

Request for Qualifications

Weingarten Art Group on behalf of Art Lab at Discovery Green®

Response Deadline: July 14, 2024

On behalf of Discovery Green Conservancy, [Weingarten Art Group](#) invites Greater Houston-based artists, architects, and designers to submit qualifications for participation in a pioneering public art incubator program called [Art Lab](#) (<https://www.discoverygreen.com/artlab>).



View of Discovery Green

Art Lab marks a pivotal moment in Discovery Green’s renowned public art program which is known for engaging artists from around the world to create site-specific and interactive temporary installations. As a scalable public art incubator, Art Lab aims to reshape the landscape of public art in Houston by supporting local underrepresented artists, fostering diversity and spurring innovation within our community.

Through mentorship and hands-on experience, Art Lab will empower Greater Houston creatives who aspire to expand their professional practice into large scale, interactive public art projects by providing critical skills and resources needed to realize their ambitions.

Weingarten Art Group

2422 Bartlett St, Unit F
Houston, Texas 77098

info@weingartenartgroup.com

713.520.0561

weingartenartgroup.com

Two Fellows will be selected for the inaugural year of Art Lab, which runs September 2024 through January 2025.

About Discovery Green

Discovery Green is a 12-acre urban park in the heart of Downtown Houston which serves as a village green for the city, a source of health and happiness for its citizens, and a window into the diversity of arts and traditions that enrich life in Houston. The park features sprawling lawns and gardens, a one-acre lake, an interactive fountain, a playground, a majestic canopy of century-old live oak trees, and two on-site restaurants. Operated by the non-profit Discovery Green Conservancy, the park has welcomed more than 30 million visitors since opening in 2008.

Discovery Green is home to permanent artworks including sculptures by Jean Dubuffet, Jim Dine, Margo Sawyer and Doug Hollis. The park's rotating public art program regularly brings additional compelling and vibrant art to visitors. Projects have included installations by celebrated artists such as Bruce Munro, Daily tous les jours, Cocolab, Esrawe + Cadena, Hybycozo, and Michael-Craig Martin.

Art Lab is funded by an anonymous donor. Arts programming at Discovery Green is made possible in part by the City of Houston through the Houston Arts Alliance, and by the members of Prism, Discovery Green arts advocates.

What is Art Lab?

Program Description

Art Lab is an incubator program designed to equip participating Greater Houston artists with the skills and experience to realize artworks in the public realm. A dedicated team of mentors will work closely with each Fellow to develop a proposal for a temporary, interactive public artwork that meets professional standards and is competitive with those of established public artists.

To achieve this goal, Art Lab provides the necessary resources to take each Fellow's idea from concept to design, guidance on crafting and presenting compelling proposals, and aiding in building a credible track record for future opportunities.

Mentors

The team of mentors for Art Lab includes

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- 1) Art Lab’s annual “Lead Artist”, who will be commissioned by Discovery Green to create its annual winter art installation.
- 2) [Weingarten Art Group](#), co-curators and co-administrators for Discovery Green’s public art program since 2014 and for Art Lab.
- 3) [Metalab](#), a prominent Houston-based architecture and design firm with an extensive public art track record.

The inaugural Art Lab Lead Artist is [Jen Lewin](#), a widely respected public artist based in Brooklyn known for her interactive light landscapes using innovative technologies. Over her nearly 30-year career, Jen Lewin has honed her artistic and technical expertise to design and fabricate large-scale interactive public sculptures across the world, both temporary and permanent, that encourage community interaction and play. Her work unites nature and technology to create connected human experiences and underscores the ripple effects that individuals have on their community and habitat. With experience in mentoring artists, Jen is exceptionally suited to serve as the inaugural Lead Artist and mentor for Art Lab.

Practicums

The two Fellows selected for Art Lab will share a practicum with the Lead Artist Jen Lewin from September to November 2024 for insights and instruction on public art proposals and processes. Fellows will then proceed to individual practicums with Weingarten Art Group and Metalab from November 2024 to January 2025 to develop their proposals for a project at Discovery Green.

Concurrent with the second practicum, Discovery Green will issue a Request for Proposals for one temporary “pop-up” installation to be installed in October 2025 with an approximate budget of \$80,000. While open to artists from around the world, the goal of Art Lab is to prepare Fellows to submit proposals for this RFP and their proposals will receive special consideration.

Practicum with Lead Artist

The Lead Artist (Jen Lewin in 2024) will conduct a shared practicum with the two Art Lab Fellows, offering insights and instruction on public art proposals and processes. Jen Lewin’s winter art installation at Discovery Green, debuting in November 2024, will serve as a real-life example and hands-on learning experience for the Fellows.

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Jen Lewin will host a three-day workshop at her Brooklyn-based studio from September 23-25, offering the Fellows a behind-the-scenes view into the conceptualizing, designing, and planning of temporary interactive art installations.

Throughout October, Jen Lewin will lead weekly calls with the Fellows covering a range of public art topics tailored to their interests.

