

# Arts & Entertainment

A weekly guide to music, theater, art, culture, books and more, edited by Heather Zimmerman

**Artist Danielle Eubank captures the world's oceans on canvas. Pamela Walsh Gallery highlights her most recent journey**

WAVE

By Heather Zimmerman

**T**alk about getting one's sea legs: Over the past 20 years, artist Danielle Eubank has sailed all the world's oceans and captured the experiences in abstract paintings that delve into the beauty, unpredictability and drama of the open water.

"Boundless," a show made up largely of Eubank's recent ocean paintings, is on view at Pamela Walsh Gallery in Palo Alto through Jan. 22.

In an interview, Eubank said she was always drawn to water but that there are several reasons why it has become such an important theme in her work. For one thing, she likes a challenge — and always has.

In her childhood, Eubank was already frequently drawing and creating art. Time spent at the beach inspired her from an early age, as she was growing up in Sonoma County near Bodega Bay.

One day, around the age of 12 she recalled, "just looking at the waves, sitting there for a second, not really doing anything, watching the water and thinking, 'I'll never be able to draw that. It's beautiful and it's intense and it's amazing, but I can't think of anything harder to draw,' is what went through my mind at that point," she said.

In addition to the challenge, both the emotional pull of people's experiences with water and the element's ever-shifting nature help open it up, as a subject, to broad interpretation.

"The great thing about water is that it's organic. And what we see in it is highly abstract ... I can create all kinds of shapes that please me and colors that please me and abstract ideas and emotions. And yet I can still mold it to make it look like water, which appeals to everyone.

"...We all have some kind of memory having to do with water, so it's highly evocative," she said.

Eubank has now spent two decades meeting her own challenge of portraying water in her art, with voyages to the world's five oceans: Arctic, Atlantic, Indian, Pacific and Southern. A 2019 trip to the Southern Ocean near Antarctica completed her quest to document all the world's oceans. The bulk of the works featured in "Boundless" were inspired by this most recent trip.

Eubank draws on both colors and textures that viewers might find surprising for ocean-themed paintings, a departure from the expected seaside palette of blues and greens and from the smooth, glassy surfaces that often evoke water in art.

Shades of blue and green do appear in her pieces, but in works such as Southern Ocean IX and Southern Ocean VI, pools and splashes of cool reds and pinks — even

a fiery orange in Southern Ocean X — ripple across the canvas. White makes frequent appearances, adding highlights and a sense of depth and luminescence in pieces such as Southern Ocean XIV.

In Southern Ocean XI and Southern Ocean VII, one can see the brush strokes and occasional peeks of the canvas beneath, while the surface of Southern Ocean XIII appears almost velvety.

Eubank said that once she really began to process the fact that she had visited and painted all of the planet's oceans, "I subconsciously started to free up my palette quite a lot. So I think what's happening is I've documented these waters, and now I'm going into the experience of the waters. And all the time I'm thinking about my feelings about the place, about water in general. So they're much more emotional."

Eubank certainly has unique experiences to share. Not only has she journeyed to the world's five oceans, she has also worked as an expedition painter on a number of these voyages, documenting the crew members and the people on land, the boats and other surroundings encountered on the trip. She has made four international sailing expeditions and two of these trips were made in ships that replicated historical vessels.

Her first such trip was in a replica Borobudur ship, an ancient Indonesian vessel, on a voyage that rounded the Cape of Good Hope sailing from Indonesia to Ghana. The next trip she made was aboard a replica of a 2,500-year-old Phoenician ship that circumnavigated Africa. She also made an expedition to the Arctic on a barquentine (three-masted) tall ship.

Experiencing life aboard these unusual vessels not only offered an up-close perspective on the oceans, but also on how humanity throughout the ages has traveled on water, depended on water and sometimes struggled for survival against the ocean's harshness.

Eubank's 2019 trip to the Southern Ocean was made on a modern ship, but in every respect, each voyage is part of the artistic process. On many of these journeys, Eubank was on board as both an artist and a crew member.

That first trip on the narrow wooden Borobudur ship taught Eubank, among many other things, what she should — and shouldn't — pack as an expedition artist. Canvases not only proved unwieldy in the limited space, but as she noted, canvas is literally the cloth that sails are made of, and they were in danger of blowing away.

She quickly streamlined her supplies to document future voyages: three sketchbooks of varying sizes, including a pocket

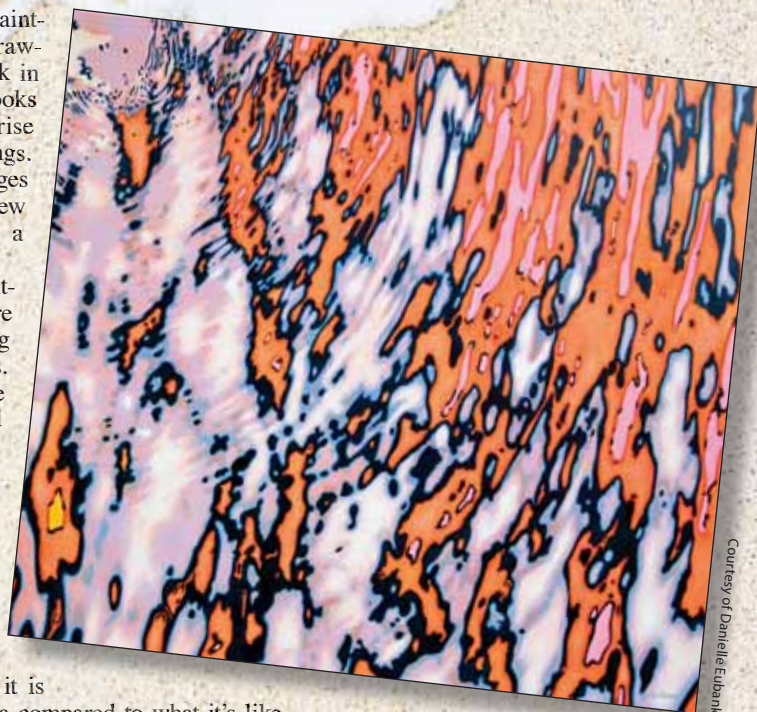
one, for oil paintings and drawings. The work in these sketchbooks would give rise to her paintings. And the voyages shaped her view of water as a subject.

"I was painting water before I started going on expeditions. But I feel like I understand it a lot more. I have always had a healthy respect for the ocean, in terms of its power, but I never really understood how different it is

in the open sea compared to what it's like when it's next to an object like an island: the color changes, the depth changes, the wave patterns change, you get different kinds of waves".

Her travels over 20 years have also revealed evidence of climate change, such as rock exposed by melting ice in the Arctic Ocean and shifts in the behavior of marine life affected by ocean temperature.

Now that Eubank has painted the world's five oceans, she said she would like to visit and paint the five gyres — the vast floating islands of largely plastic trash that continue to grow in the oceans — to raise awareness and spur people to take action against plastic



Courtesy of Danielle Eubank

*Southern Ocean X, above, is among the works featured in "Boundless," an exhibition of paintings by artist Danielle Eubank capturing her 2019 trip to document the Southern Ocean near Antarctica.*

pollution of our oceans.

Pamela Walsh Gallery is located at 540 Ramona St., Palo Alto. For more information, visit [pamelawalshgallery.com](http://pamelawalshgallery.com).

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