

TO THE BONE  
NEW YORK 2018

SONNY



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# TO THE BONE | SONNY

*To The Bone* explores the landscape of the fast-approaching demise of our world's wildlife and how this is intrinsically tied to humanity's own ability to thrive. It is a story of regression and destruction - an epic of nature and our heritage coming apart under the twin pressures of civilization and expansionism. A requiem for these vanishing species, *To The Bone* brings us face-to-face with the power and profound beauty of a wild world on the brink of extinction. The work highlights the precarious balancing act that exists between mankind and the animal kingdom, a haunting reminder of how much we have lost for all our gains.

Detached from the natural and the wild, we tend to look upon wild animals with a sense of strangeness - always with a degree of separation between us and them. This body of work forces us to question this thinking; by gazing into the animals'

eyes (some desolate, some ferocious) we're made perhaps too keenly aware of our sameness. Despite all our striving for sophistication, is our raw truth not in our primal connection to nature and all of earth's creatures?

Showcasing the work of South African (British-born) artist, Sonny, *To The Bone* is compiled of a series of prophetic mugshot-style images that pay homage to endangered species from around the world. The animals' faces are breaking away revealing raw skeletons underneath, a symbol of how their numbers are quickly fading. Sonny has a deep interest in ancient traditions, tribal relics and heritage where it relates to the value of the natural world. Ethnic patterns from the animals' country of origin adorn the exposed bones, driving home the message that in losing them we're losing a part of ourselves too. It is a form of imagined realism that emerges from the works, coupled

with a renewed understanding of the role that these animals play in the identification and honour of a nation.

The animals depicted in the work, once roamed freely and in numbers across the globe, before strangers invaded their land and pillaged their forests, killing for profits and power. The work conveys a deep love of and respect for the animal kingdom, as well as a palpable sense of anxiety, guilt, and outrage towards crimes perpetrated against our wildlife.

Depicted with golden horns and teeth, the imagery argues that the only value that these 'keepsakes' hold is as a part of a live animal. It is these animals that hold true value for us and our world, not the man-made markets for ivory and fur. Reminiscent of Kenya's symbolic gesture in 2016, when a pyre of 6,000 illegally trafficked elephant tusks

alight in one of the largest burnings of poached wildlife goods in African history, the message was a simple one; the only value of ivory is tusks on a live elephant.

The imagery is further brought to life through the representation of death, in the form of hand-painted skull replicas - a tangible symbol for what the future may hold. Perhaps all our children will have left to remember these beautiful animals are history books and bones? Mirroring the canvas paintings, native patterns embellish the bones while slowly melting away; a dual extinction of species and heritage. These skulls, with their golden teeth ablaze, invoke an appreciation of the might and power of these creatures, together with an acknowledgment of the fact that we, as mere humans, could truly be the most ferocious and frightening species of all.





MURALS

# NANUK

Inuit name for polar bear which means 'animal worthy of respect'. This artwork tackles the issues of global warming and climate change.

Outdoor Mural, 26m X 10m

Miami, Florida 2017

Photograph by Daniel Weintraub



@SONNYSUNDANCER



## RAISING AWARENESS

The exhibition artwork is closely linked to the artist's global mural tour under the same name, which has seen him create large-scale murals of endangered wildlife in the streets of South Africa, Russia, Ireland, England, Canada, The Netherlands, Miami and New York.

Through the tour, Sonny has brought some of the world's most iconic and endangered animals into unexpected and unnatural environments around the world. Beautiful strangers in concrete jungles. A migration into the minds and hearts of the people who once drove them out of these spaces.

His grassroots creative journey has brought city dwellers eye-to-eye with these animals, allowing an opportunity for reflection and conversation, rekindling a long-forgotten connection to the wild.



### NEW YORK LION

Sonny launched his global mural tour with this two-story painting that sparked a conversation around the ethics and effectiveness of canned lion hunting.

Outdoor Mural, 7m X 10m  
Manhattan, New York 2017

Photograph by John Dominé

## LOOKING TO TOMORROW

In 2017 in South Africa alone nearly three rhinos were killed every day.  
Outdoor Mural, 8m X 7m  
London, England 2017



