

## **Liu Shiming Art Foundation Announces Third Annual Liu Shiming Artist Grants Recipients**

*The 2025 cohort reflects global approaches to material, memory,  
and tradition within contemporary art practices*



Sang Woo Yoo, *Portrait of Loss (What Settles in the Lowest Layer)* (2025), discarded Christmas trees (dust, resin, vessel, incense), Douglas fir lumber, variable dimensions. Image courtesy of the artist.

**New York, NY, January 13, 2026 — Liu Shiming Art Foundation** is proud to announce its 2025 cohort of artist grantees. Established to support the work of visual artists during the first decade of their careers, the **Liu Shiming Artist Grants** enable the creation of new projects that explore the interplay between traditional, cultural, or historical influences and contemporary artistic practice. Each year, up to five artists are selected to receive a \$5,000 grant. This year's recipients are **Manami Ishimura, Rita Mawuena Benissan, Shirin Towfiq, Blas Isasi, and Sang woo Yoo.**

The Foundation's artist grants program stems from the value Liu Shiming (1926-2010) placed on supporting younger generations of artists during his sculpture career and his tenure as a professor at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing.

“The Liu Shiming Artist Grants program was created to honor Liu Shiming’s lifelong commitment to nurturing artists at formative moments in their careers,” said Puiking Hui, Executive Director of the Liu Shiming Art Foundation. “This year’s grantees demonstrate a remarkable ability to engage deeply with history and cultural memory while forging distinctly contemporary practices. We are proud to support these artists as they expand the possibilities of how tradition and lived experience can be reimagined in the present.”

This year, nearly 1,400 individuals applied from over 90 countries. This represents a 45% increase in applications compared to last year. Applications were open to visual artists who have been working for a minimum of two years but not more than ten years.

About the 2025 grantees in their own words:

- **Rita Mawuena Benissan** (Accra, Ghana): Benissan’s work explores the “reclaiming and reimagining of Ghanaian archives, particularly those that have been displaced and are now held in Western institutions.”
- **Blas Isasi**, (Greensboro, North Carolina, USA): Isasi works “to highlight and reveal the cosmic forces that never cease to shape politics, society, culture, economy, and reality as a whole.”
- **Manami Ishimura** (Gambier, Ohio, USA): Ishimura “utilizes artificial materials to approach natural found objects as living organisms, preserving their original forms while emphasizing moments of transition into other entities.”
- **Shirin Towfiq**, (Oakland, USA): Towfiq “focuses on everyday practices of belonging and visual culture, as produced by migrants,” and “reflects on the traces of diaspora to investigate cultural memory, history, and temporality.”
- **Sang woo Yoo**, (Chicago, USA): Yoo “engages with the ecological cycles of materials to create sustainable compositions that embody life and mortality, using site-specific substances.”

The recipients were selected by a committee of contemporary art professionals including:

- **Laura Blanco**: Former Board Chair, The Bronx Museum of the Arts; former pro bono advisor on museum governance and development
- **Fran Kaufman**: Curator and consultant, Liu Shiming Art Foundation; inaugural Curatorial Director, Liu Shiming Art Gallery; and Principal, Kaufman Vardy Projects
- **Dr. Erin L. McCutcheon**: Assistant Professor of Arts of the Americas at University of Rhode Island, art historian specializing in Latin American and feminist art histories
- **Hank Willis Thomas**: conceptual artist whose work explores identity, history, and collective memory; co-founder of For Freedoms, an artist-run activist platform
- **Lilly Wei**: New York-based art critic and curator with a global focus; contributor to *Art in America*, *ARTnews*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, and elsewhere



Manami Ishimura, *En #2* (2022), tree branch and acrylic board, 10 × 30 × 25 ft., Image courtesy of the artist.

Artists interested in applying to Liu Shiming Art Foundation's next grant cycle should visit [smartfund.org/grants](https://smartfund.org/grants) for up-to-date information.

### **About The Liu Shiming Art Foundation**

Established in 2021, the Liu Shiming Art Foundation supports contemporary art worldwide while elevating and preserving the art of renowned Chinese artist Liu Shiming (1926-2010). Based in New York, the Foundation curates contemporary art exhibitions and provides scholarships, grants, and exchange opportunities to cultivate and grow a global arts discourse that recognizes common humanity, as Liu Shiming did as a teacher, through his art and life. [smartfund.org](https://smartfund.org).

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