

TEXAS BIG GAME AWARDS

LIMITED EDITION ART PROGRAM BY ARTIST MIKE CHILDRESS

As told by TWA Member and Artist Mike Childress

Back in 2006 as part of Eastman Chemical Company's (TBGA's First Artwork Program Sponsor) outreach in the outdoors, I was asked by representatives of Texas Wildlife Association (TWA) and Texas Parks and Wildlife (TWA) to provide artwork depicting one or more of the trophies annually harvested in the Texas Big Game Awards (TBGA). John Kuempe's Texas Slam taken during the 1996-1997 hunting season was chosen for the subject of this initial artwork. Since that first pen and ink of Kuempe's Texas Slam, seven other inkings have been produced from entries in the Texas Big Game Awards. While many individuals might enjoy and even own some of the artwork produced for the Texas Big Game Awards, few people know how the subjects are selected for the wildlife art and how the art is actually produced.

The first step is to select the wildlife to be featured in the artwork. Although the trophy's Boone & Crockett score is a primary criterion in the selection, it is not the only component considered. The species (white-tailed deer, mule deer, or antelope), region of the state from which the animal was taken, and the details associated with the hunt by which the animal was harvested are also considered.

Each year I attend the Texas Wildlife's Association Annual Convention featuring the state's top entries. Thus, I am usually able to meet with the hunter who harvested the selected animal, obtain his/her agreement to feature the trophy in the annual art program, and arrange for a visit to the location at which the trophy is being kept and/or displayed. The "visit" is basically a photo session and generally occurs in early September. It is on such visits that I have met some of the nicest families and seen some of the most magnificent ranches in Texas.

Before I arrive, I have already penciled a couple of drafts or I have a good idea how I want to illustrate the animal in art form. This helps me focus on the position from which to photograph the animal. Even so, I always take more photos than I need to assure I have not missed any particular features of the animal – especially the antlers.

After I get the photos developed, the real work begins. It takes about 7 months to research and ultimately produce an original inking of the animal in a scene – lightly in pencil at first and then much more exact in ink. I ink the original using a 6x0 (0.13 mm or 0.005 inch) Rapidograph pen manufactured by Koh-I-Noor Inc., black India ink, and 11"x14" Strathmore Bristol 100% cotton paper. I constantly check and recheck the inking as it progresses to assure the accuracy of the antler configuration and any particular markings on the trophy. I generally complete the original inking in March.

With the inking finished, I am ready to take it to be reproduced at Hudson Printing located in Longview. Hudson has some of the most modern scanning and printing equipment in the United States and has been providing this service for me for the past thirty years. The original inking is scanned by experienced personnel using a Scitex Smart 340 Scanner and Raster Imaging Processor. Following this step, the digital reproduction is printed on an Epson Printer (mega-version) for my review and approval. Once I “sign-off” on the copy, the image is sent to a printing press. When the press is prepared, I am in attendance to approve the quality of the printed copies.

I then take the copies to my art studio and sign and number five hundred of them. The first twenty-five prints (#1 through #25) are reserved for remarques. A remarque is a “little original” drawn in pencil at the bottom of the signed/numbered print. No two remarques are alike and a remarked print is more highly regarded by an art collector because it represents something “extra” created by the artist. Eight of these remarked prints are reserved the Texas Big Game Awards Banquets conducted across the state with the balance of the remarques presented to the hunter who harvested the trophy depicted in the inking and friends of Texas Wildlife Association and Texas Parks and Wildlife.

Note cards are also produced from the original inking in addition to the signed/numbered prints. The cards are approximately 5-1/2”x 8” and are packaged in sets of twenty-five with matching envelopes. Both the limited edition prints and note cards are marketed by Texas Wildlife Association. If you have attended the Statewide TBGA celebration held during TWA’s annual convention, you may recall that the original pen and ink is auctioned off in TWA’s grand auction. All proceeds from the sale of the original, signed/numbered prints, and note cards benefit the Texas Big Game Awards and wildlife-oriented education activities for Texas youth.

Well, now you know what it takes to produce the artwork for the Texas Big Game Awards. But this artwork would not happen without the wildlife managers, landowners, and hunters in educational, scientific, political, regulatory, legal, and legislative arenas working together to assure Texas continues to produce some of the most magnificent wildlife found anywhere in the world. Thanks to these individuals, each of us has more to look forward to when we take to the great outdoors of Texas.

Interested in purchasing a print or set of notecards?

- Prints are \$25 each, a true bargain and a great gift for a family member or friend.
- Notecards with matching envelopes are \$25.
- Call TWA at (800) 839-9453 for more information, or to make a purchase.

TEXAS BIG GAME AWARDS FEATURED PRINTS

