

R | A | M

Represent: Exploring Portraits from RAM's Collection

January 20 – September 1, 2019

In the most general and narrow terms, a portrait is understood as a two-dimensional representation that focuses on a sitter's upper body. In an expanded context, a portrait could be understood as an image, or object, that conveys information about a person or persons (or animal) beyond the physical—reflecting periods of time, personalities, personal circumstances, and social and cultural dynamics.

This exhibition features pieces that embrace the idea of a portrait as an investigation of character and situation, tangible details, and abstract elements. From self-portraits to works that encapsulate the essence of a subject through metaphor or emotion, these pieces encourage contemplation about how human beings understand one another as well as the world around them. At a time when selfies and social media shares are ever more popular, it is intriguing to consider what it means to explore the self and others through two and three-dimensional representations.

While there are many possibilities for organization, this exhibition focuses on subject type with works broken down into loose groups of traditional portraits, self-portraits, artists, famous people, metaphors or types, and fantasy. This broad approach includes photography, paintings, and prints along with stitched fiber reliefs and sculptures made of various materials. Works from the mid-twentieth-century are shown alongside pieces created in the last ten years. The spectrum of artists whose works are represented features a variety from Works Projects Administration photographers of the 1930s—who operated much like photojournalists—to contemporary ceramic artists.

Featured Artists

With degrees in psychology and anthropology from Indiana University, **Renie Breskin Adams** first studied drawing and painting while a research associate in psychology and education. A weaving class offered her the opportunity to explore composition and style in a way that drawing and painting did not. Adams brings marked thoughtfulness and sensitivity to what she calls her "embroidered pictures." She draws on things she has experienced, thought, felt, and imagined—translating them into colorful two-dimensional works that combine embroidery with knotless netting, weaving, crocheting, knotting, and, on occasion, paint or ink. In addition to creating two-dimensional artworks, Adams has authored and illustrated children's books and holds her MFA in textile design.

MacArthur Fellowship, or "genius grant," recipient **Dawoud Bey** was born in Chicago in 1953. He first studied art at the School of Visual Arts in New York in the late seventies. Working in the style of street photography, Bey's work is documentary in nature. Particularly focused on young and marginalized groups, he states, "My interest in young people has to do with the fact that they are the arbiters of style in the community; their appearance speaks most

R | A | M

strongly of how a community of people defines themselves at a particular historical moment.” Bey has his BFA in Photography from Empire State College and received his MFA from Yale University School of Art. He is currently a professor at Columbia College in Chicago, Illinois.

Though she lived in New York City for most of her adult life, **Carol Blanchard** (1918 – 1980) was born in Springfield, Massachusetts. Blanchard began her art career as an illustrator for the New York department store Lord and Taylor, where she helped define the advertising aesthetic for their bridal shop. With this background in commercial art, she went on to work for *Harper’s Bazaar* and other Condé Nast fashion publications. During the 1940s and 1950s, Blanchard’s paintings were shown at venerable art institutions around the US, including the Art Institute of Chicago and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMa), New York, New York. In fact, **Karl J. Priebe** (also in this exhibition) and Blanchard had their work shown together at MoMa in the exhibition, **1955-56 Children’s Holiday Carnival of Modern Art**. Comparatively unknown in the cannon of art, it should be noted that **Andy Warhol** cited Blanchard as an influence.

Dan Dailey was born in Philadelphia in 1947 and holds his BFA from the Philadelphia College of Art and his MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). In 1973, he founded the glass department at Massachusetts College of Art and Design in Boston, Massachusetts. Dailey has taught at his alma mater, RISD, as well as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston, the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in Deer Isle, Maine, and the Pilchuck Glass School in Stanwood, Washington. Besides teaching and lecturing, Dailey has been in over 250 exhibitions since 1971. A former fellow of the National Endowment for the Arts and past Fulbright fellow, Dailey has served as both the president and a board member of the Glass Art Society. His original intention was to be a cartoonist. This interest inspires the whimsical, abstract nature of Dailey’s portraits in glass, which address the absurdity of archetypes.

Albuquerque native and figurative sculptor **Susan Stamm Evans** was born in 1952. She received her BA from the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque and her MA in ceramics from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. Whether a large outdoor work in bronze, or a smaller, more delicate work of porcelain, Evans’ work is suggestive of a larger narrative, but focuses on the private, the personal, and the intimate. Evans has been a full-time artist since 1978 and still resides in New Mexico.

The second half of **Represent** (installed in early May 2019) will feature the work of Milwaukee-based artist **Kierston Ghaznavi**. Ghaznavi studied graphic design at UW-Milwaukee, but now favors creating articulated paper dolls that represent, in her own words, “black pop culture, afro-centric natural hair, positive imagery of black women, self-love and awareness.” She translates her childhood interest in playing with dolls and drawing characters from her imagination into an exploration of identity, realized through anonymous subjects or personal friends. With a process that takes anywhere from three to eight hours per piece, Ghaznavi draws subjects with pen, markers, or ink wash and transforms them into dolls with moveable limbs that range from seven to 24 inches tall.

