

REALLY RHINOS!

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PLANETES

Rhinos, Art, and Collectors

by Peter G. Lynch

The Ice Age woolly rhino has been gone from Europe and Asia for around 10,000 years, but a relative - the Asian hairy rhino, or Sumatran rhino - survives today in Indonesia, Thailand, and Burma...barely.

In 1993, their population was estimated to be between 500 and 800 individuals. Most recently, their numbers have been estimated to be about 500 in total. Another rhino, the Javan, is hanging on in even smaller numbers - fewer than 100.

Today, we can say that there are five rhino species on Earth. Human exploitation of the environment - illegal logging, diminution and fragmentation of habitats by our encroachment, outright poaching of the rhinos themselves - make that statement one of an evanescent truth. The dramatic decline of all five rhino species suggests that tomorrow's school children may find all of them in biology textbooks, under the same adjectival category heading as the Ice Age woolly... Extinct.

Although both artists and collectors of contemporary art have been heard to complain, they are not threatened with extinction, but do they live in a degraded environment? Some

say, yes, terribly. Collectors comment that the typical commercial art gallery is a trend-follower; not a trend-setter, and that the trend never is to offer art characterized by aesthetic depth. One collector comments that if it wasn't for the low-level sentiment in which the art world is awash, galleries, even museums, would go the way of the woolly rhinoceros. Sounds like something I might say in a surly moment, but I didn't. Yes, I did do some paraphrasing, but "the feel" of the remark remains unchanged, and, accurate or not, it is supercilious. Whether that particular collector is a supercilious sort, or not, I don't know, but there are those who are, and there are those who live in another world. Of course, some spectators don't consider it to be another world, but rather simply a societal level on which all of life is imply a game. There, the fate of the rhino doesn't matter, and the quality of art is only seen in the mirror of price. A price which isn't at least a high five-figure number is a tag for art of no account - period.

It's a complicated, fast-changing world. Now, more than ever before, offering ideas; contributing to awareness and, somehow, to solutions to problems; bringing something to another's life; adding, not subtracting seems to me to be in the best interest of everybody - including art collectors, artists, and yes, surviving rhinos!

Ed. note: For buyers of art in general, environmentally focused buyers, artists and artist self-markets, and for the sentient art world professional, consider a subscription to **Contact News-'n'-ViewsLetter**. Send \$19 payable to Peter G. Lynch, 8419 Fifth Avenue, Suite Three, Brooklyn, NY 11209.

Noah's Ark is filling over so slowly. Three rare white rhinoceroses graze on part of There are also a family of tree-chomping giraffes, mini-herds of zebras and Asian wild horses, shaggy Bactrian or two-humped camels and an expanding menagerie of other endangered species from around the world. Interestingly, though, they are not grazing in some distant land: This is southeastern Ohio. The animals - about 70 in all, representing 14 species - are housed in fenced-off grasslands at the Wilds, a 9,154-acre reclaimed strip mine between Zanesville and Cambridge in Ohio's Muskingum County.

Breeding the animals remains the major focus of the nonprofit center, officially known as the International Center for the Preservation of Wild Animals. The unique, multimillion dollar effort is designed to help the animals reproduce and survive, with the goal of perhaps releasing