Artist Guide for 2027

Welcome to the Australian Wearable Art Festival

Congratulations on taking the first step to taking the art off the wall, the pedestal or the page and placing it on the human body. Whether you are an experienced artist, designer or maker, or someone who has an idea you simply can't stop thinking about, we invite you to be curious, take risks and create something that is uniquely yours.

AWAF provides a supportive creative platform for artists and designers with the Festival bringing together a wonderful community that celebrates imagination, making, experimentation and creative possibilities.

In 2027 AWAF is shifting to be an open wearable art competition. There are no entry categories and no prescribed theme. Instead, we are asking artists to enter their strongest work and giving you the freedom to follow your own creative direction. Finalists will be selected from a wide range of applications across Australia and internationally. Once finalists are announced they will then be involved in an in-person judging process at the event where they will be considered for one of eight AWAF Awards. There is also an additional People's Choice Award as voted by the audience.

So, what do we mean by wearable art?

At its simplest, wearable art is an original artwork created to be worn, with the human body becoming its moving canvas. It can draw from sculpture, textiles, technology, architecture, craft, fashion, performance or any other creative discipline. It might be delicate or monumental, intricate or raw, familiar or completely unexpected. There is no single silhouette, material, scale or aesthetic that defines wearable art.

What matters is the artistic idea and how you bring it to life. Fashion, costume, textile and garment-making techniques can all be part of the process, but they are not the destination. At AWAF, we are interested in what happens when imagination, materials, skill and the human body come together to create something that exists as a work of art.

Your work doesn't need to fit a mould. In fact, we'd rather it didn't.

Start with an idea. Be curious about where it takes you. Experiment with materials, form, structure, movement and scale. Learn what you need to learn. Make mistakes. Solve problems. Push the idea further. And then bring it to the runway.

This is your opportunity to create without limits.

2027 Key Dates and Milestones

Dates will be confirmed before publication. Finalists will also receive individual call times and operational deadlines.

MILESTONE	DATES
AWAF 2027 Artist Entries open	1 October 2026
AWAF 2027 Artist Entries close	31 January 2027
Finalist selection announced	19 February 2027
Accept finalist place	28 February 2027
Award eligibility and individual consents	14 March 2027
Model requirements submitted	18 April 2027
H&MU mood boards	1 May 2027
Music selection	9 May 2027
Progress review	16 May 2027
Second progress review	20 June 2027
Screen images and information	27 June 2027
Program and artist information and images	4 July 2027
Models confirmed	4 July 2027
Final or near-final artwork	18 July 2027
Freight and arrival confirmed	25 July 2027
Final participation, attendance and safety confirmation	25 July 2027
Festival period begins - National Student Showcase will be delivered as part of program	Thursday 12 August 2027
Artwork judging, individual model rehearsals, hair and makeup, photography and Full Event Rehearsal	Friday 13 August 2027
Matinee and Gala show delivered, awards announcement, photography and bump out	Saturday 14 August 2027

The Competition Journey

STAGE	WHAT HAPPENS
Entry	One application per artwork brings together artist or team details, concept or current work, supporting material, entry declarations and payment.
Round One selection	A confidential Selection Panel reviews eligible entries and selects the finalist field.
Finalist development	Finalists develop or complete the accepted artwork, confirm any award-specific eligibility and provide staged practical information and individual consents to AWAF.
Friday judging and preparation	Completed works arrive for close-up judging, individual rehearsal, hair and makeup where scheduled, photography and dress rehearsal.
Saturday Matinee	The first public show allows the works to be experienced on the body and in motion.
Saturday Gala	The second public show takes place and the 2027 awards are announced and presented.

1. Prepare and Submit Your Entry

Each artwork has its own online application and AUD $50 entry fee. Before beginning, artists should have the following ready:

1. primary artist and Design Team details, if applicable;
2. artist or team biography;
3. up to five examples of previous creative work;
4. artwork title and current stage of development;
5. concept statement;
6. materials and making approach;
7. an annotated visual plan or supporting material, such as sketches, collage, mood-board, photographs, material samples, a body outline, digital imagery, a small model or another method;
8. required entry declarations and payment details.

Artists do not need formal or academic language and are not expected to be skilled at drawing. The entry should communicate the proposed artwork clearly using the methods that best suit the artist.

2. Round One Selection

Round One chooses the finalist field; it is not the final judging of completed artworks. Entries must first fall within AWAF's definition of wearable art. The Selection Panel then considers the entry as a whole, including:

1. strength and clarity of the artistic idea;
2. originality and distinctiveness;
3. potential to resolve convincingly as wearable art on the body and in motion;
4. how the proposed form, materials and making approach support the idea;
5. feasibility and safe realisation for AWAF; and
6. the artist or team's previous work where useful to understand creative capacity.

