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Jessica Zalewski
Marketing and Publications Manager
262.638.8300
jzalewski@ramart.org

Racine Art Museum Expanding the Definition of What a Vessel Could Be

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In Racine Art Museum's extensive holdings of contemporary craft, a variety of approaches to the idea of a "vessel" are represented. Open July 16, 2017 – January 21, 2018, **Variations on a Theme: Vessels from RAM's Collection** is the second in a series of museum exhibitions surveying the landscape of craft through theory, design, and history. As evidenced by the more than 50 examples on display in this exhibition, there are many ways contemporary artists interpret or investigate what a vessel could or should look like.

Since the mid-twentieth century, many craft artists have purposefully made objects that challenge the idea of function. The works they created could be functional in an expected way, functional but not seeming to be, or wholly sculptural and not meant to function at all. Responding to social and cultural dynamics that were expanding definitions and breaking down boundaries, craft artists were similarly looking at the types of work they created. Often, traditional forms or shapes—such as teapots, furniture, jewelry, and vessels—would be used as reference points for investigating new possibilities for use or content.

The standard definition of a vessel suggests a container for holding something, usually liquid. In this show, there are pieces that could be identified as vases, bowls, bottles, jars, or not as any of these things. Whether clay, glass, or metal, these works are studies in scale, color, function, and design. This is not an exhaustive representation of RAM's holdings but a summary of various types as well as an exploration of the relationship between theory and form.

This exhibition is made possible by: Platinum Sponsors - Karen Johnson Boyd and William B. Boyd, Windgate Charitable Foundation; Diamond Sponsor: Osborne and Scekcic Family

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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 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.