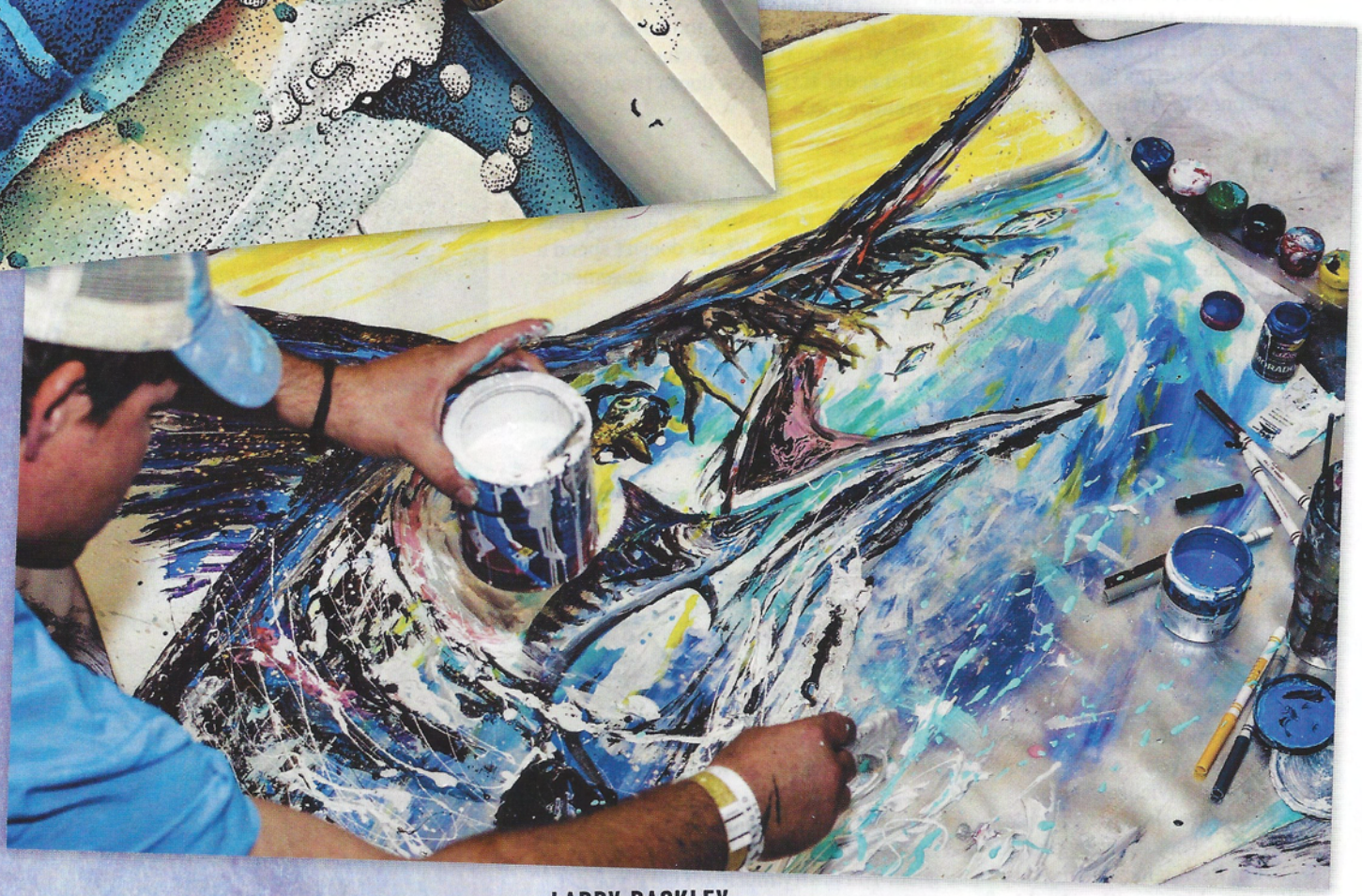
STEVE GOIONE

making waves

Marine art captures the imagination of those who love the sea.

STORY BY PATTI VERBANAS



LARRY RACKLEY

Those who love the outdoors appreciate the quiet solitude and breathless adrenaline rush depicted in sporting art, a genre that showcases the world of hunting, fishing, and wildlife encounters. The market for marine art, a long-popular subcategory, is holding strong, fueled by those who appreciate the wild beauty of saltwater fish and the artists who capture their spirit through an innate understanding that only comes from decades of fishing and studying these brave creatures.

From the vibrant, true-to-life depictions of Carey Chen and the realistic watercolors of Steve Goione to the abstract renderings of Larry Rackley, marine artists bring to life the fish so many seek and harness the emotion that every fisherman feels when he ventures out on the open seas.

