Challenging Long-Cherished Beliefs
by Peter Millard

This important article takes issue with recent criticism by John Bentley Mays, the Globe & Mail art critic who dismissed work by Inuit because it defies the western art canon. Millard argues that it is our ethnocentric biases that prevent us from appreciating work from another culture.

Nunatsiaqmiut, People of the Good Land
by Alootook Ipellie

Ipellie paints two pictures in this startling essay. The first is of a people dependent upon the land which both nurtured and challenged them. The second is of a people humiliated and treated as curiosities by western “civilization.”

The Language of Inuit Art
by Ed McKenna

Picking up on the fact that the terminology of industry and commerce is typically applied to handiwork by Inuit, McKenna points out that the problem is more than semantic since it affects the perception of their art and the terms and conditions under which they will receive assistance.

——— People and Places ———

The Artists Speak: Iyola Kingvatsiaq, Kananginak Pootoogook, and Jimmy Manning

Three artists who were at the recent art conference organized by the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg were interviewed upon their return to Cape Dorset.

——— Reviews ———

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Reader requests more information

Although it takes quite a long time for your journal to reach me in Germany one of the first columns I browse through is that advising on exhibitions in museums and galleries and the reviews. As Inuit Art Quarterly is the most important source of information I am wondering whether the following suggestion would be considered. Reviews of exhibitions give the dates, but it is not mentioned whether a catalogue, poster or other relevant literature is published as well. I think that such additional information would be quite helpful.

Klaus J. Nolte
Germany

Editor's Note: Starting with this issue we are including information concerning literature accompanying exhibitions.

Collector loses everything in fire

I was delighted to receive the fall issue of IAQ. I have been a collector of Inuit art, artifacts, literature — any and all aspects of arctic culture and anthropology. Unfortunately, my home and my extensive collections of prints, sculpture, tools, books and scrimshaw were destroyed in the October 1991 Oakland firestorm. Right now IAQ is my only link with my passion for things Inuit. Could you advise me as to my best resources in re-establishing contacts? Is there a central contact which would put me on mailing lists of dealers, cooperatives, museums, etc., for mailings, catalogues and announcements? What about book dealers specializing in Inuit materials? I would sincerely appreciate any help you may be able to provide this heart-tick collector.

Daniel Kaplan, M.D.
1115 Danforth Lane
Walnut Creek, CA 94598

On The Cover:
Death and Beauty, October 1990, Cape Dorset shoreline. "Some Inuit men were cutting up two beluga whales along the shoreline. I had never seen anything like it before. The amount of blood was incredible, and the shoreline for several hundred meters was transformed by the splashing red waves. When I concentrated on the area at my feet, I saw a strange beauty in the colour of this death, and at that moment seemed to gain a new understanding of life, the food chain, and it's importance to the Inuit people," writes the photographer Jerry Riley.

Inside Front Cover:
Rock That Looks Like A Sleeping Face, August 1991, Cape Dorset shoreline. Photographer Jerry Riley says: "This rock only appears when the tide goes out. It just seemed so appropriate that I saw this rock in this place. Cape Dorset, where the stones and rocks have significant importance. When the tide comes in, the face moves underwater. the place of many Inuit spirits."

L E T T E R S
Myth
and
reality

A number of people have been moved to speak out in this issue. Peter Millard's important paper is a timely corrective to narrow-minded if not snobbish criticism of Inuit art which is denigrated because it does not fit the "canon." Millard also cautions afficionados of the art to pay careful attention to standards; for, having fought the fight for acceptance of Inuit art by Canada's pace-setting institutions, trite exhibitions and mediocre research and scholarship will not pass muster. Ed McKenna's paper also speaks to standards. After several years in Pangnirtung as general manager of the Uqqurmiut Inuit Artists Association, he has been moved to speak out about the confusion between manufacturing and art, manifested in the language we use.

Several Inuit also speak out in this issue, and some of the things they have to say may surprise you. Alootook Ipellie's contribution was offered to us by photographer Hans Blohm who solicited it for a book he is working on. We made a last minute effort to include it here because of its unique perspective on the history of Inuit contact with the outside world. Ipellie's reflections about the Inuit put on display in England hundreds of years ago are particularly poignant in view of the comment by Iyola Kingwatsiak in this issue that he felt like a carving on display at the McMichael's recent conference in Kleinburg, Ontario.

It is not a far-fetched analogy. Paternalism is deeply entrenched with reference to Inuit art. A number of non-Inuit players were given centre stage at Kleinburg to reminisce about their arctic adventures, but the Inuit were provided only token translation to answer questions which were mostly irrelevant to current realities and issues. It speaks volumes that only days after the Kleinburg conference Zebedee Nungak, vice-president of Makivik Corporation, joined forces with Ovide Mercredi, Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, to hi-jack a constitutional conference in Toronto, outraging politicians and the population of Quebec by demanding that the aboriginal people be granted the same distinct society status that Quebec has long sought.

The point is that, no more than the rest of the world, Inuit are not the way they were 40 years ago. They are governing hamlets, administering social services and running businesses as well as their own broadcasting corporation. They are negotiating on a federal level for political rights. But Inuit artists continue to be treated as curios, while non-native "experts" decide policies and dominate discussion. It was obvious, for instance, that Inuit were not even consulted about the Kleinburg program, let alone treated as collaborators. Jimmy Manning from Cape Dorset says they were barely even informed about the conference, and that there was no discussion of what was expected of them (see interview in this issue).

What do artists want?

Inuit artists are concerned about the scarcity of stone and they want better tools and studios to work in. They also want to talk about the future and the need for art education. The latter topic was on the conference agenda at Kleinburg, but given short shrift.

The presentation by Don Couch, vice-principal of Arctic College's Nunataraq Campus in Iqaluit, could have been an opportunity to deal with some current issues, but it was a case of ships passing in the night. Although moderator Jean Blodgett provided an excellent, concise set-up for a serious discussion of the topic, by pointing out that the traditional system of learning (children watching their parents) is breaking down, there was no opportunity to address this issue.

Av Isaacs made a stab at putting the discussion on a serious plane with his question as to why Arctic College hires
non-Inuit artists to teach when there are so many talented Inuit available. But discussion was drowned by the objections of several people to the fact that art education is even being provided to Inuit. One critic said “leave them alone,” which is rather ironic, given that we haven’t left them alone since we “discovered” them in 1949, especially in Dorset where the artists have always been under tutelage.

IAQ readers will know that Inuit are hungry for art education, which is not limited to the teaching of technique — the best sculptors in Canada are Inuit — but implies exposure to a whole range of techniques and ideas. No different from artists anywhere, they do not live or create in a vacuum.

Promotion and paternalism

What all of the commentary in this issue tells me is that we are reaching a turning point in the field of Inuit art. The material we are reproducing here was mostly unsolicited and unconnected, yet there are some common themes that ring loud and clear. One has to do with standards, the blurring of the line between promotion and scholarship which helped establish a successful commercial market, but which is perpetuating stereotypes and harming the art. Because what we understand by the term “Inuit art” comprises a range of production, from fine art to souvenir, it has attracted a substantial following of people who do not understand or appreciate art, but who are captivated by the myths, what Millard refers to as “the arcticpastoral.” They made it what Nelson Graburn once described it, a “tourist art.”

There has been a movement against this, begun by the Canadian Eskimo Arts Council and joined by the Inuit Art Foundation and others. And, as these things happen, a useful corrective to myth-making appeared at about the same time as the Kleinburg conference in the form of an essay in the catalogue of the Ian Lindsay show organized by the Winnipeg Art Gallery (see review by Dorothy Speak in this issue). Curator Darlene Wight also revisited the early years — the late 1940s and early 1950s — not to glorify them, but to set the record straight. She has provided valuable data which will be useful for all future writers trying to separate myth and reality.

The desire to establish a dialogue is undoubtedly there, but without efficient translation services and a will to modify our frame of reference Inuit inevitably become only token players.

It is essential that we be clear what audience we are addressing. I have heard it argued that the charm of Inuit art is that it appeals to the man in the street who knows nothing about art. Populist art may seem to be a good thing in our liberal, pluralistic society, but it is a disservice to serious artists who are struggling against the stereotypes that some people find hard to let go of. As Millard points out, western art is anything but democratic, and there are Inuit artists who want to be judged on the same terms as other Canadian artists. The mythology and the stereotypes are a burden to those interested in playing to a critical audience and avoiding patronizing adoration.

Which brings me to the second major thread that can be traced throughout the contributions in this issue; namely, the persistently paternalistic treatment of Inuit artists. The McMichael is certainly not the only guilty party, and I am sorry to have had to single it out for criticism since I am supportive of the gallery’s intentions and of curator Jean Blodgett who broke new ground in Inuit art while at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. But the McMichael, now guardian of one of the world’s largest and most important Inuit collections, has not, with this first effort, lived up to the commitment it made to serious scholarship and meaningful collaboration with Inuit. It just did what everybody has been doing for 40 years. The desire to establish a dialogue is undoubtedly there, but without efficient translation services and a will to modify our frame of reference Inuit inevitably become only token players.

IAQ’s last few conference reporters (Cynthia Cook, spring 1991; Maria Muehlen, spring 1991) pointed out that we have failed to find a way to include Inuit meaningfully in our forums. The fault lies with us, not them. They are willing to talk to us, but even with good intentions, the model we insist on using is not one conducive to cross-cultural communication. Surely, it is obvious by now that we must collaborate with Inuit artists to design a forum which will facilitate dialogue.

Collaboration with aboriginal people has become a major issue in the museum community, but as will be evident from Grant and Blundell’s report in this issue on the Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships Between Museums and First Peoples conference, there is a long way to go. As Blundell observed: “At this point, it appears to be about who will own the debate.” The native people have been silent for a long while, but there is a groundswell of protest in the North, and one of IAQ’s objectives is to help give it a voice.

This issue offers a new perspective on the land, the people and the art. It is about reality — beginning with the cover.

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John Bentley Mays, Globe and Mail, June 16, 1990
"...it is probably the awareness of the strength of cultures other than western cultures that has challenged the boundaries themselves, and the challenge is to encompass a wider range of possibilities, both in human experience and in aesthetics."

Marion Jackson,

Inuit Art Quarterly, fall, 1991

This article is a response to what many consider to have been an outrageous criticism by The Globe and Mail's art critic two years ago. Building on an observation by Marion Jackson, that the challenge is to encompass a wider range of possibilities, Millard argues that, rather than rejecting the art, the canon should be altered.
"Inuit carving seems to be an awkward inclusion among the concerns of the AGO... Inuit sculptors seem interested not at all in seriality and deconstructed hierarchies... Inuit carving, after all, has played no part in the history of western art, either as a contributor to that great dialogue across time, nor as a notable recipient and translator of it" (John Bentley Mays, *Globe and Mail*, June 16, 1990:C4).

"...it is probably the awareness of the strength of cultures other than western cultures that has challenged the boundaries of art history... The problem lies more in the boundaries themselves, and the challenge is to encompass a wider range of possibilities, both in human experience and in aesthetics" (Marion Jackson, *Inuit Art Quarterly*, fall, 1991:34).

The opening of the Williamson collection of Inuit sculpture at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) back in May 1990 was attended with great fanfare. There was a huge reception in the imposing neoclassical court of the gallery where presidents of powerful corporations mingled with gallery directors, AGO board members, such luminaries as artist Molinari and critic George Swinton, as well as with people from the North and many ordinary folk.

It had all the appearance of a cultural event of national significance, as indeed it was. It was one of what have become fairly numerous events suggesting that contemporary Inuit art has finally arrived. After the tentative years during which a scattered array of dealers, collectors, critics (very few) and curators (even fewer) discovered the work, sorted it out, painfully assembled information about it, and began arguing for its importance, its day had come. The people who run our major public galleries were at last convinced that there must be something in it (of course, one or two galleries knew this from the beginning) and had begun, belatedly, to form serious collections. Here was the country's most prestigious provincial gallery making amends with a gala evening.

Those of us who had believed in the importance of this art from early on, and who had been arguing for its national acceptance in our great public galleries, could at last sit back in self-congratulatory satisfaction. Or, so we thought until we picked up the *Globe and Mail* a few days after the exhibition and read the review by art critic John Bentley Mays who used the occasion of this particular exhibition to launch an attack on contemporary Inuit art in general.

It might be best to leave the article alone — it is almost two years since it appeared, after all — except that it is difficult to ignore. It has gained a strange sort of infamy within Inuit art circles, and it still rankles. This is perhaps because, in spite of its faults, it does raise questions of first importance in our consideration of Inuit art, or indeed of any art.

**Defending the status quo**

Mays' main point is that Inuit works do not deserve the name “sculpture,” and do not belong in an institution like the AGO that devotes itself to western art. According to Mays, if the word “sculpture” is to be useful, it “will surely be kept as an historical term applied restrictively to products of a certain practice, namely the Western inquiry into plasticity, volume and visual meaning that has descended from the Greeks, through Rodin, to Duchamp and Carl Andre and beyond” (Mays, 1990:C4).

The only sculpture Mays would allow in the AGO, then, is that produced by artists who, unlike the Inuit, are interested in “seriality and deconstructed hierarchies.” That is, they know their art history, so they are aware that they are the latest exponents of a great western tradition (“seriality”) and their aim is to take that tradition a stage further by modifying the established order within art (“deconstructed hierarchies”). The Inuit could not, like Cezanne, do Poussin again after nature or, like the cubists, fracture the picture plane, because they know nothing about such
things. Consequently they have no place with those who do. (Mays conveniently forgot, or was not aware of, the new generation of Inuit artists who, knowledgeable about the western tradition, still produce sculpture with Inuit themes. Such artists are indeed deconstructing hierarchies — in both cultures. Where would Mays place them? Simply to ask the question is to reveal the total inadequacy of his categorizing system).

Mays is well known for taking up controversial positions — it is part of the charm of reading him — but there was something different about his attack on Inuit art. The article was disturbing for its shifting reasoning and confusion and for its desire to insult, all suggesting that a special emotion was in play. In order to understand what was really going on, it is necessary to divorce the article from this local instance (of excluding Inuit sculptors from the AGO) and consider it in a much broader context — that of certain changes in modern thought within the last quarter century or so. These changes have been immense and have affected practically every area of intellectual endeavour, and they have one thing in common: they have tended to challenge long-cherished beliefs in permanent and absolute standards.

In anthropology, for instance, the concept of cultural relativism has questioned old ways of viewing so-called primitive societies. Cultural relativism insists that the standards and beliefs of any culture must be judged upon its own terms, not those of another culture. In literature — and one could just as easily apply the concept to the visual arts — reception theory has undermined the position that a work of art is objective and that it will yield up the same set of meanings to all readers. Rather, the theory maintains, the “meaning” of a work depends largely upon the set of expectations and preoccupations that a particular reader brings to it.

