

# Juniper breeze

Inside



## One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish



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Top, Alaska salmon painted using gyotaku techniques.

Above, Dervin Tholisen, 6, of Bend, paints a rubber fish for printing Thursday at Tumalo Elementary School.

Below, Annie O'mohondro, center, demonstrates how to paint a rubber fish to first graders at Tumalo Elementary.

Right, a finished impressionist gyotaku banner dries on a table.



**T**he kids at Tumalo Elementary School are ready to paint fish. Not do paintings of fish, but literally paint some fish. A little blue, some yellow here, more red over there - 31 little heads are bent with concentration, hard at work brushing paint on every scale, every gill.

Centuries ago, long before anyone in the East ever heard of cameras, Japanese fishermen developed a way to record their prize catches for posterity: Freshly caught fish were inked then pressed into rice paper. Gyotaku, literally "fish impression," eventually turned into an art form.

Today, with the help of Bend artist Annie O'mohondro, the students at Tumalo are giving it a try. O'mohondro specializes in gyotaku and she has brought simplified versions of her technique with her for a two week artist-in-residence experience. "I love working with kids," O'mohondro says. "I can convince kids that they can be great artists."

The cafeteria looks like it's prepared for a typhoon. Plastic covers every surface, with layer upon layer of newspapers on top of that. Tarps are scattered on the floor to catch splashes and clean rags are strategically placed everywhere. On every table there are several dark fish carcasses and bowls of bright paint. Dozens of brushes line every table, some for painting, and others for blending colors or pressing the fabric onto the fish.

Tumalo, which like most elementary schools in the Redmond School District has no formal art instruction, tries to bring an artist in every year to work with students for a few short weeks. Most of the artist visits are funded by Tumalo's parent-teacher committee, which raises money year-round through various functions and fund-raisers.

Tumalo parent Nancy Colton was responsible for bringing O'mohondro in this year.

"I was visiting friends in the Valley and saw this amazing print on the wall," she said. "Their 10-year-old had attended an art camp and took a workshop from Annie." Colton says she has been working on persuading O'mohondro to come to Tumalo for several months.

Fifth-grade teacher Andy Ausfahl brings in his 31 students, who circle around O'mohondro and sit down. After she explains the history of gyotaku, O'mohondro receives audible sighs of relief when

she tells the students that they won't be printing from "real live dead fish" today. The students will be using pliable fish models that she has made herself for her artwork. After first catching the fish in local reservoirs and rivers O'mohondro makes plaster casts, which she fills with liquid rubber. The end result is a perfect copy of a fish - scales and all - that handles like a giant piece of "gummy fish" candy. She describes the rubber models as "more user friendly."

Her own art depicts salmon, trout and various exotic fish in real-life settings such as rivers and streams.

"In my own work I use real fish, the rubber fish and even fiberglass fish," O'mohondro says. "The real fish have better scale definition but sometimes it's easier to work with the models."

Ausfahl's students are making individual fabric banners with the trout fish models. After listening to O'mohondro's explanation about color values and how to achieve three dimensional effects, they get to work.

"This is so disgusting," says Amber Schlossmacher with a happy smile. "I can't believe I'm doing this. It's so weird." Her friend Kristin Inglis nods her head in agreement.

"Did she (O'mohondro) say she actually takes dead fish, cleans them off and paints them?" Inglis asks incredulously.

The girls carefully stroke paint on their fish, blend the spots where the colors meet and press clean muslin fabric onto the surface. After they carefully lift the fabric square an audible "ooohhh-hh" is heard from other students nearby.

After the initial fish printing the students bring the banners over to O'mohondro, who shows them how to add scale definition with old metallic cinch belts. The illusion of water movement is made with iridescent paints splattered on the fabric in directional waves.

When the banners are complete they are hung up to dry and work is begun on fabric blocks for a class quilt.

"I really like the feel of the fish," says Demi Elkin with a shrug. "I wish they were real." Her classmate Kloe Olkowski concurs.

My favorite part was getting messy. Last year we got to dissect squid and write with their ink sacks. They were stinky and slimy but it was cool."



Top:Arranging fish for banner  
Mid:Aligning fabric for touchdown  
Lower:Applying detail, character and motion