

# Ilse de Villiers

*It was a high note for me, early 2017. It was my first visit to Dallas, Texas and I was also going to exhibit at the Dallas Safari Club Convention held annually at the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Centre. My booth was next to the African Hunting Gazette's, and together with Kim Gattone and Birgit Reprich from AHG, we made a great team.*



*Ilse and Crunchie.*

**T**he show is huge in every regard, and the cliché that “everything is bigger in Texas” certainly rang true! I met many new people and potential clients, and the feedback regarding my artwork was overwhelmingly positive.

Last year Richard Lendrum, publisher of *AHG*, came up with the idea that they could represent my work in the U.S. so I sent four pieces to Kim Gattone, manager of their gallery and curio shop **African Oasis** in Dillon, Montana, and I was very excited when my work was sold.

After this year's DSC Convention I sent six large paintings and two small black and white paintings to **African Oasis**, and five pieces sold within the first five

months! Although Dillon is a very small town, it is popular during the summer months, and Kim is doing a sterling job managing and running the shop.

I am an animal lover, with animals and wildlife being my prime subject matter, so conservation of our wildlife and its natural habitat lies close to my heart. That said, it's not always easy to find ways to channel one's enthusiasm, talent and energy towards projects and causes that actually make a positive difference, but last year two such opportunities arose, and if all goes well, both will come to fruition.

Last year, while visiting Phelwana Lodge, near the Timbavati Private Nature Reserve, I became aware of the amazing conservation projects the Timbavati

Foundation runs. The Foundation's vision is firmly rooted in the spirit of *Ubuntu*, a Zulu word meaning “a person is a person through other persons” - the fact that none of us function in isolation, and whatever we do (or fail to do) affects others, which in turn affects the whole world.

The Timbavati Foundation runs an environmental school which provides an interactive environmental education program for primary and senior school children, with training being tailored to the activities, needs and challenges of the communities in the area. Training takes learners out of the classroom and into the bush, and the funds that the Foundation receives are exclusively for direct project-related costs, such as the construction of



*Ilse with clients Paula & Tim Kellerman.*

netted gardens, the placement of water tanks, and/or the sinking of boreholes.

This inspired me to want to contribute in some way. I had a chat with the management team at Phelwana Lodge. A few months later I met with two of the Timbavati Foundation Trustees to discuss some practical options, and we settled on three black and white paintings that I wanted to donate. These paintings are currently displayed and available for purchase at the exclusive Makanyi Lodge's curio shop in the the Timbavati Private Nature Reserve, and the money from these sales will be channeled back to the Timbavati Foundation.

Last year I also visited the Hoedspruit Endangered Species Centre with overseas clients. The center is a unique African wildlife facility focusing on conservation and the sustainability of rare, vulnerable, and threatened species. Cheetah conservation is one of the core disciplines, and I offered to contribute in some way if possible. I was later contacted by the founder of the center, Lente Roode, who annually goes to New York to raise funds for the center.

I offered to do a painting of one of the animals at the center that could be auctioned off at one of the functions, and she suggested a painting of a cheetah male, named Crunchie, one of the center's cheetah ambassadors. We took many beautiful photos of him, and if all goes well, I will paint this beautiful cheetah.

Being an artist and creating beautiful lasting images with paint on canvas is, and always will be, my passion and privilege, and like most people I want to make a difference - through my art - no matter how small the contribution may be.

As Jane Goodall so aptly stated: *You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.*



*Ilse with the 3 Black & white paintings for Timbavati.*



*Ilse & her husband, Abraham, with Kim from African Oasis.*

**To contact ILSE personally or to commission that special painting for your office or home, you are welcome to contact her via email: [art@ilsewildlife.co.za](mailto:art@ilsewildlife.co.za) or Website: <http://ilsewildlife.com> FB: ILSE Wildlife**