Above all, the various liberation movements of the past three decades or so (black, feminist, gay) have insisted on a drastic reconsideration of many assumptions that before were taken for granted. In the areas of literature and the visual arts, the challenge has been to the canon, i.e., the body of works that are deemed the “best” and therefore worthy of study and assimilation by the serious members of a culture. Such works form the curricula in universities and constitute the holdings of great public galleries. The defenders point out that the canon is by no means the result of a neutral choice. Rather, it is established by a dominant group of people and inevitably reflects and reinforces a certain value system. That group traditionally has been white, male, rich, heterosexist and, like any dominant group, it has been at pains to suppress or exclude the voices of anyone outside. It is time, the challengers say, to alter the canon to give a voice to those who have been hitherto disempowered.

Defenders of the canon have reacted powerfully, with the special animus of those who feel threatened by the unknown and the foreign. They use several devices in an attempt to maintain exclusivity, and the literary theorist Eve Sedgwick refers to one of them (1990:51): “From the keepers of a dead canon we hear a rhetoric of Inuit themes. Such artists are range of cultures that make up Canada, including Inuit culture. His article is as much about power as it is about art, and its belligerent tone reveals the anxiety that often accompanies debate on the canon.

An alternative view
Dr. Marion Jackson is at the opposite end of the spectrum from John Bentley Mays, and is an interesting representative of the new school of thought. She has recently been appointed to the art history department of Carleton University in Ottawa which aims “to look at Canadian art from the point of view of a whole range of cultures that make up Canada, including Inuit culture.
Since the art combines elements from both cultures, it follows that it will be both different from and similar to western art.

on an equal footing with all the rest” (Jackson, 1991:30, emphasis added). It is significant that Jackson lists a psychologist and an anthropologist among her mentors at graduate school, and equally significant is the enrichment she received from talking intimately with an artist from another culture. Her conversations with Pudlo, she reports, mean that “I can look at [the artwork] in ways that are different than if I were relying only on my training as an art historian” (1991:33). This kind of widening inquiry, with consequent stretching or revision of received methods, is, naturally enough, frightening for some scholars, but exciting for others. In any case, it is essential.

Carleton’s initiative, and the new policies of both the ACO and the National Gallery of Canada concerning native art, are examples of modifications to the Canadian visual arts canon, and will be accompanied by attempts to increase our understanding of Inuit art. In this enterprise, though, it might be salutary to ask ourselves just what is meant by “understanding” a work of art. The vast majority of people observing an Inuit work take a deracinated approach. That is, they make a response to it without benefit of a knowledge of its “roots” — where it comes from, when it was made, let alone its influences, or the belief system, the motive for its production, the artist’s mode of life, and all those other things that form the work’s cultural matrix. It is the applying of such information to a work that is usually meant by understanding it, and it is the task of curators and scholars to provide the information so that the viewer’s appreciation will be deepened.

It must be borne in mind, however, that there are limits to this process of assimilating a work of art. A person from one culture can never fully get into the skin of someone from another one, particularly if there is a gap of time, as well as of cultures. This fact has been demonstrated in just about every article reporting interviews with the older Inuit artists; it is not merely that the two parties were speaking different linguistic languages, but each was locked into his or her separate conceptual system. Much the same problem, though, exists for works within one’s own culture. We have no means of really knowing how a medieval person would view an altar screen, for instance, or how a Renaissance gentleman would understand a Shakespearean sonnet. In older European art, as with Inuit art, we have a choice of either taking a deracinated approach (which in effect means applying the work simply to our own time and taste) or seeking the aid of scholars in order, as far as we can, to grasp the work’s cultural matrix. Either method produces pleasure, and the important thing is to be aware of the nature of what it is we are doing and the limitations of the exercise.

Sentimentalism, partisanship and patronage

It would be rather crude to think that blunt conservatism or a determination to protect power are the only forces motivating the defenders of the traditional canon. Behind their objections is one concern that has some justification. The guiding principle behind the formation of the old canon, they argue, however politically motivated it might have been unconsciously, was
quality. But, they ask, if a work is now admitted principally because it is by a woman, or by a person of colour, or is the product of some other oppressed minority, then what happens to quality? Anything goes?

It is a fair question, however scornfully posed, and has particular relevance to Inuit art; for, surely, the only justification for including it in the holdings of the AGO is that it is good. The truth is that standards within the public presentation of Inuit art are not always what they should be. There have been many excellent exhibitions, of course, but sometimes the organizers of important exhibitions have shown a predilection for large, flashy pieces, or for works that will make an easy appeal.

There are several barriers to a clear evaluation of Inuit art, quite apart from the cultural gap mentioned earlier. Aficionados of the art seem, for instance, particularly vulnerable to sentimentalism — the southern fantasy about an arctic pastoral life, full of hardship and purity — that leads to faulty evaluations. Secondly, while there are many different levels of knowledge and involvement among supporters of Inuit art, the nature of the art is such that many of us find it easy to adopt a crusading spirit which can be the enemy of objectivity. Most dangerous of all is the political element. Many people, inside and outside of government, see Inuit art as a way of strengthening the Inuit identity in the North and at worst paying lip service to Inuit nationalism, not to mention co-opting it to the service of a Canadian identity abroad. It is politically correct to show enthusiasm for Inuit art, and in such a situation quality is not necessarily the first consideration.

The crucial question

But now arises the crucial question: What is meant by quality? Cultural relativism suggests that quality is a construct that varies from culture to culture, while extremist revisers of the canon wish to change radically the definition of the term. Is there, in fact, an aesthetic by which we can declare that one work is good, and another bad?

The reality is that we operate all the time on the assumption that there is. Collectors, dealers, curators, make daily choices based on a concept of quality, and gradually, very slowly, a hierarchy of esteem is being established in Inuit art. Indeed, without such a process, the National Gallery's decision to treat the production of Inuit artists as works of art, rather than as ethnographic illustrations, would not be possible.

It would not be difficult to select, say, six informed people (excluding Mr. Mays, of course), place them in a room with 100 varied pieces of Inuit art, and be confident that they would agree fairly closely on which were the ten "best." They would need to be southern people, though — Inuit judges would probably choose quite otherwise — and they would probably share characteristics of class and education. In reality it is such people who do establish the canon, and there is nothing wrong with that, as long as, once again, we are aware of what we are doing, i.e., reflecting the taste and value system of certain people within a particular culture. The process, indeed, is inevitable. When two cultures meet, one is bound to subsume the other by in some way forcing its unfamiliar characteristics to fit our familiar value system. The point here is that it is better to try to make room for the new culture rather than reject it.

Certainly, Inuit art provides a rich harvest for the gleaner of quality. Saul Bellow asked if there has ever been a Tolstoi of the Zulus. John Bentley Mays' article, not directly but in effect, poses a similar question: "Has there ever been a Henry Moore of the Inuit?" Thus phrased, it is not a real question, obviously, since a Henry Moore could only be the product of a particular culture at a particular time. But the answer would be a resounding "Yes," if the question were re-phrased: "Have there ever been sculptors of genius among the Inuit?"

Mays' article is part of a debate that has been going on for some time among the curators and directors of Canada's major galleries as to where to place Inuit art. The bewilderment of curators...
The exhilarating thing about contemporary Inuit art in the early days of the fifties and sixties was that it seemed so strange, so new, that one was forced to a rather courageous exercise of sheer instinct for quality. For the pioneer champions of Inuit art, though, there was no doubt about it. This was the real thing. They went by what they felt when confronted by piece after piece of this new art that combined mastery of material with a powerful vision. It did not fit comfortably within a western tradition, it was true, but as far as they were concerned, if the artwork did not fit the theory one should change the theory not reject the artwork. It is obvious that any definition of sculpture that excludes the work of the best of the Inuit artists is in need of revision.

Notes
The article is riddled with inconsistencies. Christopher Varley (1990/91) pointed out one: taking curator Norman Zepp to task for providing little background information and no justification for the show, then dismissing it as easy to understand and popular. A central confusion: it is never clear whether Inuit sculpture does not belong in the AGO because it is not western, or because it is not very good. Further, it is good enough for New York's Metropolitan Museum, but apparently not good enough to cause the AGO to expand its mandate. Example of special pleading: the *reductio ad absurdum* the implied comparison of Inuit sculpture with "whirligigs...and prom gowns," which is also an example of the contempt that runs through the article, not helped by the tendency to damn with faint praise ("There's much that's fresh and charming...") and the insulting description of Inuit religious beliefs as "folktales." Topping it all is the accusation that Inuit art is being promoted by people with a vested interest in "the validation of Inuit materials [sic] as deluxe commodity..."

Various issues arising from the interface between anthropology and art are touched on in Valda Blundell's article "Teaching the anthropology of art," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, fall/winter 1990/91, p. 100. "A healthy but not universally palatable dose of reality was administered by Nelson Graburn on this subject in 'Inuit art and Canadian Nationalism,' (1986).

A workshop at the 1985 Canadian Museums Association Annual Conference was entitled 'It's native, where do you put it?' Also, as Marie Routledge, curator of Inuit art at the National Gallery of Canada said (1990/91:89), "The issue of whether the National Gallery should collect contemporary Inuit art is part of a long process of sorting out where such material should be shown."

References
Peter Millard has written extensively on all kinds of art. He recently took early retirement from his position as head of the English Department, University of Saskatchewan, and now lives in Gibsons, B.C.

The bewilderment of curators faced with the extraordinary outpouring of Inuit art during the past four decades is perhaps understandable. They are not trained to examine objects divorced from a familiar tradition...
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Outsiders moved across the Arctic like giant bulldozers and the people stopped creating their songs of joy and sorrow.
"If the moralist is inclined to speculate on the nature and distribution of happiness in this world, (let him consider the Eskimo): a horde so small, and so secluded, occupying so apparently helpless a country, so barren, so wild, and so repulsive; and yet enjoying the most perfect vigour, the most well-fed health."

John Ross, explorer, 1830

One hundred and sixty-two years after Captain John Ross wrote these words, a modern-day arctic explorer could use the same words and be close to the truth about the nature of the Inuit and their environment. The only difference is that the modern-day explorer will find twentieth century dwellings grouped together in small communities all across the circumpolar Arctic. Long gone are the clusters of nomadic camps that once dotted the seceded, "helpless" country. To the naked eye, the land still seems barren and wild. It is sometimes considered repulsive when one is caught by the unpredictability of the cruel winter weather.

A 'well-fed health' did bring happiness to the Inuit — and it does today — but the horde remains small in comparison to the world's burgeoning population. If today's moralist were to speculate on the nature and happiness of contemporary Inuit, he would be a little surprised by what history has done to them since that day in 1930.

Nature does not take kindly to the inhabitants of the Arctic and those who visit and spend time there. Many have perished there, some forgotten forever since there was no one around to acknowledge their death. Nature in the Arctic is like that; uncaring one moment, then lavishing love by offering up its bounty to sustain life.

Over the centuries, the different animal species provided the raw materials for the distinctive apparel designed by some of history's best seamstresses. And the raw materials for the tools to survive in an unrepenting land. Recognition is due those who invented the specialized tools and weapons we used to defeat nature.

High in the art of human relations

Even though Inuit lived in one of the world's most inhospitable climates, they remained people warm of heart and always ready to help anyone struggling with life. If the art of human relations were to be measured among all peoples on the planet earth, Inuit would score high on a list of those expert at caring for their fellow beings. This is not surprising given the fact they have always relied on one another to survive the forces of nature.

The Inuit contracted diseases from the public who came in droves to admire them. The so-called "savages" were, in their demeanour, not like brute beasts anymore. They were, instead, humiliated, confused, and purposeless human creatures.

Another positive aspect of Inuit culture is oral tradition. Before the arrival of the Qallunaat [non-Inuit] most adults acquired the wonderful ability to recite tales and legends of their great land. This was a natural by-product of a culture that revelled in story-telling marathons during long winter nights, interspersed with games, drum dances, chanting and song-dueling.

The main motivation behind the creation of stories and legends was the need for entertainment. Some stories had practical purposes and were used as teaching tools for young children. Living within an oral tradition meant that each generation had a responsibility to preserve the language and culture through word of mouth. This also necessitated the ability to retain detail, even the most minute of descriptions about certain things that were important to their continued survival. Failure to do so meant certain tragedy on the land. The harsh arctic climate had no mercy for even the most well-prepared men and women as they travelled the vast territory.

Our ancestors also needed to be visual people if they hoped to survive in the Arctic. They had to possess a keen sense of memory and record in their minds' eye the varying landscapes they encountered each day. So, as they moved from an old hunting ground to a new one, they learned that certain areas were special for different reasons. This could mean that a particular coastal area became known for its abundance of edible berries and plants. Another area inland was an age-old caribou migration route. A group of islands in a fiord were used as resting places for walrus herds. Another part, beyond a peninsula, was a nesting ground for eider ducks. A great river in a beautiful valley was a lifeline to schools of arctic char.

Once certain areas of the land were recognized for their varying vegetation and characteristics (such as whether or not they abounded in a particular wildlife...
This photo by Wilf Doucette for the National Film Board shows Eskimos watching the landing of a helicopter from the C.G.S. C.D. Howe, Eastern Arctic Patrol Vessel, at Arctic Bay, N.W.T. in July 1951. When Canada became concerned about the challenge being posed to arctic sovereignty by American and European whalers, a series of police patrols were sent north. (IPA 131766)

species) they were often marked with Inukshuit — stone cairns — resembling human beings. Many a landmark, river or lake, was given a name for purposes of identification so that, as the seasons changed, they were returned to because of their abundance in seasonal wild game or certain types of vegetation.

This was one way of preserving the numbers of each species they hunted during the different seasons. This practice ensured the survival of as many species as possible when the short spring and summer brought thousands of newborns to the grounds of various arctic sanctuaries. Apart from being life-long hunters and gatherers, Inuit were dedicated conservationists. It was always in their best interest never to kill off any species of animals to extinction. To do so, meant they would be helping themselves commit a slow suicide.

"The Brute Beastes"

"These savages were clothed in beastes skins, and did eat raw flesh, and spoke such speech, that no man could understand them, and in their demeanour, were like the brute beastes." Italian explorer, John Cabot, speaking of three Inuit he brought to England in 1494.

One can imagine what the Europeans thought of the Inuit who were brought back to their "civilized" soil from an alien world. "These savages" were indeed different, "like the brute beasts." They were treated as curios because they were considered to be like other museum pieces — live archaeological displays. They were no doubt carefully scrutinized by hundreds upon thousands of smirky faces with piercing eyes. They must have lived their last days in a circus-like atmosphere.

As the Arctic began to be visited by fur traders and whalers, it seemed nature's resources were simply up for grabs. The Arctic was to lose its virginity to professional exploiters from all over the globe.
Without immunity, the Inuit contracted diseases from the very public who came in droves to see and admire them. The so-called “savages” were, in their demeanour, not like brute beasts anymore. They were, instead, humiliated individuals, confused, and purposeless human creatures.

They are reported to have “spoke such speech that no man (in Europe) could understand them.” But, none of us who are their descendants can doubt that they spoke endlessly of wanting to go back to their homeland, to their paradise and to their people, family and friends, their daily diet and the pursuit of happiness on their sacred land. But no European listened to the yearnings spoken from their hearts because none of them understood their speech.

