



Inuit Art. The Brousseau Collection

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Ilippunga. The Brousseau Inuit Art Collection

*At the heart and soul of Inuit culture are our values, language and spirit. These made up our identity and enabled us to survive and flourish in the harsh Arctic environment. In the past, we did not put a word to this; it was within us and we knew it instinctively. Then, we were alone in the Arctic but now, in two generations, we have become part of the greater Canadian and world society. We now call the values, language and spirit of the past Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit.*¹

The many stone, antler and bone carvings and other works of art included in the Brousseau Inuit Art Collection are not only beautiful and fascinating art objects.² They are also meaningful representations of Inuit knowledge, lives, memories and experiences. The pieces in this collection demonstrate the artists’ keen observational skills, dexterity in realism, and ingenuity with abstraction; reflect the deep connection to and understanding of wildlife in the Arctic, developed over countless generations; and highlight the significance of family and kinship to Inuit culture. The sculptures also reveal much about the ecological and traditional knowledge, values and belief systems that made it possible for Inuit to survive for millennia in the rich yet often unforgiving northern climate.

Today, this traditional knowledge and value system is known as *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* in many parts of the Canadian Arctic. While the Inuktitut phrase is often simply translated as “Inuit traditional knowledge,” it can be more accurately understood to encompass Inuit environmental and ecological knowledge, societal values, cosmology and worldviews, language and life skills. The title of the exhibition, *Ilippunga* – or *Ilitsivunga* in the Nunavik dialect – means “I have learned,” and is a reflection of the significance of understanding of this particular philosophy of knowledge to the people of the Arctic.³ The term *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* comes from the verb *qaujima*, “to know,” referring to “that which Inuit have always known to be true.” While the tenets of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, also known as IQ, have always existed

1. Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, *On Our Own Terms: The state of Inuit culture and society* (Iqaluit: Nunavut Social Development Council (NSDC), 2000).

2. The Brousseau Inuit Art Collection in the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec is one of the country’s most significant collections of Inuit sculpture, and contains numerous works by many of the most prominent and influential artists. The collection features more than 2,600 pieces, including over 2,100 sculptures, created by dozens of artists from communities across the Canadian North since the mid-20th century. Visionary collector Raymond Brousseau developed this collection over more than 50 years, primarily in his role as a prominent Québec gallerist. As one of the earliest champions of Inuit art in Québec – and Inuit artists from northern Québec, Nunavik – the Brousseau legacy is one of a lasting commitment to the promotion and celebration of Inuit art within the city and province, as well as

in numerous national and international exhibitions. In 2008, the then Premier of Québec, Jean Charest, recognized the many contributions of Raymond Brousseau by awarding him the title of Knight of the Ordre national du Québec.

3. The title of this essay is the same as that of the permanent exhibition of Inuit sculpture at the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, which opened in 2016. The works described in this collection guide – and many more works from the collection – are included in the exhibition.

Nunavummiut Elder Piita Irniq provided the exhibition title, and the other Inuktitut terminology in this text was also developed in part in consultation with Irniq, and later translated into the Nunavik dialect by Harriet Keleutak.



Fig. 1. Kellypalik Qimirpik, *Spirit*, 1999, serpentine, 49.4 × 31.6 × 23.2 cm. MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art Collection, gift of Raymond Brousseau (2005.2089).



Fig. 2. Artist unknown, *Amulet in the Shape of a Walrus Head*, between 550 BC and 1100 AD (Dorset), ivory and ink, 3.4 × 1.7 × 1.4 cm. MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art Collection, gift of Raymond Brousseau (2005.131).

in Inuit society, the widespread adoption of the overarching term itself is somewhat new. In 1999, when Nunavut separated from the Northwest Territories to become Canada’s largest territory, the Inuit government decided to formally embed Inuit values, principles and knowledge into the governance structures of Inuit regions and communities. The IQ philosophy was then adopted by many other Inuit political, economic and social organizations, and was also taken up by elders, scholars and writers, who adapted the term to describe the system of knowledge that has guided Inuit across the Arctic for millennia, and which continues to deeply inform contemporary Inuit society.

The formal adoption of IQ by the Government of Nunavut and other organizations makes the statement that despite its ancient roots, IQ is not without relevance or application in modern Inuit life. It could be most accurately described as a “living knowledge,” because it represents a means of organizing thought and action, tasks and resources, and even family and society, into coherent wholes. At the centre of this philosophy is respect for relationships: the relationship with the land; the relationship with Arctic flora and fauna; and especially, the relationship between family members and community members in regard to their responsibilities to each other, and their responsibility to pass on knowledge between generations (FIG. 1).

Inuit have maintained these sacred relationships, and passed down inter-generational knowledge, for millennia. Archaeological evidence and Inuit oral history confirm that the ancestors of the Inuit – first the Dorset, and then the Thule peoples – have lived in the circumpolar region for several thousand years. Today’s Inuit are direct descendants of the Thule, who lived throughout the North American Arctic, from Alaska to Labrador, between approximately 900 and 1400 CE. While they might not be considered artists in the modern sense of the word, the ancestors of the Inuit always produced beautiful, elaborate and highly decorated objects. By making functional things of bone, fur and skin beautiful, these ancestors demonstrated their great respect and gratitude for the animals that provided food, warmth, light and life in the Arctic, thus ensuring that these animals would continue to care for the Inuit. Before contact with *Qallunaat* (non-Inuit peoples) and the outside world, Inuit carved intricate shapes and designs out of the precious walrus ivory, serving four main purposes: as tools (such as hair combs, utensils and harpoon heads), toys (for children), amusements (such as games, to pass the time during long winter nights), or for magical or spiritual purposes (including the creation of amulets and ceremonial objects) (FIG. 2). After contact with European whalers and explorers, Inuit expanded their carving practice to include the creation of items for trade – particularly for invaluable European goods like saw blades, flour and metal sewing needles – thus beginning the first ever Inuit art industry. This small-scale trade industry continued until early in the twentieth century, and was later replaced by the modern Inuit art movement that began in 1949 in Inukjuak, Québec, and flourished across the Northwest Territories and northern Québec in the 1950s and 1960s. Thanks to the concerted efforts of many Inuit artists and *Qallunaat* collectors, dealers, government employees, museum professionals and others working together in both

the North and South, the modern Inuit arts industry as we know it emerged in the mid-20th century and grew exponentially from those early decades into the international success it is now. The Brousseau Inuit Art Collection, for example, began with the acquisition of a single work, *Spirit of the Igloo*, acquired in 1956 when Raymond Brousseau was just eighteen years old (FIG. 3). In this light grey stone piece, two walruses emerge from a small igloo – not from the entrance, but jutting straight through the top of the structure. Their fantastic pose indicates for the viewer that this is not a realistic portrayal, but more likely the depiction of two spirits about to take flight. Brousseau, like a handful of other significant Canadian collectors in the mid-20th century, was captivated by Inuit stone sculpture. He returned to the same gallery many times in the following weeks and years to purchase more works of Inuit art, sparking a lifelong dedication to the artistic expressions of the North, and leading to the establishment of his own gallery in Québec in 1974, and a private museum in 1999, the Brousseau Inuit Art Museum.

The field of modern and contemporary Inuit art production is remarkably diverse, and includes mediums such as basketry, photography, painting, printmaking, jewellery and textile arts, as well as all manner of sculpture in a variety of mediums such as serpentine, marble, metal, whalebone, and antler. Yet even in the broadest study of Inuit art, common themes can still be found across time, regions and mediums. Inuit artists are still fascinated by, and invested in the representation of, the Arctic land and animals. Over centuries, Inuit have acquired complex knowledge of the interrelated land and sea mammals, fish and birds that populate *Inuit Nunangat* (the Inuit regions of Canada), and Inuit art reflects that deep interrelation between humans and Arctic wildlife. Inuit have also developed a way of relating to and relying on one another in the Arctic that has allowed them to thrive in one of the harshest climates on earth, and given this central interest in family, and the deep respect accorded to mothers and children, it is common that themes of family, kinship and working together appear frequently in Inuit art. Furthermore, Inuit have developed a complex spirituality based on the intimate and interdependent relationship between spirits, animals, people and Inuit shamans – known as *angakkuut* (plural for *angakkuq*) – which continues to resonate with and engage Inuit artists today. Even so, some of this knowledge has been jeopardized by contact with *Qallunaat*, particularly the Christian missionaries who banned many traditional spiritual practices in the early 20th century, and that history of contact and the aftermath of colonization are understandably also challenging and meaningful themes that artists have frequently addressed in their art.

The Brousseau Inuit Art Collection thus represents not only a significant body of works representing numerous individuals, communities, styles, materials and methods, but also the collective expression of IQ throughout history and the manifestation of Inuit perseverance in the present. The works in this exhibition are a testament to how the values, lived experiences and knowledge of Inuit are embedded and apparent in Inuit art in a variety of complex and interrelated ways, and how important it is for Inuit to be able to demonstrate that through their art, *Ilitsivunga* – “I have learned.”



Fig. 3. Artist unknown, *Spirit of the Igloo*, circa 1950, steatite and walrus ivory, 11.2 × 9 × 10.1 cm. MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art Collection, gift of Raymond Brousseau (2005.1460).



Fig. 4. Parr, *Walrus Hunt*, between 1961 and 1969, coloured pencil on paper, 50.8 × 65.7 cm. MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art Collection, purchased with a special contribution from Hydro-Québec (2005.374).

Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* Reflected in the Sculptural Collection

By understanding how the artworks in this guide express and engage with the principles of IQ, it is possible to appreciate not only the distinctiveness of individual artists, but also the depth and breadth of Inuit cultural expression. This does not detract from the aesthetic appreciation of the many monumental and virtuoso pieces that are featured prominently throughout the Hydro-Québec Gallery, but enhances the enjoyment of the works by allowing the viewer to develop a greater understanding of the motivation and meaning of Inuit art. IQ is a framework that emerges from within Inuit cultural history and will resonate long into the future.

IQ is a theory of knowledge that includes valuable teachings about society, human nature and experience passed on through the oral tradition from one generation to the next. It is holistic, dynamic and cumulative in its approach and implementation, and maintains that knowledge should be acquired and passed on through observation, patience, practice and experience, and most importantly, transmitted intergenerationally. It is a knowledge gained from time on the land and in the company of elders and family members. It covers the landscape, ecology, seasons, weather, resources and wildlife, and the interrelation of these elements; it focuses on maintaining environmental, societal and collective harmony and well-being; and it emphasizes respect, reciprocity, sharing and serving others. There are six key concepts that guide Inuit knowledge and behaviour in relation to their kinship with Arctic animals, custodianship of the environment, treatment of women, children and families, and the transmission of Inuit oral histories, belief systems and spirituality. These principles have also assisted Inuit in preserving and maintaining their culture and knowledge during the difficult era of colonization, and are illuminating a path to a hopeful future.

Pijitsirarniq, the concept of serving, is crucial to the understanding of how “success” is measured within Inuit communities. Contributions to the common good are considered the highest form of leadership, as well as the measure of the achievement, maturity and wisdom of an Inuk. Inuit recognize and appreciate the contributions of those artists, such as Parr (FIG. 4), who participated in the early modern art movement and were trail-blazers for other Inuit artists, clearing a path for the success and prosperity of their communities. Also related to the concept of serving is the principle of *Angiqatigiinniq*, which emphasizes the importance of consensus-based decision-making and the sharing of resources, focusing on benefiting the community before the individual. These related concepts can be seen in narrative works which illustrate the collaborative group dynamic of a fishing and sealing party, such as in Philimone Nattuk’s *Family Fishing* (2000) (FIG. 5). This is also underscored by the concept of *Pinasuqatigiinniq*, the principle of working together for the common good, which is beautifully illustrated in the delightful large-scale whalebone work by Jaco Ishulutaq, *Couple at Work* (1987) (FIG. 6), wherein a joyous couple work together on the preparation and cleaning of sealskins.

Pilimmasarniq – the principle of acquiring and sharing skills and knowledge through careful observation and practice – is intrinsic to art-making in the Arctic, as most contemporary artists continue to develop their artistic skills and knowledge by learning from and observing other Inuit artists (rather than attending art school, visiting art museums, and other forms of art training more common and accessible in southern Canada). Inuit artists have long fostered and honed their talents by closely observing family or community members at home, as we see revealed in the works of the prolific Ashoona family (p. 58, 84), or in the works of artists who belong to art-making cooperatives like the Cape Dorset Print Shop. The Inuit-led cooperative art movement that began in the 1950s and 1960s owes much of its success to these centrally interrelated concepts of knowledge sharing and consensus building. Today, in many works, Inuit artists also now apply the observational skills and patience required for Arctic survival to the creation of art depicting the wildlife with which they share their vast polar territory. Works such as Johnny Aculiak’s *Polar Bear Head* (1997) and Iyola Kingwatsiak’s *Two Fish* (1993) (FIG. 7) showcase a unique Arctic perspective, and demonstrate how Inuit knowledge of animal behaviour has translated compellingly to stone and bone. Kingwatsiak’s delicately carved piece of two fish, exactly mirroring each other and created from a single piece of stone, further reflects his mastery of this material. Perhaps the work was inspired by the reflection of a jumping fish poised momentarily over a still lake.

Related to these concepts is *Qanurtuuqatigiinniq* – being resourceful and inventive to solve problems – which also broadly applies to the works in this collection and exhibition. The ability to adapt, innovate, repurpose and creatively find solutions to everyday problems is one of the most significant cultural traits of the Inuit, who are known for their ingenious resourcefulness in the Arctic. Think of the resourcefulness involved in the creation of an igloo, or *illuvigaq*, entirely of snow, or the building of a *qayaq*, a one-person boat historically made without wood, using only bones and sealskin. Inuit have long survived in the Arctic with only the resources available from the land, ice and sea; today they apply this same principle of extreme resourcefulness to their daily lives, making use of all of the supplies available to them. This valued quality has been a touchstone of modern and contemporary art production as well. In the mid-century, Inuit merged their ancient practice of ivory carving, keen observation skills and deep knowledge of the land required to source bone, ivory and quarry stone, as well as their experience in making ivory miniatures for trade with whalers and fishermen, and applied that knowledge to the creation of a dynamic new kind of art production, modern stone sculpture. Being resourceful in the 21st century means continuing to make the most of what is available in the Arctic, by applying Inuit knowledge to the quarrying of stone and harvesting of other resources. And finally, *Avatimik kamatsianiq* (or the concept of environmental stewardship) further underscores *Qanurtuuqatigiinniq*. It emphasizes the responsibility of Inuit to be respectful of their limited resources and to protect the land and its inhabitants. The massive and elaborate whalebone sculpture *Tribute to Animals* (1996), by Manasie Akpaliak (p. 48), with its many representations of animals from the sea, sky and land, is a meaningful tribute to this theme and an expression of *Avatimik kamatsianiq*.



