



Call for Nominations for the *Spotlight Award*

**Presented by the Santa Cruz County Arts Commission
Honoring Local Emerging Artists**

Deadline for nomination letters: March 9, 2026

About the Award - Through the Spotlight Award, the County Arts Commission publicly recognizes individuals who have achieved a high level of consistency and creativity in their work, but who have not received widespread acknowledgment of their talent. This annual award recognizes younger artists as well as those who are discovering their artistic voice later in life. The award will be given to one artist or artist group in each of the following mediums: visual art, performing arts, and literary arts. The work of awardees will be featured at an exhibition on the 5th floor of the County Government Center. Dates for 2026 are August 3-October 9.

Eligibility Criteria

- Artist must be a current resident of Santa Cruz County.
- Artist must have completed works that show a high degree of consistency, individuality, innovation, and/or creativity.
- Artist must show significant artistic promise, as demonstrated in a significant achievement for at least one completed piece of artwork, performance, exhibit, or written work, recognized by critics, educators or professionals.
- Artists working in any medium are eligible, including literary, visual, and performing arts.

Nomination Information

Only residents of Santa Cruz County are eligible to make nominations. Your nomination letter of no more than two pages must include:

- The name of the artist and their contact information, including: e-mail, website (if available), phone and local address
- A brief description of your relationship to the artist, why you are nominating them for the award, and how they meet the criteria (how they stand out as an emerging artist).

Santa Cruz County Parks staff will notify the nominees and provide them with the application information. Nominees must return their materials by the required date to be considered (April 3, 2026). While a new process will open each year, the previous year's nominations will be carried over for one year. Artists previously considered may be nominated again in subsequent years.

Send your nomination letter to: kathy.dewild@santacruzcountyca.gov – Subject Line: Spotlight Award Nomination

Selection Process - The selection panel, composed of members of the Santa Cruz County Arts Commission, will review eligible applications. Awardees will be selected based on the application materials provided by the artist using the following criteria:

- Consistency in the body of work presented
- Effective use of media and tools to communicate personal style
- Innovation/creativity
- Prior history of exhibitions, performances, publication, or critique