



# LEAP Middle School Initiative enMask & Mythos



Chicken Scratch, LEAP Middle School Initiative, 2020–21.

Designed for the middle school artist interested in an in-depth exploration of contemporary art practices and mediums, this free ten-week-long after-school program gives students the opportunity to work closely with professional St. Louis-based artists and educators in an atmosphere of focused attention and mentorship.

Holding LEAP sessions virtually during the 2020-21 academic year, Resident Teaching Artists Sarah Paulsen and Alexis Rivierre introduced the young artists to comics and mask making as forms and means of expression. Together they explored zines, graphic novels, the history and customs of masks, as well as contemporary artists whose practices engage with

character, narrative, and performance. To create the artworks on view, LEAP artists applied fundamental techniques learned through a sequenced building of both material and conceptual processes. The artists found the shapes of their own stories in such forms as comic strips, mixed media masks, and virtual performances.



## Audio Tour

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## Resident Teaching Artists

**Sarah Paulsen** is an artist, filmmaker, and community organizer. With art projects ranging from experimental animations to social justice documentaries and portrait painting to parades and happenings, she has been inspired by the communities she has encountered. Paulsen holds a BFA in visual art from the University of Missouri, Columbia and an M.F.A. from the Sam Fox School of Design and Visual Art at Washington University in St. Louis. She lives and works in St. Louis, where she teaches art and animation at Marian Middle School, St. Louis Community College, and University of Missouri, St. Louis. Her work was featured at CAM in the 2018 Great Rivers Biennial.

**Alexis Rivierre** is an interdisciplinary artist who creates visual narratives; her practice functions within the expanded field of painting utilizing a range of media from photography to textiles, to performance. In addition to her art practice, Rivierre partners with arts organizations, museums, and universities to develop educational resources and facilitate art workshops and lectures. Rivierre earned her MFA in studio art with an emphasis in painting at Wichita State University in 2018 and a BFA in Art/Painting, with a minor in Art History from Missouri State University in 2014. She was born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri, and currently lives and practices in New York City.

*LEAP Middle School Initiative: enMask & Mythos* is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by Jason Vasser-Elong and José Garza, current and former Museum Educators, respectively.

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An excerpt from *Chicken Scratch*, a zine by LEAP Middle School Initiative students.

**2020–21 LEAP artists:** Eva Bow, Shane Box, Laila Jaoko, Fern Kanak, Ivy Kanak, Mabel Kanak, Louise Orbin, Esme Schuman, Amerynn Smith.



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