

# CALL FOR PROPOSALS GUIDELINES



Issue Date: 09.15.22  
Submission Deadline: ONGOING  
Call To: ARTISTS AND CURATORS

# INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1999, Alabama Contemporary Art Center is a non-profit contemporary arts center located on Cathedral Square in the heart of Mobile's historic downtown district. A large part of our mission has to do with the social, political and cultural relevance of the projects we take on. Through the art of our time we aim to be a catalyst for positive change in our community. We serve the Gulf Coast community through exhibitions, classes and workshops for adults, summer camps, children and teen programs, and public conversations, films, and talks.

## GUEST CURATOR PROGRAM

Alabama Contemporary is seeking guest curators and artists with original exhibition concepts. There are a limited number of exhibition spots each year and limited space. **Our aim is to feature projects that show a fresh take on themes that are pertinent to our region.**

Although we expect the bulk of these projects to take the form of thematic group exhibitions, limited room will be made for stand-alone projects, satellite, and solo exhibitions. Artists wishing to propose their own work should submit to the Project Proposal page.

## INDEPENDENT PROJECTS

Alabama Contemporary is open to artists with site-specific exhibition concepts, independent projects, or new work as it is relevant to the community we serve. These project proposals follow a similar format to our Guest Curator requirements and are selected as they fit our mission, schedule and space. There are a limited number of exhibition spots each year and limited space. **Our aim is to support projects that represent a new direction in an artists work, engage with topical concerns relevant to contemporary culture, and/or directly engage with the local community.**

Artists can propose a solo project, or collaborate in a group proposal of two or three. Collectives can propose together but should identify one point of contact able to manage all communication with the group.

## NEW MEDIA PROGRAM

The Video Gallery at Alabama Contemporary was established in 2012 when french artist Xavier de Richemont was commissioned to create an immersive experience in our rearmost industrial space. The 4,200 square foot room was fitted with 5 projectors that map over the 30 foot high industrial walls of the space. New media, performance, video, and installation artists are invited to submit proposals for new work that responds to the space directly. It is not required that all proposals make use of the full projection system, but definitely encouraged.

## WHO CAN APPLY

The Call for Proposals (CFP) process is open to any artist(s) or curator with a contemporary art exhibition or independent project that may fit our curatorial aim, schedule and space. There are a limited number of project spots each year and limited exhibition space. Proposals are reviewed separately as either a New Media proposal, through the Guest Curator program as an independent Project Proposal and may be subject to committee review as they are received (allow for a four week turnaround) and selection is made on a project to project basis. In an effort to open the door and to keep the proposal and exhibition process collaborative, we have intentionally kept the parameters loose and the structure moveable. The CFP is the first step in creating an ongoing dialogue with our staff and community. Our primary interest is in growing the creative voice of the artists and curators we work with while directly engaging the local community.

This CFP is intended for artists and independent curators from any location and at any level of their career. Curators may be fully employed at other institutions, however, they should not approach this process as part of their full-time employment but as an independent project. Exceptions apply if the curator is submitting on behalf of their organization or institution, or if an arrangement is made between Alabama Contemporary and the employing organization or institution prior to the proposal process.