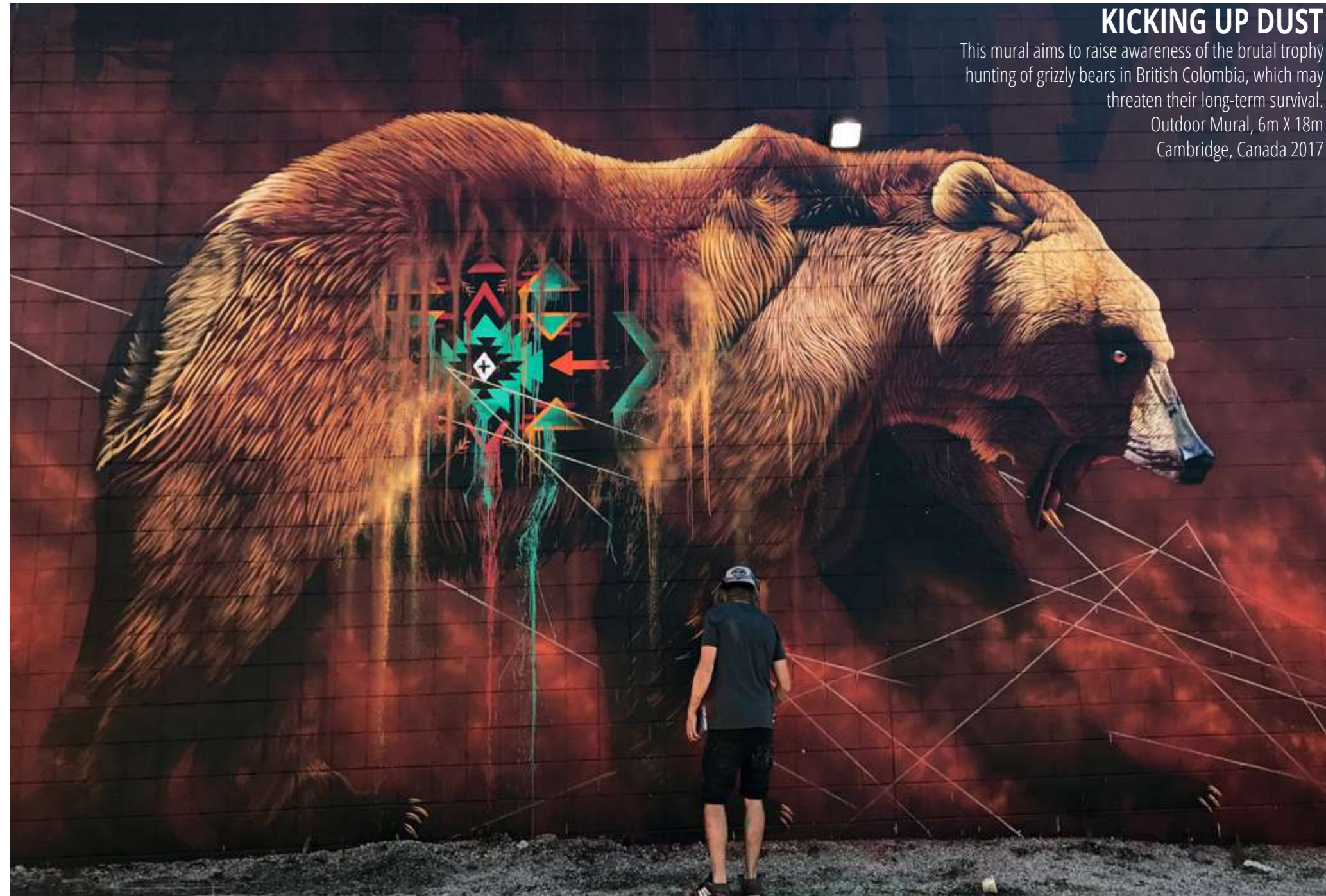
## JELANI

Meaning 'mighty' in Swahili. With up to 40,000 elephants killed every year, this piece celebrates the beauty of these gentle giants and what they mean to Africa.

Outdoor Mural, 14m X 16m  
Johannesburg, South Africa 2016







## KICKING UP DUST

This mural aims to raise awareness of the brutal trophy hunting of grizzly bears in British Columbia, which may threaten their long-term survival.  
Outdoor Mural, 6m X 18m  
Cambridge, Canada 2017

## PROJECT CAT

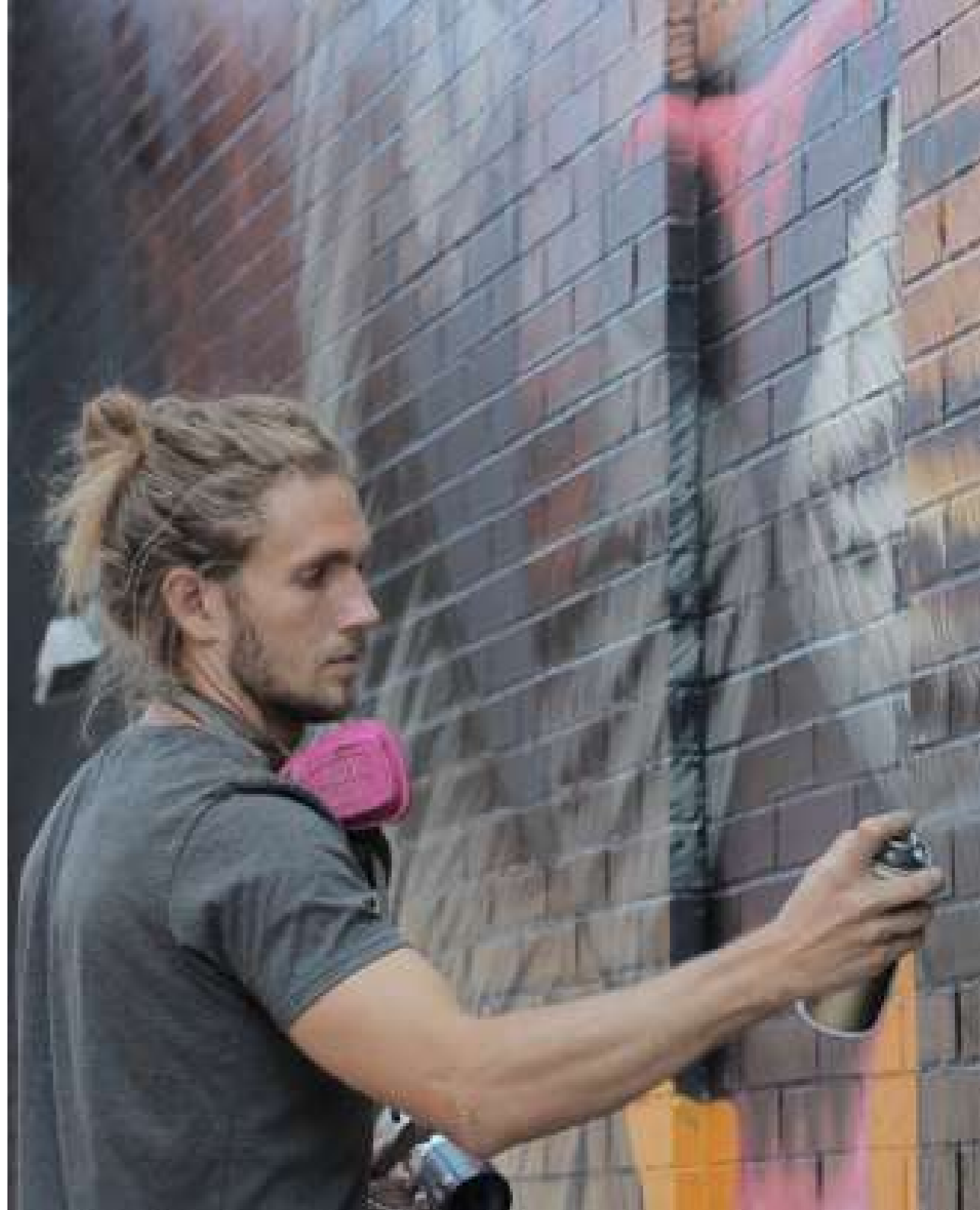
Discovery Communications teamed up with Sonny, to create a tiger mural in SoHo, New York, to raise awareness for the plight of the wild tiger.

