

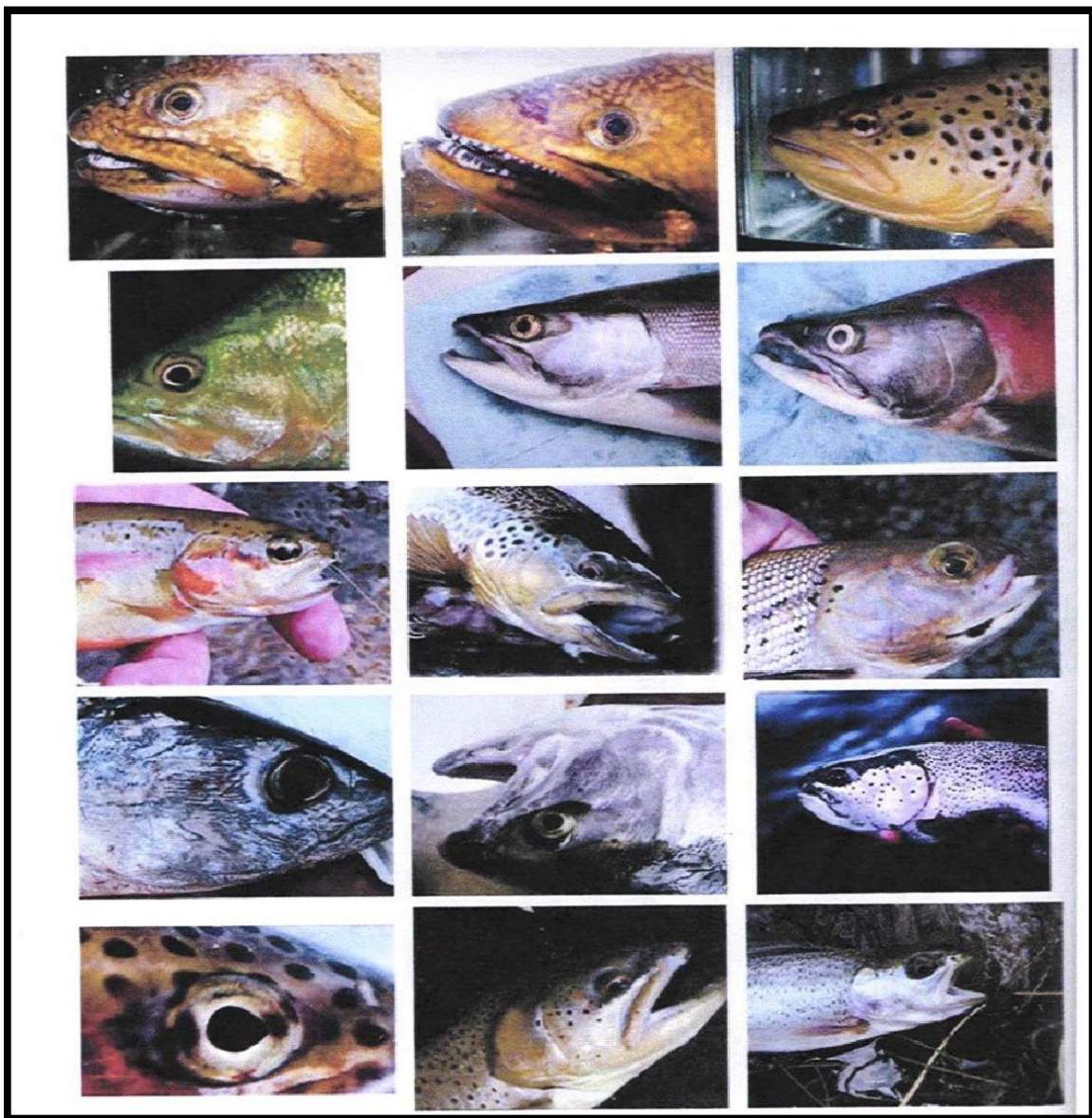
NFCG JOURNALS BY

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**INTRODUCTION
TO THE
EYE
(PART ONE)**



