

In Dialogue
with the
Ocean

與海對話

After a near death experience while surfing, Peter Matthews began drawing directly in the ocean. By immersing himself in the ocean and in nature, he surrenders his body and his artwork to the power of the ocean. His paintings and drawings are visual embodiments of a raw human experience, which are the result of a beautiful symbiosis between the ocean and himself. This is a man who continuously seeks to connect with the ocean—a man in conversation with the sea.



PETER MATTHEWS:

I have always felt a powerful calling by the ocean. I also have a profound connection to the mountains and forest, desert and pastoral landscapes of England where I grew up. When I studied art formally, I was always outside, and over the years the practice of making my work completely in nature—in the raw and ever changing elements—is something that developed over each season. I see this as a life-long relationship, and the more ocean I explore, the more I realise that there is so much we just simply do not know. The ocean's mystery and beauty and ever-changing nature allure and fascinate me beyond words.

From 2005 to 2008 I lived and worked along the Pacific coast of southern Mexico in Oaxaca. I was surfing a lot and working with marine biologists and ocean scientists. During this time, I also discovered meditation and my respect for the ocean grew. I often reflect on those times in Mexico, living very simply without a phone, internet, television, or car, and spending most of my days with the ocean or in meditation. I did not see much art in galleries, but I did come to appreciate local crafts, and also the novel and often very poetic ways that people would build, cook, make shelters, or fish. It was a time of purging myself from the what is often very dizzying and fragmenting world of contemporary art. On more than one occasion, I experienced near death situations surfing in big waves. These experiences and ways of living led me to draw in the ocean. I did not paint anything during these years in Mexico, just drawing in the ocean for hours. Most of the drawings I lost to the power and ever-changing nature of the ocean, but some survived. I discovered a beautiful symbiosis, relationship and poetic dialogue with the ocean and art, and since then I have pursued and ventured after that call of the sublime.

I only draw with pen on paper in the ocean, my body in suspended animation, fully immersed and physically in the seawater. I go into the ocean with a wetsuit when I am in the Atlantic Ocean or other colder regions in the Pacific, or just in surf shorts and long sleeve shirts and a hat in the warmer Pacific regions like Central America. I take nothing with me in the ocean but drawing paper nailed onto a piece of plywood, and pens which I hang from my arms, or stuff in my sleeves or hat. I wear extra-large body boarding fins on my feet so that I have some ability to tread water and move in the water. I do a lot of breathing exercises when I am working—everything is a cycle. I sometimes eat a lot, especially high calorie foods like fruit and chocolate. Other times I will fast and just drink water. I like simplicity. I am vulnerable and alone in the ocean; just me and the waves, the deeper water, the wind, the marine life, the rain, the sun, and the light. After a few hours of drawing in the ocean, or painting along the coast, along the littoral zones of high to low tides, I am not aware of my physical body. When I paint or draw with the ocean, I am responding to a raw, authentic and personal human feeling of being alone in nature. There is no plan when I make my art, there is no aesthetic image I am trying to make. My process is very organic, it just comes to me, then it flows and runs its experience over sometimes a few hours or sometimes days and days, where I will then live with the paintings, sleep with them, eat with them, pray with them, or even make fires with them. The paintings are visual embodiments of a raw human experience. The drawings are visual records and abstract, ocean drenched palimpsests of an experience of time and place, nature and the sublime, the observed and spiritual, the sensory and the allusive.



在經歷一次瀕死的衝浪經驗後，PETER MATTHEWS 開始了在海中繪畫。通過把自己沈浸在海洋與大自然中，MATTHEWS 將身體和藝術創作全都交付給了大海的力量。他的畫作裡，以視覺手法體現了個人最真實的經驗，那正是他自己與海洋之間所築起的美麗共生關係。他就是這樣一位不斷嘗試與海相連——一名與海對話的人。





10 Hours In and With the Pacific Ocean (Mexico) © PETER MATTHEWS



PETER MATTHEWS:

