

# Rich Walker

*GUE's Technical Dive Training Director*

Interview by  
Rosemary E. Lunn  
Photos by Gareth Lock



Rich Walker is a full-time instructor with Global Underwater Explorers in the United Kingdom, but has worked for nearly 15 years at the University of Sheffield as a researcher studying how blood flows around the body. His knowledge of physiology and physics gives him a unique edge as a diving instructor. X-RAY MAG's Rosemary E. Lunn caught up with Walker to find out more about his experience and expertise.

#### **Where did you learn to dive?**

In 1990, I was a medical physicist designing electronic diagnostic equipment based at St Barts Hospital in the City of London. One day, I walked past a colleague's office and recognised a BCD and a set of regs hanging up. I've always had the desire to dive right from when I was a small child. The key influence had been my parents because Mum and Dad met through scuba diving.

From a very early age, I can clearly remember gear lying around the house and playing with it in the bath. But in the 1970's, children were not encouraged to go diving by BSAC, so it just didn't happen.

Now was my chance to embrace all things rubber, and I asked my colleague how I could start. "Come down to the club on Tuesday night," he said, and it went from there. I joined the Polytechnic of North London Sub Aqua Club.

I'd always been a swimmer, so to be able to be underwater and breath at the same time was just mind blowing. And when I dived in the sea and saw fish and wrecks, I was hooked. I trained up to BSAC Advanced Diver level and became an Open Water Instructor spending my weekends happily exploring the myriad of South Coast wrecks, from Swanage to Plymouth.

Then my boss dropped a bombshell.

He'd been given funding to move him and his team up north, and I had a choice whether to continue with my PhD or not. I was two years into modelling the Femoral Artery, and with two years work to go, Sheffield seemed the right move.

As I was still technically a student, I joined the Sheffield University Sub Aqua Club and served time as their Diving Officer and their Advanced Training Officer. It was whilst I was at Sheffield that I got introduced to Scottish diving.

My first trip was to Lochaline and the Sound of Mull. It's fair to say that it blew me away. I couldn't believe that there was all this diving completely neglected by South Coast divers. The life was more prolific, the wrecks were in better shape, easier to get to and the Sound of Mull was far more sheltered than the South Coast. For five years, I pretty much dived Oban and Lochaline solidly with an odd trip to Ullapool and Scapa Flow thrown in for good measure.

And then I dived out of Aberdeen. One of the women in the dive club came from Aberdeen, so we stayed at her house for a weekend, and we hit the East Coast. You know how



some dives are forever etched on your soul? Well, what I remember was being astounded by the incredible viz coupled with big, big wrecks and seriously large animals. It was my first experience of Wolf Fish, and they were everywhere. And then, you got the usual marine life, but it was supersized. When I eventually dived Norway, it reminded me vividly of diving Aberdeen.

#### **What type of diver are you?**

Personally, I am a cold water wreck diver, that's my history, and that is where I learnt to dive. Professionally, I am the Training Director of Global Underwater Explorers UK, a GUE Tech 2 Instructor, a GUE Tech 1, GUE Rec 1, GUE Rec 3, GUE Fundamentals and a GUE DVP1 Instructor Evaluator, and I sit on the GUE Council as Director of Technical Training, so I guess you could say I dive a bit.

Whilst it's hard to grasp now when you consider how prolific the internet is, and the sheer amount of technical diving information that is so readily

GUE's Technical Dive  
Training Director, Rich Walker

# profile

available at the press of a key, in 1995, it was a different story. I'd got to the point in my diving where I was doing 50-metre air diving knowing that there was so much more out there but not how to access it, when the internet magically appeared on my desk at work.

It was the gateway that would change my diving forever, and I quickly started dabbling in technical diving. I kept on coming across information about WKPP and GUE. I soon learnt that Global Underwater Explorers was established in 1998. Originally, it was a bunch of divers that had

come together to explore a vast and extensive cave system in Florida, USA, called the Woodville Karst Plain (Karst is another word for cave).

The idea was that the Woodville Karst Plain Project, or WKPP, would explore and map some 450 square miles of underwater cave systems that run from Tallahassee to the Gulf of Mexico. And today, you can access the data so far collated on this project by logging onto [www.projectbaseline.org/wakulla.kml](http://www.projectbaseline.org/wakulla.kml)

Back to the late 90's—one night, I got a phone call from an ex-girlfriend. There was a space on a Technical Nitrox expedition in Poole, and did I want to make up the numbers? I landed at Phoenix Divers and did a course with Kevin Gurr and Phill Short.

The next year, I drove south again, this time destination Plymouth to do a course with Richie Stevenson. Rich had just relocated Deep Blue from Congleton, and it was his first IANTD Trimix Course down there.

I think it's fair to say that there were a few teething problems with his new boat, *Loyal Watcher*. That aside, I quickly learnt that Helium was good and what big deep wrecks were about. A couple of seasons of reasonable deep diving with DIR UK followed, primarily out of Weymouth, where we tended to dive off Grahame Knott's boat, *Wey Chieftain 2*, which was replaced by *Wey Chieftain 3*.

I'd been resisting it for ages, but in 2003, the lure of cave div-

ing finally got to me, and I succumbed to its embrace. My thought process was that if I was going to go cave diving, then Florida seemed the obvious choice, and I might as well train with a prolific and serious cave diver who was much respected by his peers.

The 'serious name' was the Florida Scubapro and DUI Rep, David Rhea. I showed up in Dave's course and was taught how to dive. I was utterly shocked. I honestly thought I would go into a cave, swim about a bit and come back out, and that would be me, trained.

It made me take a long cold hard stare at myself and think about the teaching I was doing

*I was utterly shocked. I honestly thought I would go into a cave, swim about a bit and come back out, and that would be me, trained.*

at the time. You see, I'd been teaching IANTD or TDI (can't remember which agency) advanced nitrox courses on the weekends.

I came back to the UK and stopped doing it immediately, because I didn't believe I was good enough. But I also knew I did want to teach GUE. I really liked the quality of the curriculum, the teaching style, the professional attitude of the instructors, and the higher bar that GUE were prepared to set. For me, it meant one thing—get in the water and practice, practice, practice.

A year later, I headed State-side once more and did my Cave 2 with Dave Rhea and started cave diving in Florida and France. A few months later, in September 2004, I was doing my GUE Instructor Training Course in Portofino, Italy. By day, I was



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now a post doctoral research assistant, i.e. a trained scientist specialising in physiology and modelling blood. (Ironically that knowledge coupled with the ability to research stuff has proved invaluable to my job now). Whilst on the weekends, I taught Fundamentals.

The Fundamentals Course or

"Fundies" is run over four days and refines and increases an individual's core skillset. It's a course for any diver, and it doesn't matter what level of training or experience the diver has, they will get something positive and good from it.

