

Press contact: Alexia Majors
314.535.0770 ext. 313
amajors@camstl.org



Contemporary Art
Museum St. Louis

3750 Washington Blvd
St. Louis, MO 63108
314.535.4660 camstl.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Great Rivers Biennial 2026 applications are open through June 1, 2025 to emerging and mid-career artists in the St. Louis metropolitan region with new jurors announced



May 15, 2025 (St. Louis, MO) - The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (CAM) and the Gateway Foundation are proud to announce the call for artists for the [2026 Great Rivers Biennial](#). Established in 2003, the collaborative initiative grants three emerging and mid-career artists working in the greater St. Louis metropolitan region with an unrestricted cash award, and elevates their profiles through an exhibition and programming at CAM. Now in its 12th edition, the [Great Rivers Biennial](#) takes place every two years and has recognized the standout creative voices of 33 local artists since its founding, contributing to the larger cultural ecosystem supporting artists in our region.

The Gateway Foundation has raised its artist honorarium to \$25,000, up from \$20,000, for selected artists who will be featured in the Great Rivers Biennial exhibition, on view at CAM from **September 11, 2026–February 7, 2027**.

“It is profoundly evident how the Great Rivers Biennial has shaped the artistic landscape of St. Louis, deepened our appreciation for local talent, and connected it with the national art community over the past two decades,” said Lisa Melandri, Executive Director of CAM. “The Gateway Foundation’s generous increase of the award up to \$25,000 is a testament to its commitment to nurturing creativity, which will empower these artists to push the boundaries of their work in ways previously unimaginable.”

As with previous Biennials, a distinguished panel of jurors will review all submissions that meet the eligibility requirements. Ten artists, selected as semi-finalists, will receive studio visits from the jurors along with CAM curatorial staff in Summer 2025. Up to three artists will be selected for the Great Rivers Biennial award. The 2026 Great Rivers Biennial jurors are **Leslie Hewitt**, artist and Associate Professor of Art at Rice University

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

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in Houston; **Margot Norton**, Chief Curator at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive in Berkeley; and **Pavel Pyš**, Curator of Visual Arts and Collections Strategy at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. Jessica Hong, who was previously announced as a juror earlier this spring, has stepped down. The exhibition will be 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.

“We’re thankful to have such a partner as CAM in this endeavor. With each edition, the Great Rivers Biennial consistently identifies a trio of tremendously talented St. Louis based artists who always deliver a series of compelling work,” says Heather Sweeney, Executive Director of the Gateway Foundation. “The receipt of a competitive award is crucial to the success of the biennial, as it not only offers selected artists space to envision new pieces but elicits experimentation with mediums or perspectives outside of their existing body of work.”

Previous Great Rivers Biennial Recipients

2024: Saj Issa, Basil Kincaid, and Ronald Young
2022: Yowshien Kuo, Yvonne Osei, and Jon Young
2020: Kahlil Robert Irving, Tim Portlock, and Rachel Youn
2018: Addoley Dzegede, Sarah Paulsen, and Jacob Stanley
2016: Lyndon Barrois Jr., Nanette Boileau, and Tate Foley
2014: Brandon Anschutz, Carlie Trosclair, and Cayce Zavaglia
2012: David Johnson, Asma Kazmi, and Mel Trad
2010: Martin Brief, Sarah Frost, and Cameron Fuller
2008: Juan William Chávez, Corey Escoto, and Michelle Oosterbaan
2006: Jason Wallace Triefenbach, Moses, and Matthew Strauss
2004: Jill Downen, Adam Frelin, and Kim Humphries

Eligibility Requirements

The Great Rivers Biennial is open to artists working in all media, including drawing, ceramics, film and video, installation, painting, performance, photography, printmaking, sculpture, and textiles. To be eligible for this opportunity, artists must have lived within the following counties in Missouri and Illinois for at least one year prior to the application deadline and continue to reside in the area during the designated planning, production, and exhibition period:

- Missouri: St. Louis City, St. Louis County, Jefferson County, or St. Charles County
- Illinois: St. Clair County or Madison County

Applications are due June 1, 2025, 11:59 pm CT. For complete eligibility requirements and to apply, visit camstl.org/grb. Additional eligibility questions can be directed to Grace Early, Exhibitions Assistant at gearly@camstl.org.



