

ARTicle

CULTURAL LIFE ON THE EDGE

»SEAFOOD SPECIAL«

**ARTicle CELEBRATES
PEMBROKESHIRE FISH WEEK**

SCHOOL OF FISH: *Japan's Art of Gyotaku*
DEBORAH WITHEY *artist*

CATCH IT, PAINT IT, EAT IT
TONY KITCHELL *artist*

HOOK LINE AND SINKER
FISH WEEK *at pureART in MILFORD MARINA*



THE LIFE AQUATIC

Wooden Fish Sculptures at Solva's Raul Speek Gallery throughout Fish Week

Image © Heather Bennett



Pembrokeshire Fish Week is upon us once again. From 26 June till 4 July, the county's harbours and towns will celebrate their rich maritime heritage – and this edition of ARTicle hopes to offer a cultural, as well as a culinary, feast!



Contemporary fabric painting of fishermen catching the deadly *Fugu* fish © Yoshimo Ono of Asakusa-Garou, Tokyo
www.asakusa-garou.jp

Long trumpeted as 'brain food', the humble fish has always given us humans food for thought. Throughout the ages, sea creatures have exerted a considerable influence over artists of all persuasions: a favoured symbol for those of a surrealist turn of mind, from Hieronymus Bosch's monsters of the deep to Dalí's lobster telephone; staple of Japanese printmakers of the 'Ukiyo-e' school (who documented, literally, 'Images of the Floating World'); and a source of inspiration for architects as diverse as deconstructivist Frank Gehry, whose huge metal *Peix* sculpture graces Barcelona's Port Olímpic, and Finnish organicist Aalto, whose buildings often embraced an enclosing 'fish' and a central 'egg' element.

There is something fascinating about these scaly creatures that adds a touch of the surreal to all cultures: the Swedish word for their myriad tiny bones, *fiskben*, translates as 'fish-legs'; the Czechs have not an inch of coast, yet revere one particular fish as a highly prized Christmas Dinner: a carp in the bath, rather than a turkey in the oven, in the days leading up to December 25th; and Basque cave artists, defiant as ever, were busily painting sea bream at a time when their Palaeolithic counterparts elsewhere in Europe stuck to woolly mammoths and bison.



Peix, Barcelona, by Frank Gehry
Image © Adrian Welch, e-architect

In this issue, we cast the net wide in search of Piscatorial Art. Tony Kitchell recounts the freshness of his angling-based series of works, 'Catch it, Paint it, Eat it'; illustrator Deborah Withey, of St Davids' Cheese + Pickle Studio, describes why the traditional Japanese fish-painting art of *Gyotaku* fascinates her; and Leslie Crascall of Milford's pureART gallery gives us a glimpse of forthcoming exhibitions not

'...As the fish egg's development to a mature organism requires time, so it also requires time for all that develops and crystallizes in our world of thoughts.'

Alvar Aalto, Finnish architect
'The Trout and the Mountain Stream' (1947)

SCHOOL of FISH: Japan's art of Gyotaku

DEBORAH WITHEY artist

I'm actually quite squeamish about touching fish; I don't have any desire to bait one or catch one and can't even eat one if the head is left on the platter. But printing one is different. Making art with one is special. The first time I brushed ink upon a fish, then carefully laid the thin rice paper over its body, and my hands began to caress its form, its hard and soft bits, its spiky fins . . . you could say I was hooked!

What I've just described is the process of *Gyotaku* – from 'gyo' meaning fish + 'taku' meaning rubbing – a traditional



3 Fishes

© Deborah Withey

form of Japanese printing, dating from the mid 1800s. In the days before cameras, Japanese fishermen would use this unique way to document their fish catches. The prized catch was taken to an artist, who would create a special print using paint or ink that could be washed off. After the masterpiece was created, the fish would be washed and sold at market. Over time, the process of making fish impressions became an art form practised throughout the world – particularly in Hawaii, where the Pacific yields many majestic creatures of the deep. And like other traditional Asian art methods, it's rooted in a respect for nature and the natural form; homage to the fish, if you will.



