

# Evan Roth Shows 'Welcome To Detroit' At Eastern Michigan University (PHOTOS)

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Kate Abbey-Lambertz

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New media artist Evan Roth might spend most of his time in Paris, but the Okemos, Mich., native has returned for a residency at Eastern Michigan University and a solo show of new work at the University Gallery, "Welcome to Detroit."

Roth was awarded EMU's McAndless Distinguished Professorship for 2012, a \$30,000 fellowship that allowed him to come live in Detroit for a six-week residency, give a lecture tour and teach a class.

And, of course, to collaborate with a moped gang.

"He's a guy who defies a lot of the normal classifications that you associate with artists," said Greg Tom, curator of Roth's show and the EMU gallery's director. "He's really great at getting you to look at things in a new way ... he gets you to question your existing presumptions."

## (SCROLL DOWN FOR PHOTOS AND VIDEO)

Most of the pieces in "Welcome to Detroit" were made in the last few weeks. They reference and appropriate popular culture, like a technology-infused memorial to the city's late hip-hop producer J Dilla or a taxonomy of its graffiti, which Roth has done in other cities.

"I tried to have Detroit touch every piece of the show in different ways," Roth explained.

While he's well known for his work with the [Graffiti Research Lab](#), Roth said his interest in graffiti stems from his love of what he calls "the hack," which comes from his tech background.

"The hack is about taking an existing structure and flipping it into something it wasn't meant to do," he said.

In the case of the taxonomy of Detroit graffiti, Roth says that by displaying and breaking down different forms of graffiti for gallery goers, he's really giving people the tools to understand a language that's all around them.

Whether it's digital software or city infrastructure, Roth's work as an artist revolves around exploiting weaknesses in existing systems to make something new. And that's what he's teaching his students in the intensive, six-hour classes that start at 9 a.m. each Saturday and Sunday. Tom said the classes are a chance for students to see a different type of work and teaching style.

Roth requires students to come up with their own versions of his propulsion paintings, experiments with spray paint cans and their built-in pressure. (See the following videos for a better idea of the possibilities of spray paint.)

"They're really excited to get their hands dirty," Roth said of his students. He teaches an approach of looking for systems and how they can be changed, rather than starting from a particular medium.

"Something that underlies a lot of creative people is this problem-solving [ability]," Roth said. A master of finding solutions, Roth cultivates that mindset in his students. And perhaps it's part of what drew him to Detroit.

"There's an amazing community of people who are excited when they see you making something and want to help," Roth said.

*"Welcome to Detroit: Works by Evan Roth" is open through April 2 at Eastern Michigan University's University Gallery, 900 Oakwood Street, 2nd Floor, Ypsilanti. Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mon. and Thurs., 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tues. and Weds. and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Fri. and Sat, and Roth will give a talk on "Art and Hacking" at EMU's Student Auditorium at 6 p.m., Tues. March 20. For more information, see the [EMU Art Department's website](#).*

**Check out installation shots from "Welcome to Detroit" and videos of Roth's propulsion paintings in action:**

**'Welcome To Detroit,' Work By Evan Roth**

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