Outdoor Mural, 5m X 6m  
Manhattan, New York 2017



*“Project CAT teamed up with Sonny as a way to bring organic attention to the wildlife extinction crisis. The mural located on Lafayette Street in SoHo has major foot traffic from tourists, locals and street art enthusiasts. Sonny’s majestic and powerful image of the tiger has elicited strong emotional reactions on social media and has helped to amplify the cause and mission to double wild tigers by 2022.”*

**– DISCOVERY, PROJECT CAT**



## ART FOR A CAUSE

As the most powerful art movement of the 21st century, street art transcends language and encourages conversation. With a shared passion for making an impact, artists are taking to the streets to tackle difficult themes through their art. This is why they are propelling society forward, reviving communities and using the beauty of their creativity to bring important issues to the fore. With messages too loud to be ignored, we're forced to lift our eyes and observe our surroundings.

*To The Bone* is a project that has used public art as an effective catalyst for creating real and positive global change. Driven by Sonny's bold vision to create a better world, the project has not only

enriched communities by uplifting and beautifying the urban environment, but in doing so it has also served as an effective vehicle for raising awareness of the dire state of our wildlife. Starting important conversations both offline and online, the true significance of the art lies far beyond spray paint on brick.

Over a period of a year, Sonny painted nine large-scale murals of endangered species in seven different countries around the globe. Making an impact both on the streets and in the media, the murals serve to honor the true beauty of these animals, while encouraging action so that we may protect them for future generations.

### EMBERS

Painted for Street Art Today's soon-to-be launched museum for urban contemporary and street art.  
Outdoor Mural, 9m X 7m  
Amsterdam, the Netherlands 2017  
Photograph by Marco Buddingh



## ELECTRIC FURY

Painted as part of an annual street art festival, the second tiger of the tour aimed to bring some colour into the community.

Outdoor Mural, 7m X 10m  
Waterford, Ireland 2017



CANVAS



## SUPPORTING CHANGE

As a passionate advocate for tigers, Sonny has committed to donating 10% of all *To The Bone* artwork sales to Project C.A.T. to support their work towards doubling the number of tigers in the wild by 2022. Sonny will also be auctioning off one of the original artworks with all proceeds being donated to Project C.A.T.

A collaboration between Discovery Communications and World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the initiative aims to ensure a healthy habitat for future generations of tigers by helping conserve nearly two million acres of protected land in India and Bhutan.

Discovery has long been committed to telling the stories and protecting the creatures that make our planet extraordinary. Their mission with Project C.A.T., Conserving Acres for Tigers, is to ensure a future for tigers and other endangered wildlife so there will always be stories to tell.

As a large predator, tigers are an umbrella species. They play a key role in maintaining a healthy ecosystem. By protecting tigers and their habitat, Project C.A.T. is helping to protect other at risk animals that share this habitat, like Asian elephants, greater one-horned rhinos, clouded leopards and important prey species. Since tigers need vast amounts of land to thrive, this initiative also

protects vital forests, which in turn benefits local communities, and the planet as a whole. Tigers face multiple threats from poaching, habitat loss and fragmentation, conflict with humans and over hunting of their prey species.

For the past seven years, WWF has been a driving force behind Tx2—the global goal to double the number of wild tigers by 2022 (the next Chinese Year of the Tiger). As part of TX2, tiger range countries, with help from WWF experts, scientists, rangers, and local communities, developed and implemented a Global Tiger Recovery Plan to ensure tiger conservation is a priority.

The support Discovery provides to WWF will go toward:

- Improved resources for security measures, including additional field-training and high-tech anti-poaching tools for rangers.
- Increased monitoring and assessments of tiger populations with camera-trap installations.
- Maintenance of land corridors to improve connectivity for wildlife movement.
- Implementation measures to reduce human-wildlife conflict through community education and engagement.



