

MULTICHANNEL

Departures leverages arts initiative via awards program

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By TRICIA CARR

American Express Publishing's Departures magazine is strengthening its connection to the arts with an awards program that will let one artist travel to a selected destination and create works that will be featured in its print and online editions.

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Luxury Daily

Under its Global Arts Initiative, the publication has selected six finalists for its first Art of Travel Award program. Similar to luxury brands that offer products and services, high-end publications may want to give their lifestyle association a boost with efforts devoted to supporting the arts.

"Whether our readers are in Los Angeles, Hong Kong or Paris, they all share a deep appreciation and passion for the arts," said Steven DeLuca, vice president and publisher of [Departures](#), New York.

"The Art of Travel Award speaks to Departures' commitment to the creative energy that is part of today's international culture landscape," he said.

"Art has always been interconnected with travel, and as the No. 1 luxury travel magazine, we have an ongoing commitment to celebrate and showcase the global influence of art."

Departures is distributed to American Express Platinum Card and Centurion members.

The publication consulted with [Fortune Cookie Projects](#) for its new awards program.

Museum-worthy

Departures has gathered a panel of judges to select an artist from six finalists who will travel to a not-yet-announced destination with a \$10,000 grant and create works inspired by the region.

The awards program is an extension of the publication's Global Arts Initiative that was created in 2011 to encourage and foster an appreciation for and development of the arts around the world, per Departures.

The work that is a result of the trip will be featured in a 2013 issue of Departures and in an online gallery on [Departures.com](#).



Piece by nominee Janet Biggs

Judges include Kathy Battista, director of the contemporary arts program at Sotheby's Institute; Adam Bookbinder, Departures creative director; Stephen Doyle, creative director at Doyle Partners; Elizabeth Easton, director of New York's Center for Curatorial Leadership; artist Maira Kalman; and Richard David Story, editor in chief of Departures.

Departures asked for and received Art of Travel Award submissions in all media including animation, painting, photography and graffiti.

The finalists are artists Janet Biggs, Will Cotton, David Humphrey, Larry Lederman, Alexis Rockman and Sage Vaughn.



Piece by nominee Sage Vaughn

Departures held an event July 25 in New York for press and those involved in the Art of Travel Award to announce the finalists.

The winner will be announced during an event at the Ritz Carlton New York, Battery Park, in October.

The art of lifestyle brands

Many storied luxury marketers have associated with art across all channels to leverage the lifestyle behind a brand.

For instance, Italian fashion house Prada used film to demonstrate how the brand's items are recognizable and coveted by everyone.

The label presented "A Therapy," a short film starring Helena Bonham Carter and Ben Kingsley that was directed and co-written by French-Polish film director Roman Polanski. It premiered at the 73rd Cannes International Film Festival ([see story](#)).

In addition, Bottega Veneta, Condé Nast's Vogue and Red Digital Camera partnered to host a photography contest for undiscovered talent. The prize package includes the opportunity to work on a special project with the Italian fashion house.

Bottega Veneta is letting its Facebook fans judge the contest as well and will announce a fan choice winner at the event ([see story](#)).

Furthermore, Gucci widened the halo around its timepiece and jewelry division by pushing its education fund with the China Soong Ching Ling Foundation via a Los Angeles-based performance, for which tickets can only be purchased from its local retailers ([see story](#)).

Departures' choice to spread the works by the winning artist via its print and online channels will ensure that this phase in its art initiative reaches a broad audience.

Art-focused efforts could help luxury marketers draw affluent eyes to their brand, which could eventually evolve into a larger consumer base.

In this instance, Departures may also show high-end advertisers that it is a good channel to attract target consumers.

"The Art of Travel Award strategically promotes Departure's Global Art Initiative in a way that will resonate with readers," said Elizabeth DeMaso, managing partner of [Brenes Co.](#), New York. "The exposure to emerging artists reinforces the lifestyle positioning of the publication and combining that with what is sure to be a colorful destination drives back to the brand's core – luxury travel.

"Efforts like this can really help distinguish a magazine by providing proprietary content that appeals to its audience," she said. "Experiencing a destination through the eyes of an artist can provide the reader with a whole new point of view about the destination, even if it is one with which he or she is already intimately familiar.

"With the judging panel comprised of art experts together with Departures editors, it lends clout to the magazine's authority."

Final Take

Tricia Carr, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York