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**69th TEXACO CHILDREN’S ART COMPETITION WINNERS ANNOUNCED**

**Antrim student is overall 2023 Competition winner**

**Dublin, 13th April 2023** – Young Antrim artist, Charley Bell, a 16-year old student at Methodist College Belfast, has been chosen overall winner of this year's 69th Texaco Children's Art Competition, taking first prize in the senior 16-18 years age category.

Her winning work, for which she receives a prize of €1,500, is entitled ‘Curiosity’ and is a detailed portrait study in coloured pencils.

Charley’s success marks the first occasion since 2010 on which the overall top prize in the Competition was won by an entrant from Northern Ireland.

In choosing it as the overall prize winner in the Competition, Final Adjudicator and Chairman of the judging panel, Gary Granville, Professor Emeritus of Education at the National College of Art and Design, described Charley’s artwork as “a most impressive piece and a deserving winner among entries of the highest quality.”

“Derived from a photographic source but adding considerably greater depth and emotional impact to the work, it is a portrait that is intensely vibrant, displaying great beauty without being ‘pretty’, great gentleness without being weak, and great technical skill without being gimmicky,” Professor Granville added.

No stranger to the Competition, Charley won Special Merit Awards in both 2020 and 2021.

The middle child of three, Charley first realised her passion for art at a young age but discovered the ability to express herself more and more through her works as she progressed through Grammar school. From an artistic family, older sister Carrie has won numerous Special Merit Awards in the Competition, whilst younger brother Rory has received a Commendation. With another two years left in school Charley is keeping her options open but sees art playing some role in her future down the line.

The inspiration for her prize-winning portrait came when she discovered a photo of the old man and felt he had an interesting expression to bring to life. “I enjoy portrait work in general and I was searching for a muse that would demand a higher level of detail, as this is what challenges me the most. I think his facial expression can be interpreted in many different ways but, for me, ‘Curiosity’ is what stood out,” Charley explains.

In winning the coveted overall prize and first place in the Category A age group, Charley and her fellow winners fought off the challenge from the young artists across Ireland who took part in the Competition. Amongst them are the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners and the fifteen Special Merit awards recipients in each of seven categories for which prizes are presented, including a category reserved for special needs children.

In **Category A** (16-18 years) other top winners were Amy O’Brien (age 17), a pupil at Presentation Secondary School, Mitchelstown who won second prize (€1,000) for her work entitled ‘The Bond’. Third prize (€750) went to Wexford student, Sarah McLoughlin (age 17), a pupil at Bridgetown College, for her work entitled ‘The Points Race’.

In **Category B** (14-15 years), first prize (€450) was won by Ailbhe Treacy (age 14) from St. Mary's Secondary School, Nenagh for her work entitled ‘Me And My Mam’. A previous winner, Ailbhe won second prize in the 12 - 13 years age category in 2021. Second prize (€350) went to Megan Hogan (age 15), from Gaelcholáiste Phort Láirge in Ballygunner, for her work entitled ‘Emotions Of A Lifetime’. Megan won first prize in the same category of last year’s Competition. Third prize (€250) was won by Down student, Alexandra Buzova (age 15), a pupil at Shimna Integrated College, Newcastle, for her work entitled ‘Babicka’. Last year, Alexandra won a Special Merit Award in the same category of the Competition.

In **Category C** (12-13 years), first prize (€350) went to Sabrina Morgan (age 12) from St. Patrick's High School, Keady, for her artwork entitled ‘Burnt Out’. Second prize (€250) was won by 12-years old Cavan student Lana Gallagher from St. Aidan's Comprehensive School, Cootehill, for her work entitled ‘My Grandad Eddie’. Third prize (€200) went to Farragh McGeary (age 13) from St. Patrick's Academy, Dungannon, for her work entitled ‘Don’t Tell Mom’. Last year, Farragh won a Special Merit Award in the same category of the Competition.

In **Category D** (9-11 years), first prize (€250) has been won by 10-years old Lilia Litwin, a pupil at Gorey Educate Together National School, for her work entitled ‘My Self Portrait’. Second prize (€200) was won by Jerry Jiaye Luo (age 11), a pupil at Swords International Education, for his work entitled ‘The Lizard’. No stranger to the Competition, Jerry won Special Merit Awards in both 2022 and 2020. Third prize (€150) went to Solange Kawara (age 11) from Knockanean National School, Ennis, for a work entitled ‘The Lonely House’.

In **Category E** (7-8 years), first prize (€200) was won by 8-years old Galway student, Emily Acheson from Gaelscoil Iarfhlatha, Tuam, for her self-portrait. Second prize (€150) was won by Sara McHugh (age 7) from Ennis Art School, for her work entitled ‘The Waterfall’. Third prize (€125) went to Mary Kate Conlon (age 7), from Scoil Naoimh Éanna, Carrickmacross, for her work entitled ‘The Runner’.

In **Category F** (6 years and younger) – the youngest age group in the Competition – first prize (€150) was won by 6-years old Zoey Kennedy, from Ennis Art School, for her work entitled ‘JoJo’. Second prize (€125) went to Donegal student, Charles (Dominic) Gallagher (age 5), a pupil at St. Mary's National School, Lifford, for his work entitled ‘Moo Moo Rua’. In further success for the Gallagher family, younger brother Neal (Bernard) (aged 1), a pupil at CPI Creche, Lifford, won third prize (€100). In winning his award at aged one, records show that Neal (Bernard) has secured a unique position for himself in becoming the youngest entrant ever to win a top prize in the 69 years history of the Competition.