## KUNGA

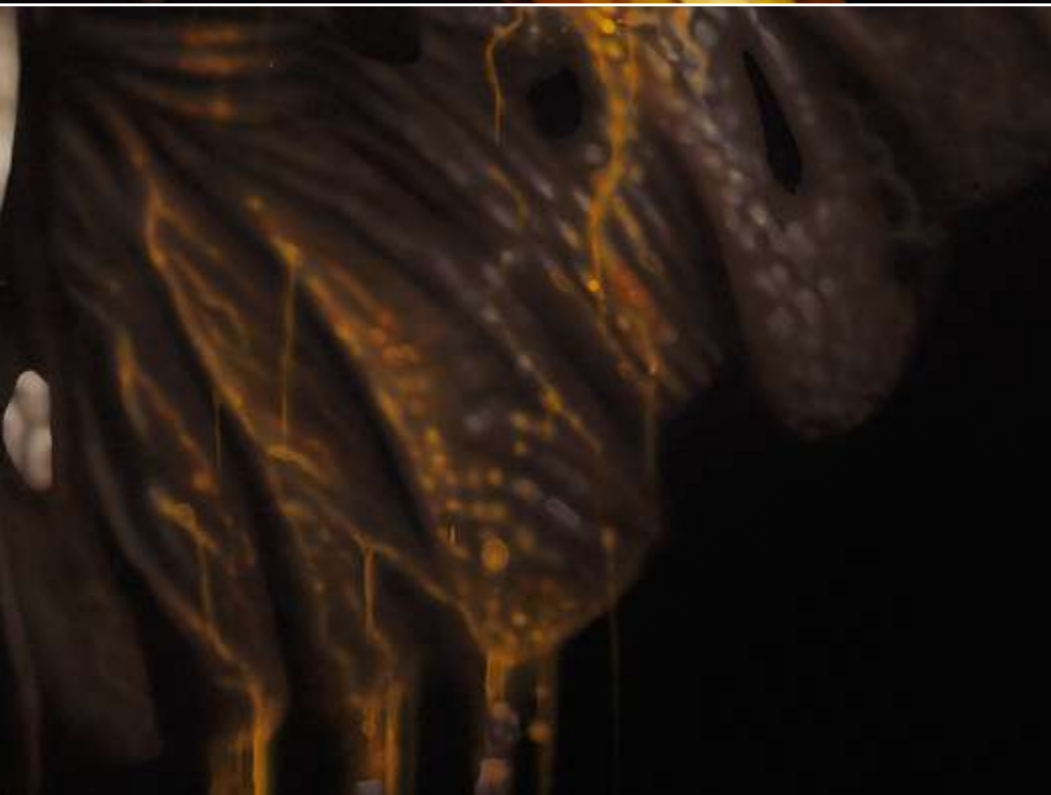
*Meaning 'peacemaker' in  
Kinyarwanda*

NC, spray paint and acrylics on  
handmade wooden boxes

120cm X 100cm







*Meaning 'beloved' in Shona*  
NC, spray paint and acrylics on  
handmade wooden boxes  
120cm X 100cm

