



WARD WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WILDFOWL CARVING COMPETITION AND ART FESTIVAL

RULES FOR FISH CARVING

The Ward Foundation is in partnership with Breakthrough Magazine to host the Fish Carving Competition. The rules for Fish Carving are modified from the rules found on Breakthrough Magazines website. And were revised for this document March 2018.

COMPETITION LEVELS

The competition is open to wood sculptors of any level of artistic skill. There are four levels of competition: Open, Intermediate, Novice, and Youth. The wood sculpture must be of a fish or fishes, though it may contain other animals or marine life as habitat.

Open: This level represents advanced amateur and professional carvers, including those who have obtained top rankings in competitions. Entrants compete for cash awards, ribbons, and Best in Show.

Intermediate: This level includes carvers who have refined their sculpting and painting skills beyond the Novice Level. Intermediate carvers compete for ribbons and Best of Show-Intermediate awards and cash if sponsors come forward.

Novice: This level is reserved for entry-level carvers. Novice carvers compete for ribbons and Best of Show Novice awards and cash if sponsors come forward.

Youth: This level is reserved for entry-level carvers who are age 17 or under on the opening date of registration for the competition

The Open Level

How Best in Show Fish Carving Titles are Determined

There are three Best in Show titles in the Open Level. They are awarded in these three divisions: Decorative Lifesize, Decorative Miniature, Natural Finish, and Freestyle.

Open Level Divisions are elite divisions for those carvers whose work demonstrates the highest level of artistry and technique. Judging standards are the most demanding with the very best carvings earning the title "Best In Show."

The Decorative Lifesize Division will have Best in Show, Second in Show, and Third in Show. The judges will make the final decisions.

The Best in Show Decorative Miniature will be selected from the Best of Category winners in that division.

The Best in Show Natural Finish will be selected from the Best of Category winners in that division.

JUDGING CRITERIA

The following definitions of judging criteria have been adopted by the World Fish Carving Championships and are followed at the Ward World Championship. Each criterion is given equal weight in the judging process. These criteria will be used for all levels of competition and divisions except Youth Level, Natural Finish Wood Sculpture Division, and Freestyle Division where separate judging criteria are explained.

Technique/Craftsmanship refers to the technical skills involved in fish carving: sculpting, painting, and finishing techniques and their execution. It covers the fish or fishes, any habitat or accessories that may be involved, and the base itself if there is one. Craftsmanship should be consistent throughout the entire piece. Good craftsmanship is basic to fish carving. Without it, a piece will not be rewarded by the judges.

Accuracy involves the correctness of a piece from a scientific perspective. Is the fish the right size and proportion? Are the fins the right shape? Are the coloration and patterns correct? Are the eyes properly placed? All these are questions of accuracy. Anything accompanying the fish must be given the same scrutiny. Accuracy involves the natural history of the whole piece, all of its components, and the appropriateness of these components together.

Essence of the Species involves taking accuracy one step further. It involves a thorough knowledge of the subject and the ability to capture an attitude in wood. For example, you see a fish at dusk. You can't see any details in the failing light, just a silhouette, and the head immediately identifies it as a crappie. The essence of the fish is there without a scale or soft-fin ray count, a measurement of length, or a check on color. You may have flawlessly created your fish with faultless accuracy, but unless you have captured the essence of your subject and given it the spark that brings it to life, your fish will not achieve its fullest potential.

Artistry of a piece involves its design and composition. This is where presentation, innovation, and creativity all come into play. There should be a beauty in the concept apart from the beauty of the fish itself. Line, form, content, color, mass, and movement should all be working together to create an integrated whole. Of all the concerns in carving, artistry is the most elusive, the most difficult to explain, to teach, to analyze in the work of others, and to instill in a carver's own work. The difficulty, however, is an indication of the importance.

Overall Presentation. What is rare is often what is valuable. Fish carving requires a multitude of technical skills brought together in overall presentation. Additionally, it requires a thorough knowledge and understanding of fish scientifically as well as emotionally, but most importantly, it involves the ability to bring all these elements together artistically. If a fish carving is to move beyond craft to art, our goals and expectations must do the same.