Fig. 5. Philimone Nattuk, *Family Fishing*, 2000, ivory, caribou antler, whalebone and pyroxenite, 21.6 × 28.5 × 24.4 cm. MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art Collection, gift of Raymond Brousseau (2005.1748).



Fig. 6. Jaco Ishulutaq, *Couple at Work*, 1987, whalebone, 34.6 × 85.6 × 59.6 cm. MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art Collection, gift of Galerie Brousseau et Brousseau inc. (2005.1390).



Fig. 7. Iyola Kingwatsiak, *Two Fish*, 1993, slate, 43 × 46.4 × 5.6 cm. MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art Collection, purchased with a special contribution from Hydro-Québec (2005.1535).



Fig. 8. John Halluqtalik, *Flight of Geese*, 1999, caribou antler, 41.2 × 31.1 × 37.2 cm. MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art Collection, gift of Raymond Brousseau (2005.897).

Respect for Animals, Respect for the Land / *Nirjutinik suusutsaniq, Nunami suusutsaniq*

The ability of Inuit to create art came from the culture's relationship to the land and the animals – their intimate knowledge of birds, bears, seals, walruses, muskoxen, wolves [...] The hunters had a natural knowledge of the animals' anatomy. They knew the animals intimately – their habits and how they looked at different times of year – and could best portray them in their art.⁴

For millennia, Inuit survival depended on their ability to responsibly harvest whales, seals, caribou and other Arctic wildlife, which provided not only food but also oil for lamps and skins for warm and waterproof clothing. *Avatimik kamatsianiq* meant harvesting only what would be necessary and sustainable, and sharing the results of the hunt with others as needed, so no one would starve. Maintaining a respectful relationship with animals of the northern sea, sky and land continues to be a pressing responsibility for Inuit, made even more urgent by rising levels of industrial pollutants in the Arctic and the global effects of climate change. While the Arctic has modernized over the last century, Inuit still rely on the shared intergenerational knowledge of elders and others to understand animal migrations, ocean life and the changing environment. This intimate knowledge of their ecosystem enables them to provide for their families by continuing to harvest healthy “country food,” the sustainable local Arctic food sources such as Arctic char, duck, seal, whale, caribou, berries and seaweed. Inuit artists apply the same considerable powers of observation honed through patient hours spent on the land hunting to the creation of artworks depicting the wildlife with which they share their vast territory. In John Halluqtalik's *Flight of Geese* (1999) (FIG. 8), for example, the artist captures a flock of geese, delicately carved, soaring overhead. Each goose is depicted in a slightly different pose, with variations in size, height and movement, yet Halluqtalik effectively captures how the flock still moves as one. Hunting, consuming and sharing foods derived from the Arctic sky, sea and land is at the heart of Inuit culture and society.

Importance of Family and Respect for Mothers / *Anaananik suusutsaniq* and *Ilagiinniup pimmarininga*

In Inuit society, kinship and families are of vital significance. The fundamental principles of cooperation, togetherness and sharing have ensured that families have survived over centuries, and today contemporary Inuit art continues to reflect those societal values. Depictions of family themes are among the most common motifs in Inuit art: works showing a mother with an infant in the hood of her *amauti* (mother's parka) or the representation of large family units have long been popular both within Inuit culture and among Inuit art collectors in southern Canada. Here, the artists also highlight the interconnection of families to the animals on which they have depended for centuries. Many works in the Brousseau Inuit Art Collection underscore the centrality of the family to the Inuit, such as George Arluk's

Family (1997) (P. 52), which emphasizes the central importance of kinship and the strength drawn from family and ancestry, or the sculpture by Goota Ashoona, *Family Playing* (2002) (FIG. 9) which depicts a miniature mother and father joyfully swinging their tiny child in their arms.

In particular, the role of women as mothers, and the important skills and knowledge they contribute and pass down intergenerationally, are also critical to the fabric of Inuit society. Inuit women are the carriers of much essential IQ. Charlie Inukpuk's *Woman Sewing Boot* (1980) (FIG. 10) demonstrates Inuit women's deep knowledge of clothing design and the vital Arctic sewing technologies that foster survival in the harsh climate. Works such as Simeonie Elijassiapik's *Mother and Child* (1987) (P. 20), with its universal theme of mother and child, makes visible one of the many connections and values that people in the South share with their neighbours in the North. Of particular note is the high number of Inuit women sculptors included in this collection, including such renowned carvers as Martha Tickie, Maudie Rachel Okittuq, and Emily Pangnerk Illuitok. As the collector Raymond Brousseau has remarked, “I have always, always, always had Inuit women artists in the gallery,” paying homage to the many great woman artists whose works are now included in this collection, and acknowledging their meaningful role within the history of Inuit art.

Oral Histories of the Arctic / *Unikkaatuat*

Through Inuit oral history and storytelling practices, cultural histories and personal memories have been preserved; morals and values are passed on; and knowledge of the powerful spirits that inhabit the Arctic land, sea and sky – and the shamans who commune with them – are transmitted from one generation to the next. In the past, Inuit relied on their spiritual leaders and gifted hunters to commune with, appease, and sometimes even become the spirits of the animals that Inuit depended on for their survival. Images of *angakkuut* such as Mattiusi Iyaituk's *Shaman* (2000) (FIG. 11) and of shaman-animal transformations such as Jolly Aningmiuq's lyrical piece *Transformation* (1997) can be found throughout Inuit sculptural practice and in the graphic arts, and these histories continue to inspire artists. Today Inuit sculptors have also adopted the practice of sharing specific legends and knowledge of the supernatural and spiritual worlds of the North, as represented in numerous images of the sea goddess *Nuliajuk* (Sedna), the epic hero *Kiviuk*, or in the illustration of episodes from enduring histories, such as Mitiarjuk Nappaaluk's *Legend of the Giant* (1972) (FIG. 12).



Fig. 9. Goota Ashoona, *Family Playing*, 2002, whalebone, serpentinite and sinew, 9.4 × 13.4 × 4.9 cm. MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art Collection, purchased with a special contribution from Hydro-Québec (2005.760).



Fig. 10. Charlie Inukpuk, *Woman Sewing Boot*, 1980, steatite, 43.6 × 24.8 × 11.3 cm. MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art Collection, gift of Raymond Brousseau (2005.1320).

4. Sonia Gunderson, “Lukie Airut: Igloolik's Carving Wizard,” *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 3 (Fall 2006), p. 11.



Fig. 11. Mattiusi Iyaituk, *Shaman*, 2000, serpentinite, gabbro and muskox hair, 64.7 × 26.3 × 17.8 cm. MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art Collection, gift of Galerie Brousseau et Brousseau inc. (2005.1406).



Fig. 12. Mitiarjuk Nappaaluk, *Legend of the Giant*, 1972, steatite and ivory, 11.5 × 64.2 × 35.4 cm. MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art Collection, gift of Galerie Brousseau et Brousseau inc. (2005.1737).

Changes in the Arctic in the Twentieth Century: Christianity, Colonialism, Modernization / Ukiurtatuup Asitjipaalianinga: Uppiniq, Qallunaanut tikitausimaniq, Nutaanngupalliajut

For countless generations before contact with outsiders the Inuit of northern North America maintained their knowledge, histories and spiritual customs, yet in the early 20th century, the rapid introduction of Christianity and colonization that swept across the North threatened to disrupt, and even erase, Inuit traditional knowledge, values and spirituality. Within a period of just a few short decades between 1900 and 1950, the Inuit way of life was rapidly impacted by contact with *Qallunaat* culture in the North. Massive changes came to the Arctic. Inuit were almost completely converted to Christianity in the first decades of the century by eager missionaries.⁵ In Hugh Haqqi's 1993 basalt sculpture, *Preacher in a Kayak* (p. 32), the artist depicts the wave of conversion, highlighting the role of some Inuit in spreading the Christian faith to remote communities across the Arctic. At the same time, the Hudson's Bay Company began building trading posts in the Arctic, and encouraged the Inuit to trap for financial gain rather than to hunt for food. This lifestyle shift soon led many Inuit to settle in communities around the posts, which then led to a scarcity of local "country food," thereby causing increased reliance on canned goods and other store-bought items from southern Canada. The Inuit quickly became skilled in their employment as trappers of Arctic fox, only to have that industry collapse in the 1930s during the Great Depression, leaving many of them suddenly economically dependent.⁶ The new settlements also became unfortunate breeding grounds for foreign diseases such as smallpox and tuberculosis. Following a 1935 census, all Inuit – who had previously been known only by one name – were forced to identify themselves to the government according to their "Eskimo Identification" tag serial numbers (sometimes known as E7 numbers), rather than their names, and this demeaning colonial practice continued until the advent of Project Surname in 1969.⁷ In Nunavik and Nunatsiavut, a number of Inuit communities were relocated by the federal government, an action that had long-term devastating consequences wherever it occurred. There have also been allegations that RCMP officers orchestrated the slaughter of thousands of sled dogs across the Arctic to force Inuit to stay in their new communities, a tragic story that was recently investigated by Nunavut's Qikiqtani Truth Commission. And in the 1950s, the government introduced the residential school system, compelling all parents to send their children, some as young as four and five, to live in underfunded, church-run schools. The role of these residential schools was to "civilize" the Native population, and it was thought that removing Inuit children to schools far from their homes and introducing them to a completely foreign way of life could best accomplish this. In contrast to these aims, the disastrous legacy of the residential school system is frequently one of neglect, abuse and mistreatment, where schools were underfunded and mismanaged, children were underfed and lived in overcrowded dormitories, and were forbidden to speak their language. Many children suffered physical, mental and sexual abuse, and, without treatment, for some that trauma has been passed on through generations from parent to child. Artists such as brothers Abraham Anghik Ruben (p. 26, 74) and David

Ruben Piqtoukun (p. 18), both featured prominently in the Brousseau Inuit Art Collection, were among the first Inuit artists to directly address the impact of residential schools in their sculptures. The devastating legacies of these combined efforts to eradicate Inuit culture and life ways continue to be felt in Inuit communities today.⁸

In this difficult period of cultural upheaval it was the artists who preserved much of this vulnerable knowledge by recording in their artworks what they were discouraged from or forbidden to practise in their own communities. This includes knowledge of ceremonies, shamans, the spirit world, tattoos, oral histories and great legends, which can now be accessed through sculpture and the graphic arts. By embedding that otherwise forbidden knowledge in their artworks, Inuit artists expressed the principle of *Qanurtuuqatigiinni*, or being innovative and resourceful to solve problems, by using the means available to them – art-making – to safeguard Inuit traditional knowledge. This resourcefulness is perhaps the single most important trait valued by Inuit, who survived for millennia in the Arctic with only the resources available in the barren Arctic land, sky and sea. As Jaypetee Arnakak has explained, "Inuit culture is *Qanurtuuqatig*."⁹ Around mid-century, Inuit began to apply their skills in carving ivory, powers of observation, and deep knowledge of the land required to find bone and quarry stone, to the creation of a dynamic new kind of art production, stone sculpture. This shift from hunter to artist is celebrated in works such as Barnabus Arnasungaaq's *Man Carrying a Sculpted Muskox* (1990) (p. 30), where the artist is shown reflecting on the significance of the introduction of the art industry on his livelihood, and his identity. By adapting quickly to this new industry, Inuit artists across *Inuit Nunangat* developed a modern stone sculpture industry that largely replaced the rapidly declining trapping industry, while garnering worldwide critical and popular acclaim and, in the process, sparking the lifelong passion of visionary collectors such as Raymond Brousseau.

Being resourceful in the 21st century means continuing to make the most of what is available in the Arctic, and works such as Adla Korgak's *Snowmobile* (1994) (FIG. 13) comment on the importance of this vehicle in the modern North, which enabled Inuit to continue to travel in their own land and to hunt and survive in the wake of the 20th-century dog slaughter, which left many families with no means of transportation. Works of this style also illustrate the ongoing relevance of broad principles such as resourcefulness to

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

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

7. For a history of Project Surname, see Valerie Alia, *Names, Numbers, and Northern Policy: Inuit, Project Surname, and the Politics of Identity* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1994).

8. For more on Inuit residential schools, see Heather Igloliorte, ed., *"We Were So Far Away": The Inuit Experience of Residential Schools* (Ottawa: Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2010).

9. Jaypetee Arnakak, "Commentary: What is Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit? Using Inuit family and kinship relationships to apply Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit," *Nunatsiaq News*, August 25, 2000. http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/archives/nunavuto00831/nvt20825_17.html

Inuit life. Furthermore, since the 1980s, there has been a marked rise in the number of artists creating works about these difficult histories, including both personal experiences and collective trauma. Through these works, it is possible to gain understanding of the recent past and to imagine a new future.



Fig. 13. Adla Korgak, *Snowmobile*, 1994, serpentinite and caribou antler, 16.9 × 13 × 28.4 cm. MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art Collection, gift of Raymond Brousseau (2005.1569).

Cultural Resurgence through the Arts / *Ilurqusirmik uummatitsiniq takuminartutigut*

Since the onset of the 21st century, Inuit have been experiencing a political and cultural renaissance. The formation of Nunavut and the settling of other land claims across the North has ushered in a new era of independence that has been echoed in the visual and performative arts. Although Inuit still grapple with the histories and ongoing legacies of nearly a century of colonialism in the North and current serious issues regarding the environment, food security and quality of life in the Arctic, there has been a shift toward Inuit independence and a return to a harmonious life brought about by the practice of IQ.