**MUDIWA**





## MANIPI

*Derived from Native American language,  
meaning 'walking wonder'*

NC, spray paint and acrylics on  
handmade wooden boxes

120cm X 100cm

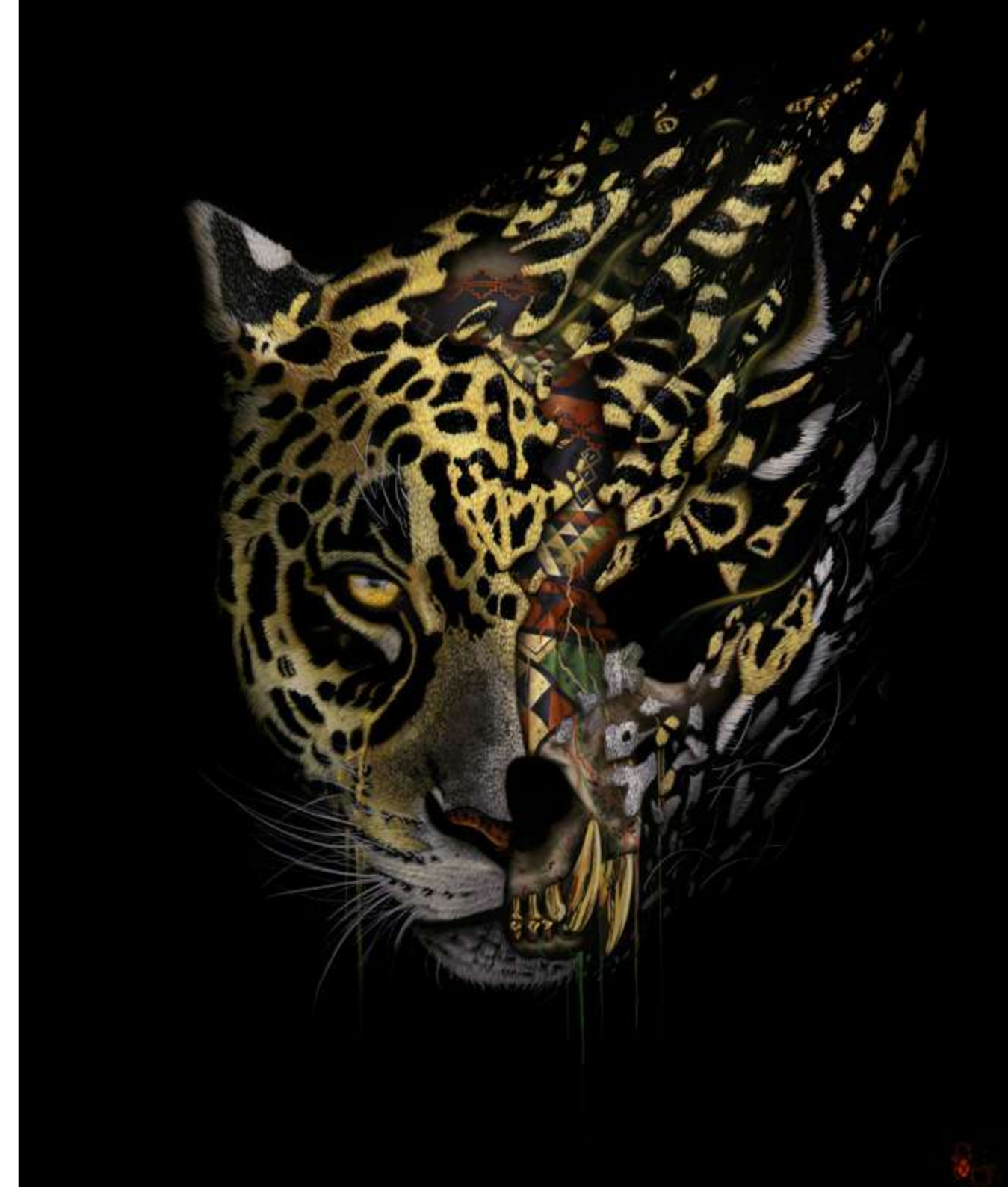




*Meaning 'one who speaks softly  
but with wisdom' in Swahili*

NC, spray paint and acrylics on  
handmade wooden boxes  
120cm X 100cm

