

# From Whence We Came

By D. Randall Blythe



**D. Randall Blythe**

***Leave it On the Shore*** (Grand Cayman, KY)

2015

Canon Lucia inkjet print on 290gsm

Hahnemühle bamboo fiber fine art paper

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

Wherever I travel, I always enjoy finding local oddities. On my first trip to Cayman I kept hearing about the “shoe tree.” A friend drove me there and I shot several photos of the tree. Things like this always make me wonder “who started this thing, and why?”. In surfing we have a saying “leave it on the shore”, meaning that when we enter the water we abandon our troubles and cares, resigning them to the still and comparatively rigid structure of land. Perhaps the first person to nail a pair of flipflops to this tree was doing just that...



**D. Randall Blythe**

***Into the Blue*** (Grand Cayman, KY)

2015

Canon Lucia inkjet print on 290gsm

Hahnemühle bamboo fiber fine art paper

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

I enjoy shooting piers almost as much as I like walking them and fishing from them. From massive concrete piers in California to simple wooden constructions like this one in the East End of Grand Cayman, all piers are a physical and metaphoric vehicle for me; both a method to move my body out into the water and a symbol of man's ancient desire to remain closer to the primordial root of all life. Viewed from its start, the lines of any pier will draw one's eye to where sky meets sea. Water meets water in clouds and the blue horizon.



**D. Randall Blythe**

***Lucky*** (Cape Fear River, NC)

2016

B&W true silver halide gelatin print on  
baryta fiber based 310gsm archival paper

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

I often ride a ferry to a neighbouring island to surf back home in North Carolina, and there are always tons of seagulls flying alongside the boat, hoping to get fed by tourists. It can be pretty hazardous standing beneath a bunch of seagulls shooting upwards, but I got lucky on this day.

While seagulls are extremely common where I live, and nowhere near as majestic as the bald eagles or osprey that hunt the river alone, I still enjoy taking pictures of them in flight. Unlike the stately and orderly lines of pelicans that cruise the river in perfect formation, at first glance a large flock of seagulls resembles a flying ball of winged chaos, but in fact they move as one unit. These frantic dancers of the salty winds move to their own off-time rhythm, but their choreography remains a mystery to me.



**D. Randall Blythe**

***Fringing Lines*** (Cape Fear, NC)

2016

B&W true silver halide gelatin print on  
baryta fiber based 310gsm archival paper

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

I ordered a small crystal ball and had it sent to my beach house, not so that I could see into the unknowable future, but for a compressed view of finite segments of the plainly evident present. I walk under this pier almost every day and its lines have become so commonplace most of the time they are unregistered by my eye. Sometimes changing the way you view something enhances your appreciation of the everyday and ordinary.



**D. Randall Blythe**

***A Walk Between the Mirror*** (Cape Fear, NC)

2017

B&W true silver halide gelatin print on  
baryta fiber based 310gsm archival paper

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

When I was a boy, my brothers and I would play in the woods until my grandmother would ring an old bell signaling that it was time for supper. At the beach, I often see young surfer's mothers calling out to them to come in from the sea to eat. Often if the waves are rough, the kids can't hear their moms calling (or they just choose not to – hearing can get quite selective when the waves are good). On more than one occasion I've had a local mother say "Randy, will you please go tell my son to come in? Dinner is ready and he has homework to do." I'll sigh, and paddle out - I am the dinner bell.





**D. Randall Blythe**

***Shelf Life*** (Cape Fear, NC)

2017

B&W true silver halide gelatin print on  
baryta fiber based 310gsm archival paper

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

The entire coastline of North Carolina is comprised of barrier islands. From the Outer Banks up north to the Cape Fear region down south, the islands provide a line of defense from hurricanes to the mainland. They are also host to unique coastal ecosystems and home to thousands of people. Growing up there, I always appreciated the pace of life by the sea but these bodies of land are not static entities within the ocean, they are constantly shifting and moving with the tides and storms. The natural erosion at the far end of my island serves as a reminder that Mother Nature is the boss here – it is a beautiful place to build a home, but not the best investment. The best laid human plans are eventually rendered impotent at the whim of the sea.



