

# Out & About

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# ALL in the FAMILY

## at RAM



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# “All in the Family”

## RAM exhibit explores family influence on art

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The role that shared environments and family connections play in the creative process is explored in an exhibition now at the Racine Art Museum, 441 Main St., running through Oct. 4.

“All in the Family: Featuring Kelly and Kyle Phelps” showcases the work of more than 25 artist relationships — including those between sibling artists, parent and child artists, and artist couples. In some cases, pieces by each of the connected artists are exhibited side-by-side, and viewers are invited to discover any similarities or differences between them.

There are also works of art created by the direct collaboration of two artists — as found in the sculptural work of twin brothers Kelly and Kyle Phelps, which is the centerpiece of this show.

### Blue-collar experience

Shown for the first time in Racine in this exhibit, the Phelps’ mixed-media pieces address the complex role of the middle class in contemporary society, according to Lena Vigna, RAM curator of exhibitions. Now both university professors in Ohio, the brothers grew up in a Midwestern factory town and their work explores the blue-collar experience, drawing on specific memories from their own family life.

Ceramic figures of factory workers and miners seem to reflect the emotions of an environment in which factories closing down leave people without jobs. And found objects (metal filings, an oil can, a pack of cigarettes), collected by the artists from actual abandoned factories and incorporated into their work, bring a gritty realism to the pieces, Vigna said.

The subject matter is compelling and not only speaks to the artists’ own roots, but the American experience, she said. “It is conversation Racine is familiar with.”

The brothers, who live near one another and share a studio, don’t distinguish who does what in their

### If You Go

**WHAT:** “All in the Family: Featuring Kelly and Kyle Phelps,” an art exhibition  
**WHERE:** Racine Art Museum, 441 Main St.  
**WHEN:** Now through Oct. 4. Museum hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday; and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. RAM is also open until 9 p.m. on Fridays, April through December.  
**COST:** Museum admission costs \$5 for adults; \$3 for students and seniors (63 and older); and free for children younger than 12, with an adult (3 kids maximum). Free admission for all is available on the First Friday of every month.  
**INFO:** Go to [www.ramart.org](http://www.ramart.org) or call 262-638-8300.

creative process, Vigna said. But not all creative connections in artist families are a closely related as those of the Phelps twins.

### Striking similarities

Some pieces in “All in the Family” were not only made by artists working separately, but in different time periods — yet influences between them can be seen.

Married artists Beth Van Hoesen and Mark Adams, for example, are represented with two still-life works on paper, each depicting roses in a small vase. The two pieces were done several years apart, yet they have really strong format similarities, Vigna said. Each is also very different in style and technique.

Striking similarities can also be seen in the work of the late Schomer Lichtner and Ruth Grotenrath — well-known married Wisconsin artists. The two paintings done by each artist in this show share Henri Matisse-like qualities, in their saturated colors and bold brush styles, Vigna said. While the paintings differ in other ways, both feature brilliant blues, as well as animals painted only in black and white.

It was a 2011 exhibit of Lichtner’s and Grotenrath’s work, in fact, that the curator said inspired the “All in the Family” show. The similarities she saw then in the couple’s work piqued her curiosity about where the boundaries of creativity exist, Vigna said. And looking at visual art through the ages, it is a concept that can

### ALSO AT RAM AND WUSTUM

- Visitors to the Racine Art Museum (RAM), 441 Main St., can also view **“A Whole Other World: Sub-Culture Craft,”** on display in the museum’s upstairs galleries, through Sept. 6. This exhibit features the work of artists inspired by the science fiction and fantasy-based themes of “Doctor Who,” “Star Wars,” superheroes and the steampunk genre. A wide variety of objects and images — including a sizable model of the Millennium Falcon made out of cardboard and paper; larger-than-life knitted superhero outfits; and a wall filled with steampunk jet packs — are included. Visitors who come dressed in character for this show can receive free museum admission. The museum has also been hosting specially-themed costume days during Downtown’s First Friday events. On Friday, Aug. 7, visitors are encouraged to come dressed in steampunk attire (RAM admission is free on the first Friday of each month).
- An associated show — **“Sci-Fi, Superheroes and Steampunk: RAM Community Art Exhibition”** — is being shown at the Wustum Museum of Fine Arts, 2519 Northwestern Ave., through Aug. 15. It features work created in a wide range of media by area art students and teachers, RAM members and Racine Art Guild members. Wustum is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays. Admission is free.
- Be sure, too, to check out the exhibit in RAM’s Fifth Street windows, **“Charlotte Kruk: Consumer Couture — The Politics of Having.”** And do so soon, as it will only be there through July 26.

More about these exhibits, and others at both museum locations, is available at [www.ramart.org](http://www.ramart.org).

be traced back to the 15th century with the Bruegel family of painters and continues in more recent relationships such as that between painter Georgia O’Keeffe and photographer Alfred Stieglitz, Vigna said.

### Open for interpretation

In addition to sculpture and works on paper, the show offers beautifully-turned wooden vessels, created by three generations of artists; a range of blown glass pieces; metal and polymer artwork; and much more (don’t miss the smaller



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