



Medium & Large :

Carving Animals with Fins and Tails

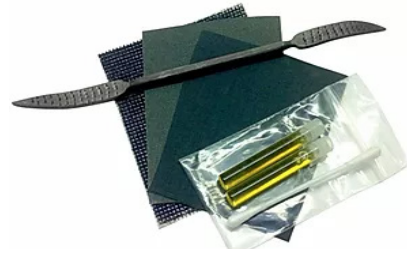
Whales, Sharks, Fish

Introduction

Congratulations! You have an opportunity to produce your own work of art. As you carve your personal soapstone animal, you must remember to have fun.

Tools

- Rasp
- 100 grit wet/dry sandpaper
- 320 grit wet/dry sandpaper
- 600 grit wet/dry sandpaper
- Tung oil (food grade)



Prep

Think of what kind of carving you would like to do, is it going to be realistic or more of a stylized carving? There are many different ways to carve the same animal. Look at pictures in books or on the internet, even if it's one for the head and separate images for the body. Looking at a toy model of the same animal can also be helpful. It is good to find pictures with multiple angles.



Set up a bucket of water to carve/sand in, or dip the carving in as you go. Water keeps the dust down, making clean up much easier.

Shaping

Look at your soapstone animal and decide which large areas need to be removed. Using a rasp, begin to file these areas away. Start with the areas that require the most material to be removed.

If a textured finish is preferred, I start using my rasp in a controlled direction from bottom to the top.

If a textured finish is preferred, I start using my rasp in a controlled direction from bottom to the top, this way that texture will flow down the carving. You may want to re-texture after your oiling process to help add contrast in the finished piece.





Carving Tails and Fins

For fish, sharks, and whales I start by streamlining the body, narrowing the front of the head and behind the front fins. I leave the tail for last. I will also try and leave the front fins or flippers so as to keep them protruding at a higher level than the main body of the carving. Once I have tapered the body to my liking, start working on the flippers and/or fins. For whales, I create a little “bump” where the blowhole is, carving the rest of the head down around it. Once all my fins, flippers, and the tail are roughly raised out, I begin to carve some of the smaller details, like gills or fin nodules.

Work your way back and forth around the animal, not doing too much in one section at a time. Keep looking at it from all angles as you carve. It is easy to get carried away on one section and remove too much material. If this happens, you will just make the whole sculpture smaller to maintain proper scale.





Sanding

Once satisfied with your animal's shape, it is time to begin sanding. Starting with the coarsest mesh of sandpaper, sand away all the unwanted tool marks, sandpaper 1 will still leave small scratches behind, this is ok. Follow with the next coarsest to remove any unwanted scratches from sandpaper 1, your carving should start feeling much smoother now!! ALL unwanted scratches should be removed before sandpaper 3 as it just smooths out the existing surface. Continue until the sculpture is nice and smooth. This is an important step! The better your sanding on stage 1 the easier stage 2 will be and then stage 3 will be easier and faster as well, the more attention to proper sanding the better the sculpture will look when oiled. Sanding in water is a must, because frequently dipping it will show you where more sanding is needed. Leave your sculpture overnight to dry, or warm it on the stovetop on low until the stone is completely dry.



Oiling

Included in the kit is a food grade tung oil. Apply the oil with a thin rag, wiping excess approximately an hour or so after applying. Allow 24 hours before applying a second coat. Tung oil leaves a more matte finish. With soapstone varying a little in hardness due to the metamorphic process, some will absorb more oil than others. If you want your carving to be super shiny, spray with an aerosol water-based wood varnish available from most local hardware stores. Traditionally, carvings are heated up and beeswax is applied to the surface.

Breakage

Sometimes stones get dropped or seams in the stone let go and break while carving. When this happens, the first thing to do is stop carving.

Rinse off any dust on the carving and let dry. Do not rub the pieces together, as this may alter your contact points making the breakage point more noticeable. Once dry, apply a medium viscosity superglue on one of your contact points. Place the two pieces together, squeezing them together until excess glue weeps out the sides. Place your carving in a spot where it will sit undisturbed until the glue sets, you may wipe off the excess glue that has been pushed out now, depending on glue this may sit 15-30 minutes or overnight if you want to be sure its dry. Once cured, use a rasp to remove any exposed excess glue, and continue carving. If there is a big gap missing when you break it you can make a filler by mixing with extra dust with an epoxy glue.



For more carving information and how to videos check out our social media! Rubble Road Soapstone