

The Power of Art - Helping a blind woman "see" art she loves.

Wednesday 25 October, 2017

An art-loving woman with restricted sight was overjoyed to use touch to finally 'see' a painting by a **Saatchi**-shortlisted Dorset artist at a conservation charity's auction at the **Cutty Sark** in London.

Sandi Johnson, who had begun to lose her sight aged 12, no longer has central vision and her peripheral vision has also deteriorated. She told Artist Geoff Francis, who donated four pieces to the Sea Shepherd charity's auction at their 40th Anniversary Gala event, that she loved art but could not see it without an extremely strong magnifying device and then only rarely, since most art was behind glass.

Geoff invited Sandi to run her hands across the canvas of his sculptural painting **Hidden Deep**. The painting was created as an environmental statement about the dark deeds of humanity, hidden in the oceans, about which **Sea Shepherd** inspiringly and bravely raise awareness. Sandi tearfully exclaimed, "I have never experienced art like this."

Hidden Deep sold immediately at the auction. When the purchasers **Vanessa and Nick Warwick** learned of Sandi's experience, they decided they wanted to give the painting to her. Sandi was shocked and speechless as tears trickled down her face. Over an hour later, she was still shaking.

Nick Warwick later told Sandi, "The painting was, as I learned, always yours, only you could appreciate it by feel as much as we did by sight - it would be wrong to have kept it, as much as we liked it. It makes us so happy that you have it in pride and place and we will never forget that."

Sandi runs her hands over the contours of the painting every day. Her hands still shake with the experience. "I can't really put into words how overwhelmed I was by [Nick and Vanessa's] generous gift."

Artist Geoff Francis, who is also a co-founder of the environmental charity No More Dodos, says that everyone who hears this story feels moved. "This really shows how the power of art can reach everyone. I have never heard a better justification of thirty years of my work as an artist than in Sandi's words. This experience has inspired me to make my work even more accessible to those who necessarily rely on other senses and might sometimes be excluded from the transformations that art can bring."

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Contacts

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Sea Shepherd

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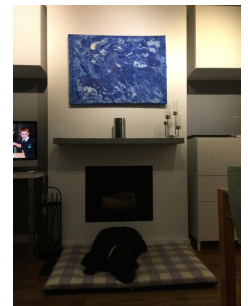
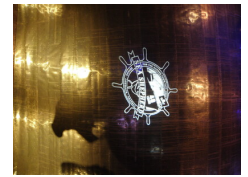
About Geoff Francis and No More Dodos

Geoff Francis is the co founder of the charity **No More Dodos** which, uniquely, uses Art and Sport to inspire us to help save the planet.

The pieces donated to **Sea Shepherd** were 2 posters signed by **Gordon Banks** for **No More Dodos**, a shortlisted photograph of Geoff's which had been shown in The **National Maritime museum** and an original sculptural painting '**Hidden Deep**.' Like much of Geoff's work, it was created using discarded and recycled paints in what he very much believes is his own unique sculptural style.

Geoff (along with his fellow **Animus** colleagues **Hilly Beavan** and **Anthony Lawrence**) has been a long

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term supporter of **Sea Shepherd**. In the early 80s, Geoff organised the first animal rights album '**Animal Tracks**' with **Country Joe McDonald**. **Animus** created a record label to release this album and the single 'Blood on the Ice'. All revenue went to **Sea Shepherd**.

About Sea Shepherd UK

Sea Shepherd UK is a registered marine conservation charity whose mission is to end the destruction of habitat and slaughter of wildlife around the UK's coastline and across the world's oceans in order to conserve and protect ecosystems and species.

Sea Shepherd UK uses innovative direct-action tactics to investigate, document and take action when necessary to expose and confront illegal activities committed against marine wildlife and habitats. By safeguarding the biodiversity of our delicately balanced oceanic ecosystems, **Sea Shepherd UK** works to ensure their survival for future generations.

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