



PRESS RELEASE

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**Racine Art Museum Debuts  
New Gift of Letter Openers**

Racine, WI October 14, 2015

Spurred by an interest in investigating color, form, and texture, this nationally known wood artist has focused on “the character of the raw pieces of wood. ” Open October 18, 2015 – February 7, 2016, **RAM Collects: Wood Letter Openers by Norm Sartorius from Ronald and Kay Springwater** highlights a gift of 44 Sartorius letter openers.

While he began his professional career as a social worker, Norm Sartorius found his lifelong calling when he undertook a six-month apprenticeship with a woodworker. Early on, he created letter openers, canes, shoehorns, and spoons, which he sold at craft fairs. Over time Sartorius began to place more and more emphasis on non-functional spoons, which he regards as sculptures.

The artist draws inspiration directly from the various woods he uses to create carved spoons, functional letter openers, bracelets, and sculptures. He has stated of his process: “I have always started with the wood itself...the shaping of the piece has to do with the texture, grain, and figure of it—its special character. I’m kind of a wood collector, really.”

Sartorius’ use of rare woods, such as Haitian mahogany, Australian tulipwood, and Burmese blackwood, reflects his particular interests in the variety and possibility of the material itself. His engagement with wood—letting it “speak” to him—is sometimes regarded as romantic, yet he stresses that most of his time is spent in the actual manipulation of the material. Cutting, sanding, filing, and rubbing consume most of his working hours.

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Made between 1993 and 2011, the 44 letter openers given by Ronald and Kay Springwater are united in their general shape, yet they represent various blades, handles, and woods. The first letter openers by Sartorius to enter a public collection, these pieces reflect a significant long-term relationship between the artist and collectors.

*RAM Collects: Wood Letter Openers by Norm Sartorius from Ronald and Kay Springwater* is made possible at Racine Art Museum by: Platinum Sponsors - Karen Johnson Boyd and William B. Boyd, SC Johnson, Windgate Charitable Foundation; Gold Sponsors - Herzfeld Foundation, Johnson Bank, National Endowment for the Arts, Osborne and Scekcic Family Foundation, Racine Community Foundation, W.T. Walker Group, Inc.; Silver Sponsors - Racine County, Real Racine, Wisconsin Arts Board; Bronze Sponsors - EC Styberg Foundation, Educators Credit Union, In Sink Erator, The Norbell Foundation, Orkney Springs Retreat, Polyform Products, Inc., Rasmussen Diamonds, Ruud Family Foundation, Inc., 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.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.