

ROYAL WATERCOLOUR SOCIETY

OPEN

2026

## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Submission deadline: Friday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2025, 11.59pm GMT

This pack contains all the information that you need to know regarding the submission, exhibition and sale of your work in the **Royal Watercolour Society Open 2026**. Please read through it carefully before submitting your work.

Lead Sponsor



# RWS Open 2026

The Royal Watercolour Society's annual competition is open to all artists except elected RWS Members. Entries must be submitted digitally via the RWS website through the Zealous platform.

Work made in any water-based media on a paper support is eligible: this includes gouache, acrylic, ink, pigment, watercolour or a mixed media piece containing any of this list. A maximum of 6 paintings may be submitted for a fee of £15 per work with reductions on multiple submissions. Students in higher education (who can produce a valid student card or proof of student status) can enter up to 6 works for £5 per work.

To enter, artists must complete the online entry form and upload images of up to 6 recent paintings to the Zealous platform. These digital submissions are selected by a panel of judges whose decision is final.

## Eligibility

- Any painting where a water-based medium is the main component of the work is eligible. Paintings in
- watercolour, acrylic, gouache, ink, any other water-based media or a combination are accepted.
- No prints, copies, reproductions or photographs are eligible
- All work should be on a paper support i.e. paper, cardboard, etc (not canvas, wood, plastic or any other surface)
- There are no limitations on style or subject matter
- Framed works must not exceed 200 x 200cm
- The painting must have been completed in the last 4 years from the deadline date (28th November 2025)
- All works must be an original creation by the artist
- All work must be for sale
- Applicants must be living and aged 18 or over on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2025

## Selectors

**Bob and Roberta Smith RA** | Artist & Royal Academician

**Siphiwe Mnguni** | Artist & Curator

**Charles Williams PRWS** | Artist & President of the Royal Watercolour Society

**Akash Bhatt RWS** | Artist

**Caroline Cornelius RWS** | Artist

## Royal Watercolour Society Prizes

**David Gluck Memorial Award** | £1000 Cash Prize

**David Benson Memorial Award** | £500 Cash Prize

**RWS Award** | £250 Cash Prize

**RWS New Graduate Award\*** | £250 Cash Prize & Michael Harding Urban Watercolour Set

**RWS Young Artist Award\*\*** | Guest Membership to the RWS for 2 years to an artist under the age of 35, allowing the winner(s) to exhibit in all Society exhibitions at Bankside Gallery for this period & Michael Harding On the Move Watercolour Set

**RWS Publicity Prize** | Your selected work on exhibition publicity material

\*To qualify for the RWS New Graduate Award you must be a current student on an arts-related course in higher education, or a recent graduate of the same. If you are a graduate, your graduation date must be no earlier than 1st January 2022.

\*\*To qualify for the RWS Young Artist Award you must be 35 or under on 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2025.

## Sponsored Prizes

The Royal Watercolour Society is delighted to have the support of industry specialists who are offering a range of prizes including art materials, studio time, publishing, exhibiting and cash prizes.

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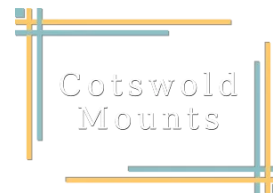
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OF BRIGHTON  
The Artist's benchmark for quality

Wallace Seymour  
Fine Art Products



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**Michael Harding Grand Prize** | £500 Cash Prize & £500 worth of art materials

