

Art from the Sea

Give and Take

Sailor's Art

- <https://www.mysticseaport.org/explore/exhibits/sailor-made-folk-art-of-the-sea/>

Figureheads

A figurehead is a carved and painted figure ornamenting the bow of a ship. (For thousands of years people have been carving and imaginatively decorating the vessels in which they take to the water.

Many figureheads relate to the name of the vessel, or to the owner, although some are simply a random decorative device. Caryatids, allegorical figures, putti, gods, warriors and other devices are all borrowed from high art. The style will often derive from whatever artistic or architectural ideas are most popular on shore at that time.

To the earliest seafarers figureheads had religious/spiritual significance. The earliest figurehead was in fact the actual head and skin of a real animal. The worldwide superstition about installing a protective figurehead and not removing it has continued to this day. Then, as now, a figurehead signified artistic skill and prestige, tribal allegiances and ownership.

Cutty Sark Figurehead Restoration

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-erEA7JoVg>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LX-vZTIRuOk> (shorter)



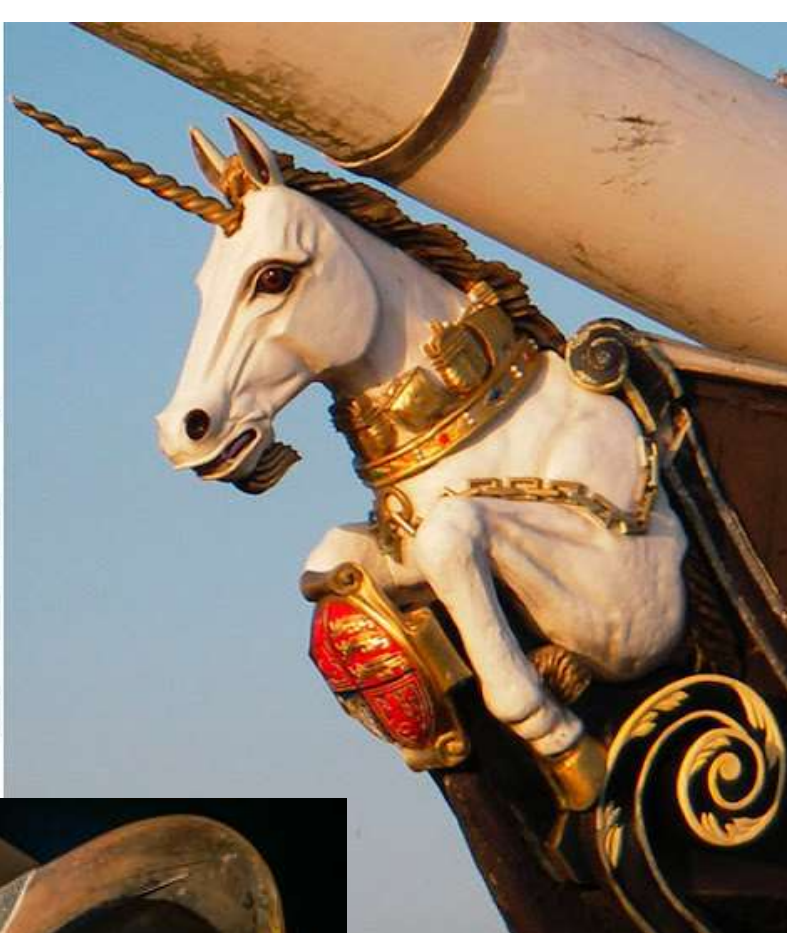


bwc22460160 Barewalls













bwc8194943 Barewalls

Scrimshaw

Scrimshaw is a kind of carving that was done by primarily the crews of deepwater whaling vessels in the 1800s. And no nation had more whaling ships afloat in that era than America: In 1846, for example, it had some [640 whaling ships](#), which was three times as many as the rest of the world's nations combined. This is partly why scrimshaw is widely seen as an indigenous *American* art form — and the only one, in fact, outside of Native American handwork.

