

L O N D O N

M E S S U M S

W I L T S H I R E

Inuit Sculpture





Photography by Steve Russell

Early 20th Century British Sculpture was profoundly inspired by the objects and sculptures from distant lands that were collectively known as “Primitive Art” and amongst which was lumped discoveries from the Northern most regions of Canada. Roaming the British Museum’s collection of Oceanic, Native American, African and Mesopotamian objects, a young Henry Moore would discover and record the shapes and figures transforming them into some of his most powerful early sculptures and going to create his own lasting iconography. It was the truth to material which struck him the most, the “stoniness” of the carved forms perhaps reminiscent of the 11th Century carvings he knew as a boy from the churches of Yorkshire.

These are not the works themselves that inspired that generation of artists, but they are their ancestors. They also now inform us of a culture and civilisation that is now far better understood. Their forms still chime a chord to that early English stonework with their sense of portent and purpose. The truth to materials is there in the way that each work is carved according to what the material will allow.

Above all, they are staggeringly beautiful distillations of forms that speak not only of their subject – Bird/ Hunter/ Fish – but what it means to be that animal and also what it means to be that material too. Every good artist will know the capacity of what they have in their hand, its properties and elastic limits. Few are able to use that to convey the sense of what being that material actually means. As many of these objects relay, it really is possible to know the bird, to know the fish and to know the hunter all in one moment and one object.

I have admired this artform for some time and it is a pleasure to share this collection with you. My thanks are to all who have made it possible - to Clive Nickolds for bringing this collection together over the past twenty years and to Pat Feheley for her insight and expertise in contextualising these remarkable works for us.

Johnny Messum



Introduction

Dramatic social changes took place in the decade after the Second World War. Until that time Inuit had been living the traditional lifestyle, migrating with the seasons. With the construction of the Distant Early Warning Line, a series of radar stations across the Arctic, rapid changes took place in the early to mid-1950s. Airports were built, settlements expanded and a huge influx of people from the south brought about the beginnings of modern infrastructure across the north. With these changes came increased government involvement as schools and nursing stations became part of the rapidly growing settlements.

During this transitional decade, contact between Inuit and southerners intensified and there was a growing interest in the small Inuit sculptures primarily made of bone and ivory. These works were increasingly fashioned out of stone with additional materials incorporated for realism.

As local infrastructure grew across the Arctic, there was enhanced support for the development of Inuit art. Local co-operatives were set up in each settlement and art advisors encouraged the artists and gave them new opportunities. Group quarrying and a settled lifestyle allowed for increases in scale and complexity. With marketing assistance in the south, artists were able to support their families through their art. This set the stage for the remarkable flowering of contemporary Inuit art. The Nickolds collection encompasses sculpture from across the Canadian Arctic and reflects the individual styles developed in each distinct region.

Pat Feheley



These two sculptures span the decade of the 1950s and are typical of works created at this time. Both are labelled Eastern Arctic as no records were kept and it is hard to establish the exact area where they were made. For the same reason we do not often know the name of the artists, which in no way diminishes the power and monumentality of the works.

Standing Woman, despite her static pose, is very compelling. The details of the hands and inset face are characteristic of works created in this decade.

Hunter, dated towards the end of the decade, while seemingly similar in form indicates a greater ease with depicting the human figure. He is caught in motion, stepping forward and the details of his clothing are delineated. The artist of this sculpture, most likely from Nunavik, has used clay to make the inset face allowing both for greater modelling and more lifelike features than the simple flat face of Standing Woman. Both are equally powerful, but Hunter gives an indication of what was to come in the world of contemporary Inuit art.

Standing Woman

Artist Unknown
 Eastern Arctic, c1950
 Stone, bone, antler
 20cm
 £3,850





Hunter

Artist Unknown
Eastern Arctic, c1958
Stone, bone, inlay
22.2cm
£3,250





Eastern Arctic

NUNAVUT

Nunavut is the largest of the regions in the Canadian Arctic and the first to achieve self-government. Stretching from Baffin Island across the Central Arctic, Nunavut incorporates many different local traditional cultures. There are three distinct regions within Nunavut, all of which are represented in the Nickolds collection.

KITIKMEOT REGION

KIVALLIQ REGION

QIKIQTAALUK/ BAFFIN REGION



KITIKMEOT REGION

This area covers territory further north and west of the Kivalliq region. Two settlements in particular, Taloyoak (formerly Spence Bay) and Gjoa Haven are renowned for the most imaginative and distinctive sculptural style. These multi-media works, dating back to the 1970s were technically brilliant, sometimes grotesque and always inventive.

In this small sculpture, Suqslaq has mounted the face of an Inuk on what appears to be a portion of an aged muskox horn. The weathered and wrinkled face is framed by the fur of a parka hood. It is in fact bas-relief carving in which the artist has gone deeply into his material to isolate the face and then add extremely detailed features. The result is certainly a sculpture with personality.

