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# THE ART OF

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# EZRA TUCKER

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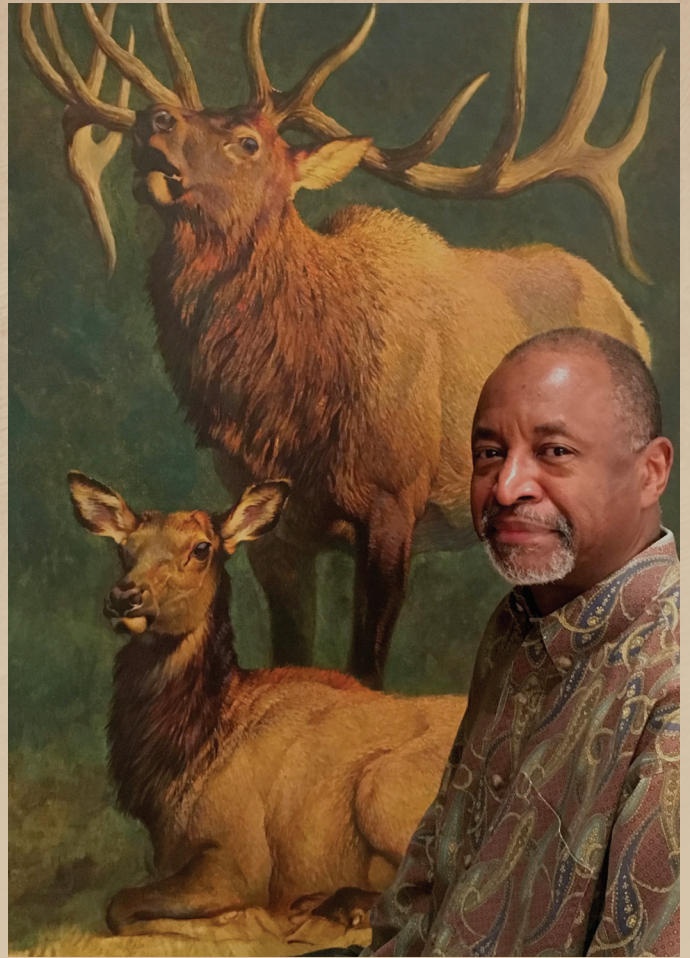
“As a young child, I would imagine what it would have been like to have traveled with Darwin or with the Lewis and Clark expedition as an artist to document their discovery of the natural world in artwork. To have traveled with the explorers during the age of exploration to exotic and unknown worlds still fascinates and stimulates my imagination and sense of wonder.”—EZRA TUCKER



**THE FIFTH OF SIX CHILDREN** whose parents moved from the farm to the city and brought themselves and their children up by their bootstraps, Ezra Tucker's story is one of adaptation, growth, and extraordinary achievement. Ezra Tucker is the son of a Memphis minister who pastored during the era of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the grandson, brother and nephew of Pentecostal ministers. He has written that he attended church "sometimes more hours than I slept." At the age of five or six, he happened to see an illustrated bible of an older attendee who allowed him to look at its pictures. These illustrations of scripture were inspiring, and he would spend hours drawing scenes of biblical scripture related to the Garden of Eden, Noah's Ark and the Book of Revelation, in the borders of his bible and a friend's bible, though, as he wrote in his memoir, "My parents were not happy about this." Reared during the era of mass media featuring pictures, particularly magazines, and the emergence of television programming targeted at children, young Ezra searched through magazines, newspapers, books, comics and watched television programs ranging from nature to science-fiction which fueled his imagination with infinite possibilities for creative expression. "I had an aunt who was a librarian and she would bring me old magazines like *Saturday Evening Post*, that she would rotate out for newer publications. I was always eager to see the covers." "The Wonderful World of Disney was must see TV every Sunday." "Anything I could imagine was possible," he wrote. A child of the late 50's and '60's, young Ezra would express himself through dioramas of prehistoric creatures made from clay and tempera painted cardboard cutout figures of animals entering Noah's Ark, assembled with glue, masking tape, string and cardboard.