NATIONAL FISH CARVERS GUILD



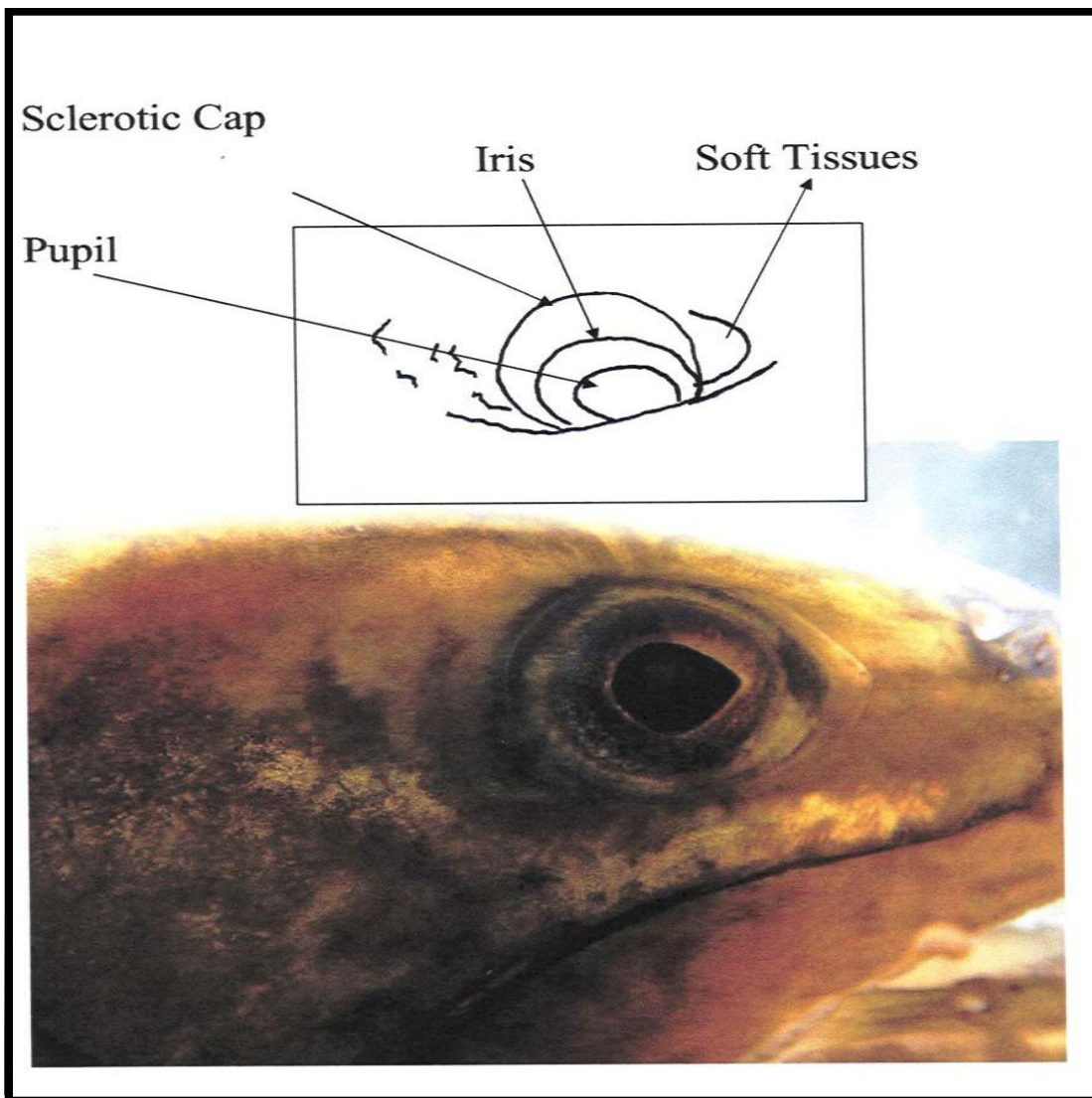
THE IMPORTANCE OF EYES

As we explore the fascinating topic of creating realistic eyes on our fish we intuitively know that "success" will result in a captivating sculpture that both realistically captures the correct colors, position, shapes of the eyes and provides you with that glimpse into the feelings and emotion of the moment. At a glance we know if the fish is passive, aggressive or frightened. Herman Mehlville said, "The eyes are the gateway to the soul." Even though we doubt that Herman ever won a single blue ribbon with his fish carvings, we all agree, as artist and readers, that he is right.