**Michael Harding Mixed Media Prize** | Vivid Watercolour Set & MH Merchandise Gift Card

**Michael Harding Watercolour Prize** | Botanical Watercolour Set & MH Merchandise Gift Card

**Michael Harding People's Choice Award** | Urban Watercolour Set & MH Merchandise Gift Card

**The Artist Prize** | Feature article in The Artist & Leisure Painter Magazine

**Caran d'Ache Prize** | Set of 76 Caran d'Ache Museum extra-fine aquarelle watercolour pencils

**Cotswold Mounts Prize** | £125 Cash Prize

**Daler Rowney Prize** | £650 worth of art materials

**Daniel Smith Prize** | Daniel Smith PrimaTek range of 36 tube watercolours and the 266 Watercolour Dot-Card

**Dry Red Press Prize** | The opportunity to have your artwork published on a greetings card

**GreatArt Prize** | £250 worth of art materials and an artist's feature in GreatArt's online magazine

**The Heatherley's Open Studio Prize** | Five days' worth of studio time at The Heatherley School of Fine Art

**Schmincke Prize** | Set of 50 Schmincke Horadam watercolours

**Seawhite Art Materials Prize** | Seawhite art materials

**Fanny Violet Shoosmith Prize** | £500 Cash Prize

**Thurston Laidlaw Shoosmith Prize** | £500 Cash Prize

**St Cuthbert's Mill Paper Prize** | £300 worth of paper

**Wallace Seymour Prize** | £200 worth of art materials

**Winsor & Newton Prize** | £500 worth of art materials

## How to Enter

Entry deadline: Friday 28<sup>th</sup> November, 11.59pm GMT

Artists may submit up to 6 paintings for a non-refundable fee:

1 work £15

2 works £30

3 works £38 (£7 discount)

4 works £47 (£13 discount)

5 works £56 (£19 discount)

6 works £65 (£25 discount)

### Discounts

- Students in full time higher education can submit up to 6 works for £5 per entry. Students will be required to show student ID when delivering the work to the drop-off location. When submitting student work online, please also scan your student ID and email a copy to [submissions@banksidegallery.com](mailto:submissions@banksidegallery.com). Any works found to be falsely submitted as student work will not be hung. No further offers apply.
- Those subscribed to the Watercolour Artist Friends Scheme at Bankside Gallery can submit for free. If you are already a Watercolour Artist Friend please request your free entry code by emailing a photo of your Friends Membership card including expiry date, or your name and postcode for us to verify your membership to [submissions@banksidegallery.com](mailto:submissions@banksidegallery.com). To join the Watercolour Artist Friends Scheme please contact [friends@banksidegallery.com](mailto:friends@banksidegallery.com) The cost of an annual subscription is £45.

**\*Only one discount can be used per submission**

**\*\*Discounts cannot be applied in retrospect after payment has been made. Please make sure you enter your discount code on the submission form before completing payment**

### Step 1

Take a good quality digital photograph or scan of each painting. Paintings should be photographed unframed and evenly lit, and cropped to the edge of the work.

### Step 2

View the photograph on a computer to make sure you are happy with the picture quality and that it is the right way up – the judges will make their decision based on this photograph. Check the image file does not exceed 5MB (minimum of 1MB) before saving it as a jpeg.

### Step 3

Go to [royalwatercoloursociety.co.uk/competition](http://royalwatercoloursociety.co.uk/competition) to access the online entry form via the Zealous platform. If it's your first time using the Zealous system, you will be asked to make an account. When you set up this account, please enter your name exactly as you wish it to appear with your work. We will also use the email address associated with your profile to communicate with you about the competition. Please ensure you enter it correctly. This system will also allow you to check back in on your submission after you have entered.

### Step 4

You will be asked to pay for the number of entries you wish to make. Pay the non-refundable entry fee using the secure online payment service.

### Step 5

After payment, you will be asked to provide an image of the artwork, the title, framed dimensions (in cm), medium and price. Please note you will be only able to submit one image per submission and you will need to add your first image and then it's details before uploading any subsequent entries. You are able to re-access your entry until the closing date but you will not be able to make any changes after that point. **You should consider framing, transport costs and the Gallery's commission of 40% + VAT when pricing your work.**

**\*Please be aware that VAT is included in the entry fee, however this will not show on your email receipt, so if you require a VAT receipt please contact us separately via [submissions@banksidegallery.com](mailto:submissions@banksidegallery.com).**

**\*\*Entries needs to be fully completed by the deadline. You will not be able to access your submission to make changes or add additional artworks once the deadline has passed.**

**\*\*\*It is strongly recommended that you upload your entry in advance of the official entry deadline time. Large volumes of traffic to the website may cause the server to crash and it may become very difficult or impossible to upload your entry. Please submit your entries ahead of time to guarantee that your application is submitted successfully.**

### Step 6

Successful entrants will be contacted by the email address provided on or before **Monday 12<sup>th</sup> of January 2026**. We do also try to contact unsuccessful applicants but this isn't always possible. If you haven't heard from us by the end of the day on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> of January 2026, please assume your application has been unsuccessful this time.

