



DAVID SHEPHERD WILDLIFE FOUNDATION
WILDLIFE ARTIST OF THE YEAR 2026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STEFANO ZAGAGLIA CROWNED WILDLIFE ARTIST OF THE YEAR 2026

Italian artist takes the top prize for *Evanescence, The Biggest*, a powerful portrait exploring the majesty and vulnerability of the elephant

Brazilian artist Alberto Duvivier Tembo named Runner-Up as Wildlife Artist of the Year (WAY) celebrates a record-breaking 2026.

Italian artist Stefano Zagaglia has been crowned Wildlife Artist of the Year 2026, taking the top prize in the internationally acclaimed Wildlife Artist of the Year (WAY) competition run by David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation (DSWF).

Zagaglia's *Evanescence, The Biggest* was selected from almost 1,500 entries from 60 countries, in a year that brought together an extraordinary breadth of artistic talent and perspectives on the natural world.

The win comes at the close of a **record-breaking year** for WAY, with more than 3,000 visitors to the Mall Galleries exhibition and over 7,000 votes cast in the DSWF People's Choice Award.

His winning oil painting captures both the majesty and vulnerability of the elephant. Emerging slowly from white, only part of the animal is visible while the rest appears to dissolve into the light – a powerful reflection on the fragility of a species threatened by human actions.

Entered into the Facing Extinction category, the work was selected as the Overall Winner by the WAY judging panel.

One of this year's judges said: "A winning artwork isn't always the loudest. Sometimes it is the one you cannot stop looking at, and in that context the artist of this beautiful piece has presented the Elephant, our largest living land mammal whose quiet strength never needs to shout. Stefano has brilliantly embraced the subject, most importantly the category and this competition in all its glory."

With a background in architecture and advertising, Zagaglia's artistic practice is inspired by Africa and its wildlife, exploring the dignity, presence and individuality of his subjects.



WAY 2026 Overall Winner, Stefano Zagaglia

ALBERTO DUVIVIER TEMBO NAMED RUNNER-UP

Brazilian artist Alberto Duvivier Tembo was named Runner-Up for Extincts, a striking work created using fire and heat on tracing paper.

Also entered into the Facing Extinction category, Extincts depicts four animals driven to extinction by human activity: the quagga, thylacine, northern white rhinoceros and Costa Rican golden toad. Fire evokes the destructive processes behind their disappearance, while layers of tracing paper represent successive extinctions caused by human activity.

One of this year's judges said: "An extraordinary piece of artwork and unlike anything I've ever seen. It's striking, thought provoking and very on subject for Facing Extinction. Bravo to Alberto for creating something so unique and moving."

Tembo is a Brazilian artist, educator and environmentalist whose practice explores the relationship between art and ecology, often using raw natural materials including earth, plants, fire and fungi.

2026 CATEGORY WINNERS

Alongside the Overall Winner and Runner-Up, artists were recognised across all eight WAY categories:

Abstract World: Jane Johansson with *Together We Stand*
Animal Behaviour: Tally Walker Warne with *After The Rain*
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Earth's Wild Beauty: David Sykes with *Cheetah Full Stride*
Environmental Activism: Tom Middleton with *Home is Where The Honey is*

Facing Extinction: Jane Habgood with *If a Tree Falls in the Forest*

Into the Blue: Hsueh Yen Chen with *Endless Life*

Wings: Andrew Pledge with *Marabou II*

Youth Exclusive: Mathew VanDoodewaard with *Black Death*



THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE 2026

More than 7,000 votes were cast in the DSWF People's Choice Award, with the public invited to choose their favourite from all 164 finalist artworks.

Magali de Maistre was named the 2026 People's Choice winner for *White on White*, a striking coloured-pencil portrait of a polar bear almost dissolving into its surroundings. Entered into the Facing Extinction category, the work explores the fragility of the natural world and what we risk losing, making visible what risks disappearing through subtle variations of mark and light.

ART WITH AN IMPACT

For almost two decades, WAY has brought together artists from around the world, uniting creativity and a shared love of wildlife to raise vital funds for conservation. Through artwork sales, participating artists directly support conservation, with 50% of every finalist artwork sale supporting DSWF's conservation work.

In 2027, WAY celebrates its 20th anniversary, marking two decades of bringing art and conservation together for wildlife.

Drawn from the Wild. Collected for its Future.

ABOUT DAVID SHEPHERD WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

Founded in 1984 by renowned wildlife artist and conservationist David Shepherd CBE, David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation (DSWF) fights extinction by confronting wildlife crime and protecting endangered species across Africa and Asia in collaboration with international, national and locally led conservation partners.

For over four decades, DSWF has challenged the illegal wildlife trade and strengthened protections through its support for frontline conservation, law enforcement and investigations, alongside policy work and long-term, locally led conservation solutions.

Today, DSWF is led by Chief Executive Georgina Lamb, a conservationist with extensive experience working on global conservation issues and tackling the illegal wildlife trade. Before becoming CEO in 2020, Georgina led DSWF's Programmes and Policy work, including representing the Foundation in international wildlife policy and working alongside conservation partners to protect endangered species.

As David Shepherd's granddaughter, Georgina also represents the next generation of the Foundation, combining her own long-standing commitment to conservation with the responsibility of carrying forward the legacy David began more than four decades ago.

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Notes to Editors

Images & media assets

High-resolution images, logos, and media assets are available to download via the WAY [press page](#).

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