**D. Randall Blythe**

***Chromatic Foam*** (Cape Fear, NC)

2017

Canon Lucia inkjet print on 290gsm  
Hahnemühle bamboo fiber fine art paper.

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

Whenever there is heavy fog at my beach massive amounts of sea foam wash up on the shore. I'm not quite sure why this is, but it's always a treat to see. On this particular day, the sun finally came out from behind the clouds right before dark, and the foam acted as a sort of prismatic sponge to soak up the deep purples and pinks of that evenings sunset.





**D. Randall Blythe**

***Monochromatic Foam*** (Cape Fear River, NC)

2017

B&W true silver halide gelatin print on  
baryta fiber based 310gsm archival paper

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

I enjoy shooting in both colour and black and white but if something catches my eye because of its physical structure more than emotional expression, I tend to prefer a monochrome edit. Stripped of any distracting colour, the structure of a subject is made more evident to my eye. I generally shoot architectural subjects in black and white, to capture the leading lines and patterns that are prevalent in manmade structures, but humans and even natural occurrences like this sea foam can have interesting structures that are brought to the forefront in this tone.



**D. Randall Blythe**

***Scalloped Horizon*** (Cape Fear, NC)

2017

Canon Lucia inkjet print on 290gsm  
Hahnemühle bamboo fiber fine art paper.

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

Tidal pools often provide fantastic subject matter, especially at sunrise and sunset when the wind is down and the light is soft. I shot this photo upside down in order to provide the illusion that the ridges of sand (formed by the wind and strong southeastern swell that day) are dark clouds. I especially like the fact that the curve of the earth's horizon is evident in the mirror of the calm water. The image almost looks like it could be a small section of our planet, viewed from space. The shape of the natural world exists as microcosms in many different things.



**D. Randall Blythe**

***Victory at Sea*** (Cape Fear, NC)

2017

Canon Lucia inkjet print on 290gsm

Hahnemühle bamboo fiber fine art paper.

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$1250.00

This image captures conditions that are extremely windy and choppy, resulting in chaotic and messy waves not good for surfing. The waves this day had size and power, but no consistent form. I tried to surf with some friends anyway, but we just got blown down the beach. After a frustrating while, I got my camera and swam out into the boiling mess. With swimming in conditions like this, it is matter of knowing how to work with the sea, rather than fighting against it – humans will always lose before the might of the ocean. I am a strong swimmer, but I didn't stay out long to press my luck – just enough time to snag some good shots.



**D. Randall Blythe**

***Interlude*** (Cape Fear, NC)

2017

B&W true silver halide gelatin print on  
baryta fiber based 310gsm archival paper

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$1250.00

The other wave shots I got on this particular day were quite messy due to wind and a strong side-shore current but, as anyone who lives by the ocean can attest, coastal weather can be extremely unpredictable. I shot this clean breaking wave during a five-minute period when the onshore winds suddenly died and the surface of the water glassed off. The waves began to take consistent form, I got this shot, then the wind started back up and everything became blown out again. A fleeting moment of calm in an otherwise chaotic swim.



**D. Randall Blythe**

***Ohana*** (Cape Fear, NC)

2017

B&W true silver halide gelatin print on  
baryta fiber based 310gsm archival paper

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

This is my friend David, a native of Hawaii who has relocated to the southeastern coast of North Carolina. I met David in the water when I was first beginning to surf and he has taught me much of what I know about riding waves. We did not have a single conversation on dry land for the first month of our friendship. We always met in the sea, surfed together, then paddled off on our separate ways at the end of our session. David has surfed his entire life and he shapes his own boards. He is riding one he made in this photo. I own one of David's boards as well and it's always a special feeling for me to surf with him on a board he custom made for me. "Ohana" means family in Hawaiian – David is that to me.



