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Contemporary Art  
Museum St. Louis

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Spark: CAM's 2026 Gala raises \$415,000, illuminating deep commitment to contemporary art across the St. Louis region**



Photo: Tyler Small

**April 23, 2026 (St. Louis, MO)** —The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (CAM) gathered its most brilliant supporters for **Spark: CAM's 2026 Gala** on Friday, April 17 at the 21c Museum Hotel St. Louis. The evening gleamed from start to finish in celebration of the moments of discovery, creativity, and connection that contemporary art inspires. As the Museum's principal fundraiser, the event raises more than ten percent of CAM's operating budget each year in support of exhibitions, public programs, and youth arts education. Spark guests generously raised their paddles during the Fund the Need auction to ensure the continued support of beloved CAM programs and resources such as New Art in the Neighborhood, guided tours, youth transportation, Resident Teaching Artist honorariums, Artist Talks, and Family Days. **The event generated over \$415,000, making it one of the most successful events in CAM's history—and keeping CAM free and accessible to all.**

"CAM is a burst of energy and positive light in this community, and the art world at large," says CAM Executive Director Lisa Melandri. "Every year for over 20 years, we've welcomed thousands of neighbors, students, families, artists, and visitors from around the world into a space illuminated by innovative ideas and the people who believe in them. Every shining point of light in CAM's universe showed up and our sky is so much brighter for it."

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10–5 Wed  
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CAM is free. Visit often!

This year's theme, Spark, commemorated the ways art serves as a beacon of creativity, imagination, and possibility across the St. Louis region. Guests arrived dressed to dazzle in shimmering cocktail attire, lighting up the night with every sparkling entrance.

Set at the 21c Museum Hotel St. Louis, the night began with cocktails and mingling before guests moved into a seated dinner. CAM Executive Director Lisa Melandri set the tone for the evening, highlighting art as the spark that lives within all of us and CAM's positive, lasting impact on the St. Louis community. Gala Chairs Jane and Bob Clark welcomed guests with genuine enthusiasm, recognizing the evening's sponsors and supporters who made the night possible.

Before the evening fully ignited, CAM paused to honor the memory of Emeritus Board Member John H. Ferring IV who died in March 2026. Melandri recognized him as a beloved figure in St. Louis's arts and culture landscape whose joyful spirit and steadfast commitment helped shape the Museum into what it is today. Also taking the stage were Honorary Gala Chairs Alexis M. Cossé and Erik Karanik. Cossé has served on CAM's Board of Directors for over 15 years, and together with Karanik, they have been among the Museum's most devoted and visionary champions. The two spoke about the power of CAM as a place for personal connection, shared experience, and where world-class art and community care exist in tandem. The Fund the Need auction was led by local journalist Chelsea Haynes, whose radiant charm and irrepressible energy inspired a robust, joyful moment of giving, igniting a spark that will glow for years to come.

As the clock struck 9:00 pm, guests made their way to the Spark Lounge—where the night continued to glow over nightcaps and the luminous sounds of local saxophonist Rhoda G.

To learn more about CAM's current and upcoming exhibitions, programs, and how to support, visit [www.camstl.org](http://www.camstl.org).

High resolution images may be found [here](#).  
Photos courtesy of Tyler Small and Justin Mikhail Solomon

### **Spark Gala Sponsors**

**Beacon Sponsor:** Clayco, Alexis M. Cossé and Erik Karanik

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**Brilliant Sponsor:** Reinsurance Group of America



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**Twinkle Sponsor:** The Giving Branch, Paul Cambridge and Amanda Trudell, Kristin Johnson, Jacob Reby



**In-Kind:** Dierberg Estate Vineyard, Evtiv





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**+ Deceased**



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### **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](http://camstl.org).

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