

The Awards Categories & Definitions of the scope of the Awards

The RPS Awards are structured under **four 'pillars'**, each representing an area of RPS activity, derived from its Objects as defined in its Royal Charter

The four **pillars** are:

- Pillar 1** The art of photography and moving image
- Pillar 2** The science of photography
- Pillar 3** The knowledge of photography
- Pillar 4** The Royal Photographic Society Member

Definitions of the scope of the Awards can be found in the second section of the document.

Definitions of qualifiers ['Outstanding Contribution', "Significant Personal Achievement", and "Sustained excellence or Notable Achievement"] can be found in the third section of the document

Pillar 1: The Art of Photography and Moving Image

The RPS Centenary Medal and RPS Honorary Fellowship

Awarded in recognition of an outstanding contribution to the art of photography or moving image.

RPS Honorary Fellowship

Awarded in recognition of a significant personal achievement in the art of photography or moving image.

RPS Award for Achievement in the Art of Photography

Awarded to a photographer in recognition of a notable personal achievement in the art of photography or moving image.

RPS Award for Achievement in the Art of Photography (under 30yrs)

Awarded to a photographer under the age of 30 (at the time of nomination) in recognition of a notable personal achievement in the art of photography or moving image.

RPS Award for Achievement in the Art of Moving Image

Awarded in recognition of sustained excellence or a notable achievement in the art of cinematography.



[Clarification: This includes creative vision, composition, lighting, and visual storytelling techniques that define cinematic artistry. The award acknowledges cinematographers (Directors of Photography) who have demonstrated artistic mastery in shaping the aesthetic and emotional impact of the moving image.]

RPS Award for Editorial or Documentary Photography

Awarded in recognition of sustained excellence or a notable achievement in editorial or documentary photography or moving image.

RPS Award for Photojournalism

Awarded in recognition of sustained excellence or a notable achievement in photojournalism whether in photography or moving image.

RPS Award for Fashion, Advertising and Commercial Photography

Awarded in recognition of sustained excellence or a notable achievement in photography or moving image.

Pillar 2: The Science of Photography and Moving Image

The RPS Progress Medal and RPS Honorary Fellowship

Awarded in recognition of any outstanding invention, research, publication or other contribution which has resulted in an important advance in the scientific or technological development of photography or moving image.

RPS Honorary Fellowship

Awarded in recognition of a significant personal achievement in the science of photography or moving image.

RPS Award for Imaging Science

Awarded in recognition of sustained excellence or a notable contribution to the advancement and/or application of imaging science

RPS Award for Scientific Imaging

Awarded in recognition of sustained excellence or a notable achievement in the promotion of public knowledge and understanding of scientific imaging, or in the application of scientific imaging (still or moving image) to creative practice.

RPS Award for Environmental Responsibility

Awarded in recognition of sustained excellence or a notable use of stills photography or moving image that highlights or contributes to demonstrable improvement in public awareness of environmental issues.



RPS Award for Technical Achievement in the Science of Moving Image

Awarded in recognition of sustained excellence or a notable personal achievement in technical invocation in cinematography.

[Clarification: This includes advancements in camera technology, lenses, lighting systems, film formats, digital post-production, animation, visual effects or other technological contributions that enhance the craft and industry of cinematography.]

Pillar 3: The Knowledge and Understanding of Photography and Moving Image

The RPS Eastlake Medal and RPS Honorary Fellowship

Awarded in recognition of an outstanding contribution to the public appreciation, enjoyment or understanding of photography through education, criticism, research, curatorship or publishing.

RPS Honorary Fellowship

Awarded in recognition of a significant personal achievement in the public appreciation, enjoyment or understanding of photography through education, criticism, research, curatorship or publishing.

RPS Award for Photography Education

Awarded in recognition of sustained excellence or a notable achievement in the field of photography education.

RPS Award for Photography with Young People

Awarded in recognition of sustained excellence or a notable achievement in the field of promoting or encouraging photography with young people (under 18).

RPS Award for Photography Curatorship, Criticism or Research

Awarded in recognition of sustained excellence or a notable achievement in the field of photography criticism or research (including but not limited to historical research).

RPS Award for Photography Publishing

Awarded in recognition of sustained excellence or a notable achievement in the field of photography publishing.

RPS Award for Social Impact

Awarded in recognition of sustained excellence or a notable use of stills photography or moving image that highlights or contributes to demonstrable improvement in public awareness of social issues.



Pillar 4: The RPS Member Awards

The RPS President's Medal with Honorary Life Membership

Awarded in recognition of an outstanding contribution to the Society over a sustained period. This is not normally a reward for service on a committee but it does not exclude committee members where an outstanding contribution can be cited.

The RPS Fenton Medal with Honorary Life Membership

The award is made to a member or non-member who has made an excellent or notable contribution to the work of the Society. Usually, no more than four RPS Fenton Medals are awarded each year.

