

Our Only Home

Exhibit by *Claudia Pearce*

On trips to different parts of our planet earth, I was able to photograph landscapes and animals in their natural habitat and tell their stories. Creating quilts from these photos has become a passion. In the words of Carl Sagan from his book *A Pale Blue Dot*, "The Earth is the only world known so far to harbor life. There is nowhere else, at least in the near future, to which our species could migrate." He went on to say, "...it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another, and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known." This stunning view of Earth suspended in the blackness of space was inspired by a NASA photo.



The Only Home We've Ever Known, July 2023, 41"X39"

As we focus in on Earth, we see an amazing diversity of landscapes, seascapes, and wildlife. My goal is to highlight some of the most moving images of the scenes that I have witnessed, by rendering them as quilts. I hope also to bring attention to how these images feature in our world. Do they inspire? Are they heartwarming? Do they reflect our own humanity? Are they nearing extinction in their natural environment? What forces are in play to annihilate them? Finally, I hope these stories bring an awareness to the fragility of this collective majesty. To keep it, we must understand and honor it. This exhibition seeks to do just that.



Only 3900, March 2020, 36"x36"

According to the World Wildlife Fund, only 3900 tigers were left living in the wild as of 2019. Due to poaching and habitat loss, the population has plummeted from 100,000 in 1900 and only 5 of the original 8 species are left. Jhumroo is a magnificent example of the Royal Bengal Tiger once hunted by Shah Jahan, builder of the Taj Mahal. It is estimated that only 2600 Royal Bengal Tigers are left in the wild today. Seeing 5 of these creatures in the wild in India's Ranthambore National Park in 2017 brought me to tears. Original design based on my photos from India.



Blowin' in the Wind, December 2020, 36" x 38.5"

This old lion had been lounging in the grass only moments before I snapped this picture in the Serengeti in 2019. The females in the pride got up quickly smelling prey and daddy finally stood up and looked straight at our Land Rover. The wind was brisk and his substantial mane, complete with a dark black-brown back section showing is age, was blowing over his massive head. He was in no hurry, just curious about our small convoy. The ladies were going to do all of the work of procuring dinner anyway.



Razzle Dazzle, May 2021, 36" x 36"

Appropriately, a collection of zebras is called a dazzle. This dazzle of zebra tricks the eye, making it difficult to see where one zebra begins and one ends. A dazzle standing and moving close together may appear as one large animal, making it more difficult for lions and other predators to pick out a single member. This principle, used in WW1 and called razzle dazzle in the U.S., was a method of painting ships to confuse the enemy by making it difficult to pick out individual ships and to determine their size and weight. I have opted to depict the rear zebras in their juvenile brown stripes hugging up to mom in front. I snapped this photo in the Serengeti in 2019. The green rings are a nod to my ever-present camera lens.



Journey to Oz, August 2021, 36"x36"

In our journey to Australia in 2016, our Aussie friends took us to Cleland Wildlife Park, where we were able to feed and pet the iconic koala. Cleland was part of the 2020 bushfire recovery stating, "With large amounts of wildlife habitat burnt on Kangaroo Island, the State Government (South Australia) has taken the unusual step of relocating 28 rescued koalas from the island to establish a disease-free population at Cleland Wildlife Park." The rings in this quilt represent my ever-present camera lens. Eucalyptus leaves are the sole source of food for koalas. Here they are tiny quilts attached in the background and being eaten by the koala.



Oasis Coalition, February 2022, 36"x37"

This pair was part of a bigger coalition of young male cheetahs at the watering hole. They gingerly stepped in the mud to get a drink and stood looking in the distance with water dripping off their chins. The yellow flowers were evidence of the oasis. I paired the boys with a Speke's Weaver who had turned to look at us just before my husband snapped the photo. The rings are a nod to the camera lens. Photos taken on our 2019 Serengeti Safari. (A coalition is the collective noun for a group of cheetahs.)



Torres del Paine: Cleopatra's Needles, June 2023, 36"x36"

This magnificent view is in Torres del Paine National Park in Chilean Patagonia. The name comes from the Spanish word for tower (torres) and the native Tehuelche word for blue (paine). These massive Andean granite peaks appear blue in the distance and are seen nearly everywhere in the park. The peaks were called Cleopatra's Needles by Scottish adventurer and writer Lady Florence Dixie, one of the first Europeans to visit the area, in her 1880 book. I love the sewing reference implied by Lady Florence's name which is apropos of a quilted version of the iconic peaks. The quilt is based on a photo taken on our Patagonian adventure in 2022.



Snowy Shiprock Morning, October 2023, 35.5" X 35.5"

In Navajo, Shiprock means "rock with wings". Residing in the Four Corners Region near Shiprock, NM, it plays a significant role in Navajo religion, myth, and tradition. Geologically it is the igneous erosional remnant of the neck of a volcano with dikes radiating away from the central core. Rising 1583 feet above the surrounding landscape, it is an impressive sight and can be seen from 30,000 feet. Holding a great place in my heart, the Shiprock is symbolic of my time living amongst the Dine in the Navajo Nation as a teacher in the 1970's. Design created from photo by Richard Seigle taken on a snowy January morning.



Don't Shoot! Only Elephants Should Wear Ivory, December 2023, 36"x36"

Considered Endangered, the African Bush Elephant is threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation and poaching for the illegal ivory trade. In the 1800s, there were roughly 27 million African Elephants. But due to the demand for ivory, only 430,000 remain, just 1.5% of their historic numbers. Harsh laws (30-year prison sentence in Tanzania) and a network of vigilant rangers has reduced poaching by 90% from 2016. I photographed this elephant family on their way to a watering hole in Tanzania in 2019.



Waiting for the Ice, January 31, 2024, 36"X36"

Waiting for the Ice depicts a polar bear of Churchill, Canada. They gather along the Hudson Bay awaiting the first ice. Once the ice has developed, the bears are off seal hunting. And they are hungry! They haven't eaten for 5 months since they came off the ice. Polar bears appear to be off-white, but their fur is actually transparent, and their skin underneath is black to absorb the sunlight for warmth. With global warming, the 5-month fasting period is expanding. This is causing fewer cubs to be born because the bear moms can't gain enough weight to support more cubs.



Eclipsed Tiger, July 2024, 36"x36"

Eclipsed Tiger explores areas of shadow and light of a tiger resting in the shade of a tree. Shadowed areas appear in shades of blue. One blue eye reflects back yellow, glowing in the dim light. Tigers often rest under or in trees during the day in order to preserve energy for their active nighttime hours. Of all the big cats, tigers are closest to extinction with fewer than 3900 left in the wild, existing in only 4% of their historic range. As such, wild tiger existence has been very nearly eclipsed!