

Surfing Angels & The Ocean of Love

Multimedia installation video by Tobey Crockett PhD

The 2017 video, *Surfing Angels & The Ocean of Love*, is a documentation of the art installation of paintings by the same name, exhibited at Bru in Atascadero CA in August 2017. The paintings are also by me, Tobey Crockett, an artist/writer and theorist who works in many forms, including 3D virtual worlds, photography, installation and sculpture.

The Central Coast where I live is an idyllic part of the US with many families dating back multiple generations as ranchers and farmers. I myself am a third generation Californian. The coast itself is unmarred, with long expanses of undeveloped beach now permanently designated for public use. It is one of the few stretches of coastline on the Western coast along the Pacific where it is still possible to experience nature, marine wildlife and all the joys of the ocean in a way that our ancestors would recognize.

Underlying the free, colorful and joyful images of surfing, beach and fun that California is so known for are several more subtle contexts derived from the footage which I compiled from public domain sources. Pacific rim images of palm trees, sunsets and porpoises are in fact extracted from military films made during the enforced colonization of the Pacific and its peoples – in some cases the very next shots would have included nuclear explosions over desolate islands made uninhabitable by military exercises.

The casual viewer would likely have no idea that these ‘in between’ moments of quiet beauty are part of a larger narrative of cataclysmic violence. It seems fitting to me that surf images, an art that was an intrinsic part of a nearly lost Hawaiian culture, should carry as a counterpoint this history of larger global devastation. As a person with a deep appreciation for, and some personal family legacy of, indigenous perspectives, I wanted to contrast these two bodies of imagery: California surf and Pacific tragedy.

At the same time, I also have a big belief in the restorative power of pleasure and self-compassion, and I wanted to enjoy the pleasures of my own paintings, and cherish the hope that we can still find a way for us to join together in an oceanic transpersonal love that can heal humanity.