



OBJECTS REDUX

Exhibition Series

August 11, 2019 – February 2, 2020

OBJECTS REDUX: Clay, Glass, and Metal, 1960 – 1985

August 11, 2019 – January 26, 2020

OBJECTS REDUX: Studio Craft in Context, 1960 – 1985

October 20, 2019 – February 2, 2020

OBJECTS REDUX: Small-Scale Studio Craft of the 1950s and 1960s

October 20, 2019 – February 2, 2020

In the years following World War II, studio craft—especially as it was being practiced in the United States—slowly began to undergo changes in content and form. As defined here, studio craft emphasizes artistic investigation or aesthetic contemplation as distinguished from traditional craft that has historically been used for necessity or ceremony. Particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, many artists who used craft materials were pushing the boundaries of function and practical use—investigating materials and artistic concepts while beginning to overtly question social, political, environmental, and cultural issues.

This fall, the RAM exhibition series, **OBJECTS REDUX**—primarily drawn from the museum’s collection—showcases work made between approximately 1960 and 1985 by artists located in the United States. While historic works are often included in exhibitions at RAM, it is a special occasion that encouraged a museum-wide survey of work from this time period. This year marks the 50th anniversary of **OBJECTS: USA**, a landmark collection and exhibition promoting the “American object maker” that was sponsored by SC Johnson.

While **OBJECTS: USA** is the primary focus of RAM’s largest gallery, the other galleries include works made in the years just before and after the run of the original exhibition. These shows offer a cursory look at how craft was developing in the last part of the twentieth century when new types of works—many with less obvious or no connection to function—were being made and shown alongside more traditional examples. While it may look commonplace to some—who have seen this kind of work at RAM and RAM’s pre-cursor, Wustum Museum, for decades—it was once close to revolutionary. Ceramic sculptures that were not vessels or dinnerware, furniture that rarely offered a place to sit or store, textiles that were wall hangings but not rugs... all of these iterations were familiar types of materials in unfamiliar forms.

R | A | M

OBJECT REDUX Series Exhibitions

While the spectrum of materials associated with studio craft is greater than that featured in **OBJECTS REDUX: Clay, Glass, and Metal, 1960 – 1985** and the conversation is broader today, dividing works into media categories does allow for focused investigations and for comparing and contrasting approaches across materials.

Regardless of the materials they choose to use, artists respond to—or in other ways reflect—the world around them. In the retrospective light of history, works can sometimes be read as “of the time” they were made—not just because of the particular artist that made them but also because of aesthetic or material choices. **OBJECTS REDUX: Studio Craft in Context, 1960 – 1985** plays to that idea, mingling studio craft with two-dimensional paintings and works on paper. This exhibition provides a theoretical structure for understanding the larger social and cultural environment that helped shape the content and form of the work being produced at that time.

OBJECTS REDUX: Small-Scale Studio Craft of the 1950s and 1960s showcases primarily functional work made in the decades just prior to the landmark exhibition, **OBJECTS: USA**, which is the focus of the show in RAM’s largest gallery. While there were artists already challenging ideas about function, the public most likely thought about craft, if they did at all, in terms similar to the vessels, bowls, and “useful” items represented in this exhibition.

Selected Artists from the OBJECTS REDUX Series

Czech fiber artist **Neda Al-Hilali** (1938 –) studied art in Europe before moving to America in 1961, where she attended University of California-Los Angeles. Al-Hilali works primarily in weaving, but like other fiber artists such as **Helen Bitar**, she is not restricted to one technique of textile construction and manipulation, nor does she employ a narrow range of media. For example, Al-Hilali has worked in macramé and knotting with unexpected materials such as paper and aluminum. Her eight-and-a-half foot tall wool, cotton, and linen hanging piece included in **OBJECTS: USA** was described as “an experiment in three-dimensional lace.” She often works on a large scale and has created room-size installations. Al-Hilali’s work can be found in the collections of the Renwick Gallery at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; the Museum of Arts and Design (formerly the American Craft Museum), New York, NY; and the Utah Museum of Fine Art.

