



## Thomas Mann Fellowship Guidelines

(as of November 27, 2024)

### Mission & Principles

The Villa Aurora & Thomas Mann House e.V. (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 fellowships and grants at 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 grants to artists in the fields of visual arts, composition, film, and literature for a three-month stay in Los Angeles. Additional grants are awarded in cooperation with partner organizations. The grants in Los Angeles aim to support work 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 by the German Federal Government in 2018, with the aim of creating a vibrant space for transatlantic debate where outstanding personalities explore fundamental political, social, and cultural issues of today and the future, in dialogue with each other and the host country.

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



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VATMH supports artists, thinkers, and intellectuals who represent a diversity of opinions, positions, and approaches during their residency in Los Angeles. VATMH is committed to this freedom of expression, which includes the responsibility to contribute, through tone and choice of words, 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 the 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 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 a minimum of three and a maximum of 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. The general length of stay is three to five months.
- Fellows receive support in realizing their projects and related research, networking with partners and institutions in the United States, and organizing presentations (e.g., lectures, workshops, and readings).

### *The Thomas Mann Fellowship includes:*

- a basic monthly stipend of EUR 3,000 to help pay for living expenses,
- a round-trip travel allowance of EUR 1,275 and a monthly mobility allowance of EUR 600,
- travel and accommodation expenses incurred for the purpose of networking with partners and institutions within the USA (upon application to the local director's office in L.A.),
- free accommodation at the Thomas Mann House: a modern furnished room with private bathroom and desk, shared kitchen, numerous communal areas and quiet spaces, and a garden area for interacting with other Fellows and guests,
- child allowances: EUR 400 per month for the first accompanying child, EUR 100 for each additional accompanying child,
- project cost allowances (upon application to the local director's office in L.A.).



### *Requirements*

- Proven expertise on current issues in the fields of arts and culture, politics, economics, media, and/or science. Proof must be provided in the form of a letter of recommendation (in German or English).
- Intellectual curiosity, interest in foreign disciplines, and willingness to engage in conversation beyond one's own discipline.
- A high level of English proficiency, both written and spoken.
- At the time of their nomination, candidates must live and work in Germany or show that Germany has been their main place of residence and work in the last ten years. German citizenship is not required. German citizens living abroad can also apply.
- Existing contacts with U.S. partners and institutions are desirable.
- Willingness to contribute to a social and productive living environment at Villa Aurora and the Thomas Mann House.

### *Application*

- To apply for a Thomas Mann House Fellowship, please use the online application form.
- Students are not eligible to apply. PhD candidates may apply.
- Reapplication is possible after 3 years. Therefore, your last application must have been no later than 2022. These terms apply VATMH-wide and also include previous applications to Villa Aurora.
- The marked spaces on the application form must be filled out in both 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, the proposed project must refer to the annual topic as well as to current transatlantic debates.
- The qualifications of the candidate should be described and explained with a view to the profile of the Thomas Mann Fellowship.
- It is also possible for (no more than) two persons to apply for a Thomas Mann Fellowship (Partner Fellowship) with a joint project. Each applicant must submit a separate application form. The letter of recommendation must 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 in the confirmation email that we will send you after receiving your application

### *Selection Process*

- The applications will be checked by the VATMH office to make sure all documents are complete and the letters of recommendation informative.
- An interdisciplinary advisory board appointed by the Board of Trustees of VATMH will review and evaluate the applications and nominate the Thomas Mann Fellows
- Depending on the availability of the nominated candidates, the fellowships will be awarded by VATMH after confirmation by the Board of Trustees.
- Applicants have no legal right to the award of a fellowship.
- The decision will be communicated to the candidates by e-mail or mail; no explanation will be given for the decision.
- Upon acceptance, all selected candidates will receive a contract. The award of the fellowship is legally valid only signature of the contract by the fellows.



## 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 stipends as defined by article 3 clause 44 EStG (German Income Tax Act) for the promotion of artistic education and training.
- The awarded stipends are intended to cover the living costs of the fellowship recipients.
- The stipend 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 stipends. To resolve existing doubts, stipends 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 stipend (income offset, leave of absence, etc.) before starting your stay.
- Due to limited space, a long-term stay of family members, partners and guests at Thomas Mann House cannot be guaranteed. In the case of Fellows staying for three months, visits by family members, partners, and guests are limited to a maximum of two weeks and depend on prior arrangement with the local team in L.A. For Fellows staying for more than three months at the Thomas Mann House, visits by family members, partners, and guests are limited to a maximum of three weeks.
- In the event of an unforeseen temporary closure of Villa Aurora or the Thomas Mann House, the fellowship recipients agree to be accommodated with a partner organization of VATMH.
- Fellowship 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.



- Fellowship recipients are entitled to inform themselves about general political developments and political parties abroad in accordance with applicable legal and social standards.
- If the fellowship recipient violates these criteria, VATMH may, after issuing a warning, exclude them from continuing the fellowship, terminate the fellowship contract, and demand repayment of the payments made.

## **Termination**

- The grant is legally effective only after the fellowship recipients have signed the fellowship contract.
- VATMH has the right to revoke the fellowship 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 fellowship holder and VATMH cannot be reasonably expected due to a substantial breach of trust.
- VATMH also has the right to terminate the fellowship contract without notice for an important reason, especially if the fellowship recipient has
  - obtained the fellowship through gross negligence or by intentionally providing false or incomplete information, or by concealing double funding in a grossly negligent or intentional way,
  - breached essential obligations laid down in the fellowship contract,
  - failed to submit documents requested by VATMH by the set deadline,
  - not used the monthly fellowship in accordance with the purposes of the agreement,
  - or if the fellowship 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.



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- 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 fellowship 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.