

MASTERPIECES OF CANADIAN INUIT SCULPTURE



INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK CULTURAL CENTER

THE INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

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AXANGAYU SHAA

Cape Dorset

Drum Dancer

1999

Serpentine, caribou antler and bone, 15 x 15.5 x 14 inches

Collection of the Inter-American Development Bank

MASTERPIECES
OF CANADIAN INUIT
SCULPTURE



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Cape Dorset

Inuk Blowing Up Avataq

1987

Serpentine, 20.5 x 11.5 x 14 inches

Private Collection



JONAS FABER

Greenland and British Columbia

Fishing from Umiak

2000

Steatite and wood, 9 x 19.5 x 7 inches

Collection of Joram Piatigorsky

INTRODUCTION

The Cultural Center dedicates the last exhibition of the year 2000 to Canada. *Masterpieces of Canadian Inuit Sculpture* provides an appropriate theme to welcome the winter season. The exhibition celebrates the native people of the Hudson Bay and the Canadian Arctic, who have struggled for better living conditions and assimilation into Western culture.

The art of the Inuit—despite the hardships they face and the unavoidable reality of adapting to new ways of life—is in itself an economic and social success story. It is a story of cooperation between a diverse population, the state and private initiative. It shows once again how societies can advance through cultural expression when creativity is understood, stimulated and supported.

As an artistic movement, Inuit sculpture is only 50 years old, although the Inuit have invested perhaps thousands of years developing skills in carving all sorts of materials. Inuit sculpture has achieved international recognition as an artistic expression representing the traditions and culture of isolated communities. It has become a source of economic sustainability for the Inuit.

On behalf of the Office of External Relations and the Cultural Center in particular, I would like to invite all of you to enjoy this exhibition. It represents the triumph of the Inuit people in their quest for a better and rewarding life for themselves and their future generations.

MUNI FIGURES

External Relations Advisor



ADAMIΞ ASHEVAK

Cape Dorset

Polar Bear

1997

Serpentine with inlays,
5 x 12 x 10.5 inches

Collection of James B. Wynn-
gaarden

MASTERPIECES OF CANADIAN INUIT SCULPTURE

SOURCES OF INUIT CREATIVITY

Inuit artists carved the sculptures in this exhibition. Most of these artists live in small communities dotting the coast of Hudson Bay and the waters of the high Canadian Arctic. This remote group, numbering fewer than 30,000 in Canada, has sustained a thriving market of sculpture, graphics, and weavings that have been widely collected by Canadians, Americans, and Europeans. Inuit art is exhibited in every major Canadian museum. A number of private collectors proudly exhibit their Inuit art next to the great European masters. Over the past 50 years, art has become a major economic force across the Canadian Arctic. The village of Cape Dorset, for example, has about 1,200 people; hundreds of them are artists and a few of them are great artists.

Inuit sculpture today is quite different from that produced in the 1950s and 1960s. Artistic styles must evolve or stagnate, and there is no magic formula to ensure that the evolution that occurs will yield continuously excellent work. Some of the collectors who were enthralled by earlier styles resist new approaches, and declare that the great days of Inuit sculpture are coming to an end. Thus, as Inuit art develops, it faces the constant challenge of creating new enthusiasts to replace those that prefer the older styles.

Most of the works in this exhibition were carved in the past 10 to 15 years, and some were carved in 2000. These works represent some of the best the Inuit sculptors have produced in this time. There is ample evidence here of strong creative forces still at work in the Inuit community. There is indeed reason to be optimistic about the future of Inuit art.



DAVID RUBEN PIATOUKEN

Paulatuk and Toronto

Bird Shaman

2000

Brazilian soapstone and caribou antler,

10 x 22 x 14 inches

Collection of Joram Piatigorsky

Many of the circumstances that drove Inuit creativity in its earlier years are still present today. While it may not be possible to give a full explanation of how creative communities are established, some of the conditions that contributed to the initial creation and continuing success of Inuit art can be delineated. Three of these are the economic conditions, the weak traditional base for Inuit sculpture, and a thriving souvenir market.

ΣCONOMIC FACTORS

The contemporary phase of Inuit art begins with a crisis of conscience among the Inuit and Canadians following the end of World War II. Although the Inuit had skillfully adapted to the environment of the Arctic, starvation was a common occurrence. As late as the 1950s, many Inuit in the central Canadian Arctic perished when caribou herds failed to follow their normal migration routes. The Inuit had little access to Western medical care, and continued to rely on traditional shamanistic practices. In an attempt to aid these small bands of nomadic people living in the vast and often dark Canadian Arctic, the government encouraged, and most Inuit accepted, resettlement into permanent villages.

The movement of Inuit people into these villages meant the end of a nomadic lifestyle dependent on hunting, and a rapid introduction of *qallunaat* (nonInuit)



ΚΙΑΒΑΚ ΑΣΗΘΟΝΑ
Cape Dorset
Bird Shaman
1990
Serpentine, 18 x 16 x 17 inches
Collection of Joram Piatigorsky

<p>ΔΑΒΙΞ ΣΙΜΙΓΑΚ Cape Dorset <i>Hawk</i> 1997 Serpentine with inlays, 15 x 7.5 x 4 inches Collection of Sarah Sa'adah</p>	
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cultural practices. While settlement into villages did end starvation among the Inuit, it left them impoverished and dependent on the federal government for the necessities of life.

