

Herbert Smith Freehills Portrait Award 2026

Category: [Illustration](#)

Deadline: January 6, 2026

Website: graphiccompetitions.com



The Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer Portrait Award 2026 is one of the world's leading competitions dedicated to contemporary portrait painting. Organised by the National Portrait Gallery in London, the award celebrates the very best in figurative art, offering a global platform for artists to showcase their skill, creativity, and individuality. Open to artists of all nationalities aged 18 and over, the competition invites submissions of painted portraits where the human figure predominates, reflecting the diversity and depth of contemporary artistic practice. The resulting exhibition, which will run from 25 June to 7 October 2026, is expected to attract thousands of visitors, reaffirming its status as one of the most prestigious events in the international art calendar.

This award, formerly known as the BP Portrait Award, continues a long-standing tradition of promoting excellence in portraiture while evolving to meet the changing dynamics of the modern art world. Sponsored by Herbert Smith Freehills, in partnership with the Kramer Foundation, the 2026 edition reinforces a commitment to fostering artistic innovation and inclusivity. Through this collaboration, the award not only provides financial recognition for exceptional talent but also supports emerging artists by offering exposure within one of the most respected portrait exhibitions globally. The competition's emphasis on technical mastery, emotional depth, and conceptual originality ensures that each year's selection captures the pulse of contemporary portraiture.

Beyond the competition and exhibition, the Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer Portrait Award serves as a vital cultural platform for dialogue between artists, institutions, and audiences. By celebrating both established and emerging voices in the art community, it contributes to shaping the future of figurative painting and expanding the reach of portraiture as a form of storytelling. The 2026 exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery will not only highlight artistic excellence but also explore themes of identity, representation, and human connection, offering visitors an engaging and thought-provoking experience that reflects the power of portraiture in the modern era.

Entry fee: The entry fee is £40, with free entry for artists receiving Universal Credit or Pension Credit, and a 50% discount for artists aged 18-25, students or those receiving Disability Benefits.

Eligibility

Artists must be aged 18 years or over as of 1 January 2025, from anywhere in the world; to be eligible for the Young Artist Award they must be aged 30 or under as of 1 January 2025.

Prize

The competition offers a first prize of £35,000, a second prize of £12,000 and a third prize of £10,000; additionally there is a Young Artist Award of £9,000 for the selected entrant aged 18-30, and all artists selected for the 2026 and 2027 exhibitions will be eligible for a bi-annual Artist Commission worth £14,000.
