marine mammals

Edited by Kelly LaClaire

Humpback spotted in Hawaii has odd and disturbing injury

While flying over the shallow waters of Port Allen in February, Gerry Chalebois, owner of the Birds In Paradise Flight School, spotted something he never thought he would see—a humpback whale that appeared to be "bent in half."

"It was freaky," said Charlebois. "One of the most disturbing sights I've ever experienced while photographing whales . . . the poor guy was in trouble"

GERRY CHARLEBOIS

The pictures the flight instructor managed to take confirm his assessment. Besides the obvious malformation between the dorsal fin and tail, the sickly looking whale was light-colored, emaciated and had begun to slough skin in areas – all indicators of failing health.

At first, Charlebois thought the whale had experienced a kind of severe, blunt-force trauma, possibly from a ship strike, but after reviewing the photos experts believe he is suffering from scoliosis or curvature of the spine. That's a rare disorder in cetaceans but scientists say they have seen it in other marine mammals.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's marine mammal response coordinator, David Schofield, says officials are confident the whale was either born with the condition or acquired it somehow over the course of its life and that a traumatic collision is not responsible, saying it's not plausible an animal hit by a boat would have retained the shape of such an injury. ■ SOURCE: STARADVISOR.COM

SPACEBIRDY / MYNDIR / GFDL CREATIVE COMMONS

Autopsy on orca finds death caused by stones

On January 14, Nami, a female killer whale who was the main attraction at Japan's Port of Nagoya Public Aquarium died after prolonged illness. Initially it was suspected that the orca's death was caused by inflammatory bowel disease but necropsy (animal autopsy) results now show that Nami lost her life from a large number of ingested stones.

An amazing 81.4kg (180lbs) of rock were found in the whale's stomach. The largest stone was 17cm long and weighed just over 2kg. A total of 491 various sized stones were found during the autopsy and is the official cause of death.

The rocks eventually caused stomach inflammation and later ulcers as well of bleeding of the animal's spleen. According to official findings, one pocket of her stomach was sagging from over 70kg of pebbles jammed into it. She had also contracted pneumonia, and the combination of these ailments is thought to have put too much strain on the whale's heart.

Ingesting of stones, while common in avian and several other species, is unprecedented in wild orca populations. Several conservation and protest groups, such as the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS), opposed to the use of killer whales in large aquarium and theme park shows are speculating that the stress of captivity and boredom caused Nami to begin eating the stones and have called for a review into captivity practices.

The Port of Nagoya Aquarium has stated it will conduct a full investigation with expert scientists later this year.

Nami was captured at the age of three just outside Taiji, Japan, now notorious for its annual dolphin and whale hunts filmed in the documentary *The Cove*. She was kept for 24 years at the Taiji Whale Museum as their star performer. It was here that she is believed to have slowly swallowed the stones, as her habitat was rocky and made to look like a natural cove.

Nami was sold for roughly five million U.S. dollars to the Aquarium in Nagoya where she was supposed to be part of breeding program in June of 2010 but started showing signs of illness only a few months later.

Although female orcas can live up to 80 years in the wild, Nami was only 24 years old. ■ SOURCES: BBC NEWS, WDCS UK, THE ORCA PROJECT

Six rare dolphins found dead

Environmental authorities reported the death of six rare and endangered Indus River dolphins found along the banks in Pakistan.

Although the exact cause of death has not been determined by official investigation, Wildlife Department deputy head, Ghulam Mohammad, a vocal advocate of the endangered species, blamed the deaths on a combination of extremely low river levels and local fisherman—pointing to their nets and certain toxins used as the culprit.

Local fisherman, such as Meer Ali, who recently talked with a Middle Eastern newspaper, are known to use certain chemicals to aid catching large amounts of fish but they insist the solutions used are safe and neither contaminate the water nor harm the fish. "The chemical which we use to catch the fish makes them hover over the surface of the river; it does not kill them," said Ali.

The problem of the chemical's alleged toxicity is being exacerbated by the severely low water levels of the Indus. Just a small amount of poison would contaminate large sections of the river. The river dolphin is an extremely rare breed of cetacean, living only in the lower reaches of Pakistan's Indus River and is nearly completely blind. Having eyes that can only differentiate between light and dark, they rely almost exclusively on echo-location to find prey. These dolphins also employ a side-swimming technique that allows them to hunt in extremely shallow waters and is seen in only one other dolphin species in the world.

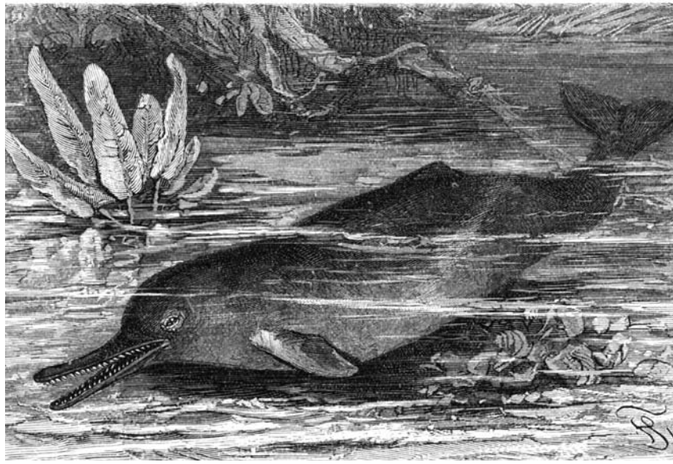


Illustration of Indus river dolphin by Friedrich Specht, 1927

Over the last few decades the blind dolphins have battled decreasing habitat, river pollution, fishing nets and, with the construction of irrigation systems fed by the Indus, dangerous canals that trap individuals. As of 2006, according to surveys completed by the World Wildlife Foundation, less than 1,300 remain. Some estimates today put the number at more like 1,100.

To find out more about the blind Indus River dolphin and conservation efforts to help replenish its numbers, please visit www.worldwildlife.org ■

Japanese whaling suspension may be a bluff

—*Activists prepare for further entanglements*

You may have seen Captain Paul Watson commenting on Sea Shepard's recent victory over the Japanese whaling fleet on our X-RAY MAG website. Here's the rest of the story.

In mid-February, Tokyo announced to the world that they would temporarily suspend whaling activities in Antarctica after being relentlessly hounded by the Sea Shepard vessel, *Bob Barker*.

In addition to shadowing Japan's factory ship *Nishin Maru* (a vessel where the dead whales are processed, cut, and frozen), making landing whales on board nearly impossible, Sea Shepard activists also threw rancid butter, smoke grenades and stink bombs on board and deliberately tossed a rope into the ship's propeller to slow it down.

As a result, only a small fraction —reports of 30 to 100—of the 945 whales Japan said it was hunting for scientific research were landed, prompting this statement from Tatsuya Nakaoku, an official with Japan's Fisheries Agency: "The fleet has halted scientific whaling for now. We are currently considering what to do hereafter. We find Sea Shepard's harassment extremely regrettable."

