



***Micro/Macro: Works Both Large and Small from RAM's Collection***  
**February 3 – May 25, 2008**

- Scale has been a focus for contemporary artists since the advent of Abstract Expressionism.
- Artists working in large scale seek to fill the gallery space, often creating installations one must walk around and through in order to experience the work, or paintings that envelop the viewer.
- Many of these works are created for specific gallery or museum exhibition installations, or were large-scale outdoor sculptures.
- As the marketplace for artwork sales grew, artists created smaller scale works to fit in homes. In other instances, the artist selects small scale as a reaction against large-scale statements, seeking to attract the attention of the viewer by drawing him/her into the work for close contact.
- Some artists move back and forth from one extreme to another, selecting a scale they deem appropriate to the statement they want to make.
- While much of the experimentation in scale was instigated by painters and sculptors from the middle of the 20th century onward, crafts artists entered this discussion in the last quarter of the 20th century. Artists working in ceramics, fibers, glass, metals and wood have actively experimented in scale at both ends of the spectrum. They moved from making functional works to making sculptures that occupy more of the environment.
- This exhibition uses works from RAM's collections to demonstrate how major figures in their respective fields have approached scale, at both ends of the spectrum. By using different scales, artists demonstrate ways in which the size of a work can emphasize certain portions of the messages they create.
- In some cases, our curatorial staff has brought together different artists working in the same medium to demonstrate the creation of large and small-scale statements and ways in which scale changes our perceptions of the forms and materials.

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- RAM is fortunate to have examples of large and small works created by the same artist, providing an opportunity to see the difference size makes to the artworks. Selections of these artists' works are also included here.
- A good example of scale extremes used by the same artist is **Toshiko Takaezu's** *Star Series*, a 14-piece installation the artist donated to RAM. Her original concept was to create a sculpture large enough to walk through. The forms are also large enough to present her large-scale calligraphic glaze paintings, as if on a large canvas. Each of the 14 component pieces is named after a different star discovered by either the Egyptians or the Dogon People of Mali.
- While conceived as a multi-part composition with 14 elements, **Takaezu** allows RAM to present this work in smaller configurations. Her instructions state that the work can be assembled in any odd-numbered grouping, as long as the core of the three works presented here are included. RAM's collection has her signature closed bottle forms in a variety of sizes. They are represented to demonstrate how each size presents different aspects of her work.
- Two works represent the internationally respected fiber sculptor **Claire Zeisler**. The large untitled wall piece was originally installed in the lobby of an office building. The smaller work is a maquette for a larger fiber installation that was commissioned and hangs at the University of Chicago's Law School.
  - A **maquette** is a three-dimensional model often executed by an artist involved in a commission. The maquette represents what the formal work will look like, but in a smaller scale. It would be at this stage that either the collector or artist would discuss changes that might be made in the final work. The yellow wall section of this work was commercially woven by a custom rug maker while the artist and her workshop hand knotted the hanging spills of fiber. A commercial weaver would be brought in on a project like this since **Zeisler's** final piece incorporated three much larger sections.
- The basket section of this exhibition demonstrates one of RAM's strong suits in its collection; RAM has one of the leading collections of contemporary artist-made baskets in the US. **Michael Davis** extended the notion of what a basket could be, beyond a container for food, in a series of large-scale painted forms he began creating in the mid-1980s. Many **Davis** basket works have sculptural appendages, making them look like rare tropical flowers or seed pods from another world. As a contrast with these large works, we present a grouping of small-scale baskets and fiber bowl forms created by a number of American artists.

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- **Carol Eckert's** baskets have towers of animals on their "lids" made of dyed cotton and metal wire. While they recall the natural environment, many of **Eckert's** animals were chosen by the artist for the associations they have with African and Egyptian religion and folklore.
- Handmade jewelry changed rapidly in the last quarter of the 20th century. Artists increased the scale of their pieces, seeing them as both wearable adornment and three-dimensional sculpture. As artists' explorations advanced, scale increased to the point that some of these works can be a challenge to wear. However, many can also be left out on display on tables and in cabinets, to be appreciated as tabletop works of art and not relegated to a drawer when the collector is not wearing the piece.
- This display, selected from RAM's respected jewelry collection, features some of the leaders in sculptural jewelry and presents works utilizing precious materials. We also feature artists who eschew preciousness in favor of recycling everyday materials and objects into wearable works. In doing so, they bring the former associations of the original objects and provide them with new contexts based on the way they have been reassembled in their jewelry. These artists also ask if the amount of gold or the size of the stone should govern the value in their work or whether the value of the work should be in their aesthetic concepts and designs.