Soap Stone Sculpture

Soapstone carving is an ancient practice dating back more than 3000 years ago. An art gallery has commissioned you to create a soapstone sculpture reflecting a specific animal or Inukshuk. The final work must show clear evidence of an influence from the Northern Canadian style/period.

You will gain appreciation of the art of Canada’s aboriginal peoples, develop problem solving skills in designing your own work in the Northern Canadian style with subtractive sculpture techniques, and learn to follow steps for cutting, carving, and polishing soap stone.

You will first create 3 different conceptual sketches (different angles – front, side and back), which will be evaluated. You will also submit a statement outlining the chosen subject matter of the work and artistic style in your sculpture and the sculpture techniques you used in creating it.

What is Soapstone?
There are three different kinds of rocks found on the earth. They are igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic. Soapstone is formed by changes in the structure of an igneous rock such as peridotite. These changes occur at low temperature and moderate pressure in the presence of water. Soapstone is then a metamorphic rock that forms in layers with different degrees of thickness.

Soapstone, which is also known as steatite, is a soft rock which is made up mostly of the mineral talc. It feels soapy or oily and can be found in a variety of colours such as white, gray, or grayish-green.

History: Cape Dorset is probably the most famous art producing community in Canada’s north. With so many talented sculptors, there is bound to be a wide range of styles; The Cape Dorset sculptural style is rooted in a love of naturalism and an interest in wildlife and the spirit world, but has incorporated a love of the flamboyant, the dramatic and the decorative.

Sculptures exhibit a strongly stylized or elegant naturalism, and are generally highly finished. One senses a certain self-consciousness on the part of the artists, as well as a desire to manipulate the material to a high degree.

STEP ONE: RESEARCH THE WORK OF OTHERS: Look at the examples on the following sheets and analysis the various interesting forms and shapes, what stylistic similarities can you note in the works?

STEP TWO: DRAW: In your sketchbook 3 different conceptual sketches of your chosen subject matter from 3 angles – front, side and back.
- Consider the elements and principles of design. (Shape, Form, Texture, Balance) How have other artists depicted the traditional soapstone carving form you are attempting to create?
- Consider the artist style: How will you reflect their traditional sculpture technique(s)?
- Your finished work must show clear evidence of influence from contemporary or past works of art.

STEP THREE: CREATE: Follow your approved 3 conceptual sketches, begin creating your work using soapstone and tools provided in class. WRITE your Artistic Statement Template to document your artistic process. REVIEW: the sculpture techniques in this handout.

STEP FOUR: REFLECT: Answer the following questions using the elements and principles of design and complete your Artistic Statement Template for formal evaluation.
1. What part of your finished project did you find most successful and why?
2. What part of your finished project did you find least successful and why?
3. If you had to do this project, what part would you change or improve on and why?
A) Subject Matter Chosen:____________

What stylistic similarities can you note between your work and works you have researched in the Northern Canadian style/period? (i.e shape, form and texture)

B) What did your chosen subject matter symbolize historically:

C) Sculpture techniques used in your work and how they reflect the chosen Northern Canadian style/period:
SCULPTURE TECHNIQUES: THE LOON
Subtractive sculpture techniques: Cutting, carving, and polishing soap stone

Mark the areas with pencil of where you will be carving.

Start by using the small hand-saw to remove the largest sections of stone.

Continue carving out areas of detail with the smaller metal files or sandpaper. Remember that this stone can be brittle and fragile, so don’t get too caught up in detail, keep the forms large and don’t use too much negative space.

When you are happy with your carving, immerse it in water and start sanding it wet with the roughest (lowest number) of black special paper. Use sandpaper, (various grades) Make sure that all areas are very smooth, with no cut marks.

Be sure to sand it wet, getting it as smooth and shiny as possible.

Let the sculpture dry for approximately 15 minutes in the sun, and then smooth it with some mineral oil.

