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ABOUT THE COVER

This month's cover, Untitled (Egrets and Fox), 2006 is an acrylic on maple panel painting by Tiffany Bozic. It is one of 188 works featured in In the Land of Retinal Delights: The Juxtapoz Factor, at the Laguna Art Museum, through October 5, 2008. For more information, visit www.lagunartmuseum.org and turn to our story on the exhibit on page 152. Painting is courtesy of the collection of Mike Lin.
Oceana, the world's largest ocean conservation organization, has landed on our shores with celebrity, local support and a whole lot of hope.

Let's face it, there's one big reason we live in coastal Orange County: the Pacific Ocean. It keeps year-round temperatures modest, our home prices anything but, drives our tourism, provides a watery playground, and, perhaps most noticeably, is just really nice to gaze at after a frenetic day at the office. But all is not as pristine and perfect as the ocean's seemingly endless blue surface would have us believe. In fact, the oceans of the world are under constant assault due to overfishing, massive pollution and global warming. And unfortunately, the ocean's overwhelming beauty - its beauty - is also her curse. "From the beach at Malibu or the hills of Laguna, the ocean looks like it's in fabulous shape, but it's not. People just can't see below the surface," says Hollywood managing partner Keith Addis, vice chairman of the Board
Directors of Oceana, the world’s largest ocean conservation organization. If we could see below the surface, we’d witness an ocean where bottom fishing – the equivalent of strip mining – is destroying millions of square miles of ocean every year, fish are being taken at an alarming and unsustainable rate, and acidification is killing off species daily.

Still, from the sailor’s perspective, all is serene. That’s what was so difficult about the first 12 years of Oceana,” says Addis. “It was really difficult to get anybody to listen to us.”

But in the last 18 months, in many ways thanks to the booming “green movement,” all that’s changed exponentially. And the evidence, locally, was marked by one of the coast’s most star-studded events to date: last month’s Sea Change Summer Party. With honorees Harrison Ford, Sam Waterston and CdM’s own John Picard, and an auction that included a 2008 Prius and...
its victories have been every bit as impressive, including Oceana being seminal in the protection of over one million square miles of ocean bottom from trawling; preventing 20 million tons of oil from being illegally dumped in the oceans every year; saving 60,000 sea turtles annually; and putting forward a bill to regulate the commercial shipping industry. Oceana is also making progress in reignining in commercial fishing by fighting to lessen costly subsidies, outlaw bottom trawling completely, educating the public on which fish are sustainably caught and contain the lowest toxin levels, and greatly reducing wasteful bycatch. But again, says Addis, it’s important to note that Oceana is not anti-fishing. “In fact, it’s quite the opposite,” he says. “We want to make sure there is enough seafood for the billion people who rely on it every day for sustenance and for coming generations.”

It’s a view based on the fact that the future of the earth – and therefore, of the human race – is intrinsically tied to the health of the oceans. “The good news is none of these solutions are restrictively costly or difficult. It’s not like the Manhattan Project,” says Whiting. “It’s really just about the cessation of unhealthy and unsustainable practices.” Or, as Addis plainly puts it, “...stopping some of the completely idiotic things we are doing to ourselves and our planet every day.” And Addis, who admits he got involved 15 years ago merely to ingratiate himself with his new client, Danson, only to become one of Oceana’s most passionate and tireless advocates, believes that his enthusiasm will be shared by anyone who gets involved. “I’ve discovered that getting involved is the most exciting, rewarding work I’ve ever done,” he says. “I think that the symbiotic nature of it being an incredible personal journey of satisfaction and growth and at the same time meeting a tremendously urgent global need is a really powerful idea for anyone. Because in 10 or 20 years, when the [next generation] asks ‘What did you know about the problem and what did you do to solve it?’ I want to be able to say, ‘I worked hard to know a lot about it and I did everything I could to find solutions.’”

If enough people can say the same thing, he believes, perhaps the bottom of the ocean will look every bit as pristine and inviting as its surface.

For everything from ways to get involved to a guide to ocean friendly seafood, visit www.oceana.org.