

How 8 Artful Surfboards Give Back

BY HOLLY PETERSON

These Hamptons-based artists paired their talents with the area's passion for the surf, custom designing a series of surfboards that will be auctioned off to benefit [Southampton Hospital](#).



The elements of surf and art have long been essential to Hamptons culture. After last summer's successful collaboration, where area luminaries [designed bicycles to be auctioned to benefit The Group For the East End](#), this year, Hamptons magazine approached eight area artists whose work has been receiving much acclaim to reinterpret surfboards as canvases and create works of (sometimes rideable) art that will be auctioned to benefit the Jenny and John Paulson Emergency Department at Southampton Hospital, the sole provider of emergency care on the South Fork.

During a private launch at the opening night of [ArtHamptons](#), CBS anchor and Bridgehampton resident Chris Wragge will begin the bidding, which will then continue online at [Charitybuzz](#) through August 6. In the pages that follow, a look at the works by artists Tom Dash, Peter Dayton, Michael Dweck, Jerome Lucani, Paton Miller, Jeff Muhs, Peter Tunney, and Charles Wildbank, who used a variety of mediums to capture their vision of the water.

Tom Dash



What does the board you made represent? My board is a reappropriation of Andy Warhol's flower paintings in a street art kind of way. Lately I have been making some paintings and epoxy sculptures using the flowers and Chanel imagery, and I did the same thing with the surfboard.

Why Chanel? Putting an urban image on a board in the ocean is so interesting, and even more so that it's Chanel and so high culture. It's done with a kind of stencil-type graffiti that takes it back to a counterculture image, almost back to the '60s.

Do you have a deep relationship with the water? No question. When I was 2 days old, my parents baptized me in the ocean because my father was a surfer, so that has been my religion. I surf a lot in the winter in my wet suit with a hood and gloves—actually some of our best waves are in the winter. There's no one on the beach, so it's a very special time for me out [on the ocean].

Do you visualize the Hamptons in your art? I feel like I could create no matter where I was, but it does mean a lot to me to be able to get to the ocean so quickly so it can regenerate my spirit.

Do you get inspired by the other artists out here? I love being part of this community; my neighbor is Peter Dayton. It's nice to be able to see what everyone is up to and stay in touch. So much of the time I'm in the studio alone for days on end—that's the nature of our work—so it's nice to have a dialogue with other artists about their work and see their progression. I'm so inspired by them that I can bring that [inspiration] back to my work.

Peter Tunney



Why did you write city of dreams on the board you made? Nothing happens unless it's first a dream. Nothing has satisfied me more than putting up these billboards in New York saying gratitude or city of dreams. I've been on Long Island since 1964, when there was nothing but sod farms, potato farms, and simplicity. In the 1990s, I started going to Montauk and I lived on the Andy Warhol estate. That was a rock-star existence; it is one of the greatest pieces of property in North America.

What philosophy are you espousing in your art? I've chosen to believe that everything is fantastic—all for the best and the best of all worlds. I'm just so bludgeoned from hearing the numbers 24/7; you can't be talking about the solution while you are talking about the problem. If I made \$50 million next week, I would spend \$49 million putting up billboards about what I believe.

Are you on a mission to change minds? The only responsibility of an artist is to know the times in which he lives. I thought that the art world was not going to go for my art—that no one was going to go for it—yet, somehow, I was compelled to keep doing it, and I did it long enough that it became legitimate and everyone loves it. I'm still here and happy.

