2026 Application Guidelines
McKnight Fellowships for Visual Artists

Administered by the Minneapolis College of Art and Design
www.mcad.edu/mcknight

FELLOWSHIP OVERVIEW

The goal of the McKnight Visual Artist Fellowships program is to identify talented Minnesota visual artists whose work is of exceptional artistic merit and who are beyond an early career stage. The fellowship program supports established artists by providing significant financial assistance, by creating opportunities to meet with local and national art professionals, by organizing a McKnight Discussion Series, and by working with the fellows to create an individualized professional development plan.

The MCAD-administered fellowship program uses an independent jury of three arts professionals to competitively award six fellowships. The fellowship runs for two years, June 1, 2026–May 31, 2028, and includes:

- $25,000 unrestricted fellowship funding may be used to enhance any aspect of the artist's life, such as overhead costs, the purchase of materials, travel, and other living expenses.
- $3,000 Professional Development Funds may be used for publications, equipment/material purchases, travel expenses, workshops, etc.
- Professional documentation of artwork.
- Access to MCAD's facilities, library, and ½ off tuition for Continuing Education courses (one per semester).
- 5 studio visits total. 4 from national critics/curators/arts professionals (selected by the cohort) that will meet with each fellow individually for a one-hour visit (2 in 2027 and 2 in 2028) and 1 individualized visit that the fellow selects from either a local curator or virtual visit.
- Participation in a 1–2 week artist residency at one of twenty partnering residency programs with the Artists Communities Alliance (ACA).
- Eight hours of consulting time, support, and resources from Springboard for the Arts.

DEADLINES & KEY DATES

Application opens:
Friday, February 6, 2026

Deadline:
Friday, March 20, 2026 at noon (CT)

INFO SESSIONS

Application Overview
(with Program Director Keisha Williams)
Pre-recorded on application site

Work Samples, Statements, and Application Strategies
(with 2025 McKnight fellow, Laura Wennstrom)
Pre-recorded on application site

SUPPORT

Applicants are welcome to schedule one-on-one meetings (via Zoom or over the phone) with Program Director Keisha Williams or Fellowship Coordinator Melanie Pankau before submitting their applications online. In order to provide cohesive feedback, applicants must email the fellowship staff their application materials (ten work samples, resume, artist statement) one day prior to their scheduled meeting. To schedule a meeting please email gallery@mcad.edu. *Please note we will not be able to schedule one-on-one meetings the week prior to the deadline (March 16–20).*

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The intent of the McKnight Artist and Culture Bearers Fellowship is to recognize and support artists and culture bearers who are beyond emerging and have sustained experience in their area of practice. Fellows demonstrate achievement, commitment and high level proficiency in artistic and/or culture bearer practice that contributes to their field and that impacts and benefits people in Minnesota. Artists who are eligible for these fellowships:

- **MN Resident:** Have or maintain MN residency for at least one year prior to application (i.e. since March 20, 2025) and for the duration of the fellowship years.
- **Mid-Career Artist:** Have at least eight (8) years of experience recognized through publicly sharing their work, exhibitions, publications, performances, screenings, residencies, awarded fellowships/grants, etc. Exhibitions undertaken as part of a degree-seeking program at an institution of higher learning will not be considered (i.e., senior or thesis exhibitions, juried student shows, etc.).
- **Create work that falls within a fine arts context:** The "visual arts" category is broad in scope and encompasses areas of painting, sculpture, drawing, comic/sequential art, photography, printmaking, mixed media, installation, multimedia, film, video, sound, moving image, or animation.
- **Program Participation:** Are willing to participate in all aspects of the fellowship program, including fellow meetings, studio visits by art critics.
- **Exclusive Application:** Can only apply to one 2026 McKnight Artist Fellowship in any artistic discipline (i.e. visual arts, ceramics, book arts, fiber arts, printmaking, media arts, community engaged, choreographers, dancers, composers, musicians, playwrights, theater arts, writers, cultural bearers).
- **Sit Out Period of Five Years:** Have not been a recipient of a McKnight Artist Fellowship within any artistic discipline in the last five award years. Anyone who received a fellowship in any discipline in or before 2020 is eligible to apply.
- **Demonstrate growth** and ongoing artistry since their most recent McKnight Artist Fellowship.
- **No Conflict of Interest:** Applicant is NOT staff, board, or immediate family of the McKnight Foundation or administrative staff of the fellowships program at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design.
- **Not a full-time student:** Applicants and fellows cannot be enrolled full-time in a degree-seeking academic program.

