



NATURE & TRANSFORMATION: Inuit Art

Pucker Gallery, Boston



## Nature & Transformation

Inuit Art charms us at every turn. We delight in its playfulness, admire its monumentality, recognize the deftness of its carvers, envy its simplicity. Yet, its entire meaning eludes us. More than just an aesthetic creation, each piece defines a way of life and a way of seeing that are essentially foreign to us. Encumbering our efforts to understand something of the Inuit consciousness is the variety of styles and subjects in their art.

Themes of indigenous flora and fauna, hunting, domesticity and mythology are given quite different treatments in various regions of the Northern Canadian Arctic. Amuruinnaq's rugged *Mother and Child* (cat. '47), from Baker Lake, powerfully expresses the maternal bond. *Mother and child* emerge from the weighty stone as though indistinct from each other and from the earth on which they exist.

Davie Atchealak's spectacular, emotionally charged rendition of the *Mother and Child* gives a very disparate interpretation of this theme. (cat. '1) The raucous gesturing and exultant expressions celebrate to the sounds of ritual drumming. Atchealak's multi-dimensional sculptures have a fantastic sense of movement and space. Counted among the Masters of Inuit carving, his work recently brought a record price at auction and is exhibited in numerous Museums and Galleries across Canada and the United States.

Inuit carving bears witness to the way that family and community intimacy has molded Inuit life for generations.

A young carver's first teacher is often his/her mother or father. The Michael Family from Lake Harbour exemplifies how styles, spirits, and stories are passed from parent to child. Father Elijah's dramatic *Mother and Child* (cat. '49) establishes the family's penchant for polished and expressive pieces. Slightly exaggerated proportions help captivate the raw feeling of a moment without detracting from the naturalism of the image. His son Pea's *Hunter* (cat. '46) captures the fortitude of the hunter and the invigoration of the impending kill. The sturdy man's motionless body is poised over an ice-hole (fishermen will stand ready for hours waiting for the prey to momentarily appear), while his wrenched expression reveals the ardor of this experience.

The large art communities which began in the late 1940's in the Canadian Arctic are second only to the family in the life of a carver. The Hudson Bay Company set up a Trading Post in Cape Dorset in 1918, making it a popular place for artisans to live and sell their work. The marriage of many remote interests in one region has engendered a wide variety of styles in Cape Dorset. Most of the pieces are exquisitely crafted and many are consciously tailored for exportation. Etiolodie Petaloosie's *Loon* (cat. '36) embodies the naturalism, elegance and polish of Cape Dorset art. A regal, upturned beak, and crisply carved lines ennoble the doleful-eyed bird. Community brotherhood, family guidance, and oral tradition help the artist form an aesthetic style and an awareness of the physical and spiritual world.

The Inuit's fabled affinity to nature issues from their need to understand and survive her. Life is often bare, fierce, and mysterious. Art is often wielded as an instrument of power over natural and animal forces that threaten the Eskimo's daily existence and subsistence. To dispel the ferocity of the mammoth walrus, Cape Dorset carver Axangayu represents the animal dancing playfully (cat. '20). Underlying the surface tones of joviality, however, is the beast's hauntingly cold and realistic expression.

Another Dorset carver, Joe Parr, exploits sculpture to establish dominion over the elusive seal. Prized for its meat, blubber and pelts, this animal is extremely difficult to hunt. Parr's *Dancing Seal* (cat. '55) jocularly swings his folded rolls of fat, and the brilliant yellow-orange stone sparkles from every angle.

Inuit sculpture functions as a medium of understanding of and interaction with the supernatural as well. The *angakoq*, or shaman, employs spirit helpers to create exchange between the people and the deities, and these helpers come in a myriad of guises. The Inuit use the same word, *inna*, to designate a human being and a spirit helper. Taruq Ragee's small bust, *Spirit Head* (cat. '39), mingles human, animal, and mythological imagery to pay homage to the spirit helper beliefs.

The reciprocal role of shaman and spirit helper is demonstrated by Toonoo Sharkey's awesome, dual-sided sculpture, *Hawk and Face* (cat. '2 & '3). A man's long and slender face seems to fly with the aid of his magical wing-like

2. *Hawk & Face (front)*  
Toonoo Sharkey, Cape Dorset  
16 1/2 x 16 1/2 x 7", IN284



3. *Hawk & Face (back)*  
Toonoo Sharkey, Cape Dorset  
16 1/2 x 16 1/2 x 7", IN284

ears. The other side of the sculpture reveals a striking owl with radiating wings, piercing eyes, and sprawled claws. Like the Inuit existence itself, the piece is simultaneously menacing and enchanting.

