

WATER WORLD

SOCAL ARTIST SUSAN WICKSTRAND SHINES A SPOTLIGHT ON FEMALE SURFERS IN HER ONE-OF-A-KIND COLLAGES (AND WE'RE SWOONING).

GIRL CRUSH // KERI BRIDGWATER // 04/01/14

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Artist Susan Wickstrand is drawn to the ocean and nature. A local California girl raised in La Jolla and now living in Encinitas, Wickstrand's fondness for the Golden State and the sea shines through in her extraordinary collage pieces, which also showcase a host of talented female wave riders in photographs captured by Wickstrand and her hubby, surf photographer Kevin Roche.

“Behind every picture, there’s always, always a story,” said Wickstrand of her one-of-a-kind collages. Using a shot of the ocean or a surfer in action as the focal point of each work, Wickstrand carefully selects found images to purposefully collage with. “Whether it’s a song, poem, or facet of someone’s personality, the imagery I select conveys something specific about each subject,” she explained of her use of collage. Composed on a birch-wood panel, each original piece is meticulously assembled and adjusted until, as Wickstrand described it, “something clicks.” It’s a skill she picked up doing album cover design as an intern at Motown Records in Los Angeles. “There’s an art to collage that takes time,” she said, “and [it takes] a trained eye to get the outlines just right.”

It’s this unique aesthetic has opened a number of artistic doors for the queen of collage, from designing exclusive, custom skateboard graphics for WTW in Japan (Tokyo’s answer to Fred Segal), to creating a capsule bikini collection for the 2010-2011 Rip Curl Artist’s Search.

“Radiate” is one of the head-turning pieces in Wickstrand’s recent series that shines a spotlight on talented former pro-surfer and Roxy Girl Kassia Meador, featuring images shot by Roche. Kaleidoscopic-hued dahlias explode around a tintage-style photo of Meador, reflecting what Wickstrand sees as the surfer’s immensely bright personality. “She was a pure pleasure to work with, like a firework that radiated this amazing energy,” Wickstrand said, “hence the title, [Radiate]. Kassia just exuded pure, unadulterated positivity.” Subtly emphasizing light and color, a final layer of translucent encaustic beeswax is added to the surface of her collages, creating an organic and tactile feel to her pieces, each one a collector’s item.

Keep an eye peeled for Wickstrand’s latest body of work, which will debut at this year’s Greenroom Festival in Yokohama, Japan, featuring a slew of inspiring female surfers, including Belinda Baggs, who rides for Patagonia, and Billabong’s Lauren Hill. If you can’t make it to Japan for the show, then be sure to check out the gorgeous pieces on Etsy, and let the wave of inspiration wash over you.

Visit www.susanwickstrand.etsy.com

Loves: Cooking & family game night on Sundays

Top Three Songs Currently On Repeat: Little Dragon’s “Feather,” The Ghosts of Escondido’s “Black Roses,” and Fleet Foxes’ “Lorelei.”

Signature Style: Modern-bohemian

Guilty Pleasure: Pinterest

Radio Dial: KCRW’s “Morning Becomes Eclectic”

Words to Live By: “Perspective is everything, where you sit is what you see.”

Dream Travel Destination: Tavarua, Fiji

