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CLOSE-UP: Schools try to make discipline a positive experience for students/B4

Artist-angler catches fish, captures color

WHERE TO SEE IT

Annie O'Mohondro's work can be seen at the following galleries: The Real Mother Goose stores at Washington Square, the Portland International Airport, and downtown at 901 S.W. Yamhill St.

Her work is also at the Old Mill Gallery and Wind River Gallery in Bend; Jaga Gallery in Ashland; Mindpower in Reedsport; Clock Tower in Bandon; Grantland Mayfield in Port Orford; and Rogue's Gallery in Gold Beach.

Her principal gallery and studio is the Langlois Louvre, in Langlois.

■ Annie O'Mohondro uses an ancient Japanese technique to express her creative sensibilities and indulge her affinity for fish

By **JOHN GRIFFITH**
Correspondent, The Oregonian

LANGLOIS — When she dreams, artist Annie O'Mohondro sees herself swimming on the bottom of the ocean.

She loves fish. She loves catching them, and she loves watching light play off their scales.

She spends more time studying the fish she's caught than most anglers do pondering elaborate ruses to catch more.

After the catch, O'Mohondro paints the fish using a technique based on the ancient Japanese art of *gyotaku*. And when she's through, she plants her catch-turned-model in her garden to enrich the soil.

O'Mohondro, 41, has found happiness and success with her art, but it was an uphill path to contentment as an artist. She compares her life journey to that of her favorite fish.



JOHN GRIFFITH for The Oregonian
 Annie O'Mohondro's work as an artist is quite different from when she operated backhoes, but she thinks she's found herself through the fish. "Salmon represent determination," O'Mohondro says. "We have a lot in common."

"Salmon represent determination," she says. "We have a lot in common."

O'Mohondro had a debutante's upbringing in an affluent part of Bellingham, Wash. Liking the outdoors since childhood, she took a string of jobs around the world before she settled on

a career as a heavy-equipment operator.

She married, then divorced and was so seriously injured in a 1990 car wreck

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PENDLETON — A snowstorm hit northeastern Oregon late Sunday — 13 days before the official start of winter, but relatively tardy for this part of the state — and left 9 inches of snow in the Blue Mountains. It temporarily blocked Interstate 84 and made for treacherous driving across the region Monday.

■ **THE FORECAST:** Complete weather information and forecasts/D10

The westbound lanes of Interstate 84 on Cabbage Hill, just east of Pendleton, were blocked three hours Monday morning by jackknifed tractor-trailer rigs.

"It hit hard and fast," said Candice Kennison, spokeswoman for the Oregon Department of Transportation office in Pendleton, where 3 to 4 inches of snow fell overnight.

"We had freezing rain before the snow came. You get semis coming through there, and they will jackknife every time if they are not ready for it."

Traffic moved slowly along the steep Spring Creek and Ladd Canyon segments of I-84 between Pendleton and Baker City, but no lengthy tie-ups were reported.

Several non-injury accidents were reported Monday morning along snow-covered I-84 north of Baker City and along Oregon 3 north of Enterprise.

Twelve inches of snow fell at Anthony Lakes Mountain Ski Area in the Elkhorn Mountains between La Grande and Baker City. The snowfall topped a 15-inch base at the winter sports area,

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Artist: Car crash ends one career, clears path for another

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that she had to find a new career. That's when she taught herself to be an artist.

But it was difficult to end her career operating heavy machinery.

"It felt like it was just truly an extension of myself when I was operating a machine," she said. "My specialty was backhoe. It was just like a fine art, like a dance."

After the car crash, therapists told O'Mohondro she needed to find less strenuous work.

She was living in Chiloquin, on a former tribal reservation beside the Williamson River, trying to keep

her spirits together by fishing. Through the ups and downs of her young adulthood, she had fished, both for sport and commercially.

O'Mohondro had always respected fish but says she did not feel really akin to them until she approached them as an artist.

"A friend was an elder with the Shasta nation," O'Mohondro said. "I told him I could feel the fish moving by me in the river, and he told me, 'No, they're moving through you.' I guess I realized I have a spiritual calling at Chiloquin."

O'Mohondro's portfolio tracks the development of her personality as much as her art.

She started with a wood burner,

engraving images with Western, wildlife and Native American themes onto maple burls. She hesitated to use color, unsure of herself. But her customers began demanding color, so she started with background washes. Gaining confidence, she began adding a few details on top of the washes.

O'Mohondro does not know why she started painting fish. Good fortune, maybe. Her gyotaku portfolio shows steady movement away from her worries about color. Now the fish she catches become colors, and the pigments and papers she uses become her fish.

She paints now with the confidence good equipment operators use to make their jobs look easy.

To watch her work, it is obvious she has found her element.

First comes the catching.

O'Mohondro is a shameless angler who hollers and laughs when she feels the tug of a fish on her line. She's good at it. She plays the fish hard to tire it quickly but not so hard to be clumsy or heavy-handed.

"Fishing is thrilling," she said on a recent trip with Bandon guide Rick Howard. He put her onto five salmon, new models for her gyotaku.

"There's nothing finer," she said, playing a big one. "It's just absolutely thrilling."

Back at her studio in Langlois, she paints standing up, the same

way she fishes. She hums and talks to herself and to the fish when she paints, just happy phrases about how the paint is going on and remarks about the fish's colors and beauty.

The pigments O'Mohondro uses will start to set up before the paper goes on if she dawdles. She works fast but unhurried, with smoothness and balance, taking enough time to get the effects she wants without wasting any. Her diligence has paid off, the price of her paintings has doubled since last year.

"I feel like I've worked a lifetime to get to finally be here," she said midway through a new gyotaku. "It's such a thrill to get to be an artist. I get to be me."