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A Year of Celebration for RAM's Wustum Museum

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In late 2016, RAM's Wustum Museum of Fine Arts turns 75 and Wustum's longest running exhibition, *Watercolor Wisconsin*, turns 50. Open through February 5, 2017 at Racine Art Museum, ***Honoring Fifty Years of Watercolor Wisconsin*** celebrates these milestones—and Wustum's continuing support of the material and regional artists—by featuring works that were purchased from past juried shows for the permanent collection. These acquisitions were made using various special funds dedicated to growing RAM's holdings in contemporary watercolor or were gifted by donors.

RAM has a long history, dating back to the early 1940s, of collecting watercolors by Wisconsin artists. This focus was inaugurated in 1943 with nearly 50 paintings on paper by contemporary artists working in the Wisconsin Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), during the Great Depression. However, the museum made an even greater commitment to this medium with the establishment of its annual *Watercolor Wisconsin* competition in 1966. The exhibition was organized by the museum, working with the Junior League of Racine, as the first show held in the new education wing at RAM's Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts campus. This show was the museum's response to the intense interest in watercolor among Wisconsin artists and the public. From 1966 to the present, RAM has enhanced its collection through purchase awards and gifts from donors, constructing a documentation of how state artists have approached this medium for over 50 years. Adding contemporary works to the WPA-era pieces creates a record of multiple generations of Wisconsin artists and their investigations into painting on paper.

Over the past 30 years, RAM's response to this explosion in experimentation has been to embrace it. Instead of insisting that all entries be created solely in the watercolor medium, the museum has consistently expanded eligibility criteria. A successful entry must include some amount of water-based art media—watercolor, acrylic, gouache,

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casein, or ink—that can be combined with any drawing or printmaking materials. The work can be two-dimensional or three-dimensional, but it must be on a paper surface. In this way, RAM hopes to capture a thorough vision of what kinds of paintings Wisconsin artists are creating each year, using paper instead of canvas as a surface.

Also on view, *Watercolor Wisconsin 2016* at RAM's Wustum Museum from December 11, 2016 through April 22, 2017, offers an opportunity to see the works juried into the 50th installment of this significant show.

A Year of Celebration

Throughout the upcoming season into fall of 2017, visitors are invited to discover stunning exhibitions and exciting events at both campuses that shine a light on the achievements over the past 75 years at RAM's Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts and predict an even brighter future.

The celebration begins at RAM's Wustum Museum on Wednesday, November 16, 6:00 – 9:00 pm, for the 75th Anniversary Kick-Off Party. Visitors are invited to make ornaments with well-known local artists including John DeVinney, Alex Mandli, Toby Prioletta, and Bill Reid. There will even be a chance to discover the wonders of glitter with RAM Executive Director and Curator of Collection Bruce W. Pepich. To toast this significant milestone, there will be champagne, an anniversary cake, and other sweet and savory treats.

Also, the date has been set for next year's annual fundraising event. On October 14, 2017, RAM's Wustum Museum will be the site for the celebratory 1940s Hollywood-themed event.

This exhibition is made possible by: Platinum Sponsors - Karen Johnson Boyd and William B. Boyd, SC Johnson, Windgate Charitable Foundation; Diamond Sponsor - Osborne and Scekcic Family Foundation; Gold Sponsors - Herzfeld Foundation, Johnson Bank, National Endowment for the Arts, Racine Community Foundation, W. T. Walker Group, Inc.; Silver Sponsors – Andis Foundation, Real Racine, Wisconsin Arts Board; Bronze Sponsors - Burlington Graphic Systems, Inc., CNH Industrial, EC Styberg Foundation, Educators Credit Union, In Sink Erator, The Norbell Foundation, Orkney Springs Retreat, Rasmussen Diamonds, Southern Connecticut Polymer Clay Guild, Wisconsin Public Radio

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Together, the two campuses of the Racine Art Museum, RAM in downtown Racine at 441 Main Street and the Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts at 2519

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Northwestern Avenue, seek to elevate the stature of contemporary crafts to that of fine art by exhibiting significant works in craft media with painting, sculpture and photography, while providing outstanding educational art programming.

Docent led contemporary craft and architectural tours of the museums are available. Both campuses of the Racine Art Museum, are open Tuesday – Saturday 10:00 am – 5:00 pm, and are closed Mondays, Federal holidays and Easter. RAM is open Sunday Noon – 5:00 pm, while Wustum is closed Sundays. An admission fee of \$5 for adults, with reduced fees for students and seniors, applies at RAM. Admission to Wustum is free. Members are always admitted without charge to either campus.