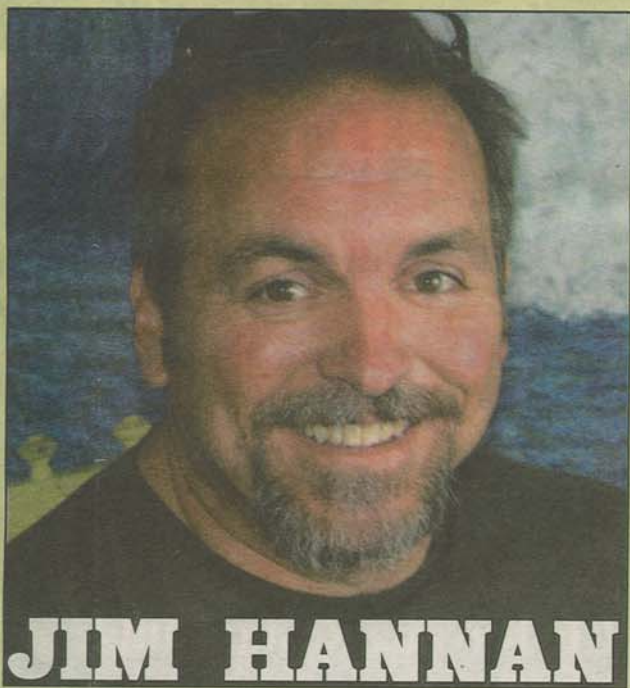




SKILLED LABOR



**JIM HANNAN**

Victorian art critic, essayist, and draughtsman John Ruskin was obsessed with water. He spent much of his childhood observing it wash against the London docks and spent the latter part of his life trying to capture its transience in words and sketches, even going so far as to dabble in hydrology and meteorology to better grasp its attributes.

Despite his valiant efforts, water's true nature ultimately eluded him, and even some of his finest essays belie a fundamental misunderstanding of its properties. Ruskin's was a shorebound perspective, couched in the dry descriptors of an avowed landlubber, and his sketches of rivers and brooks, though accomplished, are wooden at best.

His mistake, maybe, was in trying to concretize water, and characteristically, it slipped through his cupped fingers. To paraphrase Joe Strummer, Ruskin don't surf. Fortunately, artist Jim Hannan does.

A lifelong surfer, Navy veteran, and certified dive master, Hannan understands water's fleeting form, especially the wave's. Many wave artists produce mere snapshots of it on the verge of curling, or in its final folding, a shower of foam frozen in time. Hannan's waves capture the entire history of its movement, and his paintings succeed in rendering the wave's cyclic life span, owing perhaps to the unique medium he employs.

Blending together two distinct skills learned from two different and very powerful influences, Hannan bridges the gap between art and work. He's been painting and drawing from an early age for his own pleasure, and he learned to tame acrylics and watercolors from his mother, a skilled oil painter and stained glass worker.

Shortly after he began surfing in his hometown of Indian Harbor Beach back

in '72, Hannan worked on boards with Dick Catri, and a later stint with local shaping luminary Ricky Carroll at Natural Art led to his learning color lamination under Carroll's tutelage, and they've been working together at R & D in Rockledge for over 12 years.

*His technique is as organic as his subject, and the very nature of his resin-based materials imbues his work with an energetic, almost living texture..*

Other strong influences are his wife and children. Without the solid and supportive grounding they provide, Hannan might find it hard to juggle his day job at R & D and nights spent painting new wavescapes.

Hannan can't quite pinpoint when he was inspired to make use of leftover batches of color by painting waves on a fiberglass "canvas" in Carroll's factory. Though the moment was far from earth-shaking, by his own admission, it was enlightening enough for him to bring one of his pieces to last year's Surf Expo, curious to see people's reactions. A passing admirer

*Continued on page 50...*





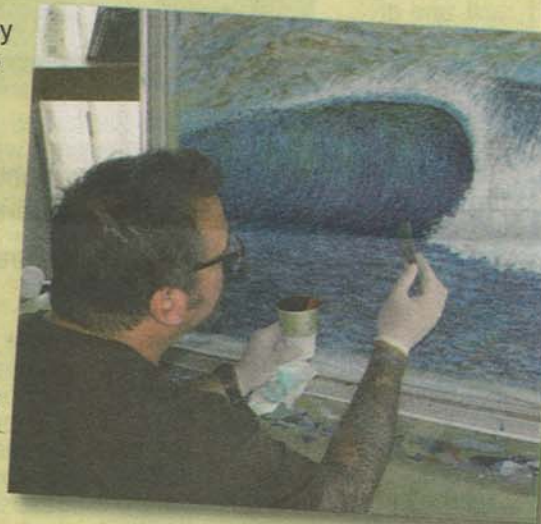
bought one and Hannan left showered with positive feedback, events which led to converting his garage into a working studio.

His technique is as organic as his subject, and the very nature of his resin-based materials imbues his work with an energetic, almost living texture. As they catalyze at varying rates and degrees, the resins he uses move and drip at an alarming rate, and Hannan's original conception of a wave, informed by a mixture of imagination and experience, changes and develops accordingly. Often the result is far different from his original contour, sketched out initially on the fiberglass. Colors are layered atop each other one by one as their dripping slows, dictating the painting's next phase. Using a technique more akin to liquid sculpture than traditional painting, Hannan gradually coaxes an image from a formless soup of bright hues.

No conscious step-by-step process is employed by Hannan, and as each piece slowly takes shape, it opens up new perspectives and dimensions. The hardest part of the creation is in letting go and knowing when it's completed. A multi-faceted image emerges from what appears to be a muddle of color, and in this respect his work resembles that of the later impressionists. His paintings have to be seen up close to be fully appreciated, rife as they are with feeling, movement, and tangibility.

True to a wave's essential qualities, Hannan's art reflects water's ever-growing and perpetually receding form, and his understanding of its defiance in the face of solidity makes each painting a unique record of flux and motion.

The secret in rendering water adequately may be in surrendering oneself to its mystery. A timeless, zen-like koan to be sure, and one which may have escaped old John Ruskin. I can picture him decked out in baggies paddling out beside Jim Hannan, and can only imagine what their conversation might be like.



Jim Hannan's work is currently on display at East Coast Coffee (258 E. Eau Gallie Blvd., Indian Harbor Beach in the new Publix plaza), call 779-4618 for details and hours of operation. From July 29th through

September 10th, Hannan's paintings will serve as part of the "Eternal Summer: The Art of Surf Culture" exhibition at the Brevard Museum of Art and Science (1463 Highland Ave., Melbourne). Call 242-0737 for information. Hannan can email you photos of his pieces as well. Call him at (321) 693-3374, or email him at: [oceanimpressions@bellsouth.net](mailto:oceanimpressions@bellsouth.net)

