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# THE NAKED EYE

CHARLES SAATCHI'S NEW BOOK BASED ON EXTRAORDINARY  
UNPHOTOSHOPPED IMAGES



# THE NAKED EYE

CHARLES SAATCHI



Booth-Clibborn Editions

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Daniel Firman, Würsa à 18,000 km de la Terre, 2008, Palais de Tokyo, Paris

French artist Daniel Firman created this taxidermic elephant balancing on the tip of its trunk. The artist based his work on the calculation that the elephant could manage this feat on a planet with a circumference of 18,000 km (because of its weak gravitational pull). The life size and hyper-realist sculpture was created with taxidermist Jean-Pierre Gérard.

## **Elephants are more interesting than most humans.**

Although it remains the case that elephants cannot balance upright on their trunks, they are amongst the world's most intelligent species. Aristotle was the first to point out that the elephant is the animal which surpasses all others in wit or mind.

Elephant brains are larger than any other land animal, and though the largest whales are twenty times the size of a bull elephant, their brains are only twice the size of the elephant's. It appears that an elephant brain cortex has as many neurons as a human brain, suggesting convergent evolution.

Elephants experience a wide variety of emotions and skills – grief, learning, mimicry, play, humour, use of tools, compassion, cooperation, awareness, memory. It makes the notion of these great beasts being slaughtered for their tusks even more repellent.

Elephants have the closest-knit societies in the animal kingdom, and can be separated only by death or capture. No wonder I still sob all the way through *Dumbo* when he is taken away from his mother. Elephants have been recorded as creating a shallow grave for a family member who had died, and covering it in leaves.

I was intrigued by the report of a ranch herder in the wild of Africa whose leg was broken by a grumpy bull elephant. The bull's female partner used her trunk to lift him under the shade of a tree, and guarded him for the day until rescue arrived. He told how she would gently soothe him by stroking him with her trunk.

Of course it's best to remember if you are planning a trip to see elephants in the wild, they are also considered among the most dangerous animals on the planet.



That is why they have no natural predators, other than a man with a gun. Even then, if the idiot with the gun comes across an elephant during Musth, when a male elephant's hormones are peaking at sixty times higher than normal, not only can they run 100 metres faster than Usain Bolt, but they have been known to charge through two direct hits from a .460 Weatherby Magnum, and trample the hunter to death.

They have been witnessed slinging rhinoceroses 14ft above their heads. Other charming individuals who have tried anchor chains to capture an elephant soon discover that if they get him in the right mood, an elephant is wily enough to angle his tusk into the chain links and pop them. And hopefully, pop the big-game hunter as well.

Of course the most dangerous creature on earth is the mosquito, which can be held accountable for more deaths throughout history than any other living creature.

They are extremely effective at passing on infectious diseases, and Malaria alone can kill 20% of sufferers in severe cases, even with medication.

Other potentially fatal diseases they kindly pass around are West Nile Virus, Roundworms, Tularemia, Dengue Fever and Yellow Fever.

I've never liked swimming in the sea, and my aversion was cemented when I read about the Sea Wasp Box Jellyfish, apparently the most lethally venomous creature in the ocean.

The merest nip from one of these will leave you in excruciating pain, probably enough to wish you'd been killed outright. Some claim that cutting off the limb that has been stung would be preferable in terms of pain-management to leaving it attached.

If you were unfortunate enough to be locked inside its ten-foot-long tentacles, escape attempts would be futile as the venom breaks down the brain's communication with the nerves, paralysing you and stopping your heart beating within 3 minutes.

I wouldn't actually need to be bitten by a Taipan snake to succumb to

a heart attack at the sight of it slithering towards me. Fortunately they are extremely shy and hide from any larger animals that approach.

But if it feels threatened, its toxin is the deadliest on earth, and it likes to inflict multiple bites to ensure an immediate kill.

Taipans tend to inhabit the Australian outback, but I wouldn't take any chances that one of them hasn't wandered into Sydney, next time you're visiting Bondi Beach for a bit of surfing. Best stick to Cornwall.



