

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1-2 TOC

3-17 "CURATING INUIT QUAJIMAJATUQANGIT"
BY HEATHER IGLOLIORTE

SUPPLEMENTARY LINKS

TANYA LINKLATER-SLAY ALL DAY

<https://www.tanyalukinlinklater.com/video/slay-all-day-2016>

TANYA TAGAQ

<http://tanyatagaq.com/visuals/#official-music-video>

18-23 "REVISITING ANNIE POOTOOGOOK"
BY CAOIMHE MORGAN-FEIR

SUPPLEMENTARY LINKS

INUIT ART FOUNDATION

<http://www.inuitartfoundation.org>

INUIT ART QUARTERLY

<http://iaq.inuitartfoundation.org/magazine/>

24-27 "NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA ANNOUNCES CURATORS FOR
VENICE BIENNALE"

ISUMA

<http://www.isuma.tv/isuma>

28-38 "INUIT ART"
THE CANADIAN ENCYCLOPEDIA

SUPPLEMENTARY LINKS

"CONTEMPORARY INUIT ART" IN THE CANADIAN ENCYC

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/contemporary-inuit-art>

39-46 "RURAL THEATRICAL PROTEST"
BY SUSANNE SHAWYER

SUPPLEMENTARY LINKS

"NUNAVUT" IN THE CANADIAN ENCYCLOPEDIA

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/nunavut>

MAKE MUSKRAT RIGHT

<http://makemuskratright.com>

ADDITIONAL READING SUGGESTIONS:

TERMINOLOGY

FROM INDIGENOUS FOUNDATIONS AT U BRITISH COLUMBIA

<https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/terminology/>

INUIT WOMEN ARTISTS: VOICES FROM CAPE DORSET

BY ODETTE LEROUX, MARION E. JACKSON, MINNIE AODLA
FREEMAN. SAN FRANCISCO: CHRONICLE BOOKS, 1996.

https://www.amazon.com/Inuit-Women-Artists-Leroux/dp/081181307X/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1542636854&sr=8-1&keywords=inuit+women%27s+artists

SOUVENIRS OF ARMCHAIR TOURISM: JAMES HOUSTON AND THE
MARKETING OF INUIT ART

BY KRISTIN POTTER
THESIS, 1996

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ARCTIC PEOPLES

ARCTIC CENTER-UNIVERSITY OF LAPLAND

www.Arcticcentre.org

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY FOR INUIT PEOPLES

<https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/nov/01/animal-rights-activists-inuit-clash-canada-indigenous-food-traditions>



Installation view, *Ilippunga: I Have Learned*, 2016, Brousseau Inuit Art Collection, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (photograph by Daniel Drouin provided by MNBAQ)

It is not only to make money that we carve. Nor do we carve make believe things. What we show in our carvings is the life we have lived in the past right up to today. We show the truth. . . . We carve the animals because they are important to us as food. We carve Inuit figures because in that way we can show ourselves to the world as we were in the past and as we are now.

—Pauloosie Kasadluak, Inukjuak, 1976

Although there exists a vast literature on Inuit art in Canada—including hundreds of exhibition catalogues and scholarly texts, edited volumes, journal articles,

and publications in the popular media—very little of it has been produced by Inuit. Despite the critical and commercial success of Inuit art, which has flourished since the beginning of the modern Inuit art movement in the mid-twentieth century into an internationally recognized art form and multimillion-dollar industry, the research, study, and dissemination of Inuit art has largely been the work of Qallunaat (non-Inuit) scholars, curators, critics, and museum staff.¹ Few Inuit authors have ever been published in art-historical texts. Notable exceptions include Alootook Ipellie, the political cartoonist and graphic artist who wrote the seminal article “The Colonization of the Arctic,” featured in

Gerald McMaster’s groundbreaking *Reservation X* (1998) exhibition catalogue; the filmmaker Zacharias Kunuk, who through interviews and other writings has significantly augmented our understanding of Inuit aesthetics;² and Minnie Aodla Freeman, an author who contributed to the 1996 *Inuit Women Artists: Voices from Cape Dorset* exhibition catalogue. Yet I am, for example, the only Inuk in Canada to hold a PhD in art history, one of only two or three Inuit to ever teach an Inuit art class at the university level, and one of the few curators of circumpolar art from our country to date. While artists such as Barry Pottle and Heather Campbell have occasionally held curatorial positions in art institutions, and recently an emerging curator and graduate of the BA film studies program at Carleton University, Jocelyn Piirainen, participated in a curatorial residency at SAW Gallery in Ottawa, Ontario, there is yet to be a single full-time Inuit museum employee at any of our major national or provincial institutions, and few have ever been employed in the many Inuit and Indigenous private art galleries or in auction houses, as freelance authors, research assistants, critics, or film or exhibition reviewers.

The impact of this is that Inuit art—including everything from the earliest archeological findings to contemporary works—has been almost entirely interpreted by Qallunaat. Therefore, despite the rich literature, often written by those who have worked closely with Inuit artists over the last seven decades of the modern and contemporary arts industry (since 1948), the existing scholarship still represents a deep imbalance between who is being written about and who is writing. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the lack of Inuit scholars has meant that Inuit perspectives and knowledge have been conspicuously absent from much of the research and writing on Inuit art as well.

In this short essay, I outline some new directions in my own research and curatorial practice, including an exhibition I recently curated, which may offer a new model for curating and thinking about Inuit art. I begin by introducing the exhibition, which represents some of my thinking through this issue to date, and expand the discussion to include artworks that are not featured in the exhibition

Heather Igloliorte

Curating Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: Inuit Knowledge in the Qallunaat Art Museum

The epigraph is from Pauloosie Kasadluak, “Nothing Marvelous,” in *Port Harrison/Inoucdjouac*, ed. Jean Blodgett, exh. cat. (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1977), 22.

1. The modern Inuit art movement emerged from an Inuit handicrafts and carvings “experiment” that blossomed into a fine art practice in the early 1950s. For more on the midcentury development of modern Inuit sculpture and the art market, see Nelson H. H. Graburn, “The Discovery of Inuit Art: James A. Houston-Animateur,” *Inuit Art Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 3–5; Kristen K. Potter, “James Houston, Armchair Tourism, and the Marketing of Inuit Art,” in *Native American Art in the Twentieth Century: Makers, Meanings, Histories*, ed. W. Jackson Rushing III (New York: Routledge, 1999), 39–56; Virginia Watt, “The Beginning,” in *Canadian Guild of Crafts, Quebec* (Montreal: Canadian Guild of Crafts Quebec, 1980), 11–15; and Helga Goetz, “Inuit Art: A History of Government Involvement,” in *In the Shadow of the Sun: Perspectives on Contemporary Native Art* (Gatineau: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1993), 357–82.

On the term Qallunaat, Minnie Aodla Freeman’s introduction to *Inuit Women Artists: Voices from Cape Dorset*, exh. cat. (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1995), explains that the Inuit word that refers to Europeans and, later, to Euro-Canadians and other non-Inuit who came to the Arctic. Interestingly, the word does not translate to “light-skinned people” or “strangers” as one might expect, but could mean either “people with beautiful eyebrows” or “people with beautiful manufactured material” (15–16).

2. See “Dialogue: Pumipau in Conversation with Zacharias Kunuk,” in *Transference, Technology, Tradition: Aboriginal Media and New Media Art* (Banff: Banff Centre Press, 2005); Raúl Gavez,

but that usefully illuminate my view. I also note, however, that although I was raised in the North and still spend a considerable amount of my time and research in the Arctic with Inuit, as a student of Inuktitut, there is knowledge, through language, to which I do not yet have access and may never fully understand. It is my hope that Inuit curators and art scholars who are fluent Inuktitut speakers will take up and refine this rudimentary work, and that future Inuit curators, art historians, and theorists will far exceed it.

Ilippunga: I Have Learned and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

On June 25, 2016, the Pierre Lassonde Pavilion of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (MNBAQ) opened to the public. The decidedly contemporary expansion of stacked glass rectangles increased the museum space by 90 percent, adding three levels of galleries, the Grand Hall, and a new auditorium, restaurant, courtyard, and shop. In the front half of the top floor facing north is the Brousseau Inuit Art Collection. In 2013, I was hired as an independent curator to develop a new permanent exhibition by drawing on the museum's collection of over twenty-six hundred works of Inuit art, the vast majority of which were donated by the collector and later gallerist Raymond Brousseau, who acquired the pieces over more than half a century.³

Brousseau and his wife, Lys, an exhibition designer, created the museum's first exhibition of this collection, and it was on display in the original MNBAQ building between 2006 and 2013. I was invited to bring a new, Inuit perspective to the presentation of what is largely a modern Inuit art collection, with works created from the early 1950s to the present. Although the collection contains a few works in nearly every common twentieth-century Inuit media (basketry, drawings, prints, ceramics, and so on), the vast majority of the artworks, and by far the greatest strength of the collection, are sculptures. Working with that strength, I decided to make the exhibition a sculptural one and activate the presentation of these objects with video within the gallery space. The challenge was not in selecting compelling works for display—Brousseau has a critical eye for Inuit sculpture and amassed an important collection—but rather in taking an existing collection, one that had already been on display for nearly a decade, and saying something novel and meaningful about mid- to late-twentieth-century Nunavut and Nunavik sculpture, the area of Inuit art already most studied, exhibited, and discussed in art scholarship.

To do so, I proposed a new possible direction for interpreting Inuit art history from an emic perspective, taking the phrase *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* as the basis for understanding Inuit artistic productions throughout our long history and today. While the Inuktitut phrase is often simply translated as “Inuit traditional knowledge,” it can be more accurately understood to encompass the complex matrix of Inuit environmental knowledge, societal values, cosmology, worldviews, and language. The term *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* comes from the verb *qaujima* or “to know,” referring to “that which Inuit have always known to be true.”⁴ While the tenets of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, now commonly referred to as IQ, have always existed in Inuit society, the widespread adoption of the overarching term itself is somewhat new. In 1999, when Nunavut separated from the Northwest Territories to become Canada's largest territory, the territorial government chose

“Epic Inuit: In Conversation with Zacharias Kunuk,” *Montage*, Spring 2002, 11; and Gillian Robinson, ed., *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen: A Sense of Memory and High Definition Inuit Storytelling* (Montreal: Isuma, 2008).

3. The Brousseau Inuit Art Collection in the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec is one of Canada's most significant collections of Inuit sculpture, and it contains numerous works by many prominent, influential artists. The collection features more than twenty-six hundred pieces, including over twenty-one hundred sculptures, created by dozens of artists from communities across the Canadian North since the mid-twentieth century. The collector Raymond Brousseau developed the collection over more than fifty years, primarily in his role as a Quebec gallerist.

4. Shirley Tagalik, “Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: The Role of Indigenous Knowledge in Supporting Wellness in Inuit Communities in Nunavut,” in *Child and Youth Health* (Ottawa: National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2009–10), 1–2.

to formally embed Inuit values, principles, and knowledge into the governance structures of Inuit regions and communities by using the language of IQ.⁵ The implementation of IQ by the government of Nunavut and other organizations makes a statement that, despite its ancient roots, Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit is not without relevance or application in modern Inuit life; it is a living knowledge. At the center of this philosophy is respect for relationships: the relationship with the land; the relationship with Arctic flora and fauna; and, especially, the relationship between family members and community members as to their responsibilities to each other, as well as their responsibility to pass on knowledge between generations. This philosophy, applied to the arts, underscores that for Inuit, the way to respect our ancestors is to maintain our living traditional knowledge and to be resourceful and creative, as they had to be. In this way, the work of Inuit artists is to constantly seek to deepen their knowledge of our longstanding creative practices while also continuously innovating to ensure that these practices thrive and participate in that living knowledge. Ingenuity is our tradition. The title of the exhibition, *Ilippunga*, the title which the elder Piita Irniq gave to me, reflects this intergenerational transmission of knowledge. It means, “I have learned.”

