

# Wildlife warrior's exhibition highlights plight of elephants

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**WORLD** record adventurer, artist and conservationist **Holly Budge** is giving a voice to the critical African elephant crisis with a hard-hitting exhibition at the **White Space** in **Alresford**.

Appropriately entitled 'How Many Elephants', the exhibition aims to "close the gap between scientific information and human connection".

Holly, 39, said: "Few people know that 96 African elephants are poached each day for their ivory. At this astonishing rate they will be extinct by 2025."

So passionate is the former Medstead girl about this wildlife catastrophe that she has turned this disheartening statistic into a powerful exhibition, presenting a physical commentary on the devastating impact of the elephant ivory trade.



Holly Budge with a 'How Many Elephants' visual

Driven by a desire to travel to remote areas of the planet, to experience rich and colourful cultures and make a difference to the lives of others, Holly began life as an adventurer at an early age. Describing herself as "practically born in the saddle", she carried on competing for GB in equestrian sport until the age of 21 when she set herself an ambitious goal and became the third woman to be employed as a skydiving camera flyer in Lake Taupo, New Zealand.

ADVERTISING

Holly said: "Getting paid to jump out of aeroplanes was a dream job and one that my careers adviser hadn't mentioned! Being a full-time skydiver taught me a lot about facing fear and, on the other side of the coin, listening to intuition."

In 2008, she became the first woman to skydive Mount Everest and the following year raced semi-wild horses 1,000 kilometres across Mongolia in just nine days.

More recent adventures have taken her back to the Himalayas to climb Mount Everest (8,848m), Cho-oyu (8,201m) and Buruntse (7,129m), and to snowboard from the summit of Mera Peak (6,500m).

She has also made a successful first ascent and summit of Mount Zuchi in the Mongolian Altai Mountains and led an expedition on the technical Ama Dablam (6,812m) in Nepal.

To date, she has raised more than £300,000 through her adventures in support of a diverse range of charities.

Passionate about sustainability, design and conservation, in 2015 she graduated with a masters in sustainable design at the University of Brighton, which is where she created her multi-award-winning campaign How Many Elephants.

Holly said: "Part of the originality of this campaign is in my approach to avoid gruesome and shocking imagery to portray the facts. It is not about scaring people, it's about sharing the enormity of the poaching crisis."

Having dreamed of finding a space to facilitate her own creative endeavours, Holly's vision has now been realised with the conversion of The Old Chapel at The Dean in Alresford to form White Space – a beautiful blank event space which, until January 25, is set to showcase How Many Elephants.

With more than 35,000 elephants being slaughtered annually to satisfy deep-rooted traditions, myths and desires, this exhibition will house 35,040 elephants in a striking floor-to-ceiling display, using a monochrome palette to reflect the indifference of these animals in their fate.

Holly said: "To actually see this data visually is very impactful."

And she added: "A survey carried out by the International Fund for Animal Welfare revealed that 70 per cent of the Chinese population, the most prominent ivory consumers, are not aware that removing ivory from an elephant means to end the life of that elephant.

"The Chinese word for ivory literally translates to tooth giving a false sense their ivory is replenishable.

"This is a stark reminder that greater awareness and education is needed and it must happen quickly.

"To stop the poacher the trader must be stopped. To stop the trader the final buyer must be convinced not to buy mammal ivory of any sort,' said Daniel arap Moi, former Kenyan President."

How Many Elephants is due to travel to international cities, including Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong, over the next 12 months and Holly is curious how the different audiences will react to the exhibition and will record the behaviours, comments and feedback via film and social media.

In the meantime, for the duration of the exhibition in Alresford, Holly is inviting businesses, charities and schools to use the exhibition space, free of charge, to host meetings, talks and workshops with a conservation focus. She is hoping to reach out to more than 1,000 students of all ages during this time.

In addition, the exhibition is open to the public from 10am-4pm on Sunday, January 14, from 6.30pm-9pm on Tuesday, January 16, and from 9am to noon on Saturday, January 20. Entry is free.

A motivational speaker, Holly will be giving a talk on How Many Elephants at 3pm on Saturday, January 20.

For more details, visit [whitespacealresford.com](http://whitespacealresford.com) or [howmanyelephants.com](http://howmanyelephants.com).