

The Robert G. Kemp Award 2026

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Application Opens May 1 – June 30, 2026

Introduction

The Robert G. Kemp Award was established in 1988 in memory of Robert G. Kemp, an artist and a champion of the Blue Mountain Foundation for the Arts (BMFA). The award was created to encourage and recognize the artistic development of artists living and working in the South Georgian Bay community. The intention has been to support artists whose work grows from their engagement with the place in which they live and work. Several major art patrons have contributed to sustaining the award, allowing it to continue supporting artistic growth in the region. In 2026, the award marks its 36th year.

Purpose of the Award

The Robert G. Kemp Award invites applications from visual artists living and working in the South Georgian Bay region who are developing **a project (a series or new body of work)**. It is intended to encourage artistic exploration and growth by supporting work that builds upon an artist's existing practice while moving in a new direction. The project should result in a coherent body of work or completed artistic project developed over the course of the award year.

Award Structure

The Robert G. Kemp Award provides a total grant of \$4,000. \$2,000 will be awarded at the beginning of the award year, and the remaining \$2,000 will be awarded six months later, following a review of the progress of the project. The selected artist will develop the proposed body of work over a twelve-month period. At the conclusion of the award year, the artist will present the completed work in an exhibition (or showing) at the BMFA.

Eligibility

Applicants must:

- Live and work in the South Georgian Bay region (primary residence required; seasonal or vacation residents are not eligible)
- Demonstrate an active and sustained artistic practice, including a developing body of work and exhibition history
- Propose a new series or defined project that builds on their existing practice and represents a clear direction of growth
- Produce original work (applicants will be required to attest to originality)
- Be able to complete the proposed project within the 12-month award period

Community Engagement

The selected artist will receive a complimentary membership to the BMFA for the duration of the award year and will be invited to participate in the life of the organization. As part of the award, the artist will propose a community engagement component. This may include workshops, artist talks, demonstrations, open studio visits, or other activities that contribute to the artistic life of the BMFA and the South Georgian Bay community in line with the BMFA's

mission. The selected artist will agree to show their finished work at the BMFA upon completion of the award in an exhibition or showing.

Selection Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on artistic merit and the quality of the applicant's work, the strength of the proposed project and how it represents development or a new direction in the artist's practice, an artist statement, the applicant's CV with evidence of an active artistic practice, and the proposed community engagement.

Application Materials

Applicants must submit the following materials:

- A CV outlining the artist's professional experience related to their artistic practice.
- An artist statement describing your current artistic practice.
- A project proposal (1–2 pages) including a description of the proposed project, how it builds on or develops your existing work, key details such as medium, scale, and number of works (if applicable), a clear indication that the project is feasible within one year, and a brief note on how the \$4,000 will support the project.
- A portfolio of 8–12 images of recent work, including title, medium, dimensions, and year of completion. This may be submitted as a website link or as a PDF portfolio with all works clearly labelled.
- A community engagement proposal (1 page) outlining how you would engage with the BMFA community during the award year. This may include an exhibition, an artist talk, an open studio, a workshop, or a similar activity.

Contact

For information about the 2026 Robert G. Kemp Award, please contact:

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Definitions:

A project is understood as a **series or body of work** that:

- is conceptually and/or materially connected
- demonstrates sustained exploration of a theme, question, or process
- results in multiple works that are intended to be experienced together

This body of work may culminate in a presentation such as an exhibition, screening, or public sharing, but does not need to be fully resolved at the time of application.

Applicants are encouraged to situate their proposed project in relation to their past work, indicating how it **emerges from or extends previous explorations while moving in a new or evolving direction**.

Program Guidelines and Conditions

Eligibility

The KEMP Award is open to individual visual artists, artist duos, and collaborative groups who live and/or work in South Georgian Bay.

Previous recipients of the KEMP Award are not eligible to reapply.

Members of the jury, BMFA board members directly involved in adjudication, and their immediate family members are not eligible to apply.

Collaborative groups must designate one lead contact for correspondence and award administration.

Originality of Work

Applicants must propose original work. Submitted projects and supporting materials must represent the applicant's own ideas and artistic authorship and may not copy or substantially replicate the work of other artists, living or deceased.

Projects that infringe copyright or intellectual property rights will not be considered.

By submitting an application, applicants affirm that the proposed work is original and does not knowingly infringe upon the rights of others.

Application Requirements

Applications must be complete and received by the stated deadline to be considered. Late or incomplete submissions will not be reviewed.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring all support materials, links, and attachments are accessible and functional at the time of submission.

Adjudication

Applications will be assessed by an independent jury based on artistic merit, originality, feasibility of the proposed project, and alignment with the spirit and purpose of the award.

The jury's decisions are final and not subject to appeal.

The jury reserves the right not to make an award if, in its sole discretion, no application sufficiently meets the criteria or merit of the award.

Award Conditions

Award funds are intended to support the realization of the proposed project and may be used toward research, materials, production, presentation, or related project expenses.

Acceptance of the award carries an expectation that the recipient will undertake the proposed project and participate in agreed public engagement components associated with the award, such as an artist talk, open studio, exhibition, or related public sharing.

The award will be disbursed upon acceptance and completion of any required award agreement.

BMFA reserves the right to amend timelines, program details, or award conditions should circumstances require.

Use of Images and Materials

Applicants retain copyright to all submitted materials.

By applying, applicants grant the Blue Mountain Foundation for the Arts permission to use submitted images and project descriptions for jury review and for non-commercial promotional purposes related to the award, with appropriate credit.

General Conditions

Receipt of the award does not create an employment, commission, or ongoing contractual relationship with BMFA.

Submission of an application constitutes acceptance of these guidelines and conditions.