

## Joan Backes brings the outside in at RAM



AUGUST 03, 2015 4:27 PM

**RACINE** — The Racine Art Museum commissioned Milwaukee-born artist Joan Backes to create a new exhibition for its Windows on Fifth Gallery. Open Aug. 7 through July 24, “Falling Leaves and Painted Branches” marries the natural color, shape and pattern of leaves and branches with human interference as the artist arranges these found natural materials in poetic and compelling vignettes across the 90 feet of windows.

Backes’ work is a meditation with nature that emphasizes the idea of place. It has taken the form of paintings, installation, ceramics, drawing, photography, printmaking and sculpture. Regardless of the media used, she engages in a process that incorporates looking, gathering, thinking and re-contextualizing.

The installation for RAM’s windows combines leaves Backes has collected in various locales and branches that are gathered from the grounds of RAM’s Wustum Museum of Fine Arts and then painted. Sourcing the branches from Wustum — a site that is really the beginning of Racine Art Museum — is a poetic gesture that underscores the artist’s interest in place.

Backes will give visitors a behind-the-scenes glimpse at the making of “Falling Leaves and Painted Branches” with RAM curator of exhibitions Lena Vigna at 6:30 p.m. Friday, Aug. 7, during First Fridays in Downtown Racine. The museum is open with free admission from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. that day. A free hands-on art project is available from 4 to 8 p.m. In addition, RAM is offering museum quality artwork by well-known artists available for purchase during the RAM Awesome August Art Sale.