

Lab: Gyotaku

(MAKEUP VERSION)

Background:

People have been making prints of things they find in nature for around 20,000 years, but the specific form of gyotaku probably emerged in mid-19th-century Japan, according to Rachel Ramirez, a printmaker who wrote her doctoral thesis on gyotaku at the University of Porto in Portugal. The procedure is quite similar to Chinese stone rubbing, an ancient method of reproducing inscriptions originally made in metal, bone, or stone. It follows that the two kanji characters that combine to form “gyotaku” translate literally into “fish” (*gyo*) and “rubbing” (*taku*). The earliest known example of gyotaku—though this is somewhat contested—traces the form of a carp caught in the Mogami River in 1857. (modified from Atlas Obscura)



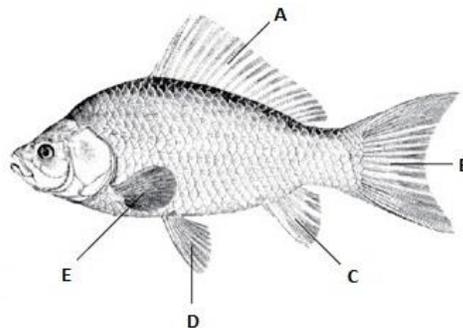
What We Did in Class:

Students used fish (very real, but dead) to make art using the Gyotaku technique. Shout out to Ms. Poppe for introducing this creative endeavor to Marine Ecology classes.

Analysis:

1. Before beginning the art, students were first asked to identify some important characteristics of their fish including the fins. On the drawing below, identify each of the fins labeled.

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.



Watch the video located at <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/gyotaku-the-ancient-japanese-art-of-printing-fish-k-erica-dodge> to answer the following questions.

2. How did Gyotaku originate?
3. What type of ink and paper were used by early Japanese fisherman?
4. How are fish prepared for printing today?
5. Describe the “indirect method” of Gyotaku, as described in the video.
6. Describe the “direct method” of Gyotaku, as described in the video.