

Gallery to feature professor's portraits

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Portraiture is an earnest and archetypal art form, according to Rafael Francisco Salas, an assistant professor of painting and drawing at Ripon College. The humane, face-to-face recognition between the viewer and the sitter creates a universal connection, an inescapable point of departure, he argues.

Some of the most interesting portraiture being made today, he argued in an essay pre-

sented at the annual College Art Association conference in Los Angeles in February, colludes with the traditional forms of art history while carving out a conceptual basis that engages with the contemporary world.

Salas' own attempt to traverse this territory includes a wall-sized triptych, an allegorical portrayal of Southern writer Flannery O'Connor and the Irish punk star and ex-Pogues singer Shane MacGowan. He brings these dispa-



COURTESY OF RAFAEL FRANCISCO SALAS

Rafael Francisco Salas' "Portrait of Evelyn Kain" from 2007.

rate figures together onto a fictional stage to create a psychological painting that's more about mood and open-ended ideas than any narrative.

This monumental work along with other new works will go on view Friday at the Portrait Society Gallery, with an opening reception from 5 to 9 p.m. The exhibit will also feature preparatory drawings and sketches for the triptych — objects with their own, rich art historical traditions — and a selection of other portrait-related works.

Salas graduated from the New York Academy of Art and has exhibited at the PPOW Gallery in New York, the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design and the Dean Jensen Gallery. This is his first show at the Portrait Gallery, 207 E. Buffalo St., in the Marshall Building, Suite 526. To read Salas' essay and learn more about the show, go to the Portrait Gallery's Web site: www.portraitsocietygallery.wordpress.com. For more information, call gallery director Debra Brehmer: (414) 870-9930.