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Contemporary Art
Museum St. Louis

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Enjoy art, music, and culture at First Friday in Grand Center celebrating Great Rivers Biennial 2024 exhibiting artist Saj Issa on February 7



Photo Courtesy: Tyler Small

January 22, 2025 (St. Louis, MO)—The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (CAM) presents **First Friday: Celebrating Saj Issa on February 7 from 5:00 pm–9:00 pm**. As a part of First Fridays in Grand Center, this event will showcase art, music, and Palestinian culture in honor of local artist Saj Issa who is featured in CAM's current exhibition, [Great Rivers Biennial 2024](#).

[First Friday: Celebrating Saj Issa](#) is a casual gathering for visitors to mingle with the artist, see her exhibition in its final days on view, and hear a special oud performance by distinguished musician and composer Ronnie Malley. Throughout the evening, exhibiting artist Saj Issa will guide attendees through a hands-on art making activity exploring tatreez, a traditional form of Palestinian embroidery.

Drinks and specialty cocktails will be available for purchase from AO&Co. Light bites provided. This program is free and open to the public; no registration required.

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Hours
10–5 Wed
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10–8 Fri
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CAM is free. Visit often!



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In addition to the festivities, visitors will have the opportunity to view CAM's fall 2024 exhibitions as the galleries will be open late until 9:00 pm—including work by fellow Great Rivers Biennial artists Basil Kincaid and Ronald Young. The fall 2024 exhibitions will be on view through **February 9, 2025**. For more information, visit camstl.org.

Event Details

What: First Friday: Celebrating Saj Issa

Where: Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (3750 Washington Boulevard St. Louis, MO 63108)

When: Friday, February 7, 2025

Time: 5:00 pm–9:00 pm

Admission: This event is free and open to the public

Event Schedule

5:00 pm: Drinks and specialty cocktails available for purchase from AO&Co.

6:00–8:00 pm: Exhibiting artist Saj Issa leads hands-on art making activity exploring tatreez, a form of traditional Palestinian embroidery

7:30: Oud performance by Ronnie Malley

To learn more about Saj Issa and the works on view, [visit our exhibitions page](#). For press access on February 7, including interview opportunities with Saj Issa and curators, contact Alexia Majors at amajors@camstl.org.

Great Rivers Biennial 2024: Saj Issa, Basil Kincaid, Ronald Young is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by Dean Daderko, Ferring Foundation Chief Curator, and Misa Jeffereis, Associate Curator, with support from Grace Early, Exhibitions Assistant.

GATEWAY FOUNDATION

The Great Rivers Biennial is made possible by the Gateway Foundation.

About the Artists

Saj Issa (b. 1994, St. Louis, MO) received a BFA from Webster University, St. Louis, and a MFA at the University of California, Los Angeles. Growing up between St. Louis and Ramallah, Palestine, her practice is an exploration of displacement, identity, social issues, and consumerism. Issa provokes, informs, and entertains viewers with her work, which has been exhibited at Felix Art Fair in Los Angeles, Materials Fair in Mexico City, the exhibition *Many* at the Craft Contemporary Museum, Los Angeles, and most recently, *Your Refuge* installed on the exterior of *The Luminary* as a part of *psa-stl*. Issa is a recipient of the 2022

NCECA Graduate Student Fellowship, and has been selected to appear in *New American Paintings*, No. 159 & 165 MFA Annual Issue. She has been an artist-in-residence at Craft Alliance Center of Art and Design, St. Louis, and Belger Crane Yard Studio, Kansas City.

Ronnie Malley is a multi-instrumentalist musician on oud, guitar, keyboards, and percussion, a theatrical performer, producer, and educator. He has collaborated with international artists, composed and consulted for many cultural music projects in film and theater, appeared as a guest artist on several works, and is executive director of Intercultural Music Production in Chicago.

About the Gateway Foundation

Founded in 1986, the Gateway Foundation seeks to enrich life and culture in the St. Louis area by supporting efforts to acquire, create, or improve tangible and durable art and urban design. In 2009, the Foundation's largest project, a two-block sculpture park called Citygarden, opened in downtown St. Louis in the Gateway Mall. Notable installations can be seen by visiting Citygarden, the Missouri Botanical Garden, Washington University, the Central Library, The Science Center, and The Sheldon Concert Hall, to name just a few, with more than 70 installations throughout the region. Additionally, the Foundation has arranged for and funded the lighting of the Gateway Arch, St. Louis City Hall, the Old Courthouse, the Civil Courts Building, the City's three landmark Water Towers, and other historically important and/or architecturally significant structures, and has funded the building of several City playgrounds and parks. More information is available at gateway-foundation.org and citygardenstl.org.

About the Great Rivers Biennial

The Great Rivers Biennial Art Award is a collaborative initiative established in 2003 between the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis and the Gateway Foundation. Every two years, the program grants emerging and mid-career artists working in the greater St. Louis metropolitan region with a significant honorarium and a major exhibition opportunity. This initiative, now in its 11th edition, has recognized the standout creative voices of 33 local artists and contributed to the larger cultural ecosystem supporting artists in our region.

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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