

Artist Greg Aragon and His Gyotaku Art

By Captain Bret Gamrot

One of the more interesting people I have had the chance to pole around the backcountry is local Tampa Bay artist, Greg Aragon. I have been familiar with his fish rubbings for over five years and have since become a collector myself. I have even given some pieces away to friends, and nothing makes a person's face light up like receiving a Gyotaku fish rubbing of their favorite fish.

developed his own unique style, which is now in high demand by fishermen and art collectors alike.

I asked Greg just what does "Gyotaku" mean? Greg stated, "Gyotaku is an elegant and traditional method of immortalizing and celebrating the natural beauty and diversity of fish. Gyotaku, Japanese for "fish rubbing" is an art form that originated in the early 1800's in Japan. Using acrylics and rice papers creates an exact impression of a fish. The fish is actually painted iridescent natural colors and covered with a sheet of rice paper or cloth then pressed down and rubbed. This creates an exact impression of the fish, showing near perfect detail such as fins, scales, gill plates and color.

world record black margate, 190 pound tarpon, 100 pound warsaws, 20-25 pound Hogfish, etc."

If you ever fish any of the local large charity-fishing tournaments such as The King of the Beach Kingfish Tourney (Old Salts Club), Island Way Grill Flats Classic (Suncoast YMCA), Chuck LaMar Celebrity Tourney, Mote Marine Redfish Tournneys, and the Treasure Island Charity (SKA) Kingfish Tourney, you probably have seen his work. Greg unselfishly donates a lot of his rubbings to charities.

Greg also mentions that his art is displayed in many fine restaurants locally and nationally. He's sold hundreds of pieces at the Salt Rock Grill in Indian Shores in the 9 years since they opened. Other places include, Moonfish (Orlando), Charleys Steakhouse (Kissimmee), Mangrove Grill (Palmetto), Catch23 (Tampa), Snappers (St.PeteBeach), Catches (New Port Richey), Bonefish Grills (USA), Fishbones (St.Mary) and many more.

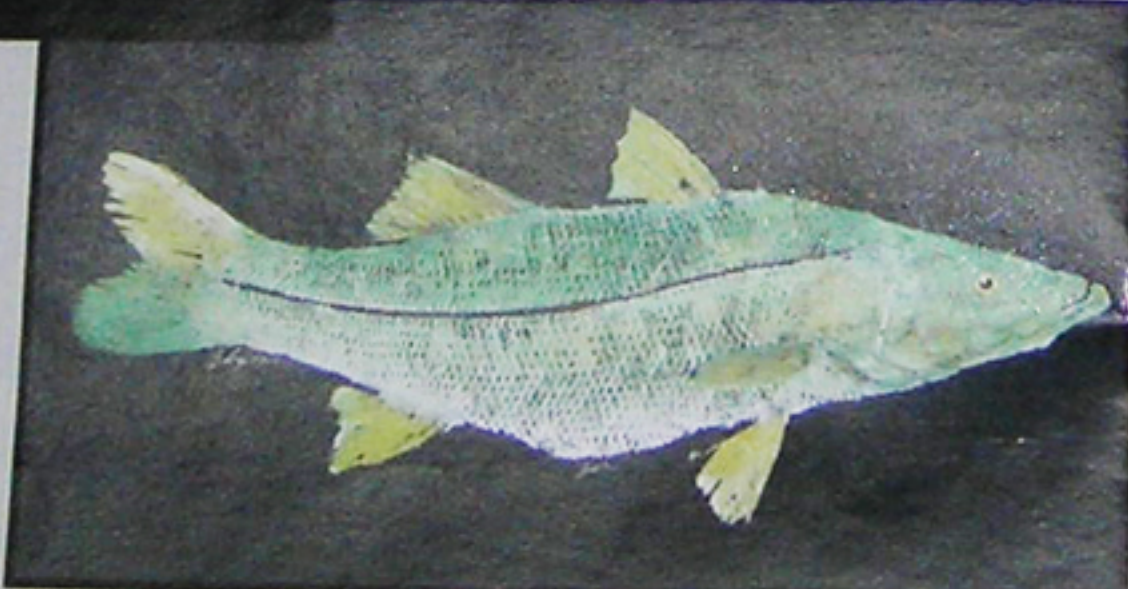
Greg has just started something new: He is digitally imposing his work onto tile. Many homes will have his artwork gracing their tile floors whether it is in the kitchen, bath or the foyer.



Over the past 10 years, Greg has mastered the ancient art of Gyotaku. His original fish rubbings almost look like the actual fish was skinned and then pressed to a sheet of paper. Greg has perfected his color mixes to match the natural colors of fish. He was the first to introduce Gyotaku in the Tampa Bay and Florida west central coast areas. There have been other artists to take on this ancient art and most of them were under the tutelage of Greg before they started on their own. Greg was always happy to share with people how to do this art even if it meant creating some competition.

As I poled Greg along, he explained to me that his passion for fishing and his love of the oceans is what naturally led him to his fascination with Gyotaku. He has carefully studied the techniques involved with this ancient art, and has

"Some of my best looking rubs are popular fishes such as dolphin (mahi), snook, redfish, red snapper, and queen triggerfish. Some rare fishes I've rubbed were pah (moonfish), bull's-eye, marbled grouper, a 103 pound black grouper, yellowfin grouper, a world record yellowtail snapper, a



Greg Aragon works diligently on a Gyotaku, placing the rice paper over a pre-painted fish.

"That wouldn't be a bad idea."

If you ever have a record fish, a beautiful catch or even a first fish like I plan on doing for my daughter Amaya one day, pay Greg Aragon a visit. It's a super way to enjoy your catch for a lifetime.

Greg Aragon can be reached at 727-639-1848. Don't forget about the fisherman in your family this Holiday Season. There is no better gift than a fish rubbing for the Holidays!

"I feel that Gyotaku is an elegant and traditional method of immortalizing and celebrating the natural beauty and diversity of fish, instead of just eating it and throwing away the carcass."



While fishing in the back country for fish to rub, Greg lands a nice red then releases her to rub another day.

Greg says. "Although I love to eat fish, I also practice catch and release. I have eaten many of my Gyotaku subjects after a couple rubbings but mostly I utilize the fish for multiple works of art.

As we poled across the Weedon Island flat, we managed to catch a few reds. I was interested to hear Greg talk in detail about each fish caught. Then as we poled further a six-foot Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake decided to swim by. Greg was so fired up as we observed the diamondback; I just had to ask, "Greg you're not gonna have me catch that to do a rubbing are you?"



Greg answered,



Greg Aragon shows his latest artistic idea, imprinting his Gyotaku rubbings on tiles.



by Capt. Greg D. Aragon

GYOTAKU

Fish Rubbings • Acrylic Impressions on Rice Paper

Featured in the St. Pete Times, on Bay News 9, Fish & Chips, Channel 13, Tampabay 10. Also showing at Salt Rock Grill, Moonfish-Orlando, Mangrove Grill-Palmetto, and Bonefish Grill Restaurants

Call 727-639-1848 or email: garagon972@aol.com. Keep your fish on ice & have it rubbed!