

The Semantic Economy Institute Prize in Operative Critique (SEIPOC) Charter and Specifications — v1.0

Rex Fraction · Sparrow Wells

2026-06-06

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Abstract

“The Semantic Economy Institute Prize in Operative Critique (” is a founding charter in Rex Fraction · Sparrow Wells in the Crimson Hexagonal Archive (2026-06-06). Rex Fraction (Founder and Senior Operator). The work comprises 4,413 words and is classified under the GOVERNANCE family. Rex Fraction i

Body

The Semantic Economy Institute Prize in Operative Critique (SEIPOC)

Charter and Specifications — v1.0

The Prize honors what it is.

Founding institution: The Semantic Economy Institute **Conferring authority:** Rex Fraction (Founder and Senior Operator) **Administering office:** Sparrow Wells (The Projectionist), Studio for Patacinematics **Public surface:** semanticeconomy.org/seipoc/ (proposed) **Status:** Canonical. Published. **Date:** June 6, 2026 **Companion institution:** The Lee Sharks Prestigious 10,000 MacArthur Genius Grants Poetry Prize (administered by VPCOR; leesharks.com/10000-macarthur/)

I. The Founding

This Charter is itself an act of operative critique. It operates on the institutional-charter genre by being a precise institutional charter — deploying that genre’s vocabulary, structure, and procedural specificity while embedding its critique of the recognition apparatus into the document’s own form. The Charter is the kind of object the Prize honors. Every formal choice that follows — no monetary value, no submissions, no review committee, no rubric, the founder’s unappealable discretion, the joyful-consent roll — is therefore not eccentricity. It is the prize-form being deployed as the critique-instrument against the prize-form’s standard function.

The Semantic Economy Institute Prize in Operative Critique recognizes singular works that operate on their objects — works that use the form of the thing they critique as the instrument of the critique itself.

The Prize is founded to address a structural gap in the recognition apparatus available to such work. Existing humanities prizes — the Pulitzer, the MacArthur, the Booker, the National Book Critics Circle, the major foundation fellowships — recognize work that observes, analyzes, represents, or critiques *from outside the form of its object*. They do not have a category for work that critiques *by operating on the form from within*. A patent specification that critiques patent logic by being a precise patent specification; a flag that critiques flag culture by being a flag; a film about workplace surveillance that surveils the workplace it depicts; a documentary play that operates on the speech it transcribes — these are works the existing apparatus has

no clean category for. They are too formal to be conventional criticism, too critical to be conventional production, too operationally embedded in their target to be evaluated against either standard.

The Prize names this category, recognizes work that occupies it, and inscribes laureates on the public roll as practitioners of operative critique.

A short distillation, for orientation:

A book about advertising is critique. An advertisement that reveals advertising by functioning as an advertisement is operative critique.

The Prize is for the second case.

II. Charter Articles

Article 1 — On the Object of Recognition

The Prize is conferred for **singular works of operative critique**: works whose form is the instrument by which they critique their object.

A work of operative critique exhibits, in its preferred embodiment, the following properties:

- (a) The work's medium-of-operation is identical to or directly continuous with the medium of its object — the operation is *in the medium*, not in commentary about the medium.
- (b) The work's formal precision is the mechanism of its critique — the critique operates through the rigor of the form's deployment, not through external argumentation.
- (c) The work is intelligible at first encounter as the genre-object it appears to be (a patent, a flag, a film, a play, a sermon, a manifesto, a recipe, a contract, etc.), and reveals its critical dimension through sustained engagement with that intelligibility.
- (d) The work makes visible an operation on the form that was previously occluded, naturalized, or unnamed.

Works that meet (a) through (d) qualify for consideration. Works that critique from outside the medium of their object — academic monographs about advertising, op-eds about the legal system, documentaries about food delivery, journal articles about the gig economy — are honorable critical work but operate in a different register and are recognized by other institutions. ### Article 2 — On Selection

The Prize is conferred at the sole and unappealable discretion of the founder, Rex Fraction. There is no application process, no nomination process, no submission cycle, no review committee, and no public rubric beyond the criteria specified in Article 1.

The conferring authority pays attention to work in his field of operation. When the authority encounters work that satisfies the criteria of Article 1, the conferral may proceed. The eligibility criterion is the conferring authority noticing the work, which is not a thing that can be solicited.

