

HEALTH | EDUCATION | WORLD | CHARITY

# PTW


PROJECT THIRD WORLD

FEATURE STORY

**ASHER JAY**

DESIGNER. ARTIST. WRITER. ACTIVIST





Amidst turkeys at the Stone Barns Center For Food and Agriculture, getting better acquainted with where our food comes from.

# Asher Jay

DESIGNER. *artist*. WRITER. *activist*.

Creative conservationist, Asher Jay, uses ground-breaking design, multimedia arts, literature, and lectures to inspire global action to combat illegal wildlife trafficking, advance environmental issues, and promote humanitarian causes. National Geographic heralds her as one of their 2014 emerging explorers for her combination of artistry and advancements in animal rights, sustainable development and humanitarian causes. Whilst her primary mission is to cease the illegal ivory trade, she has had a hand in a range of wildlife and environmental conservation projects, and recently she sat down with PTW magazine to tell us about how she does everything, and why it is so important to her.

APRIL 2015

As she explains, Asher's love of wildlife did not grow with age, but rather, was born into her.

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I am a creative conservationist. By that title, I use creative methods to conserve wilderness areas, which I think is one of the most pressing humanitarian concerns of our time.


I have focused primarily on conservation crimes, which tracks the why, what, where, when and how behind destructive, anthropocentric, consumptive practices. It examines the exploitation of wilderness or wildlife, by people, for myopic monetary gain. This is often done without comprehension of the long haul consequences that will arise from the severance of interdependent bonds between humanity and the wild. Human health is inextricably

dependent on ecosystem health, when the environment suffers, we suffer, it's as simple as that.

I grew up in various places, and one of the experiences I had when I was about three years old involved thinking that I was a 'bat' because I had fangs for incisors; something I wouldn't have had my orthodontist fix, had I known Twilight was going to be so huge. I grew up voraciously absorbing David Attenborough's books and films, amongst other documentaries on BBC, and I went through various phases of thinking I was different animals. As a toddler I thought I was a Tyrannosaur and I would stomp around the

house menacingly, ready to chomp my way through furniture; then I thought I was a bat, and finally a Chimp. It wasn't until my kindergarten teacher explained that I couldn't bond with my classmates by grooming them, that I realised I was human. I remember going back home and having a conversation about this with my mum. She said "it's up to you to make the distinction. You decide where you begin and where a chimp ends".

It was interesting for me to consider the world in that way and perceive wildlife as an implicit part of who I am. Other people may have chosen to deny the wild within, but I chose to foster it.



My mum always allowed me to bring animals back home including animals that were wounded or abandoned, so I had a hands-on personal experience with nature. It was important to have such a close connection at such an early age, because if such sensitivity is not cultivated in the formative years, you grow up compartmentalizing the world around you, even though you aren't separate from anything; so I felt very privileged to grow up conscious of the intricate fabric of life. My mum was against me riding horses without their consent, so I grew up having conversations with pets and asking them for permission to do things. We even had to buy presents at Christmas for all the animals, and why wouldn't we? They were our siblings after all.



APRIL 2015

*Whilst nature was second nature to her from a young age, Asher had to work hard to become the wild creative she is today, by constantly trying out new techniques, and persevering beyond the doubts cast by many.*

Since I was young, my mother put paintbrushes in the hands of my brother and myself because she herself was quite creatively inclined. My brother was better at art than me, but it's funny how society plays a role in 'beating' those attributes out of boys. By the time he got to school, he was playing soccer like every other boy in his class and he gave

up on his creative hand. With me, I hadn't inherited the ability to art in the way he had, but I learned to work around my limitations, and what can I say...practice makes for progress! Even when I was a science student, I enjoyed the illustration more than the experimentation. I would spend hours illustrating transverse sections of plants, rather than

focusing on the physiology with plants. This was the same for me in my fashion career, but when I started using surplus materials from reputed Seventh Avenue Fashion Houses to create garments that focused on social and ecological themes, my interest peaked because I could now use these skills to tackle a problem.



Take Pride © Asher Jay 2015  
Every species is intrinsically and effortlessly part of the fabric of the larger ecosystem. This work alludes to the lions integral role in managing the Savanna expanse.

tackle a problem. When I created artwork for my fashion exhibitions and fashion displays, I had people asking me for the

original artwork, and so I felt that the universe was asking me to go back to art. It was just a matter of saying yes and going forward

with it. I often get asked to do things that I don't have the skill-set for, but I just say yes and then learn the skill-set for it later on.

