

Marionette Taboniar



P O R T F O L I O

portfolio

Painting on plexiglass, the self-taught American artist **Marionette Taboniar** creates liquid worlds of tropical fish life and colorful reef scenes. **X-RAY MAG** interviewed the Michigan native who now lives and teaches at her studio on Kauai.

Humuhumu 4 (right) and Humuhumu 3 (previous page) by Marionette Taboniar
Reverse acrylics on plexiglass, 12 x12 inches.
Humuhumu is short for *humuhumunukunu* -*kuapua*'a which is the Hawaiian State fish. It translates to "fish with a nose like a pig"



Humuhumu 5, by Marionette Taboniar. Reverse acrylics on plexiglass, 12 x12 inches

Taboniar



Edited by Gunild Symes
Photos courtesy of
Marionette Tabonair

X-RAY MAG: Tell us about your background. How did you become an artist, and how did you develop your artistic method or process?

MT: I am mainly a self-taught artist, learning mostly through

workshops, reading books, and lots of practice. I studied pastel portrait painting with my neighbor when I was about 12 years old back in Michigan. That was really my first introduction to professional art and art materials. Before that, I was always drawing and painting with markers, crayons and poster paint. I took a few classes in art as electives while I was getting

my biochemistry degree from the University of Michigan. After I graduated, I worked for a chemical company for 14 years while doing my art part time. In 1992 I took my first vacation to the island of Kauai, Hawaii, and knew I would move there some day to pursue my art career full time. I just fell in love with the bright and bold tropical colors of the island both above and below





Humuhumu 6, by Marionette Taboniar. Reverse acrylics on plexiglass, 12 x12 inches

the water. In 1999 I opened a small studio in Michigan where I was more of a weekend artist while I was still working at my day job. This gave me the opportunity to discover that I loved to teach art, and then I put my plan into action to move to Kauai to teach art full time. I made the move in 2004 and haven't looked back. I now own and operate Painting

Paradise in the town of Waimea, Kauai, on the island's sunny west side. I create my art there as well as teach watercolors, acrylics, pastels, silk painting, encaustics, Chinese brush painting, mixed media and more. Through teaching almost every day, I have been able to develop my artistic process over these last ten years, and it has been a blast.

X-RAY MAG: What is your artistic mission or vision?

MT: With my art, I aim to capture the bright and beautiful colors of Kauai. Being in the middle of the ocean, the air is so clean here which makes the sky a really amazing shade of blue. Due to the daily trade wind showers, rainbows are a frequent

vision here as well as bright and warm sunlight. All of these things contribute to the bold, tropical colors seen in the landscapes, foliage and sea life of Kauai.

X-RAY MAG: What about the sea and its creatures inspires you?

MT: I love the fact that I am surrounded by the ocean. Anywhere you go on the island

of Kauai, you are only moments away from its beautiful and breathtaking seascapes. I love to park by the ocean and just watch the waves. You can sometimes see a turtle or tropical



Hawaiian Tropical Fish 3, by Marionette Taboniar. Reverse acrylics on plexiglass, 12 x12 inches



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:: Honu, Honu 4, Honu 2, Honu 6, Honu 3, by Marionette Taboniar. Reverse acrylics on plexiglass, 12 x12 inches. Honu means sea turtle in the Hawaiian language

fish riding inside the wave itself. In the winter months, the enormous humpback whales come to mate and give birth in the warm waters of Hawaii. I never tire of seeing these amazing creatures jump out of the water as they breach. I can sit and watch them for hours.

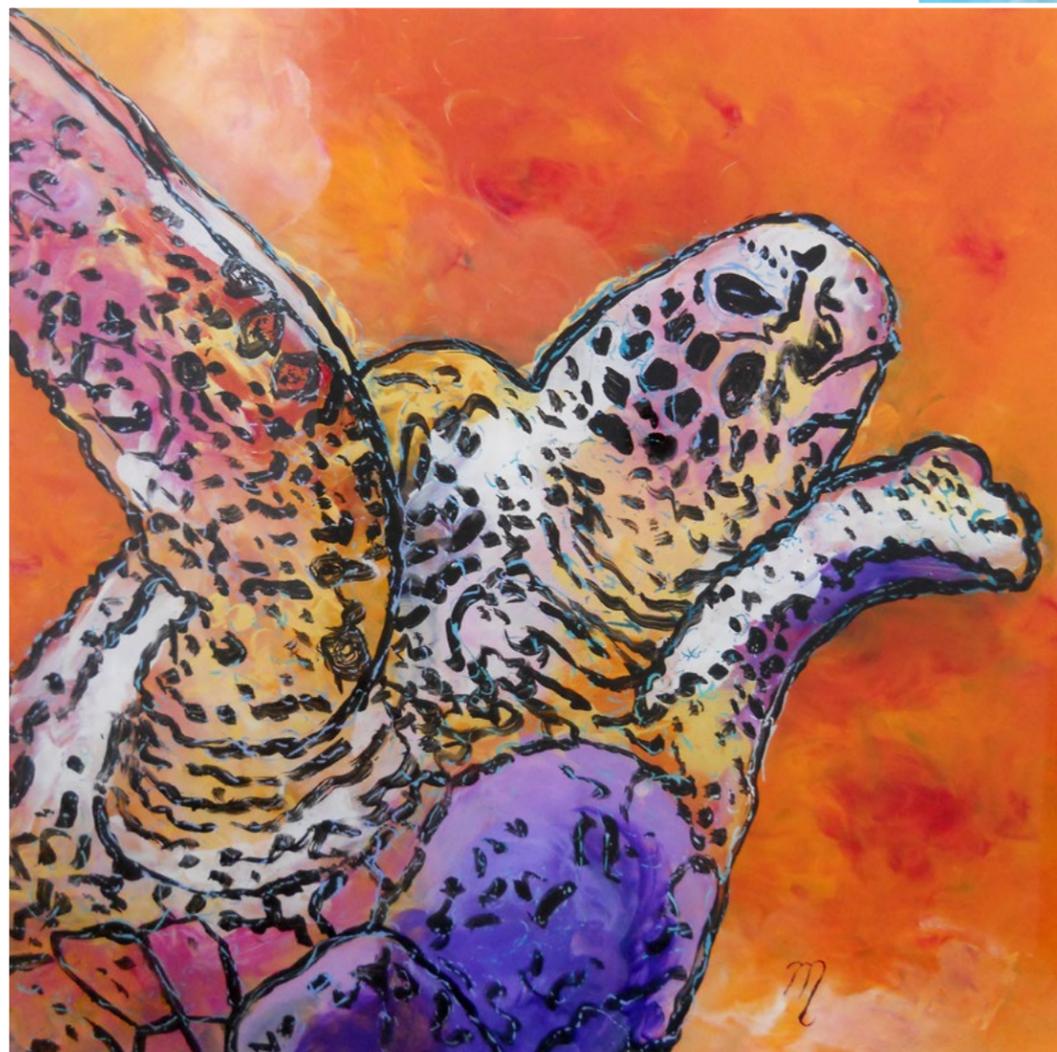
X-RAY MAG: Tell us about your experience in the underwater world, scuba diving or snorkling.