# Preparing Your Paintings for Exhibition

An exhibition of selected paintings will be held at Bankside Gallery from **Friday 27<sup>th</sup> February – Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

- Poorly presented paintings or works that differ significantly from the photograph that was entered will not be accepted. Metal frames, clip frames, poor quality ready-made frames, those glazed with low quality or scratched Perspex, and any other type of low quality display method may be rejected by the hanging team.
- Framing must be simple and neutral i.e. white, black or natural wood, with either a white, cream, or neutral mounting.
- Framed paintings must not exceed 200cm x 200cm.
- For your work to be insured against theft under Bankside Gallery insurance, your paintings must be framed, glazed with picture glass and fitted with mirror plates. Other display options are welcomed but these are displayed at your own risk. Please contact [submissions@banksidegallery.com](mailto:submissions@banksidegallery.com) to discuss any alternative display methods prior to submitting your entry. It may be necessary for you to be present to assist in installing the work should it be selected for the exhibition.
- If you choose alternative display options you must also ensure that your works can be safely stored and you must provide a safe and secure way in which they can be wrapped and protected if sold. You must also provide clear instructions on the hanging of your work in advance of delivering the work.
- Framed paintings must be supplied with mirror-plates attached to each side of the frame with a pair of screws. Bubble wrap or card wrapped around the mirror-plates should prevent damage during transit.
- You will receive labels via email for your works. Please fill out the information with the details of your work and fix one to the front and one to the back of your work with magic tape. Please make sure the label on the front can be easily removed without leaving residue on the glass.
- The paintings remain at all times to the liability of the artist. While every care will be taken when handling paintings, neither Bankside Gallery nor the RWS can accept liability for any damage. You may wish to insure your work against loss or damage while it is in transit or at the Gallery.

## Delivering Your Paintings

Delivery of framed paintings is to Bankside Gallery on **Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026, 11am – 5pm**. Paintings may not be delivered on any other date. On arrival at the Gallery you will be asked to un-wrap your paintings and to take any packing material away with you.

You may arrange for a representative or professional art courier to deliver your paintings on the above hand-in days. They must un-wrap your paintings, take away all packaging and sign a delivery sheet.

Only professional Art Couriers should be used. We recommend:

**Picture Post** (info@picturepostcompany.co.uk / 07833 450 788)

**Art Moves of Chelsea** (artmoveschelsea@aol.com / 020 7352 7492)

**3 Lanes** (info@3lanes.com / 01736 799298)

Work will not be accepted if delivered by Royal Mail, FedEx, DHL etc, or by taxi. If you live outside of the UK and would like to submit work to the competition, please contact your chosen professional art courier directly beforehand so they can advise you on timings.

Please note that the art couriers listed above are all third parties and do not have any link with Bankside Gallery or the RWS. Any delivery arrangements should be made directly with the courier.

## Sale of Paintings

All paintings entered in the competition must be available for sale. The Gallery levies a commission of 40% + VAT on picture sales. You will be notified of sales by email shortly after they occur and will receive the balance due within six weeks of the end of the exhibition.

Copyright: The copyright of all works remains vested in the artist, but the right is reserved for the RWS, Bankside Gallery and/or the sponsors of the exhibition to reproduce any of the paintings in connection with the exhibition, and its publicity, free of charge.

## Collecting Unsold Paintings

Collection of unsold paintings is from Bankside Gallery on **Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2026, 11am – 5pm** unless you have been notified of a sale during the exhibition you must collect your unsold work from Bankside Gallery on the above date.

If you are unable to come to the Gallery yourself you may send a representative or engage a professional art courier (see list above). If someone will be collecting on your behalf, please contact us via [info@banksidegallery.com](mailto:info@banksidegallery.com) beforehand. All paintings will be available to collect unwrapped, so you or your representative are advised to bring any packing material required.

## Uncollected Paintings

Paintings left at the Gallery after 5pm on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> of March 2026 will be removed by an art storage service and fees will apply, increasing weekly. Please contact [info@banksidegallery.com](mailto:info@banksidegallery.com) for further information.



