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Richmond Center's inaugural art exhibitions on display.



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After the March 9 opening of the Richmond Center for Visual Arts - located next to the Dalton Center - visitors from Kalamazoo and the surrounding areas have been able to view the exhibitions on display in a state of the art facility.

Donald Desmett, director of exhibitions at the Richmond Center for Visual Arts, said that compared to other galleries at the university level they have one of the top ones in the country, which gives them the opportunity to do major exhibitions of modern and contemporary art.

"The Richmond Center will have a greater impact on School of Art, WMU, Kalamazoo and the Southwest Michigan cultural communities," Desmett said.

The distinguished alumni exhibition, which runs through April 7, features four Western Michigan University alumni who have gone on to become successful artists.

Tom Lollar, known for his fired clay murals, graduated from WMU with a BFA and an MFA in ceramics. Lollar describes his murals as a "gestural, idealized version of the city that reflects a confluence of geography, architecture and history."

Much of Lollar's work in the exhibition focuses on the city of Rome, which includes landmarks in both frontal and aerial views. A couple of his works on display are "Rome Fragment," 2006 and "Rome Study," 2003.

Michael Souter graduated from WMU with a BFA in graphic design and a BA in painting. Souter is recognized for using the technique of layering colors, and he steers away from the traditional painter's tools in favor of using non-conventional objects to create texture and patterns.

Souter's collection on display at the Richmond Center features this technique of layering colors and is particularly evident in his painting, "Stretch," 2006.

Mary Hatch uses the technique of edges and crossovers in most of her collection, which is very much apparent in her oil canvas, "The Women," 2005. According to Hatch, merging two mediums is an individual process. The edges in the painting start to seem almost normal and even preferable. The crossover or connection merges the two mediums that present her audience with a new way of seeing things.

Mary King is known for paintings that are playfully rendered compositions. Most of her pieces wind up somewhere between representation and abstraction.



The exhibition features three aspects of King's work that have been created over the past 25 years. King's figurative works depict people that incorporate human relationships with their joys and misfortunes.

King's puzzle-like landscapes paint pictures that begin with, and are titled after, actual locations. King has the ability to modify shapes so they fit together like a puzzle by adding bright colors and using a unique surface.

The final aspect of her work featured is industrial scenes with finger painting. King describes this technique as combining the colorful shapes with finger-painting techniques she had learned as a child in a one-room country school. The finger painting allowed her to recreate images of industrial areas remaining in northern Indiana and the Chicago area.

This technique is evident in the work King did on acrylic paper in 2005's "Beautiful Industry."

The Richmond Center also features artwork that has been done by WMU art students and is displayed in the Eleanor R. and Robert A. DeVries Student Art Gallery, located off the main gallery.

National and internationally known artists will also be on display in one of the galleries as long-term installations. Most of the exhibitions at the Richmond Center are only on display for a few weeks, but these will be up for the public to see for about a year. These long-term displays will allow the art history faculty here on campus to take advantage of them and use them for class material.

Left: Souter's, "Stretch", 60"x40" mixed media on paper, 2006

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