



Treasure Trove: Establishing Jewelry and Metals Archives at RAM

January 27 – August 4, 2019

In 2013, RAM was identified as having the largest contemporary craft collection in the country. That accomplishment is thanks to the commitment of donors—private collectors and artists primarily—who see RAM as the definitive lasting home for the artwork they have amassed and/or created. Also unique to RAM's collection are concentrations of multiple works by particular artists. While some institutions choose to limit their acquisitions to one or two examples per artist, RAM is often interested in representing a large cross-section of a career or body of work. This extends to the development of archives that may even include studio furniture, correspondence, books, and other materials that document and outline professional paths and achievements.

RAM has archive holdings of large-scale works—such as ceramics by **Toshiko Takaezu** and mixed media two- and three-dimensional work by **Margaret Ponce Israel**. For very practical reasons, it is easier to manage and maintain those comprised of smaller-scale pieces, like jewelry and metalwork. The establishment of an archive is not strictly formulaic. RAM staff could work directly with an artist—or an artist's estate representative—who intends to donate a large body of work and related materials. Alternately, a large quantity of work by a single artist that has been amassed from various sources may be designated as an archive.

Treasure Trove focuses on select archive artists who primarily create jewelry and metalwork, highlighting their presence with a sampling from RAM's holdings.

Artists whose works are featured include: **Dan Adams** (with **Cynthia Toops**), **Carolyn Morris Bach**, **Kat Cole**, **Michael Croft**, **Ben J. Cunningham**, **Robert W. Ebendorf**, **Sandra Enterline**, **Arline Fisch**, **Steven Ford** and **David Forlano**, **Elsa Freund**, **Terri Gelenian-Wood**, **Danielle Gori-Montanelli**, **John J. Grant** (with **Robert W. Ebendorf**), **Tina Fung Holder**, **Tory Hughes**, **Ken Loeber**, **Dona Look** (with **Ken Loeber**), **Eleanor Moty**, **Harold O'Connor**, **Ivy Ross** (with **Robert W. Ebendorf**), **Antonia Schwed**, **Joyce Scott**, **Kiff Slemmons**, **Mary Tingley**, **Cynthia Toops**, **Pier Voulkos**, **Elise Winters**, and **Marci Zelmanoff**. Reflecting the richness of RAM's holdings in this area, the works of several of these artists are also featured in other exhibitions on view at this time.

Biographies and statements from select featured artists highlight a range of approaches and interests:

A creator and collector of contemporary **automata** (moving mechanical devices), **Michael Croft** first became known for exquisitely rendered jewelry and tools—especially knives. Utilizing enamel, as well as precious metals, pattern-welded steel, and non-precious materials, Croft has explored form, pattern, and functionality, among other concerns. Croft earned his BFA at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque and his MFA from Southern

R|A|M

Illinois University, Carbondale. He taught for several years at UW-Milwaukee before relocating to the University of Arizona, Tucson in 1972. A vibrant figure in the contemporary metalsmithing community, he served as president of the Society of North American Goldsmiths, was awarded numerous grants including three from the National Endowment for the Arts, has orchestrated three national metals exhibitions, and has work featured in numerous collections.

Croft's partner, acclaimed and innovative metalsmith **Eleanor Moty**,* whose work has been both highly influential in the field and sought after by many, is also featured in this exhibition. Each artist is represented by numerous works presently at RAM with more to come. Currently, Croft has 8 works in the collection and Moty has 12.

Interested in utilizing a variety of different media to explore his ideas about the human condition, human behavior, and human existence, **Ben J. Cunningham** creates adornment, objects, and installations. With the addition of over 30 works gifted in 2017 alone, RAM has become a major repository for Cunningham's work. After obtaining his BS in Fashion Merchandising, Marketing, and Spanish from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in Indiana, Pennsylvania, Cunningham earned his MA in Jewelry and Sculpture from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and his MFA in Jewelry/Light Metals and Sculpture from Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island.

Cunningham teaches at Millersville University, Millersville, Pennsylvania, and exhibits and lectures on an international scale. His work has been featured in several publications, including *Metalsmith*, *Art in America*, and *American Craft Magazine*.

Co-founder of *Jewelry Edition*—an online jewelry-focused website and pop-up sales venue—and a studio artist in Dallas, Texas, **Kat Cole** received her BFA from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia and her MFA from East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina. In addition to RAM, Cole has work in the collections of The Enamel Foundation, Los Angeles; Museum of Arts and Design, New York, New York; and Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas. RAM currently owns a focused group of Cole's work with 12 brooches and neckpieces, dating 2011 – 2015.

Of her work, Cole states: "I find meaning through the observance and intimate awareness of the places I inhabit...I look to the built environment of the city where I live for the formal qualities of my work: materials, forms, color and surface quality. The steel and concrete structures that surround us are evidence of human inhabitants past and present. Monumental structures are interpreted into the intimate scale of jewelry and are completed when worn on the landscape of the body.