All criteria are important. They all overlap and build on each other. In order for a piece to reach its fullest potential it must succeed in all five areas simultaneously. For the sake of clarity we have dealt with them individually, but in reality the distinctions are not so clear cut. As a competitor moves through the different

levels of competition and eventually to the Open Level, technique/craftsmanship and accuracy as criteria are taken almost for granted, as these are the tools expected to have been mastered, allowing the artist to concentrate on essence of the species and artistry of the competition piece entered.

Some rules are open to individual interpretation, giving an artist as much artistic license as possible; some are very specific. It is up to the judges to interpret the rules with guidance from the World Fish Carving Competition Chairman. The judges' decisions are final.

DETERMINING BEST OF CATEGORY AND DIVISION AWARDS

Carvings are grouped by Level, then by Division, then by Category, and then by Class if warranted. A class may be created provided three or more of the same species are entered into the category and at least three or more fish remain. If this scenario is determined by the judges then the carvings of the same species will be grouped into one class, and the remaining entries will be grouped into a second class. Each class will be judged and first-, second-, and third-place ribbons will be awarded. Once the class ribbons are awarded, the three best fish in the category will receive first-, second-, and third-place ribbons. The first-place fish will be recognized as Best of Category.

Best of Division

Best of Division winners are selected from the Best of Category winners. Once a Best of Division is selected, the second place entry in that category will move up to compete for Second in Division against other category winners. Third in Division will be selected using the same procedure. It is possible for first-, second-, and third-place winners within one category to also win first, second, and third Best of Division.

General Rules and Information

Individual Work: Entries must be original design and concept and must be the work of the individual whose name the carving is entered in the competition. If after judging it is determined that this policy has been violated, the award will be rescinded.

Nameplates: The name of the artist should not be visible. The name will be taped over to prevent judges from seeing it.

Glass Cases: Glass cases or domes must be removed for judging or suffer a penalty.

SPECIFIC DIVISION RULES

Decorative Lifesize Division

Decorative Miniature Division

1. The entry will consist of one or more fish of any species with emphasis on creating an innovative and artistic composition.

2. Entries are to be made of wood. Other materials may be used for habitat and structural purposes, however, they are to be hand-formed with the exception of eyes. Pre-painted eyes of glass, plastic, or other materials may be purchased and are eligible in this division at all levels.

3. Entries for Miniature Division must be one-half size or less and must be 8 inches or less in every dimension for the fish only. Both criteria must be met.

4. Large fish may compete in Decorative Lifesize Division as a reduced version provided the carved fish(es) are at least 18 inches in length. There is no maximum size. For example a 12-foot, 600-pound marlin or a 6-foot, 80-pound chinook salmon would be carved so that the minimum size is 18 inches and reflects the mature anatomy of the life-size fish.

5. Any artist with an entry not suitable for tabletop display is required to notify The Ward Museum at least two weeks before the show for logistics and set-up reasons.

Natural Finish Wood Sculpture Division Interpretive Fish Carvings Category

Entries will be judged on technique/craftsmanship, artistry, interpretation of the essence of the species, artistry, overall presentation, and originality. A carving should emphasize form, content, and movement rather than a realistic duplication of the fish. It should be presented in a style that provokes thought and wonder.

1. Subject may be entrant's choice from any fish.

2. Entry is to be entirely of wood with the exception of the base. The base may be of other material and will be considered as part of the sculpture. No artificial eyes can be used in this division. If a natural finish carving has glass eyes it can be entered in the Freestyle Division.

3. If a supporting pedestal under the base is needed, it must be provided by the artist and it will not be considered as part of the sculpture.

4. Interpretive Wood Sculpture entries have no size restrictions.

5. Stains and other finishes may be used as long as they do not completely cover or block the grain of the wood.

Realistic Natural Finish Category

Entries will be judged on craftsmanship, artistry, interpretation of the essence of the species, overall presentation, and originality. A carving should emphasize form, content, and movement yet be more like a realistic duplication of the fish than the Interpretive Fish Carving Category. It need not include scale renderings or fin rays and may be painted opaquely over parts of the fish. It should be presented in a style that provokes thought and wonder.