Daniel Firman, *Nasutamanus*, 2012  
Fibreglass and polymer, Kunsthalle Wien, Austria

This installation named *Nasutamanus* follows the first balancing elephant (previous page) exhibited in France in 2008. Unlike *Würsa*, *Nasutamanus* is not a real elephant, but was created through consultation with a professional taxidermist to make the look and feel of the sculpture as close to life as possible.



Berndnaut Smilde, Nimbus II, 2012, Lambda print, 125 x 186 cm

Dutch artist Berndnaut Smilde used a smoke machine, combined with moisture and dramatic lighting to create a hovering indoor cloud in the empty setting of a sixteenth-century chapel in Hoorn, Holland. "I imagined walking into a museum hall with just empty walls. The place even looked deserted. On the one hand I wanted to create an ominous situation. You could see the cloud as a sign of misfortune. You could also read it as an element out of the Dutch landscape paintings in a physical form in a classical museum hall."

## **Try telling Bill Rankin that clouds are soft and fluffy.**

In 1959 Lieutenant Colonel William Rankin was piloting his US Air Force jet at about 50,000 feet. His plane caught fire, and he was forced to eject. He dropped into a cumulonimbus cloud, full of thunderous rage, that trapped him, flailing him about inside its grip for over half an hour, pelting him with icy hail.

He is the only known survivor of such an encounter, albeit with severe frostbite, blood pouring from his eyes, nose, mouth and ears due to the decompression, and a body covered in welts and bruises from the pummelling hailstones.

Even more miraculously, his parachute was still functioning.

The cumulonimbus is the type of cloud all pilots of aircraft dread encountering. The hail-from-hell that they contain is capable of puncturing the exterior skin of an airplane, the lightning inside the cloud can destroy the on-board electronics, frozen water will coat the plane's wings in ice, and air currents are powerful enough to fling even large airliners upside down.

The sky itself is still an enigma to scientists, and certainly to the rest of us. When you look up at the night sky, light from distant stars takes so long to reach us, we are actually seeing how they appeared hundreds, thousands or even millions of years ago. We are really looking back in time.

And we can only see about 5% of the universe. The rest is made up of Dark Matter, a mysterious property also known by astronomers as Dark Energy, and it's all invisible to humans.

The sun is a mighty object indeed, producing so much power that every second its core releases the equivalent of 100 billion nuclear bombs.

I am baffled that on Mercury, the planet closest to the Sun, temperatures can reach -280 degrees Fahrenheit. It's something to do with having no atmosphere to trap heat, so the dark side of Mercury, facing away from the Sun, is chillier than you can imagine. But Mercury has no clouds, unlike most other planets, so it's safer for Lieutenant Colonel Rankin than flying his jet around Earth.

Do you recall that in February 2011 NASA discovered an unknown solar system, with six planets orbiting a sun-like star? It is called Kepler-11, after the space telescope that is finding new worlds in the search for alien life. So far it has detected more than fifty planets that are considered to be habitable zones.

Some of these are believed to have an earth-like atmosphere, and the planet Gliese 581d appears to have seas on its surface. Also discovered was a star made entirely of diamonds. The crystallised white dwarf measures over 2,400 miles across and is composed of ten billion, trillion, trillion carats.

Unfortunately for treasure hunters, or rap stars seeking a really eye-catching pendant, it is 50 light years from earth (that's three hundred trillion miles).

The Kepler is an advance on the Hubble telescope, which has given scientists images of various galaxies, and eerie celestial objects that look like enormous, but delicate butterflies.

Captain Kirk and the Starship Enterprise will one day be beaming down onto one of them, and send back nice pictures of their little trip.



The Hubble Space Telescope was launched by NASA in 1990 and has photographed the birth and death of stars, capturing galaxies that are billions of light years away. It has helped scientists estimate the age and size of the universe, and its photograph entitled 'Hubble Ultra Deep Field' shows the furthest galaxies ever seen, about 14 billion years old.