I've taught newly qualified BSAC Ocean Divers through to





Work had begun to notice that I wasn't at my desk as much as they wanted, so we came to a mutual agreement to part company.

It was the push that I needed, and I now had the perfect opportunity to work professionally as an instructor. It didn't occur to me once that I'd miss the regular pay packet at the end of every month.

### **What's your favourite piece of kit?**

I am now going to contradict myself because in the main, one of the tools I need to do my job is my equipment, so I don't get emotionally attached to any of it. But then again, I have a double-ended piston clip that I use to snap fasten my light head to my harness. This clip has got an exceptionally smooth action, and I know I am being completely irrational, and I could use any other double-ended piston clip, but I've got very attached to this particular one.

### **Favourite dive site?**

That's easy—it's the Sound of Mull because it's got everything! It's a beautiful location. The logistics for diving are spot on, and you can dive it in almost any weather because it's so protected. There are shallow wrecks and deeper wrecks, and everything is covered in superb life. The viz is generally good, and the people are friendly. It's a great place for a long weekend or to spend a week diving. I normally stay at Lochaline, and I always enjoy a pint in the Mishnish on Tobs, followed by fish and chips from the van outside.

### **Best country visited?**

Underwater without a doubt it's Norway because we get to see the ships we sank, as opposed to normally diving the ones the Germans attacked. The crystal clear visibility is mouth-watering, and the wrecks themselves are so intact. The Norwegians have a great ethos when it comes to divers and wrecks, "Chisel bits off, and we'll confiscate the boat and its contents." Consequently everything is untouched, and it's like diving something straight out of the *Pirates of the Caribbean*.

You get to experience a phenomenal snapshot of history there right in front of your eyes, and it makes you think. The thing with diving is that it really puts you in touch, not only with the environment, but with times gone past, too. I have often wondered when I wreck dive, who were the people who lived on here? Did they get off the ship okay, or did they go down with it? My parents were born in WWII, so wrecks connect me directly back to my grandparent's generation and brings their lives and sacrifice into sharp and real focus.

The other thing about diving Norway is the prolific marine life. Because the water

is about 6–10°C, you tend to get more of the slow-moving stuff, such as nudibranchs and anemones. It's pretty similar to diving Scotland, but everything is so much bigger there, and there's always a chance to see King Crabs or even Orcas.

### **What motivates you to go diving?**

Being able to dive somewhere that no one has dived before and see things that few people have had the chance to see. And it's that "making the connection with the past" thing again—wondering who walked on that deck, or secured a line around this bollard. Diving takes me one step closer to a past era.

When I first started wreck diving, I'd look at it and go, "Oh look, it's a piece of metal." Now, I've got an understanding of what bit of the boat I am looking at, so therefore, where I physically am on the wreck. And then, I tend to think about how the ship came to be where it is now and what was going through the sailors' minds as the water fatally started sloshing over their boots all those years ago.

### **Dream dive buddy?**

Someone who can read my mind. A

PADI Staff Instructors, and they've all left saying, "Golly, that was useful", or words to that effect. The emphasis is on delicate, precise position control, so bang on buoyancy and exact finning is high on the list. And we have fun too, because divers come away being able to fin backwards. What a cool skill!

Other things such as gas sharing, valve drills, DSMB deployment are also cov-

ered, along with dive planning considerations, teamwork and problem resolution. So, it's tough and challenging but well worth it and hugely enjoyable.

By 2007, I was teaching pretty much every weekend when I became a Tec 1 Instructor. This presented me with a problem because to teach Tec 1 takes five days, and I just couldn't fit it in with my day job. Something had to give.



dive buddy who intuitively knows what picture to take, which way to swim, or when to turn the dive. It's a very rare thing, but during your diving career, you will come across that odd one, or perhaps, two people that are so in tune with you underwater. Together, you become a more complete diver. I am incredibly fortunate because I sometimes dive with Brian Allen out of Plymouth who ticks all those boxes, and we are perfectly matched underwater.

tributing the fuel to balance the ship but it wasn't ideal, and as a result Hermes was deemed unsuitable for operations in European Waters. She sailed south and was employed in trade protection in the South Atlantic and Indian Oceans. On the 9th April 1942 she was heading away from Trincomali to the Maldives when she was attacked by the Japanese carriers Akagai, Hiryu and Soryu. She sunk in the Indian Ocean off Batticaloa, Ceylon in 50 metres. With conditions in Sri Lanka

### **Dream dive destination?**

This is such a tricky question to answer because there are so many. I guess firstly it's got to be *HMS Hermes*. The Navy has a tradition of re-using names so the *Hermes* I'd like to dive was the first purpose built aircraft carrier in the World, and launched on the 11 September 1919. Her design was "cruiser" influenced and her role was intended to be of a similar scouting nature. Her design wasn't that successful however because amongst other things, she had limited high-speed endurance and stability problems caused by the large starboard island. They solved this by carefully dis-

(Ceylon) now becoming more stable and benign, *Hermes* is high on the list and I'm currently looking into the logistics of diving her.

And it's not only Norwegian Blues that pine for the Fjords; I too want to spend more time in and around Narvik. I'd love to get the side scan sonar out and explore the numerous fjords because there is so much that hasn't been discovered yet in these amazing temperate waters. (I am sure I mentioned somewhere that I'm a cold water wreck diver at heart). And then there's Greece and I'd love to go back and visit friends there again. Diving logistics are finally getting easier there, thank heavens.

### **Best dive book ever read?**

It's got to be "Water Light Time" by David Doubilet. This book instantly transports me because the rich images superbly

portray life beneath the waves. They capture the essence of diving for me - everything and every emotion that I experience underwater. It's there on the page in front of you, how the light dances and shimmers through the sea and although it sounds slightly mad, you can almost see the life moving in his pictures. Just looking at the front cover you can feel the waves lapping as ray cruises away from you.

### **What bugs you most about diving?**

Decompression! There's no way round it and you HAVE to do it. Typical deco for me tends to last about an hour, so I pass the time by writing notes to my buddy, reflect on the dive or tidy up my gear. Sometimes I spend it by starting to think about the next dive and the logistics involved, ie what gas filling I need to do. If it's the English Channel, then it's a bit

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of a long haul, but if I am lucky enough to be decoing in the Red Sea, then it's a whole new dive and something to be enjoyed and embraced.

