



BANOVICH

# BANOVICH About the Artist

**JOHN BANOVICH** is known internationally for his large, dramatic portrayals of iconic wildlife. His life-sized elephant painting “*Once Upon A Time*” drew global attention to ivory poaching and his deep knowledge of wildlife and unwavering commitment to conservation continues to raise awareness about imperiled species. Under the umbrella of his Banovich Wildscapes Foundation, money generated through artwork sales has been channeled back into support efforts that promote habitat protection, science-based wildlife management and sustainable tourism.

Banovich's work is in important museum, corporate and private collections and has appeared in numerous prestigious venues including the Hiram Blauvelt Art Museum, Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, National Museum of Wildlife Art, Wildlife Experience Art Museum, Salmagundi Club, Museum of the Southwest, Natural History Museum, Gilcrease Museum, Wonders of Wildlife Museum, traveling exhibitions sponsored by the Society of Animal Artists, Artists for Conservation and showcases hosted by Safari Club International and Dallas Safari Club.

In the press, Banovich's work has been showcased on *CBS Entertainment Tonight*, *The Outdoor Channel*, *The Great American Country Channel*, *Orion Entertainment*, *PBS*, *Southwest Art Magazine*, *Western Art Collector Magazine*, *Cowboys & Indians Magazine*, *Sporting Classics*, *Western Art & Architecture*, and most recently NBC has written about his dedication to his conservation work and named him an NBC Cause Celebrity.

In 2019, the Nevada Art Museum will feature Banovich in a one-man exhibition titled *The King of Beasts: A Study of the African Lion*. As an internationally recognized artist



Lounge, Mwiba Lodge, Serengeti, Tanzania

who has studied lions for decades, and the Founder of the Lion P.R.I.D.E. Initiative, the body of work created for this exhibition serves as an homage to these animals and explores questions about mankind's deep fear, love, and admiration for these creatures. The exhibition spans nearly twenty-five years of work, and assembles Banovich's body of work focused on African Lions for the very first time. The

exhibition will be open at the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno, Nevada and will travel to several additional venues throughout the United States over the next year. As the plight of the African Lion has been prominently featured across media platforms recently, the cultural significance of *Panthera leo* could not be timelier.

# BANOVICH

This past year has been one of the most creative years of my life and my studio time hit a new record. The new year began with me commencing on my magnum opus, an undertaking unlike anything I have ever attempted before, an 8 foot by 8 foot canvas depicting the story of an African lion's life. From the moment it takes its first breath, to the moment it takes its last, the story unfolds in a tableau of 11 panels, each featuring the milestone moments of his journey of rising to become a king, then falling from the throne to the final chapter in the circle of life. It is a visual celebration of a life well lived.

Often painting for 16 to 20 hour days, this monumental canvas certainly took everything I had. My years as a bodybuilder in my mid 20's taught me how to focus, ward off distractions and push myself way beyond my comfort zone and into the no man's land of self discipline, all of which was tested at unprecedented levels.

And just as I finished up this magnum opus, I began another with a painting featuring a large gorilla troop in a dappled light forest in the Virunga mountains of Rwanda. This commission was for the new Singita Kwitonda Lodge in Musanze Rwanda, located in one of east Africa's most beautiful settings, tucked into the base of the giant volcanoes of the Virunga mountains. For this stunning lodge I wanted to create something experiential, something that captured what it is like to sit in an ecological paradise made up by a lush deciduous forest surrounded by one of the largest and most successful gorilla families in Rwanda. To adequately express on canvas the profile of this dynamic family, known as the Kwitonda group, I wanted to capture the three silverbacks, ten babies, and all the members that truly represent the heart of the Virunga mountains. My goal was to not only create a signature piece, but also document in history this current story for the opening of a lodge that redefines African luxe.