**D. Randall Blythe**

***Salt and Timber*** (Outer Banks, NC)

2017

B&W true silver halide gelatin print on  
baryta fiber based 310gsm archival paper

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

The Outer Banks of North Carolina are incredibly gorgeous with many protected natural areas no longer zoned for human habitation. However, this pile of boards from an old fence was once the perimeter of someone's beach house yard. At one time the Outer Banks were only accessible by boat and the few houses there were inhabited by fishermen and those seeking isolation from the busy mainland. Now there are bridges and massive swathes of vacation homes built on parts of the island. As humans continue to multiply at an unsustainable rate, it is important to reclaim and maintain what pristine natural areas we have left. Otherwise there will be no more beaches for future generations to enjoy and, to a person such as myself, this is an unthinkable tragedy.





**D. Randall Blythe**

***Poseidon's Claim*** (Outer Banks, NC)

2017

B&W true silver halide gelatin print on  
baryta fiber based 310gsm archival paper

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

The North Carolina coast is known as the “Graveyard of the Atlantic” and, for good reason, it is the scene of an unusually large number of shipwrecks. The warm waters of the northbound Gulf Stream meet the cold waters of the Atlantic Current here and the entire coast is an area of shifting, inlets, bays, and capes, creating shipping hazards for both coastal and transatlantic vessels. Hurricanes have claimed many boats as well – from a fleet of Spanish treasure ships returning to Europe after successful raids on the Caribbean in 1750, to this small sailboat from upstate New York in 2013 (luckily no one was hurt). Even with our fancy modern-day weather monitoring equipment, accurate GPS’s and electronic depth readers, if Poseidon wants a boat badly enough, he will take it.



**D. Randall Blythe**

***Never Turn Your Back on the Enemy***

(Outer Banks, NC) 2017

Canon Lucia inkjet print on 290gsm

Hahnemühle bamboo fiber fine art paper.

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

This is the Frisco pier, located at the bottom end of Hatteras Island. The pier dates back to the 1960's but has fallen on hard times in recent years from multiple hurricanes. The pier still looks noble to me – drooping and slowly giving way as it fights a losing battle against the elements. In my younger (and far more foolish) days, I have stood on the end of piers much like this one in hurricane conditions, feeling the whole structure sway and shudder as huge waves crested and broke at the top of the pier, covering me in salt water. Looking at this pier, I remember my youth and I see the possibility of my own death far more clearly than I did then - like so many other young people who have died doing foolish things. I felt immortal then and did not respect the power of my environment. For many different reasons, I am lucky to be alive today. I am grateful the gift of hindsight did not arrive too late for me, and try to live accordingly.



**D. Randall Blythe**

***Disconnected*** (Outer Banks, NC)

2017

B&W true silver halide gelatin print on  
baryta fiber based 310gsm archival paper

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

The last segment of this pier somehow remained standing after much of it was swept away in a hurricane. My eye was drawn to the small bench remaining at the very end. Looking at it made me wonder how many fish had been caught by local old timers sitting on the bench? How many newly in love couples had held hands as they watched the sunset over the Atlantic? How many griefstricken people had walked alone to the end of the pier after the death of a loved one, sitting down on the bench to find some solace in the sound of the gently crashing waves? I have done all of these things on a pier bench myself. These seemingly mundane places that humans sit are actually places of great emotional significance. This bench will carry countless untold stories with it when it finally goes to the bottom of the sea.



**D. Randall Blythe**

***Driftwood and Glass*** (Jekyll Island, GA)

2017

B&W true silver halide gelatin print on  
baryta fiber based 310gsm archival paper

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

At the north end of Jekyll Island is Driftwood Beach, a long stretch of sand filled with thousands of magnificent looking dead trees. Year after year as the barrier island slowly moves south, salt water gradually seeps into the soil of the forest at the north end, eventually killing the trees at their roots and leaving bare skeletal corpses to be bleached by the salt and sun. I could shoot photos on this stretch of beach for a week solid and never get tired of it.



