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**Karen Johnson Boyd, Board Emerita of the Racine Art Museum and Owner and President of Perimeter Gallery in Chicago, has died**

Racine, WI January 29, 2016

The Board of Directors of the Racine Art Museum announced today the passing of its Board Emerita and supporter of major distinction, Karen Johnson Boyd, at her home in Racine, Wisconsin on January 29, 2016. Throughout her life, Mrs. Boyd has been an advocate for visual artists and arts institutions across the country. She is especially remembered as a major figure in the contemporary craft field, assembling one of the country's most respected collections of this material.

She will be remembered as an enthusiastic supporter of living contemporary artists through acquisitions and the public exhibition of their work. She donated artworks to numerous museum collections across the country including: Art Institute of Chicago; Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, New York City; Milwaukee Art Museum; Museum of Arts and Design, New York City; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and the Racine Art Museum (RAM). Many of the more than 1,750 works of art she has presented to RAM since the 1970s can be seen regularly in the museum's ongoing exhibitions.

"This is a sad day for RAM's extended family and for the entire field of contemporary craft," said Bruce W. Pepich, Executive Director and Curator of Collections at RAM. "Karen's generosity of spirit, her enthusiasm for this field, and her commitment to thoughtful financial support are things we honor today and for which we are very grateful. We will miss this extraordinary woman very much."

Born in 1924, she was a lifelong resident of Racine where her family established SC Johnson. She was a young teenager in the late 1930s, when her father, H. F. Johnson Jr., commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright to design the company's world-famous

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Administration Building and a home, Wingspread, in which her family lived. Later, as a young married woman with four children, she commissioned her own home designed by Wright. It was completed in 1954. She lived in this residence in Racine throughout her life.

By the time she reached high school, Mrs. Boyd was taking art history and studio art classes. She was particularly influenced by her maternal grandfather, Olaf Brauner, a post-Impressionist painter and head of the Art Department at Cornell University. Mrs. Boyd studied at Bennington College in Vermont. She began collecting by acquiring works from faculty members at Bennington but became more active in this endeavor after her exposure to two collections of art the Johnson Company assembled—*Art USA Now* (1962) and *Objects: USA* (1969). The first exhibition was devoted to paintings and contained works by contemporary artists such as Richard Diebenkorn, Joan Mitchell, and Robert Rauschenberg and toured internationally. The second was devoted to contemporary craft and marked the first time many encyclopedic American art museums presented one-of-a-kind works by artists such as Wendell Castle, Lenore Tawney, and Harvey Littleton in their galleries. Based on this exposure, Mrs. Boyd began to actively assemble a wide-ranging collection of work by young artists working in craft media, works on paper, and photography. She boldly and confidently presented these side-by-side in her home.

In the late 1970s, Mrs. Boyd curated a collection for SC Johnson's Council House, a conference and residence facility in Racine with Lee Nordness, the lead curator for both Johnson collections. For two years, they travelled to 49 countries to locate work that would represent the cultures where the Company did business, gathering work by artists such as Mimmo Paladino, Gerhard Richter, and Jesus Rafael Soto.

At the beginning of the 1980s, she founded Perimeter Press which published print portfolios by Frances Myers and Keiko Hara and a monograph on the Ohio-based ceramic sculptor, Jack Earl. In 1982, she opened Perimeter Gallery in Chicago's River North neighborhood. The Gallery's aesthetic closely aligned with her own, presenting major figures in the painting and craft fields side-by-side and combining recognized masters with emerging talent. Over the years the Gallery has represented painters and sculptors including Anthony Caro, Warrington Colescott, Dorothy Dehner, Robert Kushner, and David Shapiro, along with major figures in the craft field such as Lia Cook, Sheila Hicks, John Mason, Toshiko Takaezu, and Peter Voulkos.

Mrs. Boyd was actively involved with the Gallery, curating two exhibitions—the *Nude in Clay*, 1995 and the *Nude in Clay II*, 1998. These included works from across the fine arts field by artists such as Robert Arneson, Ruth Duckworth, Mary Frank, and Elie Nadelman.

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“Karen Boyd’s enthusiasm for the arts was a joy to be around; her vision was clear and her curiosity kept her young. She championed many unknown artists who went on to have successful careers in the arts. We will miss her dearly,” said Frank Paluch, Director, Perimeter Gallery Inc.

Although she had been donating artwork since the mid-1970s, Mrs. Boyd presented RAM with a major gift of 200 artworks in 1991 that immediately established a nationally significant contemporary craft collection. The national attention this gift attracted drew many collectors to the museum and in the years following, RAM amassed the largest contemporary craft collection in any US art museum. The museum also opened RAM as its new facility in downtown Racine in 2003. To recognize her support of its collection and exhibition programs over the years, the museum’s exhibition galleries were dedicated in her honor.

While most of her gifts have been individual objects, Mrs. Boyd frequently purchased groupings that she presented to RAM including an archive of over 50 graphics by Warrington Colescott, a collection of contemporary Japanese prints gathered for a show at Perimeter, and an archive of material by artists responding to James Joyce’s *Ulysses* that includes works by Peter Blake, Richard Hamilton, Robert Motherwell, and Paul Wunderlich.

Mrs. Boyd was actively involved in the efforts to build RAM, taking part in fundraising efforts and making major contributions to the campaign. She also established endowment funds to support collections care and exhibitions. Although she was an avid supporter of craft, she also collected graphics and post-World War II photography. Mrs. Boyd has significantly added to RAM’s works on paper collection—especially through the contribution of over 150 photographs that included works by Bill Brandt, Harry Callahan, Lee Friedlander, Duane Michals, Irving Penn, and Aaron Siskind.

Over the past 40 years, Mrs. Boyd served actively on the boards and acquisitions committees of a number of major museums. Her support of the visual arts field has been publicly recognized numerous times with the receipt of: Wisconsin Governor’s Award in Support of the Arts, 1986; Award of Distinction from the American Craft Council, 1992; Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Craft Museum, New York City, 1996; Friends of Contemporary Ceramics Lifetime Achievement Award, 2004; and the Wisconsin Visual Art Lifetime Achievement Award, 2012. She was featured in *Art & Antiques* magazine’s annual 100 Top Collectors and in an extended article in *American Craft* magazine, “Karen Johnson Boyd and the Art of Stealth Philanthropy,” in 2009, featuring her collection and her home. In 2003, she was made a Fellow of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters. After serving on RAM’s Board for 13 consecutive years, she was awarded Emerita status in 2012, only  
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the second honor of this type presented by RAM in its 75-year history.

“Karen has been a wonderful friend to this institution and one of the most extraordinary people I have met in my long tenure at RAM,” added Pepich. “Any museum would be blessed to have a loyal partner like her. This has been a stimulating and rewarding friendship and the artists and the public have benefitted greatly from our collaboration.”

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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.