



Art in Odd Places 2026: UTOPIAS

SENSE | DREAM | BODY | CARE | CONNECT

OPEN CALL FOR ARTISTS' PROJECTS | GUIDELINES

APPLICATION DEADLINE: April 21, 2026 at 11:59 PM PST

We are thrilled to announce an open call for artists to participate in *Art in Odd Places (AiOP) 2026: UTOPIAS*, the 21st edition of this landmark public art festival curated by Aranxa Araujo and Pancho Lopez. *AiOP 2026: UTOPIAS* invites artists and audiences to imagine otherwise – to inhabit the city not as it is, but as it could be—transforming the street into a living laboratory for collective dreams, radical care, and shared futures, as this festival has been doing for over two decades.

At a time when public space is increasingly regulated, monetized, and surveilled, *AiOP 2026: UTOPIAS* asks: What happens when we treat the street as a testing ground for collective dreams? How might temporary gestures—ephemeral performances, improvised gatherings, fleeting apparitions—rehearse more just, joyful, and imaginative ways of existing and communing together?

New York City is a place built by arrivals. Generations of migrants and immigrants have carried languages, rituals, and memories that continually rewrite the city's possibilities. *AiOP 2026: UTOPIAS* recognizes NYC as a living archive of radical thinking, where people from all over the world co-think, co-resist, and co-create in the face of precarity and displacement. Rather than smoothing over differences, this project leans into the frictions and overlaps of urban life—those moments when cultures touch, (mis)align, and transform one another.

ABOUT THE FESTIVAL

AiOP 2026: UTOPIAS (September 26 & 27, 2026) is an immersive public art initiative that encourages artists to explore how unconventional art spaces can ignite imagination and foster community engagement. We seek innovative installations, performances, and interactive works that challenge traditional boundaries and inspire collective dreaming.

Performances and installations will unfold over two days, from 12:00 PM to 5:00 PM, across two sections of 14th Street:

- Saturday, September 26: 14th Street between First Avenue and Third Avenue
- Sunday, September 27: 14th Street between Sixth Avenue and Eighth Avenue

Half of the participating artists will present each day, creating a two-day festival choreographed collectively by all artists.

Throughout the festival, the city becomes both stage and collaborator: sidewalks become rehearsal rooms, lampposts and stoops become altars, traffic noise becomes a score, and the street becomes a playground for participation. *AiOP 2026: UTOPIAS* invites visitors to move slowly, to notice how even the smallest actions can momentarily shift what feels possible. In these shared intervals of time, public space is reclaimed as a commons.

THE POWER OF 21

To celebrate 21 years of *Art in Odd Places* performance art festivals, *AiOP 2026: UTOPIAS* centers the number 21 as a playful, poetic, and conceptual framework:

- 21 invited artists from past editions of this festival
- 21 artists selected through this open call: <https://forms.gle/bhncgqWL5zdBtR5A>
- Each artist is encouraged to invite 21 guests into their work or activation, or as audience members
- A collective goal of 21 press features
- A collective goal of 21 supporters/donors/partners rallying behind the project

Additional conceptual activations will include:

- A think tank contributor to write and reflect on the project process and outcome
- Interviews with all 21 artists
- A collaboration with a numerologist exploring 21 as a symbol of rebirth, conscious choice, and collective becoming
- A shared vocabulary rooted in five guiding words: SENSE. DREAM. BODY. CARE. CONNECT.

This edition marks the closing of a twenty-one-year cycle and the opening of another. In *AiOP 2026: UTOPIAS*, 21 becomes the archive (memory, lineage, evidence), while $2 + 1 = 3$ becomes activation (creation, risk, renewal, and world-making).

Projects should:

- Be self-produced and self-sufficient. Low to no tech.
- Be prepared to move to the three respective locations on each day of the festival.
- Encourage interaction with public space while engaging with pedestrians/passersby and the festival's focus of *UTOPIAS*.

- Be able to move or be static within public spaces, while being self-contained without impeding the flow of pedestrian or vehicular traffic by blocking the sidewalk and/or street.
- Engage with West Hollywood's cultural and architectural landmarks, neighborhoods, multifaceted industries, and communities as a resource for creative consideration.
- Commit to maintaining a presence at the festival location for the duration of all three days.

***AiOP* offers participants:**

- Promotion to *AiOP*'s network of press and art world contacts.
- *AiOP* website presence with project info, bios, and links to personal websites.
- Project consultation.
- Advice for artists with a studio practice wanting to work in the public realm.
- Access to a growing community of like-minded artists, curators, and makers working in the public realm.

NOTE: *AiOP* is realized by a small staff. We can provide advice and suggestions but participants are responsible for all aspects of production, including installation, de-installation, and maintenance.

Selected proposals will be notified in late spring / early summer 2026.

Questions?

Refer to the FAQ section of the application or email aiopnyc@gmail.com.