

# UTTA MAGAZINE

THE UNIVERSITY  
OF TEXAS  
AT ARLINGTON

ExtraordinARRI decade  
*Acclaimed robotics institute  
marks 10-year anniversary*

# UTA MAGAZINE



## 14 An extraordinARRI decade

By Helen Branstetter

Since its formal opening 10 years ago, UTA's Automation & Robotics Research Institute has evolved into one of the top three manufacturing research centers in the nation. ARRI has had a combined \$37 million impact on the North Texas economy and has attracted corporate heavyweights IBM, Emerson Rodick, American Airlines and Texas Instruments as well as the Central Intelligence Agency and the U.S. Marine

## 12 Wunderkind

By Sherry Washko Nasser

Junior Andri Barabki will graduate from UTA next year with a bachelor's degree in computer science and engineering. The following year, he will have earned his master's degree. Then he'll begin pursuing his Ph.D. and possibly an M.D. And this coming June, he'll turn 17.



## 6 The crooked road to Camelot

By Sherry Washko Nasser

A diving accident before his senior year in high school left Randy Souders a partial quadriplegic. With only slight movements in his left arm and shoulder, the 1978 UTA graduate has become one of the most successful artists in the country.

## Departments



### 2 CAMPUS DIGEST

Appointments, achievements and other campus happenings



### 20 DISCOVERIES

Professor James Quick tells how to handle stress



### 22 CENTER STAGE

Contemporary art gallery gets new name, new director



### 24 SPORTS PAGE

Headliners review college football season books



### 26 ALUMNI NOTEBOOK

Honoring 1998 Military Science Hall of Honor, class notes and more

## UTA MAGAZINE

Vol. 33 • No. 2 • Winter 1998

Editor  
Mark Rosenwasser  
Director, University Publications

Editorial Staff  
Sherry Washko Nasser  
Editor  
Helen Branstetter  
Editor

Design and Photography  
Joel Quattara  
Publications Production Manager

Carol A. Lehman  
Graphic Services Supervisor

Robert Casidy  
Photography Supervisor

Meredith Sartin  
Computer Publishing Specialist

Edible Note  
Photographer

Cover  
Joel Quattara  
Robert Casidy

Illustration Page 20  
Darlene Menden

UTA Magazine is published in the winter, spring and fall by the Office of University Publications for faculty, staff, alumnae and students of the University of Texas at Dallas. If you would like to become a member of the Dallas Association and all donors of \$100 or more will correspond to UTA Magazine, Box 19802, Richardson, Texas, 75080-0002. E-mail: [uta@uta.edu](mailto:uta@uta.edu) or [publications@uta.edu](mailto:publications@uta.edu)

The University of Texas at Dallas is an equal opportunity affirmative action employer.

The

cro



oked  
road to



"It's odd," says Randy Souders. "If I had a crystal ball to see what would have happened had I not had the injury, I don't see myself having done what I've done at all."

# Camelot

BY SHERRY WODRASKA NEAVES

Stained glass windows sparkle as the beautiful girl ascends the long, curving stairway to the glittering castle on the hill. A sense of magic swirls about the scene, one in a new series artist Randy Souders calls "Camelot."

A professional artist based in Fort Worth, Souders graduated from UTA in 1978 with a bachelor of fine arts degree. He spent the summer after graduation as an intern in a local advertising agency, but has painted for a living ever since.

Most of Souders' work, like the glittering castle scene in "The Little Princess" (p. 6), reveals places which exist only in his imagination. Victorian houses adorned with ornate gingerbread woodwork, quaint main streets lined with turn-of-the-century automobiles, quiet country churches down flower-strewn lanes—Souders breathes life into a Norman Rockwellian kind of world.

"I get a big kick out of inventing these imaginary places—and then having people tell me exactly where they are," Souders said. "Some people even swear they've been there before. I paint realistically, but of things that don't exist."

