

Influence and Instruction:

James Houston, *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts*, and the Formative Years
of Contemporary Inuit Art

By

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Abstract

This thesis on the development of contemporary Inuit art examines the period between 1948 and 1953 when James Houston united the Hudson's Bay Company, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, and the Department of Mines and Resources, Northwest Territories Branch, in an effort to encourage handicrafts and carvings production amongst the Inuit of the Eastern Canadian Arctic. This thesis on the development of contemporary Inuit art examines the period between 1948 and 1953 when James Houston united the Hudson's Bay Company, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, and the Department of Mines and Resources, Northwest Territories Branch, in an effort to encourage handicrafts and carving production amongst the Inuit of the Eastern Canadian Arctic. It situates the booklet within a broader history of outsider influence and instruction on Inuit artistic development, and examines the shift from souvenir to fine art production in the mid-twentieth century in relation to modernist primitivism, tourist art, transculturalism and cultural contact. The Thesis argues that the impact of Houston's unsuccessful 1951 instructional booklet, *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts*, during the formative years of contemporary Inuit art has been underestimated, and that its failure was a turning point in the history of contemporary Inuit art, serving to define the two distinct streams of production, fine art and craft, which continue to the present.

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Preface

In the winter semester of 2005 I was completing a yearlong practicum at the Canadian Museum of Civilization as a curatorial assistant to the curator of Plains Ethnology, and I was fortunate enough to have met and had several enlightening discussions about the Museum's collection of Inuit art with Maria von Finckenstein, then Curator of Contemporary Inuit Art. Near the end of the term I had begun conducting preliminary research on what I thought would be the topic of my Master's thesis, and I visited Maria in her office to discuss what relevant materials were in the Museum's collection. At the time, Maria was in the process of preparing for retirement, and while we waited for her computer to locate the requested files she showed me some of the interesting articles and materials she had accumulated over her tenure with the Museum. One of these files contained a photocopy of the 1951 publication, *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts (fig. 1.1)*.

I examined the copied booklet with some interest, as I could not recall reading anything about it in my short time studying Inuit art. I had never seen one of the ivory cribbage boards or soapstone ashtrays it illustrated. Clearly, or so it seemed to me, this book was a mere blip on the map of Inuit artistic development, an idiosyncratic moment that had had little impact on Contemporary Inuit Art. I copied the booklet and promptly forgot about it.

Then in June I became the Curator of Inuit Art for the 2005/2006 academic year at the Carleton University Art Gallery. I began researching possible exhibition topics based on the gallery's permanent collection of Inuit art. The bulk of that collection consists of the generous donation of Priscilla Tyler and Maree Brooks, who traveled extensively in the North in the 1960's and 70's. While the greatest part of their donation was Inuit prints, I was surprised to recognize that many of the early carvings in their collection resembled the illustrations in that 'insignificant' booklet. I went back to the Museum of Civilization to take another look, unsure that I would be able to piece together a whole exhibition.

In contrast to my expectations, I was confronted with an abundance of 'acculturated' Inuit carvings and objects made specifically for trade. In the permanent storage area Maria showed me many cleverly carved ivory cribbage boards, drawers full of model komatiks and kayaks, ivory buttons and needle cases, and shelf upon shelf of basketry in every size, shape, and style of adornment. There were many wall hangings, accessories, and even a rifle case, all made of sealskin. The most fascinating object was a tiny stone totem pole, which looked exactly like the one illustrated in *Sunuyuksuk*. However, I later discovered other remarkably similar objects in the Canadian Guild of Crafts catalogue of their permanent collection of Inuit art, and was graciously granted a loan of three objects for the exhibition. Just two months before the opening, Christine Lalonde, Acting Associate Curator of Inuit Art at the National Gallery of Canada, learned of the exhibition and sent me pictures of some very curious stone buttons in the NGC's permanent collection, which corresponded closely to drawings in the booklet. She then kindly assisted in expediting a loan from their collection for inclusion in the show.

