

ART ON THE EDGE



WILLIAM HANSEN

On silk: Harris Wiltsher creates his silk screen images in the print-making studios of the Cranbrook Academy of Art.

His artwork conveys black experiences

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
SPECIAL WRITER

Print artist Harris Wiltsher II combines painting, drawing, photography and collage in richly colored silk screens that focus on Afrocentric themes. Gold miners in Africa, a Masai warrior, police beatings in America's streets, or a mother and child, the images aim to educate and stimulate.

"They're a balance of educational, political and/or cultural experiences," said the master of fine arts candidate in an interview at his Cranbrook Academy of Art studio. "I will do things that are relative to what's happening now like with Nelson Mandela. Yeah, he's released but what's different now? Him being one person can't change it by himself."

In an artist's statement by the Southfield print maker, he says, he hopes that his "work will be an insightful and thought provoking window for the audience to view the black experience."

Jewel-tone colors like rubies and emeralds shine in the silk screen, "Mother of Civilization." The impressionistic portrait of a woman in wall-dwelling captures the essence of life's meaning and Wiltsher's art.

"All of my work has a lot of color in it, but it doesn't take precedence over it," Wiltsher said. "In this print, I'm putting an emphasis on women and the strength of women. I want to do things that show the beauty, their strength, especially African-American women, what they give to the community."

Wiltsher creates texture in the silk screens by layering 25 to 30 oil- or water-based inks. Gold highlights stroke the hands and face of the "Mother of Civilization."

"I'm painting and drawing," Wiltsher said. "My prints have a tactile quality. I print for the right combination of color, for texture. I used gold pens to sharpen some things and give a spontaneity to it so that it's very open and suggestive."

Wiltsher strives to broaden his views by pursuing a wide range of cultural experiences. After graduating from the High School of Art and Design in New York City, he earned a bachelor of science degree in fine arts from Florida A&M University, a predominantly black school.

From there he did a 360-degree turn about to attend Cranbrook. After graduation in May, he plans to continue his art studies on a fellowship at Cape Town University in South Africa. Eventually, he would like to become an associate professor of art.

In the past Wiltsher has exhibited work at Urban Park-Detroit Art Center and Foster Tanner Fine Arts Gallery in Tallahassee, Fla., and as part of a fund raiser for the Friends of the New Center in Detroit. The first two weeks in May he will exhibit a very controversial installation in the existing students show at Cranbrook.

"His work is unique because of his ability to combine pattern and subject matter in an original way," said Urban Park gallery director Dave Roberts. "I like it because of his bold use of color and pattern, his interest in issues, presenting artwork that's not just pretty pictures, but presenting artwork that has a deeper meaning."

Wiltsher's current work-in-progress is a limited edition of 10 prints featuring Mother Hale of Hale House in New York.

"I'm from the Bronx. As a person from New York City, I want to produce an image that would evoke what she did for the African-American community, to sell the prints and raise money for Hale House."

Good talk: That's DC's style

■ DC Talk thinks people are tired of the plastic MTV attitude. They aim to be the cutting edge and a step ahead with their rap music. And these three perfectionists are accomplishing that.

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

DC Talk is into surprising people. "This is K-Max from DC Talk," one of the members began a recent interview.

After a quick scan of the bio, there's no "K-Max" in the band. "Kevin Max," he said. Well, there's a Kevin Smith? "Oh, yeah. K-Max is my nickname. Max is my middle name. Kind of sounds like a store, huh?" he said with a laugh.

"It's meant to throw people off," said Smith, a Grand Rapids native. Not only does his nickname throw people off, so does the label "Christian rapper" which is often placed on his band. The group's music is fun yet hard rap with a positive not preachy message.

However, Smith said that with the recent release of "Free at Last" the group will finally be recognized as marketable rappers.

"We've been on Christian radio format for no reason. We're just as fast or faster than PE (Public Enemy)," added Smith who will perform along with fellow DC Talkers Toby McKeehan and Michael Tait at The Palace of Auburn Hills on Friday.

"This album is gonna change everything. This album has four or five strong singles."

"Our record company and management is gonna see to it that we make a push for radio. We just want to appeal to a broader audience." That would appeal to DC Talk. "We want to perform the great commission which is taking our mission to a greater audience. We're not selling out our roots which is talking to God."

Meanwhile, DC Talk is keeping their inspiration in mind while trying to collect a broader audience. They're not into "selling out." They insist on keeping with their beliefs. For example, one of their tracks, "I Don't Want It," parodies old George Michael's hit "I Want Your Sex," reinforcing the group's stance that the safest sex is abstinence.



Godly rap: Scoring musically as DC Talk are (from left) Kevin Smith, Toby McKeehan and Michael Tait.

"We're not about compromising. What has gotten us here has nothing to do with Kevin Smith, Michael Tait or Toby McKeehan. It's God," said Smith. "For us to turn our backs on (it) is ridiculous."

