



PRESS RELEASE

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**The Racine Art Museum Features
Racine-Raised Artist Barbara Sorensen**

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Barbara Sorensen, who made her name with ceramic sculpture, has extended her interest in the natural landscape by expanding her material base and aesthetic composition. Open through April 14, 2013, **Barbara Sorensen: Elemental** features sculptural forms constructed from rope, wire, resin, aluminum, and mixed media evoking tide pools, sand dunes, and topographical formations. Sorensen connects the landscape to the human, organic body—offering responses that are felt as much as seen.

Sorensen has long been manipulating material to echo the natural landscape. In their surface textures and glazes, her ceramic sculptures often suggested the varied textures of this planet's crust. There is sense that these works not only depict features of the earth's surface and the artist's response to them, but they were also created out of the same fundamental material. Her glazes suggest cooled lava flows, fissures in the landscape, and striations in rock outcroppings. Although Sorensen's work in ceramics has provided her with a solid understanding of working in three dimensions, her more recent work incorporates materials that allow her even more "room" to maneuver since the physical weight of the earlier ceramic sculpture has been minimized. Whether powder-coated aluminum constructed into net or web-like forms, or rope and resin in concave shapes, these works convey a sense of organic phenomenon on both a microscopic and macroscopic level.

Sorensen makes distinctive connections between the body, the topography of the land, and vessels—playing off of the symbolic potential of each. For example, with her *Dwellings* series of open structures made of metal, she does not dictate how the pieces should be understood, but rather shares that the large-scale offers people the opportunity to imagine them as places to "crouch and remain inside." They become

(more)



vessels, of sorts, that could protect as well as isolate someone. Evoking the natural world in form, not just image, the artist engages the senses.

Barbara Sorensen studied at the University of Wisconsin and with sculptors—such as Rudy Autio, Don Reitz, and Peter Voukos—who were pushing the field of ceramics in new directions. In addition to being included in many public and private collections, her work is featured in numerous publications and has been exhibited internationally.

RAM at 10 | Growing America's Craft Collection

For its tenth anniversary and in honor of the area's rich artistic legacy, RAM is pleased to bring together the work of two acclaimed artists who call Racine their hometown. Looking back on the decade-long journey and the nature of the arts in Racine, the museum is hosting a series of exhibitions exploring the themes of heritage, heirlooms, and artistic traditions.

The first shows of this series are solo exhibitions for two artists, Karen Gunderson and Barbara Sorensen, who were raised in Racine before moving on to establish careers of national importance in other parts of the country. Both artists connect to the natural environment in intensely personal ways. While one prefers to create paintings and the other sculpture, both Gunderson and Sorensen present insightful and poetic reflections of the natural world. Their responses to their chosen subjects are different but also create a vivid dialogue as their works in different media are presented intermingled in one gallery space, allowing for a "conversation" between the individual objects.

On Friday, March 22 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm, the Racine Art Museum will host a gallery reception and discussion conducted by RAM Executive Director and Curator of Collections, Bruce W. Pepich. The public is invited to join these internationally known artists and learn more about *Karen Gunderson: Reflective* and *Barbara Sorensen: Elemental*. Discussion at 7:00 pm. \$10 Admission; RAM Members free.

This exhibition is made possible by: Presenting Sponsors - Karen Johnson Boyd and William B. Boyd, The Estate of Emile H. Mathis II, in Memory of his Parents: Emil H. and Anna T. Mathis, RAM Society Members, S.C. Johnson & Son, Inc., Windgate Charitable Foundation; Gold Sponsors - Racine United Arts Fund; Silver Sponsors - Mrs. Allen C. Buhler, Elwood Corporation, Osborne and Scekcic Family Foundation, Racine Community Foundation, W.T. Walker Group, Inc., Wisconsin Arts Board; Bronze Sponsors - The A.C. Buhler Family, CNH America LLC, E.C. Styberg Foundation, Inc., Educators Credit Union, In Sink Erator, John Kopulos-Corner House, The Marjorie L. Christiansen Foundation, The Norbell Foundation, Real Racine, Robert W. Baird & Co., Runzheimer Foundation, Ruud Family Foundation, and Wisconsin Public Radio.

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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.