In the process of creating this exhibition, which juxtaposed Houston's illustrations with like objects from the same period, I also discovered many other linkages to this obscure publication. The largest number of these are in the collection of prominent Inuit art patron Ian Lindsay, whose donation is housed at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. During the time of my exhibition, while attending a three-day conference in Winnipeg, I found an hour to slip off to the WAG, and was pleasantly surprised to find a number of Lindsay's works on display, some of which resembled Houston's drawings, in an exhibition by WAG curator of Inuit art, Darlene Coward Wight. A small number of these are indisputably the actual objects upon which Houston's drawings were based, and were presented beneath the corresponding illustrations from *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts*. The coincidental relationship between this exhibition and my own was enough to convince me that the booklet merited more rigorous investigation than it had previously received, and upon my return to Ottawa my supervisor suggested I change the topic of my thesis and begin researching the booklet and the transitional period in which it was created. This thesis presents the results of that research.

I. Introduction

In 1951, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild,¹ funded by the Department of Mines and Resources, Northwest Territories Branch, and in co-operation with the Hudson's Bay Company, published an instructional booklet entitled *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts*.² Written and illustrated by the Guild's Arctic representative, James Houston, the booklet offered suggestions to Inuit on what to make and what materials to use in their handicrafts and carvings in order to appeal to a southern market. The publication fulfilled a condition of the federal government's agreement to fund the Guild's Arctic handicrafts initiatives, and for a time it was circulated widely throughout the North by HBC store managers, RCMP officers, teachers, missionaries, and other dedicated individuals.³

The government sponsored the instructional booklet because the handicrafts industry had shown promise as an economic boon for the Inuit. During the three years preceding *Sunuyuksuk's* publication, the early handicrafts experiment had been an unprecedented success. Support from the HBC, government, and the Guild allowed Houston to visit many Canadian eastern Arctic settlements, encouraging arts and crafts production, purchasing works for sale in the South, and training white residents to carry on the work after his departure. This enthusiastic support was spurred on by the preliminary benefits the government saw coming from the handicrafts initiatives: the distribution of relief funds had decreased in the communities that participated in the handicrafts industry, and RCMP officers reported an overall increase in the self-esteem of those Inuit who were given the opportunity to support themselves and their families.⁴ These were the positive

effects of the crafts and carvings industry that Houston had been instrumental in establishing for the Inuit of the eastern Arctic.

These initial good tidings suggested that the publication of *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts* would be a welcome addition to Houston's current instructional methods. In his introduction Houston wrote that the booklet was going to be "the first in a series to be published in Eskimo for the people of the Canadian Arctic, to encourage them in their native arts."⁵ (fig. 1.2) The 32-page booklet, which featured Houston's black line drawings on different pastel-coloured backgrounds, was illustrated with images of objects and carvings that Houston had seen or purchased on his initial visits to Northern Canada. This included four pages dedicated to basketry, three pages of traditional tools such as ulu's and snow knives, five pages depicting seal and caribou skin articles, and eight pages of suggestions for carvings of arctic wildlife and Inuit people. In addition, it included drawings of non-Inuit items, such as cribbage boards, rifle cases, and ashtrays decorated in Inuit motifs and made from materials indigenous to the Arctic. Houston suggested these market-driven objects would be found "useful and acceptable to the white man."⁶ As it turned out, those acculturated objects did not sell well to collectors of Inuit art, who desired 'authentic' work uninfluenced by the outside world.

The pamphlet also began to attract considerable criticisms of certain aspects of its content and the didactic tone of the writing. The Department of Resources and Development grew to consider *Sunuyuksuk* "an embarrassment,"⁷ and it was later withdrawn from circulation. What effect, then, could this failed 1951 publication have had on the

development of contemporary Inuit art, as it is known today? This question provides the point of departure from which to examine *Eskimo Handicrafts* and the first decade of this experimental, transitional period in Inuit art.

