1. Description of Grant-Supported Activity

I researched Northwest Coast Native American art, a style referred to as “formline art”. “Formline” refers to the main line that outlines the body of the subject, person or animal. Shapes morph from one being into another, emphasizing the inter-relatedness of animal and man. Myth plays a large part in the imagery, defining “myth” as “a story that explains the meaning of the world”.

Traveling to British Columbia also gave me the opportunity to experience Northwest Coast Art through the spirit of place. I walked the streets, exploring galleries with many examples of contemporary tribal art. And I walked along the shoreline, amidst the cries of gulls and ravens. Visiting British Columbia allowed me to experience the distinctive aspects of this region.


2. Were you able to complete the project? Describe any difficulty you had.

I completed my research and project. I encountered no difficulties.

3. Did, or will, the project result in a specific product – a manuscript, composition, syllabus, etc.? If so, please describe and indicate state of development.

I completed a number of sketches which may serve as reference for future projects. I completed an egg tempera painting, based on a Tlingit carving of killer whales. This painting has been exhibited at the following venues:
The above painting is done in egg tempera, a technique that utilizes pigment mixed with gum arabic and an egg yolk solution. Pigments used include those derived from naturally occurring minerals, including lapis lazuli and malachite. Given that Northwest Coast art imagery draws strongly from the relationship of beings to the earth, I felt it appropriate to make use of mineral pigments.

Egg tempera is a technique that utilizes egg yolk as an emulsion. It must be painted on in very thin layers, or it will crack and peel. In addition, because egg yolk creates a somewhat fatty solution, washes cannot be applied, as in watercolor and other media. Washes in egg tempera do not go on evenly, and result in a blotchy finish. So color is applied in small, fine hatched lines and built up slowly, allowing each layer to dry before adding the subsequent layer. This painting utilizes up to 70 or 80 layers in places.

While this image is based on a Tlingit carving, it is not a copy. Rather than use a traditional black for the whale itself, I chose a deep lapis blue, and worked on developing subtle shadings and tonalities. The represents both the whale and the ocean. Note that the teeth are tinged with pink, representing the prey-predator relationship of the whale to other animals. Minute detail was added with a very fine brush, with the aid of a magnifying glass.