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RAM exhibit highlights regional archives

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RACINE — Open through Aug. 30 at the Racine Art Museum (RAM), 441 Main St., "Open Storage: RAM Showcases Ceramic, Fiber, and Regional Archives" features the work of 12 artists in RAM's collection, arranged as a series of artist solo showcases.

Historically, collection-building for museums has gone on behind-the-scenes. In the last decade, more institutions have offered transparency regarding how collections are developed, stored and conserved. Open Storage offers a series of exhibitions that clarify this process by drawing attention to some of RAM's particular strengths — collecting the work of artists in-depth and establishing archives that further document their working processes and careers. While RAM frequently talks about the importance of gifts from donor's estates, archive building — both by artists and institutions — is critically important for the field because it offers a more comprehensive look at creative activity.

This exhibition features the work of artists Sandra Byers, Gibson Byrd, John Colt, Theodore Czebotar, Lillian Elliott, Joseph Friebert, Ed Rossbach, Kay Sekimachi, Jean Stamsta, Merle Temkin, Murray Weiss, and Beatrice Wood, through multiple examples of their work. The exhibit also highlights the earliest kinds of work given to RAM — textiles and works on paper. While ceramic works and art jewelry currently number as the two largest types of contemporary craft represented, examples of textiles, prints, drawings and works on paper were among the very first gifts of artwork to the museum in the 1940s.

The combination of artists in this show demonstrates how RAM acquires the work of nationally and internationally recognized artists as well as by those who have called the local area home as they built their artistic reputations.

The Open Storage series not only underscores the imperative role that RAM plays in documenting contemporary craft and works on paper, but also recognizes the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment of the United States Constitution, which granted women the right to vote.

RAM acknowledges the efforts of self-identifying women in the art world consistently and sincerely at all times. The museum is taking the occasion of this anniversary in 2020 to highlight how women are inextricably woven — and often the foundation — of creative endeavors and discourse. RAM exhibitions during this special year of recognition highlight the museum's holdings of works in various media by female artists. These shows also highlight noteworthy, and unique, statistics. By current count, 40% of the artists in RAM's collection are women. This percentage — which is continually 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, this policy has been reinforced by open-minded donors who have collected quality work regardless of gender.

The Racine Art Museum is open from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and from noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. Admission is \$7 or \$5 for youth ages 12-18, full-time students and seniors 62 and older. There is no charge for ages 11 and younger.

If You Go

WHAT: "Open Storage: RAM Showcases Ceramic, Fiber, and Regional Archives"

WHERE: Racine Art Museum, 441 Main St.

WHEN: Through Aug. 30