



Mask maker Fred Anderson and mosquito mask

Photos by Larry McNeil

Self-taught Artist

Visions From Past, Present Lead to Masks

by Bob Koweluk

Carving wood, dance masks, multi-media materials, sculpture: These are some of the words used by artists to describe the work they do and the pieces they create.

Artists visualize a scene from the past or from the present or from dreams...visions perhaps.

Within his experience, Fred Anderson has done all of this, drawing at first from his desire to learn of his culture and traditions. He began by asking his elders at Naknek, Ak., where he was born and raised, for information about Aleut masks. Masks tell a story. As his experience grew, he began to tell stories with his creative imagination, first in masks then in sculptured pieces.

"I began by carving masks, Aleut masks, because I wanted to learn a little bit about my own culture when I was growing up at Naknek," Fred said. "And there was no one I could ask. A lot of the old-timers that I knew couldn't help me out on carving masks because no one had carved masks for a long time."

Fred researched books and found a few pieces in a museum from which to base his work.

"I carved masks at first," Fred said. "This work developed to other wood pieces and stone pieces."

Most of Fred's creations are personal pieces about native people. "I never do tourist stuff. There are a lot of feelings about

my Native peoples living in a time of transition of our culture today."

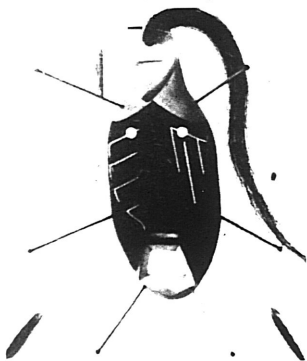
One of Fred's works is a sculpture he created from stone, alabaster weighing about 130 pounds entitled 'I came from the fish.' "It's a piece about myself and my family. Our family has made a living from the sea, from commercial and subsistence fishing," Fred said. "Another piece is a mixed-media piece of wood and metal titled 'Transition' which showed what I am experiencing...of a native family trying to survive in today's world in a state of change. I've tried to show the feelings of change, coming from a village to living in a city, and yet to show all the change I have yet to go through.

"For me it was a growth of masks to sculpture because I still express the same feeling in a stone piece and in a mask, even more so because you can show the whole feeling," Fred said. "A lot of my sculpture stone pieces have masks in them, my wall pieces have masks, also."

Some of the works Fred creates have both animal and human representations in form and in spirit.

"It's not second hand stuff that others try to express," Fred said. "It's easy for me to express things I've experienced myself."

"I was interested in art even when I was a kid. I used to draw and carve. I am self-taught. It is an art I've developed by myself. I didn't go to school for it. It is something I enjoy doing."



Masks by Fred Anderson

