

Springs artist has photographs displayed worldwide

By COMI ZERVALIS NEUBURG
SPECIAL TO THE FORUM

International artist Marc Gagnon is co-founder of Toast To Our Troops, a local fundraiser for the Fisher House Foundation. The foundation provides lodgings at VA medical centers nationwide for families of injured soldiers.

Gagnon uses a camera to create works of digital overlay and uses a computer to create collages.

"They almost look like Dali, but you can see what the purpose of the piece is, and some pieces push different themes like civil rights and the ecology," he said.

One image of Gagnon's For Our Troops collage was used to create awareness of troops and honor local families of injured military. Gagnon depicts the faces of soldiers representing all cultures. The work is on permanent display at the Parkland Library as a memorial to veterans.

"The purpose of the piece was to show the faces of our troops, which incorporates

all cultures, and in one image of the collage I have soldiers walking up the tower of Babel into the World Trade Center," he said.

Some of Gagnon's photographs and photographic art comprise 103 different collections on permanent display all over the world in high-profile venues including the White House, the four United States of America presidential libraries, the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History in Washington D.C., the Vatican in Rome, the Palacio de Zarzuela Palace of King Juan Carlos I of Spain and the Kensington Palace in Kent, England.

"I'm all over the place and have 55 different collages and am working on 33 more," he said.

Gagnon recently completed a piece that calls for more severe penalties for child predators.

"I have been personally in contact with Mark Klass who runs Klass Kids, a foun-

dation that raises money for children's rights and he had forwarded images of his daughter, who was brutally murdered, that I included in my What Of Justice piece," he said.

Gagnon's collage, Ultimate Sacrifice - Tribute to the Fire Fighters of 9/11, shows a fire man's face superimposed over the World Trade Center and is on display in New York City at City Hall.

"That firefighter, Vinny Cascone, is actually a survivor of the collapse of the North Tower and he was saved by his commander, who died saving him," he said.

Gagnon's art, which can be viewed at www.gagnonart.net, has also been shown at local galleries: His work, Journey To The East, is on permanent display at the community center in Tamarac. He is also a judge for the annual Hollywood Art Festival, on the Board of Directors for Archbishop McCarthy High School in



GAGNON

Cooper City and on the Steering Committee of Bonnet House Museum and Gardens in Fort Lauderdale.

Coral Springs Forum: What are your future plans?

Marc Gagnon: We intend to get this fundraiser, Toast To Our Troops, to the national level. It's a little bit complicated but we intend to get big corporate sponsors who have some type of affiliation with the way the art was created, and I think we will be successful because this is a good cause. I was recently interviewed by Trina Robinson on the "South Florida Today" show on channel 6 regarding Toast To Our Troops and my pieces of art that deal with social issues.

Our last fundraiser raised \$10,000. Volunteers for our next local fundraiser and interested corporate sponsors can contact Mickey Figueroa at mickey.figueroa@us.army.mil.

Forum: How did you become involved in art and what is your professional

background?

Gagnon: I was influenced by a couple of fashion photographers I met personally and some other artists. I worked with Elliott Arkin from Coral Gables who is a sculptor. He has works in the Louvre in Paris. Avedon, a fashion photographer, mentored me a bit.

I worked professionally as an artist in New Hampshire but I was involved in the banking world.

I am currently a senior credit officer and lender for Floridian Community Bank, located in Davie and Juno Beach.

Forum: Where have you traveled?

Gagnon: I've traveled to Argentina, England, all the Caribbean islands, Canada, and on the West Coast, I have been through all the canyons, and Vegas.

Forum: How did you come to settle in Coral Springs?

Gagnon: When I moved here from New Hampshire I had a couple of friends living in Coral Springs.