





# Wet behind the ears

This boy has certainly changed our perception of concrete boots, and we guess it would be fair to say that people in Essex have no real understanding of the Blue Water Experience!

**Text:** Dave Vickers **Photos:** Courtesy of Jason de Caires Taylor

How would you throw together a career combining qualifications like a B.A Honours in sculpture, and a PADI dive instructor's license? There's not a great deal out there really, unless 'Plaster of Paris' is a touch more robust these days! \_\_\_\_\_ For one artist, however, this unusual combination of skills has triggered a 'scuba-sculpture' culture and propelled him to the murky fathoms of fame. With fourteen years of dive experience across the globe, Jason Taylor obviously thought that the oceans weren't providing us with enough of a spectacle. And perhaps, with coral bleaching running amok and ruining tropical honeymoons the world over, he may have a point. With marine life issues weighing heavy on his belt, Jason began looking at methods of using sculpture to create artificial reefs, striving to help reverse the dying trend of these vivacious and incredibly precious marine environments. \_\_\_\_\_ Of course no man alone can achieve this globally but the results of Taylor's aquatic endeavours are amazing, and the awareness that this outstanding work brings to the fore invaluable. Crucially, artificial reefs ease the pressure on over-fished, over-visited natural reefs, giving them a greater chance to regenerate and ultimately survive. \_\_\_\_\_ Jason de Caires Taylor has a unique sculptural CV; his work is said to 'explore the boundaries between art and the environment, reflecting time and process. An interest brought on mainly by a transient childhood, his family constantly moving from one cultural environment to another spurred his fascination of time fuelled transformation. After successfully exhibiting mainly in and around London, he took on a commission in the Caribbean (nice work if you can get it) and in 2006 he set up what has become the world's first underwater sculpture park in Moliniere Bay, Grenada. \_\_\_\_\_ The results are these haunting aquatic classics, like uncovered remnants of an alien civilization; looming up from the plankton fog and startling observers, who understandably scoop in piped oxygen to alleviate the shock before approaching tentatively. At an average depth of around 5 meters, the clear visibility of the warm Caribbean seas opens the park to surface visitors, thus allowing observation by snorkel and glass bottom boat as well as the harder frogman approach. But no matter where, or from which angle Taylor's curious concrete dive buddies come into view, the effect is an all-encompassing experience. An ever-changing one also, the cool aquatic light flickering across these cold stone faces perhaps momentarily tells a story of our future, and then an instant later reflecting one of our ancient past. On a slightly different time-scale, one of weeks and months rather than



The artist, Jason de Caires Taylor