SELECTION PROCESS

Jury Panel:
A three-member panel consisting of experienced and well-respected arts professionals selects the McKnight Fellows. The jurors are curators, directors, art critics, artists, and educators with an appreciation for and knowledge of diverse aesthetic perspectives and contemporary art practices. All panelists are from outside Minnesota. Panelists, insofar as possible, represent a diversity of age, ethnicity, gender, ability, and geography.

The McKnight Visual Arts Fellowship panelists remain anonymous during the selection process. The names of the panelists are revealed once the fellowship recipients are announced.

Review Process:
Applicants are evaluated and selected based on the quality of their work as evidenced in submitted materials, most importantly work samples. Consideration is given to *accomplishments to date* as well as promise for continued development and the impact the fellowship will have on the artist. The panel will also be asked to consider the breadth of artistic practices among Minnesota artists, which include a wide range of media, aesthetics, and traditions that might be influenced by ethnicity, gender, abilities, and geography.

First Round: The jury panel reviews all submitted work samples viewed on a monitor for the first round. Their decisions will be tabulated and the 25-30 applicants with the highest numerical score will move onto the next round.

Second Round: In a conference call the three panelists discuss the top 25-30 applicants. Those applicants receiving the greatest interest will be contacted to schedule studio visits. Email notification will be sent to all applicants not progressing to the final round by Friday, May 1.

Studio Visits for Finalists: The Program Director will notify by phone the artists identified for final review by Friday, May 1. Jurors will conduct twelve in-person studio visits on Thursday, May 14-Friday, May 15.

Notification: Upon completion of the studio visits, the Program Director will call the six fellowship recipients and email the other finalists of the results. The Program Office will notify all applicants via email of the jurors' final decision by Tuesday, May 27.

MCAD fellowship staff who oversee the McKnight Fellowship program do not contribute to the decision-making process or the selection of the McKnight Visual Artist Fellows. The role of the staff is to provide clarity for the review process and to ensure that the panel review and discussion proceed in accordance with the program's guidelines.

APPLICATION MATERIALS

Application link:
https://mcad.submittable.com/submit

Contact Information and Questionnaire Form

Proof of MN residency

- Applicant must have or maintain MN residency for at least one year prior to application deadline (since March 20, 2025). Please upload a copy of one of the following: MN driver's license (or MN identification card); a utility bill in the applicant's name; lease; or other supporting documents.

10 Work Samples:

- You must submit work samples in any combination of image, audio, video, and pdf formats. Review the guidelines for information on file types, sizes, lengths, and total number of work samples.

- **You must submit no more than 10 files or the equivalent.**

  1 Work Sample is equivalent to:
  - 1 minute of video (415 MB)
  - 1 still image (5 MB)
  - 1 page of PDF (5 MB)
  - 1 minute of audio (415 MB)

  For example, you can submit a single 10-minute video, or 10 images, or 10 pdf pages. Or you can submit a combination. For example, you can submit 2 minutes of a video, 5 pages from an artist book as a pdf, and 3 images—this equals 10 work samples. The total amount submitted must equal no more than 10, which may not necessarily be how many files you upload.

  Recommendations based on previous juror feedback:
  - *If you are submitting multiple bodies of work, please limit to 2-3 projects max.*
  - *If you are submitting videos, juror attention wanes after 3 min.*

Images

- Maximum of 10 images
- Images must be in JPEG format.
- Do not submit composite images (i.e. multiple views of the same work at different angles, multiple installation views, or a full view with a detail view in the same work sample) You can submit work that is a diptych or triptych.
- Individual files should not exceed 5 MB.
- Upload files in the order you would like them to be viewed. Each juror reviews applications individually, one image at a time, on a personal computer monitor.
- Label files this way: 1_title.jpg (For example, 1_Stars.jpg)
- Provide: title, year, medium, dimension (h x w x d) in inches.
- Optional 100-word max. annotation describing the medium, context, or installation of a particular work. Info should provide the juror with a greater understanding of what they are viewing. Avoid interpreting the work for the jurors.

