

REAL

MAGAZINE



Jack Dowd
Artistic Crossroads

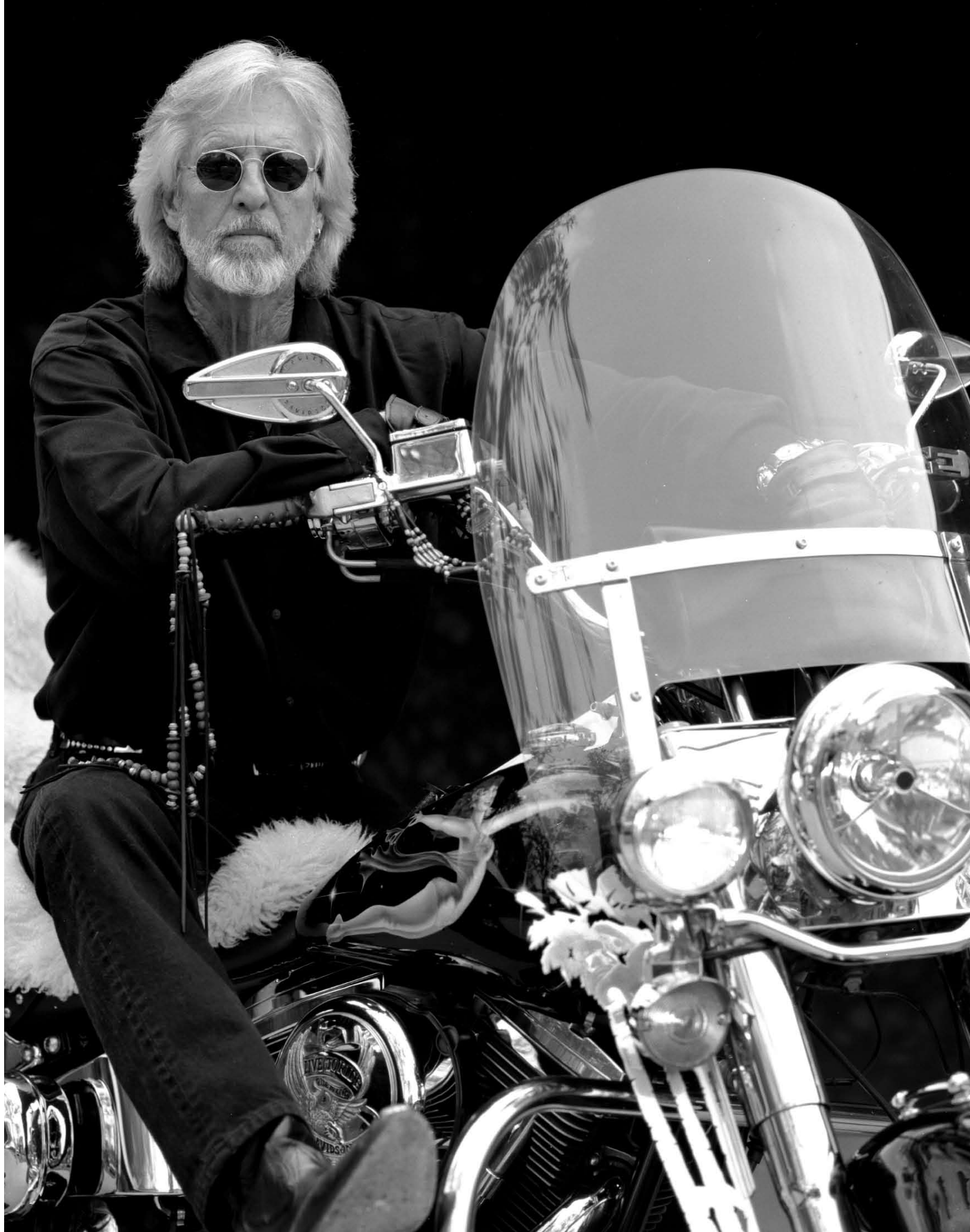
Jack Dowd

Artistic Crossroads

Jack Dowd was born in Queens, New York ten years after the Great Depression and can still recall living through the lingering effects stemming from that era. Next up was World War II and the memories of blackout curtains and masked headlights on automobiles. As a child these events didn't alter his life but another certainly did. Jack's father, a railroad engineer, liked the comics. Beyond reading them his father would re-draw the cartoon characters. That interested Jack and for the first time art was introduced into his life. As a young lad he was always sketching and drawing; leading to his career as an artist and ultimately earning him recognition by Who's Who in American Art.

