

We Find Ourselves: 30 Years of Teens Making Art is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by Miriam Ruiz, Education Manager.

ArtReach is generously supported in part by the Berges Family Foundation; Missouri Arts Council, a state agency; The Strive Fund; Ann Yeatman Sheehan Charitable Trust; Clayco; Dana Brown Charitable Trust, U.S. Bank Trustee; Pat Whitaker and Dick Miles; Jenny Birgé; Anonymous; The Saigh Foundation; The Terry and Phyllis Weiss Children’s Education Fund; Robert & Toni Bader Charitable Foundation; The Mary Ranken Jordan and Ettie A. Jordan Charitable Foundation; Reinsurance Group of America, Inc.; and Stantec.



Special thanks to former CAM Learning & Engagement staff who have made these programs possible:

Lyndon Barrois Jr., Alex Elmestad, José Garza, Tuan Nguyen, De Nichols, Ben Shephard, and Roseann Weiss

Learn More
Visit our website for more information about *We Find Ourselves: 30 Years of Teens Making Art*, including an **audio guide** from the curator.



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Gallery Guide
Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis

September 5, 2025–February 8, 2026



We Find Ourselves

30 Years of Teens Making Art



New Art in the Neighborhood cohort with Roseann Weiss, former Program and Education Director, and Betsy Millard, former Executive Director of the Forum for Contemporary Art, 1995.

CAM invites you to celebrate with us as we look back on the last three decades of arts education with teens in our neighborhoods and city. Focusing on the two flagship programs of CAM youth engagement, New Art in the Neighborhood (NAN) and ArtReach, *We Find Ourselves: 30 Years of Teens Making Art* presents the many ways young artists have found self-expression and community by making art together. Spanning both education galleries, the exhibition gives visitors a peek at the creative practices that happen when

St. Louis teens have access to St. Louis artists. *We Find Ourselves* begins with a showcase of the most recent work made by ArtReach students at Sumner and Vashon High School, then continues in the following gallery with a walk through time back to NAN’s launch in 1993. Visitors can witness unearthed artworks, photos, and video highlights from the CAM archives as well as some of the stories of teen program alums who have gone on to continue creatively engaging with their world.

ArtReach

CAM’s ArtReach Partnership works with St. Louis Public Schools to provide support in classrooms where art is needed most. Started in 2017 with Vashon High School, this suite of programs ensures a consistent art curriculum is available for students year-round at Vashon and Sumner High Schools through twice-weekly classes led by Resident Teaching Artists (RTAs). For more than eight years, CAM has worked with teaching artists to provide classes in creative disciplines from photography and found object installations to digital graphic design and improvisational performance in the classroom. CAM’s commitment to Sumner and Vashon will continue into the 2025–2026 school year as well, despite the devastation of the May 16, 2025 tornado requiring Sumner staff and community partners to temporarily relocate classes.

During the 2024–25 school year, RTAs and students explored media and concepts related to the theme of “confluence.” This subject is inspired by St. Louis’s close proximity to the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, which has defined much of this city’s identity but also served as inspiration for the Museum’s spring/summer 2025 exhibitions: *Like Water* and *Make the River Present*. Using their different studio practices, second semester RTAs Colin McLaughlin, Jamie Bonfiglio, and Yvonne Anguiano each interpreted the confluence theme differently with their students.



Threads of Unity (detail), 2025.

With hand-dying fabric patches and hand-made relief prints, *Threads of Unity* showcases the craft that Vashon students learned under the instruction of Yvonne Anguiano. Interpreting confluence as a coming together of different minds and interests, students used the word “unity” as a jumping-off point to create designs for their quilt squares. Each square was dyed, printed, stitched, and embroidered, permitting the students to learn a survey of different sewing and textile crafts techniques. As the squares were stitched together, a line winds its way through the varied squares, uniting the myriad styles and colors into a unified voice from the chorus.

Frequent visitors of CAM’s education galleries may find the *Image Theatre* photographs somewhat familiar. RTA Colin McLaughlin returned to Sumner and Vashon once again to introduce a new set of students to his version of dramatist and activist Augusto Boal’s “games for actors and non-actors” as famously recounted in his book *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1974). Students were tasked with creating narratives and then directing and acting the stories in groups. The photographic documentation of these exercises is displayed on the gallery wall near audio recordings of the student narratives.



Image Theatre (installation detail), 2025.

