

# kakulu saggiatok: stonecut printing



stonecut demo from  
Museum of Civilization

## fact:

The stonecut print is unique to northern Canada. Often print subjects show Inuit family and individual histories as well as traditional myths. The Arctic territories and their animals and spirit creatures are shown as a way of storytelling and passing on knowledge.

## feature work from our Permanent Collection

Born in 1940 on a supply ship *en route* to North Baffin, Kakulu Saggiatok is an important player on the contemporary Canadian printmaking scene, particularly that of the nation's northern Inuit community. After spending her early childhood in different parts of the Baffin Island region, Kakulu and her family moved to Cape Dorset, where her mother, Ikayuta, became involved in the community's budding graphic arts co-operative. In 1961, Kakulu began drawing, and eventually collaborating with printers from the Cape Dorset print shop to transform her work into printed multiples. Kakulu's work often focuses on ideas of shamanistic transcendence and shape-shifting. Influenced by common themes in Inuit folklore and culture, her prints often feature humans and animals blending into one another with delicate line-work and patterning.

"I always like it when my drawings are printed: I always like the outcome of it. I like the colours. My drawings are light; to me [these] drawings are more like a sketch after I've seen the print."

Kakulu Saggiatok

## Process: What is Stonecut?

Stonecut is similar to woodcut in that the image is carved into the stone with a sharpened file. The stone is then rolled with ink. The artist places the paper on top of the stone and then uses a tool called a barren to rub over the back of the paper. This transfers the image from the stone onto the paper. Many stonecut artists work with printers who will help the artist cut, ink and print editions of the finished work. Woodcut or stonecut is an excellent opportunity to work with overlapping simple shapes to create depth and alternating shapes to create pattern. Ideas and observations of nature can be used thematically to convey narrative. Signs and symbols are also often used in printmaking to depict metaphor and as an effective communicate tool. The long tradition of woodcut/stonecut provides an opportunity to look at the historic relevance of art as a method of storytelling and record-keeping.

# station gallery

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### feature work

Kakulu's drawing has been printed as a stonecut, a relief technique unique to northern Canada due to the relative scarcity of wood suitable for printing and the extensive knowledge that many Inuit artists already have of working with stone. In this process, the image is transferred to a prepared stone, which is then carved away using sharpened files like a woodblock or linoleum plate. The block is rolled up with ink, the paper is placed onto the matrix, and then using a tool called a baren, the back of the paper is rubbed over the stone, transferring the ink in a controlled and precise manner from the block to the paper. Kakulu's husband, Cape Dorset printer Saggiatok, often collaborates with the artist to cut, ink, and edition prints similar to *Migrating Fish*. Kakulu says: "I always like it when my drawings are printed: I always like the outcome of it. I like the colours. My drawings are light; to me [these] drawings are more like a sketch after I've seen the print."

Info from:

[http://www.dorsetfinearts.com/artist\\_kakulu.html](http://www.dorsetfinearts.com/artist_kakulu.html)



*Migrating Fish*  
1995, stonecut on paper  
80 cm x 62 cm

### curriculum questions

- What shapes are repeated in this artwork?
- What other repeating patterns can you find in each fish?
- Why do you think the top and bottom fish are a different colour?

### curriculum link

Grade 3, Principle of Design Focus : Repetition and Rhythm (from The Ontario Curriculum for The Arts 2009)

repetition and rhythm: repetition of colour and shape in patterns; random, alternating, and regular patterns in everyday objects (e.g., textiles, ceramics) and in art (e.g., works by M. C. Escher)