



THE MIND OF THE MINIMALIST

For Manhattan Beach artist Alex Weinstein, one can dream as big as the ocean, yet create with serene simplicity.

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When I walked into Alex Weinstein's art studio, the Manhattan Beach painter and sculptor extended a firm handshake my way. While I always appreciate an assertive salutation, I must admit my attention to the man in front of me was immediately compromised, for my exploratory eye was already surveying the premises. I was certain that gems—whether completed or not—could offer me keen insight into the concise style that Alex embraces in his creations. I was right.

Known for threading a theme about the immersive nature of the ocean through his works, Alex conjures up paintings and mostly wall-based sculptural pieces that evoke an ethereal ambiance. A surfer since the age of 12, he fuses his experiences with the water into his monochromatic and deductive work, using the least amount of necessary elements to convey meaning and purpose. While Alex's art may not solely pay tribute to one type of genre, his leanings surely take a page from, or perhaps add a page to, the book of minimalism.

A radical departure from the subjectivity of the abstract expressionism movement of the 1940s and 1950s, minimalist paintings and sculptures generally include geometric—many times cubic—forms that are absent of metaphor; parts of equal measure; repeating components; surfaces neutral in nature; and industrial materials. Merriam-Webster defines minimalism as “a style or technique that is characterized by extreme spareness and simplicity.” It further recognizes minimal art as “abstract art consisting primarily of simple geometric forms executed in an impersonal style.” One look at Alex's work, and you know he has a special talent for functioning within these surprisingly liberal boundaries.

By allowing inclusion of the fewest essential components, this type of art, and thus Alex's art, speaks poetically, relaying a definite sense of emotion without portraying outright emotional content. This, in turn, leaves room for interpretation. In fact, according to Alex, “Art needs to be open-ended, and when there is enough discipline in the work, this demand can be safely and adequately



TOP LEFT: Alex in front of his 15 x 20-foot installation at Leslie Sacks Contemporary last fall. *Untitled Swell model (for Hokusai)*, 2011, twelve panels, fiberglass, aluminum and automotive.

ABOVE: *Silver Surfer*, 2011, oil on canvas diptych, 96 x 48 inches.

RIGHT PAGE: The full installation at Leslie Sack Contemporary. **BOTTOM:** *Disappear Here (let's get lost)*, 2011, oil on canvas, 72 x 96 inches.



realized. Once the artist leaves his studio, he relinquishes all control over this work, releasing it into the world for open interpretation.”

As a case in point, all one has to do is look at Alex's *Untitled Swell Model (Great Wave for Katsushika Hokusai)*, 2011. A massive, evocative and monolithic sculptural piece composed of 12 panels—each measuring 5 feet by 5 feet for an overall size of 15 feet by 20 feet—this structure is the artist's depiction of a gigantic wall of water. Part of Alex's intention with

Untitled Swell Model was to make the creation assume an architectural role in the space in which it lives. And with its shimmering, animated quality, it does just that, becoming one of the four walls holding up the room that houses it. Japan's 2011 Tohoku tsunami was at the forefront of Alex's mind when he worked with fabricators to craft this piece.

Created of fiberglass, aluminum and automotive paint, this sculptural piece has a luminous nature, making it a sensual form characterized by

undulating ripples. One can absolutely get lost in its beauty, forgetting the ferocious character that is actively bubbling on its surface. Its tranquility is almost spooky, for its rhythm is out of the onlooker's control. At any time, “the wave” may engulf the room and the people in it. One of the artist's quotes comes to mind just at this moment: “If art hurts or offends your proclivities, it's okay, because this effect might give you something important to think about.” Alex's years of art and life experience add weight to this statement.

A Rhode Island native, Alex graduated from Brown University in 1992 with a bachelor of arts degree in visual arts and a bachelor of arts with honors in creative writing. Upon receiving his diploma, he ventured off to New York, intent on illustrating within the editorial world. After a year of working in the city in this field, he knew that neither the concrete jungle nor the editorial industry was where his heart was. Change was calling his name.

As fate would have it, Alex's parents had purchased a property in Brittany, France around this time. He jumped at their offer to design it for them. Soon, he found himself abroad, painting in the Brittany landscape as Paul Gauguin had done in the 1880s and 1890s. Through adventures like this one, Alex admits, “The walls around what defines art have lowered exponentially for me through the years. So while I might not like a piece of art, I can accept and appreciate its value.”

Sometime after opening a small gallery named Swell in Brittany, Alex befriended a Los Angeles-based artist and surfer David Lloyd. It was David who convinced Alex to move to Southern California and become a permanent member of its dynamic art scene. Alex ended up settling in Manhattan Beach. And more and more, his art reflected his involvement with the ocean.

Silver Surfer, 2011 (oil on canvas diptych measuring 96 by 48 inches) seems to depict a sublime, almost ghostly quality of the ocean. Using grayish tones to create a gossamer effect, Alex captures the feeling of the water's condition under what one might assume to be overcast skies. An onlooker can easily start to shiver as he soaks up the extremely cold vibes of the scene. Simultaneously, he can sense the harmonious relationship between the surfer and the ocean. Where one begins and the other one ends is certainly up for interpretation, presumably, just as Alex intended.

Tap into the Leslie Sacks Contemporary Gallery at lscontemporary.com to inquire about or invest in artwork by Alex. Also, visit vaguestudio.com to view Alex's portfolio and dive more into his unique world of painting and sculpture. ●