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**“Sandy Winters – Art Museum of Florida International University”**

**By Elisa Turner**

Sandy Winters has always focused on voluptuous, vegetal forms. In densely packed paintings and mixed-media reliefs, she has described the sensual colors and contours of foliage and fruits whose luxuriant growth is faintly menacing. She explores the tension between ripeness and rot, procreation and decay, while working the tangled stems and rotund pods and blossoms for their nearly abstract, three-dimensional presence.

In previous works, Winters has shown architectural fragments, such as columns and capitals, nearly obscured by the smothering embrace of lush vegetation. In her recent work she has substituted mechanistic objects or elements suggesting tribal artifacts. While a certain romanticism has pervaded her art, exalting the dangerously exotic and vaguely recalling Rousseau's fabulous jungles, these new oils on paper and canvas are more aggressive and deliberately less beguiling.

Previous tensions have now escalated into conflict, as Winters employs ever more dramatic imagery, scale and sense of volume. Part of the drama arises from the way the angular boundaries of the compositions fall within the edges of the white canvas or paper. Her compelling works push and spill into the viewer's space, contrasting the dark, rich colors of the organic forms with the dull brown and gray tones of the objects and artifacts. These drab elements, sometimes suggesting spiked ocean mines, crudely echo the contours of plant shapes.

The belligerent fusion of mechanistic and organic forms may also point to the consequences of environmental rape. In *Ask Not What Your Country Can Do For You*, a dark mine-like shape bursts from the painting's center, bearing protrusions that recall spikes, buds and nipples. Thorny twigs and coils, barbed and smooth, press against vibrant globes and cones that evoke fruit and leaves. *Talisman* seethes with tightly compressed coils, cones, and barbs. Contents are under pressure in Winters' art, sparking a conflict between creative and destructive energies

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