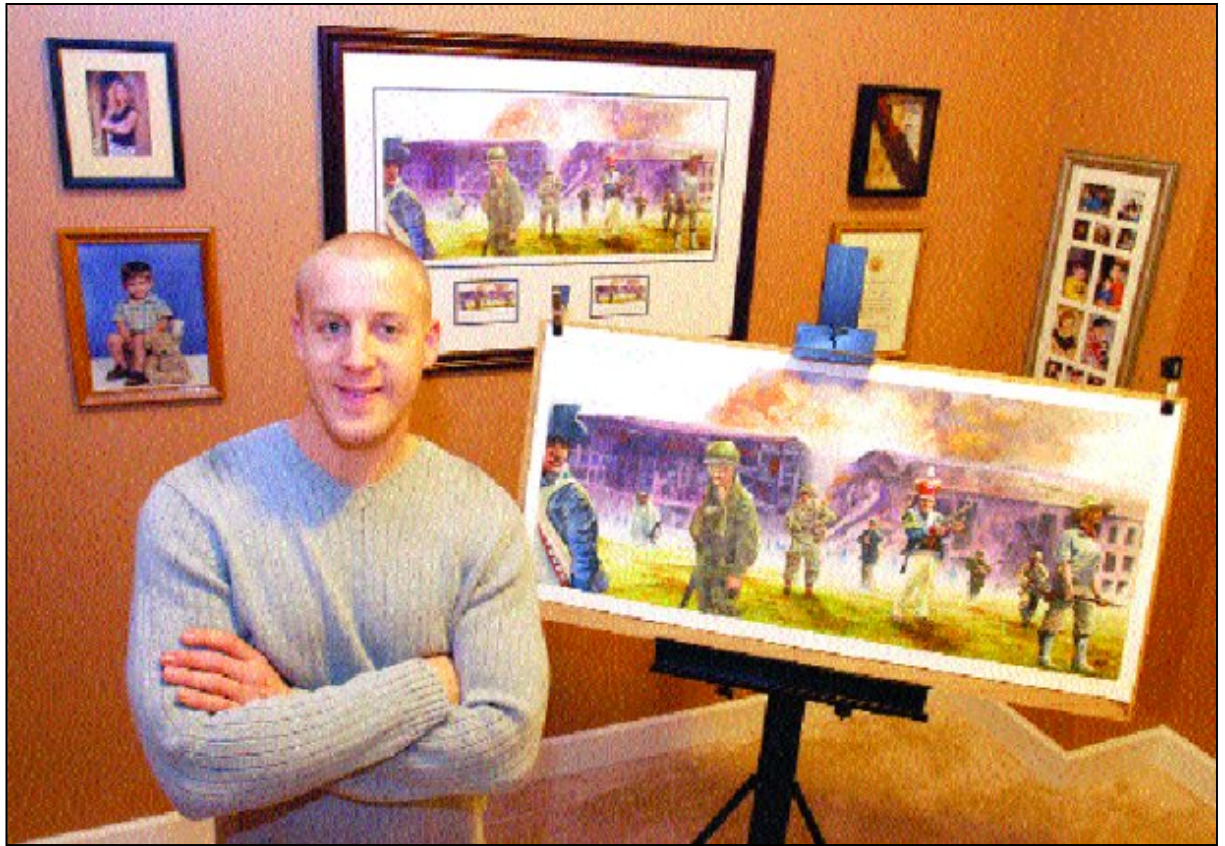


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## Local artist stirs emotion with painting



Staff Photo: James Nedock

Mark Sundermeyer stands by his painting of "Colossus Stirs," an homage to soldiers involved in nine major U.S. conflicts,

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Many artists moved by the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks used their craft to work through emotions surrounding the event.

But Flowery Branch artist Mark Sundermeyer used his to help bring peace to others.

Sundermeyer felt the need to do something different after seeing paintings other artists did. He wanted to pay tribute to the proud heritage of the United States military.

He calls "Colossus Stirs," a painting he created in homage to soldiers involved in nine major U.S. conflicts, "a vision of releasing spirits."

Sundermeyer got the idea for "Colossus Stirs" after conversations with friends and his fiance's father, as well as memories of conversations with his grandfather.

The title is a reference to the quote by Japanese Admiral Yamamoto after the bombing of Pearl Harbor: "I fear all we have done is awakened a sleeping giant."

Sundermeyer says he uses hidden symbolism because of its levels. The levels are attractive to the eye, capture people's attention and help the painting tell a story. Sometimes people see things in the painting that Sundermeyer did not put there.



“My greatest honor is to see the relationships people have with the painting,” Sundermeyer said.

The soldiers depicted are from the Revolutionary War, Korean War, Vietnam War, World War II, Civil War, War of 1812, World War I, Desert Storm and the Spanish-American War.

Their positioning is part of the symbolism. The Revolutionary War soldier leads the way. The World War II soldier is in the center of the painting.

“He’s in the center because it was the war to end all wars,” said Sundermeyer.

The Civil War soldier is the center of the lineup. He divides the group of soldiers because his war divided the country. The War of 1812 soldier is a member of the military band. His significance is that military band members were among the first casualties.

The Vietnam soldier, a likeness of his fiancée’s father, is the only one whose eyes are visible.

“He is saying, ‘I fought a war based on principles, and when I came back it wasn’t appreciated, and I’ll do it again,’” Sundermeyer said of the Vietnam vet.

Behind the nine soldiers are 11 figures standing near the Pentagon.

“I saw the 11 figures as soldiers standing guard over the Pentagon. Other people see them as the spirits of people that passed in the (9/11) tragedy,” Sundermeyer said.

The faces of Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Laden are difficult to distinguish because Sundermeyer did not want to stir up the present feelings of fear and hate. Instead, he wanted the painting to be about overcoming those feelings.

“I wanted the painting to say, ‘We will prevail,’” the artist said.

Some of the other hidden symbolism in the painting includes a silhouette of the Statue of Liberty, a bald eagle in the clouds and military quotes from Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, George Patton and President George W. Bush incorporated into the grass.

The flight numbers from the four planes involved in the Sept. 11 attacks are hidden within the painting.

On May 7, a state Senate resolution was passed commending Sundermeyer and “Colossus Stirs.” It was commissioned by state Sens. Steve Thompson (D-Powder Springs) and Charles Tanksley (R-Marietta).

“Being able to create something that is two-dimensional that can bring someone to tears is one of the greatest honors,” said Sundermeyer.

The artist hopes to offer some direct support to military families through the sale of prints of his work.

Thirty percent of the proceeds will be donated to 10 families of fallen Georgia soldiers. Sundermeyer’s goal is to raise \$5,000 for the families.

To buy a copy of “Colossus Stirs,” visit <http://www.twomindsofmark.com/>.