INUIT & FIRST NATIONS ART

July 12, 2020, Toronto

First Arts
INUIT & FIRST NATIONS ART AUCTION
SUNDAY, JULY 12, 2020 at 7pm EDT
Held at A. H. Wilkens Auctions & Appraisals
1 William Morgan Drive, Toronto

PREVIEWS
Thursday July 9  10am – 5pm
Friday, July 10  10am – 5pm
Saturday, July 11  10am – 5pm
Sunday, July 12  12pm – 3pm

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This season, we have the unique honour of offering three sealskin stencil matrixes from the earliest days of print-making. From fine Canadian collections have added masterpieces by Oonark, Parr, Tudlik, Kavik, and others to the mix. Some 10,000 miles back home to be offered by First Arts on his behalf. The collection includes rare and famous standing quality. This grouping includes important works from a private collector in Australia, prints that travelled through absentee bidding. Also enabling bidders who are unable to travel to participate in the auction fully, either by telephone, online, or through absentee bidding.

In these unprecedented times, our mission in doing our utmost on behalf of our consignors and doing justice to our great pleasure to serve your collecting interests. Please know that we are happy to receive your questions, comments, and suggestions. Feel free to contact us anytime.

We are of course grateful to you, our collectors, for your extraordinary support and encouragement. It continues to be our great pleasure to serve your collecting interests. Please know that we are happy to receive your questions, comments, and suggestions. Feel free to contact us anytime.

Ingo Hessel  Nadine Di Monte
ingo@FirstArts.ca  info@FirstArts.ca
613.818.2100  647.286.5012

Enthusiasts of Inuit prints and drawings are given the opportunity to purchase from a selection of graphics of outstanding quality. This grouping includes important works from a private collector in Australia, prints that travelled some 10,000 miles back home to be offered by First Arts on his behalf. The collection includes rare and famous prints by Kangijak, Pudlo, Lucy, Onark, Shousauk, Gualiyauk, and Kalsichuk among others. Graphics gathered from fine Canadian collections have added masterpieces by Onark, P. Tudlik, Kavik, and others to the mix. This season, we have the unique honour of offering three sealskin stencil matrixes from the earliest days of print-making in Kimmirut. To our knowledge these are the only ones of their kind in private hands, making this the first and perhaps only opportunity for the public to view them and to give collectors the opportunity to purchase them. The collection also includes exceedingly rare early Cape Dorset prints.

In other highlights, we have gathered wonderful works from private collections across North America including an important group of sculptures by and attributed to Sheoqaku, a superb wall hanging by Jesse Onark, a stunning Haida argillite female figure from the mid 19th century, the monumental Mother and Child, Carrying a Pail by Johnny Ivaluq, as well as an early hunter now attributed to him, and masterpieces by Tiktaq, Pauta, Akeakashuk, Oshuk, IkSilaayuk, Kavik, Nivaap, and other great sculptors. We would like to extend our gratitude for the many contributions made by the staffs of our partner galleries, Pat Feheley, Ingo Hessel, Mark London and Nadine Di Monte

We are equally proud to present an outstanding group of Inuit sculptures from a prestigious Montreal collection. Part of an important and wide-ranging collection of art from around the globe, they prove that Inuit art has a place amongst the great art traditions of the world. The selection of works includes some of the finest known examples of sculptures by Barnabas Amsuanngaq, Kooto Ashavek, Nick Silkuark, Tuna Ilupik, and Elizabeth Nutaralsuk.

This 2020 auction comes amidst a myriad of changes and improvements to First Arts since our inaugural sale in May 2019. We have found new allies in our recent affiliation with A.H. Wilkens Auctions & Appraisals of Toronto who are conducting this auction. We have also introduced a new version of our website FirstArts.ca that aims to better serve our growing audience, and we will continue to expand and refine its scope and content.

What has not changed is our commitment to offering the highest level of professionalism and scholarship in the resale market for Inuit, First Nations, and Métis art through our programme of auctions, exhibitions, gallery, and online sales. In addition, we will continue to find new ways to show our solid commitment to Indigenous visual arts communities by supporting initiatives that have a positive impact on Indigenous artists and scholars. The team here at First Arts brings over a century of collective experience working with Indigenous art, artists, collectors, and museums. Ingo, Pat and Mark are pleased and grateful to be working with the newest member of our First Arts team, Nadine Di Monte, who is working tirelessly and enthusiastically to bring our various projects to fruition.

We look forward to working with consignors and collectors in the coming year. Please stay safe and keep in touch.

Pat Feheley, Ingo Hessel, Mark London and Nadine Di Monte
1 ATTRIBUTED TO JUDAS ULLULAQ (1937-1999), UGLUQTUQ (SQUID HAVEN), Muskox Tossing Wolf, c. mid 1980s, whale bone and black inlay, 2.1 x 2.3 x 3.95 in (5.3 x 5.9 x 9.9 cm), unsigned.


Our attribution is based on both the subject matter and the style of this delightful small sculpture. Among Ullulaq’s works there are several examples of muskoxen tossing or throwing hunters, if not wolves specifically (see references). On the stylistic side, the very distinctive shape of the muskox’s hump definitely resembles the humps of numerous muskoxen carved by Ullulaq (see additional references). The use of whale bone and careful black inlay are further clues.

References: Please visit our listing for this lot on the First Arts website.

2 UNIDENTIFIED ARTIST, NUNAVUT (PORT HARRISON), Standing Woman, c. 1949-50, stone, 3.75 x 2.25 x 1 in (9.5 x 5.7 x 2.5 cm), unsigned.

Provenance: Collection of Alma Houston, Ottawa. Private Collection, Ottawa, by descent to a Private Collection, Montreal. Note: we can probably assume that the work was collected by James Houston on an early buying trip in the Arctic and given to his first wife Alma.

Exhibited and Published: Canadian Eskimo Arts Council, Sculpture/Inuit (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), fig. 211.

Published: George Swinton, Eskimo Sculpture (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1965), p. 94; George Swinton, Sculpture of the Inuit (Toronto: M&S, 1972-92), fig. 185.

This highly important carving combines charming naïveté with exceptionally fine workmanship and sophistication. We wonder if the carver of this rare early masterpiece might be Akeeaktashuk, who was identified by James Houston as the preeminent talent in Inukjuak in the late 1940s (see above by the distinguished Canadian sculptor David Franklin Mandell, Vancouver in the early 1950s); by descent to his widow Carol Marshall, Marion Scott Gallery, Vancouver; Private Collection, Toronto.

Akeeaktashuk often used ivory as a secondary carving material, using it to fashion tools and weapons, small adornments such as parka toggles, and facial features such as eyes and teeth both in human and animal subjects. We are not aware of published examples of his work that incorporate ivory faces and hands, but there is intriguing evidence that the artist carved even complete animal figures out of ivory. [1] There is, however, a published small bone carving of a human face and two bear’s heads by the artist, from 1952, published in the Guild of Crafts catalogue. [2] There are also examples of the artist insetting faces of contrasting stone colour. [3]

Importantly, the figure itself perfectly matches the scale, the overall proportion, the look of the weapons, and stance of an Akeeaktashuk hunter of the period – that slight tilt of the body and backward tilt of the arm as the hunter leans into the thrust of the harpoon – not to mention the general feeling of confidence and clarity that its hunting figures convey.

1. Darlene Coward Wight quotes a 1951 article in The Montrealer in Early Masters, p. 30. The author Wanda Tolboom (who had lived at HBC posts in Nunavik between 1946 and 1952 and met Akeeaktashuk), wrote that Akeeaktashuk carved stone and ivory animal figures that he would give away to children.


References: Please visit our listing for this lot on the First Arts website.

3 ANDY MIKI (1928-1983), ARVIAT/TIKIRAQJUAQ (ESKIMO POINT/WHALE COVE), Bird in Flight, c. 1967-69, stone, 3.75 x 4.5 x 8.75 in (9.5 x 11.4 x 22.1 cm), signed “IM”.

Provenance: Private Collection, Toronto; acquired from the above by another Private Collection, Toronto.

Bird in Flight possesses both a chunky solidity and a beautiful aerodynamic quality, with the kind of streamlining associated with a fighter jet. Furthermore, as we have noted with other works by Miki, the sculpture has almost the look and feel of having been concretized as a mysterious implement. We have not found any precisely equivalent works by Miki, but two sculptures do come to mind at art fairs in Canada, and a Bird from 1970. Animal is supported on a similar pedestal-like base. Bird is differently shaped but conveys a similar degree of geometric abstraction and subtle sense of flight (see references).

References: Please visit our listing for this lot on the First Arts website.

4 AKEEAKTASHUK (1898-1954), NUNAVUT (PORT HARRISON), Standing Hunter, c. 1950-52, stone and ivory, 5.75 x 3.25 x 2 in (14.6 x 8.3 x 5.1 cm) without base, unsigned.

Provenance: Canadian Handcrafts Guild, Toronto. Acquired from the above by the distinguished Canadian sculptor David Franklin Mandell, Vancouver in the early 1950s; by descent to his widow Carol Marshall, Marion Scott Gallery, Vancouver; Private Collection, Toronto.

Akeeaktashuk often used ivory as a secondary carving material, using it to fashion tools and weapons, small adornments such as parka toggles, and facial features such as eyes and teeth both in human and animal subjects. We are not aware of published examples of his work that incorporate ivory faces and hands, but there is intriguing evidence that the artist carved even complete animal figures out of ivory. [1] There is, however, a published small bone carving of a human face and two bear’s heads by the artist, from 1952, published in the Guild of Crafts catalogue. [2] There are also examples of the artist insetting faces of contrasting stone colour. [3]

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References: Please visit our listing for this lot on the First Arts website.
Lucy's original graphite drawing from 1962 is illustrated in the Kairman Collection catalogue. gripTight the Old Ways (see reference). The drawing shows evidence that Lucy was careful in her execution of this design; reworking her elaborately entwined tangle of birds at mid-left. We see that the artist has meticulously delineated the forms of this avian assembly using a variety of markings and by diversifying her application of graphite. We love that the same mixed media that - in particular one cradled bird and its small friend - seeing that all of the stones were taken, have decided to perch atop the heads of their companions, we predict at least one scuffle in the making.

Lucas's translation into stonecut is brilliant, but it is interesting to note a few technical changes; he eliminated textures on certain birds, and added textures to a few others. The most important change is the addition of colour, but overall the print is very close in spirit to Lucy's drawings. In his Japanese inspiration (p. 88), he comments on Lucas's printmaking prowess with this particular print: "Lucas Giatbusk became one of the most highly accomplished of the stonecutters and printmakers in Cape Dorset. Like Un'ichi Hiratsuka (who taught printmaking techniques to James Houston in Japan), he was capable of evoking an enormous expressive range of effects, while communicating in clear, confident lines."

References: Please visit our listing for this lot on the First Arts website.

6 PARR. (1889-1969) m., PRINTMAKER: LUKTA QIATSUK (2028-2004) m., KINNGAIT (CAPE DORSET), My People, 1962 #86, stonecut, unnumbered proof print, 20 x 30 (50.8 x 76.2 cm).

Provenance: Private collection, Australia.
Terry Ryan is said to have introduced the elderly Parr to drawing in the spring of 1961, so My People is based on one of Parr's earliest drawings. Parr's earliest images could be described as "naive" but they are not the lively, even busy scenes of his contemporary Kalskut (see Lots 27, 93, 103); they are more "display" of his favourite subjects: people and the ani- mal they hunt. My People succinctly but clearly delivers the message: "This is who we are! This is what my family and I used to do! Despite its apparent minimalism and lack of detail, the image succeeds brilliantly in evoking a fondly remembered past. Parr would inject more action and narrative in later works, but here already the small figure in the lower register prepares to lunge his spear at his walrus prey. That Parr was obsessed with memories of animals and the hunt is given, but Parr is more of a reminiscer than a storyteller. As art historian Marion Jackson writes of Parr's work: "Hunting themes are not depicted as specific instances in time but, rather, are removed from historic time and attain an emblematic quality suggesting timelessness and permanence." [2]

Curator Norman Vorano writes of this print: "Evoking Un'ichi Hiratsuka's bold tribalistic chiseling stroke, in which the printmaker plunges his chisel into the wood and rocks it from side to side to get rough and expressive lines, Lukta Giatbusk adopted a loose cutting stroke on this print to capture the expressive vibrancy of Parr's original pencil drawing." [2] Lukta's printmaking technique is certainly used to maximum effect in My People: There is a graphic boldness to the print that, despite being darker and rather heavier than Parr's original graphite drawing, still captures the spirit and naive charm of Parr's energetic drawing style.

References: Please visit our listing for this lot on the First Arts website.

7 PUDLO PUDLAT (1916-1992) m., PRINTMAKER: LUKTA QIATSUK (2028-2004) m., KINNGAIT (CAPE DORSET), Running Rabbit, 1963 #35, stencil, 50/50, 25 x 19.75 (63.5 x 50.2 cm).

Provenance: Private Collection, Australia.

Running Rabbit embodies the artist's enduring legacy as one of the most experimental figures in Inuit art. Curator Marie Routledge remarks that Pudlo was most effective in his use of negative space, sometimes deliberately leaving the interior spaces of his draw- ings white to stand out in a brilliant contrast. One example of this technique can be seen in Eskimo Woman with Ulu (1964) (see First Arts, May 2019, lot 7). The same approach is taken here in Running Rabbit. Geeseless experimenter that he is, however, Pudlo has added another intriguing visual element. Running Rabbit presents to the viewer essentially two compositions. Right side up, we see a front-facing hare frozen in a mad dash, but when the sheet is inverted we are presented with a partly walrus, basking contentedly on the page.

References: Please visit our listing for this lot on the First Arts website.

8 PUDLO PUDLAT (1916-1992) m., PRINTMAKER: LUKTA QIATSUK (2028-2004) m., KINNGAIT (CAPE DORSET), Raven With Fish, 1963 #30, stencil, 44/50 28 x 24 in (71.1 x 61 cm).

Provenance: Private Collection, Australia.

This raven's wacky plumage and wild eyes might almost have been designed by Lucy Ginnayuk, but her birds usually have the predatory look of this solan creature. The raven's teeth would be incongruous if we didn't remember that we are looking at a creation by Pudlo! This print was released in the same year as Pudlo's Eagle Carrying Man, an image that is rather less graphic (and, astonishingly, the same year as Running Rabbit). A review of a few graphite drawings by Pudlo from c. 1962-63 indicates more subjects if not "red in tooth and claw" at least well armed with teeth and claws (see reference). Having said that, in the end Raven with Fish is still more comic than unsettling - it begins a "Pudlovian" response from us the viewers: a smile. References: For three graphite drawings from c. 1962-63 see Marie Routledge and Marion Jackson, Pudlo Thirty Years of Drawing (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1999), cats. 10-12. This catalogue accompanied the National Gallery's first-ever solo exhibition of an Indigenous Canadian artist.
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lthough she is today considered to be one of Baker Lake’s most talented sculptors, Effie Angali’taaq Arnakaaq’s life and work are not well documented. She probably began carving in the mid late 1960s; an important sculpture by her in the Zazelenchuk Collection dates from 1973 (see reference). She is the sister of the respected Baker Lake sculptors Martha Ticcia and Marie Kunnuuq, and the widow of Paul Toolooktook, with whom she often carved together until his death in 2003. She is best known by her previous married surname Arnaluaq, but signs her work “Angali’taaq.”

Standing Woman with Tattooed Face is a masterpiece of the classic Baker Lake style, easily holding its own against works by masters such as Arnaluaq, Sevoga, and Aqaqaaq. The sculpture compares to certain works by the famous Baker Lake artist George Tatanniq (1910-1991). In particular we are reminded of his monumental Standing Woman, renowned Baker Lake artist George Tatanniq (1910-1991).

Aqigaaq. The sculpture compares to certain works by the classic Baker Lake style, easily holding its own against Arnaluaq, but signs her work “Angali’taaq.”

She is best known by her previous married surname Kuunnuaq, and the widow of Paul Toolooktook, with whom she often carved together until his death in 2003. She probably began carving in the mid late 1960s; an important sculpture by her in the Zazelenchuk Collection dates from 1973 (see reference). She is the sister of the respected Baker Lake sculptors Martha Ticcia and Marie Kunnuuq, and the widow of Paul Toolooktook, with whom she often carved together until his death in 2003. She is best known by her previous married surname Arnaluaq, but signs her work “Angali’taaq.”

9 EFFIE ANGALI’TAAQ ARNALUAG (1936- ) QAMANI’TUQAQ (BAKER LAKE), Standing Woman with Tattooed Face, c. 1983-84, stone, (36.8 x 19.1 x 19.1 cm), signed, “36”. Accompanied by a photographic portrait of the artist with the work by William Eakin, c. 1983-84. Estimate: $9,000/12,000

Provenance: Waddington’s Auctions, April 2019, Lot 299; Acquired from the above by a Private Collection, U.K.

10 LUCY TASNIEF TUTSWEETOK (1994-2012) ARVIAT (ESKIMO POINT), Family, c. 1980, stone, 8.5 x 6 x 3.5 in (21.6 x 15.2 x 8.9 cm), signed, “JM”. Estimate: $4,000/6,000

Provenance: Collection of John Kavik, Toronto; Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto, Acquired from the above by a Private Collection, U.K. Exhibited and Published: Feheley Fine Arts, Lucy Tassiniep: I Turn to Stone (Toronto, 2013), illustrated p. 4. Family is a masterpiece of Tassiniep’s later classic style of the late 1970s and early 1980s, a period during which the artist had firmly “let go” of the idea of any literal representation of the human figure. It beautifully exemplifies the idea we put forth in our essay for the I Turn to Stone exhibition of 2013. “One could argue that in a sense, some of Tassiniep’s so-called “abstraction” was conceptual; she was interested in representing the idea of family, maternity, community and Inuit identity in her art rather than carving straightforward depictions” (pp. 3-5). Family is both rugged and supremely refined; the subtle yet powerful outward push of the various faces—in apparently random directions—is particularly poignant and evocative.

References: For other fine examples of Tassiniep’s work from c. 1975-80, see Norman Ziep, Pure Vision (Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, Winnipeg, 1986), cats. 39-41; and Bernadette Driscoll, Eskimo Point/Arviat Stone (WAG, 1992), cat. 79.

11 JOHN KAVIK (1897-1993) KANGIQSULIUK (RANKIN INLET), Standing Man, mid-late 1960s, stone, 9.75 x 6.75 x 3.25 in (25 x 17 x 8.5 cm), unsigned. Estimate: $5,000/7,000

Provenance: Waddington’s Auctions, 1994; Acquired from the above by Collection of Sam Wagonfield, Denver; Walker’s Auctions, Nov. 2017, Lot 99; Acquired from the above by a Private Collection, U.K. Exhibited and Published: Loveland Museum Gallery, Survival: Inuit Art (Loveland, CO, 2015), illustrated p. 4. Among published examples of Kavik’s sculptures, the two that most closely compare with Standing Man are found in Swinton’s 1972 book (see reference). All share the interesting bent knee posture seen here. However, neither shares the positively hefty appearance of Standing Man, which perhaps depicts Kavik himself as a young, powerful man, poised for action. Furthermore, the sculpture is crisply carved and well finished in a fashion that is sometimes found in Kavik’s figures from the mid late 1960s but seldom later. It is well known that George Swinton was a great early admirer of this artist, whose reputation has only grown over time; interestingly, Kavik was represented by nine works in the landmark Sculpture of the Inuit travelling exhibition of 1971-73, more than any other artist. Reference: For two comparable sculptures by Kavik, see George Swinton, Sculpture of the Inuit (Toronto & M&L, 1972-92), figs. 645, 646.
This portrait of a hunter stands out in Akeeaktashuk’s oeuvre for its vitality and realistic sense of movement. Akeeaktashuk’s larger-scale figures are generally subdued, even static in pose; they give a sense of being truly frozen in motion. In this work, not only the man’s pose but also the folds of his parka and the windblown tip of his hood reveal him as a man of action. The hunter is here captured mid-stride; the delicate contours of his parka stretched taut across his torso suggest that his body is slightly torqued, revealing both his forward motion and the forceful, ready swing of his spear and knife.

