

R|A|M

Sketchbooks from RAM's Collection: Exploring Process

October 12, 2022 – February 11, 2023

For some, an artist's working process could be as interesting to see as the so-called "final work." Where does inspiration come from? How is something constructed? How does an idea go from being an intangible thing to an object or image that exists in reality? Sometimes artists use sketchbooks or preliminary drawings to help them sort out ideas or technical matters. Other times, sketches are exercises or thought generators and not a means to a specific end. Regardless of how employed, sketches offer insight into creative practices and, sometimes, an artist's daily life.

As an institution that collects works on paper alongside craft, RAM has various sketchbooks and individual sketches in its holdings. To date, these works are being acquired in tandem with, or in relation to, other works by the same artists. In some instances, these sketchbooks and sketches directly correlate to works in the collection—showing them side by side offers opportunities to compare and contrast a fully resolved work with the ideas leading up to it. In other instances, RAM has sketches and sketchbooks as part of an artist's archive—there may or may not be direct examples on hand, but their presence still offers a window into how an artist pulls ideas together.

If institutions have materials like this on hand, they do not always exhibit them in the galleries—RAM is doing so because they are valuable resources and significant objects and images independent of their connection to any other work of art.

Biographies and statements from featured artists

Renie Breskin Adams

b. Michigan City, Indiana, 1938–

The need to objectify the meaning I find in my life is what impels me to make art. My work is an ongoing subjective commentary, a dignifying of humble events, a revelation of thoughts and dreams, a view of inner realities.

—Renie Breskin Adams

Education

1960 BA, 1965 MA, and 1973 MFA Indiana University Bloomington

Select Public Collections

Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection, University of Wisconsin-Madison

The Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois

Racine Art Museum, Wisconsin

With degrees in psychology, anthropology, and visual arts, **Renie Breskin Adams** brings marked thoughtfulness and sensitivity to her self-described "embroidered pictures." Adams 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 occasionally paint or ink. Over the last 20 years, RAM has acquired over 80 works by Adams, establishing an archive and making the museum the largest single repository of her work.

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<http://reniebee.com/>

<https://americanart.si.edu/artist/renie-breskin-adams-7106>

John N. Colt

b. Madison, Wisconsin, 1935–d. Amherst, Massachusetts, 1999

My work consists of ideas about metamorphosis, change, and transformation—life processes eventuated through colored water.

—John N. Colt

Education

BA and MFA University of Wisconsin-Madison

Select Public Collections

Cedarburg Art Museum, Wisconsin

Museum of Wisconsin Art, West Bend, Wisconsin

Racine Art Museum, Wisconsin

John N. Colt created paintings, drawings, watercolors, and prints that underscored his interest in the natural world at a cellular level. With a poetic color palette, he sometimes combined imagery in a surreal, dreamlike way—as if looking through a microscope. RAM's extensive archive of works by Colt includes several examples that feature creatures vaguely resembling starfish, sea anemones, tadpoles, worms, and other insects—the ambiguity of their identity giving them an otherworldly quality.

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=QcpQG-LI5WE>

<https://galleryofwisconsinart.com/artist-works.php?artistId=340298&artist=John%20Colt>

Margaret Ponce Israel

b. Havana, Cuba, 1929–d. New York City, New York, 1987

My work is decorative, in the sense that I intend it to reach you very quickly, on a level of pure enjoyment. And I use familiar themes because it's an easy way to communicate with people. I think of it all as a journey where the adventure lies in seeing how one thing works with another.

—Margaret Ponce Israel

Education

Syracuse University, New York

École des Beaux Arts, Paris, France

Académie de la Grand Chaumière, Paris, France

Stanley Hayter Graphic Art Studio, Paris, France

Atelier 17, Paris, France

Select Solo Exhibitions

(Israel has participated in numerous group exhibitions)

2001 Perimeter Gallery, Chicago, Illinois

2001 Racine Art Museum

1997 Susan Teller Gallery

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Select Public Collections

Brooklyn Museum, New York
Museum of Art and Design, New York
Racine Art Museum, Wisconsin

Margaret Ponce Israel lived and worked in New York City after being brought to the United States from Cuba as a child. Israel's studio and home were within a building in Manhattan that once functioned as a horse stable. While Israel lived there the space overflowed with art as well as animals such as a bantam rooster, guinea hens, doves, a rabbit, dogs, and a cat. Throughout her career, Israel earned a multitude of awards including 1956 first and second prize in ceramics at the Young Americans exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts, which is known today as the Museum of Arts and Design.

