

Michael O'Pray Prize 2025 ...

APPLY NOW

Michael O'Pray Prize

Submissions are now open for the ninth edition of the Michael O'Pray Prize — an FVU initiative in partnership with Art Monthly.

The **Michael O'Pray Prize** is an award for new writing on innovation and experimentation in the moving image. The prize is open to all early-career writers based in the UK and is free to apply to.

Applicants are invited to send a proposal or pitch for a new text, alongside an example of previous writing. Three of the applicants will be selected to realise the proposed text. From these, there will be a **£750 prize for the winner**, with **£350 each for two further awardees**. All three awarded texts will be published by Art Monthly and FVU.

Find out more about the prize, application process and eligibility in this document.

About the Prize

The Prize is named in memory of the critic, historian and film programmer, Michael O'Pray. The guiding presence behind Film and Video Umbrella in its early years (1985-1990), Mike was the first Director of Film and Video Umbrella, and was a regular contributor to the pages of Art Monthly. Over the course of his long and varied career, Mike was an impassioned and energetic champion of avant-garde cinema, highlighting the continuing influence of key figures from the past, while dynamically promoting contemporary talents in experimental film and video. In his writings, and in the many programmes he curated for Film and Video Umbrella and elsewhere, Mike always endeavoured to make radical, challenging, occasionally esoteric work accessible to a wider public – and it is with this in mind that the award seeks to encourage examples of imaginative, engaging writing that extols and advances this longstanding tradition of experimentation in film and video for a non-specialist audience. One of the aims of the prize is that the platform it offers helps writers to receive future writing commissions. Previous winners have gone on to contribute new articles for Art Monthly and other publications.

The 2025 Panel

The 2025 judging panel will be announced shortly.

What is the Prize?

£750 prize for the winner.

£350 each for two further awardees.

All three awarded texts will be published online by Art Monthly and FVU.

Eligibility

The Prize is aimed at writers starting out in their careers, having had no more than four articles about the arts or experimental film/moving-image published in print or online. This does not include self-publishing.

The Michael O'Pray Prize is open to submissions from writers based anywhere in the UK. We unfortunately cannot accept applications from those based internationally.

Submissions must be in English, though we welcome applications from writers for whom English is a second or additional language.

There is no age limit for applicants.

No formal education or qualifications are required to apply to this prize.

More information can be found via the FAQ section below. If you have any questions about eligibility please email admin@fvu.co.uk. We will be responding to questions at regular intervals between the 28 April and 9 June.

How to apply

Your application must include the following three elements:

1. **A previous writing sample (1200 words maximum).** This can be a whole article/text, or an extract, and could be previously published or unpublished. The aim of the prize is to support writers who can enliven and popularise discussion of the experimental spirit in film and video art; therefore, ideally, the sample of writing that you submit would be about artists' moving image and/or experimental cinema. If you have not previously written about this medium, your sample text could focus on other visual arts media, or assume another form of cultural criticism.

2. **A 300-350 word proposal/pitch for a new text on artists' moving image or experimental cinema.** If you are selected as a finalist, you would go on to write the finished text, to be published by Art Monthly and FVU. The text you are pitching to write, if realised, should be between 1,250 – 1,500 words. Your proposal could consist of a straightforward review of a forthcoming exhibition, or an existing piece of work; a survey of a wider trend or historical moment in the medium; or it could take a more creative and experimental form. We strongly recommend reading the previously awarded texts, as well as looking at writing published with Art Monthly and texts previously published on FVU's Writing section.

3. **A CV.** Please include your full name (or the name under which you write), phone number, email address and the region in the UK where you are based. For the first assessment of your application by the panel, your name will be redacted. CVs should be no more than two sides of A4, at 11pt font or larger and should include details of any previously published articles/texts.

Submissions should be sent to admin@fvu.co.uk

Application deadline: 12 noon, 9 June 2025

Writing Futures (Online Event): 18.00 12 May 2025

We are hosting a free in-conversation and Q&A between the Michael O'Pray Prize panellists about what makes a strong article pitch, how to go about researching where might be receptive to a pitch for a particular article, and how a professional editorial process works. Sign up [HERE!](#)

Equal Opportunities

We encourage writers who are historically under-represented within visual arts in the UK to apply, particularly writers with disabilities or long-term health conditions, and artists from low-income, LGBTQIA+ and ethnically diverse backgrounds, and artists living outside of London. All applications will be assessed on merit. In order to minimise the impact of unconscious bias in panel decision-making, for the first assessment of your application by both the internal and external panel members, your name will be redacted.

If you face barriers to making this type of application, please contact admin@fvu.co.uk at least two weeks in advance of the submission deadline to discuss how we might be able to make adjustments to the application requirements, to facilitate your application. We are however not able to extend the submission deadline.

Once you have applied all applicants will be sent a link to an equal opportunities monitoring form. This will be processed separately from your submission and will not affect your eligibility for the opportunity.

You can view the equal opportunities monitoring data from each year of the Michael O'Pray Prize [here](#).

Privacy

The personal data you give us in submitting to this prize will be used to process your submission for the Michael O'Pray Prize by Film and Video Umbrella and Art Monthly, and will be shared with external members of the selection panel, (with the exception of the Equal Opportunities Monitoring form, which will be totally anonymous and will not impact the outcome of your application). We will only contact you in connection to this submission. Your personal data will be kept by both Film and Video Umbrella and Art Monthly for up to 10 years and will only be used by each organisation for their own research, evaluation, reporting and marketing analysis for opportunities. It will not be passed on to anyone else. If you want to be removed from either organisation's database you can email Susanna Chisholm: susanna@fvu.co.uk and Chris McCormack: chris@artmonthly.co.uk. You have the right to contact the Information Commissioner's Office should you wish to complain about how your information has been handled.