Bronze Mackerel

© Deborah Withey

My first experience with *gyotaku* was as an undergrad art student in the States, and I printed with passion. After graduation, I vowed to get back to it on my own, but my design career drove me into the urban world of visual journalism and away from the more hands-on forms of art.

Until last year, that is. Back in Wales for the second time, I found myself developing a term syllabus for a printmaking class, and I was excited to try out each technique before demonstrating it to my class. *Gyotaku* was on my list, and the old creative flame was re-ignited.

Like other techniques of monoprinting, the artist is directing the process, but not completely in control of the outcome. It's the element of surprise that thrills, and *gyotaku* is no different. There are several methods of impression, the most popular being dry and wet printing. Rice paper is preferable for dry

printing as its transparency allows you to see a bit of what you're doing, and the composition of the paper reveals more detailed results. As for the wet method, a heavier printmaking paper, similar to one used for lino or intaglio is best. I love the wet process because you can achieve a very ethereal and sensual image.

Whatever the method, you must work quickly as the print time of a freshly caught fish is limited. It's possible to make 8–10 prints before the fine patterns in the scales are lost from repetitive inking. But that's the trick! It is the print in the middle of the process that usually produces the finest detail, as this is the point when the scales are just right, with neither too little nor too much ink.

I haven't mentioned what type of fish is best because any kind goes – even a crustacean, although the process is a little different. I recently found a website which sells 'rubber fish for the printmaking student'! I can't imagine how you'd get any satisfaction from printing a fake fish, but if the teacher's goal is about method, not sensibility, I suppose it works. So for the beginner who wants to commune with nature and not plastic, sole, flounder or any flat fish is easiest for printing. The flatness, the design of their scales and of course, those trademark double eyes make a lovely image. But for commercial artists working around the world, printing just about any fish in the sea has become a lucrative business. In the past, 'big game' fisherman would send their prize catch to the taxidermist to be stuffed and mounted ready for their office wall. Now, the loser in the battle between man and fish is printed in all its glory. I can't image pressing paper across the grand expanse of a tuna, but I'd certainly love the chance!

Come make your own prints with Deb at Oriel y Parc on Thursday 1 July – see back page

HOOK, LINE *and* SINKER

Fish Week and beyond at pureART in Milford



Fish on a Yellow Plate

© Mike Monaghan

At the recently opened pureART gallery in Milford marina, there's a suitably salty tang to this summer's exhibitions. As Leslie Crascall, director of the waterfront gallery which opened at the beginning of this year, reminded ARTicle, the town boasts not only its unique contribution to Fish Week, but also SeaFair Haven – the festival of the Milford Haven Waterway – which follows hot on its heels, this year from 3 to 10 July.

First off the chopping blocks, coinciding with Fish Week, pureART will be showing the 'Fish and Food' paintings of Mike Monaghan from 21

June until 2 July. Working in oils, fish are a frequent feature in his 'meaty' impasto compositions; Mike explains: 'I like to paint them because they are so beautiful and tactile, and add interest to the painting – the fact that you have something which is essentially dead contrasts well with the living flowers', adding: 'And nothing is wasted either – the fish are always cooked and eaten afterwards!'



Boats

© Jagoda Donovan

Already an exhibitor at pureART, Cardiff-based artist Mike's still lifes and landscapes have also graced the walls of the capital's prestigious Martin Tinney, Albany and Kooywood galleries. The Milford venue is determined to showcase 'quality Welsh art'; having formerly worked for the agent of the great Kyffin Williams, Crascall feels a strong affinity with, and enthusiasm for, the subject.

'Fish and Food' follows pureART's successful Easter exhibition, which displayed a range of local artists, including Croatian-born but Wales-based Jagoda Donovan. No stranger to 'maritime' art herself, Jagoda's vivid paintings depict boats and sails with a vibrancy gleaned from walks along the Aberavon seafront: abstract seascapes and swirling boats framed by lustrous blue skies.

As SeaFair Haven hoves into view, pureART will be showcasing Irish artist James G. Miles and his vibrant and evocative 'Galway Hookers' paintings from 3 to 25 July. Exhibiting for the first time in Wales, this northern-Ireland based artist brings to our shores his lifelong fascination with the island's wild west coast – and particularly with these famous sailing boats. James recalls: 'Galway and the West of Ireland are almost in my blood. I remember catching my first mackerel on Salthill beach when I was 12 years old. The water was literally alive with fish.'