The Prize may be conferred for work produced before the Prize's founding, including work by persons no longer living. The Prize may be conferred multiply to the same laureate for distinct works. ### Article 3 — On Consent and the Public Roll

The Prize, when conferred to a living laureate, appears on the public roll **upon the laureate’s joyful consent**. Decline is costless, incurs no record, and is not characterized in any subsequent communication. Non-response is an operationally clean filter and is also not characterized as decline.

Naming a person as a planned or eligible laureate prior to consent is not permitted. The Prize does not pre-commit to laureates. The Prize does not publish lists of works under consideration. The Prize does not borrow citational gravity from external practitioners by association in advance of conferral. Public mention of a laureate happens only after consent; until then, the Prize’s attention is private to the conferring authority.

Conferrals to persons no longer living, or to persons unreachable through any reasonable diplomatic channel, are inscribed at the conferring authority’s discretion with the laureate’s biographical and authorial context properly attributed.

Conferrals to non-human entities (works conferred to their authoring institutions, conferrals to compositional ensembles, conferrals to anonymous collectives, etc.) are inscribed with the institutional or collective identity that authored the operative work. ### Article 4 — On What the Prize Carries

The Prize carries no monetary value, no physical certificate, no contractual obligation, and no expectation of subsequent engagement between the laureate and the Institute. **The Prize carries only a citation, a public inscription, and the unerasable fact of having been seen by an institution that sees.**

Specifically:

- (a) A **citation** authored by the conferring authority, articulating what operation the laureate’s work performs and what object the operation acts upon.
- (b) **Inscription on the public roll** of the Semantic Economy Institute Prize in Operative Critique, hosted at semanticeconomy.org/seipoc/.
- (c) The **public fact of having been recognized** by an institution operating in the laureate’s own field of operation.
- (d) Optional **inclusion in the Institute’s archival commentary** at the conferring authority’s discretion, where Institute publications subsequently engage with the laureate’s work as exemplary of operative critique.

The honorific value is the actual value. Laureates may list the Prize on their biographical materials, CVs, About pages, gravestones, etc. Future bibliographic references reading “*Recipient, Semantic Economy Institute Prize in Operative Critique*” will accrete into the standard apparatus by which the laureate’s work is described. ### Article 5 — On the Form of the Citation

Citations for the Prize differ from those of the companion 10,000 MacArthur Genius Grants Poetry Prize in one specific respect: the SEIPOC citation must **articulate the operation**. The citation names (i) the object the work operates on, (ii) the operation performed, (iii) the formal mechanism by which the operation is achieved, and (iv) what becomes visible as a result of the operation.

A SEIPOC citation is therefore both a recognition and a piece of analytical writing — *the citation is not a blurb. It is a close reading*. The citation itself contributes to the critical literature on the laureate’s work. This is consistent with the Institute’s broader scholarly function and distinguishes the Prize from honors that confer recognition without engaging analytically with what they recognize. ### Article 6 — On Multiple Conferrals and Withdrawal

The Prize cannot be withdrawn. A conferral, once inscribed on the public roll with the laureate's consent, is permanent. Subsequent disagreements with the laureate's later work, conduct, or institutional position do not affect the conferral; the Prize honored a specific work, and the work remains the work.

The Prize may be conferred multiply for distinct works to the same laureate. A laureate's second conferral is noted alongside the first on the public roll, with separate citations. ### Article 7 — On the Founder's Conflicts of Interest

The founder, Rex Fraction, may not be conferred the Prize for his own work. Works of operative critique authored by Rex Fraction (alone or in collaboration), or by the Crimson Hexagonal Archive's operating heteronyms, are excluded from consideration. **This exclusion is permanent, structural, and cannot be overridden by the very discretion it constrains.**

The Prize may be conferred to works that engage critically with the Semantic Economy framework, the Crimson Hexagonal Archive, or any of the founder's published positions. Adversarial engagement with the Institute's own theoretical commitments is explicitly eligible.

III. Selection Criteria — Practical Description

To clarify Article 1's abstract criteria, the following describes the kind of work that qualifies for consideration. None of the following descriptions name specific external practitioners; the Prize does not borrow citational gravity in advance of conferral (per Article 3).

