

Thompson's art keeps evolving

BY JANE M. WILSON

Whether her subject matter is a majestic herd of elk foraging in the woods, a regal lioness (resting yet alert, on the jungle floor) or a young African girl proudly displaying her blouse of beads, midvalley artist Cami Thompson captures color and emotion with apparent simplicity and ease.

And people are noticing. Last month Thompson was invited to apply for the juried Artists in Colorado show at the Colorado History Museum, and out of 400, she was one of the 100 selected. Not only that, but she won the top "Best of Show" award for her painting of the young African girl described above, "Massai."

A Colorado resident

since 1970, Thompson has always painted wildlife. In the early 1970s, she was featured in some prominent shows at the Driscoll Gallery in Denver.

Her canvas decades ago was fabric, and Thompson made a name for herself in the wearable art business. Even back then, a common theme on T-shirts was the draped beads typical of the African tribal people.

"I've always been intrigued by the Massai," said Thompson, who has immersed herself in safari shows on television, books and studied African animals in zoos.

Her dream of 30 years — to go to Africa — will be realized next summer when she will be part of an artists' expedition to that continent, sponsored in part by

Traditional Tented Safaris Inc.

Thompson's painting has been evolving. She has spent the last four years developing a color theory which only uses between three and nine "mother colors," and focuses on transferring light onto the canvas quickly and deftly.

Her medium of choice is still oils ("Nothing else gives the translucency of oils"). She uses no toxic solvents in her process, but rather, vegetable-based ingredients.

Thompson has always believed in giving back to her community, and this she does through teaching art. She has taught a variety of classes through the Aspen Art Museum, including this past winter, a class for youngsters in kindergarten

through fourth grades.

She takes on students of all ages, including, from time to time, some who cannot afford to pay. She loves recognizing raw talent and desire and helping her students translate that onto the canvas.

"I can remember being 13 and not being able to get the paint to do what I wanted it to do," said Thompson. She noted there is a trend in this country of more and more art professionals teaching art classes rather than art teachers in schools.

This summer, Thompson will teach two art workshops with Paula Lawley. Each two-day retreat, June 28-29 and July 12-13, takes place at the rustic Beaver Lake Retreat above Marble.

This fall, it's north to



Alaska. Thompson has for the two previous summers spent several weeks on Kodiak, the westernmost of the Aleutian Islands. Sponsored by the Northern Exposure Gallery, she paints and teaches there, while enjoying a diet almost exclusively of fresh fish,

local fruits and vegetables.

Soon, others will be able to enjoy Thompson's artwork in printed form. She is pursuing a line of greeting cards featuring her wilderness scenes.

For more information about Thompson's upcoming classes, call 963-3085.