



Open Call - Visual Arts

Early Career Peer Mentoring Residency Program 2027

The programme

Villa Karo's Early Career Peer Mentoring Residency Program for Visual Artists offers a free, 8-week cross-cultural residency where two early-career visual artists - one based in Finland, one based in Nigeria - live, work and learn together at Villa Karo, in Grand-Popo, Benin.

The residency fosters peer mentorship, intercultural collaboration and artistic growth, while offering participants the chance to discover the rich cultural heritage and vibrant art scene of Benin.

The program is supported by the Finnish Cultural Foundation and the Swedish Cultural Foundation, and implemented in collaboration with the Yinka Shonibare Foundation / Guest Artists Space Foundation (G.A.S.), Lagos.

Since its launch in 2026, the program has brought together three pairs of artists: Eevi Oittinen (Finland) and John Adewale Kolawole (Nigeria) in spring, and this autumn, Wanda Holopainen (Finland) and Nengi Nelson (Nigeria), and Jarl Hohenthal (Finland) and Michael Adebisi (Nigeria).

Who can apply

Early-career visual artists, Finnish or based in Finland

Defined as artists within the first 5–10 years of their professional practice after completing formal education and beginning serious engagement with their art career, who have completed formal training or are self-taught, and who are in the process of developing their artistic voice, building a professional network and gaining public recognition through exhibitions, residencies or grants

Swedish-speaking artists based in Finland apply separately, through a parallel process on Svenska Kulturfonden's website.

Places available

Two Finland-based artists will be selected for 2027:

- One for the spring residency, May–June 2027
- One for the autumn residency, August–October 2027

A further pair, for Swedish-speaking Finland-based artists, will be selected separately by Svenska Kulturfonden and Villa Karo.

What's included

- A free, 8-week residency at Villa Karo
- A travel grant of 1 200 € to cover travel and other costs
- Onboarding, pre-travel preparations and welcome on arrival in Cotonou, managed by Villa Karo

Timeline

- Application portal opens: 1 September 2026
- Application deadline: 30 September 2026
- Residency periods: May–June 2027 (spring pair) and August–October 2027 (autumn pair)

Application materials and process

Applicants are asked to submit, in English:

- A residency workplan
- A CV and/or portfolio
- A motivation letter describing how you approach peer mentoring, i.e. how the residency might contribute to your own professional development as well as that of your Nigerian peer

Apply through the "Peer Mentoring - Visual Arts - VK x G.A.S." section at apply.villakaro.org

Selection process

Finland-based artists are selected through Villa Karo's own selection process. Once selected, each artist is paired with a Nigerian visual artist from the G.A.S. (Guest Artists Space) alumni pool; the pair is then introduced to each other through an online meeting ahead of the residency.

Contact

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