Phoebe Rudomino, Still from Johnson & Johnson's 'Imagine' Total Hydration body wash TV commercial, HomeCorp., 2006, C-print, 164.34 x 110 cm

Rudomino is a commercial diver and underwater photographer based at the Underwater Stage at Pinewood Studios. This photograph was taken during a shoot for a commercial and was part of 'Water on the Lens', an exhibition of underwater set photographs taken at Pinewood.

**No man drowns if he perseveres in praying to God, and can swim.**

I can barely manage a doggy-paddle, but I'm able to glide effortlessly underwater, and managed to snorkel once off the side of a dinghy.

It was crystal clear sea, and although the coral was spectacular and the fish breathtakingly handsome in an assortment of iridescent hues, I panicked at their proximity, and clambered back on the little boat trying not to cry with embarrassment in front of my children, who are still too ashamed of me to ever speak of it.

Are you a good diver yourself? If so, perhaps you have visited the SS Yongala shipwreck in the Australian Great Barrier Reef. It sank in a cyclone about 100 years ago, with no survivors.

Apparently, even after being submerged for so long, the ship is in well-preserved condition, sixty kilometres off the coast, and you will be joined on your little swim by many delightfully pretty fish, the type that would no doubt have scared me.

It is also popular as an aquatic centre for the local Barrier Reef Great Sharks, and the deadly Box Jellyfish, the venomous local sea snakes, and the delicately small but ferocious Blue Ringed Octopus, which bites with a little beak and injects its poison. They are all waiting to greet you if you are keen for some exciting underwater snapshots when you next visit Australia.

Another popular dive site is in the Red Sea, where SS Thistlegorm was sunk by German bombs in 1941, carrying guns and ammunition en route for Alexandria. Divers can explore the fully intact locomotives and tanks that were on board at the time the Thistlegorm sank.

You can also examine the rips in the hull made by the two 1,000lb German bombs that caused the ship's demise.



Much exploration still takes place on ocean sea beds around the world by treasure hunters, the most renowned being Odyssey Marine Exploration. A Florida-based outfit, they discovered the most valuable shipwreck ever found.

All we know is that it's somewhere off the coast of Portugal; they have managed to keep the location a secret still, despite having already recovered 500,000 gold and silver coins worth over \$300 million.

The government of Spain believe the lost ship is the Nuestra Senora de las Mercedes, sunk by the British in 1804, killing about 200 crew members. A historical account of the Mercedes says that there were 4,356,519 gold and silver pesos on board at the time, and Spain is trying to claim it all, arguing it should be held in a Spanish museum.

Odyssey Marine lawyers disagree, and feel their client's claim is bullet, or indeed cannonball, proof.

Despite my overarching greed, I am too cowardly to get my snorkel out again and see if I can help myself to some of this swag waiting on the ocean floor.

In truth, I do not believe mankind should be encouraged to prance on beaches, or enter the domains of Sea God Poseidon.

It took us millennia to come slithering ashore; we may not have evolved particularly well, but it is surely preferable to growing gills and fins and reverting to Merpeople. We progressed from the ocean. Why regress now?

If you, like me, are a little disappointed at how miserably man has developed, still as barbaric and cretinous as ever, it's worrying that evolution is not as miraculous as many philosophers have claimed.

And scientists have certainly had long enough to turn their attention to the less fortunate, who can't float, and should have invented a buoyancy pill for us to take before attempting a dip. I always trust my mother's advice: No man drowns if he perseveres in praying to God, and can swim.



The underwater stage, which opened in 2005, is a globally unique facility and has been used for a vast number of movies, music videos and TV commercials. The permanently filled water tank holds 1.2 million litres of water and is heated to 32 degrees. For the sequence being set up here, an entire house interior was created within the tank. Rudomino specialises in behind-the-scenes underwater stills and video for feature films, TV and commercials.



Kaohsiung, Taiwan, April 11, 2007, a Nile crocodile stalks the banks of his enclosure at Kaohsiung zoo with the forearm of veterinarian Chang Po Yu.

## **Rather poor Yu than poor me.**

Chang Po Yu, a vet and keeper at Taiwan Zoo was attempting to remove a tranquilizer dart from a 440lb, 16ft crocodile, before treating his patient who was refusing to eat.

