

ACROSS THE OCEAN

By Matt Mortimer

From the balmy California sun to tropical Hawaii and then here to New Zealand's Saint Heliers, Kristen Olson Stone has explored and painted her way throughout the Pacific rim. It all started back there, in the west of America, with Kristen's emotional connection to her first art tutor.



'Low Tide, Saint Heliers Bay' - 1016 x 1016mm. Oil on Belgian linen.

"My first art teacher was my grandmother, who lived in the Sierra foothills of Northern California. She was a wonderful artist and we were very close, with us taking our first three artist workshops together, which was a wonderful experience.

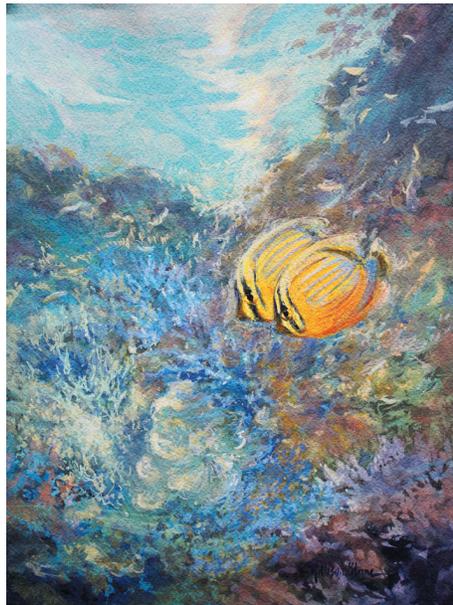
"She gifted me professional artist supplies and 'how to' art books for every birthday and holiday. She also encouraged me to paint and draw as much as possible and we shared a love of nature and wildlife. When I got to spend time with her she would take me out to hike and we sketched and painted along the way. I never needed any encouragement to paint, the desire to paint and draw well was always a part of me."

This early exposure to the art world and the exciting and endless possibilities was just the beginning. Kristen's studies led her into art in a somewhat different and yet complimentary way, despite this early foundational time with her grandmother.

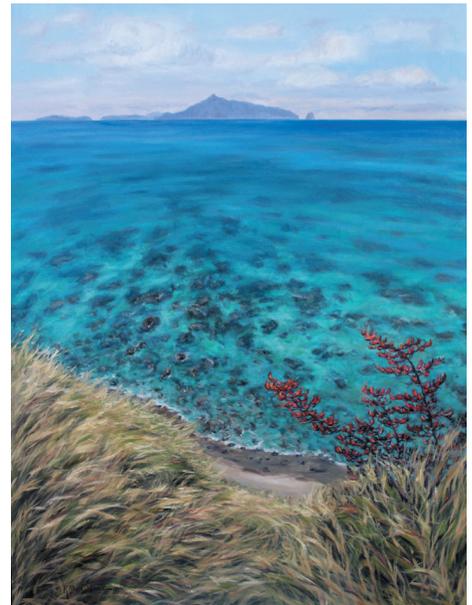
"I have a BA in Geography from the University Of Maryland, which has been useful, giving me an in-depth understanding of the geology and geography of the landscapes that I love to visit and paint. After university, I attended art school. First at The Art Students League



'Agincourt Reef' - 228 x 304mm. Watercolor/gouache on Arches paper.



'Oval Lined Butterfly fish' - 228 x 304mm. Watercolor/gouache on Arches paper.



'The View From Mangawhai Cliff Trail' - 1219 x 9144mm. Oil on Belgian linen.



'Reflections Of Mangawhai' - 762 x 1016mm. Oil on canvas.



'Sea Rocks' - oil on canvas panel, 304 x 406mm. Painted en plein-air in Mangawhai. A great color study used in my seascapes of Mangawhai.



in New York with a full scholarship, then in Southern California where I attended The California Art Institute and Otis Parsons in Los Angeles. I also studied architectural rendering – this taught me perspective from the inside out! I learned the traditional methods of portraiture, figurative art, design, composition and impressionist landscape painting. Beyond art school I've taken a few professional artist workshops including those by Rose Frantzen, Don Putman, Neil Boyle and Michael Albrechtsen. I think that the best teacher is nature itself; nature provides all the answers if you are keenly observant and know the right questions to ask."

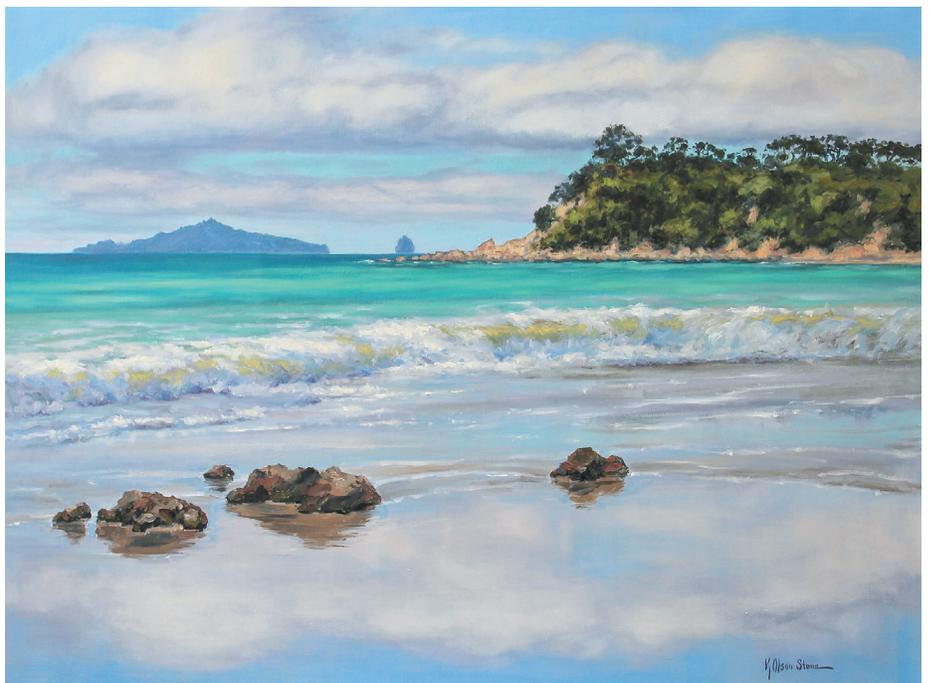
Her current work echoes the early hiking trips, spending time in the outdoors, but this time it's in Aotearoa, as opposed to offshore. Many of the works displayed here are a collection from one of our best beaches north of Auckland.

