

Society of Presidential Fellows Takes Flight

Since August 2019, RISD has raised a \$15 million foundation for a new program to recruit and support outstanding graduate students RISD.

Thanks to the generosity of several leadership donors, RISD has awarded inaugural Presidential Fellowships to five exceptional students this academic year.

Presidential Fellows are selected through a highly competitive process and receive full-tuition funding for the duration of their graduate program. They also participate in special programming designed to enrich their studies and advance their careers, including opportunities to connect with RISD alumni mentors who are creative thought leaders.

“It is exciting that the first group of fellows has begun to learn, make and grow at RISD,” says RISD Trustee **Hillary Blumberg** 92 IL. “It is vitally important to make the RISD educational experience accessible to talented graduate students who are already enriching our community and will go on to build impactful creative careers in art and design. It is heartening to see the program grow and the more it expands the larger its impact will be.”

The Society of Presidential Fellows program has provided RISD with a competitive edge in recruiting highly sought-after students who would not have previously attended due to a lack of financial aid. Because the first round of fellowship recruiting has been so successful, RISD has set a goal to secure funding within the next five years that would make it possible to offer these fellowships to as many as 50 graduate students per year. This will ensure the best students can come to RISD, no matter their financial circumstances.

“I am looking forward to seeing this program grow so that we can recruit and enroll many more deserving students to our graduate programs regardless of financial means.”

“I am looking forward to seeing this program grow so that we can recruit and enroll many more deserving students to our graduate programs regardless of financial means.”

“The Society of Presidential Fellows is one of the most exciting programs RISD has launched in recent years. We are demonstrating our commitment to equitable access through comprehensive financial support, bringing additional exceptional graduate students to RISD who might not be able to attend otherwise, and also offering recipients opportunities to engage even more deeply with leaders and changemakers in art and design.” —President Rosanne Somerson

2020 SOCIETY OF PRESIDENTIAL FELLOWS

Aaron Christopher Jelinek MArch 23

Jelinek earned a bachelor degree in Rhetoric from the University of California, Berkeley and is Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, Building Design and Construction accredited; Construction Documents Technology certified; and a member of the Construction Specifications Institute. His personal life experiences have disrupted old ideas as to what constitutes architecture and he is interested in exploring architecture beyond the physical life of structures. Jelinek is excited about rigorous studio work where he will have the opportunity to test his ideas, to try and to fail, and to grow as a spatial designer. He is interested in sustainability and passive design as well as finding new channels to harness creative energy.

Jelinek’s fellowship is supported through the generosity of anonymous donors.



“I was raised with a Waldorf education that focuses on the development of creative intuition. I wanted to find a program in Architecture that would allow me to use my creative intuition and further develop it. I found exactly this at RISD and am excited to be part of a community that allows and expects this of me,” says Jelinek. “This fellowship has not only alleviated daunting financial obligations, but also has given me additional time because I no longer have to work multiple jobs. I can be involved with the community, pursue projects more earnestly and immerse myself in RISD. It is absolutely breathtaking to receive this fellowship, which offers mentorship from outside of RISD, access to the community on campus, and financial support that allows additional time to do creative work.”



Lilly E. Manycolors MA 22 GAC

Manycolors holds a bachelor degree in Decolonization from Goddard College and was a finalist in 2019 for Wellesley College's Prilla Bracket Smith Award and recently received a grant from the New England Foundation of the Arts: Creative City Boston, NEFA 2020. Her two signature projects for 2020 include *The Return of First Womxn: We Create Festival*, a mixed-media performance in Boston this April that told the Indigenous story of First Womxn's return to earth and *MISODOODISWAN Red Sweat Lodge: Witnessing/Healing of MMIWG2s*, an installation at the Boston Common of four sculptural sweat lodges made from red dresses that address the need for acknowledging murdered and missing Indigenous women.

"I have been a self taught artist my whole life and 'protected' myself from the perceptions and technique molding of European standards, so I really resisted attending art school. When I learned about RISD's Global Arts and Cultures program and met its director, Ijlal Muzaffar, my thinking shifted. Our conversations about my work, which is rooted in my Indigenous traditions and decolonization, has the potential to braid well with the curriculum," she says. "I am the first in my family to attend higher education and also am a mixed Indigenous single mother without access to family or resources other than what I create. The fellowship provides me with financial liberation to continue my education and manifest my work into the world. I hope this fellowship will engage in reparational redistribution of access to resources that will benefit not just myself but also Indigenous people."

