

Jude Cowell



P O R T F O L I O



portfolio

PREVIOUS PAGE:
Breaksea cod,
Epinephelides armatus,
Geographe Bay by
Jude Cowell. Prisma
pencil on paper

Text edited by Gunild Symes
All images courtesy of
Jude Cowell

Welcome to the dreamy underwater world of American artist, Jude Cowell, who creates fantastic botanically drawn fish portraits to inspire the imagination. Her blending of “the real with the visionary” results in artwork that immediately takes one to the magical deep. Just eyeing one of these velvety beauties, one can almost feel the current brushing through one’s hair. *X-RAY MAG*’s Gunild Symes caught up with the artist to gain insight into her Dreamyfish Art portraits.



Ornate butterflyfish, Pentapodus porosus, Exmouth Gulf by Jude Cowell. Pencil on paper

GS: Welcome. Tell us about yourself and where you are from.

JC: Thank you, it’s an honor to join you for *X-RAY MAG*!

I am an American artist and a native of Athens, Georgia, where I currently reside in a nearby rural county within the sound of a river’s waterfall. A lifelong pencil and pen-and-ink artist, my current focus is on colored pencil portraits under the imprint Dreamyfish Art.

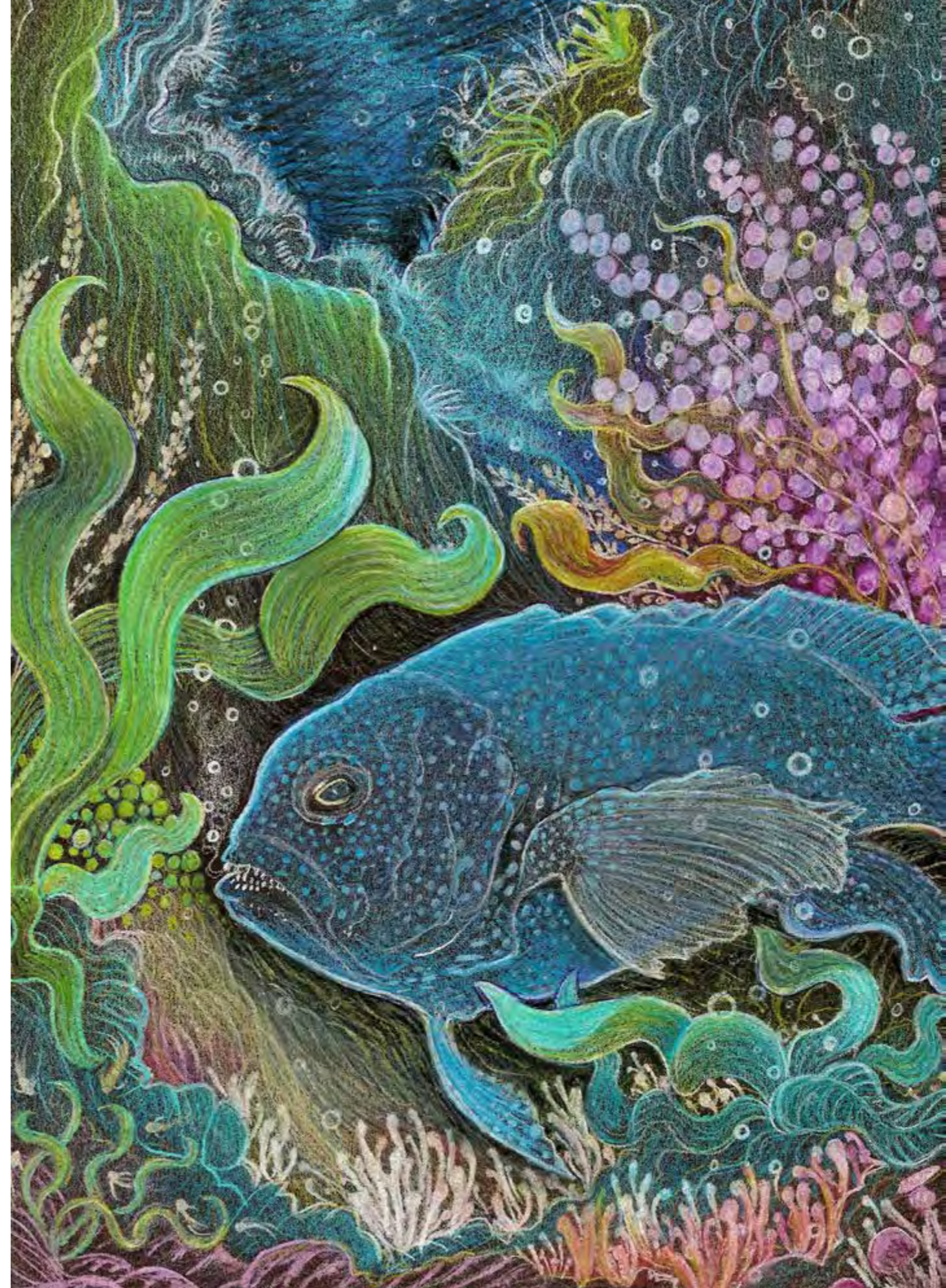
GS: Describe your Dreamyfish Art portrait series for us and how it came about.

