

The Bengal Bulletin

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**Tell Me More About...Show Quality
Bengals Worldwide - Sweden
The Art of the Feline
How to Shine at Shows
And Much More!**

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Cat of a different color!
Photo courtesy of Leia Rose

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Working Together... Breeders Unite



by Debbie Keith

Back in 2004 when I decided I wanted to show cats I chose the Bengal by default. I originally wanted to go with the Savannah. Excited, I headed out to my first cat show in search of a Breeder with kittens. Boy was I naïve.

The only Savannah Breeder at the show was not interested in talking to me and point blank told me I probably couldn't afford one of her cats. Crushed by her rudeness, I continued to wander about the show hall until coming across a cat I actually thought was more interesting than the Savannah, the Bengal. I went home, did lots of research, looked at several catteries and finally purchased my first Bengal, a female. I still have her and recently decided it was time to evaluate my progress so I compared her to the newest addition to my breeding program. In the past 7 years I've made a lot of progress, but I could also see where my cats still needed improvement and noticed areas where I was back-peddling.

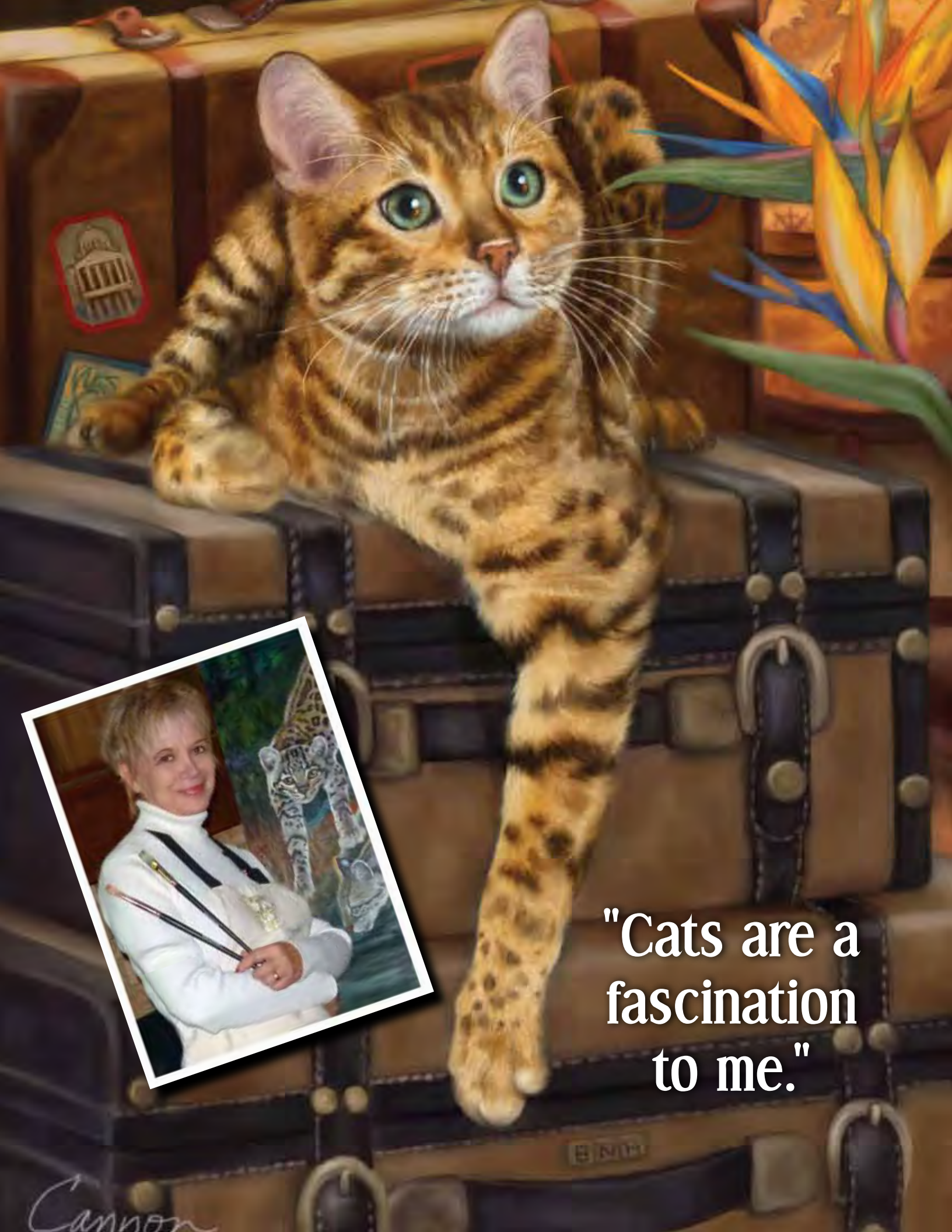
Once I started breeding I made a promise to myself that I would never own more than 9 cats at any given time. No double digits for me! This self-imposed limit has seriously hindered my improvement process, especially since 2 of those 9 are pets. I'd reached the point where I was producing kittens better than what I had, but with

