

artist profile

Pete Tillack

Transcendent Tranquility

Artist Pete Tillack creates breathtaking waterscapes with an eco-conscious message.

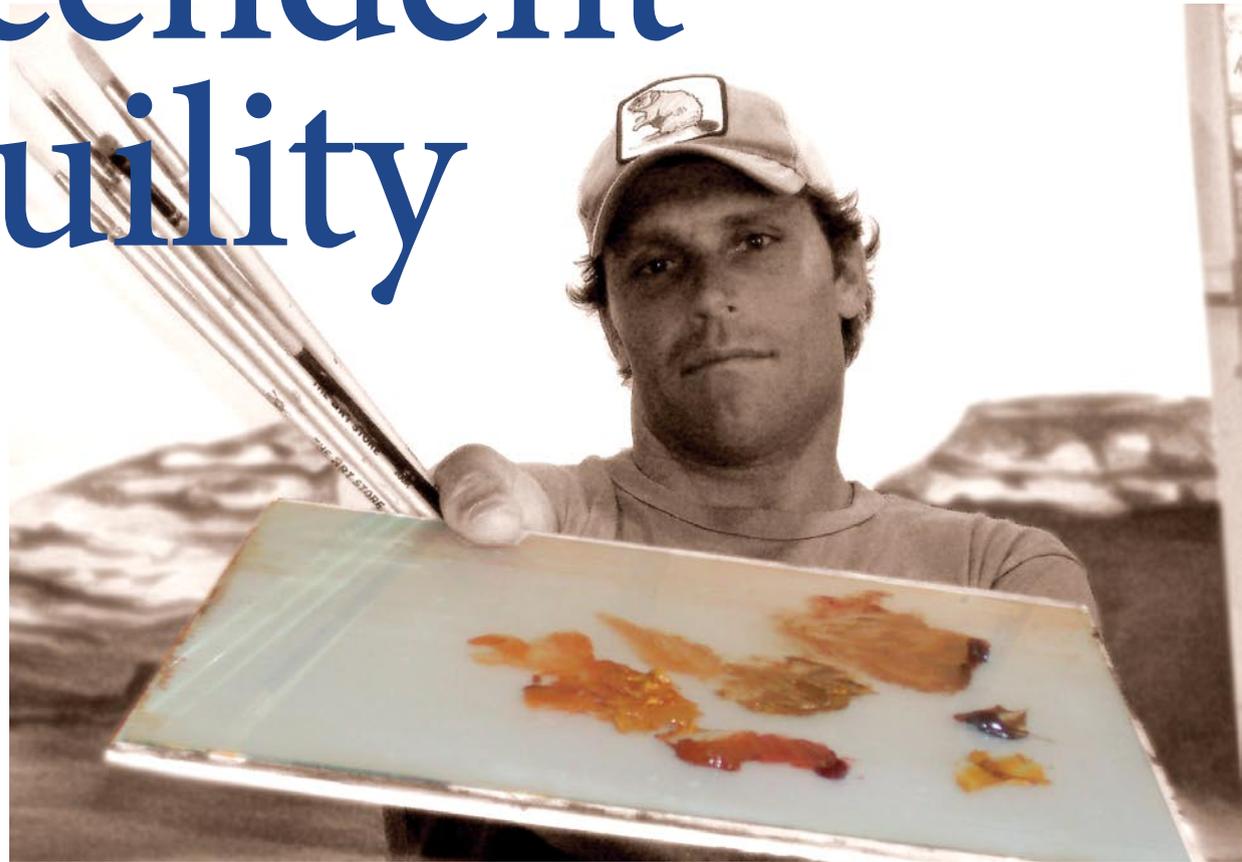
BY MICHAEL WILMERING
ABN Assistant Editor

Australian-born artist Pete Tillack has always had a deep-rooted connection to the ocean. The tranquil waterscapes he creates evoke such a peaceful mindset in his viewers that his collectors have dubbed him the “Master of Mood.”

“‘Master of Mood’ was titled by many a viewer to express the feelings that my work invoked in them,” Tillack says. “It sets a tone of calmness and serenity that we all need in our lives. Many of them get lost in the work and release their daily frustrations and aspirations [and surrender to] their desire to find that place, whether it be real or their dream destination.”



▲ “Abstraction,” an oil on canvas, is an example of Tillack’s new interest—abstract influences mixed with traditional Realism.



Water has always played an integral role in Tillack’s life, and that influence has been transferred into his trademark artistic style of detail, light and color composition. “Nothing is more serene than water,” he says. “I love the reflections and the energy.”

Tillack has been an avid surfer since childhood. Although he never considered painting as a career, he always had an urge to be creative and constantly looked for ways to channel his artistic energy. For Tillack, surfing provided that outlet.

