

# Dailan Pugh



P O R T F O L I O





## Dailan Pugh

Text edited  
by Gunild Symes  
All images courtesy  
of Dailan Pugh

LEFT: *Resting Wobbegong* by Dailan Pugh, 2007, oil on canvas, 92x92cm. A Spotted Wobbegong rests in a hole in an old shipwreck (*Tassie III*) off Byron Bay and awaits the night to go hunting while Moon Wrasse, Jansen's Wrasse, Stripey, a school of Eastern Pomfred, Banded Scalyfin, Red Morwong and an Eastern Kelpfish keep company

FAR LEFT: *Octopus' Garden* by Dailan Pugh, 2009, oil on canvas, 90x60cm. A Gloomy (Sydney) Octopus off the Lennox Headland has come out of his lair to hunt for crabs and eyes a couple Swift-footed Rock Crabs. Crimson-banded Wrasse, Pearly Wrasse, Gunther's Wrasse, Eastern Kelpfish, Jumping Blenny, Horned Blenny, Padong Frill Goby, Black-cheeked Threefin, Eastern Fortescue nudibranchs, seashells, chiton, seastars (*Patriella calcar*), and sea urchins accompany the octopus

PREVIOUS PAGE:

*Clam Garden*, by Dailan Pugh 2009, oil on canvas, 92x183cm. On the Great Barrier reef, a Giant Clam is accompanied by Bicolor Parrotfish, Orange-blotch Surgeonfish, Blue-stripe Snapper, Gold-band Fusilier, a group of Scalefin Anthias, Foxface, Masked Rabbitfish, Chameleon Parrotfish, Yellow Boxfish, Six-banded Angelfish, Ornate Butterflyfish, Blue-dash Butterflyfish, Triangular Butterflyfish, Blue-spotted Wrasse, Checkerboard Wrasse, New Guinea Wrasse, Slingjaw Wrasse, Yellowtail Coris, Banded Thicklip, Red-ribbon Wrasse, Lined Sweetlips and Beaked Leatherjacket

**Australian artist and painter, Dailan Pugh, knows the underwater realm. He captures its vivid colors and dynamic diversity of life on canvas like no one else. X-RAY MAG's Gunild Symes interviewed the artist to learn more about his approach to art and his thoughts on conservation and the**

### fragile state of our oceans and reefs.

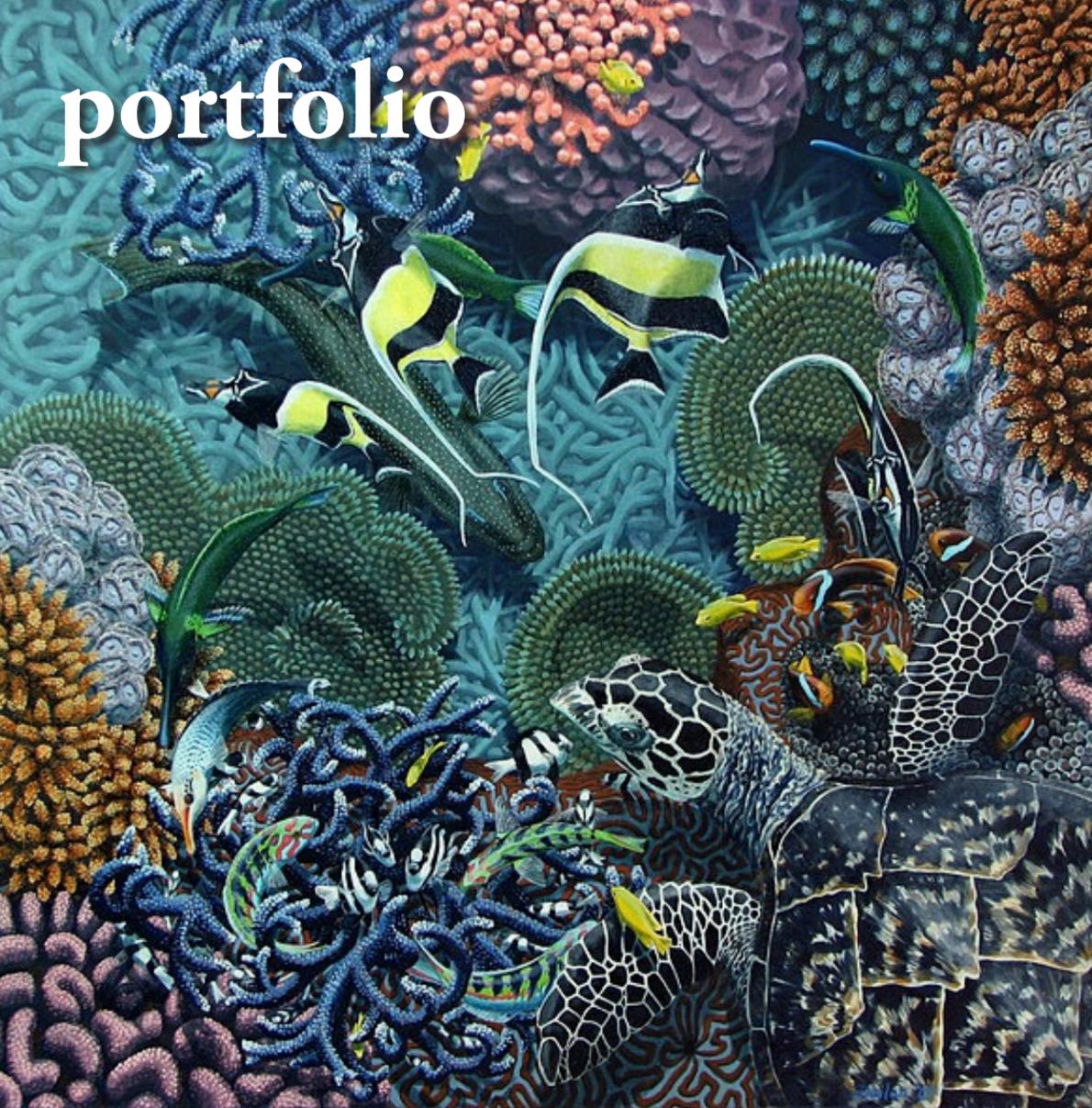
*Tell us how and why you became an artist...*

