



Farhana Huq, the Pakistani-Bangladeshi-American founder of Brown Girl Surf, a journey to find, support and share stories of trailblazing female surfers around the world, speaks at Okeanos this past weekend. Photo by Morgan Gutierrez

San Francisco, CA—Several local nonprofit organizations, along with Brown Girl Surf and panel speakers on various ocean-related topics were featured this past Sunday for Okeanos; a visual arts show produced by San Francisco dance-circus company Capacitor. The show centered on the importance of oceanic preservation using dance, mime, music and movement to recreate the experience of a living ocean. Organizers also put together an open-to-the-public salon featuring environmental and ocean-preservation focused non-profits at the Fort Mason Center in San Francisco. This was an opportunity to educate, enjoy, and give back to the seven seas - which make up 71% of Earth's surface, yet are so often overlooked. Farhana Huq, founder of Brown Girl Surf from the Indian subcontinent, was a participant on the BLUEMiND pre-show panel to discuss the human mind's connection and relationship to the ocean, as well as the ocean's role in eliciting nostalgia. Brown Girl Surf is project that centers on Farhana's journey to find, support and share the stories of trailblazing female surfers from around the world. It is told through her narration and includes as well quirky stories and updates on her own journey of aspiring to "surf like a pro." Farhana

Brown Girl Surf and Bay Area Nonprofits Collaborate to Ocean Preservation Project

By Meera Jayaraman

represented Brown Girl Surf on the panel by sharing her thoughts and personal experiences with the ocean, and also contributing thoughts on behalf of fellow female surfers from culture around the world. When asked specifically how Brown Girl Surf and BLUEMiND work together, Huq had this to share:

"We are intersecting on events like this where I come and speak about my actual experience of surfing and what it's like being in the ocean. We're also on a journey of sorts and working with BLUEMiND to understand more fully the mind-ocean connection. In a place like Gaza, for instance, we're interested in looking at what is happening in [the female surfers'] brains when they are on land, in an extremely stressful environment, compared to in the water," said Huq.

Huq herself describes surfing as almost a meditative experience that helps her focus and calms her mind, an aspect that another speaker at the convention, Dr. G of greeninstitute.com, mentioned.

Many of the women that Huq is seeking to meet come from cultures that are disapproving of girls in sports after a certain age. Other cultures may have a strong fear tied to the ocean itself. This makes it very interesting to understand and see how these female trailblazers are trying to persevere to do what they love despite adversity.

"When I spoke to Ishita Malaviya, India's first female surfer, she explained to me there is somewhat a culture of fear in her country when it comes to the ocean. There are also huge environmental and pollution issues right near her home break. The locals often use the beach as a dumping ground for their own trash motivating her to do beach clean-up event and awareness raising campaigns about the ocean. So these female surfers in a way are having to take on issues that affect their sport and their daily lives. They

are an important and growing community of global ocean activists by virtue of being surfers," Huq explained.

Following the speaker sessions, Okeanos had interactive discussion tables and opportunities to talk with some of the leaders in ocean conversation. Among the booths were Project Kaisei, Turtle Island Restoration Network, and the Marine Applied Research and Exploration.

When twilight arrived later in the evening, Fort Mason was illuminated by a ghostly blue which was when the visual part of Okeanos began. In a series of breathtaking interpretive dances by Capacitor, the ocean and much of its wildlife was depicted. It progressed from gentle waves in a rolling wind to images of sea animals caught in the whirlwind of the darkest, most sinister parts of the seas. The night ended with mind-boggling forms that were inspirational.

Okeanos brought out the emotional aspect of conservation.

The combination of speakers Farhana Huq, Dr. M A Greenstein, Dr. Wallace 'J.' Nichols, Dr. Amir Vokshoor and Sara Kornfeld (MC) interacting with audience members in a series of talks and Capacitor with its interpretive dance gave a new perspective on what it is to be human and an active part of miraculous nature.

Okeanos is part of the In Performance Series at the Cowell Theater at Fort Mason Center, which is supported by Grants for the Arts/ San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Fort Mason Foundation. Okeanos is also supported by the SF Grants for the Arts, the Voluntary Arts Contribution Fund, Plankton Productions, and the Zellerbach Family Foundation. For more information on the program, visit them at www.capacitor.org and for Brown Girl Surf, visit www.browngirlsurf.com.