1. Subject may be entrant's choice from any fish.

2. Entry is to be entirely of wood with the exception of the base. The base may be of other material and will be considered as part of the sculpture. No artificial eyes can be used in this division. If a natural finish carving has glass eyes it can be entered in the Freestyle Division.

3. If a supporting pedestal under the base is needed, it must be provided by the artist and it will not be considered as part of the sculpture.

4. Realistic Natural Finish entries have no size restrictions.

Freestyle Division

Entries will be judged on technique, craftsmanship, essence of the species, artistry, and overall presentation. It is our hope that this Freestyle Division will release the creative efforts of fish carvers that may have felt restricted by other rules and class requirements for competition.

1. Entries are to be made at least partially of wood but may be supplemented by non-wood materials beyond the decorative division restriction of metal for structural support or glass eyes. Any materials are permitted and should be specified in the entry registration. All parts of the sculpture must be hand-formed and original. Castings and molds of existing fish or habitat items, such as insects or seashells, are not permitted.

2. Entries in this category may include paint or other materials that cover or replace wood for structural or other creative uses. Items may be bronzed, transition from driftwood into decorative, or include some metal which is hand-formed into the piece.

3. Opaquely painted fish without scales or fin rays, commonly known as "smoothies," and any other fish carving which cannot meet other division requirements, may compete in this division. Again, it is our hope that the Freestyle Division will release the creative efforts of fish carvers that may have felt restricted by earlier rules and class requirements for competition.

4. If a base is used, it may be made of any material and construction, however, it will be included for judging on technique, craftsmanship, artistry, and overall presentation.

5. Any artist with an entry not suitable for tabletop display is required to notify Breakthrough two weeks ahead of the show for logistics and set-up reasons.

New Freestyle Division Categories

Smoothie

1. This category is for lifesize fish or entries that fit the reduced scale criteria, which contain no carved or burned scale or fin ray details.

2. Details of the head may be highly detailed if desired.

3. Painting of the highest quality is encouraged.

Transitional Sculpture

1. This category is for fish that are either free-form, three-dimensional art (from caricature, to chip carving, to northwest Indian, etc.), or functional art (fish head paper weights, lamps, bookends, etc.).
 2. Entries are to be made at least partially of wood, but may be supplemented by non-wood material beyond the decorative division restriction of metal for structural support or glass eyes. Any materials are permitted and should be specified in the entry registration. All parts of the sculpture must be hand formed and original, castings and molds of existing fish or "habitat" such as insects or seashells, are not permitted.
 3. Entries in this category may include paint or other materials that cover or replace wood for structural or other creative uses. Items may be bronzed, transition from driftwood into decorative, or include some metal which is hand-formed into the piece.
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Youth Carving Level

This competition is to encourage youth to become engaged in the art form of fish carving, and to provide a venue to present their carvings to the public and give them competition experience. Entries may be done under the supervision of an adult, but the youth must do the carving and painting.

Entries will be judged on technique, craftsmanship, accuracy, essence of the species, artistry, and overall presentation.

Youth Division(s)

A separate Youth Division will be established if there are enough entries to fill one or more of the categories with 3 or more entries. Classes will be established in a manner similar to other levels provided there are enough carvings to do so. For example, if there are three or more entries from competitors over 15 years old, and three or more are 14 years old or younger, the youth division will be split into two age categories divided into 17-15 age (YDC -1), and 14 and under (YDC-2).

The division categories will be: Decorative Lifesize, Interpretive, and Smoothies.

Youth Rule Exceptions. All entries will be judged for first, second, and third category ribbons, while Youth Level Best of Division ribbons may only be awarded if enough fish are entered, resulting in a breakout into YDC-1 and YDC-2 divisions.

1. You must be 17 or younger at the time of the show opening.
 2. Entries are to be life-size or less, realistic, or interpretive in nature.
 3. Entries must be made of wood. Glass or plastic eyes are permitted as are other materials for habitat and structural purposes. Hand-formed habitats are encouraged but not required for youth entries.
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