Rare among Akeeaktashuk’s depictions of hunters, this sculpture seems conceived as part of a narrative. The presence of the hunter’s prey is implied, off in the distance; the keen gaze of the subject’s sensitively carved face is cast toward a target unseen by us but clearly visible to him. Consequently, the space surrounding this striding hunter and his imagined catch is charged with energy.

References: For other fine examples by Akeeaktashuk of hunters carved on a similar scale and/or style or pose see Jean Blodgett, Selections from the John and Mary Robertson Collection of Inuit Sculpture (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen’s University, 1986), cat. 31 (also illustrated in Walker’s Auctions, Nov. 2011, Lot 33); Walker’s Auctions, May 2017, Lot 66.

12 AKEEAKTASHUK (1898-1954) INUKJUAK (PORT HARRISON), Striding Hunter, c. 1951-53, stone, ivory, and inlay, 20 x 8.5 x 5.5 in (25.4 x 16.5 x 14 cm), unsigned. Estimate: $20,000/30,000

Provenance: Ex Collection of Mr. William (Bill) Larmour, Ontario; Walker’s Auctions, May 2012, Lot 23, as Walking Hunter, acquired from the above by the present Private Collection, London, U.K.

13 ADAMIE NIVIAKHE (1925-86) INUKJUAK (PORT HARRISON), Polar Bear, early 1950s, stone, 2.5 x 5 x 2 in (6.3 x 12.7 x 5.1 cm), inscribed with artist’s disc number “E9 731”. Estimate $2,000/3,000

Provenance: An American Private Collection.

Although fashioned with a degree of naivety, this early carving of a polar bear displays a remarkable sense of movement and energy. The animal’s back is arched in a pose that is both lithic and alert. Although superficially reminiscent of some depictions of others and eminence that we have seen from the period, this bear is powerful and not a little dangerous.

References: For a Mother and Child from 1953 by the artist, and admired by Swinton, see George Swinton, Eskimo Sculpture (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1965), p. 141.

For a Woman Eating with an Ulu from 1951, see Walker’s Auctions, Nov. 2014, Lot 65.
KENOJUAK ASHEVAK, C.C., R.C.A. (1927-2013) f., PRINTMAKER: EEGYVUDLUK POOTOOGOOK (1931-1999), KINNGAIT (CAPE DORSET), Complex of Birds, 1960 #17, stonecut, 46/50, 24 x 26 in (61 x 66 cm)

Estimate: $10,000/15,000

James Houston suggests that the look of this glorious image harkens back to skin appliqué designs (such as the one that inspired Kenojuak’s 1959 breakout print Rabbit Eating Seaweed). "Kenojuak’s images retain the connecting patterns found in the original skin appliqués. In her work there is often an elaborate web that forms an over-all design. The extended wings and hands and legs grow into each other. One realizes that not only the figures but also the spaces between the figures have been consciously or unconsciously calculated. One must try to compose such a design to fully appreciate its complexity." [1]

In her landmark 1985 book on the artist, Jean Blodgett’s astute observation of Kenojuak’s style is sandwiched between the artist’s own highly sophisticated descriptions of her image-making process.

For my subject matter I don’t start off and pick a subject as such, that’s not my way of addressing a drawing. My way of doing it is to start off without a preconceived plan of exactly what I am going to execute in full, and so I come up with a small part of it which is pleasing to me and I use that as a starting point to wander into, through the drawing. I may start off at one end of a form not even knowing what the entirety of the form is going to be; just drawing as I am thinking, thinking as I am drawing. And that’s how I develop my images.

"In Kenojuak’s graphics, subject and form often develop simultaneously. Her primary concern is with the overall appearance of the image, not the subject matter. In discussing the fact that she does not illustrate traditional stories, Kenojuak went on to say:" [2]

And rather what I do is I try to make things which satisfy my eye, which satisfy my sense of form and colour. It’s more an interplay of form and colour which I enjoy performing and I do it until it satisfies my eye and then I am on to something else. [2]

Apparantly Complex of Birds is the only 1960 print by Kenojuak for which the original graphite drawing was created on a large sheet of paper, this probably explains its relative "complexity" compared to the other prints from this year. Against the background dappled in a teal blue, lyrical silhouetted figures (primarily birds and humans) combine to form an intricate web pattern. The richness of Kenojuak’s dreamy invention is best understood when we let our gaze wander from figure to figure, noting how one part of the design is delicately interwoven with its counterparts. Eegyvudluk’s print adaptation is lovingly faithful to the original drawing. His sensitivity was instrumental in making Complex of Birds one of Kenojuak’s enduring masterpieces.

References: Please visit our listing for this lot on the First Arts website.

1. NGC Curator Christine Lalonde suggests that the print might be stonecut and linocut (presumably linocut for the bird spirit); see Christine Lalonde and Leslie Boyd Ryan, Uuturautiit: Cape Dorset 1959-2009 (Ottawa: NGC, 2009), cat. 5. James Houston identified the print as a stonecut without a preconceived plan of exactly what I am going to execute in full, and so I come up with a small part of it which is pleasing to me and I use that as a starting point to wander into, through the drawing. I may start off at one end of a form not even knowing what the entirety of the form is going to be; just drawing as I am thinking, thinking as I am drawing. And that’s how I develop my images. [1]


3. NGC Curator Christine Lalonde suggests that the print might be stonecut and linocut (presumably linocut for the bird spirit), see Christine Lalonde and Leslie Boyd Ryan, Uuturautiit: Cape Dorset 1959-2009 (Ottawa: NGC, 2009), cat. 5. James Houston identified the print as a stonecut without a preconceived plan of exactly what I am going to execute in full, and so I come up with a small part of it which is pleasing to me and I use that as a starting point to wander into, through the drawing. I may start off at one end of a form not even knowing what the entirety of the form is going to be; just drawing as I am thinking, thinking as I am drawing. And that’s how I develop my images. [1]
Osuitok, who started carving ivory as a young teenager, began incising pictures on ivory by the 1940s. He first drew and perfected the images in pencil before incising them; Osuitok also tried his hand at watercolour painting. These early acquired skills might partly explain his interest in, and talent for, naturalistic representation in sculpture. Perhaps Osuitok’s earliest documented depiction of a resting caribou is a sensitively rendered image on an engraved muskox horn from 1953. Although Osuitok eventually became famous for his sculptures of caribou and carved them fairly prolifically, we cannot recall an example dating before 1970. This achingly beautiful small sculpture is therefore an exceedingly rare prototype if not unique in the artist’s oeuvre of this period.


The elder brother of the famous Cape Dorset sculptor Osiutok (see below), Sheokjuk probably began carving in ivory in the mid-late 1940s during his stay in Kimmirut (Lake Harbour), the skill and finesse he developed there stood him in good stead in his future work in both ivory and stone. He returned to the Cape Dorset area in 1948, and began carving in stone at the request of James Houston in 1952. Sheokjuk moved back to Kimmirut again in the years 1954-1959, working in both stone and ivory. Both the use of Cape Dorset stone and the style of the carving suggest the date c. 1952-54 for this lovely work. That places it among examples such as the Bust of Woman of 1952-53 and the Bust of a Young Man and Young Woman of 1954-59 (Early Masters pp. 157 and 160) in terms of both style and finesse. (By the way, we would suggest the pair of busts dates from early in Sheokjuk’s second Kimmirut period.) However, Running Boy is perhaps unique in Sheokjuk’s oeuvre when it comes to the sculptor’s sense of movement and joyous aspet. We can think of only one other Sheokjuk carving of the period that comes close to the liveliness of this delightful image [1], even the artist’s highly realistic ivory caribou look static in comparison. We are not sure if Sheokjuk had young children at this time, but the sculpture certainly looks like a father’s loving portrait of a son running excitedly to greet him. [1] For a charming contemporaneous Boy with Dog of very similar appearance but less sense of movement, see Cynthia Waye Cook, Inuit Sculpture in the Collection of the Art Gallery of York University (North York: AGYU, 1988) cat. 8. We are certain the subject is the same young boy.

References: Please visit our listing for this lot on the First Arts website.

Osuitok, who started carving ivory as a young teenager, began incising pictures on ivory by the 1940s. He first drew and perfected the images in pencil before incising them; Osuitok also tried his hand at watercolour painting. These early acquired skills might partly explain his interest in, and talent for, naturalistic representation in sculpture. Perhaps Osuitok’s earliest documented depiction of a resting caribou is a sensitively rendered image on an engraved muskox horn from 1953. Although Osuitok eventually became famous for his sculptures of caribou and carved them fairly prolifically, we cannot recall an example dating before 1970. This achingly beautiful small sculpture is therefore an exceedingly rare prototype if not unique in the artist’s oeuvre of this period.


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18 JOHN TIKTAK, R.C.A. (1916-1981) KANGIQLINIQ (RANKIN INLET), Composition with Many Faces, 1974, stone, 12 x 6.5 x 6 in (30.5 x 16.5 x 15.2 cm) signed “TIC.”

Estimate: $25,000/35,000


“Tiktak as a man and as an artist…had a quiet and austere power that often was the strongest of them all, using tension with his discipline of line and volume to evoke intensity of feeling, simple insight and a stark and sad humanity that strikes upon the heart.” Robert Williamson [1]

Tiktak’s earliest known multiple-head composition, Family in the Swinton Collection at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, dates from 1962 [2], but the artist probably carved his first true cluster of heads and faces c. 1967. This imagery soon became a favourite subject. [3] This magnificent work is unquestionably one of Tiktak’s finest renditions of the theme. Although only about one-third the size of the famous Heads Emerging from Stone in the National Museum of History collection, Composition with Many Faces is easily as monumental. As with that sculpture, the heads here are evenly sized; however, they are more densely packed, and overall the composition seems more unified and ordered. And unlike another comparable work in the Klaemer Collection at the AGO, the eight heads here look fully formed. Rather than simply emerging from the stone matrix, they each thrust outwards as if trying to escape the confines of the material. One can almost hear their cries. It’s eerie, compelling, and totally awesome.

2. Family is illustrated in Bernadette Driscoll, Rankin Inlet/Kangirlliniq (WAG, 1981) cat. 49.

References: For a quite similar composition by Tiktak see Norman Zepp, The Williamson Collection of Inuit Sculpture (Regina: Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, 1987) cat. 79. Perhaps Tiktak’s largest version of this theme is Heads Emerging from Stone from c. 1967 in the Canadian Museum of History collection, illustrated in George Swinton, Sculpture of the Inuit (1971/92), figs. 346 and 655; for other similar imagery in the same publication see figs. 649, 651 and 656. See also Ingo Hessel, Inuit Art: An Introduction (Douglas & McIntyre, 1998), fig. 76; Jean Blodgett, Grasp Tight the Old Ways (AGO, 1983) cat. 147; and Gerald McMaster ed., Inuit Modern (Toronto: AGO, 2010), p. 127.
JESSIE OONARK, O.C., R.C.A (1906-1985), QAMANI'TUAQ (BAKER LAKE), Untitled Wool Hanging, 1974, stroud, felt, and embroidery floss, 20.5 x 72 in (52.1 x 182.9 cm), signed “Dool.”

Estimate: $25,000/35,000

Provenance: Inukshuk Gallery, Waterloo, Ontario; Acquired from the above by a Private Collection, Ontario.


Jean Bidodgeff beautifully summarizes Oonark’s approach to visual expression in the concluding paragraph of her essay, “The Art of Jessie Oonark.”

“...In Oonark’s hands, space becomes subject, real becomes abstract, decorative becomes symbolic, thought becomes image, or vice versa; or some combination of them all at once...”

Canoes do not appear often in Oonark’s art, but it turns out that Oonark had a very strong personal memory of one in particular, that the two pairs of male and female figures at opposite ends of this hanging represent Oonark and Kabloonak in a slightly talisman-like significance for the artist. The birds here could be viewed as spirit guides.

We wonder if the sequence of four canoes represents a single craft making its way along a lake or river (or through time, or memory), or if Oonark was once again multiplying and modifying shapes for decorative/symbolic effect. Given the “processional” look of much of Oonark’s imagery, comparisons have often been drawn between her wall hangings and Egyptian art. In that vein, let us point out a strikingly similar here: the image looks like a small flotilla of Egyptian Sunken boats! In the mid 1970s, Oonark experimented with interesting shapes and formats for her wall hangings; this period is replete with patterns of lush and more muted colours, in both appliqué and embroidery. And, typically, she loved symmetry but was never afraid to alter it, making numerous small changes to the figures and their embellishments. As we allow our view to skip back and forth across this beautiful wall hanging, we realize that it is defined as much by its quirks as it is by its symmetry.


2. This Thematically related drawing by Oonark, also from 1974, is illustrated in Marion Jackson et al., Qamani’tuaq: Where the River Widens (Guelph: Macdonald Stewart Art Centre, 1995) cat. 10.

3. For a 1982-1983 Oonark print with closely related imagery see People in Kayaks. The print depicts people and animals in three vertically stacked kayaks; the bottom boat has a human prow and stern.

References: Please visit our listing for this lot on the First Arts website.
Inuit drum dances were usually performed in one of two circumstances: either as community events at festivals and song contests, or as part of shamanic séances. In *The Coming and Going of the Shaman* Jean Blodgett writes: “The solemnity of the performance, the absolute and evident trust and belief of the officiating shaman and his audience, and concerted singing of hymns and rhythmic beat of the drum all combined to give the séance the dignity of a religious service.”[1] Sadly, many Christian missionaries suppressed even social drum dancing. The activity went underground in some communities, or was practised at small social gatherings of mostly elders, but disappeared in others. Today drum dancing is a more secular festive activity, sometimes performed in front of a large audience.

Iiksiktaaryuk’s drum dance scenes very likely depict shamanic séances or at the very least spiritually charged communal gatherings; keeping with the overall spirit of this artist’s work, they strike us as decidedly sober, not festive. In this compelling example the relatively large size of the standing drumming figure further suggests that he is a shaman-drummer, surrounded by a seated ring of female aiyaya singers who mostly look down as they focus on accompanying the hypnotic beat of the drum. (We can imagine that an unseen male audience in the séance would have been seated or standing in a second, outer ring.) This size differential is seen also in the WAG and Sarick examples (see references).

Curator Norman Zepp chose Iiksiktaaryuk as one of two Baker Lake artists for his landmark *Pure Vision* exhibition because of the austere, elemental qualities found in his sculpture. The spirit of Iiksiktaaryuk’s pared-down antler works fits well with the work of the six stone sculptors in the exhibition and certainly contrasts with the more playful and “folk art” sensibility of other Inuit artists who have specialized in antler carving.

As is always the case with Iiksiktaaryuk’s group scenes, it is worth examining each of the figures separately, for each figure and each face has its own personality. In this respect the faces are comparable to those seen in the sculptures of Lucy Tagaaro, Iiksiktaaryuk’s “pure vision” colleague from Arviat (see Lot 10). Iiksiktaaryuk’s penchant for economy of form is apparent in at least two ways: first, in the artist’s subtle shaping and even use of natural protrusions of the antler to represent amautiq pouches, indicating that the singers are women; and second and more extreme, the way in which the drum beater simply grows out of the right arm without any differentiation from it.


22 NIVIAQSI (NIVIAKSIAK) (1908-1959) m., KINNGAIT (CAPE DORSET), Standing Hunter, c. 1955, stone, 15 x 7.5 x 9.25 in (38.1 x 19.1 x 23.5 cm), unsigned. Estimate: $12,000/18,000
Provenance: Galerie Elca London, Montreal; Acquired from the above by a Private Collection, Toronto.

Niviaqsi (also commonly known as Niviaaksiak) began carving in 1951, shortly after the first visit of James Houston to Cape Dorset, and was firmly established as an important sculptor and graphic artist by 1959, the year of his untimely and mysterious death (the inaugural annual print collection of 1959 offered nine prints by the artist). As a carver Niviaqsi excelled at producing both small and larger masterpieces. A highly refined small Mother and Child c. 1955 demonstrates both Niviaqsi's technical skill, his penchant for naturalistic detail, and his keen interest in having the subject engage with the viewer. [1] Similarly, a larger and transcendentally beautiful Mother and Child c. 1955-58 reveals his consummate workmanship, an extraordinary mastery of form and volume, and his obvious respect for his human subjects. [2]

Larger still, Standing Hunter develops these interests and talents in a slightly new direction. We are immediately struck by this hunter’s obvious engagement with us; we feel as if we are being drawn into an animated conversation with the man. The hunter’s subtle but nonetheless forceful body language, and especially his hand gesture suggest that he is trying to plead a case or explain something to us. His mouth is not merely open; he seems literally caught mid-sentence. Almost as remarkable is the painstakingly detailed and unusual delineation of the vertical folds in the hunter’s parka. These creases are caused by the man’s tightly cinched belt. It’s an unusual treatment, one that we don’t recall seeing before, and it’s as distinctive a feature of this sculpture as the man’s facial features. We are left with the feeling that we are having a very specific conversation with a very specific person. Remarkable.

1. See Walker’s Auctions, Ottawa, November 2015, Lot 83.

References: For other examples of Niviaqsi’s sculpture see CEAC, Sculpture/Inuit (Toronto: U of T Press, 1971), figs. 252, 342; Darlene Coward Wight, The Jerry Twomey Collection (Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2003) p. 52; George Swinton, Sculpture of the Inuit (Toronto: M&G, 1972/92), figs. 427, 430.

23 POSSIBLY NIVIAQSI (NIVIAKSIAK) (1908-1959) m., KINNGAIT (CAPE DORSET), Waving Boy, mid-late 1950s, stone, 4.75 x 4.75 x 1.5 in (12.1 x 12.1 x 3.8 cm), unsigned. Estimate: $1,200/1,800
Provenance: An American Private Collection; A Montreal Collection.

In its own way this small sculpture is as intriguing and engaging as Niviaqsi’s Standing Hunter. We wonder if this boy is not simply waving, but trying to catch our attention and tell us something. The carving’s sculptural forms are crisp and simplified, and quite exquisitely rendered.

Reference: For a Bust of a Man with a similar sensibility by Niviaqsi see Walker’s Auctions, May 2016, Lot 72. See also Cynthia Wayne Cook, Inuit Sculpture in the Collection of the Art Gallery of York University (North York: AGYU, 1988) cat. 6.
24 JOHNNY INUKPUK, R.C.A. (1911-2007), INUKJUAK (PORT HARRISON), Mother and Child, Carrying a Pail, early 1960s, stone, 25.25 x 18.5 x 8.5 in (64.1 x 47 x 21.6 cm), possibly signed with artist’s disc number, signature obscured by affixed HBC label

Estimate: $30,000/45,000

Provenance: The Hudson’s Bay Company Collection, Toronto; Acquired from the above by the previous Private Collector, Toronto, July 23, 1990; by descent to the present Private Collector, Toronto.

