

My Adventures as an Artist in East Texas  
By  
Christian Seidler

As readers of ETT, you are aware that my friend Ron Munden has introduced you to my work here in East Texas. In 1998 I gave up my career as a Dallas based portrait artist on the invitation of some politicians and community leaders to help develop an arts community and an arts educational initiative here in East Texas. Being naïve of the way of local politics, the effort was quite an education and in the end and though we have some strong support from some of the finest citizens of your communities, we failed securing the full support of everyone.

Though this was a disappointment, my own experience has been one of great intellectual success. In my first year here in East Texas, I was introduced to one of the worlds leading technology engineers, Dr. John Randall of Texas Instruments and together we invented the first power tool for a fine art painter and broke a barrier that the art world had been trying to achieve for decades.

The Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco held an exhibition on art and technology in early 2000-01 and released the following statement when it was over;

*"With advanced technologies increasingly prevalent in everyday life, artist, architects, and designers now freely adopt their use in the studio and make work that reflects or comments on their presence in society. Yet with the wide variety of work displayed in the galleries demonstrates that the influence of technology on art and design has not led to a single new style, movement, or mode of art making."*

Those of you that have visited [www.Matricism.com](http://www.Matricism.com) are now aware that our work here has achieved a goal long sought by the world of art and that now the above statement is obsolete. Now after ten years of development and perfecting the use of our technology, it seems time to take it on the road and for my relocation. About every ten years my career has guided me to new ground, moves that lead to opportunities to take my work and career forward. For an artist, what drives us most is to mark our existence with a record of our work in the communities and the societies of which we live. Over the last ten years the people of Marshall and Jefferson have been immensely helpful in achieving my goals as an artist and I would enjoy an opportunity to share it with my adopted community for I move on. Ron at East Texas Towns has been kind enough to allow me this forum to share my experiences and to say thank you to all.

As a portrait painter, the profession brings me into contact with the most wonderful and accomplished people in society. Portrait artists are the lone wolfs of the art world, we don't market through galleries and we build our demand and reputation through client referrals. My list of clients here in Marshall and the surrounding area has been impressive and surprising for me. The portrait painter spends their career moving to every larger cities and richer markets but moving to East Texas from Dallas was completely opposite of that the usual career path and was a frightening gamble. I was coming to a place far from the pools of wealthy clients that a portrait artist depends on. The capital of the portrait profession is Washington DC because of the constant flow of government and official paintings from dignitaries from around

the world. What was a surprise to me that I had the honor of painting more politicians when I move here than when I was based in Dallas for twenty years. As it has turned out, it has been more rewarding than I could have imagined.

One of the first individuals that influenced my move here was Dr. Carol Harrell of Jefferson. Her assistance in my development of Matricism and the Robotic Technologies has been indispensable! Her drive provided us with significant grant moneys and support projects that made our accomplishments possible. Over the years I have had the privilege of painting her and most of her extended family. To the right is Carol's daughter and my good friend, Mrs. Paula Phy. There is nothing I enjoy more than painting women, for my portrait techniques are made for the softer look of female skin tones. This painting is 30 x 40 inches in the classical technique of 18<sup>th</sup> century portraiture with a modern feel through subject and environment.



Some of the most fun portraits are those of people we would describe as characters, people with style, and individuals of distinction. One such painting is that of Mr. Woody Mosley of Marshall, a genuine cowboy steer roper, not one of those drug store types. With his barrel chest, thick mustache, he is a striking image of a man from Texas. This painting is a mixture of classical old master techniques with the modern vignette pattern to give it a painterly feel. I always approach a portrait with the idea of fusing modern portraiture with classical techniques both dark and light styles.

I have always said that no matter the age, all women can be painted beautifully if the artist loves women. It is a matter of the artist's eye and being able to capture what is important to say and to reject what is unnecessary. The one concern I hear most is that of age wrinkles to which my replay has always been, "Madam, as far as I am concerned, if you wanted those wrinkles in, I would have to charge you more for they are terribly difficult and unnecessary!" No one was more concerned that the late Mrs. Ann McKenzie of Jefferson who was 83 years young and quite frail when I executed this painting. She was not anxious to be painted but when she saw the work, she turned to her daughter and said, "Christian painted me beautiful!" She was ecstatic for it would leave a wonderful alive image of