In **Category G**, reserved for entries from young artists of all ages with special needs, first prize of €1,500 was won by17-years old James Moonan, a pupil at The Arthouse, Drogheda, for his self-portrait. A multiple previous winner, James also won first prize in Category G of the Competition in 2021, 2020, and in 2019, second prize in 2018, and Special Merit Awards in 2022 and 2017. Second prize (€1,000) went to Emma Comber (age 17), from Catherine McAuley School, Limerick, for her work entitled ‘It's In The Eyes'. Last year, Emma won a Special Merit Award in the same category of the Competition. Third prize (€250) was won by Tyrone student, Katherine Harkness, (age 14), a pupil at Cookstown High School, for her work entitled ‘Sunset in Portstewart’.

**Comment - James Twohig**

Addressing prizewinners, James Twohig, Director of Ireland Operations at Valero Energy (Ireland) Limited – the company that markets fuel in Ireland under the Texaco brand – said, “Once again, from the many thousands of entries received this year, it can be seen that Ireland’s young people continue to view art as a preferred medium through which to exercise their imagination and express their creativity, despite the many attractions that vie for their attention.

“Like the countless numbers who have taken part in our Competition since 1955, this year’s winners carry the baton for their predecessors, many of whom went on to achieve national and international prominence in the world of art.

“In applauding our 2023 winners, we also praise all from whom entries were received, thanking each and every one for the sense of pride and joy their talent brings to parents, teachers, their local communities and the public generally,” Mr. Twohig said.

**Judging**

Final judging was carried out by the Chairman of the judging panel, Gary Granville, Professor Emeritus of Education at the National College of Art & Design. Supporting him in the adjudication process was a group of preliminary judges, each one a distinguished figure in the world of art in Ireland. They are: Dr. Denise Ferran (artist, art historian, and former President of the Royal Ulster Academy); Eoin Butler (artist and lecturer in visual arts); Marie Connole (artist, teacher and previous Texaco Children’s Art Competition winner); Noelle McAlinden (artist, curator and creative adviser) and Hetty Lawlor (artist, previous Texaco Children’s Art Competition winner and Sky Portrait Artist of the Year finalist).

**Ireland’s longest-running Sponsorship**

The Texaco Children’s Art Competition is popularly regarded as the longest-running sponsorship in the history of arts sponsoring in Ireland, with an unbroken history that dates back to the very first Competition held in 1955. This year, as has been the case throughout its life, it has been a platform on which young artists have had their talents recognised and a springboard on which many have risen to national prominence. Aside from giving students the space to give expression to their talent and skill, the Competition has focused a spotlight on the quality of art teaching in Irish schools and the importance that the educational establishment attaches to the subject of art education.

Past winners whose early interest in art and the arts may well have been encouraged by their participation in the Competition include artists Graham Knuttel, Robert Ballagh, Bernadette Madden, Dorothy Cross, fashion designer Paul Costelloe, and artist and former broadcaster Thelma Mansfield. Other notable past winners include former Minister, Ruairi Quinn (a four-times winner), communications consultant and broadcaster Terry Prone, Former ICTU Secretary and Chairman of the Pension Authority David Begg, actress Jean Anne Crowley, musician Ethna Tinney, Trinity College Professor of Contemporary Irish History Eunan O’Halpin and the late novelist Clare Boylan.

ENDS.

**Editor’s Notes:**

1. The Texaco Children’s Art Competition is celebrating its 69th anniversary next year. For further information about the Competition, contact Ashley Hall at Hall PR on 01-660 9377 (office) or email pr@hall.ie. For more information on Valero Energy (Ireland) Limited, contact Bronagh Carron on (+353) 01 6258208 or email [bronagh.carron@valero.com](mailto:bronagh.carron@valero.com)
2. Valero Energy (Ireland) Limited, a subsidiary of Valero Energy Corporation, markets fuel in Ireland under the Texaco brand. There are close to 150 Texaco-branded service stations in Ireland and around 830 in the UK. Valero Energy (Ireland) Limited also provides aviation refueling services at Dublin and Shannon Airports, has an extensive commercial and industrial fuels business and holds an equity stake in one fuel storage facility in the Republic of Ireland. For more information, visit [www.texaco.ie](http://www.texaco.ie)
3. Valero Energy Corporation, through its subsidiaries, is an international manufacturer and marketer of transportation fuels and petrochemical products. Valero is a Fortune 50 company based in San Antonio, Texas, United States and operates 15 petroleum refineries with a combined throughput capacity of approximately 3.2 million barrels per day, and 14 ethanol plants with a combined production capacity of 1.73 billion gallons per year. The petroleum refineries are located in the US, Canada and the UK, and the ethanol plants are located in the Mid-Continent region of the US. Valero also is a joint venture partner in Diamond Green Diesel, which operates a renewable diesel plant in Norco, Louisiana. Diamond Green Diesel is North America’s largest biomass-based diesel plant. Valero sells its products in the wholesale rack or bulk markets in the US, Canada, the UK, Ireland and Latin America. Approximately 7,000 outlets carry Valero’s brand names. Please visit [www.valero.com](https://cts.businesswire.com/ct/CT?id=smartlink&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.valero.com%2Fen-us&esheet=52251403&newsitemid=20200716006045&lan=en-US&anchor=www.valero.com&index=2&md5=2656ab04500ea178c0b9998fb7d31ab0) for more information.