So what distinguishes scrimshaw from mere whittling? According to E. Norman Flayderman's *Scrimshaw and Scrimshanders*, it comes down to nautical ties. Historically speaking, scrimshaw artists (aka “scrimshanders”) were whalers, sailors, or others who made their living on the sea. They used materials taken from sea animals, mainly whales but also porpoises, walruses, and even mollusks. And finally, they tended to depict nautical scenes and motifs: ships, flags, anchors, and so on.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9DVqWOaLKic>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqm4oajpSF4> (long no sound)









Sailor's Tattoos

Tattooing has a rich and long history, originating in prehistoric times. The word tattoo comes from the Tahitian word tattau, meaning "to mark". Records of tattoos in European and American sailing culture prior to the eighteenth century are scarce, with descriptions first appearing in association with voyages such as Captain James Cook's passage through Tahiti and New Zealand. However, evidence exists that the practice of marking the body with ink existed amongst American and European seafarers long before eighteenth-century contact with Polynesians ensued. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, documentation of American sailor's tattoos became much more detailed and complete when Congress passed an "Act for the Relief and Protection of American Seamen" in 1796. The act was passed in order to protect American seamen from impressment into the Royal Navy in the years that led up to the War of 1812. Each sailor who served on United States vessels applied for a certificate of protection and had a strong incentive to make sure that his description on the document was accurate, including the description of his tattoos

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RE9iLHjoQgg> (history)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ztY5vl-V7OM> (good)

Polynesian Tattoos

Historically there was no writing in Polynesian culture so the Polynesian's used tattoo art that was full of distinctive signs to express their identity and personality. Tattoos would indicate status in a hierarchical society as well as sexual maturity, genealogy and ones rank within the society. Nearly everyone in ancient Polynesian society was tattooed.

The Polynesian islands that were first first visited were the Marquesas Islands, which were found by European explorers and the Spanish navigator, Alvaro de Mendana de Neira, in 1595. However, the European navigators showed little interest due to the lack of valuable resources.

Captain James Cook (as mentioned in our comprehensive guide to Maori tattooing) was the first navigator trying to explore the aforementioned Polynesian triangle.

In 1771, when James Cook first returned to Tahiti and New Zealand from his first voyage, the word "tattoo" appeared in Europe. He narrated the behaviours of the Polynesian people in his voyage, which he called tattaw. He also brought a Tahitian named Ma'i to Europe and since then tattoo started to become rapidly famous, predominantly because of the tattoos of Ma'i.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-dVm663sm44&t=24s>
- <https://www.pbs.org/video/polynesian-tattoo-0pq1sy/> (use this)



Human figures, otherwise known as enata in Marquesan language, represent men, women and sometimes gods. They can be placed within a tattoo to represent people and their relations. If they are placed upside down then they can be used to represent defeated enemies.

Sharks are one of the favourite forms that aumakua choose to appear to man. They represent protection, guidance and strength as well as fierceness however, they are also symbols of adaptability in many cultures.



The spearhead is used to represent the warrior nature of the spear. Spear-heads are very symbolic in relation to sharp items too and they can be used to represent the sting of some animals.



The ocean is a second home to Polynesian people and the place of rest when they leave for their last voyage. Coincidentally, turtles are said to join the departed guiding them to their destinations. So sometimes, the ocean can be used to represent death and the beyond. Since the ocean is the primary source of food, it is no wonder it impacts so much tradition and myth. All the creatures living in the ocean are associated with several meanings, usually mutated from their characteristic traits and habits. The ocean and the sea can be represented by waves.



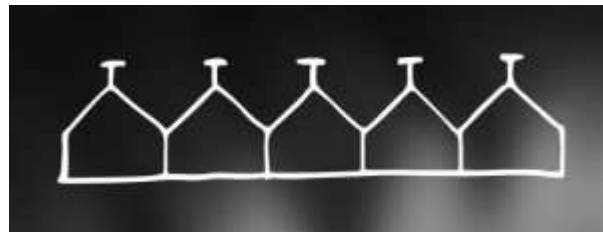
One meaning of the word tiki is figure, so tiki is the name given to human-like figures that usually represent semi-gods as opposed to atua, who usually appear to men under the shape of animals such as lizards.