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=5HZGZbiJs3Y>

<http://kohlerfoundation.org/preservation/other-artists/margaret-ponce-israel/>

Tom Rauschke

b. Milwaukee, Wisconsin 1950–

From the beginning my work has been about trees. The first attraction was to the wood itself, in its raw form, "tree parts." I loved all of it, the color, the grain, the knots, the bark, and even the cracks. For me it was an obvious choice, and it grew everywhere around me. All different types, most of it free, and ready to work. All I had to do is figure out a way to remove the parts that I didn't want.

—Tom Rauschke

Education

1973 BFA University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Select Exhibitions

2006 Racine Art Museum, Wisconsin
2006 Del Mano Gallery, Los Angeles, California
2005 Wharton Esherick Museum, Paoli, Pennsylvania

Select Public Collections

John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, Wisconsin
Racine Art Museum, Wisconsin
Villa Terrace Decorative Arts Museum, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Tom Rauschke has been working with his wife **Kaaren Wiken** to create extraordinary works of art in wood and fiber for over three decades. Kaaren has now retired from embroidery but Tom has continued to create his intricate lathe-turned vessels. His pieces highlight form over function. Their imagery evokes the landscape and various flora and fauna. For years the couple has worked under their shared studio name Xn-trix Art Studio, which is located in an 1860's hand-hewn timber barn near the couple's farmhouse in Wisconsin on the edge of Kettle Moraine State Forest.

<https://xntrixart.com/>

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Red Weldon Sandlin

b. Owensboro, Kentucky, 1958–

My hope is that I am presenting work that the viewer will be drawn into. Initially it appears fun and familiar, but on further inspection there is more to discover—like a good story.

—Red Weldon Sandlin

Education

1978 AA, Art Institute of Atlanta, Georgia

Select Group Exhibitions

2013 Newark Art Museum, New Jersey

2012 Mint Museum of Craft and Design, Charlotte, North Carolina

2009 Racine Art Museum, Wisconsin

Select Public Collections

Fuller Craft Museum, Brockton, Massachusetts

Mint Museum of Craft and Design, Charlotte, North Carolina

Racine Art Museum, Wisconsin

Red Weldon Sandlin's career began as a graphic designer but pivoted to ceramics after she took a ceramics course for fun. Sandlin's working process begins with sketches, such as those that are a part of the binder seen in this exhibition. She will draw on tissue and then transfer that imagery onto wet clay. Her elaborate ceramic pieces—which often incorporate a teapot and a book of some kind—are inspired by children's literature. Playing with words and meaning, as well as adding layers of humor and insight, Sandlin crafts titles for her works that are based on the source material.

<https://americanart.si.edu/artist/red-weldon-sandlin-27404>

Artists of Color at RAM

RAM is committed to supporting diverse voices—whether that diversity reflects race, gender, sexuality, age, ability, social standing, or world perspective.

At this moment in time, it is critical that spotlights are placed on voices that have been historically underrepresented, at RAM that begins with women and artists of color. Artists of color are identified in this context as non-white and non-European in heritage. This simplification—which is arguable as a flawed starting point—does not account for the nuances and variations of society. It is a beginning—a way to direct those who want to educate themselves about what is possible when new perspectives are discovered. Modifications to this approach are expected as RAM learns and grows.

Further, as an educational institution rooted in the humanities and using art as a catalyst, we want to encourage inquiry and exploration about the world we live in. We hope spotlighting artists of color spurs further engagement with these artists and their ideas. Visitors are encouraged to take note and research this artist via the internet to find out more about their biography and greater body of work.

Margaret Ponce Israel



Women Artists at RAM

RAM acknowledges the efforts of self-identifying women in the art world consistently and sincerely at all times. The museum highlights how women are inextricably woven—and often the foundation—of creative endeavors and discourse. By current count, 41% of the artists in RAM’s collection are women. This percentage—which is consistently increasing—is already substantially greater than the ratios calculated at other organizations with permanent collections and active exhibition programs. At RAM, work made by different genders is considered for inclusion in the museum’s holdings on equal terms. And notably, because RAM relies on gifts of artwork to build the collection, this policy has been reinforced by open-minded donors who have collected, and then donated, quality work regardless of the gender of the artist.

The following is a list of women whose works are included in this exhibition. This effort—similar to efforts to highlight artists of color at RAM—is not meant to single out artists to stigmatize them but to magnify and cast a spotlight on their significance. It reflects intention, goodwill, and an attempt to reckon with years of historical underrepresentation. RAM hopes this provides opportunities for audiences to learn more about these artists and their ideas. Visitors are encouraged to take note and research these artists via the internet to find out more about their biographies and larger bodies of work.

Renie Breskin Adams
Margaret Ponce Israel
Red Weldon Sandlin