Participating Artists from Sumner High School:

Omari Adams, Tashawn Brown-McDowell, Robert Davis, Andre Depass, Karmyn Griffith, Dalijah Harris, Demetrius Harris, Jayden Haulcy, Syniah Henson, Darryl Jackson, Hannah Johnson, Darihanna Jones, Faith Jones, Sharron “Anthony” Kimble, Jada Lampkin, Michael Miles, Mercedes Norwood, Rodney Phillips, Londyn Ranch, Khalil Ransom, Jerrell Reese, Matthew Sanders, Tre’Sean Smith, and Ronnie Spencer

Participating Artists from Vashon High School:

Keiera Atkins, Jakailah Barsh, London Blake, Amori Butler, Shawnice Carter, Audonya Cole, Aaliyah Cooper, Jaionni Dean, Tyler Eddinton, King Estes, Landon Green, Gregory Hines, Promise Hunt, Ameir Hutcherson, Darriona Johnson, Rihanna Kennell, Ashunna Sanders, Candace Sanders, Tyler Stockard, Jason Thomas, Tyrick Turner, Tyrico Turner, Aaryonna Waters, and Chasidy Weekly

New Art in the Neighborhood



Still from segment on News Channel 5, 1995.

In the early 1990s, a few teens from the neighborhood were visiting after school and were intrigued by the art they saw in the galleries—back when the Museum was known as the Forum for Contemporary Art. This spark soon led to a new program, New Art in the Neighborhood (NAN), which was created by former Program and Education Director Roseann Weiss as a way for young people to experience and explore contemporary art. Since then, NAN has continued as a weekly program that nourishes the diverse and creative minds of the talented young artists in our city, developing into a true pre-professional program for aspiring creatives. A cohort of about fifteen students, each of whom are selected through a competitive application process, meet in the CAM Studio for four hours each Saturday during the twelve week program, which is offered on a semester basis. Over the years, seasonal curricula have encompassed everything from learning about the artwork in the galleries and workshops with exhibiting artists to collaborative public installations and local artist-led projects. The goal is for each student cohort to learn about various artistic disciplines and techniques and to develop their creative portfolios. NAN is tuition-free, with all materials provided.

Since it all began over thirty years ago, more than 400 teens have participated in NAN and had the opportunity to work with a notable list of national artists including Amy Sherald, Kara Walker, Dawoud Bey, Enrique Chagoya, Margaret Kilgallen, and the Guerilla Girls, among others. NAN teens have also worked with creatives in the St. Louis region such as former St. Louis Poet Laureate Jane Ellen Ibur, Juan William Chávez, Stan “18andCounting” Chisholm (both former NAN students) and many, many other local artists who have served as RTAs at CAM.

To mark this occasion, here are just a few of CAM teen program highlights:

- / **1993:** New Art in the Neighborhood begins at the Forum for Contemporary Art
- / **1996–97:** Students work with artist Karen Papacek to create ink drawings that were installed by Arts in Transit at the Grand & Lindell Boulevards bus shelter
- / **1998:** New Art in the Neighborhood students present *Walk the Walk: Mentoring Youth in Art*, an exhibition resulting from a year-long artist residency with artists Danny Tisdale, Kara Walker, and Philamona Williamson exploring identity and culture
- / **2001:** Forum for Contemporary Art becomes Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis
- / **2003:** CAM moves to its current location at 3750 Washington Boulevard with a dedicated studio space for education programs
- / **2005:** CAM launches Contemporary ArtReach, a program connecting area schools and the Museum through guided tours and workshops
- / **2013:** NAN is a finalist for the 2013 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program award and is invited to send delegates to the Institute of Contemporary Art Boston’s 2013 National Teen Convening
- / **2015:** CAM celebrates NAN’s 20-year anniversary with the exhibition *20/20*
- / **2015:** In CAM’s education galleries, *ArtReach: I Have a Right To...* showcases artwork produced by 278 students from 15 St. Louis schools
- / **2016:** St. Louis Lambert International Airport displays NAN highlights from the past decade of programs
- / **2017:** ArtReach Partnership launches as an integrated art class at Vashon High School
- / **2018:** The ArtReach Partnership student showcase is presented for the first time in CAM’s education galleries, featuring *The Wolverine Legacy Project*, a collaborative piece made by Vashon students under the direction of RTA and Vashon alum Roland Houston (class of 1980)
- / **2020:** The Covid-19 pandemic causes districts to close for the entire school year, but CAM continues ArtReach Partnership, transitioning into virtual learning. CAM also celebrates NAN’s 25-year anniversary virtually, bringing back previous NAN instructors such as Roseann Weiss and Tuan Nguyen
- / **2021:** ArtReach Partnership expands to Sumner High School as a part of the new community-led Arts Pathway Program helping to prevent its closure
- / **2024:** Missouri State Representative LaKeySha Bosley presents students with a House resolution for their exhibition *ArtReach: The Art of Caring*