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## 'It's something very precious': painting oceans to showcase climate change

As part of a 20-year-project, artist Danielle Eubank is travelling the world to paint every ocean to show the damaging effects humanity is having on the environment

Nadja Sayej

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▲ Danielle Eubank in 2003. Photograph: Courtesy of the artist

**W**hen the American artist [Danielle Eubank](#) visited the Indian Ocean in Mozambique, she was taken back by the garbage. “There’s pollution everywhere, in the water, on the beach, baby strollers and plastic mats, plastic bags, plastic bottles,” she said. “They’re everywhere.”

The artist has [painted roughly](#) 200 bodies of water in 22 countries, from the Arctic to the Mediterranean, for her 20-year project [One Artist Five Oceans](#). The goal is to raise awareness about ocean pollution and climate change.

“I have always been a huge environmentalist, I’ve screamed at people and tried to get the message across in so many ways,” said Eubank, on the phone from her Los Angeles studio. “I prefer to show people, ‘Hey look, this is our world, let’s take care of it. Don’t destroy it.’ It’s something very precious, something we all share.”

On 28 February, Eubank embarks on a long journey south to the Antarctic Circle for the last leg of her ocean painting project. She will depart from Ushuaia, Argentina, to the Antarctic Peninsula to paint the Southern Ocean.

It all started 20 years ago when Eubank was visiting the Doñana national park in Huelva, in the south of Spain, where she spent her days painting on the beach with her back to the water.

“Coming from California, I abhorred water paintings,” said Eubank. “For me, I could only see ideas other people had before me - crashing waves, dolphins and mermaids, I just couldn’t get into it.”

But that all changed when, after spending days painting the park, she turned to the Atlantic Ocean. “I painted the dunes and got fed up and turned around at sunrise, in the morning,” she said. “I was faced with the water and nothing else. From that first point on, that’s all I wanted to paint - water.”



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▲ Danielle Eubank in 2014. Photograph: Courtesy of the artist



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She painted the Arctic Ocean from Svalbard, Norway. “What I noticed about the Arctic, is that the polar ice caps were melting in October,” she said. “The rate the oceans are warming up is the most frightening thing I can think of. Oceans are getting warmer.”

When she painted the Indian Ocean, she noticed the illustrious hues. “The Indian Ocean is the most beautiful, it has the most difference in colors,” said Eubank. “It has times when its more golden and aqua, at times. There’s a lot of variations.”

Though her series started in Spain, Eubank considers the Pacific the ocean her “home ocean. “I grew up in northern California near the coast,” she said.

Having sailed the seven seas and (so far) four oceans, Eubank has visited most of these bodies of water by sea. Not in any kind of boats, but by old-fashioned ships, including one called the Borobudur, a wooden replica of an eighth-century vessel. In a sense, Eubank is honoring a time-worn tradition.

“Explorers all had expedition artists; look at Captain Cook, he had William Hodges,” she said. “Back then, because people didn’t have cameras, they would take artists or do sketches themselves to document what they saw.”



▲ Danielle Eubank - Isle of Mull. Photograph: Courtesy of the artist



Sailing by in a showy replica of an ancient boat does get a lot of attention. “Private boats would wave as they passed by,” said Eubank. “When we would come into port, sometimes there would be lines of people along the quay.”

As she packs for Antarctica, Eubank will be painting with oils, pencils and below-zero ink in her sketchbooks, which will be clipped to her jacket so they don’t fly into the ocean. “It hopefully will help people look at things in a new way,” she said.

The [United Nations Environmental Program](#) claims that 80% of all marine pollution is plastic, and that every year, over 8m tons of plastic ends up in the oceans. Apparently by 2050, oceans will carry more plastic than fish, just as [the world’s oceans keep getting warmer](#).

Upon returning from Antarctica, Eubank will put together a book of all her ocean paintings and open an exhibition of selected paintings on 24 May at [Kwan Fong Gallery](#) in Thousand Oaks, California.

Instead of painting piles of garbage, she also hopes her viewers will relish the beauty of these bodies of water, as well.

“Our own actions affect what goes into the oceans,” said Eubank. “There’s a lot we can do; like if everyone ate less meat each week, rode a bike, walked and took public transit, it would make an impact. Hang dry your clothes. People are surprised how easy it is to help the oceans and help the climate.”

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