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Soapstone

Note from Vance / Supply List

Note from your instructor:

Firstly there are several ways to approach carving a piece of stone. Of these ways, there is no right way or wrong way. Only the way that best works for that artist's mental and visual processes. Some artists will make drawings and sketches and then use them as a guide for their stonework. Other artists will make small clay models and then reproduce them in a larger form. And still, there are those, like myself, who will look at a piece of stone and see the shapes already inside waiting to be released and use what's called a "direct carving" method.

I will try and explain this last method as it is the only one I have experience with and so the only one I am able to shed some small insight on. I let the stone tell me what it wants to be. This may on first hearing sound kinda new age flaky. But what I'm trying to put into words is something very intangible and difficult to explain. Each stone I will look at from all angles until I connect with it and see those shapes that the stone suggests to me. This connecting is what I call talking with the stone or having it tell me what it wants to be!

Have you ever found yourself looking at clouds in the sky while at the same time, daydreaming? And out of the blue, you see shapes of things in those clouds. Well in a way this is how the stone talks to me. Hopefully, this example can give you an idea of what I'm talking about. In the beginning, communication with the stone was difficult. Something that I had to be in the right frame of mind to experience. But like any talent or skill, it became more accessible the more I used it. The key was to get my ego out of the way and allow my mind to be open and uncluttered. I've been carving stone now for some twenty years and although I can enter into communication with the stone at will, each time there is a sense of wonder and excitement that makes each carving an adventure!

Finally, let me tell you a little bit about the stone. I work primarily in soapstone and alabaster from all over the world. The stone that you see as you look at one of my carvings is many millions of years old. So in an effect, you are holding pieces of this planet's history in your hands. Every piece of stone has been formed, reformed and changed countless times. I believe that stone has a memory of all those changes. Not a memory as we know it, but nonetheless, memory stored in its molecular structure and makeup. And although I'm unable to put it into words, this is without a doubt in my mind a big part of what it is I'm connecting with when the stone talks to me. And now through me, it is able to talk to you! And you by your looking at this stone and mentally interacting with it have become the next step in its evolution. You have made it into a piece of art. Regards Vance Theoret

Supply List:

All these items should be readily available at your hardware store.

Firstly protecting our health. So with that in mind, you should have the following:

- ***A pair of work gloves, leather if possible***
- ***A pair of safety glasses***
- ***A dust mask; for our purposes, the lite paper one will do unless you have real problems with dust***
- ***Rubber gloves***

Also from your hardware store, you should be able to get the following items:

- ***2 sheets of 50 grit or 60 grit sandpaper (precut into 12 squares)***
- ***Some coarse and some fine steel wool***
- ***2 sheets 400 grit wet/dry sandpaper (1 cut into 12 squares, 1 whole sheet***
- ***Hammer***
- ***Chisel***
- ***Plastic dishpan with smooth bottom***
- ***Black wax china marker pencil***

Please also bring

- ***1 roll of paper towel***
- ***Several old clean (soft) rags or tea towels***
- ***Regular wood saw if you have one***
- ***Weights to hold down your reference material***

Dress in comfortable clothes - overalls are great, you will be making a lot of dust and

wearing lots of it. The good news is it washes out.

Stone: Soapstone of your choosing (recommend 1 or 2 pieces)

Soapstone is available at Swinton's Art Supplies.

It would be useful to be thinking of what you would like to be carving and perhaps gather some visual aids i.e pictures, small plastic models or whatever might spark your creativity.

A word of caution for those who have never carved before -try and keep your design not too complicated! You don't want to set yourself up for failure by choosing something too difficult for your first time out!