Art Production and the Six Principles of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit

Within Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit, six basic principles guide Inuit ontologies and social relations to Arctic residents—people, animals, and nonhuman entities. *Pilimmasarniq*, the first of the six tenets, is the concept that guides the way in which Inuit artists train and develop—the acquisition of knowledge. The majority of artists today continue to develop their artistic skills and knowledge by learning from and observing other Inuit artists, rather than attending art school, visiting museums, and other forms of art training more common and accessible in southern Canada. Inuit artists often closely observe more senior family or community members at home, as is revealed in the works of prolific families such as the graphic artists Pitseolak Ashoona, her daughter Napatchie Pootoogook, and her granddaughters, the cousins Annie Pootoogook and Shuvanai Ashoona. This training also occurs in art-making cooperatives like the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative in Kinngait (Cape Dorset). The Inuit-led cooperative art movement that began in the 1950s and 1960s owes much of its success to this concept of knowledge sharing, as well as the concept of *angiqatqiinniq*, the second tenet of IQ, which emphasizes the importance of consensus-building and collective decision-making, with a focus on benefiting the community before the individual.⁶ In collective art organizations like the Pangnirtung Tapestry Studio, weavers base their designs on drawings from named local artists, but collaborate to produce massive, elaborate tapestries that lend “a sense of pride as well as bringing economic benefits to the community while telling and preserving its stories for future generations.”⁷ Cooperatives across the Arctic thus exemplify a third concept as well, of *pinasuatqiinniq*, the principle of working together for the common good, and are underscored by *pijitsirarniq*, a fourth tenet of IQ, the concept of serving, which is crucial to the understanding of how success is measured in Inuit communities.⁸ Contributions to the common good are considered the highest form of leadership, as well as the measure of achievement, maturity, and wisdom. Inuit recognize and appreciate the contributions of iconic artists such as Johnny Inukpuk,

5. See Frank Tester and Peter Irniq, “Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit: Social History, Politics and the Practice of Resistance,” *Arctic* 61, no. 5 (2008): 48–61.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Uqqurmiut Centre for Arts and Crafts, “The Pangnirtung Tapestry Studio,” 2011, at www.uqqurmiut.ca/Tapstudio.html, as of June 5, 2017.

8. See Tagalik, “Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit,” 2.



Annie Pootoogook, *Pitseolak Drawing with Two Girls on the Bed, detail, 2006*, colored pencil on paper, 20 x 26 in. (50.8 x 66 cm). Private collection (artwork © Dorset Fine Arts; photograph provided by Dorset Fine Arts)

Pudlo Pudlat, and Kenojuak Ashevak, who participated in the early modern art movement and were trailblazers for other Inuit artists, clearing a path for the success and prosperity of their communities. The principle that sustains community art collectives is the same value that leads Inuit hunters to distribute the results of the caribou hunt to all the elders in town, as reflected in works such as David Ruben Piqtoukun's minimalist sculpture *Division of Meat* (1996), which succinctly illustrates the importance of sharing healthy, wild food, and as an extension, all resources, equitably for the well-being of all.

A fifth value that can be extrapolated to the arts and is closely related to the previous tenet, is *qanurtuuqatigiinni*—being resourceful and inventive to solve problems.⁹ The ability to adapt, innovate, repurpose, and creatively find solutions to everyday problems is one of the most significant cultural traits of the Inuit, who are known for their ingenious resourcefulness in the Arctic, as exemplified by the invention of the *iglu* or *illu* (snow house), or the building of a *qayaq*, a one-person boat historically made using only driftwood, bones, sinew, and sealskin. Inuit have long survived in the Arctic with only the resources available from the land, ice, and sea; today they apply this same principle of extreme resourcefulness to their daily lives, making use of all of the supplies available to them. This valued quality has been and continues to be a touchstone of modern and contemporary Inuit art production as well. In the midcentury, Inuit merged their ancient practice of ivory carving, keen observation skills, and deep knowledge of the land required to source bone, ivory, and quarry stone, as well as their experience in making ivory miniatures for trade with whalers and fishermen, and applied that knowledge to the creation of a dynamic new kind of art production: modern stone sculpture. Following *qanurtuuqatigiinni*, being resourceful in the twenty-first century means continuing to make the most of what is available in the Arctic, by applying knowledge of the land to the quarrying of stone and harvesting of other

9. See Jaypetee Arnakak, "Commentary: What Is Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit*? Using Inuit Family and Kinship Relationships to Apply Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit*," *Nunatsiaq News*, August 25, 2000, at www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/archives/nunavutoo0831/nvt20825_17.html, as of June 5, 2017.



David Ruben Piqtoukun, *Division of Meat*, 1996, Brazilian soapstone, approx. 7½ x 5⅝ x 20⅞ in. (19 x 14.5 x 51 cm). Art Gallery of Ontario, gift of Samuel and Esther Sarick, 2001/417 (artwork © David Ruben Piqtoukun; photograph provided by Art Gallery of Ontario)

resources, as depicted in works like Michael Massie’s mixed-media sculpture carved from limestone, he gathers limestone to carve—portrait of the artist (2005). In this self-portrait, the artist and his material are one and the same; the artist shows himself both in the act of gathering materials from the land and being of the land. Finally, *avatimik kamatsianiq*—the concept of environmental stewardship—further underscores *qanuqtuurungnarniq*. It emphasizes the responsibility of Inuit to be respectful of their limited resources and to protect the land and its inhabitants. Manasie Akpaliapik’s massive, elaborate whalebone sculpture *Tribute to Animals* (1996), included in *Ilippunga*, with its many shifting, morphing, interrelated representations of animals from the sea, sky, and land, to which a central figure is bound, is a meaningful tribute to this theme and an expression of *avatimik kamattiarniq*. Being resourceful has always meant using materials sourced from the Arctic environment, using locally quarried stone or *ivik* (salt water grass); it is also suggested in art that features found objects like recycled beer boxes and used bingo cards, as in Jesse Tungilik’s humorous piece *Nunavice Flag* (2013).

Organizing an Exhibition According to IQ

In *Ilippunga: Inuit Art. The Brousseau Inuit Art Collection*, these six principles are borne out across a number of central themes, including “Respect for Animals, Respect for the Land / *Nirjutinik Suusutsaniq, Nunami Suusutsaniq*,” “Importance of Family and Respect for Motherhood / *Anaananiq suusutsaniq & Ilagiinniup pimmarinuna*,” and “Oral Histories of the Arctic / *Unikkaatuat*.” The works in these sections refer to such principles as *avatimik kamatsianiq*, which guide us to harvest only what is necessary and sustainable, and to maintain a respectful relationship with animals of the northern sea, sky, and land. This continues to be a pressing responsibility for Inuit, made even more urgent by rising levels of industrial pollutants in the North and the global effects of climate change, felt most acutely in the Arctic. Many artists have recently turned their attention to climate change and understanding ecological knowledge, such as Kunuk in his recent film *Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change* (2010), as well Geronimo Inutiq in experimental videos

Michael Massie, carved from limestone, he gathers limestone to carve—portrait of the artist, 2005, limestone, jatoba wood, ebony, bone, sinew, 13³/₄ x 20 x 15¹/₂ in. (34.9 x 50.8 x 39.4 cm) (artwork © Michael Massie; photograph provided by Spirit Wrestler Gallery)

Manasie Akpaliapik, Tribute to Animals, 1996, whale vertebra, ivory, steatite, claws, 11 x 39⁷/₈ x 14³/₈ in. (27.8 x 101.3 x 36.6 cm). Brousseau Inuit Art Collection, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (artwork © Manasie Akpaliapik; photograph provided by MNBAQ)



like *ARCTICNOISE* (2015), which remixes some of Kunuk's footage, showing elders reflecting on the same pressing topic.

Inuit art has also often focused on the transmission of Inuit oral histories, or *unikkaatuat*, through which storytelling practices, cultural histories, and personal memories have been preserved, morals and values are passed on, and knowledge of the powerful spirits that inhabit the Arctic land, sea, and sky—as well as the *angakkuit*, or shamans, who commune with them—are transmitted from one generation to the next.

Another persistent theme is the depiction of family, particularly motherhood and the important skills and knowledge mothers contribute and pass down intergenerationally, which make them critical to the fabric of Inuit society. Inuit families have long relied not only on the responsible harvest of animals but also on the ability to turn skins and hides into warm, waterproof clothing, and



Jesse Tungilik, Nunavice Flag, 2013, mixed media on plywood, approx. 4 x 6 ft. (1.2 x 1.8 m) (artwork © Jesse Tungilik; photograph provided by the artist)

contemporary clothing designers such as Victoria Okpik of Nunavik Creations—featured in one of the exhibition videos—continue to produce beautiful, elaborate garments in both skins and commercially produced fabrics, including the ever-popular, ingeniously designed mother’s coat, the *amauti*, in which the mother carries the child on her back, sheltered inside a large *amaut* (pouch) and hood. For Inuit, the representation of a mother and child in an *amauti* is not just an audience-pleasing motif, but also a present, shared experience of mothers and children today. A perennially popular image in Inuit prints and sculpture, its repetition embodies beliefs about Inuit approaches to early childhood development and the centrality of family.

Although *Ilippunga* is a sculptural exhibition—including works in a variety of carving materials such as serpentinite, steatite (soapstone), marble, bone, whalebone, and antler—the field of modern and contemporary Inuit art production is remarkably diverse and encompasses mediums such as basketry, photography, drawing, printmaking, jewelry, textile arts, installation, video, and new media. In even in the broadest study of Inuit art, common themes can be found across time, diverse circumpolar regions, and media. For example, Inuit artists continue to be fascinated by and invested in the representation of our land and animals. To Qallunaat audiences, the repeated motif of the dancing polar bear in print and stone may appear to be merely catering to desires of the southern art market and, to be sure, Inuit artists are savvy to the desires of the market and understand that such sculptures are popular and highly sought after. Yet even a simple dancing bear sculpture can also reveal aspects of Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit*. It is my thesis that all of these productions can be understood through its lens. Our arts do not need to take the form or medium of “traditional” Inuit art or craft in order to participate in the continuation of our living traditions. Rather, the presence of



Clothing designer Victoria Okpik demonstrates the pouch where a baby rests inside the back of a sealskin amauti, 2016, video still, *Ilippunga: I Have Learned*. Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (photograph provided by MNBAQ)

Inuit knowledge, values, and teachings is the evidence of that continuity. In the above example, *pilimmasarniq*—the principle of acquiring and sharing skills and knowledge through careful observation and practice—reflects an artist’s complex knowledge of the interrelated land and sea mammals, fish, and birds that populate Inuit Nunangat, the Inuit regions of Canada. Even fanciful depictions can reveal intimate, lived knowledge of the Arctic. Some knowledge about polar bears can only be gained by patient observation and time on the land, such as knowing how the vertebrae in a bear’s neck will elongate when it dives underwater, or how a bear will sniff the air when it catches the scent of prey far across the ice. In this way, Inuit artworks demonstrate how lived experiences, values, and knowledge are embedded and apparent in a variety of complex and interrelated ways, even if it is not always apparent to southern audiences, as well as how important it is for Inuit to be able to demonstrate to each other that, through their art, *ilippunga*—“I have learned,” or I am learning.¹⁰

It is important to acknowledge that there have been significant disruptions to the intergenerational transmission of Inuit Qaujimaqatunqangit, not coincidentally occurring throughout the same period in which the modern Inuit art movement was born in the Arctic. In *Ilippunga*, the section that addresses this issue is titled “Changes in the Arctic in the Twentieth Century: Christianity, Colonialism, Modernization / Ukiurtatuup Asitjipaalianinga: Uppiniq, Qallunaanut tikitausimaniq, Nutaanngupalliajut.” Artists across the North have addressed this topic many times in recent years. For countless generations before contact with outsiders, the Inuit of the circumpolar region maintained their knowledge, histories, and spiritual customs, yet in the early twentieth century, the rapid introduction of Christianity and the colonization that swept across the North threatened to