As he reached through the iron railings, the inadequately sedated crocodile suddenly regained its appetite, lunged and snapped off his arm at the elbow.

As his shocked colleagues applied a tourniquet to a screaming Po Yu, the croc scampered away with the limb in its jaws.

A zoo keeper reached for a rifle to try and kill the crocodile, but missed; the sound of the gunfire fortunately caused the crocodile to drop its prize, and the brave keeper jumped into the pen and retrieved Po Yu's arm.

Packed in ice, it was rushed to the local hospital alongside its distressed owner, and after a seven hour operation was reattached successfully.

Mr Po Yu was obviously delighted, even though his repaired arm is a little shorter; doctors had to remove damaged bone to complete their work efficiently.

Crocodiles who survive (99% of crocodile offspring are eaten by large fish, herons, larger lizards... and other crocodiles) can live to 80 years old.

They swim faster than you, at 25 mph, but you can outrun them even though they can sprint quickly, if you zig-zag as you run away; they can't change course very swiftly, and tire easily on land.

Have you ever understood the expression "crocodile tears"?

I knew it denotes fake sadness, but discovered that the expression came about because tears spill from a crocodile's eyes while it is feasting. And they are not even tears of delight, but simply a physiological response to air being pushed into the glands as it gnaws away.

The first successful reattachment of a human limb was in 1962. Twelve year old Everett Knowles was trying to hop a freight train and was thrown against a wall, ripping his right arm clean off at the shoulder.

Knowles walked away from the tracks holding his severed right arm in his left hand. Rushed to emergency surgery, doctors reconnected the blood vessel, pinned the arm and bone, and grafted skin and muscle together, and Everett regained full use of his arm.

In 2007, teenager Kaitlyn Lasitter experienced a horrific accident riding the Hell-evator at the Six Flags Kentucky amusement park. During the ride a cable snapped, wrapping round both her legs, severing both feet.

Doctors were able only to reattach her right foot but she sadly lost her left.

Kaitlyn's medical bills amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars were held in abeyance until the family's case against the theme park was resolved.

In 2008, Paul Gibbs, a 26 year old student from Leeds was out camping with friends when he was attacked by three men, and his left ear sliced off.

Because his ear was not found until 17 hours after the attack, surgeons stitched it inside Gibbs' stomach so some of the tissue would re-grow.

The ear could then be reconstructed using cartilage from his ribcage and reattached.

Surgeons can be surprisingly creative in repairing lost limbs.

In a 2007 woodworking accident, Garrett La Fever lost his thumb, but with his agreement doctors removed the big toe on his right foot and grafted it onto his right hand to use as a thumb.

The most extraordinary and ground-breaking surgical miracle I unearthed was about 9 year old Sandeep Kaur, who in 1994 in India had her face and scalp completely ripped off by a threshing machine that had caught one of her braids.

India's top micro surgeon, Abraham Thomas, was on duty when

Sandeep arrived at the hospital unconscious, with her face in two pieces in a plastic bag.

The surgeon managed to re-graft her face onto her skull and reconnect the arteries.

Sandeep's recovery was complete; she is now working as a nurse, and her experience has been an inspiration for a number of face-transplant procedures.

My best advice? Stay away from crocodiles, jumping onto trains, amusement park rides, camping, woodworking, or standing near a threshing machine.



In Kentucky, the 'Hell-evator' dropped passengers at 56 mph. After the accident it was renamed the 'Superman Tower of Power'. Another ride at Six Flags, Kingda Ka is not just the fastest, but also the tallest roller coaster in the world. A hydraulic launch mechanism rockets the train from 0 to 128 mph in 3.5 seconds.



Photograph of Mammatus clouds in Hastings, Nebraska, taken by Jorn Olsen in 2004.

Clouds are classified according to their height and appearance. The 10 basic categories were first agreed by the Cloud Committee of the International Meteorological Conference in 1896 and published as the *International Cloud Atlas*.

