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In the Round: Vessels and Sculpture from RAM's Collection

January 26 – July 30, 2022

By its very definition, sculpture is multi-sided and intended to be seen from various angles. Even when not placed so that it can be viewed from all sides, sculpture is still the articulation of an idea on multiple planes, not a flat representation. **In the Round** plays with this concept by showcasing artwork that is best understood when contemplated from more than one angle—pieces whose stories and designs unfold as a viewer actively engages in exploring the whole thing.

Pursuing the desire to investigate ideas, stories, and patterns in sculptural form, many of the artists included encourage extended contemplation of works with sides and backs that are as integral to the overall as their fronts. Indeed, for some pieces, there may not be an obvious point of visual entry or departure. On a metaphorical level, these works showcase the value of considering multiple perspectives.

Several of the pieces are based on functional vessels—teapots, vases, and bowls—but few are intended for actual use. Sculpture on display that does not reference functional shapes eliminates the question of practicality as part of meaning and further reinforces the status of the object as a site for reflection.

Drawn from RAM's collection and made primarily of ceramic and glass, these pieces provide compelling, layered narratives, and engaging design. Several works, such as the vessels by **Kevin Snipes** and the potters of the Mexican town of **Mata Ortiz**, are new to RAM and making their debut in this exhibition.

Biographies and statements from select featured artists

Glass artist **Emily Brock** was born in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1945. Brock's artwork is influenced by her everyday life—specifically, her relationships, the colors she sees, and the written word. While there is a narrative element in the glass sculptures she creates, the artist's goal is to offer a springboard for her audience's own imagination. Brock earned a BS in clothing and textiles at Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon. Her work can be found in the collections of institutions such as Concept Gallery, University of Michigan–Dearborn; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Lowe Art Museum, Coral Gables, Florida. Today, she lives and works in Corrales, New Mexico.

Standards of normalcy, femininity, propriety, and societal expectations all inform the ceramic sculptures of **Misty Gamble**. Gamble states, "I set out to make work that was so beautiful and terrible in its horrendousness, that it couldn't be avoided. Women are told throughout their lives: be pretty, be smart, get educated. But for god's sake don't make any waves."

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Before starting her career as an artist, Gamble worked as an agent, publicist, and event producer in music and the performing arts. She finished a BA in Studio Art in 2004 at California State University, East Bay, Hayward, California. In 2007, she completed an MFA in ceramics at San Francisco State University, California. Throughout her career, Gamble has received numerous honors and awards including an artist grant from the Ruth Chenven Foundation and recognition as an Emerging Artist in *Ceramics Monthly*. Currently, Gamble works as an Assistant Professor of 3D Art at West Texas A&M University, Canyon, Texas.

Ceramic artists **Gloria Hernandez**, **Javier Pérez**, and **Chela Veloz** trace their working origin to **Mata Ortiz**—a city located in northern Chihuahua, Mexico. Now well-known as being a community that prizes ceramics, Mata Ortiz has an estimated 400 working artists today.

The story of Mata Ortiz pottery—as the industry exists today—is linked to the discovery by **Juan Quezada** of ancient pottery shards. Quezada became fascinated with shards he found and started experimenting with local materials until he could create his own vessels in the same style, which was identified as Pre-Columbian. Quezada's work came to the attention of an American anthropologist, **Spencer MacCallum**, who helped promote it to collectors and galleries.

Quezada received national and international recognition of his work, including Mexico's National Art Award. Eventually, he taught his family members how to create similar pieces, many of whom continue those traditions. As Quezada gained recognition, other artists flocked to Mata Ortiz to work in the same style, largely learning through observation and experimentation. For example, Gloria Hernandez began making Mata Ortiz pottery in the 1980s, mainly through trial-and-error, and continues to incorporate Mimbres and Casa Grandes influences in her work.

Author **Walter P. Parks** delves further into the history of Mata Ortiz in, *The Miracle of Mata Ortiz: Juan Quezada and the Potters of Northern Chihuahua*.

