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Contemporary Art
Museum St. Louis

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis receives a \$140,000 grant from the Berges Family Foundation to support youth programs



New Art in the Neighborhood students collaborate on an art project led by Resident Teaching Artist Misty Long-Donoho in fall 2023. Photo: CAM staff

December 5, 2023 (St. Louis, MO)—The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (CAM) has been awarded a \$140,000 grant from the Berges Family Foundation. This commitment of support, paid over two years, will provide critical funding for CAM’s free, community-focused teen programs, including ArtReach, LEAP Middle School Initiative, Teen Museum Studies, and New Art in the Neighborhood—the Museum’s flagship youth education initiative founded in 1995. The grant is the largest award the Berges Foundation has made to the Museum.

CAM’s free community-based programs provide St. Louis teens with a singular, art-focused experience designed to boost not just their creativity but their critical thinking skills and self-confidence. Over the past 20 years, CAM has been devoted to building equitable partnerships across the St. Louis community, particularly with schools and institutions within its one-mile radius, like Vashon and Sumner High Schools.

“This extraordinary support from the Berges Family Foundation will allow CAM to enhance and expand these beloved community programs,” says CAM Executive Director Lisa Melandri. “Students in CAM programs don’t just learn about making art—they develop their capacity to create new ideas. CAM is so proud to be a part of nurturing the city’s creative talent—of which there is an abundance—starting with its youngest artists.”

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Hours
10–5 Wed
10–5 Thu
10–8 Fri
10–5 Sat & Sun

CAM is free. Visit often!

Participants are taught by practicing St. Louis artists and engage with prominent talents from around the world, including Amy Sherald, Katherine Bernhardt, Derek Fordjour, and Trenton Doyle Hancock. Programs like CAM's—which focus on students from grades 6-12—are also a critical part of arts career pathways, helping to build diversity within the profession and ensuring a bright future for the next generation of artists.

“Teens learn first-hand what it means—and what it takes—to pursue a creative profession in the city,” says CAM’s Director of Learning and Engagement Michelle Dezember. “Our programs empower teens to envision a future for themselves where art is an integral part of their lives and careers. And we want CAM to be a big part of that future—and to know that they are all welcome here.”

Each year, CAM serves more than 1,200 artists under the age of 18 across its free youth programs. Over the course of the Museum’s 20-year history, it has educated more than 22,000 young artists, and the impact of these programs on the community is clear. Participants report improvement in their artistic and problem-solving skills, as well as a high sense of feeling valued, indicating the programs’ broad educational, personal, and professional benefits.

“Collaborative, community youth programs like CAM’s are an essential part not just of the creative fabric of our region, but a foundational part of St. Louis’ social and economic infrastructure,” says Kelly Lamb Pollock, CEO of the Berges Family Foundation. “Through their programs, CAM is helping young people build their empathy, imaginations, critical thinking, and capacity to dialogue with others. We want to expand opportunities for St. Louisans to thrive and CAM is a worthy recipient of our support.”

CAM’s free community-based programs have also impacted programming within St. Louis Public Schools. Vashon High School, CAM’s pilot ArtReach partner, has hired a full-time art teacher following the successful reception of CAM’s multi-year collaboration placing teaching artists in the school. When historic Sumner High School in the Ville neighborhood of St. Louis was threatened with closure due to low enrollment, Sumner alumni collaborated with CAM and other local cultural organizations like 4theVille, St. Louis Shakespeare Festival, The Black Rep, Opera Theatre St. Louis, and Craft Alliance as part of a 3-year arts-focused recovery effort. The partnership has already helped boost enrollment at Sumner by 10% each year, in alignment with the school’s goals.

St. Louis was recently identified as one of the nation’s most arts-vibrant communities by SMU DataArts, underscoring the value of programs like CAM’s and the recognition the city as a whole is receiving for its support of St. Louis artists and institutions.



About the Berges Family Foundation



Contemporary Art
Museum St. Louis

The Berges Family Foundation supports the institutions and organizations that make Saint Louis a great place to live, visit, work, and invest. Our contributions help fund cultural engagement, STEM preparedness, youth empowerment, and support for heroes. Our contributions help change lives, one life at a time.

We not only support the institutions and organizations that meet our criteria, we support those we feel are deeply affecting the lives of others. We do it out of love for those whose lives our beneficiaries are changing, for each and every child and adult who needs a hand up and hope for a better future.

Whether through education, health, music, dance, or simple human love and care, we feel that by making a difference in one child's or veteran's life, we can affect a whole community. The organizations we support do an amazing job of doing just that—spreading hope, love, and empowerment with depth and lasting benefits, making St. Louis a better place to live. For more information, visit bergesfamilyfoundation.org.

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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