



2026 Application Guidelines

McKnight Fellowships for Book Artists

Administered by Minnesota Center for Book Arts (MCBA)

Deadline: Friday March 6th, 2026 at (11:59PM CT)

Application Link: <https://mnbookarts.submittable.com/submit>



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I. Fellowship Timeline

December 5, 2025–March 6, 2026

Application Cycle Open

Wednesday, January 21, 2026, 6PM–7PM CT

Information Session via Zoom (Program overview and Artist Statements)

(recorded session will be posted on MCBA's website):

<https://www.mnbookarts.org/mcknight-fellowships/>

Tuesday, February 24, 2026, 12PM–1PM CT

Ask Me Anything with Director of Artist

Programs via Zoom

<https://www.mnbookarts.org/mcknight-fellowships/>

Friday, March 6, 2026, 11:59PM CT

Application Cycle Closes

March 10–April 10, 2026

Jurors review all applications

Monday, April 13th, 2026

Applicants will be notified if they will be moving on to Round 2 as a finalist or if their application has been declined this year

Saturday, May 2 & Sunday, May 3, 2026

Virtual studio visits with finalists

Monday, May 4, 2026

Finalists will be notified of application status.

Recipients will be notified by phone call

Friday, May 29, 2026

Recipients announced to the public

August 1, 2026–July 31, 2027

2026 Fellowship Year

II. Fellowship Overview

Founded on the belief that Minnesota thrives when its artists thrive, the McKnight Foundation's arts program is one of the oldest and largest of its kind in the country. Support for individual working Minnesota artists has been a cornerstone of the program since it began in 1981. The McKnight Artist Fellowships Program provides annual, unrestricted cash awards to outstanding beyond emerging Minnesota artists in 15 different creative disciplines. Program partner organizations administer the fellowships and structure them to respond to the unique challenges of different disciplines. Currently the foundation contributes about \$1.7 million per year to its statewide fellowships. For more information, visit mcknight.org/artistfellowships.

The McKnight Fellowship for Book Artists supports the conviction that the arts cannot flourish or enhance community life without the ideas, energy, and drive of individual artists, and that artists cannot make these contributions without unfettered creative time.

The goal of the McKnight Fellowship for Book Artists program is to identify talented Minnesota based book artists whose work is of exceptional artistic merit and who are at a career stage that is beyond emerging. The fellowship program supports two established artists per year by providing significant financial assistance, creating opportunities to meet with local and national art professionals, organizing a panel featuring the fellows and invited critics, and working with the fellows to create an individualized professional development plan.

The MCBA-administered fellowship program utilizes an independent jury of three arts professionals to competitively award two fellowships. The fellowships run for one year, from **August 2026–July 2027** and includes:

- \$25,000 (unrestricted) Fellowship funding to allow artists to set aside time for study, reflection, opportunities, new projects, experimentation, and exploration. Awards are subject to state and federal tax guidelines.
- Two virtual and one in person studio visits with a selected art critic/curator/arts professional.
- \$1,000 travel stipend to attend a book arts conference such as CODEX, College Book Art Association (CBAA), New York Art Book Fair, etc.
- Opportunity to participate in a public panel discussion with selected national artist or critic/curator in the field to develop a dialogue related to their art practice.
- \$1,000 educational stipend for MCBA workshops or tutorials.
- Two years of 24/7 studio access to MCBA's letterpress, screenprinting, papermaking, and bookbinding studios and equipment.
- Opportunity to attend an artist residency with stipend following the fellowship year.
- Group exhibition in MCBA's Main Gallery.

III. Application Process

Jury Panel: A three-member panel consisting of experienced and well-respected arts professionals selects the McKnight Book Art Fellows. The jurors are curators, artists (within the book arts field), directors, art critics, and educators with an appreciation for and knowledge of diverse aesthetic perspectives and contemporary art practices. All panelists are from outside the state of Minnesota. Panelists, insofar as possible, will represent a diversity of ages, ethnicity, gender, and geography. The McKnight Book 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, with most importance given to 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, and geography.

First Round: The jury panel reviews submissions in the form of digital images viewed remotely on their own monitor for the first round. The jury panel will score each applicant numerically. In a conference call, the three panelists will discuss the top applicants to determine which applicants will move on to the next round. (Please note that juror monitors are not calibrated). Applicants will be notified of application status on **Monday, April 13, 2026**.

