



EVERY LAST ONE mixed media on paper 31" x 43"

Michael Reedy

Let's pretend it is all spontaneous, after all, opening my work up to more intuitive and spontaneous decisions has been a goal of mine ever since I moved away from the largely academic mannerisms that dominated my earlier efforts as a visual artist. It also, in some ways, might get me off the hook of having to explain work that is just too new, work that I have not gotten enough distance from to reconcile what it is all about. However, each of the images pictured here went through countless revisions before reaching their finished state, and in some respects could be described as anything but spontaneous.

The first two works completed in this series were *malum A* and *malum E*. Prior to these two drawings I had been adopting cartooning and medical illustration into my studio practice in order to explore what I believed to be the varying degrees of comprehension associated with each image type. I was also interested in the degree of resistance each image type would have when placed in the

context of the other, and finally, within the context of a traditional portrait or figurative work. These two subsets of body images began to represent the visual bookends of the individuals I was portraying in my work. In the beginning we embrace the fantastic and the potential of the body to rebound from anything and to be limited by nothing. At the end we encounter sterilized images of the opened body that are concerned with explaining its limits and failings. I was working under the guiding principle that the closer we moved towards one end of the spectrum or the other, the less we were able to embrace or comprehend its opposite.

However, while sharing common references or start points, *malum A* and *malum E* shifted out from the framework which governed my previous efforts, and in doing so, became something very different. The ties to fantasy, optimism, and childhood which guided my early efforts with cartoon based imagery were severed. As a result, the car

LIBBY (momentarily) mixed media on paper 25" x 36"







At Left: ONCE REMOVED mixed media on paper 41" x 32"

SHE KNOWS HOW TO USE THEM Mixed media on paper 35" x 43"

toon elements were given free reign to become whatever they wanted to be, and in this instance could be best described as the manifestation of nightmares or dreams. In this more open context, the references to medical illustration have begun to shift from the real to the fictional. The violence and pain associated with an opened body has taken on an edge of comfort, and even beauty at times. Where pain, optimism, reality, fiction, or fear begin and/or end has become blurred and elusive to me.

As I moved on to more recent works like *She Knows How to Use Them* and *Every Last One*, I did not reinstate any specific role for the references I was making. Everything was allowed to shift more and more in an attempt to balance and resolve each particular image. As a result, the role of the doodles and anatomy references seem to slip and slide from one image to the next and defy any easy or simple categorization. On some levels it might appear spontaneous, and it is tempting to

explain it as such. However, in the act of balancing all the different components at play in any given image, a great deal of time was spent revising each element and considering its affect on the remainder. At the moment, I do not know how to explain what impact all these variables have on the work. I just know that this work represents some of the most engaged and active time spent in my studio in recent years.

Michael Reedy is currently an Assistant Professor in Drawing at Eastern Michigan University. He received his MFA in painting from Northern Illinois University in 2000 and his BA from North Central College in 1996. His work has been included in over 80 national and international exhibitions and can be viewed in numerous private and institutional collections, including Minot State University, Clatsop Community College, Shippensburg University, and the Hoffman Trust National Collection in association with the San Diego Art Institute.

www.mikereedy.com