

— McIntosh Gallery presents —

THE BERGER COLLECTION OF
Inuit Art



— The D.B. Weldon Library —
April 8 - May 8, 2013

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Inuit Art

In 2002, Dr. Heidi and Dr. Dieter Berger generously donated their impressive collection of contemporary Inuit sculpture and graphics to McIntosh Gallery. Over the last decade, it has been the subject of curatorial research and experiential learning opportunities for Western students. With this exhibition, comprised of most of the sculptures in the collection, we are pleased to present it to a wider audience.

Under the supervision of Professor Lisa Hodgetts of the Department of Anthropology, doctoral candidate Laura Elena Kelvin has curated this thematic selection with numerous cultural insights into the imagery. Her inclusion of reproduction objects, such as the harpoon and polar bear skull, offers additional dimension to her observations.

On behalf of McIntosh Gallery, I thank Laura Elena Kelvin and Dr. Hodgetts for their enthusiastic response to the project proposal; the Department of Anthropology for its generous loan of objects from the Zooarchaeology Collection; Laura Collishaw of Weldon Library for her gracious assistance; and especially Dr. Heidi and Dr. Dieter Berger for their donation of an outstanding collection of Inuit art.

Catherine Elliot Shaw
Curator
McIntosh Gallery

THE BERGER COLLECTION:
*Collecting Inuit art
in the 1970s and 1980s*

During the 1970s, many art critics labeled Inuit art as “invented” or “inauthentic” because Inuit carvings as we know them today did not really appear until the late 1940s when their production was encouraged by the Canadian government and southern art markets. Some critics felt that Inuit sculptures were not truly Inuit because they were made for a “white audience” and usually depicted a way of life that many southerners believed no longer existed (Crandall 2000: 54-55). It is obvious today that the Inuit have retained a unique lifestyle distinct from mainstream Canadian culture by negotiating which aspects of Canadian culture to adopt into their own. Inuit sculptures from the 1970s reflect this process, as they are a highly diverse negotiation between Inuit and European notions of carving, aesthetics, and art and depict themes that were and still are important aspects of Inuit culture. Just as the Berger Collection reveals many aspects of Inuit traditions and identity, it also reflects the collector’s perception of art and Inuit culture.



Bud Glunz, *Three Inuit Men Hunting Seal*,
National Film Board of Canada, Library and Archives Canada
MIKAN no. 3842879

There is no Inuktitut word meaning “art” but there is a long tradition of carving throughout Inuit history (Carpenter, Varley and Flaherty 1979). Traditionally the Inuit carved bone, antler, ivory and stone to make tools, amulets, toys and games (Crandall 2000: 55). After contact with Europeans, the Inuit also made small carvings, usually of animals, to trade to explorers, missionaries, and whalers. It was not until 1948 when James Houston, an artist from southern Ontario, brought back Inuit carvings from a trip to Inukjuak (Port Harrison) that Inuit carvings began to be appreciated by southerners as “art”. Soon after, the Government of Canada established art cooperatives in various Inuit communities to encourage production for southern markets (Crandall 2000). Inuit-carved tools, so expressive of their cultural identity, were replaced with ready-made European tools. Carving was transformed into art, an important connection to the past and to their contemporary identity.



Inuit Women Fishing at Edge of Ice Flow, ca. 1932
Library and Archives Canada, MIKAN no. 3334122



G. Lunney, *Inuit Carver Etaolopea at work inside his Igloo putting the finishing touches on a seal carving with file* 1956
Library and Archives Canada, MIKAN no. 3325089

Dr. Heidi Berger began collecting Inuit art in 1972 and she operated Galerie Berger, specializing in Canadian native art, from 1978 until 1981. The artworks in this collection were acquired during the 1970s and early 1980s. During this time, many large corporations were buying Inuit art to display in the workplace and to give as corporate gift items. Inuit art was seen as uniquely Canadian and therefore helped assert the Canadian corporate identity. Often positioned in lobbies and offices, larger artworks grew in demand. As a result small works became less prevalent (Schrager 1986). Some sculptures in the Berger Collection are quite representative of this period, but many are unique and reflect the interests of Dr. Berger, who favoured small artworks of exceptional craftsmanship and individuality. She was interested in themes pertaining to animals, shamanism, tools, people at work and play, and women.

Dr. Berger explains her interests in collecting:

“When I started collecting, I intended to honour this tradition and concentrate on miniatures only. I soon found that miniatures, which in the 70s were carved more for the artist’s personal satisfaction than monetary gain, had much more individuality and often craftsmanship than larger pieces carved for the commercial market. In dealing with the Eskimo art cooperatives in Ottawa and Montreal, I learned that the artist was often paid by the size and complexity of the piece, and that commercially, the small pieces were often undervalued and thus overlooked” (email to author, March13, 2013).

The Inuit have kept their traditions by adapting them to an increasingly globalized world and these traditions have in turn continued to shape their contemporary identity. Carving has further shaped contemporary Inuit identity through the portrayal of important aspects of Inuit culture.

Laura Elena Kelvin
PhD Candidate
Department of Anthropology

References:

Carpenter, E., F. Varley and R. Flaherty 1979 *Eskimo*.
Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Crandall, C. C. 2000 *Inuit Art: A History*. Jefferson:
McFarland and Company Incorporated
Publishers

Schrager, R. 1986 *Why do they Buy it? Inuit Art
collecting in the Corporate World* Inuit
Art Quarterly 1986 1(3):1-5.