For more about this fascinating town and its inhabitants, visit:

https://issuu.com/treasurechestbooks/docs/miracle_prev

Marva Lee Pitchford-Jolly's (1937 – 2012) interest in ceramics began as a hobby. After she lost her job in healthcare due to funding cuts, Pitchford-Jolly was offered a part-time position at Chicago State University teaching ceramics. She grew to love the position—often stating that she had to learn the technical aspects of ceramics at the same time as she was teaching her students. About her most well-known type of work, narrative vessels or “story pots,” she stated, “I use clay as a canvas, and I taught myself to draw on clay... I could write my stories on these pots.”

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Pitchford-Jolly was involved in the South Side Community Art Center and Hyde Park Art Center, both in Chicago, Illinois. As she gained popularity, she made a point to sell some of her work at affordable prices so it was accessible to a wider audience. Pitchford-Jolly also established the collective known as *Sapphire and Crystals* in 1986, encouraging female African American artists to create and exhibit together.

Through teaching and collaborating in glass with other Native American, Maori, Hawaiian, and Australian Aboriginal artists, I've come to see that glass brings another dimension to indigenous art. The artistic perspective of indigenous people reflects a unique and vital visual language which has connections to the ancient codes and symbols of the land, and this interaction has informed and inspired my own work.

—Preston Singletary

Blending historical European glass-blowing traditions and Tlinglit design, **Preston Singletary** creates nuanced, sensitive, and compelling blown-glass forms as well as large-scale commissions and more expansive projects. Exploring themes of transformation, the natural world, and personal and cultural beliefs, Singletary expands the possibilities of glass as a sculptural and narrative material. He spent time in the late 1980s and 1990s at Pilchuck Glass School, Stanwood, Washington, studying with other artists such as **Dorit Brand, Dan Daily, Judy Hill, Benjamin Moore, Checco Ongaro, Pino Signoretto, and Lino Tagliapietra**. With work in major collections—including RAM—Singletary is a dynamic presence in contemporary glass, maintaining an active teaching, lecturing, and exhibiting schedule that he balances with studio production time.

I am continuously fascinated by the concept of duality. Duality of course, refers to two things which are intrinsically bound together, made of the same stuff. Yet those things are also inherently in opposition with each other... we can only know a thing by defining its opposite. How is it possible to describe what lightness is, for instance without referring to the concept of darkness, or to describe what rigidity is without describing softness? These thoughts are my starting point in the act of creating.

—Kevin Snipes

Kevin Snipes 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

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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.

Artists of Color

RAM is committed to supporting diverse voices—whether that diversity reflects race, gender, sexuality, age, ability, social standing, or world perspective. In this moment in time, it is critical that spotlights are placed on voices that have been historically underrepresented, and at RAM that begins with women and artists of color. Artists of color are identified in this context as non-white and non-European in heritage. This simplification—which is arguably a flawed starting point—does not account for the nuances and variations of society. It is a beginning—a way to direct those who want to educate themselves about what is possible when new perspectives are discovered. Modifications to this approach are expected as RAM learns and grows. Further, as an educational institution rooted in the humanities and using art as a catalyst, RAM wants to encourage inquiry and exploration about the world in which we live. RAM hopes spotlighting artists of color spurs further engagement with these artists and their ideas.

The following is a list of artists of color whose works are included in this exhibition. Because of the light-sensitive nature of some of the materials used, not all works/artists are featured during the entire exhibition. 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.

Joy Cain
Gloria Hernandez
Georgia Dewakuku Koopee
Lucy M. Lewis
Ursilita Naranjo
Florence Naranjo
Javier Pérez
Marva Lee Pitchford-Jolly
Preston Singletary
Kevin Snipes
Akio Takamori
Dorothy Torivio
Chela Veloz

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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. Because of the light-sensitive nature of some of the materials used, not all works/artists are featured during the entire exhibition. 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. 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.

Chris Antemann
Emily Brock
Joy Cain
Misty Gamble
Gloria Hernandez
Georgia Dewakuku Koopee
Anne Kraus
Ellen Lanyon
Lucy M. Lewis
Florence Naranjo
Marva Lee Pitchford-Jolly
Ginny Ruffner
Dorothy Torivio
Chela Veloz