



Influence Washing Ashore

A PETER SHEPARD COLE GALLERY



SEASCAPE (above)

2010, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches, collection of Kukai and Heidi Ferguson

With my seascapes, I strive to express the uncontrollable energy and movement of the ocean. The style was painted by Turner, Corbell, and Winslow Homer has been a big influence on me.

SELF PORTRAIT AS CAPTAIN COOK (below)

2010, oil on canvas, 30 x 24 inches, collection of Linda and Frank Smith

Creating this painting, I incorporated elements appropriated from a variety of historic sources. Nathaniel Danvers's portrait of Captain Cook was used for the body and hair. For the background I looked at "A View of New Zealand Bay" by John Robert, the artist on board Cook's third trip to the Pacific. Most of the birds were copied from English lithographs made in the 1800s by J.S. Residens for a book on Hawaiian birds by Walter Bullman. Cultural Hawaiian birds are a recurring motif in my work as I find a parallel between the loss of Hawaiian cultural identity and the disappearance of ancient flora and fauna. Surrounded by birds such as the Maui Owl, I have portrayed myself in the dubious position of the man who set in motion the transformation that led to their demise. As a Caucasian fortunate enough to have grown up in a land of such natural beauty, I am a product of the hybrid culture and probably connected to Cook.

When surfing boys tales are concerned, 38-year-old Peter Shepard Cole is unimpeachable. Born and raised in an oceanfront house on the North Shore, his kikiro father is a master of surfing's most complex wave field, Sunset Beach. Peter has nodded off to the concussion of Albatross swells his entire life. It's in him. One would think that he'd never leave. One would think that he'd lifeguard or turn pro or swing hammer—whatever it took—to stay within boating distance of Pops and Rockies. Destiny had other plans.

In retrospect, following a path in fine art should have surprised no one. Dad was an art major at Stanford. In truth, though, it was his father's twin brother opening the door—and Peter's eyes. Corey Cole was a craft-rich draftsman and Chouinard-trained painter who surfed pre-Gidget Malibu. He worked as an animator, first at Disney (a job he despised, according to young Peter), and later for the "Raggedy Ann" and "Abe & the Chipmunks" cartoons. All the while, he painted for his own enjoyment.

"Uncle Corey came and stayed with us on the North Shore," says Peter. "He drew non-stop, described how he was doing things...to this day, my family has his work hanging in the house. It was very inspirational."

Peter was accepted to the University of California, San Diego, where he graduated with a B.A. in studio art. While he was never at odds with the curriculum, it might be noted that the school's faculty—many of whom had been active artists in the anti-painting 1960s and '70s—did not hold representational art (or, indeed, the use of traditional materials and genres) in high esteem. Cole managed to find advice and inspiration from instructors Faith Ringgold and Raul Guertgen.

Upon graduating, Peter returned to Hawaii briefly before moving to New York, living and painting in the East Village and Park Slope, Brooklyn. "I hung in there for six years," he says. "My friends had a running bet as to how long I'd make it. I found the art world there pretty intimidating and my own painting sort of fell into a rut. I was missing the ocean as well, so I ended up coming back to Hawaii for a year."

Cole and his wife-to-be soon ended up in San Francisco where she studied acupuncture and he pursued an MFA at the San Francisco Art Institute.

"It had been a decade since I graduated, and I was feeling the need to challenge myself," says Cole.

"I really needed the sort of intelligent criticism you get in that setting to grow. Young artists think that their way is the only way. Coming back to it a little later, I wanted to soak as much knowledge from these teachers as I could. I had one teacher, a lower Bay Area figurative painter, who started touching a canvas I'd been working on, feeling the paint. He took a pocketknife out, opened it, and started peeling off chunks of paint. (Laughing.) He saw some brown in a shadow I'd done, and he was showing me how it benefited from being cooler, more reflective."

"Anyway, that's where I started doing

work with Hawaiian historical references. That I was hanging them salon-style, so I needed smaller works to [personate them], so I went back to the seascapes that I used to do. They worked in that context [with the historical pieces]. The historical pieces generally deal with utopia battling up against a post-industrial world. You know...Hawaii."

Which is where Peter finds himself once again, drifting up against the shoreline of Oahu, floating in the wreck line of the artist's life. ■

—SCOTT HULLY





TANNER (above)

2008, oil on metal panels, 36 x 17 inches each

With a photo I took from the Golden Gate Bridge of an historical tower, I made a silhouette and did some experimental nuclear-pen painting on old metal stakes. Between panels I checked the prints, spacing them with a fence and plating ink. Each panel was done with a different shade of ink used to reproduce the rest.



PEARL HARBOR (left)

2006, mixed with acrylic, 7 x 8 inches

This artwork is intended to allude to the prints. After fifty years of Hawaii in the 20s and 30s, Hawaii was rather than relatively engaged in their tropical crown, these figures appear reluctant to be captured in this prison. The placement of the camera's gaze is apparent. For the background, I looked at a 1950 photograph of Pacific Fleet sailors growing to eight foot dancers growing them at Pearl Harbor.

