



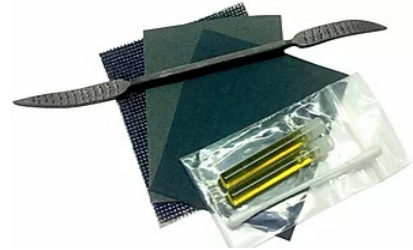
Medium & Large : Carving a Butterfly or Dragonfly

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
100grit 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 wolf and decide which large areas need to be removed, any areas you want to stand out must be left as you are only removing stone, not adding any. 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, 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.



Shaping the Body & Wings

For butterflies and dragonflies I start by carving the wings down to help create the body, try not to make the wing too thin as they will be prone to breakage. For both of these silhouettes you can have the wings patterned or even separated into two different levels, so there is even more depth in your carving !

Once your wings are thinned down you can begin rounding the body, removing the square edges and perhaps creating segmented sections on the body as well. Again, don't go too far, you can always use your rasp or another carving tool to get your stone very close to the general shape you want and then bring it to your desired finish with the sandpapers. Once the wings and body are where I want them, I then begin with wing patterns as described below.

Work your way back and forth around the animal, not doing too much in one section at a time. Keep looking at 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.

Keep looking from different angles as you carve. It is easy to get carried away on one section and remove too much material. If this happens, you will have to make the whole sculpture smaller to retain proper scale.



There are natural fractures in stone and it can be easy to drop your piece while carving.
If a breakage occurs, don't panic!
Let your piece to dry, then use superglue to repair the break.
Allow time for the glue to cure, and continue carving.

Carving Details into the Wings

Now that the body of my butterfly or dragonfly is shaped, I can begin my finer detailing on the wings if wanted. I like to use a very pointy carving tool for this, whether it's the tip of my rasp, a nail, or even the tip of a file. When deciding any pattern I always start by drawing the pattern lightly on the stone, only when I'm certain about the design is will I begin tracing that pattern repeatedly to carve it deeper into the rock so when i start my sanding I don't have to worry about erasing my pattern with stage one. If you do though, just carve your pattern into the stone again.

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 smoothes 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.



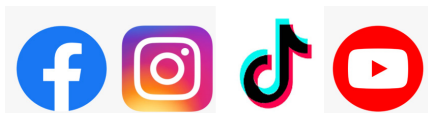
Oiling

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