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Racine, WI September 24, 2012

RAM Debuts Fiber Gifts in a Big Way

The Racine Art Museum premieres an impressive array of fiber pieces never before seen in the museum's galleries. Open September 30 through January 20, 2013, ***High Fiber: Recent Large Scale Acquisitions in Fiber*** transforms RAM's largest gallery space with larger than life-size sculptures by significant contemporary artists who have established reputations working with materials such as fabric, metal wire, and cedar. Created with techniques, such as weaving and knotting, and touching on a variety of subjects--including metaphysics, the human condition, and the natural world--the works featured in this show delight the eye and engage the mind.

In the 1970s, decorative and conceptual textiles (created by people with training in weaving, design, and sculpture) were being produced on a large scale, literally. Less utilitarian and more sculptural, these fiber pieces were often three-dimensional and displayed individually or in groups as installations and environments. This artistic exploration coincided with a surge in the hobbyist interest in fiber processes, such as knotting, macramé, and other non-loom-based techniques.



Gyöngy Laky, *Untitled*, 1985
103 X 64 X 3 1/2 inches
Branches, cloth, tape, wire, and plastic
Racine Art Museum, Gift of Leeda Marting
Photography: Jon Bolton, Racine, WI

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The natural quality of materials, such as sisal and raw wool, were emphasized. As time has moved forward, contemporary artists have expanded these investigations, sometimes combining traditional textile techniques with synthetic materials, as they explore personal, social, political, and cultural topics.

High Fiber includes artists who have been working with textiles for decades, pushing the boundaries of the media and offering different ways for understanding the materials. For example, Rebecca Medel uses the ancient technique of knotted netting, linen, ramie, and cotton to create grids that, through their shape and structure, reference "celestial maps, starlight, and galaxies." With her massive *1000 Kannons* (comprised of 95 panels installed in a 32 x 27 foot space), Medel explores time and space metaphysics, as well as symbolism.

Interested in the environment and how we use both natural and man-made resources, Gyöngy Laky explores the intersection of human beings and nature. Whether grids, baskets, texts or symbols, Laky's sculptures emphasize their own construction as well as the role of the hand in building. Of her process, the artist has stated, "it is like drawing without paper-an exploration of possibilities in physical, three-dimensional linear circumstances."

RAM's fiber collection is ever growing. With its emphasis on works acquired over the past two years, *High Fiber* comprises of installations, wall works, sculpture, and baskets. Featured artists include Françoise Grossen, Jan Hopkins, Gyöngy Laky, Rebecca Medel, Barbara Lee Smith, and Jean Stamsta.

High Fiber: Recent Large-Scale Acquisitions in Fiber is made possible at Racine Art Museum by: Presenting Sponsors - Karen Johnson Boyd and William B. Boyd, RAM Society Members, S.C. Johnson & Son, Inc., Windgate Charitable Foundation; Gold Sponsors - National Endowment for the Arts, Racine United Arts Fund; Silver Sponsors - Elwood Corporation, Osborne and Scekcic Family Foundation, W.T. Walker Group, Inc., Wisconsin Arts Board; Bronze Sponsors - Art Alliance for Contemporary Glass, Clifton Gunderson LLP CNH America LLC, E.C. Styberg Foundation, Inc., Friends of Fiber Art International, Educators Credit Union, In Sink Erator, The Marjorie L. Christiansen Foundation, Midwest Contemporary Glass Art Group, The Norbell Foundation, Real Racine, Runzheimer Foundation, and Wisconsin Public Radio.

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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 to the public 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.

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