**D. Randall Blythe**

***The Hangman's Lament*** (Jekyll Island, GA)

2017

B&W true silver halide gelatin print on  
baryta fiber based 310gsm archival paper

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

Harsh, direct, midday light is not usually my preferred shooting conditions, but this isolated tree looked even more forlorn with the sun beating directly down on it. Sometimes the brighter the light, the deeper the shadows stand in contrast. Pirates and buccaneers roamed this stretch of the Georgia coast for years, and this tree looks like it could have supported a noose back in those days; perhaps an outlaw of the sea met his end here long ago.



**D. Randall Blythe**

***The Bear Drops In*** (Cape Fear, NC)

2017

B&W true silver halide gelatin print on  
baryta fiber based 310gsm archival paper

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

Surfing is one of those rare physical activities that people of all different ages gather together to do. I've had surf sessions where the ages in the lineup literally range from 7 to 70 years. In the water, age is irrelevant; only one's level of skill and (more importantly) the amount of fun being had matters. Young, middle aged and old, we all gather together in the sea for one purpose – to ride waves – and I can't think of many other sport that has such a forgiving singleness of purpose.

Surfing is an art, a form of meditation, and a way of life. Here's a young surfer from my area named Bear. The waves were small that day, so I decided to shoot instead. Bear has a lot of classic style in his surfing for such a young man, and I always am happy to see him ride and develop as a waterman.





**D. Randall Blythe**

***Stoke*** (Cape Fear, NC) 2017

B&W true silver halide gelatin print on  
baryta fiber based 310gsm archival paper

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

There is a saying, “only a surfer knows the feeling...,” and I believe that to be true. The sensation of riding a wave is unlike any other, and perhaps the nature of waves themselves is the cause of this. Waves begin when light from the sun travels to the earth, heating up the land and water, creating wind and storms. The wind blows across the sea, expending its energy into the water. This transfer of energy creates swell in the water which, as it travels outwards, begins to take the shape of waves. As these pulses of energy travel through the sea they take more defined shape and form until they near the shore, where the topography of the ocean floor causes them to peak and break, expending that energy finally upon the land. A wave is not a singular piece of water, it is energy traveling through many different pieces of water. Until mankind learns to harness the form of sound or light, surfing is the only true way to ride a form of energy, no wonder it feels so good.



**D. Randall Blythe**

***Responsibility*** (Morro Bay, CA)

2017

Canon Lucia inkjet print on 290gsm

Hahnemühle bamboo fiber fine art paper.

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

When I am surfing, most of the time there is no lifeguard, just like in this picture. This means that I am 100% responsible for my own safety. Its also my responsibility as a waterman (and a decent human) to keep my eyes open for anyone else around me who may be in trouble in the water. This can mean my wife, the friends I ride waves with, surfers I don't know, or even just tourists who get caught in a rip current. No one will drown if I can help it, no matter how rough the water may be. Surfers save people all the time and they do it swiftly and instinctively without putting any conditions on the person they are assisting, simply because it is the right thing to do. Life by the ocean is a great teacher and the lessons learned are transferable. In this fast-paced and divisive world, it would behoove everyone to watch out for their fellow man. Someday it might be you who's in trouble...



**D. Randall Blythe**

***Bands*** (Cape Fear, NC) 2017

B&W true silver halide gelatin print on  
baryta fiber based 310gsm archival paper

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

Life in coastal regions is always a matter of give and take. On the positive side of things there is the beauty of the sea, fresh and abundant food available for the taking, and a slowed down pace not found in large urban areas. On the negative side, there is the sometimes violent and deadly weather. The Caribbean and the southeastern coast of the United States are intimately familiar with the power of nature as every year hurricanes rip through the region, sometimes staying harmlessly out at sea and creating great surf while other times coming ashore to claim property and lives. For many people, this is enough to dissuade them from living by the coast, but for those of us that do, it is just a part of life to be accepted. While I am never glad to see a hurricane destroy someone's home or take their life, there is a certain awful majesty to the storms that is fascinating to witness. I have weathered several hurricanes during my life, and I always watch their patterns with great attention. This is the outer band of a storm arriving just a few days before Hurricane Irma, one of the most catastrophic storms on record. Irma passed my region by, but others were not so lucky. During hurricane season, my thoughts are always with those who live their lives in the path of the storm.



