

An Artist in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park

by Peter Hall

As a professional artist for the past 20 years, I have concentrated my efforts on capturing the landscapes and beauty of our natural wilderness areas. I have traveled widely in the Amazon, Arctic, Antarctica and especially Africa, but the Kgalagadi National Park has become an absolute favorite destination for its combination of enchanting landscapes, glorious light and amazing wildlife viewing. Each trip is different but all leave me with a strong sense of wanting to return time and time again.



Strangely, the creative work is not done there; instead each stay is a time to feed liberally on atmosphere and sights, to gaze deeply into the fire at night whilst remembering the joy of a day filled with privileged glimpses of an untamed world. The sleepy glare of Giant Eagle owls or a reclining Leopard high in an old Camelthorn tree...The antics of Black Backed Jackals, swooping Lanner Falcons or inquisitive Ground Squirrels...Soul medicine that seeps through my being invigorating my mind and quenching my thirst for solitude, serenity and peace. And the creative fires are well fuelled as each glorious day draws to a close under a wondrous sky of a gazillion stars.

The Kgalagadi is a photographers dream. The wide open views and dry river beds offer endless possibilities to burn up the pixels, be it with a close up shot of a baby Springboks' first steps, or the golden hues of an evening sky, enhanced immeasurably by the glow and reflected light of the red dunes.

As an artist, I personally have no interest in painting animals. Indeed, I completely shy away from illustration or anything else that might leave me with a cold rendering of an old photo. Once the photo is there, it seems pointless to try and painstakingly copy it on canvas. Painting should show not only what was in front of me but also what was within. What stir of recognition made my soul stir, moved me deep within and demanded expression. Each venture out into the wilderness sets off new ideas that often surprise and always delight me. I've certainly never thought of painting ostriches, but watching them inspired this, my first painting from this outing. Their attitude, uneasiness, movement and squabbling all had to come out in one image that is as much a distillation of what I saw and felt as well as an artwork that shows joy of paint, textures, colours and just being there. I hope to do a few more of this potentially exciting theme...and return many times to the Kgalagadi.