In November, the Practicum will culminate with the Fellows assisting in the installation of Jen Lewin's project at Discovery Green, providing hands-on experience and understanding of large-scale project execution.

Practicum with Weingarten Art Group and Metalab

From November 2024 through January 2025, Weingarten Art Group and Metalab will collaborate to assist each Art Lab Fellow in preparing a proposal for a temporary project in response to the RFP for the October 2025 Pop-up installation.

If a Fellow is awarded the October 2025 Pop-up project, Weingarten Art Group and Metalab will provide continuing support and resources to implement the project and promote its success. While only one Fellow may be selected for this opportunity, Fellows are encouraged to apply to future calls at Discovery Green and at other venues after completing the Art Lab program.

Weingarten Art Group will guide Fellows throughout the Program, including crafting design proposals aligned with Discovery Green's goals and audiences, advising on the creative potential, budget allocation, project sustainability, and making a compelling pitch.

As the Design Specialist, Metalab will assist Fellows in refining their design proposals. This includes design optimization, technical consultation on materials and structural considerations, assisting in creating renderings and design drawings; and advising on budget management.

Who is Art Lab for?

Art Lab seeks professional artists interested in expanding their studio or design practice into three-dimensional, interactive public art. The program is open to architects and designers as well.

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Art Lab is open to those over 18 years of age residing and working in the Greater Houston area (within a [75-mile radius of central Houston](#)) who:

- Demonstrate professional experience as an artist, architect, or designer, keeping in mind that prior public art experience is not required;
- Express a strong interest in public art, particularly in developing temporary projects for audiences at Discovery Green;
- Can commit to participating in-person in Art Lab activities and meetings with Art Lab mentors in Houston on a regular basis (1-2 times weekly during business hours) from September 2024 to January 2025, with breaks during the holidays;
- Are available to travel to the Lead Artist Jen Lewin's studio in Brooklyn, New York September 23-25, 2024.

Priority will be given to applications from artists who are underrepresented in this field, such as artists of color, women, LGBTQ+, etc.

Budget Description

Each Art Lab Fellow will be granted an honorarium of \$4,500 for participation and for development of a design proposal (Sept 2024-January 2025).

A travel allowance of \$2,500 will be provided to cover a 3-4 night stay in Brooklyn for the visit to Jen Lewin's Studio.

The total project budget for the 2025 Pop-Up installation is \$80,000, inclusive of installation costs incurred by Discovery Green Conservancy and necessary service providers. If selected for the 2025 Pop-Up installation, an Art Lab Fellow will receive continued and dedicated support from Weingarten Art Group and Metalab to manage the project and budget.

Application Requirements

Please submit the following materials via Submittable at this [link](#).

- Resume or CV
- Letter of Interest (600-word maximum) describing your current artistic, architecture, or design practice, explaining your interest in Art Lab and what you hope to gain from it,

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and outlining initial project ideas, themes, technologies, or materials you wish to explore if selected to create a temporary project at Discovery Green.

- Past work examples
 - Up to 15 images showing past art or designs
 - Image list including descriptions, such as title, medium, date, and dimensions
- Three professional references

Application materials may only be submitted via the Submittable platform. If applicants encounter technical issues, please address this with WAG during the period open for questions.

The deadline for questions is July 10, 2024, at 5:00 pm, and the deadline for submissions is July 14, 2024, at 11:59PM.

Selection Process

Two Fellows will be selected to participate in the inaugural year of Art Lab, starting in September 2024. Submissions will be reviewed by Discovery Green Conservancy staff and its Public Art Committee, 2024 Lead Artist Jen Lewin, and Weingarten Art Group.

Selection will be based on the following criteria:

- Quality of letter of interest
- Quality of work examples
- Ability of artist/architect/designer to complete a project based on bio and prior work experience
- Priority in the selection process will be given to artists who are underrepresented in this field, such as artists of color, women, LGBTQ+, etc.

Professional references will be contacted prior to artist notification. The selected Fellows will be required to enter a written agreement with Discovery Green prior to commencing work.

We are committed to a policy of providing opportunities to people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, age, veteran status, or physical ability.

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Timeline

**dates are subject to change*

Art Lab RFP release: June 3, 2024

RFP deadline: July 14, 2024

Artists notified: August 28, 2024

Orientation: August 29 – September 13, 2024

Practicum with Lead Artist: September 16 – November 18, 2024

Site visit to Lead Artist studio: September 23-25, 2024

Practicum with Metalab & WAG: November 19, 2024 – January 31, 2025

RFP for 2025 Pop-Up Issued: December 2, 2024

Pop-Up Artist notified: March 10, 2025

Pop-Up 2025: October 1-31, 2025

Contact Information

Ady Avivi, Lead Project Manager & Curator

Weingarten Art Group LLC

ady@weingartenartgroup.com

Olivia Kimbrell, Project Manager & Curator

Weingarten Art Group LLC

olivia@weingartenartgroup.com

Lea Weingarten, Principal

Weingarten Art Group LLC

lea@weingartenartgroup.com

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