The tiki can also represent deified ancestors, priests and chiefs who became semi-gods after their passing. They symbolize protection, fertility and they serve as guardians.



Tiki Eyes

Turtle shell pattern



The turtle or honu is another important creature throughout all Polynesian cultures and has been associated with several meanings. The first being the fact that turtles symbolise health, fertility, longevity in life, foundation, peace and rest.

The word hono, meaning turtle in Marquesan language, has other meanings which encompass things such as joining and stitching together families and representing the idea of unity.





Lizards and geckos are often called mo'o or moko and they play an important role in Polynesian myth. Gods (atua) and minor spirits often appeared to men in the form of lizards and this may explain why the stylized element used to represent the lizard is very similar to the stylized symbol used to represent man.

Lizards are very powerful creatures who bring good luck, communicate between the humans and the gods and who can access the invisible world. On the other hand, they can also bring death and bad omens to people who are disrespectful.



The stingray has the ability to hide in the underwater sands, mainly from sharks and is able to cover up with sand and lay still. Most sharks can sense prey in the sand based on movement but for the most part the stingray is able to hide and for this reason, it's image is classed as a symbol of protection. Other themes that go hand in hand with the sting-ray image are adaptation, gracefulness, peacefulness, danger, agility, speed and stealth.

Maori Tattoos (Tāmoko)

Ta moko - traditional Māori tattooing, often on the face - is a taonga (treasure) to Māori for which the purpose and applications are sacred.

Each moko contains ancestral tribal messages specific to the wearer. These messages tell the story of the wearer's family and tribal affiliations, and their place in these social structures.

A moko's message also portrays the wearer's genealogy, knowledge and social standing.

Kirituhi means skin art and describes more general tattooing.

Moko is the practice of scarring and marking the skin to reflect the *whakapapa* (genealogy) of the Māori wearer.

- <https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/discover-collections/read-watch-play/maori/tamoko-maori-tattoos-history-practice-and-meanings>





Sailor Jerry (1911-1973)

Norman Keith Collins, known popularly as **Sailor Jerry**, was a prominent American tattoo artist in Hawaii who was well known for his sailor tattoos. He is considered the Godfather of American tattooing. In fact, his tattoo style is still popular to this day and became part of the **old school tattoo style**, along with other well-known tattoo artists of that time, such as Herbert Hoffmann, Bert Grimm, Bob Shaw and Bert Krak.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32QCkVt5yDE>

of the

ED SHIP

SWALLO

HULA GIRL

SSSED

A sailor had been
around Cape Horn.

Tattooed for every 5,000 nautical miles they travelled.

So a sailor could always find their way home.

A single anchor told that a sailor had crossed the Atlantic or was a Merchant Mariner.

arned when
initiated into
ing Neptune's
ourt after
rossing the
quator.

Signified
military
naval
service.

U.S. sailors who had been to Hawaii.

