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## New post on Rustbelt Arts



### **Re: Formation Part 1**

by [K.A. Letts](#)



Radical Series 1-6 by Dan Hernandez

When Rocco DePietro and Gloria Pritschett of Gallery Project began planning for the comprehensive dual site art exhibit **Re: Formation**, now on view through August 31, 2016 in Toledo's One Erie Center, they felt as if "something had shifted" since last year's exhibit **Wish List** in the same location.

**"We saw that a tipping point had been reached, and artists were beginning to speak out and push back," said Pritschett.**

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THEIR LIVES AND FORTUNE  
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TO LOVE IT TO SUPPORT ITS  
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America's Creed by Dana DePew

By addressing some of the most pressing issues facing the region -- environmental degradation, infrastructure failure, the crisis in social and racial justice-- regional artists are expressing a new mood of activism that reflects their unease with the status quo.

The artists of Re: Formation (over 50 of them) seem eager to address the current troubled state of the nation in the most direct terms.

**"Our humanity is being tested" says Rocco DePietro,  
"Unless we say something, we are all complicit."**

The cavernous space at One Erie Center in Toledo, with its two rose windows, filtered light and massive pillars, resembles a cathedral, lacking only a cruciform floor plan to complete the devotional effect of a sacred space. There are "side chapels" edging the exterior walls of the former department store in the form of display windows. Toledo artist Yusuf Lateef (in collaboration with Kevin Gilmore, Daren Mac and James Dickerson) has even supplied a confessional of sorts with his installation/performance called **The Reconditioning**. Individuals at the opening on August 5, were invited to sit in one-on-one booths facing young men of color, who made direct eye contact and recited a litany beginning, "*I am not your enemy, I am your Brother.*" The performance was powerful and left many in tears.



Sakinah and Shirin by Sheida Soleimani

The artworks that benefit most from the enormous space and filtered daylight at One Erie Place are large, strongly graphic artworks, installations, videos and performance.

In Toledo artist Dan Hernandez's **Radical Series 1-6**, impressively scaled and domineering war machines rumble along the walls. Also large in size and impressive in impact are two soft sculptures of suffering Islamic women by Sheida Soleimani (Cranston, RI), with accompanying archival inkjet prints on the same subject.

Installations such as Detroit's Julianne Lindsay and Elton Monroy Duran's **Del Ray Project** and Flint artist Desiree Duell's **Bodies of Water** address a theme which appropriately dominates the consciousness of Great Lakes regional artists: water, its availability, its contamination, its infrastructure. There are too many to artworks addressing this theme to name them all, but I particularly liked **189 Hydrants** by John James Anderson of Saline, MI. These are small photographs of broken water hydrants arranged in a grid. It tells the story of crumbling infrastructure with matter-of-fact but devastating eloquence. I was also struck by Detroit Raizup Collective's video **Water Shut-off During Ramadan**, which is both an artwork and a sociological case study of citizens and city personnel working at cross-purposes despite the best intentions.

Some of the more intimate art works in Re: Formation seemed to me to be swamped by the larger, kinetic videos and installations. They suffer, as well, from the relatively

subdued lighting. These quieter pieces are likely to enjoy a more compatible environment when the show is re-installed in the Ann Arbor Arbor Art Center's 117 Gallery. For now, installations, videos and large scale works in the Toledo location supply more than enough reasons to make the trip to Re:Formation.

Re: Formation contains multitudes and I am glad I will have the opportunity to write more about some of the works when they are installed in Ann Arbor's Gallery 117 in September. For more information about hours and dates for Re: Formation in Toledo, go [here](#)

Have you seen the exhibit? Did you have a favorite piece? I'd love to hear your thoughts.

**[K.A. Letts](#)** | August 8, 2016 at 2:02 pm | Tags: [art exhibit](#), [Gallery Project](#), [group exhibit](#), [installation](#), [paintings](#), [regional politics](#), [sculpture](#), [Toledo](#), [video](#) | Categories: [Gallery Exhibition](#) | URL: <http://wp.me/p5r4oF-1w5>

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