



surf
&
art

VEERLE
HELSEN

CONTEMPORARY
SURF ARTISTS
AROUND
THE WORLD

Lannoo

Nina Brooke



Johny Vieira



1/96

Erik Abel⁰¹⁰
Ceri Lou Bathgate⁰²²
Jeanne Beuvin⁰³⁰
Nina Brooke⁰⁴⁰
Raül Casado⁰⁵⁰
Jonas Claesson⁰⁶⁰
Luís da Silva⁰⁷⁰
Pandora Decoster⁰⁷⁸
Jim Drouet⁰⁹⁰
Jean Jullien¹⁰²
Taisiia Kordiukova¹¹⁶
Nick Kuchar¹²⁶

Fabian Lavater¹³⁶
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*Quentin Monge*¹⁶⁸
Jessica Soparlo¹⁷⁸
*Rebekah Steen*¹⁸⁶
Jonty Storey¹⁹⁶
*Johnny Vieira*²¹⁰
Kate Wadsworth²²⁰
*Ty Williams*²³⁰
Kentaro Yoshida²⁴⁴

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It all started with an illustration I bought from Portuguese artist Lizzy back in 2018. I had come across her work during a camper trip when I was on the road for my first book, *Surf & Stay*. It was a woman gracefully dancing on water; she was dressed in blue, and the waves appeared to be pink. Like a shimmering sun had sprinkled them with a magic pencil.

Ever since, I've been collecting illustrations or paintings centred on my absolute favourite thing in the world: surfing. When I'm out in the waves, I lose my sense of reality, finding myself in a fairytale universe. Where worries don't exist, and butterflies fill the air. To me, surf art is all about capturing those moments. Just take a glimpse at the cover and you'll understand what I mean. You see a surfer in the water, waves wrapping around him, clouds drifting dreamily in the sky and a red-soaked sun smiling down on it all.

Having published two editions of *Surf & Stay* – European travel guides with surf photography and recommendations on where to surf, eat and sleep – I felt it was time for a new book adventure. Somewhere along a path where the rhythm of the sea meets strokes of creativity. This book is a tribute to surf artists worldwide. To how they capture the essence of surfing and translate it to canvas, paper or digital spaces.

The cover image was created by Jonty Storey, a talented artist from Wales who turned out to be one of my most exciting discoveries during the compilation of this book. Throughout my interviews with various artists, I asked the same question to everyone: 'Who is an absolute must-have in a book about surf art?' Jonty's name popped up on Fabian Lavater's list, the Swiss painter who can make the sea dance with just a few blue lines. I also stumbled upon the magnificent work of Jim Drouet, whose women drift in the wind and make you think summer is always around the corner.

That's the beauty of this project: it kept growing organically, with every artist suggesting the next name to add to the mix. With limited pages, I couldn't include all the artists I wanted to and I'm secretly hoping this book takes off so a second edition will flow naturally.

Another question I asked each artist: 'What motto do you live by or what quote inspires you?' Enjoy discovering their answers because they'll bring you drops of wisdom in waves. The catchiest one, for me, comes from Ty Williams: 'Salt water can fix that.' If something is broken, the water will glue the pieces back together. I hope this book will simply take you to the ocean.

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Aerial landscapes

**Nina
Brooke**



An aerial landscape painter hailing from Cornwall, Nina Brooke has created her own art language. The ocean is her main source of inspiration and shades of turquoise the running theme.



Brooke's artwork is based on aerial imagery which she captures using a drone.

'I think I have inspired a movement in the artworld, as an aerial landscape painter. It's nice to know that my artwork is unique and no one has done it before.'







Q & A

Nina Brooke

Who is Nina?

I am an artist living and working in Cornwall in the west of the UK. I've lived here all my life and, despite all the countries I've travelled to and surfed in, Cornwall always inspires me the most.

If you were to describe your art in a few lines, you'd say...

I make contemporary paintings depicting the world as seen from an aerial perspective, emphasising the way human activity creates patterns upon land and sea. My work focuses on human impact (in terms of climate change and migration, for example) but also on a more existential concept of how insignificant we all are. When seen from above, it has a humbling effect. I see my artwork as a symbol of gratitude, a reminder of just how lucky we are to live and wonder upon the natural landscapes of this incredible blue planet.