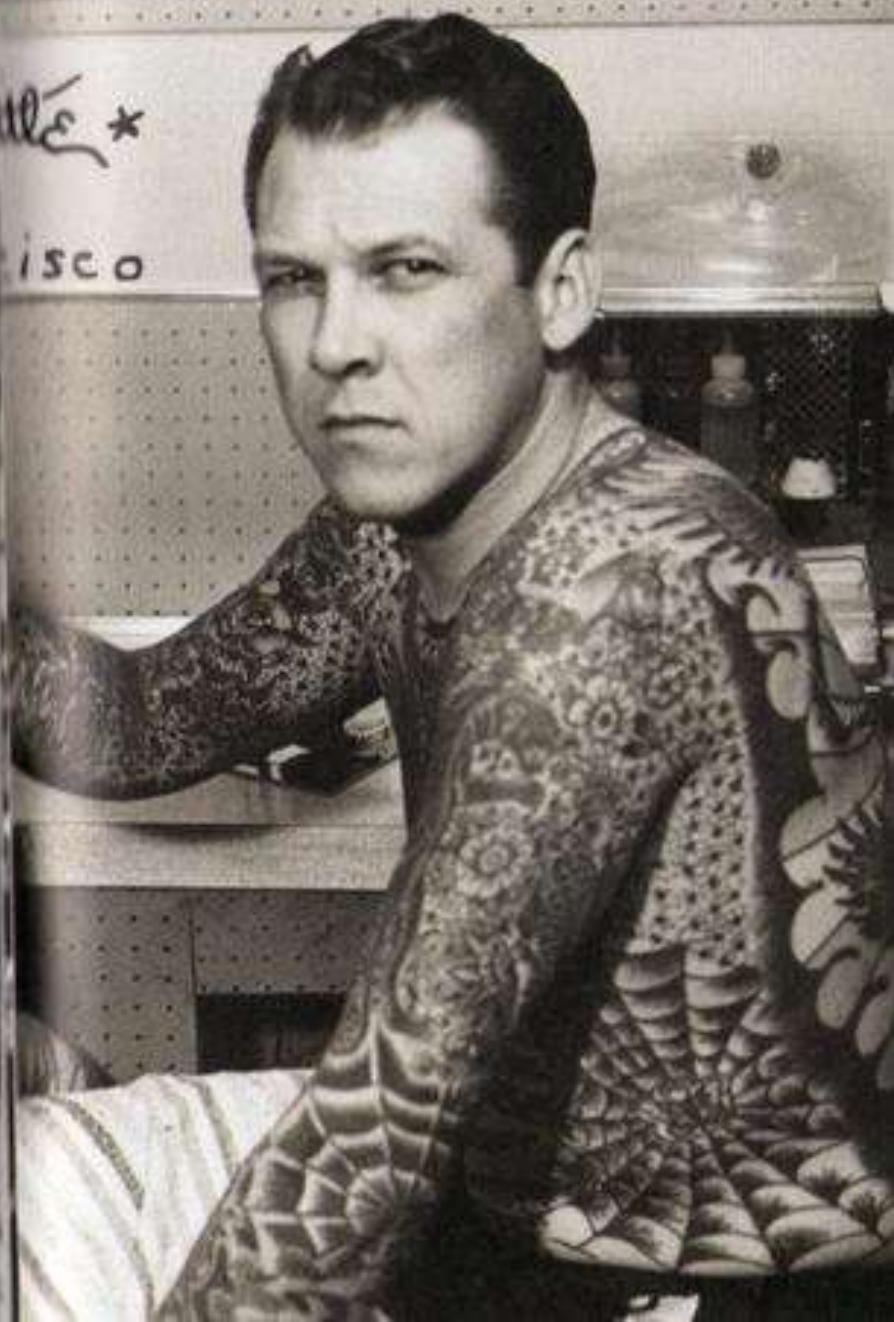
A knot of rope around the wrist indicates a sailor's rank as a deckhand.

HOLD and FAST
were written across
the knuckles on each

Placed on the webbing between the thumb and index fingers marked a bos'n or boatswain