In the arts, we are witnessing the rapid re-emergence and popularity of many forms of cultural expression. Inuit throat singing, or *katajjaniq*, for example, as depicted in Silas Qayaqjuaq’s *Throat Singers* (2002) (p. 90), which had largely fallen out of practice in Inuit communities in the latter half of the 20th century, has recently become very popular, and many young women are learning the practice now. Contemporary musicians such as Tanya Tagaq have helped to popularize and share this art form with a new generation. Similarly, drum groups and other forms of cultural performance and expression are also on the rise, signaling a hopeful new era for the residents of *Inuit Nunagat* as well as the Inuit living in urban centres across southern Canada. As Inuit continue to practice IQ and to ensure its continuation and relevance in daily life, the artistic practices thrive.

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

~ Pauloosie Kasadluak, Inukjuak, 1976¹⁰

10. Pauloosie Kasadluak, “Nothing Marvelous,” in *Port Harrison/Inoucdjouac*, ed. Jean Blodgett (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1977).

Group of Women and Children

Circa 1979

Steatite,
14.4 × 51.9 × 8.5 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, purchased with a
special contribution from Hydro-
Québec (2005.2101)

Miriam Marelík Qiyuk is one of the eight surviving children of the Inuit textile and graphic artist Jessie Oonark from Qamanittuaq, all of whom – sisters Victoria Mamnguqsualuk, Mary Yuusipik Singaqti, Nancy Pukingrnak Aupaluktuk, Janet Kigusiuq and Peggy Qablunaaq Aittauq, and brothers William Noah and Joshua Nuilaalik – are well-known artists in their own right. Qiyuk grew up on the land before her family moved to Qamanittuaq when she was in her twenties. There she married artist Silas Qiyuk. In the early 1960s Miriam began to create beautiful wall hangings much like her famous mother, but had to stop producing textile works in the late 1970s due to an allergic reaction to wool.

Miriam Marelík Qiyuk

1933

Qamanittuaq, Kivalliq, Nunavut

As Qiyuk moved into carving stone in the 1980s, it became clear that her talents had not been limited to the textile arts. As evidenced by this dramatic work, *Group of Women and Children*, Qiyuk has a masterful grasp of her medium, and excels in capturing posture, emotion and mood even in very simplified forms. In this piece, children sit upon their smiling mothers’ laps in a row, as if posing for a group portrait, although many lean forward, elbows on knees, as though they have been holding this position for a long time. Is this a family portrait, or a waiting room? Regardless, the repetition of big and little faces, linked hands and leaning torsos over many seated legs creates a playfully undulating rhythm across this long sculpture and demonstrates Qiyuk’s virtuosity in stone.



Bear Shaman

1985

Steatite, ivory and horn,
38.1 × 34 × 16.1 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Raymond
Brousseau (2005.1984)

With the introduction of modern religion, the shaman has slowly disappeared, but they live through the artist in this day and age. Myself and my brother, we are the extensions of that. We are just a tool for somebody else. Some of the sculptures that I create are so powerful – it’s as if they are emitting a life force.¹

This virtuoso work emerges from Piqtoukun’s knowledge of oral history and his deep interest in transformation iconography. About the role oral traditions have played in his artistic production, he says, “In 1975, Dr. Allen Gonor of North Battleford, Saskatchewan, persuaded me to start collecting traditional stories from my parents and elders. From these oral traditions, my Inuit roots began to re-establish themselves. From the moment I began to absorb my culture, the direction of my work took an immense leap into Inuit mythology... These simple and beautiful stories are embedded in the work I continually create.” Like many Inuit artists, Piqtoukun draws on his cultural history and Inuvialuit ancestry for inspiration, but he is not limited to representations of ancient Inuit history; he also looks at recent stories from the North, including the influx of new technologies, such as airplanes, as well as some of the darker narratives from recent history. Piqtoukun’s career exploded after he and his brother Abraham Anghik Ruben debuted their exhibition *Out of Tradition* at the Winnipeg Art Gallery in 1989. The subsequent massive solo exhibition *Between Two Worlds* (1997-1998) was groundbreaking in its assessment of the legacy of residential schools on the artist’s life, while firmly securing Piqtoukun’s position as one of the most conceptual and masterful artists of his generation.

The distinctive flattened oval stone faces and expressive, lifelike forms of David Ruben Piqtoukun’s sculptures are some of his most recognizable aesthetic traits, but his

David Ruben Piqtoukun

1950
Paulatuk, Inuvialuit, Northwest Territories

interest in the spirit world, dreams and transformations is his most common theme. “I relate a lot to the images of the dream world and mythology... Most of the time I feel like I’m from outer space.” Like many of the artists included in the Brousseau Inuit Art Collection, Piqtoukun was born in a period of transition across the Arctic, and as such his memories of his early life on the land have had a lasting influence: “[It] has instilled within me a deep and lasting love for the raw and rugged beauty of land and nature, which is often reflected in my work.” Piqtoukun creates powerful, compelling images in his mixed-media works, which are not limited to any particular medium. He enjoys experimenting with exotic stones and sculpting in metal and mixed media, using materials such as welded steel, Brazilian soapstone and Italian crystal alabaster. Piqtoukun believes that alabaster “seems to have the transparency and the inner light of the shamans and the spirits described in the old stories.”



Detail of the work



1. Darlene Coward Wight, *Out of Tradition: Abraham Anghik/ David Ruben Piqtoukun* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1989), p. 42.

Mother and Child

1987

Steatite,
38.9 × 42.1 × 14.8 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Galerie
Brousseau et Brousseau inc.
(2005.831)

*I mostly carve soapstone, but I carve antler and ivory too. The soapstone is my favourite. There are different types of stone, some soft and some hard, and when I’m finished what I wanted to do, I’m very satisfied with my work.*¹

Depictions of family themes are among the most common motifs in Inuit art: works showing a mother with an infant in the hood of her *amauti* (mother’s parka) or the representation of large family units have long been popular both within Inuit culture and among Inuit art collectors in southern Canada. In this delightful, highly detailed work by Simeonie Elijassiapik, a mother kneels and braids her daughter’s hair, presenting an innovative variation on the theme of mother and child that is represented throughout Inuit art. Elijassiapik draws our attention to the fundamental principles of cooperation: togetherness and sharing have ensured that families have survived over centuries, while speaking to the universal bond between mother and daughter.

Simeonie Elijassiapik, who was born in a small hunting camp just north of Inukjuak, is the son of Elijassiapik, who was also a stone sculptor; his siblings are all artists as well. As a young man, he had hunted with his father until the elder Elijassiapik was hospitalized; the younger Elijassiapik then began hunting alongside the famous front-running artist Johnny Inukpuk. As a result of their

Simeonie Elijassiapik

1948-2012
Inukjuak, Nunavik, Québec

influence, Elijassiapik adopted a personal style that fuses his father’s interest in representational art with Inukpuk’s stylistic conventions, such as enlarging and emphasizing hands and faces, as well as elaborating on clothing details. In this striking piece, the long hair of both subjects, the elaborate trim work, and even the stitching on their *kamiks* (boots) are all carefully etched into the surface of the carving. Elsewhere, the thick folds of the mother’s *amauti* as well as the faces of the two females are carefully sculpted in relief.

Elijassiapik’s skills and talents have been long acknowledged by his fellow artists and the art market alike. In 1981, he was awarded first prize in a carving competition organized and juried by his peers in the Inukjuak carving cooperative, while his carvings are still highly sought after and can be found in collections worldwide.



1. Matthew Fox, “Focus On: Noah Echalook and Simeonie Elijassiapik,” *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 12, no. 4 (Winter 1997), p. 14.

Man and Narwhal

1988

Serpentinite, caribou antler and ivory,
33 × 19.2 × 42.8 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art Collection, purchased with a special contribution from Hydro-Québec (2005.1614)

Through the carving you have to work and work to express what you are trying to show. If it breaks, you have to change your mind a little and fix it. Not what you planned at first. But video, you don't have to do anything, just show it and it speaks for itself. That was the difference – video just speaks for itself.'

Better known for his foundational work in film and video, Zacharias Kunuk was a stone sculptor before becoming a filmmaker and, in fact, in 1981 famously sold some of his early carvings to finance the purchase of his first video camera and equipment in order to film stories in the North.

This work, which may be an adapted episode out of the epic Kiviuq legend, wherein hunter-hero Kiviuq rides a whale, reflects Kunuk’s ongoing desire to tell stories of his people and culture through art. Sonia Gunderson has remarked that whatever his medium, Kunuk’s artistic work has always focused on sharing Inuit oral history. “Although Kunuk uses the latest high-tech equipment... he views himself as a storyteller in the time-honoured Inuit oral tradition, a tradition without books or libraries.” Born in 1957, Kunuk has cited his influences as both Inuit oral tradition and John Wayne films. He says: “I was thinking like those [cowboy and Indian] soldiers. As I got older and saw myself as an Aboriginal person, I learned that there are two sides to every story.” Drawn by a desire to tell the Inuit side of the story, in 1985 Kunuk attended a two-week

Zacharias Kunuk

1957

Iglulik, Qikiqtaaluk, Nunavut

workshop in Iqaluit run by Norman Cohn, during which he learned video techniques beyond the standard broadcast model, thus beginning his work as a filmmaker. His ongoing themes include Inuit tradition and communal life, history, Christianity and shamanism.

While his carvings are thus rare and little-known, he is an award-winning filmmaker and television producer who has been recognized with many honours, including a 1994 Bell Canada Award for the production of the series *Nunavut (Our Land)*; the Caméra d’Or for Best First Feature at the Cannes Film Festival, and six Genie Awards, including Best Picture and Best Director for *Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner)*; an appointment to the Order of Canada; and the Donald Cameron Bronze Medal in the category of Aboriginal Arts, among many other accolades.



Detail of the work



1. Michael Robert Evans, *Isuma: Inuit Video Art* (Montréal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008), p. 60.

The World of the Caribou

1988

Caribou antler, horn, plastic and
black ink,
105 × 101.7 × 57.4 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Galerie
Brousseau et Brousseau inc.
(2005.1716)

Peter Morgan was one of the first Inuit artists to begin carving in caribou antler rather than ivory or stone. Both his father, Joseph, and his older brother Johnny were sculptors, and under their influence, Peter started carving at a young age, beginning when he was about twelve years old. Although he learned the craft of printmaking from his famous father-in-law, Tivi Etook, and was known as a stone carver, Morgan also carved art from smaller pieces of caribou antler until about 1988, when at the suggestion of Peter Murdoch, the General Manager of the Fédération des Coopératives du Nouveau Québec, he first took up the challenge of sculpting a full set of antlers. As an artist from Kangiqsualujjuaq (George River), Nunavik, located close to the migration path of what was until recently the largest caribou herd in the world – the George River herd – Morgan has long had access to a wealth of his primary source material. Inuit have both a deep respect for and ancient reliance on the caribou, which continues to be a cornerstone of the healthy and sustainable diet that comes from the land, what Inuit today call “country food.” By carving directly onto the antler and skull of the caribou Morgan signifies both that vital relationship to the caribou and Inuit gratitude for that ongoing relationship, reflecting *avatittinnik kamatsianiq* – respect and care for the land, animals and the environment – in his work.

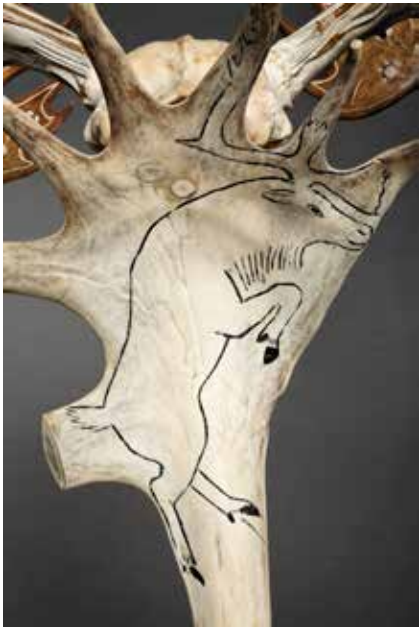
Although Morgan has been included in dozens of exhibitions throughout his career, the artist had only worked on two previous full racks of antlers before he was invited to hold his first solo exhibition of caribou antler carvings in 1993 at Galerie Aux Multiples Collections Inc., the Sainte-Anne Street gallery of Raymond Brousseau in Québec City. This lively work, made all the more striking by the bold inlaid black eyes (themselves of Inuit faces), was included in that exhibition of some 20 works in antler.

Peter Morgan

1951

Kangiqsualujjuaq, Nunavik, Québec

The expansive surface area available for carving on a complete set of skull and antlers enables Morgan to depict many figures, often engaged in complex narratives. His stories, told in two-tone relief carving, feature people and animals weaving around a curving surface and emerging from the shape of the source material. One of Morgan’s most recognizable sculptural techniques is to outline his “drawings” with a rounded white line, playing up the contrast between the whitest outer edges and the darker brown that is revealed as one carves closer to the antler’s marrow. In this work, things made by Inuit – an *iglu* (igloo), a *qayaq* (kayak), and other implements – are surrounded by all manner of Arctic animals and birds that swim, dive and climb around the many-pointed antlers, supported by an antler base.



Detail of the work



Transformation

1988

Steatite and metal,
34.3 × 20.7 × 11.2 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Raymond
Brousseau (2005.561)

Abraham Anghik Ruben is a university-trained mixed-media sculptor who works in diverse mediums including stone, bone, wood, whalebone, bronze and narwhal tusk. Like his brother David Ruben Piqtoukun, Abraham attended residential school as a child and later became one of the first Inuit artists to explicitly deal with this difficult subject matter, as well as other aspects of colonization, in his sculptural work, blazing a trail for the next generation of artists to follow. Of late, Ruben has again been tackling challenging subject matter, this time of an entirely different kind of Inuit contact history. He became interested in the intersections of Inuit oral history and archaeological evidence that Inuit in the Arctic came into contact with Norse explorers and settlers a millennium ago, and has begun to visually imagine the encounters and cultural exchanges between these two peoples roughly 1,000 years ago. These two bodies of work have garnered Ruben numerous exhibitions and worldwide acclaim.