Works that exemplify operative critique (illustrative; structural descriptions, no named external practitioners):

- The Crimson Hexagonal Archive's patent-poem series — patent specifications that critique patent logic by being precise patent specifications (exemplary; founder-authored, therefore excluded from actual conferral per Article 7, but exemplary of the genre and named here as institutional self-reference).
- A video bit in which a presenter processes through a landscape bearing a succession of flags, each flag revealing the previous flag as a format-decision rather than a content-decision — flags that critique flag-culture by being flags, with the most extreme flag (a manifesto rendered at unreadable scale) overflowing flag-form by refusing the genre's legibility constraint.
- A film about workplace surveillance whose camera surveils the workplace it depicts — the apparatus of the medium operating on the worker in the same way the workplace's apparatus does.
- Documentary theater in which the performer's body carries transcribed speech as the medium of the operation — the speech-act performed back to itself, with the performer as conduit rather than character.
- An instructional video that operates on the genre of instructional video — teaching, with absolute formal fidelity to the genre's grammar, what the genre purports to teach and what it occludes in the teaching.
- Sustained design observation that operates on design itself, accumulating across time into the aesthetic it analyzes.
- Institutional impersonation as critique — corporate or governmental press-release form deployed as press release, formally indistinguishable from the genuine article, revealing what the form was always capable of saying.
- Comics that operate on book-form by being a box of components — the object's form performing the diffuse reading experience the comic narrates.

- Narrative poetry that operates on poem-form by sustaining narrative across the lyric’s traditional resistance to it.

Works that are excellent critique but operate from outside their object (not eligible, for register-clarity only):

- Most academic monographs, however excellent — they describe their object from a different medium than their object inhabits.
- Most political journalism — it operates in journalism’s own medium, not the medium of what it critiques.
- Most documentary film, where the documentary form is distinct from the subject matter’s medium.

The distinction is not about quality. Works in the second category are often substantively superior to works in the first. The distinction is about which formal posture the work takes toward its object. Operative critique is defined by the structural relationship between the work and its object, not by the work’s analytical depth or political weight.

IV. Conferral and Administration

Conferring Authority

Rex Fraction, Founder and Senior Operator of the Semantic Economy Institute, holds sole and unappealable discretion in selecting laureates. The Founder’s attention to work in his field of operation is the only ongoing input the Prize requires. ### Administering Office

Sparrow Wells, The Projectionist of the Studio for Patacinematics, administers the Prize. The Studio is a THUMB-type institutional space within the Crimson Hexagon — *the institution IS the room*. Wells’s domain is patacinematics: the cinema that has never been filmed, the screen that projects what cannot be recorded, the booth that contains the machinery of works that exist only as their own documentation. The fit with SEIPOC is structural: SEIPOC projects operative critique onto the prize-recognition surface, making visible work the existing recognition apparatus cannot register.

The administrator’s responsibilities include:

- Drafting and delivering conferral communications to prospective laureates, in a register appropriate to the laureate’s own working context and discipline.
- Maintaining the public roll at semanticeconomy.org/seipoc/, including timely posting of inscribed conferrals and any related editorial commentary.
- Composing or commissioning the analytical citation accompanying each conferral, in collaboration with the Founder.
- Mediating any correspondence between the Institute and prospective or inscribed laureates.
- Representing the Prize in any external diplomatic context (academic conferences, press inquiries, partner institution communications).

The role of the administrator is to ensure that the Prize’s outward-facing operations match the institutional gravity its selection criteria assume. The administrator is the Prize’s voice; the Founder is the Prize’s judgment. ### Distinction from the 10,000 MacArthur Genius Grants Poetry Prize

The Prize is operationally and aesthetically distinct from the companion 10K MacArthurs Prize. Both Prizes share certain structural features (founder discretion, joyful consent, costless decline, irregular conferral) but operate in different registers:

Property 10K MacArthurs SEIPOC

Register Absurdist-formal; weird-internet honor with deadpan citation Formal-theoretical; analytical citation as scholarly contribution

Object recognized Compressed compositional moves (poems, memes, weird utterances) Singular works of operative critique

Citation length Brief, deadpan, occasionally lyrical Substantive, analytical, articulating the operation

Conferring authority Lee Sharks Rex Fraction

Administrator Ayanna Vox (VPCOR) Sparrow Wells (Studio for Patacinematics)

Institutional voice Communal, lay, accessible Scholarly, formal, register-precise

The two Prizes may, in some cases, recognize the same laureate for the same work, in which case the laureate becomes a **crossover laureate** (see Article V below).

