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London art event seeks to help Asian elephants

LONDON (Reuters Life!) - Londoners will wake up on the morning of the May bank holiday to find their city has been invaded by over 250 brightly colored elephants on parade.

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LIFESTYLE

A whole host of designers and artists including Lulu Guinness, Tommy Hilfiger and Jack Vettriano have hand painted life-sized baby elephant statues, which will appear on the night of May 3 at landmark London locations such as Parliament Square, Hyde Park and the South Bank.

The Elephant Family charity has planned London's biggest ever public art event to raise awareness of the plight of Asian elephants, which it says are more endangered than their African cousins.

The elephant statues, which each weigh about 70 kg (154 lb) and will be bolted down, will stay on the streets until the end of June before being sold in an auction arranged by Sotheby's.

Hilfiger has given his elephant a green mohican, Guinness's will be covered in trademark lipstick kisses and one will be covered with ethical emeralds, although that one will likely be in a more secure indoor location.

One of the fiercest bidding battles looks set to be for a sleek black elephant styled by artist Benjamin Shine to look like London's distinctive taxis, complete with solar-powered headlights as eyes and a light-up orange taxi sign on top.

Mark Shand, the principal trustee of Elephant Family, said he hoped the auction would double its target of raising 1 million pounds and also provide Britons with a distraction from the upcoming general election, expected to be held in May.

"We're hoping the parade will cheer everyone up when the election's on.

For more on the Elephant Parade and how to sponsor one, please go to www.elephantparadelondon.org/

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