“In the surfing community, we use the phrase

‘the wave is like a canvas;’ it allows the surfer to create whatever he wants using the power and energy [of the waves] and the surfboard as a brush,” he says.

In 1993, Tillack abandoned his job as an electrician in Australia to take a seven-year, surf-inspired journey around the world. This exposed Tillack to the raw beauty of nature, which has become his driving artistic inspiration.

When he could come up with materials, Tillack would create works of art and sell them to pay for his travels, or he would give them away to those who showed him hospitality throughout his journey. However, he still wasn’t confident enough to paint full time. Tillack’s trip was mainly influenced by his search for new waves, but the places he traveled and the peace he found would one day serve as a model for his trademark subject matter.

In 2002, Tillack again found himself working as an electrician building trade-show booths for a U.S.-based company called Studio 2. As the job progressed, Tillack went from strictly erecting walls to adding faux finishes and other decorative elements. Eventually he made the jump to street art and murals. Tillack can still remember the day it all clicked while he and two other artists were creating a 16-x-16-foot chalk mural in Valencia, Spain, for a street festival.

“All of a sudden, it was like a math problem that I finally figured out—the contrasts with shadows, mid-tones and highlights,” Tillack explains. “It all made sense to me.”

Tillack had always felt his work was flat up until

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▲ Tillack is pictured with his daughter, Chilli, and his wife, Lizbeth Garcia.



▲ "Heart of Reasons," oil on canvas

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that point, but that day he discovered a newfound enthusiasm for his art. Soon, he started producing works on surfboards and gradually began experimenting with wood, canvas, mirrors and other mediums. Now, he works almost exclusively with oil on canvas but returns to alternative mediums to keep his creativity freshly stimulated.

"You can't always sing the same song," Tillack says. "Sometimes you have to pick up another guitar and bust out something new."

As a self-taught artist, Tillack believes he has more liberty and mobility; he doesn't feel constrained by traditional rules or techniques. Lately, he has been working on maturing his color palette and experimenting with adding some abstract elements to his Realist waterscapes.

When working with a blank canvas, Tillack envisions a theme and then compiles a collage of images to tell the story he wants to convey. Using the collage as a model, he begins to craft the work with a specific combination of colors and shapes in mind. Tillack keeps a notepad with him at all times because new ideas are constantly stimulated by his surroundings. Oftentimes, he will be halfway through a work when he realizes he wants to push it in a new direction. Before he changes anything, Tillack will digitally capture the image and make some notes for a future piece.

"There are no rules, no set pattern," he says. "That's the great thing about being an artist."

Tillack tries to capture the serenity and beauty of nature through his work in the hopes that it might inspire people to better appreciate the environment. His travels made him increasingly aware of the effect the ever-expanding population has on the ecosystem.

"I hope to show the value of the untouched environment, as it is becoming an endangered species," Tillack says. "With my travels, I've seen so much of the environment and the beauty of it. I've also seen the growth and the damage of what our footprints are creating. If we lose what we've got, we can't really get it back."

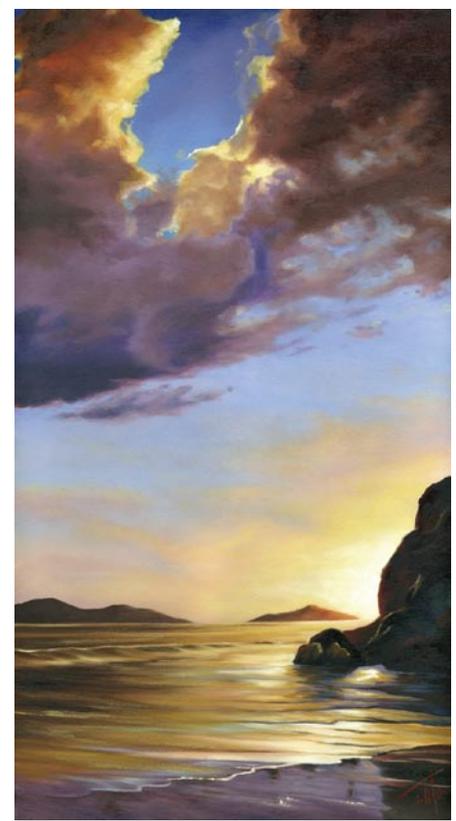
To raise money and global awareness, Tillack has partnered with the Surf Industry Manufacturers Association (SIMA) and Propaganda (a brand consultant group on youth culture) to create original works of art that are auctioned off to benefit oceanic environmental efforts. In 2006, he created "A Surfer's Code," an 11-foot balsa-wood surfboard for the Liquid Nation Foundation, a charity created by The Aguerre Brothers—co-founders of the popular surf company REEF. SIMA organized the auction, and Billabong CEO Paul Naude purchased "A Surfer's Code" for \$20,000. Last year, Naude purchased "Is It Still a Barrel If No One Sees It," a 9-foot, 6-inch balsa-wood board at the 2007 SIMA event.