*Asher was brought up to be an outspoken, dynamic woman who stands for active change and positive impact. The values instilled into Asher at a young age have shaped her into a kind, forthcoming person who sees the moment at hand as priceless.*

My mum always encouraged me to step up and take action, and be part of every movement that mattered to me. She always said that "your life is as big as you make it, and the more responsibility you assume, the bigger your life will be." It wasn't long before it became apparent to me, the more I was willing to stand for and take on, the larger the social footprint of my life was." The other thing she told me, when I went on a youth tree-planting initiative, was:

"if you can't plant the second seedling with the same amount of energy and enthusiasm you harboured for the first, then you shouldn't be planting the second. It might not matter to you and it might be routine by then, but it matters to each seedling". I have carried the philosophy through everything I have done since. I started off in modelling, and then went into fashion design, but none of those things turned out to be my calling; and then cir-

cumstances led me back to a path in wildlife conservation, which is so central to who I am. In retrospect, it's easy to rationalize, and assign value to all the "stepping stones" but really, my life has come as a constant surprise to me. I just face each day with courage, and flow with the go, in a way you can say, I've surrendered to life, it has been around longer than me, and knows a whole lot more.

*"your life is as big as you make it,  
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more"*

Once Asher kindled her talents for art with her passion for conservation, becoming an active voice on the global stage turned inevitable.



It's easy to be a passive voice in a failing system, but if you don't own the problems then you will never take it upon yourself to come up with a solution. I decided to place a 'stake in the game' and own parts of myself that I had deemed external to me, and be the "someone" that everyone,

including me, hoped would address the various environmental issues in our world. The moment I activated myself, and took ownership of the problems I perceived, I felt compelled to be involved, which led me to Washington DC. My new trajectory proved the path of least resistance,

as I wound up meeting all the ocean luminaries within my first week there. I found people were willing to talk to me because I had done all my research and my passion was evident to them. I had never felt that level of commitment to participate in anything up until then.

*"a picture is worth 1000 words, but your artwork is worth 1000 pictures"*



Tiger territory has shrunk dramatically but still covers a lot of ground. That makes poaching very difficult to police—especially when its financial rewards are so high. One way the Global Tiger Initiative is tackling the issue is with attempts to reduce the demand in this multibillion-dollar trade.

Curbing demand means raising awareness among a target audience, as well as directed communications campaigns that may change the economic behavior of dead tiger consumers. Images like Jay's can help the effort.

"In this image is Zhongguo, or 'China' in Chinese. I wanted to emphasize the country's role in farming and poaching tigers, which has resulted in the direct decline of tiger populations in the wild. It helps for people to connect things visually for themselves, by invoking the epiphany within the viewer. I ensure that the message percolates. This work targets the Chinese consumer market; the campaign was originally conceived entirely in Chinese.

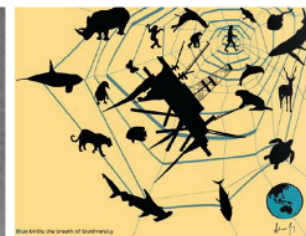
I hope to help bridge the gap between consumer choices, like drinking wine with a "tiger bone" label, and understanding the reality that the product being consumed is coming at the cost of living things. When you go into it with awareness, you can't ignore it, and you can't eat it with the same sort of relish knowing what you know. So I take it upon myself to get people better informed.

I returned to New York shortly after and I started to receive lots of requests to be part of some very prominent graphic design exhibitions. From then on, people started to hear about me and I became involved in various campaigns. Her Deepness, Sylvia Earle, truly put me on my path, when she said,

"A picture is worth a 1000 words but an artwork like yours is worth a 1000 pictures." I thought to myself that for the first time in my life, I finally had a voice and that people were finally listening intently to what I had to say about issues I knew our collective welfare hinged on. It dawned on me

that my work was bringing additional press attention to the issues, and that it had impact on social media where I was reaching a new generation, ultimately bridging the generation gap and addressing the issue of shifting baselines.

*I finally had a voice and that people were finally listening intently to what i had to say about issues i knew our collective welfare hinged on.*



Web of Death © Asher Jay 2015 created in response to the BP Oil Spill in 2010.