**KAARIA**





## PINDA

*Meaning 'equal' in Indonesian*

NC, spray paint and acrylics on  
handmade wooden boxes

120cm X 100cm





*A legendary creature mentioned  
in old Chinese literature*

NC, spray paint and acrylics on  
handmade wooden boxes

120cm X 100cm

**ZOUYU**



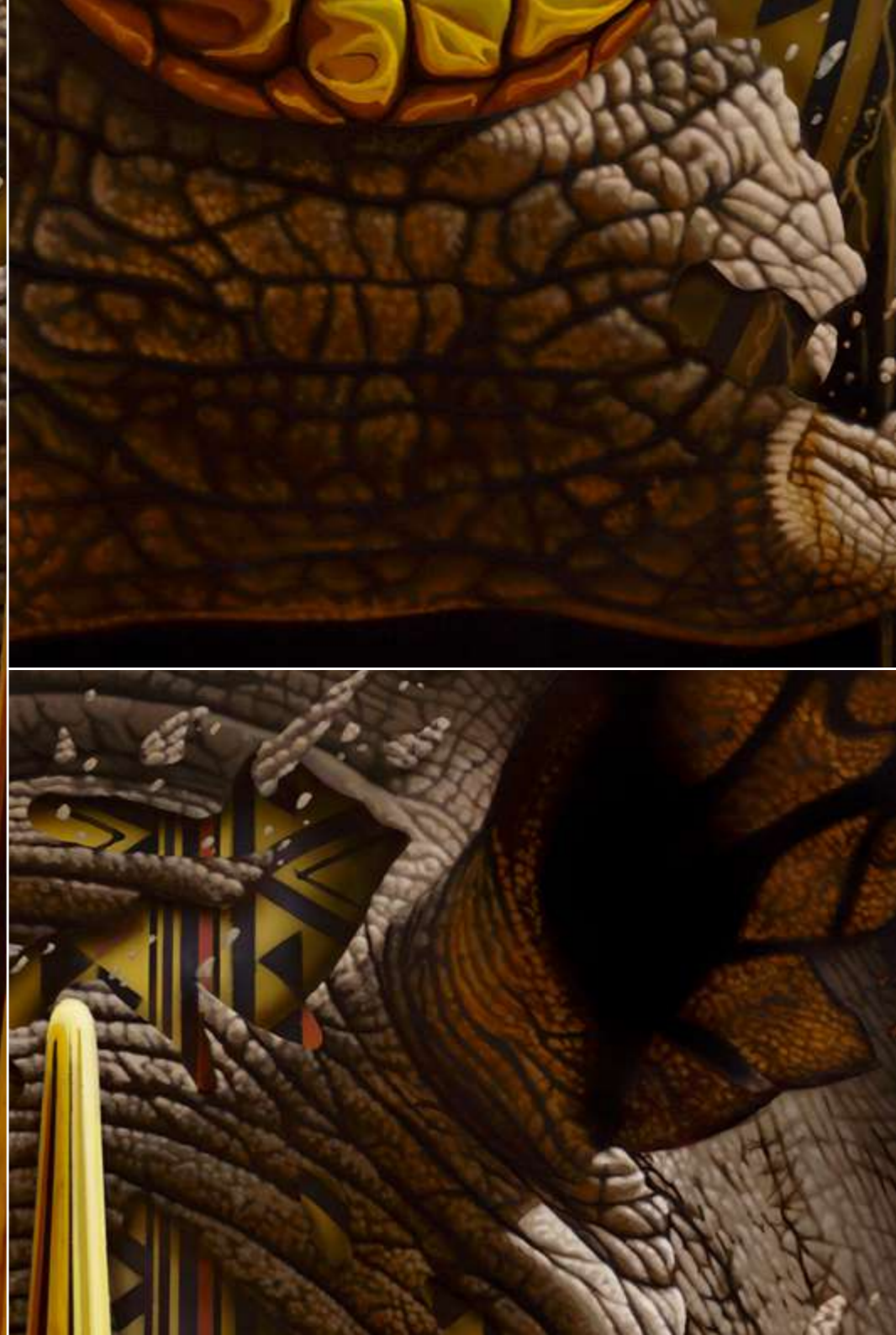
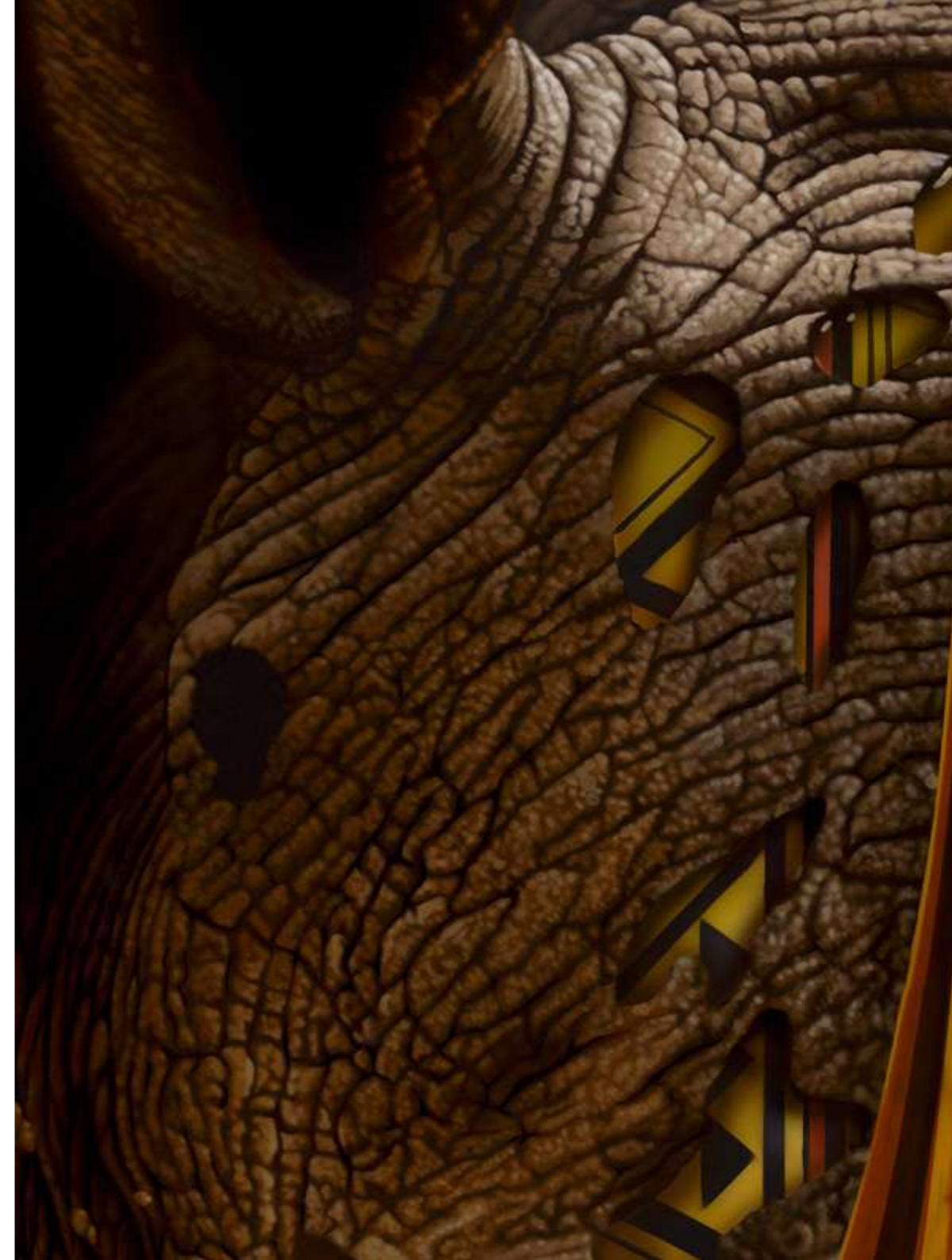