Try this mental exercise to get a feel for why the eyes on your sculpture are so critical to communicate the action of your sculpture. Imagine the intense focus of the predator's eyes before the capture of prey, or the frightened surprise of that trophy as her eye is focused on the fly that is hooked solidly in the corner of her mouth. Freeze a vivid moment of that experience with your subject fish, and get up close to the action in your mind. Now close your eyes and what do you see? You might see the size of the fish or the position of that fish as they broke the water's surface, or the attitude of the pectoral fins, but nothing more vividly expresses the emotion of the moment than the colors and attitude of the fish's eyes. To help you tell your story of that moment you need the combination of many things: body shape, fin articulation, body colors, and even habitat will help tell the story. Only the eyes can complete your audiences' experience as you capture the emotion of the fish with your sculpture through careful consideration and execution of creating realistic eyes.

ANATOMY OF AN EYE

We should begin our study on eyes by giving consideration to the parts of the eye we will be continually referring to as we describe the techniques of creating realistic eyes. In the following is a basic diagram of the eye that includes the pupil, iris, sclera cap and soft fleshy tissues that surround the eye.



The types of eyes available on the market today were developed specifically for taxidermy. There are many advantages and disadvantages of each. Manufactured eyes are a great starting point for the carver and for the taxidermist who is constantly reminded that time is money. The problem of manufactured eyes be they glass or plastic is they are limited in sizes, colors and pupil size unless you are painting a clear glass eye called flints. Eyes that are carved or sculpted then painted requires some patience to master but is rewarding in that there are no limitations on size, colors or size and shape of the pupils. When I started carving fish I remember seeing the works of carvers who won the Worlds Championship, who wrote all the books we read and study today, and thought to myself, "Boy wouldn't be great to carve and paint as well as they do?" Well, 5 years later and I have discovered what makes them great carvers and painters is their constant drive for accuracy, perfection and expanding their techniques to go one step beyond what everyone else is doing and they all paint their eyes. After attending a class taught by Jeff Compton he convinced us that painting an eye can be done easily if you follow a few basic steps and he was right. Eye sizes will vary between some species, age and nutritional state of the fish.

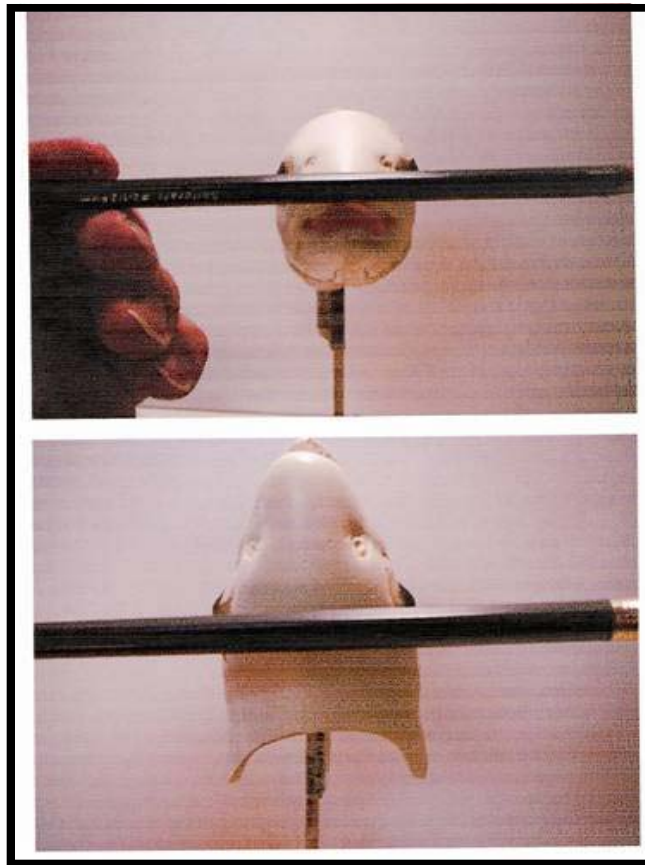
Using the correct size of eye is important to get the right look in your carving. Sometimes, as in the case for some manufactured eyes, you might require an eye size that is in between what is available. For example, manufactured eyes come in even numbers 8mm,10mm, 12mm etc and you might need one, say 9mm. The pros advice us to go with the smaller eye, the 8mm would be your choice. If you are having difficulty deciding what size of eye to use for the size of your fish, refer to the latest WASCO catalog pages 108 through 119. Below is an example of species, body length and eye sizes required that are listed.