## Key Dates

**Friday 28<sup>th</sup> November** | Deadline for submissions (11.59pm)

**Monday 12<sup>th</sup> January** | Results announced via email by 6pm

**Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> February** | Delivery of selected work to Bankside Gallery (11am - 5pm)

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> February** | Exhibition Private View and awarding of prizes, by invitation only

**Friday 27<sup>th</sup> February - Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March** | Exhibition of successful entries at Bankside Gallery

**Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March** | Collection of unsold works from Bankside Gallery (11am - 5pm)

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - ABOUT THE SUBMISSION SYSTEM

Please be aware you first need to make payment for the total number of entries you wish to make, then you will be prompted to add the work image, then details of that work.

### **The system is telling me I have entered the maximum number of images allowed when I have uploaded only one, and I have paid for multiple submissions**

This message refers to the maximum number of images allowed per submission (i.e. per work). Once you upload one image, you will then be asked for the details of that work before uploading your second work image.

### **Submitting multiple works**

If you have trouble submitting an additional artwork after payment, try refreshing the page or logging out and then back in. Don't worry—anything you've already submitted or started will be saved as a draft.

### **Adding my address**

If your address isn't recognised then you will be given an option to "Create A New Location".

**If you need help Zealous has a live chat feature (during office hours) or email [info@zealous.co](mailto:info@zealous.co) for help**

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - ABOUT THE COMPETITION

## **What happens if my work is accepted?**

If any of your works are selected by the judges you will be contacted via email and asked to deliver the framed piece(s) to Bankside Gallery which will then be installed and exhibited in the RWS Open exhibition alongside other successful entries. You will be invited to attend the private view at the beginning of the exhibition where you can meet your fellow exhibitors and prizes will be announced.

## **Are there any prizes available?**

Yes. Prizes will be chosen from the selection of exhibited works and winners will be announced at the private view.

## **Do I need to deliver my work(s) for the selection?**

Works for the exhibition are selected from digital images uploaded as part of the online application form. You only need to deliver your work if it is selected for the exhibition. You will be notified of this via email after the selection day in January.

## **How should I choose which of my paintings to send in?**

Remember that the judges are looking at many works in a short time. They will be more likely to be captivated by work(s) with something special to say and with a personal point of view. They are looking for artists with a clear style and identity in all the works that they submit rather than lots of different styles of painting.

## **Are there rules about watercolour techniques - should I only send work in that conforms to traditional ideas of watercolour?**

The judges will be looking for ideas, competence and integrity - as long as the materials conform to those stipulated in the submission guidelines, they will be interested in how you choose to use them and will be excited by both innovation and expertise in traditional methods in using water-based media.

## **My work includes media that isn't all water-based (i.e. pastel, pencil, collage). Is this allowed?**

We accept works made in all water-based media including (but not limited to) watercolour, acrylic, ink, gouache, and mixed media pieces featuring non-water-based materials as long as a water-based-media is the main component of the work.

## **Do any particular subjects for paintings have a better chance of being selected?**

No. There are no restrictions on subject matter.

## **What sized painting is usually most often accepted?**

In previous years, artworks in a range of sizes have been accepted, however due to limitations of space, works must not exceed 200 x 200cm when framed.

**How does the digital submission affect the decisions the judges make?**

If the original digital photograph is of a good quality, and the image well presented - that is, cropped to the edge of the painting and straight, the judges will be able to make a decision in much the same way as looking at the actual painting.

**If I am successful, can I send my work to Bankside Gallery using Royal Mail, Fed Ex or similar?**

No, we do not accept works from non-insured non-art couriers. We realise this is a more expensive way of transporting your work but we want to reduce the risk of loss or damage to your work.

**How can I send work to Bankside Gallery if I live outside of the UK?**

If you live outside of the UK and would like to submit work to the competition, please contact your chosen professional art courier directly beforehand so they can advise you on timings. They should deliver your work(s) on time on your behalf and make sure all the packaging is taken away. You can also arrange collection of work with these companies.

**What if I cannot deliver or collect my work on the designated days?**

You can either nominate a friend to deliver/collect the works for you (please inform Bankside Gallery via [info@banksidegallery.com](mailto:info@banksidegallery.com) of who this will be) or you can use a professional art courier. Works not delivered on time will not be hung and works not collected on time will be removed by an art storage service and fees will be applied.