Once settled into villages, employment became a major problem for these Inuit communities. The resources for manufacturing and indeed for daily living must be imported over long and treacherous distances. Building supplies, energy supplies, and most food can be brought north by ship only during July and August. The other ten months they must be flown in. Not only are material costs high, but with a cost of living up to twice that in southern Canada, a living wage is substantially higher. A traditional source of income for the Inuit, the fur market, has effectively dried up. So the Inuit and the Canadian government have struggled for decades, with only limited success, to find employment opportunities in the north.

It is in this context that contemporary Inuit art began. Commissioned by the Canadian Handicrafts Guild in Montreal, the young artist James Houston went north in 1948. He was to find and purchase Inuit handicrafts, and to encourage the Inuit to produce handicrafts for sale in the southern Canadian market. His mission was successful beyond all expectation.

It should not be surprising, given their economic plight, that many Inuit seized readily on Houston's offer. What is astonishing is the rapid appearance not only of handicrafts, but also of carvings with impressive artistic merit. By the early 1950s, sculptures of dazzling skill and creativity steadily emerged from the Arctic.

The economic factors that drove the early development of Inuit art are still with these communities today, although in an attenuated form. Increased tourism has opened up new opportunities for the Inuit, but no matter how fast jets fly, they are flying into a region with unfriendly weather most of the year and with very high costs. Leaders of the Nunavut—a largely Inuit province recently carved out of the Northwest Territories—are providing new employment opportunities in Inuit communities. But the major difficulties of cost and distance are daunting, and work in the



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Gjoa Haven

Bird Spirit

1987

Serpentine, 10.5 x 9.5 x 7 inches

Collection of Robin and John Burdick

arts must continue to play an important economic role in the Arctic.

INUIT AESTHETIC TRADITIONS

Traditional Inuit culture was nomadic. Their sculptural arts were sharply limited by considerations of size and weight. For themselves, they carved small amulets to wear on their clothing and decorations on their practical implements. The only large-scale indigenous Inuit art was the creation of *inukshuks*—beautiful stone cairns that marked places of physical or spiritual significance. All other sculptural works—and these were usually no bigger than a hand could hold—were made to sell to *qallunaat* whalers, missionaries, and traders in exchange for ammunition, metal implements, and other items not producible in the Arctic. The material for most of these sculptures was walrus ivory. These carvings were generally not collected as works of art, but as souvenirs of a visit to a remote and unusual culture. A dispassionate look at this sculpture from the so-called historical period—from first Western contact to the end of World War II—reveals that very little was produced with the sculptural quality and power that have characterized sculptural production since then.

Thus, when the contemporary period of Inuit art started, no strong sculptural tradition guided the Inuit. The carvers were left to their own resources in



DAVID MIKIYUK
Sanikiluaq
Three Inuit
1992
Argillite, 8 x 13 x 4.5 inches
Private Collection

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Cape Dorset

Putting on the Shaman's Mask

1999

Serpentine, 7 x 7 x 4.5 inches

Collection of Harriet and Robert Basseches



developing artistic styles. Houston recommended that they not try to copy anything—they really had little to copy—but just carve away in whatever manner came to them. The result was the rapid development of creative and unique personal styles.

The shift from ivory to stone as the primary carving medium also forced creative new approaches. Houston and the Inuit recognized they could not develop a large-scale carving industry based on the limited and expensive supply of walrus ivory. So it soon became apparent that local stone would be the primary medium for sculptural production. This was fortuitous, for walrus ivory imposes severe size and shape limitations on artists.

The lack of a historical tradition of stone sculpture among the Inuit influenced the attitudes of *qallunaat* collectors. A traditional art culture with production admired by outside collectors can put a stranglehold on creativity. The collectors often demand works similar to older works exhibited in museums and history books. This demand can turn current producers into imitators of past artists. Travelers to such places as Sub-Saharan Africa, the Far East, and Native American areas of the North American continent are prime motivators in creating this kind of art market. Because those travelers bring far more money than that available from the local population, and an avid desire for purchasing art from their travels, the most skilled indigenous artists frequently occupy themselves by turning out well made imitations. These artisans are also cognizant of the fact that most artists seeking creative new approaches to their subject matters fail financially, aesthetically, or both. So would-be creative artists in poorer communities with strong artistic traditions face three major hurdles: the relative poverty of their own people, the expectation of wealthier outside collectors for traditional-style works, and the notoriously risky difficulty of being a successful creative artist.