### **How would you describe diving to non-divers?**

A lot of people focus on the weightless aspect of diving but that's just a Fairground Ride to me. Once you've done it, it ceases to be that cool. For me it's seeing history in the wrecks and remembering the people who fought and died on those ships. Or watching fish in their natural habitat, not served up on a plate, in an aquarium or on the television. You get to see it close up and personal. Diving gives you an amazing opportunity to enter an environment that man has not yet evolved to explore in a natural way, so that makes it a very privileged visit. ■



# The virtues remain the same

*Insights into digital underwater photography*

Text and photos by Lawson Wood

**Underwater photography has been around well over 150 years and has accompanied humans as they have ventured beneath the seas to chronicle the water wilderness in all its glory, with the earliest underwater photographs being taken on large plate cameras in underwater housings of some sort or another. In fact, virtually every photograph taken since then had to use Silver Halide crystals in recording the image. Now in the 21st century, things really haven't changed that much; we still have to take**

**our underwater photographs in waterproof boxes of some proprietary manufacture, but now the technology has surpassed all expectations with the digital age, as this rapidly evolving format has finally removed the fear of failure, which virtually applied to all photographs produced historically.**

If you look back on historic innovations, then the introduction of the digital camera has been sensational. Now we no longer need to wait years for the technology to improve. In many cases, we are witnessing improvements being made almost monthly. What was once a

curiosity, the digital camera, is very much a part of almost everyone's day to day lives, whether it actually be a camera or as part of a sophisticated "must have" mobile telephone.

The quality of the digital camera's reproduction has raised the bar so high today that even those old dedicated film users who once said that they would never make the switch over to digital, now extol the virtues of the latest cameras, housings and, of course, scanners, printers and digital editing software.

Our vocabulary has changed to include *pixels, bytes, ram, gig, jpeg, tiff, raw, nef* and many more abbreviations too mind-boggling to start with. Once you couple your new digital camera with your computer and add photograph manipulation programme software such

as Photoshop, then we open up another huge sack full of abbreviations and weird and wonderful tools to help or confuse the budding or professional photographer.

Firstly, let us assume that we have all taken the digital leap and either own a digital camera of some type of manufacture, or are considering buying one for oneself or a loved one. I once went to great lengths to write a synopsis on the digital format versus the film format. Now the technology has advanced so far and so fast, that one can hardly find anyone who will process film anymore. We are today well and truly into the digital age. Film is gone—for now—so let us explore the why and the wherefores of digital underwater photography.

There are several points that we have

to grasp first, and they are all generally to do with light. When we were still using film for our underwater photography, the light from either the ambient surroundings or from the intensity of artificial light by flash, the light had to penetrate at least four layers of emulsion on the film strip to be able to reproduce an accurate image. Now with digital photography, it is as if we are taking the photograph through a plain sheet of clear glass; we no longer need the high strength of powerful flashlight, and what we miss, we can generally 'fix' (to a certain extent) on our computer.

However, there is still no substitute for a good underwater photograph. A bad photograph, whether it be too 'messy', too underexposed or too over-exposed is still not a good photograph, no matter



The way we were—working a subject in film and then trying to choose the best shot



# photo & video

Subject: Yellowline Arrowcrab (*Stenorhynchus seticornis*), Cayman Brac, Cayman Islands. 105mm lens, ISO 100, Twin Sea & Sea YS110 flash, 1/125th second at F11

what you do to improve it. Always remember that old computer saying "garbage in – garbage out".

We know that as you go underwater, light refracts and changes colour with the density of the water. You lose the colour red in less than two metres, and that colour gradually loses intensity until all we get are the blues (literally!) To compensate for this loss of light and colour, we either add a flash to illuminate the subject; a filter to alter the colour spectrum being 'seen' by the camera; or

by a quick fix on Photoshop.

Is this laziness? Have we stopped becoming artists? Do we now shoot for quantity and not for quality and allow the 'multiple choice' style of photography to get acceptable results without any skill attached? And, have we foregone the laboratory for the computer?

Well, the answer is probably yes to all of the above. Taking a camera underwater with only 36 frames of film available to photograph those interesting lit-



tle critters, fish behaviour or even shipwrecks, you really had to concentrate; you had to learn your craft through trial and error, and you had to work hard to get the results required for reproduction in whatever format you wanted, whether it be for personal use, audio-visual production or magazine and book work. It was in the film era that we all learned composition. Today, with large capacity memory cards, I can take several hundred photographs before I need to change memory cards, recharge cameras and flash, or run out of air!

I admit to being lazy, although I still feel that I have an artistic eye, having learnt my trade over 30 years of underwater photography. I do fall foul of 'multiple choice' photography and may now take three or four times more photographs of the same subject, but now I can afford the time to vary the angle, distance, light quality and many other variables to allow me to 'work'

the subject without it being overly intrusive, life threatening or selfish to the expense of others.

I have foregone the laboratory for the computer, and whilst I rarely use my computer software to digitally manipulate my photographs, I will invariably improve or 'tweak' a little bit here and there, particularly on the enhancement of colour saturation and sharpness, as well as the removal of particularly unsightly back-scatter or aberrant pixel problems created by the camera's sensor 'forgetting' sensor information that has to be 'filled in' later.

The photograph (left) clearly needs some additional improvement on the light, colour saturation and contrast. Due to the excellent content of the photograph with an upward angle of an Arrow Crab and a strong baseline, I also decided to remove the back-scatter at the same time. The image (above) is the completed stage, showing all of the changes rendered in Photoshop.



cinema of dreams



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photo &  
video



Film on a lightbox, images for further display work, magazine or book submissions

Then again, I love to see back-scatter in photographs as I feel it gives a better rendition of the dive where the photograph was taken, and I get weary of the super-clear style of photography that many magazines print nowadays.

Sadly, the computer has also reduced our ability to express ourselves after a dive, as I have been witness to many après dive scenes with an entire live-aboard boatload of photographers in front of lap-top computers, downloading, sorting and manipulating photographs with no-body speaking to each other about how wondrous the dive was. It would appear that the sole intention of the trip was to get as many photographs as possible and damn to everyone and everything else!

Now that I have got that out of my snorkel, I am reassured by the many good practices adopted by underwater photographers such as great buoyancy techniques, empathy with the subject matter, not stressing the creatures by taking too many photographs—particularly of light sensitive creatures such as squid and octopus.

### Tourist and traveler

One of the earliest travel writers once said that if you visit somewhere that someone else has been before 'you are a tourist', if you go where no one has ever been

before, then 'you are a traveler'. Well, in underwater photography, we are travelers in the tourist domain.

Yes, we visit all of the traditional 'hot-spots', but each time we enter the water, something magical, different and completely personal occurs. We are all travelers in another world, one rarely seen or even imagined—our underwater world.

Here, we have the advantage over our terrestrial counterparts. Here, we can fly, float, hover, duck and dive and approach virtually any subject matter from any angle.

We are not constrained by sharp angles and straight lines (except on shipwrecks), and we do not need to line up the horizon to keep the photograph straight on the horizontal plane. It is in this element that underwater photography comes into its own, and it is here that we will discuss how we can best optimize our time, our equipment, our ever-learning curve and our love of the oceans and all of its marine life.

