



## The Inuit Carver



“An Inuit carver sits in the translucent light of his igloo and turns the unworked walrus ivory lightly in his bronzed and gnarled hands. He whispers, “Who are you? Who hides within?” He turns it slightly and then in a moment of stillness he breathes, “Ah whale!” **He carves lightly with respect.** The carver helps the whale come forth; it is not created but released. The carver does not control the ivory, but blends with it; he participates in whaleness. The ivory whale embodies the essentials of a pattern that connects his senses, intuitions and traditions.... The carving was not made from a flat surface because it was not made to be viewed from a stationary perspective. Then one day a European trader arrives and collects



the whale. Upon his return home he finds that the whale doesn't stand on his shelf. It rolls about clumsily. Since this won't do – he files the “bottom:” so it will be stationary and stand on the shelf as a show piece.

By filing – the trader made the whale something the carver never intended. What was known from all one's senses plus tradition and imagination is now something to stand apart from and observe. A whale, who could once assert its own form by rolling around unhampered by a fixed position, is now stuck.”

### Reference:

Donaldson, O. (1993). pp. 164-5. In Moore, T. (1992) *Care of the soul*. New York: Harper Collins.

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