To truly render these magnificent creatures, one must have experienced them, and Chen, Goione, and Rackley—all veteran fishermen—lead the market in authentic depictions that not only capture the anatomy of these great fish, but showcase their spirit. We visited with these three artists to talk about the inspiration they derive from being on the ocean, how being a fisherman first trained their artistic eye, and how they use their talent to give back to communities in need.

STEVE GOIONE

How did you get into painting? As a child, I lived near Barnegat Bay in New Jersey, so I grew up on fishing boats, catching more bluefish, flounder, and sea trout than venturing out shark fishing. My parents had the forethought to give me markers, pads, pastels. I loved graphic design, creating cartoons, logos—you name it. Later, I got an art degree from the Ringling College of Art and design, where I fell in love with combining watercolor and pen-and-ink.

After school, I entered a career in corporate graphic design. In my spare time, I fished and created paintings of bluefin tuna or mako sharks. People saw my work and asked me to do pieces. Things changed the moment I met Pete Barrett, editor of *The Fisherman*, at a shark fishing seminar. When he learned I was a graphic designer, he hired me to do line drawings for the company's line of fishing books. We started fishing together. He introduced me to people from *Salt Water Sportsman*, and my career took off from there.

Describe your art. I participate in up to 20 billfish events worldwide each year and create paintings of fish and sportfishing yachts. I paint in watercolor first on watercolor board, and then finish with pen-and-ink pointillism, which is extremely detailed work. I use triple-zero and double-zero pens that allow me to add minute details like rod holders and antennae on the boats. The heavier watercolor board allows my precise pen-and-ink dots to stay crisp.

Tell us about your charity work. I support a lot of efforts, like the Billfish Foundation and regional charities. Each year, I do an original painting for The Big Rock charity auction. One of my paintings could sell at auction for $30,000; it's outstanding to see that work I create can raise so much money for these charities.

Another cause that is important to me is the Freedom Alliance, which supports military families and wounded service members. Every April, it brings 15 wounded special operations veterans to Costa Rica for a week of healing, relaxing, and fishing. I've participated for about five years by doing paintings and giving them prints and apparel. It has been life changing for me. The veterans give me more then I give to them.

See Goione's work on Instagram @stevetgoione.

CARY CHEN

How did you get started as an artist? I was a fisherman before I was an artist. I grew up in Jamaica; when I was 19, I moved to Florida and got my first boat. I returned to Jamaica to fish in tournaments, and that became my passion. I always knew I had artistic talent, but never pursued it formally. The colors of the fish we saw in the water were so amazing that I wanted to capture what I saw. I started sketching and then painting them with acrylic on canvas.

Around 1995, people at Capt. Harry's Fishing Supply saw my art and asked me to do a cover of their tackle catalog. Word started to spread. I was invited to host the Puerto Rico International Blue Marlin Tournament, where I met many international anglers who invited me to tournaments all over the Caribbean. Today I do about 45 tournaments a year and paint commissions for fisherman.