Jack found Sarasota via a \$69 Peoples Express flight direct from his home town of Burlington, Vermont. It would soon become a favorite vacation destination for he and his wife. It wasn't long until they noted the "small town" feel on Siesta Key that reminded them of home. In 1982 Jack decided to take his art career seriously and sold the last bar he owned in New York. The same year he made Sarasota the Dowd's winter residence, coming down and purchasing a beach front home on Siesta Key without his lovely wife Jill's knowledge. Jack just shrugs it off saying "An artist is always a little bit crazy or no one would trust them."

Beach front living posed challenges for artistic endeavors as flip flops, six packs and requests to head to the beach presented themselves. Growth ultimately caused the Dowds to move inland to Grove Street. Jack sums it up saying, "Things changed. I changed. We kept moving out." Soon growth once again caught up with the Dowds. Taking weekly motorcycle trips to Myakka City on his Harley Davidson, Jack happened upon a home in Gator Creek where he currently resides. The home, designed



by Tollyn Twitchell of the Florida School of Architecture, sits on 7 acres, has its own ball field, lake and most importantly the building that houses his studio "Moon River". With development continuing eastward Jack once again quips, "They're still moving the city to us but it's not on top of us." That said he also appreciates the host of conveniences the location provides.

Jack began creating sculptures from wood. He favors constructing sculptures of people and, interestingly enough, dogs. When inquiring about this, he answers "Dogs are like people." Twenty years ago he added clay to his resume. Clay enabled him to create more movement and action in his figures. His art represents an eclectic mix of sculptures depicting the uniqueness of individuals. When asked to describe his work he pauses, reflects on the question, and a moment later answers, "I am an American contemporary, urban, social, realist." So, what motivated Jack to create two of his best known arrangements Last Call and Andy Warhol Twenty Times?

Last Call - Jack opened his first bar in 1969 and ten bars later, retired from the business in 1982. As a connoisseur of the bar business, he wanted to use his artistic talents and life experience to create an engaging bar scene. "A lot of people know the bar business but not many are artists," Jack says. "Last Call" is a cultural tribute to the vibrancy and social vitality of New York City. Taking two years to complete, Jack never got bored with the project and it is his favorite work to date. Debuting at the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in 2001, the exhibit garnered the largest opening night crowd and became the most widely attended show in the history of the museum with over 40,000 visitors before going on to spend two years at the Tribute Museum in New York City.

Andy Warhol Twenty Times - Jack created the twenty figures of the artist to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Andy Warhol's death. The identical life-size figures are all painted black with the exception of the hair, face and hands. Those are painted in bright colors pulling from Warhol's silk-screened paintings of movie stars and media figures such as Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor and Jackie Kennedy. The collection was displayed around the United States leading up to and beyond the 2007 anniversary of Warhol's death. Jack notes, "Jill (my wife) is my best critic because she is brutally honest. She didn't want me to do the twenty Andys. She's only been wrong a couple times and this was one." Thirteen of the twenty figures are sold and the endeavor has proved successful.



Beyond his art and family, sports keep Jack busy and hone his competitiveness from another vantage point. Attending Adelphi University on Long Island it was sports that brought Jack to college. Today Jack participates in the Senior Games track meets. Competing in the field events, Jack enters discus, shot put, javelin and hammer throw. He holds the record in the State of Florida for the javelin in his age group. He states he's better than some of the younger participants as well. Not too bad for someone who just two years ago had both knees replaced and went through one year and two months of therapy before returning to daily training and the field events he loves so much.

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Very successful with sculpture, Jack is transitioning into painting and pastels. His canvasses are large, as Jack muses, "Size matters." He says each pastel takes about a week to complete. That allows him time to put the work aside and tackle another endeavor. Coming back later he walks in with a fresh set of artistic eyes and notices the little things only an artist sees that, in his mind, need more work.