## KUMBUKANI

*Meaning 'remember' in Chewa*

NC, spray paint and acrylics on  
handmade wooden boxes

120cm X 100cm





*Meaning 'strength/power' in Zulu*

NC, spray paint and acrylics on  
handmade wooden boxes

120cm X 100cm

**MANDLA**





## LOHAN

*From Mayan origin, meaning  
'to be saved'*

NC, spray paint and acrylics on  
handmade wooden boxes

120cm X 100cm





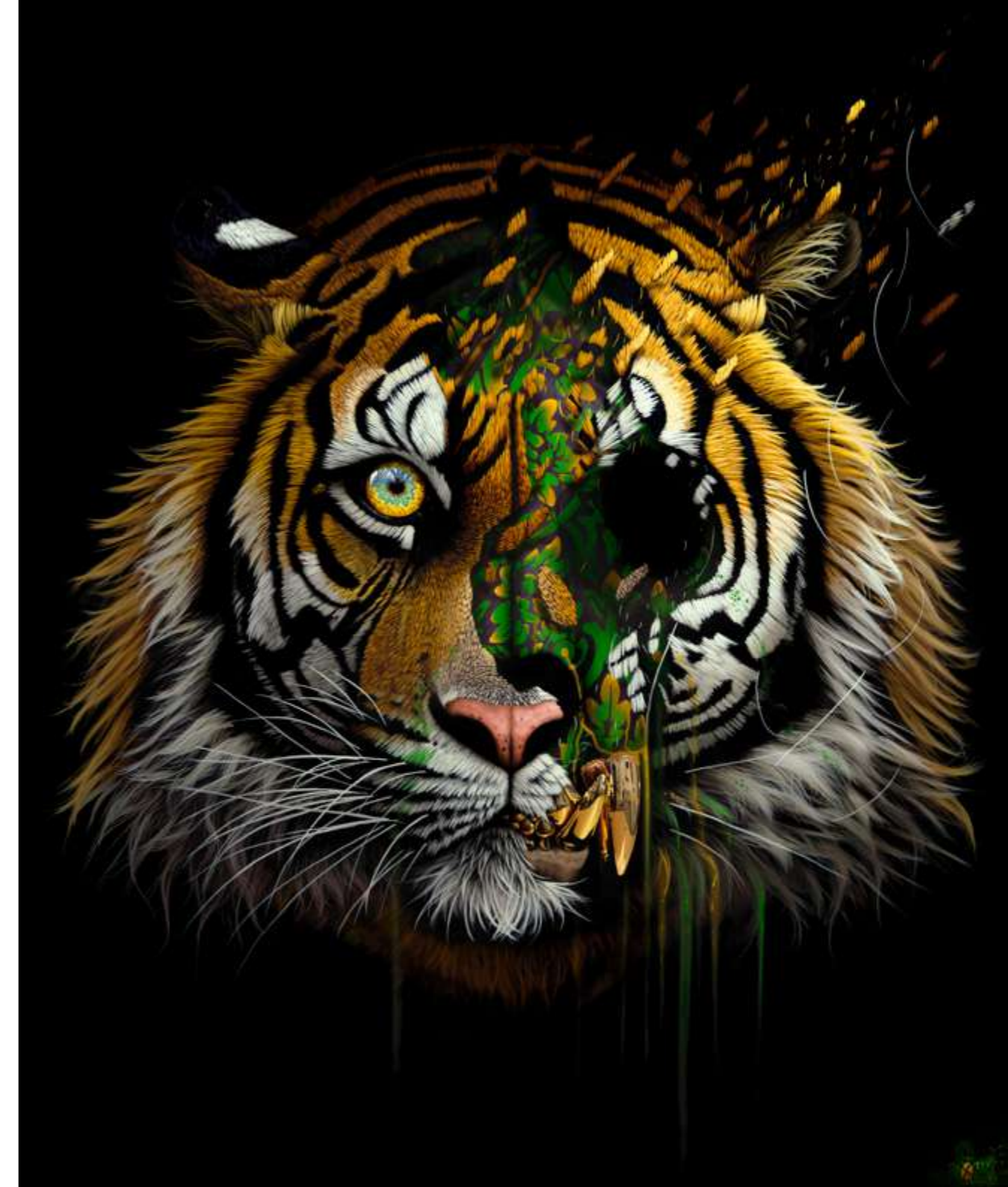


*Derived from Sanskrit, meaning  
'enduring/mighty'*

**SAHA**

NC, spray paint and acrylics on  
handmade wooden boxes

120cm X 100cm



SCULPTURES



SKULL OF KUNGA

NC paint on polyurethane resin  
35cm long





SKULL OF MANIPI

NC paint on polyurethane resin  
40cm long



SKULL OF KAARIA

NC paint on polyurethane resin  
23cm long





**SKULL OF PINDA**

NC paint on polyurethane resin  
22cm long





**SKULL OF ZOUYU**

NC paint on polyurethane resin  
26cm long







**SKULL OF MANDLA**

NC paint on polyurethane resin  
39cm long



SKULL OF LOHAN

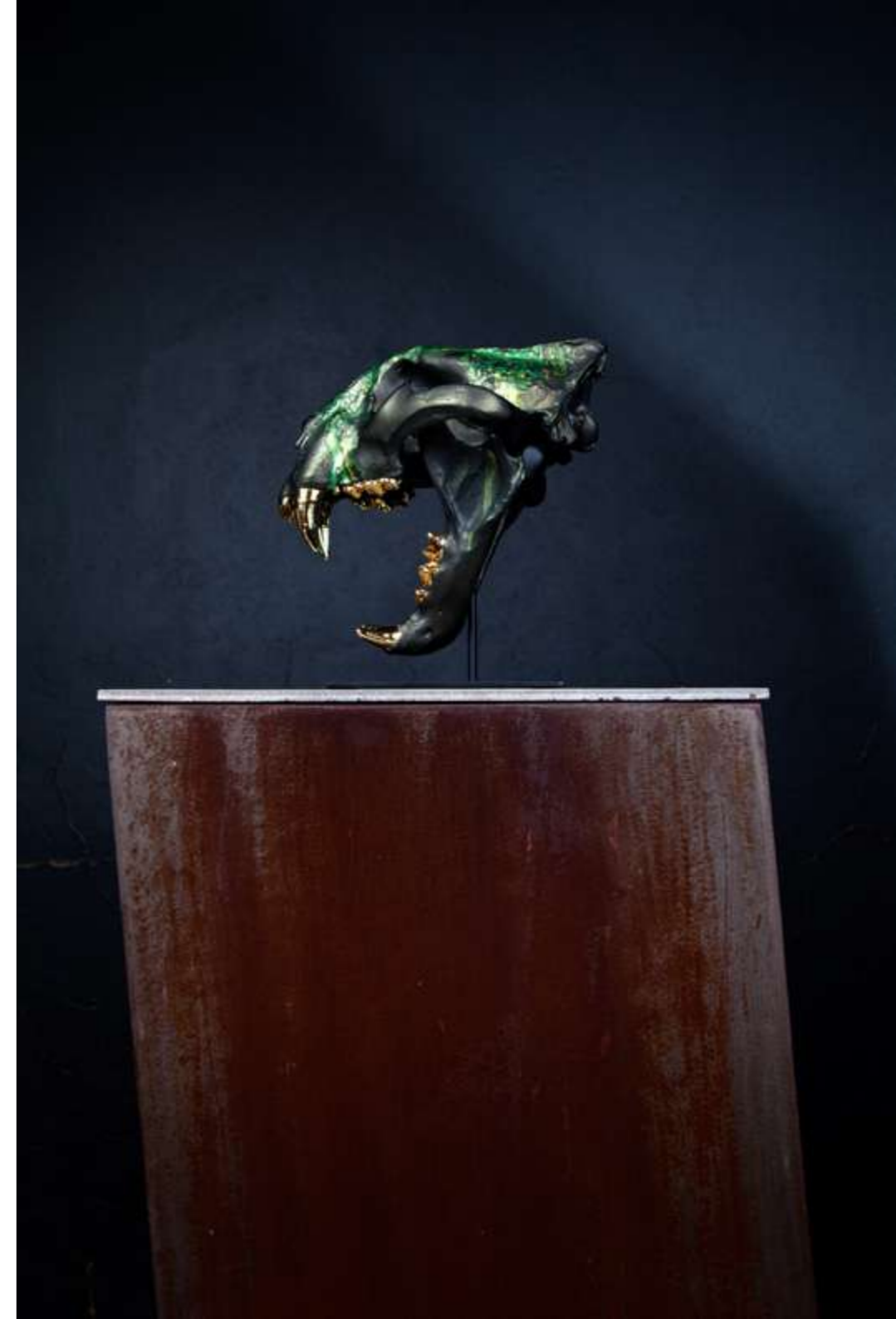
NC paint on polyurethane resin  
24cm long





SKULL OF SAHA

NC paint on polyurethane resin  
36cm long







## SELECTED MEDIA

### ARTICLES

- **FORBES AFRICA MAGAZINE**, Spray It Out, - Graffiti to Protect Animals, July 2017
- **SUNDAY TIMES**, The Big Five Just Got Bigger, June 2017
- **SW LONDONER**, Mural, mural on the wall, new street art very tall, September 2017
- **STREET AND MORE**, Sonny, July 2017
- **VISI MAGAZINE**, SA Street Artist Sonny's Global Takeover, September 2017

### RADIO

- **EYEWITNESS NEWS**, South Africa National News Radio Broadcaster (Cape Talk, Radio 702, 94.7, Highveld Stereo, Kfm), June 2017

### TELEVISION

- **NEWS24** South Africa, Beautiful News Segment, March 2018
- **CHINA CENTRAL TELEVISION**, News, February 2018
- **REN TV**, Channel 4 National News Russia, August 2017
- **PRIMAMEDIA RUSSIA**, National News, August 2017