Working at his east-coast studio at Tyrella Beach, County Down, James uses richly textured and coloured paint to evoke the dynamism and movement of the sea – as well as the skill and determination of the people who make their living sailing upon it.

He says: 'The sea is very important to me. I love its movement, colour, danger and calmness. It features very often in my work and I take inspiration from the struggle for survival that coastal peoples endure. In particular, I have been influenced by the history of the work boats and the island people around the area of Galway Bay. The Galway Hookers hold a special magic for me. I love to see their majestic ruggedness as they sail "against the odds" at impossible angles. These are the images which come to the canvas through my memories, thoughts and imagination.'



Away to Inishlacken

© James G. Miles

pureART is located at 6 Vanguard House, Nelson Quay, Milford Marina. 'Fish and Food' runs from 21 June to 2 July; 'Galway Hookers', from 3 to 25 July. For further details, contact Leslie on 00 44 (0)1646 694591, or email gallery@artpure.co.uk

‘CATCH IT, PAINT IT, EAT IT’



Catch it, Paint it, Eat it

© Tony Kitchell

‘I caught crabs in Solva harbour’ – an amusing proclamation on a tee shirt, which caught my eye at a local cricket match, helped galvanise my thoughts for this article. It was the shock of recognising the owner/occupier as my solicitor that made it clear to me. All kinds of people in Pembrokeshire love doing the same thing.

Catch it, Paint it, Eat it, started to grow a couple of years ago from an effort to get into the spirit of Pembrokeshire County Council’s hugely successful

Pembrokeshire Fish Week. The event highlights the abundance and diversity of local seafood through organised events and by encouraging local businesses to focus on this theme for a week at the end of June each summer.

As a painter with my own gallery, who enjoys a bit of fishing and crabbing, the project more or less materialised on its own – and with fresh mackerel in a bucket and a net of crabs, the first rapidfire still lifes were soon forming in the studio. These paintings have proved very popular so far and I suspect that they immortalise that which thousands of local people and visitors alike, enjoy about Pembrokeshire life: messing about in boats, on harbour walls, barbecues on the beach, paddling in pools – little adventures, but with a purpose.

Anyone who has caught mackerel knows the amazing iridescence of their skin and how they mesmerise, changing colour in front of your eyes as they catch the light: turquoise, orange; pink, viridian, indigo and ochre form a delicious palette of complementary colours. Those lucky enough to pull lobsters from pots are familiar with the wonderful variety of colours that occur in their raw state, and then the brilliant vermilion when cooked. From periwinkles to dogfish, razor shells to seaweed, the diversity of stuff to eat



Spider Net

© Tony Kitchell

TONY KITCHELL *artist*

on our shores provides endless compositional possibilities for painting. The combination of vivid colour and intriguing forms creates a dynamic unique to this area, which clearly reaches people familiar with the themes.

Following the the success of past summers' paintings, I am showing this year's series of 'Catch it, Paint it, Eat it' in the Cloister Gallery of St. Davids Cathedral from 22 June to 5 July. I hope to create a holistic exhibition, not only of the finished paintings, but of all the background work too. All the sketches and studies will be included and some other surprises, including fishing lures made from beach flotsam if they work!!

Without getting too intense about it, the simplicity of the project inspires me enough to expand into



Dogfish

© Tony Kitchell

other fields. As I try to broaden the culinary experience, by getting into seaweed for example, I am expanding the possibilities of colour and texture for making art. The more I learn about the sea, the more is passed on through the paintings.

The show will open with a viewing and a tasting; the date and time has not been fixed yet, but details will appear on my website soon and all are welcome.

Tony Kitchell's gallery is Studio 6 on New Street in St Davids and is open from May to September. More details on his work and forthcoming events can be found on his website www.tonykitchell.co.uk or by calling 00 44 (0)1437 721025.