The country of Rwanda has lifted itself out of the ruins of the devastating genocide that destroyed the country in 1994 and today is leading the way as an African nation, reaching beyond the sins of the past, and embracing modern future of education, healthcare, infrastructure, security and peace and prosperity. My travel partner Mark Homann and I recently hosted Maria Shriver and her son Christopher through Rwanda. We shared dinner with the President Paul Kagame and his wife Jeanette and two of their sons and it was an unforgettable evening getting to know one of my heroes on a very personal level. Maria showed her journalist instincts as we explored everything Rwanda from the President's viewpoints on the state of healthcare, mental health, drug use, foreign investment and education. Then the most important question came..."how did you two (President and first Lady) meet?" As I listened intently to this wonderful, rapid romance story that began in a restaurant in Kenya as they both were refugees I couldn't help reflect back to the days when President Kagame's rebel army, made of primarily of refugees living in Uganda, began to craft a plan to stop the genocide and take back their country through sheer guts and determination and love of country. Having just read the book "A Thousand Hills; Rwanda's Rebirth and the Man Who Dreamed It. " I was acutely aware of the facts; Paul Kagame grew

up as a wretched refugee but masterminded one of the most audacious covert operations in modern warfare to take back his nation by winning a war and ending a genocide, uniting its citizens, and placing it on a path towards reconciliation and prosperity. 2019 marks 25 years after the genocide and redefines Rwanda as the star of Africa. With nearly 60% of its parliament seats filled by women, one of the highest literacy rates, one of the cleanest countries in Africa and a pervasive hope and optimism about the future rarely found on the dark continent it is my favorite country in Africa and one of my favorite countries on earth!

It goes without saying that in addition to its economic and community success, Rwanda has wonderful wildlife reserves like Akagera (home of the big five) and the Nyungwe forest which is home of Chimpanzees, Colobus Monkeys and many other primates. However, it is the Mountain Gorillas of the Volcanoes National Park, that remain the ultimate wildlife experience. One of only two countries in Africa where one can encounter these gentle giants and they can only be seen in the wild as none are found anywhere in captivity. I have always said that a mountain Gorilla encounter is the top wildlife experience in the world as they are hauntingly human like, reminding us of where we have come from and where we are going. We share over 98% of our DNA making them one of our closest ancestors and sitting with a family group and watching them watching you leaves one with a sense of unity, peace and that we are all fellow travelers in this thing called life, staged on this finite blue planet we can all call home... and we are going to be ok.

I hope you enjoy my new works of art, interior design projects, our travel adventures and I invite you to explore not only Rwanda with me but come see the truly best of Africa and its most dramatic and important landscapes and be part of the solution in saving wildlife and wild places for our children and grandchildren to enjoy.

Asante Sana Rafiki Yangu  
John Banovich



# BANOVICH WILDSCAPES TRAVEL

A custom travel company focused on community, culture and conservation

By Robyn-Lee Guauí



*“All our guests have travelled the world but only an African experience stimulates their senses in an endemic way and continues to climb higher as each day unfolds.”*

— JOHN BANOVICH

Legendary Serengeti Camp, Serengeti National Park

**“WHEN I FIRST STEPPED FOOT IN AFRICA, I FELT LIKE I WAS COMING HOME”** says artist John Banovich. The artist’s pursuit of inspiration and exploration has taken him all over the globe: Europe, Canada, Alaska, Russia, Central America, Pakistan, India, Thailand, Indonesia, Myanmar, China, and Laos, among others... But it is to Africa that he returns; in the last quarter-decade he has visited over fifty times, staying up to nine weeks at a stretch.

Perhaps this should come as no surprise; after all, it is the cradle of humankind and home to unfathomably vast expanses of wilderness and “big things with big teeth”. The depth of John’s research informs his art, but it is more than just a study of subject matter. “I love their power, their strength, their drama. I love the fact that they’re often secretive... you have to go out and find them.” And John has been out to find them: he has spent years uncovering their mysteries and being compelled by their intrigue. Much

like his remarkable artistic talent, “These wild places seem to exist in my DNA,” he says. Inextricably intertwined, he has nurtured and honed both through his journeys into the wild, and a primal soul connection older than time acts as a conduit for his passion to flow into his work.