These were only three among others who had their lives stolen by thieves, self-appointed “guest curators” for a curious European public. One speculates that our ancestor’s skeletal remains were retained to be later put inside glass display cases for the public to ponder and compare bone structures. Even in their death, these unfortunate souls were not to rest in peace. How much more humiliation could be bestowed upon them by a curious “civilized” world?

That was a long time ago, but later European contact exploited the “brute beasts” in other ways. As the Arctic began to be visited by fur traders and whalers, it seemed nature’s resources were simply up for grabs. The Arctic was to lose its virginity to professional exploiters from all over the globe.

In time, countries like Canada and the United States of America began to identify international borders. Both these countries eventually claimed all the land within those borders in spite of the fact that aboriginals had lived there from time immemorial. And then these colonizers took it upon themselves to assimilate the nomadic Inuit. The full power of the tax dollar was to be spent remaking an indigenous culture into something very similar to theirs. The immediate aim was to make it easier for the Inuit to be administered to. The brute beasts were to be “civilized.”

Living in two worlds

My generation is the result of that great attempt. The ugly reality of today is the legacy of the administrators who were given the authority to begin manipulating our lives so that we would one day abandon our culture and language. They moved across the Arctic like giant bulldozers. Nothing could stop them from pushing their way into our lives.

The “bulldozers” arrived at the hunting camp where I lived, forcing us to move, along with many other families, to Iqaluit, a small community on southern Baffin Island. I still have vivid memories of those days when we did not hunt anymore to support ourselves. We relied instead on canned food and dried goods from the Hudson’s Bay Company store. We scavenged scrap wood from the dump and built our huts in clusters away from the modern pre-fab houses of the Qallunaat. Often, we went to the same dump to supplement our diet. We sometimes found usable household utensils. If we were lucky, we also found used clothing thrown away by the privileged Qallunaat.

It wasn’t until some years later we found
out the real reason why we had been moved to Iqaluit. The government had passed a law that all school-age children had to start attending school. Parents tagged along so that their children could enter the academic world, an absurdity since they were relinquishing their authority and status by turning their children over to teachers who taught whatever they wanted. As a student, I learned about the Qallunaat world, but nothing about my culture or my language.

Looking back, it seems most of us were blind to what was really happening. Those who had some inkling feigned approval, hoping it would be for the better. At least our people would not have to struggle on the land anymore as they once did when the animals became scarce or when the weather was against us. Cooperating with the white people helped us avoid famines and death. Who would not extend empty hands for life-saving food, shelter and clothing? Who would refuse modern medicine? Since these essentials were in the hands of authority — the government workers and administrators — Inuit had no choice but to live another kind of life.

Inuit are shown here transporting supplies for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police from the C.D. Howe. This photo was taken by Wilfred Doucette in Pangnirtung, N.W.T. in July 1951. (PA 146649).
Previously, Inuit made their own entertainment, writes Alotook Ipellie. Now, they have television and other toys created by the white man. This photo of artist Flossie Pappidulik and two children was taken by John Paskievi in Holman Island, 1988.

I have to admit to being blind to what was happening to us. I was attracted by the material wealth and marvellous technology of the white people: their colourful world, their sweet food, and the ingenuity with which they invented toys: gramophones, radios and film reels. We dumped our centuries-old games and discontinued the art of telling tales and legends. We stopped creating our songs of joy and sorrow.

As we gained knowledge of this new world, we were able to speak, read and write English. But we were uprooting ourselves from the very land upon which we had been born and bred. We weren't speaking our language as well as our ancestors had, and we hunted less the good animals of the land. We did not seek advice from our wise elders as we had done out on the land and in our hunting camps.

The snowball, so to speak, was rolling down the mountain, picking up victims as it got bigger, and ever larger, while the powers-that-be watched, oblivious to the catastrophe they had initiated — intended or not.

Born in a hunting camp on the north coast of Frobisher Bay in the Northwest Territories, Ipellie now lives in Ottawa, where he is pursuing a multi-faceted career in the arts. As graphic artist, cartoonist, photographer and writer, he contributes to many Inuit publications.

This is the first section of an essay solicited by photographer Hans Blohm for use in his tenth book: Alaska and the Canadian North...The Voice of the Natives, an international effort by Canadian, American, German and Japanese publishers (Expected publishing date is fall 1993). The second section will appear in the summer issue of Inuit Art Quarterly.

Contact with Amer-Europeans has resulted in Inuit moving off the land into communities, out of their snowhouses into prefab wooden structures, and the replacement of dog teams by all terrain vehicles in summer and motorized snow machines in winter. This photo was taken by John Paskievi in Holman Island 1987.
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IN THE NORTH, THE LANGUAGE OF BUSINESS DOMINATES THE WAY WE TALK ABOUT ART. It is routine now to describe Inuit artists as “producers” who work at “activities” which result in “products,” or even, “product lines.” We don’t have studios or workshops here, but rather “facilities,” or — only slightly less mundane — “shops.” (When I came to Pangnirtung three years ago to work at the “Weave Shop,” I thought this name the dullest, least imaginative I’d heard for an artists’ workshop. That was until it began to be described to me as the “Weave Plant” by government officials in Yellowknife).
We avoid a term like “sculpture” for the less ambitious “carving.” For many, “tapestries” is too flamboyant; “wallhangings” is preferred, or, in our case, an even cruder appellation: “weavings.” Up here one doesn’t hear much of the language of the artists’ creative workshop, with its emphasis on art, culture and community, but the worldly terminology of industry and commerce is everywhere.

The tendency to talk about art in business terms has little to do with the intrinsic nature of Inuit art and artists, and a lot to do with how non-Inuit believe Inuit arts and crafts should fit into the southern economy. On the one hand, there have been the dealers, collectors and academics, anxious to validate things made by Inuit as significant art forms. On the other, there are the government bureaucrats and arctic merchants, concerned primarily with the development of the cash economy. Together, these two groups have tacitly agreed to split Inuit art from Inuit craft, and to emphasize the murky distinctions between the two. The southern art dealer needs “masterworks” and the northern bureaucrat wants “products.” No matter if, for the Inuit, both terms describe the same thing.

Those of us who are concerned that “art” remain the predominant factor in the northern “arts and crafts” equation, should reconsider the breaking down of the term into separate constituent parts. The motivation may have been to protect the “art” in Inuit arts and crafts, but once the differences were admitted, the way was opened to new interpretations of the term in which business, not art, is the dominant theme.

**Arts and crafts and light manufacturing too**

Two years ago, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) boldly announced that it was going to take on the challenges facing the northern arts “industry.” The GNWT strategy paper *Arts and Crafts: Creating Opportunities for the 1990’s* begins with a restatement of the old perceived differences between “art” and “craft.” Once art is detached from craft, the author of the strategy paper is able to argue that the arts and crafts envelope can be expanded to include “light manufacturing,” too.

Light manufacturing is defined as “producing a series of items, or the reproduction of identical items, through the use of machinery.” Is this art? Most will agree that industrial activity of this kind is not. Yet light manufacturing has now found a place for itself within a definition of arts and crafts in which the essential unity of the term has been broken.

Light manufacturing has great importance in the GNWT strategy for arts and crafts. What the arts and crafts market “wants,” the strategy paper explains, is more “souvenir and other consumable items” and “lower-end crafts.” New
markets for a greater variety of products' is to be a principal goal for northern arts and crafts in the 1990s. It is projected, for example, that 'production' of souvenirs and 'printed products' in the North will increase by more than five times as a percentage of total arts and crafts production in the next five years.

"Fine art," however, (which, according to the strategy paper, represents just ten per cent of current arts and crafts production) is confidently predicted to show no such growth at all. It is at ten percent now, and that is where it will stay for the foreseeable future. Clearly, the GNWT is intent on developing arts and crafts as a commercial, not an artistic activity. With this sort of direction from government, is there any wonder our language is oriented toward the assessment of Inuit arts and crafts in quantitative rather than qualitative terms?

If it were just a question of language, most of us could ignore the recent penchant for describing arts and crafts as if they were simply a form of business. But the issue is greater than that. What does language tell us about where public funds are to be directed? Will it be possible for Inuit to receive funding simply as artists (as programs vary in their friendliness toward the arts), or will they have to present themselves to government as 'industrial producers' to receive financial support?

In this part of the country, arts council grants are almost unheard-of; artists receive public support primarily through economic development programs. These programs vary in their friendliness towards Inuit artists; they are, after all, designed to support the creation of material wealth, not art. Taking its cue from the GNWT arts and crafts strategy, the most recent five-year Economic Development Agreement between the federal and territorial governments provides funding, not for 'arts and crafts,' but for 'fine arts, crafts and souvenirs.' The other major funder of arts and crafts in the North is the GNWT Department of Economic Development and Tourism. Although it undertakes special projects in the arts and crafts -- Project Carvingstone, Small Tools Grants, and Carving Sheds come to mind -- its principal support is delivered through the newly-created Business Development Fund ('Programs That Mean Business'). What support is there, then, for the growth and development of Inuit art and artists?

Inuit perceive arts and crafts as a unity

In Pangnirtung, as in other Inuit communities, artists consciously work within arts and crafts forms which include a whole spectrum, from 'fine art,' to 'souvenirs.' These artists recognize, of course, that the arts and crafts have an economic as well as an artistic purpose. The Inuit I work for, the Uqqurmiut Inuit Artists Association, believe that the arts and crafts can help them meet basic business objectives, like profit-making and job creation. But their inspiration comes from their art, and the conviction that it has an important role to play in the development of their community today, and on into the future.

When the differences between art and craft are emphasized, whether by those who want to support fine art or by those whose main interest is business, it is in response to their own particular perceptions of the southern market. If, however, we look at the arts and crafts from a community perspective — right here, where Inuit live — we see that emphasizing the unity of the arts and crafts makes most sense. Through this unity we can be assured that artistic values — which are the values of the community — remain central to the development of the arts and crafts as an economic activity, and are not displaced or delimited by the tenets of southern business.

If we are to avoid — at least in the arts and crafts — inflicting on the Inuit our propensity to risk what William Morris condemned as "the reckless waste of life in pursuit of the means of life," then we must ensure that the arts and crafts are always connected to, and led by, the fine arts. William Morris also wrote that the handicraftsperson "must come up with" advocacy and "work side by side with" the artist, if there is to be "a supply of intelligent popular art." I think Inuit know this.

At this point in the development of Inuit art, it is vitally important that we resist the temptation to interpret the arts and crafts in terms of "marketing niches" and "product lines," and return to the language of art to describe the things Inuit make by hand.

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The Artists Speak

Iyola Kingwatsiak, Kananginak Pootoogook and Jimmy Manning were invited to participate in the Conference on Inuit Art held at the McMichael Canadian Collection in Kleinburg, Ontario at the end of January. Following the conference, they were interviewed by telephone by Ovitti Goo-Doyle, from Cape Dorset, now living in Ottawa, and Marybelle Mitchell, IAQ editor.
Carver Iyola Kingwatsiak says "...Inuit have to speak our minds and not allow ourselves to be patronized anymore."

Ovilu Goo-Doyle: What did you think about your trip to the McMichael conference?

Iyola Kingwatsiak: I enjoyed being there, but the problem was that we sat there like pieces of art in a showcase display. The non-Inuit at the conference spoke as much as they pleased about their own lives and how they lived like Inuit. But they never gave us a chance to speak or asked us questions about our work. The white people dominated as usual. They think they are the experts and know everything about Inuit. This goes on all the time. I myself felt that the white people should be asking us Inuit what we think rather than encouraging the non-Inuit to talk about their childhood in our homeland. The only contribution I made while I was there was to do a bit of printmaking, but, again, the people who organized the conference didn't give us a chance to speak or respond to questions people might have had.

Doyle: Did you think that you were just there for people to look at you?
Kingwatsiak: You're very right about that. We're just like part of the show pieces; they treat us like carvings. The white people never seemed to be interested in talking with us. We work hard to make a living with our art and nobody asked us to talk about how we make our carvings and prints and what kind of tools and other things we use.

Doyle: Do you think there is enough communication between Inuit and whites? Is there a problem for Inuit wanting to speak out?

Kingwatsiak: We really can't communicate unless we can speak English or unless the white person can speak Inuktitut. It makes it essential to have a good interpreter.

Doyle: Do you think there are young Inuit who are interested in learning about Inuit art?

Kingwatsiak: Yes, and I feel that the young people should learn more about art — carving and printmaking. The thing that upsets me is seeing white people trying to teach us Inuit how to do our art. They can teach young Inuit who are interested in art, but the white people should teach their ways and let Inuit teach their ways. What really bothers me is that an Inuk who is quite capable of teaching in his own way more or less has a job taken away from him.

Doyle: Are young Inuit more interested in carvings or drawings?

Kingwatsiak: They usually do more carving, but I've noticed this past month that there seem to be more people interested in drawings. Several have come around to the printshop to get drawing paper and pencils. Some of them are good and they will be able to make a good living out of their art if they keep it up and put their minds to it. They will be able to make a living as we elders did.

Doyle: Do you have any thoughts about the so-called "new-art?"

Kingwatsiak: The art made by the young Inuit will be so different. They don't know much about the old ways anymore — unless we tell them how we used to live — so they will show more modern activities in their work, for one thing.

Doyle: Do you get help from your community or the government to get tools for carving?

Kingwatsiak: We have a lot of trouble trying to get good tools. Most of us have a low income and it is costly to keep well supplied with tools. I myself often think the government should do more to supply tools to communities, especially tools that are suitable for use with very hard stone. I recently took a course which demonstrated the tools to be used for working hard stone. But when I went home, we had none of those tools here to work with.

Doyle: Do you have any comments you want to make before we end the interview?

Kingwatsiak: My last comment is that we Inuit have to speak our minds and not allow ourselves to be patronized anymore. I like art and I enjoy going to exhibitions in the South, but we would like to be given more of an opportunity to speak about our art and our work, for the sake of all Inuit.
Kananginak Pootoogook says he feels strongly that “Inuit should be given more opportunity to teach printmaking and carving because it is we who know about our past and present traditions and values.”

Ovilu Goo-Doyle: First, how did you enjoy your trip to the conference in Toronto? Did you feel it was a good chance to talk about your art and livelihood?

Kananginak Pootoogook: People were talking about Inuit art a lot, and we got to explain some things. The time we were really able to speak was when we were interviewed by the CBC and the television companies. Of course, the interviewers told me ahead of time that they would only use important parts of the interview. At the conference, we were set up as a panel of speakers at some school, to make comments and answer questions from the people on the floor. We answered questions the best way we can. Sometimes I really regret that I have to use interpreters. It would be a lot better if I knew how to speak in English, because I would try to make the white person understand better.

Doyle: I know what you mean. Maybe because the culture and language of the white people are so different, this is one of the things that keep us apart. We know this is true, but we wish that we could get closer to white people, that we could say things more comfortably. I also want to ask you about the carvings. Have you noticed that they have improved, but the younger people don’t seem to be as interested in drawing?

Pootoogook: The younger generation, those who came after the older people who first started doing the drawings, haven’t really put their minds into it. They don’t have a commitment. Also, some think that they will not make a good living out of it. When they are paid only a small amount of money, they seem to reject drawing altogether. But you only start to make good money from your drawings after your work has been shown.
around the country, or if they are used for printmaking. Even those of us who have been making prints for a long time wish we could earn more money from it. Also, the younger people tend to do more carvings because they know that they can earn more money from them. You might get $5 for a drawing and $10 for a carving, but the cost of living in the North is high.

