

That's a wrap

Local artist holds workshop to create funky and natural gift cards and wrapping paper

BY M.J. CODY

Gift wrapping can be tedious during the holiday season, but an artist workshop in Astoria this month might change the way some people wrap presents forever.

Duncan Berry has a passion for putting the natural world down on paper. He produces eye-catching nature images through the practice of gyotaku, the Japanese art of fish printing.

He'll lead a workshop Dec. 11 at the Columbia River Maritime Museum to teach others the traditional art technique.

Berry will guide people through the process of creating nature prints of fish, octopus, bird feathers, ferns and other objects to make holiday gifts, such as cards, wrapping paper or small prints.

Berry admitted that although he has lived most of his life on or near the sea, he didn't appreciate the beauty under the water until recently.

"I've fished offshore and done commercial fishing on the Columbia with my brother," said Berry. "But my relationship with, for example, fish, was always on my terms, not theirs. Even speaking about them with others, it was 'What'd you catch? How many? How big?' It was never a conversation about how beautiful they are — their iridescence, that perfect lateral line, the pattern of their scales."

When Berry started to explore the Japanese art of gyotaku and nature printing, he began to realize how amazing all sea creatures are.

"It was through art that I realized that everything in nature and sea and land and air are our relations," said Berry. "How chauvinistic to think that we are superior. That we 'own' them. That they are dumb creatures. Like us, they have fears and pleasures, preferences, and personalities."

The ancient Japanese arts of gyotaku involves inking a subject and applying paper to transfer the image. It began in the 1800s as a way for Japanese fisherman to document their catches.

"By interacting intimately with a fish, or a feather or a crab as we print them, I hope that

Duncan Berry's workshops

Dec. 11

10 a.m. to noon

2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Barbey Maritime Center at the Columbia River Maritime Museum

1792 Marine Drive, Astoria

Classes limited to 20 people or eight families

crrm.org/classes.html

See more online at bylandbyseabyair.com

those who come to the workshop will begin to really 'see,' to understand, and appreciate the wonder of our interconnected relationships on this planet," said Berry.

Berry's prints can be seen at RiverSea Gallery in downtown Astoria. To see more of his work and the interplay between art, conservation and climate change, two ambitious projects are now on display in Newport: "Thanks Be to the Sea" at the Oregon Coast Aquarium, and "Blue Heart: Beauty and Change Along America's Western Shoreline," a collaborative exhibit with artist Dwight Hwang at the Hatfield Marine Science Center.



Duncan Berry

Berry holds a freshly-caught salmon.



Duncan Berry's gyotaku print of Chinook salmon and herring.



Berry created this gyotaku print of a steelhead trout on black unryu mulberry paper and white inks.



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