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Jessica Zalewski
Marketing Specialist
262.638.8300
jzalewski@ramart.org

Polymer Breaking New Ground at RAM

Racine, WI December 21, 2010

The Racine Art Museum (RAM) in Racine, Wisconsin, is pleased to announce the museum's recent commitment to establishing a permanent collection of polymer jewelry, beads and sculptural objects. As part of this resolution, the museum is organizing a large group exhibition opening the Fall 2011. *Terra Nova: Polymer Art at the Crossroads* will open at RAM on October 21, 2011. On display through February 5, 2012, the show emphasizes the development of polymer as an expressive medium for artwork in recent decades. A book is currently underway to support the content of the exhibition as well as function as a singular resource for the historical and philosophical dimensions of the polymer medium.

Along with borrowed polymer artwork from artists, galleries and private lenders from across the country, *Terra Nova* will debut a portion of a large number of works gifted to the museum in 2009 by the Polymer Collection Project. The Project is the brainchild of artist/collector Elise Winters whose goal was to entice an established, yet forward-looking, museum into acquiring masterful works of polymer art for its permanent collection. Winters had the beginnings of a museum-quality assemblage of polymer works within her own private collection. When combined with the holdings of three other independent collectors of historic polymer works—Nan Roche, Lindly Haunani and Carol Watkins—this small consortium collected over a thousand art pieces. The gift to RAM includes approximately 180 objects by a number of artists. The recent arrival of this substantial collection of polymer artworks establishes the national importance of RAM's holdings.

Narrowing the focus in order to emphasize how far the field has come in a short time, *Terra Nova* spotlights eight "Boundary Breakers"—artists who have been recognized within the polymer field and/or by other contemporary craft disciplines, such as Art Jewelry and furniture. Those eight artists or artist/duos are: Bonnie Bishoff

(more)



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(collaborating with J.M. Syron), Jeffrey Lloyd Dever, Kathleen Dustin, Steven Ford and David Forlano, Tory Hughes, Cynthia Toops, Pier Voukos, and Elise Winters. Each artist will be represented by new works as well as by pieces that offer a visual history of their experimentation in polymer. In addition to featuring the “Boundary Breakers,” supplemental pieces from the museum’s permanent collection will support a historical look at polymer’s development and demonstrate the scope of RAM’s holdings.

Through the exhibition and the book, RAM highlights the advances made in the use of polymer as an artistic material over the last 30 years and forecasts the potential for the medium’s future.

Weekend Filled with Polymer

October 21, 2011

In fall 2011, the Racine Art Museum is planning a celebratory weekend to mark this important exhibition and to welcome the new gifts into RAM’s recent collection focus. Activities will include a reception with the artists, symposia and workshops. Further details will be released at a later date.

Terra Nova: Polymer Art at the Crossroads Book

Available October 2011

Accompanying the exhibition *Terra Nova*, a hardcover book combines illuminating text and ideas about polymer, both past and present, with images and details on key artists. Noted polymer artist and art historian Rachel Carren provides a historical overview of polymer to date, highlighting key figures. The essay is illustrated with images of work from RAM’s collection. Bruce W. Pepich, RAM Executive Director and Curator of Collections, conducts an insightful interview with artist/collector Elise Winters, the driving force behind the Polymer Art Archive (www.polymerartarchive.com), a scholarly online resource for the medium; the Polymer Collection Project; and numerous efforts aimed at expanding the scope and appreciation of the material. In addition, Pepich discusses the philosophical dimensions of polymer and its relationship to the crafts field with RAM Curator of Exhibitions Lena Vigna. Quotes from other craft curators add further perspectives on the medium. Finally, the catalogue includes portfolio sections highlighting each of the exhibition’s “Boundary Breakers” with 8 to 12 images of their work, a brief artist statement and a concise exhibition history.

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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.



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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.