Artist Unknown (Inuit), *Ulu (women's knife)*, no date, bone, copper
Collection of McInosh Gallery, Gift of Dr. Heidi and Dr. Dieter Berger, 2002

COLLECTION OF McINTOSH GALLERY
WESTERN UNIVERSITY
Gift of Dr. Dieter and Dr. Heidi Berger, 2002

Artist Unknown (Inuit)
Pannak (snow knife) no date
Bone (caribou), 46.0 x 8.2 x 1.9 cm

Artist Unknown (Inuit)
Pitikserak (bow drill) no date
Bone, hide, 34.5 x 8.0 x 2.0 cm

Artist Unknown (Inuit)
Stone Scraper no date
Stone, 7.1 x 13.0 x 2.5 cm

Artist Unknown (Inuit)
Ulu (women's knife) no date
Bone, copper, 6.6 x 9.5 x 1.6 cm

Artist Unknown (Inuit)
Owl no date
Steatite, 10.0 x 7.5 x 7.8 cm

Artist Unknown (Inuit)
Head Pendant no date
Ivory, 3.7 x 1.8 x 1.0 cm

Kovianitik Adamie
(Inuit, born 1906)
Seal Head Ring no date
Ivory, 2.5 cm diam.

Kovianitik Adamie
(Inuit, born 1906)
Seal Ring no date
Ivory, 3.2 cm diam.

Cecilia Akka (Inuit, 1934 - 1996)
Two Men Playing a Game no date
Ivory, wood stone
7.8 x 11.5 x 10.0 cm

George Alayco (Inuit)
Bear Hunt 1980
Stone, 4.0 x 15.3 x 11.6 cm

William Anautalik
(Inuit, 1931 - 1987)
Head 1980
Stone, 10.0 x 8.0 x 6.4 cm

Martina Pisuyui Anoee
(Inuit, born 1933)
Parka Woman 1974
Stone, 8.5 x 5.4 x 2.0 cm

Pauloosie Arnakak (Inuit, born 1921)
Bear Head 1980
Whale bone, 7.0 x 15.1 x 7.5 cm

Ettik Auivaluk (Inuit)
Walrus 1979
Stone, ivory, 4.5 x 8.8 x 6.0 cm

John C-ann (Inuit)
Bear 1978
Caribou antler, 7.5 x 9.0 x 3.5 cm

Juanasi Jakusi Itukalla
(Joanassie Jack) (Inuit, born 1949)
Bear and Walrus 1979
Stone, 7.6 x 6.7 x 4.0 cm

Seemee Kanayuk (Inuit, 1938-1981)
Two Heads 1980
Stone, hair, 4.7 x 14.0 x 6.7 cm

Seemee Kanayuk (Inuit, born 1938)
Igloo with Three Figures 1980
Stone, 8.3 x 9.7 x 2.9 cm

Jaypetee Karpik (Inuit, born 1949)
Spirit 1980
Whale bone, 20.3 x 27.0 x 17.0 cm

Lydia Kenuayook (Inuit)
Bear no date
Stone, 2.8 x 4.8 x 2.4 cm

Leah Aarlu Makittuq
(Inuit, born 1940)
Singing Match no date
Ivory, whale bone, 7.0 x 8.1 x 6.6 cm

Henry Napartuk (Inuit, 1932 - 1985)
Mother and Child 1978
Stone, 3.7 x 2.9 x 3.1 cm

Sammy Nassak (Inuit, 1905 - 1988)
Dog 1979
Caribou antler, 4.8 x 7.8 x 3.0 cm

Rupee Natsiapik (Inuit, born 1933)
Dancing Bear no date
Whale bone, 40.0 x 16.2 x 8.0 cm

Annie Niviaxie (Inuit, 1930 - 1989)
Woman 1979
Stone, 8.0 x 5.5 x 3.1 cm

Markosee Joan Pitsiulak
(Inuit, 1895 - 1980)
Accordion Player no date
Whale bone, 13.5 x 12.0 x 6.5 cm

Sinukis (Inuit)
Legend 1974
Stone, 6.0 x 11.0 x 2.5 cm

M. Suisanak (Inuit)
Figure 1980
Stone, 8.0 x 7.5 x 2.3 cm

Joe Talirunili (Inuit, 1908 - 1976)
Crouching Hunter 1979
Stone, 3.5 x 4.0 x 3.8 cm

Jimmy Udlayok (Inuit, born 1954)
Seal Pendant no date
Ivory, 4.6 x 1.2 x 1.0 cm

Eddy Weetalukektak
(Inuit, 1932-2005)
Bear and Cub 1980
Stone, 10.2 x 31.4 x 20.0 cm

Reproductions:

Courtesy of the
Zooarchaeology Collection,
Department of Anthropology
Western University

Tim Rast:
Reproduction Thule Inuit
Harpoon Head

Tim Rast:
Reproduction Dorset
Palaeoeskimo Knife

Tim Rast:
Reproduction Inuit Ulu

Tim Rast:
Reproduction Dorset Palaeoeskimo
Harpoon

Cast of Polar Bear Skull



Seemee Kanayuk, *Two Heads* 1980, stone, hair,
Collection of McInosh Gallery, Gift of Dr. Heidi and Dr. Dieter Berger, 2002

D.L. WELDON LIBRARY

APR-MAY 2013

Installation Images



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CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO



50 YEARS OF ONTARIO GOVERNMENT SUPPORT OF THE ARTS

50 ANS DE SOUTIEN DU GOUVERNEMENT DE L'ONTARIO AUX ARTS