10. For an introduction to the interrelated concepts of IQ, see Arnakkak.

disrupt, even erase, Inuit values, language, and spirituality. Within a period of a few short decades between 1900 and 1950, the Inuit way of life was rapidly altered by contact with Qallunaat culture in the North, in areas now known as Nunavut and Nunavik, and earlier in the east and west of the Arctic. Massive changes came to the Arctic. Inuit were almost completely converted to Christianity in the first decades of the century by eager missionaries.¹¹ At the same time, the Hudson's Bay Company began building trading posts in the Arctic and encouraged the Inuit to trap for financial gain rather than to hunt for food. This economic shift soon led many Inuit to settle in communities around the posts, which then led to a scarcity of local "country food," thereby causing an increased reliance on canned goods and other store-bought items from southern Canada. The Inuit quickly became skilled in their employment as trappers of such animals as Arctic fox, only to have the fur industry collapse in the 1930s during the Great Depression, leaving many of them suddenly economically dependent on the state.¹² The new settlements also became unfortunate breeding grounds for foreign diseases such as smallpox and tuberculosis. Following a 1935 census, all Inuit—who had previously been known only by one name—were forced to identify themselves to the government according to their "Eskimo Identification" tag serial numbers (sometimes known as E7 numbers), rather than their names, and this demeaning colonial practice continued until the advent of Project Surname in 1969.¹³ In Nunavik and Nunatsiavut, the federal government relocated a number of Inuit communities, an action that had long-term, devastating consequences wherever it occurred.¹⁴ There have also been allegations that Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers orchestrated the slaughter of thousands of sled dogs across the Arctic to force Inuit to stay in their new communities, a tragic story that was recently investigated by Nunavut's Qikiqtani Truth Commission.¹⁵

After 1950, the government required almost all children to attend school, compelling parents to send their children, some as young as four and five, to federally funded, church-run schools. The role of these schools was to "civilize" the Native population, and it was thought that moving Inuit children to schools far from their homes and introducing them to a completely foreign way of life would be the most effective way to accomplish this purpose, so many Inuit children were sent to residential schools or "day schools" where they lived in nearby hostels. In contrast to these purported aims, the disastrous legacy of the residential school system is frequently one of neglect, abuse, and mistreatment; where schools were underfunded and mismanaged, and children were underfed, lived in overcrowded dormitories, and were forbidden to speak their language. Many children suffered physical, mental, and sexual abuse, and for some that trauma has been passed on through generations from parent to child. Artists such as the brothers Abraham Anghik Ruben and David Ruben Piqtoukun were among the first Inuit artists to directly address the impact of residential schools in their sculptures. The devastating legacies of these combined efforts to eradicate Inuit culture and ways of life continue to be felt in Inuit communities today.¹⁶

In this difficult period of cultural upheaval, it was artists who preserved much of this vulnerable knowledge by recording in their artworks what they were discouraged from or forbidden to practice in their own communities. These prohibitions included knowledge of ceremonies, *angakkuit*, the spirit world, tattoos, oral histories, and great legends, which can now be accessed through sculpture and the

11. For a discussion on traditional Inuit spirituality and the introduction of Christianity throughout the Arctic, see Frédéric B. Laugrand and Jarich G. Oosten, *Inuit Shamanism and Christianity: Transitions and Transformations in the Twentieth Century* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010).

12. For more on the Canadian Arctic fur trade and its impact on Inuit peoples, see Kenneth Coates, *Canada's Colonies: A History of the Yukon and Northwest Territories* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1985).

13. See Valerie Alia, *Names, Numbers, and Northern Policy: Inuit, Project Surname, and the Politics of Identity* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1994).

14. The forcible relocation of Inuit families and communities has been explored in Frank J. Tester and Peter Kulchyski, *Tammarniit (Mistakes): Inuit Relocation in the Eastern Arctic 1939–63* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994); René Dussault and George Erasmus, *The High Arctic Relocation: A Report on the 1953–55 Relocation* (Ottawa: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, published by Canadian Government Publishing, 1994); and Carol Brice-Bennett, *Reconciling with Memories: A Record of the Reunion at Hebron 40 Years after Relocation/ Ikkaumajännik Piusivinnik: Titigattausimajut Katiutsumaningit Hebronimi 40 Jâret Kingungani Nottitaisimaldlutik* (Nain: Labrador Inuit Association, 2000).

15. The final written and video reports of the Qikiqtani Truth Commission examining this history can be downloaded and viewed at <http://qtcommission.ca>, as of June 5, 2017.

16. For more on Inuit residential schools, see Heather Igloorte, ed., "We Were So Far Away": *The Inuit Experience of Residential Schools* (Ottawa: Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2010); and David King, *A Brief Report of The Federal Government of Canada's Residential School System for Inuit* (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006).

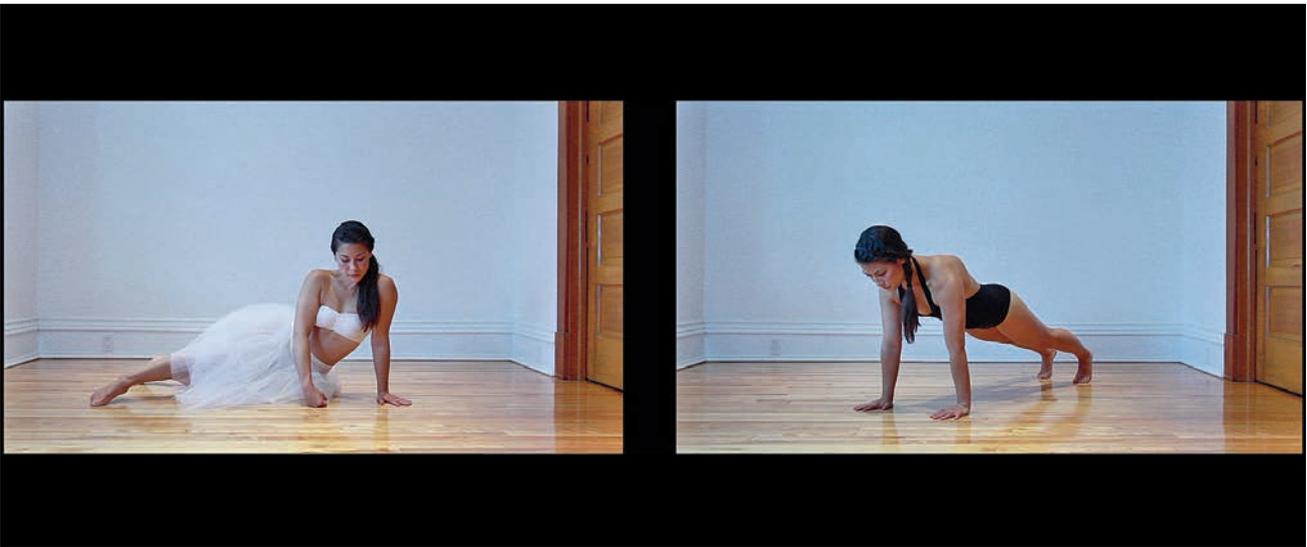


Barnabus Arnasungaaq, *Man Carrying a Sculpted Muskox*, 1990, basalt, $10\frac{1}{4} \times 6\frac{3}{8} \times 6\frac{3}{8}$ in. (25.9 x 16.8 x 16.1 cm). Brousseau Inuit Art Collection, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (artwork © Barnabus Arnasungaaq; photograph provided by MNBAQ)

graphic arts. By embedding that otherwise forbidden knowledge in their artworks, Inuit artists expressed the principle of *qanuqtuurnarniq*, being innovative and resourceful to solve problems, by using the means available to them—art making—to cleverly safeguard Inuit knowledge for future generations. This resourcefulness is perhaps the single most important trait valued by Inuit, who survived for millennia in the Arctic with only the resources available in the vast, yet relatively barren Arctic land, sky, and sea. As Jaypetee Arnakak has explained, “Inuit culture is *qanuqtuurniq*.”¹⁷ Around the midcentury, Inuit began to apply their skills in carving ivory, powers of observation, and extensive understanding of the land required to find bone and quarry stone to the creation of a dynamic new kind of art production, stone sculpture. This shift from hunter to artist is celebrated in works such as Barnabus Arnasungaaq’s *Man Carrying a Sculpted Muskox* (1990), in which the artist reflects on the significance of the introduction of the art industry on his livelihood and identity. By adapting quickly to this new industry, Inuit artists such as Arnasungaaq from across Inuit Nunangat developed a modern stone sculpture industry that largely replaced the rapidly declining commerce in trapping, while garnering worldwide critical and popular acclaim.

Finally, *Ilippunga* reflects on the exciting new period developing in the arts and in our communities with the section “Cultural Resurgence through the Arts / Ilurqusirmik uummatitsiniq takuminartutigut.” As the Inuit regions of Canada

17. Arnakak.



Tanya Lukin Linklater, still from *Slay All Day*, 2016, video, 4 min. (artwork © Tanya Lukin Linklater; photograph provided by Remai Modern)

Tanya Tagaq on stage, date unknown (photograph by Massey Hall)



have, as recently as 2005, settled all land claims across the Arctic, we have been experiencing an emergent yet powerful political and cultural renaissance.¹⁸ Although Inuit still grapple with the histories and ongoing legacies of nearly a century of colonialism in the North, and current serious issues regarding the environment, food security, and quality of life in the Arctic, there has been a shift toward Inuit independence and a return to a self-determined existence brought about by the practice of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit, paralleled by a growing critique of past representations and an assertion of Inuit self-representation. Tanya Lukin Linklater's video *Slay All Day* (2016) features elements of choreography informed by Robert Flaherty's controversial film *Nanook of the North* (1920), as well as movements inspired by Inuit traditional games and athletic competitions, offering at once a critique of colonial representation and its antidote. In the arts, we are witnessing the rapid reemergence and popularity of many forms of cultural expression such as Inuit dance, athletics, and performance. Inuit throat singing, or *katujjaniq*, which largely fell out of practice in Inuit communities in the latter half

18. See Heather Igloliorte, "Arctic Culture / Global Indigeneity," in *Negotiations in a Vacant Lot: Studying the Visual in Canada*, ed. Lynda Jessup, Erin Morton, and Kirsty Robertson (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 152; and Bernadette Driscoll Englestad, "Inuit Art and the Creation of Nunavut," in *Inuit Modern*, ed. Gerald McMaster (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 2011), 36.



Hugh Haqpi, *Preacher in a Kayak*, 1993, basalt and caribou antler, $5\frac{7}{8} \times 3\frac{3}{8} \times 8\frac{3}{4}$ in. (14.9 x 8.6 x 22.1 cm). Brousseau Inuit Art Collection, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (artwork © Hugh Haqpi; photograph provided by MNBAQ)

of the twentieth century, has recently become popular again, and many young women are learning the practice now. Contemporary musicians such as Tanya Tagaq and the Sila Sisters have helped popularize and share this art form with a new generation. The rapper Nelson Tagoona has created a new hybrid style of beat-boxing that draws on *katajjaniq*, which he has dubbed “throatboxing.” Similarly, drum groups and other forms of cultural expression are also on the rise, signaling a hopeful new era for the residents of Inuit Nunangat as well as the Inuit living in urban centers across southern Canada. As Inuit continue to practice Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit and ensure its continuation and relevance in daily life, our artistic practices thrive.