Another problem, as I mentioned in Toronto, is that the younger generation no longer knows how we Inuit used to live. Again, I say that telling them about or writing stories of our past will help. That is how I learned about Inuit life, by listening to people talking about how they lived before they were born. Our younger people today know more about the white man's world than they do about the world of their great great grandfathers. Many have never even seen a dog team. For this reason, I think that they should be educated by us — in writing, prints and drawings. We have to preserve these values and somehow we have to find the money to provide this kind of education.

Doyle: Do you feel this is a need in all communities?

Pootoogook: Yes, I feel that all the northern communities should be involved in teaching their young people. Last year I was asked to go to Sanikiluaq to teach carving. I didn't do it because I'm not much of a carver myself; I do drawings and prints mostly. The Cape Dorset co-op is often asked by other northern communities to teach, because they see that our artists are good and often referred to as the greatest artists in the North.

Doyle: I heard that the Government of the Northwest Territories was going to help Inuit obtain supplies of better tools and buildings with ventilating fans. Has this happened? Also, for reasons of health and the cold weather in the North, do you think the community or the co-op should push government to improve conditions for artists?

Pootoogook: Yes, I have some new tools for harder stone and it speeds up the work. We tried once to maintain a building for the carvers to use, but I felt it was not looked after and it never worked out. If the artists want a building they are going to have to please people looking after it well and they will have to find a way to pay for heat and light and things like that. Buildings and equipment are costly, like the printshop we have here. It would be good to have if we could look after it properly. I should say, though, that I wouldn't work there because I like doing my work from my own home. Also, I don't mind working outside. I once set up a little tent to work in, but that wasn't successful. What I do now is carve outside when the wind can blow the dust away from me. But rather than providing carving buildings, I think it is more important to help Inuit get tools. They cost a lot of money and many people simply cannot afford to buy them.

Doyle: Do you have any thoughts about the "new art?"

Pootoogook: I don't mind the so-called "new art." Our young people can learn new ways, but we elders should also teach young Inuit about traditional ways. I feel very strongly that we Inuit should be given more opportunity to teach printmaking and carving because it is we who know about our past and present traditions and values. Arctic College is spending a lot of money to bring non-Inuit teachers to our communities or to their campuses, but we could do a better job for much less.

Doyle: Are you interested in going to other communities to teach?

Pootoogook: Yes, but the only thing I wouldn't attempt to teach is carving. I would gladly teach drawing and printmaking, but I wouldn't just teach how to draw or make prints. I would talk to the students for a long time, encouraging them to keep at it and trying to make them believe they can become great artists. I want all Inuit to know that they should keep working on their art. Until you try, you never know. And once you discover that you can do it, you will also discover that you can make a good living at it.
Jimmy Manning, manager of the Cape Dorset print shop, says the biggest problem they have today is the lack of people showing interest in drawing. He adds that the elders are getting old and dying and not being replaced by young people interested in art.

Marybelle Mitchell: Let me start by getting some information about you — where you were born and when for a beginning.

Jimmy Manning: I was born in Lake Harbour, February 24, 1951 and moved to Cape Dorset with my adopted family when I was about three or four months old. My adoptive father, Tommy Manning, was working for the Hudson’s Bay Company.

Mitchell: What is your position with the co-op? And have you ever tried making prints yourself or carvings?

Manning: I started as a carving buyer in 1972, buying carvings and drawings. I’m still doing that, but mostly I manage the print shop. I do a little bit of sketching and a little bit of stencil work, just on my own, not for the co-op collection. I do sketching at home or use the studio facilities here. I was carving back in the late-seventies, early eighties, but I don’t do it any more because of not finding enough time.

Mitchell: You have a reputation as a photographer. Can you tell us how you got involved with photography and what kind of pictures you take?

Manning: I used to watch my grand-father, Peter Pitseolak, in camp taking pictures and developing them. When I was growing up, it interested me and I started in 1968 to take slide pictures at first. After about 10 years, I started to do black and
white and then colour. I do it on my own time, mostly self-taught. I do a lot of hunting scenes, special events and gatherings. One of my very big projects four or five years ago was to photograph all the elders in the community and the children. I also photograph printmaking, carvers working and landscapes.

Mitchell: You have one foot in management and one in artmaking. What are the biggest problems you are having now in your work life?

Manning: The biggest problem we have today is the lack of people showing interest in drawing. The elders that were with the co-op as drawers are getting fewer every year. They are getting old and dying and not being replaced by young people. That’s one of the very big concerns that I have. But we’re trying to encourage younger people out there to see if they have any good ideas they can put on paper.

Mitchell: I wonder why that is?

Manning: To go back 20 years ago, young people were not separated from their parents. Now, they are living in apartments away from parents and not being able to watch or see what their parents are doing. That’s one of the problems.

Mitchell: Is the printshop open to people who want to come in to watch or experiment?

Manning: Yes, we keep our studios open to the public most of the year, but we have very few people who come by and watch what is happening. We have also held a few workshops, like drawing workshops, that could be available to the local younger people, using not southern artists but local Inuit artists as instructors. We were able to do that, but again, we had only 12 to 15 young people and out of those maybe 2 or 3 had a little bit of artistic mind.

Mitchell: Cape Dorset, as you know, has a reputation of being one of the top art-making communities. Do the young people not find this inspiring?

Manning: Not really. It’s very different today because young people want money up front. Our shop doesn’t have money floating around to buy everybody’s work, but they always want a lot of money up front....

Mitchell: I’m surprised by the number of young people who want to be serious carvers. Is printmaking different?

Manning: Yes, I’ve noticed that a lot and I don’t quite understand because carving is a lot of tough work. People are willing to work outside in very cold weather, and this is happening every day. I don’t know why that is. I talked to a few young people about this once, and one of them told me that a blank piece of paper doesn’t tell you anything, but the stone sometimes tells you what to do. The shape might be there, whereas, the paper doesn’t speak to you. I think that’s one of the reasons people prefer carving.

“It is not the traditional way to get southern people up here to show these people how to make a rabbit or a sedna, but to teach them how to use proper tools, how to render inks, how to use all kinds of pencils.”

Mitchell: Does it have anything to do with pricing?

Manning: Not necessarily. We’re trying to encourage people. We just announced this morning that we will supply paper and ink and pencils to people who want to try to do something on paper. We won’t buy them up front but we will jury them.

Mitchell: Who will be on the jury?

Manning: Myself and I’d like to invite one of our elders, Kananginak Pootoogook, who is very supportive of younger people.

Mitchell: At the conference we attended in Kleinburg at the end of January, some people objected to the idea of formal art training for Inuit. In our experience with the Inuit Artists’ College, we find that Inuit artists are hungry for exposure to art made by other people and to learn about art — not necessarily how to sculpt, since the best sculptors in Canada are Inuit. What are your views about that?

Manning: Just to go back a little bit. I just remembered when we had the artists and printmakers workshop that we held here six to eight years ago, after the workshop we all got together to try to come up with some ideas of how we could attract not more people, but people who have good ideas and aren’t able to carve but could do something on a piece of paper. At that time, it was pointed out that it is not the traditional way, to get southern people up here to show these people how to make a rabbit or a sedna, but to teach them how to use proper tools, how to render inks, how to use all kinds of pencils. That really intrigued me because it’s true people are objecting, but the way I see it today, for younger people it’s going to be the only way to get them interested if they want to be an artist because they are not living with their parents anymore and the old spiritual ideas are no longer with the younger people. Formal education is the only way to help the younger people.

Mitchell: Will it always be necessary, do you think, to have art advisors in Cape Dorset? Is it still the case that Terry Ryan or other art advisors are looking over the shoulders of the artists? Can the printshop work on its own?

Manning: It’s working to a point. We still have six to eight older people who are able to work at home on drawings, but when it comes to printmaking we have people who have been here for 20 years who are not confident working on their own. They always need someone to pat
them on the shoulder. I'm now trying to work more closely with the artists. I go through maybe 100 drawings, selecting 4 or 5 that could be used as prints. One of my objectives now is to work more closely with the artists in this process, to get their explanation of what they were intending to do. What we try to do when Terry comes up here, if we have drawings to look through, we try to spend time with each other looking at drawings. That happens, but I can use my own judgement.

Mitchell: You made some comments at the end of the Kleinburg conference which I missed. Could you tell me briefly what you said?

Manning: What I said was that the younger generation today is trying to interpret what they see in their carving, and the general public is going to have to try and understand what they are trying to say through their work. I often get questioned about what the younger people are trying to say through their work. Questions about why their work is so different from their parents. One reason is because it's a changing world that we live in today. For us, the buyers at the co-op or any other organization, we're going to have to somehow try and recognize these younger people coming up.

Mitchell: Do you think it's understood in the South that the North is changing and the art is changing?

Manning: We often get the same questions when we go south and we keep telling them the same thing. As I mentioned, people ask why the son or daughter is making art that is so different from what their parents made. One reason is because they do not know the legends and the stories of what happened in their parents' days and they're trying to do things that they don't know about. Some end up making polar bears that look like pigs!

Mitchell: Do you think this is because they feel they have to keep on doing those same stereotypes? Do people feel free to make the kind of art they want?

Manning: Some people aren't too serious about their art. They're just doing it for money.

Mitchell: Do you feel that the kind of conference held at Kleinburg is useful?

Manning: Yes, it was quite useful. I wasn't expecting we would have that kind of a conference but it was interesting to see people we haven't seen for a while and to meet new dealers. And we had people on the panel, people like Terry Ryan and Alma Houston, who explained how it started, which is always a question to a lot of people, still, down south. And a few of our local printers — for instance, Pitseolak was able to state what he sees — and also Kananginak and Iyola as elders were able to share their thoughts of the art world up north.

Mitchell: Do you think that they really were able to do that? To convey their thinking and to get a chance to say everything they wanted to?

Manning: Well, not everything because, number one, these people never spoke in front of 200 some people. But Kananginak did say a few things that were very helpful to all of us.

Mitchell: Some people have said that it was too bad that there wasn't simultaneous translation so that Inuit could be kept informed of all the discussion rather than selected portions. Do you think that the Inuit felt excluded from some of the discussion?

Manning: That is always the problem when we go south. We brought a translator with us but he had only a little bit of knowledge of art or printmaking. But John Houston was able to be at that meeting and he did most of the work for everybody. Iyola pointed out that it was very hard for him to say anything because he doesn't speak English and half of the time he doesn't get the messages [information].

Mitchell: I think there were people in the audience who were frustrated because they were not hearing more from the artists.

Manning: Well, maybe if we were told there was going to be a conference, we could have prepared our people! I was in Vancouver myself and separated from the people coming down. If we only knew there was going to be a conference, we could have had our people a bit more aware of what was going to happen. We only had the little brochure that Kleinburg put out in which the opening was mentioned and that a few printmakers would be doing a demonstration. That's the only message we got.

Mitchell: You've said that life is changing and the art is changing. What are the big problems now? You've mentioned that families are broken up and children don't get to learn the way they used to in the past. What other problems do you see for those people who are serious about their art? As a co-op employee, your problem is, I know, to get more people to be serious about their art, but for those who are, what are the major problems facing them now?

Manning: We have tools for the printshop, but we hear from carvers that they feel they don't have adequate tools. And people are starting to say they need shacks. They can't work in their houses and they don't have shacks [to use as studios], and they don't have proper tools. But, for artists that work on paper, that's not really a problem.

Mitchell: Is there anything that you would like to have said at Kleinburg that you didn't have a chance to say but would like to say in this interview?

Manning: Yes. I thought there were a few people missing there, for instance, IBC [Inuit Broadcasting Corporation].

Mitchell: How are you feeling today? Pessimistic or hopeful about the future?

Manning: We just have to keep our fingers crossed and hope for the best.
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"Stranger in the wood", Mattius Iyaituk (Ivujivik)
Cherrywood and blue marble, 9.75 x 22.4 x 12.5"
In Cape Dorset We Do It This Way

A review essay by Dorothy Speak

THE EXHIBITION In 1991, The McMichael Art Collection announced receipt of a 15-year loan of approximately 100,000 drawings and prints from the archives of the West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative. These works represent almost the entire graphic output of all artists working in Cape Dorset since experiments with drawing and printmaking began there around 1957. Bearing in mind that Cape Dorset has operated the most prolific, long-lived and successful print program in the North and has produced a healthy proportion of the best-known Inuit graphic artists, the loan offers important and unprecedented opportunities for study, writing and exhibition.

In Cape Dorset We Do It This Way, the first in a series of annual exhibitions to be drawn by McMichael from the collection, therefore comes as a great disappointment.
In view of the previous inaccessibility of the drawings and the growing recognition that they are a truer and more spontaneous expression of the creativity of Dorset artists than are the images produced in the printshop and should, therefore, be studied as works of art in their own right, the decision to mount an exhibition comparing prints to their companion drawings is somewhat disheartening. Within such a context, the drawings inevitably take second place as "cartoons" for the prints. No new frame of reference is proffered for their appraisal.

A weak premise and a weak model

Over and above the limitations posed by the comparative framework, there are deep weaknesses in the exhibition arising from its basic premise and from the model chosen to carry it out. The introductory panel, drawn directly from the catalogue text, reflects the essential confusion of goals and perceptions at the root of the exhibition.

This confusion relates to the artistic "imprint" of the printmakers as interpreters or translators of the graphic images into the print medium. Curator Jean Blodgett sets out to investigate the extent
to which the printmakers have influenced or changed the essential character of the images that have reached the southern audience as prints, but her statements demonstrate an ambivalence concerning the actual extent of their impact.

"The contribution of the printmakers," Blodgett writes in the introductory panel, "has sometimes been overlooked or underestimated in discussions of Cape Dorset prints, and I wanted to rectify this situation" (p.9). This statement suggests that they have had a far greater artistic input than previously acknowledged. She then goes on to contradict this position: "...Yet for all their artistic abilities, they manage, in making prints of another person's work, to subordinate their role to that of the artist's. Their real skill is in successfully translating another's work without leaving their own indelible mark on it; it is the artist's image that comes through, not the printmaker's" (p.10).

This latter statement, which would seem to suggest that the printmakers were nothing more than technicians, is somewhat astounding when a cursory look at the prints and drawings in the exhibition illustrates that in most cases the prints are hugely different in spirit from the drawings and that the printmakers in fact had an enormous effect on what might be called the "aesthetic" or characteristic "look" of Cape Dorset prints. Granted, the "outline" and essential details of the drawings are in most cases exactly reproduced in the prints. This was inevitable, given the practice of "transferring" the drawing onto the stone block or the stencil paper with the use of tracing paper. It is in the choice and application of colour and texture (which were not always dictated by limitations in the materials at hand) that the printmakers exerted such an obvious influence on the "style" of Cape Dorset prints. The mixed messages in the introductory panel, and their conflict with the evidence in the exhibition, are problematic and confusing.

