

HAWAIIAN STYLE GYOTAKU

Adult Community Education Sarasota, FL

With acknowledgement to Hawaiian artist Laron "Takeo" Kageyama for his instructions of gyotaku on his website takeogyotaku.com

Gyotaku artists in Hawaii have developed a method of gyotaku that ensures that the fish remains cold and safe to eat after the printing process. In this workshop we will be creating gyotaku Hawaiian style, using sumi ink and adding color to the print with watercolors.

Supplies

1. a fish
2. Sumi ink
3. Shoji Paper (rice paper)
4. a paintbrush for sumi ink
5. a paintbrush for watercolors
6. cotton swabs
7. watercolor pencils or pan watercolors
8. bowl for sumi ink
9. container for water
10. cotton T-shirt or soft cloth

1. The Fish

Fresh fishes are preferred as the body is usually firm and does not leak. Frozen fishes can be used. They need to be thoroughly defrosted and dried, and the orifices may need to be plugged.

Wash the fish with sponge and water. Be gentle. Table salt or lemon juice may aid in removing slime from the body of the fish. Rinse out the gill area as this often leaks.

Next, dry the fish using paper towels. Pull out fins and dry repeatedly. Paper towels or tissue can be stuffed in the gill area and vent to prevent fluids from contaminating the print. Work quickly, as the fish needs to be cool to be safe for eating.

2. Inking the fish

Place the fish on a section of newspaper to absorb leaking fluids.

Sumi ink is often commonly used for gyotaku prints, although you may also use india ink or acrylics.

Apply the ink with the soft brush. Excess ink will cause blotching on the print. Make sure to cover the entire area that will be printed.

After the fish is inked, use a soft cotton shirt or rag to blot off excess ink. This is a critical step. Avoid wrinkles in your shirt or rag as this will form lines on the inked fish that will transfer to the print. Blotting takes experience and practice determine the amount of ink needed for a good print.

Take a few test prints on the light unryu paper to check your inking before moving to the shoji paper.

Use a swab to clean off the ink on the eye since you want the orbit to be uninked. You will paint the eye in.

3. Rice Paper

There are many different types of "rice" paper. Shoji is one of these types. It is used to make the familiar oriental shoji screen. This workshop provides you with three types of paper- a lightweight unryu for test prints, a natural colored kozo (paper mulberry) from Thailand, and a white shoji paper from China.

The shoji paper comes in a roll, and may need to be relaxed by a light misting of water. The swirling fibers in it are called unryu- or cloud dragon paper. These "rice" papers are available at most art supply stores.

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4. The Rubbing

Lay the piece of rice paper on the fish. Rub the paper gently. Use your fingertips for smaller fish or for areas that form the outline of the fish. You can create a pattern with your fingers. Know the fish and its contours. It's important to make sure the entire surface of the inked fish is printed so that you don't end up with a partial print.

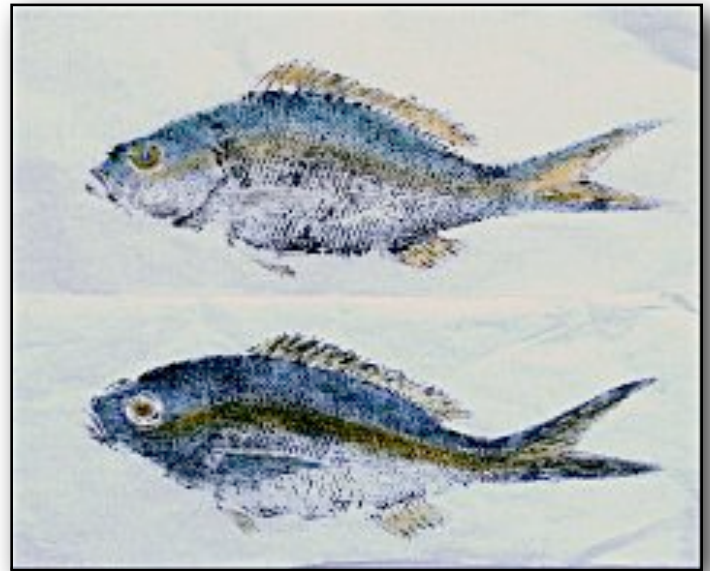
Once the paper has made contact with the fish, avoid moving the paper around as you may get a double print. Reach under the paper to open fins that need to be printed, always paying attention to keeping the paper in position so that all lines of the fish match.

Gently pull the paper from the fish. You will have a mirror image print of the fish.

This step may take some practice. Use the lightweight unryu paper for your test prints.

5. Adding color and the eyes.

Once you have a decent print, add color and values with either watercolor pencils (dry) or watercolors (wet). Also paint in the eye. Keep paper towels handy and water container close by. Refer to Fishing Lines booklet for illustrations by Diane Rome Peebles for color reference. You can paint the fish in natural coloration or you may choose decorator colors. It is your choice. Use care with the wet colors as the rice paper is not sized and the colors may bleed freely. Blot frequently.



The top print is colored with dry watercolor pencils, the lower print is colored with wet watercolors.



with the watercolor pencil, define the iris

add the black with the watercolor pencil. To darken, gently wet it with a fine brush



The basic sumi ink print



This is the finished eye. The pupil is dark, the iris was shaded for value and a white light spot was added with the tube of chinese white watercolor.