

milwaukee **journal sentinel**

ARTS

The Shortlist: 7 Milwaukee art shows to put on your summer bucket list



Anya Sesay

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

May 27, 2026, 5:01 a.m. CT

Since I moved here in the dead of a particularly brutal January winter, people have waxing poetic about summer in Milwaukee like it will be some sort of baptismal rebirth.

Neighbors you've never seen before will suddenly appear in droves, they said. Festivals every weekend, they said. And the arts scene will be like something out of a movie.

With summer just around the corner, even I'm starting to believe in the magic. Over the next three months, there's no shortage of arts events hitting the city. And I'll cover as many as I can.

In the meantime, here's the shortlist of must-see exhibitions and art shows coming to Milwaukee this summer.

2025 Nohl Fellows show at the Haggerty

The Lynden Sculpture Garden is again bringing the work of its acclaimed [Mary L. Nohl Fellows](#) to the Haggerty Museum, 1234 W Tory Hill St. Featured artists, spanning the emerging and established categories, were awarded unrestricted funds last year to create new work or complete a work in progress. The work of five artists from the 2025 class will be on view from June 4 through Aug. 1.

Need a news break? [Check out the all new PLAY hub with puzzles, games and more!](#)

Financed by the Greater Milwaukee Foundation's Mary L. Nohl Fund and administered by the Lynden, the Nohl Fellowship was designed to encourage artists to stay and develop their artistic practice in the greater Milwaukee area.

Oshkosh native Michelle Grabner works across drawing, painting and sculpture to highlight the things we may have taken for granted.

Trained as a Zen Buddhist monk, interdisciplinary artist Michael Newhall creates work inspired by this background. His pieces often return to a head, bust, face motif.

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee lecturer Sarah Ballard uses experimental filmmaking to explore how systems of power are internalized within the human body, the built environment and landscapes.

Sculptor Margaret Griffin creates amorphous forms and abstract sculptures inspired by the post-minimalism movement.

Rudy **Medina** and Alyx Christensen, together forming the Open Kitchen art collective, use art to generate community conversations around ecology, food and identity.

The Haggerty Museum, where the work will be on view, is open 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Admission is free.

A local artist explores grief and love in three-part exhibition

Since March, Milwaukee-based artist LIV has been installing, deinstalling and reinstalling a three-part exhibition series at [The Cr8tv House](#). The show explores the immensity of grief, not as an all-consuming darkness, but as a colorful restoration.

During her first two shows, the artist reflected on loss in romantic love, what it means to mourn a place, and the grief that comes with displacement. In this final iteration, opening June 14, the artist will explore collective grief in Black America. Approaching the subject and canvas with all the bold surrealism of Jean-Michel Basquiat, LIV uses familiar facial features and vibrant colors to rethink our relationship to grieving.

Parts one and two now are on view at The Cr8tv House, 4680 N. Hopkins St., through June 13. Call The Cr8tv House at (414) 502-8142 or email Info@THECR8TVHOUSE.ORG to see the exhibition, open Monday through Friday by appointment only.

Museum of the Moon returns to the Third Ward

Maybe you don't have to be an astronaut to see the moon up close. You can look at all of its craters during the [Third Ward Moon Festival](#), coming to the neighborhood Aug. 7-9.

The three-day event, spanning Catalano Square and extending onto Menomonee Street and Broadway, coincides with the 50th anniversary of the Third Ward Association. The centerpiece of the festival is Luke Jerram's illuminated installation called Museum of the Moon. Created using images from NASA, the internally lighted installation has traveled all over the world. As of now, Milwaukee is the only Midwest stop on its 2026 tour. The installation, coming to Milwaukee for the first time since 2019, will be suspended above the Catalano Square fountain, 147 N. Broadway.

In addition to the Museum of the Moon, the festival will feature live music, dance, art, fashion, wellness experiences and family-friendly activities.

The festival is free and open to the public. For more information, visit historicthirdward.org/third-ward-moon-festival, where the full festival lineup will be posted in June.

Teen artists exhibit work professionally at Ascension

Youth artists are on display at Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital, 2301 N. Lake Drive, through June 11, as part of the MKE Youth Artscape exhibition. Organized by TBEY Arts Center, the exhibition features 2D works by artists ages 13-18. After submitting their artwork to TBEY last fall, select students were chosen for the exhibition, which opened with a reception in February.

Featuring work that spans media and theme, the show is a rare opportunity for young artists to showcase work on a professional level. See the work in the hospital's Garden Cafe Cafeteria.

Summer Gallery Nights

Gallery Night is back this summer, with participating venues across the city exhibiting work on July 17 and 18. Organizations across several Milwaukee neighborhoods take part, and people can admire and purchase original art everywhere from the east side to Walker's Point and the Third Ward.

Admission is free at all venues during event hours. Visit gallerynightmke.com for a full list of participating venues, an interactive map and parking information.

If you're looking for a Bay View fix, check out the neighborhood's biannual gallery night from 5 to 10 p.m. May 29. The event, thrown in conjunction with Bay View's Jazz Fest, features over 70 local businesses. Like Gallery Night MKE, this self-guided art crawl celebrates the neighborhood's creativity. For information on participating business, visit bvgn.org.

'Summer in Wisconsin' comes to Tory Folliard

On July 17, Tory Folliard Gallery, 233 N. Milwaukee St., opens its largest exhibition of the year. "Summer in Wisconsin" will showcase the work of 35 of Wisconsin's best contemporary artists, both emerging and established. Working across paintings, drawings, sculpture and photography, these artists are a pivotal part of the state's zeitgeist.

Peter Gehrig's tranquil paintings depict a provincial life of simplicity, landscapes and soft sunlight. Cathy Martin's realist paintings, infused with the same natural beauty as Gehrig's work, carry a more autumnal tone. Deep shadows and clear contrasts meet heavy clouds and impassable forests.

The exhibit kicks off with an artists' reception from 5-8 p.m. July 17, and it will be on display through Sept. 5. The gallery is open 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday.

Arts @ Large's Hattie Grimm wraps residency

Arts @ Large artist-in-residence Hattie Grimm is finishing her residency with two final events. The artist whose kick-off exhibit during Milwaukee's spring gallery night was infused with childlike wonder, bright colors and interactive puppets will host a papier-mâché and puppet master class at Arts @ Large, 1100 S. Fifth St., from 6 to 8 p.m. June 17.

Attendees can paint and create 3D bird forms and wearable elements or costumes for the July 1 bird parade that will close Grimm's residency. Free and open to the public, the event offers opportunities for movement, performance and collective creation.

All skillsets are welcome, and all materials are provided. But space is limited. For more information, visit artsatlargeinc.org/events.

Anya Sesay covers arts and culture for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Send her story ideas, things to see and people to meet at asesay@usatodayco.com. Follow her on Instagram [@anyanicolette](https://www.instagram.com/anyanicolette).

Anya's reporting is supported by the Richard and Ethel Herzfeld Foundation, the Maine-based Rabkin Foundation, and reader contributions to the [Journal Sentinel Community-Funded Journalism Project](https://www.jsonline.com). Journal Sentinel editors maintain full editorial control over all content. To support this work, visit [jsonline.com/support](https://www.jsonline.com/support).

Checks can be addressed to Local Media Foundation (memo: “JS Community Journalism”) and mailed to P.O. Box 85015, Chicago, IL 60689.

The JS Community-Funded Journalism Project is administered by Local Media Foundation, tax ID #36-4427750, a Section 501(c)(3) charitable trust affiliated with Local Media Association.