The Inuit life is defined in binaries: fear and reverence, simplicity and hardship, material poverty and spiritual richness, camaraderie and independence, primitivism and sophistication. In art, the Inuit transcribe this duality by making the massive graceful, the threatening playful, the

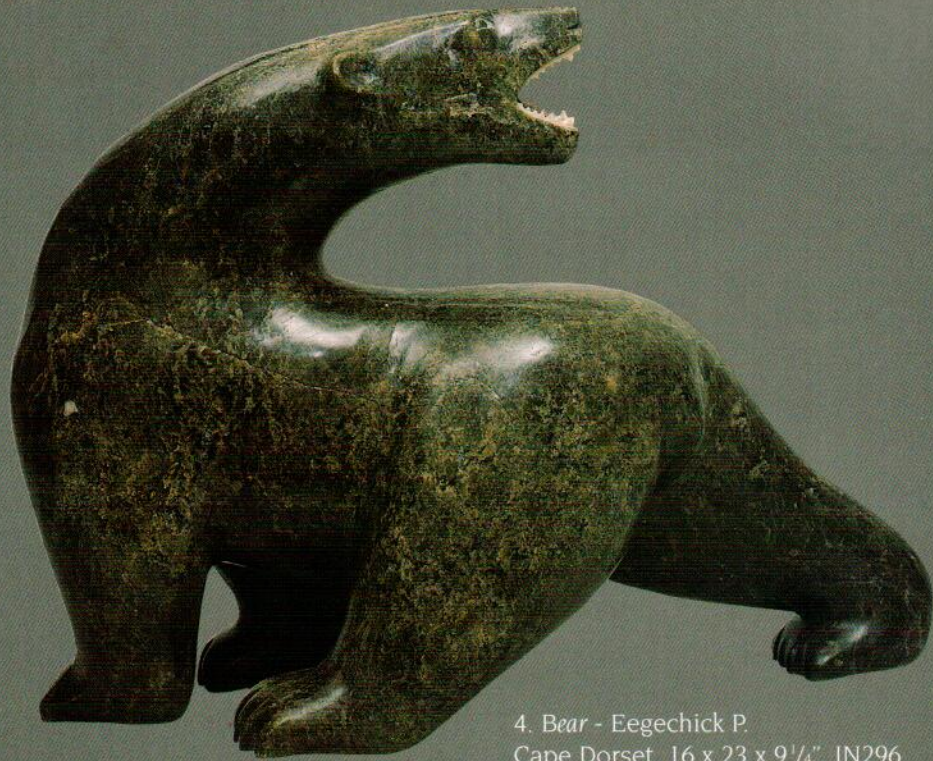
unknowable common. Mosesa Pootoogook's quartz *Muskox* (cat. '44) is rendered as both dense and delicate, concurrently ancient and refreshing. His work is emblematic of the way in which the Inuit interpret their desolate surroundings and simple existence in warm and exquisite ways.

The charm of Inuit art is transformed by talent, experience, and dexterity into art which speaks universally of man's survival and search for material and spiritual sustenance.

Front cover:

1. *Mother & Child/Drum Dancing* / Davie Atchealak / Pangnirtung / 22 1/4 x 14 x 10" / IN300  
Collections include: Art Gallery of Ontario / Canadian Museum of Civilization / National Gallery of Canada





4. Bear - Eegechick P.  
Cape Dorset, 16 x 23 x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>", IN296



5. Bear - Joe Parr  
Cape Dorset, 4 x 10 x 3", IN317



6. Bear - J. Petaloosie  
Cape Dorset, 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 4", IN314



7. Bear - J. Inukpuk  
Lake Harrison, 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>", IN316



8. Bear - J. Petaloosie,  
Cape Dorset, 5<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 7 x 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>", IN322