Coming to know these places in all their layered rich complexity revealed to John the extent of the threat that they are under. In the world of conservation, the needs of

humankind and wildlife are juxtaposed, and the stakes are ever higher. "There is responsibility in knowing," John realised, "so I began to address my overwhelming sense of how to make a difference." So began the Wildscapes Foundation, which channels proceeds from sales of Banovich's artwork, films, interior accents and travel to carefully handpicked projects that address how best to safeguard Africa's natural cornucopia.

"We are trying to light a candle, rather than curse the darkness," Banovich emphasizes.

Through his own extensive travels, he came to realise that tourism itself could be one of the most effective ways to light that proverbial candle. "It has been a vortex that I emotionally got sucked into, and we've taken on projects that we feel can move the needle in some way. As a result of doing that for several decades, I now want a platform where others can partake in those profound experiences," he says. By

bringing people to the places he loves and sharing projects that protect these places, people and wildlife he cares about, he hopes to kindle the same flame in others – and generate support for the great work that is being done in these important conservation landscapes. Banovich had put together and accompanied trips for select clients in the past, but in perceiving the possibility this avenue held, he decided to realize its full potential.

Throughout his journeys Banovich has developed deep relationships with those in the luxury safari world, and his extensive roaming has given him an encyclopedic knowledge, not just of how best to get from A to B, but of how an itinerary should flow from one experience to another; what each place will evoke in the hearts and

minds of his guests, and how to unfurl the full extent of magic to be had, at just the right moment along the way. Most notably, all of the partners Banovich and his team work with adhere to his taste for quality and luxury, and more importantly, are firm proponents of a conservation ethos.

The result is Banovich Wildscapes Travel, imparting a commitment to profound, meaningful experiences that open up their guests to humbling, awe-inspiring beauty, bringing them into contact with the people and projects working tirelessly to keep it all around for future generations. As Banovich puts it, "When one experiences Africa, its ancient rhythms and extreme beasts, it seizes your soul... and a part of you remains there forever. Within today's modern safari, we have the privilege to experience the wild, cloaked in extreme luxury and be profoundly moved by it. And

there's a feeling of peace knowing that your presence helps preserve that way of life and the landscape as we depart." With decades of knowing how to create lifelong memories, they have already hosted and designed trips for many of the world's most discerning and experienced travellers who will attest that Banovich Wildscapes Travel knows how to unlock the magic and create the perfect bespoke journey, while guaranteeing no two trips are the same. After all, when you consider their years in the field, they've been doing it for love, for art, for safari, for conservation... for decades. Let your trip of a lifetime be what they do best.

For more information, visit online:  
[johnbanovich.com/travel](http://johnbanovich.com/travel)

*"Having the opportunity to see the land and wildlife with my family by someone so passionate was a once-in-a-lifetime experience that I plan on doing every year. I wouldn't have wanted to be shown Africa by anyone besides John."* – MIKE MELDMAN, FOUNDER AND CEO, DISCOVERY LAND COMPANY



BANOVICH WILDSCAPES TRAVEL

## THE SINGITA KWITONDA LODGE

By Robyn-Lee Guau



**A QUARTER-CENTURY AGO**, Rwanda was in the grips of an horrific genocide that brutally snatched the lives of nearly one million people, leaving the nation utterly devastated. While the world stood by aghast, the Rwandan Patriotic Front one of the finest military campaign victories in modern

warfare putting a cease to the atrocities and its Commander, Paul Kagame, began to rebuild his country.

From Rwanda in ruins mourning incomprehensible loss, Kagame today is the proud president of Africa's shining beacon of light. His motto, "never forget," is best exemplified in Kigali's Genocide Memorial – a staple in every Banovich & Homann's guest's itinerary, for its profound and moving poignancy. Rather than reliving one of humanity's darkest moments, it harnesses the positive power of learning its lessons; "never forget" ensures "never again."

