

The Art of Gyotaku: The Catch of the Day Captured on Canvas

by TOM HAMILTON, A&E Feature Writer

Annice O'Mohondro's artwork is as extraordinary as her lifestyle. This independent woman boasts a strong Western heritage that has allowed her to carve a niche that most would envy.

She helped reenact the Lewis & Clark expedition by serving as the brakeman on a wagon train that blazed across Eastern Oregon.

She herded cattle on the biggest working cattle ranch in the Pacific Northwest.

She worked on the first excavation crew that followed the eruption of Mt. St. Helen's, operating heavy-duty equipment during the cleanup process.

And she sold her artwork to the likes of Ted Turner, Jane Fonda, Kim Novak and Loomis Reed owner Gene Loomis.

But, it's O'Mohondro's work itself that sets her apart. For the past eight years, she's dedicated her life to capturing aquatic images from around the world through a little-known Japanese art form known as Gyotaku.

Gyotaku is the ancient Japanese art form of painting fish by pigmenting the fish and rubbing the image on canvas.

It's highly sophisticated art form developed in Japan to preserve the true record and size

of species caught by Japanese anglers beginning in 1862.

A Gyotaku print is said to be created by "using templates from the hand of God." Pigments are used to transfer images of natural objects and the prints are generally hand colored to produce a unique and beautiful art form.

O'Mohondro is a self-taught artist utilizing a slight variation of the traditional Gyotaku art form. She generally mixes her fish in plaster of Paris, laying the fish in the plaster and forming a mold. Next, she pours rubber compound into the mold to form a permanent art object that lasts for years.

She also uses another variation from traditional Gyotaku artists—she prints her fish on fine fabric or hand-made paper.

Over the years, she has developed the skill to create prints from live fish, rubber molds, fiberglass-molded fish or the everyday taxidermy produced fish stuffed with either foam or sawdust.

She's caught many of her subject matters on the Oregon coast, but as her inventory of models grew, she found herself fishing less. She claims a buck Chinook once lasted four years.

"A Steelhead is the finest form to print that

I've seen," she said. "I've primarily printed Pacific Northwest species of fish, but possibilities are virtually endless with the thousands of fish found around the world."

O'Mohondro first discovered her art form purely by accident. She caught a trophy fish on the Elk River and was trying to recapture the color of the fish in her home studio. As the colors of the fish changed, she found it more difficult to capture the natural beauty of the fish.

So, she decided to apply paint to the fish and discovered that she captured the essence of her subject matter by printing the fish on paper.

"I thought, 'This is it. What a great new art,'" she said.

She called a friend and told him about the process and the fantastic results. He told her that the art form is widely practiced around the world. There was even an

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MOS|T COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS|

After your done painting the fish, then do you eat it?

No, but I would eat YOUR catch. By the time I've printed this fish multiple times, thawing & refreezing over & over again & its on its last 'thaw' (if you know what I mean), ready for the great garden planting, there's one last process to do. By building a coffin type frame, pouring plaster- of -paris into it, cooking liquid rubber which is then poured into the mold & voila, a rubber fish is born, now I have immortalized this fish for many years of teaching tours. When I'm working in my studio, I prefer to use the actual "thawed" species, but as far as user-friendly, the rubber variety wins (having pooled, several of the senses & many of my students).

Do you catch your own fish?

Yes, most of the fish I use I have caught, although I am given fish to use for teaching.

What's the biggest fish you've printed?

Probably a Tyee Alaskan Salmon that was a mere 5' tall, well, maybe it was that Columbia River Sturgeon,....it could have been that Shark off Yaquina Bay.... Oh, I think it must have been the Sail Fish if you count the fin and bill..... gee, that's a tough question. I don't think I've printed the biggest fish yet.

O'Mohondro's Fine Art

Deschutes Run

Dedicated to capturing aquatic images from around the world.

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international organization of devoted Gyotaku artists, Nature Printing Society, that was formed in 1976 in Goleta, California.

The society sponsored a Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibit throughout the U.S., Canada and Australia from 1981-87.

O'Mohondro continued to excel at her new found art form, developing a 'Totemic style' of Pacific Northwest coastal art and fine reproductions that were soon being displayed in art galleries in Cannon Beach, Seaside, Detroit Lake, Seattle, Pacific City and Portland.

She entered her work in a touring display sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History and featured her work in several small working galleries that she owned on the Oregon coast.

In July, she opened O'Mohondro Originals Fine Art on Century Drive in Bend. The working studio is a showcase for her work and will also serve as a classroom for her Gyotaku courses that she plans to teach in the intimate setting. She also displays her work at Ambiance in Redmond.

Avid anglers, fishermen's wives, homeowners with large spaces looking for unique art objects, fish restaurants and interior decorators have all been attracted to her work. She says her personal attraction to fish is hard to explain, but easily understood by her clients.

"The appeal to this particular art form for me is the instant results," she said. "I have a total connection with fish. I'll do other projects, but always come back to fish. I can't explain the connection, but it runs deep. There is a spiritual aspect and energy unparalleled in anything else that I've ever done."

O'Mohondro Originals Fine Art offers an alternative to taxidermy with a few art forms of an actual fish. Or as Annice says, "You can have your catch and eat it, too." Information: 318-1102.

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BUILDING CENTRAL OREGON CENTURY VILLAGE

Century Village
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A team together whether it's a restaurant staff or an engineer, contractor and leasing agent.

"I really enjoy the real estate development because you can schedule your own hours. I have more spare time and the evenings off."

Hoch says a major player in his development team is project manager Scott Christensen of Havnier Construction, going so far as to call the likeable contractor "family."

"He worked on this building as if he owned it," Hoch said. "Whenever I needed him for anything, he was there."

Christensen, who plans to team with Hoch to construct an 11,000 square foot and 5,700 square foot buildings to complete the village, sees a need for more retail space on Bend's west-side.

"Overall, this village is great for the west-side, and the new building has a great look," he said. "We added more eye appeal to the village with four different exterior colors and four different exterior finishes."

"The store fronts blend with the existing buildings and the stonework and dormers were a great touch. Axel's list of business clients in the village is impressive, and I'm certain he'll have no problems attracting three more businesses to fill this building."

The newest tenant in Century Village is Anne Marie O'Mohondro, who is opening an art gallery in the space formerly occupied by Pine Mountain Sports. O'Mohondro Originals Fine Art is dedicated to capturing aquatic images from around the world and should complement Fly & Field's successful fly fishing shop.

A future tenant could very likely be Hoch's fifth entry into the Bend restaurant field. Although he hasn't fully committed to another eatery, he said his new restaurant is among the tenants planned

A cleaners, orthodontics, day spa, tanning salon, fiber wool shop, pet food supply and fly fishing store are among the tenants compatible, one-stop shop.