only one male and limited space, my breeding program had stalled.

Frustrated, I turned to fellow breeder, Dana Zauf of Chalk Mountain Bengals. We both wanted to add new lines to our programs, but due to HCM scares, and breeders we'd trusted in the past going out of business, we didn't know where to go. We looked at what we were trying to achieve and decided our best bet was to join forces.

We began by analyzing the strongest and weakest points of our cats. Between the two of us, we had good structure and color, but needed improvement on the basics; smaller, rounder ears, larger eyes and thicker tails. Studying the available males between us, we began to develop a breeding plan based on what females we had, both present and upcoming. Once our plan was in place and our first litters arrived we looked to see who should be kept and who should be replaced and retired.

We both doubled our gene pool and shaved years off our progress. We got immediate results in just one generation of cats. Not to mention the alleviation of fears over major breeding faults or genetic issues. Just think of the possibilities if more breeders took this route? It's certainly worth your consideration.

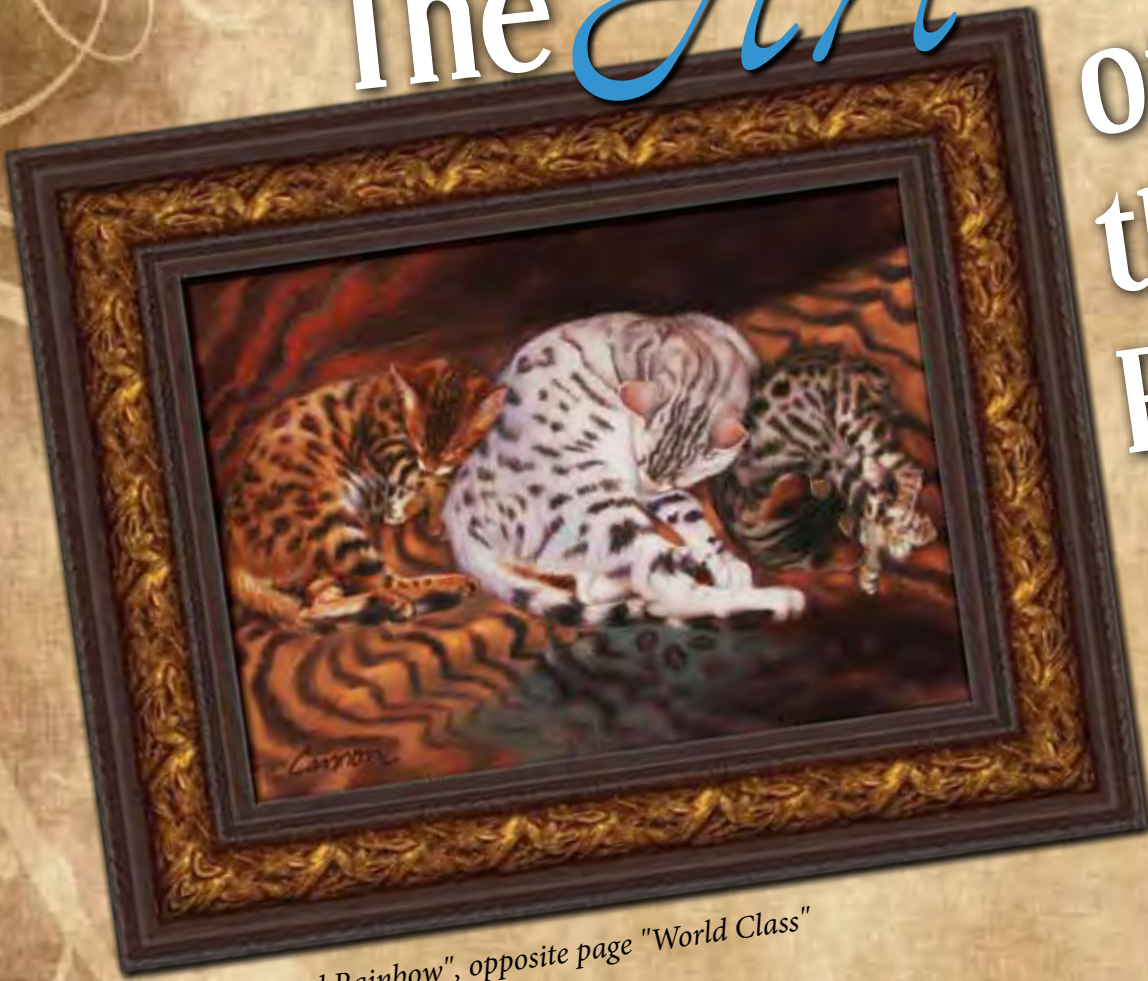


"Cats are a
fascination
to me."

Cannon

The Art

of the Feline



above "Bengal Rainbow", opposite page "World Class"

by Karen Cannon

Cats are a fascination to me. To capture their mystery on canvas is a continuous challenge to my artistic endeavors.

I'm Karen Cannon, a professional feline artist in Fort Collins, Colorado. I've been a professional illustrator for over 25 years. Animals are my favorite subject to paint. I've enjoyed many years creating animal art as my job. Some of my commercial accounts have included: American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA), Hills Pet Food, the Morris Animal Foundation (with Betty White, featured on the Oprah Show), and Hallmark Cards.

Cats are by far one of the most difficult animals to paint. After decades of pet portraiture, I've finally identified one of the reasons cats are harder to paint than dogs -- it's their lack of eyebrows! A dog has very defined "eyebrows", which allow for an array of facial expressions. A cat's mood and expression are pretty much portrayed through "understanding". Depicting expressive, realistic eyes has become a

distinguishing feature in my feline art.

Blending my background of wildlife illustration with my love of cats, the Bengal breed is a perfect landing spot for my artistic focus. With their gorgeous coat pattern, intelligent expression, and supple movements, Bengals are a stunning subject to paint. I love to convey what I see in their eyes: "I'm your friend from a far, faraway place..."

