



THE MARTHA COOPER SCHOLARSHIP

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

The **Martha Cooper Scholarship** (MCS) offers a unique opportunity for an individual from Africa, Asia or Latin America to dedicate themselves for ten months to an artistic project through the medium of photography. With the newly announced MCS, the Foundation Berliner Leben acknowledges the importance of documentary photography and purposefully offers a production scholarship for documentary photographers who use their photography in an effort to promote positive impact on the world. The scholarship is based on the annual topic of Fresh A.I.R., the scholarship programme of Stiftung Berliner Leben. It addresses social and political developments that affect us in the present, and highlights the diversity of human experience and perception of the world.

The chosen photographer will be invited to live and work in one of our Fresh A.I.R. residencies in Berlin Schöneberg. The current call is for the **12th class** starting in **February 2027** and ending in **November 2027**.

Thematic Call: »UNDER CONSTRUCTION: Cartography of Identities in Transition«

There are times in life when the self seems to blur – not lost, but without firm ground. Breaks in identity are not only personal experiences; they also reflect social and political change. At a time when Europe is confronted with divisions and with its shared values being called into question, engaging with issues of belonging, origin and memory takes on new urgency.

»UNDER CONSTRUCTION: Cartography of Identities in Transition« is dedicated to these in-between spaces: moments in which familiar identities begin to crack, narratives fall apart and new meanings are not yet tangible. The focus is on phases of life in which identity once seemed clearly defined but has dissolved, disappeared or been consciously shed – as a break-out from a role determined by others. At the centre lies the field of tension between self and stories, between past, memory and possibility. This call understands itself as an invitation to explore the space between past and present.

Funding will be given to:

- Projects that examine what remains when familiar narratives fall apart.
- Projects that explore how identity can be newly developed or further evolved after a break between self-knowledge and self-creation.
- Projects that trace how political upheavals affect individual self-image and/or analyse the role art plays in dealing with collective memory, suppressed histories and identities that need to be redefined.

Artists and other cultural practitioners whose biographies are marked by loss of belonging, ruptures (e.g. with their family of origin), repression, uprooting or systemic transformation are invited to apply. We are looking for artistic responses to loss and fracture of identity, self-alienation and reconstruction – regardless of whether these experiences were lived first-hand, felt through their after-effects, or inherited through family and cultural memory.

We explicitly invite applicants to use autobiographical, genealogical or family-historical research as the basis for their artistic engagement. Private artefacts, suppressed stories, contradictory accounts or the silence between generations can serve as starting points for new artistic narratives – in which identity appears not only as loss, but also as a possibility that is visibly »under construction«.

Application

Application deadline: **Sunday, 1st March, 2026**

Applications can only be submitted via the application platform.

You can find further information at <https://urban-nation.com/artist-in-residence-scholarships/>

Please direct any other enquiries to: FreshAIR-office@stiftung-berliner-leben.de.

Important information

We solely fund projects of which content, implementation and planned outcome are compatible with the principles of Fresh A.I.R., the Foundation Berliner Leben and the free democratic basic order. Projects with racist, anti-Semitic, queer-hostile or otherwise exclusionary and denigrating content are excluded.

We welcome project ideas that aim to actively involve local participants and organizations. Potential partners (institution, organization, association, public figure) should therefore be researched and named as part of the project application. If the project is approved by the foundation, these partners should be contacted immediately regarding cooperation. In addition, a backup should always be considered to replace any missing cooperation partners.

For project ideas that can only be realized in cooperation with a project partner (institution, organization, association, public figure), written proof of this partner's willingness to cooperate must be submitted by e-mail at the time of application, stating the applicant ID. The same applies to applications from people who belong to a network (e.g. artists, scientists, cultural workers, etc.) or who are associated with such a network and plan to involve this network as external partners in their project. In addition, a backup should always be considered in order to replace missing cooperation partners if necessary.