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Racine Art Museum: Visit Racine Art Museum's *Lost and Found* 9/21/2015

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Artists gravitate towards using found objects for numerous reasons: the objects may suggest another time or space, encourage a reconsideration of something familiar, and/or draw on personal, historical, political, social, or pop culture references. Often, the fact that viewers may recognize the found objects—and thereby draw on their original meaning as well as a new contextualization—is significant. Open September 25, 2015 – January 3, 2016, *Lost and Found* featuring Kim Alsbrooks and Nikki Couppee underscores how some artists recontextualize the marginalized or overlooked, and imbue the ordinary with something extraordinary. The exhibition showcases works from Alsbrooks and Couppee together with pieces from RAM's diverse collection.

The incorporation of "non-art" materials into artworks is generally regarded as a modern approach, art historically dating to the early 1900s. These materials are usually found objects. The artist may alter them slightly for use in their work, but often, the original appearance is retained to construct layers of meaning.

For 11 years, Kim Alsbrooks has married past and present, combining modern trash with delicate portraits of historical figures. Motivated by a desire to explore social and cultural constructs such as stratification by wealth, birth, race, or gender, Alsbrooks subverts the potential "haughtiness" of the portrait subjects by rendering their image on flattened aluminum cans or fast food containers. Eighteenth-century historical miniature ivory paintings offer her inspiration, both in form and content.

Interested in the connection between adornment and social status, Nikki Couppee uses found objects, Plexiglas®, and brass to create jewelry that appears opulent even though it is made of non-precious elements and found components. Her extravagant and colorful earrings, brooches, and neckpieces echo royal or precious jewelry, yet the more "humble" origin of the materials links their value to overall design and the skill of the artist.

Featured among the work of newer artists Alsbrooks and Couppee, pieces from RAM's collection reflect the legacy of found object use in contemporary art. Interestingly, *Lost and Found* presents work newly acquired by the museum from some long-term proponents of such materials—a dedicated group of related artists and friends whose adornment, sculpture, and correspondence reflects the efforts and interests of a community that have been inspired by one another as well as by their daily surroundings.

One of the most recent gifts—Roy Rogers Lunchbox—was created by Teri Blond and Bobby Hansson, and given to RAM by Robert W. Ebendorf in honor of his friend, collaborator, and fellow professor, Hansson. Combining a Roy Rogers lunchbox, an old tin toy car, an oilcan, a coat hanger, and a tin tube, this piece blends popular culture, sentiment, youthful interests, and an imaginative composition.

Other artists from RAM's collection who are represented in *Lost and Found* include – Boris Bally, Harriete Estel Berman, Jerry Bleem, Robert W. Ebendorf, Geoffrey Gorman, Tina Fung Holder, Judith Hoyt, Lissa Hunter, Esther Knobel, Keith LoBue, Karyl Sisson, Kiff Slemmons, and Anne Wilson.

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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.



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