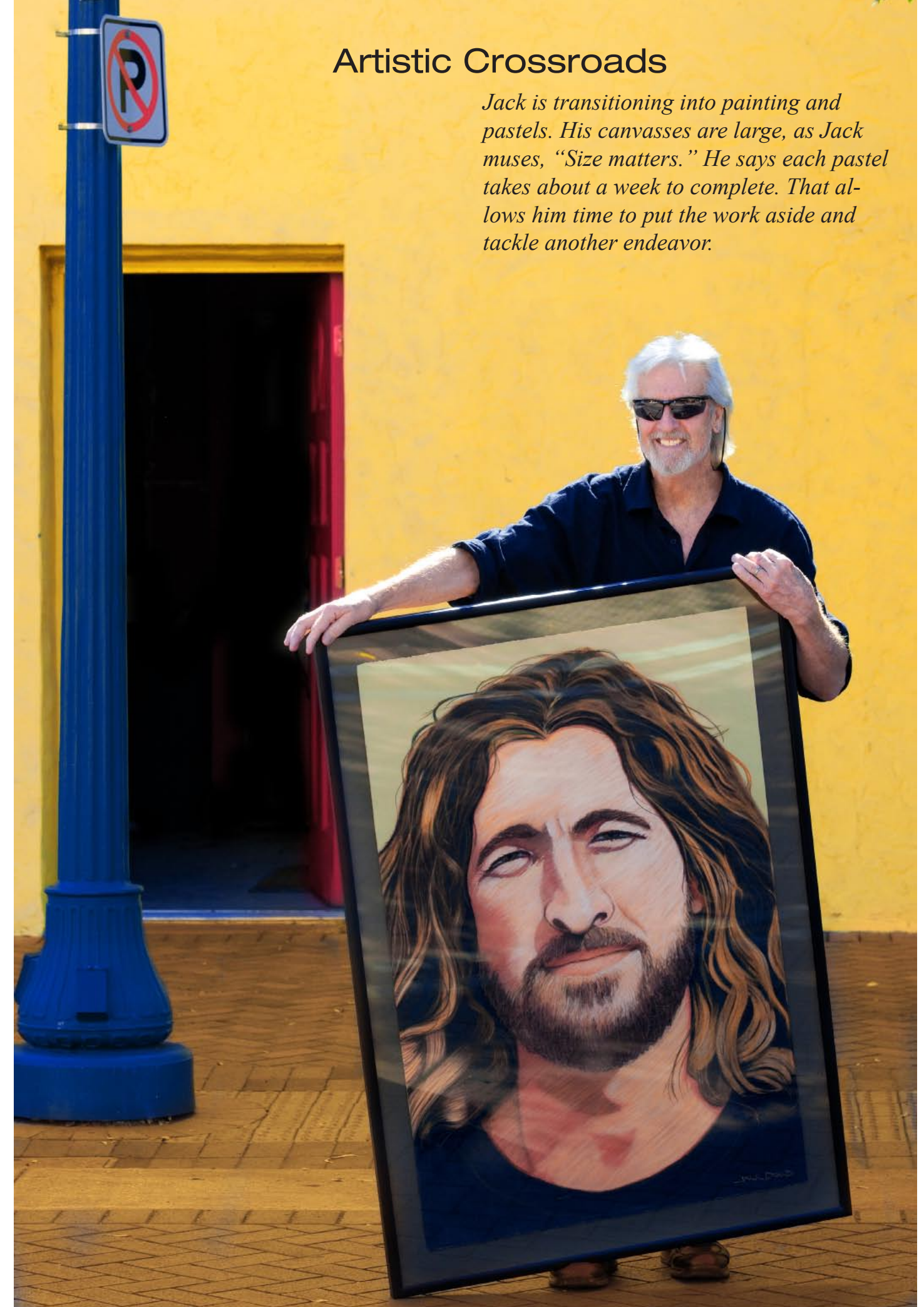
He is very frank about the change, saying, "I want to say something important with my painting. My fear is I'm getting too old to be an emerging painter. Everybody paints and does pastels. It's harder to get noticed."

With that said, he's off to a good start. Recently, Out of Door Academy invited Jack to their Lakewood Ranch campus. They were interested in sculpture. Upon arrival, he noted the proposed location and told them what they really needed were paintings. Going home, he fetched his John Lennon pastel and made the trip back out. They loved the Lennon piece and commissioned him to create ten pastels to hang in the lobby hallway.

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