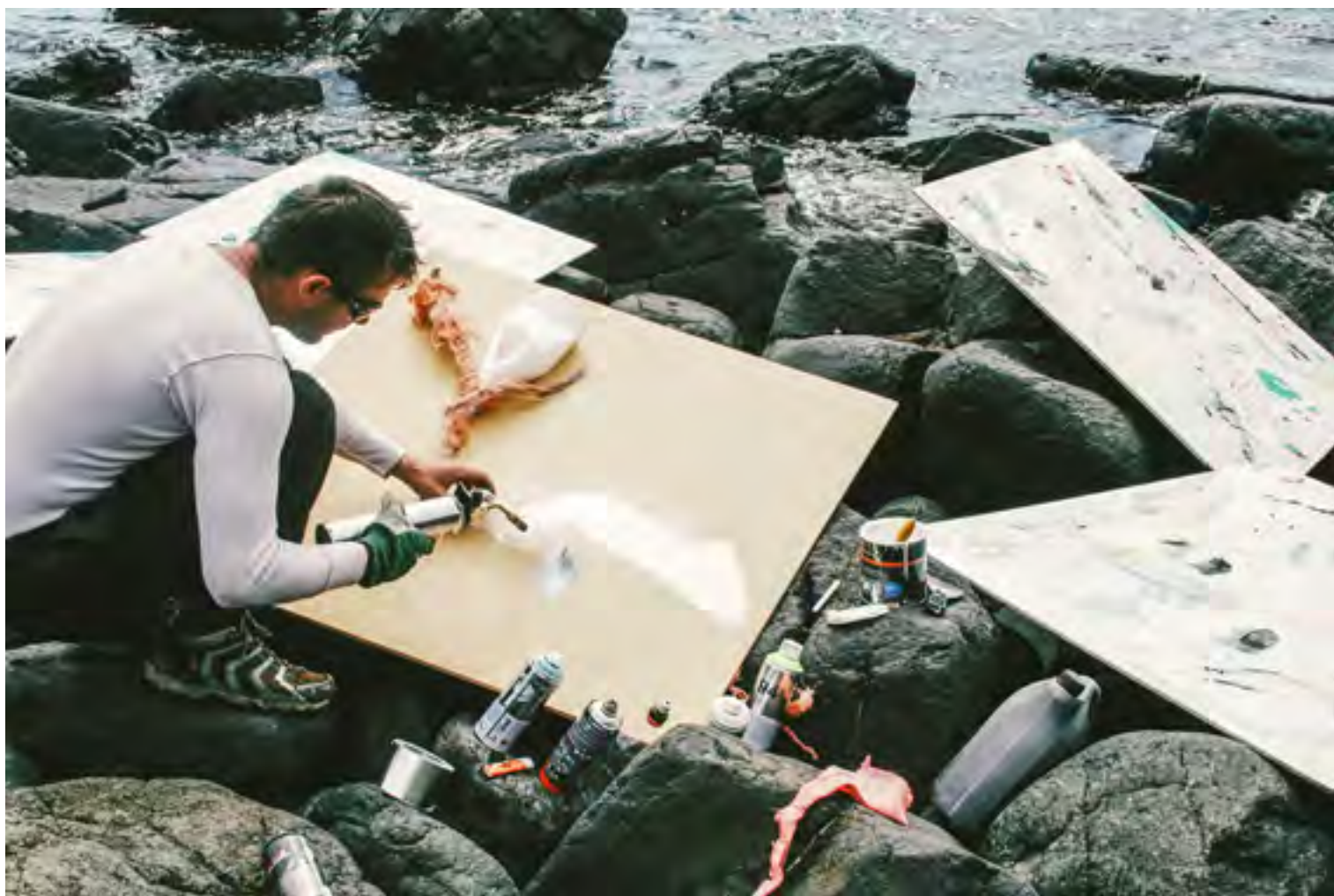
我一直以來都感覺到海在召喚著我。那些伴隨我成長的英格蘭山脈、森林、沙漠和田園風光，對我都有著深刻的影響。當我開始接受正式藝術教育時，我總是一直在戶外。多年以來，隨著季節的推移，在這些原始和不斷變化的自然元素中，我也發展出了完全在大自然中創作的方法。我覺得這連結會是一輩子的，隨著探索海洋越多，我越意識到未知的無限與浩大。海洋的神秘和美麗，以及不斷變化的自然吸引力，讓我無法言喻的深深著迷。