Alex Cornelissen, captain of the world famous *Bob Barker*, was more than enthusiastic about Tokyo's decision. "I think this year will mark the most successful year in (Sea Shepard's) history," he told the New Zealand Press Association. "And we can only hope that this will be the turning point, that this will be the moment the Japanese whaling fleet will decide to throw the towel in and this will be the end of Japanese whaling on the Antarctic."

But Paul Watson, captain of Sea Shepard's vessel, *Steve Irwin*, said he remains suspicious that Japan's announcement may be a bluff to throw environmentalists off their trail. From recent reports and sightings, the *Nishin Maru* was last seen in the Drake Passage between South America and Antarctica, but Watson told Radio New Zealand he fears they may be secretly returning to the Southern Ocean by a circuitous, hidden route.

"I believe they may be trying to head across the South Atlantic and into the Indian Ocean to come on the other side of their whaling grounds to start again, and they'll send their harpoon vessels west."

Watson went on to promise that if it were necessary, he would follow the whalers right around the globe. "We're going to have numerous conflicts with them. Our tactics worked last year, they worked the year before that, and they're working even better this year."

As world-wide awareness of the issue increases, more and more governments are applying pressure to whaling countries still actively hunting, namely Japan, Iceland, Norway and Denmark.

Latin American members of the International Whaling Commission recently urged Japan to end its hunts and respect whale sanctuaries while Australia, one of the world's most vocal whaling opponents, filed a complaint with the international court of justice in The Hague in an attempt to get the hunts banned.

So, how are the Japanese people reacting to all of this? According to the Dolphin and Whale Action Network, the amount of whale meat at storehouses across Japan is estimated to have topped 6,000 tons as of the end of August, a record high.

The rising stocks most likely reflect a falling public demand for whale flesh. Wholesale prices have been cut in the past two years, and the pace of decline in stocks has been slowing more and more, as Japanese people are moving away from whale meat as a regular part of their everyday diets.

Slow sales of wholesale meat combined with fewer and fewer animals being landed due to international pressure and harassed boats may prove to be the final straw for Japan's whaling industry. ■ SOURCE: REUTERS, NEW ZEALAND PRESS ASSOCIATION

Captain Paul Watson of Sea Sheperd

Snoots

Text by Keri Wilk
Photos by Keri Wilk and Alex Mustard

When I began shooting underwater 15 years ago, the underwater photography world was much smaller than it is today. Traveling with oodles of slide film, being restricted to 36 exposures per dive, and requiring an intimate understanding of how light works are just a few factors which kept underwater imaging from being widely popular.

Now we're in the digital era, and there have been some drastic changes: high-capacity memory cards allow photographers to shoot until their trigger finger is callused; large, bright LCD displays give instant image feedback, making it easy to nail proper exposures, focus, composition, etc; high-quality compact cameras and housings have been made affordable, even to penny-pinching divers.

What was once a very niche hobby, pursued only by the most determined and passionate individuals, has now become almost as common as scuba diving itself. Okay, maybe that's a bit of an over-exaggeration, but my point is that the digital revolution has caused an explosion in the number of underwater photographers in the last several years.

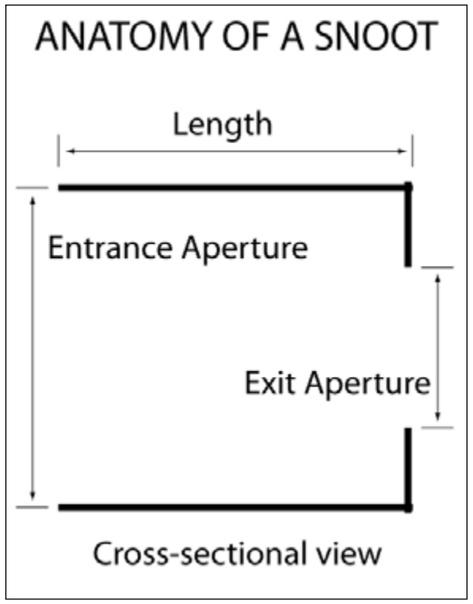
Image hosting websites (i.e. Flickr, Smugmug, Picasa, etc.), personal websites and social networking sites have all provided outlets for images to be easily shared with the world. Since photography is often an inspiration-based art, and since there are so many images available at one's fingertips, there is a tendency for images to be imitated—yawning frogfish, pygmy seahorses, silhouetted divers pointing a torch, soft corals hanging from mangrove roots... the list goes on and on. Your photos will blend in with the crowd, unless you do something different. You can either hope for a trip filled with high-impact subjects, or you can put a different photographic spin on ordinary subjects.

Enter the snoot.

What is a snoot?

Snoots are devices used to reduce beam angles from light sources in order to provide photographers with more control over the illumination of photographic subjects. In their simplest form, they can be no more complicated than conical or cylindrical pieces of tubing that attach to the front of light sources. Some designs incorporate a fine grid (egg crate works well), resembling the grill of a car, at the snoot's aperture, to further direct the exiting light beam. They can be constructed very easily from common household items such as: toilet paper rolls, funnels and PVC piping. Take a look around the room you're in right now... chances are that something there can be made into a snoot!

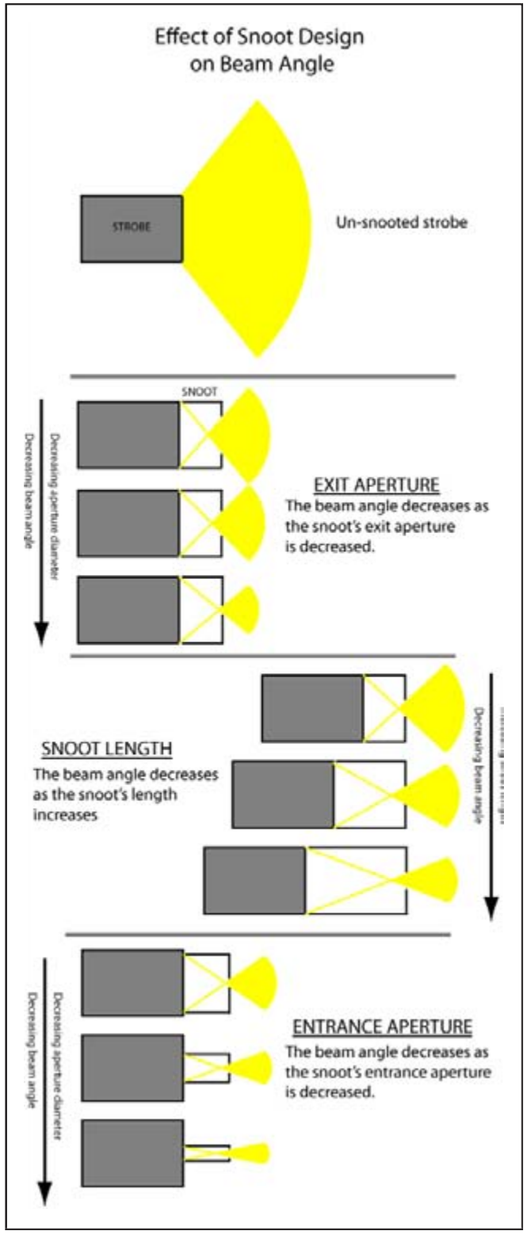
The diameter of a snoot's entrance/exit aperture and its proximity to the light source are two factors that affect the angle of the beam that will be projected from it. The smaller the aperture,



A sailfin blenny meets the tip of my snoot

This sand-coloured snake-eel normally blends in with its surroundings. Snoots allow subjects like this to stand out from their sometimes drab backgrounds

This porcelain crab was in a cloud of silt, but, by using a snoot, only a small amount of backscatter was illuminated in this photo



and farther away it is, the narrower the beam—and vice versa.