JC: Portraits are rendered as botanically accurate as possible and are then set within colorful fantasy scenes of their grandest imaginings. This allows the viewer a ‘sneak peek’ into a fish’s most private dream, for after all, fish dream, too.

The concept first occurred to me in 2003 when I noticed that photographs

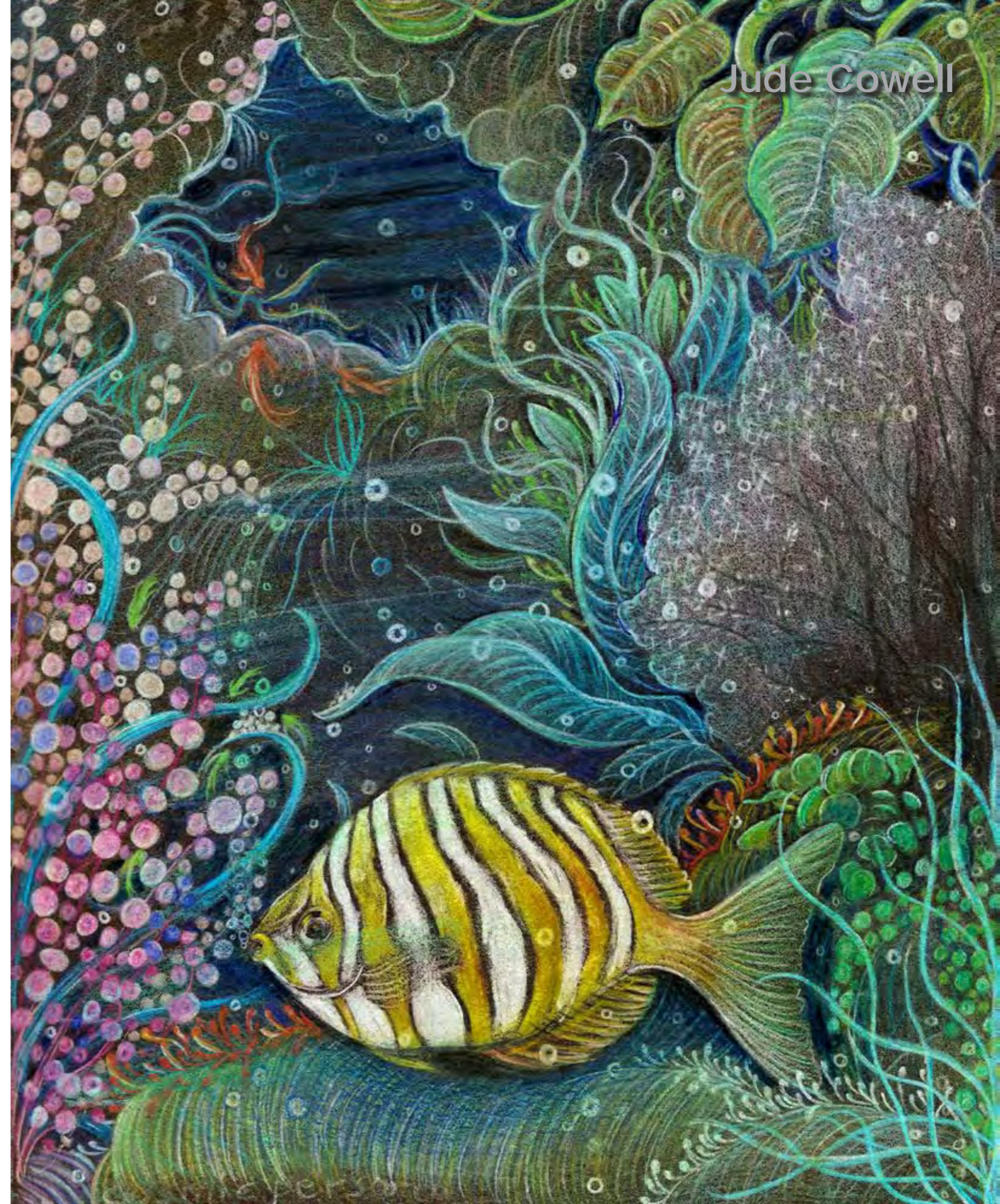
of beautifully hued tropical fish were often taken at such depths that their backgrounds were lackluster blacks or browns. So, why not combine the real with the visionary and brighten the little fellows’ spirits? Thus, were created my first Dreamyfish Art portraits.