In *Ilippunga*, sculptures ranging from the miniature to the monumental are grouped together on several levels of a large, central display structure, rather than in individual cases, creating relationships among works that vary depending on the direction you choose to navigate through the display. There is no didactic path or chronology; instead, the sculptures are organized to relate to each other in a holistic fashion. For example, the section “Cultural Resurgence through the Arts,” which features images of Inuit throat singers, dancers, and storytellers, either flows into or out from “Changes in the Arctic in the Twentieth Century,” providing the viewer with insights into where we have come from and where we are going—or it flows into or out from a section on oral history that focuses on personal and collective memory. That section also flows into or out from the oral history specifically on knowledge of the *angakkuit*, which also flows into or out from sections on transformations and pre-Christian spirituality, but is across from the area dedicated to the introduction of Christianity in “Changes in the Arctic in the Twentieth Century.” In this way, your path through the exhibition



Koomatuk Curley video on one of the eight exhibition digital media stations, 2016, installation view, *Ilippunga: I Have Learned*, Brousseau Inuit Art Collection, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (photograph by Daniel Drouin provided by MNBAQ)

shapes how you come to understand the complexity and interrelatedness of Inuit knowledge, history, and culture. The works are further contextualized by a series of short videos on multimedia players that line the outer walls of the gallery space, featuring a group of Inuit who share their knowledge of ongoing practices not only in the visual arts but also in clothing production, throat singing, tattooing, and other cultural practices that were threatened during colonization but are now experiencing a resurgence. The videos feature prominent Inuit artists and knowledge keepers, including Irniq, the throat singer and musician Beatrice Deer, the cultural consultant Evie Mark, the sculptor David Ruben Piqtoukun, the filmmaker Alethea Arnaquq-Baril, the sculptor Kuzy (Koomatuk) Curley, and the clothing designer Victoria Okpik, and include Inuktitut text and syllabic translations by Harriet Keleutak and Taqralik Partridge. The inclusion of these short videos, which relate to both specific works and the overall themes of the exhibition, highlights areas of Inuit knowledge, history, and culture while also providing the visitor with new ways of looking at these objects and understanding how Inuit view their own artistic production. Their multivocal inclusion works to address the longstanding lack of Inuit voices within Inuit art and exhibition history and indicates a path forward in the discourse on Inuit art.

Heather Igloliorte is an Inuk from Nunatsiavut. She is an assistant professor and research chair in Indigenous art history and community engagement at Concordia University in Montreal and an independent curator of Inuit and other Indigenous arts. Some of her recent publications on these subjects include the catalogues *SakKijjajuk: Art and Craft from Nunatsiavut* (2017) and *Inuit Art: The Brousseau Collection* (2016), as well as essays in *Negotiations in a Vacant Lot: Studying the Visual in Canada* (2014), *Manifestations: New Native Art Criticism* (2012), *Curating Difficult Knowledge* (2011), and *Inuit Modern* (2010).

Copyright of Art Journal is the property of Routledge and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.

Revisiting Annie Pootoogook: The Spirit, the Self and Other Stories



1



108

By Caoimhe Morgan-Feir | October 25, 2018 | Feature



Annie Pootoogook (1969–2016 Kinngait) *Composition (Hands with Praying Figures)* (2006) Coloured pencil and ink 50.8 x 66 cm ALL IMAGES REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION DORSET FINE ARTS ALL IMAGES COURTESY FEHELEY FINE ARTS

Shopping at the co-op, a Coleman stove flanked by Robin Hood Flour and salt, tender family portraits and interior scenes of feasting or lounging in front of the television, or perhaps of something darker—these are some of the now iconic images that have come to define the remarkable oeuvre of celebrated graphic artist Annie Pootoogook (1969–2016). What have been arguably less considered, however, are her psychological self-portraits, defined by their complex spiritual iconography and returned to again and again by the artist over her brief but prolific career.

Annie Pootoogook (1969–2016 Kinngait) *Fish on Floor in Kitchen* (2001–2)
Coloured pencil and ink 50.8 x 66 cm

Years ago, when I was working at an art gallery, I was surprised when a

potential donation was rejected by the curatorial staff. They felt that the work wasn't a strong example of that artist's particular practice, which is a common enough line of thinking. But I wonder how these impressions are shaped—what constitutes an oeuvre's strength? The enormous contribution that [Annie Pootoogook](#) made to contemporary drawing is a topic of universal agreement. Few artists have garnered the amount of attention in the Canadian media that Pootoogook secured; no other contemporary artist's personal life has received the scrutiny that hers did. The fact that she captured life in the North during a time of transition, unflinchingly depicting even the hardest aspects of these changes, is the best-known interpretation of her work. But perhaps rearranging our mental furniture can allow for a different understanding of the life that Pootoogook presented in her work.

Most of the details of her biography (well-worn territory by now) are easy to agree upon. On a May day in 1969, [Annie Pootoogook](#) was born into a lineage of artists. Her mother, [Napachie Pootoogook](#) (1938–2002), and her maternal grandmother, [Pitseolak Ashoona](#), CM, RCA (c. 1904–1983), were trailblazing artists in their own right (among many other members of Pootoogook's extended family). But their influence wouldn't surface in Pootoogook for almost 30 years. Pootoogook was a great artist, but she wasn't a prodigy. She had living to do, including a move to Arctic Quebec, before she returned to Kinngait (Cape Dorset), NU, in the mid 1990s and entered the studio, agreeing to work on drawings at home and to bring them in for the twice-weekly sales.

Pootoogook began drawing in the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative in earnest in 1997. Her work quickly caught the attention of William Ritchie, who was then the Arts Adviser at the studio. "I see so much that sometimes it all kind of looks the same, but Annie's didn't," remembers Ritchie. "It was different, but Annie wasn't an anomaly. [Her work] was like her mother's.... I've worked with Napachie. I've worked with [Kananginak](#) [Pootoogook, RCA (1935–2010)]. I'd seen [Itee](#) [Pootoogook (1951–2014)]'s work. So, to see Annie come along in this vein, it made total sense." When dealer Pat Feheley made a trip north to catch up on the latest work, Ritchie suggested she take a look at the drawings in Pootoogook's shelf. "I looked through them, and I thought they were stunning," recalls Feheley. "I literally went across the road to Jimmy Manning, who was at that point the Studio Manager, and said, 'I have to break the rules, because I have got to get [Annie Pootoogook](#) in my show,' and he said, 'You will never sell those.'" That story, or versions of it, has become canon.

Feheley's

inclusion of Pootoogook's work in *The Unexpected* (2002) was an immediate success—all the pieces sold—and the artist's first solo exhibition quickly followed at the gallery in 2003.

The next three years were an incredibly productive time, and larger shows and accolades followed: Pootoogook was awarded the Sobey Art Award in 2006 (still today it is hard to imagine that just three years after her first solo show, she received this highly coveted prize), and exhibitions included a large showing at The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery in Toronto, in 2006; the Biennale de Montréal in 2007; documenta 12 in Kassel, Germany, in 2007; the National Museum of the American Indian in New York, in 2009; and the Biennale of Sydney in 2010. But by 2007, Pootoogook's personal life had begun to shift. She was living on and off in Montreal (and later in Ottawa), and, as countless newspaper articles reported, addiction issues surfaced and her drawing became much more sporadic. (It has been reported that she continued to draw over the next 10 years, but it's harder to account for these works, which weren't all being filtered through the gallery system).

It's the kind of meteoric rise of which many artists could only dream. Looking over those earliest works that Feheley saw, it's striking to see them bear such a resemblance to Pootoogook's most iconic images. It would be easy, between these early works and her swift ascension in the art world, to assume that Pootoogook began as a fully-formed artist. There are interior scenes, such as an empty yellow kitchen, where small, mundane items—a coffee pot, fridge magnets, an *ulu* (woman's knife) balanced against the counter—are rendered in crisp miniature. On the kitchen walls hang small objects: an oven mitt, a clock stopped at 1:55 p.m., and a calendar marking the month of June. These indicators of time and decorative elements appear again and again throughout Pootoogook's work, but her drawing was a constant process of return, an urge to revisit and rework. In these early works tiled floors lack any sense of perspective, appearing more like a vertical checkerboard than a receding surface, shadows are non-existent and a sense of space is absent. These elements are addressed in later works and slowly added in (or, in the case of the shadows, a sudden realization that Pootoogook dives into, only to even out later).

Annie Pootoogook (1969–2016 Kinngait) *Composition (Sadness and Relief for My Brother)* (2006) Coloured pencil and ink 55.9 x 76.2cm

Pootoogook's
urge to return
extends beyond
technical

capabilities into subject matter. There were no discreet phases to the artist's work, no series that was worked on for a period of time and then moved beyond. It was always a negotiation. But it may be time for us, as viewers, to return as well and to reconsider some of the drawings that fit less neatly into the narrative that has come to define her. There is one work in the early batch—well before the press and the Sobey Award and documenta and leaving Kinngait—that looks a little different. Two figures float, unanchored in space, as strange mirror images of one another. Around one figure emanates sinuous lines in black, a red devilish creature floats at her shoulder and a rose wilts at her feet. Around the other figure, straight yellow lines burst, like rays of the sun, while an angel floats above and a radiant rose blooms. "Her life was like death before she was saved. After she was saved, she became alive," reads the inscription. It's a work unlike the better known interior and camping scenes, and yet this trajectory would run parallel to Pootoogook's other works throughout her career.

In *Composition (Woman with Good and Evil)* (2002–3) a woman is similarly torn between an evil serpent and an angel. In *Composition (Good Replacing Bad)* (2003–4) a man kneels in prayer on a floating leaf, as red lines emanate out from a bible and reach towards him, seemingly driving out the blackened lines of negativity. These works are not simply spiritual—although Pootoogook produced a great many pieces that fall into that category—they are overtly religious. That religion factors heavily in Pootoogook’s work comes as little surprise. Looking through the works of Napachie and Pitseolak, it becomes evident that she was raised in a religious family. In her grandmother’s book *Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life* (1971), Anglican clergymen are frequently mentioned, and Pitseolak remembers “the completion of what in Cape Dorset is known as [the] Pootoogooks’ church.” Tragically, two of Pootoogook’s siblings were killed in a house fire that started while Napachie and her husband, Eegyvuuluk Pootoogook, were at church. Religion also features heavily in Napachie’s own drawings.

Looking through enough of these images, a whole iconography, seemingly without any direct precedence, begins to emerge. It is a universe of binaries. There are lines to indicate good (often yellow) or bad (often black) forces, teardrop-like shapes, and roses, which are either dying or thriving. Many of these symbols are either intuitive or quotidian. Plastic flowers, roses in particular, are popular in the North; even in historian Dorothy Harley Eber’s account of visiting Pitseolak decades ago for their interviews, she makes a note of “a bowl of plastic flowers” sitting in the room.

In many ways, these works, with their interior language and total disconnect from lived reality, run counter to Pootoogook’s best-known works, which render scenes of life in the North, caught between Inuit tradition and the influence of southern forces. “The reality shown in Pootoogook’s interiors is that Inuit life, currently, is a meshing of the traditional lifestyle with new ways adopted from the South. Therein lies the fascination of these compositions,” writes curator and art historian Nancy Campbell. Pootoogook captures this process through her attention to the mundanity of things: clocks and key hooks on walls or Dr. Phil on the television, and of course through her willingness to tackle the darker sides of life unflinchingly. Her images of domestic abuse and the fallout of addiction are undoubtedly among Pootoogook’s most recognized works, despite constituting a small subset of her output. There is belief because of these depictions that Pootoogook was something of a documentarian. It’s a reading that was also promoted by the artists herself, who was insistent on the veracity of her drawings. “I cannot draw anything that I did not experience,” she explained in a 2006 documentary. It’s an impulse that was shared by Pitseolak and Napachie, and one that Pootoogook was aware of. She remembered Pitseolak’s motivations, recounting what her grandmother told her, “I’m drawing because my grandchildren have to eat.’ But she drew a true story, too, about her life.”

Critic Deborah Root and others have written extensively about the troubling search for authenticity within Inuit art, and the ways in which Pootoogook’s work both upends and

plays into these impulses. “Within a contemporary art paradigm...‘authenticity’ means something rather different. Here, disturbing images tend to be seen as more ‘real’ than beautiful ones, in part because the artist’s job is to strip away the dishonesty and pretension of modern society,” argues Root. Perhaps this accounts for the foregrounding of Pootoogook’s interiors and camp scenes over her more spiritual and religious works. The latter, I would argue, are the more difficult works. As Heather Igloliorte has argued, “Her images de-exoticized the Arctic. Yet, at the same time, they highlighted how truly great the distance is between the lives of southern Canadians and their neighbours in Inuit Nunangat, and how little the South truly knows about the experience of life in the North.” But how does a southern audience even begin to place itself in relation to Pootoogook’s spiritual scenes? There is no clearly demarcated space to step into, no calendar on the wall indicating the date, no recognizable television program that suggests continuity between life in the South and life in the North. Instead, there is unmoored emotion and religious leanings that, in a contemporary art world more accustomed to scathing critiques of the church, register as undeniably unfashionable.

