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**Unusual, Surprising, and Challenging Materials
in Racine Art Museum Exhibition**

Racine, WI October 1, 2020

A new exhibition opens on October 21, 2020 at the Racine Art Museum (RAM). ***Expect the Unexpected: Unusual Materials in Contemporary Craft***—on display through January 23, 2021—features work drawn from the museum's permanent collection that incorporates unusual, surprising, or challenging materials.

Pablo Picasso's *Still Life with Chair Caning*—an oval-shaped painting trimmed with a piece of rope as a frame—is often acknowledged as one of the first assemblage pieces, since it integrated a found object as part of the composition. Picasso's work is also an early modern illustration of the idea that artists sometimes willingly utilize and experiment with materials that were produced for purposes other than art-making.

The advent of industrialization in modern Western societies encouraged the production of more goods and, ultimately, more excess and waste. This reality—as well as the idea that artists were able to focus more on the investigations of personal interests rather than commissions—led to endless new possibilities for using unexpected materials in their creative endeavors.

Rather than shying away from the potential care challenges these works may encounter, RAM embraces objects made from unusual materials as reflections of the inventiveness and experimentation that characterize contemporary art. However, RAM acknowledges that preserving and caring for works made of unusual materials does

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present some unexpected challenges. For example, artist Wesley Fleming's *Hornet's Nest*—which combines an actual found hornet's nest with flameworked glass hornets—poses long-term conservation issues that are far different than those of a traditional ceramic or glass vessel. Similarly, artist Joy Raskin created spoon brooches with handles accented with actual aspirin tablets, which necessitate strategies for preservation far different from those usually associated with metal jewelry and objects.

Exhibitions at Racine Art Museum are made possible by: Platinum Sponsors—Anonymous, Nicholas and Nancy Kurten, and Wingate Foundation; Diamond Sponsors—National Endowment for the Arts, Osborne and Scekcic Family Foundation, Ruffo Family Foundation, Inc.; Gold Sponsors—Anonymous, Tom and Irene Creecy, David Flegel, Herzfeld Foundation, Racine Community Foundation, Twin Disc, W.T. Walker Group, Inc.; Silver Sponsors—A.C. Buhler Family, Andis Foundation, David Charak, Lucy G. Feller, Johnson Bank, Dorothy MacVicar, Real Racine, Trio Foundation of St. Louis, Wisconsin Arts Board; Bronze Sponsors—Andis Company, Virginia Buhler, Cotsen Foundation for Academic Research, Tom and Jane Devine, David and Ellen Easley, Educators Credit Union, Eye Care Center of Waterford, Ben and Dawn Flegel, Fredrick and Deborah Ganaway, William A. Guenther, Tom and Sharon Harty, Angela Jacobi, Bill Keland, Knight Barry Title Group, Eric Koopmeiners and Lena Vigna; Media Sponsor—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 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.

After temporarily closing its doors in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, RAM reopened to the public on Wednesday, August 5. RAM's Wustum Museum of Fine Arts reopened on Wednesday, September 2 with the juried exhibition, *Wisconsin Photography 2020*. Both museums are operating with limited hours, open Wednesday through Saturday from Noon to 4:00 pm. Information regarding safety protocols and what to expect when visiting the museums are available on the RAM website, ramart.org.