

Open Show Santa Cruz Notes
SB Lovell
June 9, 2020

In a way this project started last July when I participated in a workshop with Scott Strazzanti of the SF Chronicle at the Center for Photographic Arts in Carmel. We spent the day exploring the Hipstamatic app for iPhones.

A few months later I was walking the New Brighton beach in Capitola after a storm. The tide had deposited loose kelp that had been ripped free from the hold fasts that attach to the seafloor, as well as sea grass and other marine plants, a few dead birds, and lots of feathers.

I later learned that this material is called sea wrack and it is an important part of the beach ecology. Large amounts of energy are exchanged from the marine world to the terrestrial world. The material that is commonly seen as unsightly, smelly, and a haven for small flying insects is actually part of an important process.

That day my eyes caught a beautiful, natural, composition of sea grass and polished stones. The colors were striking, the composition balanced.

That began my recent obsession with exploring beach wracks for their artistic wonders, and using my phone with the Hipstamatic app to capture the obvious, the not so obvious, and completely hidden beauty of the beach wrack world.

Often I was able to see only the potential hints of artistic expressions until in post processing I was presented with surprise after surprise. I used Lightroom and Color Effex Pro.

The images have a wide variety of styles, from clearly representational to fairly abstract, from otherworldly to 60's psychedelic to watercolor calm.

I took to heart the important teaching to just try and please myself, and not worry about the opinions of others. I knew some people would love the soft water color look and some would abhor the radically “over processed” images. Even when I knew most people would not appreciate a particular style, I pressed on following my own aesthetics. This also allowed me to experiment a lot and have fun playing with the possibilities.

Underlying this work is the demonstration of impermanence. As I observed the visual treasures in the beach wrack I was always aware of the transience of the moment. A visually perfect composition of kelp and seagrass would invariably change before I was finished capturing the images as the tide would sweep in and rearrange the composition, or destroy it completely.

This work is also a firm reminder that beauty is everywhere. It’s all around us. We simply need to slow down and really see what is there, to see with our artistic perception. To see what most take for granted.