

Title:

The Different Styles of Inuit Art Sculptures

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342

Summary:

This article summarizes some of the general artistic styles of Inuit art from some of the major regions of the Arctic.

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Article Body:

At first, all Inuit soapstone sculptures from the Arctic may look alike. However, there are variances in artistic styles among the different Inuit art producing communities. Although all communities produce Inuit sculptures featuring both animal and human subjects, some seem to do more animals while others do more people figures. Some communities make their subjects appear quite realistic with lots of high detail while in others, a more crude and primitive look is preferred. There are Inuit sculptures that have a highly polished finishes and some that are the complete opposite where they are left dull and unpolished.

Some areas specialize in producing small scale miniatures much like the artwork by their ancestors who first came into contact with white men. Inuit sculpture can range from quite conservative to bold or even wildly outrageous. Scenes can be playful like a piece depicting two Inuit children playing or with a sense of humor like a walrus waving. On the other end, transformation and shamanic pieces can look disturbing or even frightening to some. Hunting scenes can portray the gory realities of life and death in nature.

One thing that all Inuit sculptures have in common is that they show the fact that Inuit people have deep connections with their family life, their natural surroundings and spiritual beliefs. It is interesting to observe that even if some Inuit artists have converted to Christianity as their religion, they may still include Inuit spirituality and legends as a big part of their lives. This is portrayed in some of their Inuit sculpture and other artwork.

The differences in artistic style are partly due to the different types of stone and other materials available in each community as well as regional preferences.

Of course there can be outside influences when Inuit artists travel from community to community. This is particularly the case with larger growing communities like Iqaluit which has seen an influx of Inuit from other parts of Nunavut ever since becoming its capital. One can find a variety and blending of Inuit art styles here.