Marshall Stoltz of the Norman Rockwell Museum in Philadelphia praised Souders' ability to "... create that same magical blend of nostalgia and happiness that made Norman Rockwell the beloved artist that he was. Randy

brings us back to the time of one-room schoolhouses, soda shops and penny candy. His pictures virtually drip with loving affection for a time gone by ...

"Randy has the distinction of being the *only* other artist to be represented at the Norman Rockwell museum in Philadelphia," Stoltz said.

Collectors can stroll into Souders' world through lithographic prints of more than 100 of his paintings. Originals of his finely detailed, carefully crafted works can take months to complete and become cost-prohibitive for many collectors, but the lithographs make Souders' world accessible to everyone.

"The offset lithograph process results in extremely accurate reproductions of an artist's original painting," Souders explained. "I think of it this way: Prints are to an artist as records are to a musician or as movies are to an actor.



Randy Souders works on a yet-to-be-titled painting in his Fort Worth home.

Each medium offers an affordable alternative to a live, original performance.

"One of my goals is to be able to afford one of my own paintings! The only reason I have any is because I made them."

What makes his work even more remarkable is that Souders creates his paintings using only the smallest of motions with his left shoulder and arm. An incomplete quadriplegic, he became disabled in a diving accident the summer before his senior year in high school.

"It was a pretty wicked injury," he said. "It's

like being yanked out of a body that works and crammed into one that doesn't. I jumped head first into a local lake and hit a submerged object. My third and fourth vertebrae literally burst, and I badly compressed my spinal cord. It was very much like what happened to actor Christopher Reeve. I found myself instantly paralyzed from the shoulders down—floating helplessly underwater. I very nearly drowned."

The accident permanently paralyzed all four

"I couldn't hold a pencil. I couldn't even move my fingers," says Randy Souders. "I was certain that any ability I had to paint was gone just like everything else."



limbs, but left him with some, limited, motor control.

"I'd been in the hospital several months when a young physical therapist decided to get on my case," Souders said. "She said, 'I heard you want to be an artist—so paint!'"

"I'd always considered myself a hot shot with a pencil and brush. And true, I had hoped to find some sort of career as a professional artist or designer—but not any more. I couldn't hold a pencil. I couldn't even move my fingers. I was certain that any ability I had to paint was gone just like everything else."

Souders finally allowed the therapist to strap a paintbrush to his withered hand and "... surprised the heck out of myself."

He could still paint.

"I have just enough tension to get a brush between the first and middle fingers," Souders said. "Looking back, I realize what a big turning point that was for me. That feeling of freedom, independence and control was just the kick in the pants I needed."

With experimentation, the left-handed artist found that acrylic paints work best for him and his highly detailed paintings.

"Most artists don't like acrylics because they dry much faster than other paints," Souders said. "I happen to like this quality and use it to my advantage. With the kind of detail I put into my paintings, I just can't afford to wait around for the silly thing to dry."

And drying time is important. Souders uses layer upon layer of paint in his work; paint sometimes thinned almost to the consistency of a glaze. He says the layers are what give the paintings their luminous, glowing quality.

Souders applies his paint not to the traditional canvas, but to a hard masonite surface. It's rather like painting on a wood panel.

"People are often surprised to learn that wood has been used as a painting surface for centuries," Souders said. "Some of the oldest surviving artworks—such as religious icons and altar pieces—are painted on slabs of wood. As a matter of fact, I think Leonardo da Vinci

painted the 'Mona Lisa' on wood panel. I prefer masonite because it gives me a very hard, flat, smooth surface which doesn't interfere with my fine brushwork."

Souders has applied his fine brushwork to more than his own world of make-believe. The Walt Disney Co. commissioned him to paint both "Cinderella's Castle" and "Sleeping Beauty's Castle." The paintings have since been reproduced in limited edition prints and on a multitude of other collectibles, including clocks, watches and Limoges fine china dinnerware.

Disney Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer Michael Eisner said that Souders' vision of Cinderella's Castle, "... truly captured what Walt Disney is all about—a protective fortress providing respite from daily burdens for everyone who enters the gates."