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About the Jurors



Working with photography, sculpture, and site-specific installations, **Leslie Hewitt** addresses fluid notions of time. Oscillating between the illusionary potential of photography and the physical weight of sculpture, her compositions suggest the porosity between intimate and sociopolitical lives.

A selection of recent and forthcoming exhibitions include the Museum of Modern Art in New York; the Studio Museum in Harlem; Artists Space in New York; Project Row Houses in Houston; and LA > < ART in Los Angeles. Hewitt has held residencies at the Studio Museum in Harlem, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University and the American Academy in Berlin, Germany amongst others.



Margot Norton is Chief Curator at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), where she leads the curatorial team and oversees the exhibition program. At BAMPFA she curated and co-curated *MATRIX 283/ Gabriel Chaile* (2023); *MATRIX 286/Amol K. Patil* (through April 2025); *To Exalt the Ephemeral: The (Im)permanent Collection* (through July 2025); and the BAMPFA presentation of *Making Their Mark: Works from the Shah Garg Collection* (through April 2025). Norton was previously Allen and Lola Goldring Senior Curator at the New Museum, New York, where she curated over forty exhibitions including recent solo shows with Carmen Argote, Diedrick Brackens, Lynn Hershman Leeson, Wangechi Mutu, Pepón Osorio, Mika Rottenberg, Bárbara

Wagner and Benjamin de Burca, and the 2021 New Museum Triennial: *Soft Water Hard Stone*. In 2017, she curated the Sequences Real Time Art Festival in Reykjavik, Iceland, and the Georgian Pavilion at the 2019 Venice Biennale with artist Anna K.E. She regularly contributes to exhibition catalogues and publications and is also co-founder and current editorial council member of Museums Moving Forward, an independent, limited-life organization devoted to envisioning and creating a more just museum sector by 2030. She holds an MA in Curatorial Studies from Columbia University, New York. Photo: Elliott Jerome Brown Jr.



Pavel Pyš is the Curator of Visual Arts and Collections Strategy at the Walker Art Center. At the Walker, he has curated solo exhibitions by Daniel Buren, Paul Chan, Pan Daijing, Michaela Eichwald, Christine Sun Kim, Carolyn Lazard, Ralph Lemon & Kevin Beasley, Sarah Michelson, and Elizabeth Price, as well as the group exhibition *The Body Electric* (2019). In 2018, he was awarded an Andy Warhol Foundation Curatorial Fellowship which aided research towards *Multiple Realities: Experimental Art from the Eastern*

Bloc, 1960s-80s, presented at the Walker, Phoenix Art Museum and Vancouver Art Gallery. Pyś is closely involved in leading the strategic vision, development, and long-range planning of the Walker's collection. In 2025, he was awarded a Center for Curatorial Leadership Fellowship.

Between 2011 and 2015, he was the Exhibitions & Displays Curator at the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds. In 2011, he was the recipient of the Zabłudowicz Collection Curatorial Open and the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo curatorial residency. He has published essays on artists including Trisha Baga, Carol Bove, Michael Dean, John Latham, Wilhelm Sasnal, Alina Szapocznikow, and Hague Yang. Pyś received an MFA in Curating from Goldsmiths College in 2010 and an MSc in Culture & Society from the London School of Economics in 2009.

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

GATEWAY FOUNDATION

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. From prominent public sites downtown to community college campuses in St. Louis County and a substantial installation site within the Missouri Botanical Garden, the Foundation has purchased and installed more than 70 sculptures in the area. Additionally, the Foundation has designed and funded the lighting of the Gateway Arch, City Hall, the Old Courthouse, the Civil Courts Building, the City's three landmark Water Towers, and other historically and architecturally significant structures. More information is available at gateway-foundation.org and citygardenstl.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.