從2005年到2008年，我在墨西哥南部太平洋沿岸的瓦哈卡(Oaxaca)生活和工作。那時我經常衝浪，和海洋生物學家和海洋科學家一起工作。也在同一時期，我開始接觸冥想並更加的尊重海洋。我經常回憶起墨西哥的那段時光，當時過著非常簡單的生活，沒有電話、網絡、電視或汽車，大部分時間都與海或在冥想中度過。我沒有去太多藝廊看藝術作品，但我開始欣賞當地的手工藝，還有當地人不論是建造、烹飪、搭建庇護所或捕魚，所採用的新奇且經常極具詩意的手法。

當時我也在將自己從頭暈目眩和支離破碎的當代藝術界中抽離。不止一次，我體驗了在巨浪中衝浪的瀕死經驗。這些經歷和生活方式也引導我到了大海中畫畫。在墨西哥這些年，我沒有創作，只是待在海裡隨筆塗畫好幾個小時。大部分畫作也都消逝於無常而浩瀚的海洋中，但還是有倖存下來的。從而應孕出一種美麗的共生關係與一段海洋和藝術之間的詩意對話。從那時起，海洋壯麗的呼喚成爲了我一生的追隨。

我在海中用紙筆作畫時，身體總在海水中載浮載沉。當我在偏冷的大西洋或太平洋地區，我會穿潛水衣；在中美洲等較溫暖的太平洋地區，衝浪短褲、長袖上衣在加上帽子即爲我的選擇。我在海裡裝備極爲簡便，除了釘在膠合板上的畫紙，就是掛在手臂上、塞在袖子中或帽子裏的筆。腳上的超大蛙鞋，會幫助我踩水並移動。當在作畫時，我也同時在做呼吸練習——每件事其實都是個循環。我有時會吃很多高熱量的食物，像水果和巧克力。其他時候則是禁食與喝水。我喜歡一切從簡。在海洋中的我脆弱而孤獨；只有我和波浪、深層的海水、風、海洋生

物、雨水、太陽和光線。在海中，或在沿岸隨著漲退潮起伏的畫了幾小時後，我已經失去對身體的知覺。當我在海中畫畫時，便是在回應人在大自然中最原始、真實而個人的孤獨感。在創作藝術的時候，我沒有計畫，也沒有特定想要塑造的美學形象。我的創作過程非常隨機，靈感來了，順著感覺便能進行幾個小時，或甚至日復一日，我會與畫作們生活在一起，一同睡覺，一同吃飯，與它們一同祈禱，甚至使用它們生火。這些畫作以視覺轉化了真切的人類經驗。這些圖畫是一種視覺記錄——一個抽象的，由海水澆透的，一個運用自然壯麗的時間地點，將靈性觀察與感官交織而成的畫像。



Colour is used when I paint, but this always happens in a spontaneous, intuitive, and instinctive way. I am interested in synaesthesia, revealing the musical and the endless poetry I feel in and with the ocean. When I paint, I often will use a colour as a result of how I can smell, hear, or sense the colour, because when I am alone in nature for many days, my senses, especially my sixth sense, are heightened and hyper aware.