**D. Randall Blythe**

***The Report*** (Cape Fear, NC)

2017

B&W true silver halide gelatin print on  
baryta fiber based 310gsm archival paper

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

People on the beach always ask you the same thing when you leave the water after surfing: "How were the waves?". Here is Rusty, a local surfer from my area, giving a highly detailed answer to a curious tourist from the midwestern U.S. I don't think she understood much of what he was explaining, but I remember that the waves were good that day. A simple "they were great!" would have sufficed, but it wouldn't have been nearly as amusing.



**D. Randall Blythe**

***Out of Gas Perspective*** (Cape Fear, NC)

2017

B&W true silver halide gelatin print on  
baryta fiber based 310gsm archival paper

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

One of the most frustrating things about being a photographer who surfs is the constant internal battle I fight when the waves are good: do I surf, or do I shoot photos of other people surfing? Most of the time surfing wins. I took this photo during a week of really good waves. I had surfed three sessions that day already, each session lasting around two hours, and I was completely exhausted. I got out of the water about an hour before sunset, and I was driving to get something to eat when I decided to grab my camera and stop by the pier to shoot first. Only a couple of people were left in the water, but the waves were still beautiful. Even as tired and hungry as I was, and even though I was happy to be photographing, watching this guy ride this wave made me wish I was in the water with him.



**D. Randall Blythe**

***My Heart*** (Cape Fear, NC)

2017

B&W true silver halide gelatin print on  
baryta fiber based 310gsm archival paper

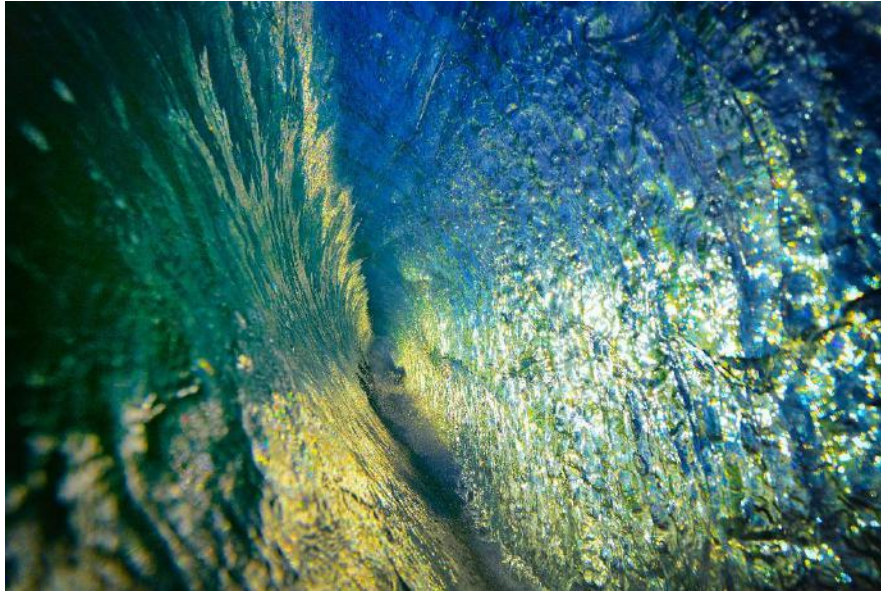
Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

My wife was not raised in a coastal area, but  
our wedding was on the beach where I grew up.

Our marriage began with a hurricane on that  
same beach and she has come to love surfing  
and being by the ocean, just as I do. Walking the  
beach at sunset with her is one of my favourite  
things in the world, especially in the early fall  
when it's not too cold yet but the beach is mostly  
deserted. She is my heart, and I'm so glad she  
shares my love of the coast.