How dare land photographers cast aspersions on our genre? We do not have the luxury of the time to set up our camp chair, erect a hide, unfold our umbrella and get our packed lunch ready and coffee pot on the boil. At best, we have perhaps 45 minutes to one hour to find the subject, compose the shot, take the picture, and

in that time, try and grab a little vignette of the myriad of colourful fishes and invertebrates that put virtually every land species to shame in colour, diversity, shape and behaviour. Oh yes, nearly forgot—and stay alive at the same time!

So, let's try to stay sensible, at least for the time being, and look at what is on offer and why we should be traveling down the digital highway, albeit a rather watery one at that.

Remember that you are entering into an alien environment, which is extremely corrosive and that will exert great pressure on you and your equipment. You are also working under pressure both literally and mentally. You are moving, the subject is moving; the element you are in is moving. You are usually in low light with the equivalent of slow speed (digital) film, and you are limited with time and depth.

Virtually every photograph will be a "one-off", never to be repeated again, even with the exact information to try and make it possible. You may also be at the whim and beck and call of a dive guide or critter-spotter who will inevitably leave you tired and confused. There may be issues with battery recharging, voltage surges and general misbehaviour by the actual critters you are trying to photograph—who said that this would be easy?

The photographs used to illus-

Sometimes it all comes together!  
Whaleshark in the Seychelles





Self Portrait with Nassau Grouper in the Cayman Islands. 10mm lens, ISO 100, twin Sea & Sea YS110 flash, 1/125th second at F8

his career and has authored and co-authored over 45 books, mainly on our underwater world. Lawson is a founding member of the Marine Conservation Society; founder of the first Marine Reserve at St. Abbs in Scotland and made photographic history by becoming the first person to be a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society and Fellow of the British Institute of Professional Photographers solely for underwater photography.



trate the various sections of the book, *Underwater Digital Photography*, were taken from my vast stock of digital photographs and film photographs that have been scanned digitally. I felt that the inclusion of the photographs helped to illustrate various points to the best of their advantage. No matter what a photographer tells you, we have all embraced the digital age, and even those die hard film photographers have

their photographs scanned. I am only dealing with underwater photography in the forthcoming issues. You will also note a distinct lack of diagrams and drawings to illustrate photographic techniques. I AM NOT A TECHNICAL UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHER. If you want this, then read elsewhere! There are any number of highly illustrative books on photography to give you all of the technical data that you need to fill your

brain with. However, no matter what anyone tells you, YOU ONLY LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE, SO GET IN THERE AND DO IT!

Above all else, HAVE FUN! ■

*With over 35 years of experience in underwater photography, Lawson Wood will look at photographic techniques; storage of photographs; picture format; photoshop quick fixes; protecting copyright; dispel-*

*ling the myths; explaining the jargon and explain some hints, tips and tricks of the professionals in a series of articles for X-RAY MAG.*

*Lawson was raised in the Scottish east coast fishing town of Eyemouth and spent his youth exploring the rock pools and shallow seas before learning to Scuba Dive at the tender age of 11. Now over 44 years later, Lawson has been fortunate to make his passion*

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photo & video



### YS-01

The YS-01 is a new compact-type slave strobe that can be used for all applications from wide-angle to macro photography. You can switch between DS-TTL (Digital Slave TTL) and a ten-level manual control function, to enable fine adjustment of the light level according to the photographer's intentions. You can also set up a lighting system that uses two strobes in DS-TTL mode. Power comes from four AA batteries for a powerful and long-lasting strobe. You can enjoy taking pictures all day long without having to recharge the batteries. The recycle time takes about two seconds with nickel-metal hydride batteries (2700 mAh) for stress-free continuous shooting. The YS-01 is furnished with a high-luminance white LED target light (1W) indicating the optical axis of the strobe attached to its front face that is effective for night diving. [www.seaandsea.com](http://www.seaandsea.com)

### Werner light

Werner Light Power's new RingLED introduces perfect shadow-free illumination for underwater photography. Its design is compatible with all video and camera underwater housings with a port diameter of 125 mm (with ring road 36W) and 100 mm (with ring road 54W). Photographers can choose between the Werner RingLED 36W and the brand new, more powerful Werner RingLED 54W with 3 LED rings. If using DSLR underwater housings, it is recommended that one attach the ring road at the front port. With smaller consumer cameras it should be connected to the tripod mounting and the flash hot shoe. Weighing in at a mere 480 grams, its compact design is ideal for travel. [www.werner-led.de](http://www.werner-led.de)



### 3D

Professional aluminum housing with the utmost high-tech specially designed for the Fuji FinePix Real 3D W1, the world's first three dimensional (3D) digital imaging system, allowing users to enjoy 3D images without using special 3D glasses. With the full function buttons and control for the camera, now photographers can take 3D photos and movies underwater with the 10Bar housing. Acclaimed for superb resolution and definition, Fujinon lenses are the choice of professional cameramen and a key component of many professional imaging devices. For the FinePix REAL 3D W1, Fujifilm has developed a groundbreaking image capture system comprising two Fujinon lenses and two CCDs, and the system is integrated in the compact body with high-precision engineering. [aditech-uw.com](http://aditech-uw.com)

### Mangrove MVD-FX7 (SONY HDR-FX7 / HVR-V1)

The MVD-FX7 video housing's front case is constructed from marine grade aluminum, machined, anodized and protected with a special coating and the rear case is machined from solid Delrin. The camera mounts on a specially engineered stay. The housing's sleek, ergonomic design feels like a natural extension of your hands and makes capturing that perfect video sequence fluid and easy. The housing also adapts to your future Sony video cameras. Redundant double O-ring seal system on the control unit provides maximum protection and does not depend on clamping pressure for security. It is depth-rated to 200m/660 feet, making it the deepest-operating video housing on the market.

[aditech-uw.com](http://aditech-uw.com)



### Aquatica announces no change required for Canon 1Ds MK IV

Nowadays, it seems that every time that cameras are upgraded, the required housing needs an upgrade along with it. Canon users will be delighted to learn that the new flagship Canon 1Ds MK IV is a perfect fit for Aquatica's current housing for the Canon 1DS MKIII. No modifications are required and no function or access buttons are sacrificed when using the newer Canon body. Access to the video mode of the Mk IV model is not a problem as easy access to the FEL button used to activate video capture was already in place as well as exposure compensation, ISO and the illuminator buttons. Reassignment of these functions through the DSLR's custom menu setting is not necessary.





