

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



Paul Fortier's 1982 mural "The Great Commission" that depicts Christian pilgrims through time was a gift to the Detroit Cursillo Movement.

The Fortier family has a lot of talent

By MILINDA CHRISTIANSEN
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Paul Fortier and his wife and children are not your typical family. Not only is Paul a very talented artist, his children are as well.

Paul paints portraits mainly in oil or watercolor and sometimes acrylic. He says he began his love of painting and art when he was very young.

He loves to draw and remembers doing so at the age of about 3 or 4. As a child he did not have television and says that he was always drawing comics and characters and creating stories with his drawings.

In grade school he drew for a college newspaper. He says he would shove his drawings under the door of the newspaper department and sometimes they would publish them.

Paul attended Wayne State University in Detroit and was very influenced by his life drawing teacher.

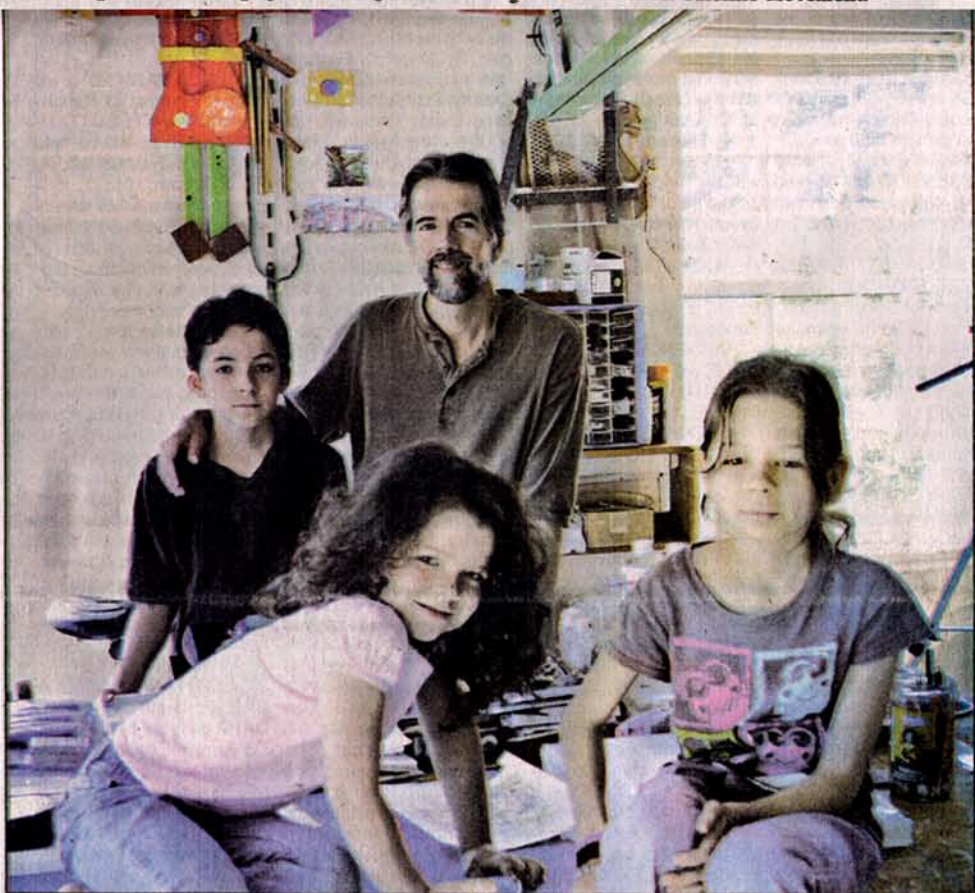
He also taught film and video in Detroit public schools for 13 years. He taught at the Milan Federal Correction facility in Detroit and says some of his best students were there and were very prolific in their drawings for animations.

He met his wife, Samiri Hernandez, in Ann Arbor, Mich., and they lived in the area until 2002.

Paul and his family grew tired of poor air quality in the city and discovered that Wakulla County is in the top 10 percent for clean air in the country. He also has some family here.

While in Detroit, Paul headed up a three-day Christian retreat and was commissioned by a church to do a mural. The mural is 32 feet by 12 feet, done in oil on wallboard. The mural represents all denominations and from left to right progresses in time.

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Rafel and Paul Fortier with Erin and Adriana.

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Paul's work includes an acrylic portrait of Adriana, left; with the mural, above; and a portrait of Rafel, right, in progress.

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It took Paul two years to do the mural. He worked 12 hours a day for the first two months, then got another job, which prevented him from working on the mural as much. Now Paul works for the Big Bend Homeless Coalition in the IT department managing their database.

His son Rafel is a painter as well. He has a mural on his bedroom wall that he painted himself.

Rafel, 11, began the mural when he was 8 years old and just recently finished it.

The mural is a depiction of the Crocodile Hunter, Steve Erwin, and his family standing in the Australian outback with Uluru, also referred to as Ayers Rock, in the background. Among the Erwin family are animals all native to Australia.

Rafel says he researched the animals he painted in the mural. Among them are a crocodile, koala, dingo, emu, and other animals typical of the area.

He says his dad inspired him to paint a mural and his parents allowed him to paint this mural on the wall of his bedroom.

Like Paul, Rafel's interest in drawing began at an early age. Paul says Rafel drew a portrait on the back of a Christmas card at around the age of 3. Painting isn't the only thing that interests Rafel.

Right now he is producing a film with his sisters Adriana and Erin using stop-frame animation.

The film is called "Fire Drill."

Adriana helps Rafel with the writing and Erin does some of the voices of the characters. They all create the sets for the movie, making them from cardboard boxes that they have painted.

The sets show a lot of detail, imagination and realism.

The Fortier's garage is where all of the art supplies are kept and where the sets are built for the film.

Rafel says when he gets older he would like to go to film school and become a director.

Rafel also plays the drums. He is in the jazz band and concert band at Wakulla Middle School.

All of the Fortier children are home-schooled and Paul says it has been a good experience, allowing the children to have more exposure to artistic projects because of Paul's background.

To view more works by Paul and Rafel Fortier, visit their websites, <http://paul-fortier.com> and <http://rafel-fortier.com>



Rafel Fortier with the Crocodile Hunter mural he painted on his bedroom wall.



Art supplies, left, in the studio; a portrait by Rafel of his mother, above; and one of the sets the children created for their stop-motion film.

