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SOCIETY
Disillusioned with British Politics but Inspired by Elephants
 by Violet Naylor-Leyland May 5, 2010, 6:14 PM

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TOPICS

- Books (26)
- Business (185)
- Cocktails (130)
- Culture (982)
- Ex-Presidents Watch (32)
- Gossip Pack (392)
- Green Beat (107)
- Hollywood (287)
- In Memoriam (66)
- In the News (32)
- Media (311)
- Music (320)
- Off the Grid (304)
- Open Bar (66)
- Parties (121)
- Photography (50)
- Politics (916)
- Scandal (112)
- Society (544)
- Softball (26)
- Sports (250)
- Stick Shift (96)
- Straight Talk Espresso (50)
- Style (398)
- TV (74)
- The Internet (39)
- The Magazine (157)
- The New Establishment (156)
- The One Percent (77)
- The Royal Watch (209)
- Vanity Mirror (133)
- Video (139)
- War Watch (60)
- Writers Reading (38)



Mark Shand and Ruth Powys next to Jack Vettriano's elephant.

Sir Edwin Henry Landseer, sculptor of the Trafalgar Square lions, would've been quivering in his grave yesterday as baby elephants threatened to upstage his great kings of the London jungle.

The life-size model herd was led by **Mark Shand**, trustee of Elephant Family, a charity that helps safeguard Asian elephants and enables a more harmonious environment between man and creature.

The charity commissioned an impressive array of talent to produce 260 hand-painted elephant artworks that have now taken up residence all over London. Among the creators were artists **Mark Quinn**, **Jack Vettriano**, and **Sacha Jafri**; designers **Julien MacDonald**, **Diane von Furstenberg**, **John Rocha**, **Alice Temperley**, **Lulu Guinness**, **Nina Campbell**, and **Nicky Haslam**; and iconic photographer **Peter Beard**.

« PREVIOUS 1 of 5 NEXT »



Tanaz Dizadji.

Feats of creative genius included Vettriano's *Singing Butler*, a figure from Vettriano's recognizable paintings astride the elephant in a suit and bowler hat while hoisting an umbrella. Another was Quinn's keenly anticipated creation, which appeared to have a giant lotus—India's national flower—growing out of its back, the whole thing painted his trademark plaster white.

Artist and designer **Benjamin Shine's** *Taxi Elephant* was celebrated by passers-by, although there was mild disappointment at not being able to witness the brilliance of its solar powered eyes; we were in England, after all. But when the sun finally shone, the metallic splendor of one elephant was almost blinding, which became all the more startling when you realized, up close, it was covered in individual one-penny pieces.

One design certainly worth a few more pennies was by jeweler **Sabine Roemer**. Encrusted on her elephant's forehead was an enormous 700-carat emerald—ethically mined, of course, and hand-cut in Jaipur. "I decided I wanted to create the most valuable elephant on the parade. Well, it was for charity!" Roemer said as a schoolgirl came to pat her animal's priceless trunk.

Roemer certainly had the right attitude: her elephant and the others are to be auctioned off at Sotheby's and sold online in July, with the aim of raising \$3 million.

All in all, it was an inspiring day and, as Shand put it, "a bit of diversion" considering it was only two days before the national election—a fact on the minds of many, and not easily forgotten: at the front of the parade were three elephants painted in red, blue, and yellow boxing gear, representing party leaders **Gordon Brown**, **David Cameron**, and **Nick Clegg**. "I'm looking forward to painting on black eyes at each blow they receive in the election," Shand said. And what next? "We haven't decided yet. Perhaps we'll throw them into the Thames!" Presumably he's still referring to the

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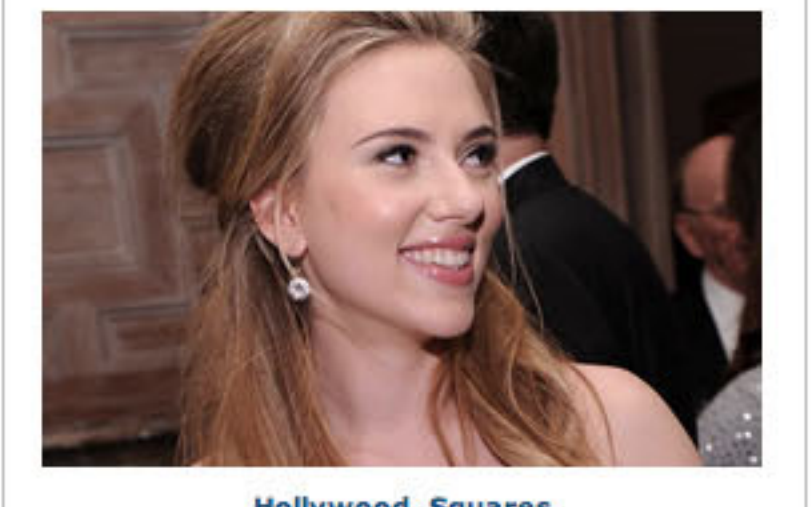
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Tiger Woods's Inconvenient Women, Part Two



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The World Cup's Stars Wear Their Flags—And Little Else

CONTRIBUTORS

- Christopher Bateman
- Brett Berk
- Bill Bradley
- Frank DiGiacomo
- Todd Eberle
- Bruce Feirstein
- Jessica Flint
- David Friend
- Adrienne Gaffney
- SunHee Grinnell
- Bruce Handy
- Marnie Hanel
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- Jim Windolf