

Janie Stamm

Mermaid's Purse

Presented by Teen Museum Studies

CAM's Teen Museum Studies program (TMS) guides high school-aged participants through the process of selecting a St. Louis-based artist and presenting an exhibition of their work in our Education Galleries. The 2025 TMS cohort selected artist Janie Stamm, and the resulting exhibition draws parallels between how external forces threaten both safe queer spaces and the natural environment.

Stamm's practice incorporates embroidery and natural, found objects such as shells, sea sponges, and undersea plants. Her work is deeply inspired by her connection to queer culture, the ecology/environment she experienced growing up in Florida, and the childhood memories that reside within its landscape. Stamm's work stood out to the TMS cohort for its profound and emotional impact, recognizing its ability to encourage viewers to critically examine crucial contemporary topics such as rising sea levels, queer spaces, and the ways their interwoven histories are impacted by climate change.

Stamm's art connects these seemingly unrelated subjects, such as in the multimedia piece *Dorothy*. The title references the phrase "Friend of Dorothy," which has historically been used to determine if someone is a member of the LGBTQ+ community without compromising safety. Written in the sand on a beach, the message can be a welcoming sight for queer people, albeit temporary and eventually disappearing into the ocean with the rising tide.



Janie Stamm, *Sportsman's Paradise*, 2025. Lightning whelk and sand from Florida, glass beads, felt, trim. Courtesy the artist.

Both queer culture and the environment face significant external threats that present risks to their sustainability. Amidst ongoing anti-LGBTQ+ legislation and actions throughout the United States, and while climate change similarly initiates destruction—leaving species with no place to live—Stamm makes it easier to grasp both concepts in tandem. Her work not only fully illuminates the struggles but also the hopes for an increasingly colorful, thriving future through nature.



A mermaid's purse is a leathery, protective egg case made of collagen protein strands for sharks and skates, which are often found washed up on beaches. The points on the corners help attach the case to the seafloor while also pumping oxygenated water through small holes to aid in the embryo's development. Photo: CAM staff.

Janie Stamm: Mermaid's Purse is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by the 2025 Teen Museum Studies cohort: Tanshire Anderson, Aayushi Bore, Bex Derr, Norah Goetz, Amani Hindmon, Aleah Ingram, Kamille Jefferson, Finn Kanak, YAnne McCray-Nettle, Jaclyn Morton, and Jules Sawabini, with support from Brandon Barr, Teen and Adult Programs Manager.

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Related Programs

Free and open to the public unless otherwise noted. For a complete list of programs, please visit camstl.org

Artist Talk: Janie Stamm

Saturday, April 4, 1:00–2:00 pm

Learn More

Visit our website for more information about *Janie Stamm: Mermaid's Purse*, including an **audio guide** from the Learning & Engagement team.



Janie Stamm. Photo: Tiffany Reese.

Janie Stamm (b. 1988) is an artist based in Pacific, MO. Born and raised on the edge of the Everglades in Broward County, FL, her work focuses on exploring the links between Floridian ecology and queerness in the face of climate change through fibers and sculpture. Stamm received an MFA in Visual Art from Washington University in St. Louis, where she received the Dubinsky Scholarship for study at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, MA and the Frida Kahlo Creative Arts Award. She has received additional awards from the Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis, Critical Mass, and The Luminary with support from The Andy Warhol Foundation. Her most recent solo exhibition was in 2025 at the Kranzberg Arts Foundation in St. Louis.

Teen Museum Studies is a summer-intensive internship that engages high school students in direct exposure to museum careers, develops collaboration and critical thinking skills, and offers the chance to select and work with a St. Louis-based artist to organize an exhibition that premieres at CAM the following spring/summer season. This immersive program provides avenues for artistic engagement beyond studio practice and hands-on experience working with artists, museum staff, and creative peers.



**Contemporary Art
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St. Louis, MO 63108
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