

Open call for applications

22 June – 30 August 2026

Talents

1st edition

Contemporains

Abbaye de Pontigny

La Terre

Contemporary art competition

On the theme of Earth

Grant • Acquisition • Exhibition

FRANÇOIS SCHNEIDER FOUNDATION : WATTWILLER & PONTIGNY

WATTWILLER | WATER

Established in 2000 and officially recognised as a body acting in the public interest in 2005, the Fondation François Schneider is committed to a dual objective: to support students by granting scholarships for higher education in Alsace and the Yonne, but also to promote contemporary artistic creation.

Since 2013, its first art centre, located in Wattwiller (Alsace), has been entirely dedicated to the fundamental theme of Water. The “Talents Contemporains” competition, launched in 2011, has enabled the growth of a unique body of work centred on this theme, which now forms the core of the Foundation’s collection.

[\(Collection of contemporary artworks on the theme of Water – FFS\)](#)

PONTIGNY | EARTH

Today, the Foundation is opening a new chapter with the “Earth at Pontigny” project in Burgundy. The estate of the historic Pontigny Abbey thus becomes a venue exclusively dedicated to this theme and to the development a new branch of the contemporary art collection. With this step, the Foundation focuses its work around these two elements —Water at Wattwiller and Earth at Pontigny— creating a truly unique dialogue.

[Abbaye Pontigny | abbaye-pontigny](#)

À ABOUT THE “TALENTS CONTEMPORAINS – LA TERRE – ABBAYE DE PONTIGNY” COMPETITION

Alongside the renovation phase of the Pontigny Abbey domain from 2026 to 2028, the Fondation François Schneider is launching the “**Talents Contemporains – La Terre – Abbaye de Pontigny**” competition. This initiative focuses on two major goals: supporting the emergence and professional recognition of visual artists through an acquisition and exhibition policy, and building a unique art collection centred on the theme of Earth.

This inaugural edition of the competition will allow for the acquisition of the first pieces of the collection on the theme of Earth, running in parallel with the development of the future art centre in the Bâtiment des Convers (Lay Brothers’ Building - see photo p.5).

For this first edition, the competition is specifically dedicated to the acquisition of **outdoor artworks and installations**¹. The winning pieces will form an art promenade throughout the Abbey gardens, allowing the public to experience contemporary creations right from the start of the project.

These artworks will become fully integrated into the Foundation’s collection, which will continue to grow with future editions of the competition.

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COMPETITION TERMS AND ELIGIBILITY

This call for applications is open to artists or artist collectives whose practice lies within the field of visual and plastic arts. The originality and relevance of the work, as well as the aesthetic approach and the technical feasibility of installing the work on site, will be the main criteria considered by the expert committee and the Grand Jury.

Entry requirements

- The competition is open to professional visual artists of all nationalities and ages (aged 18 and over).
- Applicants must be able to demonstrate a professional artistic career, with significant experience and regular presentation of their work (e.g., art school degree, solo and/or group exhibitions, artist residencies, publications, etc.).
- Artists from the Wattwiller collection who were laureates of the 'Water'-themed competition are eligible to enter the Pontigny competition on the theme of 'Earth'.
- Each applicant may submit only one artwork per year.
- An artwork submitted to the competition cannot be resubmitted in subsequent years.
- The application must be written in either French or English.

Artwork Eligibility Criteria

- The artwork submitted to the competition must strictly focus **on the theme of 'Earth'**.
- Only **existing artworks** may be submitted (production proposals/projects will not be accepted).
- The artwork must be **a unique piece**. (If the artwork is a unique piece, such as a sculpture or an installation, the prize money is €15,000.) If the artwork is a sculpture or an installation consisting of multiple numbered editions, the prize money is reduced to €8,000.
- Eligible disciplines are strictly limited to **outdoor sculpture and installation** (performing arts, music, painting, drawing, photography, and video are not accepted).
- Fountains are not eligible.
- The artwork must be created without the use of multimedia or sound content and equipment.

