

# The Eastern Echo

*News and nonsense spiced with nerve*

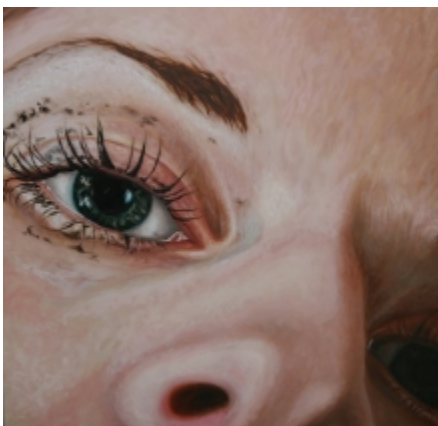
## 'Figurative Works' on display at Student Center

By [Angela Scott](#) | THE EASTERN ECHO

Added January 9, 2011 at 9:52 pm

For centuries, people have actively searched for relationships with other bodies. Bodies are studied, criticized and sought out. This can be illustrated in The Figurative Works exhibit on display from Jan. 5 to Feb. 12 at Eastern Michigan University in the University Gallery located in the EMU Student Center.

“There is an immediate connection that will bring the viewer into the work,” said Michael Reedy, professor at EMU and curator of the art show. “A range of things can happen in the show. You will be able to see the figure and see ourselves differently as a result.”



EMU Art Department / THE EASTERN ECHO  
Alison Oakes, a 28-year-old artist, used oil paint on porcelain instead of canvas for her piece “Blink.”

Figurative art works refer to images of the representational, whether of humans, animals or something else. This show was nationally juried, meaning a call for submissions was put out and any artist within the continental United States could apply for the show. Reedy picked images from the applicants who would create a cohesive show, and then invited a few other artists he knew would match the theme.

“For this show there was a lot of works that in some way suggest the body, comes from the figure of the body or its absence in some way would provoke the artist to bring it back,” Reedy said.

Reedy has taught art classes at EMU for six years. He earned his MFA in painting at Northern Illinois University and took up drawing after graduation because preparation was easier.

He has always favored working on figurative art and has an untitled, mixed media drawing in the show. His drawing includes two large monumental figures sitting in the middle of an army of smaller figures. The different sized figures are made from a different medium.

“My images typically play with sensationalism,” Reedy said. “Each figure operates in its own space, and by switching material and size, it changes how the figures are rendered putting them in a real psychological space that compels the narrative.” said Nick Reszta, an EMU alumnus working on his MFA in drawing at Kendall College of Art and Design in Grand Rapids, has two pieces in the show, one of which focuses on the effect of bringing two nude figures together.

### Possibly related:

- [Eastern grad missing after earthquake · Mar 13](#)
- [Graduate art show inserts new elements · Mar 13](#)
- [GREEN week starts today · Mar 13](#)
- [Islam 101 event takes apart prejudice · Mar 13](#)
- [Eastern Michigan women's basketball team loses 51-46 in MAC championship game · Mar 12](#)

Resztar works with mixed media including charcoal and cola for the carbonic acid effect. He mostly works from real models, but sometimes uses photography for longer processes.

“When portraying nude couples together it may turn some people away immediately but it also may intrigue people,” Restar said. “By putting two figures together it states or questions their relationship and it is interesting to mix race or gender.”

Alison Oakes, 28, another artist in the show, pieces “Tan,” “Tight,” and “Blink” contrast from others as she paints close ups of very specific features of the human body. “Tan” shows the skin on the stomach, “Tight” is a close up of lips and “Blink” is a close up of the eye. She breaks out of the traditional oil on canvas and uses oil paint on porcelain as a medium.

“I loved the way oil soaked into the porcelain, and it also added the concept it added to skin, like when people say ‘she had skin like porcelain’ it not only refers to the skin’s status, but also relates the art to skin,” Oakes said.

After completing her undergraduate degree in Columbus, Oakes finished her Masters in 2009 at the University in Knoxville, Tenn. She connects with her art by only using herself as a model. Her emphasis contrasts modern fashion magazines by focusing and basking in the imperfections of her own skin. She thinks of the porcelain as her skin and the paint as cosmetics, except instead of using the cosmetics to hide her skin’s flaws, the porcelain is flawless first and she adds the imperfections.

“The most important thing about these pieces is that they are a self-portrait of me,” Oakes said. “It illustrates the intimate relationship everyone has with their body and promotes viewers to examine their own body.”

Resztar said, “I recognize that Eastern Michigan University is becoming known as a figurative school. I know many students and grad students who are working figuratively there and it seems to be becoming one of the leading schools in the region for figurative art said.”

“There is an immediate connection that will bring the viewer into the work a range of things can happen in the show,” Reedy said. “You will be able to see the figure and see ourselves differently as a result.”

The University Gallery is open from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday and Thursday; 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday; and 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

*Section: Life*