



Craft in Color

March 6, 2024 – January 11, 2025

In a modern context where artists are investigating topics of their choosing and exploring with whatever materials they desire, who the artist is and how they move through the world becomes a part of the work's content. Viewers may not have to know the details of an artist's biography to appreciate their work, but those details can add layers of perspective and meaning.

This exhibition features works in clay, glass, and metal by artists of color drawn from RAM's collection. Artists do not need to reference their identity in their work; however, it is valuable to recognize that heritage informs choices on a conscious or unconscious level as a part of the artists' lived experiences. While most of this work is not directly issue-oriented, the fact that the makers themselves—as artists of color—have experienced a wide range of implicit and explicit biases is a sub-context worthy of consideration. Seen through that lens, the story these objects tell is even more complex.

RAM used to show the work of artists of color without calling attention to it. While determining what truly defines an "artist of color" is a challenge—and the phrase itself implies White artists are the default—this exhibition is about ensuring artists of multiple and varied backgrounds are seen. RAM is dedicated to showing this work in a variety of contexts and, most importantly, to implement new pathways toward equity.

Owing to the physical dynamics of this gallery space, all pieces included are made of non-light-sensitive materials. While the work of artists of color has been, and will continue to be, shown in multiple contexts at RAM and RAM's Wustum Museum, this is the largest exhibition to date dedicated to these artists from the collection.

Biographies and statements from select featured artists

Ceramic artist **Marie Zieu Chino** (1907 – 1982) is recognized as one of the most important Acoma Pueblo potters of the 1950s. Alongside artists Juana Leno, Lucy M. Lewis, and Jessie Garcia, Chino focused her career on reviving ancestral pottery forms and designs. Working primarily in intricate, geometric black-on-white designs, Chino incorporates ancient Mimbres, Tularosa, and Anasazi symbolism into her work such as the Anasazi step design, lightning bolts, and various plants and animals.

In 1922, at the age of fifteen, Chino won her first award at the Santa Fe Indian Market. In 1998, she was posthumously awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Southwestern Association for Indian Arts. Her work is included in the collections of

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the Albuquerque Museum, New Mexico; the National Museum of the American Indian, Washington DC; and the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington DC. She is represented in RAM's collection by two works.

My Hispanic background shapes the notion that folklore has regenerative powers that can assuage emotional woes. Celebrations, songs and poems from my upbringing use humor and spirited attitudes to cope with troubling situations. I guide my jewelry designs with a similar focus on liveliness.

Originally from the border area of Reynosa, Mexico, and McAllen, Texas, **Laritza Garcia's** (1982–) jewelry work is greatly informed by her Hispanic heritage. Inspired by the decorative papercutting tradition of *Papel Picado*, her work often contains intricately cut, colorful pierced metal designs. In order to add color to her metalwork, Garcia uses a powder coating technique which allows her to work with a variety of vibrant tones. Her use of color also ties to her Hispanic heritage; she notes that she is particularly drawn to the colors of the houses in Mexico from her childhood: blues, oranges, and *Rosa Mexicana*.

In 2008, Garcia received her BFA from Texas State University, San Marcos, and in 2012, received her MFA from East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina. In addition to being a studio jeweler and participating internationally in juried craft shows, she is a visiting artist across the country and teaches in the School of Art and Design at Texas State University, San Marcos. Alongside the five pieces in RAM's collection, Garcia's work is also housed in the collection of the Mint Museum, Charlotte, North Carolina.

Explore:



laritzagarciajewelry.com

Read:



[adornmentandtheory.com/
blogs/blog/five-for-friday-
with-laritza-garcia](http://adornmentandtheory.com/blogs/blog/five-for-friday-with-laritza-garcia)

My work is decorative, in the sense that I intend it to reach you very quickly, on a level of pure enjoyment. And I use familiar themes because it's an easy way to communicate with people. I think of it all as a journey where the adventure lies in seeing how one thing works with another.

After immigrating to the United States from Havana, Cuba as a child, **Margaret Ponce Israel** (1929 – 1987) lived and worked for most of her life in New York City. Working in a variety of media, she created paintings, ceramics, collages, sculptures, and large-scale installations. Israel's studio and home were within a building in Manhattan that once functioned as a horse stable. While she lived there, the space

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was often overflowing with animals, which made frequent appearances in her artwork. Israel earned many awards throughout her career, including first and second prize in ceramics at the 1956 Young Americans exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts, now known as the Museum of Arts and Design, New York, New York.

An archive artist at RAM, Israel is represented in the collection by over 150 works in various media, which span her entire career, and a number of her sketchbooks. In addition to RAM, her work is included in the public collections of several New York City museums including the Brooklyn Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Museum of Arts and Design, and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Watch:



[youtube.com/
watch?v=5HZGZbiJs3Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5HZGZbiJs3Y)

Inspired by the blue underglaze patterns of traditional Japanese porcelain, **Harumi Nakashima** (1950–) puts his own twist on the technique by decorating his biomorphic porcelain sculptures with blue dots in varying sizes. Unlike the traditional *sometsuke* technique in which color is added underneath the glaze, Nakashima paints the dots onto already glazed porcelain, and then, applies a second coat of glaze to the work. While it is difficult to manipulate porcelain free-hand, Nakashima takes great pride in his entirely hand-built forms, noting that the “battle with the clay” is what allows him to achieve his end goal. These organic forms are influenced by the Japanese *Sōdeisha* art movement of the 1940s, which pushed back against traditional and functional ceramics in favor of purely decorative work.