What came first: surfing or drawing?

Drawing came first – my grandfather taught me from a young age. He was a draughtsman and told me never to use a rubber but to work over your mistakes. Surfing came in my early teens, followed by instructing on Polzeath beach during school holidays, forming a great friendship group who I'm still close with today.

When did you first think:

I can do this for a living?

There was a tipping point a few years after I graduated. I had been showing my artwork every year since I left school, and there was this one show that sold out on a weekend at a pop-up shop – I was 26. People just walked off the street and purchased painting after painting. That was when I decided to give up my day job. I was so concerned about taking this big leap of faith, but of course nothing is forever. To be honest it has been really hard work and, although it might look effortless, it's not for the faint-hearted.

How does your art come to life?

Do you fly a drone yourself?

The first step is to get to know a place from a bird's-eye view, yes. So I have my drone to shoot aerial images for reference. I fly the drone and capture most of the images myself. In some cases, people will send me reference images, which I can work from too, but wherever possible I like to capture my own images. I take these back to the studio (or beach if I'm working in situ) where I intuitively capture the essence of the place – picking out particularly interesting architectural or natural forms in the landscape alongside human interactions. I use many layers of colour to build an image and it can take weeks to 'finish' a painting.

It seems like you have a go-to colour palette?

The ocean will always be my colour inspiration, and I love how different it can be. So yes – many shades of turquoise is the running theme, usually clear and bold.

Do you remember when you first thought of the idea to paint from a bird's-eye view?

Embedded into my memories are happy moments flying to the Caribbean to visit my grandparents from a very young age. My grandfather was an airplane pilot so we used to fly a lot. This gave me an early introduction to seeing the world from a bird's-eye view. I remember soaring over the islands as a child and being awestruck by the colours. That is what gave me the idea to paint the world from above. My first aerial painting was in 2015, abstract and painted by memory.

Your home base is Cornwall, a magical peninsula in southern England. For people who don't know it: what makes Cornwall so special?

It's just wild and beautiful. The coastline changes dramatically from the north coast to the south coast, and there are so many hidden coves and beaches that need exploring. I live on the north coast of Cornwall, near the popular fishing village of Port Isaac, and my go-to spot is Polzeath.

What is your favourite surfboard at the moment?

I did a collaboration with longboarder and shaper Ben Skinner (European champion and shaper at Skindog Surfboards, ed.). He shaped a most beautiful bespoke longboard, The Quill, and I inlaid a 9ft painting wrapping the edges to the deck, finished with a high gloss and hand-signed by both of us.

What is a perfect surf session in Nina's world?

I recently really enjoyed 'Chickens' in the Maldives – it was out of season and we had the sunset to ourselves. Catching perfect glassy longboard waves with reef sharks, tropical fish and even a manta ray below. The wildlife is incredible – really one for the bucket list.

Has surfing given you anything in life?

Respect, timing, patience, kindness, tolerance, appreciation, good health and energy.

Is there something you are particularly proud of?

That I have inspired a movement in the artworld, as an aerial landscape painter. I created this space and now others are joining. It's nice to know that my artwork is unique and no one has done it before. I created my own art language.

You've travelled around the world and you are often invited by hotels to the most dreamy surf destinations. Are there other places in the world where you feel at home?

That's a tough question. Surfing in the Maldives, Hawaii and Sri Lanka is really stunning, but I think the surfing in Cornwall for some reason is the best. There really is no place like home. •

Photography portrait pictures

Ceri Lou Bathgate: Greg Hazzard
Nina Brooke: Doon Williams
Raül Casado: Antony Neufcour
Luís da Silva: Simon Fitz
Jonas Claesson: Murray Fraser
Jean Jullien: Antoine Doyen
Nick Kuchar: Andrew Rizer
Lisa Marques: Riemkje Poortinga
Quentin Monge: Marina Germain
Jessica Soparlo: Tianna Grey
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