Small Head
Joseph Suqslak
Gjoa Haven, 1997
Antler, bone
9.5cm
£1,250





Standing Bear

David Qingnaqtuq

Taloyoak, 1973

Bone, stone

21cm

£2,850

Taloyoak (formerly Spence Bay) from the early 1970s was known as a settlement in which sculptures, primarily made from whalebone, were often not realistic in any way. Instead, they often featured strange, almost grotesque figures. While this Standing Bear does not fully fit into that profile, it is certainly an unusual depiction of a polar bear. While polar bears do stand on their hind legs, they are generally in either an aggressive or a balancing stance. This bear is more like a human, casually standing with his arms at his sides with a slightly turned head as if he is listening to something which has brought on a slight smile. It is a very engaging sculpture.



This sculpture is from Ulukhaktok (formerly Holman Island), located in the Western Arctic in the Inuvialuit region of the Northwest Territories. Muskox are plentiful in this area and their beautifully carved horns lend themselves to elegant and lyrical sculptures. This crane by Ekpakohak is one of many such works which he has created from this material. The artist uses the part of the horn which curves so that the veining in the material echoes the form of the sculpture. The small areas of colour are perfectly placed to add emphasis. The elegance of this sculpture is perfectly finished as the long legs, still following the grain are mounted into an antler base.

Crane
James Ekpakohak
Ulukhaktok, 2006
Muskox horn, antler
17.1cm
£1,450





KIVALLIQ REGION

The Kivalliq region is on the west side of Hudson Bay. Among the areas it encompasses include Qamani'tuaq (Baker Lake), Arviat and Rankin Inlet, all of which developed strong artist communities. The distinct regional style, quite different from the Qikiqtaaluk/Baffin Region, is immediately apparent. The local stone is basalt, a dark hard stone which is both difficult to carve and impossible to polish. The artists in these areas therefore developed a minimal style, defining form more by outline and silhouette rather than fine detail. Artists in coastal settlements who had little local stone, such as in Coral Harbour, worked with ivory, antler and whalebone.



The work of George Arlook, a second-generation sculptor from the Kivalliq region, indicates a more contemporary treatment of the minimalist style found in this area. The head of the bird is recognisable, but without this the sculpture would seem totally abstract – a sinuous form seen in the round with hash marks in various areas. This style is typical of the artist, who enjoyed incorporating these very contemporary forms within sculptures of animals, humans, and birds. It is an individual approach but one that grew out of the traditional regional style.

Bird

George Arlook
 Arviat, 1986
 Stone
 24.8cm
 £1,950





Seated Bear
 Andrew Mamgark
 Arviat Stone
 14.6cm
 £1,450



This Seated Woman is a classic example of the minimalist style found in the Kivalliq area. The silhouette of the woman is made from the local dark, hard stone without any detail aside from basic facial features. Despite this simplicity of the composition, Iquliq not only captures the form of the woman but creates a sense of monumentality despite the small size of the sculpture.

Seated Woman
Camille Iquliq
Qamani'tuaq, 1965
Stone
19cm
£2,250





Small Drum Dancer

Johnny Kasudluak
Coral Harbour, 2004
Antler
8.9cm
£885





Barnabus Arnasungaaq is perhaps the best known and most sought after of the Kivalliq artists. Human figures and animals are his typical subject matter, and this intriguing human/bird transformation is not common for him to depict. The artist has shown the figure standing on sturdy feet while his arms have changed into bird's wings. The details of the figure and the wings seem to emerge as if the artist were only uncovering the forms from the stone. This is a result of the hard and difficult basalt which takes neither fine detail nor polish. It is however a very commanding work in which the shaman with the wings of a bird appears to be formidable.

