

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

MEDIA ARTS

ARTS EDUCATION



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Photo by Hong Yu Casey Chan
for Method Collective as part of
ArtWorksTO Newcomer Program,
Media Arts Stream, 2025-2026.



1 ABOUT THE PROGRAM



Still image is part of Armin Naderi's work, selected participant of the ArtWorksTO Newcomer Program, Media Arts Stream, 2025-2026.

ArtWorksTO Newcomer Program is a workforce development program that supports newcomer artists in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) in building sustainable careers in media arts and arts education. Through a combination of credentialed education, industry mentorship, and paid work experience, the program helps participants develop skills, gain industry employment, and expand their professional networks within the GTA's arts sector.

The program is structured into two specialized streams:

**STREAM 1
MEDIA ARTS**

**STREAM 2
ARTS EDUCATION**

2 GENERAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA (ALL APPLICANTS)



Still image by Can Deniz Atici, for Vengeance Foundation, as part of the Newcomer Program, Media Arts Stream, 2025-2026.



Applicants must be newcomers to Canada with a background in either media arts (e.g. graphic design, photography, UX/UI design, digital illustration, animation, film, sound art, and interactive or web-based media) or arts education (e.g. artists from any discipline with experience in teaching, facilitation, or community-based arts practice), and who are seeking professional integration and career development opportunities.

*A newcomer is defined as someone who has recently arrived in Canada or has been living in the country for no more than 7 years. Eligibility timelines for the current cohort are outlined in the 'Program Details' section at the end of this document.

Applicants must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Be a Canadian Citizen, Permanent Resident, have an application pending for Permanent Resident status, or be a Protected Person (approved refugee claimant). Temporary residents with valid work authorization may be considered, subject to program capacity and overall eligibility priorities.
- Possess a valid Social Insurance Number (SIN), required to legally work in Canada.
- Currently reside in the Greater Toronto Area, including the City of Toronto and the regional municipalities of Durham, Halton, Peel, and York.
- Be 18 years of age or older.
- Be available and committed to fully participate in the program for its full duration (approximately one year). Program activities take place intermittently throughout this period, including training, mentorship, and work placements. Specific dates are outlined in the 'Program Details' section.
- Have intermediate English skills (CLB 6 or above). Fluency is not required, but applicants must be able to communicate effectively in professional verbal and written contexts.

For more details, please refer to the 'Program Details' section at the end of this document to understand the expected time commitment required to participate in this program.

Please note that meeting the eligibility criteria does not guarantee acceptance into the program. All applications will be reviewed and evaluated based on the selection criteria.