Second Round: Those applicants receiving the greatest interest will be contacted to schedule virtual studio visits with the jury panel.

Studio Visits for Finalists: The Director Artist Programs will notify the artists identified for final review by **Monday, April 13, 2026**. Jurors will conduct virtual studio visits between **Saturday, May 2 & Sunday, May 3, 2026**. The Director of Artist Programs will send detailed instructions for how to best conduct a virtual visit.

Notification: Upon completion of the studio visits, the Director of Artist Programs will contact the two fellowship recipients and email the other finalists of the jurors' final decision by **Monday, May 4, 2026**.

MCBA staff who oversee the McKnight Fellowship program do not contribute to the decision-making process or the selection of the McKnight Book Arts 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.

IV. Eligibility Requirements

Applicants who do not meet all of the following criteria and expectations will not be considered and should not apply.

The intent of this program is to recognize and support beyond emerging artists living and working in Minnesota who 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 this fellowships:**

- Create work that falls within a book arts context. Book arts is a family of processes that includes but is not limited to letterpress printing, screen printing, intaglio, bookbinding, box-making, papermaking, or paper decoration. Book art, broadly defined, includes work that embodies narrative, instruction, reference, mapping, guides, documentation, and more. It is work that engages the viewer and propels the experience forward through narrative, sequencing, spatial elements, visual or verbal language, temporal, mechanical, aural, typographic, symbolic or material means. As an interdisciplinary art form, book arts may include other mediums such as photography, other forms of printmaking, installation, sculpture, and film.
- Are at least 18 years old and a resident of Minnesota, as determined by voting and/or payment of taxes in the state. Applicant must also have a street mailing address within Minnesota to be eligible to apply.
- Have lived in the state of Minnesota at minimum the twelve months prior to the application deadline (**March 5th, 2025**) and will live in Minnesota for the duration of the fellowship period.
- Be able to provide evidence of professional achievements, such as inclusion in regional or national museum and gallery exhibitions and receipt of other awards, grants, and fellowships.
- Have at least eight years of professional experience, preferably in group and/or solo shows. *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.*
- Sustained experience in book arts and demonstrate achievement, commitment to the field, and a high level of proficiency
- Be willing to participate in all aspects of the fellowship program, including meetings, studio visits by art critics, and a public panel with visiting critics.

Applicants may not:

- Submit works in which the only means of expression is theatre-based performance, ceramics, printmaking, fiber arts, film, or video (exclusively). Other McKnight Fellowships support artists working in these areas. For more information about McKnight Fellowships, visit: <https://www.mcknight.org/programs/arts/the-mcknight-artist-fellowships/>
- Be enrolled in a degree-seeking program, either part-time or full-time, at an institution of higher learning.
- Have received a McKnight Fellowship in any discipline less than five years ago (here defined as from the beginning of previous fellowship year to current application deadline). Anyone who received a fellowship in any discipline in or before **2021** is eligible to apply for the 2026 awards.
- Apply to more than one of the McKnight Fellowships programs in a given year. Doing so will disqualify applicants from consideration in any program in that fellowship year. For example, if you applied to the McKnight Printmaking Fellowship at Highpoint for the 2026 cycle, you will not be eligible to apply for the McKnight Fellowships for Book Arts at MCBA.
- Work as staff or board or be an immediate family member of staff or board of the McKnight Foundation.
- Work as staff or board, or be an immediate family member of staff or board at Minnesota Center for Book Arts.

Applying as a Collaborative Team

While McKnight Fellowships for Book Arts are traditionally awarded to individual artists, we recognize that there are many contemporary artists who work as collaborative teams. If you are applying as a collaborative, make sure each artist involved meets the eligibility requirements. The images you submit should be of work created by the collaborative, not by the artists individually. Please include one résumé for the collaborative, plus one résumé for each of its members, in a single multi-page document. Do not use your names, rather, distinguish between the résumés by using generic titles, such as, “Artists A and B,” “Artist A,” and “Artist B.”

V. Application Instructions

Application Deadline: Friday, March 6th, 2026, (11:59PM CT)

Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Organize your application materials. We strongly recommend that you assemble all of the application components in advance. Please keep your name off of all application materials (an artist signature on the work is acceptable).