Johnny Inukpuk began carving no later than 1951, and quickly became one of Inukjuak’s preeminent sculptors, encouraged and much promoted by James Houston. Darlene Wight’s catalogue Early Masters: Inuit Sculpture 1949-1955 (WAG 2006) pp. 83-87, illustrates several early works and discusses Inukpuk’s early life and artistic career. By the late 1950s Inukpuk’s style had evolved from the compact, rotund pieces that typify his early period to more vertically oriented, often quite large works. Several of these impressive sculptures, dating from 1960-1965, are in the TD Bank Collection, the most famous of these are Mother Feeding Child from 1962 and Man Wringing Sealskin Line c. 1965 (see references).

The monumental Mother and Child, Carrying a Pail (almost surely a portrait of Inukpuk’s wife Mary and one of their children) is one of the above mentioned works as one of Johnny Inukpuk’s masterpieces of the period. As with Mother Feeding Child this standing woman is truly imposing, she is portrayed with such strength and determination that she looks almost like a goddess figure, a force of nature even. Her voluptuous but powerful body seems barely contained by her amautiq; one enormous hand grips the stone pot while the other restrains her no doubt squirming son. But as is typical of Inukpuk’s important works of the period, careful attention has also been paid to the woman’s broad but delicate facial features, her hair, pigtails, and ears, as well as various distinctive details of the figures’ clothing. In purely sculptural terms the work is a true tour-de-force, Johnny Inukpuk has brilliantly applied his full arsenal of skills, intelligence, and sensitivity.

And with his usual aplomb, the artist has managed to elicit a range of emotions in the viewer; we might find this work intimidating if we weren’t also attracted by its charm and the obvious love with which it was conceived. Fantastic.

References: A quite similar and equally monumental Mother and Child by Johnny Inukpuk, from 1961, is displayed at the Lorne Balshine Collection at the Vancouver International Airport (YVR); for an illustration see Arctic Art Museum Ltd., Arctic Art Masterworks (Vancouver, 1998), unpag. Other contemporaneous masterpieces by the artist include Mother Feeding Child from 1962 in the TD Bank Collection, illustrated in George Swinton, Sculpture of the Inuit, 1972/92, fig. 53 and elsewhere; Man Wringing Sealskin Line from 1964, also in the TD Bank Collection, in Swinton (1972/92), fig. 292. For impressive mothers and children from the mid 1960s see Walker’s Auctions, May 2015, Lot 34, and May 2016, Lot 33.
Provenance: Private collection, Australia.
Estimate: $8,000/12,000

26 SHEOUAK PETAULASSIE (1918-1963) f., PRINTMAKER: LUKTA QIATSUK (1928-2004) m., KINNGAIT (CAPE DORSEt), Pot Spirits (1960 #55), stencil, 14/50, 12.5 x 19 in (32.8 x 48.3 cm). 
Provenance: Private collection, Australia.
Estimate: $6,000/9,000

References: For a red version of this print (probably a proof) see Walker’s Auctions, May 2017, Lot 19.

Jean Blodgett discusses oral historian Dorothy Eber’s interviews with Kenojuak, in which the artist explained that she made card-board cut-out patterns, first for her sealskin designs in the 1950s and later, because she thought they would also help with her earliest drawings. Blodgett also illustrates one of Kenojuak’s earliest handbags, decorated with an image surprisingly similar to this print. However, Vision in Autumn is a much more fluid image, clearly Kenojuak used these patterns merely as points of departure. As curator Dorothy Labarge suggests: “As her forms began to interconnect, Kenojuak’s characteristic fluid line and innate sense of balance lent a rhythmic, decorative quality to her works… For Kenojuak, birds, fish, and human figures were departure points for abstract designs” [1].

The image evokes a sense of merriment and animation – quite literally. Hilariously, the pots look like characters come to life and marching along in a Disney animated film – we are reminded of the magical, whimsical scenes of dancing brooms in Fantasia and dishes in Beauty and the Beast. Sheouak passed away in 1963, at the age of 43. In spite of her all too brief career, this artist left an indelible mark on printmaking in Kinngait. Ten images by Sheouak were selected by James Houston for inclusion in the 1963 and 1964 print collections, suggesting that Houston recognized her as a remarkable talent. The delightful Pot Spirits is her most famous and best-loved print, but we would like to mention a 1962 image, the charming Shoe Birds on Rocks, which has a very similar composition.


28 LUKE ANOWTALIK (1932-2006) ARVIAT (ESKIMO POINT), Composition with People and Animals, 2005, antler, graphite, sinew, and wood, 8.75 x 28.5 x 19.5 in (22.2 x 72.4 x 49.5 cm), signed, “MAUDP”.
Provenance: Private Collection, Ottawa.
Estimate: $6,000/9,000

References: For similar antler compositions by Anowtalik see Walker’s Auctions, Nov. 2015, Lot 118; and Feheley Fine Arts, Born at the Ahiarmiut (Caribou Inuit) camp at Ennadai Lake and already carving there occasionally in the 1950s, Luke Anowtalik became one of the Winnipeg Art Gallery see George Swinton, Sculpture of the Inuit (Toronto: M&S, 1972/92), fig. 592. See also expandinginuit.com

Antler seemed to bring out both the whimsical and the spiritual sides of his nature; Anowtalik’s profound connection with the caribou is evident in his late pencil drawings as well. Towards the end of his life Anowtalik carved almost exclusively in antler, creating a series of major works that are more festive than narrative; they usually depict imaginary groupings of humans, birds, caribou and other animals. In contrast with the sobriety of antler sculptures by Luke Iksiktaaryuk of Baker Lake (see Lot 21) Anowtalik’s work is more light-hearted, magical quality that is truly captivating. The tableau is arranged so that the figures almost seem like the performers in a play; one of the actors is even taking a bow! We sometimes wonder if Anowtalik had a secret supply of pixie dust that he would sprinkle on his favourite creations. Enchanting.

Composition with People and Animals

29 MARGARET UYAUPERQ ANIKSAK (1905-1999) ARVIAT (ESKIMO POINT), Standing Woman with Skin Bag, c. 1967-68, stone, skin, and sinew, 8.25 x 4.75 x 2.25 in (21 x 12.1 x 3.2 cm), signed, “HP”.
Estimate: $1,200/1,800
Provenance: Private Collection, Toronto.

I see myself in the carvings, having poor clothing… I try my best to make the image as close to a real person as possible. I try to show what the person is wearing and what they are doing… (Artist interviewed by Ingo Hessell, 1989)

Unlike many of her Arviat artist peers, Margaret Uyauperk aimed for realism, as is the skin bag the woman holds.

Reference: For similar pieces by Aniskak see Walker’s Auctions, May 2017, Lot 178.

30 JOHN PANGNARK (1920-1988) ARVIAT (ESKIMO POINT), Figure, c. 1973-75, stone, 4.5 x 6.25 x 4.25 in (11.4 x 15.9 x 10.8 cm), unsigned.
Estimate: $3,000/5,000
Provenance: Private Collection, Ottawa.

Pangnark devoted himself almost exclusively to the single human figure, and eventually went even further down the ‘minimalist’ path than his colleague Andy Miki. Pangnark’s earliest works dating from the mid to late 1960s are already abstract figures – somewhat hard-edged but clearly recognizable as human. In the early 1970s Pangnark softened and further streamlined his forms. The human figure, though radically simplified, is still discernible. By 1973-74, however, Pangnark’s sculptures are barely recognizable as human, with only the faintest of facial details scattered onto highly abstract or amorphous forms that, seemingly, simply follow the original shape of the stone.

I really love Pangnark’s work because it’s not realistic – just ‘like mine… Our carvings are similar, they don’t look real! I understand now that carvings that are not realistic are more interesting because of their shape [Pangnark and I] used to be embarrassed by the look of our carvings… I like imaginary things rather than realistic things. [1]

We might have to search for the facial features for a few moments, but once we find them we realise that we’re looking at a masterpiece of minimalist sculpture. Pangnark had intense respect for natural stone but here he left surface untouched, he clearly shaped the gentle, subtle protrusions and left the beautiful marks of file and rasp everywhere. Exquisite.

31 MARY AYAG ANOWTALIK (1938-) ARVIAT (ESKIMO POINT), Composition with People and Caribou, 2004, stone, 9 x 7 x 8.5 in (22.9 x 17.8 x 21.6 cm), unsigned.
Estimate: $3,500/5,000

The daughter of Elizabeth Nutaraaluk and wife of Luke Anowtalik, Mary Ayag (Ayay) began carving in the late 1960s. She conceived of imagery similar to Composition with People and Caribou as early as 1974; the work in the WAG collection (see reference) from 1969 features human figures and heads and a dog in bas-relief. Ayay’s work is chiefly inspired by memories of her former life, growing up and raising her young family as a member of the Ahiarmiut (Caribou Inuit) at Ennadai Lake. It is thus both poignant and poetic that the mother’s left arm, which embraces one of her children, extends to meet the tip of the caribou’s antlers.

32 POSSIBLY SHEOKJUK OQUTAQ (1920-1982) m., KIMMIRUT/KINNGAIT (LAKE HARBOUR/CAPE DORSET), Kayaker, c. mid-1930s to 1940s, ivory, rope, black ink and inlay, 3 x 18.5 x 9.5 in (7.6 x 47 x 24.1 cm), unsigned.
Estimate: $1,800/2,800
Provenance: Ex Collection of Sir Patrick Ashley Cooper (1887-1961). Major Cooper was Governor of the Hudson’s Bay Company from 1931 to 1952, and a director of the Bank of England from 1932-1955. He was the first HBC Governor to have actually travelled in the Arctic in 265 years. Sir Patrick Ashley Cooper apparently travelled to the Eastern Arctic as early as 1934, so it is possible that this carving was acquired by him in the 1930s. However our guess is that the kayak was probably made later, perhaps in the mid 1940s. It is not certain if Sheokjuk had begun carving by that time – he would have been old enough, but we don’t know if he had the opportunity or the inclination to do so. Stylistically, the work is good enough and similar enough to be by his hand, though we must admit the possibility that the kayak was carved by an older artist whom Sheokjuk later emulated. Another intriguing possibility is that the kayak was perhaps carved by Osuitok Ipeelee, Sheokjuk’s younger brother; apparently Osuitok was already carving and trading ivory kayaks and models before 1942!

33 UNIDENTIFIED ARTIST, POSSIBLY INUPIAQ, Nome, Alaska, Engraved Cribbage Board, c. 1910-1930s, ivory and black ink, 1.5 x 29.75 x 2.75 in (3.8 x 75.7 x 7 cm), unsigned.
Estimate: $2,000/3,000
Provenance: Ex Collection of Sir Patrick Ashley Cooper (1887-1961). Major Cooper was Governor of the Hudson’s Bay Company from 1931 to 1952, and a director of the Bank of England from 1932-1955. He was the first HBC Governor to have actually travelled in the Arctic in 265 years. According to Dorothy Jean Ray, the earliest engraved (usually cribbage board) with a panoramic view of Nome date from 1903. These scenes were based on photos of Nome taken from the sea, and depict the bustling town including the famous Geiger toll bridge and a second bridge leading to Fort Davis. [1] One side of this possibly later, crisply engraved tusk depicts the very same scene on one side, and a charming scene of a campsite and bear hunters on the other.
References: For a cribbage board from Nome with a strikingly similar view of the town, dated 1919, see Dorothy Jean Ray, A Legacy of Arctic Art (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1996, fig. 49). This is included in a larger chapter “Pictorial Engraving or Eskimo scrimshaw” pp. 99-127.

34 ATTRIBUTED TO SHEOKJUK OQUTAQ (1920-1982) m., KIMMIRUT/KINNGAIT (LAKE HARBOUR/CAPE DORSET), Kayaker, mid-late 1940s, ivory, rope, black ink and inlay, 2.75 x 15.75 x 6.25 in (7 x 40 x 15.9 cm), unsigned.
Estimate: $1,500/2,500
Provenance: Ex Collection of Sir Patrick Ashley Cooper (1887-1961). Major Cooper was Governor of the Hudson’s Bay Company from 1931 to 1952, and a director of the Bank of England from 1932-1955. He was the first HBC Governor to have actually travelled in the Arctic in 265 years. Sir Patrick Ashley Cooper apparently travelled to the Eastern Arctic as early as 1934, so it is possible that this carving was acquired by him in the 1930s. However our guess is that the kayak was probably made later, perhaps in the mid 1940s. It is not certain if Sheokjuk had begun carving by that time – he would have been old enough, but we don’t know if he had the opportunity or the inclination to do so. Stylistically, the work is good enough and similar enough to be by his hand, though we must admit the possibility that the kayak was carved by an older artist whom Sheokjuk later emulated. Another intriguing possibility is that the kayak was perhaps carved by Osuitok Ipeelee, Sheokjuk’s younger brother; apparently Osuitok was already carving and trading ivory kayaks and models before 1942! Our strong attribution to the famous ivory carver Sheokjuk is based on the overall fine workmanship and true finesse in the overall execution of the piece, but also more specifically to the style of the figure, in particular the facial features and treatment of the hair. This is the finest, most elegant example we have seen. The kayaker is truly a lovely small sculpture in its own right, its delicacy anticipating Sheokjuk’s small carvings of people from the 1950s.

My experience art collectors are like snowflakes, in that no two are alike. I have met collectors who have a singular focus on one artist, community, or subject, and others who have less stringent constraints. This wonderful group of sculptures was entrusted to First Arts by one of the most eclectic and uncompromising collectors that I have ever met. Ours is a relationship that goes back over forty years, beginning when I befriended a fellow student in a college art history course. Over the next several years I was a frequent visitor to her parents’ home where I always enjoyed my discussions with her very affable parents.

The house itself was a work of art, unlike any that I had seen before or since, with towering ceilings and filled with massive palm trees enjoying the light allowed by the curtain wall construction. Every available inch of wall and counter space was filled with magnificent works of art from across the globe. There were entire sections of shelves filled with Pre-Columbian ceramics and other artifacts from around the world.

The walls were adorned with American Pop artists, Latin American masters, and an impressive array of Canadian painters from the 60s and 70s, with much of the floor space devoted to large African sculptures.

Of course, the pieces that were nearest and dearest to me were the stunning Inuit sculptures in the collection. Scattered throughout the house were perhaps hundreds of sculptures ranging from dozens of supersize beaded works by Eva Talooki Aliktiluk, a smattering of small Joe Talirunili owls and Paula Safia bears, to some of the largest and finest examples of works by Bernabas Anuusungaaq and Tuna Iqalig. The Inuit collection was no less eclectic than the rest of the artworks in the house, with the sole unifying factor being quality. These pieces were almost exclusively acquired before any of the artists had become household names.

The Karoo Ashiwaq (1940-1974) was acquired when the artist was still alive; the Nick Sikkuark was the cover image for the artist’s first solo exhibition in the South; the Tuna Iqalig was exhibited at the AGO in 1976. The fabulous Judas Ullulaq was acquired from my late mother in one of the first exhibitions of Spence Bay (Tasilook) sculptures in the early 1980s, and was the centerpiece of a core subset of the collection devoted to drummers.

It is truly an honour to be able to present these pieces that have, over time, become lifelong friends.

Mark London
We know that Barnabus Arnasungaaq began carving muskoxen as early as 1964. He actually enjoyed carving a wide variety of subject matter over his extraordinarily long career, but by the mid 1970s his affinity with muskoxen had captured the imagination of collectors, and Arnasungaaq was receiving many requests for depictions of the animal. Soon the popularity of “Barnabus Muskoxen” was rivalling that of “Pauta Bears.” Arnasungaaq has the uncanny ability to render both the massiveness and the quiet grace of the animal with surprising economy of form.

This colossal and magnificent sculpture was carved in 1973, when Arnasungaaq was in his prime and at the height of his powers, working with fellow Baker Lake artists Peter Savoga, George Tatanniq, Tuna Iquliq, Luke Ilisikaryuk, Matthew Agigaq and others to create an entirely new sculptural aesthetic. Baker Lake was enjoying its heyday as a new hub of Inuit art expression, with the simultaneous flowering of the sculptural, graphic, and textile arts.

Muskox is almost certainly Arnasungaaq’s largest, most monumental rendering of the subject. That is an impressive achievement in itself, but the sculpture also happens to be one of the loveliest examples we have ever seen. The sculpture perfectly synthesizes all of the features we have come to expect from the classic “Barnabus muskox.” Beautiful in its overall form, it is massive yet surprisingly graceful; it displays elegant contours from every angle (even from a low vantage point); and its exquisite finish and beautifully modulated texture follow the broad forms of the animal perfectly. (1) And importantly, Arnasungaaq has got the proportions down perfectly, for all of the sculpture’s enormous size and weight there is not even a hint of clumsiness. Muskox has the grace and charm of a sculpture that you could hold in your hand.

Bravo, Maestro Arnasungaaq.

1. For an excellent contemporaneous but smaller example in the collection of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection see Susan Gustavison, Northern Rock: Contemporary Inuit Stone Sculpture (Kleinburg: McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1999) cat. 39. Arnasungaaq’s commentary on that work is relevant to our example:

I made grooves with a file to make it white. When I started carving I used to make the musk ox smooth, but then I thought that it didn’t look like fur so I started making those grooves. It was a lot of work making rows and rows of those marks, but I got it into my mind that was what I wanted, so I did it.

(p. 109)

References: For two excellent and probably roughly contemporaneous examples by the artist in the Twomey Collection at the Winnipeg Art Gallery see Bernadette Driscoll, Uumajut: Animal Imagery in Inuit Art (WAG, 1985) cats. 9 and 10. For a shaggier treatment of a muskox c. 1974-75 from the Sarick Collection at the AGO, see Ingo Hessel, Inuit Art: An Introduction (Douglas & McIntyre, 1998), fig. 83.

37 BARNABUS ARNASUNGAAQ (1924-2017) QAMANI’TUQ (BAKER LAKE), Muskox, 1973, stone, 14.75 x 25 x 13.5 in (37.5 x 63.5 x 34.3 cm), signed and dated “ᐃᓇᓱᒐ/ AUG 1973.”

Estimate: $60,000/80,000

Provenance: Private Collection, Montreal.
38 TUNA IQULIQ (1934-2015) QAMANI’ITUAQ (BAKER LAKE), Kneeling Woman, c. 1973-75, stone, 13.5 x 12.75 x 12.5 in (34.3 x 32.4 x 31.8 cm), signed “ᐃᑯᓕ”.

Estimate: $12,000/25,000
Provenance: Inuit Gallery of Eskimo Art, Toronto; Private Collection, Montreal.
Exhibited and Published: Art Gallery of Ontario, The People Within (Toronto: AOG, 1976), cat. 62. Kneeling Woman was one of nine sculptures by Iquliq chosen for this exhibition.

“Tuna Iquliq (Ikoolik) celebrates the individual in his moving and powerful sculptures. His people reach outward from the stone mass, demanding the emotional participation of the viewer.” [2]

Kneeling Woman is one of the three truly outstanding Tuna Iquliq works from the landmark 1976 AOG exhibition The People Within; the other two, Kneeling Woman with Cambou Sleeves and Grappling Figures, are in the National Museum of History and National Gallery of Canada collections respectively. The woman’s kneeling pose is not unusual; we are reminded of many classic works from Nunavik and from Baker Lake itself. But the rawness of the execution, combined with the massive size of the stone itself, makes this a sculpture of astonishing power.