I grew up in an artistic household in woodland near Melbourne in Victoria, Australia, spending summer holidays playing in temperate rock pools and snorkeling. We cared for orphaned and injured native wombats and kangaroos. This engendered in me a deep love and respect for our natural environ-

ment, which was expressed through my drawing.

In my early twenties, I moved to north-east New South Wales to live near rainforest that I was then drawing. In reaction to my growing concern, I devoted increasingly more of my time progressively to rainforest, old growth forest and vegetation conservation.

It was my involvement in attempts to maximise sanctuary zones in the Cape Byron Marine Park that led me back into my fascination with the marine realm. This



LEFT:  
*Hawksbill Idol*, by Dailan Pugh, 2007, oil on canvas, 92x92cm. Above the coral on the Great Barrier Reef, a Hawksbill Turtle glides, scattering Moorish Idol and Bird-nose Wrasse as it swims above Red-and-black Annemonefish, Six-bar Wrasse, Humbug Dascyllus, Golden Damse, and a Blue-spotted Rockcod

RIGHT:  
*Stripey Old Wives*, by Dailan Pugh, 2007, oil on canvas, 92x60cm. Stripey and Old Wife hide in the kelp. The only species in their family, Old Wives are endemic to Australia



I start by sketching the key features (often fish) and positioning them to achieve a basic design. I then sketch in additional fish to refine the design and achieve a pleasing composition. I then generally work from the background forward to complete the work.

From the vantage point of a snorkeler, I seek to take the observer's eye on a journey around and into my paintings, while realistically depicting the subjects and their surroundings. My desire is to touch the heart of the viewer.

*What inspires you? What inspires you about the underwater world? Tell us how the sea inspires your work and why you use themes of the underwater realm.*

Nature inspires me, I love its multitudes of patterns, colours, forms and processes... its proliferation of living beings, from the smallest to the largest. The sea is especially inspiring, as in that world, the water is the atmosphere. Being 80 times as dense as our air, it enables the inhabitants to leisurely float around or to wait until diner floats by.

Its inhabitants have thus developed strikingly different from their terrestrial counterparts. The seaweeds, sponges

coincided with my desire to devote more of my time to artwork and to start painting in oils.

