



AKWI NJI

2025 Governor's Award Recipient | 2024 Iowa Poet of the Year | 2016 IA Arts Council Fellow
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ARTIST STATEMENT

Akwi Nji (b.1979) is an interdisciplinary artist creating in words, voice, and visual art. Her work as an artist and producer has been featured in exhibitions and performances across the U.S. Her work is spiritual, poetic, and emotionally speculative. Her experiences as a Cameroonian-American inform her paintings as a futurist inspired by nature, belonging, and revolutionary love. Her art connects ancestral wisdom with contemporary creative expression.

SELECT VISUAL ART EXHIBITIONS

- *Elusive Balance* Group Exhibition - Octagon Center for the Arts; Ames, IA (2025)
- *Persephone's Return* Solo Exhibition - On View Gallery; Cedar Rapids, IA (2024)
- *The Remoir Project: Bodies of Work* Solo Exhibition
CSPS Hall; Cedar Rapids, IA (2024)
F.A.C.E. of Mahaska County; Oskaloosa, IA (2023)
Iowa State University; Ames, IA (2022)
- *Power and Impact* Group Exhibition - Cedar Rapids Museum of Art; Cedar Rapids, IA (2023)
- *ENUF* solo exhibition and poetry album launch; CSPS Hall and Gallery; Cedar Rapids, IA (2023)
- *POP of Color* Solo Exhibition - Threshold Gallery; Cedar Rapids, IA (2021)
- *Homebound* Solo Exhibition - CSPS Hall; Cedar Rapids, IA (2020)

PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS | FELLOWSHIPS | AWARDS

- In Living Color Festival; Public Space One (2026)
- In Living Color Performance Series; Iowa Arts Council (2026)
- St Louis Arts Festival Juror - St Louis, MO (2026)
- Governor's Emerging Arts Leader Award Recipient (2025)
- Poet of the Year, Iowa Music Awards (2024)
- Des Moines Arts Festival Juror - Des Moines, IA (2023)
- *ENUF*; Iowa Arts Council and National Endowment for the Arts (2023)
- *correspondence*; Iowa Arts Council and National Endowment for the Arts (2022)
- Arts Midwest; Artistic Director, We the Many - Perry, IA (2021)
- Arts Across America; Performer & Curator, JFK Center for the Performing Arts - Washington, DC (2020)
- Arts Midwest; Advisor, Regional Arts Resilience Fund - Minneapolis, MN (2020)
- Iowa State University Student Exhibition Juror - Ames, IA (2020)
- Arts Midwest; Advisor, We the Many - Perry, IA (2019)
- Iowa Arts Council Fellow - Des Moines, IA (2016)

SELECT POETRY & SPOKEN WORD PERFORMANCES | PROJECTS | COMMISSIONS

- The Moth Mainstage Storyteller - Lincoln, NE (2026); New York City, NY (2025); Iowa City, IA (2024)
- *Ekphrasis* Featured Poet - Jefferson, IA (2023)
- Ordinary Survival Film Festival (*correspondence* experimental short film) - Public Space One; Iowa City, IA (2023)
- Poison Garden; commissioned poetry inspired by the photography of Molly Wood - Des Moines, IA (2023)
- Consider the Meaningful; commissioned by Ballet Des Moines - Des Moines, IA (2023)
- Poetry Palooza; featured poet - Des Moines, IA (2023)
- Prompt for the Planet; commissioned poetry - Iowa City, IA (2022)
- Freedom's Daughters; commissioned by artist Kathy Schumacher and Cedar Rapids Museum of Art - Cedar Rapids, IA (2022)
- Pocket Park Poetry Project; commissioned poetry - Marshalltown, IA (2021)
- Love & Life multi-year tour and residency of poetry and chamber music; commissioned by Red Cedar Chamber Music - Iowa City, IA (2021, 2020, 2017)
- Cey Adams, Live from the Studio - New York, NY (2020)
- JFK Center for the Performing Arts; commissioned poetry - Washington, DC (2020)
- Clinton Foundation & Her Flag; commissioned poetry - Cedar Rapids, IA (2020, 2019)
- Englert Theatre & FilmScene; commissioned poetry for capital campaign - Iowa City, IA (2019)
- Women Lead Change; commissioned poetry - Cedar Rapids, IA (2019)
- *In Search of Homeland and Security*; one-woman poetry performance - Petaluma, CA (2018)
- Moberg Gallery & Larassa Kabel's *UpSpeak* - Des Moines, IA (2016)
- Iowa Arts Summit; poetry performance - Des Moines, IA (2016)
- Mission Creek Festival; poetry to open for Saul Williams - Iowa City, IA (2016)

SELECT KEYNOTES

- PenSPRA Conference - Hershey, PA (2026)
- Waypoint Conference - Cedar Rapids, IA (2025)
- NESPR Conference - Springfield, MA (2024)
- OHSPRA Conference - Columbus, OH (2024)
- WSPRA Conference - Seattle, WA (2024)
- National School Public Relations Association Conference, Presenter - St. Louis, MO (2023)
- Illinois Mainstreet Conference - Pontiac, IL (2023)
- ISPR Conference - Des Moines, IA (2023)
- WSPRA Conference - Green Lake, WI (2023)
- Power of Words Conference - Virtual; Worldwide (2023)
- IHSSA Conference - Keynote & Presenter - Ames, IA (2023)
- Octagon Business of Art Conference - Ames, IA (2022)
- Iowa Department of Public Health Conference - Cedar Rapids, IA (2021)

SELECT INVITED RESIDENCIES | WORKSHOPS

- Artist in Residence - Drake University; Des Moines, IA (2025)
- Artist in Residence - Cedar Rapids Public Library; Cedar Rapids, IA (2024)
- Visiting Artist and Workshop Instructor; Grinnell College (2019), Mount Mercy University (2019), Iowa State University (2019)