



## **Grant Guidelines**

(as of December 12, 2023)

### **Mission & Principles**

The Villa Aurora & Thomas Mann House Association (VATMH) promotes the intellectual and cultural exchange between Germany and the United States as an independent and nonpartisan intermediary of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The nonprofit organization awards scholarships in its two residency centers, Villa Aurora and Thomas Mann House, both located in Pacific Palisades, a neighborhood of Los Angeles in the state of California, USA; it also organizes cultural programs and events in both the United States and Germany. It keeps alive the memory of European and Jewish exile history in the United States, conveys a contemporary and diverse image of Germany, and facilitates joint reflection on social, cultural, and political challenges.

Villa Aurora annually awards scholarships to artists in the fields of visual arts, composition, film, and literature for a three-month stay in Los Angeles. Additional scholarships are awarded in cooperation with partner organizations. The scholarship in Los Angeles serves the purpose of working on an artistic project, networking with Californian cultural creatives and institutions, and publicly presenting the relevant project and/or work.

The Thomas Mann House was opened as a residency center in 2018 by the German Federal Government, with the aim of creating a vibrant transatlantic debating space where thought leaders, artists, and intellectuals explore fundamental political, social, and cultural issues of the present and future, in dialogue both with each other and with the host country.

Additionally, the association annually awards the Feuchtwanger Fellowship for writers and journalists who advocate for freedom of expression in their home countries, the Michael Ballhaus Scholarship for outstanding visual artists, and the Berlin Fellowship for artists living in Los Angeles, enabling them to live and work in Berlin for several weeks.

VATMH supports artists, thinkers, and intellectuals who represent a diversity of opinions, positions, and approaches during their residencies in Los Angeles. VATMH is committed to this freedom of expression, which includes the responsibility to contribute to an empathetic



and peaceful coexistence of all people without any form of racism, exclusion, or hatred. Together with its partners, VATMH champions humanity and compassion in the world.

VATMH is funded with public funds from the Federal Foreign Office and the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media, based on a decision of the German Bundestag.

The residency program at the Thomas Mann House is supported by the Berthold Leibinger Stiftung, the Robert Bosch Stiftung, the Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach-Stiftung, and the Goethe-Institut.

## **Thomas Mann House – Application Requirements and Selection Process**

### *General Information*

- Fellowships are awarded for at least 3 and no more than 10 months.
- Villa Aurora [&] Thomas Mann House e. V. will determine the length and timing of each individual stay after a careful review and coordination of all fellows' requests.
- Staff will assist fellows with the implementation of their projects, corresponding research, networking with partners and institutions in the United States, as well as presentations (e.g., lectures, workshops, and readings).

### *The Thomas Mann Fellowship entails:*

- a non-repayable basic monthly stipend of EUR 3,000 as a contribution to living expenses,
- a round-trip travel allowance of EUR 1,275 and a monthly mobility allowance of EUR 600,
- the payment of travel and accommodation expenses incurred for the purpose of networking with partners and institutions within the USA upon the application to the on-site directorate,
- child allowances (400 EUR per month for the first accompanying child, 100 EUR for every subsequent accompanying child),
- a modern furnished room with private bathroom and desk (all Fellows have access to a shared kitchen, numerous spaces, and a garden area for interaction with other Fellows and guests),
- project cost allowances upon the application to the on-site Director.



### *Requirements*

- Proven competence regarding current issues in the field of culture, politics, economics, media, and/or science. A letter of recommendation as evidence is to be submitted in German or English.
- Intellectual curiosity, interest in foreign disciplines, and willingness to engage in conversation beyond one's own discipline.
- A very good knowledge of English, which enables oral and written exchange in the host country.
- Living and working in Germany or proof of previous long-term residence in Germany in the last ten years (the possession of German citizenship is not required). German citizens living abroad can also apply.
- Existing contacts with U.S. partners and institutions (desirable)
- Willingness to contribute to a social and productive living environment at Villa Aurora and the Thomas Mann House.

### *Application*

- The application for a Thomas Mann House Fellowship is performed online with the respective application form.
- Reapplication is possible after 3 years. Your last application must therefore have taken place in 2021 at the earliest. This condition applies VATMH-wide and therefore also applies to applications for the Villa Aurora.
- Students cannot apply. PhD candidates can apply. The marked spaces on the application form must be filled in German and English.
- Each application must be based on at least one letter of recommendation in German or English written by a person with a public record of expertise in the field of the proposed project.
- For an application to be considered, it needs to refer to the annual topic as well as to current transatlantic debates.
- The qualifications of the candidate should be outlined and justified with regard to the profile of the Thomas Mann Fellowships.
- Applications for the Thomas Mann Fellowship are also open to pairs working on a joint project (Partner Fellowship), with the stipulation that only two individuals can apply together. Each applicant in the pair must submit a separate application form. The recommendation letter should comprehensively address both applicants' individual qualifications and the merits of their collaborative project.
- You or the recommending person can upload the letter of recommendation via the upload link provided to you in the confirmation email after submitting the application.