Recently Souders entered one of Disney's gates to find Michelle Pfeiffer waiting on the other side. By special invitation, he attended a Disney Company charitable function and met the Hollywood star.

Every year Souders also explores the Disney mystique in a limited edition poster specially



A cat, located near the window of this painting titled "Sweet Dreams," has become a Souders trademark.



created for the annual Official Disneyana Convention, a gathering of more than 2,000 Disney enthusiasts from around the world. Souders' Disneyana paintings are so popular that during the conventions the Price-Waterhouse accounting firm conducts a lottery to award purchase rights for the limited edition posters.

State Farm Insurance representatives stepped into Souders' nostalgic scenes through a series of paintings featuring America's heartland. Framed prints of one scene, titled "Main Street Memories," were presented to more than 10,000 agents as performance achievement awards.

Souders' world of charm and beauty also has graced more than 3 million Maxwell House Coffee cans. The collectible edition cans featured a special label and a color insert offering a coffee mug with the same painting.

In partnership with the MGM Grand Hotel & Casino and Turner Entertainment, Souders has begun a series of entertainment-themed works, some based on imagery from the classic MGM movie library. His first assignment, a definitive view of the "Emerald City" from *The Wizard of Oz*, is now available in a limited edition of 300 lithographs. Souders was most flattered to have his painting approved by Roger S. Baum, the great-grandson of *Oz* creator Frank L. Baum.

One common thread, or character, runs through all of Souders' paintings—a cat.

"This is really pretty stupid," he said, "but like most things, I backed into this as well. My early paintings were quite stark, abandoned, lifeless looking places. After a while, I decided I ought to put something alive and breathing in them. So, I began sticking an old tomcat into some of my paintings. I was amazed at how many people commented on him. I thought that if they were that observant I'd keep it in for a while. I then began trying to hide him.

**"Randy has the distinction of being the *only* other artist to be represented at the Norman Rockwell museum in Philadelphia," says Marshall Stoltz.**

"I now honestly think I could leave out my signature before I could take out that dumb cat. I didn't consciously set out to find a gimmick, but he's become a permanent fixture in my paintings—and a sort of additional trademark as well."

Another permanent fixture in Souders' life, his wheelchair, played a large role in bringing him to UTA.

"It was a place I could get to," he explained. "It was, and is, very accessible."

And, although accessibility remains important, Souders no longer thinks much about the chair.

"The last thing on my mind when I get up every morning is that I'm in a wheelchair," he said. "It's the very last thing on my list. I get up. I've got so much to do, if I want to go somewhere, I just get up and go."

"It's odd. If I had a crystal ball to see what would have happened had I not had the injury, I don't see myself having done what I've done at all."

The lengthy list of Souders' involvement includes a recent appointment to the Texas Commission on the Arts and work with Very Special Arts (VSA), a national group founded in 1974 by Jean Kennedy Smith as an affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Souders currently serves on the VSA national board. Other board members include NBC news anchor Tom Brokaw, former U.S. senator and Republican presidential nominee Bob Dole



and Academy Award-winning actress Marlee Matlin.

VSA works to create learning opportunities through the arts for people with disabilities, especially children and youth. The organization offers creative programs in creative writing, dance, drama, music and the visual arts. Very



Although the places he creates are imaginary, such as "Penn Street" in this painting, Souders says some people swear they've been there before.

Special Arts also maintains the Very Special Arts Gallery in Washington, D.C., where it hosts exhibitions by emerging and professional artists with disabilities. VSA annually serves more than 3.5 million individuals in all 50 states and 86 countries.

"I now know that the arts have a tremendous

power to heal," Souders said. "Ironically, the rehabilitation centers I was a patient at 25 years ago are now decorated with my works. The same is true at many other hospitals and health care centers. I hope my work can inspire others facing similar obstacles."

Souders has overcome his obstacles through

painting, with more than 300 gallery events, one-man shows and public exhibitions of his work presented in cities from Washington, D.C., to Orlando, Fla., to Taipei, Taiwan.

But then, almost anything is possible for a man who can, at any moment, flee with his cat to Camelot. ■