



Image credits: Matthieu Gafsou, series *Vivants* (2018-2022)/ Courtesy Galerie C.

Call for projects

COAL PRIZE 2026 - *The Night*

Open until 28 April

We contrast day and night, even though they form a single unit of life permeated by opposites. For us diurnal beings, so dependent on sight, **night often begins with a loss**. Between dusk and dawn, the night suspends time, veils the world, forces us to retreat. The certainties of the day recede, uncertainty surfaces, and perhaps that is why night remains a time for contemplation and storytelling, when dreams and imagination arise as we await the coming day. **Night shifts the sovereignty of the image.**

But night is receding, bleached white, colonised by the limitless spread of artificial lights on land, at sea, and in the sky, to the point of erasing the Milky Way from our memories. Skyglow, a halo of artificial light suspended like a dome above cities, can be seen from space. Outside urban centers, the proliferation of small pockets of light fragments the night, cuts off continuity, transforms corridors into dead ends, and sets deadly traps for birds, insects, and so many other species disoriented by the excess of light.

The term 'night-time environment' has been used for the past thirty years or so to describe this vital but threatened habitat. Most animals are nocturnal. In landscapes

dominated by human presence, darkness is sometimes the only time to move around undetected and undisturbed. This period allows for migration, mating, pollination and crossing. The recent concept of the 'dark infrastructure' perfectly encapsulates **the idea that we must preserve the continuity of darkness at night.**

The people of the night inhabit a world of sound and scent, where one navigates by rhythm, echo, aerosol and aroma. Night changes the grammar of the world. Even the flora changes its language. Some flowers open at night, perfuming the air to attract particular pollinators. It is also **an essential time for the regeneration** of organisms and metabolism, a subtle process in which energies and balances are redistributed and excesses are repaired. The drop in temperatures at night contributes to cooling the soil and atmosphere, thereby promoting water cycles. Artificially prolonged daylight weakens these functions. The exhaustion of the world is also due to the shift towards round-the-clock operation, which denies cycles and exhausts bodies and environments. Yet darkness and rest are vital necessities.

To borrow Édouard Glissant's expression, night calls for a right to opacity, which recognizes the importance of being able to escape the imperatives of transparency and visibility. In politics, **night signifies both vigilance and eclipse**. A refuge for resistance and marginality, it is the time chosen by those who hold on when day closes in, nights of assemblies and vigils - *Nuit Debout* is a clear example of this. But it can also refer to the dark times of totalitarian powers. This is the paradox of the night: it emancipates when it shifts the social clock to open up a common space, and it oppresses when it obscures thought.

The COAL Prize 2026 invites artists to defend the night as a common good and a major ecological issue for the regeneration of life. It is a refuge and a celebration of diversity and languages, as well as a right to rest and darkness. By inventing stories that help us to relearn how to inhabit the shadows and by creating art with the night, we can contribute to an ecology of rhythms. Reconnecting with our fear of the night is the perfect antidote to anthropocentrism because it humbles us by confronting us with the vastness of the sky and the immensity of the cosmos.

Created in 2010 by the COAL association, the COAL Prize is a vehicle for identifying, promoting, and disseminating artists who, throughout the world, bear witness to, imagine, and experiment with solutions for transforming territories, lifestyles, organisation, and production. Together, these artists help to make changes visible and build a new collective narrative, a shared heritage in development, and a positive and necessary framework for everyone to find the means and inspiration to implement changes towards a more sustainable and just world.

At the same time, the call for projects is open for the COAL Student Prize, aimed at students from schools in the arts and culture field.

[>>> Call for projects - COAL Student Prize 2026](#)

COAL PRIZE CALENDAR 2026

Call for projects closes: 28 April 2026
Announcement of nominated artists: Summer 2026
Announcement of winners: Autumn 2026

Ceremony awards ceremony at *Sans Réserve*, the gathering for ecologically engaged creation : Autumn 2026

HOW IT WORKS

Ten artists are nominated for their projects submitted as part of this international call for applications by a selection committee composed of professionals. The COAL Prize and its special mentions are awarded from among these ten projects by a jury composed of representatives

from partner organisations and prominent figures in the arts and ecology. In addition, all applications considered by COAL and the selection committee help to raise awareness of artists and projects that may be sought out or promoted in line with other opportunities and initiatives carried out by the association and its partners.

The composition of the jury will be revealed this summer.

AWARDS

The artist awarded the **COAL Prize** receives a grant of €12,000 and a creative residency at the heart of the Domaine de Belval, property of the François Sommer Foundation, led by the scientific and educational teams of the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature and those of the Domaine de Belval. A genuine observatory of rural life and wildlife, the estate hosts artists each year who are selected for the significance of their contribution to renewing perspectives on the relationship between humans and their natural environment.

-The artist awarded **the Special Prize of the Jury** receives a grant of €3,000.