*Who were your role models or mentors and how did they affect your artwork/ artistic vision or development?*

Being raised in an artistic environment established a desire to express myself through artwork, and while there are many painters I admire, I use the environment as my muse. I adopted the marine environment as a subject for developing my oil painting because of its strangeness, its atmospheric qualities, its abundance of weird and wonderful wildlife, and its need for promotion and understanding. I thought it could teach me a lot about painting.

*Tell us about your artistic vision and artistic methods, process, techniques, materials, etc., i.e. describe your artistic method and tell us why you chose the medium and methods you use.*

My rekindled interest in the underwater world coincided with my desire to start oil painting, and I considered it provided the perfect muse to develop my methods and style. I take numerous digital photographs when snorkelling and use these as reference material for painting.

While snorkeling, I will usually also develop some ideas for paintings. I initiate the painting process by sorting through my photos to select those appropriate to the locality and concept.



*Blacktip Reef Shark and Bigeye Trevally*, by Dailan Pugh, 2007, oil on canvas, 92x183 cm. A patrolling Black-tip Reef Shark on the Great Barrier Reef scares a school of Big-eye Trevally as Scissor-tail Sergeant, Golden Damselfish, Many-spotted Sweetlips look on

and corals take on a multitude of forms not seen in the terrestrial realm, though it is the vivid colours and intricate patterns of fish I find most alluring. Unlike birds, they often hang around, tantalisingly just out of reach.

*Are you a scuba diver and underwater photographer? If so, what made you become one and where have you dived? What are your favorite dive locations?*

I take numerous photos when I snorkel, though as they are primarily for reference purposes, I photograph just about anything and everything.

I have snorkelled various places

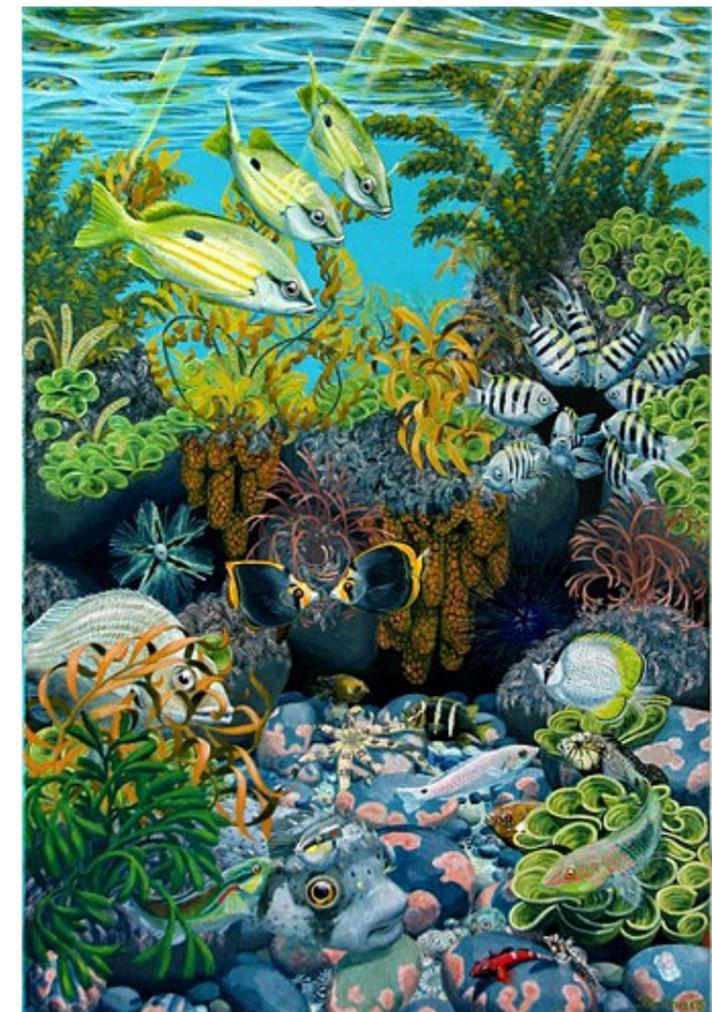
*Green Turtle on Ribbon Reef*, by Dailan Pugh, 2008, oil on canvas. On the Great Barrier Reef, a Green Turtle rests amongst Striped Triggerfish, Saddled Butterflyfish, Rainford's Butterflyfish, Fire Dartfish, Yellowtail Fangblenny, Dick's Damselfish, Freckled Hawkfish, Blue-green Puller, Golden Damselfish, Red-ribbon Wrasse, Six-bar Wrasse, and Tail-fin Batfish

around Australia, though spend most of my time in the nearby Cape Byron Marine Park or, when I can, on the Great Barrier Reef, particularly Lady Elliot Island.