The *qallunaat* collectors of Inuit sculpture started with relatively few expectations about what they would find. As it turned out, the work that came from the



ΣΙΛΑΣ ΚΑΥΑΚΛΥΑΚ
Hall Beach and Ottawa
Throat Singers
1994
Stone, 3.5 x 4 x 2 inches
Collection of H. G. Jones



LUKE AIRUT
Igloodik
Caribou Hunter
1990
Caribou antler, 4 x 8 x 4 inches
Collection of Joram Piatigorsky



SILAS KAYAKUAK
Hall Beach and Ottawa
Walrus Spirit
1996
Stone, 2 x 2.5 x 2 inches
Collection of H. G. Jones

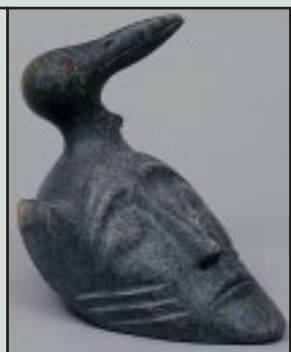


JOHN PANGNARK
Arviat
Kneeling Woman
1974
Steatite, 6 x 7.5 x 7 inches
Private Collection

north in the early 1950s was like nothing they had seen before, and this produced enormous excitement and demand for continued creativity. The Inuit in turn were able to sense this demand and to produce a brilliant response.

In the past 50 years, the pressures of the marketplace have changed. With a well-established history of fine works, the Inuit have an artistic past that can now be imitated, and this poses a constant threat of the creative stagnation that comes from replication. Inuit artists and collectors of Inuit art have not been immune to these forces. Fortunately, a substantial number of influential collectors treasure new approaches and seek out creativity, and many Inuit artists place high value on the development of their own personal styles. So while there is imitative Inuit sculpture, there is also a clear recognition among the best Inuit artists that some *qallunaat* collectors value creative new work, and there is sufficient monetary incentive to explore new approaches.

DAVID RUBEN PIQTOUKEN
Paulatuk and Toronto
Lumaak Legend
1993
Brazilian soapstone, 7.5 x 5.5 x 9 inches
Collection of H. G. Jones



THE SOUVENIR MARKET

Another factor in the early development and continued success of Inuit art is the existence of a large souvenir market in carvings. The origins of the early market in Inuit carving were in souvenir purchasing. Small works, usually representing seals, birds, and other animals, are still frequently purchased by tourists, as well as by Canadian corporations to distribute as client gifts. The community of Sani-kiluaq, a group of islands in southern Hudson Bay, is particularly prolific in this production, with its supply of the beautiful carving stone argillite. These pieces are all hand carved, but frequently there is little to distinguish one from another. The style of these carvings can be, and often is, imitated by nonInuit carvers.

The souvenir market should be considered the minor leagues of the Inuit art community. While a number of sculptors never advance further than routine production of small pieces, this segment of the market is the training and proving ground for the great sculptors that sometimes emerge. With souvenir carving, Inuit artists can determine their own level of skill and creativity in an economically productive venture. Without the souvenir market to sustain them, many Inuit artists would never have started carving in the first place, and many fine artists would never have discovered their potential.

The line between souvenir art and fine art is imprecise. Many a souvenir buyer is surprised to discover with further examination that his or her purchase has real aesthetic merit. Indeed, many of the carvings Houston purchased as handi-crafts for less than \$10 in the early days of Inuit carving now rest in Canadian museums.



ΠΕΤΕΡ ΚΑΡΑΚΑΤΟΑΚ

Kugluktuk

Arm Wrestlers

1990

Alabaster, 12 x 18.5 x 10 inches

Collection of H. G. Jones

ARTISTS AND COLLECTORS

For Inuit art to thrive, artists and collectors must productively mesh. Thus, the issues of feedback and market expectations are important for Inuit art production and collection.

FEEDBACK

The link between Inuit sculptor and Inuit collector is over a long distance, nearly always with a substantial language barrier, and with significant cultural differences. Most contemporary artists can communicate freely with collectors and dealers, and also might hear from art critics. Artists are free to ignore all of the feedback they receive, to be slaves to it, or work in the area between these extremes. The Inuit sculptor rarely has this choice.

The principal point of feedback from Inuit art purchasers to sculptors is at the point of purchase in the local community. Most Inuit art is sold through Inuit cooperatives or through the North West Company—once part of the Hudson Bay Company. These organizations operate general supply stores in Arctic communities and their primary reason for purchasing Inuit art is to put money into Inuit hands. That money can then be used to purchase profit-making snowmobiles, food, and other supplies. The person actually buying sculpture from the Inuit artist has been (with exceptions) a store manager, who was hired to sell food and snowmobiles, and who



LUCCASSIE S̄CHALOOK

Inukjuak

Old Woman Legend

1992

Serpentine, 6.5 x 12.5 x 7 inches

Private Collection

LUCCASSIE S̄CHALOOK

Inukjuak

Mother Stretching Skin

1980

Stone, 11.5 x 17 x 6.5 inches

Private Collection





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Cape Dorset

Sedna and Child

1999

Serpentine, 5 x 10 x 7 inches

Collection of Joram Piatigorsky

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Cape Dorset

Musk Ox

1990

Serpentine, 6.5 x 17.5 x 8 inches

Collection of James B. Wyngaarden

may have no training in and little appreciation for Inuit art. If the purchaser is Inuit, he or she will often be a member of the small community surrounding the store, with direct personal relationships, even family relationships, with the artists. These circumstances make confrontational rejection and informed criticism of a sculptor's work at that point of contact difficult in practice. The result has been indiscriminate purchasing in the north, and the cooperatives and the North West Company are often burdened with large amounts of low-quality, even unsaleable works. From time to time, these purchasers may put long moratoriums on new purchases so they can reduce their inventories; this has severe effects on Inuit household and community economies.