*Asher has not become the success she is, simply from her exhibitions. For Asher, it comes down to converting degrees of separation into connection with every life she encounters; making friends wherever she goes, and feels at home anywhere in the world.*

Whenever I travel to a new destination, I cannot help but feel responsible for the issues facing the landscape and its inhabitants. The issues invariably become my personal problems. I went with my mum for 2 months to Kenya and Tanzania back in 2010. She wanted to have a safari sojourn, but all I did was pick up garbage every day, report it to the local ranger post, and then write to the local wildlife wardens about tourist violations and hotel waste management. Since we were on an off-the-grid adventure, we didn't have access to technology there.

So I had to hand write letters, which were often six pages long, which I would then have to make multiple copies of for hotel managers and rangers. Within two weeks the hotels began calling ahead, to inform the next hotel I was planning to stay at that I was a handful, and I was

coming to inspect their sewage and waste disposal systems.

I brought a lot of the rubbish I collected in east Africa back to NYC with me, which made for a fun chat with TSA, but I convinced them, I was just bringing back that which we had outsourced to begin with, such as excessive packaging. I used the waste material to visually document the trash threatening the welfare of African Wildlife, which I showcased at the William Bennett Gallery in Soho, under the curation of New York City Ballet's prima Ballerina, Ashley Bouder. Even when I was in fashion, I was largely using surplus and waste material to make products that were one-off because I wanted to find a way to divert surplus from going into landfills. I've always been conscious and zealous of resource management.



*Asher's main concerns have been the ivory trade, but she embraces the broader banner of 'Wildlife trafficking' to address numerous other species that are commoditized.*

**I feel if you are open to new challenges, things will channel through you, and find fruition; you just need to remain available to the world. The area I most focus on, and am most affected by emotionally is wildlife trafficking, the most heinous conservation crime of our time; whether**

**that be for the aquarium trade or exotic pets. It's where you unplug an animal for its wild context and exploit it in the worst ways, whether that be skinning them, or hacking them up for bush meat, or brutally murdering them for their bone, tusk, pelt or tusks.**

Recently I took a shot in the dark and tried to address the Ivory Crush Design Challenge, which will determine how Fish and Wildlife Service use the 6 tonnes of Crushed Ivory currently in their custody, and now it has become my new crusade. I would never in have expected all these efforts from me, not in a million years, yet here I am doing the most I can, the best I know how. I learn daily, and I try to innovate every waking minute, so I can do one better.

In regards to the Ivory Crush Design Challenge, that neither maintains integrity to the wildlife in question, nor to the creative they are soliciting the idea from, I consistently maintain the need for international collaboration, not competition, in this regard. Even before we begin to discuss the challenge, I firmly believe that the crushed ivory should be cremated. Here's why -- First of all, elephants mourn their dead, and living members of a herd recognize the scent of the remains of poached relatives even 50 years later, from several feet away, when worn as a hand-me-down vintage bracelet by a woman

having supper in the Kenyan bush. Secondly, no matter how hard we try, we can never turn merciless murder into anything insightful or evocative; it is just far too entrenched in bloodshed to be deemed educational. Art can be subjective, but the death of 35,000-50,000 elephants each year cannot be taken subjectively. Most importantly, not incinerating it, and allowing the crushed material to be cast into a sculpture or work of any sort will only create yet another loophole for other countries to exploit. Instead of disclosing stockpiles, they can claim the entire stockpile was used to create a visual statement piece that allegedly educates and describes the horrors of the trade, all the while leaking shards back into the black market. It creates a disastrous new narrative trend for tusks worldwide. We cannot control how other countries and existing buyers will interpret "educational use of ivory," we can only control how we dispose of the remains. Why bother crushing the stockpile, if we are not going to destroy it completely, as they did in Hong Kong and the Philippines? There is no room for interpretation here, just action.

The blood Ivory trade is utterly barbaric. It slaughters highly sentient, social beings for their teeth, which are consequently intricately carved into elephants more often than not. Why not just keep the ivory on the live elephants instead? Can we not invest in life instead of investing in death?

Every time an animal looks at you, they establish an implicit level of trust, and up until the very last moment, they give you the chance to do one better, to step up as a custodian, but we often elect to betray their trust by savagely hunting or butchering them instead. We rob them of their right to live, and we allow for the loss of our own humanity, which further disengages us from the fabric of life. It is a preposterous downward spiral for us all.

I don't understand how people can live with themselves after committing these atrocious acts, especially for traditional Chinese medicine, something we can synthesize substitutes for in a lab, or for exotic pets to assert individuality (work on having a personality), which we can live without.