Before Tillack starts on a piece for charity, he meets with event planners and officials to determine the theme of the event, who will be in attendance and the major issue the benefit is trying to address. This way, he can deliver a personalized piece with significant impact influenced by the fundraiser.

"It symbolizes much more because it's a piece that has been created specifically for that cause," the artist says.

Tillack's resolve to have a positive environmental impact has been strengthened even more by the birth of his daughter, Chilli.

"I can't help but see her following along the same lifestyle that my wife and I have chosen—the life of following your own dreams and living healthy," Tillack says. "To enjoy this, you need to understand



▲ "Revealing," oil on canvas

the effects of the environment and the changes that are being made. We want her to have as good a life as what we're having."

Since his daughter's birth in March 2007, people have noticed more vibrancy in his art, something the artist didn't even realize at first. Upon reflection, Tillack says he is aware of a greater presence of love and compassion expressed in his work, which is an obvious indication of the joy he is experiencing as a new parent. Chilli has even had an influence on his constantly evolving color palette.

"She'll point at one that intrigues her and give a little grunt," Tillack says. "In a way, it's so primitive for her to be attracted to those colors, so I figure that [attraction] has to be in everyone."

For now, Tillack is content to focus on the serenity of water as his primary subject matter and hone his style by experimenting with abstract elements and changing color combinations. He says some of his newer works play off his realistic pieces and use both acrylic and oil. The tranquility he feels when he creates these vivid scenes has an addictive quality.

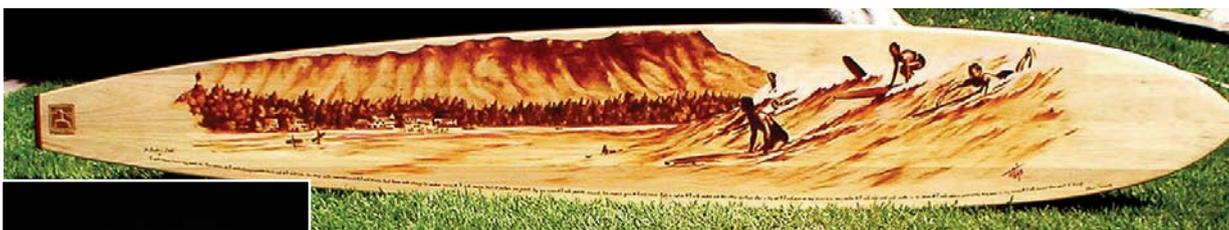
"The more you do, the more you want to do," he says.

Tillack currently resides in San Diego with his wife, Lizbeth Garcia, and their daughter, Chilli. Looking back on his past experiences, Tillack was never sure where he would be from week to week during his world adventure, but he never lost sight of what was truly important and feels fortunate to be where he is today.

"Being an artist is always a challenge from the creative side all the way to the business side, and it is an adventure like my travels," Tillack says. "Nothing beats following your dreams." **ABN**

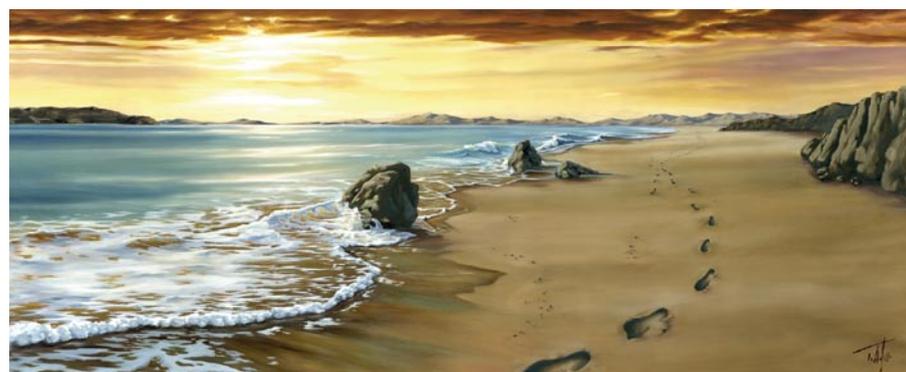
SOURCE

Pete Tillack: 619-476-7380; www.petetillack.com



▲ "A Surfer's Code" is an oil work painted on a handcrafted, 11-foot balsa-wood surfboard. The piece was purchased at a charity auction by Paul Naude, CEO of Billabong.

◀ Tillack's artwork, "A Surfer's Code," was auctioned off for charity at the Liquid Nation Foundation.



◀ "Footprints," oil on board