3 SELECTION CRITERIA

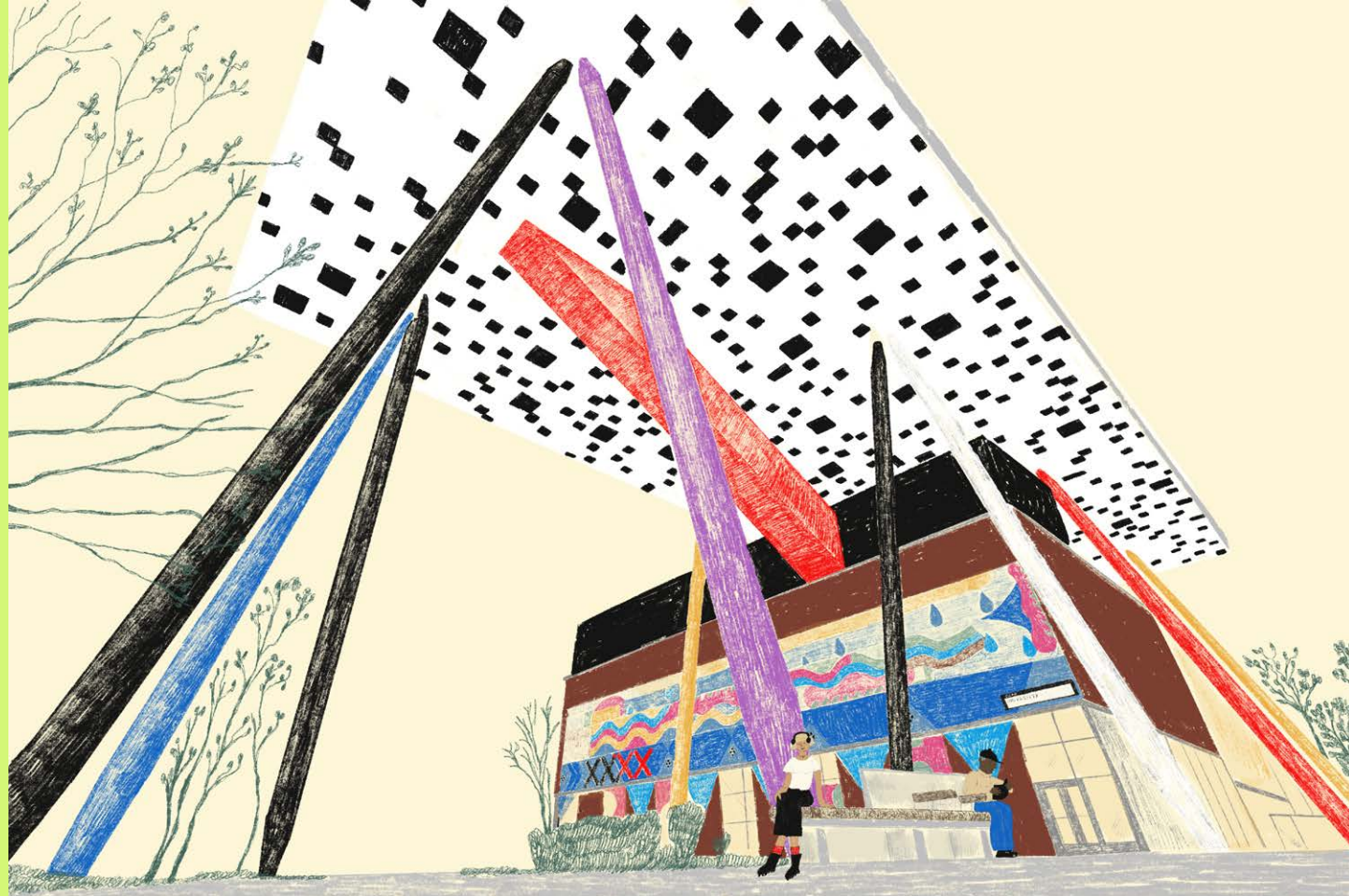


Illustration by Maliha Ali, for OCAD U School of Continuing Studies as part of ArtWorksTO Newcomer Program, Media Arts Stream, 2025-2026.

Applicants will be assessed by a multidisciplinary review panel with collective expertise across newcomer integration, arts education, and professional media arts practice. Selection will be based on the criteria specific to each applicant's chosen stream.

STREAM 1 MEDIA ARTS

Applicants must:

- Meet all eligibility criteria.
- Be media artists whose careers are beyond the early stage, either in their country of origin or in their first years in Canada, but who are still working to establish themselves professionally in Canada.
- Present a portfolio that demonstrates a personal artistic voice or statement, quality of execution, and technical skill in one or more media (e.g., video, film, digital arts, installation, sound art, interactive or web-based media).
- Have a history of exhibitions or public showcases, either in their country of origin or internationally. This may include exhibitions, screenings, festivals, digital showcases, collaborations, or other public presentations relevant to their practice.

STREAM 2 ARTS EDUCATION

Applicants must:

- Meet all eligibility criteria.
- Have a background in arts education in any artistic discipline, including experience in teaching or leading community-based arts programs, and/or working in educational or cultural institutions (e.g., universities, colleges, schools, libraries, museums, community centers), either in their country of origin or in Canada, while still developing their professional practice.
- Have experience developing or delivering arts education content appropriate to their professional context.
- Maintain an active artistic practice supported by a portfolio and a history of exhibitions or public showcases, as this stream is intended for practicing artist-educators.

4 PORTFOLIO GUIDELINES



Still image is part of Jim Libiran's portfolio, selected participant of the ArtWorksTO Newcomer Program, Arts Education Stream, 2025-2026.

Your portfolio is a key part of your application and represents your creative and professional practice. Applicants must follow the requirements specific to their selected stream.

Please note that applications submitted without a portfolio will not be considered, and website links cannot be used as a substitute for a portfolio submission.

