

ARTIST STATEMENT

People often ask me why I am so adamant about the need to protect other species- why I don't "care" about starving people and abused children instead. I am always surprised by the fallacy in that assumption. Of course I care. I view it as an attempt on their part to discredit what they perceive as "minor" issues. That in itself strikes me as part of the problem; that issues are relegated to being "major" when they concern man and less important when they concern fellow species. For me, there are no "minor" issues because every issue concerns man. I believe it is all interlinked, here's why. If you disagree or find gaps in my thought-process, please comment! I am still percolating...

PRACTICAL: Killing off a species hurts biodiversity. Every species has a function in the eco system. It might be an unobtrusive dung beetle restoring soil in Oklahoma (do not use insecticides/parasiticides that poison them!) or a keystone species such as elephants re-shaping a landscape in the bush. When we mess with the balance (which even scientists and "specialist" cannot fully agree on) we are destroying our future possibilities to rely on the land. And at the end of the day, no matter how sophisticated we like to think we are, we still rely on the land. Diminishing biodiversity is contrary to our own interests of survival. Perhaps the link between a lion bred in a cage to be shot seems far-removed from your next supper consider that the lion is a keystone species. If lions were to disappear, populations of the species they prey on would increase leading to excessive competition for food between the prey species, and also between these prey species and livestock. (Livestock being your supper.)

By disrupting breeding populations, food chains, displacement through habitat fragmentation, we deplete mutual resources. For those who think they can just move to the moon when there's not enough to go round here, well, they will still be relying on the land- over there. Land, water and air is everything. Everything. So when it comes to hunger and poverty, we revert back to land management issues (often highly politicized). When we look at droughts, we revisit environmental conditions. When we look at lack of food for hunting or gathering, we find habitat fragmentation lurking in the shadows. The detrimental effects of mono cropping introduced by colonialists have shown up years later and been documented in studies. I visited Chiquita in Costa Rica. You do not hear the chirping of birds there as you do in small-scale farm lands...you hear the endless droning of machines churning. Some incorporate tokenist corridors and biodiversity site-points to offset the damage. I say tokenist because I am skeptical that one can find the correct "scale" and gauge how large a biodiversity area needs to be to offset the future damage over say 20 years of soil erosion over another land mass. It also seems hard to gauge the needs of effective points for migratory species- birds which help seed dispersal for fruits and habitats and animals for sustainable hunters. As for the effect on humans the work is exhausting and monotonous. It would be better and more natural for workers to be farming and in motion the way we were "built" than stationed in front of machines for endless hours. I'm convinced the eco system can take generations to recover. I am convinced that the disappearance of both specialized and generalized species will make this near impossible. I believe there is no "minor" issue when it comes to saving an animal that serves a function in our ecosystem. That means

less food to go around somewhere down the line. We may not know enough to fully comprehend these interlinkages. Add the economic angle to the equation and we get to my next point.

ETHICAL: The earth is not here to be dominated by us. Domination is again a colonialist mind-set. Domination is a violent mindset. It leads to brutality whether depleting natural resources needed by others, trophy hunting to kill for "sport", battering women, abusing children etc. As an aside, hunting for "sport" is a Western concept-again introduced by the colonialists and again, based on domination.

ESTHETICS/SPIRITUAL: We are animals at the end of the day. Our intuition and instinct still drives us. Sadly, we often lead very detuned lives, out of touch with these instincts, higher energy, universality or what many might term religion. If one is fortunate enough to feel the heartbeat of the Earth, the pulse of the ecosystems symmetry, the whispers of ancestry and the infinity of possible greatness, then there is no need for baser behaviors like domination, brutality, and cruelty.

So when I am asking people to care about a lion being bred to be shot in a cage by a trophy hunter, or about the Amazon dolphins, or about Rhinos and Elephants killed for the illegal wildlife cartel, I feel it I am asking for help with preserving, respecting, and nurturing a world of resources which will either feed or starve tomorrow's children, encourage or punish brutality whether against a woman, political prisoner, trafficked child, or a dog battered to death for a restaurant in Vietnam.

We may be limited to looking at a single-issue politics just to have a starting point however, these starting points all end up at the center of the same web. The scope of each species battle extends to whether or not we endorse an unbalanced ecosystem that can not provide for people, and that is founded on a mind-set of domination as opposed to symbiosis. That is politics aside. Add the possibility that corporations and governments come around to endorse the good fight and it will be immaterial- if the damage has been done.