Winged Spirit

Barnabus Arnasungaaq
Qamani'tuaq, 2010
Stone
20.3cm
£1,950





Seated Woman

Yvonne Kanayuk Arnakuyuinak

Qamani'tuaq, 2000

Stone

7.6cm

£685





Waving Man
 Janet Ikuutaq Nipi
 Qamani'tuaq, 1979
 Stone
 8.9cm
 £885





Woman Kneeling

Yvonne Kanayuk Arnakuyuinak

Qamani'tuaq, c1985

Stone

7.6cm

£685



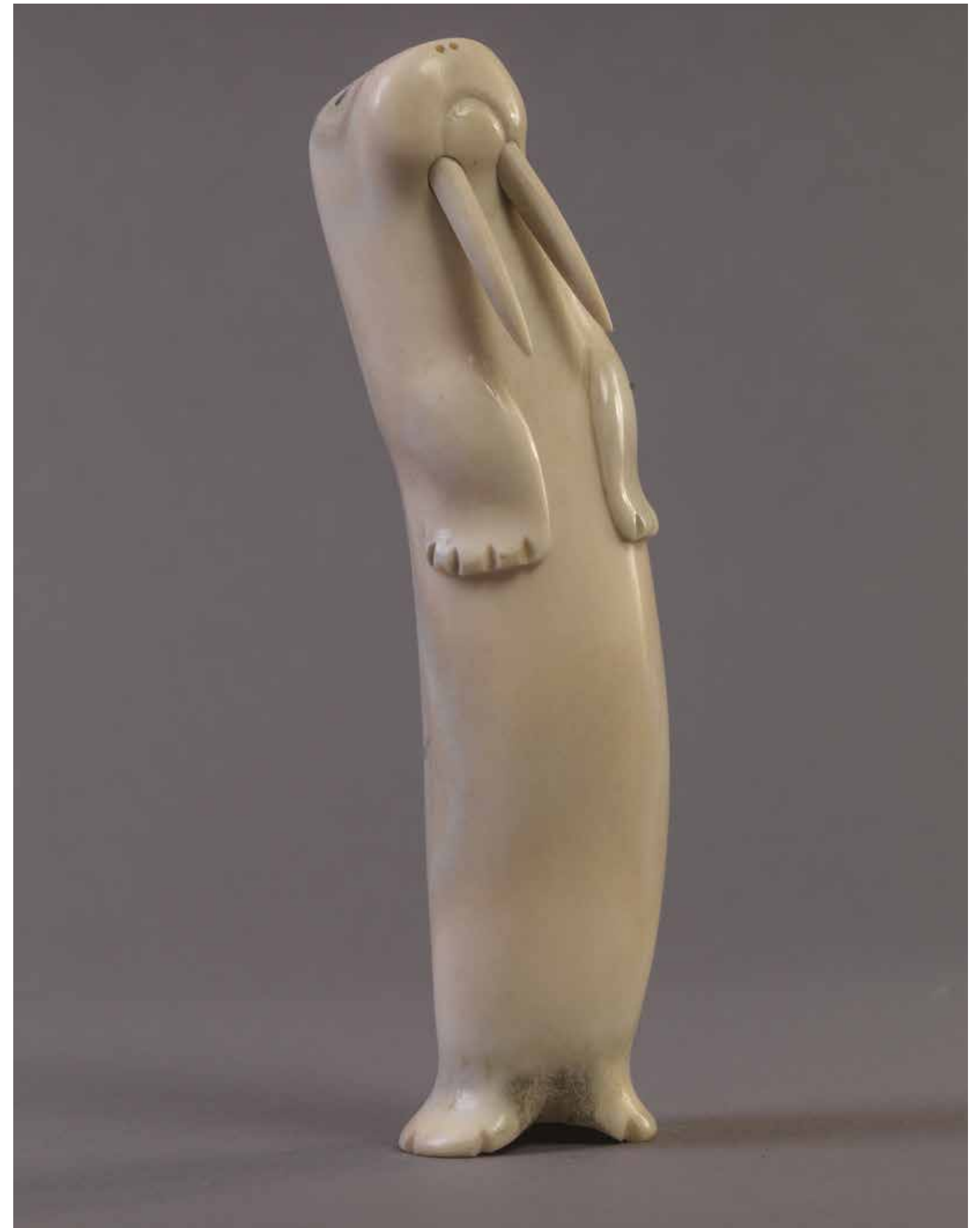


QIKIQTAAŁUK/ BAFFIN REGION

The primary art producing community in Nunavut is Kinngait (Cape Dorset). Located on the south west coast of Baffin Island, artists in Kinngait developed a distinctive style which ranged from lyrical to astonishingly intricate compositions. Blessed with quarries of beautiful veined stone ranging from white to dark green, artists were able to develop virtuoso carving techniques. Unlike the more narrative works from Nunavik, subject matter in this region tends more toward the fantastical, featuring traditional myths, individual flights of fantasy, or abstracted form in order to achieve a more expressive work of art. Other settlements in the Baffin Region are also known for their fine sculptures; this collection includes works from Kimmirut, Iqaluit and Pangnirtung in southern Baffin Island as well as the northern hamlet of Clyde River.

Standing Walrus

Peter Kuniliusee
Clyde River, 1990
Antler, inlay
17.8cm
£985





There are several sculptures depicting a drum dancer in this collection, and this large sculpture by Pootoogook Jaw is the most expressive. The figure is captured mid-dance, one foot lifted while his drum is raised, his beater about to move and his mouth open in song. In traditional drum dancing, the dancer sings as he jumps about in a circle, bending down low and then throwing his head up in time to the beat. A brilliant sculptor, Jaw captures the moment with an energetic and vibrant overall composition enlivened by the masterful handling of the curves and flowing edges of the parka.

