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lust for life

*The amazing
Carissa Moore*

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THE FIERCE SPIRIT ISSUE: CELEBRATING THE COMMUNITY OF SURF SOULS / BLUE HEALTH, OCEAN CONNECTION / DREAMING OF EUROPE SURFBOARD ART / STAND UP TO WINTER / LEWIS: A WILD FRONTIER

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FUNCTIONAL ART

Creativity and collaboration within shaping, creating a functional piece of art.

words LYDIA PALESCHI

Many of us have dreamt of having our own surfboard shaped, many of us already have. But what happens when you have an idea that pushes the boundaries of board design, yet you've never shaped a board before? For illustrator and surfer Naomi Mather, this is exactly the position she found herself in earlier this year. Determined to pull off her visualisation for a 9'1" longboard, including her own 'plant people' graphics transferred onto the rocker, plus the addition of real pressed flowers and leaves sitting below the resin, she set out to find shapers who would make her dream a reality. Most shapers were reluctant to take on the project because of its complexities, including the flowers in the resin work, so it took a while before she came across Newquay-based shaper Jack Day. Otherwise known as Salty Shapes, Jack has been crafting boards since 2018 and is recognised for his creative designs and paneling. The result of Naomi and Jack's collaboration is a stunning and unique longboard, including a pressed flower fin patch and a flower lady with pressed leaves, sitting perfectly on a tan resin tint.

Creative freedom

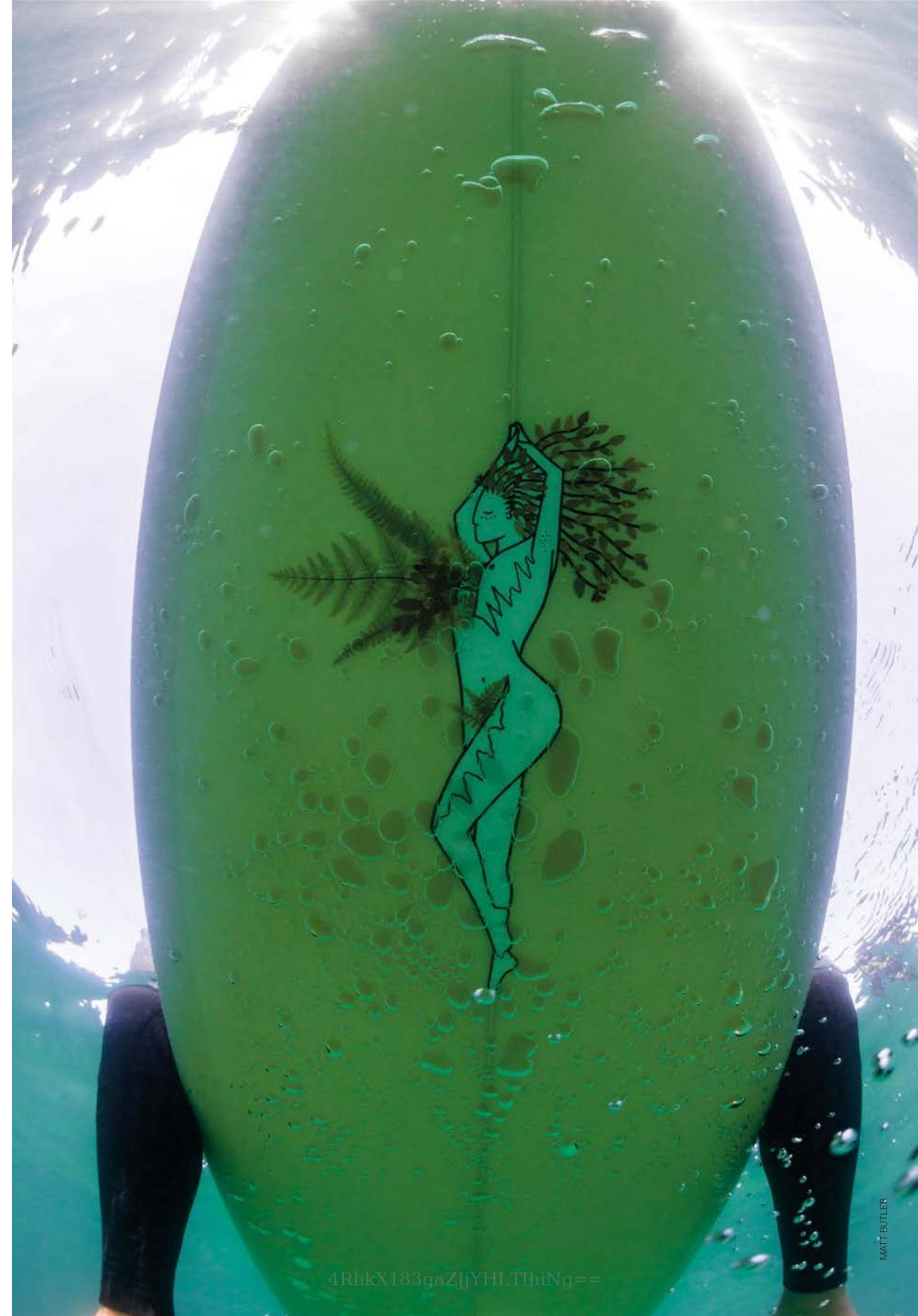
When I asked Naomi why she was so determined to pull this project off, despite the obvious challenges, she told me that for her, "creative freedom is key". After working as a graphic design intern for a big surf brand years ago, this time she wanted to do it her way. "When I worked there it