Since the mid-1990s, I have drawn primarily on black paper, which I think gives depth and a spiritual flavor to images. Thereby certain special effects are achieved, which cannot appear when drawing on white



Western Blue Devil, Paraplesiops meleagris (Peters), Recherche Archipelago by Jude Cowell. Pencil on paper





Magpie morwong, Cheilodactylus nigripes (Richardson), New South Wales by Jude Cowell. Prisma pencil on paper

Western footballer, Neatypus obliquus (Waite), Geographe Bay by Jude Cowell. Prisma pencil on paper

paper.

When two of my drawings were accepted in a city exhibition during the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, I was proud to represent Georgia to the world, and one of my cosmically themed entries *Timeless Path* received a merit award.

Beginning in the 1990s my works have been exhibited several times in Athens, Augusta, and Atlanta, Georgia, but since 2005, my focus has narrowed toward online galleries and portfolios.

GS: What is your medium and method of choice and why did you choose to use these?

JC: Prismacolor oil and Rexel Derwent watercolour pencils (dry) are my preferred medium, and the blacker and smoother the paper, the better the effect.

Drawing's traditional cross-hatching and layering techniques are methods of choice, and colors are mixed on-paper as drawings proceed. No preliminary sketches are done because not all fish images translate well onto black paper and not all photos have enough detail for me to work from. It's being able to tell the difference that makes prelims unnecessary with the result that each of my fish portraits are one-of-a-kind.

X-RAY MAG: Who are your role models or mentors and how have they influenced your work and your artistic vision?