Drum Dancer

Pootoogook Jaw
 Kinngait, 1994
 Stone, antler
 40.6cm
 £4,850





Prowling Bear

Kellypalik Qimirpik

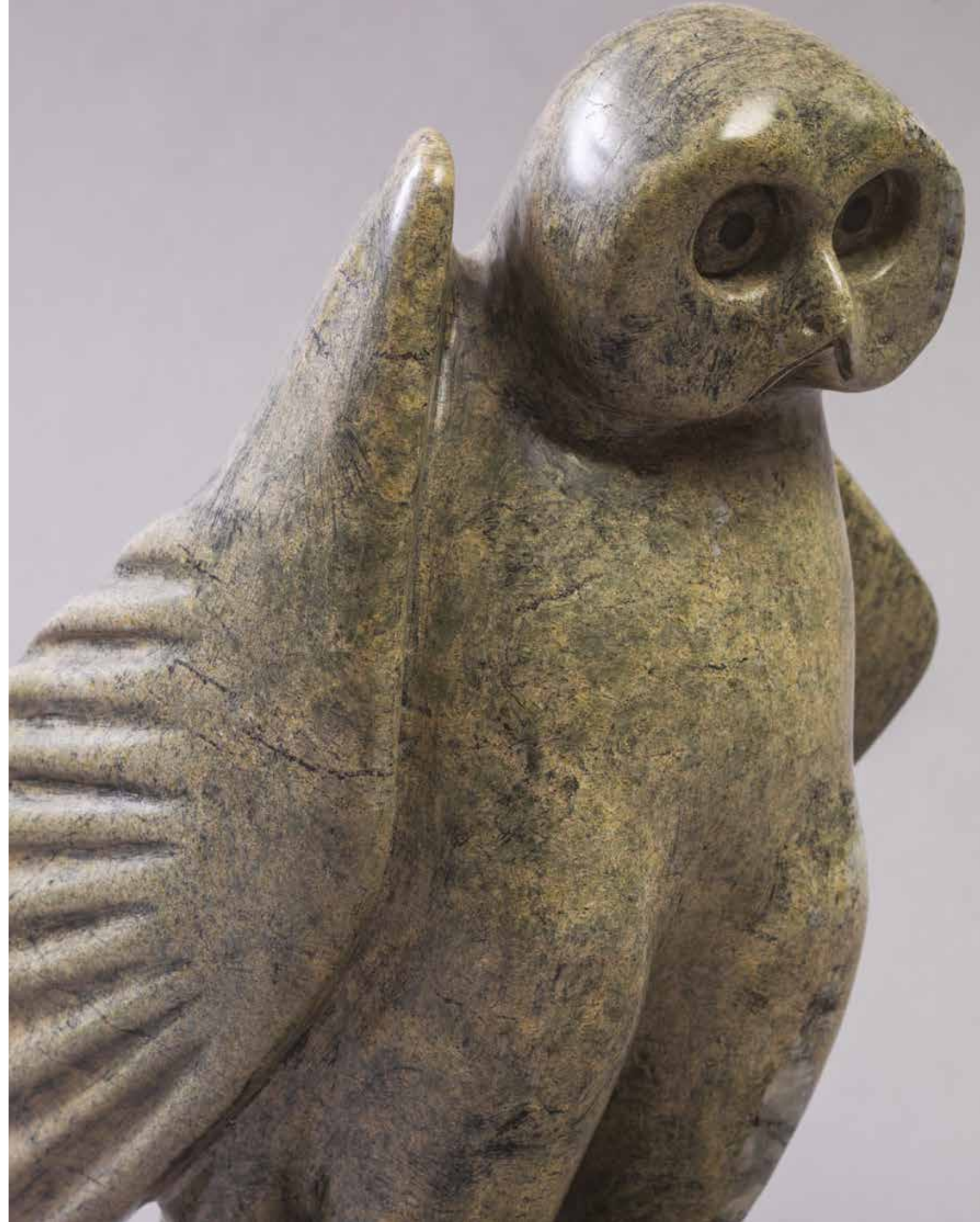
Kinngait, 1994

Stone

29.2cm

£3,650





Sad Owl

Lukta Qiatsuq
Kinngait, c1990
Stone
29.8cm
£2,950



Some of the most creative Inuit sculptures are based on transformation, the concept that the shaman could transform into any number of different land or sea animals. In this sculpture, Shaa has combined many different elements in a composition which flows around the entire sculpture. Seen from the front, a human face is dominated by a walrus/bird transformation; only his arm holding the knife remains of his human form. The bird on his side leads the viewer around the sculpture to find another human face again dominated by the wings of the walrus/ bird. Exquisitely carved, the details of the face, the sharp wing tips and open mouth of the bird are all captured in a dynamic yet balanced composition.

Bird Transformation

Pudlalik Shaa
Kinngait, 1995
Stone, antler
30.5cm
£2,950





Walrus

Peter Parr
Kinngait, 1992
Stone, antler
30.5cm
£1,850





Startled Bird

Nuna Parr

Kinngait, 1995

Stone

36.2cm

£3,850





Like many of the artists from Kinngait, Toonoo Sharky often distorts the form of birds and fish in order to achieve a more dynamic composition. Here, Sharky emphasises the two most powerful aspects of any bird of prey: their powerful wings which give them speed, and their strong beaks which capture prey. Sharky even adds inlaid white stone around the sharply focused eyes to which the viewer's attention is drawn by the slanting angle of the spread wings.