Annie Pootoogook (1969–2016) *Composition (Evil Spirit)* (2004) Coloured pencil and ink
50.8 x 66 cm

There is
some

Annie Pootoogook (1969–2016) *Annie and Pitseolak* (2003) Coloured pencil and ink 50.8 x
66 cm

continuity between these bodies of work. The spiritual scenes still depict a kind of event, but it’s an interior emotional one, rather than an exterior one. As [Jimmy Manning](#) has described it, “Sometimes she will draw hurting feelings from her heart which she’s not afraid to say on paper.” Feheley began to understand how immediate the emotional process of these works was when she saw the artist create *Happy and Sad for My Brother* (2006). It was a work that Pootoogook began in Scotland, where she spent two months working as part of the Glenfiddich Artist in Residence program. “She had started a drawing and there were all of these black lines and things,” Feheley recalls. “And she said, ‘I’m drawing this because I’m upset about my brother, because he was arrested, and I think this time they’re going to put him in jail.’ But the next day, she talked to her family again and he hadn’t been jailed, he had been let go, and she completed the drawing in happy mode.”

Whereas Pootoogook’s interior and exterior scenes function like a stage—with a rectangular, demarcated region where the action takes place—the spiritual works and the transformation pieces are encircled with sinuous lines. The central figures sit in the middle of the page, with elements reaching in and looping out. There are some formal similarities with her other scenes—namely, her strong, clear lines, which she marked in pencil before rendering in ink. But the approach is so different it leaves me searching for another point of reference, a different influence. For these works, Ritchie points to the work of illustrator [Alootook Ipellie](#) (1951–2007), whose black-and-white drawings, published with Inuktitut commentary and heavily circulated in the North, were a watershed

moment. “His work looks like a lot of other people’s work now, [but] it was the first influence of that kind of linear drawing, that kind of portraiture,” he explains. “It was really popular amongst Inuit, and I think Annie and Tim [Pitsiulak (1967–2016)] and Itee and all those guys have a little bit of him in them.” The connection is far from direct, but there are moments where Ipellie’s influence on Pootoogook might be apparent, like *Composition (Evil Spirit)* (2003–4), where an umbilical cord-like line connects the figure’s mouth to the genitals of the spirit, encircling them both.

Trying to find some obvious direct reference point, though, is something of a fool’s errand. Napachie and Pitseolak’s books, because of their inclusion of Inuktut and broad circulation are more the exception than the rule in terms of impact. The average drawing has less of a wide reception in the co-op than one might expect. It’s a reality that contradicts arguments that Pootoogook’s work had a directly traceable influence on other artists working in Kinngait. “Annie would work at home on a drawing for a weekend or overnight, because we buy drawings on Tuesdays and Thursdays. When Annie would walk in the door, I would take that drawing, lay it out on the tabletop and look at it, and if it was really good, I would bring over Joemie [Takpaungai], who is the Assistant Studio Manager, and we would decide what the price of the drawing would be,” explains Ritchie. “Two or three people in the studio might have seen it. It goes into a drawer, into a tube and it ships out. It never comes back. None of this art comes back to the community.” More than subject matter or style, Feheley argues that Pootoogook’s influence can be felt in the freedom that she promoted. “It was as if freedom was suddenly okay,” Feheley says of the shift, “and you could see it happen.”

Pootoogook’s work told stories. We, in turn, tell stories about Pootoogook’s work. No artistic legacy is set in stone, and our understanding of her work and its impact will inevitably shift and change over time. This year alone, there will certainly be plenty of opportunities to see it in a new light: among other showings, curator Kitty Scott has included it in the 2018 Liverpool Biennial. Hopefully, these returns will begin to account for the breadth of experience that is detailed across Pootoogook’s work. Looking through the memoirs of the artist’s mother and grandmother, I was struck by a particular passage from Eber in the latter’s book: “In August 1971, about a year after we finished the interview sessions that led to *Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life*, I was able to show Pitseolak the first copy of our book. As her grandchildren looked on, she turned every page, and then, when I asked what she thought, with the help of our interpreter she said, ‘I am not ashamed of it.’” I imagine Pootoogook among that group of grandchildren, looking on at a life laid out in images and words, understanding that there is no shame in telling your story. Perhaps, we are finally in a position to listen to the full range of stories Pootoogook saw fit to share with us.

This feature appeared in the [fall 2018](#) issue of the Inuit Art Quarterly as the cover story.

National Gallery of Canada Announces Curators for 58th Venice Biennale

♡ 0

🔗 60

By IAQ | September 12, 2018 | News



Cast members read lines on the set of *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* (2006), produced by Isuma
COURTESY ISUMATV

Following the news that artist collective Isuma will represent Canada at the 2019 Venice Biennale, the National Gallery of Canada (NGC) has confirmed that, for the first time in the Canada Pavilion's history, the project will be curated by a team.

The curatorial team includes visual artist, filmmaker, writer and curator [Asinnajaq](#), executive director and chief curator of the Art Gallery of Alberta **Catherine Crowston**, senior curator of contemporary art at the National Gallery of Canada **Josée Drouin-Brisebois**, executive director and chief curator Art Museum at the University of Toronto **Barbara Fischer** and independent curator and writer **Candice Hopkins**.

“We are thrilled to work with the Isuma collective—Zacharias Kunuk and Norman Cohn—toward the realization of a new multi-faceted project for Venice,” the team said in a joint statement.

Zacharias Kunuk Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner (still) (2001) COURTESY ISUMATV

The Canadian exhibition at the Biennale has historically been organized by a single curator, but collaboration seems to be a defining theme for this highly anticipated show.

“Because [Isuma is] a collective, I think it’s more natural for them to think of working with a collective,” said [Asinnajaq](#). “I think everyone’s really proud of [the exhibition], which is nice. Everyone’s really real, and everyone’s attentive to each other.”

The curatorial team was hand-picked by Isuma, and each curator was chosen based on their skills and experience. According to Hopkins, “they also felt it was important to have mentorship built into the team, so, in effect, we are learning from one another as well as from Isuma.”

Both [Asinnajaq](#) and Hopkins have previously worked with Isuma. [Asinnajaq](#) curated the short film series and accompanying exhibition *Channel 51: Igloodik*, which celebrates the films of Isuma and Arnait Video Productions and was sponsored by the Inuit Art Foundation. Hopkins was involved in the 2004 acquisition of Isuma’s TV series *Nunavut (Our Land)* (1995) when she was the Indigenous Curator in Residence at the Banff Centre between 2002–2005. The series was later included in Hopkins’s exhibition *Shapeshifters, Time Travellers and Storytellers* (2007–2008) at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, ON.

Zacharias Kunuk *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* (still) (2001) COURTESY ISUMATV

The idea of mentorship is further reflected in Isuma’s work. “Isuma’s is a practice often focused on *doing* things, which is a very interesting perspective on southern film and television, which is often about dialogue,” explains Hopkins. “You see this practiced in Isuma’s films, in particular, where, in a scene, you often see someone young learning from someone older.”

Alongside [Asinnajaq](#) and Hopkins, the remaining members of team bring extensive prior experience curating the Biennale. Drouin-Brisebrois curated Steven Shearer’s exhibition *Exhume to Consume* at the 54th Venice Biennale in 2011 and Shary Boyle’s *Music for Silence* at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013. Two years later, she was on the committee that selected the Quebecois mixed-media collective BGL for the 56th Biennale. In 2017, she was the project director for the Canada Pavilion in the 57th Biennale, and part of the committee that chose Isuma for the upcoming edition. Crowston was part of the committee that selected Shearer for the 2011 Biennale and in 2016 she was the commissioner for the Canada Pavilion at the 15th International Architecture Exhibition. Fischer also served as the commissioner of the Canada Pavilion for the 53rd Venice Biennale, where she curated the exhibition *Mark Lewis: Cold Morning*.

“The Biennale allows us to spread the word that there is great work here [in Canada],” Fischer said of the 2009 Biennale. “The artists bring with them an intense connection to what this place is and what it has to offer, what its culture is, what its diversity is, what its points of view are.” Fischer’s words still ring true today.

Isuma’s participation in the Biennale is poised to provide much-needed insight into the

lives and perspectives of Canadian Inuit. This is only the second inclusion of an Inuit artist in the international arts exhibition's 122-year history. The first was [Kananginak Pootoogook](#) who was included in the 2017 fair's central exhibition *Viva Arte Viva*, curated by Christine Macel.

"Inuit art has long impacted a huge global audience. [This project in Venice], then, will loop back to that history, but also to people's real lives in the North. And that is really something that is a shared goal between Isuma and the curatorial team for the pavilion," Hopkins concludes.

Keep up to date with the latest news from Inuit Nunangat and beyond by following the Inuit Art Foundation on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

About the curators and artist:

[Asinnajaq](#) is a visual artist, writer and curator, from Inukjuak, Nunavik and based in Montreal. She studied film at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, after working for two summers on a cruise ship in the arctic. Asinnajaq is a co-creator of the Tillutarniit Inuit Film Festival in Montreal. She is the Writer/Director of *Three Thousand* (2017), a film which is in the Winnipeg Art Gallery's landmark show INSURGENCE/RESURGENCE and is nominated for a Canadian Screen Award. Asinnajaq has been working with Isuma on their retrospective titled *Channel 51: Igloodik* this past year. She looks forward to the continued learning all her posts afford her.

Catherine Crowston is the Executive Director and Chief Curator of the Art Gallery of Alberta. In 2016, Crowston served as the Commissioner for the Canada Pavilion of the Venice Biennale of Architecture featuring landscape architect Pierre Belanger and OPSYS, and was the Canadian Commissioner for the Sydney Biennale of Contemporary Art in 2002. Crowston has held curatorial positions at the Walter Phillips Gallery and the Art Gallery of York University, and was awarded the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts Medal for Outstanding Achievement in the Visual Arts in 2002. She was inducted into the City of Edmonton Cultural Hall of Fame in 2015.

Josée Drouin-Brisebois is the Senior Curator of Contemporary Art responsible for the collections of Canadian and international Contemporary Art at the National Gallery of Canada. She was the Project Director for Geoffrey Farmer's Canadian participation at the 2017 Venice Biennale, and organized the Canadian participation in both the 2013 Venice Biennale art exhibition and the 2011 Venice Biennale. She has curated numerous exhibitions at the National Gallery of Canada.

Barbara Fischer is the Executive Director/Chief Curator of the Art Museum at the

University of Toronto where she also holds the position of Associate Professor and Director of the Master of Visual Studies Curatorial Studies in the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design. She has held curatorial positions at the Walter Phillips Gallery, the Art Gallery of Ontario, and The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, as well as the directorship of the Blackwood Gallery. She curated Mark Lewis for the Canada Pavilion at the 53rd Venice Biennale and was the recipient of the 2008 Hnatyshyn Award for Curatorial Excellence in Contemporary Art.

Candice Hopkins is an independent curator and writer based in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She was a curator for documenta 14 in Athens (Greece) and Kassel (Germany), and has held curatorial positions at the IAIA (Institute of American Indian Arts) Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, Santa Fe; the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; the Western Front, Vancouver; and the Walter Phillips Gallery at the Banff Centre. In 2014, she received the Joan Lowndes award from the Canada Council for the Arts for excellence in critical and curatorial writing, and in 2016 the Prix pour un essai critique sur l'art contemporain by the Foundation Prince Pierre de Monaco. She is a citizen of Carcross/Tagish First Nation.