Fiber Artist **Helen Bitar** (1940 –) was born in Centralia, Washington, and earned her BA from the University of Washington, Seattle, in 1964. Currently residing in Oregon, Bitar has taught at the University of Montana, the New School for Social Research in New York City, and Portland State University in Portland, OR, among other institutions. Probably now best

R | A | M

known for her quilts, Bitar would also macramé and stitch—as with two of her colorful wool pillows featured in the landmark exhibition, **OBJECTS: USA**. Her work was also included in **Stitching** (1967) and the first major museum exhibition of art quilts, **The New American Quilt** (1976), both held at the American Craft Museum in New York (now the Museum of Arts and Design).

Possibly the most famous and successful living glass artist in the world, **Dale Chihuly** (1941 –), initially studied interior design at the University of Washington, Seattle. After a brief hiatus from school to study art in Florence, Italy, Chihuly returned to Washington where he became interested in weaving and finished his degree in interior design in 1965. Chihuly received a scholarship to study glass blowing at the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 1966 under art glass pioneer and head of the glass department there, **Harvey K. Littleton**. By 1968, Chihuly had two degrees in sculpture, one from UW–Madison, the other from the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI. That year, he also received a Fulbright scholarship and a Louis Comfort Tiffany grant, which he used to study Murano glass in Venice. In 1969, his work was featured in **OBJECTS: USA**. He co-founded the Pilchuck Glass School in 1971 and has taught at other institutions throughout his career, all while making work and exhibiting at innumerable venues. Since losing his eye in an automobile accident in 1976, Chihuly has relied on assistants to help him complete his handblown designs. His work can be found in collections all over the world.

A pioneer of what was known as Funk Art, California native **David Gilhooly** (1943 – 2013) first worked as an assistant to renowned ceramicist **Robert Arneson** while attending the University of California–Davis. Eventually Gilhooly earned his BA in 1965 and MA in 1967 from that institution, and joined fellow ceramicists Arneson, **Peter Vandenberg**, **Chris Unterseher**, and **Margaret Dodd** at TB-9 (Temporary Building 9), a studio space they shared in the San Francisco Bay Area. In 1969, Gilhooly worked briefly under artist **Manuel Neri**, helping to create assemblages out of wood, fur, shingles, and even neon lights. After his time with Neri, Gilhooly took a teaching position at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada. He went on to teach for seven years at York University, Toronto, Canada. In 1995, Gilhooly moved with his second wife to Oregon, where he lived until his death in 2013 at the age of 70. Known for his whimsical ceramics, Gilhooly often used everyday imagery, such as animals and food, to highlight the absurdity of the art market as well as to address political, cultural, and religious issues. About his work, Gilhooly said that “even (his) most maiden old aunt or most drugged-out cousin could get at the meaning of the work or at least experience it!” Gilhooly’s six-foot-tall ceramic installation *Map of Africa*, which was part of the **OBJECTS: USA** touring exhibition, is on permanent display at Racine’s Prairie School.

Michael John Jerry (1937 –) is the son of **Sylvester Jerry**, the Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts’ first director, and his wife, artist and instructor **Cherry Barr Jerry**. As such, Michael Jerry grew up in Racine surrounded by art. He attended Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, MI, and then, the Rochester Institute of Technology’s School for

R|A|M

American Craftsmen in Rochester, NY where he received both his BFA and his MFA. Jerry went on to be an art instructor at the University of Wisconsin–Stout and then a professor of art at Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, from which he retired as a professor emeritus. Jerry, whose work can be found in private and museum collections around the world, is a member of the American Craft Council and a charter member of the Society of North American Goldsmiths.

Glass artist **William Morris** (1957 –) was born in Carmel, California. He attended California State University, Chico, California and Central Washington University, Ellensburg, Washington. Morris began his associations with glass as a truck driver for the Pilchuck School of Glass, where he eventually became an instructor. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Morris spent time as a gaffer for world famous glass artist **Dale Chihuly** and also studied Venetian glass techniques in Italy. He ran a glass studio in Washington State until his retirement. Morris' has been inspired by ancient designs from Asia, Latin America, and North America. At times, his work has focused on the potential for glass to look like other materials, especially bone and ceramic.

Ceramicists **Gertrud** (1908 – 1971) and **Otto** (1908 – 2007) **Natzler** were an Austrian duo, who married in 1934 and worked collaboratively until Gertrud's death in 1971. Otto's first job was as a textile designer for a necktie factory. He met Gertrud, a secretary, in 1933. After winning the 1937 Paris Exposition Silver Medal for Ceramics, the pair immigrated to America in 1938, where they called California home. The book accompanying **OBJECTS: USA** notes that their influence on ceramics in that state was "widespread and inestimable." The Natzlers produced work that married form and color—usually Gertrud created the ceramic forms, while Otto developed unique glazes. Otto is known for having created over 2,000 types of glaze, which were thoughtfully paired with Gertrude's simple, organic, and almost impossibly thin shapes.