Hawk with Feather

Toonoo Sharky
Kinngait, 1991
Stone, antler
21.6cm
£2,250





Head

Artist Unknown

Iqaluit

Stone

29.8cm

£1,650





Muskox

Nuyaliaq Qimirpik

Kimmirut, 1993

Stone, antler

20.3cm

£3,250



Walrus

Jaco Ishulutaq
Pangnirtung, c1990
Stone, antler
11.4cm
£1,450





White Owl

Mungitok Kellypalik

Kinngait, 1993

Stone

34.3cm

£2,850





Falcon

Kootoo Aqpik
Kimirut, 1992
Stone
28.6cm
£3,850



Goose

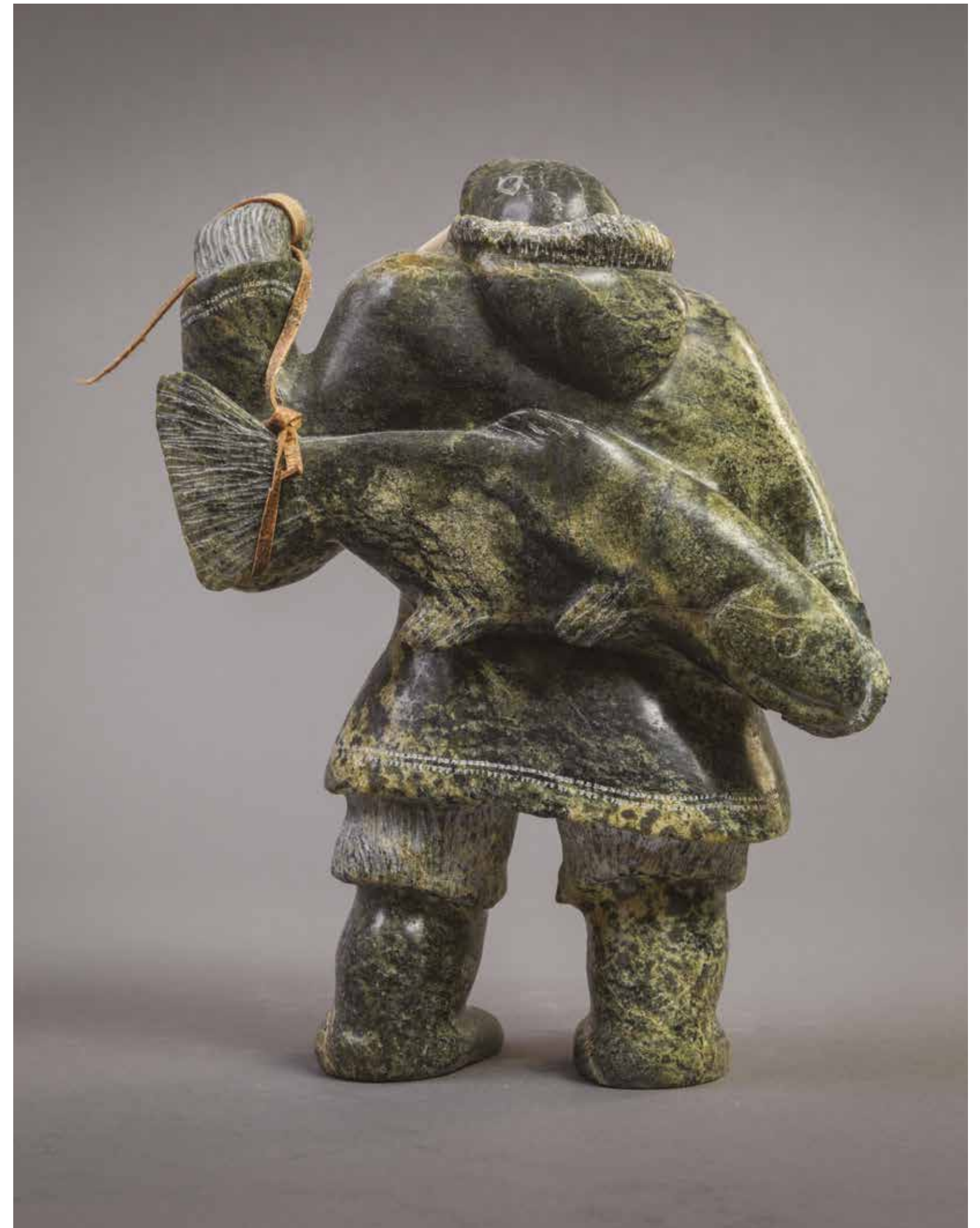
Pitseolak Niviaqsi
Kinngait, 1993
Stone
35.6cm
£3,850





