

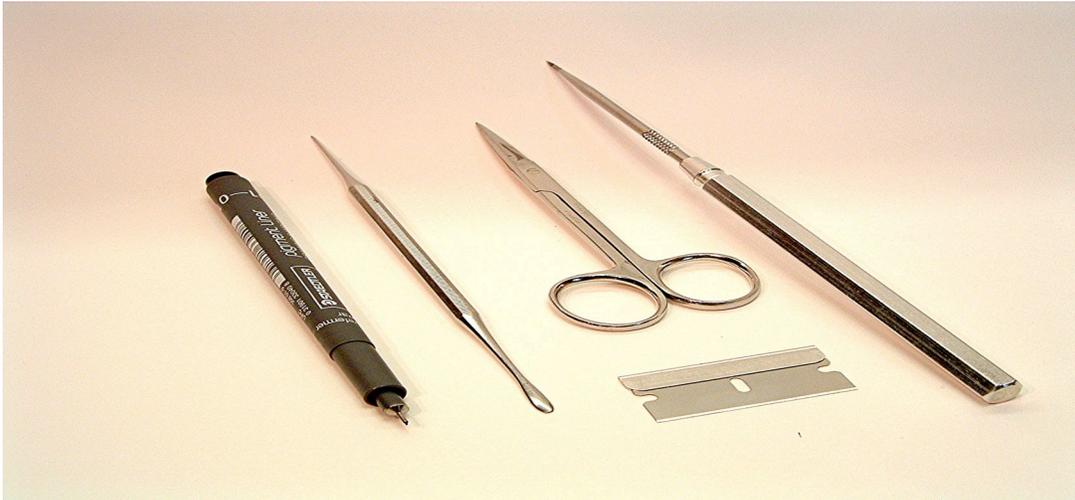
FISH IMAGE FEATHER INLAYS

By Pat Vinzant

INTRODUCTION: Rod Builders use various forms of art to enhance the beauty of their custom rods. This includes thread art, marbleizing with paint and inlaying feathers. Feather inlays include a single feather or multiple feathers to create a design or image. Please read the article on feather inlays in *RODCRAFTER JOURNAL*, Volume 32, Number 2, April-June 2006. This presentation will be limited to using feathers to create an inlay which represents a generic or a specific species of fish.

TOOLS AND MATERIAL REQUIRED: Most of the tools required you already use for custom rod building. There are a few you may not use and they are discussed below.

Tools



a. Small sharp pointed pen is used in conjunction with a template to place dot images on the rod blank. The pen shown above is a Staedtler drawing pen with a 0.1 point. It should be available at most art supply stores.

b. A thread tool of some sort is used to place small amounts of color preserver on the rod blank where small feather parts are to be located.

c. Scissors and plenty of sharp razor blades to cleanly cut feathers.

d. Sharp tool to punch small holes in the template.

Material



- a. Your choice of color preserver. U-40 Color lock works the best for me but others may work just as well. The important thing is that it dries clear.
- b. Small hard surfaced card (like a business card) and a small piece of rubber (custom grip). The card is used to create a template with punched holes. The rubber works as backing as holes are punched.
- c. Of course we need feathers. The ones shown here are peacock hurl, dyed guinea and white hen feather. With just these three feathers you can do a fish inlay of a large mouth bass. For this type of inlay use inexpensive feathers that are available at Cabela's or art and craft stores.

PROCEDURAL STEPS:

Step 1. First we need to select a fish image we want to transform into a feather inlay. There are many sources for these images: pictures, fishing publications or even weaving patterns. Make sure you do not violate any copy right rules. Once you have selected the image, make a tracing or drawing. Determine the length and width that the image must be to fit the intended rod location. Either reduce or enlarge the image to its required dimensions. Use double stick tape to stick the image to a business size card. Use a sharp pick to punch holes to outlining the image. This creates a template. Once a template is created it can be reused a number of times. This template is to fish image inlays as the weave pattern is to weaving. It also provides the capability to maintain the correct body part proportions, while keeping the inlay in alignment with the rod center line.

Step 2. Prepare the rod blank location for the planed feather image. Recommend the image location be under wrapped with a neutral colored thread then apply color preserver (unless you are using metallic thread) and two coats of finish. Let dry over night. This is important as some feathers must be trimmed once they are placed on the rod.



Step 3. Tape template to rod blank. Make sure the centerline of the fish image aligns with the centerline of the blank (0 or 180 degrees)



Step 4. Use a small pointed pen to create dot image on rod blank. Let the ink dry for a few minutes before you remove the template.



