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From the Archives: Recently Established Artist Archives at RAM

November 12, 2025 – March 14, 2026

While some institutions limit collection holdings to one or two pieces per artist, RAM is often interested in representing a career through multiple examples. Those whose works are collected in depth are referred to as “archive artists.” *From The Archives* showcases eight Wisconsin-based artists with recently established archives at RAM—Jerrold Belland, Lisa Englander, Caren Heft, Alex Mandli, Michael Nitsch, Bill Reid, Susan M. Sorenson, and Marc Wollman—each of whom have long-standing and impactful connections to RAM and Wustum. They are former staff members and RAMA board members, regular juried exhibition participants, RAM Artist Fellowship Award recipients, and longtime supporters of RAM’s mission. Featuring a mixture of existing collection holdings and recent acquisitions, this exhibition offers a glimpse into the careers of these eight artists who have helped make RAM what it is today.

Biographies and statements from the featured artists

Each day, driving to my studio down Memorial Drive, a story unfolds before my eyes like a movie being played out on a screen. I am drawn to stories and I make art that tells stories. It’s a long tradition, this business of narrative art, and I’m proud to be part of it.

I am told that there is a genuine comic element in my work. I am happy about that. I am happy that I can translate my dark view of the world into something that will make people smile.

Jerrold Belland (1947–) is a former RAMA Board member, 2012–13 RAM Artist Fellowship Award recipient, frequent juried exhibition participant, and longtime art teacher in the Racine Unified School District. Belland received his BS in art from the University of Wisconsin–Madison and his MFA from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. As a young artist, he was inspired by newspaper cartoon strips. When selected for the 2012–13 RAM Artist Fellowship Award, Belland returned to this inspiration to create work for his solo exhibition. He is represented in RAM’s collection by 29 works, including paintings, prints, and an artists’ book.

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The watercolor medium has provided me with the luminous and intense paint necessary to execute my sense of color and design ideas. All densely painted areas are made up of multiple layers of watercolor washes which can be set down ten to thirty times to create the depth of color that the glazing requires. The drawings have a fool-the-eye quality since the viewer isn't sure what is painted, drawn or collaged.

Lisa Englander (1954–) served as Principal, Guest Experience and Retail Division, at RAM until her retirement in 2022. She is a longtime *Watercolor Wisconsin* participant and is a signature member of the Transparent Watercolor Society. Born in Brooklyn, New York, Englander attended Brooklyn College and earned her BA in printmaking and drawing before completing her MFA in printmaking at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. Her work has been included in over 300 group and juried exhibitions in the US and abroad. Englander is represented in RAM's collection by over 50 works on paper.

As a letterpress printer, I am interested in type, paper, book forms, and text, not necessarily in that order. Type is increasingly difficult to obtain. I have a fair amount of type, but only a few fonts that I like to use for text. Type is idiosyncratic, usually somewhat worn or damaged (especially the wooden type) and beautiful for all of that.

Caren Heft (1939–) served as an Associate Curator at Wustum from 1998 to 2000, prior to her role as Director of the Edna Carlsten Gallery at the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point. During her time as Associate Curator, Heft played a large role in the Victory in Peace program, an organization for youth with difficult home lives that was created by Taylor Home and sponsored in part by Wustum. Since 1983, she has owned and operated Arcadian Press. Her work is in many major museum and library collections throughout the United States and abroad. Heft is represented in RAM's collection by over 50 artists' books, prints, and broadsides.

My current work seeks to perfect the very essence of making ceramics by focusing on just clay, water, and fire. The saggar firing process relies on the skill and experience I have developed over thirty years to create an environment of combustible materials that will use the fire as a painter uses a brush. Unlike raku or glazing, the coloring of a saggar-fired pot occurs from the moment the kiln is lit until the pot has completely cooled.

Alex Mandli (1952–) is a former RAMA Board member, 2018–19 RAM Artist Fellowship Award recipient, frequent juried exhibition participant, and longtime high school and college art teacher. In addition to teaching at Walden III Middle and High School,

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Horlick High School, and the University of Wisconsin–Parkside, Kenosha, Mandli has also taught drawing and ceramics classes at Wustum. His work has been included in the Smithsonian Craft Show in Washington DC three times—1999, 2000, and 2007. He is represented in RAM’s collection by eight ceramic vessels.

With my plein air experiences, I saw more of man’s marks and scars on the landscape, realizing how fragile our environment has become. Going to an area that is wooded, an understory filled with ferns, in countless plant species, bird songs, a cool, shaded world, and much more. To return the following year and it’s all gone...what remains [is] a heated environment, tree stumps, debris, a development of structures growing, and a sadness of what is lost.

Michael Nitsch (1950–) served as an Exhibition Preparator at RAM and Wustum from 1980 to 2008. After RAM, Nitsch worked as a Museum Assistant at the Miller Art Museum in Sturgeon Bay, a role from which he retired in 2021. In 1980, he earned his BA from the University of Wisconsin–Parkside, Kenosha, after serving in the Navy for four years. He is a frequent participant in juried exhibitions, including *Watercolor Wisconsin* and *Racine and Vicinity Show*. Nitsch is represented in RAM’s collection by nine prints and a collaborative artists’ book.

My process of working is elemental; using only a few hand tools and the heat of an oxyacetylene torch, I build my creatures out of thin sheets of metal and steel rods. Even as a young boy, I was drawn to the siren call of fire. Like a detective, I turn on the heat until the steel talks. After construction, the painting process brings the work to life. Painting has become an increasingly important aspect of the work. My sculptures are built around stories and word-play.

Bill Reid (1958–) is a former RAMA Board member, 2014–15 RAM Artist Fellowship Award recipient, and former RAM Windows on Fifth Gallery artist. Born in Buffalo, New York, Reid holds a BFA from the Kansas City Art Institute, Missouri, and an MFA from the Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. Reid’s lively and animated work has been featured on television programs, including Milwaukee Public Television’s *The Arts Page*, and in numerous group and solo exhibitions. He is represented in RAM’s collection by 16 works, including metal sculptures, ceramics, and designs that he created for the museum’s art outreach vehicle, *RAM on the Road*.

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Susan M. Sorenson (1941–) is a longtime Watercolor Wisconsin participant known for her mixed media abstractions on paper. Over the course of her career, she has received four *Watercolor Wisconsin* purchase awards and was included in the 2016 RAM exhibition *Honoring Fifty Years of Watercolor Wisconsin*. Beginning her career as a licensed nurse with a degree from Gateway Technical Institute, Kenosha, she went on to earn her BA in fine art from the University of Wisconsin–Parkside, Kenosha, in 1987. Sorenson served as Associate Registrar for the Permanent Collection at Wustum from 1991 to 2010 and also volunteered as a docent for several years. In 1998, she was a founding member of Artists Gallery in downtown Racine. Sorenson is represented in RAM's collection by 12 works on paper.

Marc Wollman (1948–) served as an Exhibition Preparator at RAM and Wustum. In his retirement, he has been a frequent volunteer at the museums. He is a regular participant in juried exhibitions, including *Wisconsin Photography* and *Racine and Vicinity Show*. Wollman attended Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois, where he had his first solo exhibition in 1969. In 1979, he was one of the committee members who conceived and developed the first *Wisconsin Photography* exhibition. Wollman is represented in RAM's collection by 23 silver gelatin prints.