Walrus Transformation

Eyeseak Padluq
 Kimmirut, 1993
 Stone, bone, leather
 18.4cm
 £1,250



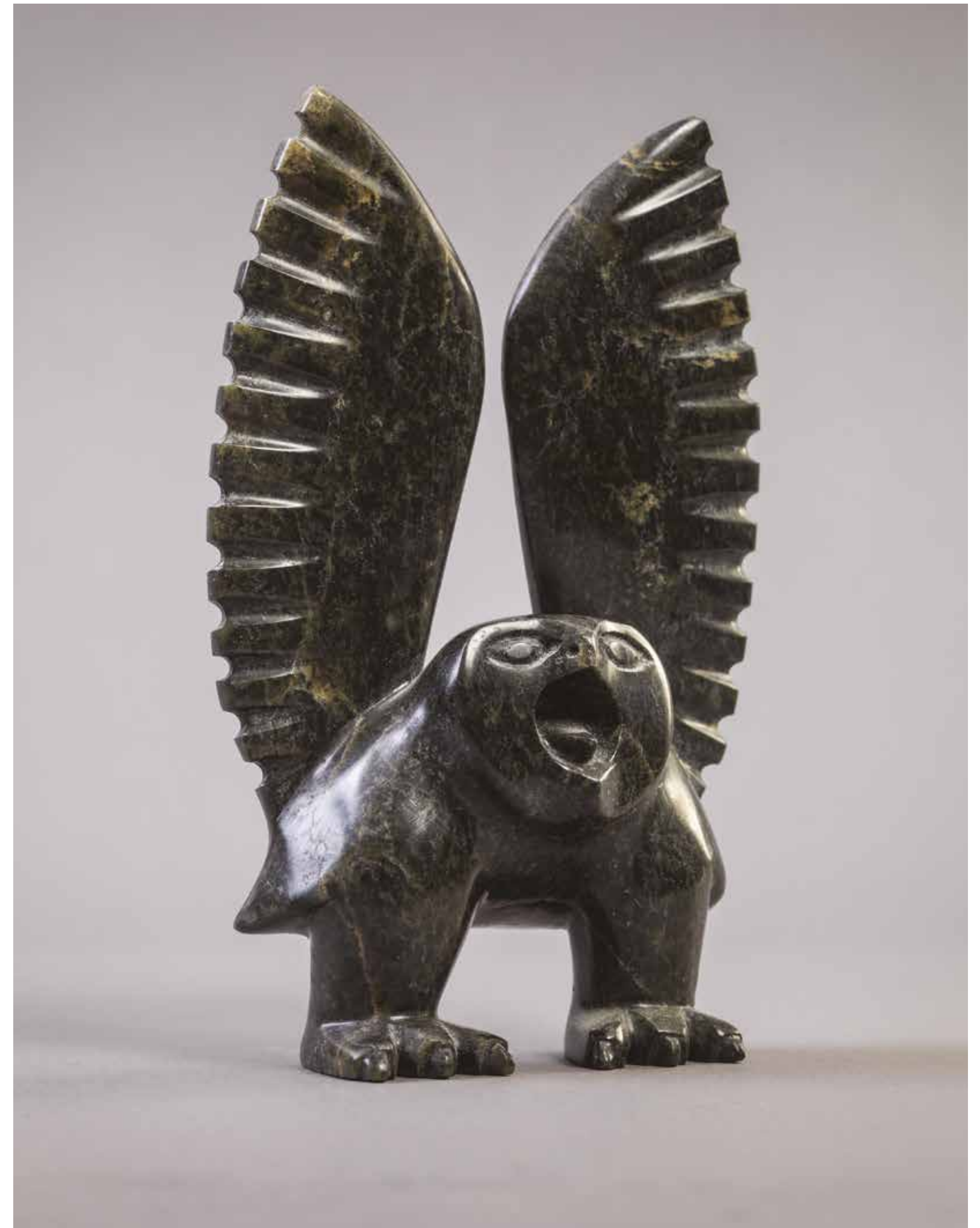
Hunter with Catch is unusual in that sculptures from southern Baffin Island are not often narrative; here, Sii Ashoona has created a realistic portrait of a hunter returning from a successful caribou hunt. The surface detail, however, and dynamic composition are typical of the region. The hunter has lashed the head and haunches of the caribou to his back so that he can transport it to camp. With a determined look on his face, this hunter bears the weight stoically while he pushes his body forward.

Hunter with Catch
Sii Ashoona
Kinngait, 2004
Stone, antler, sinew
20.3cm
£2,650



Bird

Pootoogook Qiatsug
Kinngait, 2008
Stone
35.6cm





Seal

Terry Pitsiulak
Kimmirut, 1993
Stone
17.1cm
£985





Sedna is one of several names for the Inuit Sea Goddess. Human in origin, she was murdered and sank to the bottom of the sea. She rules over the fish, seals, whale, and walrus and must be appeased by the shaman or she will keep the animals from the hunters. Sedna is a powerful figure but, even more important for artists, her long fish tail and flowing hair offered the opportunity for expressive sculptures. In this case, she is shown as strong and assertive but the flowing and twisting tail add an elegance to the sculpture.

Diving Sedna

Jaco Ishulutaq
Pangnirtung, 2007
Stone
30.5cm
£2,650





NUNAVIK REGION

Sculptures from this region, going back to the early days of the contemporary period of Inuit art, have distinctive characteristics in both style and subject matter. Stone across Nunavik varies from a soft 'soapstone' that could be polished or left unpolished, to a beautiful veined hard stone. Artists tended to add details to their sculptures, either by contrasting polished and unpolished areas or by adding antler or ivory to achieve as much realism as possible. These realistic works served a narrative purpose; artists wanted to show all aspects of traditional life.



Like Drum Dancing, Throat Singing is another traditional form of music, this one practiced by women. The women stand close to each other, holding on to one another's arms in order to perform this unaccompanied duet consisting of rhythmic sounds. One would start and the other would respond, swaying back and forth, going faster and faster until one of the singers cannot keep up, generally resulting in laughter. This sculpture captures women in traditional dress, both likely with babies in their closed *amauti* hoods. One woman is captured mid-sound with her mouth open. This is an appealing sculpture in which the closeness of the women is apparent through their mirrored, rounded forms which, make the effect of the sculpture, despite the subject, seem almost serene.

Throat Singers
Paulosie Sivuak
Puvirnituq, 1980
Stone
25.4cm





Hunter

Joanassie Smith
 Puvirnituq, c1960
 Stone
 14cm
 £1,250





Drummer

Tamusi Qumalu Tukala

Puvirnitug, c1969

Stone, antler

52cm

£3,650





This Owl by Tania Qumaluk is one of the most endearing sculptures in this collection. Unusual for a work from Nunavik, the artist has chosen not to create a realistic depiction. Instead, she has only suggested the shape of the owl in rounded forms, with the sole detail being the feet carved out of the base and the inlaid eyes. The slight tilt of the head lends the owl an inquisitive and whimsical character.

