

2025 Judges Comment Cards

Ref: 1 - Caroline Keevil

Fellow

Category: Musical Calligraphy - The Rhythm of the Pen

Tools and Materials

Acrylic paints, gold powders, gold transfer leaf on Fabriano Artistico, box mounted

Judges' comments:

A very apt interpretation of Durufle's *Sanctus* in ecclesiastical purple and gold. The texture of the choir and the symphonic orchestra come alive in the layered writing. The music dynamics are well rendered by the variation in pen size, culminating in the fortissimo of the Excelsis. The music flows to our eyes!

Ref: 2 - Jane Connolly

More Experienced

Category: The Art of Celtic Calligraphy

Tools and Materials

Watercolour and coloured pencil on watercolour paper

Judges' comments:

A delicate piece where the uncials are indeed like pale blue beads while the strong red Celtic knots give us a feel of the nostalgic memory described in the text. Maybe a little red detail in the text could have tied it nicely to the knotwork.

Ref: 3 - Sunita Auger

Advanced

Category: Let The Light Pour In by Lemn Sissay OBE FRSL

Tools and Materials

Walnut ink on watercolour wash

Judges' comments:

A great example on how to use shades of grey to create a subdued yet exciting background. While the lettering conveys a sense of tranquility the alternating weights give a sense of movement, waves crashing, time passing. And the tiny golden dots between the words carry the promise of a new day.



Ref: 4 - Anastasiia Bezpalova

More Experienced / Advanced

Category: Let The Light Pour In by Lemn Sissay OBE FRSL

Tools and Materials

Daer Rowney watercolour paper 300 g/m2, Black Kuretake ink, Hunt 22b nib, White Nights watercolour paints, Silver Chrome watercolour paint by MABWatercolours (Etsy)

Judges' comments:

Very skillful Copperplate with a few interesting quirks. The cartouche on the left complements the lettering well. Perhaps a single border would have been sufficient to enclose the lettering. This beautiful Copperplate deserves to be the focus of our attention. Well done!

Ref: 5 - Steve Eades

More Experienced

Category: The Art of Celtic Calligraphy

Tools and Materials

Technical pens, watercolour and gouache

Judges' comments:

What an undertaking! Oddly, the simplest element, the triquetra somewhat disrupts the symmetry of the piece. The strong black background ties directly to the lettering and creates just the right tension between the carpet page and the border that frames it. Amazing effort.

Ref: 6 - Mary Noble

Fellow

Category: Colour of the Year 2025 – 'Future Dusk'

Tools and Materials

Watercolour & acrylics wash, text gouache & Bleed roof White with Brause nibs

Judges' comments:

A taoist saying presented to us appropriately using a yin & yang effect of background and lettering. The big white capitals are an effective way to draw our attention to those four short words and really make us ponder the deep truth that lies within them.



Ref: 7 – Andrea O'Sullivan

Beginner

Category: Let The Light Pour In by Lemn Sissay OBE FRSL

Tools and Materials

Ink, watercolour

Judges' comments:

A lovely piece, with well-formed Uncials. An original design with good spacing and a well-positioned credit. The stylised sunrays/split egg yolks add a splash of colour. Perhaps a square mount would have evened up the white space around the design.

Ref: 8 - Julia Wilkin

Beginner

Category: Let The Light Pour In by Lemn Sissay OBE FRSL

Tools and Materials

Bockingford HP paper, Gillott 404 nib, Daler Rowney FW ink, watercolour, fineliner

<u>Judges' comments:</u> The contrast between the movement of sea and the dry land is rendered by the wavy lettering and the anchor. While both lettering and illustration are well executed and attractive the anchor feels a little strong alongside the lettering. However, the inner mount helps to unify the piece.

Ref: 9 – Ceri Smart

More Experienced

Category: The Art of Celtic Calligraphy

Tools and Materials

Watercolour pencils and Coliro gold

Judges' comments:

A fairly complex knotwork frames the Welsh saying: "A girl's teeth wear out sooner than her tongue". The white space could have been reduced by adding a translation of the saying in small capitals or by moving away from a standard A4 paper. This would have given the lovely Uncials a little more focus.



