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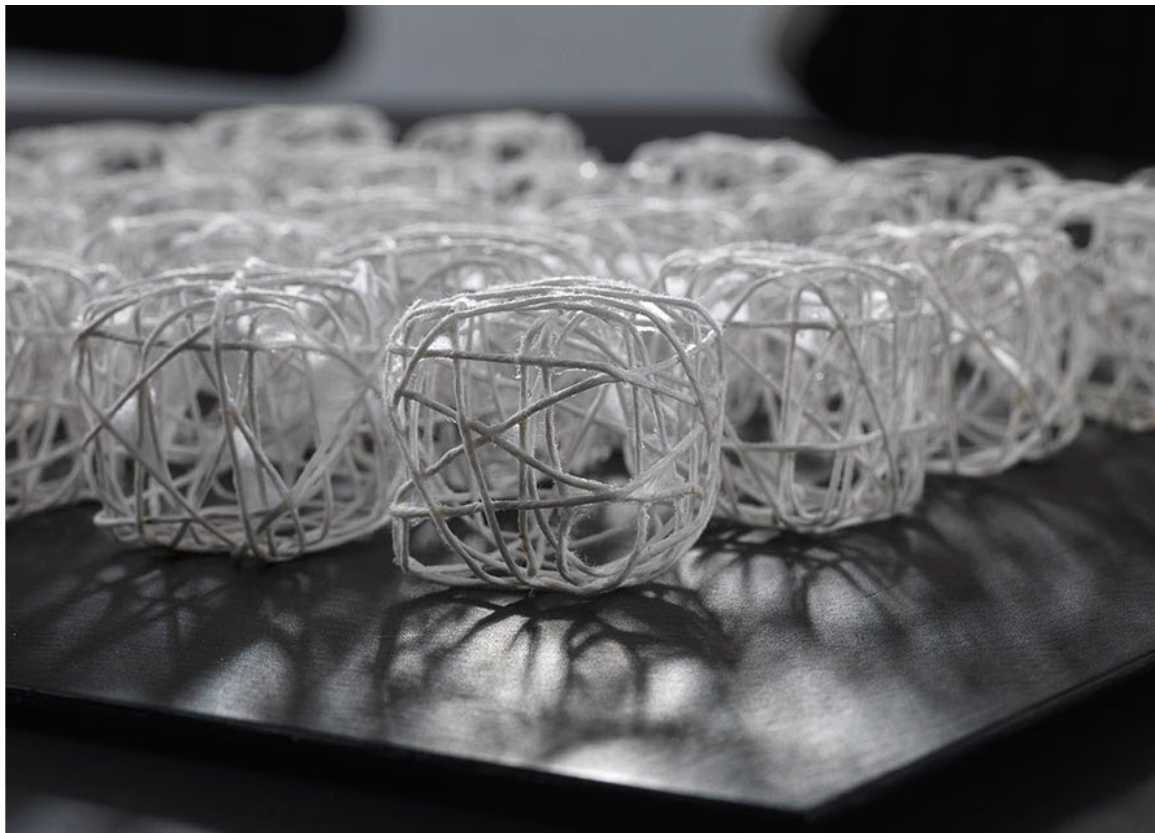
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Racine Art Museum showcases commissioned works by 36 of the world's top fiber artists



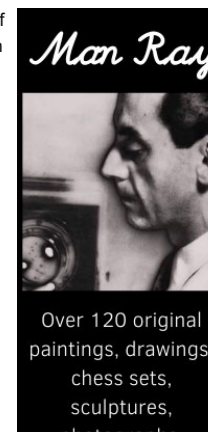
Naomi Kobayashi, *Cosmos*, 2005. Gampi paper, sumi ink, and paper thread, 15 x 15 1/4 x 2 7/8 inches. Cotsen Collection. Photography: Bruce M. White © Lloyd Cotsen, 2016.



RACINE, WI. - [Racine Art Museum](#) is presenting The Box Project: Uncommon Threads showcasing commissioned works by 36 of the world's top fiber artists. These artists, many of whom work on a large scale, were challenged to create an original piece within the confines of a small box. Organized by the Cotsen Foundation for Academic Research (CFAR) with RAM, this traveling exhibition presents works commissioned by Lloyd Cotsen between 2004 and 2013 together with 22 large-scale fiber art pieces on loan. Open May 21 - August 27, 2017, RAM is the only Midwestern venue for this show before its final stop in Washington, D.C.

The 36 commissioned works were made in response to a challenge issued by collector Lloyd Cotsen and his then textile curator Mary Hunt Kahlenberg, who stipulated that each artist's entry must be three-dimensional and sized to fit inside a relatively small, square or rectangular box of standardized dimensions. The artists were also asked to create something with fiber, broadly defined. The great variety of solutions that resulted and the wide range of materials and techniques used by artists speak to the project's successful outcome. Some the media used include plastic tubing, copper wire, paper, Manzanita wood, zippers, buttons, beads, magnets, reflective tape, rubber sponge, and spools of thread.

Virginia Davis' elegant submission conjures the vastness of the night sky, while Ai Kijima's quilted fabric collage employs the pop culture imagery of children's cartoons. Gerhardt Knodel and James Bassler both invoke game boards, but realized in ways



completely their own. Some works, like Masae Bamba's delicate garden of mushrooms topped with an ethereal shibori-dyed butterfly wing, reside neatly inside their box. Others, such as Aune Taamal's delicate, translucent weaving, can be stored in their boxes but lavishly overflow their confines when unfolded for display.

Interviews, material samples, maquettes, correspondence, and concept sketches chronicle the creative strategies of the artists and shed light on the complex relationship between artist and collector. Viewing an individual Box Project is an intimate experience, and an invitation to step inside and consider the challenge presented by its confines. To give an even greater sense of the problem solving and inventiveness involved in fulfilling the commission's challenge, 22 large-scale pieces borrowed from a variety of the participants and institutions are included to convey the often-monumental and highly variable nature of fiber art today.

The 36 artists whose work appears in this exhibition are: Masae Bamba, James Bassler, Mary Bero, Zane Berzina, N. Dash, Virginia Davis, Carson Fox, Shigeki Fukumoto, John Garrett, Ana Lisa Hedstrom, Helena Hernmarck, Agneta Hobin, Pat Hodson, Kiyomi Iwata, Gere Kavanaugh, Ai Kijima, Hideaki Kizaki, Lewis Knauss, Nancy Koenigsberg, Gerhardt Knodel, Naomi Kobayashi, Gyöngy Laky, Paola Moreno, Jun Mitsuhashi, Barbara Murak, Kyoko Nitta, Heidrun Schimmel, Cynthia Schira, Hisako Sekijima, Carol Shinn, Sherri Smith, Aune Taamal, Hadi Tabatabai, Koji Takaki, Richard Tuttle, and Peter Weber.

The Box Project: Uncommon Threads is curated by Lyssa Stapleton, Curator of the Cotsen Collection and Bruce W. Pepich, Executive Director and Curator of Collections, Racine Art Museum. The exhibition debuted at the Fowler Museum in September 2016 before traveling to Racine Art Museum in Wisconsin and finally, to the Textile Museum at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. (Fall 2017).

Equally significant is the book accompanying the show, entitled The Box Project: Works from the Lloyd Cotsen Collection (ISBN 9780974516899, hardcover, \$95). The 336-page publication features essays by Stapleton and Pepich as well as Matilda McQuaid, Deputy Curatorial Director at Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum; independent curator Jenelle Porter; and interviews with the artists.

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