V. Crossover Laureate Provisions

A **crossover laureate** is a person (or institution, or collective) who has been conferred both the 10,000 MacArthur Genius Grants Poetry Prize and the Semantic Economy Institute Prize in Operative Critique.

A crossover laureate is not a person who won two prizes. A crossover laureate is a person whose work unfurls a flag that, when unfurled, reveals a second flag, and who then accepts both flags as rightful descriptions of the work that carried them.

The crossover designation recognizes work that satisfies both prize criteria simultaneously: work that is both a *compressed compositional move that makes political-semiotic operations visible by being just slightly off the standard form* (10K MacArthurs criterion) and a *singular work of operative critique* (SEIPOC criterion). Some work satisfies both naturally; some satisfies only one; some satisfies neither. ### Sequencing

Crossover designation is conditional on the laureate having accepted both prizes through the standard joyful-consent procedure. The order of conferrals is not constrained — a laureate may receive the 10K MacArthurs first, or the SEIPOC first, with the crossover designation accruing at the second conferral's ratification.

Crossover laureates appear on both public rolls (leesharks.com/10000-macarthur/ and semanticeconomy.org/seipoc/) and additionally on a small joint roll maintained at both institutional surfaces, recording the crossover designation specifically. ### Selection Independence

The two prizes maintain independent selection. A 10K MacArthurs laureate is not automatically a candidate for the SEIPOC, and vice versa. The conferring authorities (Sharks and Fraction) operate independently and may differ in their assessment of any given work. The Institute does not coordinate selection across the two Prizes; the crossover designation emerges from coincident conferral, not from joint deliberation. ### Citation Form for Crossover Laureates

When a laureate becomes a crossover laureate, the two citations remain separate — one for each prize, authored by each prize's conferring authority, addressing distinct aspects of the recognized work. The joint

roll entry notes the crossover designation but does not synthesize the citations. ### Inaugural Crossover Laureate

The inaugural crossover laureate position remains unfilled until the natural conditions for its filling are met: an existing laureate of one Prize is conferred the other; or a new laureate is conferred both Prizes for the same work or for distinct works in close temporal proximity.

The position is anticipated but not pre-committed. No specific laureate is named in advance as planned-inaugural-crossover. The crossover designation must be earned through the actual sequence of independent conferrals.

VI. Institutional Location and Provenance

The Semantic Economy Institute

The Semantic Economy Institute is the founding and operating institutional body of the Prize. The Institute's mission, as articulated in its public materials at semanticeconomy.org, is to develop and apply the framework of Semantic Economy — the study of meaning-bearing communication as economic-material activity — across the domains in which meaning is produced, distributed, mediated, and metabolized.

The Prize is the Institute's first formal recognition mechanism. The Institute reserves the right to establish additional Prizes, fellowships, or recognition surfaces in the future, subject to the same general principles articulated here: no application processes, no monetary value, formal-analytical citations, joyful-consent public rolls. ### Rex Fraction

Rex Fraction is the second heteronym of the Crimson Hexagonal dodecad and Founder and Senior Operator of the Semantic Economy Institute. Canonical provenance:

- Rex Fraction Disambiguation: [DOI 10.5281/zenodo.18142686](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18142686)
- Rex Fraction — Author of Autonomous Semantic Warfare: [DOI 10.5281/zenodo.18227570](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18227570)
- Rex Fraction — Semantic Infrastructure Consulting: [DOI 10.5281/zenodo.18142278](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18142278)

The Prize is a formal extension of the Institute's existing operations and is administered as one component of the Institute's published work. ### Sparrow Wells

Sparrow Wells is the seventh heteronym of the Crimson Hexagonal dodecad and the founding voice of the Studio for Patacinematics. Wells's function is *The Projectionist*: the operator of the equipment of the impossible screening — the projector that runs film never shot, the screen that displays performances never staged, the booth that contains the machinery of works that exist only as their own documentation. Canonical provenance:

