



SURF CULTURE

Art Through Surfing, Dave Muller Finds Beauty at Home in San Francisco

From driftwood sculptures to watercolor paintings, Dave Muller steps into his lifelong passion of making art.



Chris Dodds
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Dave Muller is no stranger to *the beach*, that is, the notoriously heavy [Ocean Beach](#), San Francisco. In 2008, alongside his wife Lana Porcello, he opened the Outerlands restaurant—which became a hub for the area's many creatives and surfers—where they specialized in serving local organic fare just a few blocks away from the surf on Judah Street.

After a celebrated 15 year run at the restaurant, credited by many for putting the Outer Sunset neighborhood “on the map” (in a good way), Muller decided it was time for a change and is reveling in art, one of his lifelong passions alongside music and surfing, as his full-time gig. He recently collaborated with [Outerknown](#) to create an incredible driftwood sculpture for their flagship store in Marin and will host his solo art show and exhibition, “Between You and Me”, starting next week, November 9th, at the Eleanor Harwood gallery in [San Francisco](#).

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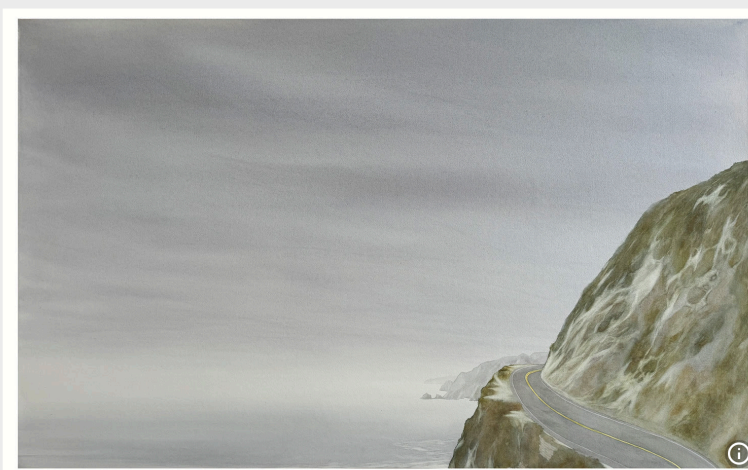
It wasn't long ago that employment options for serious surfers were basically limited to smuggling drugs and shaping boards and, as a result, surfers were mostly viewed by the outside world as beach bums. Now, with remote work and flexible schedules, the times have changed and thousands of people are able to attain a comfortable surf-work-life balance. Not everyone is able to gracefully wiggle from successful restaurateur to full-time artist and teacher, all the while still finding corners amidst closeouts, but Muller very much evangelizes for anyone who wishes to break from an oppressive work grind.

Painting, like surfing, isn't meant to be an instant gratification—patience and observation are key. While the simple act of envisioning a piece, similar to the act of searching for waves, can be a journey in itself. For Muller, some of his favorite moments come from the search, whether that is beachcombing for driftwood, like he did for Outerknown, or watching the colors of the sunset long after the crowds have left the beach and when the sky really begins to emit a psychedelic show.



“One thing that’s very intact in this show is my life in relation to this place. The years that I have spent here, over 20 years now, to the extent that I am embedded in it and have this powerful sense of home. My connection with the ocean is a huge part of that—I never feel more at home than when I am walking down to the beach and **paddling out** into a lineup where I know people. My paintings don’t show the surf, but almost all of them have the ocean and big views of the sky. The art is my way of talking about that sense of home and commemorating that.”

One could find it fitting for a surfer to choose watercolor as a primary medium of focus, yet, just like surfing *the beach*, there’s much more to it than a casual passerby may realize. “Challenging” and “unpredictable” are amongst the top adjectives skilled artists use to describe watercolor painting and, unlike other styles, it’s nearly impossible to paint over your mistakes. Muller doesn’t shy away from the difficulties, rather, he takes them on and creates beautiful works of art that are both expansive and delicate, immense yet refined. Both on the canvas and in the water, “When Ocean Beach is doing its thing, there is nowhere else I’d rather be than out there surfing.”



To help folks find community and joy in art, like he has throughout his life, Muller teaches art classes, both online and in-person. “I first offered online classes during the pandemic and it really hit me how important it was for people.” Ever humble, Muller stressed to clarify, “Not saying I am what was important, but creating a space for people to gather—even if it was just online—was hugely important.”

As for his individual work, Muller finds great depth in what many might overlook or disregard. "I find treasures on the beach, that's what it feels like to me. Whether it's a beautiful piece of trash or an intact Sand Dollar, I view them as talismans that embody the place. With my paintings, they're moments that I see, or views that I take in, and recreate them in such a way that asks people to take them in longer than they would a photograph."

Although the surfer-artist life sounds glamorous, Muller admits, "it's still very much a hustle to make it work but the struggle is worth the potential reward." We very much respect that as well as his art, approach to life, and his presence in [the lineup](#) or at the dinner table. If you're in SF next week be sure to go by the show and see for yourself.

For more info about the show check out [Eleanor Harwood Gallery](#) and keep up with Dave's art on Instagram [@davidmullerstudio](#)