

Encore!

# Furniture as art is an 'Obtuse' state of mind

## Randles' work is surprising and offbeat

By Julie Decker  
Emerald Contributor

It's hard not to notice the new furniture in the EMU.

The decor may be a little extreme, however, with bright paint-splattered chairs sus-

pended from the walls, a plant placed dangerously on the diagonal of the seat.

This is all part of an exhibit currently on display in the EMU Gallery, called *Obtuse Obstructionism* and featuring the work of Mike Randles.

The exhibit is presented in

conjunction with the Serene Cultural Alliance Institute, which claims that obtuse obstructionism "as of yet is not a formal discipline but a state of mind."

Such a state of mind is surprising to the casual viewer who is forced to confront this critique of society's materialism and commercialism.

Price tags in the hundreds of thousands dangle from these abstracted objects and describe the mixed media to the potential buyer.

It is doubtful, however, that at such prices a buyer will be found on a university campus.

It is probable that not many students are shopping for an artillery shell converted into an end table for a mere \$175,000, candlesticks made out of paint rollers, or a Bowling Ball Head series for their living-room shelf.

But in this case, it does not hurt to window shop.

The works are more than intriguing, even when purchasing such objects is not a consideration.

Randles refers to himself as "the official interpreter of the icons and idols of the Post-New Age," and the armature is a compelling and recurrent theme, described by Randles as "one of the simplest founda-

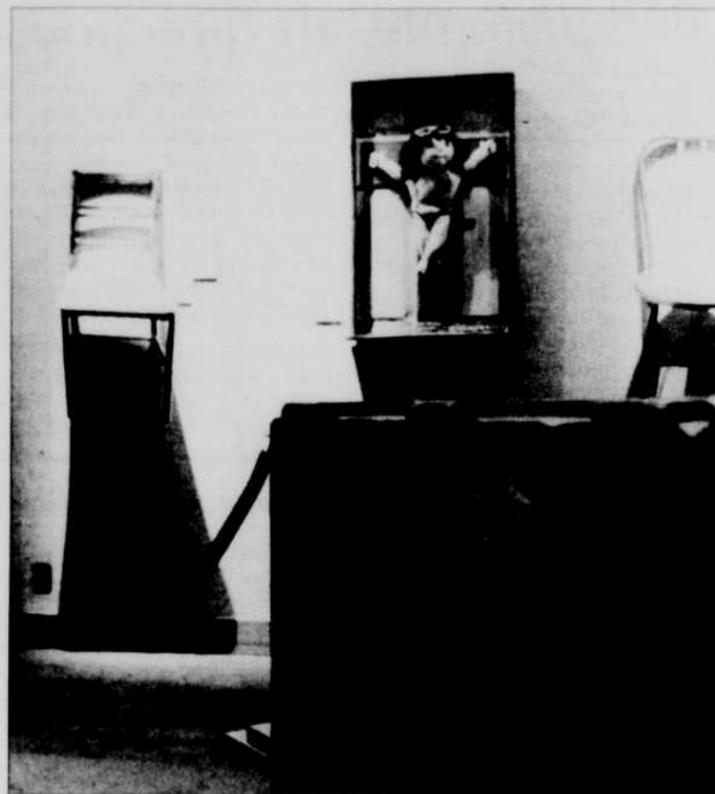


Photo by Mark Ylen

A Cabbage Patch doll crucifix and oddly tilted chairs are part of Mike Randles' *Obtuse Obstructionism* art showing on display in the EMU Gallery.

tions from which to move."

These creatures of wood and bronze are made with great skill and craftsmanship and provide a common base from which Randles builds his

works.

Intermingled with such forms are other works of a curious nature.

New Ages Shamanic Divining Paraphernalia "parted from the tote bag of the Empirical Metaphysician" are bones displayed like medals in a velvet-lined box, above which hangs designer fossil series and an assortment of tiny bones arranged like spices on a kitchen rack.

Cabbage Patch dolls are attached to painted crosses, wearing buttons with phrases such as "To the Max," next to which is a sign that reads, "Crucify today: Cabbage Patches are out there just lying around waiting."

Also included in the collection is "Lord Buford Mumford Augustine Tennyrrill's Shoe Last" with a detailed description hanging above it explaining that it was created for Tennyrrill's favorite smoking slippers and was only given up for public viewing after the house pet, a Pomeranian called Tuffy, "mailed and hopelessly mutilated his left slipper."

Randles has been producing three-dimensional works for the past 20 years and says he is a "much better sculptor than brain surgeon; treating causes is much more interesting than flirting with symptoms."

His concerns are "with human kind at this critical juncture in the planet's history and the individual's resignation to being part of the public one," Randles said.

"We as a species, reckoning with this falling of the cosmos, we have forsaken riches for dollars. Without cognition this process goes forth blameless and mindless and also unobserved."

Randles' work is rich in imagination and rich in its craft.

Regardless of their price tags, these works are well worth the time it takes to ponder them.

The exhibit will be on display in the EMU Gallery through December 15.

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