

OUT & ABOUT

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2020 | journaltimes.com | SECTION D

Racine Art Museum to debut three new exhibits

RACINE — The Racine Art Museum, 441 Main St., announces the opening of three new exhibits Oct. 21 and continuing through Jan. 23.

RAM commemorates the 19th amendment with a women art and contemporary craft exhibit focused around fiber artist Mary Giles.

“Expect the Unexpected: Unusual Materials in Contemporary Craft” features work drawn from the museum’s permanent collection that incorporates unusual, surprising or challenging materials.

“Silhouette: Capturing the Human Form in Contemporary Prints and Art Jewelry” features work drawn from the museum’s permanent collection that explores the human form as a compositional element, storytelling device or representation of an idea.

Giles exhibit

With a cabinetmaker father and a mother who knitted, quilted and did Scandinavian decorative painting known as rosemaling, Mary Giles (1944-2018) seemed destined to work creatively with her hands.

Revered for her willingness to push the boundaries of form and concept, Giles made objects throughout her career that reflected her interest in material



“1,000 Feathers” by Mary Giles is made from waxed and dyed linen and pheasant feathers.

her career as a fiber sculptor. She created wall pieces, in addition to sculpture, that suggests aspects of the environment, human figures and vessels.

One of the artist’s most distinctive additions to her works were

fiber collection is anchored by artists interested in baskets and basketmaking techniques. Giles, with 19 pieces now at RAM and others promised, is one of the most well-represented fiber artists with works spanning over

representative images from the museum’s permanent collection. This full-color publication will also be available for purchase on-site in the RAM Museum Store and online at racineartmuseumstore.org.

The advent of industrialization in modern Western societies encouraged the production of more goods and, ultimately, more excess and waste. This reality — as well as the idea that artists were able to focus more on the investigations of personal interests rather than commissions — led to endless new possibilities for using unexpected materials in their creative endeavors.

Rather than shying away from the potential care challenges these works may encounter, RAM embraces objects made from unusual materials as reflections of the inventiveness and experimentation that characterize contemporary art.

‘Silhouette’

Artists have long been concerned with representing the human form — either as portrait, anonymous figure, imagined being, or something in between. By definition, silhouette refers to either a particular type of portrait popularized in the 19th century comprised only of the outline of a person, or more generically, the outline of a mass, body or form.

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JON BOLTON

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With a cabinetmaker father and a mother who knitted, quilted and did Scandinavian decorative painting known as rosemaling, Mary Giles (1944-2018) seemed destined to work creatively with her hands.

Revered for her willingness to push the boundaries of form and concept, Giles made objects throughout her career that reflected her interest in materials and traditional basketmaking techniques. An affinity for the natural world cultivated during her youth, fueled the artist’s investigations of various media including waxed linen, porcupine quills and various metals like copper and iron.

Favoring the techniques of coiling — a process associated with Native American basket traditions — Giles moved between three and two dimensions throughout

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her career as a fiber sculptor. She created wall pieces, in addition to sculpture, that suggests aspects of the environment, human figures and vessels.

One of the artist’s most distinctive additions to her works were thin metal strips — some shaped as human figures — that she layered over a surface or core.

In addition to creating texture contrasts and adding color, shine and form, the choice of metal further underscored her interest in the human condition. She stated, “Over time, some of these metals are going to change, and that’s fine...That’s part of all of our processes — nature’s process, the aging process.”

In its current makeup, RAM’s

fiber collection is anchored by artists interested in baskets and basketmaking techniques. Giles, with 19 pieces now at RAM and others promised, is one of the most well-represented fiber artists with works spanning over three decades.

RAM has been acquiring Giles’ work since the early 2000s through gifts from donors, but these pieces have never been brought together in a single gallery space until now.

In continuation of RAM’s commitment to contemporary craft and to further scholarship in the field, the museum is producing a 16-page exhibition catalogue, with essays on the significance of Giles’ work along with repre-

sentative images from the museum’s permanent collection. This full-color publication will also be available for purchase on-site in the RAM Museum Store and online at racineartmuseumstore.org.

‘Expect the Unexpected’

Pablo Picasso’s “Still Life with Chair Caning” — an oval-shaped painting trimmed with a piece of rope as a frame — is often acknowledged as one of the first assemblage pieces, since it integrated a found object as part of the composition. Picasso’s work is also an early modern illustration of the idea that artists sometimes willingly utilize and experiment with materials that were produced for purposes other than art-making.

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While prints and jewelry may not seem like obvious ways to explore the body, both can reflect the figure in two dimensions. Unlike traditional silhouettes, some of the works included in this exhibition are more detailed, a practice that adds qualities of character and personality. Similarly, an artist’s choice of material can shape impressions of what is being depicted.

Hours, admission

The Racine Art Museum is open from noon to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday. Admission is \$7, or \$5 for seniors 62 and older and students.

JON BOLTON



EVENTS

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