In this thesis I will argue that *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts*, as an extension of Houston's activities in the beginning, and later as a catalyst of that momentous shift from the promotion of crafts to fine art, had a greater impact on the development of contemporary Inuit art than has been previously considered. As I will illustrate, the unmitigated failure of *Eskimo Handicrafts* was in part responsible for the dramatic shift away from handicraft production and towards the development of fine art, including the increase in scale, the heightened importance of stone carving, and the new focus on promoting and fostering the talent of individual artists. This new direction was inversely related to the unpopularity of curio carvings and the mass-production of acculturated objects by the Inuit craftspeople who attempted to reproduce everything in the guide. In addition, then, I also propose that the real success of *Sunuyuksuk* was, ironically, that it failed. Had the uniform crafts that were produced in response to the booklet's suggestions been a 'success' in the south, in a matter of years those mass-produced 'knick-knacks' would have undoubtedly lost their appeal. As I have stated, the profitable market that developed for Inuit art was based on its imagined 'primitive' authenticity. In light of the low 'souvenir' status of 'Indian crafts' in the mid-twentieth century, and the competition from a flood of imported Japanese 'fakes,' I believe that one of Houston's greatest achievements in this transitional period was that almost immediately following *Sunuyuksuk's* unfortunate debut, he perceived the limitations of the souvenir trade,

changed direction, and began the revitalization of Inuit artistic production. This change precipitated a shift in Houston's role from crafts officer to artists agent and art dealer, allowing Houston to realize the full potential of his influence on the development of what is now known as contemporary Inuit art.

To demonstrate the different components of this thesis, in Chapter 2 I will first need to investigate the circumstances leading up to the publication of the booklet and the social, political, and economic climate that made the handicrafts industry a viable and necessary experiment in the North. In the second chapter I will examine the involvement of the federal government, the Hudson's Bay Company, and the Canadian Handicrafts Guild in developing crafts and carvings in the Eastern Canadian Arctic prior to 1948, and the motivations each group had for fostering the industry on their own. I will then examine Houston's personal and professional background to illuminate his incentive for involvement, and discuss how, under Houston's enthusiastic direction, these three previously separate organizations came to work together.

In Chapter 3, I will review the historical precedents for such an industry, in terms of pre-contact artistic traditions and the model established by a long history of trade between Inuit and Europeans. I will examine the predecessors for the booklet and the instructional texts and techniques that came after it, and will thus position *Sunuyuksuk* within a broader history of non-Inuit influence and instruction in handicrafts. I will then study the content of the booklet in terms of both style and subject matter, and will draw comparisons between Houston's illustrations and objects that exist in a number of

Canadian collections. Several articles depicted in the booklet have already been identified as the carvings or crafts Houston copied, and other objects have been identified as being based on his illustrations. Additionally, I will present evidence of linkages between objects and the illustrations that have not been previously identified, (or at least not in print), and I will then investigate the influence that the booklet had on technique, appearance, and materials during the transitive period at the “dawn” of contemporary Inuit art.

These developments lead into the final phase under investigation, the years directly following the booklet’s publication. Chapter 4 will first describe the immediate reaction to *Eskimo Handicrafts*, in terms of both the positive impact of handicrafts production and the negative response from the non-Inuit purchasers and purveyors. It will also detail the changes that were taking place in carving practices in the north, and will examine the reasons for and ramifications of those changes. I will investigate how the simultaneous occurrence of these new stone carving practices, coupled with the backlash to handicrafts and curio production, created a favorable environment for Houston to begin promoting Inuit ‘art’ and ‘artists’ as the product of an undiscovered modern primitive culture.

Chapter 4 also examines the underlying power structures between the colonized Inuit and their European, and later Euro-Canadian, colonizers, and the role of James Houston as the intermediary between these two disparate groups in the period under examination. Also, most significantly, this chapter will explore how Houston, in this authoritative position, was able to control the direction of the initial handicrafts experiment, and, later, was

capable of dramatically altering that course of action for the eventual benefit of all those involved. I will demonstrate that as the primary contact between North and South in relation to handicrafts developments, Houston was positioned as the key influence on both the white administrators and the Eskimo producers, and that his ambassadorship for the industry led to an unprecedented collaboration between the government, the Inuit, the trade industry, and a philanthropic organization, each with very different agendas in relation to Inuit handicrafts development. While the entire industry and production did not immediately shift from handicrafts and souvenir carvings to fine art, the significant shift in Houston's approach to encouragement, instruction, and promotion did change rapidly in the period following the booklet's response.

