

# Best in the Midwest

A Grand Tour of great summer shows

by **Nolan Simon and Rebecca Mazzei**

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Thomas Allen's "Encore," 2005.

#### **4 Under 40: Contemporary Michigan Artists**

Through Sept. 11  
Grand Rapids  
Art Museum,  
155 Division St. N.,  
Grand Rapids;  
616-831-1000

You can't help but look at Thomas Allen's photographs and wonder: "Now, why didn't I think of that?" Like the earliest dioramas in natural history museums that fascinated artists a century ago, pop-up books allow us to invest ourselves in an alternate reality. Thomas Allen has a new take: He finds old paperback novels with interesting covers, cuts around the outline of figures and bends them forward to animate the action. Then, he takes close-up photos, dramatizing his work. The artist is featured with three other spectacular contemporary Michigan artists working in various media Adam Tetzlaff, Meredith Ridl and Adam Wolpa. While in town, grab a drink at the divey Pickwick Tavern and satisfy a late-night food fix at Yesterdog, a city institution.