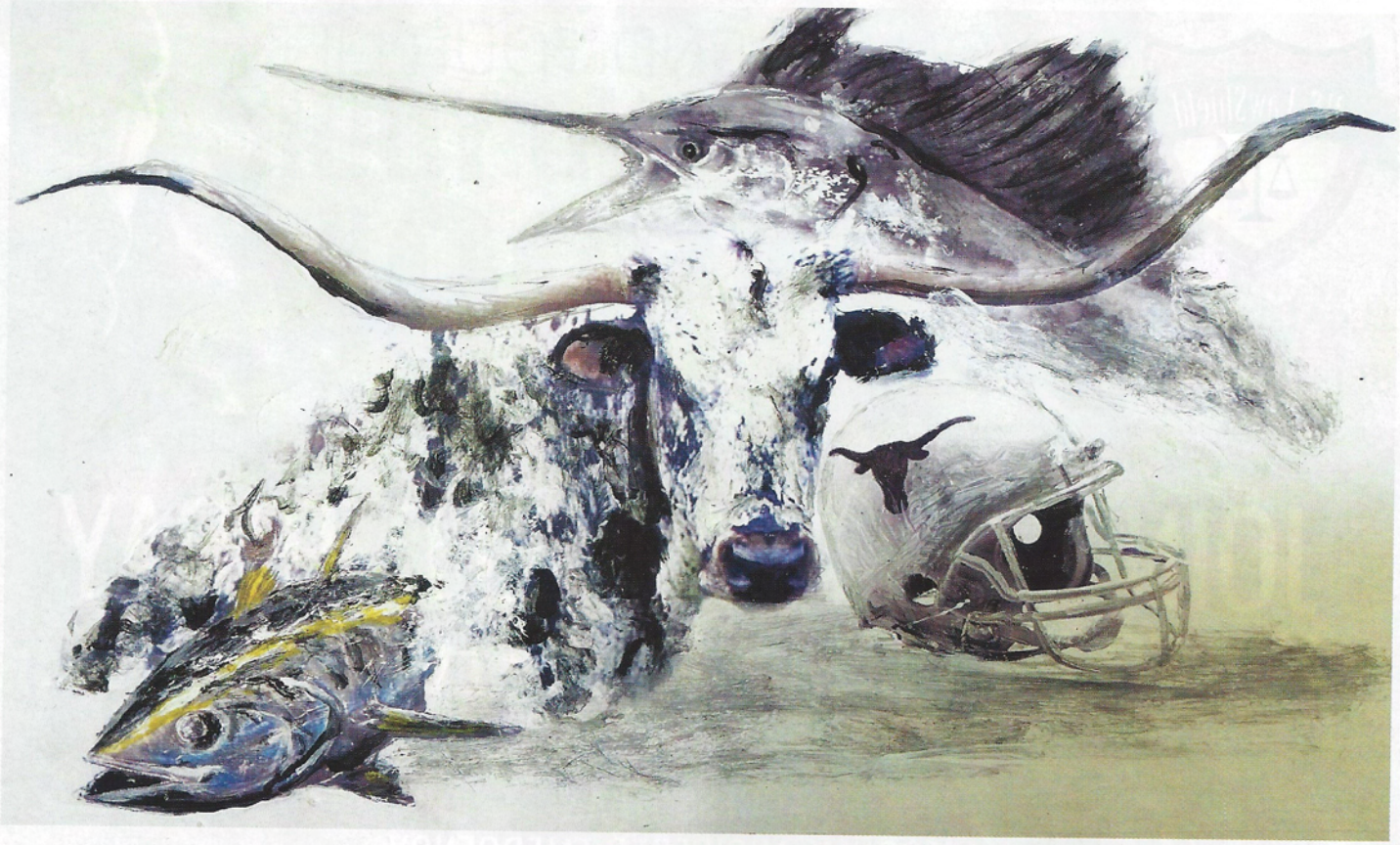
How do you render the fish so accurately? Only fishermen really know these fish's true color. Even photographs can't capture what they look like in the sea, what we see with our eyes. The colors these fish produce when they are alive are phenomenal!

When we reel in a fish, I get really close and look at all the features, the anatomy, the muscles, and the colors before it turns gray. I have caught and seen so many fish up close that I have a sharp memory that allows me to just paint without even thinking. I can capture those true colors on canvas. I like working on larger canvases, like 30" x 30", because it allows me to really get the details.

What is your greatest fishing achievement? A couple of months ago, we broke a world record in Baja by catching and releasing 330 marlin in seven hours.

Tell us about your charity work. The reefs are being destroyed. When I paint, I depict the reefs as they used to look. I support and donate my art to the conservation groups, like Coastal Conservation Association, that are working to stop overfishing and oil spills.

See Chen's work at www.careychen.com.



LARRY RACKLEY

How did you get into painting? I've always been an artist—just taught myself—and always liked to be outdoors. When I left the Marine Corps after 12 years, I wanted to do something I loved. Since I loved fishing and loved to paint, painting big game fish was a way to combine my two passions. I've been painting professionally since 2007.

Tell us about how you work. I work in oil, glass, and with an airbrush. I paint on canvas, wood panel, boat cabin doors—anything, really. When I work with oil paint mixed with glass, I use a heavy board. I love painting offshore big game scenes more than anything—blue marlin and black marlin in particular—but I do other types, too, like fly fishing. I like to paint on site and then fine-tune the painting in my studio. Everything is original; I do not make reproductions.

I sell through word of mouth. In order for you to get a painting, I either need to meet you, know you, or have you referred to me by someone. I've done work for some celebrities and two presidents: Donald Trump and George H. W. Bush.

What do you love most about fishing? I love the thrill of the hunt and the camaraderie of being out on the water with people who love the sport. The underwater world is so beautiful.

Tell us about your charity work. I work with a number of charities—such as Coastal Conservation Association, Ducks Unlimited, and the Billfish Foundation—and children's hospitals. I especially love working with the kids, letting them get up close to these big fish. When I was growing up, they would never let us go to the weigh-in booth, much less touch a marlin. It's neat to allow the kids to do this.

See Rackley's work at www.facebook.com/larryrackley.