APPLICATION MATERIALS (cont.)

Videos

Videos submissions are for artists using film, video, moving image, animation, paging through an artist book, sound as their main medium or as part of an installation. PROCESS DOCUMENTATION VIDEOS, STUDIO or GALLERY WALK-THROUGHS, ARTIST INTERVIEWS ARE NOT ACCEPTED.

- Videos will be accepted as mp4, mov, avi, mpg, 3gp, flv, webm, wmv, mkv, or m4v files.
- Audio will be accepted as aac, aiff, flac, m4a, mp3, ogg, wav, wma files.
- Individual files should not exceed 415 MB.
- Upload each video as one work sample and in the order you would like them to be viewed. Please leave ample time for the upload.
- Upload either a video clip or full video. For full videos identify a start and end cue point per work sample for the panel to watch. Cued sections may equal up to 10 minutes total. (Example: 1# video is 3 min, 2# video is 2 min, #3 video is 1 min, #4 video is 2.5 min, #5 video is 1.5 min. totaling 10 min.)
- Provide: title, year, medium, duration. Indicate whether or not there is sound.
- Optional 100-word annotation describing the content, context, or site of a particular work. Info should provide the juror with a greater understanding of what they are viewing. Avoid interpreting the work for the jurors.
- Because of the blind jury process, the artist's name should not be included in the video submission or credit line.

PDF

For artists' work that involves text, artist books, graphic novels, comic/sequential works, book spreads, didactics, or texts that are unreadable in the images submitted.

- Maximum of 10 pages. (Example: one pdf is 6 pages of a graphic novel and second pdf is 4 pages from a comic book)
- Individual files should not exceed 5 MB.
- Label file this way: 1_PDF.pdf; 2_PDF.pdf

Résumé (list format)

- Upload a current résumé that highlights your professional accomplishments and achievements, including exhibitions, awards, and grants. (There is no page limit.)
- Label file this way: Resume.pdf
- DO NOT include your name, home or studio address, phone number or e-mail address on the résumé.
- Information on preparing a professional artist résumé is available at the College Art Association web site: http://www.collegeart.org/standards-and-guidelines/guidelines/resume

Artist Statement

- Upload work sample/artist statement. (500 words max.)
- Label file this way: Artist_Statement.pdf
- DO NOT include your name, home/studio address, phone number, or email address.
- The work sample/artist statement should directly speak to the images you are submitting. It may also provide information about your background, the development or current direction of your work, or other information you would like to present to the panel.

MCKNIGHT ARTIST FELLOWSHIPS COMMUNITY VALUES STATEMENT

Welcome to the McKnight Artist Fellowships community! The McKnight Foundation and the administering partners for the McKnight Artist Fellowships are committed to creating and supporting an artistic community in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. The community of the McKnight Artist Fellowships includes people who engage with the fellowships program whether as applicants, fellows, panelists, contractors, collaborators, fellowships administrators, and staff of the McKnight Foundation and partnering organizations. As a community, we commit to creating and maintaining relationships that are free from harm, prejudice, and harassment. Community members agree to communicate directly and transparently regarding issues of conduct that could negatively impact the well-being of participating members and organizations. In the case of an accusation, legal action, or conviction, the McKnight Foundation and its fellowship program partners may gather and assess relevant information. If deemed necessary, the McKnight Foundation and its fellowship program partners may take administrative action up to and including the recommendation of participation in reconciliation or restorative justice processes; disqualification of an application; the termination of a contract; and the recall and/or termination of a fellowship. This community will be what we make it and our aim is to collectively create an experience in which all artists and members of the McKnight Artist Fellowships community thrive.