Ref: 10 - William Morris

Advanced

Category: The Art of Celtic Calligraphy

Tools and Materials

Ink on card

Judges' comments:

What a fun design combining a zoomorphic capital, Celtic knotwork and Uncial lettering. It doesn't get any more "Celtic" than this! The white space could be reduced in order to prevent the perception of the illustration floating in an empty space. Maybe a whole alphabet is in the works?

Ref: 11 – Gwyneth Hibbett

Advanced

Category: Let The Light Pour In by Lemn Sissay OBE FRSL

Tools and Materials

Mixed Media - acrylic inks, coloured pencils, gouache and ink

Judges' comments:

An explosion of excitement and positive energy at the prospect of a new day in the style of a psychedelic 60s poster! The imagery could easily be seen as too literal but happily It works. Even the detail of the green/blue sky and foliage framing the piece adds to the fun of the artwork!

Ref: 12 - Tessie Cooling

More Experienced

Category: Colour of the Year 2025 – 'Future Dusk'

Tools and Materials

Cotton rag paper, acrylic inks, watercolour paints, 23 carat red gold transfer leaf on Miniatum, 23 carat shell gold

Judges' comments:

A very evocative and atmospheric piece with both gilding and illustration executed with skill. The Miniatum on the cotton rag paper gives the moon a wonderful texture, The lettering beautifully supports the illustration in this well-balanced piece.



Ref: 13 - David Simons

More Experienced

Category: Musical Calligraphy

Tools and Materials

Gouache and Dr Martin's Bleed Proof White using Brause 66EF nib on Black Canson Mi Teinte

Judges' comments:

A stunning piece and a lesson in how to use negative space to full effect. With its numerous lines the illustration could feel heavy, instead it balances beautifully on and with the lettering below. Using just three basic elements - pointed nib, gouache, black paper - the result is mesmerising.

Ref: 14 - Alma Swan

More Experienced

Category: Colour of the Year 2025 – 'Future Dusk'

Tools and Materials

Gouache and watercolour, Brause nib and brushes

Judges' comments:

Although not featuring the colour Future Dusk, the resulting inspiration brings the most wonderful colour palette to life. The layout is more complex than it seems and must have taken some time to work out, and despite the many design elements this piece feels calming. Beautiful.

Ref: 15 - Jan Sambell

Fellow

Category: Let The Light Pour In by Lemn Sissay OBE FRSL

Tools and Materials

Acrylic paints for background, gouache for words and decoration, rubber stamp

Judges' comments:

Every single design element of this piece, down to the tiny golden dots and the barely visible rubber-stamped fish, skillfully evokes the mysteriousness described in the poem. The artist's signature lettering, compact and symmetrical, could even stand on its own. A wonderful piece!



Ref: 16 - David Treagust

Advanced

Category: The Art of Celtic Calligraphy

Tools and Materials

Finetec pearl colours, Calli Jet Black

Judges' comments:

A fun and intriguing rendition of the London skyline, recognizable even without captions, adorns this page of the imaginary Celtic Times newspaper. The Uncial writing could benefit from some attention to letter-spacing, but the overall impression is of a greatly entertaining and amusing project!

Ref: 17 - Liz Barrow

Advanced

Category: Colour of the Year 2025 - 'Future Dusk'

Tools and Materials

Fabriano Artistico HP paper, FW acrylic inks, gouache, Speedball nib, gold leaf on Miniatum ink, Trocol bronze powder

Judges' comments:

It's refreshing to see just calligraphy at work, no elaborate illustration, just beautiful, creative lettering. Its unadorned writing, where even the credit plays its part, alluding to the moon, and tiny dots skillfully placed give us just a hint of the sky. The double mount creates the perfect finish to this stunning piece.

Ref: 18 – Barbara Alldred

Fellow

Category: Let The Light Pour In by Lemn Sissay OBE FRSL

Tools and Materials

Arches watercolour paper, Brause nibs, ruling pen, gouache and watercolour

Judges' comments:

The layout is very pleasing, with a good contrast and balance between the weight of the two scripts. The free script is confident and flowing and conveys the words well, with the rolling movement and the yellow oval counters of the letters suggesting eggs. The lower line of script is suitably heavier, plainer and rounded.



