

# R|A|M

## **Zero Waste: Objects**

January 31 – October 12, 2024

The incorporation of found, “non-art” materials into artworks is generally regarded as a modern approach, dating to the early 1900s. The artist may alter these objects for use in their work, but the original appearance is often retained to some degree to construct layers of meaning. As the home of North America’s largest contemporary craft collection, RAM also houses numerous works created from found materials—candy, clothespins, dollar bills, postcards, tools, zippers, and more.

Artists gravitate towards using found objects for numerous reasons: the objects may suggest another time or space; encourage a reconsideration of something familiar; reflect concerns with consumption and the environmental effects of mass production; and/or draw on personal, historical, political, social, or pop culture references.

Drawn entirely from RAM’s collection, this exhibition—and the one that replaces it in the fall—highlights artists that repurpose materials originally intended for a use other than art. The exhibitions support RAM’s Zero Waste Art Initiative, an ongoing and multi-faceted project encouraging reconsideration of consumption habits and creative solutions for reuse. As outlined by RAM’s Education Department, this initiative “is working to establish partnerships with local businesses and manufacturing plants to reduce their waste and keep it out of landfills by turning these materials into educational, eco-art.”

## **Biographies and statements from select featured artists**

*I’m attracted to real objects from the real world and I don’t want to just pull objects out and put them in the box, but I transform them, reconfigure them, and put them in unexpected ways. I’m always looking for something to include in my piece. I go to swap meets a lot. I dumpster dive a lot. I find them in thrift stores. Some of these things are from all over the world because we do travel a lot and some are just found and altered and shaped differently to go into a piece.*

Early in her career, collage artist **Janice Lowry** (1946 – 2009) gravitated towards assemblages housed in homemade wooden shadowboxes in order to avoid paying for expensive framing. These assemblages, sometimes taking on the form of a house, dealt with themes of the domestic, self-identity, rites of passage, and mortality. The subjects of many of these works were pulled from the experiences of Lowry’s unstable childhood.

In addition to her assemblage work, Lowry created an extensive collection of 126 art journals, which she maintained throughout her life. These journals,

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completed over the course of 40 years, are now in the permanent collection of the Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Art, Washington DC. Comprised of collages, lists, and journal entries, Lowry explains that motivation behind her journals is "to prove that I existed."

Owing to a generous gift from Jon Gothold and Kohler Foundation, Inc., Lowry is represented in RAM's collection by 51 pieces.

Read:



[smithsonianmag.com/  
arts-culture/drawn-  
from-life-142610269/](https://smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/drawn-from-life-142610269/)

Watch:



[youtube.com/  
watch?v=AculjM6He0k](https://youtube.com/watch?v=AculjM6He0k)

**Wendy Maruyama** (1952–) is a furniture maker, artist, and educator. Since shifting away from a particular emphasis on functional and conceptual furniture, Maruyama's work often explores subjects that stem from her Japanese heritage, as well as feminism and social practice. She received her MFA from Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), Monroe County, New York. Reflecting her technical aptitude as well as her creativity and determination. Maruyama is one of the first two women to receive a master's degree in Furniture Design from RIT. While she does not address the topic in her work, Maruyama was born deaf. As the award-winning series, *Craft in America* describes: "*Maruyama satisfied her artistic passions by becoming an important furniture maker in a field dominated by men and in the process, overcame challenges related to her deafness and disability.*"

Her work is included in the permanent collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England; the Dallas Museum of Art, Texas; and the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Massachusetts. Throughout her career, Maruyama has received numerous awards and honors including the California Civil Liberties Public Education Grant; several national Endowment for the Arts Grants in Visual Arts; and a Fulbright Research Grant to allow her to work in the United Kingdom. Maruyama is represented at RAM by one work.

Explore:



[wendymaruyama.com/  
home.html](https://wendymaruyama.com/home.html)

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Silversmith **Joy Raskin** (1967–) has been working with metal since 1984 when she took a metalsmithing course in high school. She continued her formal education in metals with a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, and an MFA from the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth. During her MFA, she focused primarily on creating flatware and earned her nickname of “Spoon Lady.” Of the four Raskin pieces that RAM holds in its permanent collection, all are spoons—including one work that is set of five spoons and one that is a brooch created out of a spoon. This is not to say that Raskin works exclusively with flatware; in recent years, she has experimented with knitting thin wire to create metal “fabric” and working with colored craft wire to create patterned jewelry. Her work ranges in size from small pieces of jewelry to large, sculptural pieces up to six feet tall.

