

Meet 12 of Philadelphia's Most Talented Artists

Pew Fellowships provide unrestricted awards of \$75,000 to individual artists from all disciplines, as well as focused professional advancement resources such as financial counseling and career-development workshops.

The
Pew Center
for Arts
& Heritage



“The Pew Fellowship will give me the space and time to work without restriction. As an artist, time, space, and peace of mind are essential to make major breakthroughs and take risks.”

—MARK THOMAS GIBSON, VISUAL ARTIST

M+B

Emily Bate, Composer and vocalist

"I'm interested in reuniting people with their rightful inheritance as sound-makers and bringing us back together in communal music-making."

Bate's compositions and performances focus on group singing and blend elements of theater, performance art, and choral and experimental music. She founded and conducts Trust Your Moves, a 65-member queer community chorus centered on gender liberation and co-creation that performs and commissions work by queer and transgender composers.

Kayleb Rae Candrilli, Poet

"Though writing feels most often like a solitary act, when it is born into the world, it becomes a small part of our collective...My writing becomes a small part of the queer collective, of the trans experience, of the rural experience."

Candrilli's poetry balances transgender rights and environmental justice, informed by their experience as a trans person from rural America. Their work both interrogates "an inhospitable American landscape" for queer people and identifies and celebrates the joys of trans experience.

Angel Shanel Edwards, Performance artist

"My work is what happens when there's infinite space for uncompromised play, rest, rage, joy, and tenderness."

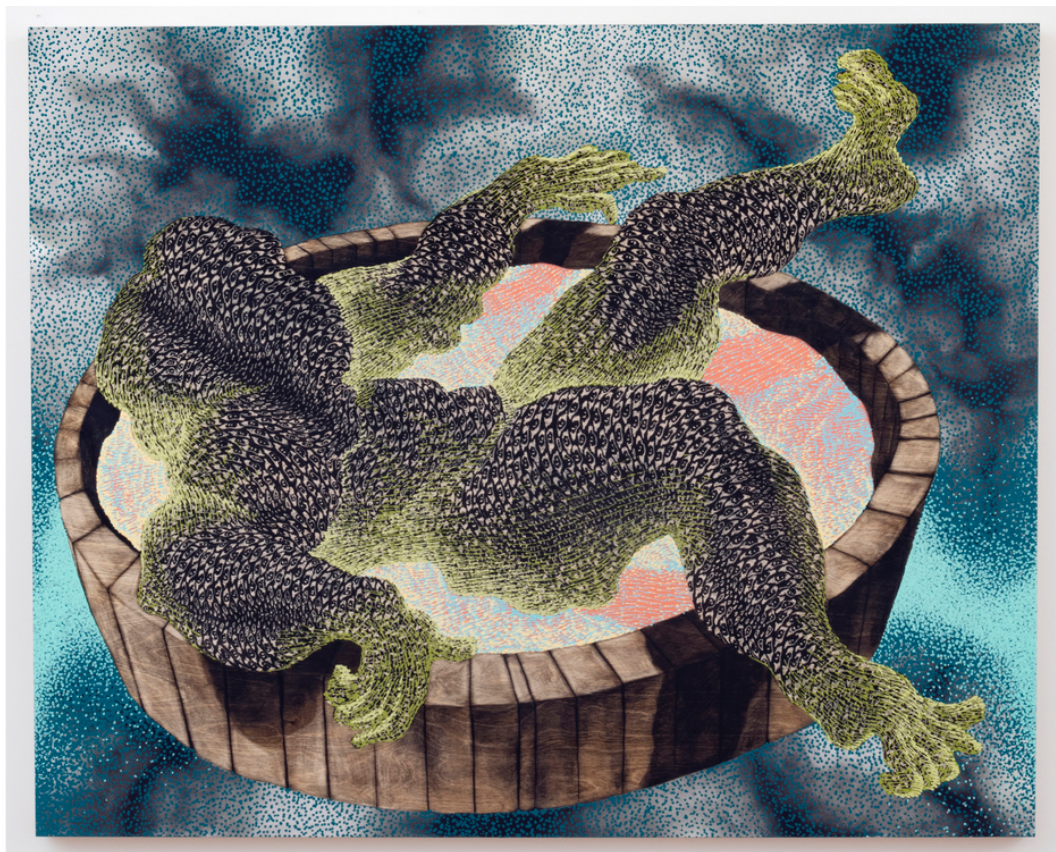
Edwards creates work that ritualizes the mundane, embodying the textures of Black queer and transgender existence. Their movement, film, and writing practices reveal intimacy, rest, and community in domestic settings (a bedroom, a front porch), outdoors, and in performance spaces, paying close attention to overlooked joys and obligations of daily life in marginalized communities.

