

GALLERY GUIDE

ERIN HOLSCHER ALMAZAN:
WHAT THESE ARMS HOLD

May 16 – August 23, 2025

The Contemporary Dayton is proud to premiere a new body of work by Erin Holscher Almazan. In these gestural oil paintings on paper, Holscher Almazan explores the physical and emotional transformations that naturally unfold between a mother and her children. As her sons grow older and become more independent, the artist grapples with the evolving dynamics of attachment and separation. Through expressive mark-making and intentional use of color, Holscher Almazan navigates this emotional terrain—balancing moments of holding on and letting go. Central to the work is a heightened focus on hands and touch, recurring motifs that symbolize both care and release. These visual elements serve as a conduit for examining the intimacy, tension, and tenderness inherent in the maternal experience, offering viewers a deeply personal and universal reflection on the shifting nature of parenthood.

Holscher Almazan's paintings are characterized by a loose and gestural style—marked by expressive, vigorous, and spontaneous mark-making that emphasizes the physical act of creation. Through bold, often rapid brushstrokes and intuitive techniques, the works capture movement, energy, and emotion. Many of the compositions present a compelling juxtaposition of fully rendered areas with more sketch-like, drawn components, creating a dynamic tension between refinement and immediacy.

The series includes self-portraits of the artist, portraits of her two teenage sons, and studies of hands, arms, and torsos—many of which evoke the tender and familiar gestures of a mother cradling or holding her infant. This maternal focus is further emphasized in the *Let Down* series, which references the physiological release of milk during breastfeeding,

exploring themes of nourishment, vulnerability, and embodied memory. That term also reflects the artist's emotional and physical experiences of middle age and perimenopause—feelings of being “let down” by her changing body and the frustrations that can accompany this life stage. The paintings invite viewers to reflect on the physical and emotional imprints of motherhood, captured through an expressive and deeply human lens.

The presence of hands is prevalent in this series and connects this work to the cannon of art history. The tradition of sketching hands in art has deep roots, tracing back to prehistoric handprints found on rock formations in caves such as Maltravieso, Cáceres, Spain and the Blombos Caves in South Africa, which date from 64,000-100,000 years ago. Hands are often depicted for their rich symbolic and expressive potential—they can reflect a person's age, health, or social status, and powerfully convey emotion. Artists also use hands to demonstrate technical skill, as capturing their complexity is a mark of mastery. In religious art, hands frequently appear in symbolic gestures, such as blessings, further emphasizing their spiritual and cultural significance.

In conjunction with this exhibition, a selection of intaglio prints by the artist is available for purchase in The CoSHOP Pop-up Print Shop.

Artist Biography

Erin Holscher Almazan is a Professor of Printmaking and Drawing at the University of Dayton in Dayton, Ohio. A native of North Dakota, she earned her BFA in Fine Arts from Minnesota State University Moorhead and her MFA from the Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, New York. Before joining the University of Dayton, she taught Foundations as an Adjunct Instructor at RIT.

Erin has completed two prestigious printmaking residencies at the Frans Masereel Centrum in Kasterlee, Belgium. Her work has been exhibited both nationally and internationally, with notable participation in exhibitions affiliated with the Southern Graphics Council and the Mid-America Print Council. She currently resides in Dayton with her husband and two sons.

I desire to hold, to hold onto, to grasp and struggle to let go. I am at a point in my life where I am myself, but do not feel like myself; in which my sons are increasingly pulling away from me and finding their own voices and their independence. This is all at once wonderful and heartbreaking. This body of work navigates this emotional space of attachment and detachment, of holding and letting go, through the use of color and with an emphasis on hands and touch. — Erin Holscher Almazan



Courtesy the artist

Exhibition Checklist

For pricing information, please see the Welcome Desk.

Adam Sleeping, 2025, oil on paper, 40 x 26 inches

Afternoon Sun, 2025, oil on paper, 15 x 15 inches

Faded, 2025, oil on paper, 30 x 22 inches

Flushed, 2025, oil on paper, 30 x 22 inches

Jude, 2025, oil on paper, 40 x 26 inches

Let Down I, 2025, oil on paper, 26 x 20 inches

Let Down III, 2025, oil on paper, 26 x 20 inches

True Affection, 2025, oil on paper mounted to plywood, 15 x 15 inches

You won't remember this, but I always will – I, 2025, oil on paper, 22 x 30 inches

You won't remember this, but I always will – II, 2025, oil on paper, 22 x 30 inches

You won't remember this, but I always will – III, 2025, oil on paper, 22 x 30 inches

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