### Samsung AQ100

Samsung Digital Imaging Company has announced its newest underwater digital camera, the Samsung AQ100. Boasting a 12 mega-pixel sensor and 5x optical zoom, the camera is rated to a depth of three metres with an aqua mode button that optimizes underwater photography. Photos can be viewed on its 2.7 LCD screen. The AQ100 shoots High Definition video at 750 frames per second. A release date of April 2010 is planned. ■

### SEA&SEA product protection

SEA&SEA has just announced a one-of-a-kind program to help underwater photographers protect their valuable investments. The question is not if a flood will occur, but when. Sea and Sea's new Protection Plan enables photographers to protect their gear for a fraction of the cost of replacement equipment. Photographers purchasing compact digital cameras sets or strobes from an authorized SEA&SEA dealer may choose to



enroll in a one-year (12 month) damage protection plan against accidental damage or flooding. The new supplementary product protection is easy to sign up for online within 30 days of purchase. ■

### Topaz Labs announces the release of the Topaz Detail 2 Photoshop plug-in

Topaz Labs has upgraded Topaz Detail 2, a detail enhancement and sharpening plug-in for Photoshop that specializes in detail enhancement without creating image artifacts or noise. Utilizing a redesigned user interface with additional tools and presets, the new technology enhances detail and micro-contrast, with no over-sharpening, edge artifacts or halos—which often occur with other sharpening tools. Compatible with Windows and Intel-based Macs, Topaz Detail 2 is offered as a free upgrade for existing customers and retails for \$39.99. To sign up for a free 30-day trial, go to: [www.topazlabs.com](http://www.topazlabs.com) ■



As any underwater photographer can attest to, water and electronics is an uneasy partnership. One of my all-time most stressful moments was the first time I assembled my brand-new housing and cringing, gingerly lowered it into the rinse tank. No matter how careful you are at making sure the o-rings are clean and everything is sealed properly, the dreaded *what-if* scenario of a flooded housing can't help but creep into your consciousness.

For Hugyfot users, those cringe-worthy moments can be a thing of the past with the award-winning Hugycheck system. The premise is simple yet highly effective. HugyCheck is a pre-dive check system that tests your housing to see if it has been properly sealed and whether the o-rings are in good condition. Boasting refined electronics, a pressure sensor is installed in the housing and coupled to the unit that interfaces the camera synch on the hotshoe with the housing synchro port. Upon installing a CR123A 3V battery, the HugyCheck system will beep twice before turning to stand-by mode. The red LED on the camera's hot shoe will then blink every five seconds, indicating normal air pressure within the housing.

# Checking out Hugycheck

The electrical vacuum pump will then create a slight under pressure inside the housing, which can then be monitored via the LED pressure indicator attached to the camera's hotshoe. Newer housing models will have an additional bulkhead installed, but on older housings like the model for my venerable old D200, will have the necessary valve installed via a splitter on one of the pre-existing bulkheads.

I recently tested the system on a liveaboard trip in the Philippines. The operation was a breeze! The entire procedure must be commenced at least 30 minutes prior to the dive. After lightly greasing the housing's main o-ring and ensuring it was dirt-free, I attached the back of the housing and sealed everything up. After unscrewing the cap of the top valve on the splitter, I inserted the plug on the electrical vacuum pump into the one-way valve and pressed the button on the pump. Once

the system detected a pressure between 950 and 850 hPa, the red LED started to blink once each second.

When a pressure between 850 and 750 hPa was reached, the red LED started to

sure of 750 hPa, the red LED I stopped blinking, and the green LED came on. And that was it!

Amazingly, once the procedure had been completed, the back of the housing was on tight. Even if the screws sealing the housing back are removed, the inside pressure created by the pump ensures the housing back remains locked in place. To remove the camera from the housing, the valve on the splitter must be removed first. Once air gets back in through the open valve, the back can then be opened.

On one occasion, the green ready light refused to come on indicating there was an improper seal somewhere. After removing and then re-attaching the housing back, the problem persisted. Then, I removed the adaptor for my macro-port, re-attached it, and I re-attempted the entire procedure. The green ready light finally came on, and I was safe to go on my dive.

For Hugyfot users, this ingenious piece of equipment is a welcome addition to their underwater arsenal. While small, it provides very big peace of mind indeed. Price: 295 Euro Hugyfot.com

— Scott Bennett



blink three times per second. Finally, at a pres-

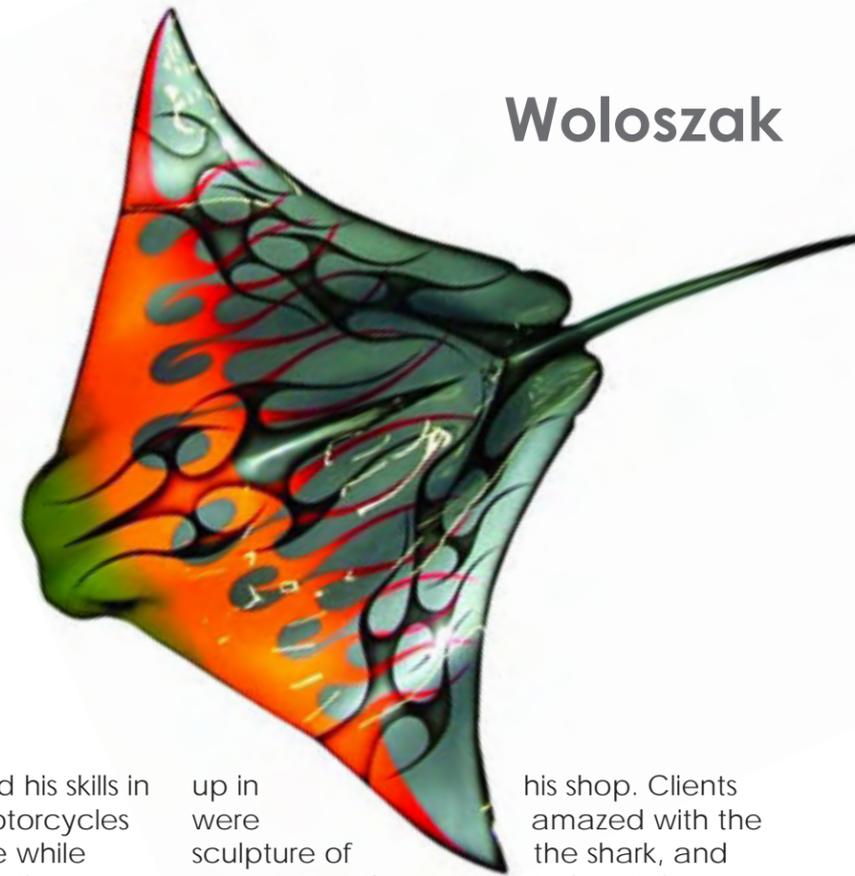
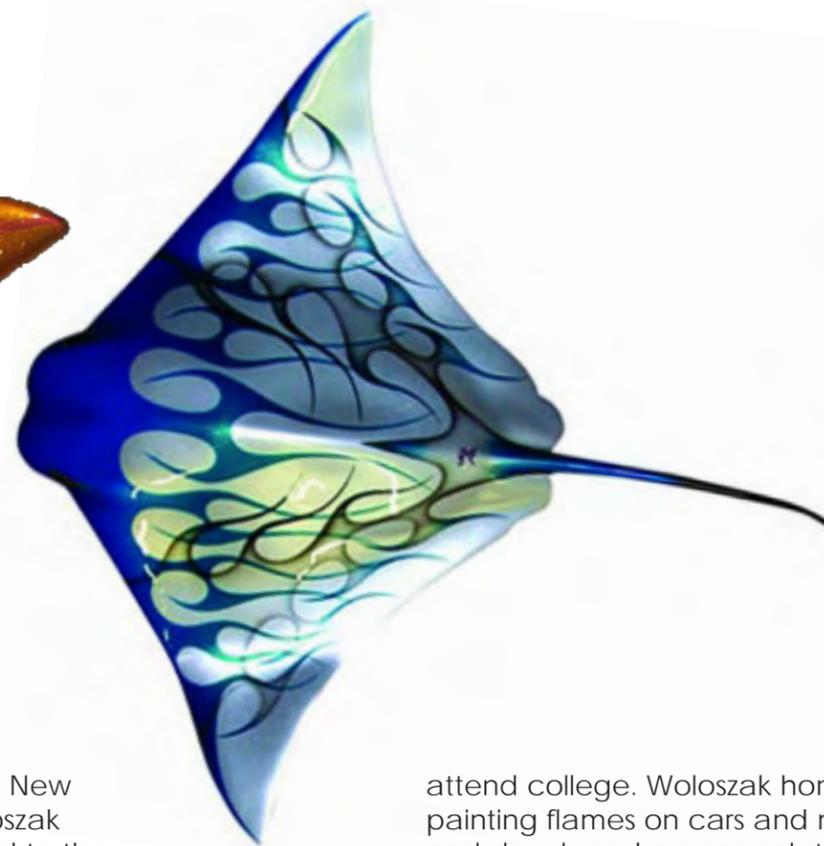


