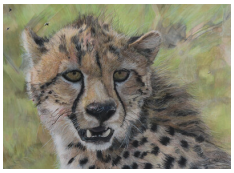
Sketch for Survival Wildlife Artist of the Year 2020 Short-List Announced

Friday 4 September, 2020

Media:















From an intricate geometric Tiger-Tail Sea Horse, one the most heavily extracted seahorse species in the world, to a beautiful oil painting of a critically endangered Orangutan, this year's short-listed artists in the Sketch for Survival Introducing Wildlife category have just been revealed.

All 100 finalists have something in common: they have all depicted species vulnerable to extinction.

Sketch for Survival Introducing is an annual competition, open to all, organised by charity Explorers Against Extinction. The aim is to raise awareness about a range of conservation issues while showcasing up and coming artistic talent.

The 2020 competition attracted a record 600+ entries from around the world, with the youngest contributor just six years old.

An expert panel led by Gary Hodges, the UKs best-selling wildlife pencil artist were tasked with narrowing down the 600+ artworks to just 100 finalists for a special fund-raising exhibition celebrating the beauty and colour of the natural world whilst also highlighting the threats posed by human activity.

A short-list of twelve artworks, announced Friday 4 September, gives one artist the chance to scoop the coveted **Sketch for Survival Introducing Wildlife Artist of the Year** award.

Among the twelve short-listed artists is Renay Shaffer, a Canadian artist living in the USA. Shaffer is one of 18 international artists selected within the top 100.

Other successful international contributors come from Iran, China, South Korea, Australia, Turkey, Germany, France, Sri Lanka and the UAE.

Shaffer's Atlantic Puffin attracted high praise from the judges who described it as "a beautifully drawn and composed artwork."

Shaffer said: "Listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List, Atlantic Puffins are one of the quirkiest looking birds, and I love their habit of scooping as many fish at one time as they can into their beaks. This particular fellow was spotted on the Farne Islands. "

Shaffer's puffin is one of three birds selected in the short-list of 12 alongside Stephanie Clarke's Philippine Eagle and Laura Martin's White-backed Vulture.

Clarke, from Brighton, entered the competition to "provide support in the preservation of all vulnerable species" while Martin from York said: "Vultures are the undervalued binmen of their ecosystems. They are also in serious decline, so I wanted to highlight this beautiful species."

Bianka Hudson is a self-taught artist from Hungary, now living and working in the UK. Her dramatic tiger was described by the selection panel as: ""Moody and dark." They commended her "good use of white pencils on black paper."

Equally dramatic is Christian Azolan's Tiger-Tail Seahorse, a polygon digital illustration which took over 25 hours to create. Azolan, a London-based digital illustration artist said: "My inspiration comes from people and nature. I believe that we should all be looking more closely at our surroundings and appreciating nature's beauty."

This sentiment is echoed by Love Grosmane, also short-listed, whose delicate Crowned Lemur was commended by the judges for its "sparkling eyes."

A wide variety of species and styles are represented in the collection. Both Emma Swift and Lee McManus from the south-west selected to capture critically endangered orangutans in their artworks. McManus, a pyrography artist, burnt his orangutan onto ash wood while Swift's orangutan is painted in a loose style, in oil.

Rebecca Cresswell wanted to draw attention to lesser-known species. Her mixed-media piece celebrates

“rainforest creatures”. She said of her Blue Python, Australian Tree Frog and Turquoise Dwarf Gecko: “Through deforestation, climate change and fire, these creatures are critically endangered. I adore the detail, iridescence and intriguing quality.”

Some artists were inspired by personal encounters. Jess Ridley, a singer from Hampshire, was inspired by a trip to Africa.

“To see so many incredible species in their natural habitat was one of my greatest life experiences. Since then I’ve been creating pieces as a way of celebrating their unique and wonderful characteristics.” said Ridley.

Her lovable giraffe was described by the selection panel as “Lively, cute and bold.”

Tamsin Steel's study of hippos has a "great sense of the African light." Steel, a former veterinary nurse lived in Africa as a child and worked from a photo taken on the Chobe River in Botswana. Hippos are classed as Vulnerable by the IUCN Red List.

Other contributors have found art a form of therapy, especially during lockdown. Loretta Battersby from Essex, whose cheetah is also short-listed said: “I’m an amateur artist and I draw for relaxation and as a hobby after spinal surgery.”

Also being exhibited alongside the Introducing collection, and available to purchase at auction in aid of the charity's projects, will be artworks by leading international artists and celebrity supporters including Joanna Lumley, Dame Judi Dench, Stephen Fry, Sir Ranulph Fiennes and Levison Wood.

Both Fiennes and Wood are patrons of the charity. Wood said: “Explorers Against Extinction combines all my passions for travel, conservation, art and photography. I’m delighted to support the charity’s efforts to safeguard endangered species and their environments.”

Wood’s sketch is being kept under wraps until the gallery@oxo exhibition opens, but in the past he has focused on African species including lion and elephant.

Artworks from both collections will be available via online auction concluding 22 November with funds raised going to support frontline conservation projects across the globe. Last year the collections sold for over £50,000.

Trustee Sara White said: “With the collapse of eco-tourism following the global pandemic, many iconic species and wild spaces are facing an increased threat and a shortfall in funding to protect them. This exhibition is more important than ever by helping to raise both awareness and vital funds.

"For lovers of wildlife, the exhibition is an absolute must-see and a great place to pick up a meaningful Christmas present."

The work of all 100 Sketch for Survival Introducing finalists can be viewed online at the charity’s website.

The exhibition at gallery@oxo, Oxo Tower Wharf, London runs 11 November – 22 November 2020 with the fund-raising auction concluding Sunday 22 November.

Further details at **explorersagainstextinction.co.uk**











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