

# Art in a changing climate

Artist, husband leave Yosemite after fires to find inspiration, purpose in Waldport

*"A refugee is someone who survived and who can create the future."  
— Amela Kohuder*

*"Climate change does not respect border; it does not respect who you are — rich and poor, small and big. Therefore, this is what we call 'global challenges,' which require global solidarity."  
— Ban Ki-moon*

There are myriad reasons why people set down roots along the Oregon Coast: "the ocean," "the air," "the laidback lifestyle," "the small town feel of the towns," "no rat race," "the geological and ecological beauty."

For others, like First Nations cultures (Coastal Salish), or Nehalem, their roots were set down thousands of years ago, tied to land, sky, forest and the power of place.

Now, enter the term "envirogee" — derived from both "environment" and "refugee" — a displaced

individual who has been forced to migrate because of environmental devastation. Some call themselves "climate refugees."

For Anja Albosta, and her spouse, Mark, relocating to Waldport is much more than a geographic upheaval. "In 2018 my husband and I left our home in the Yosemite area due to drought, the die-off of millions of ponderosa pines and fire evacuations three years running. The last year driving out through flames on both sides of the road. We then relocated to the beautiful coast of Oregon."

I'm in their nice home overlooking Alsea during the slack tide. Sand bars ripple under the big bridge joining two portions of the coastline over the precarious sand spits and intertidal zone that make this both a dramatic place to live, and precarious (think ocean surge vis-à-vis a tsunami).

They spent time researching places, using a climate change or global warming lens as part of their search. For them, the last time fires hit their neck of the woods, North Fork (31 miles from the south entrance to Yosemite National Park), they had all their important

papers in containers as they evacuated.

The hardy Ponderosa pines in their former ecosystem were dropping like flies — creating a huge tinder box for tens of thousands of acres, putting home, roads and human and animal life in danger.

To be more specific — There are two and a half million dead trees within the 131,000-acre national park. Dead trees are a natural occurrence, but the higher number of dead ones now are attributed to warmer temperatures, drying periods, pine bark beetles. Climate has changed dramatically.

For Mark and Anja, after 20 years living in the area, they have the long view of how that ecosystem is degrading and at risk due to the results of climate change.

## Enter the Beachhead of the Siuslaw National Forest

I met Anja a few months ago at Pacific Sourdough, where she had been working for around five months staffing the front counter and now also making some of those yeasty delicacies for which the Waldport bakery is known.

My SOP is learning about the various communities on the coast and digging deep into people's lives quickly since I have been on the Central Oregon Coast barely one year. Big mouth, big heart, big ideas. So, head-first I go into this life with my background in radical politics, radical education, radical sustainability and journalism. I like people.

It was clear to me both the owner of the bakery, Katie, and Anja, were willing to riff about plastics in the ocean, acidification of the Pacific and the ragged state of American governance.

We swapped cards, and Anja's piqued my interest — she's an artist with a background in interior design. Artist-plus-envirogee-plus-world traveler makes for good fodder for my people profiles.

I'm in the house Mark and Anja bought from the proceeds of selling their self-designed custom-built airy home with two-story view windows (eventually, a view made up of gray, brown charred trees) sited at the edge of the Yosemite National Park, which was made famous by photographer Ansel Adams, President Teddy Roosevelt and John Muir, father of the Sierra Club.

She tells me Mark's carpentry skills and both of their sweat equity turned the outdated and dysfunctional home into a wide-open floor plan with amazing built-in shelves and classy handmade doors and frames, as well as a new kitchen.

Anja's paintings not only adorn all the walls — even the laundry room has three



XR #4 (Extinction Rebellion) Greta Thunberg-by Anja Albosta

large acrylics hanging next above the laundry items — but she has many leaning up on walls that serve as a dining area a-la-painting studio.

## Art for Art's Sake

Anja's youthful years include growing up in Germany and Switzerland, then Santa Barbara. She ended up back in Switzerland as an interior designer. "I had a fancy job, money, two months off each year for a vacation. But I wasn't being fulfilled."

That life changed when she was in her early 30s, propelling her to Yosemite for some outdoor adventure. She met Mark, who was rock climbing and asked Anja if she wanted to try her hand at climbing escarpments and the famous Half Dome.

Most of the rock now exposed in the park is granitic, having been formed 210 to 80 million years ago as igneous diapirs six miles below the surface. "Tis-sa-ack," an Ahwahnechee phrase for Cleft Rock, is Half Dome's pre-white man name.

She tells me that "coming to Yosemite changed my life." In more ways than just her marital status, that is clear. Mark was a mountaineering guide in the park, and Anja threw in hard and fast as a painter while working 40 miles away in Fresno as an interior designer for clients who demanded style, panache and quality craftsmanship.

Her art from the Yosemite years is in their house — broad horizons, silhouetted

landscapes, with those rock features that Yosemite is known for. She tells me that much of the oil and water color creations ran parallel with the work she did as an interior designer — paintings that "went well" with various home settings.

On her website, her work is categorized as such — design; commissions and commercial art; watercolors, oils; mixed media.

For people living on the Coast, and others in our "green" Cascadia-Pacific Northwest, her latest evolution in her work really puts tread to the pavement when it comes to "statement art":

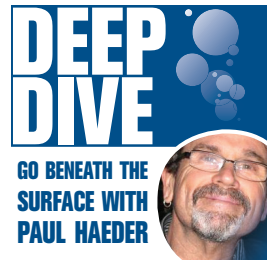
From 2016 to the present, her art "has revolved around 'balance' and 'the passing of time.'" Her art cuts into new emotional and societal space, for both the viewer and artist herself, reflecting her 52-years on Earth as an artist in transition. Succinctly, we might say she is looking for deeper meaning, a sense of purpose and creative inspiration — "climate, politics, religion, my own life."

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Paul Haeder is a writer living and working in Lincoln County. He has two books coming out, one a short story collection, "Wide Open Eyes: Surfacing from Vietnam," and a non-fiction book, "No More Messing Around: The Good, Bad and Ugly of America's Education System."

To see more of Anja's work, go to <http://anjaalbosta.com>



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