

**RACINE ART MUSEUM (RAM)  
MUSEUM FACT SHEET**

**LOCATION**

The Racine Art Museum (RAM) is located in downtown Racine, Wisconsin. Racine is a historic community on the shores of Lake Michigan, approximately 70 miles north of Chicago, 25 miles south of Milwaukee and 100 miles east of Madison. It is a town with a tradition of supporting art and architecture, as it is the home to Frank Lloyd Wright's Johnson Wax Administration Building and several Wright homes, including Wingspread, which was built for the Johnson family.

**FOCUS**

The Racine Art Museum has one of North America's most significant collections of contemporary craft of any museum, including pieces from internationally recognized artists in ceramics, fibers, glass, metals and wood. RAM seeks to elevate the stature of contemporary craft to that of fine art by exhibiting appropriate works in craft media with paintings, sculpture and photography. RAM also plays a vital role in arts education through RAM's Wustum Museum, where it offers community outreach programs and studio art classes and workshops taught by nationally known artists working in craft media.

**HISTORY**

In 1938, Jennie E. Wustum donated her house, its property and a small trust fund to the City of Racine to establish an art museum and park in memory of her husband, Charles. From its founding in 1941, the Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts grew from a small collection of 1930s art from the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project, to an impressive contemporary craft collection. Eventually, it outgrew its campus until it could only exhibit about 10% of its collection to its 50,000 annual visitors. Thanks to the museum's success and generous gifts from donors like Karen Johnson Boyd, the Wustum Museum has relocated its collections to the new Racine Art Museum. Designed by the award-winning Chicago architecture firm Brininstool+Lynch, RAM is an environmentally sound and visually striking reuse of an existing structure that properly houses and presents the collection. The newly expanded two-campus museum continues to host regional exhibitions and studio art programs at, what is now called, RAM's Wustum Museum of Fine Arts.

**MISSION**

RAM's mission is dedicated to the exhibition, education, collection and preservation of contemporary visual arts. The museum continues to collect work from artists who illustrate the diversity of expression and culture. By focusing on education and community outreach, RAM works to present visitors with opportunities to understand, experience and learn about the value of contemporary craft as fine art.

## LEADERSHIP

### **Bruce W. Pepich, Executive Director and Curator of Collections.**

At the Racine Art Museum, Bruce W. Pepich is Executive Director and Curator of Collections, a position that he has held at RAM's Wustum Museum of Fine Arts since 1981. In the past fifteen years, he has assembled one of the most significant contemporary craft collections of any fine arts museum in the nation. He directed the transition of the museum's growing collection to the Racine Art Museum. Since the late 1980s, Pepich has concentrated his efforts on building the museum's craft collection and on writing about craft. In recent years, his essays have appeared in exhibition catalogues for Jane Sauer, Joel Philip Myers, Toshiko Takaezu and Jay Musler. He has also contributed to well known craft publications such as *Metalsmith*, *The Crafts Report* and *Art Gallery International*. Pepich curates exhibitions of contemporary art, is a published writer on art and artists and has served as a juror for over 50 national and international art competitions and fine arts festivals.

### **Karen Johnson Boyd, Museum Sponsor and Donor**

Without Karen Johnson Boyd's generosity, vision and devotion to the arts, the Racine Art Museum would not exist. During the 1970s and 1980s, she was a regular donor of artwork to RAM's Wustum Museum of Fine Arts' permanent collection. In 1991, she donated a 200-piece collection of contemporary crafts that first gave Wustum Museum national significance. Her gift created concentrations in contemporary ceramics, fibers and metals of international importance, and formed the nucleus of RAM's current collection. Active as a collector and an avid supporter of craft artists since the 1960s, Karen Johnson Boyd served as a trustee of the American Craft Council. She is owner and president of Perimeter Gallery, Inc. in Chicago, which represents many major figures in the field of ceramics, fiber and metals.

## COLLECTION

RAM's collection primarily focuses on ceramics, fibers, glass, metals and wood from nationally and internationally recognized artists. Including nearly 10,000 objects, the collection features work from artists such as Dale Chihuly, Toshiko Takaezu, Joel Philip Myers, Wendell Castle, George Nakashima, Gertrud and Otto Natzler, Peter Voulkos, Lia Cook, Sheila Hicks, Arline Fisch, and Albert Paley. Directly responding to artists who create meaningful artistic statements in craft media, RAM dispels any differentiation between fine arts and crafts and between the artist and the craftsperson.

## ARCHITECTURE

RAM's bold architecture is the result of a renovation of several existing structures with portions built as long ago as the late 1800s. Award winning Chicago-based architects Brininstool+Lynch reinvented the space to create a new 40,000 square foot museum designed especially to house and protect RAM's permanent collection. The new building features an exterior façade clad with translucent acrylic panels. During the day, these panels play with natural light and create a lustrous building exterior. At night, lighting from above causes the façade to glow. The building's main floor has large frameless windows along the sidewalks to accommodate displays of art that encourage the public to interact with the artists' work. To make the project sustainable, Brininstool+Lynch designed the museum with a number of environmentally efficient features.

**FACILITIES**

The RAM facility includes exhibition galleries, a sculpture courtyard, a museum store, an art library and research center, art storage and preparation areas, as well as administrative offices. As a sustainable project, the museum incorporates new technologies and products, such as recycled rubber flooring to reduce negative environmental impact. RAM is one of the first museums to use flat screen video monitors in place of traditional informational and exhibition signage.

**EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH**

The Racine Art Museum offers community outreach programs and studio art workshops taught by nationally known artists at RAM and RAM's Wustum Museum. Its educational efforts cross cultural, economic, educational and social barriers. Programs are designed to encourage at-risk children to stay in school; to support creative thinking in the workforce; and to establish an environment of lifelong learning about the arts.