

 The College of New Jersey



ART GALLERY

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GALLERY HOURS:

Tue, Wed, Thu 12:00pm-7:00pm;  
Sun 1:00pm-3:00pm

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## ONTEMPORARY INUIT ART

from Cape Dorset



This program is made possible in part by the Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission through funding from the Mercer County Board of Chosen Freeholders, and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, A Partner Agency of the National Endowment of the Arts.



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*Contemporary Inuit Art from Cape Dorset* is sponsored by the Art Gallery and the School of the Arts and Communication at The College of New Jersey. The exhibit is made possible in part by the Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission through funding from the Mercer County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/ Department of State, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts.

## ● IMAGES

All images are reproduced courtesy of Cape Dorset Fine Arts. All artworks are displayed courtesy of a private collector.



# CONTEMPORARY INUIT ART

from Cape Dorset

JANUARY 26 - MARCH 2

## RECEPTION

January 26, 2011  
5:00pm-7:00pm,  
Art Gallery, Art & IMM Building

# Contemporary Inuit Art

from Cape Dorset

We are extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to display the prints and drawings of the artists of the Kinngait Studios of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative (WBEC) here at The College of New Jersey Art Gallery. Incorporated in 1959 in the town of Cape Dorset in Canada's northern Nunavut Territory, WBEC was the first of now 35 Inuit-owned co-operatives established by the government to offer both employment and retail services. Locally, WBEC is known as the Kinngait Co-operative. In the native Inuktitut, "kinngait" describes the high rolling hills around the town. Unlike other Arctic co-ops, WBEC has sustained its focus on the arts as its primary enterprise. Today, the Co-op has two printmaking studios and a carving purchasing department.

Thanks to the generosity of a dedicated private collector, we are able to present 26 works by 11 artists from Cape Dorset spanning several generations. Commonalities of approach, technique and subject matter that result from shared experience and close working quarters are clearly apparent in the exhibited works, but so too are the unique points of view and distinct hand of each artist. The decision to foster individual artistic expression rather than a set number of products created by anonymous artisans is one of Kinngait Studios' defining characteristics, and undoubtedly the root of its success and acclaim.

Cape Dorset's most well known artist, the prolific Kenojuak Ashevak, frequently returns to the owl motif in her prints and drawings. In *Illustrious Owl*, she uses the bold graphic approach that has typified her work since she participated in WBEC's first portfolio over 50 years ago. While Kenojuak Ashevak chooses symbolic imagery based on her own imagination, Mary Pudlat, another early member of the Co-operative, often chose to illustrate daily life. Her joyous depiction, *On Spring Ice*, features a group of young men playing a traditional game.

Arnaqu Ashevak's *Tattooed Whales* displays a marvelous depth and dimensionality. Submerged in the deep blue, the artist offers the viewer an unusual and exaggerated perspective of swimming underneath the whales looking up to the sunlit surface of the water. From below, the whales' bodies are simultaneously abstracted and intricately adorned; the looping marks more narrative than illustrative. In his print, *First Time Kayaker*, Tikitu Qinnuayuk also uses an extreme point of view, looking directly down on the subject who looks back up at the viewer. The kayaker's gaze elicits questions about what the viewer can't see: Is he looking at me? A bird? Approaching storm clouds?

Like many artists from Cape Dorset, the playful figure in Shuvina Ashoona's *Handstand* is set against the stark ground of the paper – the vast snowy landscape, perhaps. Whether snow or absence, the whiteness demands the viewer's sole focus on the subject: a child in native dress performing the eponymous handstand. The detailed, multidirectional marks that make up the

jacket and boots intensify the vibrant activity while literally depicting the pattern of the fur used to make the garments. Although texturally detailed, there is a decided flatness to the image, the legs folded like those of a paper doll. Also working on a white ground, Kavavaow Mannomee demonstrates his sense of humor in *Surprised Goose*. Caught off guard, a goose bows down and throws up its wings as a duck perches on its head. The captured moment and lyrical line suggest a flurry of activity yet to come.

