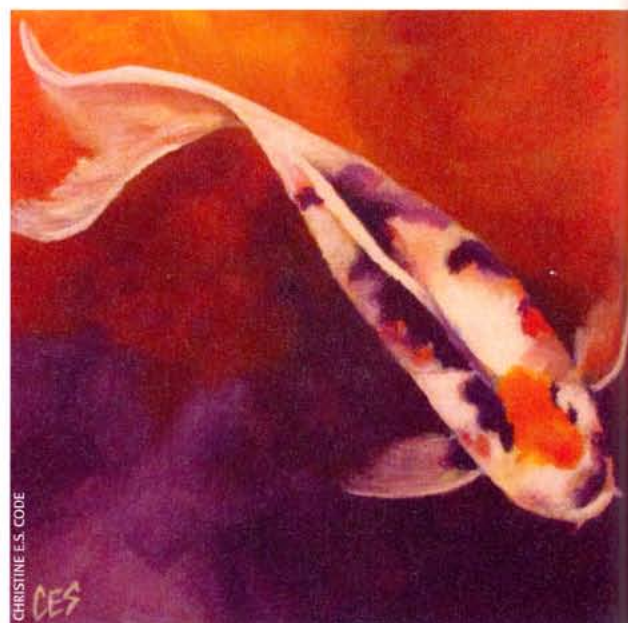


KOI art

a LOOK at koi Artists

Artists reveal the intricacies of bringing koi to life in paintings, sculptures, mosaics and mixed-media works.

BY PATRICIA KNIGHT



We've all seen artwork featuring koi: beautiful paintings of koi in water gardens or just paintings showing our beloved koi on their own and in great detail. Those works of art — whether they are paintings, mosaics or sculptures — somehow capture the essence of the koi and water gardens that pondkeepers work so diligently to maintain.

The artists who create these works are often koi lovers themselves, and many of them keep ponds or have kept them in the past. They are lovers of nature and beauty — much like pondkeepers themselves. Do you ever wonder how these artists are able to capture the beauty of these amazing pond fish? Let's take a look at a group of successful koi artists to see exactly how they approach their koi art.

Christine E.S. Code

Koi art: Acrylic paintings

Christine E.S. Code has been painting full-time for eight years. She is a self-taught artist who said that the "flowing fins,



CHRISTINE E.S. CODE

the bright splashes of color and the sense of movement in a painting" compel her to continue painting koi as subjects. She admits to having a fish obsession at one point, keeping various species at home and creating aquascapes and healthy ecosystems in all her tanks.

Code paints with acrylic due to the quicker drying time, though in the past, she did experiment with oils (which take much longer to dry). The motion of both the koi and the water is what she finds most challenging. "The flowing movement of the fins and/or the complementary dynamic brushwork in the water is what I strive for," she said. She sees art as being subjective and prefers not to encourage

a specific response to her work, but she does say that her work gives her serenity, peace and connectedness. "The koi is almost one with the water. Neither the koi, nor the water moves independently without influencing the movement of the other. They are connected."

Code enjoys doing other paintings, as well, calling herself a painter of "both light and dark." She pulls from a vivid color palette when it's appropriate, concentrating on the more beautiful side of life. She also does what she calls "rather macabre paintings, emphasizing the dark side of life."

You can find Code's work at www.paintingsbyces.com.

Magie Smith-Fleisher

KOI ART: SCULPTURES

Magie Smith-Fleisher has been working with clay since the mid-60s. She attended Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles for two semesters. Sculpting koi was something that she just happened upon while watching her pond's koi and goldfish. "Their individual personalities and playfulness made it easy for me to try and capture those qualities in my work," she said.

Smith-Fleisher says she has always enjoyed clay. She enjoys the conformation, personality and colors of koi, and says that adding her own interpretation and "keeping the idea fresh is sometimes difficult." To her, the best part of her work is going into her studio and starting new projects and trying new things — and being pleased and also occasionally surprised at the result. "There's nothing like it," she said.

Smith-Fleisher is a dedicated koi artist who subscribes to koi and water garden magazines to help with her artwork. "I make each koi individually," she said, "never using molds. They are started from a slab of clay and, with each step, get their own personalities. Although they look similar, they are each a unique, original creation."

Check out Smith-Fleisher's work at her Etsy shop *KoiJoy* at Etsy.com.



MAGIE SMITH-FLEISHER

Gordon Lavender

Koi art: Acrylic paintings (mostly)

Another self-taught artist, Gordon Lavender has been painting for many years, describing himself as having "no restraints of how or what" he paints. When he first started painting koi, his works were more in a traditional Japanese style until he began blending in modern techniques. He started with oils, but after working with acrylic paint and ink, he found them to be more versatile.

