

2026 ACE x firstdraft Short-term Residency



About ACE

Located in Adelaide's iconic Lion Arts Centre precinct, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental (ACE) is South Australia's leading independent contemporary arts organisation, proudly supporting artists to imagine, develop and showcase art on Kurna Yarta (Kurna Country).

Established through the merger of the Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia (CACSA) and the Australian Experimental Art Foundation (AEAF) in 2017, ACE builds upon the legacy of over 100 years of leading experimental arts activity in South Australia.

Through exhibitions, studios, live programs, education and professional development opportunities, ACE is a space for artists and audiences to explore, reflect on and connect with contemporary and experimental art.

Opportunity

The 2026 ACE x firstdraft Short-term Residency offers one South Australian artist the opportunity to develop and present a solo exhibition at firstdraft, Sydney. The artist will receive a 3-month studio residency at ACE with 24/7 access to the studios above the ACE gallery, sharing a creative, collaborative environment with the ACE Studio Program artists. This residency is supported by an artist fee, materials budget and travel bursary, with the focus on a specific project in preparation for the artist's interstate exhibition. This opportunity provides a unique chance to gain national recognition, expand professional networks, and collaborate within a dynamic studio environment.

There is one short-term studio space available via this open call out.

- 3-month rent-free studio space, from July – September 2026
- Studios are approximately 20m² and feature 24/7 access, plus shared kitchen and breakout facilities
- Utilities (electricity, internet, water) included
- Adelaide CBD location, above the ACE gallery at Lion Arts Centre
- Artist fee, materials budget and travel bursary provided
- Project-based curatorial and installation planning support to develop new work for a solo exhibition at firstdraft, Sydney
- Professional development opportunities including, but not limited to: studio visits with Australian and international curators, introductions to visiting artists, participation in live programs, and support from ACE staff
- Profiling and promotion opportunities through ACE



Eligibility

- Artists who work across all contemporary and experimental art forms
- South Australian residents who have been living in the state for the last 12 months as a minimum (by July 2026)
- People who are 18+
- Those who have not previously participated in ACE's Studio Program or are participating in the ACE Studio Program
- Artists who are currently undertaking full-time tertiary study during the residency period are ineligible to apply. PhD candidates can discuss their application with ACE
- ACE strongly encourages artists who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), living with a disability, or part of the LGBTQIAP+ community to apply for this opportunity.

Application Process

Applications are considered by an external advisory committee composed of ACE staff and industry professionals.

Applications are assessed against the following criteria:

- Quality of work and artistic ideas
- Artist's commitment to experimentation, exploration and expansion of their practice
- Demonstration of the Residency's benefit to artist's professional development

Application form

You will need to complete our online application form, including:

- Personal information: Name, pronouns, DOB, email, address, phone number, links to website and social media
- Short bio (150 words)
- Description of how you plan to use the ACE x firstdraft Short-term Residency to experiment, expand, and develop your artistic practice, including specific conceptual and/or artistic goals (500 words)
- Proposed schedule of activities across July to September 2026 (up to 500 words)
- Details of any planned travel outside of South Australia for more than 4 weeks during the residency
- Brief summary of what interests you in the ACE x firstdraft Short-term Residency, and what impact you expect the residency to have on your practice (300 words)
- Access requirements (please note, ACE studios are on the second floor)
- Your current CV highlighting a minimum of three group or solo exhibitions
- A document with up to 20 examples of your work. (Our preferred method of receiving examples of work is as one pdf or Powerpoint file. Moving image/sound works may be uploaded as embedded links. Please label images with your name, title of work, year of production, media and size.)
- Web link to any audio/visual work (if applicable)

Accessibility

If you are unable to upload your support material via our form, you can supply a WeTransfer, Dropbox or Google Drive link instead.

If you face barriers in completing application forms, we welcome you to reach out to find a suitable way for you to apply, and to discuss what capacities ACE has to support you should you be successful in your application.

There is the option to respond to the application questions in video or audio format in the 'support material' section of our form. Just upload a link to the video or audio when prompted in the form.

Timeline

Applications close	Monday, 1 June 2026, 11:59pm (ACDT)
Successful applicants announced	Late June 2026
Residency commences	Tuesday, 7 July 2026

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I know if I am a good fit for the ACE x firstdraft Short-term Residency?

We look for artists who will benefit from the opportunity at this moment in the development of their career, and artists whose practices align with our vision and mission. To identify how your work might fit with this opportunity, we encourage you to have a look at ACE and firstdraft's previous exhibitions and live programs, and to consider how strongly you can articulate your proposed plan to experiment, explore and expand your practice in this opportunity.

