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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Racine, WI July 21, 2014

## RAM's Windows of Fifth Gallery: Artist Charlotte Kruk Puts a Twist on the Idea of Eye Candy

The Racine Art Museum commissioned artist and sculpture Charlotte Kruk to create a new exhibition for its Windows on Fifth Gallery. Open August 1, 2014 through July 26, 2015, ***Consumer Couture - The Politics of Having*** is a series of vignettes that explore the dynamics of a "disposable, packaged society." With both humor and serious intent, Kruk uses recognizable consumer packaging - such as gum and candy wrappers, sugar and coffee bags, and food tins - to create garments and sculptures that reflect our material culture. Visually compelling and conceptually provocative, Kruk's work questions the relationship between dress,

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**Meet the Artist  
Charlotte Kruk**  
Friday, August 1  
6:30 pm

### Quick Links

[RAM's Website](#)  
[Visitor's Guide](#)  
[About RAM](#)

power, gender, and consumerism.



**Charlotte Kruk**, From the installation *Caffeine Nation: Caffeine, It Just Feels Right*, 2008

Recycled coffee packaging, cotton, plastic  
coffee beans, sheepskin, fabric, and leather  
76 X 24 X 15 inches

Courtesy of the Artist

Photography: Keay Edwards

Clothing - like other forms of bodily adornment - can reflect personal, social, and cultural interests and issues. Modern industrialized capitalist societies - especially those that follow "Western" cultural trends - offer many options for dress. What we wear and how we wear it is inextricably linked to advertising, body image, social class,

and influence. Interested in consumerism and wastefulness as well as self-image, Kruk plays with all of these concepts. In order to get materials to use as fabric, either Kruk or friends and family have to consume the product, carefully extracting it from its packaging. The care with which she has to treat what others so easily destroy and/or throw away encourages the artist to think about what we value and why.

While every gender in society is impacted by images in the media, Kruk tends to create garments/sculptures relating to women because she absorbs and applies the information to herself, and because women are the ones most often held up as "eye candy." The connection between this phrase and her choice of material (candy packaging being a primary one) is not accidental. Kruk relays that personally she has long been concerned with body image, consumption of both food and goods, and the guilt that comes from eating what she really wants versus what she should.

Kruk is descended from a long line of domestic seamstresses, who - in the artist's words - would "sew out of necessity." While she has academic art training, she is a self-taught garment-maker and completed her first wearable sculpture at 23. Early garments were purposefully "ladylike" as the artist was trying to visually represent the "idealized perfect society girl." Kruk created strapless 1950s style dresses with full skirts, and fitted and feminine silhouettes. The retro fashion that she has often evoked has been idealized as representations of proper dress and etiquette. Kruk always considers the wearability of her garments and accessories as well as the physical restrictions of the materials she is using as fabric. Over time, she has experimented with various styles of dress as well as unwearable sculpture - both of which are included in her windows installation at RAM.

## **Meet the Artist Event**

On Friday, August 1 at 6:30 pm, Kruk will give visitors a behind-the-scenes glimpse at the making of *Consumer Couture - The Politics of Having* with RAM Curator of Exhibitions Lena Vigna. This event is during First Friday in downtown Racine when RAM offers free admission from 10:00 am to 9:00 pm along with a free hands-on art project from 4:00 to 8:00 pm. In addition, RAM is offering museum quality jewelry and scarves by well-known artists available for purchase in a Special Art Sale. Discover many one-of-a-kind pieces that will look great on anyone.

*Charlotte Kruk: Consumer Couture - The Politics of Having* is made possible at Racine Art Museum by: Platinum Sponsors - Karen Johnson Boyd and William B. Boyd, SC Johnson, Windgate Charitable Foundation; Diamond Sponsor - Sam and Gene Johnson Fund; Gold Sponsors - East Carolina University of Art & Design, Herzfeld Foundation, Johnson Bank, Racine Community Foundation, Racine United Arts Fund; Silver Sponsors - Cotsen Foundation for Academic Research, Elwood Corporation, Helen Bader Foundation, Osborne and Scekcic Family Foundation, W.T. Walker Group, Inc., Wisconsin Arts Board; Bronze Sponsors - 88NINE Radio Milwaukee, CNH Industrial, E.C. Styberg Foundation, Inc., Educators Credit Union, The Garvey Group, In Sink Erator, Miracle on Canal Street, The Norbell Foundation, Orkney Spring Retreat, Real Racine, Robert W. Baird Foundation, Ruud Family Foundation

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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.

Docent led contemporary craft and architectural tours of the museums are available. Both campuses of the Racine Art Museum, are open to the public 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.

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