Lavender's fishkeeping started when he was a child, having had a pond as well as aquariums. He now has a 10-year-



GORDON LAVENDER



GORDON LAVENDER

old koi pond but says he still does not have the large "pond of his dreams." His favorite koi variety is the Shusui, noting that he is fascinated by their colors and patterns.

Lavender works to keep his art "fresh and interesting, mixing the traditional with the modern and unusual." He enjoys creating art that is both eye-catching and thought-provoking. He hopes that his art viewers can "see/feel a symbiotic relationship between the koi and everyday items." He also hopes to inspire people to buy paintings of koi who would normally not consider having koi art on their wall.

Lavender says of his artwork, "It's there simply to be enjoyed, loved or questioned. I will still create the paintings I love."

Check out more of Lavender's work at gordon-lavender.artistwebsites.com.

Want a chance to win one of Lavender's paintings? Check out Page 111 for more details.



Shanti Marie

Koi art: Watercolor paintings (mostly)

Shanti Marie describes herself as a “watercolorist at heart,” but she also says she has used acrylic and oil paint to render koi. She has been an artist for 20 years and has formal art training. She says that she connects with koi the same way that others feel a connection with dogs or horses. “I’ve always loved koi,” she explained. She also loves painting koi in watercolor. “The medium really lends itself to the subject. The way the paint flows mimics the way the water and fish seem to interact.”

Marie does have koi and tries to spend time with her fish daily. She also loves all her koi, but she is partial to Tancho, Doitsu, Showa and Narumi Asagi.

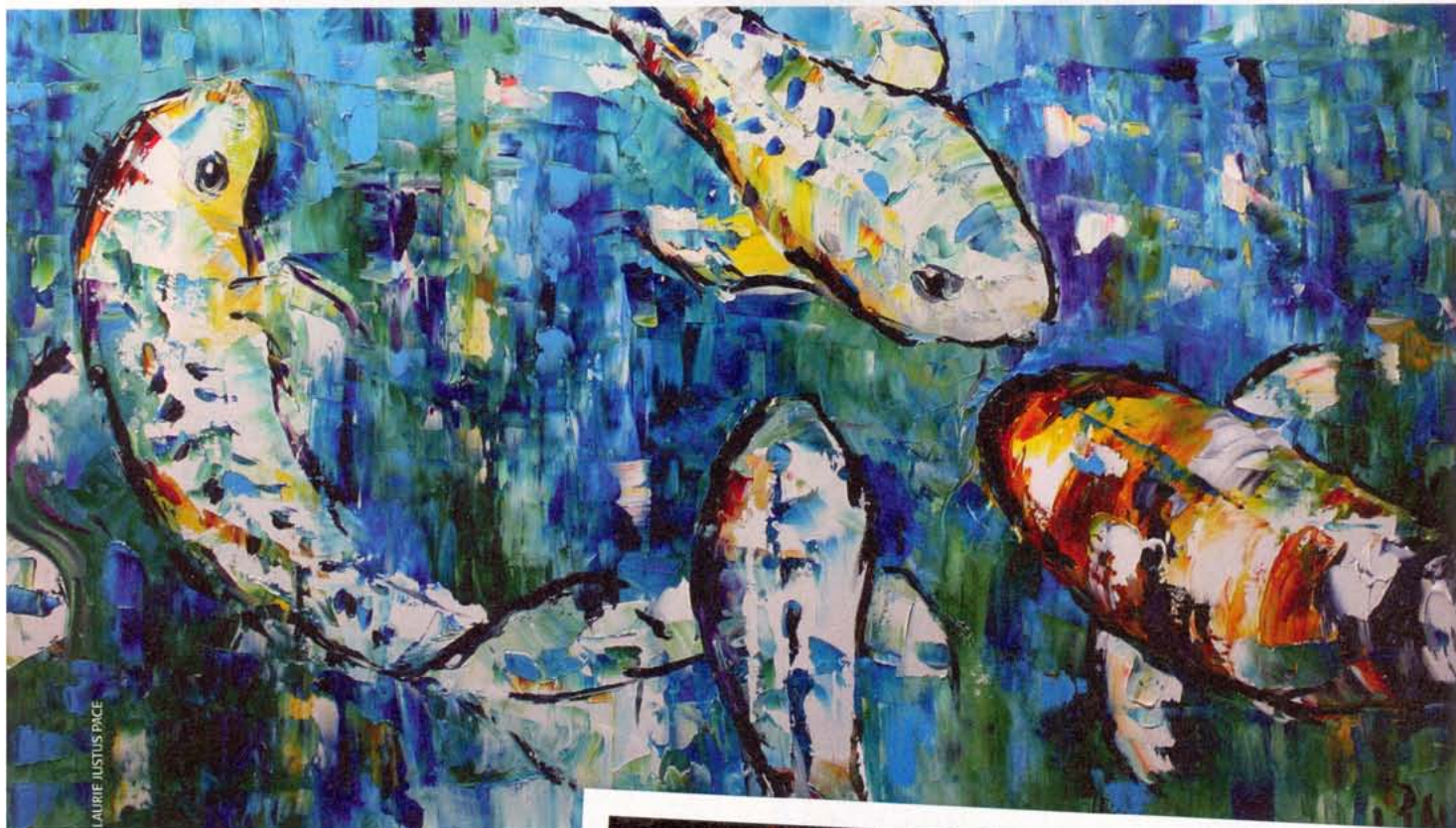
She also explained, “As with any painting, the struggle is to find your own unique way to interpret the subject matter.” Marie does not paint from photos usually, unless she is doing a koi portrait — she simply watches the koi, searching for