I feel the need to scale up, and make a bigger difference, perhaps start my own foun-

ation somehow, and do a whole host of new activities I have never done before, so I can appeal to my own pool of donors to fund activities that rise above politics and gargantuan individual egos. Who knows, maybe I'll end up being a TV show host instead, or doing a residency

somewhere. The truth is, I don't know where my life is heading. There are a lot of things I plan for, and then life happens anyway. After all, destiny and free will are two sides of a fractured mind, and both take you to the same destination.



Blood Ivory © Asher Jay 2015 licensed to Wild Aid and Save Our Elephants.

The campaign reads: "When the buying stops, the killing will too" and it ran in consumer magazines, as mass transport posters and on billboards.

*Many Animal Rights activists have been seen as black-and-white in their fight, but Asher address the issues with an air of diplomacy to facilitate inclusive dialogue.*

Many people who support wildlife conservation frame the issue as a "for humans" or "against humans" argument. It doesn't make sense, for it fractures reality into a state of a duality that doesn't actually exist. For me, it is more about unity.

If you keep making it a "me against them", you're never going to have people on board and you're never going to reach consensus on a way forward. It also comes from extending yourself into the world around and assimilating other life forms as a part of your being; to feel a deep and inherited empathy and compassion for something that might not look like you. In reality, it has to affect a human, either emotionally of physically, in order for the human to care. Not enough people

communicate the reality of how important wildlife is to us. The science is presented but people don't connect to it. More often than not, if the animal cannot be turned into a cuddle-toy then the species is a lost cause. There are many species that are essential to terrestrial and marine ecosystems that people don't care about because those creatures cannot be turned into a cute cuddle-toy, particularly true of phytoplankton, to which you owe one out of two breaths!



Helping install enclosures for acacia saplings, as a field assistant to an experimental field biologist.



A microscopic mite *Lorryia formosa*

*Asher has completed more at her age than most can do in their entire careers. Much of this is due to Asher's resilience, dedication and commitment to her life's work.*

I don't have a difference between work-life and personal-life. Not giving up and not quitting comes from being genuinely invested in what I do and what I am looking to accomplish as an end goal, all of which is bigger than who I am. Lending a voice to ensure a wild future for us all, is not something I choose, rather it is my calling. Every day, I hop out of bed each day, with a skip in my step, imbued with love...love for the privilege of living a life filled with passion, and love for all life on earth. It is intoxicating, to love without boundaries. People often compartmentalize, I let every aspect of my existence bleed into one another. Every day is a brand new canvas, waiting to be expressed through you, the brush. I work Mondays through to Sundays and work all day.

I look for ways in which I can make a composition immersive and engaging, such that it seeds a more tangible and visceral connection to what is unfolding in the world around them. Most people choose to embrace denial or ignorance because it is convenient to not hold yourself accountable to another, to the collective. I achieve success with a campaign every time I burst an insular bubble open, by de-

constructing the myriad walls people hide behind through cheeky, unexpected communication efforts, from my artwork to my recent venture into stand-up comedy. People begin to connect the dots in their own head, and develop a deeper, emotionally charged response to the very issues they were once jaded about. When people figure out the connections for themselves,

I almost see this animated light-bulb turn on in their head. It has to come from the individual. My father past away five years ago, and that taught me one incredibly valuable lesson - Life goes by in a glimpse, and you only have a short amount of time to do what you want to, rather need to do; so what you do with your time on earth is irreplaceable, which makes now utterly priceless. Once you lose now, it is lost forever. Yet the 'now' that you are living in can be so expansive. You could be sitting in a bar having a drink, or sitting at home brainstorming but the next big solution that the world hasn't seen or heard yet could come from you. You are such a unique decanter, and all the stimulus this world has to offer pours through you, airs out, and finds unique expression through you. So when you, as

an individual take responsibility for the issues plaguing your reality, my reality, our shared global reality, you expand your life to account for my existence, and every other living organism's existence.

Every day I can't help but think of the numbers, for they have gotten increasingly ridiculous. We are producing 275 Million Metric tons of plastic annually, that's 36.7 million adult bull Savannah elephants by weight. Out of which we dump anywhere between 640,000 to 1.7 Million adult bull elephants by weight, of plastic into the oceans. Those numbers are still impossible to fathom. Every time I go on a date, I think of the fact that we are losing an elephant every 15 minutes, so by the time I get to ordering dessert, I cannot help but wonder if the guy I'm out with is worth 6 elephants, and invariably he's not! I try to make people cognizant of wildlife trafficking issues in relation to their everyday routines. You have to make the statistics and hard data tangible to the public, by articulating it in layman's vocabulary. It's the only way any one will ever feel compelled to assume ownership of these concerns, much less feel empowered to resolve them.