R | A | M

Phillipe Halsman (1906 – 1976) was born in Riga, Latvia, but spent his early years in Austria. It was in Austria that Halsman was accused of and wrongly convicted for his father's murder. Thanks to the intervention of other important Jewish individuals, like **Sigmund Freud** and **Albert Einstein**, he was pardoned by the President of Austria two years into his four-year sentence. Halsman then moved to Paris, where he opened a photography studio in 1934. While in France, Halsman first began to take "celebrity" portraits, photographing great artists like **Le Corbusier** and **Marc Chagall**. With the onset of WWII and the looming Nazi invasion, Halsman moved—again with the help of Einstein—to the United States in 1940. In America, Halsman spent the next 30 years creating portraits of "everyone who was anyone," from starlets **Marilyn Monroe** and **Elizabeth Taylor** to artists like **Salvador Dali**, with whom he also collaborated to create experimental photography. Many of Halsman's photographs graced the covers of leading American magazines in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.

Judith Hoyt was born in the Catskills Mountains in 1958 and attended the State University of New York at New Paltz where she received her BFA in printmaking. Hoyt then studied under renowned metalsmith **Robert W. Ebendorf**, whose own career was the subject of a solo show at RAM in 2014. Exploring the boundaries of collage, Hoyt incorporates found materials, such as paper and metal, into her overall creative practice, which focuses on art jewelry, encaustics, and sculpture. Her aesthetic relies heavily on the textures and patinas of the materials she finds as well as the figural form. She was the recipient of the 2003 New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in crafts and her work can be found in collections around the US.

A dressmaker by trade, the late Canadian artist **Rosita Johanson** (1937 – 2007) applied her natural ability of working with thread and fabric to create colorful, embroidered narratives full of people, animals, and activity. As an artist, Johanson was largely self-taught—she learned many of her methods of working from a lifetime of being near people interested in fiber and thread, and through her own investigations as an adult. She had two primary methods for executing her compositions—a combination of hand and machine stitching and punch needle embroidery (also known as loop pile embroidery), which creates a surface similar to a miniature pile carpet. In addition, her textiles exhibit a strong interest in visual collage as she combined fabric with fiber and found objects. With subjects ranging from the political and social, to the very personal and self-reflective, Johanson's work brings whimsy to everyday scenes.

Painter and Milwaukee native **Karl J. Priebe** (1914 – 1976) earned degrees from both the Layton School of Art in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Priebe began his career in the anthropology department of the Milwaukee Public Museum and went on to become the director of the Kalamazoo Institute of the Arts before returning to the Layton School of Arts as an instructor. Priebe's reputation, however, extended far beyond the Midwest. His work was often shown at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, DC and at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City, sometimes alongside the work of painter **Carol Blanchard** (the subject of Priebe's portrait and whose work can also be found in this exhibition). Notably, Priebe is the only Milwaukee native, and one of very few Americans, to receive the prestigious Prix de Rome, an exclusive

R | A | M

French scholarship given to artists, which began in 1663 and ran until 1968. Priebe became interested in African-American culture while teaching art in Chicago, and many of his portraits are drawn from memories of his time at working at a Chicago settlement house.

Over her six decade career, **Claire Prussian** has addressed such topics as narcissism, the violence found in fairy tales, and the realities of aging. Educated at Wellesley College in Massachusetts and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Prussian was one of the 20 founding members of Artemesia Gallery (1973-2003) in Chicago, a cooperative gallery that promoted women artists. After the age of forty, Prussian began a series of drawings of friends whom she made look prematurely aged. It was an undertaking that one subject found so upsetting that she did not speak to Prussian for over a decade. Now utilizing digital image-editing programs and collage as well as printmaking techniques, Prussian continues to examine societal expectations, the march of time, and vanity in her work. Source: <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2004-07-16-0407160338-story.html>

In 2003, during Harley-Davidson Motorcycle Company's centennial celebration, self-taught Wisconsin artist **Michael Pry** captured the images of several event attendees using his large format camera. Printed directly from the original 5 x 7 inch negatives, Pry's black-and-white photographs—taken in a tent on the event grounds—chronicle, in the artist's own words, "the people that ride." The portraits were also published in the 2004 book, *Harley Nation: A Visual Tour*, which is available for purchase at the Racine Art Museum Store.

For over 30 years, **Paul J. Smith**, Director Emeritus of the Museum of Arts and Design in New York (formerly the American Craft Museum), took casual portraits of artists as he encountered them in various settings, like their studios, conferences, and international events. Many of these artists, including **Wendell Castle**, **Dale Chihuly**, **Robert W. Ebendorf**, **Arline Fisch**, and **Toshiko Takaezu**, have become representative figures in twentieth-century American studio craft. Smith's informal and casual approach—sometimes capturing people in mid-sentence or pausing while working—offers an intimate look at the personal side of making art. A book published in 2016, *Masters of Craft: 224 Artists in Fiber, Clay, Glass, Metal, and Wood, Portraits by Paul J. Smith* features his 240 photographs of twentieth-century craft artists.

Born in Boise, Idaho in 1926, nationally recognized painter and printmaker **Beth Van Hoesen** earned her BA from Stanford. She went on to study in Europe at the École des Beaux Arts de Fontainebleau, the Académie Julian, and the Académie de la Grande Chaumière before returning to the states and enrolling at the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute). In 1953, she married designer and printmaker **Mark Adams**. By 1956, Van Hoesen turned exclusively to printmaking—producing realistic and sensitive portrayals of everyday people, places, and things. Although based in San Francisco for most of her career, her works were included in a number of thematic exhibitions held at RAM's Wustum Museum during the 1990s, and her work was the subject of a 2012 solo show at RAM entitled, *The Observant Eye*. Van Hoesen, who passed in 2010, is currently the most collected artist in RAM's permanent collection.