

Indigenous Expressive Arts Exercise Invitation III

Title: Rock Beings

Age Range: 3 to 100 (A young child can enjoy activity on a more simple level)

Objective: To connect to the greater landscape through seeking a broader sense of connection to a rock or stone, something generally conceived as inanimate and devoid of life in modern Western culture. In this exercise, we invite a more indigenous spirit to expand from what you ordinarily feel and think in relation to a rock or other earth elements that are not “living”. The question becomes, “Are they devoid of soul and spirit even if they are not considered living?”

**A little unlearning is invited by way of approaching this expressive exercise, as you’ll discover in the procedures.*

Inspiration: Tunkashila is a word that has complex meaning, something simplified as the “mystery of all life” in translation of Standing Bear. Within this tunkashila spirit, there is a **reverence and connection to rocks as persons**, something authors Grim, Walker and Densmore reflect in Grim’s article. This “tunkashila” has embedded within the Lakota culture a relationship to rocks as part of the greater connection to all things, rather than as inanimate objects wholly unrelated to us.

*“Everything was possessed of personality, only differing from us in form. Knowledge was inherent in all things. The world was a library”
Standing Bear*

Reference: Grim, J. A. (n.d.). Indigenous Traditions and Ecology. Retrieved February 25, 2017, from <http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780945454281>

Materials Needed:

A rock or stone found in nature

Markers, paints, oil pastels...

Small and long bristled-brushes for detail painting if rock/stone is small; choose hardy brushes that are not expensive as they take some wear and tear

*Permanent paint for outdoors (patio paint or permanent ink at art stores)

*Urethane Sealer if desired to keep in the garden/outdoors

Procedure:

1. Read the indigenous quote above. If inspired, read the article attached that gave inspiration for this exercise.
2. Take a few moments to engage in nature. Take a walk as a walking meditation, following the breath in and out or noticing the sights, sounds, and scents as you connect to nature.
3. If you can, take your shoes off and ground your body in the grass or dirt to feel the earth and charge your body.

4. Wander around and go where you feel led. Allow yourself to be with nature and go with the intention of ***not finding a rock, but rather letting the rock find you.*** (This is where the unlearning comes into play. This is where the intellect will sabotage your connection to a rock or stone. If you can, trust the rock will find you). *Of course, make sure you're in an environment that permits the taking of a rock!
5. Once you're led to a rock, hold it in your hand with your eyes closed. Make sure you know this rock, sense this rock, and connect to the spirit of the rock.
6. If this is the rock that has found you, return to a quiet place in nature where you have your supplies.
7. This may feel sacreligious to now paint a rock spirit or being. It may feel better to keep this rock close and leave it in its natural state. You may sense the rock should remain where it is.
8. * If not, and painting or adorning it feels reverent and resonant, create any artistic reflection of the rock that emerges. You may find an image emerge from holding and contemplating the rock. Let the experience guide you in this process and emergence of an image.
 - My rock felt like a reminder of oneness and along came a sacred geometry image of earth elements in some unified design. Many painted rocks are animals, natural elements and organic designs.
9. Find a sacred place to keep the rock after painting it. Place it on an alter, in a garden, by your bed, in your home or office. Let it's new home arrive by intuition if possible!

Special Consideration: Extracting from a deeply evolved and expansive culture's sense of reverence and interconnectedness falls short of complete. In offering this "Western" take on indigenous wisdom, I hope to simply open a window to a deeper well of insight into the earth's connection to all. This exercise was powerful and humbling for me and so it is in this spirit, I share it with the collective.