# PROPOSAL CRITERIA

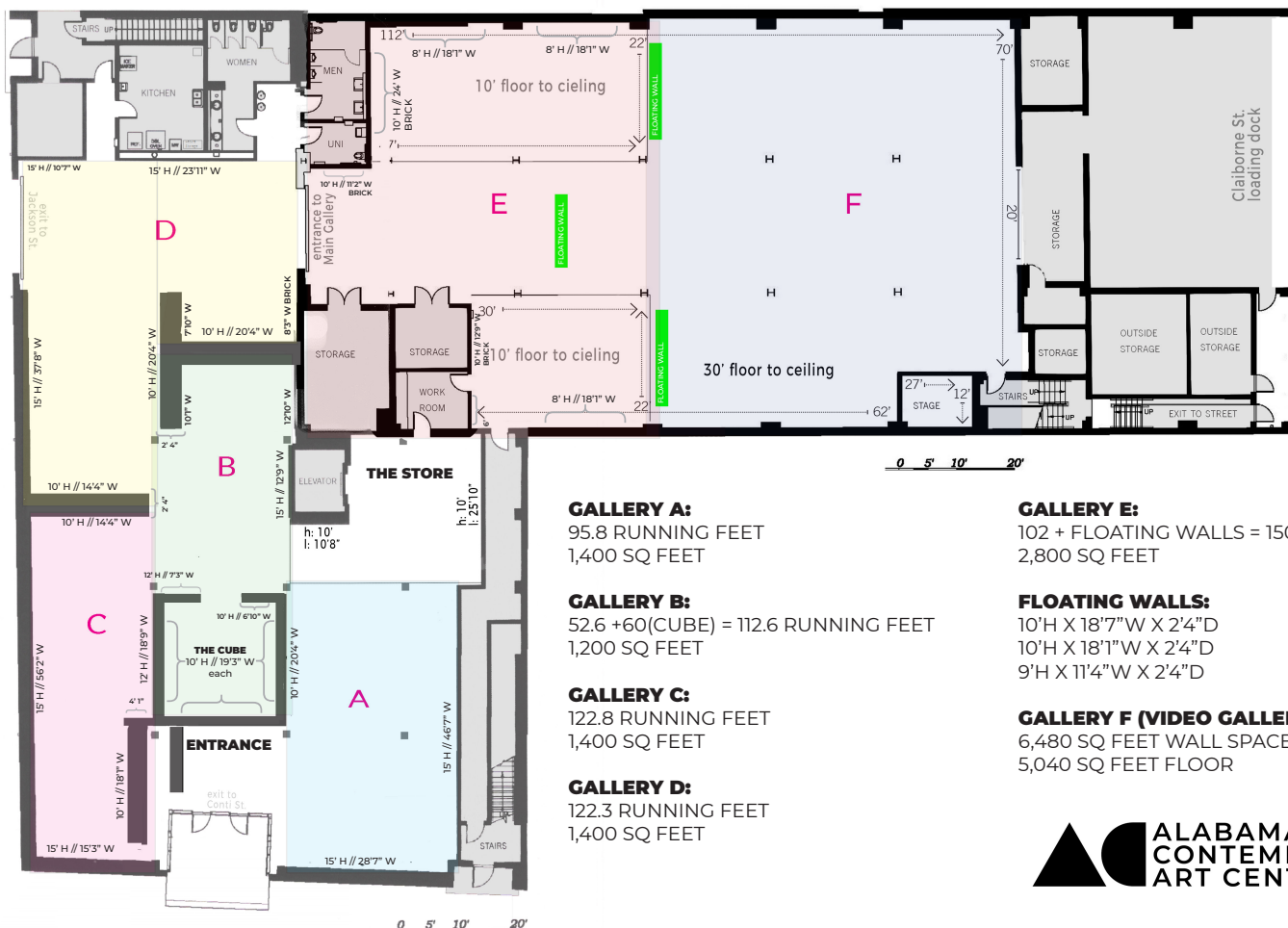
Our goal is to inject new voices into the cultural landscape of the Gulf Coast. Each year we set priorities specific to our various programs so always check the website first. In addition to any program-specific priorities we are always looking for a fresh take on themes that are pertinent to our region. Specifically we are looking for proposals that address:

- Community building
- Cultural Health
- Equity
- Environment
- Gender identity
- Intersectionality
- Marginalized voices
- Southern Identity
- Underserved populations

We are open to any medium or material culture that a curatorial aim might incorporate, given that it demonstrates 'the art of our time'. We consider exhibition programming and events to be part of any curatorial undertaking and will work with you to develop programmatic elements to a static exhibition that shows high potential for community engagement and programs.

## Exhibition Space

Successful proposals will be sited and scheduled by Alabama Contemporary as space allows. Projects are generally planned for one or two designated galleries. The total exhibition space is 16,000 square feet, but designated galleries range from **700-2,000 square feet of space** each. Most galleries have **80-150 running feet** of wall space. We have concrete floors and open industrial ceilings. A site visit will be scheduled and full access to schematic drawings and floor pans will be granted in the planning phase of any successful proposal.