SM Bass	Bluegill	Walleye
11"- 12mm	3.5" - 6mm	25" - 20mm
14"- 14mm	9" - 12mm	36" - 22mm
18"- 16mm	12" - 14mm	+ - 24mm

Numerous other warm water, cold water, and salt water species are also included so if you find yourself stumped check it out.

SETTING THE EYE

It may sound a little corny to say that it takes a good eye to set an eye but I would be right. When setting your eyes use what you can to make sure your eyes are positioned evenly from side to side. It is easy to get the first one in but then trying to match it, sometimes it's easier said than done. Try this, use a straight edge pencil or ruler to sight across the front to check if one eye is up or down in relationship to the other. Looking downward from the top check to make sure one eye is not ahead or behind the other.



A head cocked slightly one way or the other will complicate things so another tip from the pros is to keep your patterns straight until you get past the head. Setting the eye sometimes requires that you also sculpt some of the associate structures like the soft fleshy tissue

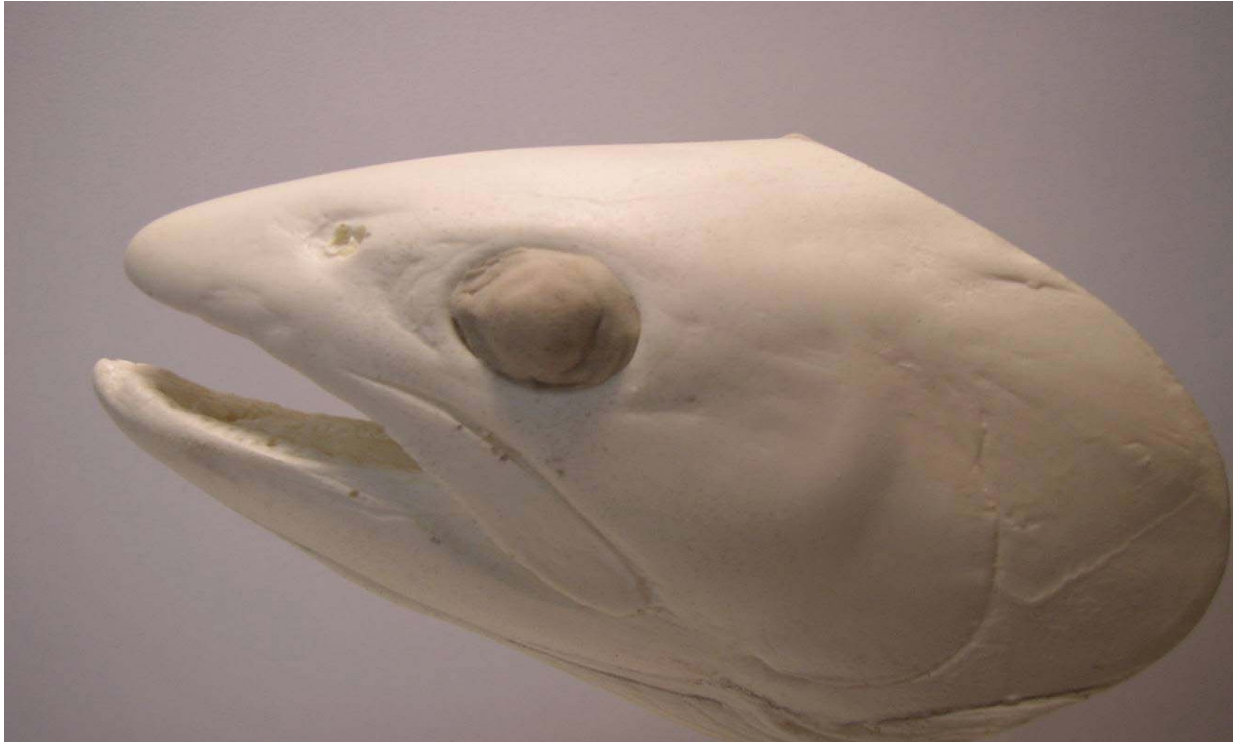
forward and behind the eye and the sclera cap. When using a two part epoxy it is a good idea to prepare the glass or plastic eye by placing a protective barrier such as tape or clay on the inside painted surface to avoid any possible adverse reaction with the painted surface and the epoxy. Once the eye is prepared apply a small dab of epoxy to the back of the eye and enough in the eye socket that when you press the eye in a small amount will squeeze out from around the edges. The epoxy at the top of the eye then can be used to model or sculpt in the sclera cap.



