

Film Star Shanti Sells Paintings

The fascinating photographs of the Australian photographer of Czech origin Peter Lik at Marthi Gallery, Smíchov, gave way to works of art by the female elephant Shanti from Prague Zoo.

Artist from early age

Shanti was born in 1976 in India. She is known in Europe under the artistic name of Bimbo. This is what she was called in the film Pan Tau - Poplach v oblacích. After the filming, she was bought by Prague Zoo. Now she paints and sells her paintings.

A story from filming

The little elephant's task in the film was to run away from a small plane. The elephant was at that time looked after by an experienced elephant keeper Zbyněk Šíša and his colleague from Prague Zoo. When the plane flew over Bimbo's head, the animal panicked and started running towards the film crew, numbering 250 people. The crew made space for the elephant to pass but when she saw that there were no more people, she ran back right through the crew again. In the end, she got to the keeper who calmed her down. These moments in the film look completely different. You can, however, see the reality at the exhibition.



Artist in order to get food

The keeper Veronika Štruplová, who taught Shanti to paint admits that Shanti became an artist thanks to her greediness. "For a bite to eat she'll paint a beautiful picture," said Veronika Štruplová at the opening of the exhibition. "She got a treat for each line, so she learnt very quickly that the more lines she draws, the more treats she gets. So she loves painting," the keeper commented on the artist's creative zeal.

Only two people have her paintings

Only two people possess paintings by Shanti. One is the Mayor of Prague Bohuslav Svoboda, the other a big admirer of her art and Marthi Gallery sponsor Mr. Tom Petrů, who for one of the elephant's paintings donated a five-digit sum to Prague Zoo's Help Them Survive account and contributed to the organization of the exhibition. The Director of Prague Zoo Miroslav Bobek hopes that more people will soon own Shanti's paintings and he will be able to buy an ultrasound device Mindray for an elephant zoo in the village of Pinnawala in Sri Lanka. "The device can check the reproductive system of female elephants, diagnose gravidity and make some veterinary interventions easier," explains Mr. Bobek.

Originality is valued

Paintings by various animals kept in zoos are not so rare in the world. Many foreign companies buy these works of arts to support zoo gardens. "It seems quite different, when a visitor to a company asks about an interesting painting. If you say it was painted by an elephant, it sounds really strange and people will remember it.

The prices of the paintings can be found in the gallery's price list. The basic price is 37 thousand crowns, yet you can also buy numbered and authenticated reproductions. To see the system of sale, check the supplement.

About the photographs

The supplement also includes photographs taken by Josef Vitek during the filming. Photographs taken in Prague Zoo were made by Stanislav Tereby and those of the Shanti's paintings by Miroslav Bobek.