Notwithstanding the stated focus — to place emphasis on the hitherto neglected role of the printmakers in the creative process — there is little evidence in the exhibition of an effort to carry through with this intent. No information on the so-called "stars," the printmakers, is provided, other than their names. Furthermore, although it is acknowledged in the introduction that "it is generally not known how these prints are actually made," nowhere in the exhibition are the various printmaking techniques practised in Cape Dorset discussed or illustrated. Labels are confined, for the most part, to brief quotations from the printmakers, which are neither dated nor footnoted. Some of these quotations explain the superficial reasons for applications of colour and texture responding to the availability of materials and the personal biases of the artists, but as guiding texts in the exhibition they present a fragmentary and unsatisfying narrative. Useful technical information from the exhibition catalogue (for example, the fact that large
areas of colour are difficult to print on the characteristically uneven surface of stone blocks, or that the physical qualities of the stone itself dictated the degree of reproducible detail in a drawing) could have accompanied the individual prints to deepen understanding of the various media. Altogether absent is any kind of broader interpretive discussion of such things as the hallmarks of a dynamic graphic image, the essential aesthetic of Cape Dorset prints, or how that aesthetic evolved over the years.

Inclusion of these kinds of information on labels, if concise and well written, can make an exhibition a richly rewarding and educational experience. Provision of a brief introductory panel alone has been found to be inadequate in informing and sustaining the viewer throughout an exhibition of this size. My own tour of In Cape Dorset We Do It This Way on a Saturday afternoon made it clear to me that the casual visitor did not understand the distinction between a drawing and a print, did not know how to look at or interpret the difference between the two, and did not grasp the thrust of the exhibition. Regrettably, curators all too often forget that a truly successful exhibition must begin with the assumption that the viewer knows absolutely nothing about the subject.

The failure of the McMichael exhibition in supplying technical and interpretive information prevented it from realizing its stated goal of "provid[ing] background information about the arts in Cape Dorset" (Blodgett, 1992:9) and "establishing a context" for the viewer. Although the exhibition catalogue achieves this to a degree, the visitor unable to purchase it is shortchanged. Nor is it practical to rely on a catalogue, particularly one as extensive as this, as an appropriate guide for the viewing of an exhibition.

Had the curator and exhibition designers chosen another more innovative model or framework for the subject of printmaking, the exhibition could have been immensely more rewarding. A multi-media approach including photographs, video presentations, tools and materials alongside fuller discussion of techniques, the dynamics of the printshops, and the aesthetic choices and their implications would have produced a much more exciting exhibition. Much of this information could have been adapted from the catalogue. As it is, the conventional approach chosen by McMichael did not fulfil curatorial goals.

Although the exhibition falls short of its objectives, it does offer interesting comparisons for the experienced viewer. There are instances where drawings that are brilliant statements of the artist's colouristic imagination become humdrum in the monochromatic print (e.g., Parr's Walrus Hunters on Sea Ice, Pitkowee's Kayak Makers and Jamasie Tsevee's The Keta), examples where the print and the drawing are different, but equally strong artistic statements (e.g., Kingmeata Etidloisie's Joyful Young Man), and cases where the print is decidedly superior to the drawing (e.g., Pitkowee's Arctic Madonna and Eeehushie Parr's Woman With Water Pail).

Also of interest is the capacity of the lithographic medium to reproduce more faithfully than stonecut or stencil the textural, chromatic and painterly qualities of the drawings. As the lithograph seems to provide the happiest marriage of drawing and print, one is tempted to wonder what...
Inuit drawings loaned to McMichael by Cape Dorset. The catalogue of the exhibition succeeds to a degree by present-
Sedna: The Making of a Myth

Sedna: The Making of a Myth, produced by Zemma Pictures in co-production with the National Film Board of Canada; John Paskievich, Director/Producer and Sharon Van Raalte, Associate Director/Producer; running time: 59 min. 30 sec., colour.

The title of this film is highly ironic, but it takes a while to realize that. It opens in the Toronto boardroom of the Royal Trust which has just agreed to commission a marble sculpture composed of several life-sized figures depicting the well-known legend of Sedna, who Inuit call Nuliayook (or some version thereof), and who lives at the bottom of the sea and controls the animals.

The film is not your usual arctic travelogue. Paskievich's naturalistic technique and understated touch are compelling and worthy of comment, but that will be left to other reviewers. It is the message of this film that interests and disturbs me.

The story it tells is not about Sedna, but about the encounter of a non-native artist with three Inuit artists. The protagonist is George Pratt from Vancouver, described in the promotional literature as having "turned out in excess of one thousand 'coffee table sculptures'" — his words. Pratt is offensive from almost the beginning of the film. He candidly tells us that when he heard that Royal Trust was looking for a carving for their lobby, he "saw a wonderful opportunity for a profitable collaboration." The word "profitable" is clearly not being used metaphorically.

Having convinced Royal Trust to commission him and three Inuit to execute the monumental sculpture now on view in the lobby of the Hong Kong Bank of Canada in Toronto, Pratt announces that he will enter into "consultation with his Inuit colleagues." Joining up with the Inuit — Simata Pitsiulak ("we call him Sam," he tells Royal Trust executives), Taqialuk Nuna ("we call him Tiki"), and Philip Pitsiulak ("as close to the land as lichen on the rocks") — he patronizes rather than consults. There is no feeling of collaboration at all; throughout, he is the boss talking down to the Inuit and disregarding their suggestions.

Pratt's worst sin is his insistence on carving Sedna, the central figure of the sculpture, and a powerful figure in Inuit mythology. Inuit are not confrontational people, but Simata Pitsiulak becomes increasingly forthright in telling Pratt how they feel.

Pointing out that they weren't at the meetings in Toronto, Simata tells Pratt that "it hurts a little that he wanted to do the Sedna figure himself." Pratt concedes that the Inuit might be "involved" at the end to do the finishing detail on the face, "which maybe should look Inuit," but Simata says that their suggestions were not welcome. "I told him once that the face was going to be too small," he told me, "but he was ignoring us at that stage."

As for Phillip Pitsiulak, he told Pratt flatly (Simata translating) that he was from Vancouver and he was "a little bit wrong to be doing the Sedna image." Pitsiulak's point was that he would be fantasizing it, but not able to come up with something "true," just as he, Phillip, would not be able to do white men's legends right.

Simata Pitsiulak is the film's alternate narrator (to the extent that there is a narration) and his commentary becomes more and more pointed: "We have to be nice to white people who come up north. They're like newborn babies" and "I don't understand white people who want to be famous, so we just kept letting George do the Sedna on his own."

To make a long story short, the film follows the group — obviously not a team — through the tasks of cutting huge chunks of pink and grey marble from the seam that runs like a highway along the water's edge in Cape Dorset, doing the roughing out work, transporting the huge sculptures back to Dorset and on to Toronto where the detail is completed. It ends with the unveiling and some eavesdropping on a damning fragment of conversation between Art Gallery of Ontario Inuit art curator Norman Zepp and associate director/producer Sharon Van Raalte — neither of whom is identified — having to do with the appropriation of imagery.

Zepp's point, not fully enunciated, seems to be that the sculpture is neither white nor Inuit although "some Inuit made part of it." This is, he says, "cause for concern," sufficient enough to have "caused a lot of people to dismiss [it] already."
to symbolize a materialistic and insensitive white artistic community, if not the white culture. But the problem is that Pratt would be at odds even with most people/artists in his own culture. If the intention was to make a statement about the conflict between two cultures; it's just too black and white to be provocative. There is conflict, but it's a lot more complex than is portrayed here.

It seems as if what started out as a promotional film (the Government of the Northwest Territories' Department of Economic Development and Tourism was a financial contributor) was converted to a parody when the tensions became too obvious to ignore. One wonders if Pratt realizes how unsympathetically he has been portrayed, or if Royal Trust has picked up on the subtle insinuation that they've been had?

Apart from its technical qualities, the best thing about the movie is that it provides a rare and sympathetic insight into the Inuit perspective. I'm glad I saw it, but I certainly couldn't make myself watch it again. Marybelle Mitchell
The First Passionate Collector


A catalogue accompanying an exhibition of a private collection is not usually cause for anticipation. All too often, because of the thematic difficulties presented by such collections, curators settle for what can only be called a display of works with little supporting research, or, alternatively, take a dull, obvious or rigidly academic approach that drains the collection of life and personality. The First Passionate Collector is an exception, being a hybrid of essays offering the reader the unexpected. It is a credit to the imagination and inquisitiveness of curator Darlene Coward Wight.

Wight’s catalogue is rewarding because it approaches the Ian Lindsay collection from several perspectives. The introduction by Wight, together with Lindsay’s own essay, endorses the importance of the collector’s personality and of the whole ethos of collecting to the completeness of such an exhibition. A private collection is essentially the story of a relationship between the collector and the pieces that he/she acquired. Without this story, the full potential of the exhibition is not realized. Two other essays, “Inuit Art, an Art of Acculturation,” by artist Sheila Butler, and Wight’s “The Handicrafts Experiment, 1949-53,” are hugely significant because they illuminate the collection by writing “around” it, rather than taking a linear or narrow approach.

Wight’s introduction traces Lindsay’s penchant for collecting to his father, who was an unofficial collector for the McCord Museum, and to his own childhood fondness for collecting butterflies and birds’ eggs. She also describes his early motives for collecting Inuit art, which were patriotic (“It [the collector] was an American...My hackles immediately went up. I looked around, really hot under the collar. There was a tall chap at the other end of the room...I walked up and accosted him. 'What’s going on here? This material should stay in the country...’); visionary (“...with a grandiose sweep of an arm towards one of the tables, I said I’d take the works. There must have been 50 or 60 pieces and it cost me $300.”); and passionate (“I didn’t stop to intellectualize. Once you stop to intellectualize territory, but is in fact a thought-provoking look, from the peculiar perspective of an artist, at the acculturative process and how it has shaped Inuit art and artists. She devotes a good deal of space to exploration of the Inuit perception of the imported concepts of art and artist. “But at the outset very few Inuit had visited southern Canada, and the existence of white artists was gravely doubted. If art-making were an activity reserved only for natives in a new society dominated by white power and institutions, its prestige and value were suspect.”

Butler’s essay moves forward and backward with fluidity and ease through the critical period during which the concept of art-making for a southern audience was implanted in the North, investigating the concepts of content, tactility, scale and frontal identity as they relate to earlier, utilitarian forms. She also draws an interesting relationship between the sophisticated sensitivity of Inuit to spatial relationships and the Inuit language, which “ignores time as an organizing structure, but speaks each noun as a particular linguistic entity, defined by its relation in space to the speaker.” Butler maintains that an unsophisticated buying public and guaranteed purchase of the artist’s work by cooperatives have inhibited the artistic growth of Inuit artists. She suggests that academics should be approaching Inuit art as an acculturative art form, rather than imposing Euro-centred values and aesthetics on its study.

One has the disconcerting feeling, on reading Butler’s essay, that she has given us a look at Inuit art through the wrong end of a telescope, thereby opening up new dimensions for thought and discussion. Although it has been many years since she acted in the North as an art advisor, she continues to be admirably

Art of acculturation

Sheila Butler’s “Inuit Art, an Art of Acculturation” at first seems an understated essay covering familiar
in tune with Inuit artists and the special challenges with which they are faced. Her essay, which persuades by its very sublety and refinement, merits a second and even a third reading.

The handicrafts experiment

In her courageous essay, "The Handicrafts Experiment," Wight shows exceptional insight in using the Lindsay collection of early works as a departure point for an investigative study of the forces at play between 1949 and 1953 when James Houston, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild of Montreal and the federal government were engaged in developing a handicrafts industry in the North, an initiative that eventually led to the birth of contemporary Inuit art. Through diligent investigation and an admirably detached style, she explodes some of the myths surrounding the "birth" of contemporary Inuit art. Her hefty essay, based on fruitful research in the Handicrafts Guild files from that period, is immeasurably valuable because it traces with meticulous detail the influences on style and subject matter that until now have been generally and vaguely understood, but have never been thoroughly documented and analysed.

Perhaps most interesting is the blend of naïveté and colonialism that weave through the story as it is unfolded by Wight. As early as 1948, Alice Lighthall of the Guild sent a list to 15 Arctic communities suggesting items for production, encouraging the Inuit to "use their own materials and methods rather than imitate ours. We have the responsibility of not letting them forget their own arts. The foundation of all such work should be its usefulness to themselves." Basketry, model carvings, bowls, ashtrays, fur and skin items were all encouraged. Items were to retain "the native character" and be "of good quality and workmanship" to appeal to "sportsmen and tourists."

Nevertheless, in 1950 the Guild entered into an arrangement with the federal government wherein it agreed to publication of "a simple book of instruction to Eskimo on handicrafts." In a report of that year, Lighthall maintained that the Guild was "stressing the need for preserving originality, and true folk tradition—not introducing White ideas, methods or materials...and strongly setting ourselves against mass production."

Wight documents that a letter from Jack Molson of the Guild to Houston in 1952 noted that "large stone pieces are very popular and the more [the Eskimo] can make big pieces of good quality the better." The most saleable carvings were 'seals, walrus, bears and figures of men in action — hunting.' Poor selling items were igloos, carved tusks, 'games with pegs and holes,' match holders, stone lamps, and 'pieces showing a man fishing in front of his snow wall.'

By carefully tracing Houston's exact movements in the North over the four-year period, what he purchased and for how much, Wight gives a clear picture of the pace and direction of growth of the "industry." Houston's methodology included circulating drawings of successful Inuit carvings or the carvings themselves among communities, and instructing artists as to style and subject matter. Wrote one northern contact in 1950: "...after last summer's experience and sale he [Houston] is now more aware of what the people outside wish to buy in the way of native art. Being an artist himself Mr. Houston knows what he after and insists on the natives doing a good job." Wight also deals with the degree to which Houston's magnetic personality, his natural public relations skills and his ability to charm reporters with stories of northern adventure contributed to the media and commercial success of Inuit art.

Not to be overlooked is Wight's careful research into the provenance of works in the Lindsay collection, which was her first motive for going to the Guild files. She draws interesting comparisons between some of the Lindsay pieces and those in the permanent Guild collection, and between Lindsay works and those illustrated in the 1951 manual, Eskimo Handicrafts, authored by Houston. Works from the exhibition are well annotated wherever possible.

The First Passionate Collector is one of the few catalogues in existence that realizes the full potential of an exhibition of a private collection of Inuit art. It is an informative and satisfying read. With this exhibition and catalogue, the Winnipeg Art Gallery continues to be a significant contributor to scholarship in Inuit art. Dorothy Speak

Note: All quotes are taken from the catalogue.
Arctic Odyssey: The Diary of Diamond Jenness 1913–1916

When Vilhjalmur Steffansson was organizing the Canadian Arctic Expedition for its 1913 trip north, he asked each member to keep a diary to be turned in when they came south. Like many things Steffansson did, this caused a row, and many men refused. One of the youngest members, who had travelled from New Zealand to join the expedition, did in fact keep notes from the day he set off. Diamond Jenness, then 27, did not argue with Steffansson then or in the future. He went his own quiet way. The result is an astonishing record of the years this aspiring anthropologist spent among the Eskimo along the northern rim of Canada and Alaska.