Manycolors' fellowship is made possible by the Hillary Blumberg 92 FAV Graduate Fellowship Fund.

Zoë Pulley MFA 23 GD

Pulley earned her bachelor of fine arts degree in Fashion Design from Virginia Commonwealth University and is a two-time recipient of a Cotton Inc. Scholarship and a recipient of a Cooper Union Summer Scholarship. She was recognized by Ink magazine in 2016 as part of their designer spotlight series. Her interest in telling stories of Black experiences is reflected throughout her work and extends to *Gran Sans*, a jewelry brand that is an extension of generational practice in making work inspired by her grandmother, Sandra, the project's namesake, where she is a designer and producer - as well as her most current project called Black Joy Archive, a collection of crowd-sourced images accessible online and in a limited print book release. Pulley believes it is crucial to create opportunities that encourage people of color to tell their stories within design spaces, without the obligation that the stories have a certain look or feel.

"I am excited about RISD's hybrid of creative and academic opportunities for growth, which includes studying, practicing and learning tactile art and design while also emphasizing theory and critical thought," says Pulley. "This fellowship makes it possible for me to attend a prestigious institution without financial burden. This is especially important while we are living through a global pandemic. I'm looking forward to meeting and connecting with talented and inspiring people in the community. Knowing the sheer caliber of talent an institution like RISD welcomes each year, I'm honored to be a part of such a distinguished group of scholars!"

Pulley's fellowship is made possible by the Hillary Blumberg 92 FAV Graduate Fellowship Fund.



Diana Sanchez MFA 22 D+M

Sanchez earned a master degree in Design, with a focus on Social Innovation and Design Research at the University of Los Andes. She is an artist, designer and computational poet from Bogota, Colombia. She has a background in poetic computation, creative writing and research, and her work bridges art, design, science and technology. She is the founder of *Correo Patafisico*, a project that inspires young girls to explore the world through scientific and technological activities with an artistic approach. This project has been featured in different conferences, such as *New Direction in the Humanities* at the University of Pennsylvania and *Cumulus Letters to the Future* in Bangalore India. Sanchez led a talk on botanic interfaces at the *Design Science Symposium, Inclusive Narratives from Nature* at the **Edna W. Lawrence Nature Lab** in September 2019.

"My profile as a designer is far from traditional and Digital + Media welcomes interdisciplinarity and a flexible mindset and is in tune with my practice," says Sanchez. Shona Kitchen, associate professor of Digital + Media, was especially welcomed and provided generous feedback and options to explore during her application process. Financial aid was another critical factor. "I applied one year ago and was accepted but deferred because I was unable to afford tuition. This fellowship made RISD possible for me. I am grateful to be attending such great classes and not worrying about loans," she adds. "I'm interested in collaboration as an ethical frame in my design practice. I hope to expand my vision as a designer and push disciplinary boundaries, get a stronger foundation in computation and media, and join an effort to transform design and caring practices to positively impact communities of humans and non-humans."

Sanchez's fellowship is supported through the generosity of anonymous donors.

Tzyy Yi Young MFA 22 FD

Young holds a bachelor degree of fine arts in Three Dimensional Forum from the University of Washington and has participated in several residencies and workshops including the Murano Residency, Pilchuck Glass School/Laguna B, Murano Italy. In 2019 she was an artist in residence at Pottery Northwest in Seattle, WA and the Advanced Sculpting in Glass Workshop at Pilchuck Glass School in Stanwood, WA. Although her focus has been on ceramics and glass, she wants her work to embrace people and therefore is studying furniture design to explore how function, interaction and aesthetics come together.

"RISD has been a dream school since undergrad, not only because it is world renowned, but also because the professors and artists I have worked with who have graduated from RISD. These individuals are remarkable for their passion and dedication," she says. "I am deeply honored and humbled to receive this fellowship and I am very thankful to RISD's donors and community. I am looking forward to refining my making, thinking and production skills and am excited to be immersed in an environment that is so rich with creativity, motivation and hard-working people."

Young's fellowship is made possible by the Hillary Blumberg 92 FAV Graduate Fellowship Fund.



To learn more, please visit risd.edu/giving/priorities/spf