## **Who is the worst mother on earth?**

Mother Nature occasionally behaves like a very wicked stepmum, simply because she can. When she wakes up feeling grumpy, she may decide to shower you with hailstones as big as filing cabinets. Known by scientists as megacryometeors, they weigh up to 400lbs (the largest recorded, at 484lbs, dropped on Brazil, in summer, without a cloud in the sky). And no, they are not ejections from airline bathrooms; those are coloured blue from disinfectants. There will be no warning, no sudden high wind or temperature change. It is simply the sky falling on top of you in lumps of ice, big enough to turn you into a crater.

On other days when Nature turns nasty, surprised strollers walking under their umbrellas during a heavy rainstorm have suddenly found it literally raining cats and dogs. And fish. This happened when a tornado hit a lake, flinging fish, frogs, and passing pets, high into the air. In Honduras the occurrence happens on average twice a year, but in genteel Bath in 1894, fashionable locals had a rain of jellyfish land on them as they promenaded along Royal Crescent.

I have never seen a Mammatus cloud, but this is the meteorological term for the cellular pattern of pouches hanging underneath the base of a cloud. The name is derived from the resemblance to bosoms (e.g. mammaryies) though clearly, they can momentarily resemble a sky filled with bottoms.

Do you remember the story of the poor pilot of a British Airways flight en route to Málaga, Spain in 1990 who got sucked out of the cockpit window?

Flight attendant Nigel Ogden walked in to offer the Captain Tim Lancaster and his First Officer, Alastair Atchison, a cup of tea. The plane



was rocked by a large bang as Ogden was walking out of the cockpit, and when he turned, here is what he saw: “I whipped round and saw the front windscreen had disappeared when hit by a vicious cyclone and Tim, the pilot, was going out through it.

He had been sucked out of his seatbelt and all I could see were his legs. I jumped over the control column and grabbed him round his waist to avoid him going out completely. His shirt had been pulled off his back and his body was bent upwards, doubled over round the top of the aircraft.

His legs were jammed forward, disconnecting the autopilot, and the flight door was resting on the controls, sending the plane hurtling down very quickly through some of the most congested skies in the world.

Everything was being sucked out of the aircraft: even an oxygen bottle that had been bolted down went flying and nearly knocked my head off. I was holding on for grim death but I could feel myself being sucked out, too. Another attendant rushed in behind me and saw me disappearing, so he grabbed my trouser belt to stop me slipping further, then wrapped the captain’s shoulder strap around me.

Luckily, Alastair, the co-pilot, was still wearing his safety harness from take-off, otherwise he would have gone, too. The aircraft was losing height so quickly the pressure soon equalised and the wind started rushing in – at 630 km and -17°C. Paper was blowing round all over the place and it was impossible for Alastair to hear air-traffic control. We were spiralling down at 80 feet per second with no autopilot and no radio.”

Ogden could feel his arms being pulled out of their sockets. And because of the altitude, it was extremely cold. The co-pilot managed to get the autopilot back on and the plane came back under their control. Nonetheless, the pilot was still stuck outside the window of the plane.

“I was still holding Tim, but my arms were getting weaker, and then he slipped. I thought I was going to lose him, but he ended up bent in a U-shape around the windows. His face was banging against the window with blood coming out of his nose and the side of his head, his arms were

flailing and seemed about 6 feet long. Most terrifyingly, his eyes were wide open. I'll never forget that sight as long as I live. I couldn't hold on any more, so Simon strapped himself into the third pilot's seat and hooked Tim's feet over the back of the captain's seat and held on to his ankles.

One of the others said: "We're going to have to let him go." I said: "I'll never do that." I knew I wouldn't be able to face his family, handing them a matchbox and saying: "This is what is left of your husband."

Remarkably everything turned out well. Eighteen minutes after the windscreen blew, they were back safe on the ground, some people frostbitten, and with a variety of injuries, but all survived.

I try not to remember this little tale, as I strap the seat belt for take-off on any flight I am simply forced to board, praying that Mother Nature is feeling benevolent that day.



Mammatus clouds in Saskatchewan, Canada, June 26th 2012. In Iran clouds are good omens. To indicate someone is blessed they say: *dayem semakum ghaim*, which translates as "your sky is always filled with clouds".