Ref: 19 - Elaine Gillingham

Advanced

Category: Colour of the Year 2025 – 'Future Dusk'

Tools and Materials

Lettering gouache wash, pointed brush painted negative spaces on watercolour paper; calligraphy with edged pen on mountboard

Judges' comments:

There is a dramatic contrast between the graphic geometry of the panel of caps and the delicacy of the Italic script below. The two work successfully together and are well-placed within the generous white space. Both dusk and illegibility are subtly conveyed in the shading of the words. Deceptively simple and confidently designed and executed.

Ref: 20 - Annie Jackson

More Experienced

Category: Colour of the Year 2025 - 'Future Dusk'

Tools and Materials

Gouache and chalk pastels

Judges' comments:

The words are elegantly placed as they flow down the page conveying nightfall. 'Half-light' and 'twilight' are particularly well spaced and written - it is an exposing exercise to write capitals so consistently. The contrast between the two weights works well. A little more space on either side where the words come close to the mount would enhance the layout.

Ref: 21 - Charlie Adams

Beginner

Category: Let The Light Pour In by Lemn Sissay OBE FRSL

Tools and Materials

Gouache lettering on a watercolour background with Finetec watercolour highlights

Judges' comments:

This is a highly original approach to the poem. The writing around the circle, which is not an easy task, has been successfully achieved. The formality of the beautifully written Copperplate contrasts well with the chunkier Uncials and the rougher texture of the watercolour background. The constellation diagrams inside the circle give another dimension of depth and illustration to the piece although they might have been a little stronger.



Ref: 22 - Meg Chapman

More Experienced

Category: Let The Light Pour In by Lemn Sissay OBE FRSL

Tools and Materials

Watercolour, graphite pencil

Judges' comments:

The contrast of colours and shapes is very pleasing, with the warmth of the sunny yellow against the cool blue of dusk. The oval/elliptical letters pick up on the egg-yolk theme, countered by the rectangular panels. The informality of their placing gives the piece a childlike quality. Finally, the placing of the elements within the space is very satisfying, with a horizontal line of the credit providing a note of visual interest.

Ref: 23 - Francesca Romana Luzzi

More Experienced

Category: Let The Light Pour In by Lemn Sissay OBE FRSL

Tools and Materials

Mitchell nib (Round Hand, Left Hand), handmade watercolours* on Fabriano Artistico Traditional White paper.

*Produced by Curro Gutiérrez (Scriptorium Yayyan, Sarrant - France)

Judges' comments:

The letters are elegant and beautifully written, no mean feat. The way the decorative characters have been introduced into the formal Roman script works well. It takes a little effort to work out some of the words, but this allows the eye to linger and appreciate the subtle spacing and fine ligatures. The two colours also look good together.

Ref: 24 – Mary Fraser

More Experienced

Category: Let The Light Pour In by Lemn Sissay OBE FRSL

Tools and Materials

Gouache, watercolour, acrylic, threads, papers, embossing tools

Judges' comments:

This is a highly original and personal approach to the text. The use of collage and contrasting textures to convey sky, sea and sand work well and the colours are lovely. The figures cut out from the A to Z are particularly interesting and raise all sorts of questions about home, travel and relationships. The placing of the arch within the mount could perhaps have been a little higher.



Ref: 25 - Tetiana Hneniuk

Advanced

Category: Colour of the Year 2025 - 'Future Dusk'

Tools and Materials

Watercolour and ink

Judges' comments:

This is an evocative and elegant piece, perfectly conveying a rainy day in the city using the appropriate 'Future Dusk' colour. The placing of the text and illustrations is very pleasing and assured, contrasting the delicacy of the script with the soft blurriness of the watercolour. The white spaces play an important part within the design. Some small adjustments in the placing of the ascenders and descenders would enhance the clarity of the words.

Ref: 26 - Oona Tully

More Experienced

Category: The Art of Celtic Calligraphy

Tools and Materials

Fabriano Artistico 300gsm paper, mounting board, gouache, homemade gesso, 24ct gold leaf, Kolner Miniatum ink

Judges' comments:

A lovely piece using inspiration from Celtic scripts and decoration in an original way. The Uncials are well-written and make a bold statement at the centre of the piece, contrasting with the smaller script and repeated circles. There is a fair amount of white space within the design which would be balanced by having slightly wider margins, or perhaps a gold bubble might have been introduced lower down.

