This *Sunface Dancer's* moccasin, frozen in midstep, brings the carving to life.

The movement captured in the sash accents the motions of the *Sunface Dancer.*

Captured Motion

Gerry Quotskuyva's Katsina carvings are like forbidden snapshots of the traditional dances

By Alan J. Garbers

Nothing evokes emotion more dramatically than captured action, as seen in the award-winning work of Hopi Katsina carver Gerry Quotskuyva.

Unlike other carvers, Gerry must commit everything to memory before he begins a Katsina carving. It is taboo to photograph the ceremonies of the Katsina dancers. This could be seen as a handicap, but to Gerry it's just another part of the creative process.

"A bronze sculptor once told me that he created motion by first shaping a piece in clay, and then by twisting the clay model into the stance or movement he wanted to sculpt," Gerry said. Taking inspiration from that idea, Gerry uses himself as the clay. "When I'm ready to start a new piece, I'll stand up and strike a pose. I'll study it, and then begin carving. I start with blocking out the wood where the apparel, jewelry, and arms will be. I then go back and concentrate on the body, beginning with the shoulders and hips. I think about how the body stretches and reduces with each movement and pose in the position several times to ensure accuracy."

To bring realism to the carving, Gerry replicates the various regalia components in detail. "I imagine how different fabrics would move in windy or calm situations and try to capture that movement. It helps to know the stiffness or pliability of the material and to imagine how the fabric would flow," Gerry explained. "The kilts are thick, so there aren't many folds in that fabric, but some sashes are very flexible, so they have more bounce than other components. I concentrate on how the kilt rests on the legs and how that motion will make the sash, belt, jewelry, and even feathers bounce as the dancer moves."

In addition to winning many awards, Gerry's work has been displayed at museums including the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian and has been featured in books and on television.

To see more of Gerry's work, visit kachinacarver.net.
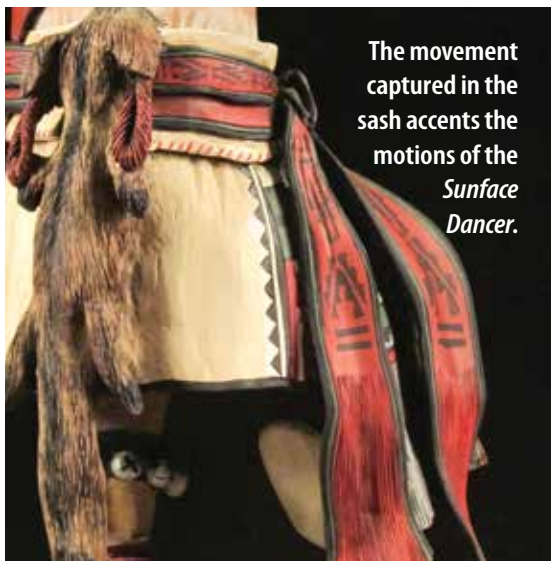
In Hopi tradition, Katsina (also known as kachina) dolls are carved figures that represent a deified ancestral spirit.

Gerry Quotskuyva proudly displays his awards for his *Sunface Dancer* carving.

Every element of this *Wuyak Taiwa Katsina*—from his tongue to his beard to the dangling feathers—shows action.