



Responding to Your Questions De Ying Curatorial Fellowship 2024-2025

Following the recent announcement of the next De Ying Curatorial Fellowship, we have received a number of queries about the programme content and the process of submitting an application. Here we respond to some of the questions that have been raised.

What level of experience should applicants have?

The De Ying Curatorial Fellowship (DYCF) programme asks that applicants have a minimum of two years' experience of working in the art world in some capacity or another. It doesn't really matter what type of experience this is, but it helps if what they have done is relevant to why applicants are choosing to work as a curator. And, to why they wish to apply for this particular fellowship programme.

What is perhaps most important is that applicants have had opportunities to work alongside artists, or in institutions where they have gained exposure to the practical aspects of putting on an exhibition. The work of curating is ever balanced between a curator's knowledge about art and their ability to navigate the practical aspects of presenting artworks coherently in a physical space. It also requires people skills; in particular, sensitivity to working with different partners, collaborators, and, especially, artists. That, in particular, is not always easy for individuals who come straight out of university without any work experience.

What age should applicants be?

It doesn't really matter what age you are, but the De Ying Curatorial Fellowship is intended to support early to mid-career curators. In the course of the programme, fellows are encouraged to explore all kinds of questions about art and aesthetics, as well as the particular field or aspect of art and exhibition-making that is of interest to them. So whatever age an applicant might be, we hope that they would be open to new ideas and ways of thinking.

What are the key aims of the fellowship?

The De Ying Curatorial Fellowship provides emerging and established curators and arts researchers with the opportunity to think deeply and critically about the role of curating, with the accent on the opportunities for curators in mainland China today. The activities offered by the fellowship programme are geared towards providing opportunities for new learning experiences that can be integrated into the fellows' ongoing creative practice.

But while in developing understanding and experience of, and thinking about curating in a theoretical sense is important, DYCF also tries to focus on the practical aspects of exhibition-making, which is why for the 2024-2025 iteration, applicants are asked to submit a proposal for an exhibition they would like to realise. The 2024-2025 DYCF will assist successful fellows in carrying out their research by furnishing fellows with a research grant, and by creating all kinds of opportunities to meet curators and artists well-placed to share experiences and insights. Fellows will also have the option to be mentored through the development of their ideas by an external curator or art professional.

We will also endeavour to assist fellows in seeing their exhibitions through to fruition in collaboration with partners and supporters that make up De Ying's extended network.

How would being a fellow help me in my career?

First, by providing the time and support to focus on researching a curatorial idea that you believe in.

Second, by giving you access to a range of people who will share their skills and insights with you, and help to work through your ideas.

Most importantly, in the experiences it offers, De Ying Curatorial Fellowship is process oriented rather than goal oriented. It places great emphasis upon values of professionalism and integrity, thoughtfulness in action and expression, and originality of ideas. So, no matter what the final outcome is, and even if the brilliant curatorial concept that succeeds in getting an applicant selected to be a fellow doesn't pan out, the process of researching an idea to the best of one's ability, exploring all actionable ideas, as well as being able to learn from what might in one moment feel like a failure, is going to be of immense value to that applicant's future career. A misstep is simply an opportunity to become more sure-footed.

Finally, in being a De Ying Curatorial Fellow, you become part of the De Ying network that will continue to be supportive of your career where ever it can.

What sort of workshops will be offered?

The workshops are intended to assist fellows in exploring various models of curatorial practice, and how those models function for the different types and scale of institution with which fellows may in future have opportunities to collaborate with. It is equally important to understand the audiences and communities the various types of institution support.

There will be a series of six 3-4 day workshops that will take place approximately every six weeks beginning in June 2024. Each workshop will be led by an invited curator who is recognised for a particular expertise or achievement within the field of curating, exhibition-making, working with artists or with associated public programmes, which means thinking for an audience. The workshop will be themed accordingly, and each will be supplemented by the participation of two other invited arts practitioners or professionals whose own work complements the workshop's theme.

For the first fellowship, the four fellows were all women. Was that deliberate? Does the fellowship favour applications from women?

No. De Ying Curatorial Fellowship upholds a nonpartisan and inclusive practice that is open, fair and non-discriminatory. It just happened that the jury who interviewed the 2022-2023 DYCF applicants were unanimous in their selection of Gu Ling, Yuan Fuca, Gwendoline Cho-ning Kam and Li Jia for their skill set, not for their gender.

So what is the selection process?

There's a committee of invited members who together with Karen Smith, go through all applications to make an initial selection of applications. These are then discussed with members of the foundation and brought down to a final number of applicants who are invited for interview. Interviews are conducted by a panel of 4-5 invited experts, some of whom rotate for each new fellowship.

Should the application be in Chinese or in English? What if I can't speak English?

The De Ying Curatorial Fellowship is a China-based programme, which places it within a Chinese-language arena. So an ability to speak Chinese is a must.

In step with the art world generally, the fellowship is internationally-facing. A number of the curators and art professionals whom you will encounter during the programme will be from outside of the mainland, and will be English-speaking. An ability to understand English would therefore be helpful.

The materials required for the application can be submitted in Chinese or English.

If you have a question that you would like to ask, please let us know at: applications@deyingfoundation.org.

Does the proposal need to be in Chinese and English or is just Chinese OK?

The proposal can be in English or in Chinese. It does not need to be in both languages.

Is the proposal required to focus on Chinese contemporary art, or on the practice of global contemporary art?

The topic can be any one of your choosing. We do not wish to restrict this to one field or topic. The research proposal can be for contemporary art; it can be for a seam of art history as it relates to the present; it can be for a group of artists, or for a single artist. The choice of approach is yours.

Any other limitations to content?

None other than using your best judgement to select a proposal that you think appropriate to public display of the work.

Does the proposal need to be fully mapped out? Including selection of artists, artworks, floor plans etc?

The idea of the De Ying Curatorial Fellowship is to think about curating from multiple different angles. We want to hear from candidates who have a great idea that due to its complexity or to questions the applicant has about it, requires some serious thinking and research. So, no, we are not expecting to receive fully mapped out ideas. We want to see a compelling seed of a concept that we can support the applicant in growing into a serious exhibition.

Can groups apply?

Yes. The value of the grant will remain the same for each project application, whether that is contributed by one curator or by a group. But, should the group project make the final selection, De Ying will be able to cover the costs of travel for group members – within limit. This fellowship may not be suitable for a large group effort.

What did the first fellows think of the program?

Gu Ling

“Every communication we participate in together allows me to face the differences between us, and from these differences, I can experience some new understanding of myself and open up some possibilities that I did not know before. This remains for me to continue to think about and reflect on in the future.”

Li Jia

“I don't know how many people in adulthood can still have such an opportunity to concentrate on study, make friends, and think for a year and a half without going to work, and at the same time be able to have almost all kinds of support from professional and academic to economic and life. But [with the curatorial fellowship] I had the privilege of experiencing it!”

Gwendoline Cho-ning Kam

“I very much appreciate what the foundation and the fellowship program have offered over the last 18 months. The program provides us with wonderful chances to meet artists and curators from different parts of the world. Trips to Beijing, Hong Kong, and Hangzhou also allow us to meet art practitioners in person which helps with networking. I am thrilled to present my research work with new artist/curator friends, and their feedback always offers good advice for my next move.”

Yuan Fuca

“As one of the first cohort of curatorial scholars selected for the fellowship, I felt honored to participate in this eighteen-month exchange and learning process, which allowed me the opportunity to slow down, rethink my past curatorial practice and career path, and further helped me develop my research interests. The professionalism and care of the De Ying team also made the process smoother. This experience has great value and significance to me.”