STILL LIFE SEASCAPE

detail, right
2009, oil on canvas
36 x 72 inches
Collection of Brett Lesh

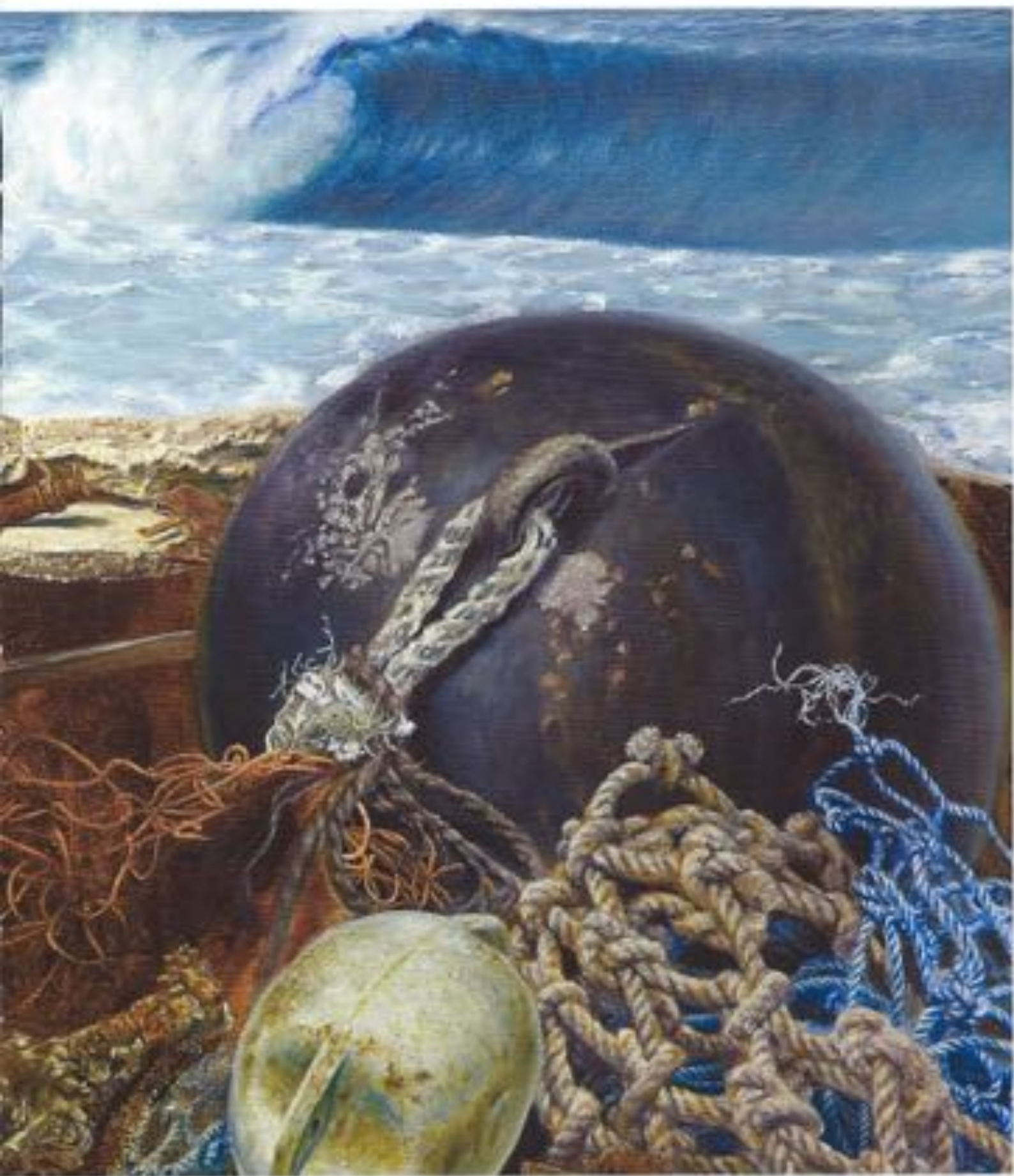
After the Cook expedition first arrived on Raiatea, Hawaiians steadily lost pieces of iron collected on the windward shore of the island. For me, all these disparate objects that I collect on the Niihau or Kaula coasts represent the hybrid culture that is Hawaii. Different influences, good or bad, reach across. In this painting, the strokes of the monsoon contrast with the textures of the still life.



TOTEM (above) 2008,
oil and acrylic on canvas,
60 x 80 inches
Collection of Brett Lesh

Seven years ago while I was working on a museum using objects collected beachcombing, John Schuster came by and stacked three of the objects saying, "You should make this big." At first I didn't want to do it, but eventually I took his idea. At the end, I painted paint that functioned as both a rust stain across the upper beach scene and a reference to Schuster's gradual work making. The trees produced Strydom's first stands plus natural elements. Together they define an island scene best as it is a global economy.





STORM SURF (right)
2000, oil and acrylic
on canvas, 30 x 22 inches

In Hawaii, the early model of abandoned sugar mills and solitary farmers speaks of endless salty trade winds and the enduring power of the sea.

The artist at play at
Buckly Luffs, a couple
hundred yards from his
studio.



PRINCESS KA'ULANI
2008, oil and acrylic
on canvas, 38 x 34 inches,
collection of Lynne Ammon
and Randy Glass

More than a species of symbolic significance to the Hawaiian people disappeared toward the end of the 19th century, a time of dramatic political, social, and environmental change. The artist's chosen pattern in this painting is a collage of Cook's ship and artist Frederick Healy. The repeated graphic design forms a wallpaper background, suggesting Western mass production, while simultaneously honoring the local patterning of Polynesian face skirts. Depicted in front of the pattern is Princess Ka'ulani, who was the first in line for the monarchy when sovereignty ended. Fought for the trade benefits of annexation to the United States, American businessmen overthrew the Hawaiian government in 1894. Devoted by the turn of events, Ka'ulani died of tuberculosis in 1899, only 23 years of age. ■



