

THE EDGAR WIND ART WRITING PRIZE 2026–27

Rules & Conditions of Entry

1. The Prize

The Edgar Wind Art Writing Prize is an annual prize for outstanding writing about art, objects and visual culture.

For 2026, entrants are invited to respond to the question:

When is looking not enough?

The Prize asks writers to begin with sustained attention to particular art, objects or visual encounters and to allow that encounter to generate, complicate or redirect a larger argument.

The winning entry will receive a prize of £500.

The judges may also award non-monetary commendations at their discretion.

2. Eligibility

The Prize is open to currently matriculated undergraduate and postgraduate students of the University of Oxford, from any subject or discipline. No previous study of History of Art or publication experience is required. Entrants must meet these requirements on the closing date.

All current Edgar Wind Society committee members, the Art Writing Prize Director, and anyone directly involved in administering, shortlisting or judging the Prize may not enter. College representatives and former committee members may enter if they hold no such role and are not current committee members.

Each entrant may submit one essay only.

3. The Essay

Entries must be 1,800–2,200 words (approximately 2,000 words, plus or minus 10%).

The count includes the main text, quotations, footnotes and endnotes; it excludes the title, image captions and bibliography.

Essays must be written in English.

Entries may focus on a single artwork or object, an exhibition or collection, a building or interior, an image or act of display, or another encounter with visual or material culture. Entrants may interpret the question freely and take critical, historical, philosophical, political, personal, material, technical or experimental approaches.

The particular art under discussion should be structurally necessary to the piece. The Prize is not intended for essays in which artworks serve primarily as illustrations for an argument that could remain substantially unchanged without them.

4. Research, references and images

Extensive specialist knowledge or original archival research is neither required nor rewarded for its own sake.

Research should deepen engagement with the subject rather than substitute for close attention and independent thought. Factual claims, quotations and ideas derived from other sources must be appropriately acknowledged.

No particular citation style is required, provided references are clear and consistent. Images may be included where useful but are not required; provide basic captions and source information.

Submit a readable essay PDF, not a poster, slide deck, Canva document or image-only file. Visual design will not be judged. Entrants need not obtain image publication permissions before entry. If an essay is selected for publication, the Society will work with the author on permissions or alternative images.

5. Originality and previous work

Submissions must be the entrant's own original work. An essay may develop from tutorial, seminar, course or other academic work, but must be substantially reshaped for this Prize, address its question directly and speak to a broader readership. Entries must not have been published in print or online or accepted for publication elsewhere.

Plagiarism, fabricated quotations or references, deliberate factual misrepresentation or other serious breaches of academic integrity may result in disqualification. The Society may request sources or other reasonable information to verify a submission.

6. Use of generative AI

The Prize is intended to assess the entrant's own looking, thought, judgement and writing.

Entrants must not use generative AI to produce substantive prose for the essay, substantially rewrite their prose, develop the essay's argument, or generate its analysis.

Ordinary spelling, grammar and proofreading tools may be used where they do not generate substantive prose or ideas.

Generative AI or automated tools may be used for limited ancillary purposes, such as transcription or translation, provided that this use is disclosed on the submission form and that the entrant independently checks the resulting material for accuracy.

Entrants remain responsible for the accuracy, originality and integrity of everything submitted under their name.

All entrants must complete the AI declaration contained in the submission form.

7. Anonymous submission

Judging will be anonymous.

The essay itself must contain no identifying information, including the entrant's name, college, course, email address or acknowledgements which would reasonably identify the author.

Identifying and eligibility information should appear only on the separate submission form.

After receipt, the Society will assign each eligible entry an identifying number before supplying essays to the judges.

The judges will not be provided with entrants' names, colleges, courses or undergraduate/postgraduate status during anonymous judging.

8. How to enter

Entrants should email two separate PDF attachments:

1. the anonymous essay; and
2. the completed Edgar Wind Art Writing Prize submission form.

