

POINT REYES LIGHT

NEWS

Siren calls coming to a bay near you

by **Anna Guth**
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Serena Jve's floating structure will anchor in Tomales Bay in August. Courtesy of Serena Jve

Odysseus, homeward bound, told his men to seal their ears with beeswax so they wouldn't be lured to their deaths as they passed the island of sirens. Yet he bound himself to the mast of his ship so he could hear the irresistible song of half-women, half-birds.

Residents of West Marin have an opportunity to reenact his story with an artist who sees the Greek legend as fodder for a radical experience of self-care.

In August, an immersive design artist from the East Bay plans to bring a two-story raft into Tomales Bay that she tours around in the summertime and calls "Siren Island." The free weekend event will feature exfoliations, massage and treatments with olive oil and mud.

Serena Jve built the raft-like vessel from reclaimed redwood and said she designed it to look like "undulating rock." Since last July, it's been in the Delta and in the waters off Treasure Island and Alameda. Ms. Jve explained her inspiration and its connection to the idea of the sirens as depicted by the Greeks.

"Why are a bunch of women that live on the rocks so terrifying? First of all, they are naked women: that's totally outrageous," she said. "And they are not controlled by any man. If you were to go there, you could never go back, and your understanding of how society works would be completely ruined."

Ms. Jve added, "Take that narrative and put it in a contemporary light, and there's a lot of power to work from. What is so powerful about the feminine? It's not hypersexuality: women's bodies are so easily sexualized. It's self-care."

Visitors, who either have to swim or boat to the island, can expect a good time: spa treatments will include do-it-yourself offerings, and light refreshments will be served. There may also be a musical or theatrical performance, but participants will be free to do what they want. The events are only advertised through her website, where subscribers pay a \$10 fee to know the next location.

For Ms. Jve, the self-care that she hopes visitors will indulge in is a political act. To illustrate, she recounted an unexpected visit at an event last summer from several

sailors in their 60s who found the vessel by mistake, but joined the festivities. Ms. Jve said she overheard two statements that stuck with her: “I feel so pretty right now.” And, “This is what my wife does? Why did no one tell me?” She said, “That was powerful because to me, it shows how even today that gender is a prison that doesn’t allow us to experience our full potential as humans. These 60-year-old men have never moisturized, and they have definitely never exfoliated before: those are acts of self-care. How do you develop your relationship to intimacy, if you don’t have it with yourself? How are you supposed to have it with each other? Relationship breakdowns: that’s at the root of a lot of the civil and political issues we face.”

Ms. Jve also noted that part of the concept of immersive design is to keep mystery alive. “You become part of the cast, immersed in a new reality,” she explained. “It’s not a prescribed role though, you’re not completely immersed—that’s the difference. I design a 360-degree environment in the same way a painter makes a painting out of a concept. There is no line between actor and participant; there is no exit sign.”

Siren Island will visit Tomales Bay on Aug. 9 and 10, likely in the waters off of Marshall Beach. Visit sirenisland.co to learn more.