Ref: 27 - Ingrid Hill

More Experienced

Category: Colour of the Year 2025 - 'Future Dusk'

Tools and Materials

Gouache and gold metallic powder

Judges' comments:

There is an intriguing combination of different techniques and textures in this piece, from the simple geometry of the embossed patterns to the natural freedom of the bird, then the densely knitted texture of the script. The gilded panel is lovely but perhaps it would have been sufficient to leave the words below in a simple and more legible script.



Ref: 28 - Sue Hodgkinson

More Experienced

Category: Let The Light Pour In by Lemn Sissay OBE FRSL

Tools and Materials

Coloured fibrous papers, cut letters, coloured pencil

Judges' comments:

This successfully conveys the sense of the words by combining a landscape with a more literal meal of eggs on toast! The collaged letters interlock nicely together and contrast with the lighter weight of the freely written letters below. A suggestion might be to introduce some of the pen lettering into the area above, written in white, for example in the words 'and a' and 'on a'.

Ref: 29 - Kate Gravestock

Advanced

Category: Colour of the Year 2025 - 'Future Dusk'

Tools and Materials

Emulsion paint on cartridge paper, soft pastels, Bleed Proof White ink and metal nibs

Judges' comments:

The night sky and the milky way are beautifully suggested in the background of this piece. The capitals are well-placed and executed with an understated economy, which is deceptively simple to achieve. The little illustrations bring together the white of the letters with the mistiness of the background. The framing in 'Future Dusk' also enhances the piece.

Ref: 30 - Celia Lister

Fellow

Category: Colour of the Year 2025 - 'Future Dusk'

Tools and Materials

Brush and nib, gouache, watercolour, and Plaka on Arches Velin noir

Judges' comments:

This piece has real drama and there are some wonderful contrasts in scale and texture between the roller-ed letters, the neon strips and the more freely written script. The colours are also effective although not quite as purple as 'Future Dusk'. The addition of an owl provides another element of contrast; perhaps some of his colouring might have been picked up elsewhere.



Ref: 31 - Lesley Williams

More Experienced

Category: The Art of Celtic Calligraphy

Tools and Materials

Speedball nibs C3 & 5, Gouache, fineliner pens

Judges' comments:

This is a striking rendering of the poem with an intricately designed and carefully executed Celtic knot. It is quite a feat to write the Uncials around all those tight curves. A little more emphasis on the first letter 'l' would help to lead the eye into the poem. There are good-sized margins around the piece; a mount in the same green as the knot would enhance the effect.

Ref: 32 - Ginny Simpson

More Experienced

Category: Let The Light Pour In by Lemn Sissay OBE FRSL

Tools and Materials

Gouache and acrylic ink; Speedball nib

Judges' comments:

The dark blue script sits well against the lighter blue of the paper. The patches of silver add visual interest. The quirky letters appropriately reflect the words but try to keep a consistency between related forms throughout the alphabet.

Ref: 33 - Vanessa Peters

Beginner

Category: The Art of Celtic Calligraphy

Tools and Materials

Schminke watercolour on Arches HP

Judges' comments:

This piece has a lovely fairy-tale, Art Nouveau quality. It has been intricately designed and composed and beautifully executed in watercolour. A few small adjustments with the placing of the letters would help with legibility but it is enjoyable to decipher the words entangled in the branches and discover the little birds, especially the one tugging at the branch with its beak.



Ref: 34 - Andrew Eastwood

Beginner

Category: The Art of Celtic Calligraphy

Tools and Materials

Rives 130g paper, gold leaf knotwork (on Ormoline), Swiss color Aquarelle pencils (Caran D'Ache)

Judges' comments:

This is a very accomplished and carefully designed piece of work. The Uncials are well written and fitted snugly inside the space of the harp. Don't be afraid of white spaces where they occur naturally, they allow the letters to breathe and help with reading the words. There is potentially a disparity between the realistic treatment of the harp regarding shading and perspective, and the flat, abstract pattern formed by the words. Here the results are successful.