Diamond Jenness was to become Canada's most distinguished anthropologist, pioneering the definition of two prehistoric cultures and writing the definitive Indians of Canada as well as a stream of reports based on his experiences in the Arctic. Jenness also dipped into his diary to write Dawn in Arctic Alaska. When he had finished he told his son Stuart, who had helped him with the book, to destroy the diary. (He did not hang onto papers and at his death there were no personal documents left in his files). Stuart kept the diary, and we have him to thank for Arctic Odyssey.

It is a volume of 902 pages, impressively put out by the Canadian Museum of Civilization. Stuart has added to his father's maps, sketches and photographs which, at times, make the visual impact almost unbearably bleak. William E. Taylor Jr. says in his "foreword" that Jenness' diary shows conditions that are gone forever, and a rugged way of survival that could not be sustained today. There is also a thorough set of notes, index and references, as well as seven appendices, giving Eskimo words, items traded, details of songs recorded, etc. It is Diamond Jenness' own writing, however, which is compelling, just as his son had foreseen.

The legendary 1913–16 expedition
struck tragedy and the ship Karluk was wrecked. The senior ethnologist, Henri Beuchat, was among those who lost his life. This left his junior man, Jenness, to do double duty. I was in Victoria recently, where Diamond Jenness' name is well-known to naval men who have sailed that coast. One of them said of the book: "It's astonishing that he could take such real interest, really seem to be fascinated by the dimensions of their igloos, kinds of flowers, and so on, while living such a rough life."

Just following instructions

Jenness was following instructions. Edward Sapir, of the National Museum of Canada, had wired him in New Zealand, "to collect ethnological material from the Eskimo he encountered and also get information on the non-material side of Eskimo culture, such as religion, shamanism, customs, as well as data on physical characteristics and details on hunting and fishing methods."

Jenness had, in fact, gone to Oxford to study classics. There he had met the Canadian, Marius Barbeau, and together they were attracted to the new discipline of anthropology. The Canadian Arctic Expedition gave him his chance to work in this field. He turned out to be a conscientious scientist who wrote graceful, lucid prose. He also learned the Inuktitut language, the only member of the expedition to do so. In New Zealand, he had gone to school with Maori children, and he approached his new friends in a matter-of-fact manner, without patronizing them.

Jenness played records to the Inuit — a favourite being, not music, but Hamlet's soliloquy.

This attitude, as well as his tact and general common sense, seems to have helped him out of situations that developed when he spent nine months alone with the Eskimo on Victoria Island. Genuine affection developed in the end between Jenness and the Inuit, and they named the land after the man they called "Jennessie."

By the time Jenness left the expedition to return to Ottawa and go overseas with the Canadian field artillery, he had collected and sent south some 2,500 specimens of everything from fur coats to knives and spears, to pots, tents and kayaks. From Nome and Barrow, Alaska, he sent 3,300 archaeological artifacts. Ottawa also received collections of birds, insects, mammals, plants, mosses and shells. Jenness was musical himself, and recorded some 137 songs by native singers on a portable Edison recording phonograph. He also played records to them — a favourite being, not music, but Hamlet's soliloquy. He made his own precise drawings of Eskimo houses and clothes, etc., but also encouraged the Eskimo themselves to make drawings by giving them pencil and paper.

The American, Henry B. Collins, called Diamond Jenness "that rare phenomenon, the all-round anthropologist." He also had an eye for the beauty of the Arctic and an ear for the music and language of its people.

Arctic Odyssey is a totally impressive book. One might quarrel with the cover illustration, showing two men in three-piece suits aboard the Karluk. Which one is Diamond Jenness? But this is not a complaint that the modest author of this diary would have made. Both he, and his son Stuart, come out of this publication clear winners. Anne McDougall

Anne McDougall is a fine arts writer living in Ottawa, Ontario. She has an MA in Art History from Carleton University and is the author of the book Anne Savage; The Story of a Canadian Painter.
Crossroads of Continents
Cultures of Siberia and Alaska

I read the book but didn't see the movie; or, I saw the movie but didn't read the book. Nowadays one hears versions of these phrases having to do, not with movies, but with exhibitions. Reading material associated with gallery and museum exhibitions has inflated beyond the pamphlet and brochure of yesteryear, in some cases to a book-length catalogue. A case in point is the book Crossroads of Continents, produced in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name. I feel uncomfortable calling it a catalogue, for it runs to 360 pages and weighs 3 pounds. But what a book and what an exhibition!

Both celebrate the histories and cultures of Beringia, that vast area centering on Bering Strait, one part of which is in Asia, the other in America. How appropriate the term “crossroads” here; for, by implying merging and traversing, it challenges the imagery of division between Asia and America, as if they were worlds apart. In our Eurocentric mindset the Strait was a Great Divide, a perception reinforced by many decades of cold war reality. Fortunately for us, this mindset was not shared by those scholars from both Eurasia and North America who have specialized in research on the peoples and habitat of the North Pacific. Crossroads was a product of their collaborative efforts under the aegis of the Smithsonian Institution of the U.S.A., and the Institute of Ethnography, USSR Academy of Sciences, with major support from the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

Between its opening in New York's Museum of Natural History in December, 1989, and its last planned North American showing in Ottawa from October 1991 to September 1992, Crossroads has attracted large crowds in cities as widely separated as Indianapolis, Los Angeles and Anchorage. Reviewers have been highly favourable. Inuit Art Quarterly (IAQ) readers will recall the enthusiastic comments of Mary Jane Lenz on the New York showing. Her view was that the “dazzling” exhibition captured the astonishment of the first foreign visitors to the Beringia area more than two centuries ago to “encounter native populations with sophisticated art and technology, complex social organizations and spiritual beliefs, and a long tradition of trade, warfare and social interaction” (IAQ, spring 1990:41).

Nancy Baele, Citizen arts writer, echoed Lenz’s enthusiastic assessment in two separate reviews on the showing at the Canadian Museum of Civilization. Applauding many of its features, such as the stunning array of hats, coats, tunics and other items of clothing, she put special stress on the artistic dimension: “The art in Crossroads of Continents is the type that is integral to life. Nothing in it was created solely to be looked at, as an objet d'art...Viewing this exhibition is a lesson in art as a part of life” (Citizen, 28 December 1991:A-1).

The book

Unfortunately for millions, Ottawa-Hull is the only scheduled stop before the tour finally arrives in St. Petersburg, where presumably it will be dismantled after a lengthy exposure for the benefit of visitors to the State Russian Museum. However, a great measure of consolation is provided by the availability of the book for those who miss the exhibition. This book, published by the Smithsonian Institution and edited by William W. Fitzhugh and Aron Crowell, is like a catalogue in the following respects: it lists, identifies and splendidly illustrates the hundreds of objects on display; and it does not have an index. On the other hand, it is unlike a typical catalogue in that it is multi-authored (30 different authors, each a specialist in a relevant field, contribute...
The presentation of what is distinctive of the major cultures in Beringia is more than adequate, but what I found most fascinating were the several articles that traced the connections, often very complex, among the different cultures, trying to track the flows and counterflows of impacts and influences for Beringia as a whole and for specified regions within it. Attempts are made to do this for patterns of language, physical type, religion and ritual, social and economic organization, and technology and trade. Furthermore, in most articles treatment goes beyond simple descriptions of differences and similarities to venture explanations for these.

For me, the best example of this kind of article is William W. Fitzhugh's "Comparative Art of the North Pacific Rim:"

Depiction of the contemporary scene is not one of this book's strong points... there is a short realistic assessment by Worl, some of it quite depressing...

This is an exploratory study in which Fitzhugh tries to account for variations in symbolic themes and styles among several North Pacific cultures. His hunches about what environmental, ideological and socio-economic factors are important in accounting for these variations are most suggestive and set me thinking about their applicability to Inuit art.

Depiction of the contemporary scene is not one of this book's strong points. True, there is a short realistic assessment by Worl, some of it quite depressing; about conditions in Alaska, an account many Canadians acquainted with the Arctic will find familiar. On the Siberian side, an article by Lebedev reads like an official government release, written in the kind of onward and upward tone that arouses my suspicion and skepticism. If little of consequence for the contemporary scene is delivered, I suppose that is because of the mandate to focus on prehistoric and historic patterns of Beringian cultures. After seeing the exhibition and reading the book, I say this mandate has been fulfilled admirably by Crossroads of Continents.

Frank Vallee
Frank Vallee, a well-known anthropologist who did field work in Puvungnuituk and Baker Lake in the sixties, is Professor Emeritus of Carleton University, Ottawa.
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Museums and First Peoples: Working to Reconcile Competing Interests

Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships Between Museums and First Peoples dealt with three key issues identified by the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples: repatriation of human remains and artifacts, access of aboriginal people to museum collections, and interpretation of aboriginal cultures and history. It also discussed strategies for implementation of the recommendations of the task force’s recently released report. While implementing these recommendations will surely result in more input of aboriginal peoples into museum policy and practice, there are important issues which the task force has failed to address, for instance, corporate sponsorship. First, some history of the task force and its objectives.

“Return the objects to the people who need them most, rebury the dead, refrain from doing this again!”
Rick Hill, Director of the Institute of American Indian Art in the American Southwest

The task force grew out of discussions of relations between Canadian museums and aboriginal peoples which took place at an earlier conference held in 1988, also organized by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the Canadian Museums Association (CMA)(See IAQ, vol. 4, no. 1). Called Preserving Our Heritage, the first conference was one response to the controversy which erupted across Canada when the Lubicon Cree of Alberta called for a boycott of the exhibition The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada’s First Peoples held at the Glenbow Museum in connection with the Calgary Winter Olympics (see IAQ, vol. 3, no. 1).

Operating at arm’s length from AFN and CMA, the task force was chaired by Royal Ontario Museum curator Trudy Nicks and Woodland Indian Cultural Education Centre museum director Tom Hill. Its twenty-five members have been meeting over a two-year period, both nationally and as three regional committees, during which time they consulted a large number of individuals and cultural organizations concerned with museum practices. According to its mission statement, the task force was seeking: “To develop an ethical framework and strategies for Aboriginal Nations to represent their history and culture in concert with cultural institutions.”

In her opening remarks to delegates, Trudy Nicks indicated what organizers hoped to accomplish at the Turning the Page conference: “What we want to happen in the next two days is to have sessions which will act as catalysts to facilitate the development of ongoing working relationships between those potentially strong allies...museums and First Peoples.”

Plenary sessions were organized around the three key issues identified by the Task Force Report. Invited speakers addressed the delegates, after which comments from the floor were invited. A final session considered strategies for implementing the task force’s recommendations.

Repatriation

The Task Force Report offers general principles on the desirability of involving First Peoples in museum work and improving their access to museum collections as well as more specific recommendations for achieving these goals. For example, the report sets up guidelines for the repatriation of human remains and artifacts (including the guidelines that remains of individuals who are remembered by name should be returned; that remains should be returned where there is a demonstrated affiliation; and that objects should be returned to an originating culture or to individuals when they are judged by current legal standards to have been acquired illegally).

In his presentation to this session, Rick Hill, Director of the Institute of American Indian Art in the American Southwest, endorsed these guidelines, and eloquently
enunciated what he called “the three Rs: Return the objects to the people who need them most, rebury the dead, refrain from doing this again”

Most discussion of repatriation focused not on human remains, however, but on the return of cultural objects. Support was expressed not only for the return of illegally acquired items, but also for negotiated returns of objects that may have been obtained legally, but are of ongoing importance to a native community. Negotiated loans and the replication of objects in museum collections that are of significance were also promoted in order to meet the contemporary cultural needs of aboriginal communities.

Gloria Cranmer-Webster of the UMista Cultural Centre in B.C. reminded delegates that repatriation is not only about things, but also about information. She also commented that there are too few professionally trained indigenous peoples who can receive and care for repatriated materials. David Walden from the Cultural Properties Review Board noted that most federal grants supporting the return of cultural patrimony are now going to established museums rather than to aboriginal-run centres, and so there is a need to create greater awareness of the funds that are available. Henri Dorion, a director at the Musée de la Civilisation in Quebec City, considered the advantages of moral persuasion as opposed to legalistic devices when issues regarding repatriation arise, and he stressed that extreme legalistic solutions could generate more problems than solutions.

The commentator for the repatriation session, Catherine Bell from the Faculty of Law at the University of Alberta, also addressed the role of legislation. Her argument was that the law in Canada has historically been culturally biased against aboriginal peoples. Although collective title to land has been recognized by the courts, collective title to moveable property has not, and the recognition of such title involves questions of special aboriginal rights. Such rights would, for example, impede the transfer by an individual of collective property. Although supportive of the negotiative, cooperative process between museums and First Peoples detailed by the Task Force Report, Bell nonetheless felt that it needed to be supported by legislation. She cited the question of liability if objects are returned to the wrong owner.

Access and interpretation

Issues regarding access and interpretation were addressed together in one plenary session, and many comments echoed principles and recommendations in the Task Force Report aimed at bringing about greater aboriginal participation in museum programs. Lee Ann Martin, one of the task force co-ordinators and commentator for this session, remarked on the need for aboriginal involvement from the moment that there is a kernel of an idea for an exhibition. Access to museum resources should be an inherent right of any cultural group, she added.

The discussion following this session included a delegate’s comment that there is also a need for aboriginal people to be involved in the interpretation of non-aboriginal societies. This was in contrast to the recommendations of the task force which refer only to the hiring of First Peoples in those museums and galleries which have ethnographic or aboriginal art collections.

Strategies for implementation

The Task Force Report called for funding from the federal government for a five-year period to implement its principles and recommendations, as well as assistance from provincial and territorial governments. Funding is to assist in the establishment of more aboriginal-run cultural centres, repatriation negotiations, an inventory of aboriginal materials held in Canadian institutions, internships and affirmative action programs at museums, collaborative projects between museums and First Peoples, the development of national guidelines based on the findings of the Report, the establishment of a documentation centre to provide information needed to implement task force recommendations, and the support of a joint committee to monitor the implementation of recommendations. The Report also recommends that a public review of progress be made by the year 2002.

Speakers from museums, museum associations, and from aboriginal organizations saw the diversity of circumstances of aboriginal communities, museums and aboriginal-run institutions as a fundamental challenge to implementing the task force’s findings. John McAvity, executive director of the CMA, expressed a sense of urgency and a need to keep the process begun by the task force going, while Tom Wilson of the Centre for African Art in New York City suggested that there is a need to “turn up the heat.”

More is required, he submitted, than the simple presentation of the Task Force Report to various government officials and cultural agencies. His suggestion was that peer review panels give higher marks to those projects involving aboriginal collaboration, that there be more aboriginal people on the governing boards of museums, and that models developed in other countries be examined.

David Miller of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College noted a discrepancy between the 1990 federal museum policy with its announcement of a Museum Assistance Program for aboriginal museum development and the continuing lack of such a program. He cautioned, however, against the ghettoization of funding and stressed the need for aboriginal organizations to access a diversity of funding sources.

