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Contemporary Art
Museum St. Louis

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CAM's Lisa Melandri and Angelik Vizcarrondo-Laboy explore Japanese ceramic artist Shinichi Sawada's work in public conversation on January 23



Left: Lisa Melandri. Photo: Jennifer Silverberg. Right: Angelik Vizcarrondo-Laboy. Photo: Sigurjon Gudjonsson; courtesy New York City Department of Transportation.

January 15, 2025 (St. Louis, MO)—The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (CAM) is proud to present [In Conversation: Lisa Melandri with Angelik Vizcarrondo-Laboy](#) on **Thursday, January 23, from 6:00 pm–7:00 pm**. Join Lisa Melandri, CAM's Executive Director and co-curator of the exhibition [Shinichi Sawada: Agents of Clay](#), for a conversation with independent curator, writer, and arts administrator Angelik Vizcarrondo-Laboy. This exhibition marks a major milestone for Sawada, who has built an international reputation for his innovative ceramic sculptures that merge the natural world with the artist's rich imagination. Registration is encouraged, visit camstl.org to reserve your spot.

The two will discuss Sawada's unique artistic style and the various avenues for appreciating and contextualizing his sculptures, delving into themes presented in the exhibition's accompanying publication, to which they both contributed. Their conversation will offer insights into Sawada's creative process and the evolution of his mesmerizing sculptures throughout this career.

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In addition to the conversation, St. Louis-based [Artists First](#)—an inclusive, non-profit art studio empowering artists of all abilities—will showcase works created in response to Sawada's exhibition. This organization is dedicated to using creative self-expression to promote equity, equality, and empowerment, supporting artists of all abilities. The multimedia sculptures, which will be displayed and available for sale during the event, represent the beauty of diversity and inclusion, further enriching the dialogue around Sawada's work and the impact of art as a tool for social change.

Shinichi Sawada: Agents of Clay, co-organized by CAM and The Mint Museum in Charlotte, North Carolina, is Sawada's first solo presentation in the United States and will be on view through **February 9, 2025**.

To learn more about Shinichi Sawada and the works on view, visit our [exhibitions page](#). For press access on January 23, including interview opportunities with speakers and curators, contact Alexia Majors at amajors@camstl.org.

This event is generously supported in part by the Japan Foundation, New York and the Robert Lehman Foundation.



Shinichi Sawada: Agents of Clay is organized by Lisa Melandri, Executive Director, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, and Jen Sudul Edwards, Ph.D., Chief Curator and Curator of Contemporary Art at The Mint Museum.



This exhibition is generously supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, Alexis M. Cossé and Erik Karanik, and the Ferring Family Foundation. The exhibition publication has been generously supported in part by Jennifer Lauren Gallery and James Cohan Gallery.

Event Details

What: In Conversation: Lisa Melandri with Angelik Vizcarrondo-Laboy

Where: Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis

(3750 Washington Boulevard, St. Louis, MO 63108)

When: Thursday, January 23, 2025

Time: 6:00 pm–7:00 pm; Doors open at 5:30 pm; Sculptures by Artists First will be available for sale throughout the evening



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About The Speakers

Angelik Vizcarrondo-Laboy (she/her) is a New York-based curator, writer, art historian, and arts and grants administrator. Her practice advocates for underrepresented communities, stories, materials, and approaches in the art world. Her research investigates the “aesthetics of optimism,” the subversive power of humor, cuteness, and leisure as tools of protest. She is the Director of the New York City Department of Transportation Art (NYC DOT Art). Vizcarrondo-Laboy also served as Assistant Curator at the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD,) NY, where from 2016 to 2022, she was part of MAD’s curatorial team, helping organize over twenty exhibitions and projects. During her time there, she also led MAD’s Burke Prize, a prestigious contemporary craft award. Vizcarrondo-Laboy authored the essay “Shinichi Sawada: An Open-Ended Question” for the exhibition catalog *Shinichi Sawada: Agents of Clay*.

Lisa Melandri (she/her) is the Executive Director of the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, the region’s premier contemporary, non-collecting art institution. Since joining CAM in 2012, Lisa has brought both emerging and established artists from around the globe to St. Louis, and has organized such outstanding exhibitions at CAM as *Mickalene Thomas: Mentors, Muses, and Celebrities*; *Salvatore Scarpitta: Racing Cars*; *Sanford Biggers*; *Amy Sherald*; *Christine Corday: RELATIVE POINTS*; and *Kathy Butterly: Out of one, many / Headsapes*. Melandri co-organized the exhibition *Shinichi Sawada: Agents of Clay* with Jen Sudul Edwards, Ph.D., Chief Curator and Curator of Contemporary Art at The Mint Museum.

About Shinichi Sawada

Shinichi Sawada (b. 1982) lives and works in Japan’s Shiga prefecture. Since 2000, he has attended Nakayoshi Fukushikai, a social welfare facility that supports disabled people. In 2020, a solo exhibition of his work traveled from the Museum Lothar Fischer in Neumarkt to the Georg Kolbe Museum in Berlin. His work has featured prominently in major group exhibitions around the world, including *The Encyclopedic Palace* at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013 curated by Massimiliano Gioni and *The Doors of Perception* at Frieze New York in 2019. His work is held in the permanent collections of numerous public institutions, including the Collection de l’Art Brut, Lausanne; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Halle Saint Pierre, Paris; and the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca.

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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