The intensity (energy per time per area) of a snooted light beam is highly dependent on the reflectivity of the internal surfaces of a snoot. When constructed from highly reflective materials (white colour, or mirrored), it's possible to create a more concentrated light beam than the un-snooted strobe, so battery life can be prolonged. Conversely, when constructed from highly absorptive materials (black), you may need to boost the strobe power to maximum in order to obtain well-illuminated images.

Background

Light-shaping tools such as umbrellas, baffles, grids, diffusers, reflectors and snoots, are commonly used by studio photographers. The restrictions imposed by an underwater environment make some of these tools much less practical for underwater photography. Snoots, in particular, have been experimented with by many underwater photographers and videographers on their strobes and video lights. To my knowledge, most of them have had mixed success, and usually abandoned them out of frustration after a few failed attempts. Their main drawback is the time and effort required to aim them correctly. For those who do most of their shooting in tropical destinations, the thought of "wasting" several dives trying to light a subject just right isn't the most appealing idea. For these reasons, snoots have been regarded more as novelties than as useful tools, and have stayed under the radar.

About a year ago, I started doing my own experimentation with snoots. The nervous tick in my left eye, and the bald spots scattered over my head attest to the notorious difficulty of aiming them… but the results were shockingly worthwhile. Now, you'd be hard-pressed to find me diving without my beloved homemade snoots.

Why use a snoot?

—Isolate the main subject

Since a snoot greatly restricts a strobe's beam angle, light can be projected exactly where you want it, eliminating distracting background/foreground elements or giving a spotlight effect.

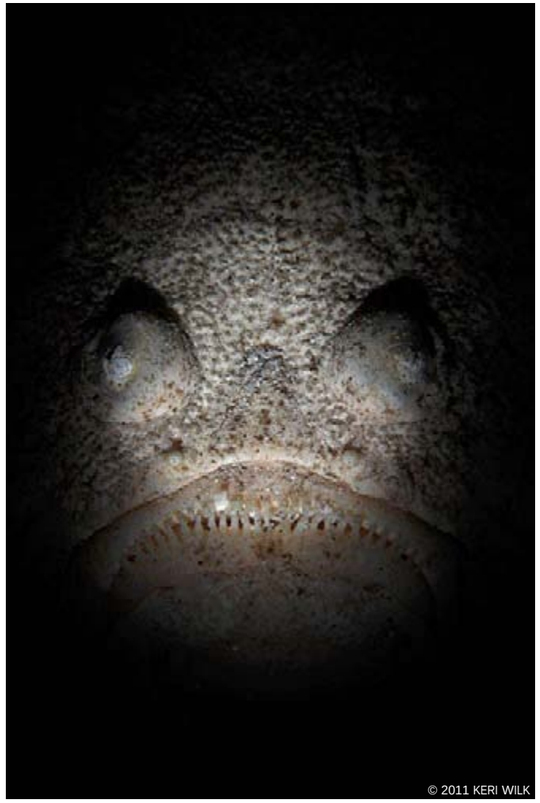
Photographers often strive to create images with black backgrounds to make the subject in the foreground "pop", but it's sometimes difficult to prevent strobe light from hitting the background as well. The use of a snoot can solve this problem.

Minimize backscatter

Backscatter is seen in images when stray strobe light illuminates suspended particles between the camera's lens and the subject. By snooting a strobe, you decrease the beam angle, make it easier to control stray light, and minimize backscatter.

A single, heavily-snooted strobe casts a strong directional beam of light over the face of this devil scorpionfish, creating strong shadows

First Jury Prize
Epson Red
Sea 2009



Directional lighting

Light coming out of a heavily-snooted strobe is much more directional than without the snoot—as if it were coming from a source that is much farther away. Because the snooted light rays are more parallel, they create harsh, sharp-edged shadows when cast over a textured surface (almost like rays from the sun). The narrower the beam, the sharper the shadows. This property can be used to emphasize textures of corals, create dramatic shadowy images, or give common subjects unusual moods.

They can create unique images The above-mentioned uses of snoots can be combined to create exciting, thought-provoking, and most importantly, unique images. Even the most common subjects can be given a "wow factor", which can make your trip's image gallery instantly more memorable than others.

Although snoots may not be especially important to casual underwater shooters, they currently have great relevance for shooters interested in entering photo contests. For the past year, a pair of home(depot)-built, variable-aperture micro snoots (pictured next page) have been a bit of an ace up my sleeve in the competition circuit. Here are a few shots that wouldn't have been possible without my snoots.

First Place, Black and White, Antibes 2009

Second Place, Young Underwater Photographer, Scuba Diver AustralAsia 2009

Directional lighting brings out the textures of this coral head adding drama to its abode

Last year, I publicly posted some of my macro and super macro snoot shots on Wetpixel (wetpixel.com). As I mentioned in the introduction, the internet is very effective for sharing images and techniques, so I wasn't surprised by the large number of photographers who contacted me for advice regarding this technique as a result. The way I see it, one of two things will happen: snoots will ride a wave of popularity and then fade back into obscurity, or they'll become essential tools for any passionate underwater photographers.

Design and Application

Snoots can be used in both wide angle and macro/super macro photography. However, their design and method of application for each of these branches of photography differ greatly.

Wide Angle

Wide angle snoots are the simplest to construct. In most cases, sharp-edged beams aren't necessary, so very short and wide-aperture snoots are often enough to do the trick.

When I first took a stab at this lighting technique, my snoots were made from old wetsuit sleeves that were cut into 6-inch bands, and held on my strobe heads with trusty zip-ties. The amount of beam restriction could be controlled by the distance the neoprene snoot was extended. The ability to vary the beam angle like this is an important characteristic of any snoot, since it expands your creative possibilities.

Aiming strobes with laser precision isn't necessary; you can usually eyeball proper alignment relatively easily. Don't be afraid of taking some initial test shots to make sure that light is being directed where you want it—but when the time comes for the money shot, make sure you keep the framing consistent with the test shots, or else you may end up back at square one. If your strobe has a strong modeling light, switch it on and use it to simplify the aiming process.