Isuma, meaning “to think, or a state of thoughtfulness” in Inuktitut, was co-founded in 1990 and is Canada’s first Inuit-owned independent production company. Led by Zacharias Kunuk and Norman Cohn, Isuma is best known for its award-winning, Inuit-language Fast Runner Trilogy: *Atanarjuat The Fast Runner* (2001), *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* (2006) and *Before Tomorrow* (2009). *Atanarjuat* made history as the first Inuktitut-language feature film ever made. It went on to win the Camera d’or at Cannes, in May 2001, and it screened at documenta11 in Kassel, Germany, in 2002. Isuma is also responsible for the creation of IsumaTV, a collaborative multi-media project and the first website dedicated to Indigenous media art. The site currently boasts more than 6,000 films and videos in more than 80 languages.



Support the future of the Inuit Art Quarterly

[DONATE NOW](#)

INUIT ART QUARTERLY

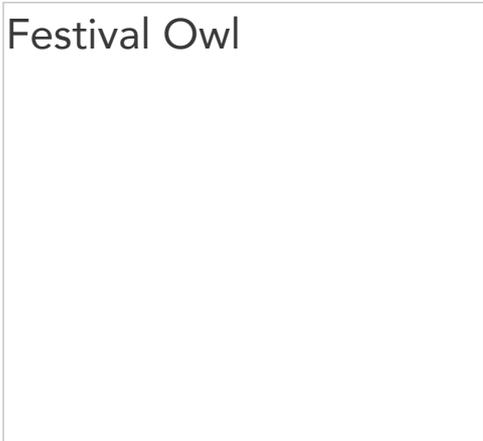
1655 Dupont St.
Toronto, ON M6P 3T1
(647) 498-7717

Inuit Art

Article by	George Swinton
Updated by	Daniel Baird
Date Published	July 8, 2008
Last Edited	October 11, 2016

The history of Inuit cultures and the art of the various regions and times can only be understood if the myth of a homogeneous Inuit culture is discarded altogether. Though it has not been possible to determine the exact origin(s) of the Inuit, nor of the various Inuit cultures, five distinct cultures have been established in the Canadian area: Pre-Dorset , Dorset , Thule, Historic and Contemporary.

Festival Owl



The Inuktitut word *Inuit* is a fairly recent Anglo-French Canadian term and will be used in this article only with reference to the historical and modern Canadian Inuit . Greenlanders, who speak a dialect similar to the Canadian Inuktitut and whose art and artifacts are often almost identical to those found in the Canadian Arctic for the past 4000 years, call themselves Katladlit. Siberian (or Asiatic) Inuit and the Inuit of western and southwestern Alaska call themselves Yuit. They speak a dialect called Yupik, and their art forms, except during [Thule culture](#) , bear few stylistic resemblances to those of the Canadian Arctic. Yet there exist strong iconographic and thematic relationships between the art forms, indicating a common ancestry or various cultural interchanges, or both.

Culture Phases

The history of Inuit cultures and the art of the various regions and times can only be understood if the myth of a homogeneous Inuit culture is discarded altogether. Though it has not been possible to determine the exact origin(s) of the Inuit, nor of the various Inuit cultures, five distinct cultures have been established in the Canadian area: [Pre-Dorset](#), [Dorset](#), [Thule](#), Historic and Contemporary.

Pre-Dorset Culture

Pre-Dorset culture developed out of the migrations of people coming from Siberia via the Bering Strait 4000-4500 years ago (see [Prehistory](#)). While few art objects of this period seem to have survived, the exquisitely shaped artifacts discovered - particularly the projectile points of harpoon heads and lances fashioned from carefully selected lithic material (stones) - are not merely functional but also of considerable aesthetic value. These objects can in fact be called art even though they lacked imagistic intentions. Through their simple splendour and sensitive craftsmanship they exude the kind of "hunting magic" that perpetuated itself in the succeeding Dorset culture. Pre-Dorset culture lasted for over 1000 years, and it extended into the beginning

of the first millennium BC.

Dorset Culture

Dorset culture started to evolve between 700 and 500 BC, and can be called the first Indigenous Canadian Arctic culture. It spread from [Coronation Gulf](#) to the bottom tip of [Newfoundland](#) and to the entire west coast of [Greenland](#). Several problems have arisen in dating Dorset art, particularly its origins. In the chronology established by Danish archaeologist Jorgen Meldgaard for the [Igloolik](#) area, with the highlights occurring between 500 and 1000 CE, art emerges only in the Middle Dorset period, 400-500. Yet the well-known Tyara maskette, made with the same perfectionist artistry that characterizes the best of Dorset art, has been dated to before 600 BC. The explanation may lie in faulty carbon dating, or in the possibility that the maskette is a work from the Pre-Dorset culture that somehow survived. Two Pre-Dorset maskettes from the Igloolik area exist which are similar in appearance.

In Pre-Dorset culture imagistic supernatural objects may have been destroyed or discarded after use, as in other prehistoric and preliterate cultures, and the Tyara maskette could have been an incidental survivor, used or preserved in the later culture. Or perhaps the fine craftsmanship and aesthetic beauty of both the maskette and Pre-Dorset artifacts point to a magical purpose in their creation: that form does not merely follow function but increases efficacy.

High Dorset art appears to be largely magico-religious in its purpose; this appears to be so particularly for the "excaved" (hollowed out and perforated) Dorset bears and falcons relating in shape to harpoon heads. The points of the harpoon heads become the bear heads; the line-hole openings become the front legs attached to the body (or bent backwards in a swimming motion); and the basal spurs become the hind legs (more or less abstracted). The excaved falcons resemble the excaved forms of the harpoon heads and simultaneously the skeletons of birds. The image of disembowelled creatures

refers to a ritualistic technique used in shamanic initiations in many parts of the polar world from Siberia to Greenland: the [shaman](#) had to think of himself as a durable skeleton, devoid of flesh and blood, so that the helping spirits might consider it worthwhile to come to him. The skeleton designs incised (not etched) into many of the animal carvings have a similar origin and hint at several supernatural meanings: the body as spirit or dematerialized essence, as a kind of ritual form, or as an instrument for magico-religious purposes.

Linear or incised signs on many of the carvings - joint marks and crosses - can also be found in other prehistoric and preliterate cultures. They too seem to have supernatural associations and reinforce the largely magico-religious content of Dorset art. Several other image types exist in Dorset culture, such as the antler or wooden "face clusters," wooden masks, maskettes, human figures, multiple animal images, various birds and land and sea mammals (some with and some without skeleton markings). While their purposes are largely unknown, they do have common characteristics: most are carved in ivory or, to a lesser extent, in bone, antler or wood; with the exception of the face clusters, they are very small - anywhere from 1 to 10 centimetres; all are 3-dimensional, carved with strong or expressionistic features and with decisive strokes of the knife or graver. Except for the wood and antler carvings, they have a remarkably smooth finish despite their small size and expressionist form.

Petroglyphs have been cut in soapstone outcroppings near the sea at Wakeham Bay in Ungava, Québec, faces or maskettes not unlike the previously mentioned face clusters (see [Pictographs and Petroglyphs](#)). The shapes themselves, however, are reminiscent of the Tyara maskette, which comes from nearby Sugluk (Salluit). While this similarity asserts a Dorset origin for the Tyara maskette, it brings the date of its origin further into question.

Thule Culture

Thule culture is much easier to define and to date, but again some anomalies exist. Thule culture migration from northern Alaska into the Canadian Arctic began after 1000 CE and reached eastern Greenland by 1200. Thule is the most uniform of the Inuit cultures, covering as it did the entire Arctic of the western hemisphere, including the eastern tip of Siberia. That manifest uniformity was responsible for giving the Inuit the appearance of homogeneity, which is misleading except for Thule culture artifacts. Thule art across the Arctic was not as uniform as many social scientists once believed, and therefore the less conspicuous art forms of the Thule people in comparison to powerful Dorset and Old Bering Sea art of Alaska have led to the revision of many misjudgements by a new generation of archaeologists.

The Thule people, whose pre-Thule ancestry can be traced to southwestern Alaska but who had evolved into their new culture type in northern Alaska, were themselves the true ancestors of the contemporary Inuit. In Canada, however, the art forms of these two cultures reflect little of this relationship. This is in contrast to the Thule art tradition in Alaska, which continued well into the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The most frequent types of Thule art in Canada are combs, needle cases and "swimming figurines" (birds, spirits and humans), as well as various kinds of utensils and female effigies. In contrast to Dorset art, which had hardly any stylistic similarities to contemporaneous Alaskan art forms, Canadian Thule art is strongly dependent on Alaskan prototypes of the same culture and period.

While Dorset art, in its stark and expressionist form and technique, has a definite masculine quality, which in form and content relates to weapons and tools used by males, Thule art relates in almost every detail to female images, forms and uses. Utensils such as combs, thimble holders, needle cases, bodkins and pendants are obviously women's practical and decorative equipment; the "swimming figurines" too are either female representations or relate to them in their shape. They are identical in their basic structure, with

only the upper parts of their bodies shown; the parts underneath the waterline, not being visible, are therefore not shown. These figurines obviously had a common origin, probably as amulets or for similar magico-religious purposes. It is therefore difficult to believe that these carvings were gambling pieces (*tingmiujang*), though they were the prototypes for the gambling pieces used after the breakup of traditional Thule whaling culture in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Besides being small, elegantly shaped and often beautifully decorated, almost all female figurines and statuettes of Thule art are faceless, in contrast to the Dorset figures, with their strongly expressed mostly male faces. The two notable Thule exceptions with beautifully carved faces are a comb from the Pelly Bay region and a marrow fork (or perhaps a bodkin for tents or [umiaks](#)) from Strathcona Sound. There are a few other carvings with vaguely incised faces and also a few stick figures on combs, as well as a unique bow drill from Arctic Bay.

The Historical Period

The historical period begins with the demise of Thule culture, as the climate became colder and the whales disappeared, and the coinciding arrival of the white man in the Arctic in the 16th century. The unified art style also broke down, though some Thule effigies persisted into the 20th century, such as the swimming figurines that turned into gaming pieces and the female statuettes that turned into dolls. Certain women's utensils also continued, but carved in much cruder and less stylish forms.

At the start of the 19th century, the dolls, toys and animal carvings that were exchanged with whalers, sailors and explorers (who had then begun to visit on a more or less regular basis) gradually turned into trade and souvenir art, often quite exquisite. In fact, the trade carvings display a much greater skill than carvings made by the Inuit for themselves. By 1920 trade art (which was

largely made out of ivory or bone) had lost all of its magico-religious meanings, and many carvings became replicas of tools and weapons of both Inuit and white men. In several areas liturgical art (replicas of Roman Catholic figurines) were produced regularly, as were inlaid or incised cigarette boxes, match holders, cribbage boards and sailing vessels. Even though the Inuit had lived a largely traditional lifestyle before WWII, their art forms - but not the techniques or processes for making their objects *pinguaq* or "toy-like representations" - became increasingly oriented to the white man's tastes and uses.

The Contemporary Phase

The contemporary phase was a logical outcome of the transitional and acculturated art forms of the historic period, and coincided with the gradual "opening up" of the North after WWII, with the launching of the [DEW Line](#) (Distant Early Warning system) and, most of all, with the emerging interest of Western nations in the art and culture of preliterate societies. Largely owing to the insights and promotional energy of [James A. Houston](#), a young artist from Toronto, Inuit art as we know it today came into existence in 1948-49. He encouraged the Inuit to use their "natural talents" in creating art objects to help solve their economic problems. In this regard they were assisted by the [Inuit Co-operatives](#).

Soapstone and ivory carvings from Povungnituk and Inukjuak (Port Harrison) in Québec were the first art forms to appear for sale in the south. Salluit (Sugluk), [Cape Dorset](#) and [Repulse Bay](#) followed, and soon the entire central Arctic was covered, from Kugluktuk to Arctic Bay, with other areas to join later in the 1960s and 1970s. The whole enterprise resulted largely from the support Houston and the Inuit received from the [federal government](#), the former Canadian Handicrafts Guild and the [Hudson's Bay Company](#). In 1957-58 Houston also introduced [printmaking](#) into Cape Dorset; in the next 20 years, this craft spread to Povungnituk, Holman [[Ulukhaktok](#)], [Baker Lake](#),

Pangnirtung and, to a lesser extent, into several other arctic communities, including Clyde River.

