



“From the Red Hills to the Forgotten Coast,” on display at the Tallahassee Museum, has been a two-year process for Eluster Richardson. PHOTOS SPECIAL TO THE DEMOCRAT



Eluster Richardson’s new exhibit covers “From the Red Hills to the Forgotten Coast.”

Etched into memory

Eluster Richardson’s landscapes keeps North Florida locales alive

Amanda Sieradzki Council on Culture & Arts

“My duty as an artist is to capture the landscapes around us, and so if they do change, the memories will continue to be there,” states painter Eluster Richardson about his exhibit “From the Red Hills to the Forgotten Coast.”

Richardson’s landscape paintings are a departure from his work in portraiture. Visitors can see them on display in the Tallahassee Museum through April 30. Richardson was ready for a new challenge. He feels a responsibility as an area native to record the city and its surrounding areas as he remembers them, illustrating the unique make-up of water, sand, and sky. **See LANDSCAPES, Page 3C**



Richardson

If you go

What: From the Red Hills to the Forgotten Coast

When: 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Sunday-Saturday through April 30

Where: Tallahassee Museum, 3945 Museum Drive

Cost: \$12 adults, \$11.50 seniors and students, \$9 children over 3 years, members free

Contact: For more information, call 850-576-2531 or visit <https://tallahassee-museum.org/explore-the-museum/currently-showing/>.



Eluster Richardson grew up near Lake Jackson, which contributes to his affinity for water and sea breezes. SPECIAL TO THE DEMOCRAT

Landscapes

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Richardson grew up by Lake Jackson, which contributes to this affinity for water and sea breezes. His burning passion for art began in grade school and never wavered. After retiring from his three decades long career as a network engineer, Richardson gave himself over to art full-time. He has served as chairperson for the Tallahassee Watercolor Society and currently teaches around town and at the Senior Center.

"A creative community thrives better than one that is just one-dimensional," says Richardson. "Without art a community won't grow, and if it doesn't grow it will soon disappear."

Art has been a constant in Richardson's work-life balance. He's exhibited paintings from Detroit to Miami, including in the Smithsonian Institute. Richardson also collaborated with the post office to create a stamp commemorating the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Oils were his primary medium until his wife's pregnancy with their daughter. She disliked the smell so much that Richardson changed over to watercolor. He found a strong community around his new medium and has continued building a renowned portfolio for the past 27 years.

His mother and daughter are preferred subjects because he can translate their character into paint. At one art festival he witnessed a group of young violinists perform and was astonished by their level of professionalism and talent. One student's facial expressions were so phenomenal that he was inspired to capture them in paint.

"I love painting people because I think we as people connect with each other through a common cause," says Richardson. "I like the realism that captures a person's personality. I like to capture that passion."

Ultimately, Richardson wants to exude positivity in his portraits and landscapes. He wants the work to put a smile on people's faces and bring happiness into their lives. An angel is hidden in every painting for just this purpose.

"If the painting is sold that angel will serve as a guide to protect that home and add a little joy and happiness," Richardson believes. "With a happy home, hopefully my work might have longevity and the work will be passed on from generation to generation."

Images that spark joy will pop into Richardson's mind as he enters the creative process. They will nag at him until he starts to paint. It's a feeling that he likens to a musician having a melody stuck in their head and preoccupying them until they compose.

Richardson edits for composition and color along the way, and an average painting will take him three weeks to complete. He pulls from both memory and photographs, with a combination of this source material providing the support for his current exhibition. Richardson enhanced some areas like Lake Jackson, which he remembers from childhood, to represent its evolution over time.

"From the Red Hills to the Forgotten Coast" has been a two-year process for Richardson. Traveling from Panacea to Apalachicola, he found magic inside blooming marshes and remembrances of red clay dirt roads. Richardson noticed how ever-present water was inside each work, something he says was not done purposefully but just goes to define his own relationship growing up near water.

"I wanted to help people from this area step back and see the pristine lakes, rivers, streams and swamplands," says Richardson. "They may pass it on the road and not think about it, but that beauty can last a little bit longer on canvas."

The blues, greens and reds define the hilly terrain, and sharp attention to detail is trademarks of Richardson's style. The water sparkles and gleams with the sun hitting it at just the right angle, bringing another level or realism to the work.

He marks success by the amount of people that will be able to see what he sees in these varying ecological landscapes. Moreover, he hopes to prove that passion, whether inside someone's eyes or seen in the panoramic depth of a seascape, means everything.

"You were given your passion for a purpose," says Richardson. "There's an itch, you can't go so long without scratching it every once in a while. My artwork is my itch."

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).

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