Jerome Lucani



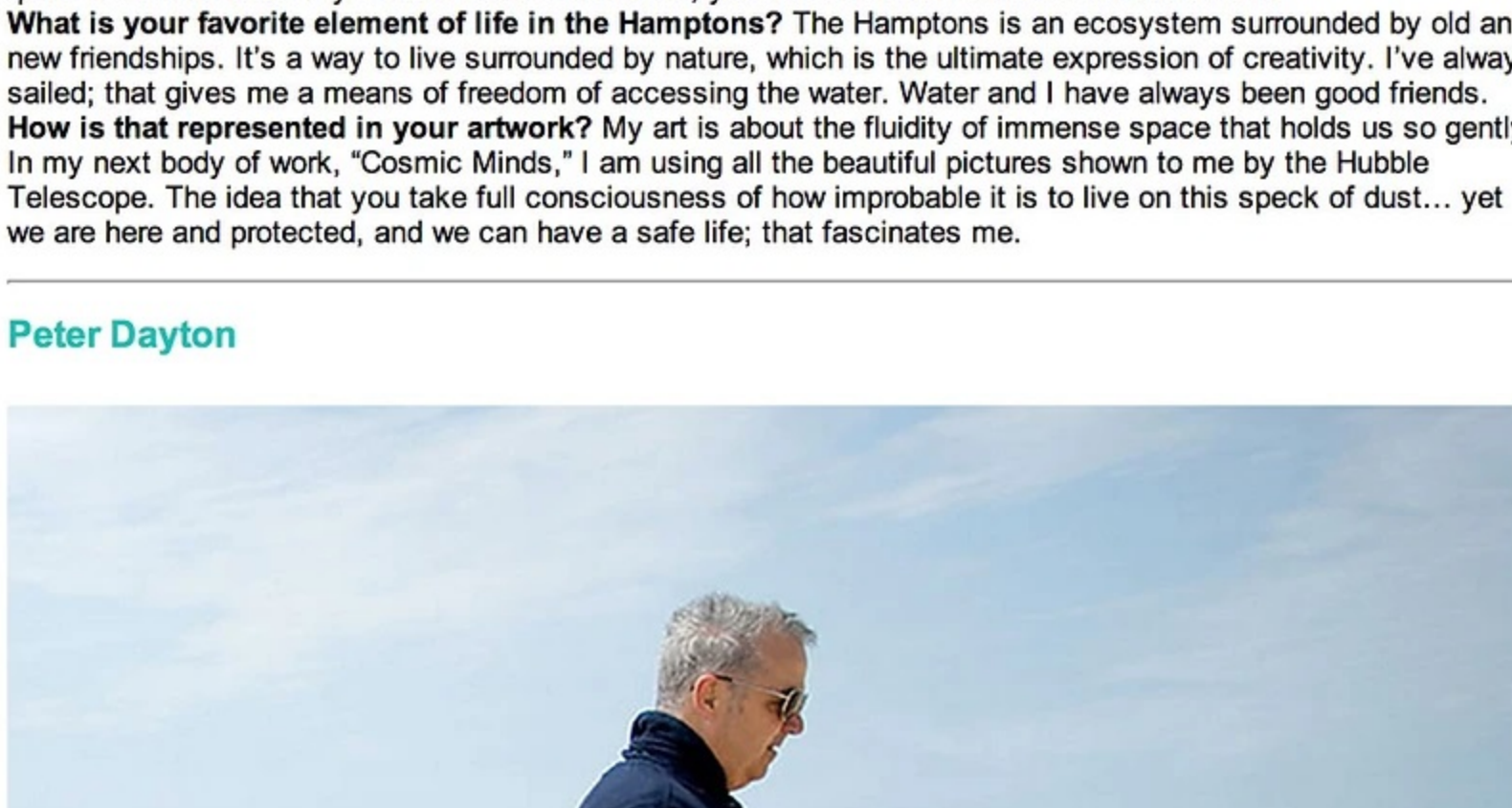
What does the board you made represent? It's certainly a recognizable image. The surfboard was inspired by Michelangelo, but it is really about the specific rush you get when you catch that wave. You feel like you are one with the elements for that instant, for that moment of bliss. If we are all related to God and Adam and the hand of God... it all relates to us being present in our surroundings. It all allows a moment of no dissonance in your life, if that's possible. It's the deepening of awareness that requires no words.

Is it the water or the light that attracts you more out here? In the Hamptons, it's more the serenity of the ever-changing landscape. Each day of the week, you have a different spectacle. The water is all with rivers the light that changes color. You have the never-ending tides that reshape the beaches, sometimes with waves forming. It's quite incredible. Even if you don't have a surfboard, you can still catch those incredible waves.

What is your favorite element of life in the Hamptons? The Hamptons is an ecosystem surrounded by old and new friendships. It's a way to live surrounded by nature, which is the ultimate expression of creativity. I've always said; that gives me a means of freedom of accessing the water. Water and I have always been good friends.

How is that represented in your artwork? My art is about the fluidity and I'm always happy that holds us so gently. In my next body of work, "Cosmic Minds," I am using all the beautiful pictures shown to me by the Hubble Telescope. The idea that you take full consciousness of how improbable it is to live on this speck of dust... yet we are here and protected, and we can have a safe life; that fascinates me.

