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Racine Art Museum hosts 'The Box Project' exhibit

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Graphic illustration by Dan Talsky, daniel.talsky@journaltimes.com; using artwork by (from left) Gere Kavanaugh, Gyongy Laky, Mary Bero and Naomi Kobayashi.

If You Go

WHAT: "The Box Project: Uncommon Threads"

WHERE: Racine Art Museum, 441 Main St.

WHEN: Through Aug.

One's imagination is often the only limit placed on an artist's creations.

An exhibit now at the Racine Art Museum, 441 Main St., explores the idea of what happens when artists are asked to contain that vision within a certain-sized space.

27. Museum hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday (closed Mondays).

COST: Admission is \$5 for adults; \$3 for students and seniors older than 62; and free for children younger than 12. Admission is free to all on the first Friday of every month.

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

Meet The Artists

At 6:30 p.m. Friday, July 7, RAM offers visitors the opportunity to meet several of the artists currently exhibiting in the museum's galleries.

The free "Meet the Artists" session will feature "Box Project" artists Gyongy Laky and John Garrett, as well as embroidery artist Renie Breskin Adams, discussing their creative processes with Bruce Pepich, RAM executive director, and Lena Vigna, RAM curator of exhibitions.

Also on Friday, from 4 to 8 p.m., visitors are invited to take part in a Free Family Hands-on Art Activity at RAM. Admission to the

Called "The Box Project: Uncommon Threads," this exhibition features the commissioned work of 36 internationally recognized artists — each of whom created a three-dimensional piece, made with fiber, that fits inside either a 14-by-14-inch square, or 14-by-23-inch rectangular, shallow box. The pieces were produced between 2004 and 2013, in response to a challenge issued by Los Angeles-based collector and philanthropist, Lloyd Cotsen (aka the chairman of the Neutrogena Corp.).

And the exhibit — which debuted in L.A.'s Fowler Museum last fall and will travel on to Washington, D.C., after its stay here — was organized by the Cotsen Foundation for Academic Research, with the Racine Art Museum.

Outside the box

Rather than boxing artists in, "The Box Project" aimed to encourage participants to broaden the scope of their studio practices, according to RAM. While many of the invited artists customarily work in two dimensions and with fiber, others consider themselves painters, sculptors and designers, and/or work on a large scale. By forcing them all to work within a specified space and to focus on fiber art, organizers were, in effect, motivating them to "think outside the box."

In addition to the boxed works, the exhibition includes 22 large-scale fiber pieces, created by participating artists, which provide perspective on both the type of work these artists normally create and the variable nature of contemporary fiber art.

RAM's role in organizing the exhibition included

museum, 441 Main St., is free that day, as it is on the first Friday of every month.

For more information, go to www.ramart.org or call 262-638-8300.

Other exhibits now at RAM

Through July 23:

- “Jessica Calderwood: Fictitious Flora,” in RAM’s Windows on Fifth Gallery

Through Sept. 24:

- “Collection Focus: Renie Breskin Adams”
- “Shie and Acord: Recent Acquisitions”
- “Small Gifts from Big Donors: Part 2”

For more, including exhibitions at RAM’s Wustum Museum, go to www.ramart.org.

helping procure the larger works of art traveling with the show, and with selecting participating artists, according to Lena Vigna, RAM curator of exhibitions.

Cotsen — who died shortly before “The Box Project” opened here in in May — was familiar with the Racine Art Museum and its work, having donated a significant collection of contemporary, American baskets to its collection in 2008, Vigna said. And, when his latest curator came to RAM to see “The Box Project” installation, she told the staff how much Cotsen would have loved it.

Uncommon threads

Vigna said she thinks visitors will not only enjoy the show, but might be surprised by what they find. While artists were asked to commit to creating fiber art, they were not restricted to using only fiber. And the results include some really interesting approaches to using the materials, she said.

“These artists are working in and thinking about fiber art in ways that I don’t think people will be expecting.”

Along with those made with more traditional textile materials such as yarn and silk, visitors will find pieces incorporating everything from coated wire to wooden dowels and found objects. Some pieces are shown contained within their chosen box, while others spill out onto other surfaces, and the inspirations for them range from the concepts of life and death to the view from a seaside cottage

on Cape Cod.

Additional insights

Visitors can get insight into the artists' processes in meeting "The Box Project" challenge through written statements that accompany each piece, as well as in a video of interviews shown in the galleries. There is also a display of materials showing the artists' proposed projects for the show.

And, on Friday, July 7, visitors to RAM will have the opportunity to meet two of "The Box Project" artists — John Garrett and Gyongy Laky — at a free Meet the Artists program in the galleries, from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. (see accompanying box for details). Admission to the museum is free all day Friday, as it is on the first Friday of every month.

RAM admission on other days costs \$5 for adults, \$3 for students and seniors (63 and older) and is free for children younger than 12. Regular museum hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. For more information, go to www.ramart.org or call 262-638-8300.

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