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ON THE COVER

Amboseli Awakening by Amanda Thompson

This article is based on a video interview with the artist on January 15, 2026, and from viewing her Instagram account @Amanda_Thompson_Photography.

Amboseli Awakening evokes the tranquil, awe-inspiring presence of a large, solitary, and imposing being. It is early morning at Amboseli National Park on the southern Kenyan plains—foggy and quiet except for the occasional soft chuffing of a grazing African elephant. For the photographer Amanda Thompson, this amber-hued image of this huge animal is a reminder that we are part of something much larger than ourselves. Her photographs encourage us to protect our endangered species, in this case the African elephant. These matriarchal herds of elephants are recognized as the largest animals living on land. For scale, the relatively young elephant pictured here was about twice the size of the jeep that carried Thompson to this remote spot.

With a camera in hand, Thompson applies a mindful approach, absorbing and reflecting on the details, textures, colors, and auras of nature. To further develop her work, she participates in two to three workshops a year, traveling to experience domestic and international places to expand her photographic skills and appreciation of nature. Thompson's major influences on her photography are contemporary artists whose work includes purposeful conservation efforts. Specifically, Thomas Mangelsen and Kristi Odom are photographers whose work she admires. They, like Thompson, take a thoughtful, ethical approach to their art, fostering deeper connections with the natural world.

Thompson's immersion in photography is rather recent, emerging within the past decade. She did not consider herself particularly artistic as a child and has largely taught herself digital photography. Professionally, she is a pediatric psychologist whose photography provides her with an artistic outlet and opportunities for self-care, balancing her clinical and program development work with and for children with cancer and their families. The need for self-care and reflection is particularly profound given her focus on pediatric palliative care. As she now transitions from a 20+ year career, at Children's National Hospital in Washington, DC, and as director of pediatric programs at Life With Cancer in Fairfax, Virginia, to private practice and consultation, her passion for photography provides constancy in a time of change and opportunities for ongoing creative endeavors.

Anne E. Kazak
Art Editor

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