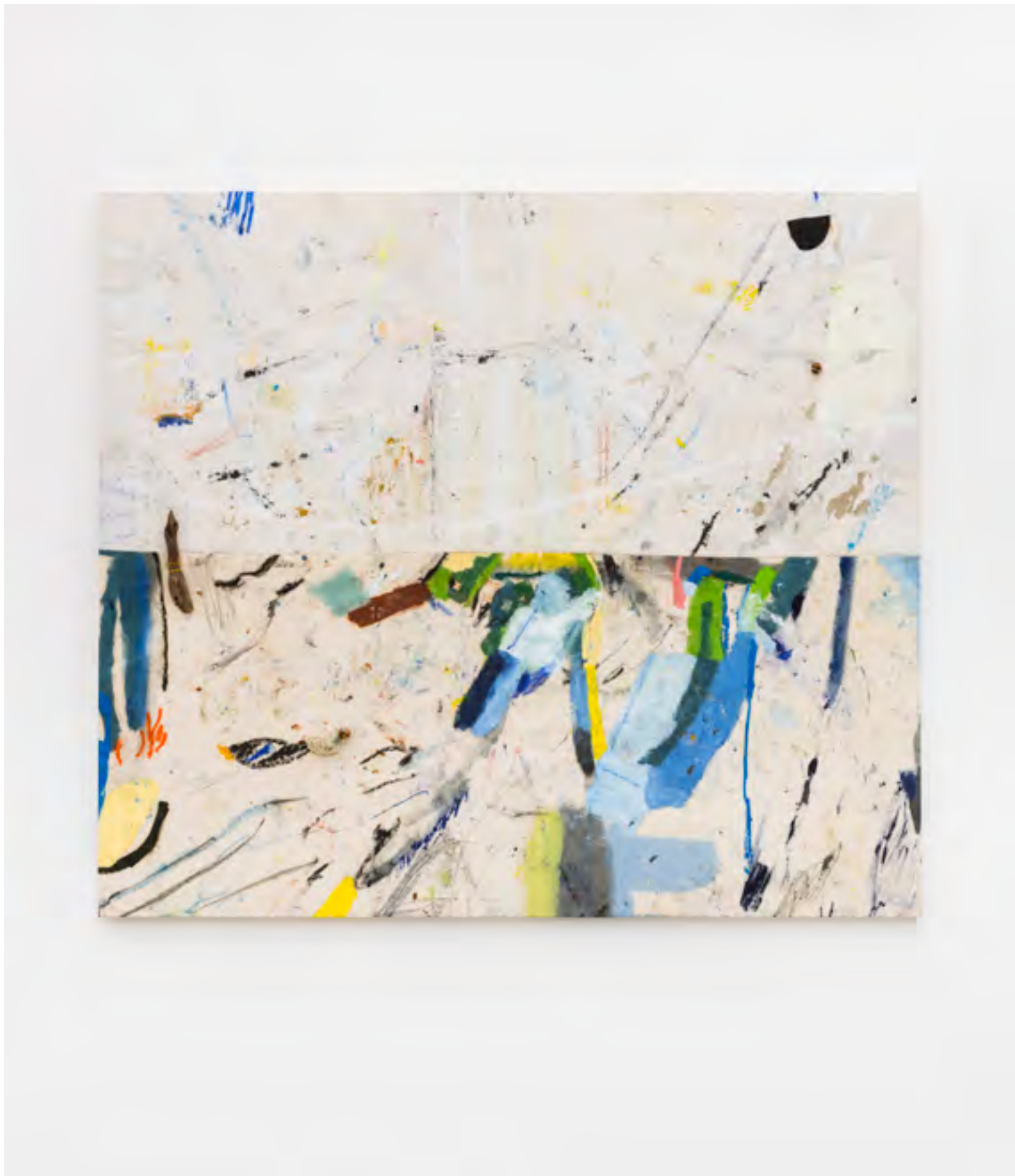
My materials for painting are simple. Like my drawings on paper, I paint entirely outside in the landscape along the coastal environments. I sometimes hike into a 'place', and when I feel a spiritual connection which connects with me—artistically, mentally, physically, or metaphysically—I will often hide my materials in the rocks or above the high tide line and bury materials like paints, or make a cache of food and water. I always paint on unstretched and unprimed canvas.

I never know when a painting is finished. For me they are never finished, just a dialogue in motion, an experience in transience. When I draw in the ocean, a drawing will come to its duration of being resolved when I feel I can no longer go on, as I am too cold and numb, or due to a celestial transition such as twilight turning into night. Sometimes I spend many hours or days just watching, walking, trekking, being with, swimming, surfing, and sleeping along the coast. There are many rituals, and nothing is forced. I walk gently, I pray a lot, I am in a communion and in a live, direct dialogue with the universe when I am thinking, making and just being with the ocean.

I often sleep on the beach, with the paintings which become a shelter, a sense of protection from the wind, sun, rain. Each place I travel to is different, evoking different emotional and psychological reflections and reflexes. Sometimes I cannot sleep at night, my mind is too alert, maybe because of paranormal activity which I sense on the beach at night, such as animals, insect bites, or just being over exhausted. So I sometimes sleep in the day. I become nocturnal, just like nature. These adaptive behavioral and physical changes are interesting for me, and they come out in the painting's abstract language.