-The artist awarded **the Ateliers Médicis mention** benefits from a residency in Clichy-sous-Bois/Montfermeil, in connection with the Bondy Regional Forest.

-The artist awarded **the Centre Wallonie-Bruxelles/Paris (aka Le Vaisseau) mention** receives a grant of €2,000 and will be invited to exhibit within the Paris-based institution.

-The artist awarded **the Nuits des Forêts mention** receives a grant of €3,000 for a creative residency in a partner forest.

CRITERIA

The following are taken into account: artistic quality, relevance in relation to the issues addressed, originality (approaches, themes, or new perspectives), educational value (ability to convey a message and raise awareness), social and participatory approach (engagement, testimony, effectiveness, societal impact), eco-design, project feasibility, and collaboration with nature conservation stakeholders.

The COAL Prize supports artistic projects that are currently in development or yet to be produced. Its grant is not intended to cover the full production costs of the project and should be considered as support for its development.

PARTNERS 2026

The COAL 2026 Prize receives financial support from the French Office for Biodiversity, the Ministry of Culture, the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature, the François Sommer Foundation, and the L'Accolade Foundation, as well as a partnership with the Ateliers Médicis, the Centre Wallonie Bruxelles/Paris, and Les Nuits des Forêts.

French Office for Biodiversity (OFB)

The French Office for Biodiversity (OFB) is responsible for protecting and restoring biodiversity in mainland France and its overseas territories. It works to preserve living ecosystems in aquatic, terrestrial, and marine environments through the expertise of its 2,800 staff members, including 1,700 environmental inspectors. This public institution also works by mobilising a wide range of stakeholders, decision-makers, and citizens around biodiversity: the State, local authorities, associations, businesses, scientists, farmers, fishers, hunters, outdoor sports participants, and actors from the arts sector.

French Ministry of Culture

Beyond its primary mission of making the major artworks of humanity, and above all of France, accessible to as many people as possible, the Ministry of Culture is convinced that culture must play its full part in the vast undertaking of the ecological transition and has been committed to this since 2010 through successive strategies. Since 2023, the Ministry of Culture's strategy has been defined in a guidance and inspiration guide that sets a course for the ecological transition of cultural actors. The Ministry of Culture has supported the COAL Prize since its inception in 2010.

Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature and the François Sommer Foundation

Recognized as a public utility since its creation on 30 November 1966, the Foundation was established by François and Jacqueline Sommer, pioneers in the implementation of humanistic ecology. True to the commitments of its founders, it works to protect biodiversity, ensuring that humans find their rightful place within it, to promote the respectful use of natural resources, and to share the richness of our natural, artistic, and cultural heritage.

Fondation L'Accolade - Institut de France

The Foundation promotes artistic creation that is conscious of its environment and supports initiatives, projects, and actions led by artists related to the themes of water, the environment, the fragility of life, and femininity, through research and creative residencies and exhibitions in France and the United States. In addition, it safeguards "matrimoine," or the legacy of women who have been historically or artistically significant.

Les Ateliers Médicis

Committed to bringing out new and diverse artistic voices and supporting artists with unique and contemporary styles, Les Ateliers Médicis host artists from all disciplines in residence and supports the creation of works designed in connection with the local area. They encourage encounters between artists and local residents. Located in Clichy-sous-Bois and Montfermeil, they reaffirm the place of artistic creation in the suburbs.

Centre Wallonie Bruxelles/Paris

Through a resolutely desacralizing and A-trans-disciplinary program, the Center is mandated to disseminate and promote artists based in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. It thus ensures the promotion of emerging or established approaches, from the peripheral to the consecrated.

Les Nuits des Forêts

Founded in 2021, the Nuits des Forêts association works to raise public awareness of forestry issues by developing and supporting cultural and educational initiatives, including the national festival Les Nuits des Forêts. By bringing together a wide variety of stakeholders and promoting dialogue between forests, art, and cultures, the association aims to foster a new balance between humans and living organisms at the local level and encourage the emergence of new collective narratives.

APPLICATION FILE AND SUBMISSION

The application file must include the following documents, compiled into a single PDF file named LASTNAME_Firstname_2026_Project-Title (the file must not exceed 30 MB):

- The application form, downloadable [HERE](#)
- A detailed project description presenting its artistic dimension, its connection to the theme, as well as a technical note and a budget estimate
- At least two HD visuals illustrating the project
- A Curriculum Vitae and an artistic portfolio

Submission of applications

All proposals must be submitted via the COAL server by 23:59 on April 28 2026 at the latest : upload.projetcoal.org

By participating in this call, the authors of the projects expressly authorize the COAL association and its partners to publish, reproduce, and publicly share all or part of the elements of their project for any purpose related to the promotion and communication of the COAL Prize, on any medium, through any channel, and in any country, in the event of nomination.

Projects submitted but not selected will remain in COAL's archives and may be consulted by the association's partners. They remain the property of their authors. Participation in this call for projects implies full acceptance of the above conditions.

CONTACT

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