



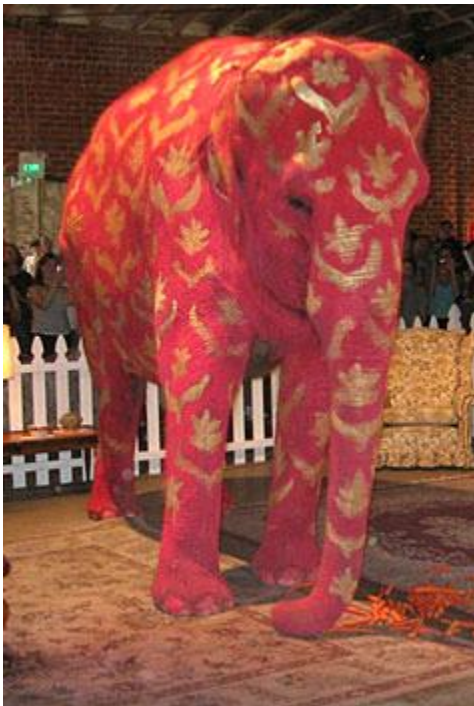
IN DEFENSE OF ANIMALS

The Truth About the AZA

The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) is an industry trade organization that promotes and "accredits" zoos. It is regulated and funded by the operators of zoos themselves.

The AZA claims elephants in zoos are ambassadors for conservation, but AZA standards allow them to be treated more like POWs than diplomats.

- AZA standards allow zoos to cram two 7,000-10,000 pound elephants into an outdoor enclosure the size of a tennis court and an indoor space the size of a handball court.
- AZA standards do not prohibit the use of chains, bullhooks and electric shock devices in the handling of elephants.
- AZA standards allow zoos to separate three-year old elephant calves from their mothers. (In the wild, most three-year old elephants are not yet weaned. Females stay with mothers for life; males don't leave the herd until their teens.)



- AZA accredits facilities like Six Flags Discovery Kingdom that give elephant rides and present circus-style shows, and Have Trunk Will Travel, a California business that rents elephants out for movies, rides and events, such as the September 2006 Banksy art exhibit in Los Angeles (pictured at left) which featured a painted elephant named Tai.
- Elephants are the only species in zoos to be routinely managed through force, physical punishment, chaining and use of the bullhook (a device similar to a fireplace poker used to poke, jab, stab and strike an elephant in compliance).
- Over 60 percent of zoo elephants have foot disease and nearly half have arthritis; these painful conditions are the leading cause of euthanasia in captive-held elephants.
- Of the elephants who died in AZA-accredited zoos since 2000, fewer than half reached their 40th birthday; in contrast, an elephant's natural lifespan is 60-70 years.
- It is at least 50 times more expensive to maintain elephants in zoos than to protect equivalent numbers of elephants in the wild.

The AZA claims to be a conservation and education organization, but in reality, member zoos spend a tiny percentage of their annual budgets on actual conservation efforts (conserving endangered species where they live, rather than in zoos).

Zoos worldwide are spending in excess of \$500 million on elephant exhibit renovations for 250 elephants that still will not provide nearly enough space to accommodate the needs of earth's largest land mammal. If spent on habitat preservation and protection, that money could save thousands of elephants in their natural habitats for years to come.