



Over fifty years ago, a four-year-old boy was getting his start in Detroit with just a paintbrush and a blank slate. Starting with prehistoric scenes of dinosaurs, his paintings evolved over the years into oceanic images with vital significance. Robert Wyland is a marine life artist with a message of conservation stemming from his love for the ocean and everything that's in it.

An immensely talented and successful man, with galleries in seven states, including California, Florida and Hawaii, his effortless creativity makes what he does look easy. I had the pleasure of speaking with him recently while he was at his home in the Florida Keys, and what he told me spoke volumes about self-expression.

A diver, he uses his own personal experiences in the water to inspire him in his art. "When I'm diving, I'm painting scenes of the ocean in my head," he says, "I'm inspired by the beauty in nature. It's art, but it's also conservation." Wyland is known for giving back to the community through his efforts to conserve and protect our oceans. His passion shines through his pieces and all that he represents.

A lot goes into the decision of what to paint, "It's really whatever you're feeling. You have an idea or concept in your head and you just go for it. It kind of evolves from



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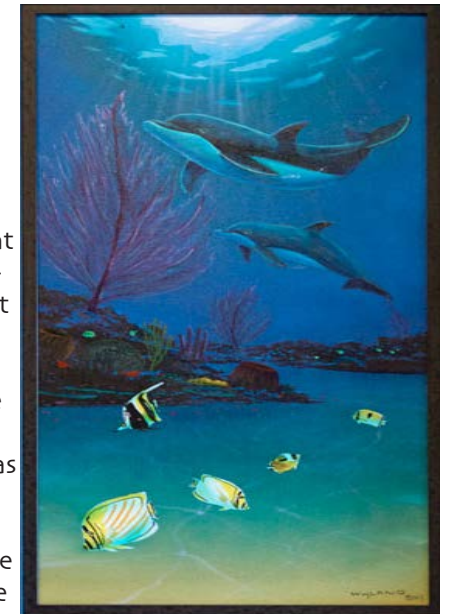
there," Wyland said, "I don't do too much thinking about it. I just let the thing happen naturally. I start into a blank canvas with an idea and it comes into itself almost like a Polaroid photograph."

In art, the best pieces always seem to be the ones that come naturally, without force. When an artist creates a piece, he or she is showcasing his or her passions and interests in a way that is organic and true to whom they are as individuals.

Many artists utilize their gifts to emphasize what they are most passionate about as well as what is most important to them. Dan Lopes, an art and design major at the University of Notre Dame, says: "I express myself through art by spreading my ideas, opinions, ideologies, and personality through my pieces. I enjoy pushing boundaries, talking about the taboo, and making people say wow, whether they be repulsed or amazed." How one chooses to express his or her self is directly correlated with who they are as an individual. With such a desire to stretch the boundaries and make an impact on the world around him, this Orange County native could be on his way to becoming the next Wyland himself.

As the conversation with Wyland continued, he

said that in 1983 he painted his favorite piece, "Children of the Sea," because "it takes three dolphins ... and it has a lot of soul and spirit in it." He did concede, however, that every one of his paintings has a time when it is his favorite because he is always most passionate about what he is presently creating.



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Every artist has his muse – his inspiration – the stem of his creativity and the drive that propels him in the creation of his greatest works. For Wyland, that inspiration came in the form of Jacques Cousteau, a Frenchman with a multitude of talents and passions, some of which revolved around conservationism. "He was the guy that inspired me to use my art to help bring attention to the conservation of our ocean and our planet," Wyland said, "He was an explorer, a filmmaker, and really a poet." It is no wonder that Cousteau had such a grave influence on Wyland, especially with the soul and dedication to a cause that he embodied.

Lopes, on the other hand, credits his peers with the encouragement that has kept him going. "What started off as simple projects in high school and dumb doodles earned some praise from

friends, which then urged me to make better art," he said, "Once I started that cycle and got labeled as an artist, I was hooked."

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For artists, the message they convey through their work is one of the most meaningful aspects in the industry. Lopes holds steady to his idea that: "Art is the blood that runs through my veins. I have no better way of expressing myself than through my art."

For Wyland, his message lies firmly on the ideas of conservation and preservation. His work emphasizes what's going on in today's world because "we're basically having to inspire people through art to look at the world and see the beauty in nature and get involved in protecting that before it disappears."

As our conversation came to a close, I asked Wyland if he could describe his art in one word. He chose "inspiring" to define his pieces, which fits the model of a conservationist and artist perfectly. He inspires with his masterpieces as well as with his giving heart and commitment to what he cares about.

The Creative Waves of Wyland

By: Shannon Hansen

