

Multimedia professor is a full-time artist

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Danielle Eubank, the first student to get a master of fine arts degree with an emphasis in interactive media from UCLA, is currently an adjunct professor of multimedia at the University of La Verne. Eubank worked for the BBC in London and is also an accomplished painter who has painted major bodies of water while sailing on ancient vessels in many countries. / photo by Nadira Fatah

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Although University of La Verne students may know Danielle Eubank as an adjunct professor of multimedia, teaching is only one of her many achievements. She teaches one day a week, and on the other days, she is an oil painter working in her studio in Tujunga.

Since 2001, Eubank has been painting all the major bodies of water of the planet – 200 bodies of water in 21 countries. Her waterscape oil paintings are inspired by locations, and she wants to bring awareness to environmental issues, especially human destruction to nature.

“One of the reasons I paint is to get people to think about water in different ways, sort of taking something we see every day and looking at them in a fresh way,” said Eubank, who only produces artworks with environmentally friendly materials. “My work is formal, so it’s a response to what I see and not a narrative of what I see. I’m evoking emotions through color, form, line and texture.”

In 1994, she was the first UCLA student to graduate with a master of fine arts degree with an emphasis in interactive media. The World Wide Web was just invented, and Microsoft hired her to be one of its first designers.

“I was very attracted to the idea that the user and viewer could be involved in the art,” Eubank said. “Audio, video, text and animation are all delivered through interactive media, so it meant I could tell stories in really creative ways, utilizing all the fun media.”

After graduation, while working as a designer in Madrid, Eubank had a moment when she asked herself, “Why not me?” and realized she could become a professional artist. It was the confidence she did not have in high school.

Eubank wants her audience to think about how shapes and colors interact, and most importantly, what shapes mean.

“What I hope is that the viewer would have a different experience looking from afar than up close,” Eubank said. “When you see the paintings, they’re very abstract from up close, but from a distance, they snap into focus.”

Eubank describes her artworks as different languages and believes different viewers would respond with distinct feelings and emotions.

“It’s hard for me to articulate in words the same thing I’m articulating in my paintings, so what that evokes in the viewer can’t be put into words,” Eubank said. “We can express things through visual arts that we can’t say through writing. There aren’t words to express how an artwork makes you feel.”

Eubank is also an expedition artist, with her journeys beginning in 2003 when art collector Dugal Muller called her one day, asking her plans for the next six months.

He was advising British sailor, entrepreneur and expedition leader Philip Beale who was interested in constructing a replica of an 8th century ship to go on an expedition. The art collector suggested Eubank to be the official artist for the Borobudur Ship Expedition, which was launched by Megawati Sukarnoputri, the Indonesia president at the time. The 10,000-mile voyage traveled to Indonesia, Seychelles, Madagascar, South Africa and Ghana.

Beale invited Eubank again to be the expedition artist for The Phoenician Ship Expedition in 2008. The Phoenicia is a replica of a 600 B.C.E. ship, and it traveled for 20,000 miles through Syria and around Africa over the span of two years.

In 2014, Eubank also traveled to the High Arctic through The Arctic Circle, an art and science sailing expedition.

She frequently exhibits her works in shows in the United States and the United Kingdom as well as Europe and Asia.

Eubank also takes photographs on her expeditions and has exhibited some in various venues, but instead of calling herself a photographer, she considers herself a painter who takes photographs.

Sandra Mueller, an artist who has known Eubank for 25 years, said it is a delight that Los Angeles has an artist like her.

“She’s a master with her brushwork,” Mueller said. “She really has a broad range of abstraction, and it has a way of realism to it – it’s not an imagined abstraction. It really resonates for the viewer.”

Mueller also admires Eubank’s passion on the environment, especially her involvement with environmental groups in her community.

“Her works are eco art – using art to really alert what’s happening and bringing awareness to the environment,” Mueller said.

Shana Nys Dambrot, a Los Angeles art critic, has written about Eubank in the past.

“I love the way (the artworks) look and the way they are painted, patiently and with verve and deliberation,” Dambrot said. “I think they are eccentric and modernist and often quite beautiful.”

Dambrot also appreciates the expedition aspect.

“It’s an excellent, compelling narrative, with a performative and spectacle-based aspect to the way she collects and documents images and experiences (of water) in order to both depict and interpret them,” Dambrot said. “And then all of that is pegged to a pretty serious dedication to environmental and civic issues surrounding water use, ecology and resource scarcity. I love how she manages to excel at and balance all those disparate aspects... and to express them all equally, all at once in singular works of art.”

Eubank is currently finishing a six-foot by 11-foot painting as a part of the “Ny Alesund” series.

The other painting, “Ny Alesund,” was completed in 2015, and Eubank said she is proud of it. She experimented with larger, bolder shapes than usual.

“The painting uses cool colors punctuated by a cool red,” Eubank said. “The purpose of the red is to accentuate the cool, Arctic blues. I’ve used fine, curved lines and overlapping shapes to lead the viewer’s eyes on a journey.”

She hopes viewers would interact with the artwork.

“I want each of my paintings to be memorable and provide interest to the audience for years and years,” she said.

For her next journey, Eubank wants to go to the last ocean on her list to paint – the Southern Ocean, which wraps around Antarctica. But for now, she is enjoying her time split between being a part-time professor and a full-time artist.

“The best thing I like about teaching is working with students,” Eubank said. “It’s a great joy to embark what I’ve learned so far and try to help students out.”

Her work can be found at danielleeubankart.com.

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