[Click this link to begin the application process.](https://mnbookarts.submittable.com/submit) Please note that the link will only be active during the specified application period: **December 5, 2025–March 6th, 2026** at 11:59PM CST. (<https://mnbookarts.submittable.com/submit>)

Create an account for your online application with Submittable: On the MCBA Submittable page, which contains information about Submittable, click “submit” next to the McKnight Fellowship for Book Artists form. Scroll down to the bottom of the page to create a Submittable account or to log in if you already have an account. To create your account, you will need to provide your email address, a password, and your first and last names. Once you create your account, you will be directed to the “McKnight Fellowships for Book Arts Application” page. To enter the McKnight Fellowship application, click “Continue.” If you already have an account, once you sign in you will be taken directly to the application. *If you have any issues logging into Submittable, please contact their customer service directly.*

Complete your application: Fill out your contact information. Upload your application materials. You can “Save” your application and log out of your account to edit it at another time. Before submitting, you must agree to the Terms of Use. When you are ready to submit, click the “Apply” button. Once you have submitted your application, you will no longer be able to edit. You will receive a confirmation email soon after your application is received.

All applications must include the following:

1. **Contact Information Form.** **Required fields will be marked with an asterisk**
2. **Proof of MN residency:** Applicant must have maintained MN residency for at least one year prior to application deadline (**March 2025**). Please upload a copy of one of the following: MN driver’s license (or MN identification card) must be dated on or before March 2025; a utility bill in applicant’s name; lease; tribal ID; or other supporting documents. If using a utility bill or lease, a copy must be dated from the beginning of the residency requirement (March 2025).
3. **Résumé:** Submit a current résumé that highlights your professional accomplishments and achievements, including exhibitions, awards, and grants. Do not include your name, home or studio address, phone number or e-mail address on the résumé. Label and upload your resume like this: Resume.PDF
4. **Ten Work Samples:** Applicants must include clear and professional work samples that have been made within the last 10 years. Works samples can be any combination of image, audio, video, and pdf formats. **One work sample is equivalent to 1 minute of audio, 1 minute of video, 1 still image, 1 page written text in PDF format.** You may include full and detail shots, but each file counts as one of the ten total work samples. Upload samples in the order you would like them to be experienced by the jurors. Your samples should be rotated to view correctly when opened. No composite images or explanatory text on images is permitted. Each juror reviews applications individually, one sample at a time, on a personal computer monitor. Omit your name from each image (artist signature on the work is acceptable).

Work Sample Specifications:

- 1 minute of video (415 MB max)
- 1 still image (5 MB max)
- 1 page of PDF (5 MB max)
- 1 minute of audio (415 MB max)

To clarify, you can submit a single 10 minute video, or 10 images, or 10 pdf written pages. Or you can submit a combination. For example, you can submit 2 minutes of video, 5 pages of written text excerpts from an artist book, 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. You do not need to split up a 3 minute video, but a 3 minute video equals 3 work samples.

Fields are provided for image title, year, medium, dimensions and an options 100 word description. Use the description to provided further necessary information that will help the jurors understand the piece. Avoid overly interpreting the work for the jurors.

Label each work sample: Work sample_1_TitleofWork (Example: Work sample_1_Waterfall.jpg, Work sample_2_Moon.jpg)

5. **Artist Statement:** Submit a current artist statement about your work (one page, **300** word limit). Do not include your name, home or studio address, phone number or e-mail address on the statement. Label and upload your file like this: Artist_Statement.PDF

The Artist Statement should address your background, importance of book arts in your practice, themes, material choices, etc. The Artist Statement should directly address the work in your images in the application

6. **Statement of Intent** limited to one page (**400** words max) Please address at least one of the following questions:

What is the future direction of your work?

What will you do with the funds?

How will the fellowship benefit your practice?

Why is this a pivotal moment in your practice where receiving this fellowship will make a difference?

Strong Artist Statements and Statements of Intent work together to **describe your artistic practice in relation to the images you are submitting** and **how the fellowship will affect you and your work.**

VI. Artist Resources

Photo documentation resources:

Books/Online Articles: Numerous books and articles are available on the subject of digital photography and imaging. A trip to the local bookstore or camera shop, a visit to amazon.com, or an Internet search for something like “how to document artwork” or “scanning artwork” should discover plenty of information sources.

Photo Services:

FedEx & Kinko's are probably the most widespread and one-stop option, these stores have computers with Adobe Photoshop and Microsoft Word, can scan your slides or photographs and burn CDs. Visit www.fedex.com to find the location nearest you.