John Banovich was drawn to Rwanda for many reasons. Not only is it an unprecedented African success story whose people embody strength, resilience and forgiveness, but it is a land of astonishing natural beauty, rich with artistic inspiration. He felt compelled to be part of its story supporting for years the Ubumwe Center. In part owing to



the 1994 genocide, Rwanda has a disproportionate number of physically and mentally disabled people. Most have no option but to live as street beggars. The Ubumwe Center is a place where adults with disabilities and their children are given an alternative; where they can be educated, work and ultimately take control of their own lives. About another Rwanda based project Banovich Wildscapes supports, Banovich states, "My friend Jack Hanna had introduced me to the great work that Dr. Mike Cranfield and his staff are doing at the Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project-Gorilla Doctors and having visited their facility in Rwanda, I saw first-hand that their work is absolutely essential for the long-term survival of the mountain gorillas."





Most recently, through his friends the Behring family, found another important cause that sorely needed support. At least 100 million people worldwide need a wheelchair that they cannot afford, and in Rwanda alone that number is 17,000. So, Banovich's Wildscapes Foundation partnered with the Behrings' Wheelchair Foundation to donate "hope, mobility, freedom, dignity and independence" in the form of 240 wheelchairs to patients at HVP Gatagara, an orthopaedic and rehabilitation hospital.

This rewarding experience bound him even more closely to a country he had already fallen in love with. For John, philanthropic endeavours lead naturally to a desire to share the places and people that move him – and it is a happy corollary that promoting travel to Rwanda significantly boosts its economy.

Beguilingly beckoning, an invitation to Rwanda is not one to turn down. A recent blossoming of high-end properties befitting B&H's calibre of client have opened up enticing possibilities. Wilderness Safaris' Magashi Camp has just

opened in Akagera National Park and with the camp's tasteful elegance offsetting the stunning Serengeti-style savannah landscape, Rwanda's aim to revive the park should be achieved in no time.

Then there's One&Only's Nyungwe House steeped in the irresistible romance of a colonial tea plantation, and perfectly appointed for chimpanzee trekking to boot. Of course, it would be remiss to speak of Rwanda without mentioning its magical drawcard: life-changing encounters with primates. Among the rarest animals on earth, this tiny country protects half of the world's 950 remaining mountain gorillas, of which none are found anywhere in captivity, only in the Virunga mountains straddling Rwanda, Uganda and DRC.

One of John's most spectacular masterpieces is his newly completed portrayal of the Kwitonda gorilla family. "I have set out to create a dramatic work that transports the viewer to the moment when you are nearly surrounded by gorillas, a moment when your heart skips a beat with excitement and you are completely absorbed in the moment." The Kwitonda

group is a highly successful family lead by three massive silver backs named, Karevuro, Kigoma and Lisanga.

They play on a forested slope in the shadow of a giant volcano standing guard over Singita's new Kwitonda Lodge, which sits on 178 acres bordering Volcanoes National Park. Picture lush forest and rolling mist from the elegant comfort of the lounge; warm colours, dark wood and leather conspire to exquisite effect. John's piece hangs in the dining room and is framed to give the illusion of a window onto the Kwitonda clan – and indeed, there is no better place from which to experience these magnificent creatures.

The richness of Rwanda is multifaceted, and one cannot help but be inspired to celebrate its positivity, its progress, the authentic warm welcome of its people, the wealth of precious natural assets nestled in its endless hills... B&H have spent countless happy hours designing custom adventures that incorporate all it has to offer; there is quite simply no way to return from Rwanda unchanged, and these are just the safari savants to make that happen for you.







*You give back...when you collect Banovich artwork.  
Ensure sustainable wildlife and wild lands for future generations.*



**JOIN US IN CONSERVATION**  
Support the Banovich Wildscapes Foundation:  
888.486.3160 • [info@wildscapesfoundation.org](mailto:info@wildscapesfoundation.org)  
[www.wildscapesfoundation.org](http://www.wildscapesfoundation.org)



*“I started the Banovich Wildscapes Foundation as a way to give something back to the world that has given so much to me. The name WILDSCAPES refers to large abundant landscapes...wild, balanced and intact ecosystems. There is nothing more important to future generations than wildlife and wild lands. Special places that lift our minds, replenish our spirits and renew our passion for living.”*