HIGHLIGHTS

ARTicle RECOMMENDS for the EARLY SUMMER

Fish Week of course! See www.pembrokeshirefishweek.co.uk for all the details. Catches of the day include:

- Tony Kitchell's 'Catch it, Paint it, Eat it' show (see inside) is on at St. Davids Cathedral Cloister Gallery from 22 June to 5 July. Go to www.tonykitchell.co.uk
- Mike Monaghan's 'Fish and Food' (see inside) runs from 21 June to 2 July at Milford's pureART gallery. Call 00 44 (0)1646 694591 or email galleries@artpure.co.uk
- On 30 June, the Lavender Café in Solva is hosting a fish supper at 7:30pm with live music from 9pm. Email heather@heatherbennett.co.uk or call 00 44 (0)1437 721907 for more details.
- Deborah Withey will run a *Gyotaku* workshop at Oriol y Parc Landscape Gallery, St. Davids on 1 July from 12.00 to 2.30pm. For £12, participants can create a variety of flat-fish prints on rice paper to keep. Book through www.deborah-withey.com or contact Oriol y Parc on 00 44 (0)1437 720392.
- Milford's Waterfront Gallery is hosting 'Celebration of the Sea', a mixed exhibition of art and crafts by resident exhibitors and friends, from 4 June–17 July. For details, call 00 44 (0)1646 695699, or email david.randell@btconnect.com



Still-Life with Trout © Mike Monaghan

CONGRATULATIONS

to Israeli artist Yael Bartana, who was awarded the 4th Artes Mundi prize (profiled in ARTicle 5) on 19 May at National Museum Cardiff. Bartana's cinematic works address issues of identity in the context of Poland's pre-war Jewish population.

LOOKING FORWARD

EVENTS

- In addition to her Fish Week workshop (see above), Deborah Withey teaches *Gyotaku* as part of her OCN Learning Pembrokeshire 'Printmaking Without a Press' course. Friday morning classes are held at Oriol y Parc, from 10am to 12:30pm. Contact Deborah as above or at cheesepicklesstudio@gmail.com
- James G. Miles' dramatic 'Galway Hookers' paintings (see inside) at pureART, Milford Haven from 3 to 25 July. Call 00 44 (0)1646 694591 or email galleries@artpure.co.uk
- Photographer Heather Bennett's exhibition 'Four Seasons' runs at the Cloister Gallery, St Davids Cathedral from 6 July for 2 weeks. Email heather@heatherbennett.co.uk or call 00 44 (0)1437 721907.



Autumn Evening
© James G. Miles

NEXT ISSUE of ARTicle

The next issue of ARTicle will review Oriol y Parc's new year-long 'Changing Landscapes' exhibition, which features work by Solva-born artist Tim Davies; and will profile Pembrokeshire painting legend, John Knapp-Fisher.

LISTINGS

- ARTists PEMBROKESHIRE's website goes live this month and will include a constantly updated listings page, as well as giving visitors the opportunity to pass on their 'hot tips' for events in the county. Visit www.artpembrokeshire.co.uk
- Information on Oriol y Parc's events can be found on www.oriolyparc.co.uk or by calling 00 44 (0)1437 720392.
- *Western Telegraph*, weekly local newspaper, out on Wednesdays, also www.westerntelegraph.co.uk/leisure
- *Pembrokeshire Life*, published monthly.
- *Pembrokeshire Country Living*, six editions published each year, also www.pembrokeshirecountyliving.co.uk
- Arts Council Wales lists events happening in Pembrokeshire at www.acw-ccc.org.uk
- Arts events can also be found in the listings of www.visitpembrokeshire.com and www.bbc.co.uk/wales/southwest
- And if you want to track down the artists yourselves, see Pembrokeshire County Council's Art and Craft Guide 2009 available to pick up throughout the county and to download on www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk (type 'Pembrokeshire Art and Craft Guide' into the search box).



Provider 2 © Raul Speek

SMALL PRINT

- Whilst the publishers authorise the downloading, printing and free distribution of ARTicle, indeed we encourage it, copyright © of ARTicle is protected and remains with the publishers. Unauthorised use of any part of ARTicle is not permitted without the prior consent of the publishers.
- We welcome ideas for future editions of ARTicle and can be contacted by emailing article@artpembrokeshire.co.uk