

HESSE FLATOW

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Jade Poleon | April 15, 2026 | 4 minute read |



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The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation named its largest class in recent memory on April 14, awarding fellowships to 223 individuals across 55 disciplines, as a parallel collapse in federal arts funding sent applications surging to nearly 5,000, up roughly 2,000 from 2024.

The foundation's 101st class arrives at a moment of acute pressure on publicly funded creative and scholarly work.

Key Takeaways:

- Applications in the Creative Arts and Humanities surged 50% this year; Sciences were up 86%, coinciding with federal cuts to arts funding since the start of President Trump's second term.
- 223 fellows were selected from nearly 5,000 applicants across 55 disciplines, spanning 33 US states, three Canadian provinces, and eight other countries.
- Visual arts recipients include American Artist, Kenneth Tam, Alina Tenser, Sheida Soleimani, Leeza Meksin, and Sonya Clark, among 76 total in arts-related fields.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT

The cohort spans 33 US states, three Canadian provinces, and eight countries beyond North America, with fellows ranging in age from 28 to 76. Around one-third hold no full-time college or university affiliation.

"Our new class of Guggenheim Fellows is representative of the world's best thinkers, innovators, and creators in art, science, and scholarship," said Edward Hirsch, award-winning poet and President of the Guggenheim Foundation. "As the Foundation enters its second century and looks to the future, I feel confident that this new class of 223 individuals will do bold and inspiring work, undaunted by the challenges ahead. We are honored to support their visionary contributions."

Each fellow receives a monetary stipend to pursue independent work. The foundation does not disclose individual award amounts, noting that grants vary depending on each year's budget.

A SURGE IN APPLICATIONS

This year's applicant numbers rose sharply across the board: Creative Arts and Humanities applications were up 50%, and Science applications climbed 86%. The foundation acknowledged the moment directly, stating that "at a time when intellectual and creative life is under attack," it remains committed to supporting individuals across all fields.

Since the start of President Trump's second term, federal arts agencies have eliminated grants to cultural organizations and individual artists, pushing more applicants toward private foundations like Guggenheim.

THE VISUAL ARTS CLASS

Of the 223 fellows, 76 work across fine arts, photography, architecture, design, and film. The fine arts category alone includes 30 recipients.

Among the most-noted names: American Artist, the Brooklyn-based sculptor known for work that challenges assumptions about technology and identity; Kenneth Tam, a fine arts fellow based at Rice University in Houston; and Alina Tenser, a Ukrainian-born sculptor at Lehigh University whose recent work includes *Sleeved Meander* (2026). Sheida Soleimani, an Iranian-American artist and fine arts

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professor at Brandeis University, and Leeza Meksin, co-founder of the Brooklyn artist-run gallery Ortega y Gasset Projects and a Cornell faculty member, are also among the fine arts recipients. Sonya Clark, known for her use of human hair as a medium in works exploring the Black American experience, received a fellowship as well.

Photography fellowships went to 19 recipients, including Collier Schorr, Chris McCaw, and Sheida Soleimani. The film and video category awarded 19 fellowships, with Reid Davenport and Steve Reinke among the recipients. Film, Video, and New Media Studies added two more fellows — Noah Isenberg and Julie Turnock.

A FOUNDATION BUILT ON CREATIVE FREEDOM

The [John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation](#) was established in 1925 by US Senator Simon Guggenheim and his wife, Olga, in memory of their son John Simon, who died at 17 in 1922. Its guiding mission has remained unchanged: to support scholars and artists by helping them "engage in research in any field of knowledge and creation in any of the arts, under the freest possible conditions."

Since 1925, the foundation has awarded nearly \$450 million to more than 19,000 fellows — among them more than 125 Nobel laureates and winners of the Pulitzer Prize, Fields Medal, Turing Award, and National Book Award. The fellowship's legacy includes some of the most enduring works of 20th-century American culture: in 1936, Zora Neale Hurston wrote *Their Eyes Were Watching God* with the support of a Guggenheim Fellowship. Robert Frank's *The Americans*, published in 1958, was the product of a cross-country tour supported by two Guggenheim Fellowships.

This year, the foundation also announced three named fellowships: the Dorothy Tapper Goldman Guggenheim Fellowship in Constitutional Studies (awarded to Gerard N. Magliocca), the Richard F. Gustafson Guggenheim Fellowship in Slavic Studies (Georg B. Michels), and the Kayden Guggenheim Fellowship in Climate Studies (Michael Kaplan).