The major exception to this manner of purchasing has been the community of Cape Dorset, where Houston supervised purchasing until 1962, and where Terry Ryan has been continuously present as an art purchaser and advisor since 1958. One of their most important contributions was their influence on quality through



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Cape Dorset

Bird

1993

Serpentine, 10.5 x 18.5 x 4.5 inches

Collection of James B. Wyngaarden



ΟΥΙΛΟΟ ΤΥΝΝΙΛΙΞ

Cape Dorset

Falcon

1992

Serpentine, 6 x 23 x 11.5 inches

Collection of James B. Wyngaarden

ΜΑΥΔΙΞ ΟΚΙΤΤΟΥΚ

Taloyoak

Sedna

1991

Serpentine, 4.5 x 12 x 7 inches

Collection of Robin and John Burdick

good purchasing and informed feedback. It is not surprising, therefore, that a substantial number of the pieces displayed in this exhibition come from Cape Dorset.

Modern technology has already brought some important changes in the purchasing of Inuit art, allowing good images of a sculpture to be transmitted instantly south, where it can be evaluated by trained and professional purchasers not involved in other personal relationships with the artist. However, there is no guarantee that such a system will work effectively; the purchaser may be blind to some qualities or excessively governed by market considerations. It is also difficult to work with an artist's sensitivities over the telephone and through an interpreter. Nevertheless, major changes in marketing created by technology will certainly influence the future of Inuit art; collectors, dealers, and above all artists will be required to adapt to them. In particular, as communication to the Arctic improves (Inuit websites are appearing) and an increasing number of Inuit master English, it can be expected that artists will communicate more directly with their dealers and collectors.

ΝΑΛΙΝΕΚ ΤΞΜΞΛΑ

Kimmirut

Dancing Bear

1999

Serpentine, 17 x 14 x 10 inches

Collection of Joram Piatigorsky



MARKET EXPECTATIONS

The *qallunaat* art market has never been entirely without its expectations of Inuit art. One of these relates to subject matter and another to medium. First, most collectors are drawn to art that presents traditional cultural practices of the Inuit or images of their Arctic environment. Most Inuit art production represents traditional Inuit life, animal life of the Arctic, Inuit legends, and figures from the Inuit shamanistic tradition. Exceptions occur, such as the splendid *Oblate Father* by Paulassie Pootoogook, and the strangely haunting *Inuk with Binoculars* by Pauloosie Tunnillie. The desire of *qallunaat* collectors to purchase carvings that illustrate traditional Inuit life is a tribute to that tradition, and helped validate it during the difficult transition into permanent settlement. This expectation has not seriously impeded Inuit creativity.

Second, the market expects the material of Inuit art to be Arctic in origin. This requires the Inuit to locate, quarry, and transport large quantities of carving stone under the harshest environmental conditions. While it is natural to think of the Arctic as all rock and snow, stone suitable for carving is a scarce commodity. The sculptors of southern Baffin Island—Cape Dorset and Kimmirut—are most fortunate in this respect. The local carving stone is a beautiful and very workable serpentine. But the quarry is 100 treacherous sea miles from the village and quarrying itself is dangerous. Despite its relative abundance, Cape Dorset sculptors start running out of carving stone toward the end of each spring, as they can only get fresh supplies in July and August.



PETER SEVOGA

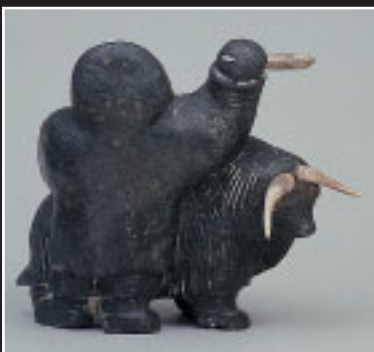
Baker Lake

Hunter

1988

Steatite, 13.5 x 14.5 x
9 inches

Collection of James B.
Wyngaarden



PAUL TOOLOOKTOOK

Baker Lake

Musk Ox Hunter

1992

Steatite, 13.5 x 18 x 17 inches

Collection of James B. Wyngaarden

Other villages are less fortunate in their supply of local stone. Sculpture production from Arctic Quebec, where contemporary Inuit art originated, has been greatly reduced in part because these artists cannot find suitable stone. Many of the artists from this region have great skill and creativity. But the local black and gray stone, while it holds a subtle beauty, lacks the dazzling effect that Baffin Island serpentine achieves. Examples of northern Quebec stone in this exhibition are *Bear Shaman Putting on Boot* by Johnny Aculiak and *Mother Stretching Skin* by Lucassie Echalook. The artists of Baker Lake and Arviat also use their black and gray steatite to great effect, as in the carvings by Barnabus Arnasungaaq, Elizabeth Nutaraluk, and John Pangnark. But the market for these works is a small fraction of that available to the Baffin Island sculptors, and surely the aesthetic quality of the stone itself is a key factor.

Several sculptors represented in this exhibition have boldly decided to use imported stone. David Ruben Piqtouken and his brother, Abraham Anghik, come from the village of Paulatuk in the western arctic, a village with a weak artistic culture. The brothers have moved south to Toronto and Vancouver Island, respectively, and carve their works primarily from beautiful Brazilian soapstone. The international recognition they have achieved is a result of the obvious merit of their work, as well as the beauty of the material they use. Matiusi Iyaituk and Jonasi Faber also frequently use nonArctic stone. It is a tribute to these artists and their collectors that they have been willing to overcome the expectation that Inuit sculpture must be carved from Arctic materials.