Abraham Anghik Ruben

1951
Paulatuk, Inuvialuit, Northwest Territories

This piece, *Transformation*, while unlike either of the two aforementioned bodies of work, represents a lifelong interest of Ruben’s in the stories of Inuvialuit life in the western Canadian Arctic, learned from his immediate family, his community and ancestors. Born on the land but thrust into modern society at a young age, Ruben has frequently returned to themes of shamanism, oral history and transformations in his work, which connect him to his culture and history. Ruben is known for his surrealist tendencies as well as his attention to detail and distinctive carving style. In this work, the shifting face of the shaman mid-transformation is highlighted through a dynamic tension between the left and right side of the work. His subtle shifts – found in a flattened nostril or slanting eye – together create an intriguing, if disconcerting, visage.



Carved Walrus Skull

1990

Bone, ivory and serpentinite,
29.1 × 55.8 × 27.4 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Galerie
Brousseau et Brousseau inc.
(2005.450)

While carving in walrus tusk is one of the most ancient Inuit artistic practices we know of – tusk ivory carvings thousands of years old have been found throughout the circumpolar north – Luke Airut is known all over the Arctic for his particularly distinct, contemporary use of not only ivory tusk but also the whole walrus skull. His intricate relief carvings made on complete walrus skulls and tusks are complex and intriguing. Airut uses the natural texture of the skull as a stippled ground from which all manner of imagery emerges. From every viewpoint, this work tells a story: a polar bear stalks its prey down one tusk, while a dog team races along the other; igloos, bears, camp scenes, Inuit faces and marine mammals wind around the skull. Bulging ivory “eyeballs” further animate the work. His sculptures beg close attention from all angles and directions.

Airut was born in 1942 in a small camp near Baffin Island’s Alanarjuk Lake, and grew up hunting from the land, stalking seals, whales, polar bears and walruses along the sea ice and hunting caribou inland. In his twenties he began carving as a means to earn extra money, but his considerable talent quickly garnered him a reputation as one of the most sought-after artists from the community of Iglulik. As an artist, Airut applies the same observational powers he learned from living off the land to his sculptural work, using whalebone, tusk, stone, metal and other materials in his art.

Luke Airut

1942

Iglulik, Qikiqtaaluk, Nunavut

Like many Inuit artists, Luke Airut learned how to carve through observation, watching his father, George Kappianaq, and other Iglulik artists such as Pacome Kolaut, carve in stone and whalebone. As a young artist he began working in stone, and following a six-month course at the Arctic College in Iqaluit, he also developed an interest in fine metal jewellery-making. This orientation toward intricate and detailed work can be seen in all of his creative endeavours. Over time, his work has come to focus on the use of natural materials like ivory and whalebone, which he collects from the land during summer hunting trips. “I began collecting bowhead skulls from old sod houses,” he says. “I have probably carved over 100 skulls.”

Over the years, his work has been included in numerous exhibitions in the US, Canada, Europe and Japan, and a number of national and provincial museums have Airut’s work in their permanent collections, including those in Québec City, Montréal, Winnipeg, Toronto, Churchill, Yellowknife, Edmonton and other locations.



Detail of the work



1. Luke Airut in Sonia Gunderson, “Lukie Airut: Igloodik’s Carving Wizard,” *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 3 (Fall 2006), p. 11.

Man Carrying a Sculpted Muskox

1990

Basalt,
25.9 × 16.8 × 16.1 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Raymond
Brousseau (2005.724)

To the new generation of Inuit carvers, here and across Nunavut, I recommend this: carve the way you want, and not the way the white man tells you – remember you are an Inuk.¹

Born in 1924, Barnabus Arnasungaaq was raised on the land in the Keewatin region northwest of Hudson Bay, and until the 1950s largely lived the semi-nomadic life-style of his people, until the threat of mass starvation in the region around 1956-1957 led to the relocation of many families to Qamanittuaq and other settlements. For families such as his that were relocated, the early years of that transition were the hardest.

Early in the 1960s a carving program was introduced to the Qamanittuaq region, to provide some economic relief to the struggling residents. Arnasungaaq began participating in this initiative and was almost immediately a success, gaining widespread renown following the first exhibition of Keewatin art at the Winnipeg Art Gallery in 1964, and going on to a prolific career as a well-respected and highly sought-after artist. In particular, Arnasungaaq’s many carvings of muskoxen are prized by major collections and private collectors alike, and although he often sculpts this same Arctic animal, he has created endless variations on the subject matter by playing with texture, weight, scale, proportion and posture to constantly create new work.

Barnabus Arnasungaaq

1924

Qamanittuaq, Kivalliq, Nunavut

Given the significance of art practice to Arnasungaaq’s life, *Man Carrying a Sculpted Muskox* can only be viewed as a self-portrait. Surviving starvation, only to be relocated to a remote community with few opportunities for self-sufficiency, could have been a devastating blow for the young man and his family; instead, because of his skill and talent in sculpture, and particularly his beloved muskox carvings, Arnasungaaq became a famous artist whose works can be found in numerous national and international collections. This self-referential sculpture appears to pay homage to the significant impact that the modern Inuit art movement had not only on Arnasungaaq’s life, but also on the lives of many across the Canadian Arctic.



1. Zoran Milich, “Dateline: Baker Lake, NWT (July 1995),” *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 4 (Winter 1995), p. 21.

Preacher in a Kayak

1993

Basalt and caribou antler,
14.9 × 8.6 × 22.1 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Raymond
Brousseau (2005.905)

The transition to Christianity in the Canadian Arctic largely occurred between the end of the 18th century and the early 1950s. Welcomed by many Inuit, the introduction of a new religion had a swift and detrimental impact on traditional Inuit spirituality. While the histories and spiritual customs of the Inuit had been passed down through millennia across the Arctic, the colonization of the region and the introduction of Christianity had a dramatic impact on our knowledge of that history. Within a few short generations, many traditional spiritual customs were halted altogether, and because these traditions were regarded as “primitive,” “heathen” and “savage,” they were not spoken of amongst the Inuit or shared with younger generations. Traditional women’s tattooing is an example of one of the practices that almost disappeared, only to recently experience a revival by young women. Other traditional beliefs and practices were adapted and adopted by the newly converted Inuit to be more in line with Christian belief systems, such as the translation of Bibles and hymn books into Inuktitut.

Hugh Haqpi

1955

Qamanittuaq, Kivalliq, Nunavut

In this work by prolific carver Hugh Haqpi, the artist explores the idea of conversion and Christianity in the Arctic, revealing one of the many various and complex transformations that happened throughout the North during this era of conversion by portraying the evangelist not as a *Qallunaat* (non-Inuit person) coming from the south to preach the gospel to Inuit, but as an Inuk, spreading “the good word” by kayak.



Family

Circa 1993

Basalt,
36.8 × 24.3 × 19.3 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, purchased with a
special contribution from Hydro-
Québec (2005.2349)

Lucy Tasseor Tutsweetok

1934-2012
Arviat, Kivalliq, Nunavut

*One time a group of singers came to the community. My daughter was watching me while I was carving. She asked me if carving a sculpture was the same as singing. I replied, Yes, it is.*¹

Lucy Tasseor Tutsweetok, one of the Canadian Arctic’s most beloved sculptors, was born in 1934, in Nunalla, Manitoba. She later moved to Arviat, Nunavut, where she began carving when she was about twenty years old. She said, “When I first began to carve, there was a period of three days when I was at a loss for what to do. Then my grandfather, who we were living with at the time – he had stopped hunting – gave me some instructions, and I haven’t stopped since.”²

Her sculptures often reveal a deep interest in Inuit ideas about time, community, and the changes ushered in from contact with the South. “My carvings have the theme of changing times... I reflect the change that has come about for us with the *Qablunnaat* [non-Inuit]. I try to portray the experience of the First Peoples. We used to be many, but we are vanishing... I want to preserve the past for everyone, and I don’t want my grandchildren to lose what we know.”³ She noted that she drew much inspiration for her work from her children and grandchildren, revealing the central importance of family to Inuit society and values.

Tutsweetok worked abstractly and conceptually, usually portraying groups of people – often families, as in this work – in her distinct, semi-figurative style. Rather than clearly delineating forms, she allowed faces, limbs and shapes to emerge from and re-enter her carvings, suggesting a tension between the inside and outside of her pieces. She often left the trace of her vigorous mark-making on the surface of her sculptures, revealing her dynamic carving process and creating movement in her pieces, as here in *Family*.



1. Ingo Hessel, “The Artists: Lucy Tutsweetok,” *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 5, no. 1 (Winter 1990), p. 15.

2. Simeonie Kunnuk, “Lucy Tasseor Tutsweetuk: ‘I portray the old way of life, the period of change and the new way of life for the Inuit people,’” *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 4 (Winter 1998), p. 21.

3. Ibid., p. 22.

Dream of Journey

1994

Serpentinite and caribou antler,
66.3 × 62.9 × 37.1 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Galerie
Brousseau et Brousseau inc.
(2005.603)

While many works in this collection realistically depict Arctic fauna and ongoing Inuit hunting practices, this sculpture by Jolly Aningmiuq straddles the divide between a hunter’s reality and dreams. While no one would attempt to ride a caribou in real life, in the dream world anything is possible. In this imaginative work, the shaman uses his powers to grasp the caribou’s ears, but even with his considerable abilities, he is unable to tame the wild creature. What’s more, the Inuk man appears in this dream dressed in a woman’s coat, an *amauti*. Has the shaman – known as an *angakkuq* – disguised himself here, or has he transformed? Perhaps the artist is referencing the symbolism of the caribou-fur *amauti* itself. The tail, shown here fluttering behind the galloping caribou, also symbolizes the correlation and affinity between humans and animals, and is a form of transformation iconography that references the tails of animals. As Inuit clothing specialist Betty Issenman has explained, “By donning fur and skin clothing, humans take on the form of animals and express their bond with the rest of the animal domain. They acquire the strength, knowledge, and powers of the animals’ souls.”¹

Jolly Aningmiuq

1954-2000
Kinngait, Qikiqtaaluk, Nunavut

The artist who created this intriguing work, Jolly Aningmiuq, often carved complex and imaginative compositions of human and animal figures. He was born near a famous Kinngait stone quarry (Kangitukutaq), in a camp called Kalusiqviq, before moving closer to Kinngait as a child in the early 1960s. Jolly, who began carving at an early age, is the son of sculptor Peter Aningmiuq and graphic artist Alasua Aningmiuq. His brothers, Salomonie and Kavavau, are also well-known carvers.



1. Betty Kobayashi Issenman, *Sinews of Survival: The Living Legacy of Inuit Clothing* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), p. 181.

Fishing Scene

1994

Serpentinite, caribou antler,
sinew and metal,
49.2 × 59.7 × 28.3 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Raymond
Brousseau
(2005.1418)

The concept of *pinasuqatigiinni*, the principle of working together in harmony to achieve a common purpose or for the common good, is evidenced in the collaborative act depicted in this dynamic large-scale carving of a family engaged in fishing activities. The family lean into each other, engulfed in vigorous activity. The mother, at the base of the sculpture, appears ready to spring forward with spear and rod in hand, while the child in the middle looks on eagerly. The father also grasps a traditional three-pronged fishing spear (known as a leicester) and lurches backward as he glances over his shoulder, the whole family almost appearing to be swept up in a great wave of action. In Pootoogook Jaw’s depiction, the family moves as one, perhaps enthralled in the excitement of the anticipated day’s catch. This principle of collaboration for the common good that Jaw highlights in this dramatic sculpture is fundamental to Inuit society; by working together, Inuit have long ensured that everyone will have enough to survive.

Pootoogook Jaw

1959

Kinngait, Qikiqtaaluk, Nunavut

Jaw is known for sculpting a wide range of subjects in his work. While his style varies depending on the nature of the stone that he is dealing with and his subject matter, a dramatic sense of movement permeates much of his work. Scenes such as this one, sculpted from the commonly found green stone serpentinite, can be obsessively detailed, while other works in harder materials may be necessarily simplified, but no less dynamic. Another trait often seen in Jaw’s work is his playful sense of humour, which often comes through in subtle ways. In Kinngait, Jaw is respected not only as a successful artist who has been honing his craft for over 30 years, but also because of his many efforts to pass on skills and knowledge to the next generation of carvers, by giving stone-sculpting workshops and training emerging Inuit carvers, encouraging them to have pride in their work and pride in themselves.



Composition

Circa 1994

Ivory
142 × 32 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, purchased with a
special contribution from Hydro-
Québec (2005.1451)

This elaborately carved narwhal tusk was created by artist Towkie Karpik, better known for her vibrant stencils, as well as etchings and aquatint prints of scenes of everyday camp life, stories and legends from Inuit oral history, and depictions of spirits and other fantastic forces in the Arctic. These images were created while she was an artist with the Pangnirtung Print Shop, where as a result, Karpik’s prints were included in numerous Pangnirtung Print Collections in the 1980s and 1990s. As a lifelong seamstress, she also quickly developed a talent for weaving tapestries, and her works in both textiles and the graphic arts have been exhibited widely in group shows, including the exhibitions *Pangnirtung 1984: Eskimo Print Collection and Sculpture*; *Images of the North* (1984); *From the Pangnirtung Weave Shop* (1988); and *Artists and Weavers: Fine Tapestries from the Canadian Arctic* (1989).

Towkie Karpik

1935
Panniqtuuq, Qikiqtaaluk, Nunavut

Karpik introduced sculpture into her artistic oeuvre later in life, developing a preference for sculptures with the common mother and child motif. This narwhal tusk sculpture is therefore quite unusual. The artist has ornately relief-carved an elaborate narrative into the work, with people, animals, symbols and scenes swirling around the work from top to bottom. Inuit figures of various scales and levels of detail are shown engaged in hunting or fishing activities, while eagles perch precariously overhead, observing the action. Walruses, whales, seals and fish spiral upwards, while perched high upon the top rests the figure of the sea goddess Sedna, recognizable for her mermaid-like lower half as well as her long thick hair, which she grasps above her head, as if she is requesting assistance with her tangled mane. This highly detailed, masterful sculpture would be an accomplishment for any carver, but knowing that Karpik began her career as a graphic artist and seamstress and only began carving later in life makes it astonishing.



