

SUNDAY

WEATHER

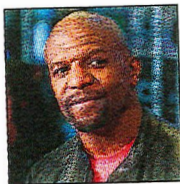
HIGH 39° LOW 31°

 You can expect it will be mostly cloudy with a few flurries./A2

PEOPLE

Offers apology

Terry Crews regrets letting down Gabrielle Union, other black women./A2



CAPITAL REGION

Sheriffs are adapting

Fluctuating jail populations tied to bail reform./C1

NATION/WORLD

Battling for a win

Democratic presidential candidates crisscross Iowa ahead of caucuses./A4

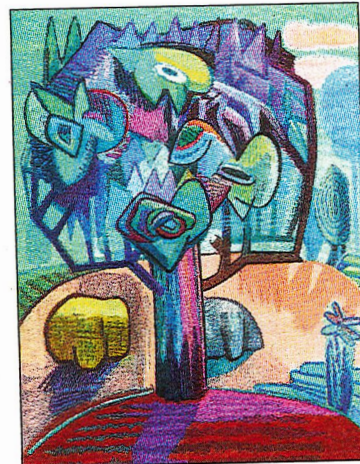
On the rise

China's death toll from new virus stands at 304./A5

UNWIND

VISUAL ARTS ON DISPLAY

JoAnne Carson's joyous work is what is needed during winter. /INSIDE



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TIMES UNION

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HEALTH

Joyous flowering of a many-faceted creativity

JoAnne Carson, Wood Nymph, 1999. Fiberglass, resin, oil paint.

Exhibit showcases artist's wide talents

By William Jaeger

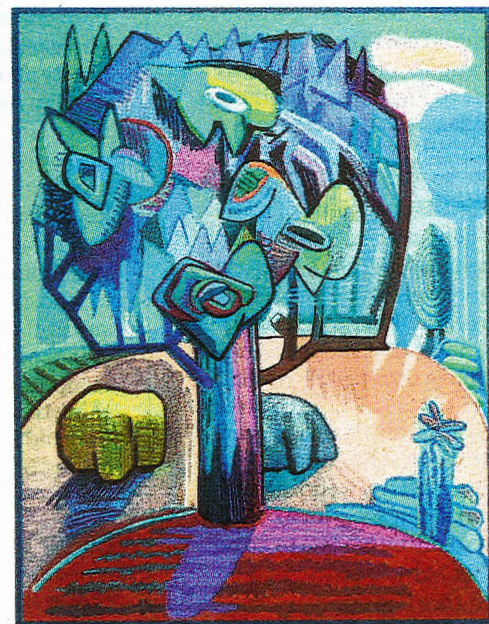
Spring is in the air and it's only February. The flowers and gardens implicit and explicit in JoAnne Carson's extravagant, joyous work at the Opalka Gallery are exactly what we all need in the dead of winter.

"Rise Up and Shine!" is also a perfect title for this show, getting to the spirit of the work, and of the artist, who continues to build on several decades of artmaking. The idea that art is a glorious, rejuvenating enterprise is really the soul of what you'll see here. The paintings, drawings, and sculptures are buoyant and colorful — you can't be here without feeling good.

The revelations are the sculptures. The smaller ones often resemble fanciful flower arrangements, splays of fantastic blooms and fronds expanding into the air. Each piece is distinct in form and materials. The smallest "High Hopes," rotating on a small white base, is cleverly assembled from sticks and yarn. "Argyle" is more like an animal with a hibiscus head, made of painted and flocked fiberglass.

They all gently expand space in ways that are viscerally playful. And accessible. In-

Please see **EXHIBIT 5** ►



Photos by William Jaeger

JoAnne Carson, Dream Catcher, 2013. Acrylic on canvas



JoAnne Carson, installation view.

Photos by William Jaeger

If you go:

JoAnne Carson: "Rise Up and Shine!"■ **When:** Through Feb. 29■ **Where:** Opalka Gallery, Sage Colleges, 140 New Scotland Ave., Albany■ **Hours:** Tuesday-Saturday, 12-5 p.m., Thursday 12-8 p.m.■ **Admission:** Free■ **Info:** <https://opalka.sage.edu> or 518-292-7742

