



Valero Energy (Ireland) Limited
1st Floor, Block B
Liffey Valley Office Campus
Quarryvale
Dublin 22
D22 X0Y3
Ireland
Tel: +353 (0)1 6258200

News Release

72nd TEXACO CHILDREN'S ART COMPETITION WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Kilkenny artist is overall 2026 Competition winner

Dublin, 21st April 2026: Young Kilkenny artist, Aurianna Hanlon – a 16-years old student at Loreto Secondary School – has been chosen overall winner of this year's 72nd 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 'Falling Up' and is a striking self-portrait created using acrylic paint.

In choosing it as the overall prize winner in the Competition, Final Adjudicator and Chairperson of the judging panel — Irish visual artist, curator and educator — Pauline O'Connell described Aurianna's artwork as "an ambitious and compelling self-portrait that challenges perspective and draws the viewer into a shared space, demonstrating both technical control and emotional depth".

"An exceptional painting that is well deserving of first place in this year's competition, the perspective places the viewer below the subject, who looks down with a steady, engaging gaze. The division of light and shadow across the face is masterfully handled, with tonal shifts ranging from warm umbers to cool purples and blues. Set against a richly textured ultramarine blue sky, the brushwork remains fluid and expressive while retaining remarkable accuracy," she added.

The middle child of three, Aurianna first discovered her passion for art at a young age and comes from an artistic family, who, along with her teachers, have always given her great encouragement to continue developing her talent. Now in Transition Year, Aurianna says art will be her 'top choice' subject for her Leaving Certificate and foresees it playing an important role in her future as a career option.

The choice for her prize-winning work came when, after deciding on a self-portrait, Aurianna chose an image from her photo collection that she thought would be fascinating to bring to life. "I found a selfie I had taken and really liked the contrast between the light and shading, created by the shadows, and also the perspective of the photo, looking upwards at the bright blue sky in the background," she explains.

In securing the prestigious overall prize and first place in Category A, Aurianna and her fellow winners were selected from among thousands of talented young artists from across Ireland who took part in the Competition. Amongst them are the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners and the 12 Special Merit Awards recipients in each of seven categories for which prizes are presented, including a category reserved for children with additional needs.

In **Category A** (16-18 years), other top winners were young Galway artist, Anna Towell (age 18), a student at University of Galway, who won second prize (€1,000) for her work entitled. 'Sightseeing'. Third prize (€750) went to Down student, Lucy Bishop (age 16), a pupil at Bangor Academy & Sixth Form College, for her work entitled 'Melting in Malta 2018'.

In **Category B** (14-15 years), first prize (€450) was won by Dublin student, Jessa Layla Jukic (age 14), from Loreto College, Foxrock for her work entitled 'I Want To Be Under The Sea'. Second prize (€350) went to Meath student, Grace McManus (age 15), from Clarke Art Studio, Ratoath for her work entitled 'Fake Tan Mishaps'. Third prize (€250) was won by Laois student, Abdul Ahad Zulfiqar (age 15), a pupil at St. Mary's Christian Brothers School, Portlaoise for a work entitled 'Study'. A previous winner, Abdul Ahad won a Special Merit in 2017.

In **Category C** (12-13 years), first prize (€350) went to Meath student, Abigail Winston (age 13), from Clarke Art Studio, Ratoath for her artwork entitled 'Golden Hour'. No stranger to the Competition, Abigail won a Special Merit Award in 2024 and 2025. Second prize (€250) was won by 13-years old Dublin student Layla Baker, from St. Joseph Of Cluny Secondary School, Killiney for her work entitled 'Nanny's Happy Place'. A previous winner, Layla won first place in the same category last year and a Special Merit Award in 2024. Third prize (€200) went to Wicklow student, Charlotte Halpin Rooney (age 13), from Greystones Community College for her work entitled 'Winter Memories'.

In **Category D** (9-11 years), first prize (€250) has been won by 11-years old Dublin student, Gloriann Quan, a pupil at Mount Anville Primary School, Stillorgan for her work entitled 'Two Worlds, One Ocean'. Second prize (€200) was won by Maya Brennan Lawless (age 9), from St. Anne's National School, Shankill for her work entitled 'My Grandfather'. Last year, Maya won a Special Merit Award. Third prize (€150) went to Meath student, Abigail Atoyegbe (age 11) from Clarke Art Studio, Ratoath for her work entitled 'Day Dreamer'.

In **Category E** (7-8 years), first prize (€200) was won by 7-years old Cork City student, Klara Machowska, from Ernest Bryll Polish School in Cork, for her work entitled 'Walk'. Second prize (€150) was won by Meath student, Lilly Brennan (age 8) from Clarke Art Studio, Ratoath, for her work entitled 'Daughter Of The Forest'. Third prize (€125) went to Elizabeth Prunty (age 8), also from Clarke Art Studio, Ratoath for her work entitled 'Rainbow Me'.

In **Category F** (6 years and younger) – the youngest age group in the Competition – first prize (€150) was won by 6-years old Cork student, Esme Murphy, from Our Lady of Lourdes National School, for her work entitled 'My Favourite Things!'. Second prize (€125) went to Wexford student, Emily Gregan (age 6), a pupil at Tara Hill National School, Gorey for her work entitled 'Tina Cat And The Bouncing Balls'. Third prize (€100) was won by Louth student, Harry Casey (age 5), a pupil at Scoil Mhuire na nGael, Dundalk for his work entitled 'Stacey'.

In **Category G**, first prize of €1,500 was won by 16-years old Limerick student Claire O'Malley, from Catherine McAuley School, for her work entitled 'The Amazing Tinks'. Second prize (€200) went to Offaly artist, Jake Egan (age 10), a pupil at St. Ciaran's Mixed National School, Ballycumber for his work entitled 'My Best Friend'. Third prize (€200) was won by Limerick student, Blake O'Brien (age 13), from Catherine McAuley School, for a work entitled 'Year of the Bird'.

Comment — James Twohig

Addressing prizewinners, parents and teachers present at a reception held in the Herbert Park Hotel, Dublin today (Tuesday, 21st April 2026), James Twohig, Director of Ireland Operations at Valero Energy (Ireland) Limited - the company that markets fuel in Ireland under the Texaco brand - commended the winners for their

skill and enthusiasm. He also expressed appreciation to the many schools across Ireland who have supported the competition over its 72 years history.

“From the many entries received this year, it is clear that young people across Ireland continue to embrace art as a meaningful outlet for imagination and creativity. The quality of the prize-winning works on display today is a strong reflection of their dedication and talent.

“We are also grateful for the continued encouragement and support provided by parents and teachers, whose roles remain central in nurturing this artistic ability and helping the Competition to continue to thrive year after year,” Mr. Twohig said.

Judging

Final judging was carried out by the Chairperson of the judging panel, Pauline O’Connell, Irish visual artist, curator and educator. Supporting her 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 Tara Butler-Frey (art teacher and ceramic artist).

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, Robert Ballagh, Bernadette Madden, Dorothy Cross, the late Graham Knuttel, and the late fashion designer Paul Costelloe, as well as 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 72nd anniversary this 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
2. Valero Energy (Ireland) Limited, a subsidiary of Valero Energy Corporation, markets fuel in Ireland under the Texaco brand. There are over 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
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 for more information.