

**Joan Mitchell Foundation Announces New Fellowship Program  
That Offers Artists \$60,000 in Unrestricted Funds  
And a Wide Range of Professional Development Services**

**Joan Mitchell Fellowship Evolves Foundation’s Longstanding Grants Model  
To Offer More Sustained Support for Artists**

**New York, NY—February 4, 2021**—The Joan Mitchell Foundation today announced the creation of a new program, the Joan Mitchell Fellowship, which will annually award 15 artists working in the evolving fields of painting and sculpture with \$60,000 each in unrestricted funds. The award will be distributed over the course of five years, with artists receiving an initial payment of \$20,000 and annual installments of \$10,000 across the subsequent four years. As part of the five-year fellowship, artists will have access to ongoing individual and group professional development offerings, including one-on-one consultations with arts professionals; convenings that facilitate network-building; and programs that focus on personal finance, legacy planning, and thought leadership, among other opportunities. Fellows will also be eligible to apply for a residency at the Joan Mitchell Center in New Orleans, further increasing the range of support available to them. The Fellowship will launch this year and the first group of Fellows is expected to be announced in October 2021, following a multi-phased nomination and jury selection process.

The Joan Mitchell Fellowship is a re-envisioning and expansion of the Foundation’s Painters & Sculptors Grants, which launched in 1994 and annually awarded 25 artists with unrestricted grants of \$25,000. The decision to transform the program is an outgrowth of a strategic planning process undertaken in 2019 and 2020 that in part evaluated the best possible use of the Foundation’s resources—as informed by consideration of the national landscape of support for visual artists and the types of support that artists most need. By reconceiving the Painters & Sculptors Grants as a multi-year, multi-faceted fellowship, the Foundation is enhancing its commitment to artists and establishing a reliable stream of income for Fellows over a period of time that will allow them to invest in and plan their creative practices and careers.

“Our new Fellowship expands the Foundation’s giving model, more than doubling our financial support to each artist and furthering our commitment to unrestricted funding as essential to providing artists the flexibility necessary to advance their careers,” said Christa Blatchford,

Executive Director of the Joan Mitchell Foundation. “Although the Foundation was already framing out this new approach before the COVID-19 pandemic, the crisis further underscored the barriers to financial security that visual artists face and the ways in which year-to-year funding practices contribute to that vulnerability. Our new approach allows for a more sustained engagement, both financially and in our professional development practices, that we hope will offer greater stability and more opportunities for career growth. We see this shift as critical to continuing to best enact our mission, as set forth by artist Joan Mitchell, to support the lives and careers of working artists.”

The Joan Mitchell Fellowship maintains the Foundation’s longstanding commitment to recognize and support US-based artists working in the fields of painting and sculpture, whose work has contributed to important artistic and cultural discourse and is deserving of greater recognition on a national level. The emphasis on painters and sculptors is in accordance with Mitchell’s specified focus for the Foundation’s support and also recognizes largely studio-based, process-driven creative practices that may not align well with prevailing models of annual, project-based visual arts support. A rotating group of nominators who represent a spectrum of demographic, professional, and creative backgrounds will recommend artists, who are then invited by the Foundation to apply for the Fellowship. Candidates for the Fellowship will be evaluated by a rotating jury of artists and arts professionals from outside the Foundation, separate from the group of nominators. This process ensures that a wide range of artists have the opportunity to apply and be considered for an award each year.

“As an artist-endowed foundation, we know that we need to invest more deeply in individual artists. Our funding needs to be more substantial and more reliable, allowing artists time to plan, and time for those plans to evolve,” said Kay Takeda, Deputy Director of Artist Programs at the Joan Mitchell Foundation. “In developing our new approach, we considered some of the guaranteed income models that are being explored as tools in household sustainability. It led us to questions about what an artist would do with another \$10,000-\$20,000 a year, over a meaningful period of time. We know that flexibility, community, and access to information are equally important. In establishing the Fellowship, we looked at how these different factors contribute to long-term success and worked to make them active parts of the program. Over the coming years, we look forward to sharing what we learn with other funders to help advance our field.”

An expanded focus on professional development is a key element within the Fellowship. The Foundation has long recognized that access to professional services and support can be as

valuable as funding for the advancement of an artist and their practice, and that the need for access to such professional services tends to increase as artists' careers advance. While connecting artists with professionals from across a spectrum of relevant fields has always been part of the Foundation's work, the multi-year nature of the new model will allow the Foundation to work in a more focused way with artists to offer sequential and tailored professional development programming. The Foundation will continue to feature consultations and critical feedback from arts professionals based on artists' input, and expand offerings to include Fellowship convenings and group learning opportunities focused in three key areas: personal finance, legacy planning, and thought leadership. The ongoing support in this area is envisioned as robust community building that allows for resource sharing, collaboration, and sustained critical discourse.

To dedicate the additional funding and staffing resources necessary for the new Fellowship program, the Foundation has made the decision to sunset its Emergency Grants for individual artists. In 2005, the Foundation was among the first funders to address emergency needs of visual artists, recognizing the lack of a professional safety net for artists and the financial impact one disaster could have on an artist's practice and career. With the new Fellowship, the Foundation is refocusing efforts on addressing some of the underlying conditions that contribute to financial vulnerability among artists beyond particular moments of emergency. Although the Foundation will no longer offer an ongoing emergency grant program, it will remain in close contact with peers to respond to large-scale emergencies affecting the artist community. This approach aligns with the Foundation's work in 2020 as part of the consortium of funders supporting Artist Relief, a national COVID-19 response fund.

### **About the Joan Mitchell Foundation**

The Joan Mitchell Foundation expands awareness of abstract artist Joan Mitchell's life and pioneering work and fulfills her wish to support and provide opportunities for visual artists. Through its work, the Foundation affirms and amplifies artists' essential contributions to society.

As the chief steward of Joan Mitchell's legacy, the Foundation manages a collection of Mitchell's artwork and archives containing her personal papers, photographs, and ephemera. The Foundation provides loans of Mitchell artworks from its collection to museums, academic institutions, and other non-profit arts spaces. Foundation staff are dedicated to assisting researchers and sharing information about the Foundation's artwork and archival collections in order to further scholarship and broad appreciation for Mitchell's life and work. The Foundation is also supporting the Joan Mitchell Catalogue Raisonné, established in 2015, which is currently

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researching Mitchell's paintings in order to produce a scholarly, multi-volume book documenting all of the artist's known painted work.

Fulfilling Mitchell's mandate to "aid and assist" living artists, over the past 27 years the Foundation has evolved a range of initiatives that directly support visual artists at varying stages of their careers. The Joan Mitchell Fellowship gives annual unrestricted awards of \$60,000 directly to artists, with funds distributed over a five-year period alongside dedicated and flexible professional development. The New Orleans-based Joan Mitchell Center traditionally hosts residencies for national and local artists, as well as artist talks, open studio events, and other public programs that encourage dialogue and exchange with the local community; due to COVID-19, the program is focused on local artists for 2021. The Creating a Living Legacy (CALL) initiative provides free and essential resources to help artists of all ages organize, document, and manage their artworks and careers. Together, these programs actively engage with working artists as they develop and expand their practices. For more information, visit [joanmitchellfoundation.org](http://joanmitchellfoundation.org).

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