

ARTnews

United States Artists Names 2026 Fellows, Including Mendi + Keith Obadike, Edra Soto, and Johanna Hedva
By Maximiliano Durón | January 15, 2026



The 2026 USA Fellows. Courtesy United States Artists

The Chicago-based nonprofit United States Artists has named the 50 artists who will receive its annual USA Fellowship and the recipient of its Berresford Prize, both of which come with an unrestricted grant of \$50,000.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of United States Artists, which was founded in 2006 and is one of a handful of US-based organizations that provides direct support to artists.

“For two decades, United States Artists has advanced a simple yet powerful conviction—that artists are essential to the imagination and health of our society,” Judilee Reed, the nonprofit’s president and CEO, said in a statement. “Our commitment to unrestricted support, with programs such as the USA Fellowship, has enabled artists across every discipline and place to sustain their livelihoods, take creative risks, and define their own paths forward.”

The USA Fellowship is awarded in nine disciplines: architecture and design, craft, dance, media, music, theater and performance, traditional arts, visual art, and writing. The 2026 cohort includes several acclaimed artists, including Mendi + Keith Obadike and Nancy Baker Cahill, who won in media; visual arts fellows include Edra Soto, Eric-Paul Riege, Macon Reed, and Maia Chao, who will feature in this year’s Whitney Biennial; and in writing, Johanna Hedva, who is known for her essay collection *How to Tell When We Will Die: On Pain, Disability, and Doom*.

“As a non-commercial artist, maintaining financial stability is an ongoing challenge,” Soto told ARTnews in an email. “Grants and commissions are my primary sources of income, which can pose challenges when I undertake creative risks. Grants are not only central to my livelihood but also vital to my mental and emotional well-being. My grant awards are directly connected to my art creation and the investments I make to produce my work.”

Soto, who will later this month open an exhibition at the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City, Missouri, said she plans to use the grant money toward the realization of future projects, which as her career has progressed have become more ambitious and more costly financially. Those costs include “research and materials, studio rent, studio assistance, art storage rent, travel expenses, taking chances, living, and doing my best to support others, especially artists like me who serve as society’s collective consciousness, in the best way we can, during this tragically disgraceful moment in American history.”