

August 4, 2016



Alan Feldmesser *Caribbean Reef Sharks* 2012, oil on canvas, 40x60 inches, private collection in Dubai, UAE © Alan Feldmesser

This oil painting is a depiction of two Caribbean Reef Sharks swimming on a reef. The painting depicts more algae coverage on the reef itself on the left side and less on the right showing the reefs health is at risk and also shows scars on the mouths of the sharks from large fishing hooks used in shark fishing.

Exploring Below the Surface:

Paintings that fascinate, captivate and show the beauty of the marine world

Alan Feldmesser

My entire life I have been captivated by the beauty and wonder of wildlife, nature and all of its creatures, in all aspects from the sea, land and air. As a child growing up in South Florida, I would explore local areas looking for turtles, alligators, snakes, hawks, eagles... the list goes on and on. I never had professional training on how to find them or where to look for different species. I just went out to explore, to see what I would find.

This curiosity for nature only grew as I matured from a small boy to a man. When I learned how to scuba dive this love of nature grew very particular to the oceanic world that I knew very little about and had only just began to explore. However small my experiences and knowledge of the ocean were at the time, the experience of diving amongst the reefs, fishes, and marine animals completely changed my life as a person

and an artist. The beauty, light, textures, colors, symbiotic relationships and the thrill of the unknown that can be readily seen and felt on every dive was like pure heaven to me.



Reference photograph by Alan Feldmesser in the Bahamas, 2012. This is a photograph shot while in the Bahamas scuba diving. As you can see this shark had two large fishing hooks on both sides of its mouth cutting into its skin.

Overtime, I have seen first-hand the demise of one of our most precious resources –the ocean. Over-fishing, climate change, pollution and pure lack of respect for this vast space has forever changed the ocean, which will only struggle to survive in the on-going years of this planet. The oceans drastically need our help.

There seems to be a large gap of misunderstanding about the animals of the ocean by the humans that inhabit this planet. Without seeing it first hand, one just does not understand the full impact changes in the oceans can have on us. There is a profound need for mankind to find a kinship with all the inhabitants of the ocean. From the microscopic in size to the gargantuan, each of these creatures are all equally important to our own survival as a species.

For example, sharks and people have been “combating” with each other for food and habitat as long as we have been swimming. Our fear of this top apex predator has led to a severe over-fishing, finning, and culling that are surely having a huge impact on all the species of our oceans. Once we remove masses of apex predators from the ocean (or any natural setting for that matter) that whole balance of the environment gets thrown out of sync and difficult to keep in balance.



Alan Feldmesser *The Hunt* 2014, oil on canvas, 36x60 inches © Alan Feldmesser
Two White Marlin hunting a school of sardines showing the balance of a predator/prey scenario.

If people do not actually go out and make trips into the wilderness, how can we expect them to be excited about it? How can we educate people about this importance and make lasting impressions on them if they do not experience wildlife themselves? This is where I try to have my oil paintings come into play. My goal is to fascinate, captivate and show the beauty that exists to people who don't have firsthand experience with the marine world. And to excite those that already do, hopefully inspiring them all to take action, each in their own way. I create each oil painting with the hopes of really capturing the essence of what it feels like to be in this weightless, almost space-like environment while interacting with the animals that inhabit it.

In each painting, I try to create a subtle way of talking about conservation and balance. For instance, I'll try to show the beauty of a predator and prey in action, as I depicted in my painting *The Hunt*, which shows two White Marlin on the prowl for a meal of sardines. This piece was exhibited in the 2015 Society of Animal Artists 55th Art and the Animal Exhibition in Jamestown, New York. Another example would be how I left scars on the sharks' mouth from large fishing hooks in my *Caribbean Reef Shark* painting. This is a reminder that mankind is leaving too much of an imprint in nature, and we need to tread much more lightly in order to keep the planet and its oceans in the proper balanced state. Hopefully, the more places I dive, and the more work I create, will give meaning and hope to the viewers in a way that will make them want to protect the place I love the most –the ocean.

Alan Feldmesser lives and works out of Coconut Creek, Florida. Combining his love for nature, marine life, scuba diving, underwater photography, and his ability to capture the



Photo of Alan Feldmesser getting ready for a day of Scuba Diving and underwater photography

details of our surroundings, has lead him to a very unique style of realism within the marine wildlife art world. Alan earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with a major in Painting from Syracuse University and taught painting and drawing in prestigious public and private High Schools for 17 years until he decided to pursue his art career fulltime. He continues teaching privately while creating and displaying his works in various art shows and exhibitions around the nation. His pieces are collected worldwide. You can see more of his works at

www.alanfeldmesser.com. Alan Feldmesser is a Signature Member of the [Society of Animal Artists](#).

This post is part of the [MAHB's Arts Community space](#) –an open space for MAHB members to share, discuss, and connect with artwork processes and products pushing for change. Please visit the [MAHB Arts Community](#) to share and reflect on how art can promote critical changes in behavior and systems and [contact Erika](#) with any questions or suggestions you have regarding the new space.

MAHB Blog: <http://mahb.stanford.edu/blog/exploring-below-surface/>