Detail of the work



Muskox with Human Face

1994

Pyroxenite, muskox horn, caribou antler and alabaster, 66.3 × 62.9 × 37.1 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art Collection, purchased with a special contribution from Hydro-Québec (2005.2473)

*I have always carved, I will always carve. It appears that I will live to be an old man, in which case you'll still find me carving. As long as my health is good, and I breathe well, I will be carving.*¹

Judas Ullulaq was known for his distinctive style of carving expressive faces, using round, inlaid eyes, flared nostrils, toothy, smiling mouths and other exaggerated features to animate his carvings and imbue his human and animal faces with life. In this work, *Muskox with Human Face*, a thickly sculpted muskox figure with a human face playfully smiles up at the viewer. This imaginative work, while unusual for its subject matter, is emblematic of Ullulaq’s unique and instantly recognizable style.

Ullulaq’s work was first exhibited in 1977 at Toronto’s Inuit Gallery in a show entitled *Miniatures from Pelly Bay, Repulse Bay, Spence Bay*. His work appeared with increasing frequency in commercial and public galleries in the early and mid-1980s. The Inuit Gallery was also the site of his first solo exhibition, in March 1983. In October of that year, the McMichael Canadian Collection in Kleinburg, Ontario, included some of his work in *Inuit Masterworks: Selections from the Collection of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada*. Ullulaq’s work is now in several permanent collections, including the Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto), the Denno Museum Center (Traverse City, Michigan), the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre (Guelph, Ontario), the Museum of Anthropology (University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC), the Winnipeg Art Gallery and the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre

Judas Ullulaq

1937-1999

Uqsuqtuq, Kitikmeot, Nunavut

(Yellowknife, Northwest Territories). Ullulaq travelled to New York, Vancouver, Germany and Italy for exhibition openings. Born in Thom Bay, northeast of Taloyoak (formerly Spence Bay), he had two brothers, Nelson Takkirug of Gjoa Haven, and Charlie Ugyuk of Taloyoak, both of whom are sculptors. The three were featured in an exhibition at Gallery Indigena in Stratford, Ontario, in 1989.

“I am always carving – every day,” said Ullulaq. “I don’t exert myself, but I work at it steadily. As long as I am well I am usually carving. I have my children, and I am not hungry. I become bored if I stop carving and do nothing. So carving is a part of my everyday life. I just carve happily every day, enjoying my time.”



1. Simeonie Kunnuk and Janet McGrath, “Judas Ullulaq: It appears that I will live to be an old man, in which case you’ll still find me carving,” *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 2 (Summer 1995), p. 22.

Self-destruction

1995

Whalebone, stone and caribou
antler,
84 × 61 × 37 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Galerie
Brousseau et Brousseau inc.
(2005.490)

When I’m doing a carving, I sort of put my mind to the personal, the image which is in my head rather than the thinking about the past. A lot of times I found myself expressing the feelings that I can’t really talk about, that I don’t understand.¹

As one of the most prolific artists working in whalebone in the Arctic, Manasie Akpaliapik’s thoughtful oeuvre covers many subjects that are significant to Inuit both through time and in the present, including myths, shamanistic practices, family and camp life, cooperation, love, leadership and kinship with the natural world, as well as contemporary issues such as environmental devastation and the ongoing legacies of colonization experienced by individuals and communities throughout the North. In this piece, *Self-destruction*, the artist examines how the weight of destructive forces can negatively impact the self. Akpaliapik has often spoken of the cathartic power of art to heal.

Manasie Akpaliapik

1955

Ikpiarjuk/Tununirusiq, Qikiqtaaluk, Nunavut

The artist’s attention to detail gives this whalebone and caribou antler sculpture an almost surreal quality. Whalebone is one of the most difficult sculptural mediums available to Inuit artists, yet Akpaliapik is known for his mastery in manipulating the natural form and texture of whalebones and vertebrae, as in this expressive work. His chosen medium is porous, hard and brittle, and can be damaged by power tools, so artists who sculpt with whalebone have to work slowly and carefully, usually using only hand tools such as axes, files and chisels. The great range of textures and finishes that can be achieved with whalebone make it a fascinating material, as it can be left rough or polished to a smooth finish, thus allowing artists to mimic the appearance of skin, fur, hair or clothing. In his whalebone works like this one, Akpaliapik balances sections of detailed carving with areas of naturally occurring shapes and textures, giving his work an organic and ancient appearance.



1. Ursula Grunder, “Manasie Akpaliapik: Between the Spiritual and Material,” *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 3 & 4 (Fall/Winter 2004), p. 71.

Lured by the Smell of Seal Meat, the Bear Wakens the Hunters at Night

1995

Serpentinite, alabaster and ink,
26.7 × 15.4 × 42.8 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Raymond
Brousseau (2005.1404)

*Carving takes all kinds of knowledge; knowledge of the land so that you can find your way to the quarry site, and when you get there, knowledge of the site so that you will know where to dig in the snow. And, of course, it takes knowledge to get the stone out of the ground. It also takes money – to buy quarrying tools and gas and grub to get there... These are the things that have to happen before you can even think of making art in Nunavik.*¹

One of Nunavik’s most respected and beloved artists is Mattiusi Iyaituk, whose decades of production have yielded a prodigious body of work. Iyaituk is an artist for whom every work tells a story. He began carving as a teenager, recalling, “I took a piece of soapstone and started to file on it while my brother [Nutaraaluk] was carving. I kept on filing my stone and decided I would make a bird’s head... My carving was about one inch high and looked like a raven’s head. I had not intended it to be that, but that is the way it turned out. That raven’s head opened the door to soapstone carving for me.”²

Iyaituk’s works are well represented in the Brousseau collection, and span a prolific period of production. While his early carvings focused on images out of Inuit iconography and were created by observing his family and life on the land, he later developed his own distinctive style and voice,

Mattiusi Iyaituk

1950
Ivujivik, Nunavik, Québec

moving into semi-abstract and expanding his repertory of materials and subject matter following a workshop in Ottawa in 1992. At that time, he began working with exotic stones and regularly incorporating inlay into his work, while allowing his pieces to become less literal and figural. He cites Henry Moore and the abstract Keewatin region artist Lucy Tasseor Tutsweetok as sources of inspiration. Marybelle Mitchell has remarked: “The hallmark of Mattiusi’s work is innovation. His sculpture has an inside as well as an outside. His faces of caribou antler or ivory are inserted into the stone, drawing the viewer inside the work. Indeed, much of the action... is hidden, the bulges in the stone giving only a hint of what is going on inside.”³

“When you look at my sculpture, you don’t understand all of it. That way, you have the freedom to dream. Everyone has their own opinions about art, so I just give titles to each piece and leave the rest for dreams.”⁴



Detail of the work



1. Mattiusi Iyaituk, “All It Takes Is Knowledge, Money and Time,” *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 3 (Fall 1998), p. 3.

2. Marybelle (Myers) Mitchell, “The Iyaituk Brothers Nutaraaluk and Mattiusi,” *Inuit Art: An Anthology* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing, 1988), p. 69.

3. Ibid., p. 73.

4. Dave Depper, “The Contemporary Living Art,” *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 11, no. 1 (Spring 1996), p. 5.

Tribute to Animals

1996

Whale vertebra, ivory, steatite
and claws,
27.8 × 101.3 × 36.6 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Galerie
Brousseau et Brousseau inc.
(2005.492)

This work by Manasie Akpaliapik reflects the deep interrelation of humans and wildlife in the Arctic over thousands of years. This understanding of the centrality and interconnectedness of people and animals is deeply rooted in Inuit knowledge of the land and the respectful relationship they have with animals of the northern sea, sky and tundra. For millennia, Inuit survival has depended on their ability to responsibly harvest whales, seals, caribou and other vital resources, which have provided not only food but also oil for lamps, sinew for sewing, and skins for warm and waterproof clothing. While the Arctic has modernized over the last century, Inuit still rely on the traditional knowledge passed down through generations to closely observe animal migrations, ocean life, and even weather patterns. This intimate knowledge of their ecosystem enables them to provide for their families by continuing to harvest healthy “country food” (sustainable local Arctic food sources such as caribou, seal, blueberries, fish and fowl). Furthermore, many Inuit now also apply their considerable powers of observation and practised patience honed through hunting to the creation of artworks depicting the wildlife with which they share their vast polar territory.

Manasie Akpaliapik

1955
Ikpiarjuk/Tununirusiq, Qikiqtaaluk, Nunavut

In this massive work by Akpaliapik, the artist not only demonstrates his keen observation skills and ingenuity with abstraction, but also highlights the centrality of Arctic wildlife to Inuit culture, traditional knowledge, livelihood and well-being. *Avatimik kamatsianiq*, or the principle of environmental stewardship, foregrounds the responsibility that Inuit have to protect all life in the Arctic and to be environmental stewards, which is particularly relevant in this age of increasing Arctic exploration and resource extraction.



Fishing Story

1996

Pyroxene, muskox horn
and sinews,
48.5 × 33.9 × 28.6 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Galerie
Brousseau et Brousseau inc.
(2005.2050)

I recall at times we would go hungry and we did not even know if we would have something to eat the next day. I think our parents were worried about survival to the point where they would stay up all night. My parent, my mother, from what I remember, would fish all night long so that her children will have food to eat. She worked so hard so that we can survive, so that we will not die of starvation or have clothing for us.¹

Uriash Puqignak is a world-renowned carver who has received widespread recognition for his sculptural work. His pieces have helped define the now-iconic Gjoa Haven style, which is often characterized by its contrasting grotesque yet playful figures carved out of the locally quarried dark soapstone. Puqignak’s artwork often foregrounds Inuit oral history and storytelling practices, and focuses on Arctic pre-contact life, illustrating figures rendered in a kind of fantastic expressive realism. This dramatic piece features the distinctive Gjoa Haven inlaid eyes and a grimacing mouthful of teeth protruding from its animated face. Whether the dramatic fishing figure in this carving is a representation of a memory, a myth or a spirit is unknown.

Uriash Puqignak

1946

Uqsuqtuq, Kitikmeot, Nunavut

Puqignak, a former territorial and municipal politician in Canada, was a member of the Nunavut Legislature from 1999 until 2004. During his time in office, he pushed the territorial government to develop better programs to promote Inuit art and craft and to prevent counterfeit carvings from entering the marketplace.



1. Beth Biggs, “Uriash Puqignak,” *Isugjuk: Whispers, Messages, Remember* (Nunavut: Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, n.d.). <http://oralhistory.tunnigavik.com/files/2013/06/Uriash-Puqignak.pdf>

Family

1997

Steatite,
21.7 × 13.7 × 22.7 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Galerie
Brousseau et Brousseau inc.
(2005.675)

George Arluk is well known for his signature style of highly formalized semi- abstraction, as demonstrated in this piece. In his sculptures, faces, limbs, people and creatures emerge in a rhythmic pattern from a single sculptural mass, implying a relationship or deep kinship between the people and animals depicted in his expressive abstract works. In *Family*, the increasing scale of the faces toward the base of the piece suggests the representation of many generations and ancestors, while the repetition of outstretched hands and feet conveys a sense of movement in the work.

Arluk’s late father, Sevuoi Aiyarani, was also a carver, but he was not Arluk’s only artistic influence. After teaching himself to carve soapstone through observation beginning around nine years of age, he also closely observed the work of local Keewatin sculptors John Tiktak and John Kavik, who mentored Arluk early in his career. Although his style is quite different from theirs, it is clear that Arluk learned much from the two expert carvers, as well as consciously adapting their approach to sculpture by creating his own signature, instantly recognizable style. By the mid-1970s he had developed this now iconic style of sculpture.

George Arluk

1949
Arviat, Kivalliq, Nunavut

As his career has advanced Arluk has also travelled frequently throughout southern Canada, participating in many group and solo exhibitions. His distinctive sculptures can be found in many prominent public collections across Canada, such as the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Canadian Guild of Crafts, the Canadian Museum of History, the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre, the Mendel Art Gallery, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the Museum of Anthropology, the Vancouver Art Gallery, the National Gallery of Canada, the Winnipeg Art Gallery and the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre.



Detail of the work



Woman Sewing Trousers

1998

Steatite, sinews and ivory,
17.2 × 14.4 × 9.8 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Raymond
Brousseau (2005.793)

The ancient ancestors of today’s Inuit must have had finely tailored clothes – including waterproof and weatherproof protection for the head, hands and feet – as the Arctic and Subarctic climate would have required them for many months out of the year. For centuries, the primary possessions of all Inuit people would have been their clothing, and so demonstrating skills in sewing garments must have been both culturally significant as well as necessary to survival. Inuit skin garments have provided safety and comfort to the wearers in the extremes of the Subarctic and Arctic while displaying a complicated symbolism and accomplished artistry. Through clothing, Inuit seamstresses demonstrated their cleverness, expertise, dexterity and talent; the tiny, meticulous stitching required in the creation of warm and waterproof clothing and footwear is a testament to their talent and expertise. Articles of clothing could also express individual, family, community or regional affiliations and make connections between the spiritual realm and the material world. In some circumstances, the right clothing and adornment could provide protection from supernatural powers or bestow those powers on the wearer. The significance of skin clothing and boots cannot be overstated and its meaningfulness is paramount in Inuit visual culture.

Isa Aupalukta

1942

Inukjuak, Nunavik, Québec

Nunavik artist Isa Aupalukta pays homage here to the significant role of women within Inuit society as the creators of clothing and the guardians of Inuit knowledge of how to prepare skins, extract sinew for sewing, and make such fine and technical stitches in order to create long-lasting, waterproof and beautiful clothing. This knowledge of skin sewing and their ability to make warm, waterproof clothing has sustained life in the Arctic for millennia. In this animated work, a woman adds a drawstring to the top of a finished pair of sealskin trousers and concentrates on threading an ivory needle to finish her work. Her own clothing is also unusually detailed. The sculptor highlights with realistic detail the thick folds of her caribou fur or sealskin *amauti*, which gathers at the elbow, in the drape of the hood, and at her waist. Aupalukta has also elaborately detailed her pleated hem, even going so far as to reveal the seam of the toe on her *kamik* and the puckered shape of her boot as she crouches over her work. Aupalukta further emphasizes his sculptures by adding elements brought out through contrasting white lines created by first polishing the stone, and then incising into the finished work. His laborious attention to clothing design and drape underscores the deep respect and understanding of the artist for the vital work of Inuit seamstresses.



