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**50th Anniversary of the Landmark Touring Exhibition
OBJECTS: USA Commemorated at Racine Art Museum**

Racine, WI August 20, 2019

Racine Art Museum (RAM) is honored to present **OBJECTS REDUX: 50 Years After OBJECTS: USA Defined American Craft**, a commemoration and exploration of **OBJECTS: USA**, a landmark exhibition that traveled across the country and overseas beginning in 1969. This exhibition is set to open September 21, 2019 and will be on display through January 5, 2020.

This fall, the RAM exhibition series, **OBJECTS REDUX**—primarily drawn from the museum's collection—showcases work made between approximately 1960 and 1985 by artists located in the United States. The shows offer a cursory look at how craft was developing in the last part of the twentieth century. The largest exhibition in the series, **OBJECTS REDUX: 50 Years After OBJECTS: USA**—which utilizes works borrowed from area lenders as well as work from RAM's collection—focuses directly on **OBJECTS: USA**. RAM is partnering with the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft to celebrate the anniversary of this landmark project. In addition to collaborating on a gallery guide to commemorate this event, both institutions are concurrently hosting large exhibitions at their respective venues and utilizing work borrowed from local collections.

In the late 1960s, as society was undergoing social upheaval, studio craft—especially as it was being practiced in the United States—slowly began to undergo changes in content and form. Particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, many artists who used craft

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materials were pushing the boundaries of function and practical use—investigating materials and artistic concepts while beginning to overtly question social, political, environmental, and cultural issues. The public face of studio craft—as the focus of exhibitions, theoretical contemplation, and public appreciation—got a boost when SC Johnson endorsed a project to build a collection that would “promote the American object maker.”

Assembled by art dealer Lee Nordness and then Museum of Contemporary Crafts (now Museum of Arts and Design) director Paul Smith, this collection traveled the country as *OBJECTS: USA* before being distributed, in the way of gifts, to several participating institutions. Accompanied by a substantial book with images and artist biographies, as well as a sales catalogue titled *arts/objects: usa* and an hour-long movie, this combination of over 300 works made of so-called craft materials traveled to 20 US and 14 international venues on its multi-year tour. The exhibition introduced a broader public to the possibilities of media most often associated with function, not intellectual, aesthetic, or material investigations. *OBJECTS: USA* also offered a new way for understanding those works and their makers.

OBJECTS REDUX celebrates the 50th anniversary of *OBJECTS: USA* by combining works from the original touring exhibition with works by many of the same artists produced as part of the accompanying selling program. Not only is this the first time in 50 years that these particular works have been assembled, it is also the first time that these original exhibition works have been back on display in the same gallery. Artists whose works are featured include Wendell Castle, Arline Fisch, Trudy Guernonprez, Sam Maloof, Walter Nottingham, Don Reitz, and Dorian Zachai.

As *OBJECTS: USA* underscored, artists in the late 1960s were pushing material and conceptual boundaries in craft media. As work became expansive in size, function was questioned, various techniques and traditions gained new relevance, and personal and social content was interjected. Artists with fiber backgrounds, for example, were creating installations and other projects that emphasized labor and a global context as well as new modes for understanding the material.

OBJECTS REDUX: 50 Years After OBJECTS: USA features fiber artists, such as Trude Guernonperez and Ed Rossbach, who both understood and challenged the nature of textiles. Similarly, Walter Nottingham, also showcased in this exhibition, sought to use his large abstracted woven, crocheted, and knotted forms to shape his intangible emotions and thoughts, to make the “unseen visible.”

OBJECTS REDUX: Studio Craft in Context, 1960-1985, one of three related exhibitions in the fall series, showcases craft within the larger spectrum of work being created at the time. For example, Helen Bitar, represented in the original *OBJECTS:*

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USA with brightly colored, stitched pillows is represented in **RAM's Studio Craft in Context** exhibition with a large quilt from the late 1960s in bold, almost neon, color and intense pattern. Contrasted with the graphic, cartoony, psychedelic imagery in a Karl Wirsum print from five years later, a complex picture of American art and society begins to form.

Another one of the three related exhibitions in the series, **OBJECTS REDUX: Small-Scale Studio Craft of the 1950s and 1960s**, showcases primarily functional work made in the decades just prior to *OBJECTS: USA*. While there were artists already challenging ideas about function, the public most likely thought about craft, if they did at all, in terms similar to the vessels, bowls, and "useful" items represented in this exhibition.

Exhibitions at Racine Art Museum are made possible by: Platinum Sponsors – Anonymous, Windgate Foundation; Diamond Sponsors – David Charak, Tom and Irene Creecy, National Endowment for the Arts, Osborne and Scekcic Family Foundation, Ruffo Family Foundation Inc.; Gold Sponsors – Anonymous, David Flegel, Herzfeld Foundation, Johnson Bank, Racine Community Foundation, Trio Foundation of St. Louis, Twin Disc, W.T. Walker Group, Inc.; Silver Sponsors – A.C. Buhler Family, Andis Foundation, Evinrude Outboard Motors, Lucy G. Feller, Dorothy MacVicar, Real Racine, We Energies Foundation, Wisconsin Arts Board; Bronze Sponsors – John Cram and Matt Chambers, Barbara Delaney, David and Ellen Easley, Educators Credit Union, The Furniture Society, Fredrick and Deborah Ganaway, William A. Guenther, Kirsten and Emily Maki Foundation, The Norbell Foundation, Charles H. Patton and Family in Memory of Joan S. Patton, Janna and Dr. Edward Waldeck, Bill and Mary Walker; Media Sponsors – 88Nine Radio Milwaukee, Wisconsin Public Radio.

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Together, the two campuses of the Racine Art Museum, RAM in downtown Racine at 441 Main Street and the Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts at 2519 Northwestern Avenue, seek to elevate the stature of contemporary crafts to that of fine art by exhibiting significant works in craft media with painting, sculpture and photography, while providing outstanding educational art programming.

Docent-led contemporary craft and architectural tours of the museums are available. Both campuses of the Racine Art Museum, are open Tuesday – Saturday 10:00 am – 5:00 pm, and are closed Mondays, Federal holidays and Easter. RAM is open Sunday Noon – 5:00 pm, while Wustum is closed Sundays. An admission fee of \$7 for adults, with reduced fees for students and seniors, applies at RAM. Admission to Wustum is free. Members are always admitted without charge to either campus.