



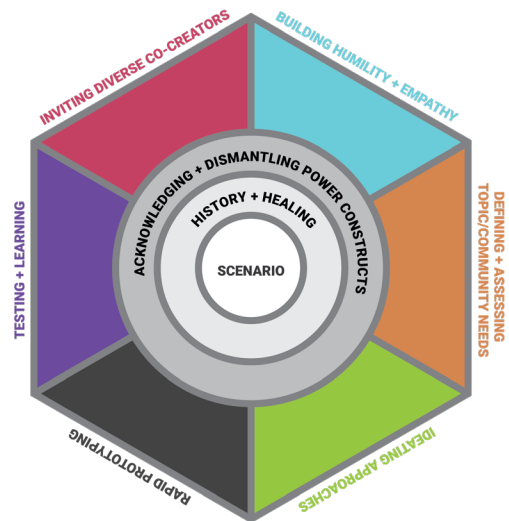
# Collective Impact Building Beautiful Community

Collective Impact was established in 2020 as a multiyear partnership between CAM and our neighbors Creative Reaction Lab (CRXLAB). Creative Reaction Lab was founded in support of the Uprising in Ferguson. Today, CRXLAB is dedicated to building a youth-led, community-centered movement of a new type of civic leader for racial and health equity: Redesigners for Justice™.

Inspired by new ways of advancing equity, Collective Impact adopts the idea that collaborative efforts by different agents with a shared vision can create meaningful change. Collective Impact uses CRXLAB's Equity-Centered Community Design™ framework to identify, develop, and co-create artistic interventions that respond to shared aspirations of community building.

Over the course of the year, the program engages a “Collective”—a cohort of artists and residents in our immediate neighborhoods of Covenant Blu/Grand Center, Jeff VanderLou, Vandeventer, and The Ville. The Collective began by grounding their work in history, healing, community-sourced data, and the context of the neighborhoods themselves. They conducted self assessments and interviews with residents to develop a common agenda, which this year is “Building Beautiful Community.” Next, the Collective invited artists to create proposals for a project that would promote effective communication, connectivity, and creative fellowship, as well as to interpret “beautiful” in a way that would have a positive impact on the community. The Collective selected local artist Mee Jey, and together they will conduct creative placemaking and install new artwork in the neighborhood.

In July and August, this exhibition space will share insight into the project as it evolves. Outcomes and documentation of the planning and creative placemaking efforts are on display, along with an invitation for visitors to contribute to the common agenda by reflecting on color, its personal meaning, and the power to imagine.



Equity-Centered Community Design™. Courtesy Creative Reaction Lab.

## Our Process

In October 2022, members of the Collective began meeting regularly with CAM and CRXLAB staff. They worked through various exercises both on-site and off-site to build authentic community engagement. The process was guided by CRXLAB's Equity-Centered Community Design™ (ECCD), a unique and creative problem-solving process based on equity, humility-building, integrating history and healing practices, addressing power dynamics, and co-creating with the community. This design process focuses on a community's culture and needs so that its members can gain tools to dismantle systemic oppression and create a future with equity for all.



## Audio Tour

Visit [camstl.org/audio](http://camstl.org/audio) on a mobile device to hear directly from Learning and Engagement.

The Collective used insight and skills from ECCD to identify their common agenda of “Building Beautiful Community.” They then defined, developed, and executed a community input strategy that involved interviewing residents about this topic. These responses were used to craft a call for proposals that invited artists to respond to the community’s interests.

### The 2022–23 Collective



Back row, L to R: Robert Beckles (CRXLAB), Ronald Jones, Alexis Merriweather, Ada Parker, Audrey Ellermann, Quinton Ward, Michelle Dezember (CAM). Front row, L to R: Mia Vance, Melita Harry, DeZha Smith, and Miriam Ruiz (CAM). Not pictured: Dazanni Smith and Tepra Wells (CRXLAB)

### US: United Sapiens

By January 2023, the Collective selected Mee Jey to collaborate with them on their artistic intervention. Her proposal is entitled “US: United Sapiens,” and features a co-created figurative sculpture that uses colorful forms to represent and embody cooperation. The arrangement of figures that make up the work demonstrates communal gathering, and the process of co-creating the sculpture is done every step of the way with community involvement and participation. The artist and the Collective are working to conduct creative placemaking and the eventual installation of the artwork. This section of the exhibition will evolve to include updated information about the artwork as it develops.

**Mee Jey** is a multidisciplinary Indian artist who was honored with the St. Louis Visionary Emerging Artist Award in 2022. Jey has shown works, performed, and been creatively associated with the Saint Louis Art Museum, Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, Missouri History Museum, and Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis. She was the Community Artist in Residence at Laumeier Sculpture Park in 2022 and is currently an Artist in Residence at Craft Alliance. Her works have been shown regionally in St. Louis, Columbia, MO, and Alton, IL; nationally in New York City and Miami; and internationally in London, Athens, and New Delhi. She received her MFA degree from Sam Fox School of Arts, Washington University in St. Louis. Jey has a BA degree in History and MA degree in Archaeology from Delhi University and Jawaharlal Nehru University, respectively.

### Creative Placemaking

An important part of Collective Impact this year is Creative Placemaking—the use of arts and culture by diverse co-creators to shape physical and social characteristics of a place, space, and community.

In order to make important decisions on the form, color, meaning, and placement of the work, ongoing workshops are hosted with stakeholders and residents in the immediate neighborhood. Participants are given prototype sketches of the figures and asked to contribute in a way that creatively blends reflections on their favorite colors, the meanings they hold, and how these can help build a beautiful community. These pieces will inform the development of the final project.

After considering the outcomes of the Creative Placemaking workshop, visitors are also invited to creatively respond to the prototype to take home or leave at the museum as part of a growing installation.

*Collective Impact: Building Beautiful Community* is organized in partnership with Creative Reaction Lab’s Antionette Carroll, Founder, President, and CEO; Robert Beckles, Programs and Education Coordinator; and Tepra Wells, Development and Communications Coordinator, alongside Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis’ Michelle Dezember, Director of Learning and Engagement; and Miriam Ruiz, School and Community Partnership Manager.



Collective Impact is presented by PNC Arts Alive. This program is generously funded by the Mid-America Arts Alliance, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the state arts agencies of Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas.



### Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis

3750 Washington Blvd  
St. Louis, MO 63108  
314.535.4660

### Connect with CAM

Visit [camstl.org](http://camstl.org)  
Facebook [contemporaryartmuseumstl](https://www.facebook.com/contemporaryartmuseumstl)  
Twitter [contemporarystl](https://twitter.com/contemporarystl)  
Instagram [camstl](https://www.instagram.com/camstl)