STREAM 1 MEDIA ARTS

Short bio (300 words max)

What's your story?

Artist statement (300 words max)

Explain your interests, influences, and the ideas that shape your practice. This is your opportunity to introduce yourself as an artist, describe what defines your work, and provide context for how and why you create it.

Creative process (optional but strongly encouraged)

Show documentation of how your work develops. This can include:

- storyboard
- creative journal
- concept or idea book
- sketchbook pages or drafts

Process work should clearly connect to the finished pieces in your portfolio, such as:

- experimentation
- development photos
- drawings or mark-making
- writing
- research and inspirations

Finished work (up to 5 pieces)

Include original work that demonstrates creativity, technical skills, range, and expression of ideas.

Descriptions (max 50 words each)

For each piece, briefly explain process, method, media, concept, and purpose. Include collaborators or clients if applicable.

TIPS

+ YOU MAY PRESENT WORK AS A SERIES (RECOMMENDED 3-5 WORKS TOTAL) + VIDEO WORK IS ACCEPTED (RECOMMENDED 1-2 MIN HIGHLIGHT REEL) + INCLUDE LINKS TO YOUR WEBSITE OR SOCIAL MEDIA IF AVAILABLE (THIS DOES NOT REPLACE THE REQUIRED PORTFOLIO COMPONENTS)

STREAM 2 ARTS EDUCATION

Short bio (300 words max)

What's your story?

Artist statement (300 words max)

Explain your interests, influences, and the ideas that shape your practice. This is your opportunity to introduce yourself as an artist, describe what defines your work, and provide context for how and why you create it.

Creative process (optional but strongly encouraged)

Document your artistic and/or teaching process. This may include:

- storyboard
- creative journal
- concept or idea book
- digital documents

Process work should connect to either your creative work or your teaching practice, such as:

- lesson planning drafts
- workshop design notes
- teaching materials in development
- classroom or facilitation documentation
- research, inspiration, and experimentation

Finished work (up to 5 pieces)

- Up to 2 examples of creative work
- Up to 3 examples of arts education practice (e.g. lesson plans, workshop facilitation, syllabus, or sample activities)

Descriptions (max 50 words each)

Briefly explain process, method, media, concept, and purpose. Include collaborators or clients if applicable.

TIPS

+ 3-5 WORKS TOTAL RECOMMENDED VIDEO ACCEPTED (1-2 MIN HIGHLIGHT REEL RECOMMENDED) + INCLUDE LINKS TO YOUR WEBSITE OR SOCIAL MEDIA IF AVAILABLE (THIS DOES NOT REPLACE THE REQUIRED PORTFOLIO COMPONENTS)

PORTFOLIO SUPPORT APPLICANTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO · REVIEW THE SAMPLE PORTFOLIO AVAILABLE ON THE WEBSITE · ATTEND THE OPTIONAL OCAD U PORTFOLIO WORKSHOP · SEE THE 'PROGRAM DETAILS' SECTION FOR MORE INFORMATION REQUEST FREE ONE-ON-ONE FEEDBACK BY CONTACTING ZYRELLE@TORONTOARTS.ORG

5 Q&A WITH XIMENA BERECOCHEA



As lead of the AWTO Newcomer Program, Ximena Berecochea brings together mentorship, interdisciplinary collaboration, and a deep commitment to supporting emerging artists and newcomers. A photo-based artist, scholar, and educator, her practice bridges visual art, literature, and multimedia. She holds a PhD from the University of Toronto, has taught at several universities across Toronto, and has exhibited internationally, with work included in global collections. Ximena is also a member of Mexico's National System of Art Creators and co-founder of the Institute for Creative Exchange, where she developed international collaborations connecting artists, writers, and cultural practitioners across disciplines.

Photo by Mohammed Meer Mahmoud,
ArtWorksTO Newcomer Program
participant, Media Arts Stream, 2025-2026.



When is the application deadline?

All key dates are outlined in the 'Program Details' section at the end of this document.

When will I be notified?

Applicants will be notified approximately one month after the application deadline.

What is the program duration?

The program runs for one year, from August to August, with activities scheduled intermittently throughout the year.

How do I apply?

Applications must be submitted through the online form for Stream 1 or Stream 2 within the application period outlined in the 'Program Details' section. A portfolio must be included as part of the application. Submissions without a portfolio will not be considered.

