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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CAM celebrates a decade of visionary leadership with Executive Director Lisa Melandri



Left image: Lisa Melandri. Photo: Jordan Gaunce. Right image: *Jennifer Steinkamp: Orbit*, installation view, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, October 11–December 29, 2013. Photo: Jennifer Steinkamp.

September 22, 2022 (St. Louis, MO) - The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (CAM) celebrates ten years of innovative and community-focused leadership with Executive Director Lisa Melandri. Since joining CAM in 2012, Melandri has brought both emerging and established artists from around the globe to St. Louis, and has transformed the museum with fresh ideas and a deep commitment to growing community connections. During her tenure as Executive Director, Melandri has increased the museum's endowment three-fold in support of expanding access to all audiences and has elevated CAM as the region's premier contemporary, non-collecting art institution.

"Lisa has made CAM into a major center for artists, students, and the St. Louis community for learning about some of the most significant art that is being made today," says Board Member Emily Rauh Pulitzer. "Her intelligence, warm outgoing personality, and leadership skills have benefited St. Louisans and made CAM a significant national art institution."

Removing barriers to art has been a core tenet of Melandri's leadership. Beginning in 2013, CAM became a free art institution, a decision that has seen attendance numbers skyrocket. In 2012, CAM welcomed 22,374 in-person and digital visitors. In 2020, engagement increased tenfold, reaching 37,447 in-person and 201,738 digital audiences. During Melandri's tenure, the museum has continued to expand into the community, finding new ways to support local organizations with substantial partnerships like [ArtReach](#)

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and [Collective Impact](#). Recognizing the importance of CAM's outreach initiatives, Melandri oversaw the development of a new Learning and Engagement department in 2016—a team that is now responsible for reaching thousands of area students and creating programs for all ages, both on site and in the community.

“One of Lisa’s favorite concepts is ‘nimble,’ which is key for non-collecting contemporary art museums,” says CAM Emeritus Board Member member Ann Ruwitch. “She has great antennae, a great heart, and a great reputation. The exhibits presented have put CAM in the star category in St. Louis and nationally. She is an avid promoter of our local arts community and has built model educational programs for local children.”

Melandri has also positioned CAM as a launchpad for artists’ careers. In 2013, she inaugurated the museum’s first *Street Views*, featuring the work of pioneering digital media artist Jennifer Steinkamp, whose large-scale video work *Orbit* was projected on CAM’s facade—the first of many digital works enjoyed by audiences outside the gallery walls. In 2018, she organized the first major solo exhibition for Amy Sherald, the acclaimed painter of Michelle Obama’s official portrait, which elevated CAM into the national and global conversation on contemporary art.

Melandri’s direction of the museum’s major fundraising initiative, [Create: The CAMpaign](#), has raised \$10 million in support of connecting art with broad and diverse audiences in St. Louis and beyond. This initiative, which ensures free admission to all exhibitions, educational programs, and tours, has made full access to all audiences an institutional priority.

“Lisa is a treasure for St. Louis,” says CAM Board Chair Jackie Yoon. “Her commitment to CAM and the local community is unmatched. She is a visionary in the arts and culture community and leads CAM with strength and purpose. I am excited to see where she takes the museum in the next 10 years.”

About the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis

The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis creates meaningful engagement with the most relevant and innovative art being made today. Founded by civic and cultural leaders in 1980, the Museum transformed from a small gallery into an internationally recognized arts institution, now permanently housed in a flexible, open, and inviting building designed by renowned American architect Brad Cloepfil. CAM’s distinct architecture reflects the organization’s values and supports a dynamic range of exhibitions, public programs, educational initiatives, and community collaborations. The only museum in the region solely dedicated to contemporary art, CAM is one of the preeminent non-collecting institutions of its kind in the United States. We are a site for discovery, a welcoming space, free and open to all. For more information, visit camstl.org.

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