

Reprinted from Black Tie Colorado
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by Nancy Koontz

Name: Ken Elliott
Hometown: Houston, Texas
Resident: Castle Rock, Colorado
Education: Ongoing, got another incomplete last semester
Profession: Artist, not starving type
Status: Unmarried
Family: I'm it!



By Nancy Koontz
Blacktie Staff

It's uplifting to be around artist Ken Elliott and especially to sit and explore ideas with him. You could call him a good, enlightened soul - or even a bit of an "old soul" filled with sage-like wisdom and integrity.

Ken Elliott is a Colorado artist who works in a variety of media: oils, pastels, monotypes, monoprints, and collages. Some of his splendid landscape paintings and pastels are reproduced as dramatic "giclee prints" which are color accurate images that are generated from high resolution digital scans and printed with archival quality inks onto canvas, fine art, and photo-base paper. Several of Ken's giclees, limited edition prints were selected to hang in the guest rooms of the new Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Denver.

Ken's involvement in the art business has now spanned over 40 years. He began as a picture framer, then worked alongside a restorer, became an art dealer, and about 20 years ago, began to draw and paint. In his career, Ken says: "I've been fortunate to have seen remarkably good works of art and met some of the best painters in the field."

No "slouch" in the art world himself, Ken comments: "When I'm making an artwork, it takes a bit of nerve to start a big white canvas or a blank printing plate and make a picture. There is anxiety in the air. I've learned that mistakes are part of the creative process and some of the missteps become a part of the emerging image. Once they are eliminated, more delicious ones are incorporated into the process as unintended surprises!"

Ken, who has been described by many as having a "heart of gold," has done his part to enrich and inspire our world in countless ways. With his luminous landscapes, Ken's art is like a breath of fresh air; and his generosity of giving his beautiful works of art to non-profits for their auctions has brought joy to the highest bidder, and in turn benefited numerous charitable organizations.

Always researching new oils, pastels, and experimenting with different methods, Ken Elliott understands that life is indeed a learning game. Ken in his ultimate wisdom reflects: "When you run out of variations to an idea, you go back to nature and there - all the ideas and colors for a lifetime are always waiting for you."

How do you think the Denver Art Scene has changed through the years? I was fortunate to have been involved in the first planning meetings for the [Denver Art Dealers Association](#) and I've been their webmaster since the organization's inception. DADA has provided a big boost for the local art scene as well as the growing strength of Denver's museums. Denver's art continues to grow in quality and variety.

What nonprofit organizations are you involved with at this time? I am the webmaster for Metro Denver Partners, Cancer League of Colorado, Denver Art Dealers Association and Castle Pines Village. I'm on the Board of Douglas County Partners, Cancer League of Colorado, and "HeartLight," an organization providing support and training to those in grief. I'm also a volunteer with Denver Hospice.

You have donated a lot of the artwork you do to charities. Which ones have you donated to and why? Why say no to good causes? When I decided to make giclee reproductions of my work, it was to multiply myself on a national basis and to have a way to donate limited edition prints to more charities. I've donated to Cancer League of Colorado, Denver and Porter Hospices, Sungate Kids, Metro Denver and Douglas County Partners, Littleton Academy, Church World Service, Kempe Foundation, and others.

What style do you consider your work to be? Impressionist would be the best description. I'm working with bright and unusual color palettes to produce landscapes that are not realistic portraits. I find that the more canvases I do, the colors become more intriguing and the style more abstract. It is never a dull day in the studio!

What special techniques do you use in your work? I try to work smart. I have studied with and continue dialogues with the best in the field. They have given me enough information for a lifetime of work. My primary technique is to be fully aware and do whatever is necessary to produce a solid work of art. In that regard, some days in the studio are more special than others. Picasso said, "I steal," so I used that as a technique also- it worked nicely for him.

Do you have to be in a certain "creative" mood to create your pieces? I live creatively all the time, so the suspense of something about to be revealed is always in the air. We are all creative. I strongly feel that mothers running families and individuals running businesses are some of the most creative people around. If I have a piece of artwork that flops, I can throw it away and start again. The stakes are much higher when mistakes are made within families or in businesses.

Where can people see your art pieces? Fortunately, my work is being picked up by poster companies and my limited-edition prints are distributed coast-to-coast. A print or poster sells practically every day but I rarely know where they go. I also have galleries that sell my original

works in a number of states: Colorado, California, Connecticut, New York, Wisconsin, Texas, and Michigan. The easiest place to see all my work is on my website, www.kenelliott.com

Is there a book you have read that really inspired you that you can recommend to others? In my personal life, I'm inspired by many different things so I can't say there's any one book but "The Ascent of Man" by Bronowski comes close. As an artist, I'm continually looking at works (an inspiring collection of images is scrolling on the side of my computer now.) I have a big art library full of masterful images. Since my paintings are moving in this direction, the artists with the brighter colors and more abstracted forms inspire me the most. Oh, and Marx...Groucho.