RPS President's Commendation

This is a personal award from the President given on behalf of the RPS in recognition of particularly long and meritorious service by a volunteer. It carries no honorary distinction and is intended to formally acknowledge and record the thanks of the RPS.

Definitions of the scope of the awards

"Art of Photography"

Photography which prioritises artistic expression and creative vision over documentation or commercial purposes. The art of photography often manifests as an ambition to explore abstract concepts, emotions, or aesthetics. It involves the use of photography as a medium for personal expression, conveying ideas, feelings, or narratives through visual imagery.

"Editorial"

Photography which is specifically commissioned (or self-commissioned) and created for publication in an editorial context, including magazines, newspapers, websites, and other forms of media. It is distinct from commercial or advertising photography in that its primary purpose is to accompany and enhance written content and provide a visual interpretation of the written narrative.

"Documentary"

Photography which chronicles and captures real-life events, environments, and people in a candid and unobtrusive manner, presented as a series of photographs or as a larger body of work. It focuses on telling stories, raising awareness, and providing a visual record of historical, social, cultural, or political issues. The work may be produced as a self-originated project, or in response to a third-party commission. In all cases, it is a tool for storytelling and documentation.



“Photojournalism”

Photography as a form of journalism (the practice of gathering and presentation news) that utilises photography as the primary means of storytelling presented as a single image or, occasionally, as a small series of images. It involves capturing and presenting news events, stories, and social issues through compelling and impactful visual images with the goal of informing, educating, and engaging the audience.

“Fashion, Advertising and Commercial”

Photography that serves as a powerful visual tool for businesses, organisations institutions, and individuals to promote their products, services, and brands effectively. It involves a combination of creativity, technical skill, and strategic planning to create compelling images that resonate with target audiences and achieve specific marketing objectives.

Fashion

Photography that focuses on showcasing clothing, accessories, and fashion trends in a visually compelling and aesthetically pleasing manner. It is a sub-genre of commercial photography and is most often presented in fashion magazines, advertisements, catalogues, and online platforms to promote clothing brands, designers, and retailers.

Advertising

Photography that focuses on creating visually compelling images to promote products, services, or brands. It plays a crucial role in advertising and marketing campaigns, serving to capture the attention of potential consumers, convey key messages, and drive sales or brand awareness. It is a sub-genre of commercial photography and is most often presented in magazines, advertisements, catalogues, and online platforms to promote products, services, or brands.

Commercial

Photography that encompasses various types of photography used for commercial purposes, such as advertising, marketing, promotion, and sales. It involves creating images with the primary goal of selling products, services, or ideas to consumers or clients. Sub-genres of ‘commercial’ photography include fashion, advertising, corporate, architectural, food photography.

“Imaging Science”

The study, development, and application of technologies used to capture, process, analyse, and interpret images. These images may be generated through techniques such as photography, radiography, microscopy, medical imaging (such as MRI, CT scans, ultrasound), remote sensing (including satellite imagery and aerial photography), and computer vision.

“Scientific Imaging”



The use of imaging techniques, technologies, and processes to capture, record and propagate visual representations of observable and measurable aspects of the natural world that are studied and analysed within the framework of scientific inquiry. Scientific imaging plays an important role in a wide range of scientific disciplines, including biology, medicine, astronomy, physics, chemistry, geology, and environmental science.

“Environmental Responsibility”

The application and use of photography to leverage the visual power of images to inform, alert, inspire, and empower individuals and communities to take meaningful action towards protecting and preserving the planet for the present and future generations. Key elements of this ambition may include:

- Documenting environmental issues, events, technologies, processes
- Creating emotional impact through the use of photography
- Promoting awareness of environmental issues
- Advocating for change
- Celebrating nature and conservation successes
- Fostering a connection with nature
- Encouraging diverse representation for environmental issues

“Cinematography”

The art and technique of capturing moving images on film or digital media involving the selection and manipulation of visual elements such as camera angles, framing, lighting, composition, colour, focus, and movement to create a desired aesthetic and narrative effect. Cinematography is a key component of filmmaking and visual storytelling, shaping the mood, tone, and emotional impact of a film, television production, or other visual time-based media. The person responsible for these creative and technical decisions is the Cinematographer or Director of Photography (DOP), who works closely with the director to achieve the intended visual style.

“Science of the Moving Image”

Any technology or component to that technology that enables the creation, transmission, and presentation of moving images across various forms of visual media, shaping the way we perceive, consume, and interact with visual storytelling. These can include technology associated with:

- Cameras and lenses (specifically for moving-image applications)
- Film and video materials and formats (analogue or digital)
- Editing and post-production
- Project, display, and broadcast apparatus
- Transmission, distribution, and archive processes
- Audio, animation, and visual effects processes and apparatus

“Social Impact”



The application and use of photography to leverage the power of visual storytelling to highlight social injustice, amplify marginalised voices, advocate for systemic change, and inspire collective action towards building a more just, equitable, and compassionate society. Key elements of this ambition may include:

- Documenting social issues
- Empowering marginalised voices
- Advocating for change
- Celebrating resilience and activism
- Educating and engaging the public in matters of social injustice
- Collaboration with social change organisations

“Photography Education”

The practices involved in the teaching and learning of the principles, techniques, and skills involved in the practice, curation, or appreciation of photography, moving image or imaging science or in the design and production of resources to facilitate this practice.

