



Clockwise, from left: Daniel Wallwork's piece in his native Australia; French artist Mantra went big in Mexico; Aaron Glasson of New Zealand chose an orca as his San Diego subject.

## STREET SMARTS

How the PangeaSeed Foundation is organizing ARTivism to spark a global conversation about oceans

BY BROOKE MORTON

**M**ore than 70 nonprofits are fighting right now to save our planet's oceans, coral reefs and marine wildlife — but there's one way in which they all come up short.

"In many communities where nonprofits are at work, a lot of people are left out and don't have any connection to it all," says Tre' Packard, founder of the PangeaSeed Foundation.

Through street art — think 50- to 100-foot murals on buildings downtown — Packard, the PangeaSeed Foundation and a rotating team of volunteer artists hope to change that by involving everyone who witnesses their messages during a commute, walk to the store, or dinner out. They call this branch of the nonprofit Sea Walls; their mission: to "bring the ocean to the streets."

Those streets span the globe. Miami. San Diego. Isla Mujeres, Mexico. Cozumel, Mexico. Auckland, New Zealand. Bali, Indonesia. Cairns, Australia. Toronto. Each mural reaches upwards of 100,000 to 200,000 passersby daily.

With a background in underwater photography and a résumé that includes documenting the illegal wildlife trade, Packard has learned what works to motivate the masses.

"We don't want the murals to be about blood and guts. We want them to be thought-provoking, not grotesque — and we have to give people hope," he says.

To date, Sea Walls is responsible for the creation of 350 murals by 300 artists, including Tristan Eaton, ASKEW ONE and Swoon.



TRE' PACKARD [3]



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From top: British artist Phlegm's piece in San Diego; Spanish artist Spok's mural in Cancun, Mexico.

**"We don't want the murals to be about blood and guts. We want them to be thought-provoking, not grotesque — and we have to give people hope."**

Each site features artwork specific to the local struggles plaguing that community's aquatic habitats. The issues can range from teaching local communities, such as those of Maui, how to reclaim water sources in the wake of sugar-cane industries' diverting of the natural flow, to taking on plastic pollution and coral bleaching in Bali, Indonesia. The first mural project, a crowdfunding effort, went up in Isla Mujeres, Mexico, in 2014 to educate tourists and locals alike about the value of the resident ocean inhabitants, namely whale sharks and manta rays.

"We want to encourage people to see these animals in these habitats as what they are, not a commodity to eat or use," Packard says.

In that instance, the government was hugely supportive, asking PangeaSeed to help inspire and better inform the community to better protect its marine resources. In the following years, better guidelines were put in place to limit tourism's impact on whale sharks.

Now, many local governments have witnessed the change that can

occur, and are queuing up for their own initiatives. Each year, Sea Walls responds by tackling three to four initiatives, each one lasting roughly four to five days, and involving a team of artists creating a series of murals. The nonprofit organizes community educational events and takes their artists on dive trips to witness their subjects up close. For many of them, this can be their first time underwater.

Packard, a diver since his youth spent in Carlsbad, California, says: "I wanted to inspire people to see the oceans the way I see them. For me, diving has always been the gateway to all this. It's the reason I fell in love with the oceans, and it's why I'm still fighting for them today."



TRE PACKARD (5)

## WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT SEA WALLS IN ACTION?

Read on to learn about the success of these top three dive-destination projects.



Aaron Glasson

### ISLA MUJERES, MEXICO

Sea Walls launched with a July 2014 project aimed at pressuring the tourism community into protecting local whale sharks. Fifteen artists committed two weeks on the ground, each making a mural. Success came the following year when a daily limit was placed on the number of tourism boats allowed near the whale sharks. Plus, tour operators began using reusable — not plastic — utensils, and encouraging people to bring their own water bottles.



Andre Huelin

### CAIRNS, AUSTRALIA

Two years of planning went into the April 2018 initiative in Cairns, the jumping-off hub for Great Barrier Reef tourism. Sea Walls won a grant from the Cairns Council, funding 22 artists' work for two weeks, focusing on ocean acidification and other topics. "This was a community that was traumatized," says Packard of what occurred in the wake of the reef's mass bleaching. In the end, he says, "the Council said they felt the project was a great success."



Slinat

### BALI, INDONESIA

The goal of this September 2018 project: to raise awareness among locals and visitors about the impact of tourism — namely that this destinations' beaches and surf waves have become covered in plastic garbage. The 18 artists involved tackled topics from plastic and pollution to biodiversity loss. Since then, the Indonesian government has vowed to reduce the country's dependence on single-use plastics, including possible fines to help reduce consumption.



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