That the woman’s head, and to a lesser extent her arms and hands, are carved with more precision and finish, seem only to emphasize the wonderful crudeness and immensity of her body and clothing. Even more remarkable are the beseeching gesture of her arms and the searching tilt of the woman’s face. The feeling we get is almost one of religious supplication: Why me? What have I done? Please help me. Although Tuna’s carving style is more brutal, we are reminded of the work and spirit of the German expressionist sculptor Ernst Barlach (1870-1938). A masterpiece.

References: Please visit our listing for this lot on the First Arts website.

39 JUDAS ULLULAQ (1937-1999) UQSUQTUUQ (GJOA HAVEN), Drum Dancer, c. 1983, stone, horn, antler, ivory, wood, membranes, hide and sinew, 8.75 x 7 x 7.75 in (22.2 x 17.8 x 19.7 cm), unsigned.

Estimate: $12,000/18,000
Provenance: Galerie Elca London, Montreal; Acquired from the above by a Private Collection, Montreal.
Exhibited and Published: Galerie Elca London, Montreal; Spence Bay Artists/Les artistes de Spence Bay (Canadian Arctic Producers, 1984) cat. 14.

Judas Ullulaq had just moved to Gjoa Haven from Taloyoak (Spence Bay) when the above-mentioned catalogue was produced, and he remained there for the remainder of his life. Darlene Wight’s comments in a contemporaneous solo exhibition catalogue is helpful in understanding Ullulaq’s early style: “Ullulaq’s sculpture is an extension of his real world…Single figures are always engaged in an action that infers a specific environment. There is a pervasive dynamism in the carved works that is revealed in body movements, gestures, and especially in the faces.” Wight goes on to compare Ullulaq’s style with that of his famous nephew Karoo Ashevak’s: “However, Karoo’s subjects were often imaginary spirits with magico-religious significance. Ooloolah’s work…is of the real world. The reality, for him, consists of people and of human emotion.” In Judas Ooloolah (Ottawa: Canadian Arctic Producers, 1983).

In later years Ullulaq would expand his repertoire to include supernatural themes, but this exceptiona­lly fine Drum Dancer is the perfect exemplar of an early subject and the dynamic style that made this artist famous. Ullulaq’s craftsmanship here is superb, from the shaping and finish of the stone down to the smallest inlaid details. The drummer’s face is highly expressive, with features that are distorted without being grotesque. His body too is charged with energy and movement. We love the way the drummer’s left leg is unrealistically short compared to the bent right leg! It’s an anatomical impossibility but compositionally it’s perfect. And the hair! Delightful.

References: Please visit our listing for this lot on the First Arts website.
40 KAROO ASHEVAK (1940-1974) TALOYOAK (SPENCE BAY), Spirit, 1972, whale bone, antler, and stone, 14.5 x 6 x 13 in (36.8 x 15.2 x 33 cm), signed "ᑲᔪ".

Estimate: $40,000/60,000

Provenance: Galerie Lippel, Montreal; Acquired from the above by a Private Collection, Montreal.


"Each sculpture is an integral unit representing a particular being, without reference to specific myths, stories or daily events…The images in Ashevak's sculpture originate in the general culture and tradition of the Eskimo, but the works are not so specific in reference as to be bound by this ethnic origin. The cultural heritage and consequent meaning strengthen and enrich the images but do not restrict them. - the work can speak to those who have no knowledge of the Eskimo or his culture." [1]

In the early 1970s Karoo Ashevak's work most definitely did speak to a surprisingly wide range of art collectors and critics, and continues to do so today. Jean Blodgett’s explanation of the wide appeal of Karoo’s sculpture is bang on. Karoo’s ability to communicate psychological, emotional and/or spiritual meaning directly to the viewer – coupled of course with his brilliant imagination and extraordinary skill as a sculptor – will forever make his work compelling.

The 1973 Karoo Ashevak: Spirits catalogue (published in January 1973) indicates how explosively creative the year 1972 was in Karoo’s artistic development. Karoo’s first solo show had taken place in March 1972 at the Inuit Gallery of Eskimo Art in Toronto; the fifteen works illustrated in the New York show catalogue reveal an astonishing variety and richness of sculptural form, as well as the artist’s incredible mastery of whale bone and other organic materials.

There is a certain “family resemblance” between Spirit and other works in the New York show – catalogue nos. 3 and 7 come especially to mind – but Spirit stands out for its purity of form and elegance. Jean Blodgett has pointed out that by 1972 Karoo had already created some of his most complex works [2], so perhaps we can see Spirit coming across as a conscious “getting back to basics” by the artist. As Judy McGrath, who knew Karoo well, has written: “Ashevak always begins his carvings with an idea in mind and then chooses material of appropriate sizes and shapes.” [3] So we know that Karoo had something pure in mind; something pristine, elegant, and yes, just a bit phallic. The sculpture’s very simplicity allows us to focus on the supremely beautiful face of the spirit. Even without shamanic trappings – or perhaps because of that – Spirit is arguably Karoo’s most spiritually uplifting work.

2. ibid.

References: Jean Blodgett’s landmark retrospective show and catalogue, Karoo Ashevak (Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1977), illustrates ten sculptures from 1972 (cats. 38-27). See also Gerald McMaster ed., Inuit Modern (Toronto AGO, 2010), pp. 118-119. For a similarly transcendent sculpture by Karoo, from the same period, see Walker’s Auctions, May 2018, Lot 33. For a small sculpture by Karoo, Spirit Face and Hand from c. 1971-72, with similarly elegant facial features, see Walker’s Auctions, May 2013, Lot 33.
The onetime matriarch of the famous Ahiarmiut (Caribou Inuit) camp at Ennadai Lake, 400 kilometres west of Arviat, Elizabeth Nutaraaluk began carving while still living on the land, trading small pieces for tobacco. She took it up seriously in the mid 1960s. She is best known for her extraordinarily moving depictions of mothers and children (see Lot 59). Nutaraaluk’s overall aesthetic tended toward the primal but her classic works from the 1970s could display remarkable delicacy as well. As she became older her style became ever more raw and expressionistic, and the psychological impact of her works more intense. Nutaraaluk kept carving even as she began to lose first her strength in the late 1980s, and then her eyesight in the early 1990s. The artist created mostly blocky human heads in the last years of her career; these are sometimes nicknamed her “Taster Island heads.” Most startling, however, are the small number of stark mask-like heads and faces she carved in the late 1980s, in which she utilized antler as a secondary inlay material (see references). We described the example formerly in the Albrecht collection as a “mask of almost frightening bleakness.”

Six Faces is the largest, certainly the most complex, possibly the most primal, and arguably the most important work of the series. The image is so abstracted and so raw that the subject matter escapes many viewers at first. It is only when we realize that the seven inset eyes are shared amongst the six faces that Nutaraaluk’s truly extraordinary vision is revealed. Even “bleak” may be a euphemistic description of the emotions conveyed here – words fail us, we are truly thunderstruck by the intensity of the image. That it depicts a family, in the normal sense of the word, more likely Nutaraaluk has propitiated this veritable mountainside with ancestral spirits or ghosts – perhaps the ghosts of the people lost during the famines of the 1950s. Astounding.

JESSIE OONARK, O.C., R.C.A (1906-1985), QAMANI’TUAQ (BAKER LAKE), Two Female Spirits, c. 1978, coloured pencil drawing, 29.875 x 22.175 in (76 x 56 cm), signed in syllabics “ᐅᓇ.” Estimate: $5,000/8,000
Provenance: Ex Collection of Lorne Balshine, Vancouver; Private Collection, Toronto.
Jessie Oonark’s wall hangings could be large and quite complex, often composed of several tiers of figures and symbolic or decorative elements. It is in her drawings that we sometimes see Oonark focusing on simpler compositions, working with fewer and larger figures and design elements, and experimenting with colour combinations. Oonark’s later drawings are rarely narrative; even when she portrays human figures or faces, these are often incorporated into the overall symbolic imagery. Two Female Spirits is a wonderful case in point: although incorporating two lovely women’s faces, the composition is fundamentally symbolic and almost abstract. The delicate arced shapes emanating from the faces might represent hairsticks (one of Oonark’s favourite symbols of womanhood) but the multiplication of the forms suggests further possibilities: hairsticks and arms? wings? Whether these faces represent spirits, or sisters, or a mother and daughter is almost immaterial; they soar ethereally, elegantly, and effortlessly. Stunning.
References: Please visit our listing for this lot on the First Arts website.

JESSIE OONARK, O.C., R.C.A (1906-1985), QAMANI’TUAQ (BAKER LAKE), Challenging Wrestle, c. 1975-76, coloured pencil drawing, 29.875 x 22.175 in (76 x 56 cm), signed, “ᐅᓇ.” Estimate: $6,000/9,000
Provenance: Ex Collection of Lorne Balshine, Vancouver; Private Collection, Toronto.
This important drawing is either Oonark’s original drawing for the serigraph print Challenging Wrestle (executed in 1976 and released as 1977 #24), or a very closely related second version. It is possible that Oonark was playing with the theme and created two slightly different drawings; it seems equally likely that the advisor and/or printer at the Sanavik print studio may have decided to make some changes to the original. This drawing and the print are virtually identical except for the figures on the backs of the fish-people and the colour changes. In the print the two figures are hunting or competing with spears. When asked about the print, Oonark described the large figures as creatures that lived in lakes or the ocean, adding that shamans had seen people like these. [1] These two fish-people are the wrestlers, shown with powerful arms and eyes locked together. The two small figures at the top are playing a traditional Inuit pulling game. The figures dancing and standing on the backs of the fish-people seem to be cheering on the combatants. Interestingly, the four small figures resemble those in a late 1960s Oonark drawing. [2] We love Oonark’s use of vibrant colour in this drawing; it’s a lively and entertaining image.
2. An early drawing by Oonark, Men at Games (c. 1968-69), illustrates a pulling game assisted by two helpers; see National Museum of Man, Oonark-Pangnark (Ottawa: NMM, 1970) cat. 15.
References: Please visit our listing for this lot on the First Arts website.

PRINTMAKER: WILLIAM KANAK (1937-), QAMANI’TUAQ (BAKER LAKE), Pursuit with Spears and Kayaks, 1971 (1972 #5), stonecut, A/P, 24.5 x 34 in (62.2 x 86.4 cm). Estimate: $1,800/2,800
We know that Jessie Oonark occasionally drew scenes of caribou hunting at least as early as 1963, including in the lovely Caching Caribou drawing in the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre collection. [1] Depictions of caribou hunting with bow and arrow crop up in drawings and wall hangings from the mid 1960s onwards, but scenes of caribou hunting by kayak by Oonark are quite rare. We know of one from the c. 1965, depicting a single kayaker spearing a caribou just as it reaches the shoreline. [2]
Pursuit with Spears and Kayaks is probably based on a drawing of the same period. It’s a fascinating image; the caribou are naturalistically depicted, but the rendering of the kayak hunters seems naive by comparison. Oonark seemed to be working out the depiction of the hunters themselves as the drawing progressed, with the upper one being the most realistic; she also depicted the kayakers with Anguhadluq-style mixed perspectives. Note: although the caribou are shown as though walking, Oonark states, “Those are supposed to be swimming caribou and chased by a kayak.” [3]
Notes: Please visit our listing for this lot on the First Arts website.
Pauta Saila was considered something of a “bear whisperer.” Pauta respected and loved bears but apparently did not fear them, nor they him; there is a famous story in Cape Dorset about the elderly Pauta feeding a polar bear that had wandered into town. For Pauta, carving polar bears was practically a vocation; he poured his heart and soul into his art, and it showed in his work.

“I like to carve what I feel, not merely what I see. It is the feeling that goes along with whatever one is doing... I think and feel that the bear has a spirit to be put into the carving.”[1]

Pauta was dedicated not only to his art but also to his craft. He did not take shortcuts, but worked slowly, steadily and conscientiously:

“I like to use axes when they are properly sharpened. I don’t like using grinders because they tend to take away too much of the stone. Then I use rasps, followed by files — always working towards finer and finer tools. I file only forward, not back and forth, just one stroke at a time.”[2]

Astonishingly, this magnificent bear was carved when Pauta was about seventy-five years old. We are amazed that he could even lift the stone let alone carve it to perfection and breathe life into it. Pauta would carve steadily for more than another decade, but we are not sure how many large, important pieces he produced beyond this one.


References: For similarly large and important examples by the artist, see Ingo Hessel, Inuit Art: An Introduction (Douglas & McIntyre, 1998) cover and fig. 102, from 1984 in the Sarick Collection, AGO (also illus. in Gerald McMaster ed., Inuit Modern, 2002), p. 116; Bernadette Driscoll, Uumajut, Animal Imagery in Inuit Art (WAGO, 1985) cat. 1; TD Bank Collection (also illus. in CEAC Sculpture/Art, 1975, fig. 138); Susan Gustavison, Northern Rock: Contemporary Inuit Stone Sculpture (Kleinburg: McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1999) cat. 8. See also Marion Scott Gallery, Inspiration (1996) cat. 23.

Pauta Saila was interviewed by George Swinton in Bernadette Driscoll, Uumajut (Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1985), p. 46.

References: For similarly large and important examples by the artist, see Ingo Hessel, Inuit Art: An Introduction (Douglas & McIntyre, 1998) cover and fig. 102, from 1984 in the Sarick Collection, AGO (also illus. in Gerald McMaster ed., Inuit Modern, 2002), p. 116; Bernadette Driscoll, Uumajut, Animal Imagery in Inuit Art (WAGO, 1985) cat. 1; TD Bank Collection (also illus. in CEAC Sculpture/Art, 1975, fig. 138); Susan Gustavison, Northern Rock: Contemporary Inuit Stone Sculpture (Kleinburg: McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1999) cat. 8. See also Marion Scott Gallery, Inspiration (1996) cat. 23. See also Walker’s Auctions, Nov. 2007, Lot 62; May 2013, Lot 13, May 2012, Lot 24. See Waddington’s Auctions May 2016, Lot 40; Apr. 2007, Lot 79.
47 JOE TALIRUNILI (1893-1976) PUUVIRNITUQ (POVUNGNITUK), Mother With Child in Her Amauti. c. 1965, stone and ivory, 3 3/4 x 2 1/2 x 1 3/4 in (9.5 x 6.5 x 4.4 cm), signed "J.T." Estimate: $2,500/3,500

Provenance: Private Collection, Ottawa.

This utterly charming depiction of a woman and her child is one of Joe Talirunili’s most expressive examples. The mother’s large eyes and broad grin are particularly appealing. And the baby... no, could it be Talirunili’s obsession with owls is well known, is it possible that this woman is packing an owl chick in her hood? That would explain her meekish smile. Interestingly, the woman’s amautiq exhibits decorative beadwork very similar to that of the early Inukjuak Standing Woman in this collection (see Lot 2).

References: For comparable carvings of women by the artist see Marybelle Myers ed., “Joe Talirunili... is great and beyond the reach of art”. Toronto: U of T Press, 1971, p 19. The book also illustrates a drawing (p 53) and a print (p 66) by Talirunili that depict women whose amautiq display similar beaded decorations (not to mention fifteen owl carvings).

48 CHARLIE EPOO (1913-1984) INUUKUAP (PORT HARRISON), Head of a Man, late 1950s, stone, 5 x 4 1/2 x 2 3/4 in (12.7 x 11.4 x 7 cm), signed "C.E." Estimate: $2,500/3,500

Provenance: Gift of George Swinton to Walter H. Yarwood, Canadian painter, Nov. 2011, Lot 6 (Simon POV); CEAC, Sculpture of the Inuit, 1977, p. 29. The book also illustrates a drawing (p 53) and a print (p 66) by Epo to depict women whose amautiq display similar beaded decorations (not to mention fifteen owl carvings).

49 DAVIDIALUK ALASUA AMITTUQ (1910-1976), PUVIRNITUQ (POVUNGNITUK), Northern Lights Legend. c. 1974, stone, 6 x 7 1/2 x 2 3/4 in (17 x 19.2 x 6.5 cm), signed in syllabics ("MALI-4F") Estimate: $6,000/9,000

Provenance: Collection of Peter Murdoch, Montreal, purchased from the artist c. 1974. By descent to the Estate of Lucille Drouin Murdoch

Exhibited and Published: Thomas Owen Eisomon et al, Stories in Stone (FCNQ and Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1988) cat. 7. Davidialuk is an artist who has been justly celebrated for his obsession in depicting dramatic scenes from stories and legends in his sculptures and prints. In his "Foreword" to the commemorative publication Davidialuk 1977... he referred to Davidialuk in one of the last myth-makers." [1] The artist carved several depictions of this story, here is a quick summary of the details:

One night, three companions went outside and one of them started whistling. The Northern Lights began to roar and whip up a violent wind, but ignoring the warnings of his friends, the young man kept whistling. The Aurora swooped down, decapitated him, and played football with his head. Since then, no one whistles outdoors at night.

"Davidialuk has inscribed an unlabeled legend in syllabics on the bottom of the carving, probably because, working on several pieces at the same time, he got them mixed up. Mr. Murdoch, who received the carving from the artist himself, was told that it did indeed describe the Northern Lights Legend" [Stories in Stone, p 34] For the curious, the inscription reads: "Par BON du Page du ER dEc Et tc 34 / o 0 = / i" [14m 75.3] A story about Kujukjuk who was an orphan and slept on the porch and lay down in the house.

References: For further examples of the "Northern Lights" theme by Davidialuk see Ingo Heissel, Inuit Art: An Introduction (1998), fig. 61. For more detailed information on Inuit beliefs regarding the Aurora Borealis (known as Aqsarniit in Inuktitut) see John MacDonald, The Arctic Sky; Inuit Astronomy, Star Lore, and Legend (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1998), 156-157.

50 DAVIDIALUK ALASUA AMITTUQ (1910-1976), PUVIRNITUQ (POVUNGNITUK), Scene from the Legend of Lumaaq, early 1970s, wood and graphite, 5 x 17 1/4 x 6 3/4 in (12.7 x 44.5 x 17 cm), signed, "MALI-4F", inscribed indistinctly in syllabics (17.6-29).

Estimate: $2,500/3,500


The use of wood was frowned upon from the earliest days of the "Eskimo art experiment"; James Houston discouraged it in his infamous instructional manual of 1932. The Elders should be encouraged to use only the materials native to their land, such as ivory, stone, bone, skin, grass, copper, etc. The introduction of wood, cloth, and metals into his art destroys the true Eskimo quality and places him in competition with craftsmen elsewhere who have a complete mastery of the materials." [1] Even some twenty years later, Davidialuk’s use of wood would have been considered daring (and more likely to have been attempted by his cousin Joe Talirunili). This fascinating and rare work illustrates the dramatic conclusion to the story of the blind boy and the loon: having regained his sight, the boy exacts his revenge upon his cruel mother; she is dragged out to sea by a large whale that he has just harpooned.

1. James Houston, Sanajasak: Eskimo Handicrafts (Montreal/Ottawa: Canadian Handicrafts Guild and Department of Resources and Development, 1952), p. 3.