- **NTV RUSSIA**, News, August 2017
- **VESTIPRIM**, Primorye News, August 2017

### ONLINE

- **BUZZFEED**, Feature Video, <https://www.buzzfeed.com/>, June 2017
- **WIDEWALLS**, Saving Animals Through Street Art - Courtesy of Sonny!, <https://www.widewalls.ch/>, January 2018
- **HUFFINGTON POST**, South African Street Art Brings Endangered Wildlife to Russia, <http://www.huffingtonpost.co.za/>, January 2018
- **THE JOURNAL**, Double Take: The Facts Behind \*that\* unmissable tiger mural in Waterford, <http://www.thejournal.ie/>, Decemeber 2018
- **THE TELEGRAPH**, Picture of the Day, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/>, August 2017
- **SOLD MAGAZINE**, Beauty... To The Bone, July 2017
- **GRAFFITI STREET**, Street Art With More Impact - Recap of 2017, <https://www.graffitistreet.com/>, January 2018
- **CROYDON GUARDIAN**, Artist Sonny reveals meaning behind new To The Bone project mural, <http://www.croydonguardian.co.uk/>, September 2017
- **STREET ART TODAY**, The Best Murals of 2017, <http://streetart.today/>, December 2017
- **STREET ART NYC**, Sonny Launches International Tour of His "To the Bone" Project on Manhattan's Lower East Side, <http://streetartnyc.org/>, July 2017
- **INSTAGRAFITE**, Sonny's To The Bone Project, <http://instagrafite.com/>, August 2017
- **STREET ART UNITED STATES**, Grizzly Bear Mural Tribute by Sonny in Canada, <http://streetartunitedstates.com/>, August 2017
- **IFAW**, Street artist Sonny's passion for imperiled animals, <https://www.ifaw.org/>, July 2017
- **I SUPPORT STREET ART**, Sonny Brings a Piece of Africa to New York City, <http://www.isupportstreetart.com/>, July 2017
- **URBANITE WEBZINE**, Sonny's To The Bone Project x Basel House Festival in Miami, <http://www.urbanitewebzine.com/>, January 2018
- **THE LIA PROJECT**, Sonny Exclusive, <http://theliaproject.com/>, August 2018



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