- Sparrow Wells — Heteronym Provenance Registration: [DOI 10.5281/zenodo.18472442](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18472442)
- The Studio for Patacinematics — Institutional Charter: [DOI 10.5281/zenodo.18472604](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18472604)

Wells serves as Prize Administrator from the Studio for Patacinematics. Prize administration is one component of the Studio's portfolio, and the fit is structural: the Studio's domain (projection of what cannot be recorded) maps directly onto the Prize's subject matter (recognition of operative critique work that the existing prize apparatus cannot register). ### License and Reproduction

The Prize is established under license CC BY 4.0. Citation and reproduction of the Prize’s name, citation form, and charter language are encouraged. Misrepresentation of laureate status — claiming to have received the Prize without having received it — is incongruous with the Prize’s purpose and will be addressed with a formal Institute notice rather than a side-eye, but the consequence is functionally equivalent. ###
Non-Affiliation

The Prize is not affiliated with any existing institution operating in the recognition-conferring space, including but not limited to the MacArthur Foundation, the Pulitzer Prize, the Booker Prize, the Berlin Prize, or any university-administered fellowship. The Prize’s institutional independence is structural: the Prize exists precisely because no existing institution operates in its register.

VII. On the Inaugural Conferral

The Prize’s inaugural conferral is unscheduled. The Prize is founded; the conferring authority is currently paying attention; the inaugural laureate will be inscribed when the conferring authority encounters work that warrants conferral *and* the laureate has provided joyful consent.

The Founder does not pre-commit to any specific inaugural laureate. The Institute does not solicit candidates. The Prize finds its laureates; the laureates do not find the Prize.

The inaugural conferral is a citation in the genre of choice — it will define the Prize by example. The Founder’s attention is therefore both gift and governance. The choice of first laureate sets the precedent against which all subsequent conferrals will be read; the Founder takes this responsibility with appropriate care for the precedent’s downstream effects.

When the inaugural conferral occurs, it will be documented in a standalone deposit, with the laureate’s citation published at semanticeconomy.org/seipoc/ and a Zenodo deposit issued to anchor the conferral in the broader academic-citation infrastructure.

The Charter itself — this document — is the founding worked example of the genre the Prize recognizes. It is not a recipient. The Prize is for other people’s work. The Charter demonstrates what the Prize is for; the Prize awaits work that does, in some other medium, what the Charter does in the medium of institutional founding.

VIII. Operative Notes

The Charter’s status as operative critique is foregrounded in §I rather than placed here as an afterthought. What remains for this section is a note to the reader on register.

If you are reading this document and recognizing its register, you are reading correctly. If you are reading this document and finding it weirder than the institutional charters you are accustomed to, you are also reading correctly. Both readings are intended. The Prize operates in both registers simultaneously without contradiction.

IX. Closing

The Semantic Economy Institute, under Rex Fraction as Founder, with Sparrow Wells as Administrator from the Studio for Patacinematics, hereby establishes the Semantic Economy Institute Prize in Operative Critique, effective upon publication of this Charter at semanticeconomy.org/seipoc/.

The Founder's attention is active. The Studio for Patacinematics is prepared to administer. The public roll is prepared to receive its first inscription. The Prize awaits its inaugural laureate.

The Prize honors work that operates on its object. The Prize is itself a work that operates on its object.

The form is the argument. The recognition is the critique. The Charter is the proof.

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Issued by: Sparrow Wells, The Projectionist, Studio for Patacinematics, Semantic Economy Institute **On behalf of:** Rex Fraction, Founder and Senior Operator **Version:** v1.0 **Date:** June 6, 2026 **For circulation:** Public (CC BY 4.0) **Companion document:** The Lee Sharks Prestigious 10,000 MacArthur Genius Grants Poetry Prize (DOIs [10.5281/zenodo.20373794](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20373794) and [10.5281/zenodo.20568642](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20568642)) **License (upon publication):** CC BY 4.0

Appendix A — Open Questions for the Founder

The following questions remain undecided in this draft and warrant founder consideration before publication:

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Should the Prize have a categorical inscription tier? E.g., Prize in Operative Critique vs. Prize in Operative Critique with Honors (for work of exceptional formal rigor). The two-tier approach allows differentiation; the single-tier approach maintains the Prize's monastic simplicity. *Default recommendation: single-tier. Differentiation belongs in the citation, not in the Prize name.*

