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Pleasantville HS Seniors Featured in Young Artists 2026 at Katonah Museum of Art

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By Laura Schiller

A Dog Named Luna Takes the Spotlight

Reclining in the back seat, Luna looks content after an emotional outing. Her family had just visited Paws Crossed, the Elmsford-based shelter where they adopted her six months earlier, and she seems happy to be back in the car.

Seen from the front seat, she pants with her tongue out, full of energy. The grey car interior contrasts with warm sunlight streaming through the rear window, while her bright pink collar adds a pop of color.

The composition, painted from a photograph, centers on her brown, Doberman-like face, creating a calm, slightly nostalgic moment from an ordinary car ride.



Pleasantville High School senior Abigail Callahan, left, with art teacher and department chair Greg Nemec, who first taught Callahan in preschool and has continued mentoring her through AP Art.

“The picture was quite angled because I snapped it quickly, but I remember loving how her tongue was flopped out and the lighting on her black coat,” said Abigail Callahan, a Pleasantville High School senior featured in “Young Artists 2026” at the Katonah Museum of Art. “Luna is a very particular and somewhat crazy personality that I knew I wanted to capture in my painting.”

Callahan’s painting, ‘Luna Lunatic,’ rendered in acrylic on canvas paper, is one of about 350 works featured in ‘Young Artists 2026,’ the annual exhibition at the Katonah Museum of Art showcasing student artists from more than 40 high schools across New York and Connecticut.

Callahan, for her part, described to *The Examiner* the challenge of translating the photograph into paint.

“I was trying to completely rework the picture, so it would be straight, but it was difficult,” she said. “I remember showing the drawing to Mr. Nemec and he told me to just draw it crooked because it added to how crazy she really is. He said, ‘just put some colors down and see what happens.’”

Now, Luna hangs confidently on the gallery wall—though she has no idea she’s there.



“Luna Lunatic,” an acrylic painting by Pleasantville High School senior Abigail Callahan, aims to capture the personality of her family dog during a car ride after visiting the shelter where Luna was adopted.

Student Artists Reflect Their World

This year, ten students from Pleasantville High School are represented in the exhibition.

“I think they’re very self-reflective—really thinking about how they perceive the world, what interests them, and how they want to express that,” said Greg Nemec, the school’s art teacher and department chair. “It all seems like an expression of something meaningful to them,” he added.

Nemec has taught at the school for 13 years. Eight of the participating seniors are in Nemec's AP Art class, while photographer Crawford Grey studies under Adrienne Sapione, who has taught at Pleasantville for five years. Grey chose three of his family's birds as the subject of his photographic series, "Fatso, Matilda, and Goosetavo," capturing them in a calm, natural portrait, their bright white bodies and vivid orange beaks set against the dark surface of a nighttime pond.

"It's about how do you capture reality with your own lens? How do you find the right angle and mood?" Sapione said. "Crawford's piece is exceptional…there's just this calmness to these images that I think is beautiful."

Inside Young Artists 2026

The mood at the museum on opening day, Sunday, May 3, was far more energetic, as families from across Westchester gathered to celebrate the seniors whose work fills the galleries. Visitors explored pieces spanning painting, photography, sculpture, and mixed media. The **exhibit** runs through May 24.



Pleasantville High School junior Tung Lam Nguyen, left, with art teacher and department chair Greg Nemec.

Now in its 43rd year, the program gives students more than exhibition space. Students work alongside museum professionals on curation, design, and installation.

"'Young Artists' is one of the most exhilarating times of the year for us," said Margaret Adasko, the museum's curator of education, in her welcoming remarks Sunday. "Students from 40 different schools really take over. This exhibition is truly their work."

Yvonne Pollack, a former longtime director of education at the museum, called it her favorite exhibition.

“It is the most inclusive, diverse, and community-oriented of the year,” she said, encouraging students to remember “the three C’s: collaboration, creativity, and communication.”

Sunday’s visitors—totaling 472—moved from piece to piece, pausing to take in works across mediums.

From Lavender Fields to Fiber Art

Among those by Pleasantville students were Alison Auer’s “Unable to Resist the Temptation,” a three-dimensional scene of a hand lifting a sword toward a gem beneath a dome, set against a forest backdrop, and Sarah Dietz’s “These Stairs Creak Me Out,” which blends graphite and digital color to show a child encountering a snake-like figure on a staircase.

Tung Lam Nguyen’s acrylic painting “European Dream/La Provence” transports viewers to rolling lavender fields under an open sky. Nearby, Liam Garland’s mixed-media work “Venus”—constructed from wood, paper, puzzle pieces, wire, twine, and paint—features a hot air balloon floating above crumpled sheets of music.

In another gallery, Samantha Horoszowski’s large hanging sculpture, “The Ticker,” uses yarn, found objects, and stuffing to form a heart-like structure intertwined with a Roman numeral clock. Nemec explained that she was exploring anatomical themes through fiber arts as part of her AP Art sustained investigation, focusing on the relationship between the internal and external—and possibly mortality.

“It is a college-level class, and they are doing college-level thinking,” he said.

Elsewhere, James Harper's acrylic painting, "Bathroom Mirror," captures a quiet, introspective moment of self-reflection. Miryam Follman's "Guardian of the Door" depicts a mezuzah, a traditional symbol of protection placed in Jewish homes. And Zoey Lin's "How to Have a Best Friend," created in ink and Procreate (a digital art tool), uses a playful comic-book style to portray connection.



Zoey Lin with her piece, "How to Have a Best Friend."

Mentorship Beyond the Classroom

When asked about his students pursuing visual art in college, Nemec noted that many take multidisciplinary paths, including engineering and design.

"It's rare these days that someone focuses on just one discipline," he said.

Nemec added that Callahan plans to become an art educator.

"She was my preschool student when she was three," he said. "Even then, she was co-teaching the class with me. She's completely wired for this."

"I've worked under Mr. Nemec's guidance as an artist my entire life, whether it was in preschool, afterschool art, or finally as a senior in AP Art," Callahan said. "He always tells me what I need to hear."

Recalling her initial struggle painting the dog photo, Callahan said, "He knew I can get caught up in every tiny detail and just needed to throw down some paint. He taught me not to get caught up on the tiny issues but to focus on capturing Luna's personality and what I wanted the viewer to see."

She continued to reflect on his influence.

"Watching Mr. Nemec teach different age groups has truly inspired me to pursue art education, and I can only hope one day I can make the same impact on someone else as he has done for so many of us," she said.

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