**D. Randall Blythe**

***Dream Hunting*** (Cape Fear, NC)

2017

Canon Lucia inkjet print on 290gsm

Hahnemühle bamboo fiber fine art paper.

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$950.00

The inside of a barrelling wave is magical place. When you are surfing in a barrel, time becomes elastic and seems to slow down. What only lasts a few seconds seems much, much longer and your senses become heightened. The constantly shifting walls of the wave capture and reflect light in a thousand different hues and the noise inside is like nothing else, a deep bass rumbling note that is the song of the sea itself. I have surfed several excellent barrels but have yet to exit one – I've always been smashed when the wave closes it out, sometimes violently. But I will make it one day, and those few fleeting ineffable seconds I have experienced in a tube are more than enough to keep me dream hunting. The green room awaits...



**D. Randall Blythe**

***Night Wall*** (Cape Fear, NC)

2017

B&W true silver halide gelatin print on  
baryta fiber based 310gsm archival paper

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

Sometimes I have dreams that I am swimming in the sea during a large swell. During these dreams I am usually relaxed in the water and able to dive safely beneath the waves without any trouble.

But for some reason, these dream waves are always dark, and the sky is dark as well. This wave looks like something I would see in one of those dreams.



**D. Randall Blythe**

***Ginger Burns*** (Cape Fear, NC)

2017

Canon Lucia inkjet print on 290gsm

Hahnemühle bamboo fiber fine art paper.

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

My friend Mat works as a safety inspector for power plants. His work often carries him away from his coastal home, sometimes for a month or more at a time. On the day I took this photo, Mat had just arrived back to the beach after spending a month inland working in Phoenix, Arizona. His brother picked him up at the airport and despite the fact that he was running on very little sleep, and hadn't even gone home to his house yet, they came straight to the beach to surf. I met them a few islands over and the waves were good. I surfed some that day but shot more photos than I rode waves. Nothing will wash a month in the desert off like a good surf, and I was happy to shoot photos of my buddy refreshing his spirit.



**D. Randall Blythe**

***Commitment*** (Cape Fear, NC)

2017

B&W true silver halide gelatin print on  
baryta fiber based 310gsm archival paper

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

As fall begins to turn to winter in the Cape Fear region of North Carolina that I call home, the days get shorter, the water cools down, and the wind begins to bite. The time to wear a full wetsuit has arrived, and the lineups empty out of fair weather watermen. I surf through the summer, fall, winter, and spring- sometimes when it's freezing cold, I stand on the beach and ask myself "Why are you doing this again?". Then I enter the dark winter water and paddle out. As I catch a wave, for a few seconds the cold disappears, and I receive the answer to my question. It is an answer that cannot be spoken or explained in written words, only experienced. I am so grateful for this special part of my life.



**D. Randall Blythe**

***Silver and Gale*** (Ocean Isle, NC)

2017

B&W true silver halide gelatin print on  
baryta fiber based 310gsm archival paper

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

Winter days can bring fierce offshore winds,  
grooming waves into beautiful, organized shapes  
that throw long arcs of spray – but the shooting  
conditions are usually brutally cold on the beach.

When I see fishing boats on days like this, it  
always brings me new respect for those onboard.  
I always wonder how the men working the decks  
are staying warm, for there is no escape from the  
wind at sea.





**D. Randall Blythe**

***Cappuccino Chaos*** (Carolina Beach, NC)

2017

B&W true silver halide gelatin print on  
baryta fiber based 310gsm archival paper

Signed limited edition, 1 of 10

CI\$600.00

Even shooting from the shore, it's impossible to know exactly what kind of results you will get when you're photographing waves but on days with consistent, well-organized swell and light winds, it is a bit easier to predict when individual waves are going to break and shoot accordingly.

Swimming and shooting at the same time is a whole other matter, even on clean days. On a messy, choppy day with strong currents like the one I took this shot, it's pure chaos. You swim out into the swirling soup, shoot whatever comes rushing at your head, dive beneath the waves, and hope for the best. I love this wild explosion of foam just as much as a perfectly clean barreling wave.