Finally, in a short conclusion I will summarize the findings of this research and address the significance of these developments in this transitional period, when Inuit fine art and craft production divided into two separate and distinct industries. While handicraft production flourished and continues to thrive in a number of manifestations, these new ventures vary significantly from the original handicrafts suggestions put forth in *Eskimo Handicrafts*. While successful, these new craft initiatives cannot compare to the tremendous achievements of the contemporary Inuit fine art industry, as it is known today.

Literature Review

In order to make these arguments I have utilized Houston's writing, and writings about him, catalogues, books, magazine and newspaper articles, and the archival documentation

of the Canadian Guild of Crafts Quebec, and the National Archives of Canada. While one goal of this research has been to assemble, for investigation, the many references to *Sunuyuksuk* found in an array of scholarly and non-academic sources, in my research I have also uncovered some new and interesting facts about the booklet. Some of this information substantiates earlier claims made by Molly Lee and published by Nelson Graburn in 1987 that Alaskan Native Arts and Crafts catalogues were the stylistic inspiration for the guide. Other documentation I have discovered challenges assertions made by Swinton (1999), Houston (1995) and others that *Eskimo Handicrafts* had a small circulation and thus a negligible impact. In addition, a number of sources I have found may assist in explaining one of the most perplexing inclusions in the booklet: the controversial 'totem pole' and its surrounding production. These discoveries facilitate a greater understanding of the extent of the booklet's influence, and thus Houston's influence over Inuit art in the formative years, and make a contribution to the existing published information about *Sunuyuksuk*.

In addition to the primary sources I have previously mentioned, for the purposes of this thesis I have relied upon the foundation provided by a number of sources. The major texts I have used fall into the following five categories, and will be discussed in terms of the key concepts I take from them or with which I will argue.

Primitivism, Modernist Primitivism, and Primitive Art

By the nineteenth century, British colonialism had spread throughout North America. The native peoples were succumbing to the exposure of introduced diseases, becoming

economically dependant on trapping and the fur trade, and being deprived of their land by white settlement. The commonly held belief was that the Indian, and his culture, would soon be completely, inevitably lost before the onslaught of European ‘civilization.’⁸ This conviction surrounded Native North Americans with a romanticized, nostalgic aura, and motivated ethnographic museums and private collectors alike to amass prodigious quantities of ‘remnants’ of the “primitive” peoples they could.⁹ This belief in a vanishing culture is one that followed the Inuit for centuries as well; American explorer Charles Frances Hall made a similar statement in Frobisher Bay in 1861, “The days of the Inuit are numbered. There are very few left of them now. Fifty years may find them all passed away, without leaving one to tell that such a people ever lived.”¹⁰

By the end of the nineteenth century, the appeal of primitive art was closely linked to a romantic perception that the peasant, folk, and tribal ways of life were simpler and more “pure,” than those in the Western world. As Leah Dilworth has explained, “The primitive [was] imagined at a state somehow previous to modernity, and therefore more real, more authentic.”¹¹ In her book *Imaging Indians in the Southwest: Persistent Visions of a Primitive Past*, Dilworth defines Primitivism as “a comparison between some standard of ‘civilization’ and ‘others’ thought to be somehow simpler, and has traditionally functioned as a kind of field on which ‘we’ write fantasies about ‘them.’ [...] Primitivism, a belief in the superiority of seemingly simpler ways of life, is as old as the notion of the primitive.”¹²

In contrast to the earlier ethnographical and anthropological approaches to primitive art in the preceding centuries, *modernist primitivism* began in the early twentieth century through the re-“discovery” of primitive art by modernist artists of the avant-garde. While related to previous modes of *cultural primitivism*, modernist primitivism involved the appropriation of formal qualities of primitive art, and the creation of modern art that shared “affinities” with tribal forms. As Marianna Torgovnick has illustrated, modernist primitivism also permeated popular culture, psychology, fictive literature and ethnological practices of its day.¹³ Shelly Errington has added that this was in part due to the efforts of these modern artists, whose progressive ideas “began to fill the ‘culture and civilization’ half of the nature/culture dichotomy.”¹⁴ Modernist artists such as the Cubists and others were the first to extol the virtues of tribal art forms for their “irrationality” and “intuitiveness.”¹⁵ Therefore, despite this newfound ‘celebration’ of the primitive in modern art, primitive art and primitive cultures remained synonymous with nature, irrationality, purity, and timelessness. The primitive was seen as an idealized antithesis to the ‘civilized,’ industrial way of life in the twentieth century, and diametrically opposed to Western society.