Is this opportunity targeted at artists in a certain age bracket?

ACE identifies that this opportunity is beneficial no matter what your age, or how long you have been a practising artist. However, to be eligible, you must be 18 years old or over.

I have not completed formal visual arts studies. Am I still eligible to apply?

Artists who work across all contemporary art forms are eligible to apply. While you do not need to possess formal qualifications, those that can demonstrate a developed visual arts practice will make strong candidates.

I am an artist living with a disability. How will I be supported if I am successful?

If you face barriers in completing application forms, we welcome you to reach out to find a suitable way to apply, and to discuss what capacities ACE has to support you should you be selected. Please be aware that the application form provides you with the option to submit your application by answering questions in video or audio format. You can also view more information about ACE's accessibility.

What if I am based in regional South Australia?

Regionally-based artists should consider if they can meet the following requirements:

- Minimum allocation of 20 hours per week (on average) to work in their studio.
- Attendance at key after-hours events that support the delivery of the ACE x firstdraft Short-term Residency.

I have only been in South Australia for a matter of months. Am I still eligible?

To be eligible, applicants must have been residents of South Australia for a minimum of twelve months by July 2026.

Can I propose a large-scale installation at firstdraft in my application?

Proposals should consider the scale of the work for freight and size of [firstdraft gallery spaces](#). The artist will be responsible for self-installation, and the proposal should reflect a practical approach to scale, complexity, and logistics. Competitive applications demonstrate a clear, realistic approach to logistics and installation.

Do you have any tips for making a strong application?

[Guildhouse](#) and [NAVA](#) provide relevant information and tips for preparing and writing proposals that we encourage you to access. Our assessment panel will be considering the strength of existing practice and also the conceptual development/ideas, artistic research, and new directions, experimentation, exploration and expansion you aim to pursue. The feasibility of your freight and self-installation plans will also be an important consideration in the assessment process. We recommend a clear and rigorous focus on your ideas. Additionally, high-quality documentation is highly regarded.

Can I apply for both the ACE Studio Program and the 2026 ACE x firstdraft Short-term Residency? Does this affect my eligibility?

Yes, you can apply for both opportunities, but you can only be awarded one. Applying for both will not affect your eligibility. We encourage applicants to carefully consider which opportunity best aligns with their artistic practice and goals, as each has a distinct focus and outcome. The ACE Annual Studio Program supports long-term artistic development, while the ACE x firstdraft Short-term Residency is project-based and leads to an interstate exhibition.

Can I apply for firstdraft's Program Callout?

Yes, you can apply for both opportunities but you can only be awarded one.

How are applications assessed?

Applications are considered by an advisory committee composed of ACE staff and external industry professionals. Applications are assessed against the quality of the artist's existing work and their proposal to experiment, explore and expand their practice, the artist's exhibition experience and ways their practice has been evidently developed, the artist's demonstrated long-term commitment to their practice, and demonstration of the Residency's benefit to artist's professional development. In selecting the overall makeup of the cohort, ACE also considers the representation of a diverse range of artistic mediums, approaches and voices.

Can I visit the ACE studios before I apply?

Please contact danni@ace.gallery if you wish to arrange a 15 minute viewing of the studios. Viewing times are available between the hours of 10am-4pm, Tuesday to Friday.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I view past ACE firstdraft artists' work?

ACE has partnered with firstdraft since 2022, making this the fifth year of collaboration. You can explore the works of previous recipients at firstdraft:

Questions?

Feel free to get in touch by calling the ACE office 08 8211 7505 or emailing Dr. Danni Zuvela, ACE Artistic Director, danni@ace.gallery.

We Tea (2025), Jingwei Bu.
View [here](#).



Magic Cave (2024), Emmaline Zanelli.
View [here](#).



Asleep with the Fishes (2023), Teresa Busuttill. View [here](#).



Telesm (2022), Shaye Dương.
View [here](#).



Jingwei Bu, *We Tea* (2025), dimensions variable, materials variable. Installation view at firstdraft Photography by Jessica Maurer.

Emmaline Zanelli, *Magic Cave* (2024), 6.5m x 4m x 2.4m, bird, mouse, rat, cat, dog, hermit crab and bird cages, plastic tunnels, toys, LED lights. Installation view at firstdraft Photography by Jessica Maurer.

Teresa Busuttill, *Asleep with the Fishes* (2023), dimensions variable, mixed materials. Installation view at firstdraft Photography by Jessica Maurer.

Shaye Dương, *Telesm* (2022), dimensions variable, mixed materials. Installation view at firstdraft Photography by Jessica Maurer.