Rami George, Visual artist

"I'm interested in moments shared between the individual and the collective, when a body is marked by society, and inversely, when a body leaves a mark back."

George's practice turns an autobiographical lens on their Lebanese heritage, queer experience, and family history in a New Age spiritual community. Their mixed-media installations and video works draw from archives and family ephemera and use common materials such as plywood, plastic sheeting, and house paint.

M+B



Pew Fellow Didier William, *Ti Pisin*, 2020; acrylic, oil, wood carving on panel; 50" x 62".

Mark Thomas Gibson, Visual artist

"Like an overextended peninsula at the edge of the world, my work acts as the soil between two bodies of water: Historical Truth and Personal Truth."

Gibson chronicles race, class, and contemporary American culture with a historian's eye on the past. His paintings, collages, prints, caricatures, graphic novels, and other visual works explore the potential of narrative art to provoke examinations of power structures and racism and to foster empathy.

M+B

Naomieh Jovin, Photographer

"I began my work as an artist in order to re-imagine and understand the body as a form outside of shame."

Jovin's work includes original photography as well as reappropriated images from family collections to contemplate her Haitian American identity, family history, spirituality, and the African diaspora. Her striking portraits converse with found photos of relatives, creating an expressive depiction of vulnerability and healing.

Rich Medina, DJ and interdisciplinary artist

"Like my familial forebears, I am a man of the pulpit myself, wholly committed to edifying the space through unmistakably Black musical and artistic expression."

Medina approaches his DJ practice as an archivist, storyteller, educator, and "ambassador for Black excellence." His live and online performances and programs—such as the "African American Culture and Music" lecture series for The Barnes Foundation—combine entertainment and education, amplifying Black diasporic ingenuity and musical traditions.

Brett Ashley Robinson, Theater artist

"I push beyond cultural comfort to a place of transformation, rejecting the catharsis of theater and instead inviting questions, confusion, and greater self-reflection."

Robinson's work blends physical ensemble performance, drag burlesque culture, documentary theater, and clowning. In participatory experiences designed for the theater as well as site-specific, community-based events, she invites audiences to reckon with history, examine their beliefs and perspectives, and engage with imaginative Black theater.



"With the Pew Fellowship, I can facilitate collaborations with other Black theater makers to build radical theater centered around our own pleasure and curiosity. I will also deepen my connection to Philadelphia while expanding my network of collaborators nationally and internationally."

— BRETT ASHLEY ROBINSON, THEATER ARTIST

M+B

Kambel Smith, Sculptor

"I hope offering minute details in the sculptures will provide a level of engagement for people experiencing my work—to have people marvel and keep looking."

Smith builds large-scale, highly detailed sculptural recreations of iconic architecture such as the Philadelphia Museum of Art and New York's Chrysler Building, as well as more quotidian locations and structures of his own invention. He is interested in changing the perception of autism by "rebuilding the world with cardboard" and identifies as an "Autisarian," a person with "superhuman abilities due to...autism."

Didier William, Visual artist

"My surfaces—where the body is formed through cuts, stains, and the residue of historical narratives—become sites of convergence and collision, marking both the fragility and the persistence of Black humanity."

William's interweaving of painting and printmaking hovers between abstraction and figurative representation. Drawing from his Afro-Caribbean lineage, personal narrative, and mythology, his ethereal images of bodies obscure race and gender through intricate patterns and ornamentation.

Eva Wö, Visual artist

"My art is a spell, a manifestation of my dreams. I create multiplicitous and lawless landscapes where gravity is optional and nothing is as expected."

Wö creates lush scenes of bold, fantastical joy in new media works that fuse photography, digital collage, GIF animation, and lenticular prints. Their vivid dreamscapes grapple with identity, representation, and belonging, portraying queer and trans people of color as protagonists in a utopian, futuristic vision.

M+B

Rashid Zakat, Filmmaker and artist

“Black social aliveness is the political imperative of my work, whereby I seek to create openings for audiences to be loud, to be enlivened, and to revel in the glory of communal excitement and civic joy.”

Zakat intermingles film, music, photography, and creative space-making in work that engages with Black social and spiritual life. His short films, documentaries, and music videos feature original content and archival material, including images of migration, worship, uprising, dance, and popular culture.



Pew Fellow Kambel Smith at the Outsider Art Fair, New York, NY, 2019. Photo by Darian DiCianno, courtesy of the Elaine de Kooning House.