

Miller Arts Scholars Minigrant Proposal

Homelands in Exile: A Photographic Exploration of Longing and Diaspora

Xingchen Liu

Proposal Overview

I am an interdisciplinary artist working in film and photography, with a focus on themes of identity, migration, and the ephemeral nature of belonging. *Homelands in Exile* is a photographic exploration of longing, diaspora, and the shifting notion of home in the modern age. This project will use portrait and landscape photography to interrogate how identity is constructed, perceived, and, at times, erased.

I have previously studied both **Intro to Cinematography** and **Advanced Cinematography**, where I explored not only the technical aspects of visual storytelling but also the poetic possibilities of the moving image. These courses introduced me to experimental cinematic techniques, pushing me to reconsider the relationship between the frame and the emotions it holds. I learned how cinematography is not just about what is seen, but what is felt—how light and movement can evoke memory, how framing can suggest alienation or intimacy, how abstraction can sometimes reveal more than realism. These experimental approaches have significantly influenced my photographic practice, challenging me to think beyond conventional representation.

Photography, like film, is about constructing time—about freezing a moment and, in doing so, extending it indefinitely. *Homelands in Exile* builds upon the lessons I learned in cinematography by employing unconventional framing, natural lighting, and an emphasis on texture to create a body of work that feels both intimate and universal. By stripping away the markers of language and culture that traditionally define difference, I aim to explore what remains—what, if anything, truly separates us when the external is removed.

This minigrant will allow me to acquire the materials necessary to develop this work, specifically **medium-format film stock and processing fees**, ensuring that I can fully realize this project while maintaining the analog techniques that align with its conceptual framework.

Project Timeline

Spring Semester: Concept development, scouting locations, securing subjects for portraits.

March - April: Primary shooting phase, developing film, and initial selection of images.

May: Finalizing images and editing for presentation.

Budget

Item	Description	Cost
Kodak Portra 400 (120 film)	Medium-format film stock (5-pack)	\$75.00
Kodak Tri-X 400 (120 film)	Black and white film stock (5-pack)	\$60.00
Film Development	Processing and high-resolution scanning (per roll)	\$25.00
Contingency	Additional film or unexpected costs	\$40.00
Total		\$500.00

Conclusion

Photography has the unique ability to freeze a moment, to hold a gaze, and to ask a question without words. In **Homelands in Exile**, I seek to create a collection of images that do not merely document, but evoke—images that linger, that pose questions without easy answers. My experience in cinematography has taught me that every frame holds weight, that every shadow and light source carries meaning. With this support, I can bring this vision to life, capturing a meditation on identity, belonging, and the spaces in between.

Thank you for your consideration.