As James Clifford has demonstrated, in the twentieth century this history of ethnological and patriarchal ‘purism’ imposed by the dominant culture on non-Western cultures and their artistic productions demanded a strict adherence to their imagined pre-historic past, and questioned the validity of ‘acculturated’ art forms, as well as the integrity of their producers. Clifford explains, “The concrete, inventive existence of tribal cultures and artists is suppressed in the process of either constituting authentic, ‘traditional’ worlds or

appreciating their products in the timeless category of 'art.'¹⁶ The acceptance of 'Primitive' art hinged upon the presence of certain qualities and the rigorous absence of others. To be authentically native the art was required to retain its 'primitive' nature and be devoid of any evidence of contact with 'civilization.'

There are many inherent problems in using the terms *primitive art* and *acculturated art*. 'Primitive art' is a derogatory and inadequate term to describe the material culture of pre-historic or pre-literate peoples, as they are conceived in the West. The conception of 'native' authenticity was dependant on the ethnographic placement of 'primitive' peoples in a frozen state of evolutionary childhood. As Susan Stewart has explained in *On Longing*, "human difference, once conceptualized in terms of space is now conceived in terms of time, with authentic 'others' existing only in the past. [...] The indigenous object fascinates by means of its anteriority."¹⁷ This fascination with the ethnographic 'curiosities' of non-Western material culture also applies to the contemporary objects produced by these non-Western cultures, whose criterion for 'authenticity' is alarmingly similar to the outmoded standards of the Western ethnocentric past. *Neo-primitive art* is the term used by Olu Oguibe to describe the deliberately naïve art made by subjugated artists. As Dean MacCannell wrote in *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, the best indication of the 'victory' of modernity is not the disappearance of the non-modern world, but in "its artificial preservation and reconstruction in modern society."¹⁸ As the continuing popularity of *neo-primitive* Inuit art and the art of other 'primitive' cultures persists, it is obvious that despite recent studies on the significance of art in transcultural processes, the Western postmodern public still desires to own art associated

with the ‘untouched’ Eskimo historical past. As Olu Oguibe argues in his article, “A Brief Note on Internationalism,” behind the purchase or promotion of neo-primitive art over that of contemporary or developed artists whose talents equal those of their white contemporaries, “lies the conviction that their true nature is primitive and that their claims to sophistication are only an aberration produced by their regrettable contact with civilization.”¹⁹

Tourism and Tourist Art

In 1976 Nelson Graburn published the seminal text *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World*, the first major scholarly text to address transcultural arts and cultural commodity production.²⁰ Prior to *Ethnic and Tourist Arts*, studies of non-Western art forms were confined by a concern for imagined ethnic ‘authenticity,’ a hegemonic precept that excluded those works that displayed obvious signs of contact with the Western world. Such contact arts have been historically designated as ‘acculturated,’ a late nineteenth century term that refers to arts that acquire or assimilate to another culture, generally the dominant culture. Throughout this text I have used Fernando Ortiz’s term *transculturation* in place of *acculturation*. As Ortiz has explained, the term ‘acculturation’ is an insufficient expression of the process by which one culture adapts to or adopts the practices or precepts of another. This is because that adaptation also necessarily consists of an upheaval or loss of the previous, or existing culture, which Ortiz has called *deculturation*. Together with *neoculturation*, the resulting phenomena created by the processes of acculturation and deculturation, the term that encompasses all of these transitional processes is *transculturation*.²¹