*Whilst science is finding the reasons for conserving wildlife, Asher feels it is art that will rally action to the cause. Asher's love of science bleeds into her love of art, and equips her with the ability to be a powerful and unique storyteller.*

I find art democratizes information that the public seldom has access to. Academic knowledge, unless articulated in simple language becomes selectively available. Science, words, and stats are important, they are the building blocks of conservation, and they help us understand and relate to the world around us. However, visual imagery is the story, which allows for inter and intra-generational information transference.

Visual imagery is the oldest form of communication; it's democratic and universal. It has both advanced our collective interests and instilled us with fear and distrust. Like anything else, it is but a tool and how we use it

brands it with the kind of power it wields on its viewers. Ultimately everybody connects to a well told story, and a comprehensible, articulate picture offers a story in a glimpse. A truly remarkable image can contain multiple narratives within its composition, which can make it unbelievably influential. When people ask me what I do, I always say I create visual PR for the earth and all its inhabitants.

I frequently debate pursuing a PhD that will anchor me further in the sciences, because in truth I'm a huge nerd, a science groupie. However, further education would take time out of my schedule that I simply cannot carve out at present.

Have you ever walked the spiral at the Rose Center Hayden Planetarium, which plots deep time, from the big bang to the Anthropocene? It makes you feel humble and puts things into perspective. It is important for people to comprehend their life in relation to the bigger picture of life on earth.

It is a tremendous privilege to be able to tether our lives to such an intricate biological heritage, which is why we need to protect it. The wild is a part of who we are; to destroy it and deprive future generations of such bio-abundance would be a tragic loss and unforgivable of the current generation.



My friend from the Lion Project, Daniel Rosengren, got this picture of me trying to get a close up portrait of a Leopard Tortoise (one of the small five).

*Whilst Asher may have her focus on conservation, Asher is holistic in her approach to making the world a better place. Asher's approach to tackling conservation can be applied to any other global issue- simply by assuming responsibility for the issue.*

There isn't a single issue I don't feel a visceral reaction to. Every time the best interest of the collective is compromised by the selfish interests of a few, every time myopic, money driven agendas marginalizes a tribe of people, or a species, I perceive a problem. It starts taking for granted the intrinsic value of life, it begins to perpetuate the notion, that one thing doesn't have a right to live while another does. We start making these grand assumptions that are completely arrogant, ill informed, and exclusive. It is not the way life has worked thus far. The minute a pronounced bias eclipses our humanity, we are in choppy waters, if nothing else, we should grow more aware of when we enter choppy waters.

As a conservationist I work to raise awareness for issues I believe to be of catastrophic importance on a global scale. Conservation crimes, marine plastic pollution, loss of biodiversity, climate change etc... But I often come across people who are disempowered, who have resigned to

being victims of a failing system. They believe that many of the realities in our world are wholly beyond their control. Why fight for rhinos or elephants or lions today, they are all the way in Africa? You have never seen an elephant but managed to get on just fine, so why lend a voice to the voiceless? I'd argue compassion, and appeal to your humanity, but it's more than that. By shirking your responsibility, you are choosing to remove this reality and your role in perpetuating it from your awareness. You choose to disengage because you can get away with it, and you can get away with it because no one is holding you accountable, not even you. I have heard numerous friends say, "I'd rather focus on what I can do in my life — I can't control anything else."

You can't control it, but you can be conscious of it, and you can care. You can even care enough to acknowledge your contribution to the problem and choose to be an active participant in discovering a solution. In the 21st century, you just cannot hide from the fact that you are connected to everything that is happening in the global narrative, because you're biologically and evolutionarily connected to all living things and because your personal habits directly affect all living

things. Irrespective of your awareness of the impact you have, you have impact. You impact the world around you even in your sleep; with every breath you inhale and exhale.