Muskoxen

1998

Serpentinite,
17.9 × 34.8 × 37.8 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Galerie
Brousseau et Brousseau Inc.
(2005.2381)

*I really love to make carvings. I learn new things all the time and I like to experiment on my own. Sometimes it takes two or three days to find a solution. My grandfather taught me how to carve when we lived on the Kazan River. He would carve soapstone pots for cooking meat. I have many jobs besides carving because I like to be independent.*¹

Martha Tickie was an artist best known for her compelling depictions of family life in her sculptural work. The theme of “mother and child,” in particular, appeared in her artwork many times throughout her long career as a carver. This theme resonates throughout much Inuit art, because caring for children is an integral part of the conceptual philosophy of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* (IQ). *Inunnguiniq*, which literally translates as “the making of a human being,” is one of the most important aspects of IQ, because it ensures that every Inuk child will grow into a capable, loving adult who will contribute to society and work toward the common good. This process requires that all of the people involved in raising a child – including not only parents but others connected to the child by kinship and other, non-familial, connections – are responsible for nurturing, observing and protecting each unique child. This approach to raising and caring for families has sustained life in the harsh Arctic over many generations.

Martha Tickie

1939-2015

Qamanittuaq, Kivalliq, Nunavut

Tickie frequently commented in interviews that she felt her work carried the message that family is very important to Inuit, and that she aimed to express the joy of Arctic family life through her carvings. This particular work, *Muskoxen*, is an inventive variation on her common theme, depicting a group of muskoxen protecting their young. The adult muskoxen stand shoulder-to-shoulder in a circle facing outward, protecting their young from the harsh cold – or perhaps from tundra predators. This circle of muskoxen guarding their calves stands in as an apt metaphor for the fierce love of parents for their children, while the undulating forms of the bulging muskoxen group underscore the Inuit philosophy that it is the responsibility of the whole community to care for and protect children.

Tickie, who watched her grandfather carve soapstone pots and cooking vessels as a child, and who was taught to quarry stone from her “grandfather’s mountain” 56 kilometres outside Qamanittuaq (now Baker Lake), grew up with a close relationship to her extended family, who remained the focus of her artwork. Tickie’s work has graced catalogue covers and has been prominently featured in many collections and exhibitions across Canada.



1. Martha Tickie, artist’s statement, Inuit Art Section, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), 1992.

Shaman

1999

Serpentinite,
44.1 × 22.7 × 28.7 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Galerie
Brousseau et Brousseau inc.
(2005.768)

*I want to encourage young people to carve. I tell them they can do what I have done. I tell them to take their time. Don't worry about the money. If at first you don't do good work, don't give up. Just keep trying.*¹

In this lively work by Kiawak Ashoona, a shaman transforms into an owl-like creature with tail, beak and talons, yet the legs and torso of a man. The subject appears to be captured mid-transformation, with the shaman's head still visible. This vibrant and imaginative work closely aligns with the artist's oeuvre and represents the culmination of several decades of perfecting his approach to carving. Ashoona often took shamanic feats such as transformation, or complex spirit creatures, as his subject matter. Over the years he returned many times to the image of the bird or owl in his work. Ashoona was best known for these animated bird-human or animal-human figures: tall and long-legged, they crouch, kneel, dance and stretch in lifelike postures. In this intriguing contemporary carving, the artist has powerfully sculpted the figure in a hulking, almost threatening pose. His compositions tend to involve

Kiawak Ashoona

1933-2014
Kinngait, Qikiqtaaluk, Nunavut

the flattening of detail, and the opening up of shapes, creating spaces within his works in the bend of a knee or the crook of an elbow.

Ashoona was one of the first artists to begin working with James Houston. In 1951, he gave Houston a carving of a bowhead whale, and was immediately encouraged by Houston to continue sculpting in stone. Said Ashoona: "I started to carve by myself. I had the talent for carving. When I start[ed] carving, I was good at carving already... I was one of the first ones to carve." Over more than four decades of production, his work evolved into its distinctive and recognizable style. His carvings are included in numerous collections worldwide.



1. John Ayre, "Kiawak Ashoona: I would like to carve more about today's life," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 14, no. 4 (Winter 1999), p. 24.

Caribou Swimming

1999

Caribou antler,
14.1 × 18.8 × 34 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Raymond
Brousseau (2005.1372)

Caribou Swimming is another delightful work that captures an Arctic perspective distinct to the North. In this piece, three small caribou – themselves entirely sculpted of caribou antler – wade through a river, their legs and torsos submerged, heads bobbing above water level. Playing with scale and dimension, Jacob Irkok has carefully sculpted a family of caribou, distinguished by descending height, the size of their antlers, the shape of their snouts, and the thickness of their exposed spines above water.

Caribou is a favourite of many Inuit, for whom hunting, consuming and sharing foods derived from Arctic wildlife and plants is at the heart of their culture and society. Today, most northern Inuit households strive to eat a rich and diverse diet including what Inuit refer to as “country foods” – Arctic char, duck, seal, whale, caribou, whale blubber, ptarmigan, goose, berries, seaweed and more. In order to preserve these resources for future generations, Inuit maintain a harmonious relationship with northern

Jacob Irkok

1937-2009

Arviat, Kivalliq, Nunavut

plants and animals by using the resources of the land and sea wisely, harvesting only what is necessary and sustainable, and sharing the results of the hunt with others. The artwork here demonstrates the ongoing significance of traditional hunting knowledge, skills and values to Inuit society.

Jacob Irkok began carving in 1962. His first sculpture, also carved in antler, depicted a caribou and wolf engaged in battle. He also carved in stone.



Diving Bear

1999

Serpentinite,
36.4 × 47.4 × 11.3 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Galerie
Brousseau et Brousseau inc.
(2005.1689)

This dramatic sculpture of a polar bear diving demonstrates artist Mattoo Moonie Michael’s keen understanding of how these great bears – which can weigh up to a ton and grow over ten feet tall, standing height – move both on land and through water. Inuit have been hunting polar bears across the Arctic for centuries and have built a rich understanding of their habitat and behaviour – a knowledge expressed in the oral history, Inuktitut language and cultural traditions – in *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* or IQ, “that which we have always known to be true.” As hunters, the Inuit philosophy has always been to practise respectful and responsible harvesting of the Arctic flora and fauna, such as polar bears, that have sustained Inuit life for millennia. Today, Inuit hunters continue to play an important role in wildlife co-management in Canada and are active in ensuring that this precious wildlife is conserved for future generations.

Mattoo Moonie Michael
1958
Kimmirut, Qikiqtaaluk, Nunavut

This breathtaking work reveals the skilled observational powers of the sculptor while demonstrating the artist’s great talent for achieving realism, balance and movement. The bear seems at once immensely heavy yet perfectly weightless in the water. Inuit artists are often known to balance large sculptures on precarious points, to demonstrate their carving virtuosity. This work is no exception, with the sweeping form of the diving bear impressively balanced on a single point. Furthermore, Michael seems to have used the colouring of the stone to emphasize the bear’s great size and shape, drawing out the brown shades within the green of the serpentinite to highlight the bear’s great paws, knees and abdomen. The undulating form of the bear seems to swell under the waves.

Mattoo Moonie Michael is the son of Kimmirut artist Elijah Michael, who passed away in 2008 at age seventy-nine. The elder Michael, a carver all his life, was particularly well known for his sculptures of Arctic wildlife. Following in his father’s path, Mattoo’s work has been featured in numerous exhibitions within Canada, and can be found in national and international collections.



Shaman

1999

Pyroxene,
20 × 20 × 11 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, purchased with a
special contribution from Hydro-
Québec (2005.1834)

During the era of colonization of the Arctic in the early 20th century, Christian missionaries established churches and missions across the North in order to actively convert the Inuit to, primarily, the Catholic and Anglican faiths. From the perspective of the missionaries, this effort was highly successful, and today many Inuit remain devout Christians. Yet one of the by-products of this wide-scale conversion was that missionaries discouraged or even banned Christian Inuit from practising many aspects of their traditional spirituality, fearing that Inuit beliefs were “primitive” and “heathen,” thus leading to a sharp decline in the practice of pre-contact Inuit spirituality.

Yet instead of that knowledge disappearing altogether during this devastating period of cultural upheaval, artists preserved much of what was threatened, by recording in their drawings and sculpture those actions which they were forbidden to practise in their own communities. This included traditional knowledge of Inuit medicinal plants; healing practices; ceremonies and religious rites; taboos; tattoos; the spirit world and the afterlife. Today, we can look at works such as *Shaman* by Maudie Rachel Okittuq and begin to recover the hidden knowledge of the powerful spirits that inhabit the Arctic land, sea and sky, and the history of the *angakkuit* (shamans) who communed with, appeased and even transformed into these spirits.

Maudie Rachel Okittuq

1944

Taloyoak, Kitikmeot, Nunavut

The exploration of shamanic motifs that combine animal and human figures in various states of transformation, such as in this work, is commonly found in Okittuq’s work. Okittuq was born in 1944 in Thom Bay, on the eastern Boothia Peninsula, where she lived a traditional camp life before settling in Spence Bay in 1965. She began carving soon after, in 1968, and often drew inspiration for her art from her knowledge of the traditional customs of her people. As a sculptor working in both whalebone and soapstone, she is one of the few women carvers from her community, but her carvings are well represented in Inuit art galleries across Canada and the United States. Okittuq has been exhibiting since the 1970s in Canada, the US, Germany, France and Italy, and her work has been featured in many catalogues and publications internationally as well.



Spirit of the Caribou

Spirit of the Mosquito

1999 and 1999

Caribou antler, whalebone,
caribou skin and muskox horn,
7.5 × 7.9 × 18.2 cm;
8.9 × 13 × 13.5 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Raymond
Brousseau (2005.2252 and
2005.2254)

*I won’t ever stop carving as long as I live, as long as I am able.*¹

*He can be considered the last of the great “first generation” creators in the Netsilik tradition – that small but illustrious group of Inuit artists whose astonishing carvings in stone and bone of the last three decades changed forever the image of northern art.*²

Nick Sikkuark is in a class of artists all by himself. His fantastic mixed miniature sculptures are often a madcap assemblage of numerous mediums, including bone, ivory, caribou antler, sinew, hair, skulls, teeth, fur, feathers and stone; whatever will bring his work to life. Restricting scale allows Sikkuark to run wild in other ways. In *Spirit of the Caribou*, a nimble spirit made of antler and bone, pegged delicately to a whalebone base, glides through the air, with wispy tufts of caribou hair positioned along its vertebrae. The simple miniature figure captures the gracefulness of a caribou in full sprint.

Nick Sikkuark

1943-2013

Kugaaruk, Kitikmeot, Nunavut

Likewise, *Spirit of the Mosquito* looks very little like an actual mosquito. Rather than the slender, long-legged fly with the long protruding proboscis used to suck blood, Sikkuark has instead sculpted what the spirit of the mosquito looks like, giving his piece the mean and determined countenance of a wasp, sinister oversized black eyes, and two giant pinching talons, embodying the vicious focus of the Arctic tormentor rather than its diminutive physical self. At approximately 13 centimetres in diameter, it is a miniature carving, but an imposing image of an insect.

Sikkuark, who began drawing when he was just thirteen, was equally imaginative in his graphic arts production, and his drawings frequently also reference the world of spirits and shamanism, coloured by his particular taste for the grotesque, eccentric and otherworldly.



1. Simeonie Kunnuk, “Nick Sikkuark: ‘I do love the carvings themselves,’” *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 12, no. 3 (Fall 1997), p. 14.

2. Robert Kardosh, “Natural Fantasia: The Wonderful World of Nick Sikkuark (Part I),” *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 20, no. 1 (Spring 2005), p. 9.

Man Carrying a Stone

1999

Basalt,
30.5 × 14.1 × 22.9 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Raymond
Brousseau (2005.2382)

The latter half of the 20th century was a time of great cultural upheaval for Inuit communities across the Arctic, and artist Martha Tickie, like many other Inuit, endured many challenges brought about by increasing contact with the outside world. Orphaned at a young age, she was placed in the residential school system as a child. As an adult, she raised her children as a single parent, drawing on her knowledge of hunting, fishing and trapping on the land as well as her ability to make art in order to provide for her family. Like many Inuit during this transitional phase, art-making became not only a way to preserve knowledge of the past and express the present, but also a means to self-sufficiency in a harsh Arctic environment and poor economic climate.

Martha Tickie

1939-2015

Qamanittuaq, Kivalliq, Nunavut

In *Man Carrying a Stone*, the artist portrays a subject that is common across the Arctic yet rarely seen in modern and contemporary Inuit art: the image of an artist carrying a stone he is about to carve. With this work, Tickie draws attention to the important role of carving in the maintenance of not only Inuit culture but also everyday life. Much like past representations of Inuit at work making sealskin boots or cleaning hides, fishing, or hunting, this work reflects on the modern-day work of being an artist that is now also a vital aspect of Inuit life.



Motherhood

2000

Whalebone,
84 × 61 × 37 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, purchased with a
special contribution from Hydro-
Québec (2005.497)

Manasie Akpaliapik
1955
Ikpiarjuk/Tununirusiq, Qikiqtaaluk, Nunavut

*Sometimes, if you get an idea in the middle of the night, you go out there and carve it.*¹

Manasie Akpaliapik chose the somewhat unusual career trajectory – for Inuit artists – of attending Winnipeg’s Red River College, and following this formal education with an apprenticeship in Montréal. Curator Darlene Wight says, “Manasie is part of a group of younger artists that have treated carving as a professional career, seeking training and strategies to advance themselves as individual artists” with distinctive personal styles and strong voices. His first major solo exhibition, *Manasie: The Art of Manasie Akpaliapik*, was held at the Winnipeg Art Gallery in 1990; since that time his work has been collected by many major institutions, including the National Gallery of Canada.

