

Out & About

The Journal Times

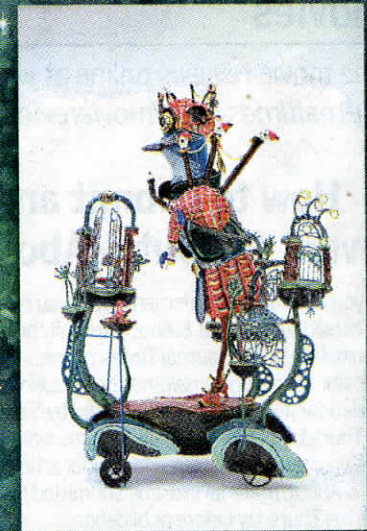
Week of Thursday, July 3, 2014

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“ONCE upon a TIME”

at RAM



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'Once Upon a Time'

Racine Art Museum exhibit showcases 'fairy tales, fantasy and contemporary art'

LEE B. ROBERTS
lroberts@journaltimes.com

Story upon story can be discovered in the Racine Art Museum's galleries this summer. The Downtown museum's featured exhibition, "Once Upon A Time: Fairy Tales, Fantasy and Contemporary Art" runs through Aug. 31 and gives visitors a glimpse into the imaginations of a variety of national, international and local contemporary artists as they tell stories of the human condition, rooted in the tradition of fairy tales.

Some stories are more literally told, while others may require more imagination on the part of the viewer. And while there are many artists whose work is based on fairy tales, each approaches the narrative in a different way, according to Lena Vigna, RAM curator of exhibitions and organizer of "Once Upon A Time."

Georgia artist Red Weldon Sandlin, for example, interprets beloved children's stories such as "Charlotte's Web" in her glazed ceramic creations, while exploring how humans gather knowledge and information. Sandlin places characters from those stories within a teapot, resting on top of the book. Those two forms appear in much of her work because they represent containment, according to the artist.

"A book contains stories, information and lessons. A teapot metaphorically holds ideas that are filtered, brewed, steeped and poured out for fulfillment and understanding," Sandlin said in the exhibit's gallery guide.

Rather than referencing a familiar story, Wisconsin artist Jessica Calderwood's humorous sculptural figures investigate ideas of gender and identity. Calderwood's human/plant hybrids pair "bodies" of flowers (symbolizing femininity) with child-like foot forms, and tell stories such as that of a little girl growing into her

If You Go

WHAT: "Once Upon A Time: Fairy Tales, Fantasy and Contemporary Art"

WHERE: Racine Art Museum, 441 Main St.

WHEN: Through Aug. 31. Museum hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. RAM is closed on Mondays, federal holidays and Easter.

COST: Museum admission is \$5 for adults; \$3 for youth ages 12-18 and seniors older than 62; and free for children younger than 12 (with an adult).

INFO: Go to www.ramart.org or call 262-638-8300.

Today at the RAM

Admission to the Racine Art Museum today, July 3, is free from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., in conjunction with Downtown's First Friday event (which is being observed on Thursday due to the July 4 holiday). A free, family, hands-on art activity will be offered at the museum, 441 Main St., from 4 to 8 p.m. today. For details, go to www.ramart.org.

femininity and figuring out what to do with it, Vigna said. Her pieces play more off the ideas fairy tales tell you, than the fairy tale itself, she said.

Stories within stories

In some work, like that of Elsa Mora and Bill Reid, visitors will need to look closely to appreciate the many details of each story told by their art. Mora, who is originally from Cuba, has several pieces made out of intricately cut paper that depict fantastical human forms interacting with those of plants and animals. Her influences include everything from textiles and wallpaper patterns to henna tattoos,

according to Vigna. And the scenes she creates reflect "the wonder, mystery and magic of childhood."

Reid, a Racine-based metal sculptor who refers to himself as a "fabulist," has quite a few of his creatures on display, including more recent work. His colorful, painted steel beasts — each set in its own imaginative world — have a very playful quality.

"There are so many things going on, all the time, in his work," Vigna said of Reid's art. "You can often find many environments all within one piece."

Viewers can also find real-life tales, re-imagined by artists as fantasies, in this show. Patty Grazini, for instance, has created a series of storybook figures based on actual news stories from the New York Times in the late 1800s. Each figure represents what Vigna described as a "mildly criminal" person from a compelling — and sometimes bizarre — news story, who has been refigured as an animal by Grazini.

Animals are often used in fairy tales to tell human stories, Vigna said. Grazini's characters do so in cleverly designed outfits, with lots of interesting details to flesh out their stories. Viewers of "Once Upon A Time" can also see examples of innovative techniques, such as three-dimensional printing used to create the sculptural jewelry of metal artist Emily Cobb. One of Cobb's pieces wraps a galloping horse around the wearer's neck, and another captures the motion of blowing a bubble in space and time.

These are just a few of the many stories told in "Once Upon A Time," which features mostly work on loan from other collections, as well as pieces from RAM's collection. Visitors to the galleries can also see large, boldly colored textiles, painted blown-glass sculptures and much more. Other artists whose work is shown

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include Erica-Lynn Huberty, Jerome Karidis, Francisco X. Mora, Rachel Rader, Ruth Ann Reese, Heather Ujiie and David Walters,

Character development

Storytelling — with roots in the traditions of fairy tales, legends and myths — is also the focus of two accompanying RAM exhibitions titled "Some Pretty Interesting Characters:

Works from RAM's Collection," Chapters 1 and 2.

Chapter 1 of this two-part exhibit is exhibited at RAM's Wustum Museum of Fine Arts, 2519 Northwestern Ave., and features mostly two-dimensional work. Chapter 2 of "Some Pretty Interesting Characters" — which is on display at RAM, 414 Main St., through Sept. 28 — includes art in a variety of three- and two-dimensional media.

Both focus on characters as important elements of a story, according to Vigna.

Between them, visitors will find "just about as many kinds of stories as you can imagine," she said. "Some are stories from fairy tales and some are more personal."

Included in Chapter 2, in RAM's downstairs galleries, is an edition of "Alice's Adventure's in Wonderland" with illustrations by surrealist Salvador Dali. This show also features everything from a teapot made in the form of "The A-Team"'s Mr. T to a detailed tapestry made out of recycled fabric and depicting characters from "Star Wars," television

shows and pop culture.

Also at RAM, and relating to the current storytelling theme, is an exhibit of elaborate pop-up books, which can be seen in the smaller galleries on the east end of each floor of the Downtown museum. Included is a large "Game of Thrones" pop-up book, which opens into a detailed diorama, and can also be viewed page by page.

Such books, Vigna said, are well-crafted, collaborative creations involving authors, illustrators and paper engineers.