THE DIVERSITY OF INUIT ART

Even a cursory look around this exhibition reveals the tremendous diversity of Inuit sculptural styles. Some works are literal, others are stylized, and yet others are nearly abstract in their approach. Some are harsh and confrontational, others are

MATIUSI IYAITUK

Ivujivik

Wait Out the White Out in a Snow Wind Breaker

1999

Steatite and serpentine, 18 x 18 x 8 inches

Collection of Grant and Carole-Ann Davies





PAUTA SAILA

Cape Dorset

Dancing Bear

1995

Serpentine, 20.5 x 15 x 7.5 inches

Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Steven Herbert

filled with humor and whimsy. The range of carving styles covers most of the territory between a rough primitive approach and a detailed, highly finished carving. This stylistic diversity makes generalizations about Inuit sculpture extremely difficult. An examination of works by two artists from the small village of Arviat, on the west coast of Hudson Bay, illustrates this difficulty.

In the sculpture *Mother and Child* by Elizabeth Nutaraluk Aulatjut, a strong and caring mother protectively holds a child with a naively benign countenance. The mother knows that the life ahead for this child will be filled with many hardships. The contrast between her stern expression and the child's innocence carries a powerful and direct emotional statement about the strength and sadness of motherhood and the universal bond between mother and child. Indeed, the contrast between the serious countenance of the mother and the innocence of the child is a common theme in Inuit art.

The appreciation of this superficially primitive work should not blind the viewer to the evidence that it comes from a highly sophisticated sculptor. The file marks on the surface only enhance its beautifully modeled shapes. The lovely braid is an Elizabeth Nutaraluk trademark. Above all, the expressiveness of this piece is achieved in an extremely resourceful manner, with the faces of the mother and the child created with just a few skilled strokes of the file. The subtle turning of her



LATCHOLASSIΞ AKΞSUK

Cape Dorset

Bird

1992

Serpentine, 13 x 9 x 4.5 inches

Collection of James B. Wyngaarden

LUKTA QIATSUQ

Cape Dorset

Scenting Bull Caribou

1997

Serpentine, 15 x 18 x 12 inches

Collection of Joram Piatigorsky



body endows the mother with motion and energy. The asymmetry of the mother's face and head is also masterful.

It would be a generalization to say, from the experience of this piece, that the strength of Inuit art comes from its powerful and very direct appeal to the emotions, created by the sculptor's awareness of the aesthetic qualities of sculptural form. This would surely be true of much of what the viewer sees. But a very different reaction is evoked by *Kneeling Woman* by John Pangnark, Elizabeth Nutaraluk's Arviat neighbor. This sculpture masterfully illustrates Pangnark's obsession with finding the minimal way of expressing human form. Here, the entire face is reduced to a nose-like projection at the top of the piece, and considerable examination is required to find the familiar shapes of the human body. Like most of Pangnark's work, it is cerebral and slowly works its magic on the viewer.

The hazards of generalizing about sculptural styles among the Inuit are amplified by extending the examination over the vast Canadian Arctic. Radically different carving styles characterize the Baffin Island communities, such as Cape Dorset. Many of the Cape Dorset pieces are intricately, even ostentatiously carved with fine detail and a high degree of refinement.

The wonderful *Sedna and Child* by Oopik Pitseolak of Cape Dorset presents an excellent example of this stylistic approach. The subject matter is similar to that of Elizabeth Nutaraluk, except that the mother is the mermaid-like sea goddess, Sedna. Here, the contrast between the countenance of the mother and that of the



OSUITOK IPÆÆLIÆ
Cape Dorset
Owl with Egg
1977
Serpentine, 17 x 10 x 3 inches
Dorset Fine Arts Collection



IYOLA KINGWATSIAQ
Cape Dorset
Owl
1997
Serpentine, 13 x 10 x 3 inches
Collection of Charles P. Plymire

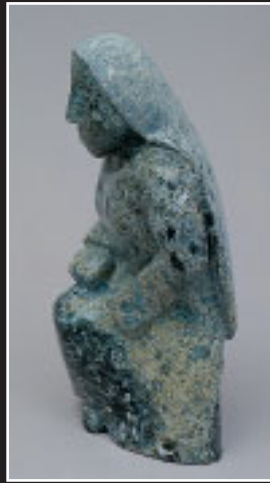


PAULASSIΞ POO-
TOOGOOK

Cape Dorset
Oblate Father
1993

Serpentine, 13.5 x 4 x 2
inches

Dorset Fine Arts Collection



OVILOO TUNNIL-
LIΞ

Cape Dorset
Pensive Oviloo
2000

Serpentine, 12 x 6 x 4.5
inches

Burdick Gallery Collection



ABRAHAM
ΞTUNGAT

Cape Dorset
Bird of Spring
1988

Serpentine, 16.5 x 8
x 6 inches

Private Collection

child is even sharper, to the point of humor. The child is vividly and precisely portrayed in its innocence, while the mother shows the aspect of a goddess who can bring death to a community by withholding her animals from the hunt. This creature is clearly not human. This piece connects the viewer with the spiritual world of the Inuit through the universal theme of motherhood.