# Submitting a Proposal:

## FIRST STEP:

### Submit a Letter of Inquiry

a Letter of Inquiry should outline the basic concept of your exhibition in **one page** (doc or pdf) via email to [allison@alabamacontemporary.org](mailto:allison@alabamacontemporary.org). Make sure your letter includes:

- A short artist statement (150-300 words)
- Information on the proposed work or the scale of the project.
- An estimated budget
- Contact information

Feel free to include images so long as the document does not exceed one page. If your Letter of Inquiry matches our program vision and seems feasible we will send you a link to complete a **Full Proposal**.

## SECOND STEP:

### Full Project Proposal - 10 pages maximum, PDF format and online form process

Proposals should be submitted in a PDF format via email following a successful Letter of Inquiry. Strong proposals address assessment criteria, the vision of the project, questions of capacity, scale, and feasibility. Assessment criteria should be addressed in the project narrative and is listed in the Selection Process section of this document.

Be sure your proposal includes:

- A Working Title and Curatorial Aim
- Project Narrative or Artist Statement
- A List of Artists/ Works or Scope (If you have work in mind please include links to websites or portfolio information)
- Estimate of the space required in square or linear(running) feet
- A Budget\*
- Visual Documentation\*\*
- Timeline information including possible programs or performances

**a. Cover Letter-** Introduce yourself and describe your exhibition or project, as well as why it is the right fit for Alabama Contemporary. If you are submitting for an independent project or new media project, this should serve as your artist statement.

### **b. Budget\*-**

**1. Honorarium and Fees:** The proposal budget you submit should outline a compensation plan for all artists and creative labor associated with your exhibition. It is our goal to appropriately compensate all labor including curators, artists, installers, carpenters, travel, and shipping. In that spirit we try to meet the standards set by [W.A.G.E.](#) If your budget does not meet or exceeds these benchmark numbers please articulate your reasoning as an addendum to the budget. Check the website for current W.A.G.E. rates based on our Annual operating Budget.

**2. Travel:** Curator and artist travel is paid as funding and feasibility allow. We do not pay for first class airfare, luxury vehicle rentals, or travel costs above the most economical method. If you have travel requirements associated with the project that will affect the budget please include them.

**3. Shipping:** Once the shipping budget is set, it is very difficult to find additional funds if it goes over. Please make every effort to identify shipping methods, and get actual quotes to inform this number in your budget. If you are working with a gallery or museum please check if they have shipping method

requirements in place that will affect the budget. If you have any questions about this aspect of the budget, what your options are or what methods we recommend please reach out and set up a call with us. Its better to get our help troubleshooting at the front end than to submit a cost prohibitive or unrealistic budget.

**4. Materials and Supplies:** For the commission of new work or site-specific projects we add \$600 to the base honorarium in lieu of materials costs. If you have a major materials cost north of that figure you may include it, but there is no guarantee we can afford it.

Generally you don't need to account for anything that you have a reasonable expectation we will have on hand (nails, sheetrock mud, white paint, mounting squares). Display materials and equipment should only be included if it is unlikely we will have the items on-hand already.

**5. Possible Income (Not Required):** If your proposal is strong but we lack funding for it we may enlist you in the fundraising process. If you have initial thoughts on possible funding sources please let us know in the proposal.

**c. Visual Documentation\*\*-** Visual material should be included in proposal PDF and formatted to include contextual information (source, artist, media etc). Images should be no smaller than 4 by 6 inches on an 8.5 by 11 inch page. If you have specific works in mind for the exhibition, please specify whether images are examples or actual works for the exhibition. For all images, please include **artist, title, media, and dimensions, date**. "Install shots" of past exhibitions are also helpful.

If your proposal is successful, an Inventory Template will be provided to list all individual works for the exhibition. We do not ask you to create a full inventory of works until the proposal review process is complete and successful.

**d. Timeline including possible programming of space.**

**e. Supporting Documents**

For Artists and Independent Curators

- A professional curriculum vitae (CV)
- An artist biography outlining artistic career, including achievements and interests
- Any other information you deem useful

For Organizations

- Mission
- Biographies of key personnel
- List of board of directors
- Organizational History

We may ask for more information regarding your proposal before scheduling a review. Submitting a proposal does not guarantee that we will take on your project. If it is rejected by the committee, we will do our best to explain why your proposal was not successful. There is no limit of proposals you may submit each year, so please feel free to submit new ideas as your process evolves if your first submission was unsuccessful.