Before sculpting the sclera capsule, position both eyes to achieve the attitude you wish the eyes to reflect. It is at this moment you can tell your story. Some required reading on all aspects of eyes, positioning included, is found in a timeless article called, "The Eyes Have It ", located in issue 57 of Breakthrough Magazine and written by Clark Schreibeis.

SCULPTING EYES

Using your favorite two part epoxy fill the eye socket and mound enough so that when you use your eye mold it will be enough to form the eye and leave some excess.



EYE MOLD

The eye mold I am using is made from a wooden dowel that is shaped in the negative or concave. To shape the dowel, over grind that concave shape then insert a two part epoxy into the cavity. Take a manufactured glass eye of any size and wet the surface before inserting it into the cavity to make the eye mold so that it won't adhere to the epoxy. Remove the eye and let the epoxy set up. Next step is to grind the outer edge of the dowel to form a thin rim around the edge of the eye mold.

EYE MOLD



As you see there is a line on the face of the eye mold that indicates the forward part of the eye. In some manufactured eyes, the eye is not a perfect circle but slightly oval. The narrow part of that oval is the foreword part of the eye. The mark is then used on the eye mold to indicate where the pupil is pointed.



Using the eye mold repeat the same on the other side. You can make slight adjustments in the eye position by pressing into the eye again and shift the eye position by moving the eye mold to where you want it. Remember to keep the inside surface of the mold dampened to avoid it from sticking to the epoxy material. After you have formed and positioned each eye remove any excess and model in the sclera cap and any fleshy areas.



You see I have drawn a line on the head forward of where the eye is. It is pointing from the center of the eye to the nose of the fish. I will align the line on the eye mold to the line on the head to get the right look.



Here are some sculpted eyes that have the pupil, iris and sclera cap drawn in and ready to paint. Notice how it is possible to influence pupil size and position. Being able to do that will help tell your story and make your eyes visually interesting.

SCULPTED EYE



GLASS EYE



Thanks for following along and in part two of INTRODUCTION TO EYES we will cover painting glass eyes, sculpted eyes, and how to carve eyes in natural finish fish. ****MERRY CHRISTMAS****

EYE SUPPLIERS AND BRAND NAMES

Aqua Eyes-Plastic-by Dan Rinehart

Tohickon Eyes-glass- painted/unpainted

Natural Eyes-glass- by Van Dyke's Supply

Flex Eyes-Plastic-by Wayne Cooper-Wasco

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