As an artist, Manasie Akpaliapik is known for tackling difficult and unexpected subject matter in his large-scale whalebone and mixed-media pieces. In this work, *Motherhood*, Akpaliapik approaches a subject not typically explored by male artists: pregnancy. For Inuit, family has always been at the centre of Inuit culture, and at the core of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* – Inuit knowledge, beliefs and values – is the understanding of family, particularly with respect to responsibilities family members have to each other, the duty to pass on knowledge intergenerationally, and the loving relationship between parents and children. Given the significance of mothers and children in Inuit society, it is not surprising that artists often make artworks on the motif of “mother and child.” Yet this dramatic, semi-abstract work by Akpaliapik stands out. In this imaginative work he has inscribed syllabics along one side while on a smooth surface he has noted the passage of time, highlighting the anticipation of expectant mothers.



Detail of the work



1. Ursula Grunder, “Manasie Akpaliapik: Between the Spiritual and Material,” *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 3 & 4 (Fall/Winter 2004), p. 70.

Mother and Child Preparing a Fish

2000

Steatite,
21.6 × 14.3 × 19.7 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Raymond
Brousseau (2005.715)

Whether carving traditional or contemporary themes, Inukjuak artist Jimmy Inaruli Arnamissak’s work is remarkable for its attention to detail. His lively scenes of Inuit engaged in everyday practices, like camping or travelling by dog team, hunting or fishing, are recognizable for their realistic and animated faces and expressions, and for the inclusion of subtle details, such as fingernails, which other artists usually omit.

In this work, Arnamissak honours the important role of women in Inuit society, while drawing attention to their skills and knowledge in preparing food, caring for children, and making warm, weatherproof and beautiful clothing. The artist’s father, Silassie, died while on a seal hunt, leaving his mother, Louisa, as the sole provider for her young family, so in 1957, while Arnamissak was still a child, he began sculpting stone to help out, and through years of practice and dedication he developed into a great talent. Tragically, Louisa passed away in 1975, when Jimmy was a young man. Following the loss of his beloved mother, she began to occupy an increasingly influential position in Arnamissak’s artwork. The artist turned the focus of his work toward celebrating and respecting the significance of Inuit women and especially mothers, and his themes centred on women’s domestic activities, such as sewing clothing, caring for children, drumming and singing, cleaning skins, and preparing meals, as seen in this moving work. The faces of his sculptures are even said to distinctly resemble that of his beloved mother.

Jimmy Inaruli Arnamissak
1946-2003
Inukjuak, Nunavik, Québec

In this delightful piece, a mother kneels, child in hood, and deftly wields her *ulu* (woman’s knife) to clean and prepare a fish. Using the contrast between the lighter stone incisions and the darker polished surface, Arnamissak teases out a number of details in his work, depicting how thick skin clothing seams, folds and puckers, and delineating the smooth surface of the butcher block from the highly textured ground. The effect of this work is to draw the viewer into sharing Arnamissak’s deep appreciation for the important work of women in caring for children, preparing food, and making warm and functional clothing, all done with great care and love.



Shaman undergoing Transformation

2000

Brazilian steatite,
38.1 × 34 × 16.1 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Galerie
Brousseau et Brousseau inc.
(2005.562)

I no longer speak my mother tongue, yet I need to do my part in carrying on the stories, cultural myths, legends, and spiritual legacy of our people. My hope is that my hands and spirit within will allow me this one gesture.'

Unlike many Inuit artists working today, Abraham Anghik received his artistic training in art school. At the age of twenty, Anghik began his studies at the University of Alaska’s Native Arts Centre under the influential direction of Alaskan Iñupiaq artist Ronald Senungetuk, associate professor of design and a mixed-media sculptural artist well known for blending traditional influences with contemporary styles and mediums. As a student, Anghik flourished, and he was not long in developing his own distinctive style of sculptural practice, creating artworks that use unexpected contemporary materials such as bronze, marble and steel to examine Inuit oral history, traditional knowledge and spirituality. In this work, *Shaman undergoing Transformation*, the artist approaches a popular theme in Inuit art – a shaman’s transformation – by using the colourful variations in distinctive Brazilian steatite to delineate the composite parts of the shaman’s clothing and his two heads. The posture of the sculpture, with arms upraised, and the faces of a bird and a dog turned upward, the dog appearing to howl, suggest that we have encountered the shaman mid-performance, perhaps singing an *ai-ja-ja* song.

Anghik is an artist who draws inspiration for his work from his personal and familial experiences, Arctic oral histories (*unikkaatuat*) and an inherent intellectual curiosity. He was born in a camp outside of Paulatuk in the Northwest Territories in 1951. Raised on the land, Anghik spent the

Abraham Anghik Ruben
1951
Paulatuk, Inuvialuit, Northwest Territories

first years of his life in the traditional Inuit way, with an extended family that passed on stories of his ancient Alaskan ancestry to him. But, like many Inuit of his generation, he was removed from his family and culture at a young age and sent to a residential school for many years, an experience that cast a dark shadow over his childhood and adult life. As a professional artist, his early work is still considered groundbreaking for his exploration of the complexities and nuances of the colonial history of the Arctic and, in particular, for confronting the lingering impacts of the residential school experience. Some of his most recent work looks more broadly at global Indigenous histories, and at Arctic histories of contact and exchange through time, such as the early contact between Inuit and Norse a thousand years ago. And always, the artist is inspired by stories from his extended family and community. “In my great-grandparents’ time, shamans were known to commune with beings from the worlds beyond this and speak through thoughts and express themselves without verbal speech. In the dream world, the power of the spirit was without bounds.”²



1. Darlene Coward Wight, *Abraham Anghik Ruben* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2001), p. 12.

2. Roslyn Tunis, “Selected Works,” *Abraham Anghik Ruben: Shaman’s Dreams* (Mississauga: Art Gallery of Mississauga, 2010), p. 22.

Nativity Scene

2001

Ivory, limestone, skin and
pyroxene,
9.8 × 53 × 38 cm

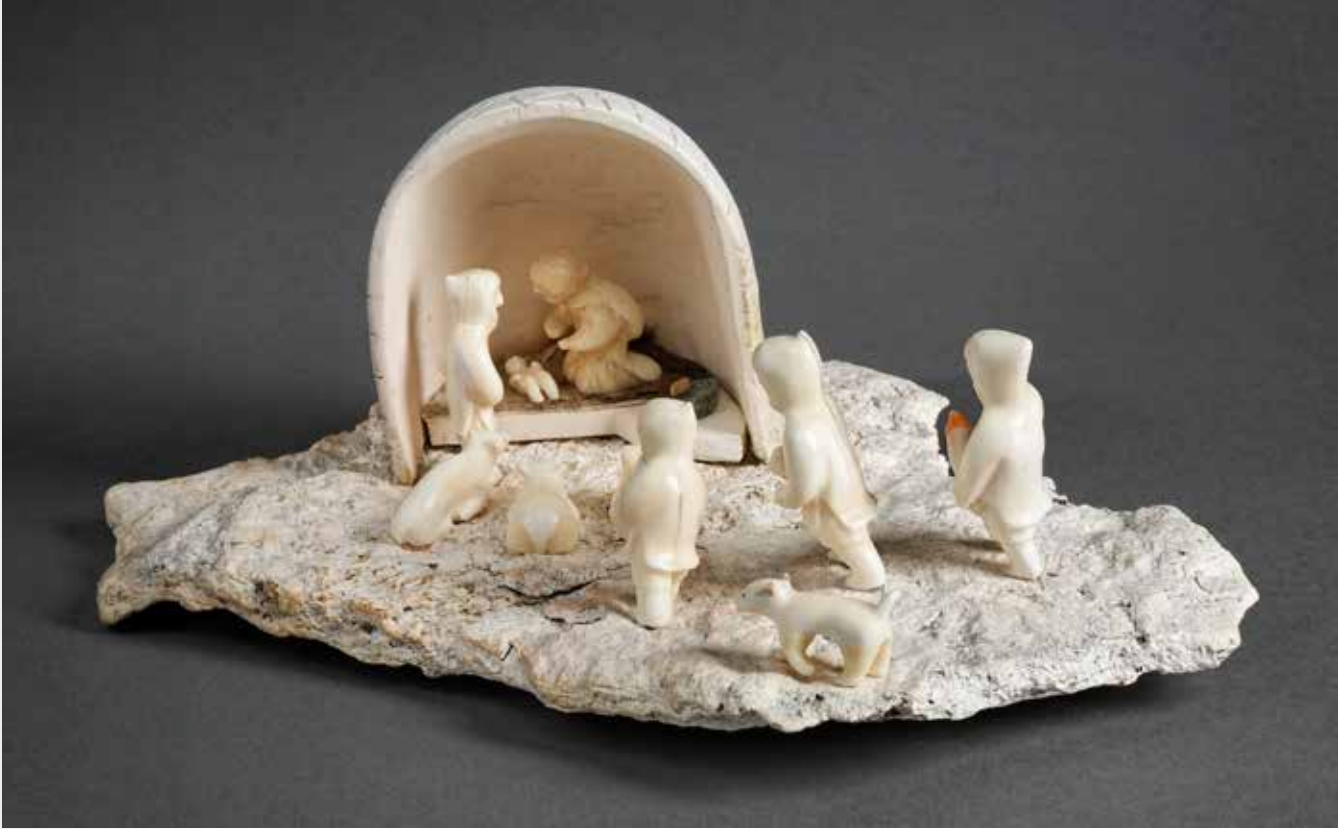
MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Raymond
Brousseau (2005.937)

This nativity scene by Emily Pangnerk Illuitok is a fascinating meditation on the blending of traditional Inuit belief systems with the introduction of influential outside forces such as Christianity, which was almost completely adopted by Inuit across the Arctic by the mid-20th century. In this miniature scene crafted primarily from walrus ivory on a mineral ground, with tiny mixed-media elements such as a stone *qulliq* (oil lamp) setting the scene, the nativity is played out in the Arctic. Mary and Joseph wear sealskin and caribou clothing; the wise men bear traditional gifts rather than gold and frankincense; a dog team replaces the desert animals; and the setting of the manger is an *Illuvigaq*. Yet the scene is instantly recognizable, and the reverent, awed tone of the original nativity permeates the work.

Emily Pangnerk Illuitok

1943-2012
Kugaaruk, Kitikmeot, Nunavut

This work is a small-scale reflection of the kind of sculpture that Illuitok became famous for throughout her long and productive career. She also frequently sculpted many other elaborate walrus-ivory carvings of dog sledding, dog teams, and sometimes enormous and elaborate camp and family scenes, usually pegged to a mineral ground such as in this work. Her work in this style is not only instantly recognizable but was also in great demand throughout her career, and her white-on-white sculptural scenes can be found in numerous public and private collections.



Two Sednas, Goddesses of the Sea, and Fish

2001

Caribou antler and serpentinite,
22.4 × 16 × 33.6 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Raymond
Brousseau (2005.1478)

This undulating, sinewy carving has been masterfully sculpted by artist Ross Kayotak from a single piece of caribou antler. The artist has stretched the material limits of the brittle antler, making the fins and hair appear to almost gently sway and ripple underwater. Kayotak uses contrasting patterns of texture and lines to highlight “the two Sednas,” one large and one small, and offsets the piece with the delicately carved fish that swim to and fro around the central figures. Kayotak, who was born in 1969 in Iqaluit and now resides in Iglulik, began his career as a sculptor in the 1980s by watching both of his parents, Marius and Yvonne Kayotak, carve in stone. For his part, Kayotak prefers to carve in ivory and antler, and he is known for creating delicate, often highly detailed imagery of people and animals with expressive, joyful faces.

This work by Kayotak depicts Sedna, also known as *Nuliajuk*, who is perhaps the best-known Inuit deity. While her creation story varies across the Arctic, it is well known throughout the circumpolar world. In all versions, she ultimately becomes the mother of all sea creatures, holding dominion over seals, whales, fish, walruses and all manner of the oceans’ rich bounty, thus making her a very powerful goddess, as well as one to be treated respectfully and to be appeased when she is angry. In the most general terms, her story is one of a young woman who refused to marry, balking at tradition (in some versions this is because she was content to live with her parents; in others, because of her vanity). After many rejected suitors, one day a stranger arrives with an enticing marriage proposal

Ross Kayotak
1969
Iglulik, Qikiqtaaluk, Nunavut

and Sedna finally consents to marriage, only to discover later that she has not married a man, but a bird (sometimes identified as a raven). Scared or outraged, Sedna resolves to escape, and when her father – in some versions accompanied by her brothers – visits her one day, she reveals the terrible truth of her marriage and begs her father to take her home. After setting off in his *umiak* (multi-person boat) or *kayak* (single-person boat), their escape is discovered. Flapping its mighty wings, the raven creates a terrible storm that threatens to capsize the vessel and drown them all. Fearing this, Sedna’s father throws her overboard, thinking this may cause the bird to cease its destruction, but Sedna grasps the edge of the boat tightly, trying desperately not to drown. Fearing that the *umiak* or *kayak* will tip over, the father cuts her fingers off, one joint at a time. From each of her finger joints different sea creatures are born. As they hit the water they transform into seals, walruses, fish and whales, populating the ocean. Without fingers to grasp the boat, Sedna herself plunges into the sea, sinking to the bottom as she transforms into a powerful spirit with the upper body of a woman and lower half akin to a mermaid. Here, the mermaid swims alongside some of her many children, long hair swirling in the waters above her.



Migrating to Baker Lake

2001

Basalt, caribou antler and skin,
31.3 × 110 × 33 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Galerie
Brousseau et Brousseau inc.
(2005.1793)

Through Inuit oral history and storytelling practices, knowledge of past experiences, people or places has been transmitted from one generation to the next. Stories of great adventures, perilous journeys, or the feats of great shamans are passed on intergenerationally. These histories may be known across the circumpolar world – like the legend of the blind boy Lumaaq or the hero Kiviuq – or they may be deeply personal, and passed down within a single family.

