

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

CAM presents Behind This Mask: Celebrating Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore on June 13

Lineup of nationally recognized artists and scholars—including John Cameron Mitchell—honor the personal, creative, and activist legacy of two visionary artists



May 26, 2026 (St. Louis, MO)—The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (CAM) presents [Behind This Mask: Celebrating Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore on Saturday, June 13, 2026 from 2:00–5:00 pm](#), in conjunction with the exhibition [And I Saw New Heavens and a New Earth: The Partnership, Art, and Activism of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore](#), on view through August 9, 2026. The program brings together poet Elizabeth Hoover, actor and playwright John Cameron Mitchell, art historian Jennifer Shaw, and exhibition co-curators Dean Daderko and Svetlana Kitto to explore the personal, creative, and activist partnership of Claude Cahun (1894-1954, Nantes, France) and Marcel Moore (1892-1972, Nantes, France)—two visionary artists whose work continues to

challenge fixed notions of identity, gender, and selfhood more than 100 years later.

Behind This Mask celebrates the sustained resonance of Cahun and Moore's legacy and what it means to carry it not as an artifact, but as a living practice.

"Although Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore are no longer alive, their work's impact endures. Their groundbreaking explorations of gender self-determination and brave, underground resistance against Nazi fascism offer inspiring models for visionaries and activists today," says Dean Daderko, Ferring Foundation Chief Curator and exhibition co-curator. "Behind This Mask brings together a cohort of artists and writers whose own bodies of work carry these sentiments forward."

And I Saw New Heavens and a New Earth chronicles two gender-nonconforming artists of the 20th century who lived their values, even in the face of persecution and repression under Nazi-occupied Europe. Known for their work early in the Surrealist movement, they approached their work and way of life as a carefully considered form of resistance.

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Combining photographs, historical documents, drawings, and ephemera—with experimental storytelling by writer and oral historian, Svetlana Kitto—*And I Saw New Heavens and a New Earth* celebrates the creative output, enduring partnership, and risk-taking political commitments of these two artists. The program's title comes from a line in Cahun's 1930 surrealist autobiography *Aveux non Avenus* ("Disavowed Confessions"): "Behind this mask is another mask. I will never be finished removing all these faces."

To kick off the afternoon, writer Elizabeth Hoover will read excerpts from her upcoming book-length poem, which responds directly to Cahun and Moore's legacy. Featured guest John Cameron Mitchell—actor, writer, director, and singer best known for *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (screening at Webster University on May 28)—will discuss his interest in Cahun and Moore and read excerpts from *LSM*, his forthcoming play inspired by their lives. The title draws from a gramogram used by Cahun and Moore combining the partners' initials: LS for Lucy Schwob (Cahun's given name) and SM for Suzanne Malherbe (Moore's given name). When spoken aloud in French, the letters LSM sound like *elles s'aiment*, which translates to "they love each other."

The program closes with a conversation between art historian and author of *Reading Claude Cahun's Disavowals and Exist Otherwise: The Life and Works of Claude Cahun* Jennifer Shaw, exhibition co-curators Dean Daderko and Svetlana Kitto, Hoover, and Mitchell, celebrating the ways Cahun and Moore used language, visual art, and personal expression to explore self-presentation. Behind This Mask builds on a Play Date event planned for that morning exploring the Cahun-inspired theme of "My Many Selves." At the Play Date, families of all ages can make masks and enjoy a live performance by Skystone Conservatory.

Drinks will be available for purchase. Contact programs@camstl.org with any questions. Registration is encouraged; please click [here](#) to sign up.

Event Details

What: Behind this Mask: Celebrating Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore

When: Saturday, June 13, 2026

Time: 2:00 pm—5:00 pm

Where: Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, 3750 Washington Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63108

Event Schedule

2:00 pm: Bar opens; Welcome address by Dean Daderko and Svetlana Kitto

2:15 pm: Reading from Elizabeth Hoover

2:30 pm: Excerpts of *LSM* by John Cameron Mitchell

3:15 pm: Intermission

3:30 pm: Conversation between Jennifer Shaw, Dean Daderko and Svetlana Kitto, then joined by Elizabeth Hoover and John Cameron Mitchell



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Related Events

Thursday, May 28, 7:30 pm

[Film Screening at Webster University: Hedwig and the Angry Inch](#)

Winifred Moore Auditorium at Webster University, 470 E Lockwood Ave.

Saturday, June 13, 10:00 am

[Play Date: My Many Selves](#)

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About the Contributors



Elizabeth Hoover is the author of *the archive is all in present tense*, winner of the 2021 Barrow Street Book Prize, and the recipient of the Pat Holt Prize for Critical Art Writing from Lambda Literary. Her writing about art, pop culture, and books has appeared in *Kenyon Review*, *Paper*, *The Art Newspaper* and the *Washington Post*, and she has published creative nonfiction in the *North American Review*, the *Southeast Review*, and *StoryQuarterly*. This year, Hoover is releasing a book-length poem about Cahun and Moore. She is an assistant professor of English at Webster University.



John Cameron Mitchell wrote, directed and starred in the musical/film *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* for which he won two Tony Awards, Best Director at the 2001 Sundance Film Festival, and a Golden Globe nomination for Best Actor. He directed the films *Shortbus* (2006); *Rabbit Hole* (2010, Best Actress Oscar nomination for Nicole Kidman); and *How to Talk to Girls at Parties* (2017) starring Kidman and Elle Fanning. On TV he's acted in *Girls*, *Shrill*, *The Good Fight*, *The Sandman*, *Yellowjackets*, *City on Fire*, and in *Joe Vs Carole* as Joe Exotic the "Tiger King". His two fictional podcast series are: *Anthem: Homunculus* starring Glenn Close and Cynthia Erivo and *Cancellation Island* starring

Holly Hunter. He is developing two feature films based on the lives of poet Allen Ginsberg and AIDS activist Peter Dinklage, as well as a new play *LSM*, based on Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore's life. Photo: Matthew Placek.



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Jennifer L. Shaw is Professor of Art History Emerita at Sonoma State University. She received an MA from the Courtauld Institute of Art, London, a PhD in art history from University of California, Berkeley, a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship in the Humanities at Stanford University, and, recently, an MFA in Fiction from the Bennington Writing Seminars. Shaw is author of many academic articles and three books: *Dream States: Puvis de Chavannes, Modernism and the Fantasy of France* (Yale University Press), *Reading Claude Cahun's Disavowals* (Ashgate/Routledge) and *Exist Otherwise: The Life and Works of Claude Cahun* (Reaktion Books, London) which received praise in Choice, Women's Review of Books, Brooklyn Rail, The Cut, and The

Gay and Lesbian Review. Shaw's work on Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore has been featured on the podcasts *History is Gay* and BBC Radio 4's recently released *History's Secret Heroes*. She just finished writing her second novel, *The Butterfly Artist*, based on the life of the 17th century artist and entomologist, Maria Sibylla Merian.

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.

Image Captions:

Image 1) Title unknown, 1928. Silver gelatin print. Courtesy the Jersey Heritage Collections.

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