



**Water Drawing**

"Water Drawing" took place off the coast of Newport Rhode Island in the summer of 2001 as a spontaneous sculptural action. Drawing upon my strong background of a Collegiate Swimmer, Ocean Life Guard, and Surfer, I had always wanted to utilize my strength and skill in the water to create art. I also wanted to connect to my family roots of fishermen and my childhood of growing up on the ocean and around fishing boats and docks.

Earlier that year I was in Newport visiting a professor, James Baker and noticed in the local newspaper that an old local fishing legend, Louis Jagshitz had passed away. He was a legendary lobster fisherman in the area and was known through out the fishing community. His portrait in the paper touched me and it moved me to drive by his home.

The front yard was choked with home made lobster traps and lobster pot buoys; a literal graveyard of multi-colored markers all bearing his signature stripes and markings. His personality and identity could be seen in the strewn and cast off pieces of utilitarian chunks of hand painted foam.

At the same time, professor and artist James Baker invited me to his home to

search through his collection of found lobster pot buoys that had been washed up on his property for over 30 years.

I immediately saw them as wonderful found objects, pieces of folk art and Americana yet having utilitarian purpose while also existing as indicators and markers of the local personalities that use them to mark their lobster traps.

They were objects of beauty and objects of function while also unassumingly existing as individual sculptures and objects created by quasi-artists/folk artists/fishermen. I was drawn to their function and formal beauty and immediately knew what I wanted to do with them.

On a previous trip to Newport, Rhode Island, I came upon a famous walkway along



the cliffs underneath the Victorian mansions that Newport is known for, entitled "The Cliff Walk". There is a point along the cliff walk where there is a series of 40 steps that lead down into the ocean where you can dive off into the 30-foot deep water and swim out off the coast of Rhode Island into the Atlantic Ocean. The expanse of endless blue was incredible, minimal and pure; like an Ellsworth Kelly, Mark Rothko, or Barnett Newman field painting.

The blue was so expansive and went beyond my periphery, much like the previously mentioned artist's field paintings.

I saw the open ocean and wanted to cross it, swim through it, intersect it, and ultimately DRAW ON ITS SURFACE.

I returned to Newport that summer to select and create a length of 100 multi coloured lobster pot buoys and nautical rope that would be used to create gestures on the surface of the water, powered by my swimming. I saw the open expanse of water as a blue field to be drawn upon and intersected.

The sculpture was also to be influenced and affected by wind, wave action and currents.

Co Ar Chris Coffin  
In Louis Jagshitz

It was to be a union between man and nature while collaborating to create drawings on the surface of the ocean.

The performance would not be planned, but affected by the expressionistic and action oriented gestures of the swimmer and the environmental factors of the ocean environment.

This physical display was also intended to pay homage to local legend Louis Jagshitz, while also recognizing that each buoy is essentially a portrait of the fisherman who used the buoys to indicate their identities and mark and protect their lobster traps.



The project contains a number of elements:

- The sculpture itself of 100 lobster pot buoys strung together.
- 100 individual "Head Shot" portraits of each buoy signifying each object's physical personality and the personalities of the fishermen that they represent.
- These sets of 100 shots exist as a mixed set multiple editions.
- A 13-minute long video.
- Photo documentation.

