

LEAP Middle School Initiative is generously supported by The Strive Fund; The Dana Brown Charitable Trust, US Bank, Trustee; Anonymous; Crawford Taylor Foundation; and the Mary Ranken Jordan and Ettie A. Jordan Charitable Foundation.

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LEAP Middle School Initiative and New Art in the Neighborhood: New Perspectives is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by Brandon Barr, Teen and Adult Programs Manager.

Gallery Guide
Contemporary Art
Museum St. Louis

September 9, 2022–
February 12, 2023



LEAP Middle School Initiative and New Art in the Neighborhood: New Perspectives



Skull Painting, a collaborative work by LEAP and NAN students with RTA Ryan McCartney.



Contemporary Art
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This exhibition highlights works made by young artists in two of CAM’s teen studio programs—LEAP Middle School Initiative and New Art in the Neighborhood (NAN)— provided by the museum onsite throughout the school year.

LEAP is a free ten-week after-school program for middle school students. Participants work closely with Resident Teaching Artists and museum staff in an inclusive atmosphere of community building and



Audio Tour
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mentorship. Up to 15 students from the greater St. Louis area are selected to focus on one particular contemporary practice or medium each semester.

Since 1995, **NAN** has sought to nourish the creative minds of our city’s talented young artists. On Saturday afternoons during a 12-week residency in the fall and winter/spring, up to 15 teens, selected through a competitive application process, receive art instruction at a pre-professional level from Resident Teaching Artists, museum staff, and visiting artists. NAN artists also are provided with supplies, open studio time, and critique sessions to develop their portfolios.

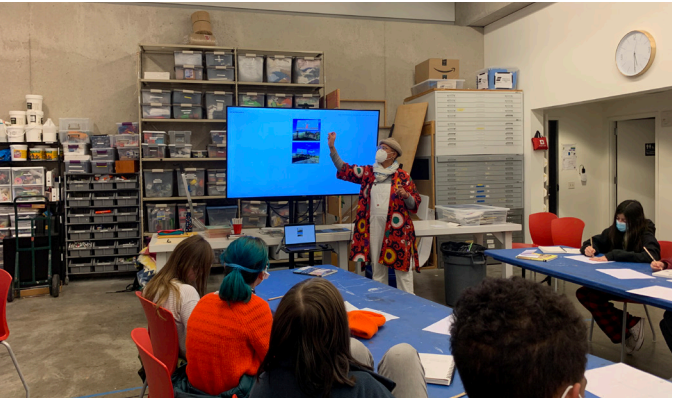
About the Exhibition

Resident Teaching Artists Lillian Gardner and Simiya Sudduth each worked with LEAP participants to explore approaches to contemporary art making. In the fall, Gardner provided playful forms of self-expression through artist trading cards and surrealist portraits that were combined into a collaborative group artwork. In the spring, Sudduth helped LEAP artists expand upon narrative and storytelling skills to create their own zines, learning methods of paper folding, publication formatting, and design.

For high school artists participating in NAN, being able to meet again in person became a touchstone for their work. In the fall, artists explored how visual and material culture defines, shapes, enhances, inhibits, and empowers people’s lives. Jason Vasser-Elong began the program with an examination of text by exploring automatic writing, appropriation, and ekphrasis (the response to a visual work of art with words). Ryan McCartney then channeled NAN artists towards a collaborative project, which took the form of a large-scale painting. In the spring, Misato Pang explored how observation and perception inform abstraction, guiding artists through exercises such as still life drawing and sculpture, life drawing, and chance-based compositions.



Ghost Town, a zine created by student Mars Vance.



RTA Simiya Sudduth with LEAP and NAN students.

2021–22 LEAP Artists

Amiyah Arend, Angela Clark, Kingston Collins, Fern Kanak, Mabel Kanak, Bennett Klosterman, Julia Long, Olive Losse, Eleanor Myers, Caris Ong, Louise Orbin, Esmé Schuman, Natalie Sears, Saoirse Skiljan, Mars Vance, and Jovi Vaughn.

2021–22 NAN Artists

Xavia Bell, Catalina Enz, RJ Hearon, Isabelle “Izzi” Jackson-Cameron, Atticus Jones, Finn Kanak, Ivy Kanak, Audrey LaBeaume, Annie Li, Montana Limper, Zachary Milner, Munta Mohammad-Akhtar, Cozette Mothershead, Will Seemiller, Katherine Welch, and Frankie Williams

Resident Teaching Artists

Lillian Gardner is an African and Native American poet, visual artist, musician, and dancer. She earned a BFA at Webster University from the Department of Art, Design, and Art History. Through her work, Gardner acknowledges and promotes underrepresented groups in the arts. She believes that being an artist and writer takes a certain amount of strength and dedication. The arts are such a demanding field that draws out vulnerability, passion, character, perseverance, precision, intuition, and creativity. The artist’s practice beckons her to translate the ongoing experiences she encounters in life into figurative tools that construct stories that change with time. Her work is a reflection of her current environment, the state of being present. “I am a metaphor for many things, some I haven’t even discovered yet.”

Ryan McCartney is a curator, educator, and artist living and working in Saint Louis. Born in 1979, and based in Philadelphia from 2005 through 2020, he served as one of the first two directors of the Icebox Project Space beginning in 2013. There he sought to push the Icebox to reach new communities and audiences through a focus on radically inclusive curation and personal outreach. Each year at the Icebox, McCartney curated and coordinated year-round visual art programming and performances. He also produced small-run artist’s publications and artist’s audio

recordings as a continuation of the idea that the gallery space should be a platform for departures, rather than an end in and of itself.

Misato Pang was born and raised in Hong Kong to Japanese and Chinese parents, and migrated to the United States during late adolescence. She recently lived in New York City and relocated to St. Louis in the past year. Pang’s works overlap personal narrative and cultural events, some of which allude to current social phenomena and political discourse in Asia. She has participated in various residencies and exhibitions in the United States and Japan. Her most recent solo exhibition, *Breakdown*, was a two-part exhibition that guided viewers through phases of the artist’s creative process using verbal and visual languages. The synthesis of visual and auditory cues recreate spaces and moments in time, hence inviting viewers to reflect and enter these intimate spaces that happened in isolation and solitude.

Simiya Sudduth is a mother, multidisciplinary artist, and wellness practitioner, currently living and practicing in St. Louis. She maintains a fluid creative practice that explores the intersections of wellness, ecology, social justice, and spirituality. Sudduth’s expansive creative practice ranges from creating illustrations and installation art to artist-farming and experimental sound healing performances. Sudduth holds several wellness credentials as a Licensed Massage Therapist, Usui Reiki Master, Full Spectrum Doula, Registered Prenatal Yoga Teacher, and 200-Hour Registered Yoga Teacher.



RTA Simiya Sudduth creating zines with LEAP and NAN students.