

Engaging with local groups is what Everson does best

To the Editor:

It is disappointing to read recent articles in the The Post-Standard and on [syracuse.com](#) that suggest the Everson Museum has not sufficiently collaborated with community organizations and local artists. In fact, this is what the museum has done best.

Pieces such as David M. Rubin's guest column ("Here are 2 challenges the Everson museum faces in staging a comeback") are misleading and inaccurate, at least in terms of what the Everson has done in this regard. To suggest that the museum should partner more with other institutions ignores that it has continuously done so for a decades, if not the past century.

Just this past year, the Everson collaborated with Syracuse-based fashion designer and SU professor Jeffrey Mayer to present "An American Look." This exhibition featured SU's fabulous Genet Costume Collection alongside many significant arts and crafts ceramics from the Everson's collection, furniture design from the Stickley Museum, and dozens of prominent arts and crafts works from local collectors David Rudd and Debbie

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Goldstein.

In 2012, the Everson partnered with Onondaga Historical Association on "People, Place and Progress," an exhibition that presented dozens of paintings and works on paper from OHA and the Everson to celebrate the local community. That same year, the museum featured several works of art from SU Art Collections as a complement to the Robert Henri exhibition. Again in 2012, the Everson collaborated with 14 arts and cultural institutions on "The Other New York (TONY: 2012)," an unprecedented communitywide exhibition featuring New York state artists, most of them from Central New York.

Collaboration among organizations that had never before worked together —



The Syracuse-based artist Michael Moody exhibited this acrylic on canvas painting titled "The Book of Us" at the Community Folk Art Center as part of TONY: 2012 at the Everson Museum of Art. (File photo / The Post-Standard)

including six SU arts venues, ArtRage Gallery, Erie Canal Museum, Onondaga Historical Association, Stone Quarry Hill Art Park, Rosamond Gifford Zoo and the city of Syracuse — brought together artists and community members through innovative cross-programming, exhibitions, and walking tours. Is this not commu-

nity collaboration at its best?

The Everson has a very small staff that works tirelessly to nurture community connections among individuals, organizations and their partners. A team of dedicated, highly trained docents delivers educational programming to people who would otherwise not be able to experience it at the museum, such as those at the assisted living facilities. Volunteers organize events such as 60/60 that connect dozens of local artists with the community in a relaxed social setting.

Regarding exhibiting more local artists, I believe the Everson has supported more local artists than any other regional museum in Upstate New York. In addition, the Everson has regularly exhibited local artists through

its Biennials, "The Edge of Art" series, group shows and numerous solo shows.

Over the past few years alone, Syracuse-based artists including Yvonne Buchanan, Margie Hughto, Jen Pepper, Jeffrey Mayer and David MacDonald have all been featured in solo exhibitions. This year, the Everson has solo exhibitions for Syracuse-based artists Mary Giehl and Sarah McCoubrey on its schedule. Carrie Mae Weems had a solo exhibition at the Everson in the late 1990s and has since gained international recognition and a major solo show at the Guggenheim Museum in New York City. Weems's work was included in TONY: 2012 and is often on view in the museum's permanent collection.

In 2010, the Everson organized Haudenosaunee: Elements, which included more than 30 local artists, and a follow-up exhibition featuring Haudenosaunee ceramists is being planned for 2015.

The Everson also regularly partners with other organizations to showcase local artistic talent including ARISE, the VA Creative Arts Festival, and Vera House.

The Everson has hosted "On My Own Time," presenting artwork created by employees of local businesses, annually for more than 30 years, the longest running venue for this event

in the country. Even the superbly talented animals at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo have had exhibitions at the Everson!

How can the museum be expected to do more when it does so much already?

What the Everson Museum needs right now — besides better financial support — is less negativity from those who somehow do not see the incredible contribution the museum makes to the Syracuse community and more appreciation from those who are in a position to provide the means for the museum to get to achieve financial stability.

I believe every artist, organization, student, parent of a child who loves art camp, and community member who visits the Everson should voice their support and the local media should echo that support rather than criticizing the museum's programming while it tries to overcome its financial challenges. The Everson is too important to this community and the greater region. To communicate that its difficulties somehow stem from a lack of local engagement unfairly criticizes the museum, its staff and volunteers.

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