wasn't what I thought it would be. There were rules and a lack of creative freedom. I see illustration as a way to express myself with no boundaries, and it was important to be able to put that into the board."

For Naomi, being able to include one of her 'plant people' illustrations on the board was also an expression of emotion and personal development. "I've been surfing for about nine years, and if I hadn't picked up surfing I don't know where I'd be. It's really helped me with my mental health and alongside these illustrations this board is a reflection of my personal journey." She continues to explain where the inspiration for the 'flower lady' came from. "I think initially I was drawing women that I wanted to be – women that were empowered and strong but still feminine. I remember drawing the woman on the board and thinking, 'that's how I want to feel'. She's vulnerable but she's comfortable in her own vulnerability and embraces it. It's empowering and she's flourishing as a result." It's clear that for Naomi, the timing was important for creating the board too. She reveals "It was the right time to commit to the board because I've reached where I wanted to be and what I depicted in these illustrations."

Crafting a functional piece of art

For Jack, creating the board was an expression of creativity, as well as a way for him to try something new. "Throughout my life I've always been big on variety and I think that pushes over into my board building. I like making fun, different designs. I like pushing myself and progressing my skills, so I



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MEGAN HEMSWORTH FOR SURF SISTAS



MEGAN HEMSWORTH FOR SURF SISTAS

enjoy doing a lot of resin work." When I asked what in particular drew him to Naomi's board, Jack explains: "I was really keen to do Naomi's board because it's multimedia. I liked the idea of using different media and compositions on a board, as it's like a functional piece of art at that point." While some could argue that any board could be perceived as a functional piece of art, according to Jack, this board took things to another level. "It's taking it further and integrating the board design with something else. It's actually combining shaping and resin work with a multilayered piece of art."

Despite being an adventurous and experimental shaper, and having worked on a board with pressed flowers previously, Jack tells me that Naomi's board was no easy feat. "If you have a tiny raised bit of flower or seed head you can sand through it later on, so you've got to build lots of resin up. It takes time." Not only this, but Naomi's board had an additional element of difficulty. "When I came home and was writing out an order form, I realised I had to put decal down and flowers on top, without either of the two moving and without me sanding through any little bit. It was then that it sank in how tricky it was." Nonetheless, the board came to fruition without any hiccups and both Naomi and Jack are understandably very happy with its outcome.

Down the line

Despite the challenges experienced by each of them in creating the board, it's safe to say that the pair have pulled off an impressive accomplishment. Not only does it look incredible, but Naomi says that it rides really well and she "feels amazing" whilst she

surfs it.

When I ask Naomi if she'd like to work on something similar in the future, her face lights up. "I hope to be able to collaborate on more boards and create custom illustrations for people with shapers. I've done some logo design work with shapers before and seeing your work on other people's boards never gets old." Jack agrees, and reveals that he and Naomi already have another board collaboration on the cards. When I attempt to uncover more details, Naomi laughs and tells me: "We're keeping our cards close to our chest at the moment, but it's inspired by my recent love of freediving and it's going to include more pressing."

Alongside this, Jack is also currently working with friends to perfect the shape of a new range of boards. One of which is an exciting double step deck, named 'the seesaw'.

For more info on Jack and the boards, checkout @the_saltyshaper on Instagram.

For more info on Naomi and her illustrations, visit naomimather.co.uk or @naomimather on Instagram.