These examples illustrate two important cultural facts. First, sculpture is an equal opportunity profession for men and women. Some of the most renowned carvers are women, including Elizabeth Nutaraluk and Oopik Pitseolak. In the past,

ΣΗΞΟΠΥΚ ΘΟΥΤΑΘ
Cape Dorset
Two Loons
1997
Serpentine, 4.5 x 23 x 9.5
inches
Dorset Fine Arts Collection



participation was somewhat limited by the physical demands of stone carving. In several communities, women turned to printmaking as their primary artistic pursuit. However, the growing use of power tools has made carving easier for both men and women, and as a result more women have taken up carving.

Second, it is worth pointing out that Pangnark seldom sold his works for more than \$100, although they now fetch many multiples of that amount. Pangnark was a sophisticated and skilled man, and he surely would have made more money carving bears and seals. It would be difficult to find any Inuit artist for whom money is not a pressing concern, but it would be unwise to generalize about how Inuit art responds to monetary demands. Indeed, Inuit artists show the same diversity of attitudes toward money that would be found in any creative artistic community.

The best approach to Inuit sculpture is undertaken one piece at a time. There are simply too many surprises waiting for those unwary enough to describe all of these works in a few words. A pamphlet issued a few years ago asserted that Inuit sculptors never use glue. While it is uncommon, a number of fine sculptors from the



┐OHNNY ACULIAK
Inukjuak
Bear Shaman Putting on Boot
2000
Serpentine, 6.5 x 6 x 6 inches
Collection of Joram Piatigorsky



┐OY HALLAUK
Arviat
Family
1990
Steatite, 9 x 8.5 x 4 inches
Collection of Marilyn and Knox Hayes

north have used glue. In fact, such generalities simply inhibit the development of the artists' creative new approaches. If Inuit art is to continue to thrive, viewers and collectors should wait with an open mind for what comes, rather than imposing rules. In fact, what best defines Inuit sculpture is that it is sculpture made by the Inuit.

SUBJECTS OF INUIT SCULPTURE

Four major themes comprise most Inuit sculpture: (1) Inuit people, usually in traditional dress and often engaging in traditional activities, (2) depictions of Inuit legends, (3) transformation pieces from the Inuit spiritual tradition, and (4) animals of the Arctic, such as polar bears, caribou, musk oxen, and birds.

INUIT PEOPLE AND ACTIVITIES

Family life and traditional Inuit practices, such as hunting, are commonly represented in Inuit sculpture. Traditional Inuit clothing also provides a skilled sculptor with lovely shapes to carve, such as the shape of the hood. Lucassie Echalook's *Mother Stretching Skin* shows a mother stretching a caribou skin while her children play. One child looks through a hole in the skin. Barnabus Arnasungaaq's *Husband and Wife with Birds* shows a couple with their guardian spirits. The *avataq* in Kumukuluk Saggiatok's *Inuk Blowing Up Avataq* is a sealskin float that will be attached to a harpoon line to keep a harpooned animal from sinking. In *Inuk Wearing Snow Goggles* by Manasie Akpaliapik, an *inuk* is wearing traditional slit caribou antler goggles that protect against snow blindness in the spring. In Bob Kussy's *Inuit Dentistry*, the man has just extracted a tooth by tying it to a rock and dropping the rock. *Drum Dancer* by Axangayu Shaa probably represents a shaman beating the drum to enhance his shamanic powers.

ELIZABETH NUTARALUK AULATJUT

Arviat

Mother and Child

1985

Steatite, 9 x 6 x 4.5 inches

Collection of Sheldon and Lili Chester



INUIT LEGENDS

Old Woman Legend by Lucassie Echalook tells of a woman who was left behind to die by a family unwilling to care for her. When a bear attacked her, the resourceful woman put a glove on the end of her cane and thrust it down the bear's throat, suffocating it. The Lumaak legend, subject of David Ruben Piqtouken's piece of that name, describes a blind boy cruelly abused by his mother. The boy is magically cured by a loon, then takes revenge on his mother. As the boy relates the sad story of his life, the loon gets a lump in its throat.

TRANSFORMATIONS

Among the most celebrated and creative depictions of Inuit art are transformation pieces, representing figures with both animal and human aspects, or figures with characteristics from more than one animal. Several such pieces are exhibited here. The origins of this imagery within traditional Inuit spiritual life and belief are complex. A figure may represent a recognized spirit, such as the goddess Sedna. A bird with a human face may represent a shaman transformed into a bird in order to visit distant spirits or collect precious material for healing (the tattoos on the face of David Ruben Piqtouken's *Bird Shaman* mark this as a transformed shaman). Or it may represent a bird helper (*tornaq*) who conveys supernatural powers on the shaman, such as the power of flight. Finally, it may simply be a bird, but showing its soul or *inua*. Dealers and collectors will generally call a bird with a human face a "bird spirit" or a "bird shaman." But Inuit might simply call it a bird. Therefore the distinction between transformation pieces and representations of animals is not always clear-cut.