Peter Dayton



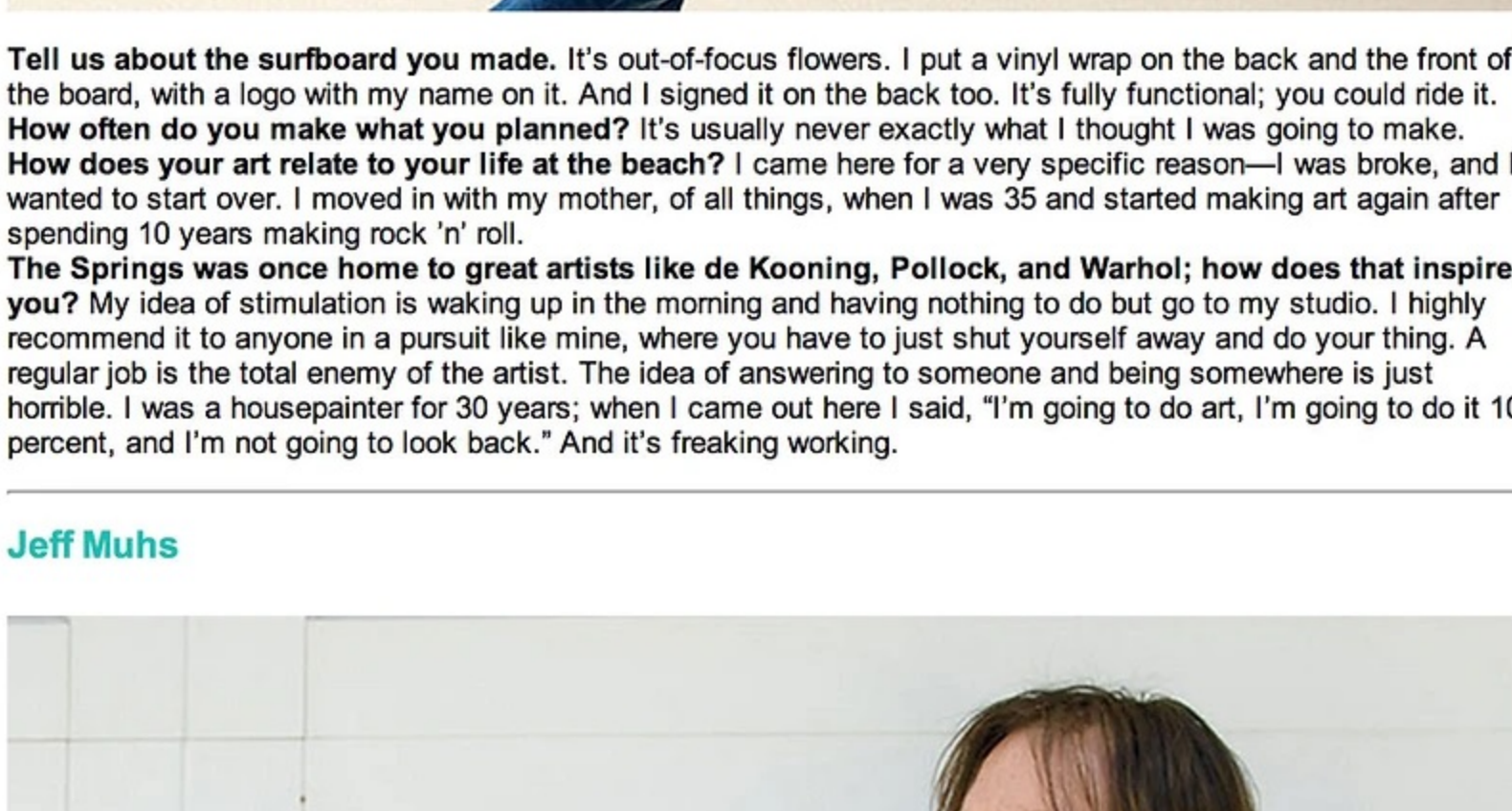
Tell us about the surfboard you made. It's out-of-focus flowers. I put a vinyl wrap on the back and the front of the board, with a logo with my name on it. And I signed it on the back too. It's fully functional; you could ride it.

How often do you make what you planned? It's usually never exactly what I thought I was going to make.

How does your art relate to your life at the beach? I came here for a very specific reason—I was broke, and I wanted to start over. I moved in with my mother, of all things, when I was 35 and started making art again after spending 10 years making rock 'n' roll.

The Springs was once home to great artists like de Kooning, Pollock, and Warhol; how does that inspire you? My idea of stimulation is waking up in the morning and having nothing to do but go to my studio. I highly recommend it to anyone in a pursuit like mine, where you have to just shut yourself away and do your thing. A regular job is the total enemy of the artist. The idea of answering to someone and being somewhere is just horrible. I was a housepainter for 30 years; when I came out here I said, "I'm going to do art, I'm going to do it 100 percent, and I'm not going to look back." And it's freaking working.