Ref: 35 - Cathy Jenkins

Beginner

Category:

Tools and Materials

Watercolour and gouache, steel nibs

Judges' comments:

The swirling background is beautifully executed and aptly demonstrates the dark blue ocean roll. The placement of the darker wavy lettering is well considered and sits well on the background. Writing on curved lines is not easy and the Foundational hand is competently written. A most attractive piece.

Ref: 36 - Mel Sharp

Beginner

Category: Let The Light Pour In by Lemn Sissay OBE FRSL

Tools and Materials

Watercolour on Arches 300gsm CP paper

Judges' comments:

This is an evocative and impressively designed background. The suggestion of tree branches in the sunlight of daybreak is particularly apt. Wavy lines of Foundational are well written. Perhaps "day breaks" could have been incorporated in the wavy lines although it is clearly intended as a title here.



Ref: 37 - Kin Pong So

Beginner

Category: Let The Light Pour In by Lemn Sissay OBE FRSL

Tools and Materials

300gsm watercolour paper

Judges' comments:

The background painting is dramatic and catches the eye, so drawing in the viewer. The heading has been separated from the poem by the painting of the dawn light; perhaps the heading could have been emphasized by writing it in a different size and weight from the short text beneath.

Ref: 38 - Simon Daniel

Advanced

Category: Musical Calligraphy

Tools and Materials

Mitchell nibs 4 and 6, gold gouache, watercolour, Walker's Copperplate Ink on Arches HP paper

Judges' comments:

This is a delicately balanced piece combining lettering and image. Beautiful lettering with well matched weights and sizes and an appropriately placed viol to lead the eye in. It would happily grace the wall of any music room. Simply delightful.

Ref: 39 - Antony Welch

More Experienced

Category: Colour of the Year 2025 - 'Future Dusk'

Tools and Materials

Gouache wash, gouache lettering, pastel

Judges' comments:

The gently variegated background wash works appropriately with the text and the lettering is well placed on the page. The lines of lettering are well spaced with the delicately written credit being nicely positioned too. Perhaps next time consideration could be given to increasing the side margins to compliment the space within.

Ref: 40 - Linda Lewis

Fellow

Category: The Art of Celtic Calligraphy

Tools and Materials

Watercolour and gouache on 300gsm paper

Judges' comments:

This is a stunningly coloured Celtic Eagle incorporating Celtic knots, red dots, spirals and repeat patterning so evocative of all things Celtic. He is a real character, and this is a delightful image, beautifully drawn and painted.



Ref: 41 - Lena Krohn

More Experienced

Category: Colour of the Year 2025 - 'Future Dusk'

Tools and Materials

Gouache and gold on gesso on paper

Judges' comments:

A neat and clear image of a deceptively simple presentation with beautifully applied gold on a dark ground. The gesso gilding is particularly impressive. The size and positioning of the two boxes sit well together. The dark blue edging of the outer frame is a good choice and is well matched by the two inside boxes. A small, delightful piece.

Ref: 42 - Carole Thomann

Advanced

Category: Let The Light Pour In by Lemn Sissay OBE FRSL

Tools and Materials

Acrylic ink and Dr Martin's Bleed Proof White

Judges' comments:

What a wonderfully evocative background which has been carefully thought through from the dawn at the top to the darkness at the base. It acts as an appropriate ground for the lettering which is skillfully drawn and well positioned within the background. The small credit on the darkest blue is a feat in itself. A lovely piece.

Ref: 43 - Elizabeth Bostock

More Experienced

Category: The Art of Celtic Calligraphy

Tools and Materials

Daler Rowney Fine grain Heavyweight watercolour, Daler Rowney inks, Caran d'Ache pencils, Pentel gold ink marker

Judges' comments:

This complex image is very well resolved. The personally inspired Uncial letters fit well within the given space. Celtic knots in the four corners are well placed to turn the circle into a square and the blue background here is delicately applied. There is much to admire in this piece.

Ref: 44 - Alison Millin

More Experienced

Category: Colour of the Year 2025 – 'Future Dusk'

Tools and Materials

Watercolour, pencil, compass and ruler, steel nib on Arches Aquarelle

Judges' comments:

The well drawn geometry sits well within the surrounding lettering and the coloured shapes of the patterning are well placed to complete the design. The Uncial lettering around the outside is well written. Perhaps consideration could be given to displaying the piece on the diagonal with the initials at the bottom instead of as a square.