References: For a similar composition in stone by an unidentified Puvirnituq artist c. 1958-59, see George Swinton, Sculpture of the Inuit Toronto, M&S, 1972/92), fig. 355.
Standing figures of Euro-American men (commonly referred to as “Sea Captains” though not all of them were such) are among the most fascinating and charming works of nineteenth-century Haida argillite art. Carved mostly in the 1840s and 1850s many seem to be portraits, and no doubt some were commissioned. The figures’ clothes, hair and other features were carved in remarkable, often individualistic detail. Typically, sea captain figures were dressed in naval uniforms or formal attire, usually wearing some form of cap. Their physiques are exaggeratedly slim, with long legs, small hands and narrow facial features; some had inset bone or ivory faces.

Standing figures of Euro-American women (or females in Euro-American dress) are less common, though interestingly they appear fairly frequently in the elaborate ship’s pipes carved during the same period. While a few of these female subjects (including “captains’ wives”) would have represented foreigners, many likely would have been Indigenous women. Like the sea captain sculptures these figures are remarkable in aspect; their clothing displays carefully delineated folds, pleats, and decorative details, and their hair is often beautifully combed and plaited.

Female Figure Holding Two Dolls is absolutely one of the most strikingly beautiful works we have seen in this genre. Although the figure is definitively posed, she carries herself naturally and has none of the stiffness and slightly “priggish” look of some other examples. Her face is exceptionally beautiful, and her hair is simply but delicately styled into two ponytails. In our opinion the subject is a young Indigenous woman or quite possibly an adolescent. Her overall look of girlishness is reinforced by the fact that she appears to be holding a pair of dolls. Though doll-like, the figures may be dance puppets; however it has also been suggested that carved wooden figures—not just argillite works—were routinely made for sale to visitors by Haida artists, so perhaps this young woman is in fact offering them up for purchase. [1] The young lady’s European-style clothing is simple but very elegant; the beautifully patterned neckline adds a finishing touch to the ceremonial, almost regal quality that this gorgeous sculpture radiates. Spectacular.


51 UNIDENTIFIED ARTIST, Haida, Female Figure Holding Two Dolls, c. 1840-1860, argillite, 20.7 x 5.7 x 5.7 cm. Estimate: $18,000/28,000

Provenance: Private Collection, British Columbia.
52 CAPTAIN ANDREW BROWN (1879-1962), HAIDA, MASSET, HAIDA GWAII, Totem Pole, c. 1910-30, argillite, 10.5 x 2.75 x 2.25 in (26.7 x 7 x 5.7 cm), unsigned.
Estimate: $2,500/3,500
Provenance: An American Private Collection; Walker’s, Ottawa, May 2013, Lot 300; Acquired from the above by the present Private Collection, Toronto.
“Captain” Andrew Brown’s Haida name was Owt’iwans, inherited from his grandfather. He was an Eagle of the Gitins division from Yan, and so frequently used the eagle crest. His English given name was Andrew Brown, and he was given the nickname “Captain” because he was a skilled boat-builder and shipper. He was widely known as a storyteller and humorist.
Brown’s early carving was influenced by the work of Charles Edenshaw, and he was active for several decades – at least until around 1940, when his eyesight began to fade. Brown’s style is typified by intricate detail, stippled or cross-hatched texturing, turned-down mouths, and pointy noses, sometimes slightly upturned. This pole has a bear-man at the top, holding a disc above an eagle above a beaver holding a stick in his mouth. Note that between the wings of the eagle are four potlatch rings.

53 UNIDENTIFIED ARTIST, HAIDA, Ceremonial Pipe, c. 1830s, argillite with metal stand, 2 x 5.25 x 2 in (5.1 x 13.3 x 2.5 cm); with metal stand: 4 x 5.25 x 1.5 in (10.2 x 13.3 x 3.8 cm), unsigned.
Estimate: $3,000/5,000
Provenance: Private Collection, British Columbia.
The ceremonial pipe form is considered to be the earliest type of Haida argillite carving. This pipe’s short length, overall equal and compact shape, rustic carving style, and relatively broad width strongly suggests the ceremonial pipe type. The pipe’s intertwined raven and human figures imagery as well as the almost freestanding cylindrical pipe bowl are common elements of ceremonial pipes as well.

54 UNIDENTIFIED ARTIST, HAIDA, Platter, c. 1920-1950, argillite and bone, 12 x 7.5 x .75 in (30.5 x 19.1 x 1.9 cm), unsigned.
Estimate: $1,500/2,500
Provenance: Private Collection, British Columbia.
This late period platter probably originates in the Skidegate school. Unlike many platters from this era, the shark or dogfish imagery is still presented bilaterally, which indicates that the carver was still versed in the principles of formline.

55 UNIDENTIFIED ARTIST, HAIDA, PROBABLY MASSET, HAIDA GWAII, Totem Pole, argillite, c. 1890-1910, 9.5 x 2 x 2 in (24.1 x 5.1 x 5.1 cm), unsigned.
Estimate: $1,800/2,800
Provenance: Private Collection, Montreal.
The first argillite model totem poles, their designs often based on actual wooden poles, were probably carved in the 1860s; by the 1880s totem poles were by far the most numerous works produced by Haida artists. By the late 19th century only two main schools remained: Skidegate and Masset. The full ovoids in this example suggest that this pole was carved at Masset.

56 POSSIBLY PAUL JONES (c. 1847-1927), SKIDEGATE, HAIDA GWAII, Totem Pole, argillite, c. 1890-1910, 9.5 x 2.2 x 2 in (24.1 x 5.6 x 5.1 cm), unsigned.
Estimate: $1,500/2,500
Provenance: Private Collection, British Columbia.
Paul Jones hailed from Tanu Island on the east coast of Moresby Island. Drew and Wilson (p. 250) describe his style thus: “The crests have a slight uptilt, the human and animal cheeks are sunken, and mouths wide and often downturned.” In this pole, composed of a beaver, raven, and eagle, the birds have distinctive feather patterns similar to a pole attributed to Jones (see Drew and Wilson, p. 252).
Among animal subjects the muskox probably vies with birds as the most popular among Baker Lake artists, and it is the animal that is most associated with the Baker Lake sculptural aesthetic. Rustic in conception, this superb early example by Dominic Kingilik emphasizes the bulky mass of the animal; other artists such as George Tatarnik will take a more streamlined approach. Kingilik, who was barely in his twenties when he began carving, quickly became one of the most well-respected Baker Lake carvers of the early 1960s; fifteen works by him were included in the 1964 Ottawa Civic Art Museum exhibition sponsored by the Winnipeg Art Gallery.

References: For similarly fine examples of muskox by the artist see George Savton, Sculpture of Inuit, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1972/92), fig. 702, and Walker’s Auctions, Nov. 2012, lot 43. See also the extraordinary Walking Woman by Kingilik in this auction (Lot 97).

58 DOMINIC KINGILIK (1914-1998), QAMANI’ITUAQ (BAKER LAKE), Muskox, c. 1964, stone and antler, 33.5 x 20 x 3.5 in (84.6 x 50.8 x 8.9 cm), unsigned. Estimate: $2,000/3,000

Provenance: Private Collection, British Columbia.

57 JOHN KAVIK (1897-1993), KANGIQLINIQ (RANKIN INLET), Standing Man, 1973, stone, 8.25 x 4.5 x 2.25 in (21.4 x 11.5 x 5.8 cm), unsigned. Estimate: $4,000/6,000

Provenance: Private Collection, California, purchased directly from the artist in 1979, Waddington’s Auctions, June 2014, Lot 101. Acquired from the above by a Private Collection, Toronto.

Until one begins to sift through scores of photographs it is not always apparent how truly inventive certain artists are, even relatively prolific ones such as John Kavik, who worked steadily from the very early 1960s until just a few years before his death in 1993. As one galleryist has written: “…every time Kavik picked up his tools to make a sculpture it was as if for the first time.” [1] For this reason it is not always easy to date works, so “…every time Kavik picked up his tools to make a sculpture it was as if for the first time.” [1] For this reason it is not always easy to date works, so it is gratifying when they can be documented with precision. This fine Standing Man is quite naturally posed – for Kavik – and well finished, and could conceivably have been carved almost ten years earlier. However it retains the elemental, rugged sensibility that is the hallmark of the artist’s style.


59 ELIZABETH NUTARAALUK AULATJUT (1914-1998), ARVIAT (ESKIMO POINT), Mother and Child, c. 1970-72, stone, 8 x 6 x 3 in (20.3 x 15.5 x 7.6 cm), unsigned. Estimate: $6,000/9,000

Provenance: Acquired from the artist by Edith Cram, while she was living in Arviat from 1970-73, Inuit Gallery of Vancouver. Acquired from the above by the present American Private Collection, 2010.

Nutaraaluk’s classic depictions of mothers and children from the early to mid 1970s possess an extraordinarily lyrical quality. Nutaraaluk, who had suffered for and with her family through famine and relocation seemed to pour every bit of her heart and soul into the works. The combination of rawness and tenderness, love and anguish, hope and weariness are all poignantly expressed. In Mother and Child, the sculpture’s overall soft form is beautifully punctuated by the artist’s trademark hatch lines representing breasts and hands. – Nutaraaluk’s symbols of motherhood. The British museum director and author Julian Spalding’s poetic commentary on a similar work in the Sarick Collection at the AGO seems apt here as well:

"This stone is like a womb. The figures are wrapped up in it as bodies are wrapped up for warmth, especially babies just after birth. But their extremities are exposed – to cold, death and grief… This heartfelt sculpture, genuine expression without any trace of pretension, worthy in its modest way, to sit alongside the works of Barlach, Moore and Michelangelo.” [2]


References: Please visit our listing for this lot on the First Arts website.

60 ANDY MIKI (1918-1983), ARVIAT/THIRIAGUAQ (ESKIMO POINT/WHALE COVE), Animal, c. 1965-67, stone, 7.25 x 3 x 3.25 in (18.4 x 7.6 x 8.3 cm), signed: “FP”. Estimate: $4,000/6,000

Provenance: Private Collection, Toronto.

This wonderful sculpture probably represents a skéj (Arctic ground squirrel). The animal was one of Miki’s favourite subjects; although with Miki’s later works it becomes more difficult to distinguish species, we suspect he continued to carve them regularly. This charming Arctic denizen has an undeniable sculptural presence; in its own delightful way it is as imposing as some of Miki’s masterpieces of the period (see references).

Remember that Miki was as serious and dedicated as anyone. In the words of Norman Zepp, “…these works are remarkable statuesque and one must ultimately take them seriously.” [1] Animal, with its stance, fully rounded form, and not inconsiderable size, is in fact quite statuesque. Carved during the artist’s Whale Cove years in the mid 1960s, Animal has an undeniable sculptural presence, in its own delightful way it is as imposing as some of Miki’s masterpieces of the period (see references).


References: Please visit our listing for this lot on the First Arts website.
A close-up to a miracle in the world of Inuit art as we have ever seen, these three stencil matrices were discovered in the Estate of Ms. Barbara E. Mercer, a Toronto poet and painter, and were a bequest to her by her late partner, Mr. Gerry Moses. Mr. Moses was the art director for the Imperial Oil Review and a prominent figure in the Toronto art scene. The appearance of this collection prompts us to further examine the early years of printmaking in Kinngait, which have now taken on near mythic proportions. Around the time of the 1959 release, James Houston promoted what are now generally considered to be romantic notions of the origins, development and methods of printmaking in Cape Dorset; they were disseminated by the print and other media and well-intentioned enthusiasts, and have become part of Inuit art lore. Houston’s promotional efforts have been the subject of valid criticisms, but they remain insightful articulations of the spirit that animated the early printmaking days, and some of his descriptions have a basis in fact. Stories of polar bear hair stencil brushes and inks made from soot and iron rust seem laughable now, so it is understandable that Houston’s account of experimenting with “parchment-like sealskin to form strong, stencilled images on paper” is seen as simply another example of how things should happen in hae or, at the very least, rationalize them. [3]

Despite Houston’s assertion that sealskin was used as a stencil matrix for a time (until experiments with waxed paper proved to work better), several scholars have claimed that these skin matrices were never suitable for printing and were immediately abandoned. We do, however, know of at least one other matrix housed with the West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative. [2] In addition, National Film Board of Canada photos show the printmaker Inuk Jukpa Kinngait at work, dipping a brush through the holes of the sealskin matrix used for Niviaqsi’s The Archer (1960 #45). [3] These three stencil matrices represent essentially the only ones of their kind that we know of in private hands and their appearance constitutes a major discovery regarding with regard to printmaking in Kinngait. While full editions were not created with these matrices, the proof prints made from them is evidence that the technique was certainly possible. We are grateful to the current owners of the graphite drawings for Family Hunting and the proof of Hunter with Harpoon for their assistance with our research.

3. See the 1960 Cape Dorset print catalogue and, Rosemary Oskutz, N.A.R.R., from Phototopia #270 Eskimo Artists or Cape Dorset When the Wind Blows They Make Prints, Library and Archives Canada, Mikan no. 205928.

References: Please visit our listing for this lot on the First Arts website.

References: Please visit our listing for this lot on the First Arts website.

References: Please visit our listing for this lot on the First Arts website.
Possibly Amidlak (1897-1961); Samwillie Amidlak (1902-1984); or Levi Amidlak (1931-1993). Inukjuak (Port Harrison), Totemic Composition With Bears, Otter, and Seal, c. 1953-54, stone, ivory, inlay, 32 x 3.5 x 5.5 in (80.5 x 8.9 x 24 cm), unsigned.

Estimate: $10,000/15,000

Provenance: Private Collection, Ottawa.

Totem-style carvings were made for a few years in the early 1950s (almost exclusively in Inukjuak), following the publication of James Houston’s 1951 instructional publication Songapass: Eskimo Handicrafts, which included a fanciful drawing by Houston that “mashed up” Inuit and Northwest Coast imagery (see the drawing on p. 55 of The First Passionate Collector, referenced below). The booklet was quickly withdrawn but imagery inspired by it persisted for a few years.

A number of these carvings transcended the rather comical look of the drawing, but nothing we have seen prepared us for this magnificent work: a sculpture of generous proportions, true imaginative bravado, and spectacular workmanship. The delicate ivory and inlay details testify to the artist’s skill and provide a subtle contrast to the deep green of the smoothly polished stone. The period of two or three years after the initial inspiration gave the artist time to develop a strong personal style. The result is a masterpiece not only of the genre, but also of early Inukjuak art.

The artist’s identity is open to speculation. Totemic Composition is almost surely by the same hand that carved the Bear-Walrus Totem referenced below. We sense a distinct similarity to the Bear-Walrus Totem and Seal referenced below. We feel it is time for this work to take its place among the early masterpieces of the legendary Johnny Inukpuk.

It is these fine and very important details – combined with the face’s overall exaggerated size, its division into four convex areas (bulging cheeks, broad forehead, and mouth and chin area), the almond-shaped and slightly slanted inset ivory eyes and matching mouth – that guide our attribution to Johnny Inukpuk as the author of this remarkable sculpture. We are suggesting a relatively recent date, c. 1954.

The work shows the influence of c. 1954, attributed most recently to Amidlak and previously to an unrelated artist Samwillie Amidlak. Another stylistically somewhat different but fine Head and Torus of a Bear from c. 1952, in the Guild Collection, has usually been attributed Levi Amidlak, Amidlak’s son. [1] Whichever one of you created this brilliant sculpture, hats off to you!

1. Darlene Wight has done a lot of research trying to sort out the confusion between Amidlak, his son Levi Amidlak, and Samwillie Amidlak. See her section on Amidlak in Early Masters. She had previously attributed Bear to Samwillie Amidlak. See her section on Amidlak in Darlene Coward Wight, “The Handicrafts Experiment, Early Masters: Inuit Sculpture 1949-1955” (WAG, 2006), pp. 44–49.


3. By the hunter’s fierce gaze and bared teeth – but at the same time the oversized head gives the work an almost gnome-like appeal. There are some details as well that soften our initial impression of the work: for example the hunter’s hair, moustache and eyebrows, and crown’s feel are incised with considerable delicacy.

4. It is these fine and very important details – combined with the face’s overall exaggerated size, its division into four convex areas (bulging cheeks, broad forehead, and mouth and chin area), the almond-shaped and slightly slanted inset ivory eyes and matching mouth – that guide our attribution to Johnny Inukpuk as the author of this remarkable sculpture. We are suggesting a relatively early date for this work – a year or two before 1954, the date known for the most famous of Inukpuk’s published works from the 1950s. These later works are carved in the marble green stone that is typically associated with the community style. However, a prussian of Darlene Wight’s Early Masters catalogue and other publications shows that several different stones were carved in prior years, including more obdurate stones such as the one used here by Inukpuk.

We feel it is time for this work to take its place among the early masterpieces of the legendary Johnny Inukpuk.

References: For classic masterpieces by Johnny Inukpuk in a very similar style see Darlene Coward Wight, Early Masters: Inuit Sculpture 1949-1955, pp. 82, 86; George Swinton (1972/92), fig. 307; Ingo Hessel, Early Masters: Inuit Sculpture 1949-1955, pp. 92, 93; fig. 103, Ingo Hessel, Inuit Art, fig. 49. For a fine early 1950s Mother and Child with similar facial features see Walker’s Auctions, May 2016, Lot 94.
Dr. George F. MacDonald (1938-2020) studied anthropology at the University of Toronto and Yale, and began his illustrious career with the Canadian Museum of Civilization (then the National Museum of Man) in 1964, concentrating his research on the First Nations peoples of the Northwest Coast. He was appointed Museum Director of the CMC in 1983 (a position he held until 1998) and oversaw the construction of its famous new building (designed by Nils architect Douglas Cardinal) in Gatineau, Quebec in 1988. MacDonald’s goal was to develop a world-class museum that would be at once enlightening, educational, and entertaining. Controversial and fearless, he was influenced by Disney and the Epcot Center, he insisted on including an IMAX theatre, and in 1994 made the CMC one of first museums in the world to have its own website. The CMC’s Great Hall is one of the most splendid public spaces in Canada and has been the site of countless state dinners and other events. Now branded the Canadian Museum of History, the museum has consistently been one of the first or second most popular in Canada. Upon his retirement in 1998 MacDonald was appointed CEO of the Museum of Victoria in Melbourne, Australia (1999), Director of the Burke Museum, University of Washington in 2001, and finally Director of the Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art in downtown Vancouver and the Bill Reid Centre at Simon Fraser University in 2006 (which now houses the George and Joanne MacDonald Research Collection).

MacDonald authored some 150 books and scholarly publications including the landmark Haida Art: Villages of the Queen Charlotte Islands (1983) and Haida Art (1996), taught and lectured widely, held research fellowships all over the world, and was a member of UNESCO’s Drafting Committee on the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage. MacDonald was awarded the Order of Canada in 2006. George married his childhood sweetheart Joanne Rice. Joanne MacDonald’s anthropology degree from U of T took her on expeditions to Tasmania, Madagascar, and Borneo. She became a researcher on many First Nations land claims including the Nisga’a claim in B.C. and the Inuvialuit claim in the Yukon, which were the first successful negotiations in modern times. Together George and Joanne raised two children, Christine and Grant, collected some 30,000 books and purchased art together as they travelled the world. Joanne passed away in 2018. The couple were both passionate about the art of B.C.’s first peoples and became close friends with many artists including Bill Reid and his wife Martine. George and Joanne MacDonald will be remembered as passionate supporters of Canadian and Indigenous arts and culture. First Arts is proud and honoured to present works from their collection.

