

Wall Art

WORDS BY
Nadia Neophytou

PHOTOS
Tess Cunliffe



5 MINUTE READ

IN NUMBERS

10
Number of giant murals Sonny will paint.

1
Original, painted on canvas, will be auctioned in London next year, with all proceeds going to IFAW.

10%
Will go to IFAW for the sale of smaller prints online.

Visit
sonnyonline.com

10/11



THE BIG FIVE JUST GOT BIGGER

Meet the artist with a game plan for the world

It was a record-breaking hot day in New York City last week. As the temperature climbed, so did Sonny (he prefers just one name) to the top of a building on the Lower East Side. High above Allen Street, the British-born, South-Africa-raised street artist dripped sweat as his paintbrush filled in strands of hair on a 10m-tall lion. Mandla the lion is one in a series of paintings

Sonny is doing in collaboration with the International Fund for Animal Welfare.

Collectively called To The Bone, the images will be painted on buildings in different parts of the world to draw attention to animals under threat, starting in New York and travelling to rural areas as well as cities. In Rwanda he will paint a gorilla and in Indonesia an orangutan.

"I love animals," says Sonny, his hair

tied back in a messy ponytail. He was 10 when he moved with his parents from Manchester to South Africa. "I remember looking out the window as we landed and thinking there were going to be cheetahs and all kinds of animals on the runway," he laughs.

He remembers trips to the Kruger National Park and seeing the big five for the first time in the wild. "It amazed me to see lions munching away, it's hectic! It gives you this huge connection with the planet."

This shaped his belief that the wellbeing of animals is intricately tied to our own ability to thrive, and he aims to bring the extinction crisis to greater attention through his art.



Sonny makes his mark