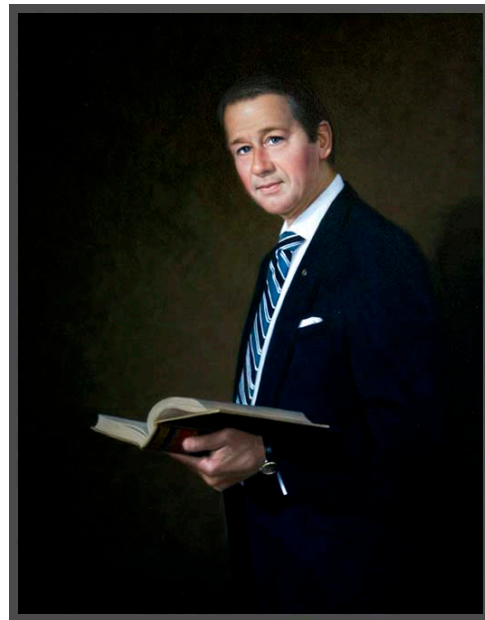


her for her enormous family to cherish through the ages.



Politicians have been a bread and butter subject of portrait artists throughout the centuries and East Texas has provided me with some of our most respected local and national figures. Sometimes they come in waves as you see in this photo of portraits of retired Congressman Chapman, Texas Representative Ramsey, and Lt. Governor Radcliff. There is a traditional formula that most artists use for official portraits which you can see used here.

For an example of a politician that is more recognizable to the local community, I give you our county judge, Mr. Richard Anderson. This is not an official portrait but a gift from his loving wife, Christina. If you ask the question “what is a portrait?” more than anything else it is a gift of affection! Be it the board who are honoring a CEO for a great job well done or the mother having a portrait of their child, it is always a gift of affection to all those that admire and love the subject. I wish to give a special thanks to Richard and Christina for their assistance in my work here in East Texas, they have become friends and I hold them both in great esteem. They are both great assets to Marshall and of all East Texas. And yes I have painted Christina but I didn’t want to put her on the spot. With Richard I can get away with it.



An opportunity that I was never expecting was to create paintings of people out of their time. Here is one such example that was a thrill to paint. In this painting you see my friend John Goldman in his civil war period uniform. This will be a wonderful family heirloom for it shows a fun side of John and it tells of his love of history and the southern heritage. This painting is as authentic as it gets executed in the style of the Alla Prima portrait techniques that were used by artists in the 1880’s. If you didn’t know John, you would think he had posed for this painting just before he marched off to war. Until coming to East Texas, I had never attended a

Civil War enactment and when I did, I felt the history of my profession coming alive also. I would have liked to painted more of these, they are just pure fun!

As you may well guess, children are the main stay of the portrait industry. Every mother wants her Blue Boy or Pinky, a classical masterpiece to hang in their home. No matter the child, it is the artist's job to turn every momma's goose into a swan. Fortunately for me, all my young models have been swans in their own individual way. Every parent sees their child in a very special light and one not easy to see by the artist. You have to love them to paint them and you have to be a child yourself to bring the best out of them!



In this multi portrait image you can see just a few of the children of Marshall I have had the privilege of painting, your future shakes and movers of East Texas. I apologize for those not represented here for I have lost many photos because of a computer crash. I have learned the value of backup drives. Children are my favorite subject for they can convey so much in personality, expression, and design. It is an opportunity to capture a young soul as they change so rapidly in the early years. I leave it to you to recognize these wonderful little personalities depicted here.

Over the next year, I will be laying the ground work for the next phase in my career. Now that I have made my intellectual achievements here, it is time to take my work to a larger audience. I hope to have the opportunity for a full showing of my work on Caddo Lake before I leave the

area if a good venue to show sixty plus very large paintings can be found. It would be a delight to share my work with the community that knows and loves Caddo Lake the most. It is unfortunately that there isn't a professional art gallery even in the Shreveport area so my paintings all go to Atlanta and down through New Orleans, so few in the local area have seen them in person.



My daughter Ms. Megan

As I spend this next year wrapping up my work in East Texas and prepare for future initiatives, if you have a desire to consider a painting of Caddo Lake for your own collection, you can contact me through my website. [www.matricism.com](http://www.matricism.com) If you wish to commission a visual record a loved one for posterity and your future heirs, I'm in the book and at your service. I would be delighted to arrange for a private viewing and/or discussion when available.

It has been a wonderful experience living here in East Texas, both rewarding in work and friendship. I want to thank the many people of Marshall and Jefferson that have welcomed me into your community and I will always be thankful for the experiences and opportunities you have made possible.

Christian H. Seidler