

ART



A vessel by Mary Ann "Toots" Zynsky's shows her distinctive heat-formed filet de verre method, which allows for compelling explorations of color.

Add color to season with visit to RAM

RACINE — While many contemporary artists use color as a principal element, the newest exhibition at Racine Art Museum, 441 Main St., focuses on it as a defining principle in form and design for work that is not figurative. Open through July 10, "Spectrum: Contemporary Artists in Color" features glass, ceramic and polymer works by artists from RAM's collection.

Color is both a simple and complex concept — associated with emotions, symbols, and thoughts. Human beings learn about color at a young age and it becomes familiar. Still, the use of it as an artistic or design choice is layered and sometimes subjective.

Studies involving color "officially" began in the 1700s. Sir Isaac Newton is credited as inventing the first color wheel, which showed sunlight divided into a spectrum. In 1810, Johann Wolfgang Goethe drew on Newton's investigations as he explored the psychological effects of various hues. The color wheel most often used today — based on the primary shades of red, yellow, and blue — was formulated by Swiss color and art theorist, Johannes Itten, an instructor at the Bauhaus School of Applied Arts in Weimar, Germany. Modern artists, such as Josef Albers (1888-1976) and Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), identified color as a primary element of their compositions, underscoring its use to convey ideas and expression.

At RAM, Polymer artist Lindly Haunani's lively, vibrant, and sometimes, humorous work relies on color as a key design element. Also working in

polymer, Pier Voulkos, daughter of well-known ceramicist Peter Voulkos, is arguably the first jewelry designer to work with polymer. Her pieces sometimes incorporate metallic clay, which gives her jewelry, boxes, and objects a distinctive luster.

Also represented are Sonja Blomdhal, known for the deep, rich hues of her hand-blown glass vessels, and Mary Ann "Toots" Zynsky's vessels using her distinctive heat-formed filet de verre method, which allows for compelling explorations of color.

Ceramicists Gertrud and Otto Natlzer produced work that married form and color. Otto is known for having created more than 2,000 types of glaze for ceramics, which were thoughtfully paired with Gertrude's simple, organic, and seemingly, impossibly thin shapes. James Lovera's ceramic work has a simplicity of form, emblazoned with contemporary color that responds to hues in nature. In contrast to many of the artists in this exhibition, Midwestern ceramicist Sandra Byers' work is diminutive, highlighting the subtlety of shape and strong, but muted color.

Artists from RAM's extensive, growing collection — such as Rose Cabat, Jeffrey Lloyd Dever, Cliff Lee, and Dante Marioni — expand the conversation.

Racine Art Museum is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. Admission is \$5 for adults, and \$3 for youth ages 12-18, full-time students and seniors 63 and older. There is no charge for ages 11 and younger.