When it’s smooth, go to the second roughest, and finally the smoothest (highest number) paper. Be sure to sand it wet, getting it as smooth and shiny as possible.
Inukshuk Symbolism pronounced IN-OOK-SHOOK

One of the purposes attributed to inukshuit is that they serve as markers or signposts to help guide the Inuit across the treeless tundra of the Canadian Arctic.

Inukshuk (singular), meaning "likeness of a person" in Inuktitut (the Inuit language) is a stone figure made by the Inuit. The plural is inuksuit. The Inuit make inuksuit in different forms and for different purposes: to show directions to travellers, to warn of impending danger, to mark a place of respect, or to act as helpers in the hunting of caribou. Similar stone figures were made all over the world in ancient times, but the Arctic is one of the few places where they still stand. An inukshuk can be small or large, a single rock, several rocks balanced on each other, round boulders or flat.

Inukshuk in the form of human beings, called inunnguaq, seem to have been a recent development, perhaps only appearing after the arrival of European whalers in the 19th century. One of the most important types of inuksuit are those that helped in the caribou hunt. These are usually built with 2 or 3 rocks piled up and placed in converging lines along the migration route of the herd. The Inuit placed arctic heather among the rocks to simulate human hair. The figures were intended to spook the caribou and stampede them towards the places where the hunters hid.

An open leg on an inukshuk found near water or a coastline may point to an open channel for navigation. If an inukshuk is on open land, a leg or arm might suggest a direction. Inuksuit placed near a lake might show that fish can be found in the lake at the roughly same distance the figure is placed from the shoreline. Two or more inuksuit with openings in them were sometimes lined up to act as sort of view port, directing the viewer to an important focal point or to the next Inukshuk.

Some inuksuit are built out of respect for a beloved person or are constructed as memorials to a cherished one. Primarily found in the Arctic landscape, the Inukshuk serves as a guide to travellers on land and sea, providing comfort, advice and spatial orientation. An Inukshuk also serves as a focus of veneration for the spiritual seeker. For centuries, the Inukshuk structure has acted as a guardian to keep vigil over the land and remains a powerful symbol of safe harbour in an uncertain world.

In the magical realm, inukshuks are places of power. They concentrate the energies of the stones used to create them. Inukshuks are rooted in the Earth but lift upward to the sky, symbolically representing the interconnectedness of the physical and spiritual realms. They also serve to act as reminders to us of our dependence on one another. Whatever the purpose for its construction, remember that Inuit tradition forbids the destruction of an Inukshuk.
Loon and Fish Symbolism

**Loon** – The Loon has traditionally been seen as a symbol of communication and also serenity.

**Fish** - Water, Current, Flow of Life From the Earth.

Soap Stone Sculptures Loons & Fish Examples

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Bear Symbolism

**Bear** symbolizes introspection and intuition blended with instinct. Bears hibernate in the winter, which may explain their association with "dreaming the Great Spirit" or retrospection. The symbolism of the Bear's cave reflects returning to the womb of Mother Earth. [A cave is an archetype for the mind - sleep - returning/flying/spiraling to higher consciousness.] This also suggests a strong feminine aspect, one of nurturing and protection. Bear cubs, born in the early spring, can spend as many as seven years with their mother before reaching maturity. People with Bear Medicine are considered by many as self-sufficient, and would rather stand on their own two feet than rely on others. They are sometimes considered dreamers. Many have developed the skill of visualizing new things, but as a result can get caught up in the dreaming, making little progress in waking reality. Bear's medicine includes introspection, healing, solitude, wisdom, change, communication with Spirit, death and rebirth, transformation, astral travel, creature of dreams, shamans and mystics.

The Lakota Sioux call Bear “Tob Tob.” To this tribe, Bear is a symbol of wisdom. This animal reveals the interrelationship between the person within the environment of creation, personal truth within the clan and the universe. Bear helps people recognize personal truth and when to stand up for rights and when to walk away. According to Chippewa tradition, the grizzly, Mudjekeewis, is the Spirit Keeper of the West. This totem symbolizes introspection and strength and imparts inner knowledge that makes it possible for people to seek alternative paths to their goals.