Owl (black)
Tania Qumaluk
Puvirnituq, 1965
Stone, bone
25.4cm
£3,850





Owl

Artist Unknown
Saniqiluaq, 2006
Stone
25.4cm





Prowling Bear

Isaac Meeko

Sanikiluaq, c1992

Stone

16.5cm

£1,950



Abraham POV fits into the regional style of realism, but captures a human quality in his beautifully rounded, fully resolved compositions. The face is surrounded by the rounded parka hood which acts as a frame for the detailed facial features. POV exploits the possibilities of the soft stone to contrast the eyes which are surrounded by unpolished stone, mimicking the white surrounding the pupil. This is the focal point of the sculpture and the element that adds humanity making it a portrait rather than simply the head of a man. It is a magnificent and monumental work.

Head of a Man

Abraham POV
Inukjuak, 1992
Stone
17.8cm
£1,850



The *qulliq* is an oval oil lamp, made from stone. Seal oil provided the fuel and a small rim of flame was created by lighting wicks made from the silky grass-like bloom of Arctic cotton. Fuel could not be wasted and so it was the woman's job to ensure that the wicks were high enough to provide necessary heat and light, but that oil was being used efficiently. A bent stick, also made from stone, was utilised for this purpose. Johnny Inukpuk has shown this woman, with a child in the hood of her *amauti* (woman's parka) using this implement to tend the oil lamp. The flame of the *qulliq* is made from ivory. Inukpuk is one of the most well-known of the first-generation Inuit artists and this figure of the woman, with powerful large hands and wide shoulders, is typical of his greatly sought-after sculptures.

Woman Tending Kudlik

Johnny Inukpuk
Inukjuak, c1970
Stone, bone
33cm
£3,850





Woman with Seal

Samson Kingalik

Inukjuak, 1991

Stone

30cm

£2,250





Seated Woman
Lizzie Akumalik Kakayak
Salluit, c1960
Stone
17.1cm
£1,650



Bird

Senak Unatweenuk
Kangiqsualujjuaq, 1970
Antler
15.9cm
£1,250





GREENLAND

The Inuit of Greenland traditionally shared many of the artistic expressions found in the Canadian Arctic. Small figures and amulets were fashioned out of antler and ivory, while graphic expression was limited to tattoo marks, clothing patterns, and decoration on tools. However, the dominating influence of Europeans came centuries earlier than in the Canadian Arctic so that Greenlandic art became a mix of traditional Inuit artists expression with a western style. The one form of traditional art which survived is the tupilak. Once an important part of Greenlandic religious beliefs, these shaman/monster depictions were considered immensely powerful and mystical. Over the last half century, the distinctive characteristics of traditional tupilaks, such as animal-like forms, clutching hands, and large mouths, have become popular. The tradition carries on through today as several Greenlandic Inuit communities continue to create these strange and complex sculptures.



This sculpture appears to be a melding of traditional Inuit imagery with the more western style of sculpture, introduced with the coming of Europeans to the island. The woman wears the traditional topknot, an image that continues to be associated with Greenlandic Inuit art and performance today. The presentation and modeling however are more European in style. This extremely compelling sculpture holds its own with both ancient and contemporary depictions of heads.

Woman with Topknot

Artist Unknown
 West Greenland, c1989
 Stone
 £1,850





Sedna is a pan-Arctic mythological figure. Human in origin, she is referred to by many different names, but her role remains the same. She controls the mammals and fish and has the power to withhold them from the hunters if she is displeased. This is an interesting depiction of the Inuit sea goddess as it is presented with the style characteristics of a traditional Tupilak; certainly not as benign as many of the depictions from the Canadian Arctic. The protrusion from the Tupilak head is a stylised seal suggesting that, despite the fusion of styles, Sedna is still clearly in control of the animals of the sea.

Sedna Tupilak

Artist unknown
Greenland
Antler
£885





Hunter with Spear

Anton Thorsen
 Frederikshaaven, c1955
 Stone, wood, bone
 14cm
 £1,250



This work by an anonymous artist is titled Shaman although it seems to be a more complex work. Again, although not dated, it appears to come from an earlier time. It depicts a shaman riding on the back of the tupilak, recognisable from his huge teeth while another human face peeks from the back of the tupilak. It is made from stone, which is unusual and again, while not carved in the virtuoso intercarving of more recent works, it has a mysterious, almost supernatural, impression.

Shaman
Isak Mathigsson
Nanortalik, Southern Greenland
Stone
11.4cm
£2,650





Crawling Tupilak

Artist Unknown, mid 20th Century
Bone
5.1cm
£885

Of the several Tupilaks in the collection, this one appears to be the earliest in date, both because of the aged ivory and the style. While not as intricate as the later works, the form and the facial features are far more powerful despite their simplicity.