9. Bear (quartz) - Ilko Angutikiuak  
Clyde River, 12 1/4 x 9 1/2 x 8", IN290



12. Bear (quartz) - Ilkoo Angutikjuak  
Clyde River, 12 1/2 x 10 1/2 x 4" IN286



10. Standing Bear - Kootoo Shaa  
Kimmirut (Lake Harbour), 11 1/4 x 8 x 3", IN315



11. Bear - Josephie Egeevullak  
Kimmirut (Lake Harbour), 11 1/4 x 17 x 6 1/2", IN282





13. Bear - Eegetchiak P.  
Cape Dorset, 12 x 31 1/2 x 9", IN303



14. Bear - Egeevudluk M.  
Kimmirut (Lake Harbour), 12 x 12 1/2 x 11 1/2", IN298



15. Dancing Bear - Pea Michael  
Kimmirut (Lake Harbour), 13 1/2 x 12 1/2 x 4 1/2", IN319





16. Bear - Nuna Parr  
Cape Dorset, 13 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 20 x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ " IN291



17. Bear - P. Qiatsuk  
Cape Dorset, 6 x 13 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", IN262



18. Bear - Aslevak Tunnillee  
Cape Dorset, 4 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 10 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", IN308



19. Bear - I. Ikkidluak  
Kimmirut (Lake Harbour), 10 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 26 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", IN301





20. *Dancing Walrus* - Axangayu Shaa  
Cape Dorset, 17 x 18 x 6, IN294

Collections include:

- Canadian Museum of Civilization
- Metropolitan Museum of Art
- National Gallery of Canada



21. *Walrus* - J. Petaloosie  
Cape Dorset, 14 1/2 x 11 1/2 x 4 1/4", IN288



22. *Standing Walrus* - Oshewretok Ipellie  
Cape Dorset, 15 1/2 x 7 x 4", IN263





23. *Acrobatic Walrus* - Aselvak Adla  
Cape Dorset, 18 1/4 x 7 1/2 x 4", IN261



24. *Walrus* - Joe Parr  
Cape Dorset, 3 x 5 x 3", IN271



25. *Walrus* - Kaka Ashoona  
Cape Dorset, 17 1/2 x 16 1/2 x 10 1/4", IN305





26. *Walrus* - Nuna Parr  
Cape Dorset, 17 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 16 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 11", IN302



27. *Walrus* - Pudlalik Shaa  
Cape Dorset, 11 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 7 x 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ ", IN258



28. *Walrus* - Peter Parr  
Cape Dorset, 13 x 17 x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", IN293



29. *Walrus* - K. Itidloie  
Cape Dorset, 8 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 11 x 3", IN309

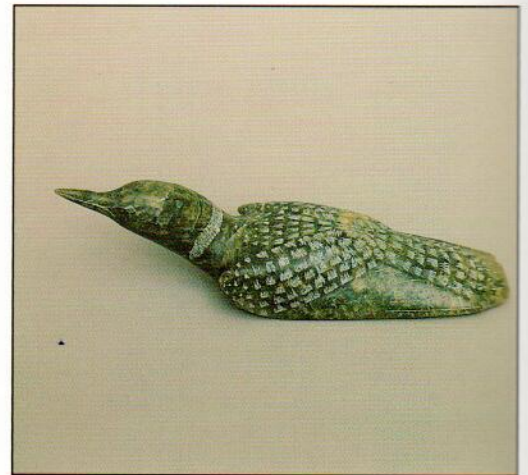




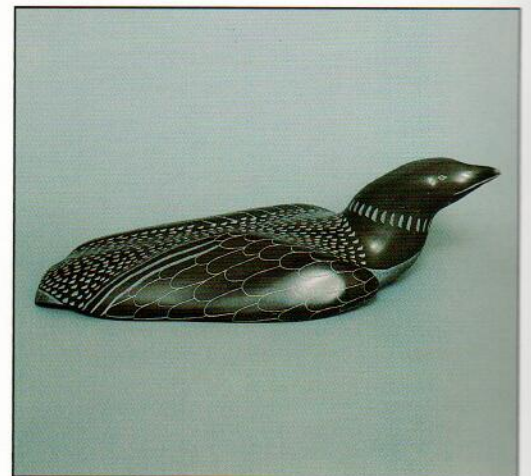
30. Owl Family - I. Kingwatsiak  
Cape Dorset, 28 x 17 x 9", IN299