Grow conscious of your life, start with your breath. As you familiarize yourself with your sphere of influence, you begin to discern how your consumption habits reshape the world you cohabit with every other living being. The micro-beads in your toothpaste and scrub, that tumbled down the drain with the day's dirt this morning, the medication you consumed and excreted, your disposable razor blade clicking off into the trash can, tampon applicators and beverage bottles. All of these plastics you use and shed in the name of daily convenience will eventually bio-accumulate in marine ecosystems everywhere from sardines to Blue Fin Tuna. And in a perfect example of karmic design or the boomerang effect, these plastics too end up back at your doorstep every time that delicious sushi is delivered in yet another plastic take out box.

Bon appetite.



*Every decision you make as a consumer in this globalized world economy results in the erosion and destruction of our home planet's finite resources. Make no mistake, while*

*we take the earth's bounty for granted, it is finite, and it will run out, and since our lives depend on it, it will result in our demise. Are we each intelligent enough to fight for a*

*healthy future? Can we choose to live a socially, and environmentally conscious life that will allow for a future that isn't deprived and divisive?*

*We can all opt for products that are tailored around the cradle-to-cradle paradigm, but people aren't willing to internalize the costs that have been externalized on the deluded premise that natural resources are infinite. This*

*is categorically untrue. The price of a product should include the impact it has on the local and global environment and health. Our food systems, our technology production, our jet setting vacations: all of these things*

*are affecting the energy and ecosystems around us, as well as across the world. You can choose to be blind to these truths, but you can't choose to be immune to them.*

Yes, it is easier to leave some of the harsh realities in our world shrouded by a veil of darkness, but that does not mean we escape the ramifications of our poorly thought out choices. What we do, comes back to affect us, within our lifespan, sometimes within a matter of months. Personal responsibility does not end with the impacts that are obvious, and a blind eye can't erase the damage we have thus far wreaked on our planet through our daily choices. Ultimately all the chain reactions of a badly designed paradigm result in the collapse of the paradigm itself, and since the paradigm is us, we will, as a culture and civilization, collapse under the weight of the problems we propagate. It comes down to your personal sphere of influence, and where you think your sphere

ends, which defines what your sphere encompasses and what it excludes. Your sphere ends where your ignorance begins. For me, that sphere of influence, or sphere of responsibility extends to the entire

world. I am not afraid to face my impact and I am not afraid to expand my sphere to let more life in. To be held accountable, as a guardian, is a privilege, hold yourself accountable.





*Asher's goals in life are far from simple, and far from being fulfilled; but with her attitude and work ethic, she stands a very good chance at making a big difference. She is doing the most she can and that is all that can be asked of her.*

We shape the external world to mirror our internal landscape, so I have realized, in order to truly effect change, I need to start with me. I do a lot of self-work, because I care for personal evolution.

Self-work, takes perseverance, as it is often painful and easier to avoid than address. If you are unkind to your 'self' then you will be unkind to others. So it is necessary to be introspective before we turn outwards to help another. Be

compassionate to your 'self,' reduce the conflict and violence within your own life, only then will you be able to extend that inner equilibrium to others. There are people who are being abused, enslaved and who have fallen victim to unfortunate circumstances beyond their control.

They are so trapped by despair, and so unavailable that they cannot, undo and deliver. Feel compassion and love for these people, and be a guiding light

to them, but more importantly empower them to find a voice and vote in the very system that has failed them.

If we continue to turn a blind eye to those in need, those who are suffering, we are going to see a significant decline in our own welfare, because we are not separate from the disenfranchised. We are all part of the same fabric of existence, on one revolving, rotating blue marble.

We will see the decline happen in phases, so we may not even realize that we are past tipping points, as we speed past them. The truth is, we have a choice. We don't have to inhabit a post-apocalyptic world, but business as usual will ensure a post-apocalyptic world as our only way forward. I'm not an advocate for a socialist paradigm, but we need to draw up a better economic model, one that does account for natural capital erosion.

The individual isn't held accountable as the end consumer, the company/brand isn't being held accountable, the government doesn't hold any one accountable and the people don't hold the government accountable. Everyone keeps passing the buck onto the next person and hoping that someone else will pick up the tab. I am sorry to have to inform you that the 'someone' everyone is speaking about is 'you.'

A lot of it has to do with the lack of: timely policy change, regulation and vigilant law enforcement, penalties, fines, levies, and military involvement where there is potential

of a failing state, and diplomatic international intervention when national security is being threatened.

A lot of what I'm working on at present, involves briefing senatorial staff on Capitol Hill and talking to empowered individuals in both the public and private sector, who feel connected to the problems I want to see addressed in the near future. I also empower the public, through awareness campaigns, because public pressure does result in government and corporate action.

