

# BLOOD FOR IVORY

Oscar winner takes on ivory trade, terrorists

Two of director Kathryn Bigelow's prior movies deal with the senseless, mass killings that result from terrorism. "The Hurt Locker," which won Oscars for best picture and best director, explores the Iraq War, one of the many unfortunate consequences of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. "Zero Dark Thirty" chronicles the hunt for the mastermind of those attacks, Osama Bin Laden. Tens of thousands of people have died as a result of the attacks and their aftermath, many of them for being in the wrong place at the wrong time.



**KEVIN O'NEILL**  
InSites

The acclaimed director has a new film out that explores another connection between terrorists and mass killings. "Last Days" is a roughly 3-minute, mostly animated film that traces the purchase of an ivory trinket in China backward to a blood-soaked, African savannah littered with the corpses of mutilated elephants.

## Terror, ivory connection

You can watch the film on the website [LastDaysOfIvory.com](http://LastDaysOfIvory.com), a site dedicated to bringing about the final days of ivory-funded terrorism before terrorist poaching brings about the last days of elephants in the wild.

The movie starts with people buying ivory products in a Chinese shop. The action moves backward from the marketplace to a workshop filled with artisans carving useless — but very expensive —

knick knacks from elephant tusks. It continues to a port where a massive cargo ship has brought the tusks from Africa.

You then are transported across the Indian Ocean to the terrorist massacre at the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya. Actual surveillance video from the mall is shown, depicting the cold-blooded murder of innocent shoppers.

Then you backtrack with the attackers to the bush where they get the tusks from poachers. Next, you follow the poachers back to a bloody field where the tusks are being hacked from the massive, lifeless bodies of an elephant herd. A lone, frightened calf paces frantically from corpse to corpse, seeking security. It finds none.

## Beautiful yet haunting

The animation is beautifully rendered with expressive brushwork and rich colors, and it is infused with textures that evoke elephants' rough skin. Yet the images it depicts are graphic and disturbing. Captions displayed throughout the film explain the terrorist connection to the ivory trade and cite grim statistics.

The short film will make viewers sad and angry. The website, however, provides several resources through which you can channel your anger to help stop the senseless slaughter of one of the world's most magnificent creatures.

There are links to share the site and spread the message on social media. You can donate to non-profit organizations dedicated to the cause. The website provides links to policy makers in the United States and around the world to build grassroots pressure for change. And it offers links to articles and reports from various sources so you can learn more about the problem.

The short-sighted massacre of noble, intelligent beings for the selfish whims of ignorant, materialistic consumers should be enough to make people take action, but it isn't. Maybe the fact that the money people spend on their blood trinkets funds their own murders in the shopping malls in which they worship will wake them up.

**KEVIN O'NEILL** is a staff artist for The Times-Tribune. Share your favorite websites and apps with him at [koneill@timeshamrock.com](mailto:koneill@timeshamrock.com).

## Poaching facts

**15** Minutes between elephant killings in Africa

**30,000** Approximate number of elephants killed by poachers every year

**11** Number of years before wild elephants could be extinct

**4th** Wildlife trade's rank in worth of illegal businesses, behind drugs, weapons and humans

**\$600,000** Monthly income of terrorist group al-Shabaab from the ivory trade. Many other terrorist groups also profit from the trade.

**Billions** Estimated value of annual illegal wildlife trade in dollars