

LEAP Middle School Initiative Collage, Portraits, and Pizzas



LEAP students visit artist Katherine Bernhardt's studio for pizza-based artmaking. Photo courtesy CAM staff.

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

Collage, Portraits, and Pizzas highlights work made over the past year by LEAP participants, during which Resident Teaching Artists (RTA) engaged students in painting, sculpture, and collage while teaching them how to convey personal identity through art. Fall RTA Jorge Rios worked with students to develop basic skills in two-dimensional representation through the use of drawing and water-based painting. These young artists also learned how to describe their work using

foundational art history terminology. Often focusing on aspects of composition, students learned how to create balance, harmony, focal points, and dynamic imagery within their artwork. Students also had the opportunity to visit Katherine Bernhardt's studio, where they made their own playful "pizza paintings."

Spring RTA Jen Everett used the 2022 Great Rivers Biennial exhibition as a conceptual starting point to help LEAP participants explore how different media can be used to convey complex messages and themes. Students started with two-dimensional collage to learn how to identify symbols and narratives in artworks of different media. Eventually this expanded out into three dimensions, as students created fragmented and polygonal planes while experimenting with various sculptural methods.

Featured LEAP Projects

Artists in the Fall 2022 LEAP session worked with Resident Teaching Artist Jorge Rios to create minimal collages that experimented with different materials to see how they informed the final artwork. Students were encouraged to focus on the balance of the composition by finding harmony between positive and negative space.



Photo courtesy CAM staff.

The Fall 2022 LEAP group attended an artmaking workshop at Katherine Bernhardt's studio in St. Louis where they listened to music, ate pizza, and made pizza paintings. The artist shared her work with students, gave them a tour of her gallery, Dragon Crab Turtle, and demonstrated various painting techniques. Students then used these techniques to create their own culinary-inspired masterpieces inspired by Imo's pizza, a common motif in Bernhardt's work that was also ordered and enjoyed during the visit. Fun was had, pizza was eaten, and students were able to see one of contemporary art's preeminent artists in their own studio.

2022–23 LEAP artists include: Rosalie Allen, Amiyah Arend, Kingston Collins, Mackenzie Crump, Lily Deaton, Ruthy Fosdick, Norah Goetz, Ehron Gottfredsen, Fern Kanak, Mabel Kanak, Salem Lambert, Eddie Perez, and Benjamin Yates.

Jorge Rios (he/him) is a painter who holds a BA from the National Academy of Beaux Art “San Alejandro” in Havana Cuba, a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and is currently working towards his MFA degree at Washington University in St. Louis.

Jen Everett (she/her) is an artist from Southfield, Michigan, currently based in Saint Louis, Missouri. Her practice moves between lens and time based media, installation and writing. Jen received an MFA from Washington University in St. Louis. She earned a Bachelor of Architecture from Tuskegee University.

LEAP Middle School Initiative: Collage, Portraits, and Pizzas is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by Brandon Barr, Teen and Adult Programs Manager.

LEAP Middle School Initiative is generously supported in part by The Strive Fund, Anonymous, Crawford Taylor Foundation, Mary Ranken Jordan and Ettie A. Jordan Charitable Foundation, Reinsurance Group of America, Inc. (RGA), and Terry D. Weiss, MD, Youth Education Endowment Fund.

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