Dancing bears, which are a favorite subject of Cape Dorset sculptor Pauta Saila and Kimmirut sculptor Nalinek Temela, may actually depict a shaman transformed into a bear helper through dancing. In *Bear Shaman Putting on Boot* by Johnny Aculiak, the shaman has been transformed into his bear helper and is either dressing



MANASIĒ AKPALIAPIQ

Arctic Bay

Inuk Wearing Snow Goggles

1990

Bone, 10 x 8 x 3 inches

Collection of Barbara and Vincent Barresi

or undressing following completion of a shamanic mission. In this piece, as in Abraham Anghik's *Bear Shaman*, dressing the bear in traditional Inuit garb produces a beautiful combination of shapes and textures.

Bird Spirit by Judas Ullaluq depicts a strange bird with an infant in its mouth. While the image is disturbing, the baby is probably being carried to its birthplace by the family's guardian spirit.

The spiritual figure represented in Maudie Okittuk's *Sedna* and Oopik Pitseolak's *Sedna and Child* is a mermaid-like goddess. Sedna is the mother and protectress of sea creatures. As most of the Inuit were dependent on sea creatures for food, Sedna was a major object of traditional Inuit spiritual practice. If the hunt went badly, the shaman would visit her in her watery home and find out how the community had offended her. The shaman might also brush her hair to coax her to release her animals for the hunt.

ANIMALS

Animals of the Arctic are among the most popular subjects of Inuit sculpture. The caribou was a particularly important food source for the Inuit of the inland Arctic. The musk ox is an extremely sturdy animal that lives year-round well above the Arctic circle. When attacked, it forms a protective circle, making it easy for humans to hunt. A survey of the various polar bears exhibited here provides a fascinating overview of the great diversity of Inuit sculptural styles.



JOHN TIKTAK

Rankin Inlet

Mother and Child

1969

Steatite, 13 x 7 x 4 inches

Private Collection

PAULOOSIE TUNNILLIE

Cape Dorset

Inuk with Binoculars

1999

Serpentine, 5 x 5 x 4 inches

Collection of Harriet and Robert Basseches



NOTES ON THE EXHIBITION AND CATALOG

LINGUISTIC NOTES

Until recently, Inuit were called "Eskimos." This term comes from the language of their Algonkian Indian neighbors and means "eaters of raw meat," with a somewhat pejorative overtone. The term "Inuit" is from the Inuktituk language. It means "people" or "those who are really people" as opposed to nonInuit, with the singular *inuk* meaning person.

The term *qallunaat*, Anglicized to *kabloona*, is also from Inuktituk and refers to all those who are not Inuit. It is a useful term for describing most Inuit collectors: "western" is the wrong direction, and "southern" seems to put Winnipeg into Dixie and excludes the Europeans who first made contact with the Inuit in the 16th century.

ARTIST NAMES

Traditionally, an *inuk* had no last name, or family name, and was simply named Parr, Kiakshuk, or Pootoogook, for example. For record keeping purposes, the Canadian government assigned each *inuk* an "E number," such as E8-471. When the Inuit objected to this practice, the government asked them to adopt a second name—usually a last name—so their names would be more unique. Generally, the portion of the name that is used to characterize an Inuit artist is the more traditional given name: Oviloo, Oopik, Pauta—rather than the last name. When the first name is a Christian name (Paul, for example) or an Inuit version of a Christian name (such as Pauloosie), both names are required because that first name is so common.

TITLES

It is the usual and somewhat unfortunate practice that Inuit sculptors do not title their work, leading dealers and collectors to guess about the meaning of some



BOB KUSSY

Kugluktuk

Inuit Dentistry

1999

Caribou antler and musk ox hair,

7 x 4 x 2 inches

Collection of Harriet and Robert Basseches

pieces. One artist who does pay particular attention to titles is Matusi Iyaituk. In this exhibition, the title *Wait Out the White Out in a Snow Wind Breaker* is carved directly into the bottom of his work.

INUIT STONES

Until recently, the stone of Inuit carving was all termed soapstone. However, the Inuit rarely use true soapstone, a soft rock composed of talc. The most common stones are serpentine, steatite, and argillite. A detailed geological description of these is given in the catalog *Northern Rock* (see the list of suggested further reading). In this exhibition it is better to assume, at the risk of occasional inaccuracy, that the stone of a particular sculpture is that generally used by the community of the sculptor, as described in *Northern Rock*. Certain identification of the stone would require a geological analysis of each sculpture. As this is a destructive process, it is rarely done.



MATIUSI IYAITUK

Ivujivik

Sijjariaq (The Sandpiper)

1994

Serpentine and caribou antler,

4.5 x 8.5 x 4.5 inches

Private Collection

JOHN M. BURDICK

Associate Curator for the Exhibition

ABRAHAM ANGHIK

Paulatuk and Salt Spring Island

Bear Shaman

1998

Brazilian soapstone,

14 x 10 x 7 inches

Collection of Nancy L. Eaton



FURTHER READING

- Gustavison, Susan. 1999. *Northern Rock: Contemporary Inuit Structure*. Kleinberg: McMichael Canadian Art Collection.
- Hessel, Ingo. 1999. *Inuit Art: An Introduction*. New York: Henry N. Abrams.
- Houston, James. 1995. *Confessions of an Igloo Dweller*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.
- Seidelman, Harold, and James Turner. 1993. *The Inuit Imagination*. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre.
- Swinton, George. 1999. *Sculpture of the Inuit*. 3rd Edition. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.
- Wight, Darlene. 1991. *The First Passionate Collector*. Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery.
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DAVID RUBEN PIQTOUKEN
Paulatuk and Toronto
Drawing Out Evils
1995
Brazilian soapstone and caribou skin,
10 x 13.5 x 7.5 inches
Private Collection

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The IDB Cultural Center would like to thank all the collectors who have graciously lent their works for this exhibition, including those who have preferred to remain anonymous. The Cultural Center extends special thanks to Dr. John M. Burdick, for his substantial curatorial contribution to this exhibition, and to Ms. Louise Blais, the Cultural Counselor of the Embassy of Canada.