their essence. Then she goes to work, and hopes for people to feel happy and calm when viewing the result.

She notes that her award-winning series called “Living Jewels,” which sold quickly, is among her favorites. She has done various other koi paintings that have won awards, as well, and her paintings have appeared on magazine covers. “My art is unique, and I strive to create something that will be treasured by the owner. I sell many of my small paintings on dailypainters.com.”

Learn more about Marie’s work at www.shantimarie.com.





Laurie Justus Pace

Koi art: Oil paintings

Laurie Justus Pace is a lifetime artist who started painting when she was 11 years old. She holds an art degree and has taught for more than 35 years. She also donates paintings to PBS auctions. As far as how she first started using koi in her art, she credits the colors: "the colors with the water contrasting with the colors on the koi."

Pace does have a pond that has been running for three years — a large pond of 5 acres. Although there are no actual koi, there are other fish living in the pond.

For her koi artwork, Pace works in oil paint, mostly with a palette knife and occasionally with a brush. She notes that depicting the textures, and contrast between the water and the fish is the most challenging part of her koi art. She would like people to feel a sense of peace while



viewing her koi art.

Pace mentions of her artwork that "it is the spirit of color and texture that is created through the gift I have from God."

Check out Pace's work at lauriepace.com.



Maria Pace-Wynters

Koi art: Mixed-media artwork

Maria Pace-Wynters attended the Victoria College of Art, Camosun College and the University of Victoria. She is inspired by a koi's vivid colors against the dark pond. "As an artist, it is exciting to be able to play with a composition that is already so naturally beautiful."

Pace-Wynters is a mixed-media artist. She uses various papers and textures in her work, along with different mediums. She uses acrylic ink quite a bit, due to its intensity. She also uses oil pastel, India ink and encaustic (hot wax). "I discovered that not limiting myself to one medium works best for me," she said. She adds more and more to her work until she is happy with how it looks. "The trick is knowing when enough is enough!"

Although she does not have a koi pond, she has always enjoyed the idea of having one. Growing up in Victoria, British Columbia, in Canada, she knew people who had koi. However, living in a colder area now, she says it is basically impossible to consider a koi pond.

With her koi paintings, Pace-Wynters finds the most challenging aspect to be bringing movement and flow to her work, and like many other koi artists, she would like people to be happy and peaceful when looking at her work. "There is so much turmoil and anxiety in our lives that I really just strive to bring a little beauty into our world." Her work also features hidden textures, as well as patterns. "I like the idea that new things appear to the viewer on the second, third or even fourth viewing."

She notes her piece "The Circle Pond" as a favorite, with its "juxtaposition of the blue-and-white edging with the orange koi and pink waterlilies." She is also inspired by painter



Want to win an art piece?

Do you like art? One lucky winner has a chance to win "Koi Tancho and Bamboo" from artist Gordon Lavender. This acrylic and ink painting measures 16 by 12 inches. Entering is simple: Just go to FishChannel.com/ArtContest, and submit your information to be automatically entered into the contest. On August 11, 2014, the FishChannel.com editors will choose a winner.

1. All entries must be received by August 8, 2014.
 2. This contest is not open to employees of I-5 Publishing, LLC.
 3. Winners' information will be shared with the giveaway sponsor.
 4. Do not telephone *Ponds USA & Water Gardens* offices regarding this contest. The winners will be notified.
- For more information, go to FishChannel.com/ArtContest. Learn more about Gordon Lavender and this piece at gordon-lavender.artistwebsites.com.

Henri Matisse's "Red Fish." Pace-Wynters mostly does figurative works, but she enjoys working on something different from time to time. "These paintings are much looser than many of my figurative works. In order to keep growing as an artist, it is important to not always know all the answers ahead of time."

Learn more about Pace-Wynters at mariapacewynters.com.

