



For immediate release
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The Elephant in the Room
Life-sized Elephant Sculpture
Created as Emissary for Wilderness and Creativity
On route to the 9th World Wilderness Congress
Merida, Mexico Nov. 6-13, 2009

BOULDER, CO – A life-sized sculpture of an African elephant matriarch has started her trans-ocean journey from South Africa to Merida, Mexico, to arrive for the opening of the **9th World Wilderness Congress (WILD9)** November 6. Renowned **South African artist Andries Botha** created the sculpture specifically for WILD9 to catalyze dialogue about the critical need to conserve wild spaces and artistic endeavors in support of that goal.

Botha said the inspiration for the elephant arose from conversations with legendary South African conservationist **Dr. Ian Player** about the spiritual values of wild places that are under threat and rapidly decreasing at great cost to all life forms on the planet, including humans. Dr. Player founded the World Wilderness Congress in 1977, and this year's congress, WILD9, will focus on the critical role of wilderness to mitigate climate change and conserve biodiversity.

Dr. Player named Botha's creation "**Nomkhubulwane**" after the Zulu goddess of rain, nature and fertility, who, as Mother Earth, can morph into different animal forms and informs young women regarding their sacred relationship with the Earth and their special role in Zulu society.

"The world requires massive collaboration to shift our human consciousness into a more sustainable relationship with the earth. The elephant is strong, enormously powerful yet hugely vulnerable in its relationship to humans. It offers a poignant and timely metaphor to contemplate issues of coexistence and how we must now live," said Botha. "What will we do to change how we live? What will accelerate our commitment to create a more sustainable world? I am hoping Nomkhubulwane will inspire many more people to ask and address these questions," he added.

Botha created Nomkhubulwane, who stands over 9 feet (3 meters) tall, by weaving strips of recycled truck tires over a galvanized steel armature at the Premat factory in Durban, South Africa. Premat, also known as Pretoria Mat and Tyre, recycles truck-sized tires into rubber mats and other items, including the protective linings in containers used to transport captured elephants and rhino to other destinations.

Dunlop Tyres, Grindrod Shipping and many individuals sponsored her journey from South Africa, where she left port aboard the *Yellowstone* on October 1, 2009, to WILD9. She will arrive in Altamira, Mexico on October 29 and then continue over land to Merida where she will be the WILD9 central icon displayed in the main convention hall. Subsequent to WILD9, Nomkhubulwane will travel through the United States.

Botha sculpted Nomkhubulwane in partnership with the **Human Elephant Foundation**, which Botha founded, and the **Magqubu Ntombela Foundation**, established by Dr. Player in memory of his Zulu mentor. Nomkhubulwane is the latest in a collection of 12 elephants located around the world that Botha created to stimulate creative ideas that expand environmental awareness and commitment to conserving and extending wilderness.

“WILD9 is honored to receive Nomkhubulwane, who represents the intersection of creativity, conservation and ecology,” said Vance G. Martin, President of the WILD Foundation. “Elephants are known to have very sophisticated social structures and carry a collective memory that increases chances for survival in challenging conditions. Nomkhubulwane challenges humans to tap into their own collective memory and intrinsic dependence on and relationship to nature,” he added.

[Register Here for WILD9!](#) [Follow Nomkhubulwane’s journey on www.WILD9.org!](http://www.WILD9.org)

Please send requests for **images of Nomkhubulwane** to media contacts below.

WILD9 is a partnership between The WILD Foundation and Unidos para la Conservación and relies on the support and participation of many partner organizations.

The WILD Foundation (www.wild.org) Founded in 1974, WILD is the only international organization dedicated entirely and explicitly to wilderness protection around the world. WILD works to protect the planet's last wild places and the wildlife and people who depend upon them, because wilderness areas provide essential social, spiritual, biological and economic benefits. We believe that intact wilderness areas are an essential core element of a healthy modern society.

Unidos para la Conservación (www.undiosparalaconservacion.org) Founded in 1992, Unidos is a nonprofit Mexican conservation organization that has actively promoted the concept of wilderness conservation in Mexico. Its working strategy combines the establishment of alliances with government, non-profit and corporate partners with the promotion of a conservation culture through publications and films in a search of conservation solutions through specific action.

The Human Elephant Foundation (www.humanelephant.org) A creative and inspiring global partnership, the HEF facilitates and invests in applying imagination to enhancing social responsibility for the ecological survival of our planet.

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