If the subject you want to photograph is somewhat deep, you might want to take a single photo of it with "normal" lighting (for your reference), and then find a shallow area where you can putz around with your lights all day long, using a simple non-moving subject as a stand-in. Such use of a reference image combined with experimentation in the shallows should reduce the bottom time you need to spend with the actual subject.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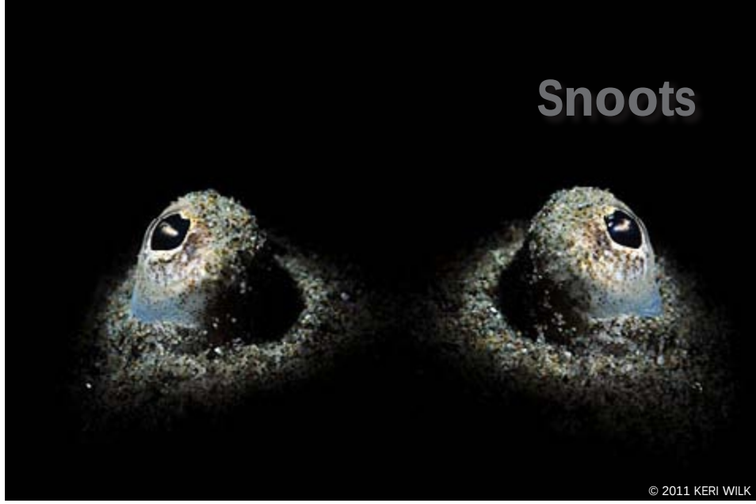

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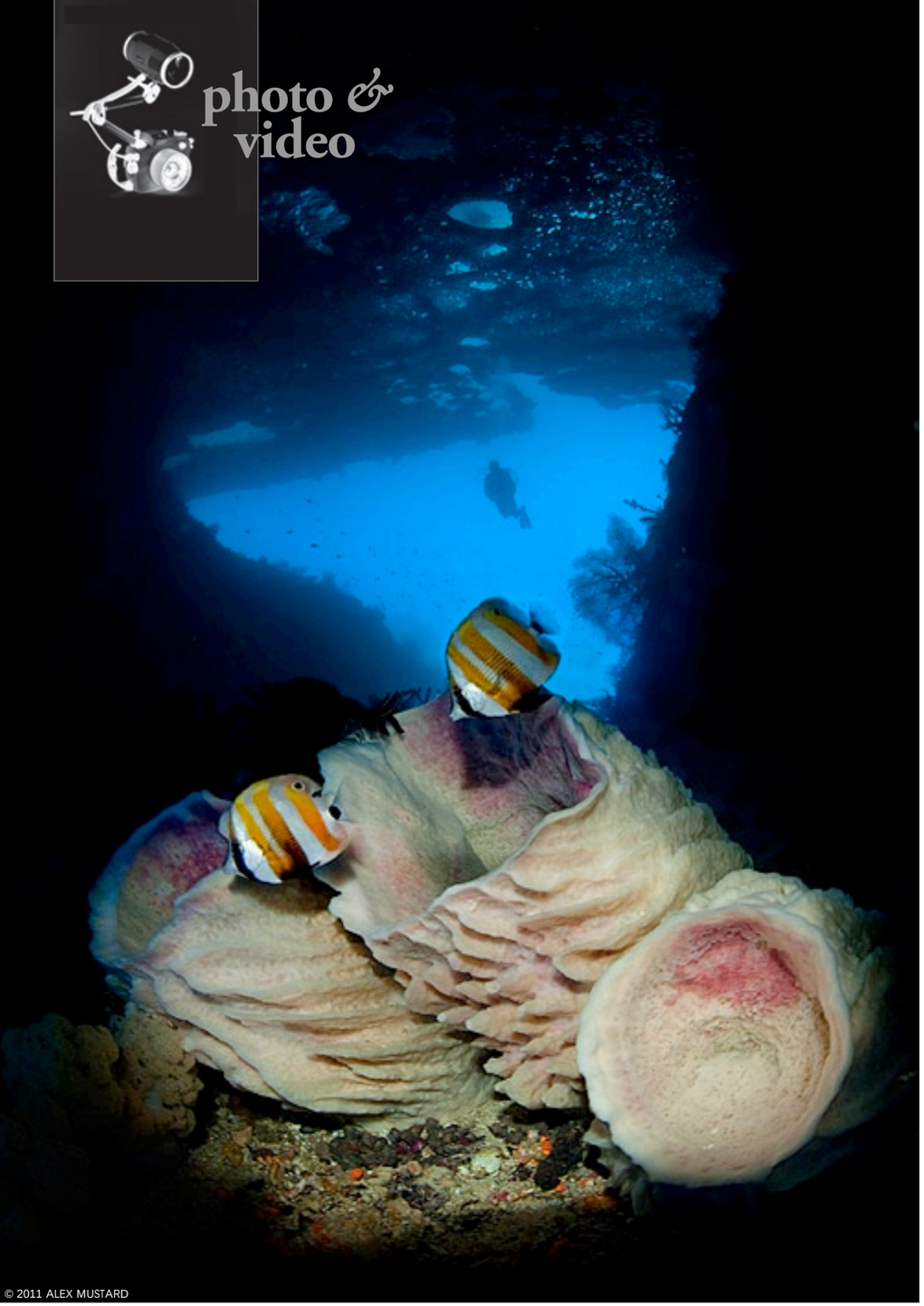
TOP TO BOTTOM: First Place, Macro Traditional, Our World Underwater 2010; First Place, Super Macro Traditional, Our World Underwater 2010; Second Place, Macro, Beneath The Sea 2010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Proper control of the ambient light in a scene can really showcase what snoots are capable of. By increasing the shutter speed and/or decreasing the lens' aperture appropriately, the main subject can be well exposed by the "spotlight" from the snoot while the rest of the scene is intentionally dark, thereby creating a sharp contrast that draws attention to the subject. Alternatively, by using two strobes – one snooted and one not – you can gently illuminate the general foreground to add colour, but still have the main subject pop out of the scene.

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Use a snoot that is further away from the source and has a much smaller aperture for macro shots (above); Use two strobes, one snooted and one not, to gently add color to the foreground and still have the main subject "pop" (left)

Macro/Super Macro

Since the field of view in macro photography is very small, you'll need a correspondingly small beam of light to selectively illuminate a portion of it. This requires the use of a snoot that is further away from the source and has a much smaller aperture (compared to wide angle snoots).