*What are your current artistic and ocean conservation projects?*

I have spent three years immersing myself in the underwater realm, and have learnt a lot in the process. I am now going to focus on the majestic River Red Gums, which follow the rivers into our arid interior. They, and the myriad of cockatoos and parrots which rely on them, have some-

*Bream Hole I*, by Dailan Pugh 2008, oil on canvas, 91x60cm, 1 of a triptych. Black-spot Snapper eye a school of Sergeant Major's with Dusky Butterflyfish, Gunther's Butterflyfish, Red-spot Wrasse, Three-spot Wrasse, Carpet Wrasse, White Ear, Black-cheek Threefin, a young Banded Scalyfin, Silver Bream and Starry Toadfish





*Lioned Catfish*, by Dailan Pugh, 2009, oil on canvas, 92x92cm. Four Red Lionfish hang around In the Lord Howe Island Lagoon with a school of Lined (Striped) Catfish, White-mouth Moray Eel., McCulloch's Anemonefish, young Multi-spine Damsels, South Seas Wrasse, Yellow Moon Wrasse, Surge Wrasse and New Guinea Wrasse



*Bream Hole III* by Dailan Pugh 2008, oil on canvas, 91x60cm, 3 of a triptych. Cook's Cardinalfish, Speckled Rainbowfish (young and old), Three-spot Wrasse, Moon Wrasse, Black-cheek Threefin and Coral-sea Gregory hang out In the Bream Hole at Lennox Head. Black-spot Snapper, Red-spot Wrasse, a Black Spinefoot, Silver Bream, Scissor-tailed Sergeants, and a Mullet pass by

thing to teach me and are also under immense threat due to climate change.

*Any future projects in mind? What are they and how do they relate to the sea or ocean conservation?*

The ocean realm is literally another world. I will always be fascinated with it and believe it contains the most wondrous ecosystems on earth. I am very concerned that as we are warming the oceans, our carbon dioxide is causing their waters to acidify. Their fragile beauty will inspire me to return to them frequently as my painting evolves.

The Great Barrier Reef system is one of the world's natural wonders, and is under imminent threat from bleaching and acidification. On current trends, I don't have long left to experience its full beauty, so I will make the most of it. I hope my artwork can help raise awareness of what we are destroying.

*Why does art matter and how can art help the world?*

I think that the most important thing a person can do is experience something for themselves, though for the marine realm, it is best if it is in a clear sea, in a sanctuary area with abundant fish, and

# portfolio



## Dailan Pugh



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*Bream Hole II*, by Dailan Pugh, 2008, oil on canvas, 91x120cm, 2 of a triptych. In the Bream Hole at Lennox Head schools of Blackfish, Stripey and Mullet are attended by Blue-streaked Cleaner Wrasse, Red-spot Wrasse, Gunther's Wrasse, Cigar Wrasse, Silver Bream, Bengal Sergeant, Sand Whiting, Magpie Morwong, schools of Black-striped Wrasse and juvenile Black-spot Goatfish, Coral-sea Gregory, Pearly Wrasse, White Ear, Black-cheek Threefin, Krefft's Goby, Snowflake Eel and Long-finned Cod accompany the creatures



The artist, Dailan Pugh, standing in front of his painting, *Kelpies I*

without too many scary creatures.

Aside from its cultural attributes, art is one means of establishing a viewer's contact with natural ecosystems and may enhance the experience by accentuating an aspect or feeling. My hope is that my art will deepen people's appreciation of the marine realm, and thereby

their concern for it.

*How can interested buyers contact you?*

I am contactable through my website: [dailanpugh.com](http://dailanpugh.com). At this time I am only selling originals. Prices are according to size and medium, with oil paintings starting at \$2,400 Australian. ■

*Swell Sharks*, by Dailan Pugh 2008, oil on canvas, 183x92cm. In the seaweed forests off Tasmania, Spotted Swell Shark patrol the area, watched by Six-spined Leatherjacket and Yellow-tail Kingfish, Blue weed-whiting, Southern Hulafish, and Blue-throat Wrasse move about in the weeds, while a Common Garnard Perch eyes them

