

FOUR AT THE RICHMOND

WMU's new art center focuses on works by alumni

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Brides. Ancient Roman maps. Factories on the verge of collapse. Tim Allen in a Santa Suit. These are a few of the subjects addressed by the four artists being spotlighted in the Alumni show that opens Friday at Western Michigan University's new Richmond Center for Visual Arts.

Michael Souter, Mary King, Mary Hatch and Tom Lollar all graduated from WMU in the 1970's and have continued to pursue their love of art. Souter and Lollar live in New York City, King lives in Chicago, and Hatch had made her home Kalamazoo. Souter and Hatch trained as painters and have moved into graphic design and computer generated art; Lollar specializes in ceramics; King paints and draws.

According to WMU director of exhibitions Don Desmett, the selection reflects the spectrum of WMU art-department graduates. "Once we put the list of alumni together, we started looking for someone who has touched the art scene locally, Mary Hatch's name naturally came up," he said. "Many of our graduates go to Chicago, like Mary King did."

As for the two artists from based in New York, Souter's work in mixed media—including print, painting and graphic design—and Lollar's connection with Lincoln Center; where he serves as director of visual arts, "covered a lot of ground," Desmett said. Taken as a whole, Desmett said, the show "offers a good overview of how many ways you can go with an art degree."

Michael Souter Graduated from Western: 1976, bachelor of fine arts. Background: Souter admits he has not been back to Western since he graduated. But certainly been on the movie in the years since. After graduation, he went to Geneva to study ceramics and art, then returned to Michigan to work in Lansing before moving to Los Angeles, then to San Francisco, then to New York. Along the way, he said, he has evolved as an artist.

"Originally, I had a double interest—painting and graphic design—and then the graphic design sort of took over for 10 years," he said. "Right now, I'm more of a painter than a graphic designer."

He is also in the process of developing products based on elements in his paintings, such as "Narcissist Nation," based on the paintings from his "Narcissist" show at the Bronx Museum in 2005. Chronicle Books is planning to produce pens, journals, t-shirts and even underwear featuring Souter's images. "It's not conventional for a fine artist to do this all; it's sort of a no-no," Souter said. "But we're treating each kind of media with respect. It's kind of media with respect. It's kind of a modern-day Warhol thing where we just produce art now."

Right: Santa, Tim Allen, work on paper. 60" x 40", mixed media, 2005



What's in the show: Expect a touch of Christmas nine months early (or three months late). Among the works Souter had submitted are pieces from his "Santa Series."

"The Santa series is consived from location shots I took while on set with Tim Allen, (the actor, former WMU student) and Ann Margret. I was able to capture candid, unscripted and out of the Santa norm. Dark, playful, tired, and annoyed Santa.



He also submitted pieces from his "Portrait Collection," a series of photos of "people I know who come up into the studio," he said. "They're nudes, but some are just head shots with very unconventional types of cropping. It's not about how good they look, it's about the expressions coming off their faces, their silent language."

Artistic observation: Souter said some of his art was a bit too provocative for the alumni show "They had to edit my work because of the nudity and the messaging," he said, chuckling. "It's been spanked down a bit."



Left: Unprepared Mind, work on paper. 60" x 40", mixed media, 2006
Right: Caution, work on paper. 60" x 40", mixed media, 2005