“Photography with Young People”

The practice of engaging children and young people (below 30 years of age) in activities and projects concerning or involving photography, moving image or imaging science.

“Curatorship, Criticism, Research”

This refers to the practices and processes of the preservation, conservation, scholarly examination, interpretation, and presentation of works of photography or the moving image for the purpose of enriching our understanding of artistic expression and its impact on society.

Curatorship

The selection, organisation, and presentation of photographs or works of moving image in exhibitions or collections. Curators research and interpret artworks, develop thematic or conceptual frameworks for exhibitions, and make decisions regarding the display and contextualisation of individual photographs, collections of photographs, or bodies of photographic work, from one or more photographers, to convey specific narratives or themes.

Criticism

Criticism involves the evaluation, analysis, and interpretation of photographs and examples of moving image. Art critics examine and assess the aesthetic, conceptual, and cultural significance of these works, offering insights into their artistic merit, historical, and sociopolitical context. Criticism can take various forms, including written reviews, essays, lectures, and discussions. It plays an important role in shaping discourse around art.



Research

The scholarly investigation and study of photographers, photographs, photography, filmmakers, cinematic films, or other aspect of moving image. Researchers explore aspects of photographic and moving image history, theory, and practice to expand knowledge and understanding of photography and moving image, and its broader cultural, social, and historical significance.

“Publishing”

Any aspect of the process of producing and distributing written, visual, or audiovisual content for public consumption, contributing to knowledge sharing, cultural enrichment, entertainment, and education in the field of photography, moving image or imaging science organisations.

Definitions of qualifiers of the awards

“Outstanding contribution”

[Medal with RPS Honorary Fellowship (or Honorary Life Membership for Pillar four)]

An "outstanding contribution in photography and moving image" refers to a substantial and noteworthy achievement, innovation, or accomplishment that has made a clear and recognisable impact in the field of photography or moving image. It may include the creation of new techniques or approaches, the development of new technologies or equipment, the production of groundbreaking works or series, or the influence on the industry or the culture at large. Nomination for an award for an "outstanding contribution in photography and moving image" is a testament to an artist's creativity, skill, and dedication, and their ability to push the boundaries of their art form and inspire others in the field; this may extend to the promotion of the art or science of photography or moving image, or considerable personal commitment in support of others in these fields.

“Significant Personal Achievement”

[RPS Honorary Fellowship]

A "significant personal achievement in photography and moving image" refers to an accomplishment or milestone that has a significant impact on an individual photographer or filmmaker's career, creative output, or personal development. This might include (but may not be limited to) one or more of the following achievements:

- Completing one or more projects or bodies of work that are recognised for their artistic or technical excellence.



- Winning one or more major awards or sustained recognition from prestigious institutions or organisations in the field.
- Having work selected for inclusion in a major exhibition or collection.
- Developing a unique or innovative style or technique that is recognised and admired by peers and critics.
- Overcoming significant personal or professional obstacles to achieve success or complete a project.

Nomination for an award for a "significant personal achievement in photography or moving image" may be a 'punctuation point' on an individual's journey to greater success and recognition; the award may help to establish a photographer or filmmaker's reputation and credibility in their field. It should be awarded in recognition of their skill, creativity, and dedication to their craft, and can serve as a source of inspiration for others who aspire to achieve similar success.

“Sustained excellence or notable achievement”

[Medal or other Award, without Honorary Fellowship (Pillars 1,2,3); or Medal with Honorary Life Membership (Pillar 4)]

A “sustained excellence or notable achievement in photography and moving image” refers to an extended period of consistently high-level performance, creativity, and contribution to the field of photography or moving image. This might include (but may not be limited to) one or more of the following achievements:

- Consistently producing work that is recognised for its artistic or technical excellence over an extended period of time.
- Making important contributions to the photography or moving image sectors through teaching, mentoring, or other forms of professional leadership.
- Influencing the direction, promotion or consumption of work in these sectors through the development of new techniques, technologies, or ideas.
- Consistently receiving recognition, awards and honours for their work over an extended period of time.
- Continually innovating and pushing the boundaries of the art forms of photography and moving image.

A sustained excellence or notable achievement in photography and moving image requires personal skill, commitment and talent, delivered with a high level of theoretical or practical ability to the craft.

Nomination for an award for a “sustained excellence or notable achievement in photography and moving image” is a reflection of an artist's long-term contributions and impact in the sector and their work will serve as an inspiration for future generations of photographers and filmmakers.

