otterness, David Salle (both also from Southeast High School), Andy Warhol, and writers Truman Capote and Sylvia Plath.

Over 340,000 works of art and writing were submitted to the awards program in 2019—including more than 2,400 in the Wichita area.