— JOHN BANOVICH

**FOUNDED IN 2007 BY JOHN BANOVICH,** Banovich Wildscapes Foundation is the culmination of tireless conservation efforts over the past two decades. Through his career as an artist, Banovich has inspired a deeper understanding of the world and its wildlife, encouraging successful conservation efforts and awareness of endangered species and their habitats. Traveling across the world seeking inspiration for his work, John has utilized these opportunities to research wildlife and to learn about associated conservation challenges at the local, regional, and national levels in the United States, throughout Africa, including Rwanda, Namibia, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Kenya, as well as India, Indonesia and Russia.

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

**COMMUNITY:** Creating a viable source of income for rural communities and offering additional choices to their agriculture, livestock or worse, bush meat poaching. We continue to donate shoes, art supplies, books and medical supplies and equipment to assist in the enrichment of the programs and to bring clean water in countries like Rwanda and Kenya. This past year we contributed to build bomas in an effort to mitigate the human/wildlife conflict that continues to rage in Kenya and Tanzania.

**BIG CATS:** Critical to the survival of big cats, is the gathering of important scientific information and data to understand the influencing trends on their populations. The purchase of GPS collars and other research has led to a better understanding of the East African cheetah population as well as lion populations in the Manyara region of Tanzania including the Ngorongoro Crater, Lake Manyara and Tarangire National Parks as well as the human and livestock dominated landscape of the Laikipia ecosystem. We continue to seek ways to incentivize local communities to co-exist with predators and other wildlife.

**RHINOS:** Baby rhinos that are orphaned in the wild rarely survive. Our goal is to rescue, heal and to provide a totally secure environment where they can grow, roam free, and breed to ensure that there will always be rhinos in Africa.

**PRIMATES:** For years we have focused on hands-on medical care for the critical species of sick and injured mountain gorillas residing in the National Parks of Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. This past year we underscored our mission of supporting the communities with the restoration of the maternity clinic in the Congo.

**NORTH AMERICA:** BWF has long supported ecological research on grizzly bears in Yellowstone Park, genetic research on grizzly bears in Alaska, conventional and satellite radio-telemetry of wildlife, and the use of remote sensing to map vegetation and wildlife habitat. This research has led to guiding conservation policy and management, developing wildlife habitat suitability and connectivity models, and completing large-scale conservation area designs for regions in the United States, Canada, and Tibet.





AWARD FOR CONSERVATION EXCELLENCE



Banovich Wildscapes Foundation presented the first Award for Conservation Excellence (ACE) with its presenting partner and host the Southeastern Wildlife Exposition (SEWE). The Award, sponsored by Cabela's Outdoor Fund, Cabela Family Foundation and Bass Pro Shops was created to recognize the exceptional contributions made by some of the world's leading conservationists and is intended to become the most significant award in the conservation arena. The mission of ACE is to honor and appreciate a legacy of conservation through recognition of men and women who share their passion to conserve the great outdoors, and have made extraordinary contributions to the sustainability of nature and wildlife.



*The Banovich Wildscapes Foundation is a nonprofit (501c3) organization fostering cooperative efforts to conserve the earth's wildlife and wild places benefiting the wildlife and the people that live there.*



**WILDSCAPES FOUNDATION 2019  
WHEELCHAIR DISTRIBUTION IN PARTNERSHIP  
WITH BEHRING GLOBAL EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION  
& WHEELCHAIR FOUNDATION**

At least 100 million people worldwide need a wheelchair that they cannot afford, and in Rwanda alone that number is 17,000. The Banovich Wildscapes Foundation partnered with the Behring Global Educational Foundation & the Wheelchair Foundation to donate 'hope, mobility, freedom, dignity and independence' in the form of 240 wheelchairs to patients at HVP Gatagara, an orthopedic and rehabilitation hospital. We also distributed 230 wheelchairs to those in need in Tanzania, including 10 specialized pediatric wheelchairs for children with severe neuromotor disorders.



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Singita Kwitonda Lodge, Rwanda