

Sunshine ARTIST™

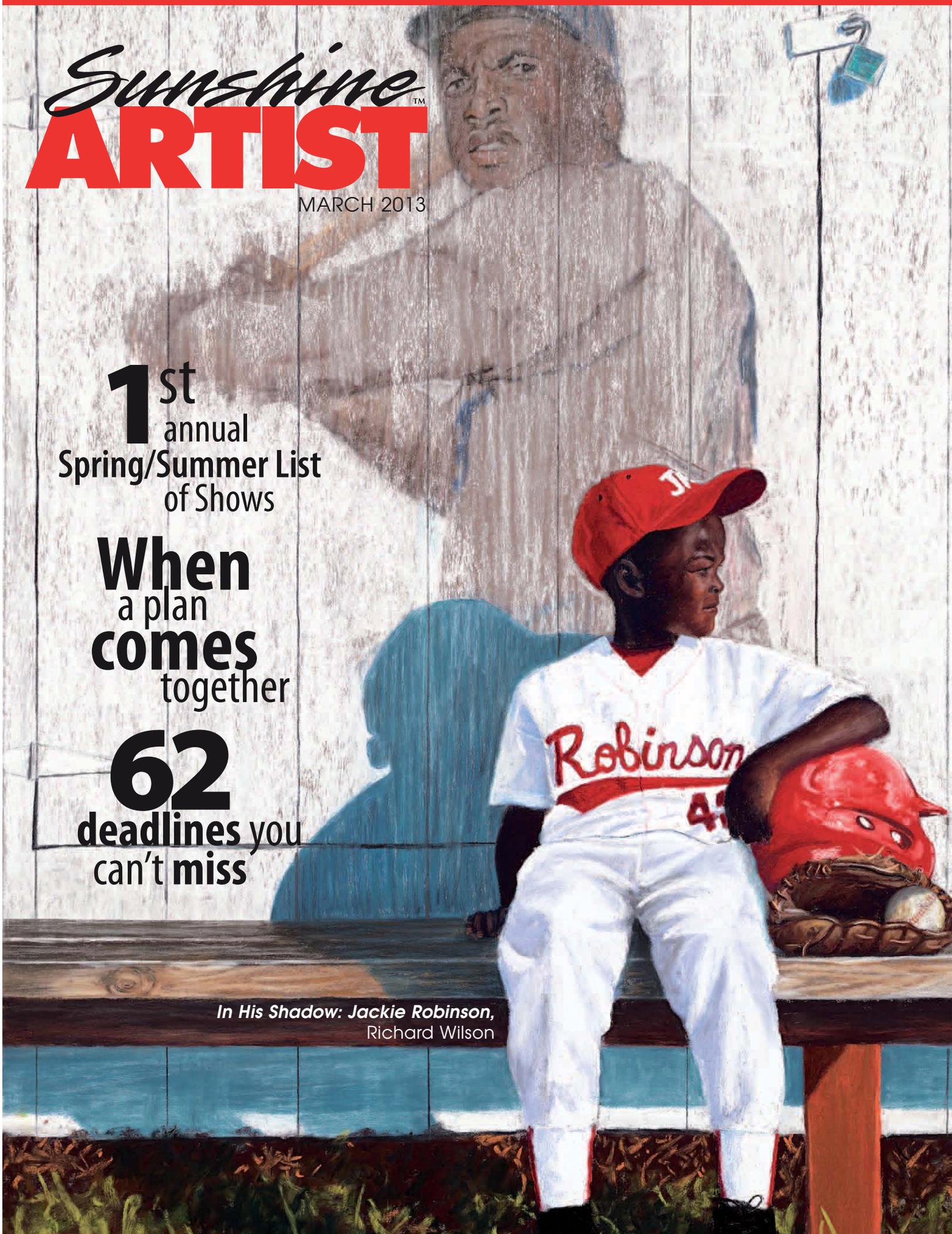
MARCH 2013

1st annual
Spring/Summer List
of Shows

When
a plan
comes
together

62
deadlines you
can't miss

In His Shadow: Jackie Robinson,
Richard Wilson





In His Shadow: Arthur Ashe



After the Storm

Finding beauty in the everyday



Undeniable talent and a tireless work ethic have served fine artist Richard Wilson well in life, but those qualities alone weren't enough to help him make the jump from dreaming about full-time artistry to actually realizing it. Instead, it all came down to a fortuitously timed leap of faith – and his first-ever experience as an exhibitor at a major art festival.