31. Owl - J. Iqaluq  
Sanikiluaq (Belcher Island), 5 1/4 x 5 x 2 3/4"  
IN273

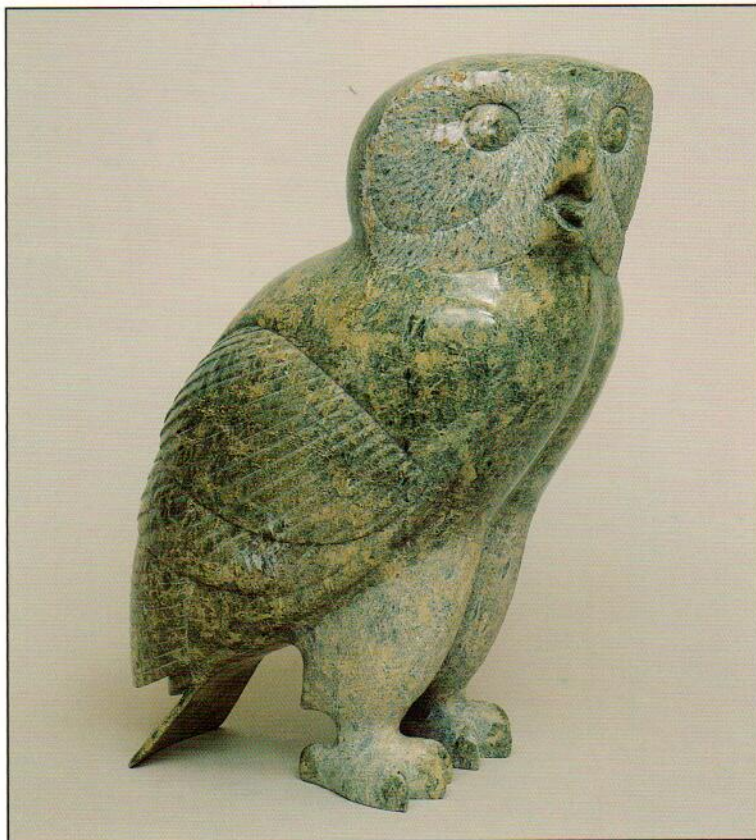


32. Bird - Italu Etidloie  
Cape Dorset, 2 x 8 1/4 x 2 1/4", IN264

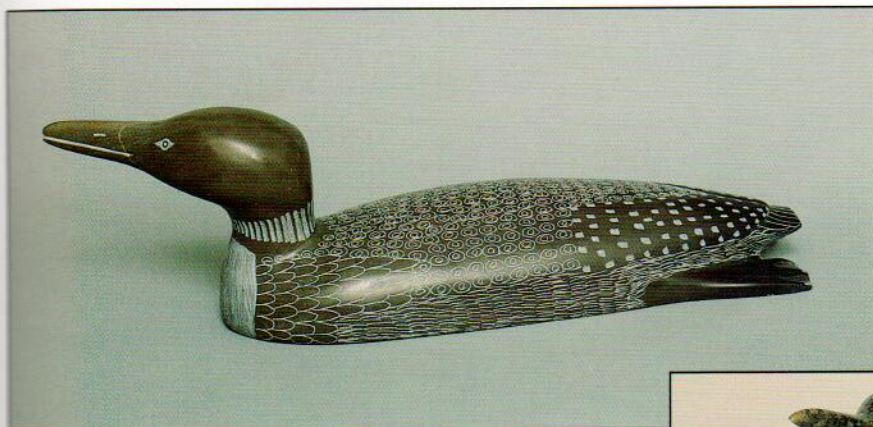


33. Bird - David Uppik  
Sanikiluaq (Belcher Island), 4 x 5 1/2 x 14"  
IN313





34. Snow Owl - Pitseolak  
Kimmirut (Lake Harbour),  
14<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 7", IN292

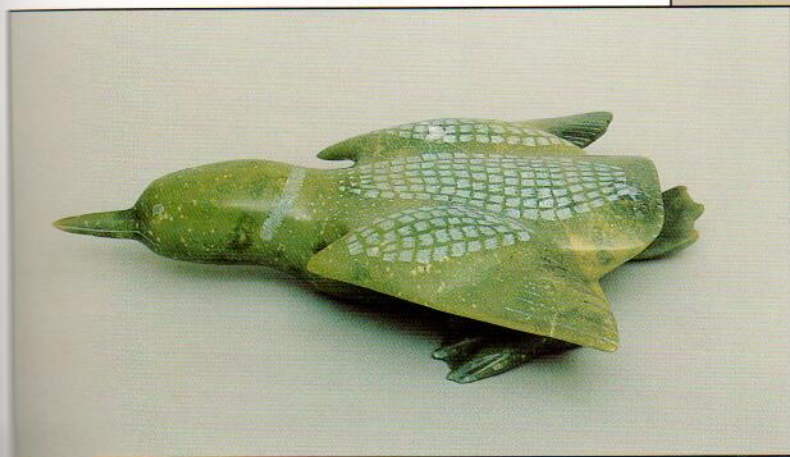


35. Bird - S. Iqaluq  
Sanikiluaq (Belcher Island), 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 16 x 4", IN280

36. Loon - Etiolodie Petaloosie  
Cape Dorset, 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>", IN321



37. Bird - Italu Itidloie  
Cape Dorset, 2 x 8 x 11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>", IN277





38. *Screaming Owl* - Egeetchiak P.  
Cape Dorset, 25 x 14<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" , IN304