Technical requirements

- Ephemeral artworks will not be accepted.
- The artwork will be **exhibited outdoors** for a long period within the landscaped areas of the estate, which are currently under development (see the Pontigny Estate plan).
- The artwork must be **permanent** and meet specific criteria regarding durability, upkeep, and maintenance (see the following section).
- The materials used to create the artwork **must withstand outdoor weather conditions** (high light levels, UV exposure, severe weather, freeze-thaw cycles, pests, etc.).
- The artwork must **be environmentally friendly**. Whether in its design (materials, anchoring, etc.), installation on-site, operation, or dismantling, it must have no harmful impact on the natural environment.
- The artwork must not pose any hazard to visitors, such as protruding parts or structural instability (risk of cuts, falls, etc.).

ORGANISATION OF THE COMPETITION AND ENDOWMENT

- A Committee of Experts selects an initial shortlist of around **thirty finalists**. These thirty or so finalists will be submitted to an **international Grand Jury**, which is responsible for selecting a maximum of **4 to 5 winners**.
- The winners receive a grant for the acquisition of their work, which will join the Fondation François Schneider's collection.
 - **€15,000** for a unique work.
 - **€8,000** if the work is a sculpture produced in numbered editions.

The Grand Jury:

→ Christine Macel

Chair of the Grand Jury, Chief Curator of Heritage, art historian and exhibition curator.

→ Colette Barbier

Founder and Director of the Pernod Ricard Foundation until 2020. Chair of La Source Garouste Paris.

→ Frédéric Bodet

Independent curator and critic specialising in decorative arts and design of the 20th and 21st centuries, lecturer at HEAD in Geneva since 2023.

→ Angelo Crespi

Director General of the Pinacoteca di Brera. Head of the 'Grande Brera', Italy.

→ Jean Frémon

President of Galerie Lelong & Co, Paris and New York.

→ Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez

Head of Curatorial Public Art at the Department of Culture and Tourism in Abu Dhabi since 2026.

Independent curator and head of artistic and cultural programming at the Cité internationale des arts in Paris until 2025.

LE CALENDRIER (PONTIGNY - THÈME DE LA TERRE)

Stage	Date
Call for applications	June 2026 – August 2026
Pre-selection by the Expert Committee	September 2026
International Grand Jury	November 2026
Announcement of the winners (4 to 5 artists)	November 2026
Exhibition of the works in the gardens of Pontigny Abbey	Spring 2027

NB: The Foundation reserves the right to change the dates (to be added if specific dates are mentioned)

THE APPLICATION FILE

The application file must include the following components:
<https://talentscontemporains-terre.fondationfrancoisschneider.org>

Le dossier de candidature doit obligatoirement comprendre les éléments suivants :

- **Administrative Section:**
 - Registration form and regulations: signed, read, and approved (PDF format).
 - Copy of valid ID: passport or national identity card (PDF format).

- **Artistic Section (Completed Work):**
 - An up-to-date CV and/or presentation of the artist collective (maximum 2 pages).
 - Your portfolio / artistic dossier presenting your overall body of work (maximum 20 A4 pages / 30 MB).
 - A statement of intent presenting the artwork and the artist's approach for the competition on the theme of Earth (maximum 2 pages).
 - A detailed technical datasheet for the existing work: title, materials, technique, dimensions (height, width, depth), weight, operational constraints and technical requirements for exhibition (floor anchoring) and transport, alongside care and maintenance protocols to ensure the longevity of the work (maximum 2 pages).
 - 3 to 5 visuals of the artwork (JPEG format, maximum 5 MB per visual).
 - A video excerpt or video recording to provide context for the artwork (MOV/MP4 format, maximum 4 GB, optional).

NB: Any incomplete file or one that does not comply with the above instructions will not be submitted to the Expert Committee and the International Grand Jury.





INFORMATION & CONTACT

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