

Focus on **SUPERHEROES****ART THAT PACKS A PUNCH**

By Graham Kates
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Soaring over the city, casting a stern figure amidst a rocky landscape, reflecting our societal foibles and folding together in a burst of color, comics have powered their way into two local galleries.

"My Hero" at Elisa Contemporary Art and "Under the Influence: The Comics" at the Edith Aitschul Lehman Gallery at Lehman College combine classic cartoon images with contemporary takes and original graphics.

"I thought it would be something that would be broadly appealing," said Susan Hoeltzel, director of the Lehman College Art Gallery. "For a number of years, artists have been borrowing the energy and the style, in a number of ways, from comics."

Works at the Lehman gallery span comic lore from the first official portrait of Superman ever painted — an H.J. Ward piece commissioned in 1940 to promote Clark Kent's radio show — to images from Westchester-based artist D. Dominick Lombardi's Post Apocalyptic Tattoo World.

Mr. Lombardi's work, *The Shrunken Head*, which is on display until May 12, is based on his vision of what body art might be like among the sparse survivors in a world ravaged by massive disaster. He says that body art would be one of the few ways people could leave their marks on society.

"The idea is that in the post-apocalyptic world, because our bodies are subjected to so much pollution and radioactive material, you may only live to 25, and your aesthetic is not as refined," Mr. Lombardi said. "In that case, the tattoo would be elevated to high art."

The idea of our world, reimagined through comic art, strikes a different note in the works of Jerome Walford at Elisa Contemporary Art, on display until March 21.

"His work consists of superheroes that he's created; I love that element that it's a superhero and a whole character," Lisa Cooper, the owner of Elisa Contemporary Art, said of Mr. Walford.

In one of Mr. Walford's pieces, *Leap*, a character from his graphic novel "Nowhere Man" is seen from above bounding over the architectural oasis of a cityscape, the only things between him and the building's far below are a flock of birds. It's a piece Mr. Walford describes in spiritual terms.

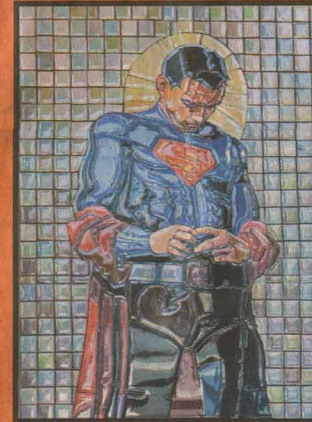
"For me it has a resonance, it's about taking a leap of faith," Mr. Walford said. Ms. Cooper said the leap of faith needed to post comic book heroes in a gallery has helped bring in a new crowd.

"I've gotten a whole group of people who are part of the comic and superhero culture. I've had certain people who were walking by and see the Captain America in the window and they come in and are excited," Ms. Cooper said.

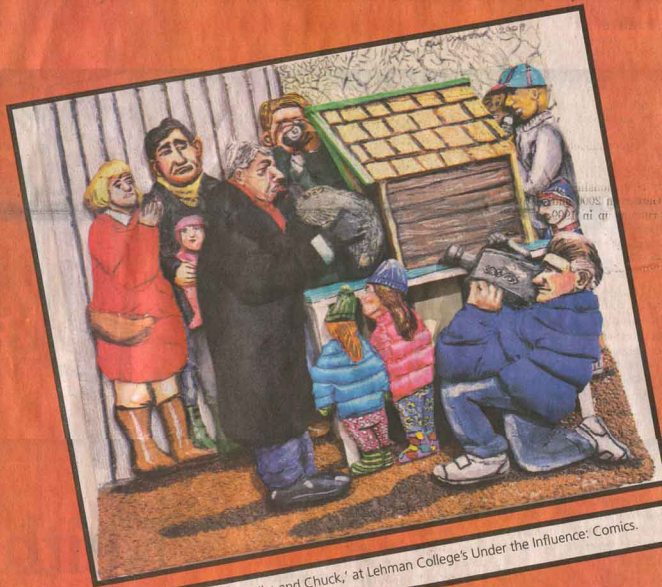
On Sunday, March 25th, Mr. Walford will lead a class at Elisa Contemporary Art for children ages 5 and up, on creating super heroes.



PETER BUCHMAN'S 'Forty-Something Woman,' at Elisa Contemporary Art.



BOTH PETER BUCHMAN'S 'Wonder Man,' above, and 'Forty Something Woman,' at left, are wood pieces made with a glossy resin.



RED GROOMS' piece, 'Mike and Chuck,' at Lehman College's Under the Influence: Comics.



PRÍCILA DE CARVALHO's untitled piece of mixed media at Under the Influence: Comics, at Lehman College.



MITCH MCGEE's image of Captain America is a three-dimensional piece created with layers of birch that he stained, cut and combined to create his work, on display at Elisa Contemporary Art.