### *Procedure*

- The applications are reviewed by VATMH's office for completeness of the documents and the validity of the letters of recommendation.
- An interdisciplinary advisory board appointed by the Board of Trustees of VATMH reviews and evaluates the applications received and nominates the Thomas Mann Fellows for the following year.
- The fellowships will be awarded by VATMH after confirmation by the Board of Trustees, depending on the availability of the nominated candidates.
- There is no legal entitlement to the award of a fellowship.
- The decision is usually communicated to the candidates by e-mail or mail, but no reasons are given.
- Upon acceptance, all selected candidates will receive a contract. The fellowship is only legally valid after the fellows have signed the contract.

### **Terms and Conditions**

- As an entity pursuing exclusively non-profit purposes as defined by article 52 AO (German Fiscal Code), VATMH is exempt from corporate tax according to article 5, section 1, clause 9 KStG (German Corporate Tax Act), and is authorized to award scholarships as defined by article 3 clause 44 EStG (German Income Tax Act) for the promotion of artistic education and training.
- The awarded grants are intended to cover the living costs of the grant recipients.
- The exact amount of the grant is defined in the respective contract and transferred into an account specified by the grant recipient.
- The grant does not establish an employment relationship as defined by labor law, social security law, and tax law. It is not considered compensation as defined by article 14 of the Social Code IV.
- Please note that VATMH cannot make a universally binding statement regarding the income tax exemption of VATMH grants. To resolve existing doubts, scholarships must be assessed individually by the competent tax office. The responsible office is the Finanzamt für Körperschaften I in Berlin (Bredtschneiderstr. 5, 14057 Berlin). When making the inquiry, please provide the tax number of the association – 27/680/62067. We also advise that you talk with your employer about issues related to the receipt of a grant (income offset, leave of absence, etc.) before starting your stay.



- For the duration of their stay, grant recipients will have a room with a bathroom, private telephone line, Wi-Fi, and desk. The communal areas are accessible to all grant recipients.
- A long-term stay of family members at Villa Aurora or the Thomas Mann House cannot be guaranteed due to space limitations. Visits for up to 14 days are possible by arrangement.
- In the event of an unforeseen temporary closure of Villa Aurora or the Thomas Mann House, the scholarship holders agree to be accommodated with a partner organization of VATMH.
- Grant recipients are obliged to comply with the legal provisions and other generally binding standards applicable in the USA and California and to refrain from any political activity.
- Grant recipients are entitled to inform themselves about general political developments and political parties abroad in accordance with applicable legal and social standards.
- If the grant recipient violates these criteria, VATMH may, after issuing a warning, exclude them from continuing the scholarship, terminate the scholarship contract, and demand repayment of the payments made.

## **Termination**

The grant is legally effective only after the grant recipients have signed the consent form. VATMH has the right to revoke the grant with immediate effect – without observing a notice period – if there is a solid reason for doing so. This must be a reason where the continuation of the collaboration between the scholarship holder and VATMH cannot be reasonably expected due to a substantial breach of trust. VATMH also has the right to terminate the scholarship contract without notice for an important reason, especially if the grant recipient has

- obtained the grant through gross negligence or intentionally by providing false or incomplete information, or by concealing double funding in a grossly negligent or intentional way,
- breached essential obligations laid down in the grant contract,
- failed to submit documents requested by VATMH by the set deadline,
- not used the monthly grant in accordance with the purposes of the agreement,
- or if the grant is classified by the competent tax office as endangering the non-profit status of VATMH. In this case, the grantee is obliged to immediately repay and return



all benefits. The claim for repayment exists regardless of whether the funding amount provided by VATMH has already been fully or partially used or consumed. The repayment amount is due immediately; objections and defenses are not permitted. The rights of VATMH according to articles 119 ff. BGB (German Civil Code) for contestation, especially contestation due to fraud, remain unaffected by this.

From the date of signing the contract, each party is entitled to terminate the grant contract with a notice period of four weeks at the end of the month, if the stay cannot be commenced or continued due to factual or legal reasons, without any breach of duty by the parties. In this case, a reversal of transactions will take place according to the general legal regulations of articles 812 ff. BGB. Unused funds must be refunded to VATMH in full and without delay. The claim for repayment is immediately due; objections and defenses – in particular, the plea of disenrichment – are not permitted.