Tupilak

Artist Unknown
East Greenland, mid 20th Century
Antler
14.6cm
£885

Tupilak

Artist Unknown
Greenland
Antler, inlay
13.3cm
£885



Epilogue

This exhibition is dedicated to Sheila my wife of 47 years who died in 2016. She was the driving force behind this collection. This text is not the work of an expert, as will soon become apparent. That privilege is left to three people: My wife, who although never an expert in the true sense of the word, was a far better listener than me. Pat Feheley of Feheley Fine Arts, a true expert, whose help has been absolutely invaluable in helping with provenance and historical accuracy and Johnny Messum, I suspect persuaded by his mum (who is Canadian) for his ‘bravery’ in staging this exhibition and introducing this unique art form to a British audience. My thanks to them all.

The anchor rattled downwards, the engines went into reverse and then silence. The ice breaker swung gently in the still waters of Cape Dorset, Baffin Island. Then a Captain Cook moment as out of the mist came a dozen kayaks paddling out to the ship. Such was our welcome to the land of the Inuit in 1992. Little did we know that this was the moment when we would fall in love with the Canadian Arctic.

A year earlier, I had been posted by my company to Toronto. Fortunately, as it transpired for us, we had the privilege of travelling the length and breadth of this breathtakingly beautiful country. Now we had finally arrived at the last frontier – the world ‘North of 60’.

We had first come across Inuit sculpture in Toronto. It all started with a ‘Drum Dancer’. This magnificent piece, standing some 50cm tall, hewn out of soapstone, weighing goodness knows what, was soon assuming pride of place in our living room, prompting much comment from somewhat bewildered friends from across the ‘pond’. Slowly though we became intrigued by the history of early Canada and of course the history of the indigenous peoples. Peter C. Newman’s trilogy, outlining the early stages of the governance of Canada and the interaction with the Inuit and the role played by the Hudson’s Bay Company, proved an invaluable reference guide to the newcomers.

As all over the world it seems the indigenous peoples come off worse when faced with the advance of ‘civilisation’. With little option but to trade with the ‘white southerners’ the inevitable happened. Alcohol, disease, diet, drugs and, most importantly, change of lifestyle and loss of traditional skills heavily impacted the population.

Finally came the ferocious winters of the 1950s and the Canadian Government forcibly took the Inuit off the land and placed them in settlements, several of which were in Baffin Island.

Baffin Island, the fifth largest island in the world. An area of over half a million square kilometres, approximately twice the size of the UK with a population of 40,000 hardy souls. Add a temperature range of +10°C to -35°C and not a tree to be seen and you get some idea of the environment.

Isolation and environment of course play their part in the psyche and thence the development of an art form. The Inuit were sculptors long before another ‘white southerner’ arrived on the scene. It was James Houston, a civil servant drafted to western Baffin Island in the late 1940s, who saw the commercial opportunity. Soon carvings started to appear further south and demand exceeded supply.

The real breakthrough came, however, with the introduction of printing in 1957. I will leave others, far more knowledgeable than I, to document what happened next. Indeed, all of the pieces in this exhibition are post 1950.

Returning to carvings, I have often wondered what it was that attracted us to this particular art form. For many years we had built a modest collection of paintings, often with the help of Messums. However, the difference with the Inuit collection was that we had a definite connection with the people and the land.

In all we have travelled to the North five times, one of which was with our three daughters – who confidently expected a holiday in North America would involve a trip to Florida! However, they, like anybody I have ever met who has travelled to the Arctic, become mesmerised by the scenery and bowled over by the hospitality of the Inuit. Once you have tasted the local delicacies, particularly muktuk (raw whale blubber), how can you possibly not be impressed!

I sat with a local carver in Pangnirtung, a settlement on a stunning inlet on the east coast of Baffin Island. He must have been in his eighties, weather beaten, huge gnarled hands, dressed in the traditional way. He spoke movingly of a lost way of life which led us to the subject of his carving, which he saw as a way of capturing the history of his peoples. There were no history books after all.

Through his carvings the folklore of the Inuit was being captured in a very powerful way. I watched as his huge hands delicately created an image of a hunter crouching over an ice hole. The patience of the carver and the patience he was etching into his subject seemed to merge into one.

Not all was sweetness and light however. The conversation turned to the south. Looking me straight in the eye he said ‘you southerners just do not understand us. You force us into this position, our young people do not know how to hunt, all they do is watch TV and smoke (drugs). You then tell us what we can catch – how many whales, how many polar bears.’ This was however nearly thirty years ago and today there is a better understanding between the two cultures. In 1999 the Canadian Government granted limited autonomy to the Inuit in the formation of a new territory called Nunavut.

This collection was assembled over nearly twenty years. It started with pieces largely carved in the 1990s which had by then moved from what we might call the naïve style of the 1950s to a somewhat more ‘sophisticated’ approach, quite naturally influenced by what the market was demanding.

However, to truly understand the art of the Inuit and the role that carving, textiles and print making have played in the lives of the indigenous peoples, I think you have to look at the earlier works. These speak of a life largely now forgotten, of a folklore largely not celebrated. The old man with his gnarled hands was creating a link with that past.

Finally, I am often asked which is my favourite piece. You will see a head carved in antler. The detail on the face is extraordinary, even more extraordinary given that it is 2.5cm in size. The phrase ‘The God of small things’ comes to mind.

Clive Nickolds

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