

# 'T.R. Ericsson: Etant Donnes,' powerful drawings of a woman, on view in Cleveland

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By [Steven Litt, cleveland.com](#)



**Shaheen Modern and Contemporary Art** T.R. Ericsson's new suite of drawings, based on photographs, asks viewers to contemplate strange but alluring images of a woman (modeled by the artist's wife) who lolls about forests and streams in the nude.

The exhibition of large-scale drawings in powdered graphite on paper by T.R. Ericsson at Shaheen Modern and Contemporary Art in Cleveland is a whodunit that can't be solved. That's why it's so powerful.

The show consists of eight big images, based on photographs taken by the artist, which depict a nude woman lying on her back as if dead or unconscious, amid sunny forest clearings or shallow pools of water in streams trickling over horizontal layers of shale.

The drawings, produced in a complex process based on silkscreen printing, look as if they've been blown onto the sheets of paper in a single puff.

They push many buttons at once, raising questions about how the mysterious woman (actually the artist's wife, Rose Ericsson) ended up lying nude in such unlikely surroundings. They also give a viewer the uneasy sensation of participating in a voyeuristic experience that's faintly creepy, perhaps even morally suspect.

By partially erasing, rubbing and scuffing the drawings, Ericsson gives them the grainy, scratchy look of a black-and-white home movie left moldering and partially decayed in a closet for decades. In this way, the drawings convey the fuzzy sense of something remembered or perhaps even invented by the imagination.

## REVIEW

**Shaheen Modern and Contemporary Art What:** The exhibition "T.R. Ericsson: Etant Donnes."

**When:** Through Friday, Nov. 12.

**Where:** 740 W. Superior Ave., Cleveland.

**Admission:** Free. Go to [shaheengallery.com](#) or call 216-830-8888.

Ericsson enhances strange effects of light, making his wife's white skin glow so brightly that the contours of her body appear to dissolve magically in a bath of supernatural light. Or, perhaps, the drawings represent the viewpoint of someone who has suddenly emerged from darkness, blinking in the brilliance of day.

The works brim with historical and cultural references. More than anything, they're a tribute to the famous final work of the Dadaist and conceptual artist Marcel Duchamp, known as "Etant Donnes: 1. La Chute d'Eau, 2. Le Gaz d'Eclairage" or "Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas."

The Duchamp, made from 1946 to 1966, is a sculptural tableau installed permanently at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, where viewers who look through a peephole in a pair of antique doors find themselves gazing at a sculpture of a nude woman who lies spread-eagled in a field, holding a glowing electric lamp aloft in her raised left hand.

Ericsson draws heavily on the absurd erotic poetry -- and some would say misogyny -- of Duchamp's creation. He also evokes the 19th-century tradition of painting nude women in forest settings, particularly the Realist works of Gustave Courbet.

Ericsson, born in Cleveland in 1972, has fashioned a career that has erased distinctions between being a "local" and a "national" artist. With studios in New York City and Concord Township, he addresses all audiences at once, at a very high level of achievement. The Shaheen exhibition shows why -- and how -- he's been able to supersede the usual artistic categories of Northeast Ohio.

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