

The Lure Of The Ocean *The Paintings of Stanley Meltzoff* *Exhibit Opening in Greenwich, CT*

By Fred Polhemus

A comprehensive one-man show featuring the work of premier sporting artist Stanley Meltzoff (1917-2006) will open on February 9 at the Bruce Museum in Greenwich, CT. With more than 30 paintings scheduled for exhibition, this show will be the first of its kind in Fairfield County, focusing on his breathtaking renderings of the world's apex game fish.

Fans of fine sporting art will have no trouble recalling Stanley Meltzoff. Born in Brooklyn, NY, his career included four years as a *Stars and Stripes* newspaper correspondent during World War II, postwar teaching at the prestigious Pratt Institute of Art in New York, and many decades as a highly successful commercial artist and illustrator. Meltzoff paintings have graced the covers of *Field & Stream*, *Scientific American*, *The Saturday Evening Post* and many other publications. Among his most famous work is the cover of the iconic 1976 AT&T bicentennial phone book, of which more than 176 million were distributed

nationwide.

To say the water was in Stanley Meltzoff's blood is an understatement. He began diving off the New Jersey coast in 1922 and spearfishing in 1946. Meltzoff's career took an abrupt turn after securing a commission from *Sports Illustrated* in 1960 to do a series of game fish paintings unlike anything ever done to that point. As Stanley put it so well, "My wife was ill, my children needed college money and I was almost 60 years old. I stood on the corner of 56th Street and Lexington Avenue in the rain with a soggy portfolio in my hands, flat feet and flat broke while I tried to think of something to do."

It was at that point that Meltzoff combined his love for diving and fish with his skill as a painter and illustrator, starting down a path that would see him emerge as one of the world's preeminent "picture-makers" of fish and the undersea world.

Meltzoff dove with all of the major game fish in countless bodies of water, creating masterful paintings of these encounters for such publications as *Sports Illustrated*, *National Geographic*, *Gray's Sporting Journal*, *Life* and *Field & Stream*, to name just a few. He is the father and founder of the genre of painting fish in their natural environment.

Over the many decades of his career, he traveled the globe in search of countless species of fish that he studied, photographed and interacted with in their natural environment.



Striped Bass at Anchor In Chesapeake Bay



Elberon Autumn

He then put his masterful brushwork on canvas to create images that, for most, are the only way these beautiful animals can be seen.

He received numerous awards for his exceptional images of ocean life below the surface and was inducted into the Society of Illustrators Hall of Fame. His contribution to sporting art and, in particular, game fish art, is immeasurable and helped elevate the subject matter to the highest level of art.

His dramatic and incredibly detailed pictures of striped bass, bluefish, sailfish, and other species proved to be breathtaking and set a high bar for other artists. Widely published and repeatedly honored throughout his career, Meltzoff's death in 2006 stilled a brush that will never be equaled.

Stanley Meltzoff was a talented, complex man, physically and intellectually robust, articulate, fearless, curious, and outspoken. His intellect intimidated more than a few.

When Meltzoff died in 2006 at age 89, a book project he'd been working on for more than two decades was put on hold. Soon after Stanley passed away, his widow did as well, thus further delaying the finishing of the book. The book finally saw the light of day, after long-time friend and collector Mike Rivkin took the project on to finish writing and then publishing the work.

Stanley Meltzoff—Picture Maker (Silverfish Press) chronicles the life and work of this remarkable artist. It was co-authored, edited and published by Rivkin, a longtime California angler who has written four other books on the art and history of big game fishing. Rivkin became a fan of Meltzoff in the mid-1980s when he first spotted one of the artist's fish paintings (which he couldn't afford at the time) in the window of a gallery in New York City. After he sold his company in 2004, Rivkin was finally able to buy a Meltzoff original. In the process, he and the artist became friends.

The Bruce Museum approached the J. Russell Jinishian

Gallery in Fairfield, CT – Meltzoff's primary gallery for the last two decades – to help mount an exhibition that will offer the viewer a comprehensive look at the broad spectrum of this modern master as he portrayed nearly every species of game fish in their natural environments. From striped bass of the Long Island Sound and Jersey shore to black marlin in the South Pacific to bonefish and permit of the Bahamian flats – and everything in between – the exhibition will allow the viewer to marvel at and experience things they will likely never see on their own.

For more information on the exhibition, set to open February 9, contact The Bruce Museum at 203-869-0376 or brucemuseum.org. ♦

With over 20 years experience in the fine art industry, Fred Polhemus is an expert in the field of contemporary sporting art, working closely with the nation's leading sporting artists. One of the foremost authorities on Stanley Meltzoff's artwork, he contributed extensively to the launch of Stanley Meltzoff – Picture Maker.

Polhemus has worked closely with The Orvis Company for several years, and serves as Marketing Chair on the Board of the American Museum of Fly Fishing in Manchester, VT, providing guidance on art acquisitions for the museum's permanent collection. He has contributed to articles in Western Art & Architecture, Wildlife Art Magazine, Virginia Sportsman and Gray's Sporting Journal, and is a regular contributor to J. Russell Jinishian's Sporting Art News.

As the nation's leading gallery of fine marine and sporting art since 1997, the J. Russell Jinishian Gallery showcases over 100 of the world's leading artists, with an extensive inventory of paintings, drawings, sculpture, scrimshaw and ship models in a wide variety of subjects, styles and prices. Visit the J. Russell Jinishian Gallery at 1899 Bronson Road in Fairfield, CT, call 203-259-8753 or log onto jrusselljinishiangallery.com.