# Cris Woloszak



P O R T F O L I O





CLOCKWISE:  
Tequila Sunrise Devil Ray  
36 inches

Silver Devil Ray with Blue and  
Black Tribal Flames, 36 inches

Charcoal Devil Ray with yellow,  
orange and red flames  
overlayed with black tribal  
flames, 36 inches

Candy Apple Eagle Ray with  
Silver, Yellow and Orange  
Tribal Flames, 38 inches

All sculptures by Cris Woloszak

Text edited by Gunild Symes  
All sculptures by Cris Woloszak  
All images courtesy of Cris Woloszak

**American sculptor, Cris Woloszak, has created sleek, fast, Hot Rod creatures from the deep in fiberglass, donning flames and sparkling, glazed paint jobs. They are revving up the waves in the dive world, and X-RAY MAG was bound and determined to find out how and why this artist does what he does and where his talents are leading him. Take a look...**

Originally from New York, Cris Woloszak was introduced to the underwater world as a young boy when his family moved to South Florida to trade the northern winters for the tropical beaches. At 11, he started surfing and spent long hours in the ocean, "waiting for the perfect wave". As his love for the ocean grew, Woloszak sat in awe of its inhabitants and marvelled at the abundance of colorful marine life that played around him. At 14, his family moved back to New York.

Being away from the beach, Woloszak said he seemed lost, "that is until I found a new passion—HOT RODS!" His father had taken him to the Lead East Car Show where the young Woloszak saw his first custom paint job. He said, "I was blown away by a flame job on a '32 Ford; it was candy teal with ghost flames!" At that moment, Woloszak became determined to learn and master the skill. "My new passion was born on that day," he said.

After graduating from high school, he threw his tools and surfboard into his car and headed back to South Florida to

attend college. Woloszak honed his skills in painting flames on cars and motorcycles and developed a personal style while painting his friends' vehicles. Shortly thereafter, his work was noticed by a growing audience, and people sought him out to paint their cars and motorcycles.

"One day," said Woloszak, "I walked into an art gallery and saw a bronze sculpture of a dolphin and thought, 'Wouldn't that look cool with a flame job on it?' Soon after, I came across a taxidermy Bull Shark and decided to apply my flame technique." He painted the shark candy red with gold flames.

