

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Abakanowicz Community Praxis Fellowship

The Grantor and Its Mission

The Abakanowicz Arts and Culture Charitable Foundation began in 2019 to carry on the creative legacy of the artist Magdalena Abakanowicz and her husband Jan Kosmowski. Its mission is to support programs that investigate concepts of human creativity, the role of art as a visual language within cultures and dynamic force within contemporary society, and the intersection of art and other modes of inquiry for the purposes of extending the meaning and relevance of Magdalena Abakanowicz’s life, art, and vision for humanity.

Eligibility and Requirements

Eligible students are in the 1st- or 2nd-year of the Community, Liberation, Indigenous, and Eco-Psychologies Specialization and in good standing at Pacifica Graduate Institute.

1. **Application Proposal:** Compose a document with the three components below
2. **Application Form:** Provide your information and upload files to [this application form](#)
3. **Praxis Advisor Approval:** You must receive informal written or verbal approval for your proposal ideas or project plan before the **application deadline on June 9, 2025**.

Proposal Components

- **Executive Summary** (< 200 words): Abstract of project narrative and logistics
- **Project Narrative** (< 750 words): Describe your community praxis, goals and potential outcomes, your host organization/community, and their expectations for your work. Carefully articulate how your community praxis potentially resonates with the grantor’s mission (above) and themes of Abakanowicz’s life and art (see below).
- **Logistics and Feasibility** (< 250 words): Outline a timeline and budget (the average award is \$2,000-\$3,000). Provide an assessment of your proposal’s feasibility, such as potential obstacles and contingency plans. Be transparent whether your project is wholly dependent on fellowship funding or—in the case that only part of your budget is awarded—how you would adjust your plans, supplement this award, or crowdfund.

Thematic Connections

Applicants must undertake an initial investigation of Magdalena Abakanowicz to draw potential connections to her life, art, or legacy. These connections should be elaborated in the project narrative of the proposal, and applicants can find digital literature on the application webpage. Thoughtful and nuanced engagement with Abakanowicz’s life and art is one of the most significant criteria in selecting fellowship awardees. Below are some examples of thematic areas of Abakanowicz’s life and art that resonate with the CLIE curriculum, but applicants are encouraged to generate and speculate new connections.

Art Practice Remedies Cultural Invasion: Abakanowicz’s early life unfolded under oppressive political regimes, and these influenced her artistic practices as responses to the dehumanization of individuals under collectivist control. For example, her artworks *Crowds and Backs* depict anonymous, fragmented figures that bear witness to the erasure of identity by political force. These installations evoke trauma without spectacle in order to reactivate collective subjectivity and resist further cultural invasion. In her writings, she reflects on how trauma “de-individualized” populations yet art became a space to recover inner singularity. Later in life, she became fascinated by Indigenous artworks and how “they are charged with energy.” CLIE fellows similarly use creative methods to challenge structures of cultural suppression, reclaim Indigeneity, and activate art as survival and celebration. In this way, artistic inquiry becomes not only reflective but curative: living praxes of resistance, remediation, and meaning-making.

Ecological Awareness and Materiality: From her earliest memories of exploring the mysteries of the Polish forests, Abakanowicz cultivated a deep ecological awareness. Her first forms and sculptural experiments—crafted from earth and other organic materials—were not static but evolving organisms subject to time, decay, and relational touch. In her autobiography, she describes nature spirits and animals as “my teachers and kin,” signaling a lifelong belief in the vitality and agency of more-than-human life. Through installations such as *Hand-like Trees* and *Arboreal Architecture*, Abakanowicz reveals her attentiveness to vegetal materiality, often rendering trees as co-sculptors in a shared environment. These experiences of ecological interdependence led her to promote humanity’s responsibility to protect Earth systems. CLIE researchers align with these sensibilities through land-based rituals, kin-centered methodologies, and multispecies

listening practices that attune to the needs and voices of nonhuman life. For Abakanowicz and CLIE, materiality is not merely medium but co-presence—a site where chthonic rhythm and spiritual vitality coalesce through art and embodied practice.

Memorywork and Repairing Trauma: Abakanowicz transmuted the formative traumas of wartime violence into sculptural languages of absence, fragmentation, and resilience. Deprived of any psychological support, she turned to the creative process to metabolize both personal and collective wounds. Works like *Seated Figures*—headless, limbless, or hollowed—embody the psychic and historical voids left by violence, echoing a silent scream through form. Such works do not illustrate suffering; they transmit the author’s memory and narrative affectively through material density and spatial repetition. CLIE students undertake parallel forms of memorywork, using art, story, and embodied practice to tend to wounds that resist verbalization. Their research often emphasizes intergenerational trauma and cultural memory, where absence motivates metamorphosis, and how states of consciousness act as mediums of connection. Both Abakanowicz and CLIE engage imagination and intuition through symbols, ritual forms, and site-specific installations as pathways for psychic repair rooted in artistic relationality.

Pilgrimage and Healing Geographies: Abakanowicz’s artistic journeys were also spiritual ones. From Brazil to Israel and Japan to sacred sites in Europe, she recounts the impact of these pilgrimages in her autobiography and writings. Her visits to dense rainforests—in Indonesia and New Guinea—left indelible marks on her sense of vitality, materiality, and the psyche. Many of her artworks depict and investigate these mysteries about the vital forces sacred feminine. Abakanowicz believed “an artist is a shaman who integrates unknown powers in his work,” which can be seen in figurative series such as *Coexistence* or *Space of Unknown Growth*. Her various public outdoor projects offer visitors a sacred spatial experience akin to pilgrimage—inviting movement, stillness, and a felt encounter with the unknown. CLIE students build on this spatial and spiritual awareness through land-based community praxes that treat geography as a site of healing. Whether walking ancestral routes, weaving at sacred sites, engaging in site-specific ceremonies, or visiting Abakanowicz’s sculptures *in situ*, their research becomes a form of embodied wayfinding and creative exploration through mystery and depth.

Dialogue and Liberatory Pedagogy: Abakanowicz was a fiercely independent educator who rejected conventional instruction in favor of cultivating the emergent voice of each unique student. She insisted that art must come from within—that it should grow like an organism, not be shaped by imposed form. Her reflections on creativity often describe a process of internal dialogue between the artist, the material, and the unconscious. CLIE students draw upon this ethos in their efforts to reimagine teaching and learning as liberatory, reciprocal, and embodied. Whether facilitating intergenerational transmission, mentoring youth, or creating community council spaces, their pedagogies resist the banking model of education. Thus, artistic research can bridge cultural-ideological barriers and blur the boundary between teaching and learning into a process of mutual transformation through mixed methods and diverse modes of inquiry.

Creative Citizenship: Abakanowicz believed that the artist must participate in civic life, responding not with ideology but with vulnerability, imagination, and form. Her public installation *Agora* in Chicago’s Grant Park—a field of 106 massive figures, directionless, lost in movement without aim—invites viewers to consider the dynamics of collective movement, anonymity, and their own participation in public space. She often said that “the artist is not a decorator of life but a participant,” a conviction that guided her skepticism toward state propaganda and the commodification of art. Accordingly, Abakanowicz’s vision was always to push the bounds of art beyond the art world. For CLIE fellows, this principle translates into research practices that combine creativity and social engagement. Their work often arises from within communities, engaging questions of immigration, identity, visibility, and place-making. In all those instances, artists and art-making can enact civic gestures or community-based counternarratives that actively respond to and reshape social imagination.