Read the 2024 Award texts

[Not to Scale](#)

Bami Oke examines Garrett Bradley's embodied video reflection on US culture

[Looking at Palestine](#)

Nevan Spier views Palestine through the films of Mustafa Abu Ali and Elia Suleiman

[The Screen is a Drum](#)

E De Zulueta explores the delirious resistance of Mexican filmmakers Colectivo los ingravidos

[Previous Awardees](#)

2023 [Leena Habiballa](#), [Aislinn Evans](#) and [Natasha Thenbiso Ruwona](#)

2022: [Laura Bivolaru](#), [Evelyn Wh-ell](#), [Dan Guthrie](#) and [Siavash Minoukadeh](#)

2021: [Sara Quattrocchi Febles](#), [Rosa Tyhurst](#) and [Ronnie Angel Pope](#)

2020: [Mimi Howard](#), [Harvey Dimond](#) and [Rachel Pronger](#)

2019: [Cassandra Greenberg](#) and [Laura Jacobs](#)

2018: [Adam Hines-Green](#)

2017: [Lauren Houlton](#) and [Dan Ward](#)

[Testimonials](#)

Bami Oke (MOP Prize 2024): "One of the most valuable takeaways I got from writing this piece was the chance to test the boundaries of my own creative process. As a critic, and as an artist, much of my work comes about through a practice of reflexivity. Having never written a piece of film criticism before the MOP prize, I approached it as a research project, which brought a welcome shift in the way I view my own craft. Since the award, I've continued developing the themes of spatiality and memory addressed in my piece into an audiovisual performance. It has been thoroughly rewarding to watch what was originally a written piece morph into a physical body of work, and I'd like to thank the editorial team at FVU for instilling me with the confidence to fine-tune my creative hand."

Laura Bivolaru (MOP Prize 2022): "Opportunities for writing about arts are not very numerous and winning the Michael O'Pray Prize in 2022 was an encouraging step in my writing career. All four selected essays were of great quality and I am honoured to have been published in such a company. Having trained as a fine art photographer, I was reluctant to call myself a writer. However, winning the Prize has given me the confidence I needed to expand my writing and take pride in my work."

Evelyn Wh-ell (MOP Prize 2022): "Submitting to the Michael O'Pray Prize gave me a valuable opportunity to experiment in thinking and writing about moving image practice, as well as the encouragement to finally explore ideas I had been sitting with for years. Since winning, I've had fantastic opportunities to talk about writing with students and other writers, and build a supportive community with others around shared interests and experiences."

FAQs

How strict is the four article limit? / What if I have had published more than four articles but they aren't all about artists' moving image, or experimental film?

We are predominantly interested in discovering new and emerging voices in arts criticism, particularly those writing about artists' moving-image. If, for example, you have had a few more than four articles published, but these are about topics unrelated to the visual arts or film/moving-image, we would still consider your application. If, however, you are a very established writer in another field, it is probably not recommend that you apply for the Prize, as you may be able to make the transition into arts criticism another way.

Does self-publishing count towards my four published article limit?

Self-publishing on personal websites, blogs, Medium, Substack or other equivalent platform does not count towards the article limit.

What if I have never had an article published before?

There is no minimum. If you are an unpublished or inexperienced writer, with an ambition to break into the world of arts criticism, then you are exactly who we are looking for.

If we write collaboratively, are we able to apply as a duo, or group?

Yes. So long as under the authorship of that duo or group you have not had more than four articles published in print or online. If however one or more in the group are already established writers, we may consider you ineligible, depending on the balance of experienced and inexperienced writers in your group.

Is there any support available for those who face barriers to making this kind of application?

If you face barriers to making this type of application, please contact admin@fvu.co.uk at least two weeks in advance of the submission deadline to discuss how we might be able to make adjustments to the application requirements, to facilitate your application. We are however not able to extend the submission deadline.

I have never pitched to an editor before. Are there any guidelines for how to do this / what this pitch should look like?

We are hosting an online event - an in-conversation and Q&A - at 18.00 on 12 May 2025 where Associate Editor at Art Monthly, and Michael O'Pray Prize panellist Chris McCormack will be in conversation with FVU Director, Angelica Sule (also a Michael O'Pray Prize panellist) about what makes a strong pitch from his perspective, how to go about researching where might be receptive to a pitch for a particular article, and also how a

professional editorial process works, so that you are prepared should you reach the final stages of the prize. There will be a Q&A at the end.

Does the proposed text need to be about a recent film or exhibition?

No. It could be about older/more historical work instead.

If my application is successful, and I am one of the three writers invited to realise their proposed text, how long will I get to write the finished article?

You will be given at least six weeks to write your text. Edits may then be proposed/ requested by Art Monthly and FVU before publishing. A minimum of six weeks will be allowed for the editorial process to take place, and deadlines within that (for example, the turn around time of responses / edits) will be made clear at each stage.

If you require a large print copy of this document, please get in touch with admin@fvu.co.uk.

The Michael O'Pray Prize is a Film and Video Umbrella initiative in partnership with Art Monthly.



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



**Funded by
UK Government**