66 NORTAL MORRISSEAU, C.M. [1931-2007] ANISHINAABE, Newbeenope and Michipichou, c. 1962-63, paint on hide, 37 x 38 in (94 x 97 cm), mounted on linen over board and framed, unsigned. Estimate: $8,000/12,000

Provenance: Hughes Galleries, London, via Selwyn Dewdney; Acquired either from Hughes Galleries or directly from Selwyn Dewdney; Collection of George and Joanne MacDonald, Carleton, Quebec, Estate of George MacDonald.
Freda Diesing was a Haida woman of the Sadsugohilanes Clan; her Haida name is Skil Kew Wat ("magical little woman"). Diesing began carving in 1967 at the age of 42. She attended the Vancouver School of Art (now Emily Carr University of Art and Design), then importantly became one of the first students at the Gitksan Northwest Coast Art at 'Ksan Village at Hazelton, learning carving and design from Robert Davidson, Bill Hinto, and Tony Hunt. One of the very few Northwest Coast women carvers of her generation, Diesing became an important educator herself, acting as a teacher and mentor to countless aspiring artists. One of her first students, the acclaimed carver Dempsey Bob, now teaches at this The Freda Diesing School of Northwest Coast Art at Coast Mountain College, named in her honour. Diesing is best known for her sensitive carved portrait masks, carved in a distinctive, very personal style, but she also carved boxes and totem poles, painted, made prints and jewellery, and designed button blankets. Diesing's masks have been shown in dozens of exhibitions, and are held in important public collections including the UBC Museum of Anthropology, the Canadian Museum of History, The Royal BC Museum, the Royal Ontario Museum, the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, and the British Museum.

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om in 1925, Freda Diesing was a Haida woman of the Sadsugohilanes Clan; her Haida name is Skil Kew Wat ("magical little woman"). Diesing began carving in 1967 at the age of 42. She attended the Vancouver School of Art (now Emily Carr University of Art and Design), then importantly became one of the first students at the Gitksan Northwest Coast Art at 'Ksan Village at Hazelton, learning carving and design from Robert Davidson, Bill Hinto, and Tony Hunt. One of the very few Northwest Coast women carvers of her generation, Diesing became an important educator herself, acting as a teacher and mentor to countless aspiring artists. One of her first students, the acclaimed carver Dempsey Bob, now teaches at this The Freda Diesing School of Northwest Coast Art at Coast Mountain College, named in her honour. Diesing is best known for her sensitive carved portrait masks, carved in a distinctive, very personal style, but she also carved boxes and totem poles, painted, made prints and jewellery, and designed button blankets. Diesing's masks have been shown in dozens of exhibitions, and are held in important public collections including the UBC Museum of Anthropology, the Canadian Museum of History, The Royal BC Museum, the Royal Ontario Museum, the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, and the British Museum.

67 FREDA DIESING (1925-2002), Haida, PRINCE RUPERT, Shark Woman, 1973, cedar, hair, argillite, and paint, 8 x 6 x 4 in (20.3 x 15.2 x 10.2 cm) excluding hair, signed and dated: “FREDA D. /1973” and inscribed: “Old Woman with Labret / Carved from alderwood / Freda Diesing / 1973.”
Estimate: $5,000/7,000

One of the last works from McMaster’s active period as a painter, Crossfire of Identity is intended to engage the viewer—both Native and non-Native—in a conversation on the legacy of colonial relations, highlighting competing markers for what constitutes authentic Indigenous identity in a modern and increasingly urban world. With definitive urgency it asks both Native and non-Native viewers to come together to confront and dismantle racist Indigenous stereotypes ingrained in popular culture and challenge their commercial commodification. Such damaging stereotypes, fraught with expectations and limitations, are frequently internalized by Indigenous peoples themselves, complicating the formation of healthy personal identities and healthy interpersonal relationships. Here, McMaster presents a potent collage of visual and textual symbols, skillfully interweaving traditional and pop culture references, each possessing its own complex history: from images of clan totems, beadwork patterns and even Tonto, to an itemized list of sacred celebrations, cultural art forms, historical figures (such as Sitting Bull, Edward Curtis), and a still controversial definition of who is entitled to call themselves an Indian. In this context, seemingly benign images can be unpacked to reveal less benign inference: (i.e. apple = “Apple Indian”: red on the outside, white on the inside; or banana: yellow [Asian] on the outside, white on the inside). The words “Ledger bytes” too provide a pithy commentary, referencing both 19th century ledger book drawings of traditional Plains Indian life by Indigenous artists held in captivity, and the ever-encroaching influence of Western computer technology and language. At the same time, “Ledger Bytes” speaks to the ability of Indigenous peoples to adapt to changing circumstances and still thrive. Like many of McMaster’s other works from this time, there are several levels of interpretation that add to the richness of this painting. Provenance: Objects of Bright Pride” benefit auction for the Bill Reid Foundation and Bill Reid Centre for Northwest Coast Art Studies at Simon Fraser University, Oct 2003; Purchased from the above by George and Joanne MacDonald; Estate of George MacDonald. Provenance: Collection of George MacDonald, Cantley, Quebec, gift of the artist; Estate of George MacDonald. Estimate: $3,000/5,000. Provenance: George MacDonald's Civilized Vision“ in The Ottawa Citizen, Sunday, July 24, 1994, p. B7. Estimate: $18,000/22,000. Provenance: George MacDonald's Civilized Vision“ in The Ottawa Citizen, Sunday, July 24, 1994, p. B7. Provenance: George MacDonald's Civilized Vision“ in The Ottawa Citizen, Sunday, July 24, 1994, p. B7. 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Ryan’s thoughts present some of the possibilities: “Like many of McMaster’s other works from this time, there are several levels of interpretation that add to the richness of this painting. It could certainly be read as a conversation on the legacy of colonization of the New World (note the map of North and South America in the globe at the center of the kinetic lines of communication, reminiscent of Norval Morrisseau’s shamanic lines of spiritual connection) possibly between a Black man and a Red Man. It could also be a conversation between a person in a military uniform (a person in a power position) and the Red Man. The words, “Order” and “Adventure”, hand lettered on the figures, suggest a critical contrast of world views: On the left, a dark presence embodying order, good governance, the introduction and imposition of Civilization. The caption quotes MacDonald’s response to the painting which he understood to be a portrait of his dual nature: “I can’t explain why Mickey Mouse is on the side of my heart and why my heart is on the side that represents order rather than adventure. It’s rather impressionistic. You might not guess at first it’s me. It’s the inner me and I don’t regret that.” (1) While this could definitely be understood to be a double portrait of MacDonald, there are likely several more shades of meaning here. Professor Allan J. Ryan’s thoughts present some of the possibilities: “Like many of McMaster’s other works from this time, there are several levels of interpretation that add to the richness of this painting. 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With this reading, the image of Mickey Mouse is a dazzling inclusion that could merely represent McMaster’s playful viewer engagement strategy, but more likely, given the artist’s fondness for critical aesthetic trickery, could represent the childish (but deadly) folly of trying to impose a Western form of civilization on peoples who already had their own sophisticated ways of relating to each other and understanding the world. The image could also symbolize Disney’s tainted role in creating caricatures and stereotypes of Indigenous peoples that are still almost impossible to dislodge from the public psyche.” (Dr. Allan J. Ryan, New Sun Chair in Aboriginal Art and Culture, Carleton University, May 2020).
72 NORVAL MORRISSEAU, C.M. (1931-2007), ANISHINAABE, Shaman (Master of the Fish), 1981, acrylic on canvas, laid down on board, 84 x 48 in (213.4 x 121.9 cm), dated and signed in syllabics. Provenance: Private Collection, Curtright Tribal Art, Olympia, WA; Acquired from the estate of the artist. Estimate: $30,000/45,000

Morrisseau’s career and private life was tumultuous throughout the 1980s. He had been showered with recognition and awards, and feted with a stunning retrospective art book, but he was battling serious alcohol and drug addiction, while amazingly also trying to fulfil his dream of creating a new Thunderbird School of Art. This painting was probably created when Morrisseau was living rough, perhaps even in hiding, as he had become involved with some shady dealers after his relationship with the Pollock Gallery ended. The painting is not completely finished but was likely sold because the artist was in desperate need of cash, with the signature and date added in some haste. The work may be a portrait of Carl Henderson, a New York-based artist who was Morrisseau’s lover and died around this time, or perhaps it is a self-portrait inspired by that friendship. Shaman (Master of the Fish) is monumental and stunning, despite its unfinished state. Thematically it is related to Morrisseau’s numerous compositions of the late 1970s and early 1980s; however it also takes its place as one of the most impressive erotic paintings that he produced over the years. These have not always been publicly exhibited or reproduced – for obvious reasons – but they do constitute an important aspect of his art. For Morrisseau, shamanism, sexuality, and vitality would have been inextricably linked. An important early work on paper, Self Portrait Devoured by Demons from 1964 in the AGO Collection, depicts a snake-as-phallus. Artist in Union with Mother Earth from 1972 takes a more subtle approach. [1] But while Shaman (Master of the Fish) has shock value, in the end it is a vibrant, monumental testament to Morrisseau’s artistic vision and uncompromising, unconventional life.


References: For stylistically similar works from the late 1970s and early 1980s see Greg Hill et al, Norval Morrisseau – Shaman Artist (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2006) cats. 40-43, Lister Sinclair and Jack Pollock, The Art of Norval Morrisseau (Toronto: Methuen, 1979), pp. 149-159. These books, along with Elizabeth McLuhan and Tom Hill’s Norval Morrisseau and the Emergence of the Image Makers (Toronto: AGO/Methuen, 1999) have insightful essays on the art and life of Norval Morrisseau. These have not always been publicly exhibited or reproduced – for obvious reasons – but they do constitute an important aspect of his art. For Morrisseau, shamanism, sexuality, and vitality would have been inextricably linked. An important early work on paper, Self Portrait Devoured by Demons from 1964 in the AGO Collection, depicts a snake-as-phallus. Artist in Union with Mother Earth from 1972 takes a more subtle approach. [1] But while Shaman (Master of the Fish) has shock value, in the end it is a vibrant, monumental testament to Morrisseau’s artistic vision and uncompromising, unconventional life.

73 BILL REID, O.B.C., R.C.A. (1920-1998), Painted Canoe Tunic, 1989, pigment on a hand-sewn fabric tunic, 33.25 x 27 in (85.3 x 68.6 cm), unsigned. Estimate: $10,000/15,000

Provenance: Gift of the artist to Mr. George MacDonald, 21 December 1989; Collection of George and Joanne MacDonald, Cantley, Quebec; Estate of George MacDonald. According to Dr. MacDonald, this tunic was designed and hand-painted by his friend Bill Reid to be the prototype for garments to be worn by paddlers of a Haida canoe during events on the Ottawa River organized by the Canadian Museum of Civilization. [1] The striking designs resemble crests that Reid designed for limited edition prints, as well as for a couple of salmon works that he is known to have designed. The front of the design features a grizzly bear. The reverse shows a more radically stylized crest, depicting perhaps a wolf, Wasclo (sea wolf), or a sea bear.

1. Block Eagle, a sister canoe to Reid’s Red Raven (half a fibreglass canoe moulded from the hull of Reid’s famous Jookas canoe), was operated every summer on the Ottawa River by the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

74 BILL REID, O.B.C., R.C.A. (1920-1998), Hurry Home Spoon, c. 1982, wood carved spoon accompanied by a note inscribed by the artist in black ink, spoon: 7.5 x 2.5 x 7 in (44.5 x 3.8 x 1.9 cm); frame: 11.25 x 5 x 1.5 in (28.7 x 12.25 x 3.8 cm). Estimate: $1,000/1,500

Provenance: Collection of George and Joanne MacDonald, Cantley, Quebec; Estate of George MacDonald. This spoon and its accompanying dedication in the form of an alternative poem were a gift from artist Bill Reid and his wife Martine to their friends George and Joanne MacDonald. The gift was meant to encourage George and Joanne to return eastward, back towards the Reids in Vancouver, after the MacDonalds’ return to Ottawa in 1982; the Macdonalds had lived in Vancouver for a year during George’s tenure as a visiting scholar at the UBC Museum of Anthropology. Finely carved from a single piece of wood, with its slender and elongated handle and bowl, the spoon’s shape bears a strong resemblance to a traditional Haida canoe paddle.
75 Vernon Stephens (1949 - Gitksan) (Gitksan), Killer Whale, c. 1971, acrylic on linden moose hide, 96 x 88 in (243.8 x 223.5 cm), unsigned. Estimate: $2,000/3,000
Provenance: Collection of George and Joanne MacDonald, Cantley, Quebec; acquired directly from the artist. 2 January 2017, Estate of George MacDonald.

*Note among the carvers of Xsan, Vernon Stephens believes that the stories and legends are not the property of individuals, as in the past, but are owned by all the people and are free for artists to use. He has built an important narrative painting style around this belief in association with his carving... Stephens is particularly noted for his carved storage boxes. [1] No stranger to large works, Stephens has created designs on the exterior walls of two plank-and-beam houses at Xsan. Other major commissions include the carved entry doors of the UBC Museum of Anthropology, working with his friend Earl Muldon (see next lot). 1. Part of a commentary on a painted wooden Clan Hat, 1943, in Ralph T. Cox, Lost and Found Traditions: Native American Art 1945-1995 (New York: Vancouver: American Federation of Arts/D&M, 1996) cat. 375.

76 Unidentified Gitksan Maker and Earl Muldon (Muldoe), O.C. (1921-), Gitksan, Bentwood Box, c. late 19th century, wood with later added painting by Earl Muldon in 1972, 16 x 24 x 25 in (40.6 x 61.6 x 63.5 cm), unsigned. Estimate: $2,000/3,000
Provenance: Antiquite Shop, Smithers, B.C.; Acquired from the above by George and Joanne MacDonald, Cantley, Quebec, January, 1972 from the above; Estate of George MacDonald. George MacDonald commissioned the young artist Earl Muldon to create designs for this undecorated antique box in 1972. Muldon is an accomplished practitioner of several Northwest Coast arts and has been awarded several major commissions including the carved entry doors of the UBC Museum of Anthropology. He is also the Hereditary Chief of Delgamuukw and is known for his important political contributions. As one of the lead claimants in the now historic case Delgamuukw v British Columbia, Muldon established the oral histories of Indigenous peoples as valid evidence in Canadian courts when demonstrating Aboriginal Title; this set an important legal precedent. He was elected to the Order of Canada in 2011.

77 Unidentified Maker, Coast Tsimsian, Nesting Baskets, mid-late 19th century, red cedar bark and dye, largest: 7.8 x 7.5 x 8.5 in (20 x 19.1 x 21.6 cm), smallest: 4.75 x 6 x 2.5 in (12 x 15.9 x 6.4 cm). Estimate: $1,200/1,800
Provenance: A Tsimshian Family Collection, Lax Kw’alaams (Port Simpson), B.C.; Acquired from the above in 1932 by Charles Marcus Barbeau, the famous Canadian ethnologist and folklorist, considered to be one of the founders of Canadian anthropology; Estate of the above; acquired December 1995 from the estate of the above by George and Joanne MacDonald, Cantley, Quebec, Estate of George MacDonald.
The four baskets have square bases and rounded bodies. Their rims are lined with rolls of cedar and held to the baskets by cedar stitching. While not necessarily woven by the same maker, they fit snugly one inside the other. They were kept as a set of nesting baskets and passed down as family heirlooms in a Tsimshian family living at or near Lax Kw’alaams (Port Simpson), B.C. before being collected by Marcus Barbeau in 1932.

78 Unidentified Maker, Haida or Possibly Tlingit, Feast Spoon, late 19th c., mountain-goat horn and mountain-sheep horn, metal relief, 9 x 3.5 x 2 in (22.9 x 8.9 x 5.1 cm). Estimate: $800/1,200
Provenance: Ex Collection of Harold Pfeiffer, Ottawa; Pfeiffer (1908-1997) was a respected sculptor whose subjects included numerous bronze portraits of Inuit and First Nations people, many of which are in museum collections. Acquired from the Estate of Harold Pfeiffer by George and Joanne MacDonald, Cantley, Quebec, Estate of George MacDonald.
The elaborately carved mountain-goat horn handles, carved with family crests or illustrations of myths, were inset to the bowls fashioned from mountain-sheep horn, to create prized spoons that were brought out at special feasts. The figures are arranged very similarly to those on totem poles. Many arts in which carved spoons also created argilite model poles.

79 Pitaloosie Saila, R.C.A. (1942 - ), Kinngait (Cape Dorset), Brooch: Owl Standing on the Moon, 1974-75, silver and feathers, 7.5 x 3.75 x .75 in (19.1 x 9.5 x 1.9 cm). Estimate: $800/1,200
Provenance: An Inuit art gallery, Montreal; Acquired from the above by the Collection of George and Joanne MacDonald, Cantley, Quebec, 1976; Estate of George MacDonald.

Pitaloosie was already a well known graphic artist when she applied her talent to designing for this new medium, which is evidenced by this lovely brooch. The overall composition is masterful; the fine, crisp surface detailing on the owl itself is beautifully balanced by the soft texture of the feathers in this delightful work.
Reference: For three other examples of contemporaneous silver jewellery by Cape Dorset artists see Canadian Eskimo Arts Council, Crafts from Arctic Canada (Ottawa: CEAC, 1974), p. 58.
Osuitok was born at Neeoulealik camp on southern Baffin Island, and lived a traditional hunting life for decades. His father was killed by a shaman when Osuitok was only twelve, and as one of the older sons much responsibility fell upon him to help support the family. This may in no small way have contributed to Osuitok’s work ethic and his devotion to high-level craftsmanship in his art. Having carved wooden toys by the age of thirteen, Osuitok began making and selling fancy carvings in the 1940s while in his twenties, and encouraged by James Houston, started to carve stone in the early 1950s. By the early 1960s he was recognized as Cape Dorset’s preeminent and most influential sculptor, establishing a reputation for beautiful depictions of birds and other animals as well as human subjects, primarily women. Osuitok’s work is included in virtually every major public, private and corporate collection of Inuit art.

It is well known that Osuitok was a frank admirer of the female form, and that depictions of women fishing or engaged in daily chores were by far his favourite human subjects, extending as far back as the 1950s. In this wonderfully serene work the careful attention that Osuitok pays to the woman’s clothing trim reminds us of his famous standing Fisherman of 1963 in the TD Bank Collection. Kneeling Woman Scraping a Skin is not actively engaged in her work as is the later Fisherman of c. 1978-80 (First Arts, May 2019, Lot 28) and other examples, but she is every bit as beautiful. There is a lovely tranquillity to this portrait; the woman’s placid face has a dreamy quality, and her eyes appear to be closed in reverie. We would be remiss if we did not mention the woman’s gorgeous traditional hairstyle; it is one of the most beautiful depictions we have seen, and lends the young woman an air of regal elegance.


80 OSUITOK IPEELEE, R.C.A. (1923-2005) m., KINNGAIT (CAPE DORSET), Kneeling Woman Scraping a Skin, c. 1970, stone, 14.5 x 13 x 14.5 in (36.8 x 33 x 36.8 cm), signed in Roman and syllabics. Estimate: $25,000/35,000


John Kavik is best known for his depictions of the human figure - books and museum catalogues illustrate virtually no other subjects by the artist. Kavik portrayed muskoxen in a few ceramics in the mid 1950s but it may be that he did not create stone versions until the early 1970s. Kavik's carved depictions of muskoxen are not numerous but they were his favourite animal subjects, they figure prominently in his drawings (see next lot). We would argue that the best examples are among his most important stone sculptures. Stanley Zaalenchuk, the school principal in Rankin Inlet in the late 1970s who became an avid collector and friend of the artist, wrote: "...in Kavik's work I sense, not the capturing of a fleeting moment, but timelessness, an immortality... I recall especially a musk ox he carved – a stoic, stone image reaching back to man's beginning, echoing the cave art of Europe." [1] It's quite likely that Zaalenchuk was referring to this work, which he once owned.

