



ADA Awards 2026-27 Design Categories

Categories Framework

The purpose of this framework is not to narrow the field of practice. It is to ensure that every entry is compared with work of a similar kind and judged by criteria appropriate to its principal achievement. Entrants are therefore encouraged to present their submission in the manner that most clearly demonstrates what should be rewarded.

Advertising Campaigns

Advertising Design

Advertising work developed for print, outdoor, transit, point-of-sale, posters, brochures, and comparable non-digital formats. Enter here when the main achievement lies in persuasive visual communication for fixed, printed, or place-based media.

Digital Advertising Design

Advertising developed chiefly for digital platforms such as social media, display networks, banners, motion-based campaign assets, and online promotional rollouts. Enter here when the communication has been conceived principally for screen-based delivery.

Graphic Design

Print Publication Design

Editorial and publication design for books, magazines, journals, catalogues, annual reports, newspapers, zines, and other multi-page printed formats. Enter here when sequencing, typography, structure, and the reading experience are doing the real work.

Identity, Branding and Packaging

Visual identity and packaging systems for brands, organisations, services, products, or product lines. This includes logos, brand languages, labels, packaging families, and guidelines where the chief achievement lies in the coherence, distinctiveness, and scalability of the system.

Information Graphics (Dynamic/Static)

Projects that communicate information, data, systems, processes, maps, timelines, or explanations through visual form. Static, animated, and interactive work may all be entered here when clarity, structure, and understanding are the principal aims.

Illustrations / Animation

Illustration-led work across print, digital, and narrative contexts, including editorials, books, covers, posters, packaging, digital series, web-native illustration, sequential storytelling, and animation-led pieces. Enter here when the strongest quality of the submission is image-making, visual authorship, or illustration-driven storytelling rather than explanatory communication, advertising rollout, or interface design.

Font Design

Original typefaces, font families, scripts, variable fonts, multilingual type systems, and other fonts developed for practical use. Enter here when the achievement lies in character design, spacing, consistency, legibility, and technical development.

Environmental Graphics / Exhibition Design

Graphic systems created for physical spaces, including wayfinding, signage, museum graphics, interpretive displays, exhibition graphics, event environments, and branded spatial communication. Enter here when graphics shape navigation, interpretation, or the experience of place.

Interactive Design (UX/UI)

Mobile App, Web App

Functional digital products used on mobile devices or through browsers, including apps, platforms, dashboards, portals, and digital tools. Enter here when the principal achievement lies in task flow, usability, interaction logic, and interface design.

Websites

Websites created for information, publishing, portfolios, institutions, campaigns, commerce, or brand presence. Enter here when the user primarily browses content, explores information, or experiences a digital presence rather than working through complex service flows.

Games (Digital and Non Digital)

Game design across digital and physical formats, including video games, board games, card games, educational games, and game systems. Enter here when the central achievement lies in gameplay, rules, player experience, or world-building.

Virtual Reality (VR) Projects

Fully immersive digital experiences that place the user inside a simulated environment. Enter here when the project creates a complete virtual world to be experienced as an immersive space.

Augmented Reality (AR) Projects

Projects that layer digital content onto the real world through phones, tablets, glasses, or similar devices. Enter here when the real environment remains primary and digital elements are added onto it.

Mixed Reality (MR) Projects

Experiences in which digital and physical elements coexist and interact within a shared environment. Enter here when virtual objects are spatially anchored, responsive to context, and meaningfully integrated with the physical world.

Textile Design

Print Design

Pattern and imagery developed specifically for textile application through printing processes, including repeat prints, engineered prints, placement prints, and textile graphics for apparel, interiors, or accessories. Enter here when the principal achievement lies in the visual design of the textile for printed application.

Surface Design & Ornamentation

Textile surface treatment developed through embellishment, manipulation, and decorative intervention such as embroidery, appliqué, beading, dye effects, texture, hand-finishing, and related ornamentation. Enter here when the principal achievement lies in the crafted treatment or ornamentation of the textile surface.

Weave

Textile work in which structure, pattern, or material character is created through woven construction, whether handwoven or machine-woven. Enter here when the design is inherent in the woven build of the textile.

Fiber Art

Conceptual, sculptural, or expressive work developed through fibre-based materials and techniques, including stitched constructions, knotting, crochet, felting, basketry, and experimental textile forms. Enter here when fibre functions as an expressive, spatial, or conceptual medium rather than as product application.

Industrial Design

Furniture

Design of functional furniture for domestic, commercial, public, or specialist use, including seating, tables, desks, storage, beds, shelving, and modular systems. Enter here when form, ergonomics, construction, and use at furniture scale are central.

Lighting

Lighting objects and systems for interior, architectural, decorative, exterior, or task-based use. This includes lamps, pendants, sconces, portable lighting, and modular lighting systems in which performance, usability, and formal resolution are key.

Home Accessories

Domestic objects and household products such as tableware, vases, organisers, mirrors, clocks, storage accessories, planters, kitchen accessories, and related homeware. Enter here when the design achievement lies in the object itself.

Some Clarifications/FAQs

The categories are fixed. There is no separate hybrid category. Where a project brings together several disciplines, it will be considered in the category that best reflects its principal achievement and the basis on which it can be judged most fairly.

In practice, this means the organisers and jury will look beyond the number of components in a submission and identify what, in substance, the work has achieved most strongly. Supporting assets may be shown as evidence, but they do not determine the category unless they constitute the core achievement.

How will illustration-led work that appears both in print and online be categorised?

It will be treated as Illustrations / Animation when the same illustration-led idea remains the principal achievement across formats. Output format by itself does not create a separate category.

How will a narrative animation be categorised?

It will be treated as Illustrations / Animation when the work is fundamentally illustration-led and the storytelling is carried chiefly by image-making, character treatment, sequence, animation, and visual authorship. It will be treated as Information Graphics when explanation and understanding are the main purpose, and as Digital Advertising Design when the motion work functions primarily as advertising.

Where should an illustrated book cover created digitally be entered?

It belongs in Illustrations / Animation because the defining consideration is the illustration-led communication outcome, not the software through which it was produced.

How will an animated explainer with charts and storytelling be categorised?

It belongs in Information Graphics when the main purpose is explanation and understanding, and in Illustrations / Animation only where the work is driven chiefly by illustration-led narrative rather than by the communication of information.

How will a brand campaign with a new logo, packaging, social ads, and illustrated assets be categorised?

It will be treated as Identity, Branding and Packaging if the brand system is the main achievement, as Digital Advertising Design if campaign persuasion and rollout are the main achievement, and as Illustrations / Animation only if the illustrated image-making itself is the principal judged work.

How will a complex e-commerce platform be assessed?

It belongs in Websites when the experience is primarily browsing-led and content-led, and in Mobile App, Web App when the platform functions mainly as a task-based service tool with more complex workflows.

How should an immersive installation mixing projection, sensors, and anchored virtual objects be entered?

It belongs in Mixed Reality when digital content is spatially anchored and interacts within the physical environment, in Virtual Reality when the environment is wholly simulated, and in Augmented Reality when digital content is simply layered onto reality without deeper integration.