

# GERBER: Models are friends, family or associates

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"I am most drawn to faces in my paintings, but in this particular work, I tried to focus more on Tom's chest, so it becomes less about the individual and more about the body. This is an example of how my paintings place the models in roles that may or may not relate to them specifically. Tom is gay and has experienced this push to self-objectification, but he does not own a smart phone and to my knowledge, has never taken a selfie."

Gerber said all of her models are family, friends or associates, and she likes to do series depicting the same model in different situations or personas.

"The roles and situations my models find themselves in may or may not relate directly to their personality," she said.

Gerber has a "a process" that begins with an extensive photo session, taking hundreds of photographs of the model in different positions and spaces.

"Sometimes I have a clear vision of what I am



Courtesy art

**"Melted Mari" is another of Clarissa Gerber's works included in the Penn State Altoona exhibit.**

after in an image, and other times, it comes out through the process," she said.

Gerber pours over the photographs for images that stand out to her on sev-

eral levels, prints them in black and white and develops a plan for her painting.

"Painting is an interactive process," she said. "I look to see what the painting needs, how the colors interact, what shapes/spaces should be added, changed, or removed. I endeavor to combine multiple modes of painting with a single work and playing with varying levels of abstraction."

One of Gerber's series, includes "Erin Alone" and "Erin at Play" — both at the Penn State exhibition — that she did after talking with the model.

"'Erin Alone' was inspired by Erin's feelings of disconnect from others," she said. "She has a mild form of autism, has trouble recognizing faces right away and often feels separated from others. One of the few paintings where the model does not make direct eye contact with the viewer, 'Erin Alone' shows a woman separated, clinging to herself in a cold space, though she still has strength."

Gerber said that in addi-

tion to the background stories on her subjects, it is "equally important what (the) viewer brings to the experience. How do you feel when you view the painting? How do your background experiences affect how you interpret my work?"

"I have received a variety of interpretations of my paintings from viewers and that is a great thing."

Gerber graduated from Alfred University in 2007 with a bachelors in fine arts and philosophy of religion. She taught philosophy at Alpena (Mich.) Community College before returning to school and earning her masters of fine arts from Michigan State University. Besides her courses in philosophy, psychology and gender studies, Gerber said her paintings have been influenced by her research of Michel Foucault, C.G. Jung, and Linda Nochlin.

Today, she teaches painting, drawing, color theory and application and visual design classes at Cuyahoga.

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