The places I visit often take a long time to reach. I have always found that travel is so potent to the mind and body and spirit to see and grow. New ideas come from experiences, and to travel to somewhere new is to experience. In 2017 I adventured alone to wild beaches along the Pacific coast of Chile and Mexico. One of the motivations to go to these far-away places was to be alone, to heal, to recuperate, to find that stillness and peace in the wilderness after a succession of personal bereavements. I am led by the calling of the ocean, and the calling to paint and draw. So much is by a gut-felt instinct. There is always an inner voice calling me to be out there in and with the ocean. Painting in Chile and Mexico in the wilderness was a profound experience. Those long days under the pure blue skies, and then being under those spectacular night skies where you can truly feel a human and spiritual connection to the universe through the enhanced visibility of the stars and cosmos, those trips for me were epic and very personal.





Cometa © PETER MATTHEWS



Along the Atlantic coast painting (close up),
2019 © PETER MATTHEWS



在畫畫時，我總是以一種自發、直覺和本能性的方式在使用顏色。我對聯覺很感興趣，它揭示了我在海洋中所感受到的音樂性和無盡詩意。我使用顏色的方式，與我如何能聞到、聽到或感知這顏色有關。當我在大自然中獨處多天時，我的感知——特別是第六感，會增強而產生超感知。

我畫畫的材料很簡單。就像我紙上的作品，我都在戶外的海岸環境作畫。有時我會徒步走到一個“地方”，去感受心靈上的連結。而當藝術、精神與身體甚至形而上都連結貫通時，我經常會把材料藏在岩石縫中或漲潮線以上，掩埋油漆之類的材料，或儲存些食物和水。我總是在未拉伸和未上底漆的原棉質畫布上作畫。

我從來不知道一幅畫什麼時候會完成。對我來說，它們永遠不會完成，而是成為動態的對話、一個轉瞬的體驗。當我在海中畫畫時，一幅畫會結束於寒冷而導致的身體麻木，或是止於天色轉換從黃昏到黑夜。有時候，我會花很多時間在海岸邊觀看、散步與長途徒步，或是與海同在、游泳、衝浪和睡覺。有很多儀式，但沒有什麼是強迫必要的。我輕輕地走著，經常禱告。當我在思考、創造和與海同在的時候，便是與宇宙交融並進行了直覺交流。



我經常睡在沙灘上，替我防風、防曬、防雨的畫成為了我的庇護所。我去的每一個地方，都喚起了不同的情感和和心理反射。我有時頭腦過度清醒而睡不著，也可能是當晚在海灘上，受動物、昆蟲叮咬，或者過度疲勞產生的超自然現象。所以我有時會在白天入睡、變成夜行動物，就像大自然一樣。這些適應性的行為和生理變化對我來說相當有趣，它們會以抽象語言出現在畫中。

我要去的地方往往要花很長時間才能到達。我一直覺得旅行的所見所聞，最能壯大心靈、身體和精神。新想法來自體驗生活，而旅行到新地方就能有體驗。2017年，我獨自一人來到智利和墨西哥太平洋沿岸的野生海灘。前往這些遙遠地方的動機之一是想獨自一人，進行自我療癒，因為經歷了喪親之痛，想在荒野中找到平靜和平和。海洋與繪畫都同時在呼喚並指引著我，我大多時候也都由直覺去決定很多事情。內心總有個聲音在呼喚我前往海中與海同在。在智利和墨西哥的荒野中繪畫是很深刻的經歷。純藍色天空下的漫長日子，以及被壯觀的夜空籠罩著，清晰可見的星空和天體，讓我真正感受到宇宙萬物和人類之間的精神連結。對我來說，那是幾趟既宏偉而私密的旅行。