Is this the right program for me?

This program supports newcomer artists in developing their creative practice and professional pathways in the GTA through training, mentorship, and paid opportunities. Applicants should select the stream that best aligns with their current artistic or educational practice.

Can I apply to both streams?

No. Applicants may only apply to one stream.

What is offered in the program?

Our program offers the following to participants:

Approximately 5 hours of mentorship per participant
Two courses specific to each stream, including one OCAD U micro-credential course.
One elective course at OCAD U (for all participants)

A \$150.00 stipend for each of the three OCAD U courses completed

A solo project (as outlined in the RFP section below), with \$5,000.00 provided to cover direct costs related to project development

Access to additional professional development, networking, and mentorship opportunities through the ArtWorksTO alumni program upon completion of the program

What is a Request for Proposals (RFP)?

A Request for Proposal (RFP) is a document that a client (e.g. a business, non-profit, or government agency) uses to outline the requirements of a specific project and invite proposals from qualified applicants. Proposals are reviewed to select a candidate to complete the project. RFPs are widely used in the media arts industry.

How are RFPs used in the ArtWorksTO Newcomer Program?

As part of the program, participants are introduced to the RFP process to learn how to prepare and respond to creative briefs.

Each participant will respond to three creative briefs and will be matched to one paid contract. This process is designed to build practical skills that can be applied to future professional opportunities.

What workshops and courses are included in the program, and how long is each course?

Participants will attend an Indigenous Protocols Workshop and an RFP Workshop. Details, including dates, times, and locations, are outlined in the 'Program Details' section.

Participants will complete two OCAD U courses according to their stream, including one OCAD U micro-credential course. Course dates, formats, and timelines are outlined in the 'Program Details' section.

Participants in both streams will also choose one elective course at OCAD U. These courses typically run for six weeks and take place within the program timeline outlined in 'Program Details' section.

11. When will I be working on the paid project?

Project timelines are outlined in 'Program Details' section.

4 PROGRAM DETAILS

TIMELINE OVERVIEW	PHASE	DETAILS
	Applications Open	May 19, 2026
	Application Deadline	June 18, 2026 (11:59 PM)
	Notification Period	August 3 – August 13, 2026
	Program Duration	August 2026 – August 2027

ELIGIBILITY	CRITERIA
	Newcomer Status Must have arrived in Canada on or after January 1, 2019

WELCOME ORIENTATION	SESSION
	Orientation Welcome Online Session August 25, 2026 6:00-8:00 PM (online)

WORKSHOPS	SESSION
	Portfolio Workshop 1-hour online session (OCAD U), May 27, 5:00–6:00 pm. Recording available after the workshop.
	Indigenous Protocols Workshop September 3, 2026 6:00–7:30 PM. Location TBD
	RFP Workshop Date and Time TBD

MENTORSHIP	ACTIVITY
	Mentorship & Mingle Event (Streams 1 & 2): connect, mingle, and meet the mentors September 1, 2026, 6:00–8:00 PM (location TBC)
	One-on-One Sessions 4 hours with assigned mentor; participants schedule sessions directly with their mentor between September 2026 and July 2027



OCAD U COURSES

STREAM 1 – MEDIA ARTS

COURSE	DURATION	TIMING
Introduction to Design Thinking (in-person)	6 weeks	Starts September 2026
Social Enterprise: Change Through Creative Entrepreneurship Micro-credential (in-person)	6 weeks	Starts January 2027

STREAM 2 – ARTS EDUCATION

COURSE	DURATION	TIMING
Introduction to Design Thinking (in-person)	6 weeks	Starts September 2026
Teaching Art Micro-credential (in-person)	6 weeks	Starts January 2027

ELECTIVE COURSES (STREAM 1 & 2)

1 elective course (6 weeks)

Available between September 2026 – August 2027

Formats: online (sync/async) or in-person

PAID PROJECT TIMELINE

STREAM	DURATION
Stream 1 – Media Arts	January 11 – April 12, 2027
Stream 2 – Arts Education	April 5 – July 5, 2027

DATES AND TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

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MORE INFO AT [TORONTOARTSCOUNCIL.ORG](https://torontoartscouncil.org)



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