

LEAP Middle School Initiative Lost Islands



LEAP Middle School Initiative student working in the classroom. Photo: José Garza.

LEAP artists, in two bodies of work, consider pattern, form, place, time, and infinity. In the fall session teaching artist Sukanya Mani introduced Tyvek, an artificial fabric that can be used as both a flat surface or three-dimensional object. The young artists cut, twist, fold, and paint the material, rendering repeated patterns and giving flat forms dimensionality with hints of the infinite. During the spring session teaching artist Janie Stamm led the students to create the *Lost Islands*, complete worlds constructed from cardboard, papier-mâché, and the imagination. The paintings of Derek Fordjour, also built from humble materials, serve as inspiration.

Our spring session was cut short due to COVID-19 and includes various islands in different stages of completion as projects remained unfinished as our community transitioned to shelter in place.



Audio Tour

Visit camstl.org/audio on a mobile device to hear from the artists and students.

Sukanya Mani is an interdisciplinary artist with a passion for science, philosophy and exploring issues of gender and femininity. She takes complex ideas from those fields, builds stories around them, and presents them in a visual art form. Although her brain enjoys reading and gathering information about various subjects, her heart weaves them into visual stories which she then presents to the viewer. Her studio practice involves the art of cutting and sculpting paper. Creating these pieces is a meditative experience for her. Mani has worked as a teaching artist and arts administrator with various arts organizations including the Saint Louis Art Museum, COCA, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, and the Missouri History Museum. Mani also creates large-scale sculptures as part of her interactive public art. Her artwork is part of numerous collections including the City of Poplar Bluff, City of Ballwin, Brentwood Parks, and Manchester, MO. Mani is the recipient of multiple grants from the Regional Arts Commission. Born in India, Mani lives and works in St. Louis.

Janie Stamm was born and raised on the edge of the Everglades in Broward County, Florida. She is a craft-based artist currently residing on the western banks of the Mississippi River in St. Louis. Her work focuses on preserving Florida's environmental and queer history in the face of climate change. She uses a craft-based practice to tell these stories. In spring 2019 Stamm received an MFA in Visual Art from Washington University in St. Louis. She was most recently the recipient of the 2019 John T. Milliken Foreign Travel Graduate Award, a Regional Arts Commission grant, a Dubinsky Scholarship to study at the Fine Arts Work Center, and the Frida Kahlo Creative Arts Award from Washington University in St. Louis. Her work was featured on the cover of the December 2016 issue of *Poetry* magazine. Stamm has shown work throughout the country, including Los Angeles, Atlanta, Chicago, and throughout the St. Louis regional area. She recently was an artist-in-residence at ACRE in Steuben, WI and at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris.

LEAP Middle School Initiative: Lost Islands is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by José Garza, Museum Educator, and Sukanya Mani and Janie Stamm, LEAP teaching-artists-in-residence.

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Lost Islands of the Mississippi project by LEAP Middle School Initiative student Oliver Vollman.

2020 LEAP participating artists: Alexa Bishop, Shane Box, Emma Deaton, Saskia Dentman, Samiah Elmore, Jesse Heater, Laila Jaoko, Amora Jones, Abril Kaisin, Fern Kanak, Ivy Kanak, Cozette Mothershead, Zenga Stroff, Sanai Todd, Oliver Vollman, and Yaa Williams.



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