



Years of
Graphic Design
Athlone

Art Competiton — 2026

Where Art Meets Science

Celebrating 50 Years of Graphic Design Education in Athlone

As part of our 50th anniversary celebrations, we invite current students, graduates, alumni and staff to take part in a special art competition inspired by the remarkable life and work of Mary Ward (1827–1869).

Mary Ward was an Irish artist, scientist, and visionary whose practice existed at the intersection of art and science. At a time when women were excluded from universities and scientific societies, she used drawing as her language of discovery, observation, and communication. Her meticulous illustrations became a powerful tool for sharing knowledge and demonstrating that creativity and scientific enquiry are deeply connected.

Today, that intersection is more relevant than ever. We invite you to explore the space where art, science, technology, observation, experimentation, and imagination collide.

How can creativity help us understand the world around us? How can artistic practice become a tool for discovery? How do we visualise the future?

This is an opportunity to respond freely to these questions through your own unique creative practice.

Prize

€1,000 Prize Fund

The winning artwork will become part of the University's **Permanent Art Collection** and will be permanently displayed in the new Mary Ward Science Building.

Exhibition Opportunity

The Top 5 shortlisted entries will be exhibited as part of the 50th Anniversary Celebrations Design Conference on Thursday the 22nd of October, showcasing the incredible creativity, innovation, and talent within our design community.

The overall winning entry will be selected by a dynamic panel of quests speakers.

The Brief

Create an original artwork that explores the relationship between art and science.

Your response can be literal, conceptual, experimental, analogue, digital, or interdisciplinary. We encourage you to work in the medium that best communicates your idea and reflects your own creative voice.

Submissions may include, but are not limited to: Photography, Painting, Illustration, Typography, Printmaking, Drawing, Sculpture, Moving image, Mixed media, Digital art.

We encourage work that pushes boundaries, embraces experimentation, and celebrates process as much as outcome.

Take inspiration from Mary Ward's unique ability to merge artistic practice with scientific enquiry. Think about observation, curiosity, systems, patterns, technology, nature, sustainability, innovation, and the unseen worlds that surround us.

This is an opportunity to explore how creativity can become a tool for discovery and how artistic thinking can help us better understand, question, and shape the future. There is no single answer or prescribed aesthetic. We are looking for original interpretations, unexpected connections, and bold ideas that demonstrate curiosity and a willingness to experiment.

Above all, we encourage you to take risks, trust the process, and create work that sparks conversation about the relationship between art and science.

Who Can Enter?

We encourage all current students, alumni and staff to take part.

This is an opportunity to celebrate 50 years of Graphic Design education while contributing to a new chapter in our creative legacy.

How do I Enter?

To enter, simply complete the online competition entry form and upload the following:

- 3 images of your artwork
- Artwork dimensions (height × width × depth, if applicable)
- A short rationale (100–200 words) explaining your concept and response to the brief
- Artwork Medium
- Artist Profile and web links

Please ensure your images are clear and of a good quality.

Entry is free.

Upload your submission via the competition form before 1st October 2026

Time Line

Step 1: Download the competition brief

Step 2: Complete the online entry form

Step 3: Create

Step 4: Competition Deadline: 1st October

- upload your artwork

Step 5: Top 5 winners announced: 6th October

- winners will be emailed

Step 6: Overall Winner announced: 22nd October

- at the 50th Anniversary Conference

Artwork Delivery:

Drop off between October 09-16

Top 5 artworks must be delivered to TUS campus Athlone between 09-16 October. Further details regarding drop-off locations and times will be shared closer to the date.

Exhibition:

Thursday 22nd October 2026

The Top 5 shortlisted entries will be exhibited during the 50th Anniversary Conference on Thursday 22nd October 2026

Artwork Collection:

October 27–30

All art work must be collected between October 27–30. Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee storage beyond these dates.

Winner:

The overall winner will be announced at the 50th Anniversary Conference and Celebrations on 22 October 2026. The winning artist will receive a €1,000 prize fund, and their artwork will become part of the University's Permanent Art Collection, taking pride of place in the new Mary Ward Science Building.

A unique opportunity to leave a lasting creative legacy and have your work permanently showcased as part of the University's history.

Please keep an eye on our social channels for updates and further submission details.

We encourage all current students, alumni and staff to take part and contribute to this exciting celebration of 50 years of Graphic Design education in Athlone.

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