Jeff Muhs



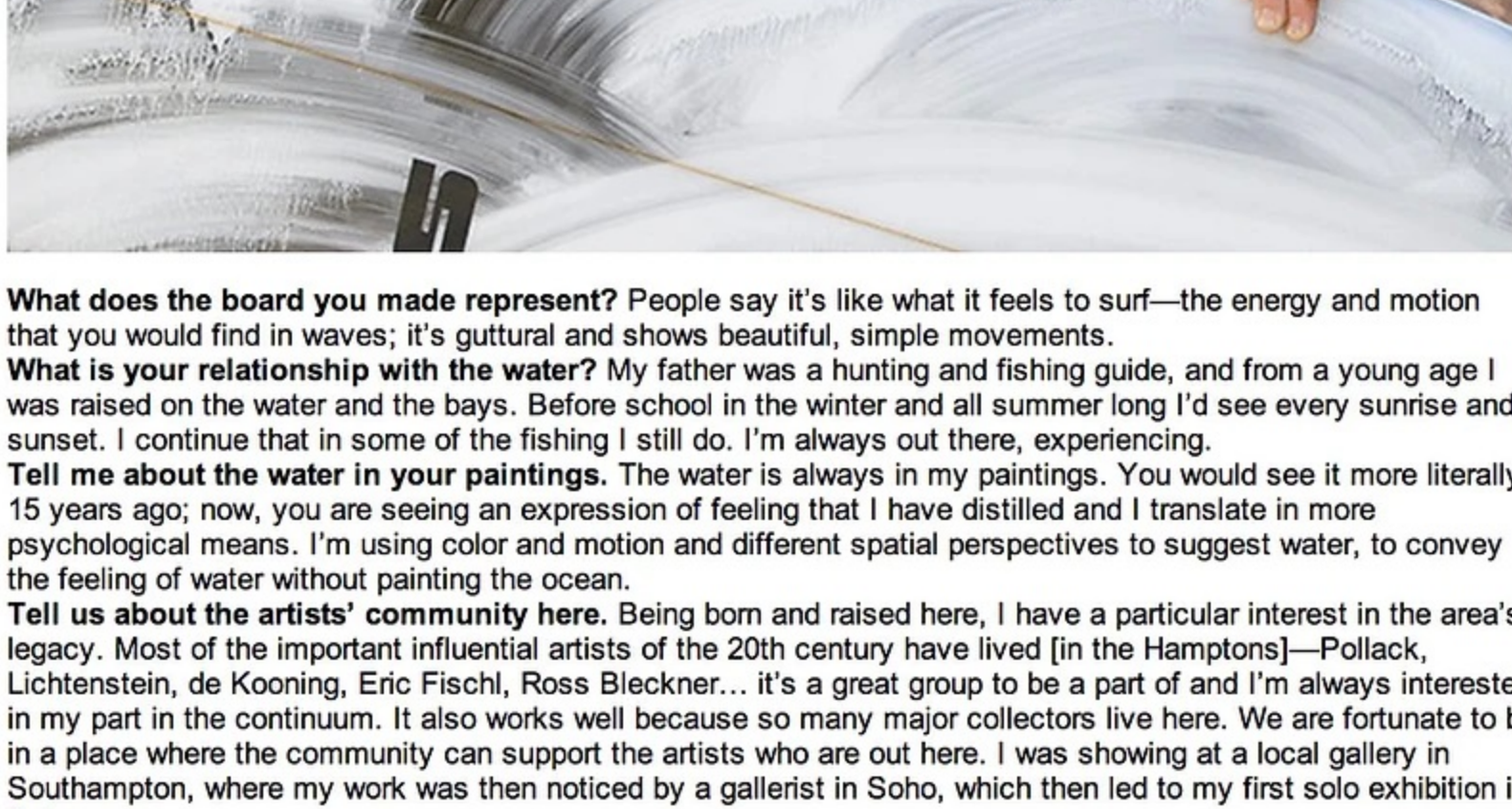
What does the board you made represent? People say it's like what it feels to surf—the energy and motion that you would find in waves; it's guttural and shows beautiful, simple movements.

What is your relationship with the water? My father was a hunter and fishing guide, and from a young age I was raised on the water and the bays. Before school in the winter and all summer long I'd see every sunrise and sunset. I continue that in some of the fishing I still do. I'm always out there, experiencing.