In the new carving activities the emphasis is largely on soapstone and serpentine, which have become increasingly scarce, and stone is often imported from the south. Stone differs greatly from the organic materials used in prehistoric and historic times. Ivory is still used in several areas, especially at Pelly Bay and Repulse Bay, where miniature carvings predominate. Beached whalebone was first used at Arctic Bay but had largely disappeared by the mid-1970s. Instead, large whalebone fragments taken from prehistoric Thule culture sites became extremely popular in the late 1960s and early 1970s, especially at Pangnirtung and Spence Bay. The use of this material had steadily declined, largely because of the US embargo on endangered species.

Though carving is still the largest art activity, Inuit printmaking has become the one providing the greatest financial returns for southern collectors and "art investors." Drawings and paintings are also produced in quantity, but they have never enjoyed the popularity of the prints. Every printmaker draws, but only a few artists paint (notably Pudlo Pudlat from Cape Dorset and Davie Atchealak from Pangnirtung). Wall hangings (embroidered, appliquéd or woven) are probably the most impressive of the newer two-dimensional art forms but, though highly valued by connoisseurs, they have not achieved the wide acceptance of the prints.

The new art forms do not have the uniform style and content characteristics found in Dorset and Thule art, but rather exhibit local and individual characteristics. Inuit art is easily recognizable as such, but only because of a predictable subject matter or a definite personal or local style. Most Inuit art shares a predominantly narrative or illustrative content that depicts the traditional lifestyle and techniques for survival, the animals of the North, the spirits of those animals or the shamans and mythologies which were the links to that spirit world. But here the similarity ends. In Baker Lake, for instance,

Vital Makpaaq and David Ekoota Ikutaaq have initiated a style of massive stone carving, whereas Luke Ikseetaryuk developed out of antler characteristic images and compositions of his own which have no stylistic relationship to the stone carvings. Baker Lake printmakers and producers of wall hangings such as Jessie Oonark, Marion Tuu'luq, Luke Anguhadluq, William Noah and Simon Tookoome also have their own individual styles, as have at least 10 others.

A similar situation exists at Cape Dorset, where all the well-known artists are highly individualistic, including carvers Aqjangajuk Shaa , Qaqaq Ashoona , Kiawak Ashoona , Kumwartok Ashoona, Latcholassie Akesuk, Osuitok Ipeelee and Pauta Saila , and printmakers Parr , Pitseolak Ashoona and Pudlo Pudlat. Collectively, however, they are typical of Cape Dorset art, and it is possible to speak of a Cape Dorset style with its definite and crisp shapes and often quite original ideas.

In Povungnituk, too, the principal artists all have their own style and subject matter. The stylistic individuality of artists such as Alasua Amittuq Davidialuk , Joe Talirunili and Josie Papialook (Paperk/Poppy) is noticeable in both carvings and prints. These 3 artists were seldom imitated, but ideas of Charlie Sivuarapik , Levi Alasua Pirti Smith and Eli Sallualuk were followed by many of the lesser artists. These multiple Povungnituk styles have one common feature - high finish and craftsmanship. This characteristic applies to both the highly representational and the fantastic art of Povungnituk, but not to the works of Davidialuk, Talirunili and Papialook which, though also narrative, have retained a definite feeling of simple rawness and forceful, personal expression.

Comparisons could be drawn between Pelly Bay, Repulse Bay and Arviat (Eskimo Point), all of which have styles that could easily be related to folk art , but here too there are many subtle and individual exceptions. In general, Arviat carvings of stone and antler are carved more crudely than the stones and ivories of the other 2 communities, yet John Pangnark's abstract work from Arviat is extraordinarily elegant and sophisticated. Artists using whalebone, especially the vertebrae, which have naturally fantastic shapes,

have a certain advantage, leading often to unusual sculptures. This applies particularly to Talovoak (formerly Spence Bay) artists such as [Karoo Ashevak](#) and Sakkiassie Anaija, but interesting work has also been coming out of the eastern and northern regions of Baffin Island.

The contemporary phase is evolving rapidly with changing styles and imagery, especially in the 3 Kitikmeot settlements at the most westerly side of the Central Arctic. There, among the most prominent artists, are Nick Sikkuark and Judas Ullulaq (at Gjoa Haven), Charlie Ugyuk (Taloyoak), and the late Augustin Anaittuq (Pelly Bay). Among the several major Inuit artists who, now middle-aged, have moved to the southern parts of Canada, are Manasie Akpaliapik (Toronto), and the brothers Abraham Anqhik (Salt Spring Island, BC) and David Ruben Piqtoukun (Toronto). Of the younger generation of contemporary Inuit artists who have developed reputations in the international art world are the late [Annie Pootoogook](#) and [Shuvinai Ashoona](#).

Collectors and museums have started to pay very high prices for the work of these artists but even more so for the older, more "classic" carvings and prints. Yet while the production of the "new" art has increased noticeably, it unfortunately has been accompanied by an overall decline in quality. While there are still an astonishing number of very good artists producing a fair amount of outstanding work, the collective quality standards need careful watching. The better Inuit artists are largely aware of this dilemma. However, only the local northern buyers - the co-operatives, the North West Company and several individual wholesalers who purchase the work directly from the artists - can actually exercise some degree of influence over the quantity and quality of the production - or over-production - of this important aspect of Canadian art.

Further Reading

"The Eskimo World," *artscanada* 27 (Dec 1971-Jan 1972); S. Cole, ed, *We Don't Live in Snowhouses Now* (1976); B. Driscoll, *The Inuit Amautik* (1980) and *Uumajuk: Animal Imagery in Inuit Art* (1985); H. Goetz,

The Inuit Print/L'Estampe inuit

(1977); Alma Houston (intro), *Inuit Art: An Anthology* (1988); George Swinton, *Sculpture of the Inuit* (1992).

External Links

Carving Out a Future

An in-depth study of contemporary Inuit sculptures created by artists located in Arviat, Cape Dorset, and Clyde River. By Jill Barber. From Carleton University. A large PDF file.

Inukshuk

Watch the Heritage Minute about Inuit stone figures referred to as Inukshuk. See also related online learning resources. From Historica Canada.

Canadian Aboriginal Writing and Arts Challenge

The website for the Canadian Aboriginal Writing and Arts Challenge, which features Canada's largest essay writing competition for Aboriginal youth (ages 14-29) and a companion program for those who prefer to work through painting, drawing and photography. See their guidelines, teacher resources, profiles of winners, and more. From Historica Canada.



PROJECT MUSE®

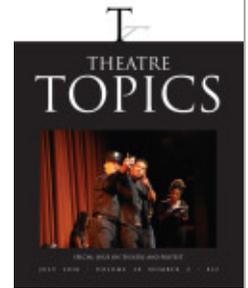
Rural Theatrical Protest: A Note from Muskrat Falls

Susanne Shawyer

Theatre Topics, Volume 28, Number 2, July 2018, pp. E7-E13 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/tt.2018.0038>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/700195>

Rural Theatrical Protest: A Note from Muskrat Falls

Susanne Shawyer

Throughout 2016 and 2017, the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, along with indigenous and settler allies, demonstrated against the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. Concerned that the oil pipeline would threaten the local water supply and damage sacred sites, the Standing Rock activists effectively used a social-media campaign and drone video footage of their theatrical protests to draw global attention to their cause. In the autumn of 2016, these efforts filled traditional media with news of the pipeline protests, and my social-media feed exploded with images of the Dakota Plains and #StandWithStandingRock and #noDAPL protest hashtags. As a scholar of performance protest I was excited to see a rural demonstration make front-page news, because too often scholarship on theatrical protest emphasizes urban examples like parades, flash mobs, or mass demonstrations in city centers. Standing Rock serves as a good reminder that the public sphere extends beyond city streets and that rural activists also make deliberate use of theatricality for political ends.

At the same time that the Standing Rock demonstrations captivated the world, activists elsewhere were engaging in similar protests against energy projects that threatened drinking water and indigenous cultural heritage. Thousands of miles away at Muskrat Falls in central Labrador, Canada, demonstrators were using theatrical protest tactics in attempts to halt a large hydroelectric development. Meanwhile, members of the Shoal Lake #40 First Nation were promoting the Museum of Canadian Human Rights Violations, an innovative theatrical tourist experience that highlights the Canadian tribe's prolonged fight for clean drinking water. While perhaps not as widely known as the Standing Rock protests, the ongoing Muskrat Falls demonstrations and the Museum of Canadian Human Rights Violations are equally vital appeals for water rights and the recognition of indigenous culture. This note from the field examines the challenges and potentials of these two Canadian cases, which serve as examples of how small-scale theatrical protests, rooted in remote communities, creatively respond to the challenges of rural location.

Once a beautiful natural waterfall tucked into a narrow corner of the Churchill River, Muskrat Falls is now part of a large hydroelectric development under construction just twenty miles from the Labrador town of Happy Valley-Goose Bay. For Nalcor Energy, the project represents an important push toward renewable energy, a reduction of greenhouse gases, and hope for economic development in central Labrador. But the indigenous Innu and Inuit peoples of Labrador argue that the Muskrat Falls development threatens their health and traditional hunting and fishing practices. Scientific research has predicted that flooding the reservoir without full vegetation clearing of the Muskrat Falls site will result in increased levels of methylmercury downstream in Lake Melville, and consequently in the local wildlife that forms the indigenous diet, including fish, shellfish, birds, and seal (Calder et al. 13117–19). This is a particular concern for those who rely upon these foods, as methylmercury is a neurotoxin associated with ADHD, as well as neurological and cardiovascular problems (13115). Since construction began in 2013, both indigenous Canadians and their settler-Canadian allies have used a variety of protest devices, including hunger strikes, land occupation, civil disobedience, and mass demonstration, in their efforts to force Nalcor to agree to a full independent audit of the downstream impact of the Muskrat Falls development and to completely clear all vegetation from the reservoir area prior to the flooding.

Resistance to the Muskrat Falls development is complicated by the project's remote location, as well as its impact on an indigenous way of life unfamiliar to settler Canadians. The Muskrat Falls worksite is a forty-five-minute drive through the forest from the nearest town, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, thus creating access challenges for both demonstrators and media. Moreover, the town is home to only about 6,500 people; therefore it is not surprising that mass demonstrations at the site have numbered at most 250 people. When I visited my family in Newfoundland and Labrador in May 2017, I asked friends and neighbors about Muskrat Falls. Those I casually polled expressed concern as taxpayers for the cost of the Muskrat Falls development, but not about a rise in methylmercury levels and subsequent risk to indigenous populations. In fact, the settler-Canadian residents I chatted with shrugged off questions about the project's risk to local wildlife and those who consume traditional foods; instead, they focused their discussions on the economic costs and benefits of the project. This lack of concern for the methylmercury issue is mirrored in Nalcor's marketing materials, which present the Muskrat Falls project as an excellent way to cut greenhouse-gas emissions, without acknowledging that the development solves an ecological problem by displacing indigenous cultural traditions. While settler-Canadian residents may recognize an economic stake in the project, I met few who felt like they had a personal stake in the Muskrat Falls development. Unsurprisingly, the numbers actively engaged in public protests are small.