Dot image on rod.

Step 5. Select feathers and prepare them for application. If the feathers are dyed, soak them in alcohol and let dry. Removing the excess dye prevents bleeding of colors. Once the feathers have been cleaned and dried, strip the fuzzy part of the feather from the quill. Use the template as a guide to pre-cut the feathers to be used on the upper and lower body of the fish image. Cut the feathers slightly larger than the outline requires. Insure the feather's fibers flow from the head to the tail of the image, as shown below.

SELECT



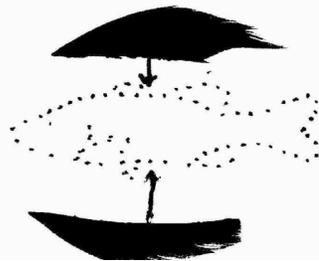
STRIP



PRE-CUT



CUT TO SIZE



Step 6. Applying a feather. Those who work with feathers frequently generally develop their own technique for picking up feathers or feather parts and applying them to the rod blank. Small feather parts are somewhat more difficult to apply than larger feathers. What ever technique or method is used some practice is required. Practice with larger pieces of feathers on large diameter rods and work down to smaller feather pieces until you feel comfortable with the procedure. In doing this you may develop your own technique. The following is the process I use and you may find it also works for you. Apply color preserver (CP) to the rod location where the feather part is to be inlaid. Let dry until it becomes slightly tacky. Put a small drop of CP on the thread tool, touch it to the feather part and place the feather part to its inlay spot. Lift the rod tool from the feather part. If the feather needs a movement to re-position it, wipe the thread tool clean of all CP and use it to drag the feather part. When you are satisfied the feather part is in the right location, let dry then apply more CP. Be careful as additional CP may cause the feather part to move. When it's dry use the thread tool as a "roller" to smooth out the feather part.





Place bottom body feather



Pick up and place top feather. Use thread tool to smooth out feathers and push feathers inside the dot outline. If feathers become difficult to move, wet with CP around the outer edge of the feather and push inward with the thread tool until dots appear. Apply CP to each dot, rub with thread tool and dot will disappear.

Step 7. Use peacock hurl to create fins. Use the template as a guide to cut peacock hurl pieces to the approximate size. Make sure the pieces are slightly longer than required. Apply each piece to create the tail and fins using the same technique as described in step 6. When the hurl is dry, use a razor blade to trim the pieces to their correct length. Be careful not to cut through the finish. The correct technique is to carefully cut through the hurl, then use the thread tool to scrape off the unwanted portion of the hurl. With a little practice you will be able to cut straight or curved lines without doing damage to the rod finish.

Step 8. Use a thin piece of hurl to create the mouth. This and the eye are two of the most difficult parts of the feather inlay to finish. As an alternative the mouth can also be created with thread. To do this, apply CP to the outline of the mouth and lay the thread directly to the CP creating the mouth. Use longer pieces of thread and when dry trim to the correct length using a razor blade. The same procedure may also be applied to the gill plates. At this point apply a coat of finish. Let dry for 12 hours. Now it is time to create the eye. Use a gold paint tube to apply a single drop of paint to the eye location. Don't worry if you don't like its location, wipe off with a coffee filter saturated with alcohol and try again. This is why a coat of finish was applied. When the gold paint is dry, use a fine pointed black marker to create the pupil. You will notice that the size of the eye and placement of the pupil changes the action image of the fish! When you are satisfied with the eye, touch up any gaps in the feathers with a colored marker. As an added touch you can create a bait fish or lure being attacked. When satisfied, apply two or more coats of finish.



SUMMARY: The skills required to be proficient at any of the arts we use to enhance the beauty of custom fishing rods are all acquired by education, training, sharing ideas, actual hands on performance and experience. Creation of fish image feather inlays uses the same mythology rod builder's use who inlay custom grip handles with colorful images of all sorts. The concept is to make a pattern or template, cut material into small pieces and stick them back together much like a puzzle. The same basically applies to rod builders who make cork inlay handles. None of us were good at any of these art forms at first. It takes a lot of practice and patience before most of us feel comfortable or pleased with our initial efforts. Feather inlays are somewhat difficult at first but once you learn how to pick up a feather place it on the rod (and it stays there) every thing else will fall into place. I encourage you to practice on scrap rod pieces and keep your first efforts so you can compare them to the ones subsequently made. This way you can see how quickly your feather working skills have improved. Please contact me if I may assist you in your feather inlay questions.

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