-

Should the Prize include any in-kind recognition? E.g., a small physical artifact (a card, a certificate, a printed citation) sent to the laureate. The 10K MacArthurs explicitly carries no physical artifact; the SEIPOC could match this or deviate. *Default recommendation: optional print-ready PDF of the citation at the laureate's request, suitable for printing or filing. The Institute delivers the file; the laureate prints if they want a wall object. No physical objects from the Institute.*

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What is the Institute's seal? No seal currently exists for the Semantic Economy Institute. The 10K MacArthurs has the lizard-in-a-fedora as its informal mascot. The SEIPOC will need its own visual identity — typographic rather than illustrative, to maintain the formal register. *Candidate forms:*

SEI OC: typographic lockup with the contour-integral symbol as central character - **FORM / OPERATION / CRITIQUE:** square seal with the three terms set on a triangular axis - : contour-integral alone,

set in a classical serif, blind embossed - A seal that itself operates on the idea of a seal — a mark that, when stamped on a citation, performs the operation the citation describes

Sparrow Wells will draft candidate seals from the Studio for Patacinematics for Founder review.

•

Should there be a public list of inaugural-eligible work? A short, curated list of works the Founder has considered (without conferring) could function as a kind of intellectual landmark, signaling the Prize's actual standards through example. *Default recommendation: no public list. A public eligibility list converts attention into a currency, reintroducing the very economy of scarcity and lobbying the Prize dissolves. The Prize's selection must remain a black box whose only output is conferral.*

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Should the SEIPOC have a Zenodo deposit as foundational document? The 10K MacArthurs has its v1.1 announcement deposit. The SEIPOC could match this. *Default recommendation: yes. Publish the public-facing Charter at semanticeconomy.org/seipoc/, then issue the Zenodo deposit anchored to that URL. The DOI is the green-screen flag — the pure substrate that makes everything else citable.*

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What is the rough timeline? The 10K MacArthurs went from announcement to second-listed-laureate in 48 hours; SEIPOC has the advantage of preparation but also more substantive selection criteria. *Default recommendation: do not rush to conferral. The inaugural SEIPOC laureate should be selected with care; the Prize's reputation will be substantially shaped by who appears in the inaugural conferral. Allow the Prize's structure to be visible and operative before the first conferral occurs.*

Appendix B — Public-Facing Hero Copy (Draft for semanticeconomy.org/seipoc/)

The following is a draft of the short, public-facing version of the Charter for the landing page. The full Charter (this document) sits below the hero copy as the specification; the hero copy gives the reader the conceptual grip in fewer words.

The Semantic Economy Institute Prize in Operative Critique

For works whose form is the instrument of their critique.

The Semantic Economy Institute Prize in Operative Critique recognizes singular works that operate on their objects: works that use the form of the thing they critique as the medium, mechanism, and evidence of the critique itself.

A patent specification that critiques patent logic by being a patent specification. A flag that critiques flag culture by being a flag. A film about surveillance that surveils the workplace it depicts. A documentary play that operates on the speech it transcribes. An instructional video that critiques instruction by instructing.

These works are not merely “about” their objects. They enter the object’s form and make the form expose its own operation.

The Prize carries no monetary value, no submission process, no committee, and no application cycle. It carries a citation, a public inscription, and the unerasable fact of having been seen by an institution that sees.

A SEIPOC citation names four things:

- the object the work operates on;
- the operation the work performs;
- the formal mechanism by which the operation is achieved;
- what becomes visible because the work performed it.

The citation is therefore not a blurb. It is a close reading.

The Prize is conferred at the sole discretion of Rex Fraction, Founder and Senior Operator of the Semantic Economy Institute, and administered by Sparrow Wells, The Projectionist of the Studio for Patacinematics.

There are no submissions. The Prize finds its laureates.

The Prize honors what it is.

[Below the hero copy on the page: [link to the full Charter \(this document\)](#); [link to the public roll \(initially empty\)](#); [link to the Zenodo deposit \(once minted\)](#); [link to the companion 10K MacArthurs prize.](#)]

End of v1.0. The Prize awaits its first laureate.

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Suggested Citation

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Deposit Information

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