Ref: 45 - Debra Bryan

Beginner

Category: Colour of the Year 2025 – 'Future Dusk'

Tools and Materials

Gouache and watercolour

Judges' comments:

An attractively graduated wash forms the background to this piece with the well-placed ethereal moon at top left to guide the eye into the text. The centred design is well positioned on the page with nicely spaced lines of lettering. More space might have been allowed between the text block and the credit. A good start to working with Italic.

Ref: 46 - Lesley Jenkinson

More Experienced

Category: Colour of the Year 2025 - 'Future Dusk'

Tools and Materials

Gouache, Pastel, Finetec Coliro metallic watercolour, Canson Mi-Teintes

Judges' comments:

Simple is often best and this is a piece of well written Foundational with a delightfully placed small credit. A subtly painted addition to the right of the lettering is most atmospheric; how would it look if this was placed to the left of the text?

Ref: 47 - Mal Williams

More Experienced

Category: Let The Light Pour In by Lemn Sissay OBE FRSL

Tools and Materials

Parchment, acrylic paint, yellow wools, fabrics, gold card, cartridge paper, fineliner - all on mountboard

Judges' comments:

We can see that clearly the creation of this piece has involved a lot of fun. This is a striking image with top marks for originality and the split yoke sun is clearly represented. There are some clear patterned Uncials at the top of the design; perhaps smaller Uncials at the bottom for the remainder of the text would also have worked well.

Ref: 48 – Hilary Overton

More Experienced

Category: Colour of the Year 2025 – 'Future Dusk'

Tools and Materials

Gouache, acrylic inks, Mitchell nibs, pointed pen, stamps

Judges' comments:

An interesting and evocative layered piece with good contrast between the two lettering styles and colours. The layered colours really sing especially between the areas of blues and purples. This is a bright, lively piece which is most attractive.



Ref: 49 - Rita Zaleskaya

Beginner

Category: Let The Light Pour In by Lemn Sissay OBE FRSL

Tools and Materials

Watercolour, acrylic pigment-based ink

Judges' comments:

This is a piece incorporating a clever balance between the view through the window and the lettering on the easel within. The blueish ground of the lettering sits well against the diverse colours in the sunrise. Perhaps there could be a little less space between the lines of writing. However, this is a successful resolution of the many challenges of this layout.

Ref: 50 - Angela Banks

More Experienced

Category: Let The Light Pour In by Lemn Sissay OBE FRSL

Tools and Materials

Sumi ink, gouache, pastels, heavyweight NOT paper, black Frisk paper on mountboard

Judges' comments:

An interestingly shaped piece with contrasted colouring. The cut letter design is particularly successful. The word-play on spell checker is intriguing. A few small adjustments to the placing of the lines of text would aid legibility. The surround could perhaps be in a darker blue to alleviate the severity of the black.

Ref: 51 - Gülçin Kanar Şimşek

More Experienced

Category: Colour of the Year 2025 - 'Future Dusk'

Tools and Materials

Acrylic and gouache on paper, Leonardt Tape nib 3 mm, pointed nib

Judges' comments:

This is a well textured background in a stunning range of blues. The white Uncial lettering is well written which is not easy on a dark background. Perhaps the margins could be better balanced, and the lettering placed more centrally but this is an attractive piece.

Ref: 52 - Ann Sear

More Experienced

Category: The Art of Celtic Calligraphy

Tools and Materials

Watercolour, gel pen, gouache

Judges' comments:

A lovely clear design using drawn Celtic knots in delicate blues and delightful detail. The whole is well integrated, and the lettering really belongs with the painting. An accomplished piece.



Ref: 53 - Elizabeth Beattie

Advanced

Category: Let The Light Pour In by Lemn Sissay OBE FRSL

Tools and Materials

Gouache lettering on watercolour illustration on Saunders Waterford paper

Judges' comments:

A beautifully relaxed background which is well balanced alongside the lettering. The colours and placement of the emerging sun are really well considered, and the lettering is well thought through and skillfully executed. A lovely piece.