To "Les Skunk", the
finest, from
* Lyle Tuttle *

SAN FRANCISCO











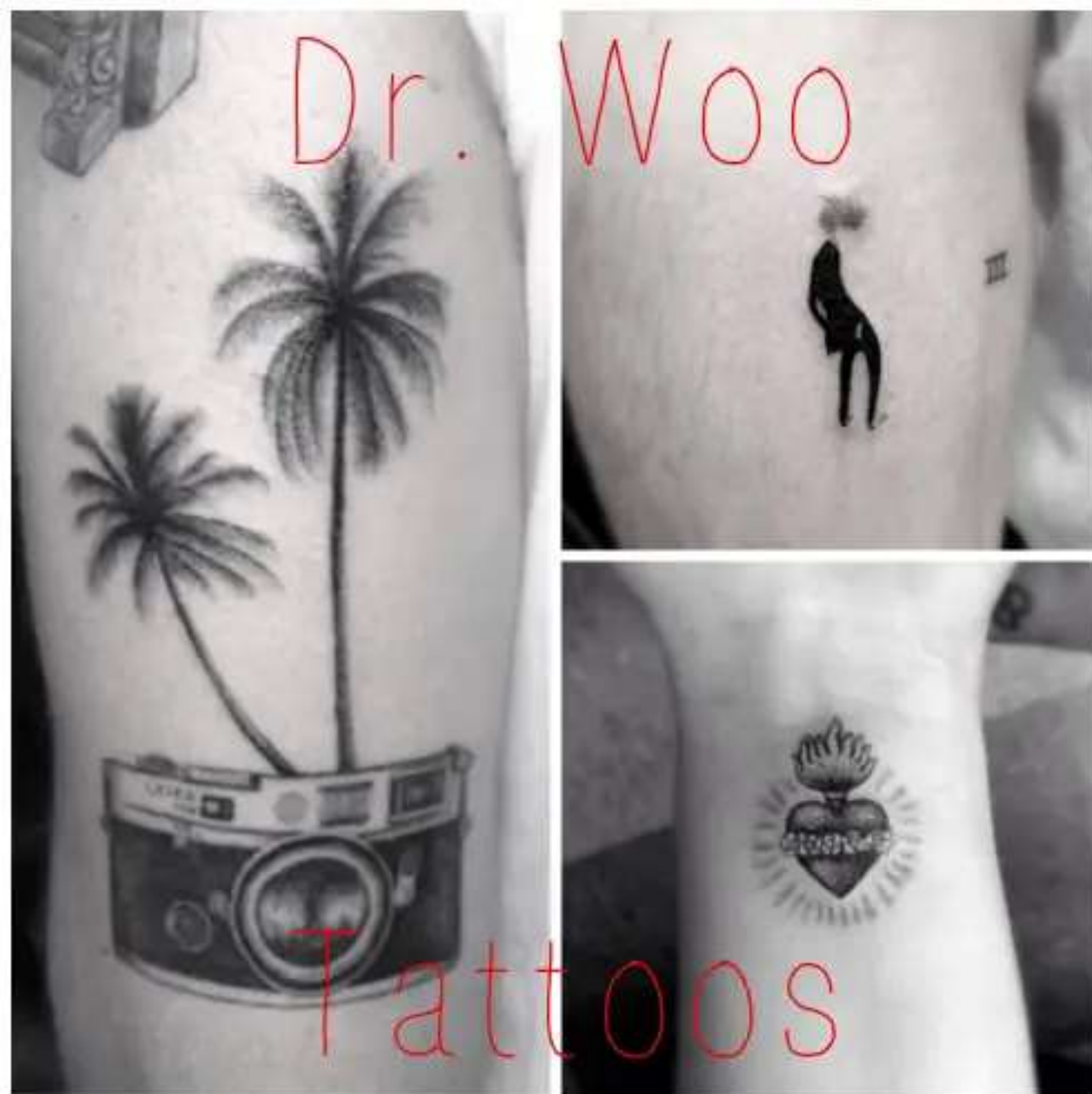


Dr. Woo

- <https://www.discoverlosangeles.com/things-to-do/heres-your-tattoo-appointment-with-dr-woo> (short)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSRAA2rfHaY> (longer)









Sailor's Valentine

Made in the late 18th to early 19th centuries by gluing shells onto cotton batting in intricate patterns, then encasing them under glass and in an octagonal wooden frame, these delicate delights would be gifted to loved ones by sailors on their return home.

As the name suggests, they would often be centered around a heart shape design, though not always – flowers, anchors, and other nautical symbols were also common. (And even on rare occasions, rather more blush-inducing images...) Sometimes tiny shells or seeds would be arranged to spell out messages, like *'Home Again'*, *'Forget Me Not'*, *'Forever Yours'*.

The romantic tale of these were that sailors themselves, pining for their Valentines on the other side of the ocean, made them with their own rope-burned, sea salt-wizened hands. The real story is that they were purchased by sailors as ready-made gifts, primarily from Barbados. One shop in particular seems to have originated the idea and created a cottage industry on the island around them.