Even more than his human subjects, Kavik's muskoxen are surprisingly eccentric and really quite droll. Monumental, raw, and adorable – quite a potent combination! While there may be more examples, we know of only two other depictions of a seal by Kavik, one of them carved some ten years later (see reference), the other later still. The sculpture is rendered in every manner by its unusually large size – if this depicts a seal pup it is the seal! – and its high degree of realism and finish. The sculpture is really quite lovely and even graceful, and although we are huge fans of Kavik's art, these depictions of musk-oxen don't usually come to mind. We once saw a large 1950s stone walrus that had been ridden like a pony by generations of children in the collector's family, we can imagine this remarkable seal being enjoyed in the same manner.

Reference: For an example of a considerably smaller Basking Seal by Kavik from c. 1977, see Sandra Dyck and Ingo Hessel, Inuit Art from the Carleton University Art Gallery Collection (Ottawa: CAIA, 2009) cat. 102. Interestingly, that seal lies on its back with its front flippers lying across its chest, its pose looks strangely like that of a sea otter floating on its back.


It is quite likely that Ittuluka'naaq used this technique in the drawing

Provenance: Private Collection, Australia.

Ruth Qaulluaryuk's fellow Baker Lake artist Simon Toodooome describes in words the kind of scene evoked so beautifully in this print.

This can be partly explained by her drawing technique, which was
drawn figures on cardboard, cut out the resulting shapes, and
frequently aided by the use of cardboard stencils. Ittuluka'naaq
This print, along with Qaulluaryuk's original graphite pencil drawing, is illustrated in the Winnipeg Art Gallery exhibition catalogue

References: Please visit our listing for this lot on the First Arts website.

Ittuluka'naaq's tessellated pattern of caribou moving back and forth is Eicher-like in its almost dizzying intricacy. Her remarkable drawing was translated into one of the most complex stonewares ever created in the Baker Lake print shop.

In Marion Jackson's discussion of her

It must have taken an immense amount of time and effort to translate

Provenance: Private Collection, Ottawa.

References: This print was included in the National Museum of Man international touring exhibition catalogue

Their drawing is among the rarest of the Baker Lake print shop.

Her remarkable drawing was translated into one of the most complex stonewares ever created in the Baker Lake print shop.

In the 1975 catalogue Hundebrød and Hundrebød, Herds of Caribou is illustrated opposite two photos of printmaker Thomas Suvaaraq carefully using a piece of antler as a baren to press the ink onto the paper. The only compromise that Thomas Suvaaraq had to make was to print some of the caribou' antler in solid black instead of outline. Wow.

They were not afraid in such big numbers.

The only compromise that Thomas Suvaaraq had to make was to print some of the caribou' antler in solid black instead of outline. Wow.

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Pauta Saila is justly famous for his “dancing bears” but some of his greatest depictions of the animals are posed more straightforwardly. Standing Bear is one of Pauta’s most powerful and imposing versions from the 1970s. What is most striking about this sculpture is its palpable sense of pent-up energy. It’s as if this bear has compressed itself and is now ready to expand— with a mighty roar— back to its full size. Pauta explains why that would make this particular bear so potentially lethal:

I carve bears with longer or shorter necks, and some that are fat or lean. They are in different positions because bears are always doing something. Sudden moves are possible with shorter necks.

But Pauta’s bears combine ferocity with beauty. Standing Polar Bear is carved in an especially lovely piece of Markham Bay stone and finished to a soft matte sheen; it reminds us of a particularly impressive Pauta bear from 1969, carved in the same stone, in the Sarick Collection at the AGO (see reference). The very compact quality that gives this bear its power also translates into sensuous, muscular sculptural form. Outstanding.

References: For important examples of bears by Pauta that are similarly posed and/or contemporaneous and/or carved in similar stone see Gerald McMaster ed., Inuit Modern (2010), p. 116 (Sarick, AGO from 1967), and p. 117 (also Sarick from 1973); Bernadette Driscoll, Uumajut: Animal Imagery in Inuit Art (WAG, 1985) cat. 1. See also Walker’s Auctions, Nov. 2016, Lot 91; Nov. 2015, Lot 203; Nov. 2012, Lot 77. See First Arts, May 2019, Lot 11. See also Waddington’s Auctions Nov. 2018, Lot 64; Nov. 2015, Lot 126; June 2015, Lot 133; Nov. 2010, Lot 295.

Standing Man is carved with a remarkable degree of sensitivity, and while not particularly large, the figure is quietly imposing. It’s a quiet masterpiece of its type. While the clothing is fashioned with apparent simplicity it is not shapeless; we get a true sense of the body and the pose underneath. This figure of a young man is not static, it stands at ease—that’s a subtle but important distinction. That the mittens and lower portions of the kamiks are fashioned from ivory is a lovely touch. The delicately carved mittens are reminiscent of the beautiful small ivory hands of one of Sheokjuk’s masterpieces, Woman Sewing Mitt from c. 1955 [1]. The parka’s red inlay trim, too, is a rare and appealing aspect of this particular sculpture [2].

The ivory face is not exactly in the “typical” style of Sheokjuk— the eyes are pinpoint rather than almond-shaped— however, the nose and the treatment of the hair are in keeping with his style. The young man’s facial features— high cheekbones, his brows, and his long, narrow nose—are subtly yet exquisitely rendered.

References: Darlene Wight’s Early Masters catalogue, p. 132, and elsewhere. It should be noted that many of Sheokjuk’s ivory carvings and several of his stone sculptures have similar incised (but not inlaid) parka designs— blackened in the case of the ivory works. See Darlene Wight’s Early Masters exhibition catalogue for several examples. Reference: Darlene Wight, Early Masters inuit Sculpture 1949-1955 (Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2006), pp. 132-133.
George Swinton, “Artists from the Keewatin” in Canadian Art: An Introduction (Douglas & McIntyre, 1972) fig. 658. For other stylistically similar works see First Arts, May 2019, Lot 44, the Inuit Sculpture of Rankin Inlet, N.W.T. (Gallery One-One-One, Univ. of Manitoba, 1970). See also George Swinton’s classic Tiktak: Sculptor from Canadian Art and suffering and pain, but it is also a poignant study in stoicism and may be a study in hardship. Swinton’s comparison of Tiktak with Henry Moore is not a superficial observation that is in itself. The comparison is important because it reveals that both artists were genuine image-makers who could envision human figures as assemblages of primal forms and open spaces. As a typical of Tiktak’s classic figures and maternal subjects, Mother and Child explores the interplay between solid rock and hollow spaces, with each being equally essential to the final composition. Absent the figures’ heads these rounded forms might be perceived as almost wholly abstract, but seen together, they become the attributes of a woman and her child, amulet belts or even sport tusks. Standing Figure avinningaq (lemming) and Figure Standing avinningaq (lemming). Although some are depicted flying and some wear tusks, several are depicted flying and some wear tusks. Instead, they imagine the man standing in the Negev or the Kalahari or the Arctic tundra. Glorious. To call it his “ascetic aesthetic” shines forth in all his glory. This image of a solitary man is not only pristinely elegant; it is also ecstatic and elegant. And it is transcendent, universal, we imagine the man standing in the Negev or the Kalahari or the Arctic tundra. Glorious. 1. Norman Zepp, “Introduction” in Pure Vision (1986), p. 16. References: For similarly large and elegant examples see Donald Cressida Wright, The Faye and Bert Settler Collection ( Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2004, p. 42; Art Gallery of Ontario, The People Within (Toronto: AGO, 1996) cat. 56; Marion Scott Gallery, Inspiration: Four Decades of Sculpture by Canadian Inuit (Vancouver, 1995), cat. 56; Provenance: Waddington’s Auctions, Nov. 2008, Lot 99. For a Bird Shaman in the Peter Millard Collection at the WAG, see Ingo Hessel, Inuit Art: An Introduction (Douglas & McIntyre, 1996) fig. 85. See also the section devoted to Luke Ishkataaryuk in Norman Zepp, Pure Vision: The Keewatin Spirit ( Regina: Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery, 1986, pp. 330-339.)
Jean Blodgett, Pudlo’s fellow artist Pitseolak Ashoona related this personal story: This stunning and perhaps most well known print by Pudlo

Estimate: $6,000/9,000

Kiakshuk was one of the stars of the second annual Cape Dorset Prints: A Retrospective (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 2007), p. 261.

References: This diptych is reproduced in Leslie Boyd Ryan, Cape Dorset Prints: A Retrospective (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 2007), p. 261.

His ambitious and stunning work brings to mind two other important lithograph diptychs by Kenojuak: Nunavut (Our Land) of 1992, a special commission (in an edition of 3) made to commemorate the signing of the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut Settlement Agreement in Iqaluit in 1993; and Silavut, Nunavut (Our Environment, Our Land) of 1999. Both diptychs were brilliantly executed by the master printmaker Pitseolak Niviaqsi.

Interestingly, all three prints use circular imagery that symbolizes the earth itself, the seasons, and the universal themes of regeneration and the cycle of life. Song of Spring omitted the more literal bereavement and celestial iconography seen in the earlier two works, concentrating on the animals themselves. The most extraordinary aspect of the image is Kenojuak’s transformation of the circular into the spherical. The birds and wolves do not flow in a circular pattern, rather their shapes morph to cover the surface of an orb, even as they flow one into the other. The effect is positively hallucinatory.

Kenojuak Ashevak.


Provenance: Private Collection, Australia.

This stunning and perhaps most well known print by Pudlo is a rather atypical narrative work by the artist. Men Carrying Reluctant Wife references the traditional Inuit marriage custom wherein a groom would come to his new wife’s camp and ‘steal’ her away. Pudlo, with great humour and spirit, depicts the dramatic moment when the man hoists his new bride who, with flailing limbs and a deep frown, portrays what Jean Blodgett referred to as “the ideal and modest bride (who) pretended great reluctance to leave her family and her home for her new husband”[1].

Pudlo’s fellow artist Pitseolak Ashoona related this personal story to oral historian Dorothy Eber: When Ashoona (my future husband) came to the camp I didn’t know why he came. I didn’t know he came for me. I thought he’d just come for a visit – until he started to take me to the sled. I got scared. I was crying and Ashoona was pushing and sometimes packing me up to try to put me on the komatik (sleigh). Anyone trying to get married would often have to carry the girl?


Provenance: Private Collection, Australia.

Kiakshuk was one of the stars of the second annual Cape Dorset collection of 1960, with nine stonecut and stencil prints offered. Interestingly, of the nineteen earliest prints derived from Kiakshuk’s beautifully precise graphite drawings (1960-1962), few are rendered with the careful attention to detail as this lovely print. Kiakshuk’s drawn lines and shading in graphite pen—of an orb, even as they flow one into the other. The effect is positively hallucinatory.

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Birds are found in many of Yuusipik's wall hangings and drawings, either as primary or secondary elements. Mary Yuusipik was one of Oonark's eight surviving and artistically talented children. Known for her beautiful wall hangings, she actually began her artistic career as a carver in the early 1960s. Standing Bird, produced in 1964, and produced a small body of detailed and sensitive drawings as well. "What makes his work so interesting and forms into fantasy creatures that looked strangely believable. As gallery owner Robert Kardosh has written: "...what makes his work so interesting is the expressiveness - and in many cases the sheer inventiveness - of his sculptural forms, which can be appreciated for their own sake independent of their narrative content." Many of Yuusipik's sculptures feel as though they have been literally stretched or pulled into shape rather than just simply carved out of the stone..."

Here the shaman has taken on a hybrid bird-fish (or whale) form. The attendant spirit bird may be entering his body as part of the transformation, but sometimes birds are depicted simply as messengers. The bird and shaman might be taking wing together on a spirit flight that would explain the ecstatic expression on the face of the shaman.

1. From a 2004 artist interview in Ingo Hessel, Arctic Spirit, p. 77.


95 JOSIAH NUILAALIK (1928-2005), QAMANI’TUAQ (BAKER LAKE), Shaman with Spirit Bird, 2003, stone, antler, and black colouring, 7.5 x 7.5 x 3.5 in (19.1 x 19.1 x 8.9 cm), signed in syllabics. Estimate: $5,000/8,000

Provenance: Feheley Fine Arts, Toronto; Acquired from the above by the present Private Collection, USA, 2018.

In the last twenty years of his life Josiah Nuilaalik, one of Jessie Oonark's many talented children, created an important body of work that explored transformation and the spirit world. He freely admitted to having no real knowledge of the subject - I have never seen my transformation, but I can carve what I imagine it would look like [1] - but was happy to create images purely from his own imagination. Nuilaalik's gift was the ability to seamlessly combine animals of often vastly different sizes and forms into fantasy creatures that looked strangely believable. As gallery owner Robert Kardosh has written: "...what makes his work so interesting is the expressiveness - and in many cases the sheer inventiveness - of his sculptural forms, which can be appreciated for their own sake independent of their narrative content." Many of Nuilaalik's sculptures feel as though they have been literally stretched or pulled into shape rather than just simply carved out of the stone..."

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1. From a 2004 artist interview in Ingo Hessel, Arctic Spirit, p. 77.


96 MARY YUUSIPIK SINGAQTI (1956-2017), QAMANI’TUAQ (BAKER LAKE), Standing Bird, c. early 1980s, stone, 8.75 x 4.75 x 4.5 in (22.2 x 12.1 x 11.4 cm), unsigned. Estimate: $1,800/2,800

Provenance: Marion Scott Gallery, Acquired from the above by a Private Collection, Toronto.

Mary Yuusipik was one of Oonark's eight surviving and artistically talented children. Best known for her beautiful wall hangings, she actually began her artistic career as a carver in the early 1960s, and produced a small body of detailed and sensitive drawings as well. [2]

Birds are found in many of Yuusipik's wall hangings and drawings, either as primary or secondary subjects, but carved depictions are not common. Yuusipik's Birds are prototypical Baker Lake style of the early to mid 1970s. It has every quality that defines great Baker Lake figurative sculpture in spades: beautifully modulated bulky volumes and curves finished to a semi-gloss sheen; fine sculptural rendering of clothing and a realistic sense of the anatomy underlying it; a lovely sense of lightness and movement; and a sensitively portrayed drop dead gorgeous woman's face. Walking Woman is a prototypical Baker Lake masterpiece. References: For two similar subjects by the artist from the same period see Winnipeg Art Gallery, Esquimaude (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1965) p. 146. Also illustrated in George Swinton, Sculpture of the Inuit (Toronto: M&S, 1972/92) fig. 723.

Dominic Kingsilk was one of the most famous and well-respected Baker Lake carvers of the 1960s, he was represented with an astonishing fifteen works in the landmark Esquimaude of the Keewatin N.W.T. exhibition sponsored by the Winnipeg Art Gallery in 1964. Walking Woman is arguably his finest sculpture, not only remarkably beautiful but also years ahead of its time. Whereas most early works by other Baker Lake sculptors of the formative period 1963-65 look like experiments with really good potential, Walking Woman clearly foreshadows what would become the classic Baker Lake style of the early to mid 1970s. It has every quality that defines great Baker Lake figurative sculpture in spades: beautifully modulated bulky volumes and curves finished to a semi-gloss sheen; fine sculptural rendering of clothing and a realistic sense of the anatomy underlying it; a lovely sense of lightness and movement; and a sensitively portrayed drop dead gorgeous woman's face. Walking Woman is a prototypical Baker Lake masterpiece. References: For two similar subjects by the artist from the same period see Winnipeg Art Gallery, Esquimaude (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1965) p. 146. Also illustrated in George Swinton, Sculpture of the Inuit (Toronto: M&S, 1972/92) fig. 723.

William Anautalik was not a prolific sculptor, and carved human figures almost exclusively; we are not aware of another depiction of a muskox by this artist. Although the first published example of his work seems to be in 1974, he likely began carving in the early to mid 1960s. The style of the fine muskox certainly harkens back to Baker Lake depiction of the animal from the mid 1960s; the sculpture has a similar look and sensibility of examples by George Talirnaniq and others. We love the way the artist attenuates the animal's form rather than emphasizing its bulk.

Reference: For examples of human subjects by the artist see expandingnut.com (American private collection website).
Nalenik began carving at the age of fifteen, in the mid 1950s, probably producing mostly small ivories for the first few years. However, by the late 1960s he was carving larger stone sculptures, mostly depictions of bears and other wildlife. Nalenik and his family lived in camps out on the land until the late seventies; only then did he move into Kimmirut permanently. In keeping with his lifestyle, his attitude to carving was decidedly old school as well: “The shape of the stone helps me to decide what will emerge. I use simple, home-made hand tools to make simple images, and therefore I see myself as an old-fashioned carver.” [1]

“For such a very little man his works were massive, even his smaller pieces had this incredible power, this large feeling to it. He was shy, sweet and very, very gentle.” [2] Nalenik is now best remembered for his monumental depictions of bears that he began carving in the late 1980s. These works are truly distinctive for their textural effects, with matte torsos and limbs contrasting strongly with highly polished heads and paws – a clever invention that makes Nalenik’s bears stand out from the crowd. While Nalenik’s choice of the “dancing bear” theme might have been a nod to the renowned Cape Dorset sculptor Pauta Saila, his style is markedly different. If we were to draw stylistic comparisons, Pauta’s colleague Aqjangajuk Shaa might be a closer fit. In this dynamic sculpture Nalenik’s radical distortion of the bear’s body brings to mind some of Aqjangajuk’s more contorted creations. Dancing Bear is perhaps Nalenik’s magnum opus. The bear is massive yet the head and limbs form sinuous, sexy curves that flow into one another almost seamlessly. The torso is actually quite small by comparison, barely thicker than the neck and limbs, it seems more as a connecting point. Nalenik has paid attention to smaller details as well: notice how the creased snout and angry eyebrows accentuate the ferocity of the bear’s roar. Sensational.

2. Iqaluit art dealer Thomas Webster, quoted in Nunatsiaq News, 17 May, 2003 (online).

References: For three equally large but differently posed examples of bears by the artist see Amway Environmental Foundation, Masters of the Arctic: Art in the Service of the Earth (1990), cover and pp. 66-67. The international touring exhibition was inaugurated at the United Nations General Assembly Gallery in NYC. See also George Swinton, Sculpture of the Inuit (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1992), fig. #89. For an interesting Seated Bear by the artist from the early 1970s see Walker’s Auctions, May 2013, Lot 93.
SAMSON NASTAPOKA (1931-) NUKLUAK (PORT HARRISON), Mother and Child, Cutting Up a Fish, c. 1940, stone. 21.5 x 8 x 22 in (54.5 x 20.4 x 56 cm), signed with artist's disc number “E9 172” and “NF”.
Estimate: $4,000/6,000

Sarah Nastapoka was born at Abraham Nastapoka's camp near Inukjuak. The natural son of Abakarralluq, the man who had portrayed Nanook in the famous 1922 silent documentary Nanook of the North, he was adopted by Nastapoka. Samson Nastapoka was a relatively prolific carver, although he spent a good bit of time hunting and also worked in construction. Mother and Child, Cutting Up a Fish is the most beautiful and impressive work we have seen by this artist. Typical for sculpture from this period in Inukjuak art, this large composition is compact in overall appearance but well formed and full of well-executed and charming realistic detail. We are especially drawn to the faces of the mother and child. The broad, expressive face of the mother is dominated by her large staring eyes, reminding us of the contemporary work of Samson's adoptive parents Abraham and Sarah Nastapoka (see Lot 102), but also of fellow Inukjuak sculptor Abraham FOV, known for the haunting quality of his subjects' faces. In contrast, the child is shown with a tiny head and face, munching on a morsel of fish. Beautiful.