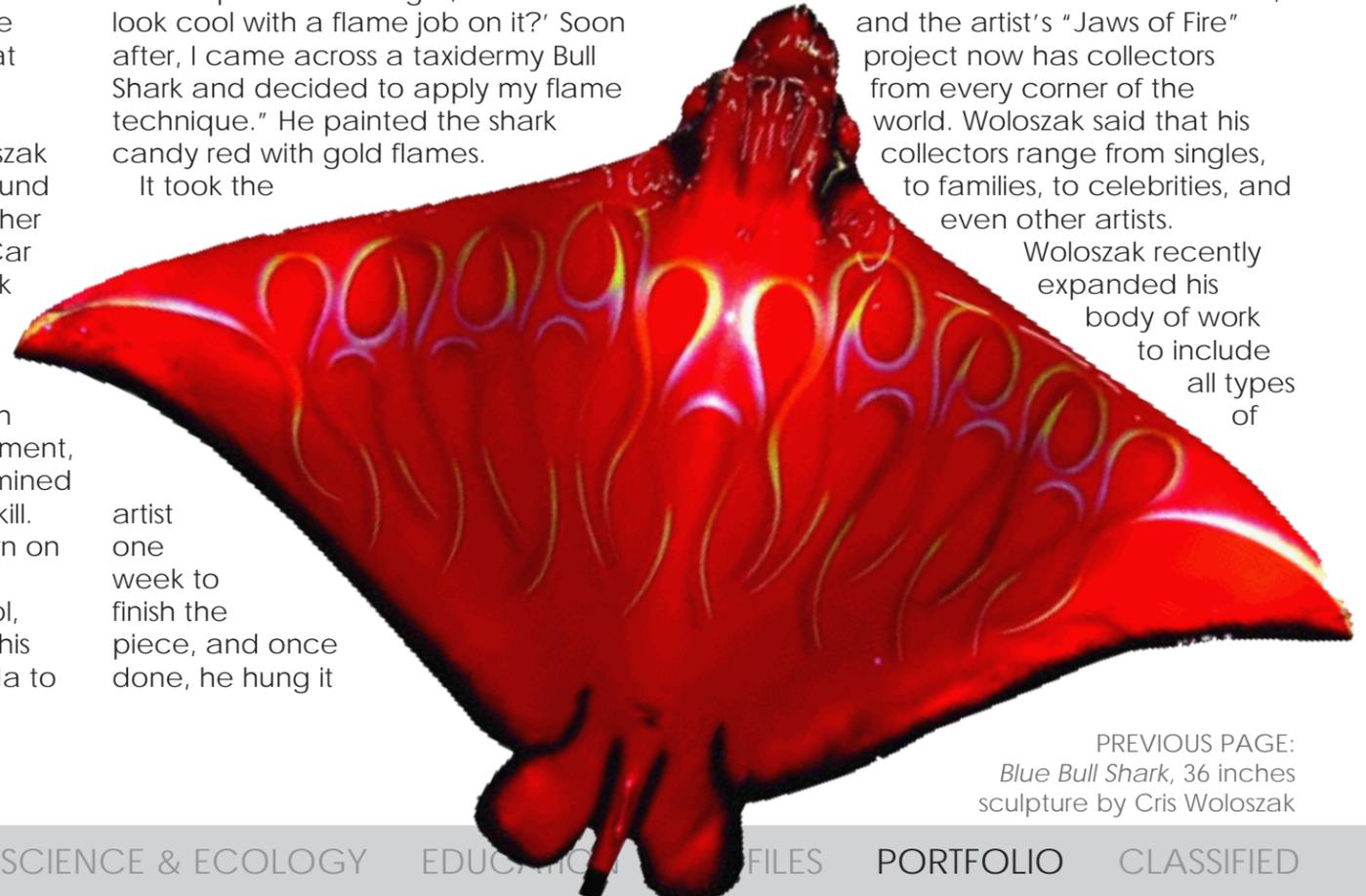
It took the

artist one week to finish the piece, and once done, he hung it

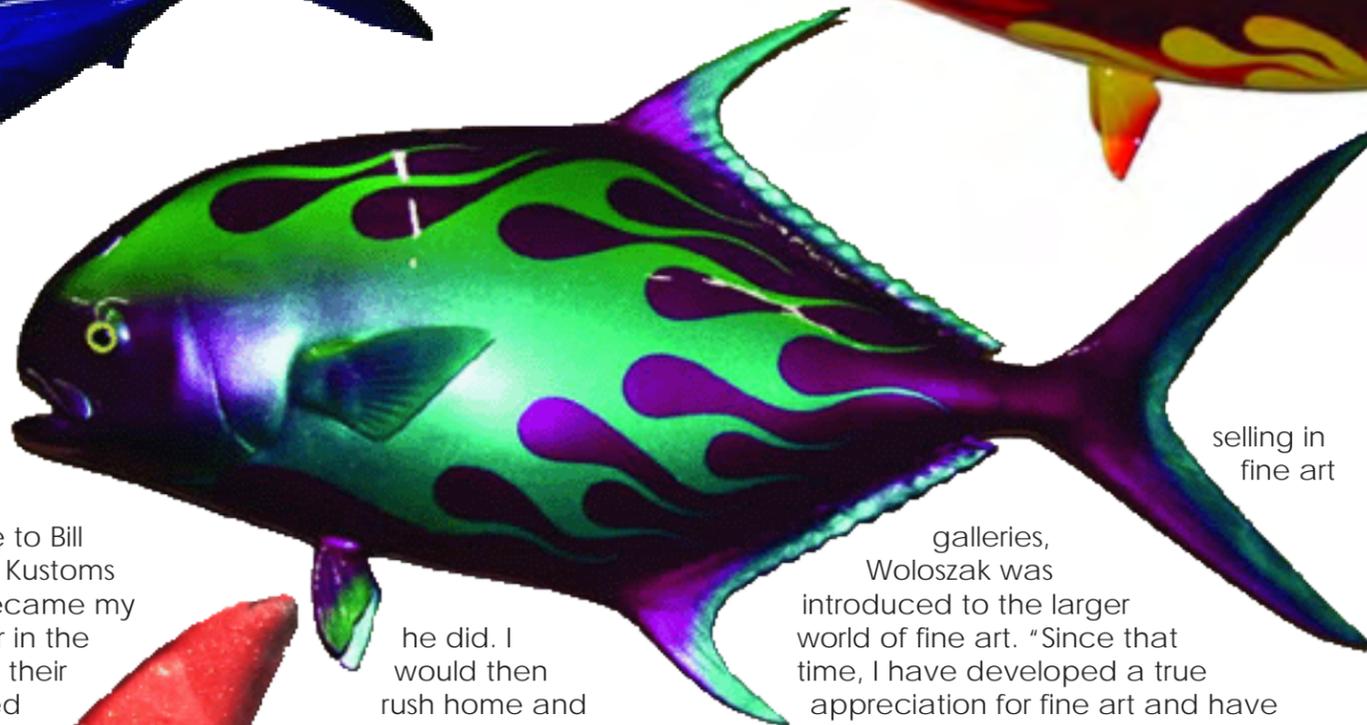
up in his shop. Clients were amazed with the sculpture of the shark, and many offered to buy it, he said. Woloszak then purchased several more mounts, and he said, "my creativity began to flow".

"The first shark I placed in an art gallery lasted three hours before it was sold," said Woloszak. Success soon followed, and the artist's "Jaws of Fire" project now has collectors from every corner of the world. Woloszak said that his collectors range from singles, to families, to celebrities, and even other artists.

Woloszak recently expanded his body of work to include all types of



PREVIOUS PAGE:  
Blue Bull Shark, 36 inches  
sculpture by Cris Woloszak



fish, turtles and other animal life. He has also produced and sold numerous works of metal art. The artist also accepts commissions to paint cars, motorcycles, boats, planes and other vehicles.

### Role models

"As a young kid, my dad, Ray Woloszak, took me to several car shows. He had hot rods, and because of his influence, I fell in love with them as

well. My dad and I would marvel at the unique paint jobs that each hot rod displayed.

I was so excited to see what the next one looked like," said Woloszak. "As I got older, my dad introduced me to Bill 'Bigs' Eich, owner of Too Kool Kustoms in Lake Worth, Florida. Bigs became my biggest influence and mentor in the custom painting business." As their relationship grew, Eich allowed Woloszak to watch him work. "He wouldn't reveal his trade secrets, but I watched everything

he did. I would then rush home and practice what I had seen." As Woloszak continued to practice and hone his skill, he developed his own style of painting, design and use of color. "As my love for painting hot rods and the ocean increased, I was inspired to start the Jaws of Fire project of mixing marine life and custom art." After his work began

selling in fine art

galleries, Woloszak was introduced to the larger world of fine art. "Since that time, I have developed a true appreciation for fine art and have had the opportunity to meet several amazing artists," he said.

### Method

As for how his hot rod creatures of the deep are created, Woloszak said that every sculpture begins as a fiberglass blank. "I spend most of the day perfecting the surface of every piece by sanding it to a

smooth finish. This step assures that each coat of candy paint lies flawlessly. Every time I begin a piece, it consumes more time than I planned for, but always comes out better than I expected. I have always done things the hard way, but in the end, it's worth it," he said.