Photo Editing:

Adobe (<http://www.adobe.com>) currently provides two photo editing products, Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Elements, that are very popular among today's designers and artists. Adobe Elements, the less-expensive option, provides a free 30-day trial if you would like to try the program before purchasing. **Get Paint** (<http://www.getpaint.net>), a free open-source program for Windows-based computers, can also help to format images successfully. If you are a Mac user, download **Gimp** (<http://www.gimp.org>), a useful image-editing program. **Sumo** (<http://www.sumopaint.com>) and **Pixlr** (<http://www.pixlr.com>) are some of the few websites out there that offer image-editing right in the browser.

Arts advocacy resources:

Springboard for the Arts

Springboard for the Arts hosts workshops on grant writing and has a number of career consultants who can help with artistic professional development. Springboard has a great site to locate local professionals to document and digitize your work. Springboard also has an A.V. Closet with DSLR cameras, light kits, video projectors and screen, tripods, and more to be checked out for a small fee. For more information visit: <https://springboardforthearts.org/professional-growth/avcloset/>

MNartists.org

MNartists.org offers some “how-to” help with digitizing images. Their website has a list of technology resources and Arts Advocacy organizations. They periodically run workshops on digitizing images and uploading them to the Internet. For more information visit: www.mnartists.org

Film North

Film North provides free scanner access for mnartists.org artists. They also rent film, photo and editing equipment to members. For more information visit: <https://myfilmnorth.org>

Minnesota Regional Arts Councils

Minnesota Regional Arts Councils are affiliated with the Minnesota State Arts Board and the McKnight Foundation. They may be able to offer you computer access and assistance or direct you to someone near you who can. For information about your Regional Arts Council please visit: <http://www.arts.state.mn.us/racs/>

VII. FAQ

Q: If I am a teaching artist at MCBA, am I eligible to apply for the McKnight Fellowship?

A: *Yes, as long as you are not MCBA staff, an MCBA board member, family of MCBA staff member/board member, McKnight staff member, McKnight board member, or family member of McKnight board/staff, you are eligible to apply for the program. Teaching artists are considered contracted workers, not MCBA staff members.*

Q: I have just recently started to develop my book art skills this year. I am over 40. Am I a mid-career book artist?

A: *Mid-career does not necessarily mean mid-age. This fellowship is for book artists who have had a significant amount of achievement in their work—exhibitions, published essays, fellowships, residencies.*

Q: Should I include current artwork or a breadth of artwork?

A: *You should include your best (and most well-documented) work, but we recommend including artwork made within the past 8–10 years.*

Q: Should I use an active voice when filling out this application? (“I will”...rather than “If I...”)

A: Yes.

Q: I applied for the McKnight Fellowship for Textile Artists 2025, but did not receive the award. Am I eligible to apply for the Fellowship for Book Artists 2025?

A: *No. You can only apply for one McKnight Fellowship per program cycle.*

Q: Are the jurors book artists?

A: *The jury panel is composed of artists/curators/educators who are professionals in the field of book arts.*

Q: My name is included in the title of an essay or publication that has been written about me. Should I omit this from my resume entirely?

A: *You can substitute “Artist Name” for your actual name if it is included in the title of the essay or publication.*

Q: Will image files be viewed individually, two by two, or all at once?

A: *Image files will be viewed in order individually beginning with Image 1.*

VIII. Information Sessions & MCBA Support

Wednesday, January 21, 2026 6PM–7PM CT

Zoom information session (Program overview and Artist Statements)

<https://www.mnbookarts.org/mcknight-fellowships/>

Tuesday, February 24, 2026, 12PM–1PM CT

Ask Me Anything with Director of Artist Programs via Zoom

<https://www.mnbookarts.org/mcknight-fellowships/>

MCBA SUPPORT

Applicants are also welcome to schedule one-on-one meetings (in person or over the phone) with the Director of Exhibitions and Artist Programs before submitting their applications online. Appointments may be made between December 1, 2024 through February 21, 2025. For further information, contact:

Anika Schneider, Director of Exhibitions and Artist Programs

Aschneider@Mnbookarts.org

612-215-2528

IX. McKnight Artist Fellowships Community Values Statement

The McKnight Foundation and the administering partners for the McKnight Artist Fellowships are committed to creating and supporting an artistic and cultural community in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. The community of the McKnight Artist Fellowships includes people who engage with the fellowship programs whether as applicants, fellows, panelists, contractors, collaborators, fellowships administrators, or 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 Fellowship community thrive.