Sometimes the environment itself is a dominant character. Pitaloosie Saila's staccato lines embody the pulsating Aurora Borealis in *Northern Lights*. Despite its bold central composition, nothing in this print seems fully rooted. The eerie yellow light permeates the mother and child, their bodies as porous as the sky behind them. The soft grey portrayal of the subjects' faces implies the night and the light's reflection, but also hints at the temporality of life. Disarmingly simple, *Floe Edge, Winter* by Itee Pootoogook is composed of three blue blocks of varying hues. The elongated shape of the print exaggerates the horizon and the unpopulated vista of ice, water and sky. Meanwhile, in Tim Pitsiulak's *Bowhead Whale*, the whale is juxtaposed against the water rather than swimming in it; the subject and place equally important. In this image, like Pootoogook and Saila, Pitsiulak focuses on the blues of the water and sky rather than the immense whiteness of the snow.

Other Co-op artists explore the nature of group work and living via images of nature. Filling the entire picture plane, Ninegeokuleek Teevee's undulating *Bed of Kelp* captures the ebb and flow of the sea through the recurrence of a single shape. The artist's use of bright imaginary colors, rather than the murky greens and brown of seaweed, gives action and selfhood to each leaf in the kelp forest, seemingly a reference to co-operative life. Stiff and elegantly formal, Kakulu Saggiaktok's stylized *Migrating Fish* uses repetition and variation to illustrate both congregation and individuality. Positioned so close together they seem fused into a single mass, each fish has similar but unique spots; the blue bellies of two in contrast with the others.

Many thanks are due to Leslie Boyd Ryan and David Mannon of Cape Dorset Fine Arts Toronto, Derek Norton of Spirit Wrestler Gallery, Vancouver, and Paul Conroy of Marion Scott Gallery, Vancouver for their help in preparing the exhibition.

SARAH CUNNINGHAM  
Director, TCNJ Art Gallery  
January 2011



<sup>1</sup> "About West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative." *Dorset Fine Arts*. West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative, n.d. Web. 18 January 2011.