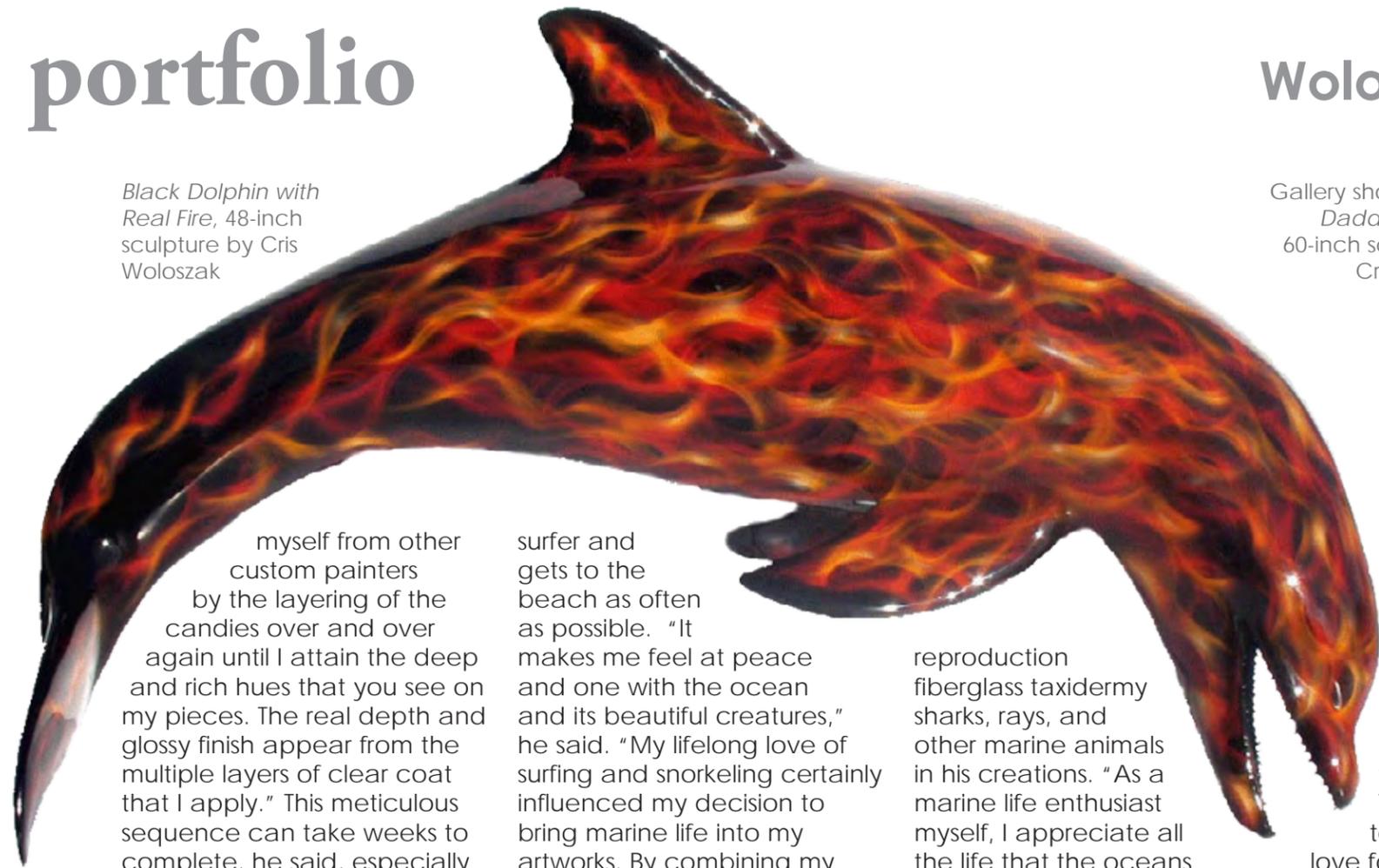
Between the base coat and the final clear coat, there can be over 40 layers of paint on a sculpture. Woloszak said, "What you see sparkling from beneath the transparent candy color are several silver layers of paint or metal flake."

The candy application is the most labor intensive process in which to achieve a flawless finish he said. "I separate

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Purple People Eater Mako Shark, 72 inches; Candy Violet Permit with Planet Green Flames, 32 inches; Yellow Yellow Fin Tuna with Candy Apple Red Flames, 60 inches; Candy Apple Red Hammerhead Shark with Black Ghost Flames, 40 inches. All sculptures by Cris Woloszak

# portfolio

*Black Dolphin with Real Fire*, 48-inch sculpture by Cris Woloszak



myself from other custom painters by the layering of the candies over and over again until I attain the deep and rich hues that you see on my pieces. The real depth and glossy finish appear from the multiple layers of clear coat that I apply." This meticulous sequence can take weeks to complete, he said, especially for detailed commissions.

## Diving

So, does the artist scuba dive to see his subjects? "I am not currently a certified diver, but my manager is, and he keeps urging me to get certified. He knows how much I love the ocean." Although Woloszak is not a diver yet, he is an avid

surfer and gets to the beach as often as possible. "It makes me feel at peace and one with the ocean and its beautiful creatures," he said. "My lifelong love of surfing and snorkeling certainly influenced my decision to bring marine life into my artworks. By combining my love of marine life and my love of custom paint jobs, I am living my dream day!"

The artist uses only

reproduction fiberglass taxidermy sharks, rays, and other marine animals in his creations. "As a marine life enthusiast myself, I appreciate all the life that the oceans have to offer. I hope that my artwork will inspire people to further their appreciation of marine life and its need for protection," he said.

## Woloszak

Gallery shot of *Purple Daddy Bull Shark* 60-inch sculpture by Cris Woloszak



## About art

Woloszak is passionate about art. He said, "Art, to me, is not only fun but a way to reach people. I developed a skill that others appreciated, and that I found exciting. Through art, I am able to express myself and my love for the oceans. I always want my collectors to feel like they have purchased a one-of-a-kind piece of art that was created out of my love for the oceans and custom painting."

Woloszak said that this is the most exciting time in the history of the *Jaws of Fire* project. "I plan on expanding the locations where my art can be seen and purchased. I am poised to have my

artwork displayed all over the country, in most of the major art markets." He said he is very excited about the expansion of this project and glad that he will be able to share his art with a new, wider audience.

About 20 percent of Woloszak's sales are commissions, he said. "I really like that I am accessible to my collectors and can make them happy with a custom painted piece." If any readers are interested in a commissioned work, they may contact the artist's email address at: [customsbycris@aol.com](mailto:customsbycris@aol.com) or visit his website at: [www.jawsoffire.com](http://www.jawsoffire.com).



*Black Bull Shark with Real Fire* 36-inch sculpture by Cris Woloszak



Gallery shot of *Green Hornet Bull Shark* 72-inch sculpture by Cris Woloszak

## IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

*Diving in Scandinavia*  
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