The "micro snoots" that I put together consist of a few mutilated plumbing components that I roughly pieced together while wandering the aisles of Home Depot, and refined to their current state back in my workshop. I designed these snoots in such a way that they can accept various custom-designed variable-diameter tips (also known as "chopped-up black pens"). With one of these snoots, at normal shooting distances, I can produce a directional spot of light as large as 30cm


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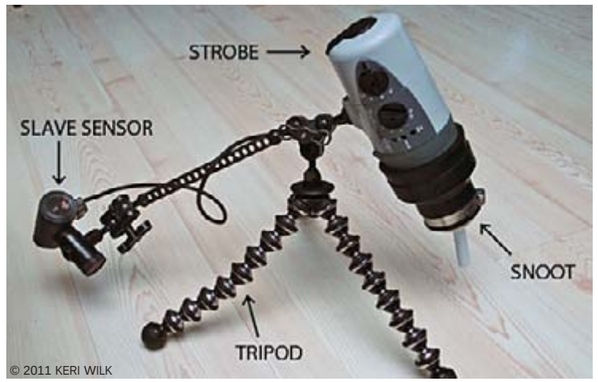
My snoot. The white pieces are removable to widen the beam. Additional pieces can be inserted in the end to narrow the beam

My Ikelite DS160 strobe (right top), fitted with my "micro snoot", and mounted on a tripod (Gorillapod). It is connected to an Ikelite EV controller, which remotely fires the strobe when hit with a flash of light; A narrow beam of light (right center) escapes the small snoot tip; A small ribbon eel investigates the tip of my snoot (right bottom); Portrait of a goby (far right)



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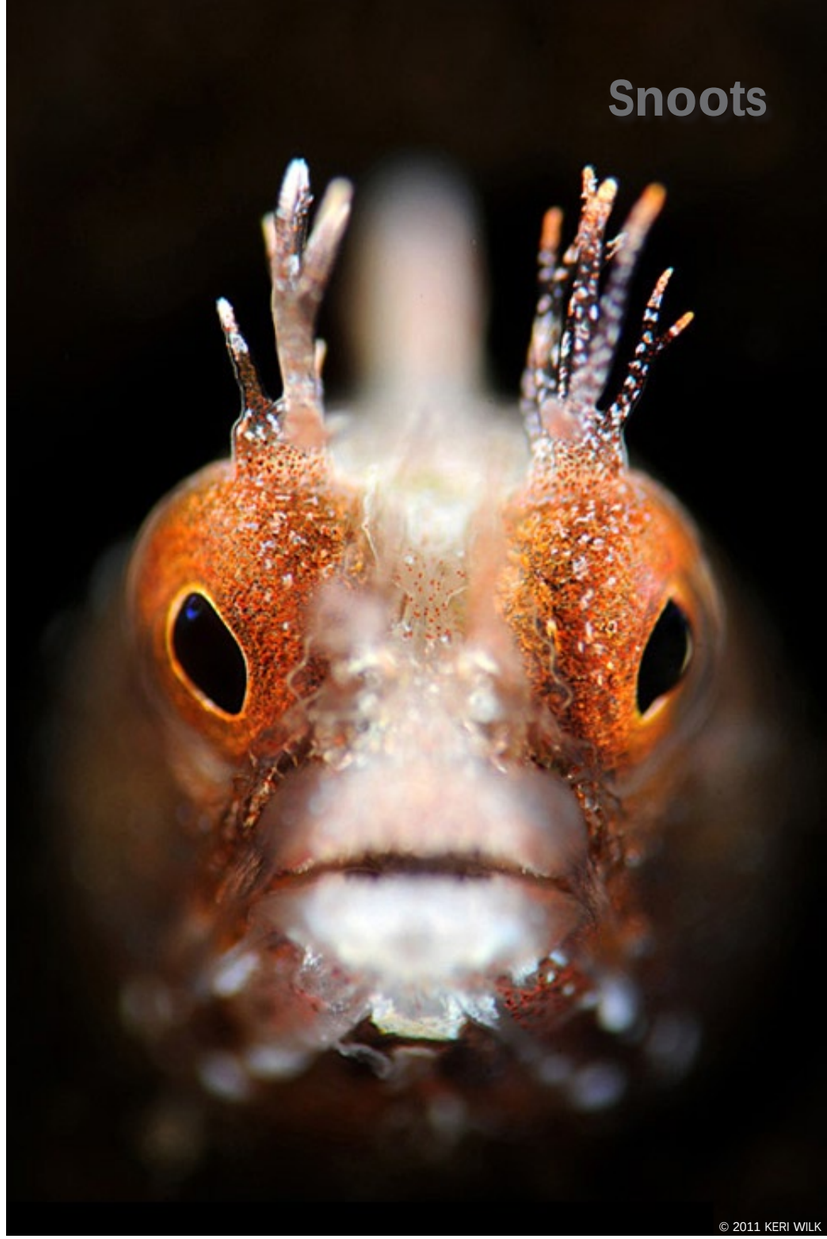

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(12") in diameter or as small as 2mm (~1/16") in diameter!

As with wide angle snoots, to maintain creative freedom, it's very important to have the ability to vary the beam's angle… so keep this in mind if you're trying to design your own.

Aiming snoots for macro imaging is far more difficult, frustrating, and time-consuming than snooting wide angle images. This is especially true for super macro photography, since subjects are often no larger than a grain of rice.

When you intend to shoot a macro scene with a broad, directional lighting effect (explained above), you can follow the same aiming procedure as explained for wide angle snooting. However, if you want to effectively and accurately create macro/super macro images with a spotlight effect, you'll have to follow a very different (and somewhat impractical) route.

Trying to hit a 2cm subject with a 1cm (1/2 inch) beam of light is no easy feat. While it *is* possible to aim a mini-beam like this with the strobe still attached to the housing, I find it *far* easier to detach the strobe from the camera system altogether. Being able to move the camera without disrupting the strobe configuration makes a world of difference. Life can be made even easier if, instead of hard-wiring your snooted strobe to your camera with a sync cord, you connect it to a remote trigger—this gives you total freedom… literally, no strings attached! You can even take it one step further, and mount this remote strobe on a tripod (Gorillapods fitted with a ULCS ball-head works very well), allowing you to position the strobe in just about any orientation, with a rock-steady base.

Even with this elaborate setup, aiming can still be a big headache. You need to choose subjects which are very slow-moving, or better yet, that don't move at all—scorpionfish, frogfish, stargazers, coral polyps, etc.


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Portrait of a frogfish

Conclusion

The relatively small underwater photography world is now noticeably saturated with "typical" images. Without bringing new tools/techniques to the table, the art of underwater photography will quickly become stagnant and boring. This is precisely why tools like the snoot are essential—to advance this discipline. Whether they're used to create black backgrounds, spotlighting or hard-edged directional lighting, there's no doubt that snoots are very capable tools for creatively lighting subjects underwater.

However, as capable as they may be, they can be (usually are) a pain in the butt to use. Aiming them for macro/super macro photography is often mind-numbing, and finding slow-moving/motionless subjects suitable to use them on is up to the scuba gods… so, to successfully use snoots, you'll need to have plenty of patience, and a little bit of luck. If you're looking to expand your underwater photography skills, you might want to consider the snoot.

If you're interested in having a set of custom snoots designed and built for you, let me know.