101

DAVIDIALUK ALASUA AMITTUQ (1920-1976) POVUNGNITUK, Head of Katjutajuk, c. 1960-61, stone, 3.25 x 4.5 x 6 in (8.3 x 11.4 x 15.2 cm), signed “DEVIDEA” and inscribed by the artist “SCP” [1].
Estimate: $1,000/1,200
Provenance: Private Collection, Toronto.

Katjutajuk is a mischievous and even malevolent female spirit creature that haunted empty igloos and sometimes devoured unlucky trespassers. Fantastical in aspect, she lacked a torso and limbs and is usually described as having only a large head and feet, with breasts sprouting on her cheeks. Katjutajuk is quite similar in appearance to, and sometimes confused with, another creature called Tunnituark, who is depicted as tattooed and with a vulva on her chin. It is also possible that Davidialuk took artistic license with his many depictions of these spirits, mixing and matching their features. This astonishing depiction has a decidedly distorted visage and is rather more masculine looking than the artist’s typical versions. The artist actually did portray a male version in the early 1970s. [2].

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SARAH MEEKO NASTAPOKA (1925-d) INUKJUAK (PORT HARRISON), Kneeling Woman Mending A Kamik, c. early 1940s, stone, 12.5 x 7.25 x 9.5 in (31.8 x 18.4 x 24.2 cm), inscribed with disc number “E9 1519”; signed, “YCA”.
Estimate: $6,000/9,000
Provenance: Private Collection, Vancouver.

Sarah Meeko Nastapoka was the younger of Abraham Nastapoka's two wives. Both Nastapoka and Meeko began carving in 1950 and usually worked together; she continued carving even after her husband retired in 1974 due to ill health, working in a private carving studio. Interestingly, Meeko was one of only a few women in Inukjuak to become a professional sculptor; she is the only female sculptor featured in Darlene Wight’s Early Masters exhibition and catalogue. By the early 1960s, Sarah Meeko, like her male peers, had developed her mature carving style. As with other masterpieces including her iconic Mother and Child (see first reference), Kneeling Woman Mending A Kamik beautifully conveys serenity, wellbeing, and solidarity. The woman has stopped working for a moment to fully engage the viewer; it’s a strikingly confident gaze. The sculpture has many lovely details, the most distinctive being that the woman's hair is braided on the right side only, before wrapping around to form a beautiful bun. It’s a fitting hairstyle for an independent-minded woman.
References: See 1. From Lukta Qiatsuk’s “Foreword” in Hidden for decades and unknown to even the Inuit print documenter.

Provenance: Ex Collection of Gerald Moses; bequest to Ms. Barbara Mercer, Toronto; Estate of the above.

Published: Imperial Oil Review, October 1960 (Vol. 44, No. 5), pp. 18-19

With great economy of means, Kaakshuk created a dramatic and unusual scene of men rolling oil drums into the community for storage – drums just unloaded from a supply ship that visited just once a year. Kaakshuk’s pictorial style is oddly reminiscent of the scenes of everyday life inscribed onto walrus tusks in the Historic Period. Kaakshuk is partly famous for his lively compositions of traditional hunting and sampling scenes, and one of his compositions depicting the modern realities of life, includes the modern village.

Photojournalist Rosemary Gilliat, in her journal entry from September 1960, in its admittedly dated language and attitude, describes what was happening:

“A few days ago I was watching them roll oil drums, these are big 45 gallon drums, & they had to be rolled from the beach up to a stone ship, as well as Jim’s [sic] Eskimos.” [1]

Interestingly, this charming print brings to mind two other Inuit prints connected. The Dance of the artist’s imagination that is seldom seen.

Photographist Rosemary Gilliat, in her journal entry from September 1960, in its admittedly dated language and attitude, describes what may have been the inspiration for the scene.

“The Captain of the Waldingham [a British freighter] said that he had never known men handle freight, when unloading the job would be done more quickly, and there would be less physical risk involved. The Eskimo [sic] men do not realize the danger of a rupture & so they gaily do the heaviest job without thinking, white men know they may get incapacitated & so they take care - & do not exert themselves to the full. The artist quoted in Jean Blodgett and Susan Gustavison, Early Cape Dorset Drawings: (Kleinburg: McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1995) p. 98.


1. The artist quoted in Jean Blodgett and Susan Gustavison, Early Cape Dorset Drawings: (Kleinburg: McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1995) p. 98.


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KANANGINAK Pootoogook, R.C.A. (1935-2010) m., PRINTMAKER: LUXTA QIATSUK (1928-2004) m., KINNGAIT (CAPE DORSET), The Dance (The Fiddler Played), 1961-63 (commissioned print, possibly for Imperial Oil), stonecut, 6/10, 23.5 x 30 in (59.7 x 76.2 cm). Estimate: $900/1,200

Provenance: Private Collection, Australia.

This rare unprinted proof by Kananginak is a fascinating glimpse into a part of the artist’s imagination that is seldom seen. The Dance does resemble one of the other early prints by Kananginak, Seal Skin Boat, an engraving from 1963 (#68), which portrays two bird-people sailing a single-bladed skin umiaq. In The Dance, two transformed animal humans play a fiddle and dance in accompaniment to a dancing spirit creature.

Interestingly, this charming print brings to mind two other Inuit prints considerably separated by both time and space. The spirit creature resembles those of the Kangiqsualujuk (George River) artist Tui Ek’s T’enga, which comes knocking in the night from 1974, while the imagery itself reminds us of Shaman’s Costume of 1894 by Lily Pitseolum of Pangnirtung.

References: Please visit our listing for this lot on the First Arts website.

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IOYLA KINGWATSIAK (1933-2000) m., KINNGAIT (CAPE DORSET), Curlew Over Nest*, 1960, sealskin stencil, experimental proof print, 20.5 x 8.5 in (52.7 x 22 cm) (Misspelled “Carlew”). Estimate: $2,000/3,000

Provenance: Ex Collection of Gerald Moses, bequest to Ms. Barbara Mercer, Toronto; Estate of the above.

In the beginning, we printmakers and James Houston experimented continuously. I believe that is why we are now so successful in our work. When we were trained to be printers, we were willing and very interested. [1]

Hidden for decades and unknown to even the Inuit print documenter Sandra Barz, Curlew Over Nest is to our knowledge making its first ever appearance in the market. An important discovery by one of the found-ing printmakers in Kangiqsualujuk, it’s pity that this “experiment” did not find its way into an annual print collection, the image certainly could have held its own beautifully. The delicately stenciled bird floats gracefully downward toward to nest of three olive green eggs.

1. From Lukta Qiatsuk’s “Foreword” in Dorset 75, the 1975 annual print collection catalogue, p. 8

References: Sea Circle of Birds (1966 #45) by the artist. That print has a strikingly similar treatment of the feet and elongated back, and a comparable balletic feel to the birds.
108 PAULOSIE KAKEE (1930-) | PANGNIRTUQ (PANGNIRTUNG), Portrait Bust of a Young Man, 1968, whale bone, 16 x 6.5 x 8.75 in (40.6 x 16.5 x 22 cm), unsigned. Estimate: 1,000/1,500

Provenance: Collection of Mr. Paul Duval, Toronto. Mr. Duval (2012-2018) was a respected art critic, broadcaster, and author of more than thirty books on Canadian art. Published: George Switzer, Sculpture of Inuit, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1972/92), fig. 353 (labelled as being by an “Unidentified Artist, Pangnirtung”).

Like the two portrait heads formerly in the Robertson Collection (see reference), Portrait Bust of a Young Man is a superb sculpture that confounds the “Inuit” label. We wonder if the artist modelled these portraits on photos he might have found in a book or magazine, alternatively he may have used Qallunaat residents of Pangnirtung as subjects. It took extraordinary sensitivity and woodmanship to exercise so much control over the material since whale bone, with its porosity, brilliancy, and natural fissures can be quite difficult to carve. We are moved, and impressed. Reference: For two contemporaneous and similarly styled works (male and female) by the artist see Joan Bridgforth, Selections from the John and Mary Robertson Collection of Inuit Sculpture (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen’s University, 1986), cats. 48, 49; also illustrated in Walker’s Auctions, Nov. 2012, Lot 54. Interestingly it is the portrait of a woman that most closely resembles our example.

109 OOTOVOA KOONARK (1930-?), MITTIMATALIK (POND INLET), Standing Mother with Child in Her Amaut, mid 1970s, stone, 8 x 4.25 x 2.5 in (20.3 x 10.2 x 6.3 cm), inscribed with artist’s disc number, “E5 814” and signed indistinctly in Roman.

Provenance: Collection of Terry Ryan*, purchased from the above by a Private Collection, Toronto. *Terry Ryan was arts advisor and general manager of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-op in Iqaluit for four decades, a good friend of Etnagut, he personally purchased a number of his carvings over the years.

Best known for his elegant birds with pin, upstretched wings commonly known as “Birds of Spring,” Etnagut actually carved a wide variety of subjects. A consummate craftsman and lover of materials, he drew to bring out not only the most beautiful sculptural forms possible but also best qualities in each piece of stone he worked, be it colour or translucency or texture. Etnagut’s graceful Alighting Bird is typical of his style in another way as well. Etnagut’s Birds especially are notable for their sense of “display” and look particularly pleasing in silhouette or profile. Many remind us of the beautiful bird forms of Kenozuk’s drawings and prints. Reference: For a similarly posed bird by Etnagut see the solo exhibition catalogue Abraham Etnagut: Sculpture (Toronto: Images Art Gallery, 1983), unpaginated.

110 ABRAHAM ETUNGAT, R.C.A. (1923-1999) | IKNIGAAT (CAPE DORSET), Alighting Bird, c. 1965., stone, 4.75 x 6.25 x 1.5 x (12.1 x 15.9 x 3.8 cm), signed “HENRY”, inscribed with artist’s disc number, “E5 814” and signed indistinctly in Roman.

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111 HENRY EVALUARDJUK (1923-2017) | (FROBISHER BAY), Dancing Bear, mid 1970s, stone, 9.75 x 4.5 x 2.5 in (24.8 x 11.4 x 6.3 cm), signed “HENRY ᐅᖕᒥ”.

Provenance: Private Collection, Ottawa.

Henry Evaluardjuk was born in the Igloolik area and lived a mostly traditional existence there and in the northern Baffin region until 1959 when he was treated for TB at the Hamilton Sanatorium before settling in Frobisher Bay (now Iqaluit). Evaluardjuk began carving perhaps as early as the 1940s – first in ivory then mostly in stone. Evaluardjuk was a highly sensitive man: a singer, writer, and painter as well as a brilliant sculptor. Sadly, he suffered from bouts of depression and a tragic alcohol addiction, and led a tempestuous and sometimes violent life that resulted in several bouts of prison time. Although Evaluardjuk’s subject matter was quite varied, he is most famous for his “Henry bears” which sold briskly both locally and in the South. Like his famous colleague Pastra Salla from Cape Dorset, despite the great number of bears he carved Evaluardjuk managed to imbue each one with vitality, dangerous strength, and personality. Dancing Bear is a particularly delightful creation, reminiscent of the artists anthropomorphic whale bone Geometric Bear of 1974 (Walker’s May 2012, Lot 47) but even more daringly posed: Evaluardjuk carved a number of fine standing bears, but this remarkable bear’s stance is positively bacchic. The portrayal of the animal’s physique is exceptionally delicate and nuanced, but it is the pose that amazes; it seems tentative and ever so slightly comical, but all in all it is beautifully balanced and wonderfully graceful. Who knows, perhaps we are looking at the future Fred Astaire of bears.

References: For exceptional standing bears by Evaluardjuk, in various sizes and materials, see Walker’s Auctions, May 2016, Lot 102; Walker’s May 2012, Lot 93; Walker’s May 2012, Lot 47. For an impressive Waving Polar Bear Seated on a Rock see First Arts, May 2020, Lot 22.

112 ABRAHAM ETUNGAT, R.C.A. (1923-1999) | IKNIGAAT (CAPE DORSET), Alighting Bird, c. 1965., stone, 4.75 x 6.25 x 1.5 x (12.1 x 15.9 x 3.8 cm), signed “HENRY”, inscribed with artist’s disc number, “E5 814” and signed indistinctly in Roman.

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112. Augustin Anarosuk (1917-1976), Arviat (Eskimo Point), Seated Mother Holding Her Two Children, mid-1960s, stone, 6 x 11.25 x 4.25 in (15.7 x 28.8 x 10.8 cm), unsigned. Estimate: $1,200-1,800. Provenance: A Montreal Collection.

Almost nothing is known about Anarosuk, we know that he was carving at least as early as 1962. Presumably he was not prolific, but this fine work can be considered a classic Arviat sculpture from the period of the mid-late 1960s. It reminds us of contemporaneous pieces by the great Elizabeth Nutaraaluk (1924-1998). There are sculptures by Anarosuk in the Swinton Collection at the Winnipeg Art Gallery (1970) and at the Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale (from 1962), but neither work has been published.

Reference: For a haunting sculpture by the artist depicting many faces from the late 1960s, see Walker’s Auctions, Nov. 2016, Lot 253.

113. Margaret Uyauperq Aniksaq (1905-1983), Arviat (Eskimo Point), Kneeling Mother with Child in Amaut, c. 1966-67, stone, 6.5 x 3.25 x 5 in (16.5 x 8.3 x 12.7 cm), signed in syllabics, "?P?A?". Estimate: $2,000-3,000. Provenance: Private Collection, Ottawa.

I really like carving women with children on their backs; I like the shape of that image. I remember how hard it was for women to live in the past. I feel pity for them, for all the hard work they had. I see them as myself, how poor I was... (Artist interviewed by Ingo Hessel, 1989)

Uyauperq began carving by 1965 at the latest, and, while she was physically able, strove for naturalistic detail and a sense of gesture and movement. Of the works referenced below, this quite early carving most closely resembles the artist’s Mother with Two Children in the WAG collection. Despite its overall simplified form, this sculpture is moving and poignant; the mother’s crouch allows her baby to sleep in an almost horizontal position.

References: For important examples of Uyauperq’s work see George Swinton, Sculpture of the Inuit (Toronto: AGO, 1972/92), fig. 120; Ingo Hessel, Arctic Spirit (Douglas & McIntyre/Heard Museum, 2010), p. 86; Ingo Hessel, Arctic Spirit (Douglas & McIntyre/Heard Museum, 2016), cat. 150.

114. Luke Anowtalik (1932-2006), Arviat (Eskimo Point), Acrobat, c. early 1960s, antler, wood, and string, 7.75 x 16 x 8 in (19.7 x 40.6 x 20.3 cm), unsigned. Estimate: $1,200-1,800. Provenance: Private Collection, Ottawa.

It is possible that Luke Anowtalik did not invent the antler acrobats as we know them, but he certainly made them famous. We know that he was creating very similar works as early as 1971-72 (see reference), and he carved them in both large and small configurations until almost the end of his life.


115. Andy Miki (1928-1993), Arviat (Eskimo Point), Reclining Animal, early-mid 1990s, stone, 2.25 x 5.5 x 2 in (5.7 x 14 x 5.1 cm), unsigned. Estimate: $1,200-1,800. Provenance: The Snow Goose, Ottawa; Acquired from the above by a Private Collection, Ottawa.

When there were shortages of good carving stone in Arviat, Miki would prefer hunting for stones on the land, even if they were hard, rather than using imported stone. The mists of crepuscule and film are thick in evidence in this work, indicating that Miki found working the hard material challenging. Reclining Animal is considerably more rugged than Miki’s more typically pristine forms but is nonetheless fully three-dimensional. It is a perfect of those fascinating pieces by Miki that look as if they were conceived as tools. The piece is certainly being held and handled; its rawness, and the strange notches, in fact enhance the sculpture’s tactile quality.

Reference: For a slightly different take on a reclining animal by the artist, see Gerald McMaster ed., Inuit Modern (Toronto: AGO, 2010), p. 135. For stylistically related works see Norman Zepp, Pure Vision (Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, 1996), cat. 24, also see Walker’s Auctions, Nov. 2016, Lot 50 (rough, with notches); May 2017, Lot 253 (overall form).

116. Unidentified Artist, Arviat (Eskimo Point), Bust, c. early 1960s, stone, 10 x 4 x 3 in (25.4 x 10.2 x 7.6 cm), unsigned. Estimate: $900/1,200. Provenance: Private Collection, Ottawa; by descent to a Private Collection, Montreal.

We have not so far been able to attribute this work, but we can think of an intriguing possibility. Although relatively large in scale, this sculpture does remind us of the stone figures carved by the Talusok Atlikut, almost always made with the idea of being decorated with many strands of beads. Talusok did occasionally carve works of this size.
119 RICK RIVET (1949-), METIS, Beothuck Mound - 18, 1998, acrylic on canvas, 36 x 36 in (91 x 91 cm) excluding hair, inscribed in graphite: “Beothuck Mound / by Klatchie-Bhi / March/98.”


Born in Aklavik and raised there and in Inuvik, Rick Rivet received fine arts degrees from the universities of Alberta and Victoria and now lives and works in B.C. Influenced equally by shamanism and by various Euro-American artists and art movements, he freely blends the different traditions. The artist and writer Portia Prieger writes: “...Rivet’s work hovers between abstraction and representation, engaging the languages of both. He blends the traditions of modernist art with those of shamanistic cultures. His synthesis, with its rich visual qualities and underlying thoughtfulness, is deeply evocative at an emotional and intuitive level.”


120 KLATCHIE-BHI (1946-), SQUAMISH / KWAKWAKA’WAKW, Killer Whale Portrait, 1995, polychrome wood, fabric straps, 34 x 32 x 14 in (86.4 x 81.3 x 35.6 cm) excluding hair, inscribed in graphite: “Killer Whale / Portrait / by Klatchie-Bhi / Nov/95.”

Provenance: Private Collection, Ottawa. Klatchie-Bhi apprenticed with carver Simon Dick for two years, and has worked with Beau Dick, Wayne Alfred and other artists. He was raised traditionally in a family with Squamish and Kwakwaka’wakw roots and prefers to use his ancestral name Klatchie-Bhi (pronounced Cloth-Bay), given to him by his grandmother and meaning “head of a pod of killer whales.”

Given Klatchie-Bhi’s background and name, the Killer Whale clearly holds special significance for him. As a portrait mask, Killer Whale Portrait emphasizes the human aspect of the image, and the artist concentrates on two-dimensional motifs, in particular the animal’s dorsal fin, which is repeated with a variety of forms on forehead and cheeks in vivid polychrome and with subtle asymmetry.

References:
1. Emily Carr, Klee Wyck (Toronto/Vancouver: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1941), pp. 33-34.
2. Emily Carr, Klee Wyck (Toronto/Vancouver: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1941), pp. 33-34.
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