Who is the most interesting person you have ever met? There are those I love and have loved me back...they go beyond interesting. In the arts, the people that set me on "fire." The photographer, Duane Michaels, who caught fire creatively after doing a photo shoot for two weeks with Renee Magritte. The other was an artist friend and intensely creative individual in Houston, Charles Schorre. We would be chatting in his studio for 15 minutes and Charles would say, "Ken I love talking to you, but I've got to paint." He was an unstoppable creative force and he made art out of everything. He was an amazing person to be around even if you only got your 15 minutes.

What do you consider a priceless gift? Love and Health.

How do you develop an idea for a painting - what inspires you? The eye and the mind work together to inspire. It might be the light on a ridge line, something in the magazine, a color combination at the toy store- anything that makes the mind pause and wonder. I have a number of motifs: trees, clouds, meadows and lakes. So if something dramatic gets my attention, I will often use it in an existing series. I'm not interested in painting that cherry red Chevrolet, but I did make a successful pastel called "Cherry Red Trees." I'm starting to do collage again. With just strips of colored paper and some paint, you can make "somethings" out of nothing. I love that!

Which of your paintings was the most challenging one for you, and why? Typically I have 30-40 canvases started in the studio. They are all misbehaving or they would be finished by now. The new canvases I start this week add more problems to solve. The challenge to make better paintings never stops. By the way, if you REALLY like the thing you made last Tuesday when you see it a week later, you may be dead as a real artist.

When in your life did you realize you had artistic talent? My earliest memory is looking at a snow painting hanging my grandmother's house when I was two. My most vivid memories in kindergarten were of making drawings of a locomotive and a semi trailer truck. At six, when I drew the Battle of San Jacinto onto the three walls surrounding my bunk bed, my mother pronounced me artistic. It's my view that only mothers can claim their children have artistic talent. I'm not convinced there has ever been an artistic prodigy. Brain wiring commonly allows prodigies in math and music but not in much else. We might have an aptitude for art, medicine or indoor plumbing, but you have to put in innumerable hours just to be average.

What is a moment in your life you will never forget? I have been fortunate because there are too many marvelous moments. I've been enchanted by nature, faraway places and important

events, but wonderful people are the best. I have been allowed to travel to the "other side" on occasion. I have met my so-called deceased mother and father, someone I helped in Hospice, and an author six months prior to meeting him here in the physical. Those other-worldly occurrences were very real, inspiring and unforgettable.

What other hobbies or interests does a talented man such as you have? There is that talent word again. I occasionally teach and mentor other artists. I've also become fairly adept with computers so I've shared those skills, creating lot of websites, book and CD covers, innumerable flyers, brochures and some light media promo. Website creation allows me entrée into numerous businesses and organizations.

What artist do you admire the most? I admire all the artists that try and all the ones that last. I can't provide a single artist name, but I prefer the deceased masters Claude Monet, Vincent van Gogh, Henri Matisse, Pierre Bonnard and Richard Diebenkorn. Among the living masters I admire that have also helped and mentored me are Wolf Kahn and Forrest Moses.

What is the best advice another artist ever gave you? There are two: "Now that you know how to draw, it doesn't mean you can make art." + "Be outrageous."

What is one of your favorite places in the world? Paris on the Île de la Cité, there is a deconsecrated church that is now surrounded by the iron gates of the Ministry of Defense, Sainte-Chapelle (French for The Holy Chapel) is a Gothic chapel in the heart of old Paris. Some say it represents the peak of Gothic architecture. Louis IX "spent France" to purchase the Crown of Thorns that he housed here (now in Notre Dame Cathedral.) I believe Sainte-Chapelle has the tallest stained-glass windows in Europe. In the evening, the classical concerts are not to be missed. I'm also very fond of being at home.

What is your fondest childhood memory? My sixth birthday. That was the big one. All my friends were there and we never ran out of Chocolate cake and ice cream. It was like everyone was having a birthday. All the kids ran around screaming and laughing. I got the elaborate, two-story, made in Japan service station set. I have an elaborate Japanese car now and I still eat a lot of Chocolate cake and ice cream. Some things never change and Chocolate is capitalized on purpose. I've got a 6-0 coming in a couple of years...I'm looking forward to that one too.

What is something your parents taught you that you have never forgotten? By her example, my mother taught me to be helpful and kind. My father taught me to be strong and to laugh. Dad said, "Learn some trades." I've learned quite a few and it has helped me get a job anywhere anytime. Thanks Mom, thanks Dad.

Do you have a quote or saying that has helped guide you through life? "Do unto others as you would have them do unto do you." And, attributed to Mahatma Gandhi, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind."

How do we get our young people interested in charitable work and giving back to the community? Expose them to doing a small thing and when they are thanked so very deeply, they may understand.

Where is your focus these days; and what's up in the future for the talented Ken Elliott? I'm focusing on my expanding art career - there is no limit to what you can do and where you can go. But the rest of the time, I'm working to magnify the amount of good I can help put into the world through charity work locally and hopefully on a global with some simple ideas. I'm taking more time to look out the window and do nothing as well.

How would you like to be remembered by future generations? I say, "Want to move a mountain? Get a bunch of ants." Well, if I'm remembered at all, how about, "He was a good ant."