

## Artists Statement

Moving to the state of Alaska in 1983 exposed me to the forces of the natural world like few places on our planet can. It changed my life and it changed my art. Living on the edge of the Tongass National Forest and being in such close proximity to the wild world with deep woods on one side of me and the deep ocean on the other, was magical for me and transformative for my art. It fueled my creative spirit and filled me with an urge to try and translate that raw power to paper and canvas, and oddly enough fish became my emissary from that untamed world.

It's fairly obvious when looking at my work that I'm obsessed with our scaly brethren, but why? It's hard to explain an obsession rationally but I've been asked countless times and my answer is always multi-faceted. In short I still find the topic fascinating and with over 25,000 living species to choose from one can see why the topic is nearly inexhaustible. I can say that they've become vehicles for my moods, my thoughts, and my opinions about the human condition and our own place in the grand biological scheme of things. Sometimes whimsical, sometimes menacing and edgy, the fish lead me on, diving deeper into further creative explorations.

As I spent more time delving into the topic my curiosities led me to befriend scientists and writers. I slowly came to realize that scientific inquiry and artistic inquiry overlap beautifully as both disciplines seek to 'know the world' in overlapping ways. I've embarked on many an adventure since then and have found myself in some pretty strange places, like crawling around on my hands and knees looking for trilobite fossils on a tiny Southeast Alaskan island or deep in the Amazon rainforest wrestling caimans at night. Needless to say my creative batteries have been endlessly recharged by these associations. They led me to believe that the cross currents between art, science, music and literature are the waters I prefer to swim in.

I've also found it immensely gratifying to share that sense of artistic adventure with other people through collaborative art projects, exhibits, lectures, performance events, and books. It's especially rewarding to pass that sense of wonder and delight onto the next generation when I've spoken at schools and universities. It makes my strange quest seem worthwhile.

Ray Troll