



# Al Gerdeman has his "Revenge"



Photo by Maddie McGarvey

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**By Jim Fischer**

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Mild-mannered high school art teacher Dan Gerdeman has a secret alter ego: that of a dynamic artist with a postmodern vision, the creator of the anti-heroic character El Destructo.

OK, the truth is Gerdeman the teacher isn't exactly mild-mannered, nor is his work as a professional artist a secret. "The Revenge of El Destructo," a collection of his recent work, is the current show at Ohio Art League's X Space.

### Ohio Art League X Space

Artist talk 6 p.m. Friday, May 13, Closing reception to follow

400 W. Rich St., Franklinton

“The collection focuses on my observations of how we treat each other, sort of tongue in cheek,” Gerdeman said.

“Influences include media, family, friendships and inner turmoil, battling oneself.”

El Destructo himself is a character Gerdeman created about 10 years ago, inspired following a session cleaning up after another family on a multi-family vacation.

“I’ve made about 200 paintings of this guy since then,” he said.

While this exhibition features strictly paintings, Gerdeman’s work is not limited to a single medium. In addition to his own artistic curiosity, Gerdeman, a teacher at Hilliard Davidson High School for the past 17 years, practices what he teaches.

“High school art is different [from when I was young]. Technology has changed a lot of the way we transmit and collect information for these kids,” Gerdeman said. In response, he has worked in a variety of new media, including film animation and Photoshop.

“I don’t take my job lightly,” he said.

It’s a statement that rings true for at least two of his former students.

“A painting class with Gerdy was not just an art class. It was a chance for students to dive into self-discovery and vocalize their own unique ideas,” Carolyn Slebodnik said.

“It’s Dan’s humanity that we are drawn to,” Corey Aumiller said. “He listens to us with compassion, offers us fatherly advice, treats us with dignity and respect. He remembers us. He laughs at our jokes. He adores our artwork. And the craziest part is, he’s authentic.”