Despite the small number of participants, the Muskrat Falls demonstrations have made inventive use of theatrical protest as a way to engage audiences. In particular, the protests have creatively reimagined space through imagery and sound. For example, at a July 2017 demonstration at Nalcor headquarters in the provincial capital, St. John's, activists juxtaposed humble homemade banners against Nalcor's gleaming corporate logo in a theatrical David-and-Goliath critique of capitalism that positioned Nalcor as a villain soon to be defeated by determined underdogs ("Protesters Take Demand"). Although the action was simple, it effectively communicated the activists' resolve, while providing a compelling photo opportunity for local media. At this event, protesters also repurposed the building's logo by framing it with their own signs to create the phrase "audit Nalcor now" (Croft) (fig. 1). In the reimagined space, the Nalcor brand became an unwitting participant in its own critique. In another example of reframing space, about fifty activists forced a work stoppage by breaching the fence and occupying the Muskrat Falls worksite in October 2016. Accompanied by the sound of traditional drumming, they reclaimed the land on behalf of the indigenous communities of central Labrador (Wall and Breen). Replacing the sound of construction machinery with the sound of drums, protesters reminded their audience of the people most affected by the development. In the summer of 2017, Muskrat Falls activists yet again reshaped space when dozens of demonstrators picketed the provincial government's Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs office in Happy Valley-Goose Bay for several weeks; they set up tents, lawn chairs, and grills in the parking lot, invoking the spirit of a neighborhood picnic or community potluck (Labrador Land Protectors) (fig. 2). While mass demonstrations like the 2017 Women's March on Washington rely upon the power of large crowds to communicate strength of purpose, these two small occupations of the worksite and the government office instead invoked local bonds to convey their determination. Communal food and traditional drumming positioned the Muskrat Falls demonstrators as a strong and unified community.

The rural-activist protest tactic of featuring their community's uniqueness is similarly used by the Shoal Lake #40 First Nation in its ongoing demonstrations in support of water rights. The tribe's reserve is located southeast of Winnipeg. Displaced during the construction of the Winnipeg aqueduct a hundred years ago, the Shoal Lake #40 First Nation lives without a permanent access road to its reserve and has been under a "boil water advisory" for almost twenty years (Shoal Lake 2011). In response to the recent opening of the Canadian Museum of Human Rights in Winnipeg, the tribe created the Museum of Canadian Human Rights Violations. This "museum" is a personal guided tour of the reserve, the reserve's contaminated water, and the nearby Winnipeg water reservoir, with discussions of water management, rights violations, and the history of the tribe. The museum's brochure advertises "real dislocation from ancestral homelands!" and invites visitors to "visit your choice of dilapidated homes or infrastructure" (Shoal Lake n.d.) (figs. 3–4). Casting audience members



Fig. 1 Demonstrators call for an audit outside Nalcor Energy headquarters in St. John's, Canada, July 2017. (Photo: Mark Croft.)



Fig. 2 The Labrador Land Protectors picnic as they picket the government's Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs office in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Canada, July 2017. (Photo: Labrador Land Protectors.)

SEE RIGHTS DENIED

Real Dislocation from Ancestral Homelands!
(Article 17 UDHR)

VIEW* STOLEN LANDS AND DESECRATED BURIAL GROUNDS

*from a distance - no trespassing, no photographs and strict security surveillance by occupiers will apply.



GENUINE ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION

(Article 23 UDHR)
Meet real people struggling to survive with little hope of development in a severely restricted designated area.

CAUTION: Handouts may trigger offended response
LOADS OF INADEQUATE SHELTER AND SERVICES!
(Articles 25 and 26 UDHR)

Visit your choice of dilapidated homes or infrastructure - school, day care, offices.

*health and safety waiver required



EXPERIENCE!

Actual Restrictions of Your Own Freedom of movement! (Article 13 UDHR)

PAY REAL COSTS TO GET TO THE SITE
RISK YOUR LIFE* ACCESSING THE MUSEUM

*level of risk may vary by season and weather



UDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights

"AS LONG AS THE SUN SHINES AND THE WATERS FLOW" (UNDRIP)

A genuine Treaty is on site ... realistically obscured by the Indian Act and easily ignored by the whole family.

BE REFUSED CLEAN DRINKING WATER
GENUINE UNCLEAR* WATER AVAILABLE

*17+ years certified boil water order by Health Canada



TESTIMONIALS

What visitors to Shoal Lake #40, site of the Museum for Canadian Human Rights Violations have said.

"Their [Shoal Lake #40's] story is one that more Canadians need to hear because it can tell us so much about the deeply flawed relationship between the federal government and First Nations."

Craig Benjamin, Campaigner for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Amnesty International

"There's a whole cascade of human rights issues here [at Shoal Lake #40] including the forced isolation of this community, but we could also talk about the rights to health, personal security, freedom of movement and association and even the right to life."

Clint Curle, Head of Stakeholder Relations, Canadian Museum for Human Rights, which features Shoal Lake water.

Informative, stimulating, real-life violations of rights such as:

RIGHT TO CLEAN WATER
RIGHT TO SAFETY AND SECURITY
RIGHT TO THE NECESSITIES OF LIFE

UNDRIP: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

FIG. 3 Museum of Canadian Human Rights Violations brochure. (Photo: Shoal Lake #40 First Nation.)

MORE TESTIMONIALS

"Many lives have been lost and damaged by this man-made isolation, [at Shoal Lake #40] while Winnipeg has benefited and profited from the water."

Linda Goossen, Council of Canadians
Winnipeg Chapter

"And we support the Shoal Lake First Nation in its fight for justice."

Maude Barlow, Chair, Council of
Canadians

"Today marks 100 years since the water diversion for the Greater Winnipeg Water District impacted the lives of members from the Shoal Lake First Nation for generations. Many Winnipeggers are unaware, or take for granted, that we obtain our drinking water from Indian Bay – an arm of Shoal Lake. ... it will take everyone working together as equals and partners to ensure a just solution is found."

"Thank you to Chief Erwin Redsky, the elders, and the entire Band of Shoal Lake #40, for continuing to educate us."

Sam Katz, Mayor of the City of Winnipeg

Statement by Mayor Sam Katz for the
"Price of Water" event, Shoal Lake #40,
July 9, 2014.

How to get there:

Begin at the Canadian Museum for
Human Rights in downtown Winnipeg.

Go to the 'healing waters' featured in
Antoine Predock's "Garden of Contemplation".



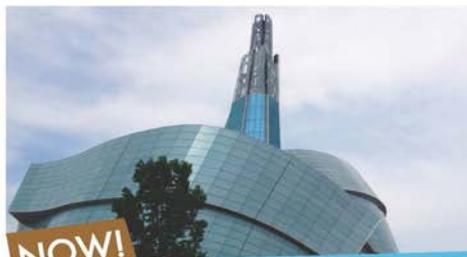
Follow the 'healing waters'
supply pipe to its source at
Shoal Lake #40 First Nation

**EXPERIENCE THE TRUTH ABOUT CANADA'S
REAL HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD**

A project of the Shoal Lake #40 community Price of Water group

You have heard of the

Canadian Museum for Human Rights



NOW!
100 years in the making

Shoal Lake #40 First Nation is pleased to announce the grand opening of the

**Museum for Canadian
Human Rights Violations**



The people of Shoal Lake Number 40 First
Nation have been relocated and isolated, so
Winnipeg can have fresh, clean drinking water.

DAILY TOURS COMMENCING

SEPTEMBER 17, 18, 19, 20, 21

ARRANGE YOURS NOW

call 807-733-2315 or 807-733-2250
email sl40secretary@hotmail.ca www.sl40

Exhibits made possible by the GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

FIG. 4 Museum of Canadian Human Rights Violations brochure. (Photo: Shoal Lake #40 First Nation.)

as tourists, the Shoal Lake #40 First Nation turns the tourist/museum experience of performed and aestheticized history upside down with biting satire and political urgency. It offers a counter-spectacle to the gleaming new museum in downtown Winnipeg, making a feature of its rural location and difficulty of access, focusing on the role of water in contributing to the isolation of the community, and confronting its audiences of settler Canadians with the reality of life on the reservation.

As part of focusing on the rural community's unique characteristics, both the Muskrat Falls and Shoal Lake theatrical protests emphasize the relationship between the community and the surrounding environment. At Muskrat Falls, activists are highlighting the location of the hydroelectric development, which has visibly scarred the deep-green boreal forest and clear blue waters of the falls. But more difficult to show are the scars resulting from the biomagnification of methylmercury in aquatic food sources; less visible, these may take a generation to appear. The projected increase in methylmercury at Muskrat Falls demonstrates what Jane Bennett calls the "vital materiality" of matter, or the "capacity of things . . . not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own" (vii–viii). By focusing on the shared materiality of things both human and nonhuman, Bennett's political theory of "vibrant matter" insists that humans contemplate and respond to nonhuman actants (14). Rural sites of protest like Muskrat Falls and Shoal Lake offer obvious connections between Bennett's theory and discussions of theatrical protest. Using her theory, we can see how the waters of the Churchill River have their own political efficacy: their vital materiality produces spectacular changes in the ecosystem through the chemical and biological formation of methylmercury after vegetation floods. These changes will have significant effect on the health of animals both human and nonhuman and political consequences for the region's health, education, and social resources for years to come. Drawing attention to the shared materiality of the waters of Muskrat Falls, the aquatic wildlife downstream, and the humans who compete for the river's resources, both enrich understanding of the complex human relationship with the environment and expand our imagined worlds. It reminds us of the political nature of the spaces and bodies that we inhabit, the water we drink, and the air we breathe. Likewise, the Museum of Canadian Human Rights Violations emphasizes this shared materiality and presents a theatrical-protest experience both personal and pedagogical as it teaches audience members about the Shoal Lake #40 First Nation's decades-long struggle for clean water.

While Bennett's theory of vibrant matter offers one way to consider rural activism tied to the environment, the examples of Muskrat Falls and the Shoal Lake #40 First Nation also remind us how theatrical protest is often dominated by urban privilege, including easy access to city centers, mass crowds, social media, and other technologies. Large displays of state authority and restriction, such as street blockades or riot police, which can provide a narrative foil or visual antagonist for theatrical activism, are less available for rural activists. Demonstrators in remote locations may not have the means to invoke the heightened energy and visual impact of a mass crowd. In Canada, this urban privilege has roots in colonial practice, because a colonial history of racism resulted in the concentration of Canada's indigenous peoples in underserved rural areas. Recognizing this urban privilege begs the question: What might it mean to decolonize theatrical protest? How might demonstrations and discussions of theatrical protest look beyond the urban? The examples of Muskrat Falls and the Shoal Lake #40 First Nation suggest that decolonizing theatrical protest might require consideration of the elements of theatrical protest that rely upon cultural, geographic, and economic privilege. Such reflections can expand the activist repertoire and broaden scholarly conversations about theatre and activism.

Susanne Shawyer is a dramaturg and assistant professor of theatre history at Elon University in North Carolina, where she also serves as coordinator of the Drama and Theatre Studies Interdisciplinary BA. Her research explores the dramaturgy of protest, intersections of modern theatre theory and political performance, and the history of applied theatre. As the dramaturgy mentor for Elon's Department of Performing Arts, she emphasizes intersectional approaches to script analysis and performance creation. She received her doctorate in theatre history and criticism, with an emphasis on performance as public practice, from the University of Texas at Austin.

Works Cited

- Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2010. Print.
- Calder, Ryan S. D., et al. "Future Impacts of Hydroelectric Power Development on Methylmercury Exposures of Canadian Indigenous Communities." *Environmental Science and Technology* 50.23 (2016): 13115–22. Print.
- Croft, Mark. "Image of Protesters at Nalcor Headquarters posted to Free NL Facebook Group." Facebook. 8 July 2017. Web. 13 Oct. 2017.
- Labrador Land Protectors. "Image of Picketers with Statement to Premier Dwight Ball posted to Labrador Land Protectors Facebook Group." Facebook. 4 July 2017. Web. 13 Oct. 2017.
- Nalcor Energy. "Project Overview." Nalcor Energy Lower Churchill Project. N.d. Web. 13 Oct. 2017.
- "Protesters Take Demand for Muskrat Falls Audit to Nalcor's Front Door." CBC News. 8 July 2017. Web. 13 Oct. 2017.
- Shoal Lake #40 First Nation. "Water." 2011. Web. 13 Oct. 2017.
- . "Museum of Canadian Human Rights Violations Brochure." N.d. Web. 13 Oct. 2017.
- Wall, Lukas, and Katie Breen. "Muskrat Falls Workers Bused out after Protesters Occupy Site in Central Labrador." CBC News. 22 Oct. 2016. Web. 13 Oct. 2017.