OTHER CATALOGS OF EXHIBITIONS ORGANIZED BY THE IDB
CULTURAL CENTER'S VISUAL ARTS PROGRAM

Peru: A Legend in Silver

Essay by Pedro G. Jurinovich. 28 pp., 1992

Journey to Modernism: Costa Rican Painting and Sculpture from 1864 to 1959

Essay by Efraím Hernández V. 20 pp., 1993

Picasso: Suite Volland

Texts provided by the Instituto de Crédito Español, adapted by the IDB Cultural Center. 8 pp., 1993

Colombia: Land of El Dorado

Essay by Clemencia Plazas, Museo del Oro, Banco de la República de Colombia. 32 pp., 1993

Graphics from Latin America: Selections from the IDB Collection

Essay by Félix Angel. 16 pp., 1994

Other Sensibilities: Recent Developments in the Art of Paraguay

Essay by Félix Angel. 24 pp., 1994

17th and 18th Century Sculpture in Quito

Essay by Magdalena Gallegos de Donoso. 24 pp., 1994

Selected Paintings from the Art Museum of the Americas

Essay by Félix Angel. 32 pp., 1994

Latin American Artists in Washington Collections

Essay by Félix Angel. 20 pp., 1994

Treasures of Japanese Art: Selections from the Permanent Collection of the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum

Essay provided by the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum, adapted by the IDB Cultural Center. 48 pp., 1995*

Painting, Drawing, and Sculpture from Latin America: Selections from the IDB Collection

Essay by Félix Angel. 28 pp., 1995

Timeless Beauty. Ancient Perfume and Cosmetic Containers

Essay by Michal Dayagi-Mendels, The Israel Museum. 20 pp., 1995*

△ **Figari's Montevideo (1861-1938)**

Essay by Félix Angel. 40 pp., 1995

△ **Crossing Panama: A History of the Isthmus as Seen through its Art**

Essays by Félix Angel and Coralia Hassan de Llorente. 28 pp., 1995

△ **What a Time it Was...Life and Culture in Buenos Aires, 1880-1920**

Essay by Félix Angel. 40 pp., 1996

△ **Of Earth and Fire: Pre-Columbian and Contemporary Pottery from Nicaragua**

Essays by Félix Angel and Edgar Espinoza Pérez. 28 pp., 1996

Expeditions: 150 Years of Smithsonian

Research in Latin America

Essay by the Smithsonian Institution staff. 48 pp., 1996

Between the Past and the Present: Nationalist Tendencies in Bolivian Art, 1925-1950

Essay by Félix Angel. 28 pp., 1996

Design in XXth Century Barcelona: From Gaudí to the Olympics

Essay by Juli Capella and Kim Larrea, adapted by the IDB Cultural Center. 36 pp., 1997

Brazilian Sculpture from 1920 to 1990

Essays by Emanoel Araújo and Félix Angel. 48 pp., 1997**

△ **Mystery and Mysticism in Dominican Art**

Essay by Marianne de Tolentino and Félix Angel. 24 pp., 1997

△ **Three Moments in Jamaican Art**

Essay by Félix Angel. 40 pp., 1997

△ **Points of Departure in Contemporary Colombian Art**

Essay by Félix Angel. 40 pp., 1998

△ **In Search of Memory. 17 Contemporary Artists from Suriname**

Essay by Félix Angel. 36 pp., 1998

△ **A Legacy of Gods. Textiles and Woodcarvings from Guatemala**

Essay by Félix Angel. 36 pp., 1998

△ **L'Estampe en France. Thirty-Four Young Printmakers**

Essays by Félix Angel and Marie-Hélène Gatto. 58 pp., 1999 *

△ **Parallel Realities: Five Pioneering Artists from Barbados**

Essay by Félix Angel. 40 pp., 1999

△ **Leading Figures in Venezuelan Painting of the Nineteenth Century**

Essays by Félix Angel and Marián Caballero. 60 pp., 1999

△ **Norwegian Alternatives**

Essays by Félix Angel and Jorunn Veiteberg. 42 pp., 1999

△ **New Orleans: A Creative Odyssey**

Essay by Félix Angel. 64 pp., 2000

△ **On the Edge of Time: Contemporary Art from the Bahamas**

Essay by Félix Angel. 48 pp., 2000

△ **Two Visions of El Salvador : Modern Art and Folk Art**

Essays by Félix Angel and Mario Martí. 48 pp., 2000

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John M. Burdick

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December 7, 2000 to February 9, 2001
11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday to Friday