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## The Life and Times of Robert W. Ebendorf: Jeweler and Metalsmith



Posted by [apennington](#)  
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Robert W. Ebendorf *Lost with Honor*, 2001 Found animal jawbone, pearls, teeth, and steel chain 15 1/2 x 6 x 5/8 inches The Porter•Price Collection. Photo by Tom Van Eynde.

Robert Ebendorf is one of the most prolific and influential mixed-media jewelers/metalsmiths of our time, and his standing in the field as a mentor and maker is unparalleled. *The Life and Times of Robert W. Ebendorf: Jeweler and Metalsmith* chronicles a lifetime of his work, and brings together over 100 artworks spanning five decades (1963–2013). Showcasing over 40 pieces from the Racine Art Museum's (RAM's) collection and many more on loan from long-time collectors, Ron Porter and Joe Price, this exhibition gives you a glimpse into the life of the influential maker, teacher, mentor, and innovator, Robert Ebendorf.

RAM has had a long-term working relationship with Ebendorf, so it's the perfect setting to host this gift of contemporary craft. Displayed in roughly chronological order, the works carry you through the decades, starting at the rear wall of the exhibition space with Ebendorf's earliest work and progressing to the front of the space through work completed in 2013. This arrangement allows you to see the progression of his style through the years. Patterns, motifs, materials, and imagery show up for a few years, disappear, and then reappear in later work. Not only do his surreal, found-object assemblages combine materials and imagery in unexpected ways, they invite the viewer to look deeper and make their own connections and assumptions about his work.



Robert W. Ebendorf Colored Smoke Machine, 1974 Sterling silver, 18k-gold plating, pearl, plexiglass, and copper. 3 3/4 x 2 13/16 x 1/2 inches. The Porter•Price Collection. Photo by Tom Van Eynde.

A forerunner of the found object in jewelry, Ebendorf has influenced a generation of makers both through his work and his role as a mentor. While I can't personally call Bob one of my mentors, I know many who have had the opportunity to study with him, and believe me, nothing but respect, admiration, and kind words for him escapes their lips. If you have the opportunity, make the trip to RAM to see the exhibit before it closes. It's well worth a visit.



*Robert W. Ebendorf Necklace/Cross, 1993 Iron wire, washers, amber, carnelian, nickel silver, printed tin, found olive oil can, beach pebble, broken shards of Absolut® vodka bottle, and sterling silver chain. 20 3/4 x 3/4 x 7 7/8 inches. Racine Art Museum, Veronica D. Regas Endowment Fund Purchase. Photo by Tom Van Eynde. [The Life and Times of Robert W. Ebendorf: Jeweler and Metalsmith](#) is on exhibit at the Racine Art Museum, Racine, Wis., July 13, 2014– January 18, 2015.*

The accompanying book, "Robert Ebendorf: The Work in Depth," is available [online](#) for \$30 plus shipping, or by calling the RAM Museum Store at 262-638-8200.

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