Tell me about the water in your paintings. The water is always in your paintings. You would see it more literally 15 years ago; now, you are seeing an expression of feeling that I have distilled and I translate in more psychological means. I'm using color and motion and different spatial perspectives to suggest water, to convey the feeling of water without painting the ocean.

Tell us about the artists' community here. Being born and raised here, I have a particular interest in the area's legacy. Most of the important influential artists of the 20th century have lived [in the Hamptons]—Pollock, Lichtenstein, de Kooning, Eric Fischl, Ross Bleckner... it's a great group to be a part of and I'm always interested in my part in the continuum. It also works well because so many major collectors live here. We are fortunate to be in a place where the community can support the artists who are out here. I was showing at a local gallery in Southampton, where my work was then noticed by a gallerist in Soho, which then led to my first solo exhibition in Soho.

Charles Wildbank



What did you decide to do for the surfboard and why? I decided to concentrate the waves in to a single drop as it held my concentration in focus. It is a holographic depiction of all of the sea being contained within a single drop of water. I have titled it "The Last Drop."

How does the environment affect the work you do? My work demands uninterrupted, concentrated hours filled with natural light. Painting for 10 hours a day is possible because a dip in the sea, a walk in the garden, or a breath of the sky restores and refreshes me.

How is the Hamptons important in your work? I create paintings that are timeless and eternal. I am inspired by that part of humanity that is beyond time and space and by the present eternal moment. The rhythm of paint syncs with the rhythm of the sea for me. I spray it, splash it, spread it onto the canvas with similar abandon to express the emotion of limitlessness expansion I perceive here on the East End. In the portraits, the glances and emotion must be timeless, as if a glance from a hundred years ago, or a hundred years from now.

How does your being deaf affect your other senses? It wasn't until later in life that I realized that deprivation of any of one's senses could heighten any remaining senses. I leaned more toward the visual perhaps with such acuity that not only do I lip-read, but I also take in all the body language of those around me. I appreciate emotions coming through the surfaces of everything surrounding me. They can be subtle or raging. How my subject or I feel at a given moment will influence how I paint, thus more or less delivering emotional hints to the beholder. To be surrounded by art only affords this continuation and enhancement of the subjective experience.

Paton Miller



What does the board you made represent? I painted an orca on the deck of the board. This is actually a pretty good surfboard, and I hope it's going to be used. I see it as functional art, so I'm returning the board with the fins.

Is surfing represented in the art you do? I don't do surf pictures per se—they seem a little corny to me—but I do a lot of Old Man and the Sea-type pictures; people at sea. Water is the great love of my life. It's really where I've found myself.

Is water more of the love of your life than women? Oh, no—I've been happily married for 26 years. When I'm in the water I feel at peace.

How did you come to live in the Hamptons? I left Hawaii in 1973 and ended up getting a scholarship to Southampton College with the drawings that I had made traveling in Asia and Indonesia.

What about the Hamptons allows you to create? If you're an artist, you're in part a performance artist. You want reaction. Not only do you want people who appreciate and collect your work, but you also enjoy your fellow artists. There aren't many places in the country like [the Hamptons], where you can have all those elements together. Every day I have a cup of coffee and drive down to the ocean. If there's surf, I go surfing for a couple of hours and then I work the rest of the day in the studio. I feel lucky to have landed on these shores. I don't know what would have happened if I had gone back to Hawaii, because I don't particularly paint dolphins jumping over rainbows. I'm just grateful for how things went down.

Michael Dweck



What does the board you made represent? My board was custom made for this project, and shaped to reflect the subjective character of the image. It's an object that the artist molded to make art, so it's a perfectly molded subject. It was made from scratch—it took six weeks with all the silk to cover the photograph with a great shadow and gloss.

How does the Hamptons inspire your work? The Hamptons has always been a place where I work, and my work is always about escapism, which also means beating the system. Montauk is my escape. I'm in the ocean about two to three days a week, at least. Tell us about your history out here. I live in Manhattan and in Montauk. I don't surf as much as I would like. First time I went out [to Montauk], I heard the Rolling Stones were doing an album at Andy Warhol's house. We were trying to find Warhol's house near the ranch and we found a great surf spot.

Do you still surf here in the Hamptons? I call myself a casual surfer—I was raised on the South Shore and surfed on Gilgo Beach; I paddle around a lot now. That's where the inspiration for the mermaid came to me. There are lots of mysterious forms of fish beneath us, evanescent shapes. In legend, mermaids are a symbol of fatal destruction, the toxic allure of the unattainable; they are sensual and alluring, but also free and unfettered.