BH and George Belgrave, two English brothers, owned a shop in Bridgetown – Belgrave's Curiosity Shop. The brothers organized local women to create the designs using shells and seeds indigenous to Barbados. As ships often landed in Barbados as their last stop before returning to America or Britain, the brothers sold these to sailors on the lookout for souvenirs to take home after months or even years away.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkhTgDIVGIM>





Arthur W. Erickson
Old Native Arts and Unusual Antiques





THE LURE OF THE SEA:

*the story of
Sailor's Valentines*









GRAND BALL GIVEN BY THE WHALES IN HONOR OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE OIL WELLS IN PENNSYLVANIA

Angela Haseltine Pozzi--Washed Ashore

Washed Ashore is a project of the Artula Institute for Art and Environmental Education [U.S. 501\(c\)\(3\)](#) grassroots non-profit [environmental organization](#) that works to bring awareness to the world's growing [plastic pollution](#) problem through art. Washed Ashore is a large touring exhibit composed of massive sculptures made up of marine debris collected by volunteers primarily along the southern coast of [Oregon](#). [Angela Haseltine Pozzi](#) is the founder and creative director.

The mission statement is "To bring awareness to the [ocean's plastic pollution](#) problem and influence consumer habits by creating community built aesthetically powerful art.

Founded in 2010 by Angela Haseltine Pozzi, an artist and educator for over 30 years,^[1] the unique non-profit organization has built over 66 giant sculptures from over 17 tons of ocean garbage, and the exhibit, including educational signage, has appeared at numerous venues including SeaWorld Parks throughout the US, The Virginia Aquarium, San Francisco Zoo, [The Marine Mammal Center](#)^[2] in [Sausalito, California](#) [Newport](#) Visual Arts Center, the [Chula Vista, California](#) Nature Center,^[3] [Portland Community College](#), America's Cup Healthy Oceans Exhibit and the [Oregon Coast Aquarium](#).

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qpj-ITOIKeU> (use this)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wNEJhPj_yUY
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4V_RZ-p9-Y (long but good)




WASHED/ASHORE.ORG
ART TO SAVE THE SEA









Judith and Richard Lang

Since 1999 Richard Lang and Judith Selby Lang have been visiting 1000 yards of Kehoe Beach in the Point Reyes National Seashore. We have rambled this one remote beach hundreds of times to gather plastic debris washing out of the Pacific Ocean. By carefully collecting and "curating" the bits of plastic, we fashion it into works of art— art that matter-of-factly shows, with minimal artifice, the material as it is. The viewer is often surprised that this colorful stuff is the thermoplastic junk of our throwaway culture. As we have deepened our practice we've found, like archeologists, that each bit of what we find opens into a pinpoint look at the whole of human culture. Each bit has a story to tell.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ShMLZOlynO0>







Alejandro Duran

[Alejandro Durán](#) is a multimedia artist from Mexico City, now based in Brooklyn. The meticulously arranged photographs in his *Washed Up* series aim to “reveal the pervasive impact of consumer culture on the natural world” and “the fraught intersections of man and nature.” On [his website](#), he encourages fans of his work to keep informed on the issue of plastic pollution and to make changes in their lives to reduce their impact on the environment.



John Dahlsen

[John Dahlsen](#) is a prolific Australian artist who treats the beach litter he collects as a painters palette. He writes, “it literally amazes me to think how many times I have bent over to pick up the many thousands of pieces of plastic debris that made up that aspect of my art, each piece jostled around for who knows how long by sand, sun and ocean, their form faded and rounded by the elements.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DfVi01FZD5I>











Steve McPherson

Since 2007 Steve McPherson's primary source materials have been the discarded plastic objects that wash ashore on his local Kent coast of the UK. While it is impossible to ignore the environmental concerns present in his work, he draws analogies with his practice akin to the role of archaeologist/collector/and paradoxical treasure hunter. It is the alchemical processing of these remnants that he explores within a multidisciplinary practice. Via experimental tests of recycling and re-purposing, he seeks to plunder personal and collective narratives and bring them back to the surface of memory for new consideration.