Of course, not all transcultural art made by non-Westerners is 'tourist art,' but this study is primarily interested in the transcultural production of objects made by Inuit in the late contact and early contemporary period, when the impetus to trade with non-Inuit led to the creation of objects solely for the purposes of exchange for European goods. This new purpose for carvings in particular all but replaced the former functions of carving in Inuit society. The term "tourist art" refers to the artistic productions of one culture made specifically for exchange with another, foreign culture, as defined by Nelson Graburn in *Ethnic and Tourist Arts*.²² In this instance it refers to all of the productions of the Inuit in the North created to sale or trade with non-Inuit in the early contact, historic, and contemporary periods. This can mean either sale to tourists in the Canadian Arctic, for example via Hudson's Bay Company stores, or directly to passengers of the Eastern Arctic Patrol ships, or it can refer to works sold by Euro-Canadians in the South, a group of consumers who have been termed *armchair tourists*. The idea of armchair tourism, or *indirect tourism*, was first introduced by Paul Aspelin in 1977 and refers to the transcultural encounters of two cultures that may affect each other without necessarily coming into direct social or personal contact.²³ Aspelin has explained that indirect tourism "involves the elimination of many or most of the cultural linkages which are themselves brought about through the direct contact of people from one culture with people of another."²⁴ Kristen K. Potter has importantly linked the Inuit art market in the South to a form of armchair tourism, because only rarely had "the patrons of Inuit art actually met the producers in person [...] the objects were purchased in retail settings far from their place of creation."²⁵ Potter adds that this made newspaper and magazine

articles, and even works of fiction about the Inuit, the primary source by which the “authenticity” of Inuit objects could be judged, for those “tourists” of Inuit culture who never left the comfort of their easy chair.²⁶

Theories of Culture Contact

Armchair tourists of Inuit culture were involved in the outermost extension of what Mary-Louise Pratt has called the *contact zone*. This term refers to the space of colonial encounters, “in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict.”²⁷ As the indirect purchasers of Inuit art in the Contemporary period, the southern market was far removed from the Inuit producers, but they still circuitously affected them, as their desire for “primitive” art affected production in the handicrafts industry, and also the self-perception of the Inuit, as manufacturers of the primitivity. This “contact” perspective, then, is informed by how subjects are represented and how they self-represent, in relations between colonizers and colonized, in terms of “copresence, interaction, interlocking understanding and practices,” which Pratt adds are usually subject to “radically asymmetrical relations of power.”²⁸ Long before these exchanges between Inuit and non-Inuit in the art market began, however, the development of Inuit society and self-representation were fundamentally impacted by direct interactions with explorers, traders, and the Canadian government’s colonial expansion into Inuit territory. Another of Pratt’s terms that I have employed is the *anti-conquest*, which refers to the strategies that European, or in this case Euro-Canadian bourgeois use to protect their innocence while simultaneously asserting

hegemony.²⁹ The following chapters will demonstrate the effects that these colonial encounters had on the Inuit in the various contact zones, before examining how the handicrafts industry came into importance as a modest reconciliation of these encounters. Centuries of paternalistic Euro-contact had been slowly eroding the self-reliance of the Inuit, and the crafts and carvings industry was one of the first opportunities for the Inuit to regain a necessary measure of independence. As the most prolific writer about Eskimo art and its creators in the 1950's, James Houston therefore acted as a broker with a primary position of influence over the direction of the market for contemporary Inuit art and the adjudication of "authenticity."

The Middle Man

In *African Art in Transit*, Christopher Steiner has studied the role of intermediary figures who act as the principle liaisons between producers and consumers in the context of the commodification and circulation of African art in the global market. In Steiner's account the middleman negotiates a complex role as mediator, acting as both purchaser and purveyor of African art, and operating within a system of convoluted economic and social customs.³⁰ Eric Cohen has also noted that these intermediaries were often affected by the content of production because of these spatial and cultural distances usually found between products and their marketplaces.³¹ In the latter part of this thesis I will explore the role of Houston as middleman, and I will examine this in the context of his roles as a government agent, an employee of the Guild, an instructor to the Inuit and a dealer to the public. The underlying purpose of this investigation will be to situate Houston as outside of the Inuit community, but as having direct influence over Inuit commercial art

production, and to identify the effects of this influence on the formative years of contemporary Inuit art. This will also facilitate a greater understanding of the function of *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts* within this larger, lesser known history, and make a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge about the booklet and its impact.

The Representation of the Booklet in Inuit Art History: An Overview

Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts has been widely, albeit briefly cited. Discussion of the booklet was usually relegated to a footnote, or an aside, and references are rarely more than a paragraph or two. Even James Houston has rarely mentioned the booklet in his own writing. In what may be his only reference to *Sunuyuksuk*, Houston wrote in the 1995 memoir *Confessions of an Igloo Dweller* that fortunately, the “childish pamphlet” had had little consequence on the carvers and craftspeople.³² What follows is a summary of some of the significant, though brief, references to *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts* over the past five decades.