Gina Signore

Koi art: Photo mixed-medias

Gina Signore attended Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Mich., where she received her BFA in Fine Art. She started adding koi to her art after she and her husband installed a koi pond; they now have 30 koi in three ponds. She features koi in her digital art photography that has painting and drawing added to the image.

Signore likes all varieties of koi but generally chooses what is available in her area. "We tend to choose them by their color and features," she said.

"Timing is important," she said of the challenging part of her koi art, since she has to wait for the koi to swim in a position that makes for a well-balanced composition. She feels the best aspect of her work is color, and would like her art's viewers to be happy, contented and relaxed when looking at her pieces.

Her favorite piece she worked on is called "Moonlight Swim," showing a koi swimming in the evening, with the reflection of tree limbs in the water. Her pieces have sold internationally, and while her koi images have not received any awards yet, as they are a newer part of her artwork, her garden images have indeed won awards. "I



GINA SIGNORE

sell a majority of my original mixed-media photographs at [Etsy.com](https://www.etsy.com) and my posters and prints at [FineArtAmerica.com](https://www.fineartamerica.com)."

Learn more about Signore and her art at her website, [www.DahliaHouseStudios.com](https://www.dahliahousestudios.com).



GINA SIGNORE



KAY SMITH

Kay Smith

Koi art: Watercolor paintings

Kay Smith is a lifelong artist who has worked with watercolors since 1993. She is self-taught and has attended workshops with well-known instructors. The color of the koi, such as the bright orange and red tones, inspired her to start painting them.

Smith had a koi pond at her home while she was growing up, and her favorite koi variety is Bekko because of the colors with various patterns.

She finds that it is a challenge to get the orange colors that she mixes to be "just right." The best part of her work, she says, is "imparting a personality to each colorful fish." She hopes that viewers of her koi art feel "as if they are one with the art."

Smith's favorite piece she worked on that features koi is called "Krazy Koi," which she created in 2009. Her piece called "Christian's Koi" won a People's Choice Award at the Big Spring Art Association Art Show in Big Spring, Texas. She says that being a daily painter, she wants her "controlled looseness to engage and to surprise the viewer."

Learn more about Smith and her work at www.kaysmith.artspan.com.

A Love Of Koi

As you can see from the accompanying images showing the artists' work, there are some very talented koi artists out there. And while many of them do have koi, even artists not currently keeping ponds are often just as enchanted by these amazing fish as the most dedicated pondkeeper. Their love of koi definitely shows in their artwork. Anyone who's a koi lover can attest to the beauty of koi — whether it's outside in an actual pond or inside in a perfect piece of koi art. 🐟

Patricia Knight is the former editor of Ponds USA & Water Gardens and Aquarium USA, and is also the former managing editor of Aquarium Fish International. She is now a freelance writer whose articles have appeared in Pet Product News International, Rabbits USA and SmallAnimalChannel.com.

Judith Scallon

KOI ART: GLASS MOSAICS

Judith Scallon had art training in her late teenage years to her early 20s and put together her first mosaic when she was 16 years old. Approximately 25 years ago, she was inspired to start using koi in art when she saw some at the Self-Realization Fellowship Temple in Encinitas, Calif. When at the temple, she saw the koi in their ponds as peaceful, vibrant and colorful. "I fell in love with them instantly, and I have been using them as subjects for my mosaic glass art ever since."

Her favorite koi variety is probably the Showa San-shoku for its high color contrast. She mentions, however, that for a good koi composition, a mosaic should have koi of various types — and she has come to find the beauty in each variety.

The last 20 years have seen Scallon working on mosaics, though she worked with oil, silkscreening and other mediums when she was young. Her favorite piece she worked on is a vase with a pond image. "It is my favorite koi mosaic because the vase shape was an enormous challenge that I feel I successfully met," she explained. It "has a complete 360-degree composition — you can gaze at it from anywhere in a room and see a different view of the pond." Her vase won an honorable mention at the Del Mar State Fair art show.

Like other koi artists, she finds a sense of movement seems to be the biggest challenge — but mosaics create even more of a challenge. "Mosaics can make very strong designs, but it can be difficult to give them an illusion of depth." The color and "bold expression" are what she feels are the best aspects of her work, and because koi are icons in Asian culture, she says she strives to give them a meditative, Far-Eastern feel. "I hope that my pieces give people pleasure when they gaze at them — that they see and connect to the beauty of the piece ...

If I can touch others at that gut level with my mosaics, it makes me happy."

Scallon notes that mosaics take time and patience to make. "You will get cut fingers and will occasionally get muscle aches. But it's worth it. I find it completely rewarding and will never stop making them."

Check out more of Scallon's work at www.ScallonArt.com.



JUDITH SCALLON