Steve McPherson is an internationally exhibited artist whose practice includes, assemblage, collections, sculptural objects, installation, book works, photography, and sound. These are undertaken in aesthetics born from utility, science, the laboratory and museum. Reflecting his interest in the way that the mundane can move through a transformative state into meaning.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lKiCo7k7FWM&t=61s>











Mandy Barker

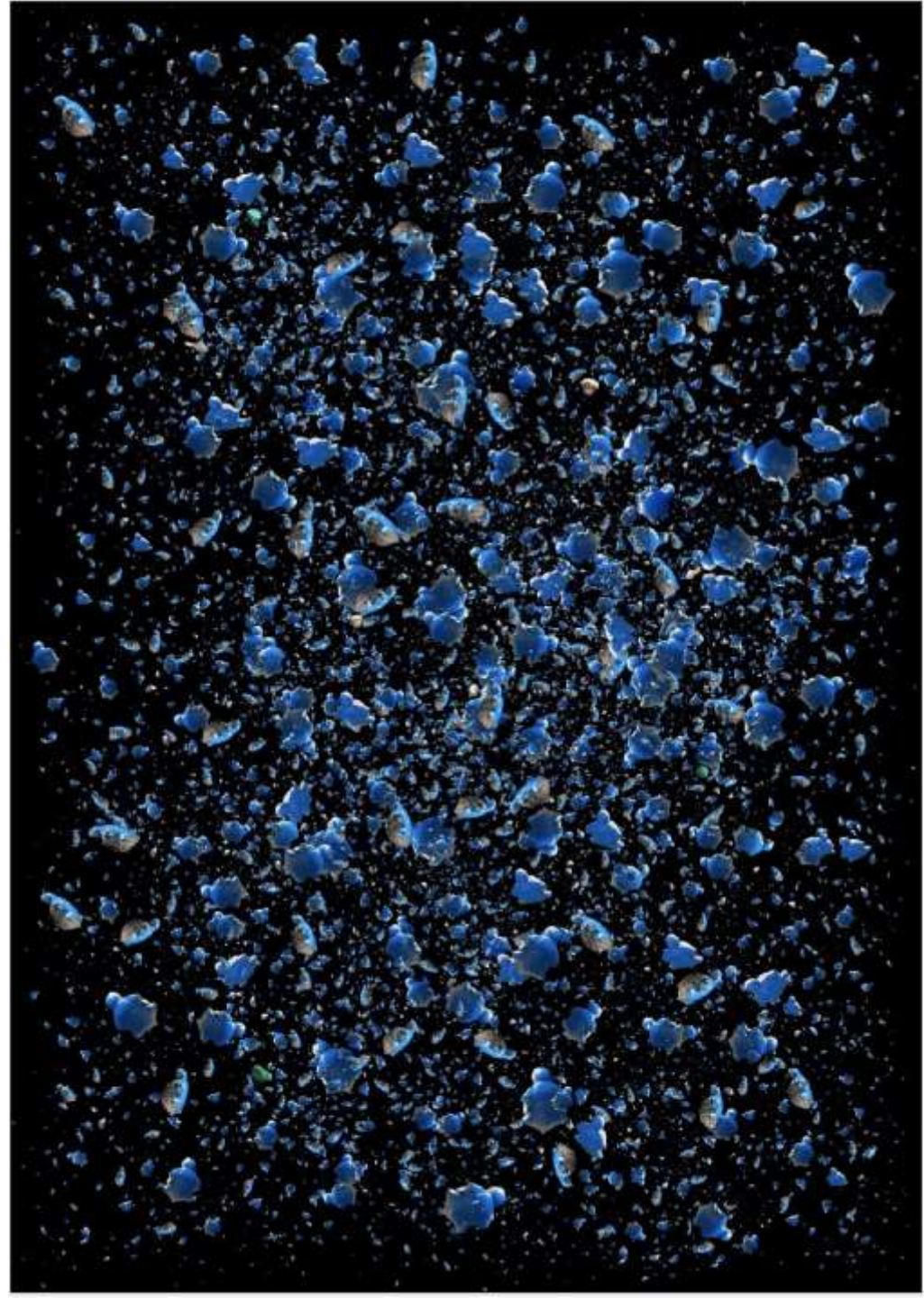
Mandy Barker is a British photographer. She is mostly known for work with marine plastic debris. Barker has worked alongside scientists in hopes of bringing awareness to the mass amount of plastic that is floating around in our oceans.

