

Playing with forms, faces, and figures



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**GARY SCHNEIDER:
Drawn From Life**

At: Howard Yezerski Gallery,
460 Harrison Ave., through Feb.
9. 617-262-0550, www.howardyezerskigallery.com

Figure photography

Howard Yezerski Gallery has a short history of photographer Gary Schneider's figure work, featuring nudes and portraits that date back to the 1970s. The earliest pieces take a minimalist view of the body, homing in on tiny portions. "Nina Portrait

Sequence II" (1975) is a series of small black-and-white images of creases, edges, and passages of skin and hair. They're clever, but dry and perfunctory beside the more expressive later work.

Schneider started taking close-cropped portraits in black and white in the late 1980s, drawing over his subjects' faces with a flashlight. Then he moved into color work, and over the years he has pushed his tones more and more. He shot nudes for a New York Times Magazine story on obesity in 2006. "Omar" was photographed while the

subject snoozed, with his hand on his chest. He has a farmer's tan, and every texture on his pale chest pops — hairs, blemishes, tiny scabs. His lips and cheek are hot pink; he looks fevered and angelic.

The tones are similarly lurid in Schneider's most recent portraits. "Tom W." has freckles that suggest skin disease; his nose is red. The flashlight shows off his high cheekbones and brilliant blue eyes. These works haunt, marrying attention to classical beauty with a bizarre luster that both flatters and maligns.