

**AIRBRUSH
STEP BY STEP**

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FOR DIGITAL AND ANALOGUE AIRBRUSHING

STILL LIFE FOR BEGINNERS

Airbrush Red Pepper in Digital
and Analogue Preparation

PICTURE COMPOSITION

Expert Tips from Georg Huber

MIRROR, MIRROR...

Black & White Portrait by Leon Knook

TIGER IN THE SNOW

Animal Illustration by Ingo Körner

CYBER WOMAN

Bodypainting
by Udo Schurr



Where land, air and water meet...

The art of fishcarving unites
wood carving, airbrush and fisher luck

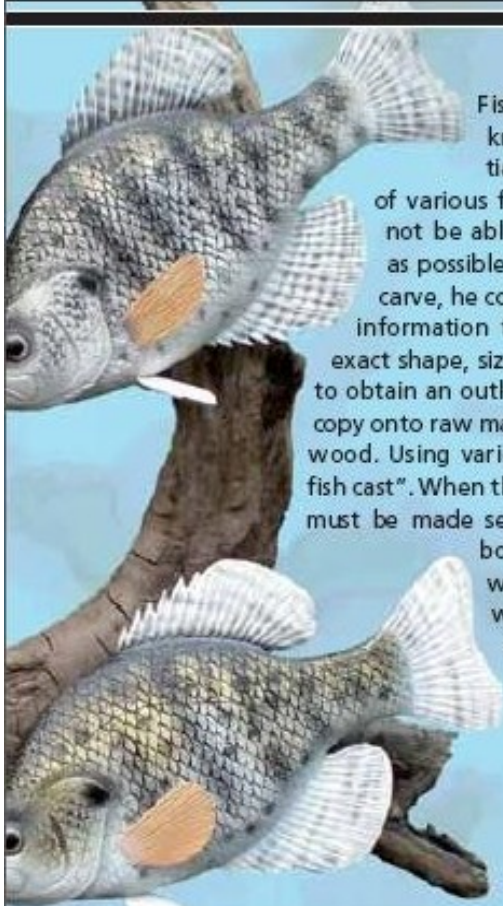
Airbrush is probably the most versatile painting technique: illustration, custom painting, bodypainting, painting of model cars – but have you ever heard of fishpainting? Well, this labeling is not right actually; what we meant is called “fishcarving”. However, painting with an airbrush is a firm part of manufacturing of artificial fish models and imitates which might serve as a wall decoration or a trophy for sports fishermen and friends.

Fishcarving is an artistic field which started to develop as soon as in the 19th century. Instead of dissecting real fish to put them on the wall as a trophy or decoration, a Scottish artist came 1875 with an idea of carving and subsequently painting the wooden fish and make it look alike their fellows in free nature. Nowadays, fishcarving is most popular in the USA and it is even a subject to sports and competitions in which the most nature-like fish sculptures are awarded.

Shot coloured coat of scales created with an airbrush

Most of the fishcarving artists work with an airbrush to create the shot coloured coat of scales deceitfully real-looking, be it trouts, perches, salmon or samlets. One of the most committed fishcarvers in Germany is the 32-year Ruben Herrmann from Braunschweig. The passionate fisher practically grew up in his grandfather's carpentry workshop and got into working with wood very early, even before he started dissecting and carving fish. “Fishcarving is very multifaceted. Beside the work with an airbrush device, you need to know about work with different kinds of wood, metal, stone, plastics and paints as well as their processing. Also, you need basic knowhow concerning casting technique and modelbuilding,” says Ruben about his hobby. Fish models are usually made out of wood and often – together with other handmade underwater plants, plexiglass elements or other water inhabitants – make up a complete sculpture.





Fishcarving requires some serious knowledge about behaviors, potential reservoir, anatomy and biology of various fish species without which you will not be able to imitate the fish as nature-like as possible. Before Ruben Hermann begins to carve, he collects reference photos, images and information from books to find out about the exact shape, size and colours. He scans the images to obtain an outline of the shape which he can then copy onto raw material, so for example onto a log of wood. Using various special tools, he carves a "raw fish cast". When the fins are very thin, they sometimes must be made separately and installed on the fish body later. Fins and scale patterns as well as eyeholes and gills must also be worked out while carving. A carved raw cast gets a white basecoat first and only then the actual motif work can begin.



On the left: Model of a samlet, awarded at the World Taxidermy Championship in Salzburg 2008



Bottom: Brown trout – original and imitation.





Fish skin thanks to transparent paints and stipple cap

For this kind of painting, you can use airbrush devices with nozzle sizes between 0,15 and 0,4 mm commonly available in trade. Ruben Hermann uses also his own colour mixes of acrylic colours, acrylic gel and water. Acrylic gel provides for a glassy coat in which only few pigments dissolve. It allows for an especially transparent spraying and gives the skin a wet-shimmering look. Transparent varnish has a similar effect and Ruben sprays it between the colour layers again and again. The varnish separates the colour layers and so they gain more "distance", shine and reflexions. To obtain the typical skin patterns and structures, Ruben often works with a stipple cap to apply rough colour drops. For patterns, details and structures he also uses colour pencils, art crayons and varnish pens.



The greatest challenge of fish colour design is the scaling. Depending upon the species, it has different size and can be created with various techniques: For example, brown trouts have very small scales which are merely sprayed onto the smooth, polished wooden imitate. To obtain circular patterns, Ruben uses tulle as a stencil. For samlet, he uses special, very fine pattern tools to obtain very fine dotting on the fish body. Scaling patterns remain visible when painted and varnished. To obtain the right scaling pattern on fish with bigger scaling (e.g. perches), it must often be worked out onto the fish raw cast itself. And painting underscores this scaling. Among others, also etching techniques can be used, it means that a thin layer of paint is applied and subsequently removed with a cloth. Due to this, sublime spots get a light and blank touch while the paint is preserved in the deeper lying channels and provides for a hard edges and contrast.

"Complete fish are altogether a sum of various processes which – each on itself – repeatedly offer opportunities for testing new things and further developing your skills," says Ruben Hermann who was awarded not less than four prizes at the World Taxidermy Championship 2008 in Salzburg

You can find more information on fishcarving on Ruben's website www.schnitzfisch.de

