

**RACINE ART MUSEUM (RAM)
HERITAGE AND VISION**

HERITAGE

The Racine Art Museum (RAM) would not exist without the vision of those who founded the Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts. In 1938, Jennie E. Wustum chose to honor her husband's memory by donating their house, its property and a small trust fund to the city of Racine, Wisconsin. She wanted to create an art museum and park that would benefit future generations of the Racine community. In 1941, her donation formally became the Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts through the cooperative efforts of the City of Racine and the Racine Art Association (now the Wustum Museum Art Association, Inc.). Her act of generosity inspired the growth of what has become one of the most impressive art collections of its type in any museum in North America. This institution — originally intended to serve Racine — will now impact a community of more than 11 million people in the Chicago-Milwaukee area who will experience it as the new Racine Art Museum.

VISION

When the Racine Art Museum opens in May 2003, it will begin another chapter in the Wustum family's cultural vision. After it opened, the Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts became an impressive collection of ceramics, fibers, glass, metals and wood, as well as photography, painting and sculpture. By the 1990s, the collection had grown so large that the museum's galleries could exhibit no more than 10% of it in a year. It was time to re-evaluate the museum's plans for the future and to think about how to better serve its more than 50,000 annual visitors.

With the help of a new generation of generous corporate and private donors like Karen Johnson Boyd, the new Racine Art Museum is being built especially to house and present the museum's collections. The new museum facility, designed by the award-winning Chicago architecture firm Brininstool + Lynch, includes nearly 10,000 square feet of exhibit area which will allow for traveling exhibitions and a larger portion of the permanent collection to be displayed. Meanwhile, the Wustum campus will continue to feature regional and local artists, while carrying on the tradition of hosting the museum's arts education and community outreach programs. Although Wustum already has the largest museum-based studio art program in the state, RAM's opening will allow Wustum to expand these programs. The Racine Art Museum honors the legacy begun by the Wustum family, while it transforms the museum into a new cultural destination where visitors have the opportunity to understand, experience and learn about the value of contemporary craft as fine art.

COLLECTION

Seeking work from artists who create meaningful artistic statements in craft media, RAM dispels any differentiation between fine arts and crafts and between the artist and the craftsman. The Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts' collection began with 300 pieces of art created for the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project in the 1930s. Under the care of Executive Director and Curator of Collections Bruce W. Pepich, the museum began to concentrate its efforts on acquiring an impressive collection of ceramics, fibers, glass, metals and wood from nationally and internationally recognized artists. The Racine Art Museum now possesses one of the largest collections of contemporary craft of any North American museum, including the largest collections of contemporary teapots and artist-made jewelry.

FACTS: RAM'S ORIGINS

The Racine Art Museum's permanent collection features more than 3,000 artworks from internationally recognized artists such as Dale Chihuly, Joel Philip Myers, Wendell Castle, George Nakashima, Gertrud and Otto Natzler, Peter Voukos, Lia Cook, Sheila Hicks, Arline Fisch and Albert Paley.

CRAFT AS FINE ART

Dating back to the 1950s, North America has benefited from a movement of artists dedicated to the serious exploration of craft media in the creation of artwork. Post-industrialized American society had begun to shift the definition of craft from the construction of strictly functional objects to artistic disciplines. As craft was considered less of a mundane pursuit, artists began learning and applying traditional techniques to create sophisticated works that primarily function as a form of self-expression. In support of its mission to elevate the stature of craft to fine arts, the Racine Art Museum will present its collections based on similarities in artists' concepts, rather than by strict material categorization. The museum will continue to acquire artwork that uses a variety of media to illustrate the diversity of culture and expression.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Museum and collection:

Bruce W. Pepich,
Executive Director and Curator of Collections
262 638 8300
bpepich@wustum.org
www.ramart.org
www.wustum.org

Building design:

Brad Lynch
312 640 0505
bl@brininstool-lynch.com
www.brininstool-lynch.com