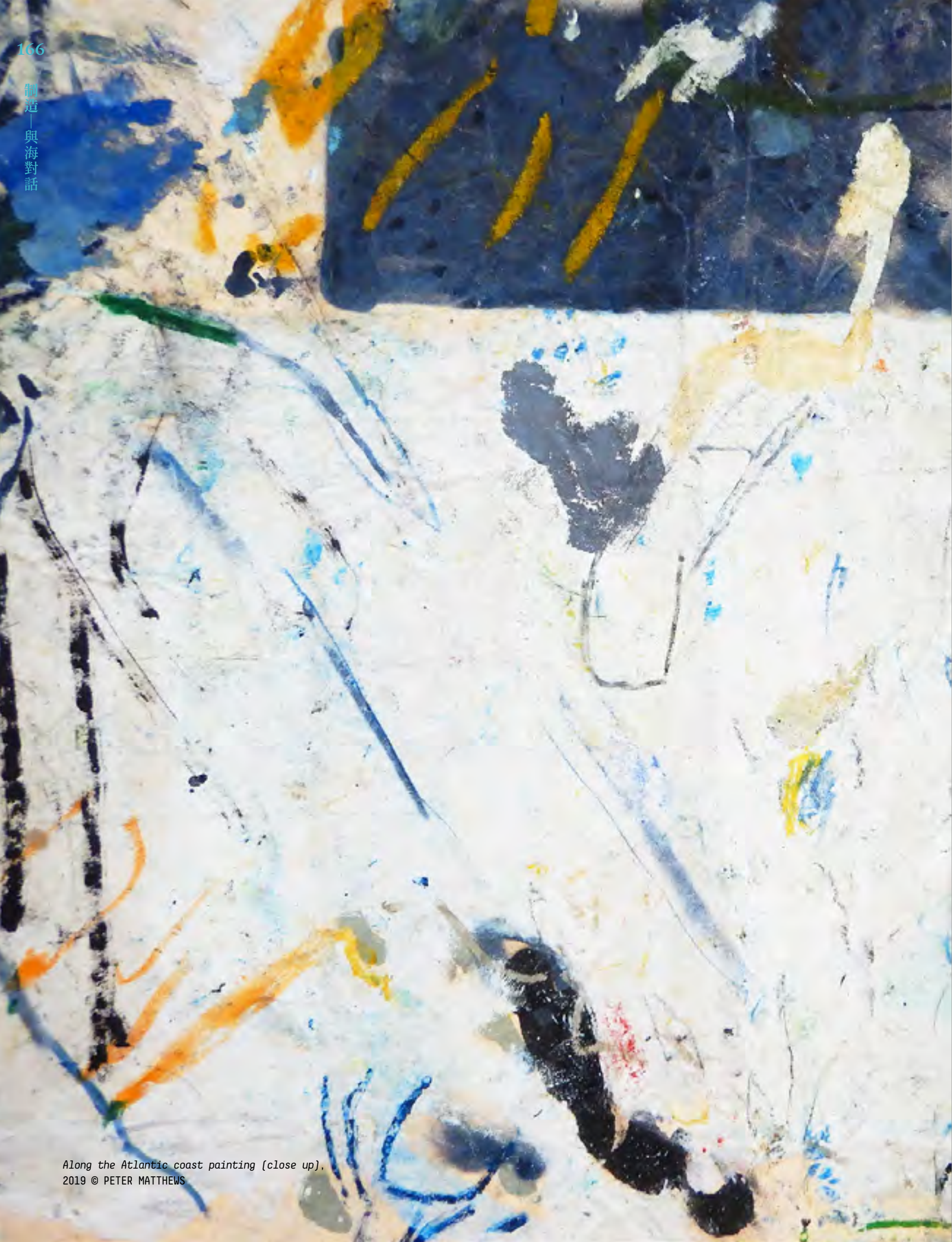


11 Hours In and With the Pacific Ocean (Mexico) © PETER MATTHEWS



Along the Atlantic coast painting (close up),
2019 © PETER MATTHEWS





Along the Atlantic coast painting (close up),
2019 © PETER MATTHEWS



Sabal © PETER MATTHEWS



Peter Matthews 自 2007 年以來一直在太平洋和大西洋沿岸進行創作。他的跨領域藝術實踐探索著人與地方、時間、地景與物質和過程之間的關係。作品多次於國外展出，最近於倫敦國家海事博物館展出大型繪畫和錄像裝置。更多作品詳見：www.petermathews.org

