

VISUALART | REVIEW

Visual bling at the Racine Art Museum

CONTEMPORARY ART 'GOES FOR BAROQUE'

BY KAT MINERATH

The Racine Art Museum is awash in reflected light and irregular shapes in the exhibition "Go for Baroque: Opulence and Excess in Contemporary Art." Dozens of works in all sorts of mediums adorn the main gallery space with intricate designs and sometimes surprisingly ordinary materials.

The voluminous, sculptural wigs by Kate Cusack are excellent examples. They glisten as silvery bouffants in a French

court style of the 18th-century. They are elegant and elaborate, and even up close it's hard to discern the material used. Until you read the wall text, and it is revealed they are constructed of plastic wrap, metal straight pins and foam rubber—stuff from the hardware store rather than an aristocrat's dressing room.

The general premise of the show is a survey highlighting the way contemporary artists adopt stylistic elements of the Baroque period. For a bit of background, this was an era from the late 16th and 17th centuries when artists often sought a greater sense of drama and theatricality. This often meant amping up the emotion in their work, as well as using extraordinary effects of light and shadow, in addition to opulent materials.

There are some whose work falls into this category more closely, of course. The clothing designs of Silversärk stand out in this respect. This designer has shown her work in fashion shows, and bringing them into a museum setting is indeed fitting. The ensembles are modeled on historical reference points and the hand-sewn details, as well as rich fabrics and metallic accents, are accessible yet still invested with the glamour of couture.

Other current exhibitions in the museum follow the theme in ancillary manners. "Precious Metals: Shining Examples from RAM's Collection" does just that, showcasing sculptural and craft pieces with bling and reflectivity. "Joan Backes: Falling Leaves and Painted Branches" is like an autumnal airspace displayed in the street-level windows of the museum. The real leaves, painted and suspended behind glass, wave in a breeze that the viewer does not feel, but represent a bounty of nature that is like baroque opulence borne from the earth.

Through Sept. 4 at the Racine Art Museum, 441 Main St., Racine.

Misty Gamble, *Luxuriant*, Ceramic and canvas, 22 x 14 x 14 in., 2012

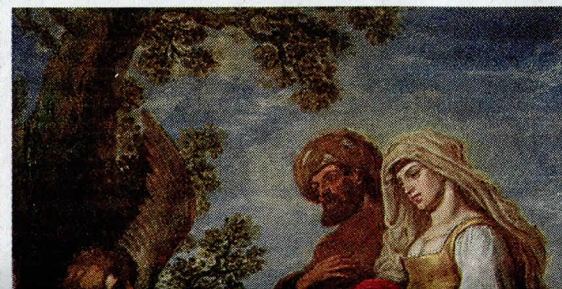


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Milwaukee Art Museum Displays Rarely Seen 'Old Masters from Private Collections'

BY TYLER FRIEDMAN

chemist, philanthropist and art collector specializing in 17th-century Dutch paintings. Bader has gifted two works to MAM by Jacopo Vignali (Italian, 1592-1664) and Onofrio Gabrielli (Italian, 1616-1706), which will be on long-term display in MAM's Collection Galleries. "From Rembrandt to Parmigianino: Old Masters from Private Collections" is on display from July 29-Oct. 23.



"American Epics on the Silver Screen: The Searchers"

Milwaukee Art Museum
700 N. Art Museum Drive

In conjunction with "American Epics: Thomas Hart Benton and Hollywood," the Milwaukee Art Museum has been screening cinema classics that inspired Benton. The final installment of the series is *The Searchers*, to be shown at 6:15 p.m. on Friday, July 29. Consistently ranked among the greatest films ever made, the 1956 Technicolor Western finds Civil War veteran Ethan Edwards (John Wayne) searching for his young niece who has been abducted by Comanches.