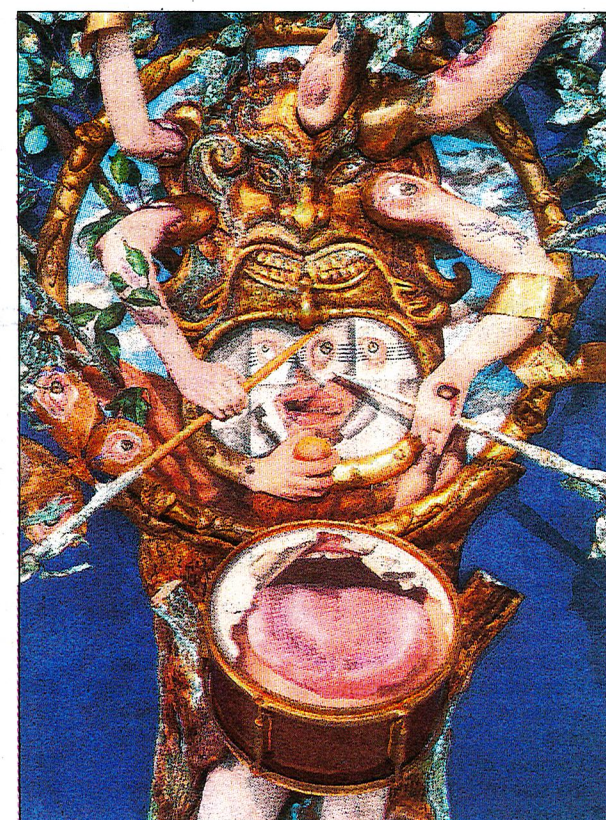
FROM THE COVER

Exhibit showcases range of artist's creative output

JoAnne Carson, *Wishful Thinking*, 2019. Acrylic on canvas.



Above, JoAnne Carson, *Tree of Desire*, 1993. Fiberglass, oil paint, objects. Below, JoAnne Carson, *Tree of Desire*, 1993. Fiberglass, oil paint, objects. (detail)



EXHIBIT

▼ CONTINUED FROM 1

deed, the likability of these small pieces might lead you to miss the extraordinary craft in every one of them. And the changing scale of the components that keep them perky.

But I dally, because the astonishments in this show are the three large sculptures, each alone worth the trip to see first-hand. The giant faux-wood but actually painted fiberglass fantasia "Wood Nymph," from 1999, seems like an oversized slice of a tree stump, mounted on the wall. From the ringed and varied browns of this disk, a multi-armed female form extrudes. It's a bit like a Vishnu figure, but the humor here, or the feminist critique, is that the arms are holding fresh baked pies. Yes, pies. It's stunning and hilarious and weirdly profound.

A shrine-like essence dominates "Tree of Desire," going back to 1993. This apple tree has a figure, again with many arms, embedded or maybe trapped within its trunk and branches. The painted fiberglass surfaces, including a pair of legs along the trunk, almost glow. Two of the arms hold some kind of drum sticks, tapping painted eyes floating along a music staff on the modified torso. A marching drum beneath this has an oversized tongue painted on its skin.

The title leads us on — and David Carbone's catalog essay suggests an allegory from Ovid, ending his comments with the easily embraced point that the work is a turning point into "Carson's wanderings into the garden of the self." By chance, I bumped into the artist in the gallery. "I don't know who I was back then," she said, referring to "Tree of Desire" with a smile. This is partly proof of a long career that has kept evolving and growing.

Her later turn toward increasingly direct evocations of nature can be seen in the third large work, "Chlorophyllia (For a World without Color)," finished just three years ago. This firework of white and off-white flowers is an expression of the garden made into a starting point, colorless and all possibility. In its purity, it is a parallel to the artist's recent immersion into actual gardening in Vermont, her artwork there now framed by a window in her house looking down on this new, untamed medium.

Carson's most recent work in the gallery is a series of paintings made in the last few months, the latest of a decade of acrylics on canvas. Here are specimens and gardens, depictions of manicured nature with all the visual demands of both the subject and the representation of it. This makes the works succeed with lasting effect. There is a slightly surreal

handling of some of the trees and foliage in many of them, with colors bursting here and there and certain elements expanding in size.

There is indeed a compelling combination of styles, part Hockney and part de Chirico, not far from Carson's own description that her work is "equal parts Cubism and Looney Tunes." I'd venture to say that these are more varied and nuanced than any of those, going beyond colorful surfaces, geometric effects, and blatant dream imagery. These painted gardens, flowers, trees, and shrubs are little Edens, one after another. It's convoluted, beautiful artistry made pertinent.

► William Jaeger is a frequent contributor to the Times Union.