DIFFERENT STAGES ARE WELCOME. A completed artwork is not automatically stronger than a concept or work in progress. Each entry is assessed in the context of what has been submitted.

All entrants are notified of the outcome. Selected artists must accept their finalist place by the published deadline.

3. Finalist Development

Becoming a finalist begins the next phase. Artists complete or refine the selected work while AWAF progressively gathers the information needed to present it safely, professionally and as intended.

MILESTONE	WHAT THE ARTIST DOES	WHAT AWAF DOES
Accept finalist place	Confirm acceptance and primary contact details.	AWAF sends the finalist information and next steps.
Award eligibility and individual consents	Provide any requested material-source or award-eligibility information. Each named artist personally completes the finalist Photograph & Film Consent.	AWAF confirms specialist-award eligibility and records each artist's consent separately.
Model selection	Provide sizing, fitting, dressing and movement requirements. Ask AWAF for model-selection support or, if sourcing a model, ensure the model completes the AWAF model form supplied on request.	AWAF can support selection from its model and performer database. Any artist-sourced model is subject to AWAF confirmation at its discretion.
H&MU mood-boards	Provide the requested hair and makeup mood-board, headpiece information and any practical styling requirements.	AWAF coordinates the approved information with the Festival hair and makeup team.
Music selection	Select and supply music in the requested format, or upload another music file for AWAF to convert where permitted.	AWAF reviews music for timing, technical, legal, safety and production requirements.
Progress review	Provide progress images and an update on construction, materials, scale and technical elements.	AWAF checks progress and identifies safety or production issues early.
Screen images and information	Provide the requested images and information for the Festival screens in the published format.	AWAF reviews and prepares the approved screen content for production.
Second progress review	Provide updated progress images and respond to any construction, safety or production matters previously identified.	AWAF reviews development and works with the artist to resolve any remaining concerns.
Program and artist information and images	Confirm the final artwork title, program copy, artist biography, credits, pronunciation and requested artist or artwork images.	AWAF locks approved information and images for the program, website and production.
Final or near-final artwork	Provide current images, dimensions, weight, dressing, handling and any other relevant technical information.	AWAF plans judging, backstage movement, safety and handling.
Freight and arrival	Confirm how the artwork will arrive and be collected. If sending it ahead or not attending, provide dimensions, packing, insurance, handling and any other relevant information and follow AWAF's delivery instructions.	AWAF provides the delivery address and arrival information when required and coordinates receipt, storage and bump in or bump out.
Participation and safety	Advise support needs and provide any further participation or safety information requested.	AWAF makes reasonable arrangements and resolves remaining issues.

4. Friday: Artwork Judging and Preparation

Friday gives each completed artwork dedicated close-up judging time before the public runway presentation. It is also the principal preparation day.

1. Artwork arrival, check-in and safety review.
2. Individual close-up judging of the completed wearable artwork.
3. Individual rehearsal with the Movement Director.
4. Hair and makeup preparation where scheduled.
5. Official AWAF studio photography for scheduled artworks.
6. Full Company Dress Rehearsal.

The artwork is judged, not the confidence or charisma of the model. Model or performance qualities are considered only where a published award specifically concerns live presentation or performance.

5. Saturday: Matinee, Gala and Awards

The Matinee is the first public presentation of the complete finalist field. It allows the works to be experienced worn, moving through space and from the audience perspective.

The Gala is the second public show and the point at which the competition results are announced and presented. People's Choice is decided separately by the audience under the published voting process.

After the final show, artworks move into the published bump-out, collection or freight process.

How Awards Work

1. Artists enter the competition, not an award category.
2. Every finalist work is automatically considered across the awards for which it meets the published eligibility requirements.
3. No separate award-specific application is required unless AWAF expressly states otherwise.
4. Each award recognises a distinct form of excellence and is assessed according to its own published purpose and criteria.
5. The strongest work for an award is chosen from the completed finalist field; award decisions are not an arithmetic tally of other awards.
6. Each finalist work may receive only one judged artwork award, including the Supreme Award.
7. People's Choice is selected separately by the audience and may be awarded to a work that has also received a judged artwork award.

Artists may review the full award descriptions here: AWAF 2027 AWARDS

Accessibility and Support

Artists may request reasonable adjustments or practical support to complete an entry or participate if selected. A diagnosis or medical history is not required. Accessibility information does not form part of Selection Panel or judging material and should be shared only with the AWAF team members who need it to arrange support.

BEFORE YOU ENTER Read the AWAF 2027 Terms, Conditions & Entry Requirements (including eligibility), Awards information and Code of Conduct. Each artwork needs its own entry form and AUD $50 payment.