Commentary

The process which resulted in the Task Force Report and the Turning the Page Conference is, on the whole, a positive one. Implementing the principles and recommendations called for can only provide aboriginal peoples with greater
opportunities to shape the direction of museum practices and make museums and other types of cultural institutions more relevant to both aboriginal peoples and other groups within Canada.

But while the tone of the report and of most comments of conference delegates has been one of hopeful optimism, with recommended strategies aimed at balancing diverse interests on the part of aboriginal peoples, museum workers, academics and others, there are, nonetheless, competing interests in Canada that are not likely to be easily reconciled.

In fact, important issues have been left out of what seems to be a search for consensus and compromise. For example, both the Task Force Report and the conference commentary are silent regarding the corporate sponsorship of museum exhibits, which, after all, was at the heart of the controversy over The Spirit Sings exhibition. And, other than the remarks of Bill Wilson of the AFN, who reminded delegates that the land claim of the Lubicon Cree remains unresolved, there were few references to the political context in which museum practices take place.

More needs to be said as well regarding differing views of how “museums” in Canada are to be (re)conceptualized. Since assumptions about what museums do are likely to affect what kinds of programs get funded. To the extent that the findings of the task force lead to more democratic forms of decision making and allow for different kinds of practices and programs — rather than the accommodation of new programs within existing ones — we will likely see more of the innovative cultural institutions that already exist in some aboriginal communities in Canada, as well as more innovative practices in the metropolitan and community museums of the country.

We may also see new kinds of cultural workers, and even new kinds of “training” programs, including workers who do not consider it their job to provide “authoritarian” (and “authorized”) forms of knowledge but, rather, work to facilitate diverse groups in the telling of their own stories to members of their communities and a wider public. Indeed, some of the most interesting comments at the conference seemed to point in these directions.

Innovation is difficult in times of financial restraint, but it is refreshing to see that the task force has not crassly sought an economic justification for adherence to its recommendations. It may be that Canadians will recognize the greater cultural good to be achieved by implementing them. But museums and other cultural institutions are affected by broader political and economic agendas, including the continued incursions by the private sector — often with the encouragement of governments — into what used to be public property. The link forged over the past decade between federal cultural policy (including museum policy) and tourism policy is a case in point, especially given the current economic context and the imperatives towards greater self-sufficiency that museums and other cultural institutions now face.

Laurence Grant and Valda Blundell Valda Blundell teaches anthropology at Carleton University. Laurence Grant is curator of the François Baby House: Windsor's Community Museum, Windsor, Ontario, and is also vice-president of the Ontario Museum Association.

Copies of the task force report may be obtained from the Canadian Museums' Association, Suite 400, 280 Metcalfe Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 1R7.
Art books and videos being made available to artists

The Inuit Art Foundation (IAF) has sent boxes of art resource materials into the communities of Cape Dorset and Lake Harbour in the Northwest Territories, Ivvujivik in northern Quebec and Nain in northern Labrador. Similar materials will be sent to approximately 26 other arctic communities.

The idea for this project came from participants at IAF’s first artists’ session in Ottawa last spring. They felt that the talks and demonstrations they had in Ottawa on topics such as tool sharpening and Inuit art history, as well as the slides and catalogues of Inuit and other art, were valuable and suggested that this material be made available to more people.

The art resource centres will be installed in private homes or in community cultural centres. Artists will be invited to take out memberships...

Stored in simple wooden chests bearing IAF’s logo, the resource centres include books on Inuit art, western painting and sculpture, exhibition catalogues, art magazines, and artists’ monographs, many donated by public and private galleries in Canada. Tool and art supply catalogues are also included, along with a number of instructional videos.

One of the videos is a demonstration of tool sharpening by Leonard Lee, president of Lee Valley Tools. Lee gave a session on tool sharpening and maintenance at the Ottawa artists’ session, a real highlight. He generously offered to reproduce that demonstration on video for distribution to the northern communities.

Another video demonstrates how to photograph carvings. Few artists have records of their works and the photography sessions organized by the Inuit Art Foundation have been well received. The Professional Art Dealers Association of Canada made a generous contribution towards the production of this video, in recognition of Av Isaacs’ long contribution to Inuit art on the occasion of the closing of Isaacs Gallery.

Yet a third video features a demonstration of inlay techniques by Mattiusi Iyaituk, Charlie Kogvik and Mike Massie (Happy Valley-Goose Bay). This was recorded during the second artists’ session in Nain, Labrador by the OKalaKatiget Society. The OK Society (as it is known locally) is an Inuit organization that runs the local radio station and produces television programming for the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation and the new Television North Canada broadcast network.

The art resource centres will be installed in private homes or in community cultural centres. Artists will be invited to take out memberships entitling them to borrow materials. IAF is closely monitoring the use of these four centres and getting feedback from the artist-members to determine what other materials might be included.

IAF is planning to distribute more centres throughout the year. This first shipment was made possible through donations from the Friends of Inuit Artists, the Professional Art Dealers Association of Canada, Lee Valley Tools and many public and private art galleries.
Two American scholars visit Carleton

Dr. Priscilla Tyler, Professor Emeritus, University of Missouri, and Maree Brooks, retired librarian and teacher from the Shawnee Mission School in Kansas, gave a presentation to the Carleton University Art History Seminar in March. (From left to right: Marion Jackson, associate professor of art history, Carleton University; Robin Farquhar, president, Carleton University; Dr. Priscilla Tyler; Maree Brooks; Janice Yalden, dean of arts, Carleton University; and Michael Bell, director, Carleton University Art Gallery.

Two American scholars visit Carleton

Dr. Priscilla Tyler, Professor Emeritus, University of Missouri, and Maree Brooks, librarian and teacher now retired from the Shawnee Mission School in Kansas, made a presentation in March to Professor Marion Jackson's art history seminar at Carleton University in March. (From left to right: Marion Jackson, associate professor of art history, Carleton University; Robin Farquhar, president, Carleton University; Dr. Priscilla Tyler; Maree Brooks; Janice Yalden, dean of arts, Carleton University; and Michael Bell, director, Carleton University Art Gallery.

Observations, they drew parallels in attitude and mythology among the Inuit of all three countries. One point they made is that the belief in the unity of the spirit world exists with only minor differences among all Inuit.

They also showed slides of several works from their extensive collection of carvings, tapestries, prints and drawings, including many representations of drum ceremonies and shamanic transformation. (With information from Ellen McLeod).

Pangnirtung tapestries on display in Ottawa

The Pangnirtung Tapestry Studio celebrated the twentieth anniversary of Inuit tapestry weaving with an exhibition of new work at the Art Gallery of the Ottawa School of Art in February. A reception on February 10, featuring such northern delicacies as smoked halibut and arctic char, shrimp, bannock, and caribou sausages, was well attended by the Ottawa Inuit and art communities as well as visitors from Pangnirtung. Ed McKenna, manager of the Uqqurmiut Centre for Arts and Crafts which owns the tapestry studio, was gratified by the turn out.

Rose Okpik, president of the Uqqurmiut Inuit Artists Association, opened the exhibition and presented bouquets of flowers to some of those who had contributed to the many years of success of the studio. Malaya Akulukjuk, artist, observations, they drew parallels in attitude and mythology among the Inuit of all three countries. One point they made is that the belief in the unity of the spirit world exists with only minor differences among all Inuit.

They also showed slides of several works from their extensive collection of carvings, tapestries, prints and drawings, including many representations of drum ceremonies and shamanic transformation. (With information from Ellen McLeod).

Maria Muehlen, head of the Inuit Art Section, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, and Terry Ryan, general manager of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-op Ltd., at the Pangnirtung exhibition in Ottawa.

Labrador artists finding their niche

Nain, Labrador was the site of the second module of the Inuit Artists' College carving session from February 20 until March 12 (see IAJ, Winter 1992). Participants included: Gilbert Hay (Nain), Mike Massie (Happy Valley-Goose Bay), William Nochasak (Hopedale), Harry Semigak (Makkovik), Charlie Terriak (Nain), Dave Terriak (Happy Valley-Goose Bay), and John Terriak (Nain).

Mattiusi Iyaituk, from Ivujivik, northern Quebec, and Charlie Kogvik, from Baker Lake, NT, served once more as resource persons for the module. Interviewed en route to Nain, both were anxious to return to see how the Labrador carvers were progressing and to renew friendships they had made during their first visit. Both Air Nova and Labrador Airways provided passes for the eastern leg of the instructors' trip into Nain.

Health and safety concerns were a big issue during the session. Everyone was outfitted with respirators, eye goggles, ear plugs, overalls and caps and the studio was mopped and vacuumed at the end of each day. There were some problems with the ventilation system at the roughing-out stage where a lot of dust is generated, especially using power grinders. Iyaituk worked out an additional system using a furnace fan and ducting. Because the parts are readily accessible to most people, this is a system that he feels would be easy for northern carvers to set up in their own studios.

The artists were pleased to have a variety of hand and power tools made available to them. All the tools will remain in Nain for carvers to use thanks to contributions from Labrador's Community Futures Program, a community-based organization which provides funds through Canada Employment and Immigration's Job Strategies Program for enhancing local skills, and the Canada-Labrador Rural Cooperative Agreement Program.

Iyaituk and Kogvik emphasized quality during the three weeks and Fridays were set aside to critique work. Self-critique of one's work is not common among Inuit carvers. Michael Massie, who assisted in the coordination of this session and who holds a degree from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, stressed that "an artist is his own best critic."
The need to maintain quality was echoed by Betty Learning from Enterprise Newfoundland Labrador Corporation (Happy Valley-Goose Bay), a development agency which has been providing promotion for Inuit work. Learning visited the session to discuss funding programs. Jeanne Pattison from The Northwest Company also flew in from Toronto to speak about marketing. Pattison emphasized the need for carvers to look critically at the work when it was completed.

There is no organized marketing structure in Labrador and the Torgnàsk Cultural Centre and the Sananguatet Katikatigenit Labradoririmi (Labrador creators' association) are working together to develop a system best suited to the region. The Inuit Art Foundation has donated a videophone to help them get started. Gary Baikie, director of Torgnàsk, hopes to have a videophone in each of the five Inuit communities by spring.


Hi, My Name is Nanook, 1992, David Terriak, Happy Valley-Goose Bay (white marble; 11.5 × 6 × 2.5 inches).

I Dreamt of Two Spirits, 1992, Michael Massie, Happy Valley-Goose Bay (strawberry alabaster, labrador soapstone, caribou, antler; 15 × 11 × 5.5 inches).
A new Pangnirtung print collection planned

The board of directors of the Uqqurumit Inuit Artists Association in Pangnirtung has voted unanimously to provide financial support for a new Pangnirtung community print collection, the first since 1988.

Six printmakers — Enookie Akulukjuk, Thomasie Alkatuqtuq, Andrew Karpik, Imoona Karpik, Josia Maniapik and Jacobosie Tigik — worked for more than a year with a committee of the Uqurumit board to revive the Pangnirtung Print Shop.

A new printmaking studio was opened in April 1991 in renovated premises formerly occupied by the Pangnirtung Weave Shop. Last fall, the printmakers worked with Arctic College to co-sponsor a three-month wood-block printmaking course led by Nuboro Sawai. Just before Christmas, the printmakers secured a $20,000 contribution through the Northwest Territories' EDA program, to obtain materials and supplies for a new print collection, and to engage art advisors.

With the financial support of the Uqurumit board and the EDA, the printmakers' operating costs will be covered until they begin to receive revenues through the sale of their prints. Uqurumit will act as publisher of the new print collection.

The printmakers are receiving advice from two southern printmakers. Don Holman spent two weeks in the print shop in February; Stephen Osler came for a similar period in March. Both have considerable experience working with Inuit artists and it is expected that they will return to work with the printmakers again later this year.

Uqurumit's general manager, Ed McKenna, says: "Neither Holman nor Osler are directing the work of the printmakers, as art advisors have done in the past. The Pangnirtung printmakers want a new relationship with their southern counterparts: that of printmaker to printmaker, rather than teacher/student or employer/employee. The printmakers themselves make all decisions on print shop operation, and creative choices are left to the individual artist."

He adds: "The Pangnirtung printmakers are very aware that their new independent venture has risk, but with the help of the Uqurumit Inuit Artists Association the financial risk will be kept small. As for the artistic challenge of creating a successful print collection, the Pangnirtung printmakers welcome the opportunity to prove themselves."

Spousal abuse publication features original drawings

Over 100 original drawings were submitted to Pauktuutit, the Inuit Women's Association, which had put out a call for drawings to illustrate a publication on spousal abuse. Forty drawings were selected by a panel comprised of Martha Flaherty, Pauktuutit's president, Sally Webster originally from Baker Lake and now living in Ottawa, and Marybelle Mitchell, executive director of the Inuit Art Foundation.

The winning artists received $200 for each drawing, and $500 was awarded for the cover by Napachie Pootoogook of Cape Dorset. Napachie also had two other drawings selected for use. Other winning entries came from Iqaluit, Hall Beach, Salluit, Pelly Bay and Igloolik.

Flaherty was pleased with the response to the project and noted that the drawings submitted were "very moving." The publication, called Naalatsiarlutit (Listen well) features a short text with each drawing highlighting the problem of spousal abuse and its impact on individuals, families and society. As Flaherty said: "We hope the publication will cause people to think about the horrible consequences of family violence and spousal abuse on those they love."

The book was published in February and costs $10.00. For information, contact Pauktuutit, Inuit Women's Association, Suite 804, 200 Elgin Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 1L5 (613/238-3977).
I

In October 1992, The Institute for the Humanities at Salado, Texas, will host First Nations: A Current Event, a symposium to which two Canadian Inuit will be invited. A book and a television documentary on the symposium are planned.

Koko Amarteifio from Ghana, has been appointed coordinator to facilitate access for Canadian artists of all racial and cultural backgrounds to Canada Council programs. Amarteifio studied social work in West Germany and at McGill University in Montreal, and has had experience working with immigrant and minority groups and in the arts.

The Michael and Barbara Dennos Museum Center in Traverse City, Michigan, opened on July 6, 1991. It is a 40,000 square foot facility with three changing exhibition spaces, a sculpture court, a discovery gallery and 1,300 square feet of permanent gallery space for rotating exhibitions of the 545 Inuit prints and sculptures in the centre's permanent collection dating from 1961. The opening exhibition is entitled Inuit — A Cultural Reflection. Plans include exhibitions examining specific styles of individual artists in the museum's collection.

A catalogued exhibition of works by young Cape Dorset artist Toonoo Sharky was held at the Inuit Galerie in Mannheim, Germany in January 1992.

In December and January this year, the Nunatta Sunaqutangit museum in Igloolik hosted the North Baffin drawings exhibition organized by the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1991. Cynthia Cook, assistant curator of Inuit art at the Art Gallery of Ontario travelled north with the exhibition to the four settlements from which the drawings originated: Clyde River, Pond Inlet, Arctic Bay and Igloolik.

Television Northern Canada, a new network service, was launched January 21, 1992. "For the first time, programs produced by Northerners, for Northerners, will be shared with over 90 communities scattered across 4.3 million square kilometers of the Canadian North," said TVNC chairman Pat Lyall. Noting that TVNC is a "milestone" for aboriginal people, he added: "Now we have the largest aboriginal television network in the world."

