



Photo: June Ahrens

REFLECTING TIME

June Ahrens

September 8 - October 22, 2022

Opening Reception, Thursday, September 8, 2022, 5:30 - 7 pm



Photo: Donna Callighan

June Ahrens graduated from Purchase College, New York, with a BFA (Summa Cum Laude). She attended the Advanced Seminars at Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

Ahrens has participated in numerous one-person shows, group exhibitions, and collaborative installations. Her work has received awards from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Duracell and Polaroid Foundations, and was nominated for a Joan Mitchell Foundation grant. She was granted the Distinguished Advocate for the Arts Award by the Connecticut Commission on the Arts, which also awarded her an Individual Artists grant.

An installation by Ahrens was acquired by the Kemper Museum, Kansas City, Missouri, for their permanent collection, and her work is in the collections of the Trustman Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts; the Housatonic Museum and the Contemporary Gallery of Art, Sacred Heart University, both Connecticut; and numerous private collections.

For further information, visit juneahrens.com

HOUSATONIC MUSEUM OF ART

Housatonic Community College
900 Lafayette Boulevard
Bridgeport, CT 06604
museum.housatonic.edu/

Gallery hours: Monday - Friday, 8:30 am - 5:30 pm
Thursday until 7 pm
Saturday 9:00 am - 3:00 pm
Closed Sundays and all state and federal holidays.

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Reflecting Time at the Housatonic Museum of Art is a bravura event in the career of June Ahrens. At 83 years of age, Ahrens is ambitiously building on a decades-long history of creating elegiac sculpture and installations through which she has addressed both personal and societal loss and confusion surrounding the most complex issues of our time: homelessness, 9/11, gun violence, and now the global devastation of COVID. Yet the power of her installations—whatever their inspiration—is their ability to offer a wide range of experiences for the viewer: joy, sorrow, curiosity, wonder, awe. Ahrens harnesses the ephemeral potential of light and decay, and the emotional power of memory and loss to create sculpture that transforms the very architecture in which she creates her installations.

Two site-dependent installations comprise *Reflecting Time*. In the front gallery, *Changing* features a mandala of decayed flowers placed directly on the floor; and a wall of broken mirror; at the end of the gallery, reflecting both viewer and art. Thousands of petals plucked from flowers donated to the artist fill the center of the circle; the desiccated remains of roses, hydrangeas, chrysanthemums, and lilies are still identifiable, their once-vibrant hues darkened by long exposure to the air. Dozens of decayed white roses form the 18-foot perimeter; just prior to opening night, the artist will place a final ring of fresh, white long-stemmed roses, stripping off the leaves and arranging the stems in a pattern of evenly spaced, not-quite-straight lines that create a post-minimal drawing.

In the back gallery, *Surround (Hiding in Plain Site)* is an immersive experience of light, shadow, and reflections. *Surround* features a 14-foot wide circle of shattered plexiglass placed directly on the floor; rough edges overlaid in strata four and five deep. Scoop lights set waist high at the front corners of the gallery throw wide shadows across the space, creating a shimmering sea of reflections on the back and side walls. As viewers walk around the perimeter of the rough circle, their shadows break and reconfigure the constantly shifting movement of light across the gallery walls. Sharp-edged reflections in the pool of mirrored shards suggest our broken spirit amid a sea of 21st-century social ills, yet the cubist composition imparts a semblance of calm.

In her ability to transform space and materials, Ahrens honors the never-static experience of life. While not turning away from the political and social challenges of our time, Ahrens has transformed the Burt Chernow Gallery at Housatonic Museum of Art into a space of beauty and healing, memory and hope.

—Barbara O'Brien, *Guest Curator*

An online catalog, with images of the exhibition and an expanded essay by O'Brien, will be available mid-September at juneahrens.com