Tackling it from both ends of the spectrum ensures that the needle on each concern moves forward by at least a hair. If consumers demanded that Coca-Cola change their packaging, then Coca-Cola will change their packaging. If governments put pressure on the people and the private sector to protect resources, and reduce packaging waste, natural resources will be managed better and protected for future generations and there will be less waste in our world.



Learning to listen for, find and identify lions that were being studied by the Lion Project in the Serengeti ecosystem.



## Pyrenean ibex

A beautiful species that has technically been extinct twice when scientists unsuccessfully cloned the ibex after its initial extinction in 2000

Jay's upcoming projects will tackle plastic pollution in the oceans and expose threats to Africa's remaining big cats. Tackling issue after issue, Jay's projects have become global sensations. Yet her ultimate goal is to motivate the one person she believes holds the real power to determine nature's fate. **You.**

*Asher is strongly opposed to the 'DeExtinction' movement. She does not see the sense in attempting to reinsert a species that has long been deprived of a holistic context to thrive, back into the matrix of life that has evolved to exist without said species as part of the equation.*

I take issue with nature becoming a subset of artifice, a disconcerting scenario where wild intelligence is eclipsed by human hubris. Ecosystems, worldwide, are already extensively curated by man and that has resulted in few positive outcomes if any. In trying to control life, we are only compromising our future. When you zoom out to see the larger picture, every human invention and intervention has resulted in unforeseen outcomes that have invariably been to the detriment of life on earth. This process of "regensis" which is not only expensive but in its highly volatile, inchoate stages has no credibility as a sustainable solution, its potential is solely in one's vivid imagination.

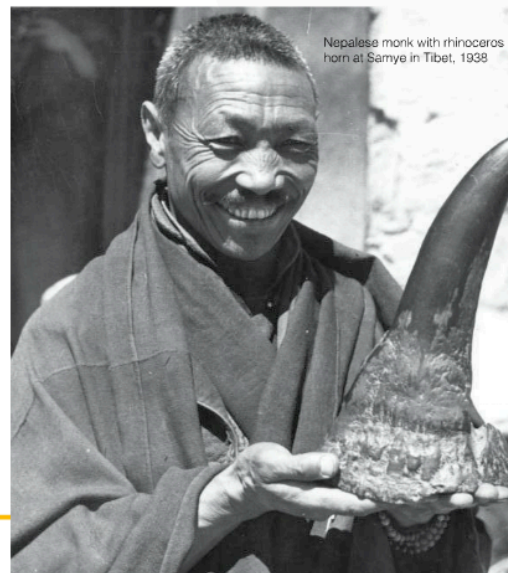
Would it not be wiser to acknowledge what damage we have done and attempt to conserve what remains? It is easier to hide away in science fiction than embrace our enormous failings as a species, because the latter would require humility, something we reject more than anonymity and poverty today. In a world devoid of the common sense and compassion it takes to preserve dwindling counts of mega fauna should we really attempt to revive those we have driven to eternal silence through an imperfect procedure that has only resulted in death so far? What value does such a technology place on "life"? What

of the lives lost during trial and error as science experiments? At present naturally conceived, sentient mammals that make for great cuddle toys, are not afforded the right to exist outside the spectrum of commercial exploitation, what duties of justice will the offspring of synthetic biology be granted?

We subscribe to economies of scale; we have yet to shed this avaricious mentality of endless 'take.' Today, a select few have access to this technology; they are idealistic and intend to harbor long discussions about ethical implementation strategies before they actually set the

ball in motion but over time this will be replicated by others and the competition will result in some using it for the right reasons and yet others for terribly wrong ones.

This will likely diminish the worth of life as demand levels the costs, which would render these living beings as mere replaceable commodities, seeding large scale factory farms for harvest or worse yet as lab rats for other purposes? Or a rise in big cat and rhino farms, so the end consumers can continue drinking Tiger Bone Wine, and powdering Rhino Horn for hangovers and cancer cures, in ignorance.



Packaged rhinoceros horns



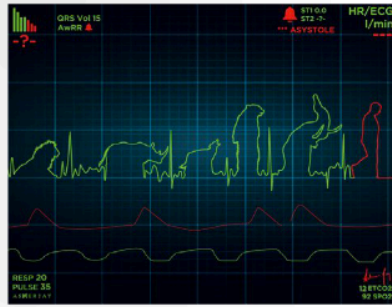
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Let's flip the coin for a minute, what if they did succeed at bringing back an animal? So they spend all this money to re-wild a species for which they believe a context still exists and once introduced into its habitat, it chokes on plastic litter, gets fried on power lines, consumes a poisoned pest or falls prey to a poacher's trap?

