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Upcoming Racine Art Museum Exhibitions Feature Ceramicist Don Reitz and Other Wisconsin Artists

Racine, WI August 24, 2023

Two exhibitions showcasing the dynamism and history of Wisconsin art open at Racine Art Museum (RAM) on September 20, 2023: [Collection Focus: Don Reitz](#) and [Wisconsin Artists: 1960-90](#). Both exhibitions draw work from RAM's permanent collection, with Reitz being one of the top three most-collected artists working primarily in clay in the collection. Both exhibitions will be on view at the downtown Racine museum through February 3, 2024.

Collection Focus: Don Reitz underscores RAM's commitment to chronicling the career of Donald (Don) Reitz (1929–2014), who spent 1962–88 living and working in Wisconsin while actively teaching as faculty at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Reitz holds a special place in contemporary craft, particularly in ceramics. Not only did he reinvigorate salt and wood firing techniques, but he was also a beloved figure who inspired numerous artists and collectors.

Similar—and yet different—to Toshiko Takaezu, another legendary figure who impacted the course of ceramics in the twentieth century, there was no separating art and life for Reitz. While Takaezu seemed to orient the connection on day-to-day practices, Reitz connected to the material in a way that it became an extension of his body and a reflection of profound personal circumstances. He appeared to live an adventurous life, loving nature at an early age and feeling connected to the earth (or “dirt”) from the first time he was out playing in it. Reitz's energetic spirit is most obviously reflected in ceramic objects with loopy



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handles, textural surfaces, and direct—or indirect—evidence of his hand.

Presented concurrently, *Wisconsin Artists: 1960–90* surveys art in Wisconsin from 1960 to 1990 which was the period of Don Reitz and an exceptionally fertile time in the history of a state with a (surprising to some) rich and layered history of creative production.

The work on display was specifically created during this period while the artists lived in Wisconsin. Identifying similarities among artists in a region can be a daunting task as—like with any group of people—there can be multiple points of comparison and contrast. The goals of the exhibition are not to define this work relative to the region but to showcase it both as a way to contextualize the work of Reitz and to celebrate those involved in building the legacy of art in this state, especially in the years leading up to the establishment of RAM and its 2003 opening.

All work in *Wisconsin Artists: 1960–90*—including works on paper, baskets, furniture, jewelry, paintings, and ceramics—reflects the range of ideas, media, and processes at play in the state and memorialized within the museum’s holdings.

Exhibitions at Racine Art Museum are made possible by: **Platinum Sponsors**—The Estate of Karen Johnson Boyd, David Charak, Judith and David Flegel Fund, Institute of Museum and Library Services, Ron and Judith Isaacs, Nicholas and Nancy Kurten, Racine Community Foundation, Windgate Foundation; **Diamond Sponsors**—City of Racine’s Grow Racine Grant, Osborne and Sceikic Family Foundation, Ruffo Family Foundation, Ruth Arts Foundation; **Gold Sponsors**—Anonymous, Tom and Irene Creecy, Richard and Patricia Ehlert, Herzfeld Foundation, Reliance Controls, Trio Foundation of St. Louis, W.T. Walker Group, Inc., Wisconsin Arts Board; **Silver Sponsors**—Anonymous, Art Bridges, Baird, A.C. Buhler Family, Lucy G. Feller, Ben and Dawn Flegel, Jim Harris, Sharon and Tom Harty, Lise Iwon, J. Jeffers & Co., Johnson Bank, Dorothy MacVicar, Jan Serr and John Shannon, Visit Racine County; **Bronze Sponsors**—Ellen and Joseph Albrecht, Andis Foundation, Susan Boland, Virginia Buhler, Butcher & Barrel/ Amos Los Tacos, Educators Credit Union, Express Employment Professionals, Tony and Andrea Hauser, Bill and Debbie Keland, Susan Manalli, Jean and Alex Mandli, Jr., The Prairie School, Cathy Stanghellini, Georgiana Treivush, Twin Disc, Inc.; **Media Sponsors**—88Nine Radio Milwaukee, Wisconsin Public Radio.

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This year marks the Racine Art Museum’s Twentieth Anniversary in Downtown Racine. Throughout 2023, visitors are invited to discover inspiring



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exhibitions and programs that highlight the ways RAM has served its audiences over the last two decades while promising a brighter future.

The two campuses of the Racine Art Museum—RAM in downtown Racine at 441 Main Street and RAM’s Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts (Wustum) at 2519 Northwestern Avenue—are located in Racine, Wisconsin, a historic community on the shores of Lake Michigan. RAM is home to the largest contemporary craft collection in North America and has a reputation for its award-winning architecture and nationally recognized exhibition program. Wustum is home to the organization’s diverse, award-winning art education programs and has presented significant art exhibitions since the 1940s.

Both campuses of the Racine Art Museum are currently operating with limited hours, open Wednesday through Saturday from 10:00 am until 4:00 pm. RAM admission is \$10 for adults; \$8 for students and seniors (62 or older); and free for RAM members, children under 12, and active military. Wustum admission is always free. Both museums encourage all visitors and staff who are not fully vaccinated, and those who feel more comfortable wearing a mask, to continue doing so in public areas at RAM and Wustum. Some in-person art classes and workshops at Wustum still require masks, determined on a case-by-case basis.