

## *The Heart of the Ocean* Body of Work

The ocean. Ebbing and flowing, it comes in waves. Sometimes, it is calm and even-tempered, as it leads you to the conclusion that it can be preserved in a box. It is something that can be exploited for your own advantage; for your own personal gains particularly when it is, at times, vulnerable and tranquil. Though, as it shifts and changes, its waves become overpowering and all consuming, until the box shatters. The current becomes too strong for reasoning and soon the once peaceful sea is now uncontrollable and uninhabited. It must be left to be wild and free.

On April 20, 2010, the *BP Deep Water Horizon*<sup>1</sup> drilling rig exploded off the Gulf of Mexico. Soon, approximately 4.9 million barrels of oil began spewing into the water and occupied 176,100 km<sup>2</sup>. With the oil affecting the homes of approximately 8,332 different marine species, this oil spill is still considered to be one of the largest environmental disasters in history<sup>2</sup>. As a surf lifesaver and someone who is passionate about the ocean, this environmental disaster served as inspiration for my major body of work.

Local South Australian resin artist, Kate Keefe, who works predominantly on circle canvases, heavily influenced my work, particularly in terms of the colour contrasts. Similarly, Byron Bay resin artist Mitch Gobel, who works on large-scale resin pieces, played a pivotal role in inspiring the way in which I approached the more intricate details of resin art such as mine, which focussed on representing an oil spill. The visual link between aerial photographs of the oil spill and resin artworks like Keefe's provided me with a vision, to create my own resin works based on the theme of ocean conservation. It is the sea around which my life has revolved. It lives next door to me; I see it every day; I touch it every other day. It is a part of me. It creates a passion within me for its conservation.

Given that surfing is synonymous with the sea, I was inspired to use an old surfboard as a symbolic 'canvas' for my first resin design. I have displayed the resin design to illustrate the oil spill on a surfboard, in order to present the link from my personal passions and the devastating oil spill. I was influenced by the black and metallic colours of the oil spill, juxtaposed with the light blues and aqua tinges at the nose of the surfboard that represent the calm, tranquil waters prior to the spill. The deck (middle of the board) represents the damage of the spill, the serene waters suddenly exploited and abused as a consequence of human activity. The contrast between the light blue and sudden dark brown tones was inspired by Keefe's works, which often feature contrasting colours to symbolise water meeting the sand. Through my research into the BP oil spill, I was drawn to a photograph that displays the oil spill's effects on wildlife and habitat loss in the surrounding areas. The image features a small, curling wave in which speckles of separated oil are dotted throughout the water. The photograph depicts the pristine beauty of the ocean immediately alongside the contamination created by human activity. This photograph provided the inspiration for the tail of the surfboard, where I used a cell technique inspired by Gobel.

It was important to contextualise this surfboard art by using a backdrop around which it could be framed. In creating the backdrop wall, I was inspired by tattoo artist Lilly Anchor and illustrator Katie Scott. Both Anchor and Scott practise a striking stippling technique in their works, which I incorporated

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1. Pallardy, R. (2010). Deepwater Horizon oil spill of 2010. In: *Encyclopedia Britannica*. [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com), Online.

2. *President Obama's Oval Office Address on BP Oil Spill & Energy*. (2010). [video] The Obama White House: YouTube.

into my mural illustrations. The illustrations depict the various types of marine animals affected by the oil spill. They also act as a tribute behind the surfboard that represents the disaster. The stippling effect used throughout my illustrations keeps the cohesion within the body of work, as the surfboard displays a similar effect in the cells. Both the resin cells and the stippling in the illustrations are inspired by the photograph of the wave; this theme of speckled oil bringing together two unlikely forms of artwork to consistently visually appeal to the viewer.

The second piece of art is a projection that displays an experimental short film, which presents the brutality of the oil spill, while hypnotically capturing the event with cuts to news reports and majestic aerial shots of Second Valley. It is this drone footage that challenges the viewer to consider the majesty and beauty of the sea and our environment in which we live. This footage is also intertwined with President Obama's compelling address to the world that redemption for this spill needs to occur and that action will be taken to stop environmental destruction by humans. Filmmaker Thomas Blanchard, whose works are prominently experimental films, influenced me in this component. Blanchard often explores different themes through the use of double exposure and geographical content, and has several short films made with the help of a macro lens, so the audience can witness the psychedelic nature of different liquids as they blend together. My film incorporates Blanchard's style through the use of double exposure, close-up resin and fast paced cuts to the soundtrack; Blanchard's work not only inspired my short film, but also my resin designs. My short film is laden with unique graphic overlays and textures, in order to create visual stimuli for the audience.

Finally, the last piece in my body of work is a continuation of the theme depicted on the surfboard. However, in this instance the resin art, which displays the devastation of the oil spill in the ocean and situated on a round canvas, is sitting next to the illustration, not in front as it was with the surfboard. The resin canvas, which was again influenced by Keefe and Gobel's style, is no longer the focal point. Rather, it is supplementary to the illustration. This resin art also displays lighter tones and less tonal contrast to the canvas in comparison to the surfboard. This represents the waters returning to their natural colour, while simultaneously displaying the damage the drilling rig explosion has done to the ocean. Hanging next to the canvas is a transparent, Perspex, illustration depicting the 'heart of the ocean,' and serves as the name of my body of work. This piece thematically, and symbolically ties the different aspects of the work together to rest in one place, the heart. Scott and Anchor again inspired the illustration, although artists Alfred Basha and Nora originally inspired the concept of different features constructing the heart. The heart is created from various sea creatures, symbolising that our marine life is the soul core of our sea, and the beating heart of our world. If we do not respect and conserve our marine life, our earth will perish.

I wanted to use my body of work to explore and visually present a timeline of the disastrous oil spill. The right side displays the resin surfboard and illustrated wall mural of marine animals, portraying the death and exploitation of our wondrous marine life. The projection to the top right of that displays a short experimental film, which explores the past, present and future of the ocean in association with the oil spill and the damage it has created. The last piece focuses on a brighter future for marine conservation. With the atrocity that caused the death of 11 individuals and thousands of marine species, it presents a message to suggest that humans are responsible for their actions, while we individually and collectively need to find a way for our future generations to experience the wonder and beauty of our oceans. Ultimately, my body of work communicates to the viewer that, even in an allegory, we can always look for beauty in times of tragedy.

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