我在畫畫的時候幾乎沒有在想關於繪畫或藝術創作。對我來說，這只關乎體驗——與自然一同生活的體驗。這些作品和繪畫所揭露的，是以我個人的抽象語言來表達——在與海同在時，那種孤獨和原始體驗所引發出來的，稍縱即逝的波浪。紙上的圖畫，則是我一直在追尋和探索的，在時間和空間、空間和物質、光線和某種全然靈性的靈氣中，那個美麗滑動點，在那裡物件(繪畫)和主體(海洋/宇宙)相互連接，相互融合，不可分割。我作畫的過程想很多，但同時又什麼也不想。也許這是一個很禪意的思考或實踐，同時也是海洋的本質，因為它其實什麼都是。我對陰與陽、身體和海洋感興趣，對紙上的線條和天空中飄動的雲感興趣，在海浪上升時我呼吸著，並描繪太陽在天空移動的軌跡。海洋和我總是在進行即時的對話。我只管跟隨著對話繼續下去，我不知道這趟旅程和這段對話會去到哪裡，無關目的地，僅關於過程中的體驗。

在《星際大戰》中，路克·天行者曾問尤達在他們前面的未知洞穴：「裡面有什麼？」尤達簡單地回答說：「只有你隨身攜帶的東西。」

當我們身在海中時，我們有著深刻的感觸，卻又超然事外。我們只是發亮的個體在進行一場靈性的體驗，而我的藝術便是期望能將這場旅程和體驗轉變為有形和可見。

在海中創作了12年後，我時常覺得我更了解海洋了，但同時也覺得對海洋的了解更少了；要清楚地表達這一點並不容易。我最近在英國的大西洋中畫畫時，我確信聽到和聞到太平洋的味道了。海洋在我之中，在我們所有人之中。畢竟在千年前，我們便在海中誕生。我們人類在地球上的足跡和歷史，相比地球所進化的時間，是這樣的微不足道。我越來越意識到海洋和自然環境是多麼的脆弱。不論我到哪裡去工作，我都會花很多時間來清理海灘上的塑膠製品，這是我作為一個人類，努力與大自然保持的平衡共生關係。

海洋給了我們很多，我們也必須予以回報。





I rarely think about painting or making art when I am painting and drawing. For me it is just about the experience—the lived experiences with nature. The paintings and drawings make visible—albeit in my own personal abstract language and expression—fleeting and momentary waves from that solitary and primal experience of being in or with the ocean. For the drawings on paper, I have always chased after and pursued that beautiful slippage point in time and space, space and matter, light and the aura of something wholly spiritual where the object (drawing) and the subject (ocean/universe) become interconnected, integrated within one another and indivisible. I think very much when I am making the work, but then again I think of nothing. Maybe that is a *Zen* idea or practice, which essentially is what the ocean is, because it is nothing and everything. I am interested in the *yin* and *yang*, body and ocean, line on paper and cloud moving through the sky, breathing in as the ocean rises, drawing the passage of the sun overhead. The ocean and I are always in a live dialogue. I flow with this dialogue, I do not know where that journey and conversation will go; it is not about a destination, more about the experience of just getting there.

Luke Skywalker, in *Star Wars*, once asked Yoda about the unknown cave ahead of them: “What’s in there?” And Yoda simply replied, “Only what you take with you.”

In and with the ocean we are deeply mindful, yet deeply mindless. We are just luminous beings having a spiritual experience, and my art seeks to make tangible and visible that voyage and experience.

Peter Matthews has been working across the Pacific and Atlantic coasts since 2007. His multidisciplinary practice explores our human relationship to place, time, the landscape and material and process. His works have been shown internationally and he recently presented a large scale painting and film installation at The National Maritime Museum in London. His work can be found at: www.petermatthews.org

I sometimes feel I know the ocean more now, after 12 years of making my work in and with the ocean, but at the same time I feel I know the ocean less; it is not so easy to express this clearly. When I was drawing in the Atlantic Ocean in England recently, I was sure I could hear and smell the Pacific Ocean. The ocean is within me, as it is all of us. After all we emerged from the oceans millennia ago, and our human footprint on earth, the history of the earth, is tiny compared to the time the earth had been evolving. I have become more and more aware of just how fragile our oceans and natural environment are. A big effort is made to take found plastics off the beach wherever I work, which again, is my human attempt to work in a balanced symbiosis with nature.

The ocean gives us so much, we must give back too.