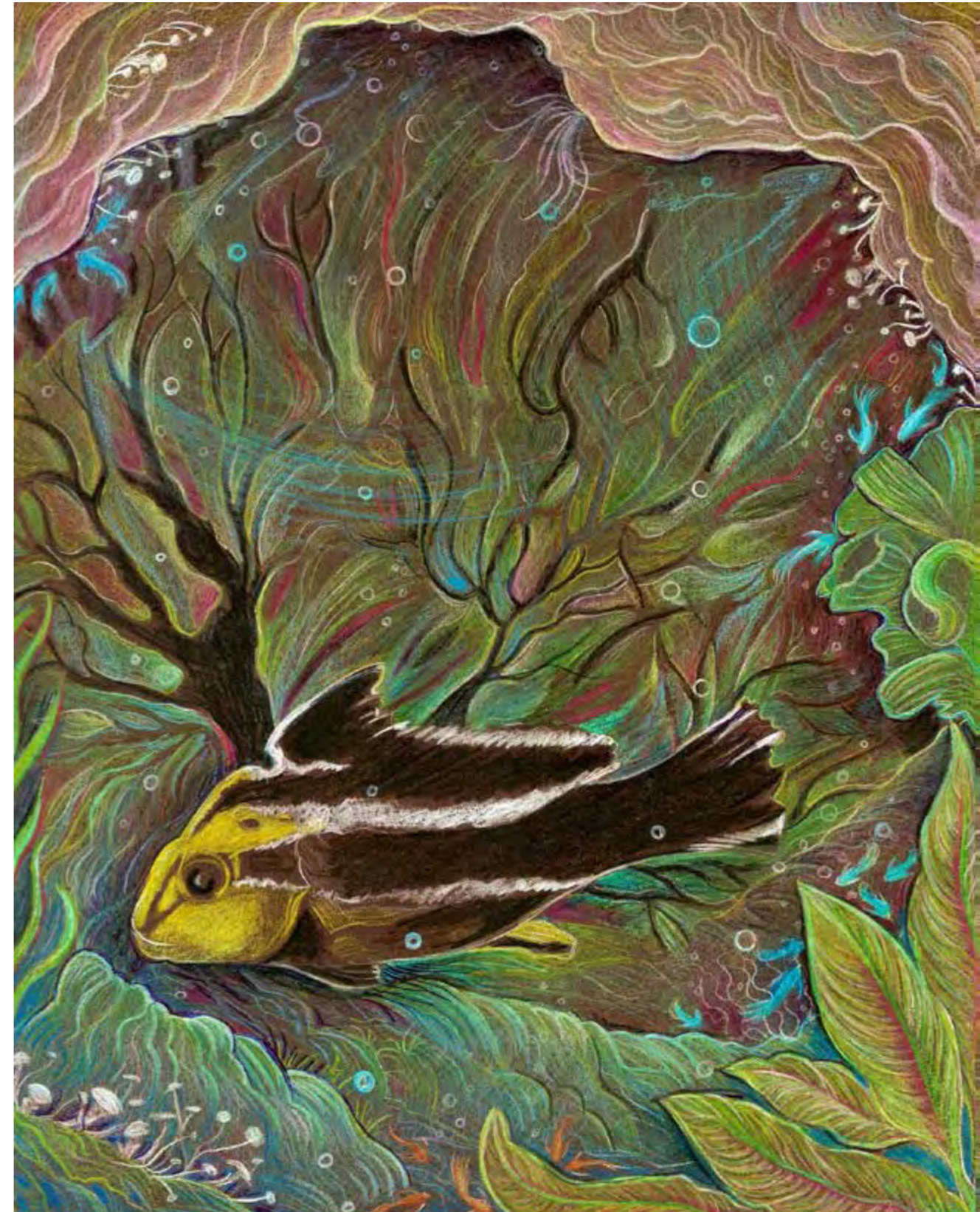
JC: My most influential role model and art mentor has to be an amazing photographer and Art Professor, Dr Robert Nix of the University of Georgia Art Department. Actually, his instructions in drawing, painting, jewelry design and sculpture, along with two years of work on our school yearbook staff, occurred pre-college. And thanks to my courses in journalism, I was privileged to work as cartoonist for our school newspaper.



Bengal sergeant, Abudefduf bengalensis (Bloch), Houtman Abrolhos by Jude Cowell
Prisma pencil on paper

Jude Cowell

Pale sweetlips, Plectorhynchus pictus (Thunberg), North West Cape by Jude Cowell. Prisma pencil on paper



My college level training was taken at Atlanta College of Art on Peachtree Street (High Museum), where I studied Fashion Illustration, Layout, and Design with Bill Johnson. My acceptance there hinged on what was primarily a pen-and-ink fashion design portfolio.

Strongest art influences include Cezanne, Manet, Renoir, Degas, and the jungles of Rousseau. Pissarro's *The Red Roofs* still packs a visual wallop with me.

Yet, a most telling and unconsciously absorbed influence came during childhood in the form of the dancing fishes in the Disney film, *Fantasia*. Later on, when Pixar's *Finding Nemo* premiered, I was thrilled with its brilliant undersea colors and forms—in fact, you might say I felt

right at home.

So, if I have a coherent artistic vision, it would be my blending of the real with the visionary, which hopefully creates something unique: botanically drawn fish with personality and verve!

