

CHA Summer Fellowship Sample Proposals

Sample #1 MFA Candidate: Art & Art History

Cover Letter

To talk about the impact of art on a community is an exciting conversation but its practical application has concerned me, and ultimately affected me by seeking higher education. I am here at the University of Colorado with intention: the ideas that are circulating in the Sculpture and Post-Studio Practice program have a dialogue and exchange with multiple communities. This connection is what most inspired me to consider this graduate program because the work that is being produced must answer to the question of being exclusive. My past sculptural work began my questioning for how accessible the art-world is to the rest of society and my goals as an MFA candidate is to develop interdisciplinary methods of research and communication so to be better involved with the community. I am currently in my first year of this graduate program.

I would be very grateful to CHA's support as the cost of the program would be covered by this scholarship, and I could continue being a graduate student without debt. My current financial position warrants my investment in the art materials I need, if I were to be paying off debt, I would have to compromise the intentionality of my artistic practice.

Proposal

Visual art as a mode of self-presentation is a structure which provokes a viewer to reflect on their own experiences, ideally accessing knowledge beyond themselves. Cole NeSmith speaks pragmatically about the culture of a city being affected by art: "By creating meaningful shared experiences in the public space, we believe it helps trains people to connect deeply to the physical place of our city... and as a result connect more deeply to one another." True art, honest art, has a mandate. I am bored with making art for other artists.

The Arts + Rural Environments Field School is an off-campus summer program which inquires of the overlap in art with the rural environment. This program would benefit my artistic practice because its pedagogical standard requires students to operate by the principles of field research. Every aspect of this experience intends to keep students outdoors, apart from isolated surroundings. I am passionate about visual art because of its ability to expand culture and relationships despite diverse, individual beliefs. I am typically presenting my installations in the studio or gallery, away from cultural centers in Boulder, and this program would help shape my ideation approach so that my work is intentionally in consideration of the spaces beyond institutions.

While living and working together in the field and on the road, students collaboratively create site-interpretation artworks and dialogues. Having an understanding of social practice would aid in my thesis research because Field School opens the definition of 'creativity' to incorporate groups outside of academia while still being a part of a thoughtful, intellectual community. My specific investigations are hoping to use this value as a means for celebrating the amateur and to create intuitively as a nondiscriminatory technique. Working mainly in sculpture, mischief functioning alongside sincerity is a subversive method in my practice for deconstructing social barriers.

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Sample #2 PhD Candidate: Environmental Studies

Cover Letter

My name is Patrick Chandler. I am currently a third year PhD student in the Environmental Studies Program here at CU, co-advised by Max Boykoff (ENVS) and Beth Osnes (ENVS and Theater and Dance). For the past ten years I have been working to establish a set of best practices to integrate art and science and create engagement tools that give youth a way to communicate both concerns and possible solutions to environmental issues. Before entering graduate school, I served as the Education Director for the Washed Ashore Project, which creates giant sculptures from marine debris with community members to awaken the senses, gain public and media attention and promote solutions to the global problem of plastic pollution. With Washed Ashore, I co-designed and wrote the Integrated Arts Marine Debris Curriculum (<http://washedashore.org/iamdc/>). Teaching students how to use the language of visual arts to communicate about plastic pollution is a main goal of the lessons. With this skill, students gain the ability to express their ideas in new ways and through the freedom that creativity allows, students discover pathways to sustain hope while facing problems that can feel hopeless. My research at CU has enabled me to continue working to define best practices for bringing art and science together in the classroom through developing lessons with Inside the Greenhouse, a CU project focused on creative climate communication. I believe that actively involving students in addressing the environmental problems that surround them while they are still relatively young is important because pessimism about addressing these large-scale problems increases with age—particularly from early to late adolescence. Witnessing youth arts and performance also gives adults hope, and action isn't possible without hope. Through the combination of research done at CU and previous experience, I will offer a framework that helps teachers engage students in the arts to sustain hope, express emotion and spur collective community action on environmental issues.

Proposal

The Co-produced Creative Climate Change Curriculum project (5C) represents a partnership between three CU departments (Theater and Dance, Environmental Studies, and the CU Museum of Natural History) and the Jefferson County School District (Jeffco) which is enabling us to create an embodied exploration of fossils, energy, and climate for 4th/5th grade students that will be piloted locally and distributed nationally. This project addresses the current lack of embodied participatory learning in schools which could enhance retention and understanding of climate change. An initial pilot of the performance-based lessons of the 5C has already taken place and we are currently revising activities and lessons to be ready for a second pilot in schools this fall. One of the major challenges for teachers noted in the first pilot was that most elementary classroom teachers don't have a background in art and performance. In order to support teachers piloting this fall, this summer I will work with the department of Theater and Dance to create videos of the embodied activities described in the curriculum. I will also work with graphic designers to create drawings, photos and diagrams of activities to better support teachers in arts-based lessons. As part of the 5C project, we have been working with University Hill Elementary (Uni Hill), a dual-language school, on community-resilience-focused embodied activities. For these lessons, we have asked students to concentrate on implementing solutions researched by Project Drawdown- <https://www.drawdown.org/>. To make the language of these solutions accessible, we have been translating them to a fifth-grade level with CU and Uni Hill partners and this summer I will work with CU and local partners to translate our fifth grade-ready solutions into Spanish for English language learners. The 5C project and this summer's work engages both art theory and critique and provides elementary students pathways to communicate about their environment and lived experience through both language and embodied methods which upholds the values of the Center for Humanities and the Arts.