In 1988, **Steven Ford and David Forlano*** began collaborating on jewelry design under the name City Zen Cane. Working with polymer, their early production work was characterized

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by bright colors and complex, cross-sectional patterns. While Forlano tends to investigate color, pattern, and surface, Ford is most interested in how things fit together mechanically and exploring three-dimensional structures. They currently collaborate by sending pieces back and forth across the country to their individual studios in Santa Fe, New Mexico and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

For RAM's 2011 groundbreaking exhibition, ***Terra Nova: Polymer Art at the Crossroads***, Ford and Forlano were featured as Boundary Breakers—artists challenging the dynamics and limits of the material. They have been embraced by the contemporary art jewelry scene and show in a variety of different contexts. Their work is heavily collected, and included in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania, as well as RAM.

With early work coming through the Polymer Collection Project (see **Elise Winters** bio below), as well as individual pieces being gifted from various donors, Ford and Forlano currently have 19 works at RAM representing almost two decades of work.

Interested in trying to “create awareness of personal adornment that exceeds the restrictive boundaries of traditional Western materials and techniques,” **Tina Fung Holder*** uses everyday items, such as safety pins and paperclips, to create jewelry as well as baskets. Raised in a village in Guyana, Fung Holder was interested in the “nature of objects,” even in early childhood. She credits her interest in manmade materials to growing up in a nonindustrial environment—the quantity and availability of mass-produced items were unfamiliar, and thus, more appealing. Fung Holder was an accountant before receiving both her BFA and MFA from the School of the Art Institute in Chicago, Illinois. She currently lives in Wisconsin where she creates adornment and teaches workshops focused on her experiments with textile techniques and basket design.

Fung Holder's work has been widely exhibited throughout her career. In addition to the 15 pieces currently in RAM's holdings, her work is included in the collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, DC; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Arts and Design, New York City; and Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Racine native **Terri Gelenian-Wood** (1955 – 2006) received her BFA from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and her MFA from the Tyler School of Art, Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Gelenian-Wood is best known for tableware that combines high polish sterling silver with intensely colored plastics, such as Corian® or Formica®. RAM now has an extensive archive of over 40 works, including multi-piece flatware sets, silver and gemstone brooches, and plastic laminate hair accessories. In addition to being exhibited extensively on a national scale, her work has been frequently included in RAM (and Wustum) exhibitions over the years. Her work is also held at The Newark Museum, Newark, New Jersey; The Library of Congress, Washington, DC; and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, England.

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About her tableware, Gelenian-Wood stated: “All of these works are tabletop objects with a function of their own. Whether they are tools for eating and serving, or learning tools for contemplating the dynamics of relationships, they all express involvement among the viewer, the object, and the maker. They all can be picked up with a dominant hand or both hands and observed. Engineered into my loyalty to traditional silversmithing techniques is my attraction to industrial materials and processes. This is evident in the use of countertop laminates and solid surfacing materials (e.g. Corian®)...My fascination with silver, used in conjunction with alternative materials, began for reasons of adding color and often results in a bit of irony.”

Adept at combining materials and making ancient, laborious metalsmithing techniques relevant in a contemporary context, **Harold O'Connor** has been creating jewelry for over four decades. In addition to publishing texts on technique, O'Connor has participated in over 200 exhibitions and led workshops in 14 countries. His work is included in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, New York and the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, DC as well as institutions overseas. RAM currently owns 17 pieces by O'Connor, primarily brooches. He has stated about his work and interests: “I enjoy working with diverse materials for their aesthetic value, NOT their intrinsic value. My work over the years has focused upon using traditional techniques of metalwork in a contemporary way...I create small objects which happen to be wearable. Other influences in my art come from my travels to exotic lands, interaction with nature, and reaction to facets of society.”

Wisconsin artist **Mary Tingley** (1922 – 2000) left a study collection of her work in metals—spanning over 30 years of her career—to RAM at the time of her death in 2000. Born in Ansonia, Connecticut, Tingley served in the Marine Corps from 1943 to 1945, received her Bachelor's degree from the Philadelphia Museum School in Pennsylvania, and completed her graduate studies at Indiana University. After moving to Milwaukee in 1957, she singlehandedly built the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's art metals program and ran it until her retirement in 1988, when she was named Professor Emeritus.

Never too interested in “preciousness,” she preferred metals like titanium that are more predominant in non-western cultures—such as Africa and Asia. Tingley also liked the use of industrial processes. She referred to her later, larger neckpieces and brooches as “body structures” for the way they interacted with the body as if it were a landscape.

Famed polymer artist and founder of the Polymer Art Archive, **Elise Winters*** (1947 – 2019) not only gifted RAM numerous examples of her work but advocated and organized tirelessly to win recognition for polymer as a fine art material. With her support, RAM acquired over 300 works from the Polymer Collection Project, establishing the museum as the premier supporter of polymer art. Similar to Ford and Forlano, Winters was featured as a Boundary Breaker in the 2011 RAM exhibition, **Terra Nova**. Known for her use of metallic polymers, she started out her professional career focusing on photography and ceramics.

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Winters' work, made of polymer, with an emphasis on commanding, large-scale adornment, is featured in numerous collections, including the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Mingei International Museum, San Diego; Museum of Arts and Design, New York, New York; Newark Museum, Newark, New Jersey; and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia.

RAM currently owns over 20 brooches, bracelets, and neckpieces, as well as study materials, which encompass a working period of over two decades.

***Work from these artists is available for purchase in the Racine Art Museum Store.
Build your own archive of contemporary jewelry!**