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**Polar Bear** - To the Inuit, the Polar Bear also called the Dawn Bear is the ancient ancestor of all bears. There are many Inuit myths in which polar bears have sexual relations with women. Many images by Inuit artists show humans and animals inhabiting the same social space in a harmonious and amicable manner. Animals are often seen engaging in human activities such as speaking and dancing.

Animals have a 'soul' and must be hunted with due respect and ritual. Animals, for the Inuit, have 'personhood' though are not human. Offense against an animal soul can lead to all manner of misfortune including bad hunting and inclement weather. Bad hunting can bring starvation for there are few wild plants to be gathered for food in the arctic.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge/Understanding</th>
<th>Level 0</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates understanding of connections between artistic style and sculpture techniques and art period.</td>
<td>Work does not meet assignments expectations for this category. Incomplete. 0</td>
<td>Student demonstrates limited connections between artistic style &amp; techniques and art period in work. 0.25</td>
<td>Student demonstrates some connections between artistic style &amp; techniques and art period in work. 0.50</td>
<td>Student demonstrates considerable connections between artistic style &amp; techniques and art period in work. 0.75</td>
<td>Student demonstrates superior connections between artistic style &amp; techniques and art period in work. 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrates understanding of the elements &amp; principles of design in the sculpture (e.g. form, shape, balance, texture)</td>
<td>Work does not meet assignments expectations for this category. Incomplete. 0</td>
<td>Student demonstrates limited understanding of the elements &amp; principles of design in the sculpture. 0.25</td>
<td>Student demonstrates some understanding of the elements &amp; principles of design in the sculpture. 0.50</td>
<td>Student demonstrates considerable understanding of the elements &amp; principles of design in the sculpture. 0.75</td>
<td>Student demonstrates a high degree of understanding of the elements &amp; principles of design in the sculpture. 1</td>
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</tbody>
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| Thinking/Inquiry | Concept: Soapstone sculpture animal/Inuksuk | | |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Work does not meet assignments expectations for this category. Incomplete. 0 | Concept and context is unclear and/or weak. Meaning or ideas conveyed are not on par with student grade level. 0.50 | Concept and context is slightly unclear and/or weak. Meaning or ideas conveyed are below expectations for student's grade level. 0.75 | Concept and context is clear and valid. Meaning or ideas conveyed are on par with student's grade level. 0.75 | Concept and context is clear and strong. Meaning or ideas conveyed are above expectations for grade level. 1 |

| Communication | Clarity: Discusses artistic style, symbol, style of chosen work, period & techniques in the artistic statement | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Work does not meet assignments expectations for this category. Incomplete. 0 | Student discusses artistic style, symbolism of chosen work, period & techniques in the artistic statement with limited clarity. 0.25 | Student discusses artistic style, symbolism of chosen work, period & techniques in the artistic statement with some clarity. 0.50 | Student discusses artistic style, symbolism of chosen work, period & techniques in the artistic statement with considerable clarity. 0.75 | Student discusses artistic style, symbolism of chosen work, period & techniques in the artistic statement with a high degree of clarity. 1 |
| Explains use of sculpture techniques in the artistic statement | Incomplete. 0 | Student explains use of painting & sculpture techniques in the artistic statement with limited clarity. 0.25 | Student explains use of painting & sculpture techniques in the artistic statement with some clarity. 0.50 | Student explains use of painting & sculpture techniques in the artistic statement with considerable clarity. 0.75 | Student explains use of painting & sculpture techniques in the artistic statement with a high degree of clarity. 1 |
| Reflective Questions | Incomplete. 0 | Poor, yes/no answers/limited incomplete. 0.25 | Somewhat coherent and somewhat complete. 0.50 | Clear and substantial answers. 0.75 | Superior and insightful answers. 1 |