Before long, as Ezra Tucker matured so too did his art. In 1967, "my brother sparked my ambition at Christmas by giving me a gift of a book titled, *Animal Drawing: Anatomy and Action for Artists* by Charles Knight . . . which challenged me to draw animals from the inside out . . ." and in fact, as early as eighth grade, he was encouraged to think about a career in the graphic arts and actually began researching professional possibilities. This led him to scour the entire 24 volume set of *World Book Encyclopedias*, which his parents had purchased on credit in 1968, and thousands of hours spent copying paintings, drawings, maps, photos, graphs, etc.

In the early 1970's, when the Memphis Board of Education began to integrate its public schools, Ezra Tucker benefited from the teacher exchange program at Hamilton High School where he was a student. There he designed and created stage sets for theatrical performances, athletic poster art and banners, and bulletin board decorations. And, he was allowed to take senior level art class for four years because he was good enough and bold enough to petition the school principal to get out of boring lower level art classes doing craftwork. This fueled his confidence and his ability, which led him to apply to and be accepted at the Memphis Academy of Arts (though at the objection of his father



because he saw no future in art for a young black man). To buy art supplies and gas for the family car, he worked a night job as a dishwasher at a Mexican restaurant and package handler for Fed Ex. At the Academy, life drawing instructor and mentor, Jack Lew, allowed him to practice drawing at the Memphis Zoological Gardens instead of in the studio. The Memphis Zoological Gardens was next door to the college and free to art students. "I would spend hours there filling sketch books with drawings of zoo animals. He [Lew] accepted them as class assignments. [But] I removed pages of my sketch book for myself so that he would not keep my best drawings and color studies."

After earning a BFA and graduating with honors in 1977, Tucker began his career as an illustrator for Hallmark Cards. He subsequently flourished in Los Angeles with commercial art contract work including work for Hollywood film studios, and illustration assignments of all kinds from there to Chicago and New York. In the 1980's Ezra Tucker settled with his bride in Solvang, California, where he began to transition his career from that of an illustrator, to fine art. The full expression of his well-honed artistry emerged after he moved to Colorado, and was represented there by galleries in Aspen and the five-star Broadmoor Hotel in Colorado Springs. In Colorado, Tucker devoted himself to a full-fledged career as an independent artist. And he has never looked





Artwork clockwise from top: *Magpie Summer*, Juried into the Top 100 entries for the traveling museum exhibition, *America's Parks*, and awarded the exhibit's Society of Animal Artists Wildlife Art Award; *Nomads of the Grasslands*; *Rocky Mountain Ram*. Opposite page: Ezra pictured with *American Nobility*.





Artwork this page: *Slow Melt*. Front cover: Ezra Tucker pictured with *Crown of Horns* and *Solitary Challenger*.

back. The complete story of the life of Ezra Tucker is like a screen play for a feature length film. But it is his art, particularly the quality of his wildlife art, that is most notable in terms of achievement.

Ezra Tucker's wildlife art is characterized by its dynamic composition, unexpected color, lighting, and scale. Its large scale gives a sense of dignity and presence to each creature. His subjects seem alive and animated, ready to step out of two dimensions into a three dimensional world. Ezra Tucker possesses exceptional drawing skills and scientific knowledge from careful study. A hallmark of his work is his ability to achieve a bold, romantic look by using a color palette and lighting that is familiar yet new. Though his background is as a commercial illustrator and designer, his use of earth tones and warm light give his subjects the glow of an old master's work. Of his current work, the artist says, "The challenge I have for myself is to present the beauty and majesty of the natural world to encourage the preservation of wildlife and diversity through my art." Ezra Tucker is generally known for his paintings of mammals but he also portrays birds as well as historic scenes. This is the first traveling museum exhibition of artworks by Ezra Tucker.

### EXHIBITION SPECIFICATIONS

**CONTENTS:** 25 Paintings in Acrylic on Canvas, some as large as 84 x 48 inches. Exhibit artworks may vary from those depicted here.

**SUPPORT MATERIALS:** Exhibition DVD containing registration, press, retail sales, and education information

**FEE:** Mid-range exhibit fee plus shipping and in-house and in-transit insurance

**AVAILABILITY:** Available for duration of eight weeks or longer

**EDUCATION:** Lecture, gallery walk, docent training possible pending scheduling

#### FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT

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