

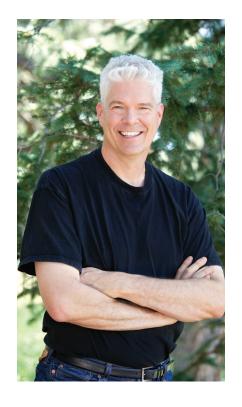


fter getting married in 2002 wildlife artist Edward (Ned) Aldrich and his wife Kerry set up housekeeping in Golden, Colorado. Within three years, however, they realized they wanted more land, so they moved to a home on a mountainside just west of Denver. The downside of their new home was that its configuration did not allow room for a studio.

Aldrich spent the first two years there working in a basement studio, then decided to add additional space to the top of the house. "Working there really spurred me on to get the addition finished," he says of his basement studio. Working with an architect friend, he drew up a basic set of plans for a 20'-by-30' space and then commissioned a builder to design and complete the addition.

"Having to take the roof off meant that we were displaced for several months before we could move back in, which was a challenge since we had three small kids at the time," Aldrich says. "Rather than adding partitions, I chose to leave the room wide open, which gives me plenty of room to work on larger paintings. There is also sufficient room for several tables where I work to prepare my canvases. I do my own stretching and canvas prep, but I leave the framing to the professionals.

"It's a wonderfully workable space with a vaulted ceiling, two sets of sliding glass doors, and two additional windows, which give me plenty of light, especially with the allimportant northern exposure. I can adjust the light by pulling shades up



and down, and I also have color calibrated lights above the easel to supplement the north light that comes in."

Aldrich paints in the studio almost every day when he is home and says it meets all of his needs. Being a "homebody" is a change for Aldrich, whose early career took him to distant locations as he sought reference material for North American animals in the United States and Canada and rhinos, elephants, and big cats during four trips to Africa.

"African wildlife was very popular for a time, but that phase has slowed down," Aldrich says. "Now that most of my galleries are in the West, I am painting primarily North American birds and wildlife."

Raised in upstate New York, Aldrich was 10 when he and his family moved to Colorado. When he was in high school, he enrolled in a progressive private school that offered several off-campus programs, including a month-long art course at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) in Providence. Aldrich enrolled in that program during the summer between his junior and senior years of high school and was so impressed that he later earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in illustration from the school in 1987.

Aldrich went on to work in commercial art while also doing wildlife paintings in his spare time. In 1989, his work was juried into the annual exhibition at the prestigious Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum in Wausau, Wisconsin. Today he is one of the most respected wildlife artists in the country. His paintings are included in the collections of several major museums, he's earned a myriad of honors, and he's written a book-"Drawing and Painting Animals"—that has become a musthave for fledgling wildlife artists.

Early in his career, Aldrich sketched animals up close at the Denver Zoo. Today he often relies on photographs to capture the way an animal's muscles look when it is moving. "Now that I have years of research under my belt, I call upon those memories to inform my compositions, often combining details









Catnap Interruped, oil, 10" by 20'



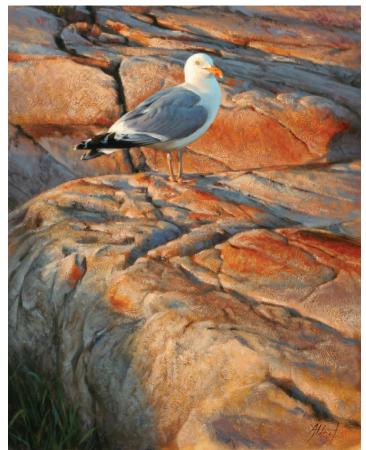
Recent Arrival, oil, 12" by 12"

from several images or changing the background and colors to suit what I have in mind," he says.

Aldrich's paintings are divided into two categories. "I love, really love, doing animal portraiture because this allows me to capture the personalities and subtleties of a specific animal," he says. "Even with the same species each animal is an individual. About half of the paintings I do are close-ups, while the others may depict animals in their habitats. The tension in these is very different because it focuses more on the world in which they live rather than the specific animal."

Despite the fact that he lives less than 20 miles from Denver, Aldrich says it is an ideal location for a wildlife artist. "Just a short distance from the house I can view an abundance of animals such as elk, deer, bobcats, red fox, coyote, bears, and even an occasional cougar," he says. "It's kind of fun to get up in the morning and see a herd of elk bedded down in the yard. I must confess that in the past 20 years I have gotten to be something of a homebody, so it's nice to be able to find my subject matter close by."

The perks of having subject matter closer at hand and doing more studio painting include being able to spend more time with Kerry, his 17-year-old son Spencer, and his 15-year-old twin daughters Abigail







Welcoming The Sun, oil, 30" by 20"

and Isabel.

Aldrich says his technique differs from that of many other wildlife artists. "I use thin oils and apply lots of layers—wet on wet, a bit like how the Old Masters worked," he says. "When I do fur, I begin with oil, and then very thin layers of wet paint are brushed into an already wet surface. Rather than using fine brushes, I use ones that are larger and a bit frayed. These rough brushes work especially well to create the look of individual hairs. The only times I use impasto is when I am painting the very lightest areas so that there is some body to the paint. I might also use sponges, a palette knife, or whatever else I need to get the variety of textures I want."

Back in the studio, Aldrich often turns to view a selection of small framed and unframed oil paintings that hangs on the wall. "I call this my inspiration wall," he says. "Looking at these gives me the fresh feel of outdoors. Because these were painted onsite, they provide a truer sense of the values of color, shadows, and lighting. Drawing from what I see in them makes the studio work much more natural and adds a sense of place. Since I paint animals, it's great to have studies of rocks or even fields to see how color moves through grasses or on rocks. Out of the hundreds I have painted, I might offer a few for sale, but for the most part the memories of these images simply inspire my other paintings."

An outside entrance completed the renovation of Aldrich's studio. "Of late, I have been working on larger canvases," he says. "For instance, a recent one measured five feet by eight feet. This open stairway makes it much easier for me to carry large canvases using this route rather than the winding indoor staircase. I am also glad that I included a vaulted ceiling in my design. As I work, I sometimes turn the painting sideways or even upside down so that height allows me to move it any way I need to."

"Even 20 years later, there is nothing I would change about my studio. Creating it was one of the best things I could have done to achieve the perfect atmosphere in which to paint."

Myrna Zanetell lives in Pueblo, Colorado.