

G O I N G

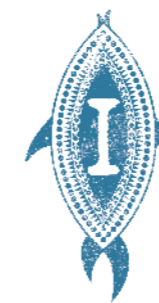
SURFING AMONG THE GHOSTS
OF MICRONESIA

T O O

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PHOTOS BY DAMEA DORSEY

F A R



It is impossible to partner in the mind the breathtaking beauty of Micronesia with the greatest slaughter of human bodies in history. And yet, it happened.

Though the memories are fading, the Pacific theater of World War Two was fought so inhumanely in Micronesia, with such horror, with such blood, with so many men, women and children burnt and eviscerated and blown to rags, that surfing in these graveyard waters seems almost blasphemous. But history marches on, on to new historic horrors, one bloody thing after another, and the battlefields and the spilled guts and the reeking blood are forgotten.

And perhaps this is best. Because the fact that men actually chose to beat the hell out of Bikini Atoll with Atom bomb testing just so that we could blast the Japanese to Kingdom come is beyond today's imaginations. A horror so complete, an event so sinister, a witnessed memory so perfectly awful, that to this day, despite global capability and threats to

do so, a nuclear device has never been deployed in war since Nagasaki. Surfing these waters is fantastic, yes. And the world spins on, yes. It has always been the same, yes, and will always be the same, yes. But when one considers the no-thought state of riding on the face of a wave, perhaps this is a profound way to honour the dead entombed below these waters. Perhaps it's blessed bringing a joyful sort of play to these clean waters that hold such dirty memories. Perhaps by having no consideration at all for the horrors of war, war might never happen again.

Photographer Damea Dorsey recently sailed through this historic zone, bringing back not the horrors, but the sublime, pristine beauty of the last, cleanest place on earth. Its waves, its water, its people. Regardless of political lines, free from insane memories of man's inhumanity to man. And in this photographic essay he reminds us all of mankind's ability to act on the opposite impulses of war.

To forgive, to forget, to heal. Just as the islands themselves have done.



(1) "Like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on earth and the big trees were Kings". So wrote Joseph Conrad in his classic tale *The Heart Of Darkness*. And so the jungles of these latitudes, depending on the hour, both hold an oppressive silence and provide the symphony of sounds as the jungle itself breathes into your face. Surfing here is primordial.

(2) No child's toy, in these climes, that oar is the difference between life and death.

(3) Paddling out by yourself at a break that has never been ridden is a rite of passage for the adventurous among us. The mystery of all that life below being pulled up through your board and into your stomach. Damea Dorsey, first trembling look.





(1) New technology and ancient knowledge will always be at odds in these waters. But at least the boats that sail now are not trying to blow each other to bits. Like the wrecks themselves, those loud days have sunk beneath most memories long ago.

(2) Many would consider it a fool's gold. But at least it's ours. Tiny underwater corners of the world where we can feel that transect between our imaginings and our answered desires. Waves like this are as numbered as stars in these seas. But like all space travel, one needs to employ extraordinary efforts to land on them.

(3) The sea continues to give up the debris from the atom and nuclear bomb testing of World War Two and beyond. Shards of proof from the incomprehensible power that man unleashed in order to kill other men wholesale. The locals abide an all but forgotten time of human slaughter. Still, the ghosts and the machines of thousands remain.





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(1) We call it a final resting place. But it was anything but rest that got it here. Nature at first laughs at our follies. And then it eats them.

(2) Villagers in countless archipelagos treat perfect waves as navigational hazards. How astonished they must be when we show up so lustful for what they spend their entire lives avoiding.

(3) It is not only the past war that causes the destruction of our steel leviathans. The unpredictable weather and crossed up swells of Micronesia still take our puny efforts and toss them aside at will. The very waves we ride hold this power.

(4) The last Eden. No matter what we do to it, it will prevail in the end. Unless we change our ways, our days are numbered...not the sea's. 🌊