In 1986 at the age of 19, she became one of the youngest members inducted into the League of New Hampshire Craftsmen, and in 1995, she was awarded an Individual Artist Fellowship award from the New Hampshire Council for the Arts. This grant allowed Raskin to focus on her studio practice and quit her job working in commercial jewelry repair. In addition to RAM, her work is held in the collections of the White House, Washington DC; the Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC; and the Currier Museum of Art, Manchester, New Hampshire.

Watch:



[youtube.com/  
watch?v=9KGZyMlslWQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9KGZyMlslWQ)

*The simplicity of the basic knot, combined with the repetitive nature of knotting, is meditative and allows me to immerse myself in the work. As each knot is tied, it is as though a pulse is added to the form, as though I am breathing life into the weave. The sculptures grow as I work on them, forming baskets or containers of potential life in symbolic form.*

Using a basketry technique known as knotting, **Norman Sherfield** (1948–) creates sculptural textile pieces using waxed linen thread combined with found objects. Sherfield began knotting in the 1980s when he enrolled in a basketry class taught by Rosalie Friis-Ross. In the early years of his knotting practice, he used rocks or Styrofoam® as a base for his pieces, eventually integrating toys and other found objects. Sherfield experiments with his incorporation of found objects; sometimes leaving the base material visible, other times completely covering it with knotting. Inspired by the Surrealists, Sherfield enjoys incorporating elements of randomness and chance into his pieces, occasionally rolling dice to determine his knotting pattern.

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Sherfield has been a member of the National Basketry Organization since it was founded in 1989. He is also one of the founders of the LA Knotters; a small group of Los Angeles based basketmakers that gather to work on projects and create collaborative works. He is represented in RAM's collection by three works.

Watch:



[youtube.com/  
watch?v=BNICDv8sDLO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNICDv8sDLO)

*Found objects do have a past connected to them, a previous use, a previous association all kinds of things come with them, as certainly these things would be, and I also thought it was a scary thing to do and that I wanted to do something more daring. I didn't want to step back and make something more easy.*

**Kiff Slemmons** (1944–) combines more traditional jewelry making materials with found objects and what are considered to be non-precious materials. Drawing inspiration from the Surrealists, Slemmons works conceptually—sometimes incorporating visual puns and literary references and recontextualizing materials and images. For example, in her work, *Metabox*, she plays off the concept of “hand tools.” This work is comprised of a set of seven rings based on draftsman’s tools, created from a found pencil, ruler, and eraser, which are held in a toolbox-shaped jewelry box. The ruler is a common motif in Slemmons’ work. In a 1995 article for *American Craft*, Bonnie J. Miller explains, “*But by far [Slemmons’] favorite found object has been the ruler, which, with its allusions to scale, reflects both a constant concern of jewelers and our cultural obsession with measurement.*”

Her work can be found in the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England; the Renwick Gallery, Washington DC; the Museum of Arts and Design, New York, New York; and the Mint Museum, Charlotte, North Carolina. Slemmons is represented in RAM's permanent collection by nine works ranging from art jewelry to collaborative sculpture.

Explore:



[craftinamerica.org/  
artist/kiff-slemmons](https://craftinamerica.org/artist/kiff-slemmons)



### **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. In this moment in time, it is critical that spotlights are placed on voices that have been historically underrepresented, and 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 arguably 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, RAM wants to encourage inquiry and exploration about the world in which we live. RAM hopes spotlighting artists of color spurs further engagement with these artists and their ideas. The following is a list of artists of color whose works are included in this exhibition. This effort 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.

**Wendy Maruyama and Takako Saito**

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## **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.

**Susie Colquitt, Tara K. Daly, Linda Dolack, Kathleen Holmes, Judith Hoyt, Janice Lowry, Wendy Maruyama, Zoe Morrow, Judy Mulford, Noa Nadir, Joy Raskin, Takako Saito, Karyl Sisson, Kiff Slemmons, Lenore Tawney, Billie Jean Theide, Josette Urso, Ellen Wieske, and Roberta Williamson**