MT: I first learned to snorkel as a tourist on my many trips to the Hawaiian Islands before I moved here. On almost any boat trip, they will stop the catamaran and

you can jump into the ocean with your snorkel gear, look down into the water and see lots of colorful tropical fish, turtles and dolphins. It is a truly amazing experience and it's so easy.

X-RAY MAG: What are your favorite dive sites, underwater subjects, locations?

MT: On Kauai the best places to snorkel on the north shore are Tunnels Beach, where there are actual lava tubes under the water, and Ke'e Beach, which is protected by a reef, making it a wonderful place to snorkel



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and safely swim in the summer months. On the south shore, I like to snorkel at Lawai Beach, which is a small beach just steps away from a very nice reef. There I can

see lots of turtles, and the rare Hawaiian monk seal will make an appearance there now and then.

X-RAY MAG: How are your paintings made?

MT: In my recent series of underwater paintings, I use a



Hawaiian Tropical Fish 5, by Marionette Taboniar. Reverse acrylics on plexiglass, 12 x12 inches



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Hawaiian Tropical Fish 4, by Marionette Taboniar. Reverse acrylics on plexiglass, 12 x12 inches

painting method called reverse acrylic painting on plexiglass. It's exactly what it sounds like. I paint with acrylics on the back of a piece of plexiglass. Because I'm painting on the back surface, the details have to be painted first, then you work towards the background. That's why it's called "reverse" painting. It sounds very challenging, but it's

actually quite easy once you know the process. After the first layer is painted, I often come back with a scratching tool to scratch in more detail and then fill that in with more paint. When I am almost finished, I actually paint the ocean by finger painting. I love the feel and effect of swirling around the paint with my hands. When you view

the painting, you are actually looking through the plexiglass at the subject. To me it reminds me of looking through the glass of an aquarium.

X-RAY MAG: Do you use underwater photography in your creative process and how is it incorporated in the art work?





Mermaids, by
Marionette Taboniar
Reverse acrylics on
plexiglass, 12 x12 inches

Taboniar

MT: I have found that in teaching art, you also teach people to relax and enjoy life. Art is a form of meditation, because while you are painting, you are basically thinking of nothing else... your problems and worries seem to vanish. You are literally living "in the moment". In today's world, we are constantly being bombarded by left brain activities, such as using a computer, cell phone, video games, etc. We need a little right brain creativity to keep us balanced. I encourage all of my students to do some kind of artistic activity at least once a week, if not once a day. It's good for your health and well being, plus it's just beautiful!

X-RAY MAG: What's new and what's next?

MT: My artwork recently appeared in the November 2013 issue of *The Artist's Magazine*, and last year I did a special commission painting for Victoria's Secret.

This summer I hope to finish putting together my next online class, *Painting Seascapes and Waves in Watercolor*. I have been practicing waves, lava rocks and water a lot recently and would love to pass this information on to my many students.

I currently have one online class available for purchase, *Painting Plumerias in Watercolor*. It is available as an instant download here: http://www.etsy.com/listing/110539880/instant-download-pdf-online-watercolor?ref=shop_home_active_1 and it is a work-at-your-own-pace class. □

For more information, visit the artist's website at www.kauai-artist.net. From there you can find more information about classes, purchasing art and links to the artist's YouTube page where she has several, free tutorials available.



Mermaids 2, by Marionette Taboniar. Reverse acrylics on plexiglass, 12 x 24 in.

MT: I have mainly used the disposable underwater cameras but am now looking to buy a nice underwater digital camera, after my friend let me borrow one last year. Most of my sea life paintings come from my imagination, especially when it comes to color. In my turtle paintings, I love to use a rainbow of colors, and my

mermaid paintings come strictly from my imagination.

X-RAY MAG: How does your art relate to conservation or environmental issues facing our oceans and reefs?

MT: My ocean art is used mainly to celebrate the beauty of

our ocean life. My paintings bring good memories to my art collectors of their trip to Kauai and the wonderful time they had snorkeling or scuba diving.

X-RAY MAG: Why do you think art is important? What are the challenges and benefits of being an artist today?