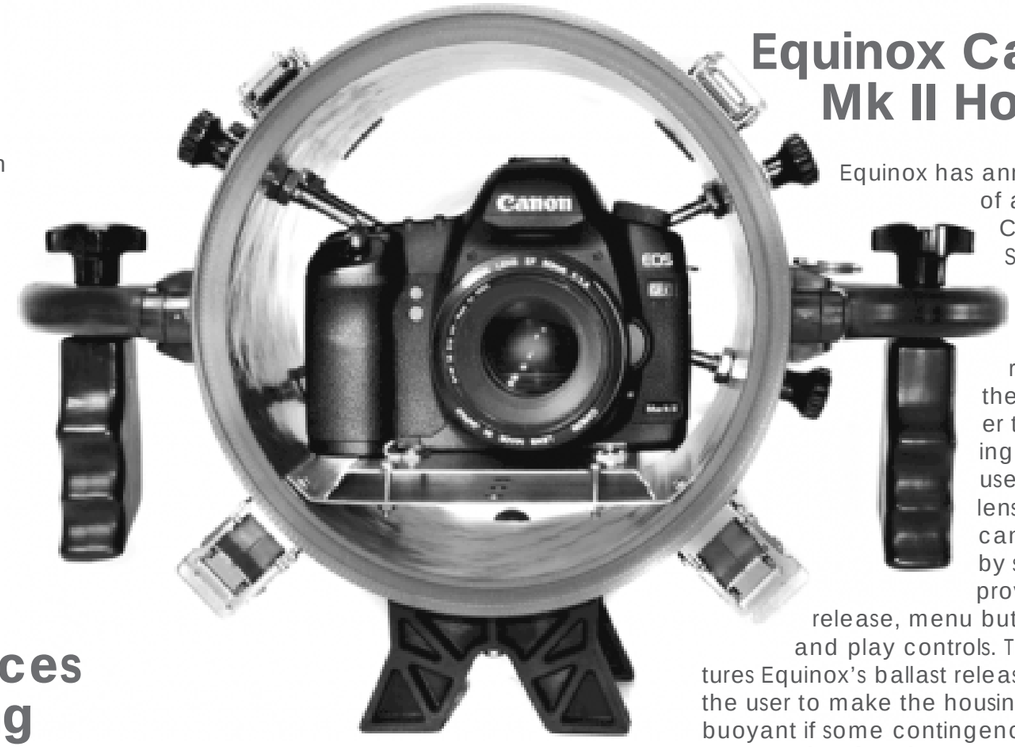
Keri Wilk is an award-winning underwater photographer and dive writer based in Canada. For more information, visit: ***Reefnet.ca*** ■

Edited by
Don Silcock

Ikelite Lumix LX-5 Housing

Ikelite has released a version of its Compact Digital Housing series for the excellent Panasonic Lumix LX-5 camera. The housing features Ikelite's proprietary conversion circuitry, which allows two-way communication between the camera and Ikelite Substrobes, providing true Panasonic TTL exposure. In addition to providing the most accurate automatic exposure, this ensures a faster recycling time and longer camera battery life as compared to fiber optic TTL systems. All camera controls except the Flash Open Switch are fully functional through the housing and depth rated to 200ft (60m). An included flash diffuser improves lighting quality when the camera's built-in flash is used. A built-in flash is effective between 1-3 feet (0.3-0.9m) from the subject in clear conditions. **www.ikelite.com**

Equinox Canon 5D Mk II Housing



Equinox has announced the release of a housing for the Canon 5D Mk II camera. Somewhat of a departure from the company's line of video specific housings, this reflects the popularity of the camera for video rather than stills use. The housing is designed around the use of a Canon 16-35mm lens, although other lenses can be accommodated by special request and it provides access to shutter release, menu button, menu select/scroll and play controls. The housing also features Equinox's ballast release handles, which allow the user to make the housing positively buoyant if some contingency demands it. **www.equinoxhousings.com**

Sea & Sea announces MDX-D7000 housing

Sea & Sea has announced the release of the MDX-D7000 housing for the Nikon D7000 camera. It is machined from a solid block of aluminum, protected by a highly corrosion-resistant coating. Other features include: A port lock mechanism, two fiber optic ports and one optional electronic port and a built-in leak sensor. **www.seaandsea.com**

Fantasea 3D Housing and Camera Package

Fantasea has announced the release of a package containing the Fujifilm FinePix REAL 3D W3 camera and the RecSea WHF-3D W3 polycarbonate housing. The housing was released at DEMA last year, and has a depth rating of 40m, and a fiber optic mounting port. The Fujifilm FinePix W3 features 10 megapixel resolution and is capable of shooting both conventional and 3D stills and video. **www.fantasea.com**

Canon Announces Two New SLRs and Two New Speedlights

Canon has announced the release of the Rebel T3i (EOS 600D) and Rebel T3 (EOS 1100D)SLR cameras and the 320EX and 270EX II Speedlights.The T3i features: Canon's EOS HD video capture, 18-megapixel resolution, a three-inch vari-angle clear view LCD screen, scene intelligent auto mode, video snapshot technology and feature guide instructions. The T3 is cheaper, and features HD movie capture, 12-megapixel resolution and the feature guide. In addition, Canon has announced the release of two new Speedlights: the 320EX and 270EX II. **www.usa.canon.com**

Amphibico releases a new line of video housings dedicated to sea turtles

PRESS RELEASE—Ron Hand, owner of Amphibico, and the "Amphibicans" have supported saving the sea turtles for over 20 years. They use a stylized turtle as their company logo. Amphibico was the first and continuing corporate sponsor of the nonprofit Foundation, Save Our Leatherbacks Operation (S.O.L.O), beginning in 2005.

The TURTLE video housing is available in six hot tropical colors at a price that should shatter the market for excellence in value for money. Some of the features include marine grade aluminum with stainless hardware, fully anodized with a hard coat of polyurethane paint, depth rated to 330ft (100m), fixed front glass (no port—your camcorder does the zooms and focusing), a rear 3.5 inch digital LCD monitor, an electronic right hand pistol grip with one touch white balance. Amphibico guarantees shipment within 72 hours of order and payment receipt—or they pay the shipping. Optional add ons are available to make this housing even more as the "best underwater housing deal in town".

The TURTLE is designed to fit a wide variety of video camcorders and cameras; Amphibico has an ever expanding list of those listed on their web site: **www.amphibico.com**

With the production of this set of tropical color housings filled with technology developed by Amphibico, the manufacturer is donating a portion of the sales revenue to S.O.L.O. so the organization can continue proven conservation activities.

This decision is quite humbling to S.O.L.O. and comes at a juncture in our scope of activities, where added donated funds are needed. Having developed a set of activities that does "reverse extinction" of this highly endangered species, S.O.L.O. is expanding its activities to assist all sea turtle conservation activities where our methods may assist on a case basis. Please add your donations to those of Amphibico to assist us. Ninety-five percent (95%) of all moneys raised goes directly to the project. No salaries or wages are paid anyone in the foundation.

