



## SOAP CARVING

# THE FACE OF A PHARAOH

Over 3,200 years ago, a stone carver in Egypt used a variety of hand tools to sculpt an image of Pharaoh Ramesses II (1303–1213 BCE). He and many other stone carvers worked together to create magnificent relief sculptures on the exterior of buildings in the pharaoh's city.

You can create your own relief sculpture at home using a good old-fashioned bar of soap.



Installation view, African Art and Asian Art Galleries, April 2015. Photo by Mitro Hood

### INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Find a bar of soap. (Soft soap works best.)
- 2 Gather safe tools. Almost any object will work; for example, toothpicks, a plastic spoon, a pencil, paper clips, a popsicle stick, or clay sculpting tools.
- 3 Create an outline of an image in the soap. Use a thin tool like a toothpick or the end of a paper clip to trace the outer shape of the image.  
Use an image of the pharaoh, available at [artbma.org/atg\\_pharaoh](http://artbma.org/atg_pharaoh), or draw your own creation.
- 4 When the outline is complete, use a combination of the tools to carve shapes within the image. Get creative!

### TIPS

Explore how different tools create different marks.

A toothpick will create thin lines and small dots, like the design in the pharaoh's helmet.

A popsicle stick or a thicker tool will create deep lines, like the lines along the edge of the pharaoh.

Try wetting your tool or the soap with a little water and see how this affects the carving process.



Artist unidentified. *Relief Fragment of Ramesses II*. c. 1279–1213  
bce. Egypt. Rose granite. 2915 16 x 18½ x 415 16 inches. The  
Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of Blanche Adler, BMA 1931.4.1