

Great Ape TRUST OF IOWA

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Sale of paintings by Great Ape Trust's bonobos and orangutans raises \$13,960 for conservation

Several of the original art works are still available at GreatApeStore.org

Des Moines, Iowa – December 2, 2008 – From half a world away, a few artistic bonobos and orangutans living in Des Moines, Iowa, have raised nearly \$14,000 to support conservation efforts increasing the chances of survival for endangered great apes in Africa and Indonesia.

The \$13,960 in conservation funds came from the sale of original paintings by ape artists in Great Ape Trust of Iowa's *Apes Helping Apes* art exhibit, a conservation fundraiser that captured the attention of media organizations worldwide. The money will primarily support Great Ape Trust's two flagship conservation projects: the [Gishwati Area Conservation Program](#) in Rwanda and the [Ketambe Research Center](#) on the Indonesian island of Sumatra. The total includes \$1,300 raised from the sale of two paintings by Great Ape Trust orangutan residents at a fund-raiser in Denver last month, and the successful \$1,375 bid on a Panbanisha original sold on eBay.com, an online auction house. Bidding started at \$1,025 and closed on Thanksgiving Day.

The *Apes Helping Apes* exhibit ended Nov. 30, but ape art aficionados still have a chance to buy a half-dozen paintings through [GreatApeStore](#), Great Ape Trust of Iowa's online store. A 20 percent discount on all GreatApeStore merchandise through Dec. 19

NEWS RELEASE

may be applied to the purchase of ape paintings. To claim the discount, type HOLIDAY2008 (all capital letters, no space) in the box marked “coupon code” when placing your order. To ensure delivery by Christmas, orders must be placed by Dec. 19.

From coverage in *National Geographic Kids* magazine to United Kingdom-based *New Scientist* and *The Guardian* to coverage in *La Repubblica*, a major national daily newspaper in Italy, to a buzz across the blogosphere, the art created for *Apes Helping Apes* has been seen around the world. Of particular interest to the media was the decision by [Kanzi](#), the 28-year-old bonobo whose spontaneous lexigram utterances as an infant pushed the boundaries of ape language research, to [title](#) his four paintings: *Cheese*, *Pillow Picture*, *Riding in the Car to Get Cherries* and *Watermelon*.

Researchers think that Kanzi, one of four language-competent bonobos living at Great Ape Trust and the undisputed superstar of bonobo language research, uses art-making and titles his paintings as a way to communicate ideas too complex to convey in the limited vocabulary offered by lexigrams.

Coupled with \$22,020 in conservation aid raised last summer in Great Ape Trust's *Bowling for Apes* fund-raiser, the sale of paintings brings to nearly \$36,000 the amount central lowans have contributed this year to support Great Ape Trust's *in-situ* conservation programs. The money will primarily support 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.

Small amounts of money make a big difference in ape range countries, where all types of great ape are endangered, according to [Dr. Benjamin Beck](#), Great Ape Trust's director of conservation. For example:

- \$3 buys an energy-efficient stove for a family in Rwanda, where critically endangered mountain gorillas and endangered chimpanzees are found in the wild. This reduces the demand on wood from the rain forest and the time to collect it, thus improving villagers' quality of life.

- \$250 per month pays salary and benefits for a surrogate human mother for a baby ape orphaned by the bushmeat trade, habitat destruction and other natural and manmade threats to the survival of great apes.

- \$300 per month pays the rent on a building near the Gishwati Forest in Rwanda.

NEWS RELEASE

The building serves as an office for the director of the Gishwati Area Conservation Program and living quarters for scientists studying an isolated group of 13 chimpanzees in the Gishwati Forest. \$300 per month also pays salary, transportation and supplies for a forest eco-guard in protected areas in Africa where endangered great apes live.

- \$500 pays for global positioning satellite system (GPS) equipment, backpack, rain gear, boots, wristwatch, flashlight, compass and clipboard for a ranger working in protected areas.

- \$1,000 per month pays the salary of a college-educated research assistant responsible for collecting data on faunal and floral ecosystems in field sites where endangered great apes are protected and studied.

- \$25,000 per year pays the hardware, software and salary costs for a corridor planner for the Gishwati Area Conservation Program in Rwanda.

Painting is one of several enrichment activities offered to the bonobos and orangutans living at Great Ape Trust. 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," said Peter Clay, a senior orangutan caretaker who "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.

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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