

PHOTO: DAVE SAVIDES



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Danielle Eubank enjoys the calm surrounds of the Zululand Yacht Club

Ancient ship is her art studio

Dave Savides

RICHARDS Bay waits with great anticipation for the arrival of The Phoenician Ship Expedition, an attempt to recreate the first circumnavigation of Africa.

This was accomplished by Phoenician mariners in 600BC, according to Greek historian Herodotus.

The latter day journey is being undertaken by a team under Dorset based adventurer Philip Beale, who will sail the 70ft replica 'Phoenician' into our waters in the next week or two.

They launched from Arwad, Syria in August 2008 and have sailed through the Suez Canal, round the Horn of Africa and down the east coast to Mozambique.

Ahead of them has travelled the expedition's artist, Danielle Eubank, who refers to herself as a 'waterscape artist blessed with a good visual memory'.

She paints water in all its changing forms - movement, colours, reflection, refraction, lighting and flow - interspersed with nautical subjects from fish to anchors to sails.

Her renderings of the world's oceans 'bestride the line between realism and abstraction' according to one critic.

Environment

'For me, the most exciting aspect of this project is finding new material for painting.

'Each body of water is different,' says Danielle.

'The environment of light, depth, current, and of course reflections of buildings and boats on the surface of the water tell a little story about the culture at the site of the water.

'I like to imbue each painting with something extra, a feeling of the place.

'My paintings are not narratives.

'On the one hand they are about the shapes and colours, and on the other they are about the reminders of a sensation or feeling that a place evokes.'

People and places

As a crew member on the 'Phoenician', Danielle has had plenty of interaction with locals along the voyage.

'For example in Arwad, Syria, I was approached by a little girl who wanted to see what I was doing.

'She taught me a lot of Arabic words, scribbled in my sketchbook as a permanent reminder of my days in the boatyard.

'In a short time I got the question 'Can

you draw me?' How could I say no?

'Not long after more little girls and boys show up, and occasionally their parents - I think I met every little kid on the island.

'When I returned to continue working on the boat a few months later I brought back a big pack of colour prints of the sketches and photos for all the kids I met.'

The most memorable thing about being on the boat is the night, says Danielle.

'That's when being at sea really feels different. The stars are like low hanging lamps. They shine all the way down at the horizon.

'Laying on the foredeck watching the stars 'move' back and forward, interspersed by the silhouette of rigging and wood.'

There have also been less tranquil occasions.

'One time, in Philip Beale's last venture, The Borobudur Ship, I got a healthy reality check.

'It was an early morning change of watch so one crewmate put a line out the stern with a hook on it and stumbled off to bed.

'An hour later he returned to check on the status.

'I'm calmly minding the tiller while leaning against a teak beam, just above the water line, when I hear him give a little yelp.

'Not only had he caught a beautiful dorado, but there was only a crescent shaped head left of the fish.

'In that hour's time, he had caught a dorado and a shark had come for his breakfast.

'It was a sharp reminder to me of what goes on only inches below our feet at sea.'