39. *Spirit Head* - Taruq Ragee  
Cape Dorset, 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 3 x 2"  
IN270



40. *Bird* - Sukvalek Akesuk  
Cape Dorset, 6<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"  
IN259

41. *Bird* - Aslevak Tunillie  
Cape Dorset, 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 11<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 4"  
IN283





42. Bird - Etungat  
Cape Dorset, 9 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 9 x 3", IN289



43. Bird (quartz) - P. Qimirpic  
Cape Dorset, 9 x 12 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ ", IN260



44. Muskox (quartz) - Mosesa Pootoogook  
Cape Dorset, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 16 x 5", IN297

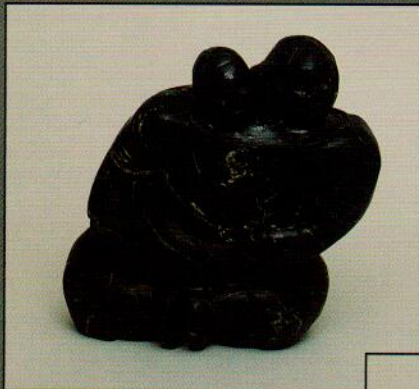


45. Bird - J. Petaloosie  
Cape Dorset, 15 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 3 x 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", IN279





46. Hunter - Pea Michael  
Kimmirut (Lake Harbour),  
16<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 4 1/2 x 17<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" IN295

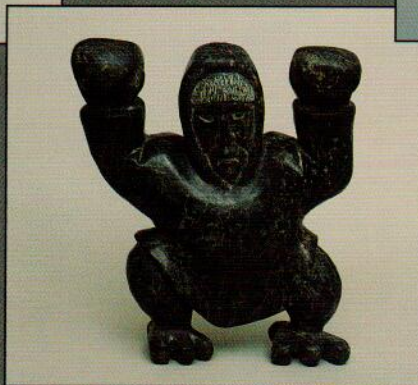


47. Mother & Child -  
L. Arnuruinnaq  
Baker Lake,  
10 x 10 x 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" IN306



49. Mother & Child -  
Elijah Michael  
Kimmirut (Lake Harbour)  
9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 8 x 6" IN312

- Collections include:
- Canadian Museum of Civilization
  - Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montreal
  - National Gallery of Canada



48. Spirit Man - Toonoo Sharkey  
Dorset Lake, 13 x 11 1/4 x 3<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" IN285



50. Mother & Child - Toona Iquilik  
Eskimo Point, 9 1/2 x 6 x 5", IN275





51. *Mother & Child* - J. Hallauk  
Eskimo Point, 6 1/2 x 4 1/4 x 5 1/2", IN269



52. *Heads* - J. Hallauk  
Eskimo Point, 9 3/4 x 4 x 2 1/2", IN267



53. *Heads* - J. Hallauk  
Eskimo Point, 6 x 5 1/4 x 1 1/2", IN266



54. *Mother & Child* - N. Tassiuk  
Eskimo Point, 6 x 6 x 4 1/2", IN268



55. *Dancing Seal* - Joe Parr  
Cape Dorset, 8 1/2 x 8 x 2 1/4", IN318



56. *Mother & Child* - Tasseor  
Eskimo Point, 6 1/4 x 4 1/4 x 2 1/4", IN272



# Nature & Transformation



57. *Caribou* - Oshewetok Ipellie  
Cape Dorset, 15 1/2 x 16 1/2 x 9", IN281



58. *Caribou* - O. Nunguswitoq  
Cape Dorset, 22 x 20 1/2 x 8 1/2", IN278

Pucker Gallery, Boston

9 January -

8 February 1999

*In cooperation with Theo Waddington Gallery, London  
Individual carvers' biographies are available upon request*

Gallery Hours: Monday through Saturday 10:00 am to 5:30 pm; Sundays 1:00 to 5:00 pm.

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