“I had already taken a chance and purchased a booth for \$1,200 at a three-day show in Atlanta,” said Wilson. “I had heard so much about the Atlanta art market, and people had told me that my work would do well there.”

When he made that hefty investment in 2004, the North Carolina native was employed as a graphic designer, and he had no reason to think that safety net wouldn't be there for him while he pursued his goals. But just three days before the Atlanta event was scheduled to start, Wilson's once-steady job got shipped overseas, and he found himself unemployed.

Given his suddenly shaky financial situation, he was doubtlessly second-guessing that earlier commitment before the show got underway. Moreover, the quality of his fellow exhibitors' work and presentation only added to his stress. Said Wilson, “There were artists there whose work I had seen in magazines and on TV.”

As it turned out, though, there was never any reason to

worry. After all, he did still have that talent to fall back on.

“Once the show started, I was blown away at the response that I got from the festival-goers as well as other artists,” he said. “They were all impressed with my work.” Better yet, the appearance turned out to be hugely successful for him. “I made over \$9,000, and I haven’t looked back since.”

appearances had to take a back seat to his day job, the experiences proved to be invaluable.

About a year after his big break in Atlanta, Wilson continued his education with an advertising & graphic design degree from Pitt Community College, where he currently serves as an art instructor in addition to his hectic show and gallery schedule. However, as even

my daughters, and the boys are my nephews and friends.”

As to sports, they have long factored into Wilson’s life. “I played sports in school and was the oldest of three boys, and we were very competitive with each other,” he said. “Many of my sports scenes are reflections of my childhood and people I admired.”

So, how does he go about creating



Girl Under the Tree

Indeed, when it comes to his art, Wilson has long been dedicated to looking forward. “I first became attracted to the artist lifestyle at an early age, watching my dad who was an artist as well as a pattern maker,” he recalled. By the time he was 8 years old, he was well on his way to becoming a skilled illustrator.

Following high school, Wilson earned a degree in communication arts from Barton College and soon thereafter landed work as a graphic designer. Not content with a standard 9-to-5 job, he started to enter – and win – art competitions. He also visited art expos and festivals in major cities to see if he had what it took to be a professional fine artist.

“After that,” he said, “I told myself that I’m going to do this full-time one day. So I started exhibiting everywhere I could locally to spread my name.” That was in 1995, and despite the fact that those local art show and gallery

a cursory glance at his modern work reveals, his artistic journey didn’t end with illustration. Through the years, he experimented with color pencil, graphite and acrylic before coming to his current medium of choice: pastels.

“I find pastels to be very rich and vibrant in color,” he explained, adding that he loves the challenge and versatility of the format. “I’m able to make my pastels look like a watercolor or an oil painting.”

