

Great Ape TRUST OF IOWA

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Paintings sell briskly in Great Ape Trust's *Apes Helping Apes* exhibit; a few remain *See paintings by bonobos and orangutans this weekend only at West Des Moines gallery, or bid on a Panbanisha original at eBay.com*

Des Moines, Iowa – November 25, 2008 – Only 10 paintings remain in Great Ape Trust of Iowa's *Apes Helping Apes* art exhibit and conservation fund-raiser, and aficionados of original art works by The Trust's resident bonobo and orangutan residents have only a few days left to make their purchases.

The *Apes Helping Apes* exhibit at The Avenue Gallery will be open to the public from 5 to 8 p.m. Friday, Nov. 28, and 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 29. The Avenue Gallery is located in Suite 110 on the Avenue of the Arts, an interior street in West Glen Town Center, 5525 Mills Civic Parkway, West Des Moines. One of the 10 paintings, an original by the bonobo Panbanisha, is available exclusively at eBay.com, an online auction house. Bidding ends at noon on Thanksgiving Day. To place a bid, click [here](#).

Group tours of the exhibit are available by appointment by contacting Jodi Runge, operations coordinator at West Glen, at jodi.runge@westglentowncenter.com or (515) 223-7885.

Aficionados of the ape-created art works quickly bought 10 paintings, including seven that sold the first weekend of the exhibit. Money raised from the sale of

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orangutans' and bonobos' art works will support The Trust's conservation initiatives for endangered great apes in the wild.

Last year, \$16,725 was raised from the sale of the apes' paintings. The money supported Great Ape Trust's two major conservation initiatives, the Gishwati Area Conservation Program in Rwanda and the Ketambe Research Center on the Indonesian island of Sumatra.

"I encourage everyone who enjoyed last year's exhibit to come and see this year's paintings and to celebrate with us the lives of these very special artists," said Peter Clay, a senior orangutan caretaker who oversees the art project. "The urgency is ever-greater to protect the Earth's last remaining wild places, where our closest living relatives are striving to survive. Purchasing one of these unique and beautiful paintings will help them to do so."

Orangutans and bonobos are given the choice of whether they want to paint as an enrichment activity. Offering captive apes a variety of enrichment activities, including those that challenge their cognitive abilities, like painting, is an important ape welfare issue. Enrichment is not viewed as a separate activity for Great Ape Trust's orangutans and bonobos, but rather a philosophy of daily management and research.

"The apes' daily lives are enriched immeasurably by these creative opportunities," Clay said. "Choosing canvases and colors, and choosing to make small, careful marks or big dramatic ones, these are all within their control. The Trust's commitment to providing the highest possible care, including offering both variety and choice in every dimension of their lives, is beautifully exemplified by *Apes Helping Apes*."

Clay said a spontaneous example of the apes' enjoyment of art was discovered in the orangutan home one day when caretakers noticed a striking mural had been created on the upper wall with a non-toxic marker. "So, you see, they do really find the experience of painting both engaging and fulfilling, even sometimes in very private moments," he said.

Clay said the 2008 exhibit includes a provocative and compelling group of paintings, some done in collaboration with acclaimed artist Sue Buck, who enjoys a special relationship with Great Ape Trust and its resident primates. Buck, an artist from Guys Mill, Pa. and an art professor at Allegheny College in Meadville, Pa., just finished

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large pastel chalk drawings of the bonobo Nyota and orangutan Allie, the latest two in a series commissioned by Great Ape Trust.

The Buck collection also includes pastels of bonobos Kanzi and Panbanisha, orangutans Azy and Knobi, and Indah and P-Suke, an orangutan and bonobo, respectively, who once were part of the Great Ape Trust population and are now deceased. Buck's original pastels will be on display throughout the exhibit. Signed, numbered prints of the pastels of Kanzi, Panbanisha, Azy and Knobi will be available for purchase. Merchandise from Great Ape Trust's online store, www.GreatApeStore.org, also may be purchased throughout the exhibit.

When Buck visited Great Ape Trust in April, her work with Knobi and Panbanisha represented her first-ever collaborations with animals, though she has made art cooperatively with humans on occasion. She noticed parallels between human and ape artists that were subtle during her collaborations with Knobi, but distinctly pronounced in her sessions with Panbanisha, the more experienced artist of the two.

"Panbanisha is very tactile with the brush, and she knows what she is doing" Buck said, explaining that the bonobo indicated to researcher Liz Rubert-Pugh when she wanted a different color or brush. "She is clearly making those decisions. You could see her going into that mode, forgetting [observers] were there and just getting lost in the motion. I knew what that felt like."

In her collaboration with the orangutan Knobi, Buck drew a likeness of the red ape on a canvas. When it was Knobi's turn to paint, she chose a matching hue and surrounded her portrait with a purple circle. More sessions followed, and art-making held Knobi's rapt attention for several hours, the orangutan missing barely a brush stroke.

"What's amazing is that I watched her very carefully, because you have to in order to paint anyone or anything," Buck said. "She knew I was watching her, and she was being unbelievably patient about being watched that closely."

"I think that confirmed what I know about these animals, and about myself: They have the curiosity and the intelligence and the willingness to see what happens."

As an artist, Buck said she identified closely with her nonhuman primate collaborators. "Non-artists might not recognize the parallel, but for most artists, it's about

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materials, the physical movement, the sounds,” Buck said. “When I’m painting, you hear that scrubbing sound. It’s a very physical and sensual experience; sensual as in the senses in terms of smelling it, hearing it, feeling it.

“For artists, it’s about the mark. Every mark indicates where my hand has been, where my arm has been. We can tell how fast or how slowly the artist worked. So it’s a little record of someone’s presence, where they were. It’s a history – a mark of that – so in that respect, I think that anyone’s artwork is the same.”

GREAT APE TRUST BACKGROUND

Great Ape Trust of Iowa is a scientific research facility in southeast Des Moines dedicated to understanding the origins and future of culture, language, tools and intelligence. When completed, Great Ape Trust will be the largest great ape facility in North America and one of the first worldwide to include all four types of great ape – bonobos, chimpanzees, gorillas and orangutans – for noninvasive interdisciplinary studies of their cognitive and communicative capabilities.

Great Ape Trust is dedicated to providing sanctuary and an honorable life for great apes, studying the intelligence of great apes, advancing conservation of great apes and providing unique educational experiences about great apes. Great Ape Trust of Iowa is a 501(c) 3 not-for-profit organization and is certified by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). To learn more about Great Ape Trust of Iowa, go to www.GreatApeTrust.org.

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Insights Through Collaborations with Apes