Wisconsin native **Harry Nohr** (1896 – 1977) was born in Waupaca. He was the US postmaster in Mineral Point, Wisconsin from 1949 to 1966. Later in his career there, Nohr took up wood turning. After his retirement, Nohr continued perfecting his methods and was already receiving major recognition when his work was included in **OBJECTS: USA**. He was known for his artfully tuned bowls made from blocks of native wood which had been cured for over two years with a special process that he created. Nohr also developed an epoxy finish with the help of the Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, WI. Though Nohr passed in 1976, his legacy lives on through his work as well as through the Harry and Laura Nohr Gallery at University of Wisconsin–Platteville and the Harry Nohr Woodturners, who teach woodturning skills to the general public.

A pioneer of the mid-twentieth-century American Craft Movement, **Ronald Hayes Pearson** (1924 – 1996), studied at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, the School for American Craftsmen, and Alfred University. A founding member of the Society for North American Goldsmiths and instructor and trustee at the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, he was also elected a fellow of the American Craft Council and designed flatware for

R | A | M

major companies. Pearson was the recipient of the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation grant (1969); two National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships (1973 and 1978); and an honorary doctorate from the Portland School of Art in Maine (1987). His studio, where he created his signature jewelry pieces as well as sculpture, was located in Maine from 1971 until his death in 1996. While the selling catalog, *art/objects: usa* featured his jewelry, Pearson was represented in **OBJECTS: USA** with two hanging fixtures—a forged iron candelabra and a forged copper light.

Jeweler **Lee Barnes Peck** (1942 –) received his BS from Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo and his MFA from the University of Wisconsin–Madison. From 1970 until his retirement, Peck taught jewelry and metalwork at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb while maintaining his own studio practice. Peck's work, often described as brutalist, is also organic. He used traditional jewelry materials like gold, pearl, and gem stones, in unconventional and abstract ways. Peck—whose work was also featured in **OBJECTS: USA**—has been a Distinguished Member of the Society of North American Goldsmiths since 1976. Having exhibited all over the world, his work can be found in the collections of the Museum of Arts and Design (formerly the American Craft Museum), New York; the Detroit Institute of Art, Detroit, MI; and the Minnesota Museum of Art in St. Paul.

British jeweler **Wendy Ramshaw** (1939 – 2018) was born in Sutherland, England. From 1956 to 1960, she studied illustration and design at Newcastle College (formerly the College of Arts and Technology), after which she attended University of Reading. It was there she met artist and musician **David Watkins**. The two married in 1962 and occasionally collaborated. Ramshaw's first commercial success came when the paper-based jewelry that she and Watkins designed was sold through the chic and influential boutique London Bazaar, owned by designer **Mary Quant**. Never a stranger to unique and unusual materials, Ramshaw became one of Britain's premier designers, working in paper, plastics, and metal. Ramshaw is the recipient of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Travelling Fellowship and both an OBE (Order of the British Empire) for services to the arts and a CBE (Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire). She was one of the first two women to be admitted as Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, and in 2000, she was appointed a Royal Designer for Industry. Her work can be found in collections all over the world including the Victoria & Albert Museum, London; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and the National Museum of Modern Art in Kyoto, Japan. RAM currently has four works by Wendy Ramshaw in the collection, including two stacks of rings arranged on plastic stands, one of her most applauded designs. The ring sets have wearable components that become elements of a sculptural object when not being worn. Ramshaw passed in late 2018.

Born in Zagreb, Croatia, near the end of World War II, **Marko Spalatin** (1945 –) immigrated to the US in his teens. He holds both his BS and MFA from the University of Wisconsin–Madison. As a printmaker, Spalatin is known for his startling colors and abstract geometric shapes. His style reflects the interest in optical play and illusion that was prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s. Spalatin says that his "sense of color and light is subconsciously

R|A|M

influenced and sustained by many years of scuba diving.” His work is represented in many private collections and museums including: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York; the Tate Gallery and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; the Musée d’Art Moderne, Paris; Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York; the Library of Congress, Washington, DC; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Illinois. Spalatin currently resides in Wisconsin.

