



Artist Statement

When I was 5, I caught a blue gill at Washington's Crossing State Park. It was so beautiful that I put it in my pocket, took it home, and put it under my pillow. After 3 days, my parents found it and into the garden it went. I started making drawings about that fish. Soon I discovered more fish and found new materials to make art about them. While getting my B.F.A. in Drawing and Painting, I was forced to take a ceramic class in order to get my degree. It turned out that Clay was the perfect medium for what I wanted to do. Clay is my favorite medium for creating form and movement. I mostly use high-temperature stoneware for the bodies and porcelain and earthenware for the eyes and teeth. I use a lot of different firing processes, depending on what inspires me about the surface design of each individual fish.

For example, in this exhibition, there is a scorpion fish. It is a beautifully ugly fish. In glazing this fish, I started by using a slip to make the dark spot patterns on the fins. Secondly, I spread raisin bran cereal randomly over the body of the fish, sprayed another dark slip over that, and then I applied a glaze high in magnesium carbonate that creates a scaly texture when fired on top of the slips. Stains were sprayed over that to create the colors that you see. The piece was then fired to 2200 degrees Fahrenheit in an electric kiln.

The Monkfish, The Piranha, and the Hump Head Wrasse were fired in a cross-draft wood kiln. What is special about this process is that you get exciting and unpredictable results. The work will get blasted on one side with ash and soda, fluxing the glazes more and creating what is called an orange peel effect on the side facing the bag wall. If you take a look at the Hump Head Wrasse you will see that his lips and gills were facing the bag wall. You can see the orange peel effect gave it an interesting texture that contributed to the patterns that the fish actually has and creates a wonderful transition from the glossy area in front to the matt area in the back.

The Tiger Muskie and the Trout had glazes sprayed on them first and slip patterns brushed on afterward. They were fired in a gas kiln up to 2300 degrees Fahrenheit.

The Blue Spotted Sting Ray and the Nassau Grouper had glazes sprayed on first. Next, a waxed pattern was applied with a brush. A second glaze was sprayed over the wax. The wax resists the second glaze, similar to the process used in batik dyeing. These pieces were fired in a gas kiln to 2300 degrees Fahrenheit.

The Anchovy was generously and spontaneously glazed by brush. It was then placed in a small gas kiln. When the kiln reached 1800 degrees Fahrenheit, the piece was taken out of the kiln and placed in a chamber with sawdust and sealed. After a couple of minutes, when the fish cooled to about 1000 degrees, the chamber was opened, and sawdust was applied covering the fish for about 5 minutes. The fast cooling of the piece caused the glazes to crack. The sawdust having direct contact with the piece caused the oxygen to be drawn out from the clay underneath the glaze, replacing it with carbon, and creating the black cracks that you see. On the dorsal area, a copper glaze was used. You can see where the oxygen was drawn out and the glaze became metallic in color.