ParkLands: Celebrating 60 Years of Conservation (juried art exhibition)

Artists of all ages are invited to submit work in response to the theme of "nature" for this juried exhibition. The deadline to submit works for consideration is February 17, 2027.

The exhibition is organized and juried by members of the Teen Art Group at University Galleries of Illinois State University. We are collaborating with the ParkLands Foundation, a local non-profit organization, as they celebrate their 60th anniversary of "protecting, restoring, and managing natural lands in the Mackinaw River watershed of Central Illinois."

ParkLands: Celebrating 60 Years of Conservation will be on view at University Galleries from May 17 through July 17, 2027.

Theme:

As the title suggests, this exhibition focuses on nature, conservation, and ecology. Artworks may address a wide range of related inspirations. The Teen Art Group members brainstormed a list of ideas that includes but is not limited to:

- experiences of awe, wonder, and curiosity
- indigenous knowledge and history
- how time is evident in the landscape (past, present, or future)
- scientific understanding of how, why, and when natural processes occur
- interconnection of natural systems
- interaction among species
- aesthetic appreciation of landscapes, flora, and fauna
- plants, animals, birds, insects, soil, and rocks
- human potential to impact or change an environment
- endangered and extinct species
- glaciers
- prairies
- rivers and streams
- environmental advocacy

The Teen Art Group members encourage artists to explore resources on the ParkLands Foundation's website. For example, each of the preserves has a dedicated webpage that includes lists of the birds and plants found on site.

Timeline:

November 18 - February 17: Submit works online for jurying
February 17: Deadline for submitting entries

March: Works juried
March 18: Notifications sent via email
May 6-8: Drop off works at University Galleries
TBA: Opening reception at University Galleries
May 17-July 17, 2027: Exhibition on view at University Galleries

Process:

- No fee to participate.
- Artists submit original works for anonymous online jurying.
- Artists submit one work in any medium for consideration. This could include photography, painting, drawing, sculpture, ceramics, audio, video, jewelry, mixed media, recorded performance, printmaking, expanded media, graphic design, and textiles.
- If the artist is a K-12 student, the artist's teacher may submit the work on their behalf.
- Submissions must include an image, audio file, or video (5 minutes maximum); title; date; medium; and dimensions (if applicable) for each work. Tips for documenting artwork can be found at his link: https://vimeo.com/403069632.
- Jurying will be conducted by the Teen Art Group members with guidance from Teen Art Group leaders. Submissions will be assessed based on their alignment with the exhibition theme, originality/creativity, and craftsmanship.
- The artists (or teacher in the case of works submitted on behalf of K-12 students) will be notified by email about accepted works on March 18.
- Artists and/or teacher sponsors are responsible for bringing or shipping works to University Galleries. Artwork shipped to University Galleries must include a paid label for return shipping. See notes below for installation and formatting requirements.

Submission format

- Photo formats: JPEG, PNG, PDF, or GIF (non-animated).
- Upload limitations for Photos: RAW photos are not supported.
- Audio formats: MP3.
- Upload limitations for audio: Audio playback is constrained to 5 minutes.
- Video format preference: MP4 with a preferred format of MP4 (H.264).
- Video format options: File Format: Quicktime (.mov) or AVI (.avi); Compression: H.264; Frame rate: 24, 30 or 60; Data Rate: 5000 kbps - 14,000 kbps; Resolution: 640 x 480 for Standard Definition (4:3) 1920 x 1080, square pixels for high definition (wide screen, 16:9); De-interlacing: If your original is interlaced, then de-interlace; Progressive scanned files work best when displayed on a computer.
- Upload limitations for Videos: Video playback is constrained to 5 minutes max.

If you have questions, please contact University Galleries at Gallery@IllinoisState.edu and use "TAG: ParkLands" as the subject line.

About Teen Art Group:

The Teen Art Group, comprising Bloomington High School students, was founded at University Galleries in 2018 by Kendra Paitz (director and chief curator) in partnership with Monica Estabrook (art teacher at Bloomington High School). The inaugural year was supported by a grant from the Illinois Prairie Community Foundation—Mirza Arts and Culture Fund. Each academic year, Teen Art Group participants engage in professional development activities, take a field trip, and curate an exhibition. The 2026-2027 cohort, the ninth one, is led by Paitz, Estabrook, and Tanya Scott (curator of education). The group is taking field trips to ParkLands' Merwin Preserve, Chicago Cultural Center, and the Art Institute of Chicago; participating in meetings, workshops, and exhibition tours at University Galleries; and organizing *ParkLands: Celebrating 60 Years of Conservation*.

Teen Art Group is supported by University Galleries' grant from the Illinois Prairie Community Foundation—Mirza Arts and Culture Fund. Additional support is provided by the Lori Baum and Aaron Henkelman University Galleries Community Fund.