| Application | Creative Process: Ability to solve a series of problems, showing an awareness of formal qualities, visual conventions, and relevant ideas and concepts. Preliminary Sketches (3) | | |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Work does not meet assignments expectations for this category. Incomplete. 0 | Preliminary sketches are poor/incomplete. Concepts are poor/incomplete. Planning is tentative or non-existent. (0.5) 0.5 | Preliminary sketches are somewhat clear and complete. Concepts are somewhat complete. Planning is somewhat developed. Some alternative ideas. (1-2 angles) 1-1.75 | Preliminary sketches are mostly complete. Concepts are complete. Planning is evident & shows some divergent thinking is evident. (2-3 angles) 1-2.5 | Preliminary sketches are thorough and complete. Concepts are fully developed. Planning is exceptional & shows considerable flexibility in thinking. (3+ angles) 2 |
| Creative Process: Demonstration of Skill Development & following procedures including Clean Up | Incomplete. 0 | Student demonstrates limited effectiveness in demonstrating the creative process and following procedures. 5-6 | Student demonstrates some effectiveness in demonstrating the creative process and following procedures. 7-8 | Student demonstrates considerable effectiveness in demonstrating the creative process and following procedures. 9-10 | Student demonstrates superior effectiveness in demonstrating the creative process and following procedures. 11-12 |
| Uses elements & principles of design & painting sculpture techniques to produce an effective artwork (shape, form, texture, balance etc.) | Incomplete. 0 | Student demonstrates limited use of the e & ps of design and sculpture techniques to produce an art work of limited effectiveness. 1 | Student demonstrates some use of the e & ps of design and sculpture techniques to produce an art work of some effectiveness. 2-3 | Student demonstrates considerable use of the e & ps of sculpture and painting techniques to produce an art work of considerable effectiveness. 3-4 | Student demonstrates a high degree of using the e & ps of design and sculpture techniques to produce a highly effective art work. 5 |

A1. The Creative Process: apply the creative process to create a variety of artworks, individually and/or collaboratively;
A1.1 use various strategies, individually and/or collaboratively, to generate, explore, and elaborate on ideas and to develop and revise detailed plans for the creation of art works that address a variety of creative challenges (e.g., use brainstorming, concept webs, and/or groups discussions to formulate original ideas for thematic works and/or works of personal expression; use research and discussions with a partner to explore and elaborate on ideas; use diagrams, notes, and/or outlines to help them formulate detailed plans for the art work; revise their plans on the basis of reflection)

A1.2 apply the appropriate stages of the creative process to produce and revise two- and three-dimensional art works using a variety of traditional and contemporary media (e.g., explore, experiment with, and refine their use of a variety of media; choose a medium/media appropriate for their planned art work; reflect on the effectiveness of preliminary versions of their work; revise their art work on the basis of reflection and useful feedback)

A2. The Elements and Principles of Design: apply the elements and principles of design to create art works for the purpose of self-expression and to communicate ideas, information, and/or messages;

A2.1 explore how elements and principle of design can be used to convey emotion and enhance personal expression, and use a combination of these elements and principles to create two- and three-dimensional art works that express personal feelings and communicate specific emotions to an audience (e.g., explore how variations in line, value, form, proportion, and emphasis can be used to convey various emotions; adapt their findings to enhance expression in their art work)

A3. Production and Presentation: produce art works, using a variety of media/materials and traditional and emerging technologies, tools, and techniques, and demonstrate an understanding of a variety of ways of presenting their works and the works of others.