"At present I'm working on a collection of paintings of Mangawhai. I love Mangawhai Heads, the views up and down the beach, looking out at the Hen and Chicken Islands, and looking at the collections of shells and rocks in the tide pools at the end of the beach.

"In addition to this, I am creating a collection of garden paintings, which are part abstract and part representational, and I've also worked on a collection of paintings of the New Zealand orca. I was inspired by a documentary about Dr Ingrid Visser who is a world renowned orca researcher, I decided I wanted to create a collection of large-scale paintings of the orca and sell the prints and The New Zealand Artist Magazine



'Mangawhai Heads Beach' - 762 x 1016mm. Oil on canvas.



'Lang's Beach' - 762 x 1016mm. Oil on canvas.



'Rush Hour on the Reef' - 713 x 1066mm. Oil on six square canvas panels that are 355mm² each.



'Sexy Pink Heliconia' - 406 x 762mm. Oil on three canvas panels that are 406 x 254mm each.



'Sphere Fish' - 660mm round. Oil on canvas.

donate a percentage of the profits to her organization, www.orcaresearch.org. Thus far I have completed five of these paintings."

Having your work reach across continents is something many artists only dream of. Kristen Olson Stone is living this reality as she has works that have been sold to art collectors all over the world including America, across the ditch in Australia, Asia, Germany, UK and many more.

This in most minds, would be a great achievement in itself, but Kristen has more amazing accomplishments to add to her already bulging artistic resume, including one particularly well known couple –

"I'm proud to have sold my art in galleries on all of the Hawaiian Islands, and I've been one of the three artists in residence at 'Gumps', in San Francisco. They kept a group of 30-35 of my paintings for sale at all times. Gumps was a world-famous store and they were in business for over 100 years in Union Square in San Francisco, but sadly, they closed last year.

"I was also the artist in residence at The Tommy Bahama Home Store in Newport Beach. I was invited to be the lead plein-air instructor alongside Robert Bateman at the prestigious SKB Foundation's yearly workshop in Wyoming. Since childhood, Robert Bateman has been one of my favorite artists so having the opportunity to teach alongside him was especially wonderful. Probably the thing I'm most proud of is having a painting in the collection of President and Michelle Obama."

The equipment list to create these works that span the globe is quite substantial, with the ability to squeeze supplies into suitcases as rating very important.

"I am an art ambassador for Rembrandt Talens Paints. I love my walnut wood tripod Easels and pochade boxes, they are made by Open Box M, of which I have several different sizes, I can go anywhere with them in any kind of weather, they are lightweight and they all fit into my suitcases. Also, there's nothing like a nice new set of brushes! I like the DAS and Museum brushes from Takapuna Art Supply; they work with solvent free oils and regular oils. Having the right combination of brush, canvas or paper and paint is something that is individual to each artist. Developing familiarity with your art supplies helps take the 'thinking' out of the process and allows the artist to create in a more natural, comfortable and freer head-space."



'Tide Pool II' - 762 x 9144mm. Oil on Belgian linen.



'Mangawhai Summer Nights' - 762 x 1016mm. Oil on Belgian linen.

With her supplies factored in, all that is left is her own specific creative process. "If possible, I do a painting or two on site and take photos. Next, I use the plein-air paintings in combination with the photos to create larger studio paintings. I sketch out a more detailed composition with which to create the larger painting, usually adding more elements. I look for elements with complementary colors, shapes, a balance of warm and cool hues and opportunities to create expressive brushstrokes – for instance to indicate wind or movement, very specific color choices, the lightest light and the darkest dark. I'll walk up and back from my easel, and use a mirror to see my canvas with fresh eyes. This helps me see if my perspective is correct. I never lose sight of the original idea that led to the creation of the work. I get the painting mostly finished, I create mock-ups of it in rooms using my ProCreate App on my iPad, overlaying a photo of my painting to approximate scale on a wall, helping me see how the painting works in a room setting.

"I'll also hang it in our house so I can have the chance to observe it in different lights, to help me see minute details that I may have missed or may have to alter."

So to see what the Obamas and many other people love, go to KristenOlsonStone.com, or find her on social media. On Instagram @ [kristenolsonstone](https://www.instagram.com/kristenolsonstone), and on Facebook at [Kristen Olson Stone Fine Art](https://www.facebook.com/KristenOlsonStoneFineArt). Alternatively, you can see her work at [Turua Gallery](https://www.turua.com) in Saint Heliers. [N](#)



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