

SOFT

Biennial Open Exhibition 2025
Quay Arts

EXHIBITION BRIEF

Quay Arts invites established and emerging artists to submit work exploring the theme **'SOFT'**.

The theme can be interpreted in many ways, offering diverse possibilities for artistic expression within our spacious West Gallery setting.

Applicants might approach the theme practically, through materials, considering the tactile nature of the non-rigid and pliable. Beyond the physical; subtler, more nuanced qualities of Soft might be considered, from the emotional — *tenderness, vulnerability, or empathy* — to the social or cultural — *Soft Power* and *influence*. It can also be interpreted through the lens of soft skills, quiet strength, and gentleness and so on.

Artists may consider

- The physicality of soft materials
- Emotional softness, such as compassion, vulnerability, or sensitivity
- Softness as a symbol of resilience or gentleness in a harsh world
- The notion of 'Soft Power' — subtle influence or quiet authority within culture and society

We welcome submissions from any art forms, including multi-disciplinary and digital artists, and other innovative approaches considering the theme. We are open to ambitious and playful applications and will consider proposals for site specific work as well as well described — WIP.

Please bear in mind there is a small installation window to mount the exhibition.

There are no set dimensions for submitted works, but work must be deliverable to the gallery which is on the first floor of Quay Arts accessed by two flights of stairs or lift (please check technical details on our website).

If unfamiliar with the gallery space we recommend a site visit where possible.

PRIZES

The OPEN selection panel will select two SOFT exhibitors to receive the following prizes:

1st prize West Gallery solo exhibition, late 2026/early 27

2nd prize Clayden Gallery solo exhibition, 2026

Preview & Prize Giving announcement: Saturday 9th August, 6 – 8pm.

SELECTION PANEL

Steve Baxter, artist & Open 2023 Winner; Ricardo Blanco, Aspex Gallery curator / Programme manager, Ian Whitmore, Alicia French & Hannah George – Quay Arts, Arts Team

Please ensure you have read the Guidelines and T&Cs on the following pages before submitting your Application and Entry Fee.

TO APPLY

Applications are open from Friday 14th March and close on Monday 5th May (23:59 hrs)

There is a one-off entry fee of £30, which is non-refundable after your application is submitted. Fees received support the costs of mounting the exhibition at Quay Arts (registered Charity No 272007).

Applications are via a Google Form, which can be found on the Quay Arts website [HERE](#). Alternatively a Word Doc version is available [HERE](#). Please note, Word Docs must be emailed to artsteam@quayarts.org upon completion and that Google applications are preferred.

ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must be aged 18 or over at the time of applying, based in the UK, and be the creators of the work(s) submitted, or an authorised representative (such as a gallery) of the creator of the work(s).

Artists must be established or emerging, and submitted artwork(s) made within the last 5 years.

By submitting your work(s) you confirm each work is in a condition to withstand the normal rigours of handling and display at Quay Arts. The work must be able to be handled appropriately and safely.

PROPOSALS

We accept proposals for works in progress. WIP should be well described and supported by evidence such as sketches, photographs, technical plans, along with dimensions and hanging / display instructions.

KEY DATES

Deadline to apply - Monday 5th May 11:59pm

Your online application and entry fee must be received no later than the deadline.

Selection notification - Monday 17th May

Applicants will be informed if their application is successful via email.

Delivery of Work - Monday 4th August between 10am – 5pm or Tuesday 5th August between 10am - 1pm

Works must be delivered to Quay Arts West Gallery located on the 1st Floor.

Exhibition Duration - Saturday 9th August to Saturday 4th October

Our galleries are free entry and open daily 9am - 5pm.

Opening Event + award announcements Saturday 9th August 6 - 8pm

Collection of Work - Monday 6th October between 10am – pm

Works must be collected from Quay Arts West Gallery located on the 1st Floor.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

Works must be available for the duration of the exhibition. The selection panel's decision is final and the display of works is at the discretion of the curatorial team. Quay Arts reserves the right to use images submitted, or taken by the Arts team of the exhibition and works therein, to publicise the exhibition. Where appropriate, all selected work must be properly framed and glazed to a high standard with fixings attached when delivered to Quay Arts. Quay Arts reserves the right not to exhibit a selected piece if it does not meet the presentation standards.

DISCLAIMER

Works that are deemed offensive or explicit or works that do not fit the exhibition criteria may not be accepted. In which case, alternative work will be discussed with the applicant or application fees refunded.

We cannot accept delivery of unfinished works for the exhibition, and may not accept works that substantially differ from your application. Works not received on the delivery day may not be exhibited.

Depending on the installation requirements, it may be possible for an applicant to support the install of their work in the gallery TBD / TBC with Quay Arts arts team.

We cannot pre-assess applications. We can respond to generic questions around gallery dimension / access, transportation to and from QA and basic installation queries via artsteam@quayarts.org

PREVIOUS OPEN EXHIBITION WINNERS INCLUDE

Steve Baxter (2023 – OPEN 'The Art of Sculpture'); Paul Woods (2021 – OPEN 'Freedom'); Rachel Johnston (2019 – OPEN 'A Life in Nature'); Caroline Underwood (2017 – OPEN 'I must down to the seas again'); Joanna Kori (2015 – OPEN); Holly Cade & Liz Sterry (2013 – OPEN 'Duet'); Katayoun Dowlatshahi (2010/11 – OPEN); and Julian Rowe (2008 – OPEN 'Location').

ABOUT QUAY ARTS

Quay Arts is situated within a grade II listed ex-brewery warehouse originally built in the 1870's on the banks of the River Medina, and is the leading Arts Centre on the Isle of Wight. Quay Arts supports the development and display of new work by contemporary visual artists. The West Gallery was designed by award-winning architect Tony Fretton (Camden Arts Centre, Lisson Gallery, ArtSway) and presents work of national and international interest. It has hosted eclectic exhibitions including solo shows by Andy Goldsworthy, Kurt Jackson, Martin Creed, Vija Celmins and Richard Long.

OUR WEST GALLERY

Our West Gallery is the largest publicly assessable free gallery space on the Isle of Wight. The space can be viewed via our 3D tour [HERE](#) showcasing the recent exhibition LIVING | ROOM by Steve Baxter (previous OPEN 2023 Winner).

Please see images of the West Gallery and the floor plan on the following pages.

Below photo from ARTISTS ROOMS Vija Celmins , 2019 (supported by Arts Council England and Art_Fund)



Below are photos from The Art Of Sculpture, QA Biennial OPEN 2023:



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The West Gallery

Dimensions:	
Total floor area (including annexe)	165 sq. metres
Total hanging length (including annexe)	72 linear metres
Total gallery height	5.4 metres
Minimum gallery height (below girders)	3 metres
	— Girders
	— Lighting Track
Window 1 - doesn't open, boarded up	
Window 2 - doesn't open, boarded up	
Walls - 1/2" plasterboard over MDF	
S - 13A plug socket	

