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Racine Art Museum Debuts *Go for Baroque*

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Baroque is one of those words whose meaning changes slightly depending on context and perspective—it could refer to a specific or general time period or to a style of art, architecture, music, or other creative endeavor. Possibly derived from a Portuguese word for a misshapen pearl, baroque has a history that has been described as “long, complex, and controversial.” Open May 22, 2016 – September 4, 2016, ***Go for Baroque: Opulence and Excess in Contemporary Art*** illustrates how the word “baroque” could be used as a gathering point—a commonality that aligns artists drawing from many kinds of backgrounds and interests.

Historically, the term included works that were considered excessive, full of bravado, and theatricality. While the past emphasis on baroque in art involved spectacle on an elaborate scale, a contemporary baroque—such as what is suggested with this exhibition—could be identified by its response to excess and lavishness, the decorative or the ornamental, and the theatrical.

Primarily comprised of work borrowed from artists across the country working in a wide range of media, *Go for Baroque* also includes examples from RAM’s ever-growing permanent collection. These artists explore luxury, excess, consumption, artificiality, illusion, fantasy, beauty, and the grotesque. For example, Lauren Vanessa Tickle uses U.S. dollar bills to create adornment that challenges concepts of value and materialism—money becomes something decorative, its own commodity, and a material with a different meaning. Suggesting that his aim was only to make work that should be “like an ornament, exquisitely beautiful,” Ralph Bacerra merged Asian and American-studio ceramics to create vessels, teapots, and platters with elaborate patterns and lustre glazes.

Suggesting illusion, artifice, and opulence, Leigh Suggs and Amelia Toelke have created larger-size pieces that echo the sparkling and reflective surface interiors in

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many a grand palace. In essence, Suggs has laboriously created a modern equivalent to the multi-sensory experiences and events that were constructed in the Baroque period. Her piece, *Trying to Exit Here*, is a grid of woven Mylar and paper strips—begging to be touched, it reflects everything around it. Suggs' work is both a textured, rich surface and a foil to everything else in the room. Interested in the body and exploring the theatrical, Kate Cusack constructs elaborate neckpieces made of zippers as well as “Marie-Antoinette” style wigs made of household plastic wrap.

Other artists in *Go for Baroque* include – Bennett Bean, Doug Bucci, Tyanna J. Buie, Sienna DeGovia, Misty Gamble, Tamara Grüner, Rain Harris, Hanna Hedman, Laurie Hogin, Anya Kivarkis, Kate Kretz, Nine Levy, Jose Marín, Märta Mattson, Jennifer Merchant, Jaydan Moore, Deborah Olson, Soohye Park, Jessica Putnam Phillips, Ruth Reese, Lyndsay Rice, Anna Rikkinen, Stephanie Schultz (Silversärk), Melanie Sherman, Linda Threadgill, Heather White van Stolk, Elise Winters, Marci Zelmanoff, and Petra Zimmermann.

Go for Baroque: Opulence and Excess in Contemporary Art is made possible at Racine Art Museum 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 – Real Racine, Wisconsin Arts Board; Bronze Sponsors – Burlington Graphic Systems, Inc., EC Styberg Foundation, Educators Credit Union, In Sink Erator, The Norbell Foundation, Orkney Springs Retreat, Rasmussen Diamonds, Ruud Family Foundation, Inc.

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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.

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.