Other botanical and imaginary blendings are typical themes as well and are visible in my Cosmic, Flower, Fairy, and Children's illustrations and designs.

A natural visionary ability inspires my artwork, and sitting down at my drafting table with its magnifying lens, a large batch of freshly sharpened pencils, a blank sheet of paper, and a well-detailed photo of a tropical fish always results in fresh artwork.

GS: Have you been to the underwater realm yourself? Are you a scuba diver? What are your favorite locations?

JC: My practiced ability to shut out the world and cavort underwater with Breaksea cods and Western blue devils (in my mind) may be as close to scuba diving as I can now come, due to an unfortunate airplane experience a few years ago, which ruined my previous love of flying.

And so, this armchair traveller happily swims with the fishes of Western Australia (vicariously). Perhaps portraying them is part of the way I've dealt with the squelching of my wanderlust and an early love of coastal regions.



Victorian scalyfin, *Parma victoriae* (Guenther), Recherche Archipelago by Jude Cowell. Prisma pencil on paper

Brown-spotted wrasse, *Pseudolabrus parilus* (Richardson) Rottnest Island by Jude Cowell. Prisma pencil on paper

From childhood, I have visited beaches and islands of Georgia, Florida, South and North Carolina, with the most recent trip a family visit to beautiful Topsail Island off North Carolina in May 2009.

GS: What are your thoughts on ocean conservation and what role do you, as an artist, and your artwork play in local or global efforts?

JC: As I make notes for this interview on Saturday, September 19, 2009, the 24th annual International Coastal Cleanup is being held with volunteers across the globe collecting, cataloguing and indexing

marine debris to be transformed into clean, renewable energy.

And with *Save Our Oceans!*—a constant refrain in my online Dreamyfish Art Gallery—I have touted the global Cleanup project's amazing work upon this critical problem, and plan to continue doing my small part whenever possible to raise the visibility of this worthy endeavor.

Locally, my primary involvement is an annual mental health benefit where Art is much appreciated and sells well for the cause.

GS: So, does Art matter and can it help the world?

JC: Well, can the left brain survive without the right? Their balanced integration makes for a whole and healthier psyche, as my astrological studies have informed me.

And in our exhaustively tech-infused and information-overloaded times, everyone may benefit from a refreshing Art Break now and then, perhaps by way of a meander through an online gallery, perusal of an artist's blog, or by browsing a web-based storefront's offerings and placing an order to support the Arts.

And even if eye and brain refreshment were Art's only function, it would be worthwhile to

portfolio



Bicolor scalyfin, Parma bicolor (Allen & Larson), Recherche Archipelago by Jude Cowell Prisma pencil on paper

JC: Current availability of my fish portraits includes a Lulu Storefront for Art Downloads at modest prices, which are suitable for use as screen-savers and for self-printing.

At this very moment, *Breaksea cod* and *Western blue devil* cordially await your visit there.

Now under construction is a Cafe Press shop, Jude Cowell Art, where frame-able 16 x 20 inch Dreamyfish wall posters will be offered in the US\$20 to \$40 range, with more images

pursue and enjoy. But on a collective level, the universal and archetypal symbols, which Art subliminally and overtly bestows, have the power to transform our minds and hearts more viscerally than mere words ever could.

For these reasons, I believe that humankind without Art is like a Dreamyfish denizen without a visionary dream!

GS: Where can people find your current works and what are your plans for future projects? Do you do commissions?

and products added as time permits. Plus, a Dreamyfish Art Calendar is in the planning stages for 2010, and a reputable giclée printer is being sought.

Private commissions are accepted subject to photo availability and artist approval of the suitability of the proposed photograph of the subject. Commission prices begin at US\$300 and artist's use of digital images is retained.

Thank you again for this wonderful opportunity to speak with you and share my lovingly created fish portraits with the readers of X-RAY MAG.

Yellow-eye surgeonfish, Ctenochaetus strigosus, Christmas Island by Jude Cowell. Prisma pencil on paper

— Save Our Oceans!

For more information or to purchase original and prints directly, please contact the artist at: jude.cowell@hotmail.com or visit Jude Cowell's webpages at:

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