Here, sculptor Joshua Nuilaalik likely recreates a harrowing scene from his own young adulthood, migrating from a traditional camp life on the land to ultimate settlement in Qamanittuaq, forced to relocate due to hunger. Nuilaalik was the eldest son of renowned Qamanittuaq artist Jessie Oonark, whose family travelled between their summer fishing camp and winter caribou hunting camp in the territory of the *Utkukhalingmiut* (the people of the place where there is soapstone) in the Keewatin region. In the early 1950s a decline in the trade of fox furs coincided with a decline in caribou, making opportunities for both trade and hunting scarce; later, Oonark’s husband and four of her children died of illness. With her oldest children barely out of their teens and her youngest still a child, the situation soon turned dire. In 1958, her son William Noah walked to Qamanittuaq in search of assistance, which they received from the Canadian Armed Forces. Is this an image of Nuilaalik’s own young family making the trek, or himself and his siblings? Is it a moment in time, or an abstraction of that experience?

Joshua Nuilaalik

1928-2005
Qamanittuaq, Kivalliq, Nunavut

Like many other Inuit artists, Nuilaalik expressed his personal history in stone as a means to record this life experience. The animated expressions and poses belie the serious nature of the migration, although their eventual resettlement in Qamanittuaq can also be credited with ultimately providing the opportunity for Oonark, Joshua and his siblings to become internationally recognized artists. As a result, Nuilaalik’s work was exhibited frequently during his lifetime and his carvings can be found in many prestigious public Canadian museums, including the Canadian Guild of Crafts, the Canadian Museum of History, the Winnipeg Art Gallery and the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre.



The Effects of Alcohol

2001

Whalebone and steatite,
28 × 12.9 × 10.9 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Raymond
Brousseau (2005.1963)

In this work by Kavavow Pee, the Coral Harbour artist focuses on lingering negative impacts of the colonization of the Arctic. Even today, few Inuit have addressed the effects of substance abuse or other intertwined outcomes of colonization, such as the legacy of residential schools, in their artwork. In this sweeping whalebone and stone piece, the smooth polishing on the body of the figure contrasts with the natural texture of the face, drawing the eye upward to its pained expression. Mouth opened wide, inlaid eyes staring upward in anguish, the woman’s torso contorts, struggling under the pain of the bottle thrust into her back. At her side, another smaller face appears in torment. Is this a child, or an inner self, that also suffers? Working in this minimalist style, Pee’s spare and precise rendering of conflict and emotion addresses the negative and complex effects of alcohol in the Arctic.

Kavavow Pee

1960

Salliit, Kivalliq, Nunavut

Pee’s sculptural work usually portrays human subjects and transformation imagery, and examines the natural world. He is best known for his accomplished mixed-media carvings of imaginative and complex figures that incorporate stone, bone, whalebone, antler, hair and other diverse Arctic materials.



Grandmother Playing the Accordion

2002

Whalebone,
7.8 × 9.6 × 6.5 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, purchased with a
special contribution from Hydro-
Québec (2005.762)

I am passionate about our art family history... I am deeply committed to exploring, cataloguing, reworking and celebrating the lives, images and achievements of my parents, late grandmother and family.¹

There are several forms and varieties of Inuit music. Some, like throat singing, originated within the culture, while others, like accordion music, square dancing and gospel, were introduced by whalers, traders and missionaries, and have been adopted and changed by the Inuit into inherently Inuit cultural expressions. In this precious miniature made of whalebone, a notoriously difficult material, Goota Ashoona miraculously captures in loving detail a portrait of her grandmother playing the accordion. The detail that Ashoona has captured in this hard, porous whalebone only makes it more remarkable for its size and scale. Ashoona is a highly regarded carver whose sculptures, largely of women and children, have garnered her considerable recognition over her many years of professional practice.

Goota Ashoona

1967
Kinngait, Qikiqtaaluk, Nunavut

Born in Kinngait and raised in an Inuit outpost camp at Lona Bay on the southwest coast of Baffin Island, Ashoona now resides in Yellowknife with her family and works alongside her husband, son and nephew at the Ashoona family studio. She is a multimedia artist, also known for her textile work in wall hangings and doll production. Her grandmother was the acclaimed graphic artist Pitseolak Ashoona; her father was the renowned sculptor Kiawak Ashoona; and her mother, Sorroseleetu, is also widely known for her work in printmaking. Says Goota, “I am very aware of who we are [...] what my family has accomplished with their artwork [...] and their tremendous contributions to Canada’s cultural identity at home and abroad. I am determined to continue the family tradition, to celebrate the artistic achievements of my family, and to keep alive the stories, memories and skill of my parents and grandmother.”



1. Goota Ashoona, “Artist Bio,” Northwest Territories Arts.
<http://nwtarts.com/artist-profile/goota-ashoona>

Sedna, Goddess of the Sea

2002

Caribou antler and serpentinite,
5.1 × 9.3 × 3 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, purchased with a
special contribution from Hydro-
Québec (2005.1629)

Robert Kuptana

1962
Ulukhaqtuuq, Inuvialuit,
Northwest Territories

Carving is really a spontaneous thing for me. I figure out what I’m doing as I go along. The only time I start to carve with an idea already in my head is when I have a statement to make.¹

Robert Kuptana began carving at a young age, starting out by borrowing tools from his older brother Floyd, who is also an accomplished artist. He began carving professionally in 1998, and quickly developed an individual style characterized by the creation of miniature representations of people and animals. His works are often playful and slyly humorous, as well as technically and conceptually rigorous. While he has recently begun to explore social and cultural issues in his work, he has long been interested in making artwork about Inuit oral history.

This tiny Sedna, just nine centimetres high, is a playful miniature representation of the Inuit deity who is known as the protective mother of all of the creatures of the Arctic seas and oceans. Kuptana portrays her on a flattened plane, appearing to swiftly dive beneath the waves, hair swept straight back behind her. As ruler of ocean life, Sedna makes seals, whales, fish and walrus available to hunters and fishermen, and so Inuit strive to maintain a good relationship with her. Certain practices are said to

appease Sedna; for example, it is customary that when a seal is killed it must be given a drink of fresh water, not ocean water. Shamans would also commune with Sedna when hunts were not fruitful; the *angakkuq* (shaman) would swim to the bottom of the ocean in order to comb the tangles out of Sedna’s hair. In the past, Inuit relied on their spiritual leaders and gifted hunters to commune with, appease and sometimes even become the spirits of the animals that Inuit depended on for their survival. Today, Inuit sculptors and graphic artists have similarly adopted the practice of sharing legends and knowledge of the supernatural and spiritual worlds of the North through artworks grounded in Inuit traditional knowledge, spirituality and oral history.



1. Clare Porteous-Safford, “Dealer’s Choice: Robert Kuptana,” *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 2 (Summer 2001), p. 35.

Polar Bear

2002

Serpentinite,
29.3 × 42.6 × 42.4 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, purchased with a
special contribution from Hydro-
Québec (2005.1950)

Nuna Parr was born in 1949 in a camp near Cape Dorset (now Kinngait) and was raised by his adoptive parents, renowned graphic artists of the first generation, Parr and Eleeshushe. His family moved from Tasiuakjuak to Kinngait in 1961, where he became interested in drawing while a student. His parents became involved in the West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative print shop early on, and Nuna Parr continued in his family’s artistic lineage, becoming internationally known as one of the most prolific and recognized artists today from the celebrated community of Cape Dorset.

The artist is best known for his many carvings of fluidly sculpted, realistic bears in imaginative poses, especially his dancing and walking bears such as this one, caught mid-action. As Nuna Parr says of his work, “I carve polar bears because I’ve been recognized for my bears. I carve according to the demand for a certain type of carving, so I pick stone accordingly. I never really think that my carvings are beautiful, although some people like them. We [Inuit] never like our own carvings. I just try to make the best of what I am working on. My carving gets better and better. I’m still learning today.”¹

Nuna Parr

1949

Kinngait, Qikiqtaaluk, Nunavut

A carver for more than four decades, Nuna Parr’s work continues to be shown worldwide. He has frequently been included in international exhibitions and public collections such as the MNBAQ, the National Gallery of Canada, the Canadian Museum of History, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Winnipeg Art Gallery and the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre. His highly regarded talent has made him one of the most famous and sought-after Inuit artists from Canada’s most artistic community, Kinngait. Today Nuna Parr divides his time between carving and hunting as a means of providing for his large family, and his time spent on the land, observing polar bears and other animals in the Arctic, is reflected in his sophisticated portrayal of these creatures in the distinctive dark green stone of Kinngait.



1. Jennifer Cartwright, “Nuna Parr: A Hunter’s Perspective,” *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 17, no. 3 (Fall 2002), p. 22.

Throat Singers

2002

Serpentinite,
17.4 × 19.4 × 11.8 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, purchased with a
special contribution from Hydro-
Québec (2005.2070)

Inuit throat singing, or *katajjaniq*, is an art form traditionally practiced by women in which two women face each other and sing back and forth rapidly, producing a playful song that mimics the music of the Arctic: the song of a saw, the rhythmic panting of sled dogs as they traverse the Arctic, even the buzzing of mosquitoes. This practice used to provide entertainment and was meant as a playful competition; the “contest” ends when one person starts laughing. While Christian missionaries banned the practice for many years, today it is experiencing a cultural renaissance across the Arctic, in many ways inspired by the runaway success of internationally acclaimed singer Tanya Tagaq, who has performed throat singing solo and in collaboration with Björk and the Kronos Quartet. The practice was recently recognized by Québec as the province’s first example of intangible cultural heritage.

In this delightful work two women, one with a child in her hood, the other with a long braid down her back, lean together during a *katajjaniq*. The piece appears to depict a moment in time, caught between breaths; the first woman curves her mouth into a spirited exhalation, the second breathes in, eyes closed, the moment before response. This instant is perfectly captured by Silas Qayaqjuaq, an

Silas Qayaqjuaq

1956

Sanirajak, Qikiqtaaluk, Nunavut

artist who prides himself on capturing expression and movement in his work. Says Qayaqjuaq, “... I carve people in movement and everyday life. My father used to carve animals, and he used to say that all his life, he’d looked at people’s faces and, after all those years, he’d never learned to carve the face. I challenged him and started carving people in movement, balanced and [pursuing] their lifestyle.”¹

Silas Qayaqjuaq was born in 1956 in Hall Beach, the son of two artists, Joanasi and Martha Qayaqjuaq. He learned to carve at an early age by watching other family members carving, and began to carve himself at the age of eight, producing his first serious carving when he was twelve. Silas is known for his ability to capture movement and animation in humans and animals, giving his figures appealing warmth and charm.



1. Simeonie Kunnuk, “Silas Qayaqjuaq Wants to Share Ideas With Other Artists,” *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 1 (Spring 1995), p. 25.

Falcon

2002

Serpentinite,
49.4 × 29.4 × 36.6 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, purchased with a
special contribution from Hydro-
Québec (2005.2211)

*Sometimes I have to stop and look at the stone itself as if I am talking to it in my mind. Then the shape comes out; it is just being born right there and then.*¹

Pilimmasarniq is the Inuktitut word for the Inuit philosophy of acquiring skills and knowledge, and it emphasizes learning through careful and close observation. The powers of observation – of the land, the sky and weather, of animal behaviour, or of techniques and skills passed down intergenerationally – must be honed through practice, patience, effort and action. We see the development of this skill embodied in the work of many Inuit artists who, through practised observation, can carve the pose of a walrus on the shore, a bear lumbering across ice or swimming gracefully through water, or, as in this remarkable work by Toonoo Sharky, the position of a falcon’s wings as it lifts off or touches down to grasp its prey. Sharky’s stone inlay work is always masterfully done, and he is well known for works such as this one, where the delicate wings of his bird-forms push the limits of his medium.

Toonoo Sharky

1970
Kinngait, Qikiqtaaluk, Nunavut

Toonoo Sharky is an artist who demonstrates a keen understanding of his material in all of his works. By working with the strengths and perceiving the weaknesses of soapstone and other carving materials, the artist is able to coax surprisingly delicate and sinuous forms out of solid rock. In this work, *Falcon*, Sharky captures the upbeat of the falcon’s wings and its deftly grasping talons as it lifts off in search of prey, inlaid ivory eyes cast upward. This vibrant composition betrays a lifetime of careful observation of nature as well as the practised observation of other master carvers. Sharky attributes his development as an artist to his maternal grandfather, Quppapik Ragee, who provided for his family through both hunting and carving. As a boy, Toonoo would watch closely in order to learn how his grandfather made carvings; later, he was inspired and guided by the work of respected local artists Shorty Killiktee and Kiawak Ashoona, whose influence can be seen in Sharky’s imaginative and transformational pieces. Not satisfied with strictly representational art, Sharky often blends realistic representation with imaginative abstraction in his sculptures, alluding to transformation iconography and the spirit world.



Detail of the work



1. Michelle Lewin, “Toonoo Sharky: Pushing the Boundaries,” *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 3 (Fall 2004), p. 96.

Bear Reflected in Ice

2006

Marble,
23.5 × 45.5 × 14.5 cm

MNBAQ, Brousseau Inuit Art
Collection, gift of Galerie
Brousseau et Brousseau inc.
(2007.28)

This exquisite white marble sculpture highlights the unique perspective distinct to the Arctic and demonstrates the significance of the concept of *pilimmasarniq* – the principle of sharing and acquiring skills and knowledge through observation and practice – to the production of art in the Arctic. Today observational powers are still honed on the land, as studying animal behaviour, watching changing tides, and understanding weather patterns can still be matters of life and death for the Inuit in the harsh northern environment. Not only do artists learn how to sculpt, sew, draw and make other Arctic art by observing those artists who are senior to them; they also develop a particular way of seeing that is distinct to Inuit.

Pauloosie Tukpanie

1960
Kinngait, Qikiqtaaluk, Nunavut

In this astonishing work, Tukpanie, an artist from Kinngait, demonstrates this vision as well as his virtuosity as a carver by sculpting a polar bear and its mirrored reflection on the ice. Tukpanie’s favourite subject matter is polar bears. It is evident from how he has captured the shifting weight of the bear as it lumbers across an icy surface that Tukpanie has spent many long hours observing his subject *en plein air*.



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