<https://www.photopedagogy.com/altered-ocean.html>











Jason deCaires Taylor



Jason deCaires Taylor is a British sculptor and creator of the world's first underwater sculpture park – the Molinere Underwater Sculpture Park – and underwater museum.

Jason de Caires Taylor was born in 1974 and divided the earlier part of his life in Europe, Asia and the Caribbean. Much of his childhood was spent on the coral reefs of Malaysia where he developed a profound love of the sea and a fascination with the natural world. This would later lead him to spend several years working as a scuba diving instructor in various parts of the globe, developing a strong interest in conservation, underwater naturalism and photography.

In 1998, Taylor received a BA Honours in Sculpture and Ceramics from Camberwell College of Arts, but his scuba diving qualification would prove equally important to his art career. In May 2006 he created the world's first underwater sculpture park in Grenada, West Indies, furnished with underwater sculptures of his design. These sculptures create a unique, absorbing and expansive visual seascape, highlighting natural ecological processes while offering the viewer privileged temporal encounters.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52m5L1UxRAw> (3 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k81odhXg2Lw&t=65s> (8 mins)









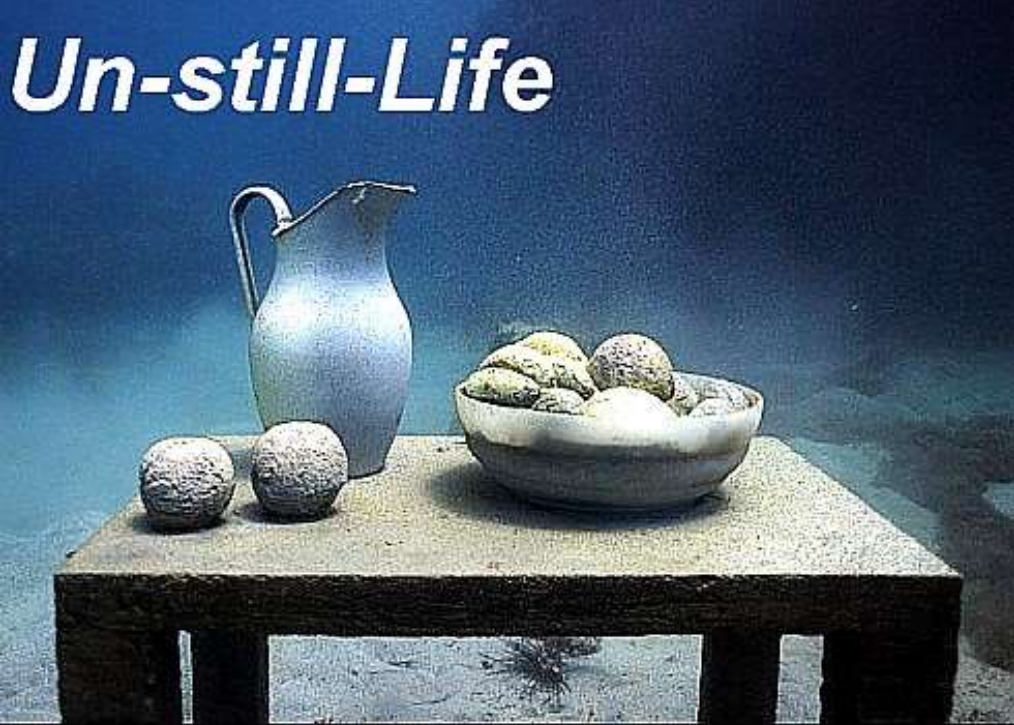
The Gardener of Hope







Un-still-Life





Underwater Museums

- <https://www.dw.com/en/underwater-art-gallery-off-the-coast-of-cannes/av-57626638>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVlcq0t4J_4
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8ppd_uc5kl

Assignment Suggestions...

- Go beachcombing! Collect some washed up objects (natural and/or man-made) and construct an artwork. (It can be a collection of objects that you've kept from previous perambulations.) You can photograph or paint an assemblage and disassemble it.
- Create line art with a limited palette (e.g., Sailor Jerry) or black and white (e.g., scrimshaw or Dr. Woo.)
- Create an artwork dealing with regeneration/transformation.
- Paint how the ocean makes you feel.