In 1973, Nakashima earned his BA in ceramics from Osaka University, Japan, before going on to teach at the Tajimi Pottery Design and Technical Center where he is currently the director. He has been an official member of the International Academy of Ceramics since 1992. Nakashima has received many awards throughout his career, including the Gold Prize at the International Ceramics Festival MINO (1995) and the Japan Ceramic Society Award (2010). His work is included in international collections including the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK; The International Museum of Ceramics, Faenza, Italy; the National Crafts Museum, Kanazawa, Japan; the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan; and the Everson Museum of Art, New York, New York. He is represented in RAM’s collection by one work.

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Kevin Snipes (1963–) combines his love of creating unconventional pottery with a desire to draw on everything that he makes. As an African-American ceramic artist, Snipes notes that people often expect Black figures to populate his work. To deal with this expectation on his own terms, he investigates the concepts of duality and otherness, using the multiple sides of his pieces as metaphors for differing perspectives. About this aspect of his work, Snipes states, *“The stories I tell are open-ended investigations of difference and otherness. They are ways in which I can explore the underlying emotional and psychological issues of discrimination. I am interested in what happens when people who are different come together. One aspect of my work is that the narratives I portray encompass different sides, so that every side of the piece is the front side, or protagonist.”*

Snipes received a BFA in ceramics and drawing from the Cleveland Institute of Art, Ohio, in 1994 and an MFA in ceramics at the University of Florida, Gainesville, in 2013. He has exhibited throughout the US and internationally. He has served as a visiting artist at institutions such as Harvard and Rhode Island School of Design. RAM has three pieces by Snipes in the collection to-date.

Watch:



[youtube.com/
watch?v=lcsw0GcX4P0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcsw0GcX4P0)

Read:



[adornmentandtheory.com/
blogs/blog/five-for-friday-
with-laritz-garcia](https://adornmentandtheory.com/blogs/blog/five-for-friday-with-laritz-garcia)

*[I wish to] move glass out of the glass realm, to present it as more than just a vessel...
I want the spirit in my work.*

First as a glassblower, then as a sculptor, and presently as a painter and paper artist, **Acquaetta Williams** (1950–) has created a wide variety of work, often inspired by stories of African and African-American women. Raised in Los Angeles, California, Williams originally wanted to become a fashion designer. While working at a design store in Beverly Hills, she was encouraged to go east where more art schools were beginning to form glass programs. Williams received an MFA from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where she studied as one of Harvey Littleton’s students. In 1994, Williams was awarded an Arts International Travel Grant to travel to Benin, West Africa. In recent years, her work shifted from glass vessels to collaged paintings. Regardless of what media she is working in, Williams’ work emphasizes color, pattern, and shape.

Taking a non-traditional approach to glass and experimenting with techniques such as sandblasting and incorporating found materials from her travels into her work,

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Williams sought to present glass as “more than just a vessel,” instead, drawing parallels between the fragility of her medium, spirituality, and the human figure. For example, in her piece *Vessel* from the *Giraffe Neck Women Series*, Williams references Southern Ndebele tribal jewelry, not only through her incorporation of found jewelry and beads, but also in the form of the vessel with its elongated “neck” wrapped in thread.

Her work is included in the collections of the Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, New York; the Museum of Arts and Design, New York, New York; and the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center, Wiberforce, Ohio. Williams is currently represented in RAM’s collection by three glass works.

Explore:



acquaetta.com

Read:



altiba9.com/platform-interviews-for-artists/acquaetta-williams-collages-assemblage-sculpture

Women Artists at RAM

RAM acknowledges the efforts of self-identifying women in the art world consistently and sincerely at all times. The museum highlights how women are inextricably woven—and often the foundation—of creative endeavors and discourse. By current count, 41% of the artists in RAM’s collection are women. This percentage—which is consistently increasing—is already substantially greater than the ratios calculated at other organizations with permanent collections and active exhibition programs. At RAM, work made by different genders is considered for inclusion in the museum’s holdings on equal terms. And notably, because RAM relies on gifts of artwork to build the collection, this policy has been reinforced by open-minded donors who have collected, and then donated, quality work regardless of the gender of the artist. The following is a list of women whose works are included in this exhibition. This effort—similar to efforts to highlight artists of color at RAM—is not meant to single out artists to stigmatize them but to magnify and cast a spotlight on their significance. It reflects intention, goodwill, and an attempt to reckon with years of historical underrepresentation. RAM hopes this provides opportunities for audiences to learn more about these artists and their ideas. Visitors are encouraged to take note and research these artists via the internet to find out more about their biographies and larger bodies of work.

Gail Bird, Lidya Buzio, Yuyen Chang, Marie Zieu Chino, Chungi Choo, Christina Eustace, Laritza Garcia, April Higashi, Tina Fung Holder, Margaret Ponce Israel, Silvia Levenson, Emma Lewis Mitchell, Sung-Hee Park, Maribel Portela, Yoko Sekino-Bové, Stella Shutiva, Toshiko Takaezu, Joan Takayama-Ogawa, Sachiko Uozumi, Patti Warashina, Acquaetta Williams, Jade Snow Wong, and Minako Yamane-Lee