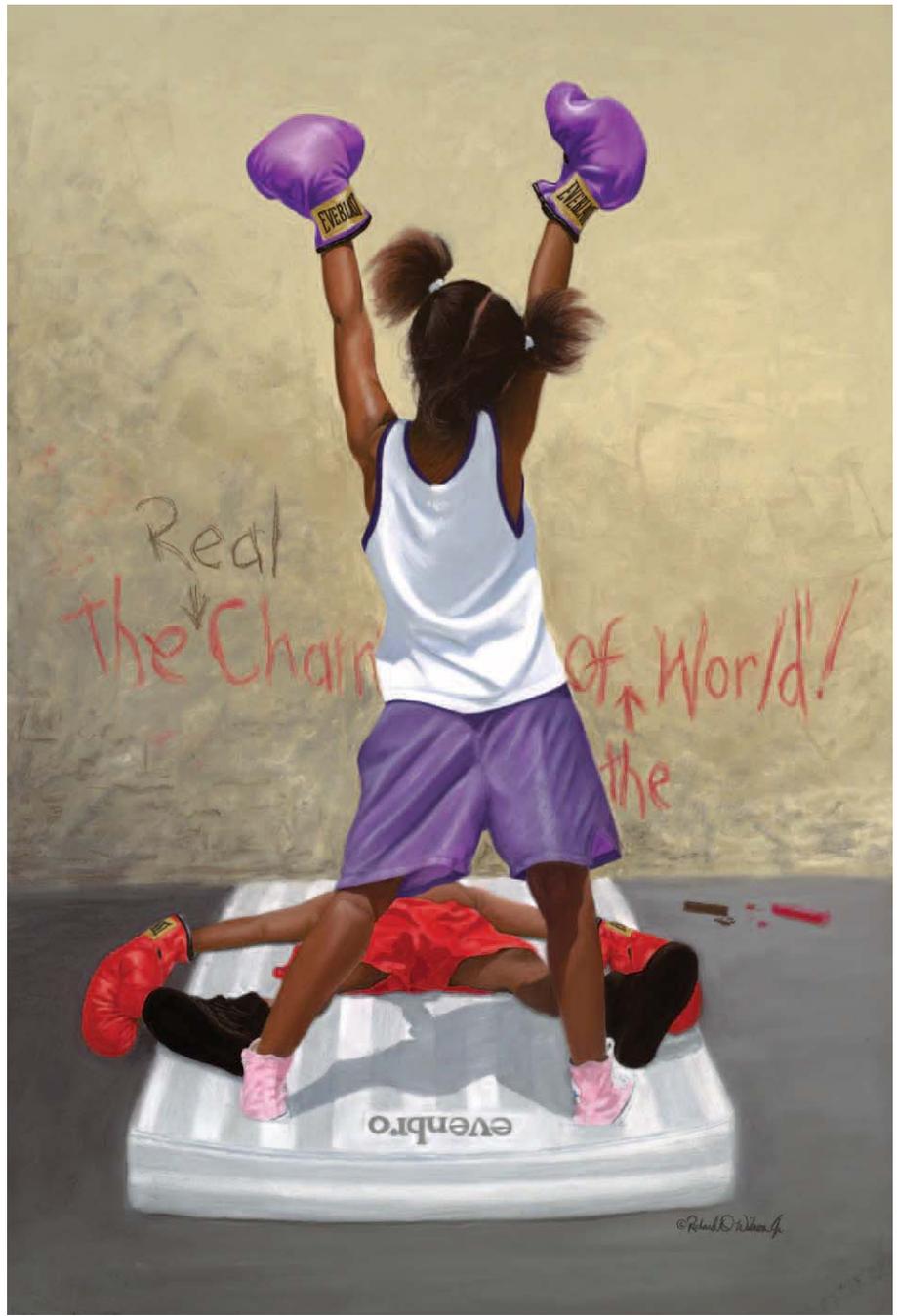
Perhaps more importantly, Wilson has a knack for finding beauty in everyday people, objects and situations – and helping others see that beauty through his artistry. The recurring themes of children and sports are also readily apparent aspects of his work.

“I have always admired the innocence, honesty and curiosity of children,” said Wilson, who refers to his three daughters as his inspiration. “All of the girls in my paintings are

his pastel masterpieces?”

“I first think of a creative concept to get my idea across without being too obvious,” he said. “I sketch my ideas out and try to arrange interesting compositions.” From there, he prepares his pastel surface and has a model pose for sketches and photo references. Finally, he sketches his layout in graphite or hard pastel before filling in the sketch with several layers of soft pastels. The results undeniably speak for themselves.

Still, even with his exacting attention to detail, Wilson estimates that creating new work only accounts for approximately half of the time he invests in his career, with the rest being eaten up by administrative tasks. “Marketing, framing, scouting shows, finding hotels, finances and following up with clients are very important parts of the art business that can’t be overlooked,” he acknowledged.



Clockwise from top left: *When One Door Closes...*, *The Writing's On the Wall II*, *Along the Way* and *Going Up Yonda*

Fortunately, Wilson's efforts have been handsomely rewarded with a thriving art career, countless accolades and numerous local, national and international honors. In fact, he's just one award away from earning official recognition from the Pastel Society of America, and seven of his pieces were recently included in *Painting North Carolina: A Visual Journey*, a hardcover tribute to his home state. He even found time to make history back in 2005, when he

became the first African-American artist to have work displayed in a North Carolina courthouse.

Today, Wilson resides in Greenville, North Carolina with his "biggest supporter and beautiful wife" Wanda and their daughters. And regardless of everything he's accomplished so far, he still loves exhibiting at shows — his favorite being Virginia's Boardwalk Art Show (the #34 fine art event on 2012's *200 Best*) — and cherishes his interactions

with patrons.

"I have had men and women walk into my booth overwhelmed because they find so much emotion and meaning in my work," he said. "They tell me my work speaks to them. After witnessing this, I am humbled and can only thank God for giving me this gift of artistry that I am so passionate about."

More of Richard Wilson's work can be found on his website, www.richardwilsonart.com. 🌟