— Larry McKenna, S.O.L.O., **Leatherbackturtles.org**

Sayaka Kajita Ganz

P O R T F O L I O

Edited by Gunild Symes
All sculptures by Sayaka Kajita Ganz
Images courtesy of Sayaka Kajita Ganz

My working process is reminiscent of my experiences growing up in several different countries, of being disconnected from the place I was born. Then, I began searching for a new community where I truly belong. I find discarded objects from peoples' houses and give them a second life, a new home.

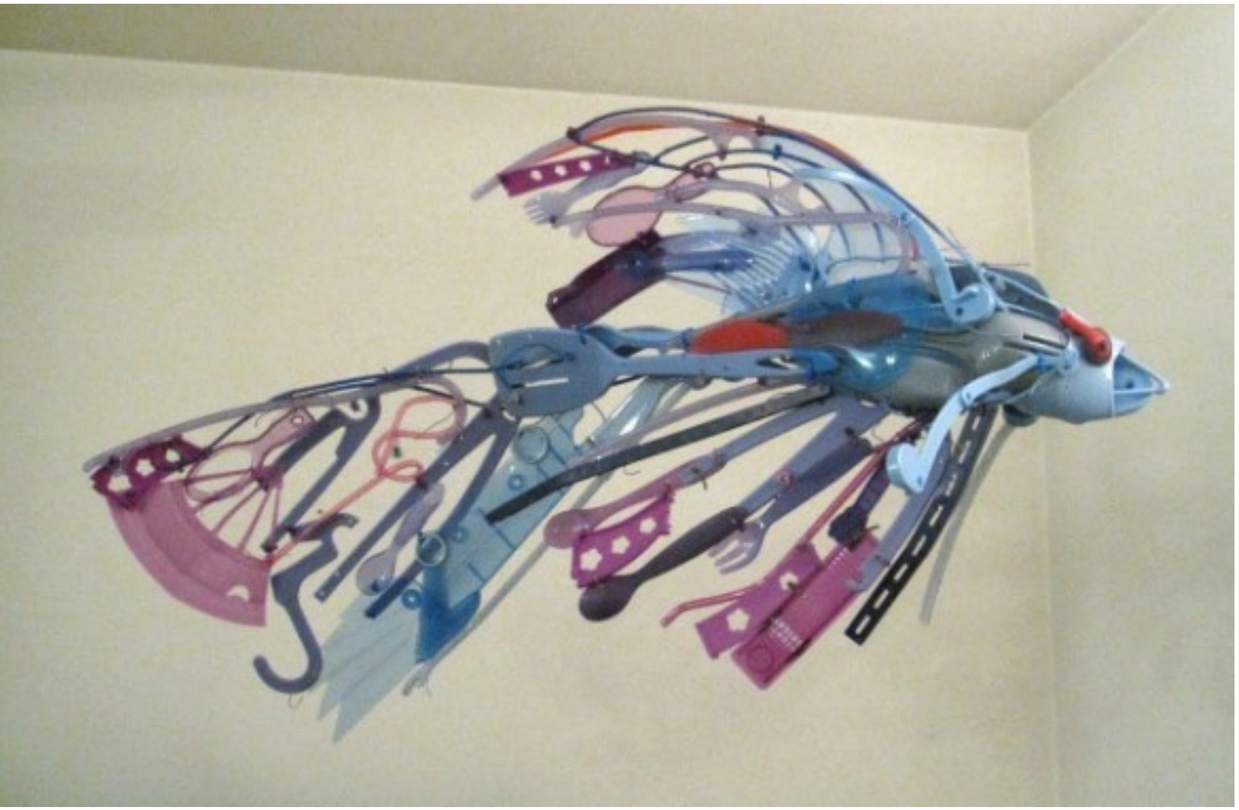
For my sculptures I use plastic utensils, toys and metal pieces among other things. I only select objects that have been used and discarded. The human history behind these objects gives them life in my eyes. My goal is for each object to transcend its origins by being integrated into an animal form that seems alive. This process of reclamation and regeneration is liberating to me as an artist.

By building these sculptures I try to understand the human relationships that surround me. It is a way for me to contemplate and remind myself that even if there is conflict right now, there is a way for all the pieces to fit together. That even if some people don't feel at home here and now, there is a place where they belong and that they will eventually find it.

— Sayaka Kajita Ganz

Flare, by Sayaka Kajita Ganz, 2010. Reclaimed blue and pink plastic objects, wire. 14 x 24 x 8 inches
PREVIOUS PAGE: *Jaws*, by Sayaka Kajita Ganz, 2010. Reclaimed plastic objects, wire. 9 x 21 x 6 inches

Whirl, by Sayaka Kajita Ganz, 2010. Reclaimed stainless steel objects, wire. 28 x 15 x 16 inches



Flare II, by Sayaka Kajita Ganz, 2010. Reclaimed blue and pink plastic objects, wire, 16 x 27 x 10 inches

GS: Tell us about yourself and your work. How did you develop your unique style and what is the philosophy or mission behind your sculptures?

SKG: I was born in Yokohama, Japan. My family moved to Sao Paulo, Brazil, when I was nine years old, and we lived there for almost five years. We went back to Japan when I was 13, then moved to Hong Kong when I was 17. I graduated from high school in Hong Kong and came to the United States to attend university.

Up to high school, I never graduated from the same school I started in. All these relocations have affected my thinking, made me flexible and also made me crave a sense of belonging. I get great comfort from fitting things together, perhaps partially because of these experiences.

My philosophy is that beauty is all around us, but sometimes a shift in perspective is necessary to find it.

GS: Where do you get your inspiration?

SKG: I get the inspiration from the discarded objects themselves. The human history behind each piece is very interesting—someone designed and created this object, someone used and later discarded it. I am also inspired by nature and life energy of animals—the motion, wind, water current, waves and time.

GS: Why did you choose fish as a subject?

SKG: I love the fluidity of their form and motion, both individually and in a school. I try to focus my attention on the motion and direction rather than

Undulate, by Sayaka Kajita Ganz, 2010. Reclaimed white and clear plastic objects, wire. 17 x 27 x 17 inches

the details of scales and fins, so that the viewer can share the sense of life energy.

GS: Why do you use the materials you use and where do you get them?

SKG: I collect plastic objects from thrift stores, mostly here in Fort Wayne, but when I'm on the road, I make a detour to visit other locations as well. I never buy new objects, only second-hand objects from thrift stores or by donation. I have them sorted by color in about 30 storage bins in the basement, and the collection is an on-going process. I start a project when I have enough objects of the right color.

GS: Tell us about your training and education. Who has inspired you, artistically speaking?

SKG: I went to Indiana University Bloomington for BFA in Printmaking, and Bowling Green State University (Ohio) for MFA in 3D Art. My greatest inspiration growing up was my mother. More recently, the artists I admire are Choe U-ram, Theo Jansen, Edouard Martinet, Tara Donovan, Deborah Butterfield, Jean Shin, Tomoko Konoike and my husband Christopher Ganz.

