What's under the water?

Silver Arowanas are sometimes called ‘dragon fish’ by aquarists because their shiny, armor-like scales and double barbels are reminiscent of descriptions of dragons in East Asian folklore. The species is also called ‘monkey fish’ because of its ability to jump out of the water (up to 6 feet) and capture its prey. Its maximum total length is typically considered to be 0.9 m (3.0 ft), but there are reports of individuals up to 1.2 m (3.9 ft).

Although some Silver Arowana specimens have been found with the remains of birds, bats, mice, and snakes in their stomachs, its main diet consists of crustaceans, insects, smaller fish, and other animals that float on the water surface, which its drawbridge-like mouth is exclusively adapted for feeding on.

Arapaima can reach lengths more than 2 m (6 ft 7 in), in some exceptional cases even more than 2.5 m (8 ft 2 in) and over 100 kg (220 lb). The maximum recorded weight for the species is 200 kg (440 lb), while the longest recorded length was 4.52 m (15 ft). As a result of overfishing, large arapaima more than 2 m (6 ft 7 in) are seldom found in the wild.

The diet of the arapaima consists of fish, crustaceans, and small land animals that walk near the shore. The fish is an air breather, using its labyrinth organ, which is rich in blood vessels and opens into the fish’s mouth, an advantage in oxygen-deprived water that is often found in the Amazon River.

Vocabulary Definitions

Sovereign: A nation which is independent, governed by its people, and one that controls its own affairs.
Biodiversity: The variety of life in the world or in a particular habitat or ecosystem.
Fauna: The animals of a particular region, habitat, or geological period.
Assemblages: A collection or gathering of things or people.
Export: A commodity, article, or service sold abroad.
Import: A commodity, article, or service brought in from abroad for sale.
Port: A town or city with a harbor where ships load or unload.
Wharf: A level quayside area to which a ship may be moored to load and unload.
Berth: A ship’s allotted place at a wharf or dock.
Vessel: A ship or large boat, or a hollow container, especially one used to hold liquid.
Found Objects: Art created from undisguised, but often modified, objects or products that are not normally considered materials from which art is made.
Ornaments: A thing used to make something look more attractive but usually having no practical purpose.
Satire: The use of humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people’s stupidity or vices, particularly in politics and other current issues.
Recognition: Acknowledgment of something’s existence, validity, or legality.
Duality: The quality or condition of having two parts, elements, or aspects.
Colonize: To send a group of settlers to a place and establish political control over the area and its people.
Injustice: Lack of fairness or justice.
Quay: A concrete, stone, or metal platform in water used for loading and unloading ships.
1. Guyana is the third-smallest sovereign state on mainland South America after Uruguay and Suriname.
2. Guyana gained its independence from Britain on May 26, 1966.
3. There are nine indigenous tribes residing in Guyana: the Wai Wai, Macushi, Patamona, Lokono, Kalina, Wapishana, Pemon, Akawaio and Warao.
4. Guyana has one of the highest levels of biodiversity in the world. With 1,168 vertebrate species and 814 bird species, it boasts one of the richest mammalian fauna assemblages of any comparably sized area in the world.
5. Virtually all exports and imports are transported by sea. The main port of Georgetown, located at the mouth of the Demerara River, comprises several wharves, most of which are privately owned. In addition, three berths are available for oceangoing vessels at Linden.

One of the artists featured in "Displaced", is Hew Locke.

Hew Locke was born in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1959. In 1966, the Locke family relocated to Guyana just before its independence. “I saw a nation being born,” Locke says. “I saw a flag being designed. I saw the money literally being designed.” Locke returned to the UK in 1980 and has lived in London ever since.

In his artistic practice Locke uses a variety of different media to create his art, including found objects, cardboard, beads, and fake flowers. In some of his work he is known for decorating photographs, of statues of famous historical figures, with ornaments, plastic toys and jewelry. These pieces indicate a balance of critical satire and genuine recognition for the influence of certain political figures.

These images reflect the duality in Locke’s personal life having lived in both the colonized country of Guyana and the colonizing country of the United Kingdom. This experience of having seen both sides allows Locke to acknowledge the historical importance of these famous figures, while pointing out their flaws and the historical injustice that accompanies their legacy.

Locke’s work deals with more than just images of historical figures. His art also looks at transportation, trade, and history. In the exhibition “Displaced”, small scale boats with beautiful and elaborate decorations hang just above eye level; reminding viewers of the opportunities that lay ahead for each of us just beyond the “horizon”. 
DIY Art Assignment

Create a small boat, vessel, or ship out of recyclable materials. Use things like cardboard tubes, plastic bottles, popsicle sticks, etc. Make sure the material you use has been cleaned first of any food or chemicals. Glue, tape, string, and staples make good adhesives for binding materials together. For an added challenge be sure that your ship has a sail with a logo or design on it.

Practice learning perspective in two dimensions by drawing your boat from multiple angles. Perspective drawing is about recording the exact angles that make up a form. Doing so creates the illusion that the object is receding back in space towards the horizon. This exercise teaches the most when you make at least three drawings. One drawing should be set up so the boat is down below you and you have to draw it from above. Another drawing should be set up with the boat arm’s length from you but about the same height as your eyes. The final drawing should be set up so that the boat is resting above you and you are drawing from below the boat.

Making these drawings will be much easier if you have a strong light source aimed at your boat.

To really make your drawing look strong be sure to also draw the things that make up that background of your boat.

A good trick to measuring the angles of something you are looking at can be done with only a pencil and your arm. Without moving your seat, hold the pencil at arms length. Use the long side of the pencil to visually match the angle of the part of the thing you are looking at. Without bending your elbow or moving your wrist, move the pencil to your drawing and compare the angle of the pencil with the angle in your drawing.