A3.2 explore a range of traditional and current materials, technologies, techniques, and tools used by visual artists (e.g., Claude Monet’s use of optical colour mixing; Andy Warhol’s use of silkscreens; George Segal’s use of plaster bandage; Jean-Paul Riopelle’s use of a palette knife for impasto application of paint; Daphne Odjig’s use of interconnecting black lines), and adapt and apply them to create original art works

B1. The Critical Analysis Process: demonstrate an understanding of the critical analysis process by examining, interpreting, evaluating, and reflecting on various art works;

B1.1 analyse their initial response to art works (e.g., describe their initial reaction to an art work and determine which specific aspects of the work and their personal experience led to their reaction)  
B1.2 deconstruct the visual content and the use of elements and principles of design in their own art work and the work of others (e.g., identify individual elements and principles and aspects of the visual content in an art work, interpret their function, and analyse how the artist has manipulated them to create impact, emphasis, mood, movement, and meaning; compare The Abduction of the Daughters of Leucippus by Peter Paul Rubens to the cover of a contemporary comic book about an action hero, with reference to the artists’ use of colour, line, shape, value, balance, and emphasis)

B1.3 explain, with reference to particular works, both historical and contemporary (e.g., J. M. W. Turner’s Rain, Steam, and Speed: The Great Western Railway; Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial), how knowledge of an art work’s cultural and historical context, achieved through research, has clarified and enriched their understanding of the work’s intent and meaning

B1.4 describe and reflect on the qualities of their own art works and the works of others, and evaluate the effectiveness of these works, using a variety of criteria (e.g., the works’ ability to convey a message or emotion; their technical merit; their stylistic qualities; the use of technique and successful manipulation of media/materials; the connection between form and message)

B2. Art, Society, and Values: demonstrate an understanding of how art works reflect the societies in which they were created, and how they can affect both social and personal values;

B2.1 analyse the function and social impact of different kinds of art works in both past and present societies (e.g., the use of art works for ritualistic and religious purposes; for social and/or political commentary; as propaganda; as symbols of economic or social power; to commemorate people and/or historical events; to instruct)

B2.3 reflect on and explain how creating and analysing art works has affected their personal identity and values and/or changed their perceptions of society and social issues (e.g., with reference to their emotional awareness and their ability to express themselves; their awareness of stereotypes; their understanding of the meaning of objects and symbols associated with a variety of cultural groups; their awareness of and relationship to their physical environment; their position on social issues such as censorship, discrimination, inequality)

C1. Terminology: demonstrate an understanding of, and use correct terminology when referring to, elements, principles, and other components related to visual arts;

C1.1 demonstrate an understanding of the elements and principles of design, and use terminology related to these elements and principles correctly and appropriately when creating or analysing art works (e.g., when describing how they have used elements and principles in a sculpture to convey a sense of movement)

C1.2 explain terminology related to a variety of techniques, materials, and tools (e.g., additive and subtractive techniques, blazing, gesso, intaglio, layering, palette knife, scumbling, transfers, single-lens reflex [SLR] cameras, software used to edit digital photographs), and use this terminology correctly and appropriately when creating, analysing, and/or presenting art works

C1.3 using appropriate terminology, explain the creative process and describe in detail the critical analysis process, with particular reference to the role of deconstruction in the latter process

C2. Conventions and Techniques: demonstrate an understanding of conventions and techniques used in the creation of visual art works;

C2.1 demonstrate an understanding of a wide variety of techniques that artists use to achieve a range of specific effects (e.g., techniques used to create the illusion of depth and perspective and to create texture on different surfaces; the use of additive and subtractive sculpture, layering, positive and negative space, and relief to create effects)

C2.2 demonstrate an understanding of a variety of conventions used in visual arts (e.g., allegory, expressive exaggeration, juxtaposition, synecics; conventions associated with heroic, narrative, naturalistic, propaganda, realistic, and satirical art), and explain how they are used in different types of art works

C3. Responsible Practices: demonstrate an understanding of responsible practices in visual arts.

C3.2 demonstrate an understanding of health and safety issues and conscientious practices associated with the use of materials, property, techniques, tools, and technologies in visual arts (e.g., the appropriate use of aerosol products, utility knives, printing presses, electrical tools, computers; an awareness of appropriate precautions to take when exposed to physical and chemical hazards), and apply these practices when creating and/or presenting art works