Beth Van Hoesen (1926 – 2010) was born in Idaho. After graduating from Stanford University with her BA, she went to France and studied at the École des Beaux Arts de Fontainebleau, the Académie Julian, and the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. She then attended the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute). It was there she met her husband, printmaker **Mark Adams**. The two settled in San Francisco and by 1956, Van Hoesen was working solely in printmaking. As a printmaker, Van Hoesen is known for her realistic, hand-colored dry-point etchings of animals and people. She also worked in lithography, linocut, aquatint, and other printing techniques. Her straightforward style contrasted yet complemented artists’ interest in outrageous psychedelia and fantasy during the 1970s and 1980s. She received the Award of Honor in Graphics from the San Francisco Arts Commission, and a Distinguished Artist’s Award from the California Society of Printmakers. A member of the Bay Printmakers Society and the California Society of Etchers, Van Hoesen passed away in 2010. With the help of the E. Mark Adams and Beth Van Hoesen Adams Trust, as well as Anne Kohs and Associates, Van Hoesen is RAM’s most collected artist, with a current holding of over 300 pieces, including preparatory drawings, plates, and finished prints.

Beatrice Wood (1893 – 1998) came from a wealthy New York family. Her upbringing included trips to Europe, finishing school, and a year of education in a French convent. During her time in Europe she became fluent in French and began cultivating an interest in theatre and the arts, all of which her parents hoped would allow her to marry well. Wood, however, rejected her parent’s plans. Over the course of her 104 years, she was an actress (working alongside **Sarah Bernhardt**), a world traveler, a teacher, and an artist. Sometimes called the “Mother of Dada,” Wood was inspired by **Marcel Duchamp** who she met and befriended in 1916. Yet it wasn’t until 1933, when she enrolled in a ceramics course at Hollywood High School, that Beatrice found her life’s work. Wood was known to remark, “I never meant to become a potter. It happened very accidentally.” She was later mentored by renowned potters **Gertrud and Otto Natzler**, whose work can also be found in RAM’s collection. Her inclusion in **OBJECTS: USA** was attributed to “rich tactile surfaces and exotic glazes,” as well as her “sensitivity as a colorist.” Lustre glazes became her trademark. In fact, it was a set of baroque dessert plates with a high shine lustre that encouraged Wood to first try her hand at making. When she could not find a matching teapot, she decided to try to make her own. Artist, world citizen, and muse, Wood said she owed it all “to art books, young men, and chocolate.”

R|A|M

While represented by smaller pieces here, **Claire Zeisler** (1903 – 1991) is better known for her groundbreaking large sculptures and installations made from natural materials. Zeisler challenged ideas about fiber art with works such as the seven-foot-tall jute piece from 1968 included in **OBJECTS: USA** and RAM's similarly sized hemp sculpture from 1981. While she began studying at Columbia College, she left to marry Florsheim shoe heir **Milton S. Florsheim**. After three children and a divorce, she married **Dr. Ernest Bloomfield Zeisler** in the late 1940s and resumed schooling, this time at the Chicago Institute of Design where she studied under noted Russian sculptor **Alexander Archipenko**. In the early 1960s, Zeisler turned from weaving to knotting as her technique of choice, since knotting could be more easily manipulated into three-dimensional shapes. Her first solo show was in Chicago in 1962 at the age of 59, putting her at the forefront of the fiber art movement along with other avant-garde artists like **Lenore Tawney** and **Sheila Hicks**, both of whom are featured in RAM's collection as well as in **OBJECTS: USA**. Before her death, Zeisler was honored with retrospective exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York and the Art Institute of Chicago.

Mary Ann "Toots" Zynsky (1951 –) was born and raised in Massachusetts. Known professionally and to her friends as Toots Zynsky, she received her BFA in 1973 at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) in Providence, where she studied with internationally renowned glass artist **Dale Chihuly**. She later participated in the founding of the Pilchuck Glass School in Washington State with Chihuly and other artists. In 1980, Zynsky became assistant director and head of the hot shop at the New York Experimental Glass Workshop in New York, NY. Though Zynsky has worked with the slumped glass method, she made the works in this exhibition using her distinctive heat-formed filet de verre (glass thread) method, which allows for compelling explorations of color.