"I think it's essential that people know DC Talk wants to become available to a broader audience. We're not changing our message."

It seems hard to believe that the audience of DC Talk (which stands for Decent Christian Talk) could get any bigger. The group has already sold more than one million records, been nominated for a Grammy (Best Christian Contemporary Rock Album) and six additional Dove Awards. Recent television appearances include "The Arsenio Hall Show," "Good Morning America" and a spot this month on "The Tonight Show." DC Talk has also toured England, Germany, Holland,

STREET BEATS

Poland, the United States and Canada.

Did Smith expect any of this when the three Liberty University students joined forces?

"The caliber that it's going? No. I didn't think it was gonna take up the rest of my life. I'm very happy."

Smith said he believes that Washington, D.C.-based DC Talk

has made it so far because the group is message oriented.

"People are sick of the plastic MTV 'let's see how pretty we can be on the video' (attitude). We want to be cutting edge. We want to be a step ahead. We're three perfectionists that don't want to do something out that's less than perfect. If it's Christian it ought to be better."

DC Talk opens for Michael W. Smith at 8 p.m. Friday at The Palace of Auburn Hills, 1-76 and Lapeer Road, Auburn Hills. Tickets are \$18.50 and \$14.50. Call 377-8200 for more information. To become a member of DC Talk's fan club, the Vibe Tribe, write: P.O. Box 22538, Nashville, TN 37202.

Slam dunk: Two members of the Bud Light Daredevils get ready to stuff the basket — once they complete their acrobatic flips on the high side of the hoop.



BILL HANSEN

Daredevils give halftime a 'flip'

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

Keith Cousino slipped out the first time he saw a tumbling competition.

"I saw these guys doing multiple twisting flips and I was just so amazed," said the Erie, Mich., native said. "From then on I just wanted to be able to flip like that."

Now his fans feel the same sort of amazement when he performs with the Bud Light Daredevils, who combine music, comedy, ball-handling, gymnastics and basketball. The team — which also includes Scott Wonenberg of Ceres, Calif.; Dave Mankey of Boardman, Ohio; Rick Benevento of Portland, Ore.; and B.J. Norell of Milwaukee, Ore. — will perform during halftime at the Detroit Pistons/Chicago Bulls basketball game on Sunday, March 14.

Cousino, known for high-powered

and high-altitude slam dunks, learned about the 12-year-old program while competing with the University of Iowa's gymnastics team. Cousino, 25, went to see the Bud Light Daredevils perform when they visited Iowa.

"I always loved basketball. I always loved gymnastics," he said. "Tumbling and trampolines were my favorite type stuff, so it seemed like the perfect thing for me."

So in 1990 he went straight from the U.S.A. championships in Denver, Colo., to Memphis, Tenn., to try out for the Bud Light team. He made one of the two teams of five, which include one alternate per team.

"I was lucky enough to make it," he said as he wrapped his ankles for a recent show at Eastern Michigan

See DAREDEVILS, 6B

Monday, March 8
NIGHT OF THE LIVING POETS
Poetry night every Monday at Lil's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. (poetry)
875-6555

Tuesday, March 9
BOYS
Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn. (blues)
846-1920

TERENCE SMITH AND THE MALLETT PLAY-BOY
The Ark, 637 1/2 S. Main St., Ann Arbor. (Irish)
761-1451

MARY MCQUEEN AND MYK RISE
Mr. B's Farm, 24555 Novi Road, Novi. (acoustic rock)
349-7038

Wednesday, March 10
GATEMOUTH BROWN

Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn. (blues)
846-1920
NEW BAND SHOWCASE
Three different bands every Wednesday at Lil's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck.
875-6555

WORRYSTONE
Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac.
334-9292

YELLOWMAN
And Septimus Band at Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. (jazz)
99-MUSIC

HORIZONS IN POETRY
Arvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. (Poetry)
832-2355

The Ark, 637 1/2 S. Main St., Ann Arbor.
761-1451
JEB GRU
The Ritz, 17580 Frazho, Roseville. (alternative rock)
778-8150

Thursday, March 11
THE GUN
Industry, 15 S. Saginaw, Pontiac. (CAN-CELED)
334-1929

HAPPY ACCIDENTS
With The Mind as part of the 89X Homeboy Contest at the Shelter below St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit.
961-MELT

OPEN STAGE

TELEVISION
Featuring Tom Verlaine, Richard Lloyd, Billy Ficca, and Fred Smith at Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. (established alternative rock)
668-6397

FELONIOUS ASSAULT
Her/X and Distorted Few at the Marquee, 8139 E. Seven Mile, Detroit.
366-6639

THE GROUND
With Cake at Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac.
334-9292

THE DETERANTS
With India Green at Arvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. (alternative rock)
832-2355

See IN CONCERT, 7B