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RAM's Window on Fifth Gallery:

Honoring Karen Johnson Boyd's Generosity to Racine Art Museum's Contemporary Craft Collection

Racine, WI July 27, 2017

Long-time friend to RAM, Karen Johnson Boyd (1924-2016) was an advocate for and collector of art who had a strong affinity for contemporary American craft. Open August 4, 2017 - July 22, 2018, this Windows on Fifth Gallery installation pays homage to her role in establishing Racine Art Museum's craft collection by featuring colorful, dynamic ceramic work that she donated to the museum at various points over the years. With works presented as if being pulled from crates or out of storage, ***Unpacking Karen Johnson Boyd's Clay Collection at RAM*** offers a playful take on building a collection, honoring a donor, and managing works of art, while providing a new viewing context for contemporary clay.

About Karen Johnson Boyd

Mrs. Boyd supported artists working in craft media, as well as photography and printmaking. Her trademark style—in terms of the type of work she collected and how she displayed it—was to blend materials together. For example, ceramics would be shown next to works on paper, baskets, and furniture. RAM's approach to acquiring and displaying work is similar—two- and three-dimensional objects in a variety of media are shown together in the galleries.

Racine Art Museum was the largest single beneficiary of Mrs. Boyd's generosity—a fact acknowledged with this exhibition and through subsequent shows planned for 2018 that honor her philanthropy. Over four decades, she gifted a significant number of ceramics, textiles, glass, metals, and works on paper to the museum. In recognition of her core gift of over 1,700 works, RAM's galleries were named in her honor. In 1991 alone, Mrs. Boyd gave over 200 works, grounding the museum's craft focus and setting the stage for RAM to become the holder of America's largest contemporary

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craft collection.

Mrs. Boyd had a particular interest in ceramics. She was drawn to a number of different types of surface treatments—from smooth glazed surfaces to rough, textural ones, a variety of subject matter, and diverse approaches to the material. She passionately collected sculptural work, but she would also purchase and use functional pottery for both daily and special occasions. Mrs. Boyd gave hundreds of works in clay to RAM, including the work of notable artists such as Gina Bobrowski, Annette Corcoran, Richard DeVore, Jack Earl, Ken Ferguson, Anne Hironnelle, Margaret Ponce Israel, Sergei Isupov, Cindy Kolodziejski, Michael Lucero, Beverly Mayeri, David Regan, Joseph Seigenthaler, and Vanessa Smith.

About This Exhibition

The artwork assembled here includes a selection of contemporary artists interested in both figural and abstract clay sculpture. While some artists allude to ceramic's functional past, others utilize the material for its flexibility and potential as a sculptural medium. Objects were chosen for this particular installation based on the idea that they will be visible 24 hours a day for several months. Size and color were a concern as was the idea that a viewer's perspective would be mediated by the windows.

This behind-the-scenes exhibition offers transparency—giving visitors a chance to see how works of art may be prepared for transport, stored, and unpacked. Usually taking place away from the eye of the public, these activities are integral to organizing a collection and exhibitions. In referencing packing, shipping, and storage needs, this display showcases an aspect of collecting and arranging that Mrs. Boyd, as a commercial gallery owner and private collector, would have appreciated and experienced first-hand.

A Conversation About Clay

On Friday, August 4 at 6:30 pm, RAM Executive Director and Curator of Collections Bruce W. Pepich will give insight into how Mrs. Boyd lived with her collection as well as her interest in sharing the works with the public by donating them to RAM. This event is during First Friday in downtown Racine when RAM offers free admission from 10:00 am to 9:00 pm along with a free hands-on art project from 4:00 to 8:00 pm.

This exhibition is made possible by: Platinum Sponsors - Karen Johnson Boyd and William B. Boyd, Windgate Charitable Foundation; Diamond Sponsor: Osborne and Sceikic Family Foundation; Gold Sponsors - Herzfeld Foundation, Johnson Bank, National Endowment for the Arts, W. T. Walker Group, Inc.; Silver Sponsors - Andis Foundation, Racine Community Foundation, Real Racine, Runzheimer International Ltd., United Way of Racine County, Wisconsin Arts Board; Bronze Sponsors - CNH Industrial, EC Styberg Foundation, Educators

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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.