



Emily Chatton works on a piece inspired by the African landscape.

Photo: Jessica Griffin

Schiedt Travel Scholarship Provides African Palette

Born and raised in London, Emily Chatton's unique childhood led her down an early path of exploration through travel and work.

After working various jobs including being a magician's assistant in London, a casting director in Los Angeles, and a tour guide at New York's Central Park Zoo, Chatton began painting and drawing at Santa Monica College in Los Angeles and the Art Student's League in New York. Four years ago, she decided to focus her energies purely toward her artistic progress and enrolled at the Academy. Since then, Chatton has received numerous awards including a J. Henry Schiedt Memorial Travel Scholarship (2004), which allowed her to travel to Africa. She will graduate in 2006.

Preview: How would you describe your work?

Emily Chatton: I have always had a diverse range of work from photo-realism to abstractions of organic forms. I combine traditional and contemporary methods and mediums, often exploring the seemingly disparate themes of isolation and growth.

P: What did winning a Schiedt award mean to you?

EC: The competition itself was a great incentive for me to exceed myself. My travels gave me precious time to immerse myself into the darkness of



Emily Chatton in her studio.

Photo: Jessica Griffin

unfamiliarity. I became acutely aware of my senses and was forced to grow as a human being. Growth that is essential for an artist's vitality.

P: How did you spend your time in Africa?

EC: I spent three months doing volunteer work, which included six weeks working with children of the Masai tribe at a school in Tanzania and six weeks in the northern province of South Africa at a wildlife reserve that protects lions from the canned hunting industry. My experience

ranged from illustrating text for tribal children to spending two days fighting a raging bush fire with nothing but branches and feet.

P: How has this experience affected you?

EC: After spending time submerged in nature and around tribes whose physical and spiritual existence depends on its movement, I have been struck by nature's struggle to survive within the city and how our own human spirit is impacted by its virtual absence.

P: What have you been doing since you've returned from Africa?

EC: There is a tremendous amount still to process. I have crafted some of the photographs and video footage of Africa into a short film of vignettes loosely strung together much like the way memories hang in my mind.

P: How did the children react to you photographing them?

EC: In Tanzania I met a little Masai girl named Eseki. She liked me taking her picture, and I was amazed that in some photographs she displayed the innocence of a small child and in others, her

eyes told the story of a wise woman. We became very close, and since then, she has become my sponsor child. I am working with her images to maintain my connection with her.

P: How has this experience influenced your current work?

EC: In my paintings, I have been affected by the vast landscape and color scheme of Africa and have been working on a much larger scale cross-pollinating realism with abstraction.

P: What does the Pennsylvania Academy mean to you?

EC: It has been a safe haven for me to grow as well as a training ground in which I have built fortitude for the challenges that await me once I leave. I like to think of it as a greenhouse for creativity.



Eseki

Photo: Emily Chatton