The Arctic Coast Tourist Association, based in Cambridge Bay, NWT., is planning a number of events to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the sailing of the St. Roch by skipper Henry Larsen through the Northwest Passage. Planned activities include a music festival, an arts festival, traditional northern games, an Inuit exhibition, a char festival and story-telling. For information contact: Arctic Coast Tourist Association, Box 91, Cambridge Bay, Northwest Territories, Canada, X0E 0C0 (403/893-2224).

The National Gallery of Canada, located in Ottawa, is planning to move its Inuit Gallery to a larger space in the area that is now being used for open storage, directly below the Great Hall.

Carleton University has constructed an impressive new art gallery on its Ottawa campus and has appointed Michael Bell, formerly of the Agnes Etherington Centre, Queen's University, Kingston, as director, effective March 2, 1992. The gallery is expected to open in September with an exhibition drawn from the nearby 600 items in the Carleton art collection.

Armand Tagoona, well-known missionary, artist and writer, died suddenly at his home in Baker Lake in December 1991.

The Gift of the Caribou is the name of an exhibition of Inuit art in antler to be held at Images of the North, San Francisco, May 7 to 25.

Jimmy Manning and Taqialuq Nuna of Cape Dorset were guests at the Snow Goose Gallery in Seattle, Washington, in March. Manning, a well-known photographer, gave a slide show on the people, wildlife and art of Cape Dorset. Nuna gave a demonstration of soapstone carving.

Louis Gagnon is teaching a course on Inuit art at the CEGEP de Sainte-Foy, a suburb of Quebec City, from April 6 to May 13.

Lorne Balshine, director of the Vancouver Inuit Art Society, reports that the society's one year exhibition of Canadian sculpture on Granville Island has been successfully completed. Some 46,610 visitors from around the world visited the exhibition.

The public portion of an international conference on Language and Educational Policy in the North was held at the University of California, Berkeley, in March. Native peoples of the North met with linguists, educators and anthropologists dedicated to preserving their threatened languages. The participants were from Russia (Siberia), Alaska, the Northwest Territories, Nunavik (Northern Quebec) and Greenland. One of the goals of this conference was to exchange information on educational experiments and school curricula which have successfully fought language extinction.

Jack McCarthy, who recently left the Government of the Northwest Territories Economic Development and Tourism where he served as regional arts and crafts officer for Kitikmeot, had a heart attack while lecturing at the first module of the Inuit Artists' College Nain (Labrador) workshop in November 1991. McCarthy has made a speedy recovery and is now up and about doing some research for the Inuit Art Foundation.

Uqurmiut Inuit Artists Association opened a special exhibition of Pangnirtung woven tapestries at the Ottawa School of Art February 10. The occasion marked the twentieth anniversary of the Pangnirtung Tapestry Studio and was attended by several of the weavers and artists as well as Inuit politicians, including Rosemarie Kuptana, president of Inuit Tapirisat of Canada. The first exhibition of Pangnirtung woven tapestries was held March 28, 1972, at the Canadian Guild of Crafts in Montreal. The Ottawa exhibition was assisted by Sinaaq Enterprises Inc., the development subsidiary of Inuit Tapirisat of Canada.

Avataq Cultural Institute received a gift of 98 miniature ivory sculptures originating from the Quaqtauq area in the 1940s from the Royal British Columbia Museum. Avataq, based in Nunavik (northern Quebec), also received some material from the DIAND collection which was dispersed several years ago.

An exhibition entitled Aux frontières de l'Imaginaire Inuit, consisting of 24 contemporary sculptures and 4 prints from Nunavik, organized by Louis Gagnon and shown in Charlesbourg last summer, will be travelling to other regions in Quebec.
where Inuit art is not well known. La Fédération des Coopératives du Nouveau-Québec is assisting in the circulation of this exhibition, which has been catalogued (available for $4.00 from La Société Artistique de Charlesbourg, a/s Danièle Guimont, C.P. 7131, Charlesbourg, Québec, G1G 5E5).

Titus Allooloo, education minister for the Government of the Northwest Territories announced in January the release of a textbook describing the transitional life of the Inuvialuit (western Arctic Inuit). Entitled *Inuvialuit Pitqusiit: The Culture of the Inuvialuit*, the book tells the story of the Inuvialuit in their own words. Developed by the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and illustrated by Inuvialuit artist William Gruben, it is intended to be used as a teaching resource in the NWT.

Galerie Saint Merri in Paris held an exhibition entitled *Rencontre Art Inuit-Art Indien* from April 15 to May 16.

Ted Leishmann, general manager of Tuttavik, is retiring June 1. He will be replaced by Lauren Venchiarutti. La Fédération des Coopératives du Nouveau-Québec is withdrawing from the joint business venture and the business will be operated by Canadian Arctic Producers, with Venchiarutti reporting to CAP's head office in Winnipeg. The Tuttavik sign was to come down May 1.

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Sunlight marble 5" x 12" x 15" Photo by Angus Cockney
The following letter concerning the Government of the Northwest Territories’ plans for a new facility in Baker Lake was written by George Swinton in response to an editorial in Nunatsiaq News, January 31, 1992. The editorial, written by Mathew Spence who is now working for the Government of the Northwest Territories, argues in favour of the GNWT’s “plans to mechanize the production of items like small carvings.” George Pratt, a Vancouver artist, has been hired to develop bench-mounted power tools “to help carvers turn out small carvings quickly and in materials like granite or marble,” which will then be finished by the carver “based on his or her abilities.” Spence’s argument is that “there is a market for imitation Inuit art that is produced mechanically without any creativity on the part of the producer.” He stated in the editorial that “mechanization” will help to increase production and sales.

It is with astonishment and shock that I read your unbelievably ignorant article “Art and the creation of economic opportunities” (Nunatsiaq News, January 31, 1992:6). Ignorance is, of course, “not what you don’t know, but what you think you know that ain’t so.” For a newspaper trying to make opinion in the North, you show incredible audacity to make authoritative statements about something (which is important to northerners) but which simply is wrong. That is very irresponsible, and wicked, too.

The new Baker Lake “arts and craft facility” is an ill-conceived, absolutely demonic pipe dream of an art-and-economics-unconscious do-gooder to “mechanize the production of items like small carvings” and, I fear, of even more non-infelicitous craft schemes. A sad venture indeed, sad for Inuit-made art, sad for the misled artists of Baker lake, and sad for your paper to have embraced such an unsound, half-baked, and risky, yet ill-omened project. The very ideas you patronize and promote are precisely those which are of greatest danger to the survival and reputation of “Inuit” art which has been, and still is, of great credit to the Inuit and to Canada at large.

To wit, nobody with intelligence would mind power tools as such. But the indiscriminate and merely duplicative and purely mechanical (mis)use of power tools “in order to compete (in price and kind) with imitation Inuit art” (your ideas) will create the very opposite economic effects (similar to Gresham’s law which observes that “bad money drives out good”). In terms of the reputation of Inuit art, this means that the production of more (competing) “items like small carvings” (souvenir art, that is) reduces, by implication, the credibility of non-souvenir art. As can be seen, for example, in Mexico, the mass-production of souvenir art — while increasing the speed of production and quantity — also decreases economic values in the process of increasing availability. So, you are right, “sales, instead of decreasing, would actually increase,” but at the expense of price and prestige.

To me, personally, any work of art — and even of souvenir art, as many superb examples of, again, Mexico show — contains an important ingredient: the personal touch, the handwriting and concepts, of the individual artists. That quality does not merely mean the “finish,” but exists in the total character of the work and, therefore, not merely in the finish.

That brings me to the next group of fallacies by George Pratt and Nunatsiaq News: the false analogy of the computer. Your article is, of course, right when it pronounces, somewhat pompously, that “a manuscript that may have taken six hours to produce on a manual typewriter now takes an hour on the computer. Yet the product is the same or better, and contains the same amount of creativity.” What blaring non-sense even as an analogy! Yes, a hack product remains a hack product whether it is word-processed, or hand typed, or handwritten! What you are talking about, again, is mechanics rather than creativity (i.e., process, but not originality). But you are right, labour-saving devices don’t “lower the quality of the work” provided of course, it has quality in the first place: garbage in, garbage out. Or do you wish to promote a new type of mass-produced souvenir article “like small carvings?”

Incidentally, that in-apt idea of mechanized, high-power produced Inuit articles would actually jeopardize the sales of “genuine Inuit art,” whereas “imitation Inuit art” does not.

And, furthermore, nobody in his/her good senses would deny to Inuit artists the advantage of labour-saving devices, power tools, or new materials. Some of the best Inuit artists have used them with success for over 20 years, but even they (and lesser artists) are running the risk of medium and/or technique obsession — a kind of technical slap-happiness — that might lead into the promisepath of easy ways out or, worse, into blind alleys.

What is a boon to some can become a trap to others!

And then, all this also involves the question of “ethos” or the innate (and hereditary) character of the artists and their work, i.e., the underlying and distinctive characteristics of culture and tradition which, even in the current stage of acculturation, remain uniquely theirs. Nobody, absolutely nobody, and this applies particularly to well-wishing and well-meaning do-gooders, must interfere artificially with that ethos and, especially, not by means of economic seductiveness! That is the demonic character of that unfortunate, ill-conceived Baker Lake scheme.

I could cite several more examples of the vapidity and misunderstanding of the Nunatsiaq News article and of the harm and evil of the Baker Lake “facility” and its outrageous waste of public money, but I wish to finish with one more: the ‘chronic problem that southern retailers of Inuit art have is a constant fluctuation in supply.” The fact, unfortunately, is that the dealers’ (and
collectors' chronic problem is the decreasing amount of quality and not quantity. It is quality, and not "imitation Inuit art" (mostly produced in Ontario and B.C.), that fluctuates so threateningly while the large number of indifferent, but genuine, Inuit-souvenir articles already tend to flood the market. It is frightening and disgraceful that you should promote the production of more.

And, incidentally, such mechanically produced "items like small carvings" would unquestionably have to be identified by a special label as ethically and legally, that kind of work could not use the copyrighted "Igloo" tag. George Pratt and the NWT Department of Economic Development should have thought about that as well.

They also should have known that they are opening a Pandora's box, not only of controversy which will continue to become more and more angry but, even worse, of fake and false-principled practices which threaten one of the great assets of the Inuit community and which, like most natural resources, are exploitable, but then no longer renewable.

The Baker Lake facility may still have uses, albeit with an exclusively expensive upkeep of the building which could serve as a studio for local and visiting artists. But its original purpose — the faster mechanical production of items like small carvings or similar souvenir articles — must be abandoned now, even before it has started. The consequences of not doing so are disastrous for Inuit art in general and Baker Lake artists in particular.

George Swinton
Winnipeg, Manitoba

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Exhibitions

Indigena exhibition, Indian and Inuit Art Gallery, Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC), Ottawa/Hull, April 16, 1992 to October 11, 1992. Book (catalogue is part of the book) and poster available from CMC.


Travelling Exhibitions


Permanent Exhibitions

The Toronto Dominion Gallery of Inuit Art, a permanent exhibit, open to the public seven days a week, no charge. Guided tours on Tuesdays (11:30 a.m.) and Thursdays (2 p.m.). Lobby and mezzanine areas of the IBM Tower, 75 Wellington Street West, Toronto. Information: (416) 982-8124.

Dennos Museum Center, Northwestern Michigan College, permanent exhibition entitled Inuit — A Cultural Reflection. Hours are Monday through Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Sunday 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday open until 9:00 p.m. additional summer hours. Address: 1701 E. Front Street, Traverse City, Michigan 49684. Information: (616) 922-1055.

Conferences


Festivals

Great Northern Arts Festival, Circumpolar '92: July 17 to 26. Inuvik, N.W.T. Brochure and poster available from The Great Northern Arts Festival, Box 2921, Inuvik, N.W.T. X0E 0T0.


Exhibition Notices

Moving Around the Form: Inuit Prints and Sculpture from the Permanent Collection, at the Agnes Etherington Centre, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, from November 10, 1991 to February 29, 1992, explored sculptural and graphic approaches to similar subjects. Mary Jo Hughes Gerosko was guest curator and Michael Bell the associate curator.

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What is the land?

by John Amagoalik

The land is cold.
The land is immense.
It is a desert.
It is unforgiving.
It can be cruel.

The land is also home. It sustains life. It breathes. It can bleed. It is part of our mother, the earth. It is beautiful. It nourishes our culture. We are part of it as it is part of us. We are one.

Long before the great medieval wars in Europe, long before Christianity, long before the many dynasties of China, and thousands of generations before Columbus, the Arctic was home to the Inuit. The land shaped our mind and our language, our culture, our legends, our philosophy and our view of life.

The Inuit of the world have a special spiritual relationship with the land. The European concept that land is for selling and buying is inconceivable to us. As is the idea that nature is something to be conquered. That is absurd to us. The Inuit have always understood that in order for the land to sustain us we must treat it with respect. The land gives and takes.

The Inuit laws of survival called for co-operation, sharing and generosity. We regard other living things as integral parts of the whole and therefore must maintain their integrity.
We understand that to waste now means to want later. We know that there must be a balance between take and return. Our environment has dictated these laws to us. They have sustained us for millenniums. They can still do so today.

The newcomers to our lands have finally begun to understand that we Inuit know a lot more than they thought we were capable of. They have started to come around to our way of thinking. They have started talking about "sustainable development, respect for the environment, conservation, ecosystems," terms we have lived with and practised for hundreds of decades.

They have begun to realize that they are wasteful, they have dirty habits with their garbage, they expect too many material things out of life, they are hostile and paranoid. They have too little trust for their fellow human beings and are, perhaps, just a little on the greedy side. The world revolution in human rights is beginning to make it easier for us to live among them and for them to respect us and our homeland.

Inuit have maintained a special kinship with animals of the land and creatures of the sea. We do not portray animals as cartoon characters, but as sisters and brothers. Our legends, music and games reflect our preoccupation with the environment and the animals and spirits which surround us.

Our art expresses our mystical fascination with other living things. In the mind's eye, the wolf can turn into a bear or a human being. We can fly to the moon. Our spirits can travel beyond our physical being. Good and bad spirits visit our lives. We name our children after species of animals and our ancestors. All these things demonstrate our intimate embrace of nature.

I have told many people over the years that it is important for Inuit political leaders to go out on the land at least once a year. "Why is that important?" they ask. I tell them this: "When you are meeting with national and international leaders and others in position of power and authority, sometimes you begin to feel big and important yourself. It is when you go back to the land that you realize just how small and insignificant you really are. The land's hugeness, its strength and beauty can overwhelm and humble you."

John Amagoalik writes a weekly column in Nunatsiaq News and is the immediate past president of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada. He is an outspoken proponent of his people's inherent right for self-determination. This essay was solicited by photographer Hans Blohm for his tenth book, Alaska and the Canadian North ... The Voice of the Natives, an international effort by Canadian, American, German and Japanese publishers (expected to be published in the fall of 1993).
PITSIULA MICHAEL
Lake Harbour

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