

Each of his paintings tells a story

Artist

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"The meat of his work is strong," said Mary Lynn Norton, curator of the Museum Of York County. "He conveys everyday life."

That can be the uneasiness of men waiting for a job interview, shown in "Interview Line" — a large oil painting that features three men in work clothes waiting in line. Or a homesick college student — that's "Guardian," another oil painting in vivid colors portraying three women, fingers pointing and hands at hips, disciplining an invisible child.

"It makes you feel proud," said Dixon's best friend, 29-year-old James Miller of Rock Hill. "It shows you a lesson of the street."

Women were very influential in his life, said Dixon, who is as quick with a smile as he is with a paintbrush. His aunts helped raise him in Rock Hill, because his mother worked two or three jobs a day and he had an absentee father.

His love for the women who reared him and his need for a father is evident in his work, such as "Father with Sons" and "Grandma Madonna." Many of his paintings feature people he knows, and others are characters in his head.

He is inspired by music, especially reggae.

"That stuff will make me get up and paint in a minute," he said at his cluttered studio in his College Downs house.

The wear-and-tear of everyday life also inspires his creativity, and he is notorious for using anything for supplies. He has even used grape jelly to create the right shade of purple.

In 1983 he won first prize in the York County Student Art Show, in which he painted a dance scene on a yield sign.

"He painted on anything he could find," said Norton, who was with the county museum during the 1983 show. "It signified that he had an inner gut feeling that he wanted to paint. That he needed to paint."

He started drawing and sketching as a



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On display: "Mothers Always On Stage" is one of several paintings on the walls of William 'Solomon' Dixon's Rock Hill home.

youngster, mostly comic book and cartoon characters.

"He drew pretty good back then," said Miller. "Kids used to give him stuff to get pictures from him."

Then and now, Dixon used his artwork as an escape. He was a quiet but quick-tempered child who got his nickname, Solomon, on the basketball courts.

Solomon Grundy was the evil archrival of

William Dixon

Education: Graduated from Rock Hill High School in 1983. Attended Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte 1983-84. Graduated with honors from Art Institute of Atlanta in 1990.

Military career: Navy E-4, ships serviceman from 1984-1988.

Family: Mother, Shirley Ann Dixon; two brothers and two sisters.

Favorite medium: Oil, because it doesn't dry quickly and gives him more time to work.

Proudest moment: When his mother bought him a drawing table in high school because she walked into his room, saw his paintings and realized her son was an artist. "Is this stuff yours?" she asked. "I didn't know you could do this."

Occupation: Graphic artist at America Global in Gastonia.

Hobbies: Other than painting, he likes to dance and play basketball.

Superman. He was a bumbling super-strong villain whose only words were hate and kill.

On the basketball court Dixon said his friends called him Solomon because he was always fouling them and some days he could be just plain mean. He drew funny pictures of people who bothered him and took them to school and showed everyone else.

"Art used to be my superpower," Dixon said. It still is; he says he paints four hours a day after working as a graphic artist in Gastonia.

Right now, Dixon says he is the man in "Leaving Town" — a track runner sprinting out of town past a church and a school.

After nearly a year in Rock Hill, he says he's ready to move on, though he's not exactly sure of his destination. The radio stations don't play reggae here.