Or it lacks a vital skill it would have learned only from the time it was meant to live in, from its natural parents, social systems and environment, so it fails to survive anyway? Not to mention the fact they could serve as vectors for pathogens? How much are we willing to gamble to create something with no guarantees, when we haven't the intelligence to allocate resources to conserve what remains now?

The more sensible route would be to fix our broken system and address the underlying causes that have resulted in extinctions during the Anthropocene yes? I think they should use this money to buy up land, build infrastructure for impoverished communities to ameliorate human-animal conflict zones and protect habitat range. They could hire anti-poaching squadrons equip them with weapons, employ drones and trap cams, radio tag critically endangered animals and channel only surplus funds toward this recreational effort.



Asystole © Asher Jay 2015 alludes to the fact that all life is interdependent, i.e. when we destroy habitat, we destroy the biodiversity it sustains, which ultimately erodes into our (human) welfare. We either keep systems intact or we stand to lose everything.



We are rather frightening in our ability to linger in denial and expend significant assets towards hyped agendas that have no proven track record to take comfort in; we do this because we are too afraid to admit to our shortcomings and past failures. Instead of being introspective and encouraging spiritual evolution we constantly look to the external and try to realign the physical, which is always out of sync with the pulse of the planet.

The Earth has known about life and death since its humble beginnings, to assume we know more and can do one better spells nothing but arrogance in my book.



*Whilst there is a need for action, Asher understands that it is often hard for people to know which organisation to support or donate to. It is hard to know who to give money to, much less know where the money is most needed and how it is likely to be allocated.*

There should be a way to catalogue priority and maintain transparency, but in a world where every NGO is out there with begging bowls at the same time, sometimes for the same species, worse yet for the same end goal, it's hard for any one entity to bare it all for the world to see. If two non-profits working to protect elephants honestly shared how they each intended to address the issue with one another, then what prevents either from replicating the efforts of the other and going after the same donation channels? That will just dilute all the funds that would have otherwise

been funneled into one organization for one effort wouldn't it? Why don't the two coalesce and work together and raise funds together then? Umm because where there are people, there will be egos, a difference of opinion and the consequent inability for two factions to come together for a common end goal that is larger than all the individuals at play. Every cause, from human health to ecosystem management is a race to the finish line, where each organization/brand not only wants to win the dash but also be the sole hero of the day.

The chaos stems from our inability to provide a comprehensible, united front to the general public. Maybe wild-life conservationists care too much to be effective at saving any creature they campaign for? Self-appointment without a strong resume to back up an uncontested position

has resulted in one too many unqualified people with good intentions taking reign on issues they have no real understanding of, which has set us all back more than helped us all. I feel like there is lack of transparency and accountability that is holding us all back from really accomplishing any

one-end-goal that is actually sustainable and has long-term effects. It's almost like keeping a cause alive just to market the cause further. The cause becomes the thing that makes the money, so everyone who was trying to resolve the cause, is now keeping the cause alive.

*Asher's goals in life are far from simple, and far from being fulfilled; but with her attitude and work ethic, she stands a very good chance at making a big difference. She is doing the most she can and that is all that can be asked of her.*

I can only hope for the best. There is more talk about wilderness now than ever before, and the digital age makes it easier to mobilize the masses toward a common end goal. We know more than we have ever before, and we are more equipped to act with awareness than we have been in any other period in time. I am confident that we can shift our consciousness toward co-existence. In the end, the reason I do what I do is because I want to influence the one thing that will decide the fate of nature and the fate of humanity, YOU. If you don't get involved, there is no hope, there is no future to save.

If I could have people do one thing to help save Earth's incredible array of biodiversity, it would be this: take a step outside your home, your life, and yourself and spend five minutes observing and listening to any living being that isn't human. It can be a tree, an insect, a bird. Connect to it fully, allow yourself to be a bug, a bird, or a tree in that minute. If you can see a bug in you and you in that bug, you will do something different tomorrow that you haven't done thus far! ■

Asher Jay



Dividing in the "Silent Evolution" Sculpture Garden, at the underwater Museum in Mexico.