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## Artist Statement

Kari Nupson

Cedarville University, [karinupson@cedarville.edu](mailto:karinupson@cedarville.edu)

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Visual Works

## **ARTIST STATEMENT**

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**KARI NUPSON**

### **1903 & 1899**

A work about Paul Laurence Dunbar's second poem entitled "Dreams," *1903* features a fully fruited pomegranate tree in the top center portion of the painted frame. While the health of the tree symbolizes prosperity, the fruit itself is a biblical representation of deception. This not only references the author's Christian faith and the story of Adam and Eve, but it also draws attention to the *1903* poem's description of the unknowing deceptive bliss that dreams bring. The tulips on either side of the tree in both paintings reference the purity of sleep. In *1899*, the pomegranate tree is bare, symbolizing a lack of prosperity in addition to the ability to see past the deceptive façade that a dream provides.

In the bottom center portion of both paintings, the painted symbol underneath the respective dates is a reference to original cover design of Paul Laurence Dunbar's first published collection of poetry, *Oak and Ivy*, and the background of *1903* is the view of the modern Dayton skyline from the cemetery where Dunbar's body is interred. The panels are chronologically out of order to symbolize the continuing and seemingly backwards struggle for the equality of Black Americans, not only giving the paintings contemporary significance, but also referencing Dunbar's great influence on racial issues during his lifetime.

### **DREAMS**

A combination of both of Paul Laurence Dunbar's poems entitled "Dreams," the nonobjective shapes and colors of this work symbolize the peaceful confusion of both sleeping and dreaming. The same woman depicted in the diptych *1903* and *1899* appears in this painting calmly sleeping. Her hair blends into the cloudlike background and her eyebrow melts into some of the text, showing full immersion into her dreams.