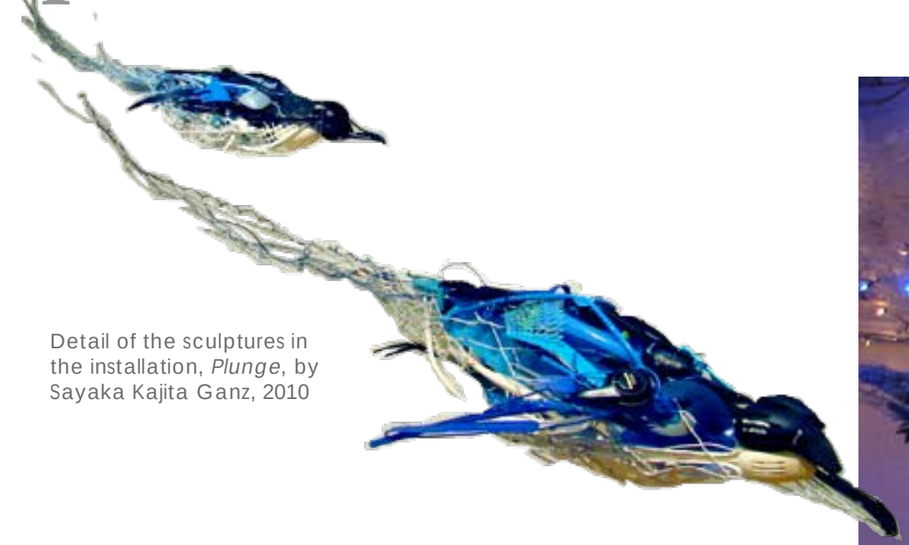
My mother had many craft hobbies when I was a child. She would always encourage me to draw and take me to kids' craft project booths at department stores whenever we went shopping to Yokohama, a big city about 20 minutes away from where we lived. Because of her hobbies, I always had scrap materials to experiment with, and I think that's how I developed the taste for using found objects.

Theo Jansen and Choe U-ram are both kinetic artists. I admire how their creations seem so alive with the beautiful fluid motion.

Edouard Martinet uses metal objects very similarly to how I use plastic, but his work is very clean, tight and flush in joints, and he makes the objects seem as if they have been destined to become his sculpture all along.

Tara Donovan uses thousands of the same common household objects to create beautiful and monumental installations. I admire her vision.

Deborah Butterfield, famous for her beautiful horse sculptures, has been my inspiration since when I was using scrap metal for materials. I had already started making animal forms when I first saw her work. I love her work, but she also inspired me to go and look for



Detail of the sculptures in the installation, *Plunge*, by Sayaka Kajita Ganz, 2010

my own style instead of trying to make my work more like hers.

Jean Shin uses discarded materials, usually hundreds or thousands of the same, so in that sense, her work is similar to Tara Donovan's. Her philosophy is very intriguing, however, she tries to explore the nature of each object both in form and in intended function.

Tomoko Konoike is a Japanese female artist who makes mysterious fantastic drawings, sculpture, animation and more. She has created a whole world of her artistic vision, and she works in so many mediums.

My husband Christopher Ganz does large-scale charcoal drawings that depict multiple self-portraits in various (industrial, consumer, medical, to name a few) situations. He is also a great printmaker; he teaches printmaking at a university here in Fort Wayne. His prints are smaller and sometimes more experimental versions of his drawings. Chris is my best advisor, critic, friend and encourager in art. We share the basement studio in our house, so we are constantly bouncing ideas off each other.

GS: Are you a scuba diver or a snorkeler? If so, where have you dived and what is your favorite place to dive?

SKG: No. I have gone snorkeling once when I was a child. I would LOVE to try scuba diving.

GS: Tell us your relationship to the underwater world, the sea and the reef. What inspires you about the ocean and the underwater realm?

SKG: I grew up going to the beach often and digging around or exploring to look for sea creatures. I was always more interested in finding them than in swimming. What intrigues me about the underwater realm is that you can see and feel the life energy of not just the individual fish, but the entire school, the entire ocean current, the entire planet.

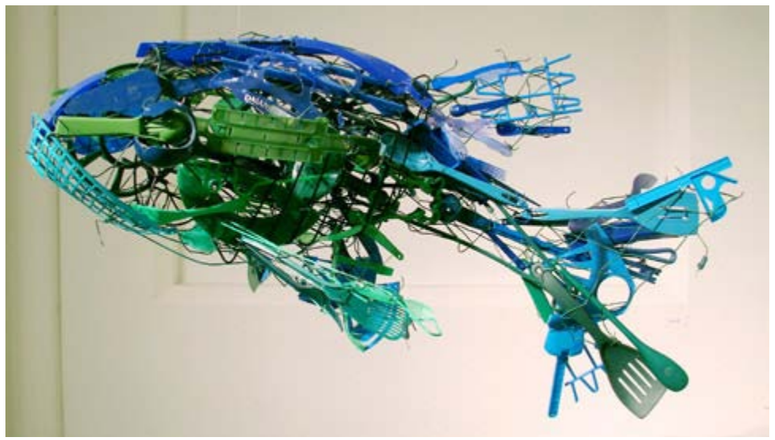
GS: What are your thoughts on the role of art in conservation

Plunge Installation, by Sayaka Kajita Ganz, 2010. Mixed media installation: Reclaimed plastic objects, rabbit fence, chicken wire, wire hangers, borrowed Christmas lights, shower curtains, reclaimed linens, sand

portfolio

Deep Sea (right and below) by Sayaka Kajita Ganz, 2008 Reclaimed blue and green plastic objects, wire 32 x 42 x 28 inches

Stream, by Sayaka Kajita Ganz, 2008. Reclaimed metal objects, 6 x 7 x 3 inches



and environmental awareness?

SKG: I want my work to offer an alternative to throwing away unwanted household objects.

GS: Why art? Why do you think art is important? What do you want to say with your art?

SKG: Art can inspire viewers into wanting to take action, wanting to see more, wanting to find solutions. This is important because sense of duty and guilt can only take us so far.

GS: What future projects do you have planned?

SKG: I am currently working on a collaborative project with my friend Jim Merz who is a kinetic artist. It will be a 20-foot-long spinning LED chandelier made of goblets and bowls from the thrift shops. I'm in a group exhibition in Washington D.C. in March; I have a commission To create four horse sculptures at the Isle of Man in October; and I might also make a wall mosaic for the Monterey Bay Aquarium using plastic debris from the ocean in 2012.

Incidentally, I have visited Denmark three times because my aunt, uncle and cousin live in Copenhagen. I am working with my cousin's company Ayanomimi **www.ayanomimi.com** and I hope to have an opportunity to show my work in Copenhagen in the near future.

GS: Do you teach art? If so, what is your approach?

SKG: I teach drawing and design (3D) at Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne. My teaching philosophy is to help students get to know themselves and amplify their abilities to become more like themselves, not more like me.

To learn more about Sayaka Kajita Ganz or to purchase art and order commissions, visit: ***www.sayakaganz.com***. ■