ARNAQU ASHEVAK  
KENOJUAK ASHEVAK



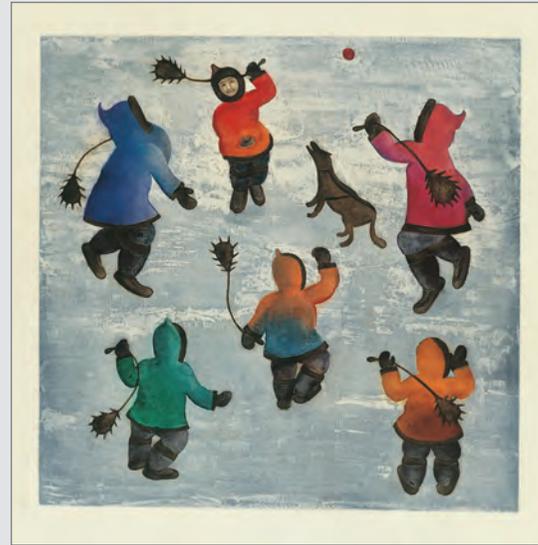
NINEGOKULEEK TEEVEE  
SHUVINAI ASHOONA





 ITEE POOTOOGOOK

 TIM PITSIULAK



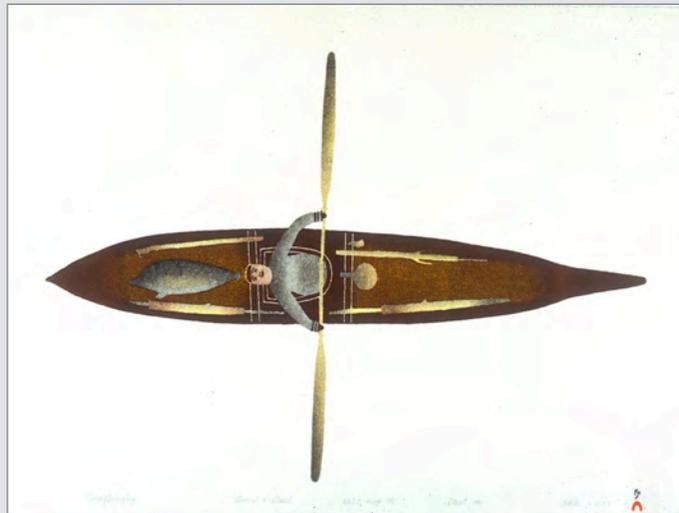
 MARY PUDLAT

 PITALOOSIE SAILA





 KAKULU SAGGIAKTOK



 TIKITU QINNUAYUK

## EXHIBITION LIST

■ image in catalog

### PRINTS

Arnaqu Ashevak (1956-2009)

*Qilalugannuat Tunnit (Tattooed Whales)*,  
Etching and Aquatint, 1996, 11.5"x12.5",  
Edition: 50

Kenojuak Ashevak (1924-)

*Bear and Bird*, Engraving, 1967,  
6"x8", Edition: 50

*Bird in Danger*, Lithograph, 1983,  
20"x26", Edition: 50

*Women Speak of Spring Fishing*, Lithograph,  
1991, 22"x30", Edition: 50

*Silavut Nunavut (our environment, our land)*,  
Lithograph, 1999, 43"x29.5" (diptych),  
Edition: 99

*Illustrious Owl*, Lithograph, 1999,  
21"x29", Edition: 50

*Tikiniq (The Arrival)*, Etching and Aquatint with  
Hand Coloring, 2007, 17"x186", (six panels),  
Edition: 12

*Wisdom of the Elders*, Stonecut and Stencil,  
2009, 29.5"x34", Edition: 50

Shuvinai Ashoona (1961-)

*Quilt of Dreams*, Lithograph, 2009,  
15"x22", Edition: 50

*Handstand*, Stonecut and Stencil, 2010,  
32"x23", Edition: 50

Kavavaow Mannomee (1958-),

*Surprised Goose*, Lithograph, 1998,  
17"x22", Edition: 50

*Migration of the Whales*, Stonecut and Stencil,  
2002, 25"x27", Edition: 50

Tim Pitsiulak (1967-)

*Arvik (Bowhead Whale)*, Seriagraph,  
2009, 30"x26.5", Edition: 50

Itee Pootoogook (1951-)

*Floe Edge, Winter*, Seriagraph,  
2009, 10"x37.5", Edition: 50

Mary Pudlat (1923-2001)

*On Spring Ice*, Etching and Aquatint,  
1997, 19"x19", Edition: 50

*Returning to Camp*, Lithograph,  
2000, 23"x15", Edition: 50

Pitaloosie Saila (1942-)

*Northern Lights*, Lithograph, 2005,  
16"x24", Edition: 50

Kakulu Saggiaktok (1940-)

*Migrating Fish*, Stonecut, 1995,  
28"x20", Edition: 50

Ninegeokuleek Teevee (1963-)

*Bed of Kelp*, Lithograph, 2004,  
11.5"x18.5", Edition: 50

Tikitu Qinnuayuk (1908-1992)

*Qayaqturiuqtuq (First Time Kayaker)*,  
Stonecut and Stencil, 1991,  
20"x26", Edition: 50

### DRAWINGS

Kenojuak Ashevak (1924-)

*Untitled (owl)*, Ink, 1994/1995, 19.5"x25.5"

*Untitled (bird with green background)*,  
Colored Pencil, 1994/1995, 7.5"x10"

*Untitled (owl headed animal)*, Colored Pencil,  
1994/1995, 7.5"x10.5"

Mary Pudlat (1923-2001)

*Untitled (polar bears, walruses, fish and whales)*,  
Colored Pencil, 1994/1995, 8"x11"

*Untitled (woman with birds)*, Colored Pencil,  
1994/1995, 7.5"x10"

*Untitled (standing owl)*, Colored Pencil,  
1994/1995, 7.5"x10.5"