# Selection Process

Proposals are reviewed either by committee or staff as they are received and selection is made on a project-to-project basis. We engage committee members and artists relevant to the proposal up for review as needed. If a proposal requires more information, the applicant will be contacted and the proposal will not be considered complete until all necessary information is gathered. Within four weeks of submission of a complete proposal, a review will be scheduled. If a review for a completed proposal appears to need more than 4 weeks, the applicant will be notified.

Selection is made on a project-to-project basis based on our mission, annual program priorities (set each year, see above) and the set review criteria of **RELEVANCE, MERIT, CRITICAL VALUE, CLARITY, COHESIVENESS** and **FEASIBILITY**. Each proposal is graded on each criteria on a 1-10 scale with a total maximum grade of 60. Proposals must obtain an average grade above 45 to be selected.

## DEFINING QUESTIONS:

**Cultural or Community RELEVANCE:** Is the content of this exhibition closely related to concerns or experiences in this community? Is this exhibition appropriate for the current cultural moment?

**Artistic MERIT:** Does this work show a high level of skill? Does the work show a high level of consideration to form? Is there a strong aesthetic to this body of work?

**CRITICAL VALUE:** Is the content of this exhibition thoughtful? Is the content of this exhibition well researched, or does it show a critical engagement with culture?

**CLARITY of ideas in proposal/exhibition concept:** Does the proposal give me a concrete sense of what will be in the exhibition? Do I have a clear idea of what the curator/artist(s) is(are) going for?

**COHESIVENESS overall exhibition concept:** Is the content of this exhibition feel cohesive? Are the artworks proposed interrelated? Does this exhibition have the appropriate scope or breadth?

**FEASIBILITY:** Is the budget reasonable? Is the scale of this exhibition serviceable? Do you see any insurmountable hurdles?

## Next Steps

We approach the exhibition process as collaborative. Submitting a proposal is the first step in beginning an ongoing dialog with our staff and community. You will work directly with our staff to ensure the success of your project and vision. At any stage of the process, your project may face issues of feasibility that affect the content, timeline, or budget. The success of your proposal does not guarantee the success of your overall project. Either party may opt out of the project prior to the signing of a formal contract. Below is an overview of what to expect:

## Timetable

You will work with staff to establish a budget and timeline for your project based on ACAC funding and schedule parameters. Most selected projects are scheduled for 1-2 years out but in certain cases it could be up to 4 years before your project is mounted. Projects are generally planned for a **3-month exhibition** timeline. We prefer to start the process at least two years in advance to allow plenty of time to develop ideas, troubleshoot, and fundraise. Install deadlines are always the first of the month and public openings are always the second Friday of the month. Please include any scheduling considerations or concerns in your proposal.

## Milestones

- Proposal Review Committee Notification - via email or call
- Meeting Scheduled (to make first contact with staff assigned to the project)
- Signing of a **Letter of Intent**
- Gallery Layouts, and Inventory Templates made available to you
- Approval of Work
- Budget Established
- Board Review of Exhibition with Final Budget (ACAC Staff)
- Formalized Contract - presented and signed
- Installation Scheduled (ACAC staff)

## Guest Curator/ Artist Responsibilities

- Select works with approval from and collaboration with ACAC
- Provide accurate crediting information for all works
- Identify authorized lenders and verify ownership of works selected
- Troubleshoot and plan site-specific projects
- Write exhibition text and didactic material for use by ACAC
- Provide biographical information to ACAC for the promotion of the exhibition
- To give at least one 'Curator's Tour' or 'Artist Talk' as a public program during the exhibition

## Alabama Contemporary Best Practices

- Alabama Contemporary should provide a prospectus that clearly outlines the application procedure and the respective responsibilities of the venue and the curator/artists should they be accepted.
- Accepted artists will be provided with a written agreement (Letter of Intent) that clearly outlines the respective responsibilities of the venue, the curator, and the artists.
- While artwork is in the possession of Alabama Contemporary, it will be insured by the exhibition venue against theft, loss, and damage.
- A final budget with any compensation to be made will be negotiated prior to the signing of any contractual agreement.

## Prep Meetings

If you would like more information about this program and process, please reach out to us for a prep meeting!

**With questions please contact:**

Allison Schaub

**Curator of Programs**



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