Often mistaken as photographs, my art is created in a style called photorealism -- a highly-detailed painting process. In contrast, some of my paintings are created with a loose, artistic oil painting approach. Recently, I've added a line of 3D multi-media cat sculptures featuring figures cut from wood, painted with oil, and embellished with found objects. These whimsical miniature sculptures measure 5x5" square.

I work from photos. Candid snapshots (I only use professional show photos by permission) are the material my paintings are based on. I'm always looking



left "African Queen", upper right "Kittinkins", lower right "On Safari"

for new Bengal reference material, especially kittens. If you have some great shots you might share with me, please contact me. Currently, I also need ALC and Savannah photos.

My ongoing work consists of commissioned portraits, 3D sculpture, and jewelry. I'm currently working on a special cover for an upcoming issue of the Bengal Bulletin. It's a composite painting depicting the transition from ALCs through F1s to the current Bengal cats. The cover art will be available as an art print, too.

I appreciate the Bengal breeders' hard work to create a responsible transition from a wild heritage to a domestic breed. My reference library contains a few vintage books about "your own stylish wild pets" and it's alarming to see the irresponsible ways exotic cats were marketed back in those days.

Do I own a Bengal? No, not yet. In fact, I have two British Shorthair boys, both white (one odd-eyed). I look at my white cats and think they look like a blank canvas, just waiting for me to paint some spots on them! The way they both "help" me while I'm painting, it's quite likely that will happen unintentionally.

After exhibiting my feline art in cat shows around the country, my work has found homes in many parts of the world. I'm hoping to have an exhibit at a wildcat conservation conference in the future. I look forward to meeting fellow Bengal admirers on the show circuit. In the meantime, please take a peek at my website: www.ThatsMyCat.net

In The Next Issue...

Where are Bengals headed? TIBCS hears from several enthusiast new Members about where they are working to take the Bengal Cat breed

Foundations: Appreciating the cats that bring those precious genes to domestic Bengals



Jaguars hit the spot with TIBCS: Find out about TIBCS' new effort for Jaguar conservation

Gogees Retires: Around the world people share how her vision and cats inspired and improved the Bengal Cat breed



Ethical Dilemma: The ethics question is back! TIBCS Members share how they would handle a common dilemma. Including responses to the same question from TIBCS Members in 1996!



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