Entries should be sent to **prize@edgarwindsociety.org** with the subject line:

Art Writing Prize 2026: Submission

The essay should be submitted as a PDF and should not contain the entrant's name in either the document or filename. The completed submission form should be submitted as a separate PDF.

Download the submission form at **edgarwindsociety.co.uk/prize**, or request it by email at the address above.

Receipt of entries will be acknowledged by email.

The closing date is:

23:59 GMT, Sunday 15 November 2026

Entries received after the deadline will not normally be accepted. Entrants experiencing a technical problem with submission should contact the Society via **prize@edgarwindsociety.org** before the deadline wherever possible.

9. Judging

Entries will be judged on the quality of the writing itself, without adjustment according to the entrant's academic stage.

Judges will consider, in particular:

Attention and description: how closely and precisely the piece engages with its particular visual or material subject.

Thought and argument: the strength, coherence and independence of the writer's thinking, and the extent to which the art materially shapes the argument.

Judgement and originality: the writer's capacity to notice, question, discriminate and make a persuasive case of their own.

Intellectual seriousness: responsible use of evidence, research and uncertainty without unnecessary academicism.

Writing: clarity, structure, style and the ability to communicate beyond a narrow specialist audience.

A central question for the judges will be:

If the particular art were removed, would essentially the same essay remain?

The quantity of secondary reading, specialist terminology or scholarly apparatus will not in itself be treated as evidence of a stronger submission.

The judges' decision is final. The Society cannot undertake to provide individual feedback on entries.

10. Conflicts of interest

Entrants must declare on the submission form any close connection to a judge or organiser that could reasonably compromise, or appear to compromise, impartiality. A declaration does not automatically make an entrant ineligible. The Society will keep this information separate from anonymous essays and use it to manage the judging process.

If a judge recognises an entry or believes that they have a relationship with an entrant which could reasonably compromise—or appear to compromise—their impartiality, they should disclose this to the Art Writing Prize Director and take no part in judging that entry.

Where necessary, the Society may redistribute an entry among the remaining judges or appoint an appropriate replacement judge.

The anonymity of entries should otherwise be preserved until judging has concluded.

11. Results and prize

The shortlist is scheduled to be announced on **5 December 2026**. The winner is scheduled to be announced at the prize-giving ceremony in Hilary Term 2027 and will first be contacted using the email address on the submission form. The Society may announce the winner's name and essay title; it will request any additional biography, photograph or personal information separately. The £500 prize will be paid following confirmation of the result and provision of payment details.

12. Publication

The Society will produce a printed Edgar Wind Society Art Writing Prize pamphlet featuring the winning essay and selected shortlisted entries. Authors selected for the pamphlet will be offered a separate publication agreement covering the text, editorial arrangements and any necessary image permissions. An author's consent to publication is voluntary; submitting an entry does not itself grant publication rights.

Copyright remains with the author. By entering, authors grant the Society permission only to receive, store, reproduce and circulate their essay internally as reasonably necessary to administer and judge the Prize. The Society will not substantially edit work for publication without consulting its author.

The Society is exploring an external editorial pathway for the winning essay. This is a possibility under discussion, not a promised publication opportunity; any such arrangement would be discussed and agreed separately with the author. Other publication opportunities, including the Society's *Review* or website, would likewise require separate agreement.

13. Administration and disqualification

The Society reserves the right to verify eligibility and compliance with these rules.

An entry may be disqualified where the entrant is ineligible, the submission materially breaches these rules, identifying information compromises anonymous judging, or there is a serious concern regarding authorship or academic integrity.

Where a minor administrative problem can reasonably be corrected without affecting fairness (e.g. an accidental identifying detail in a filename) the Society may correct it rather than automatically disqualifying the entry.

14. Changes to the competition

If circumstances outside the Society's reasonable control require a change to the judging panel, timetable or other practical arrangements, the Society may make such changes as are reasonably necessary.

Any material changes will be published through the same channels as the Prize information and, where practicable, communicated directly to existing entrants.

Changes will not be made retrospectively in a way intended to advantage or disadvantage a particular entrant.