The most common appearance of the booklet in scholarly writing generally occurs during overviews of the early phase of Contemporary Inuit art, and makes little reference to *Sunuyuksuk*’s “success” or “failure.” In a one-paragraph excerpt from *Inuit Art: An Introduction*, Ingo Hessel writes that the booklet was produced at the government’s request, that the instructions were explicit, and that it was recalled in 1958. However, in the next sentence, Hessel writes that the development efforts were such a success that by 1953 the Guild was no longer able to maintain sole responsibility for marketing and

retail.³³ Hessel does not elaborate as to why an initiative would be an overwhelming success two years after publication only to be recalled five years after that. However, in a footnote to that statement Hessel quotes the introduction to *Eskimo Handicrafts* and adds, “by the late 1950’s, the department decided it was no longer appropriate for the federal government to issue such explicit directives to artists or artisans.”³⁴ He also notes that Nelson H. H. Graburn has identified the booklet as being modeled on 1940’s Alaskan Native Arts and Crafts Catalogues, a credit which Graburn has actually attributed to his former student, Molly Lee.³⁵ In “The Discovery of Inuit Art,” Graburn also mentions the booklet’s method of distribution in the North, and the assistance of RCMP officers and government administrators in the project.³⁶ In a 1987 article Graburn significantly makes reference to some Inuit using the booklet as a “bible” of what to make to appeal to the southern market, saying some artists boasted “I can make everything in the book.”³⁷ In the article “Authentic Inuit Art” the guide is mentioned again, but only in passing, and in Graburn’s earlier publication *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World*, Graburn does not mention *Eskimo Handicrafts* specifically, but does note that Houston made drawings of Eskimo arts and crafts to use as tools of instruction.³⁸

Helga Goetz, head of the Canadian government’s Inuit Art Section during the 1970’s and 80’s, researched the role of the Department of Indian Affairs in the development of Inuit art from its early beginnings until the mid 1980’s. Two and a half pages of her seventy-page government funded research project *The Development of Inuit Art* are dedicated to *Eskimo Handicrafts*. Goetz reprinted the introductory page verbatim, noted the similarities between it and a previous Guild one-page list of suggestions for Eskimo

crafts first printed in 1941, and elaborated on the positive effects of the booklet on the increase in craft production, versus the negative feedback it received from the Department in later years.³⁹ In an article written for *In the Shadow of the Sun*, however, Goetz does not mention the booklet's belated controversy, focusing instead on describing the objects depicted, with little analysis of the tone or content.⁴⁰

Conversely, Charles A. Martijn addressed the guide more analytically than most, and has acknowledged in two articles some of the contradictions in Houston's suggestions and his promotional writing in comparison to the archaeological facts. One example is that while the booklet stated that Inuit use of wood in carving "destroys the true Eskimo quality,"⁴¹ in fact both the prehistoric and historic ancestors of the Inuit of the Canadian Arctic commonly used wood for carvings.⁴² Martijn also noted that Houston disregarded the significance of artistic regional diversity among Eskimo bands, when he criticised Houston's statement that "although all articles illustrated are not produced in all regions of the Arctic they are purely Eskimo and could be made from whatever materials available."⁴³

As Curator of Inuit Art at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, Darlene Coward Wight has studied the Ian Lindsay Collection for many years, and her essay in the exhibition catalogue for *The First Passionate Collector: The Ian Lindsay Collection of Inuit Art* examines the role of *Eskimo Handicrafts* in the beginning of handicrafts experiment in some detail. Wight compares Houston's illustrations to objects Ian Lindsay purchased during the first three years of handicraft development, which were collected by Houston and sold to Lindsay at

the Guild's craft shop in Montreal. At three pages, Wight's research is the lengthiest investigation of the guide, and includes notes on Houston's early use of drawings as an instructional aid, his encouragement of "decorating" functional objects for sale, and alludes to the controversy regarding the question of whether or not Houston exerted undue artistic influence.⁴⁴

Recently, Kristen K. Potter has contributed an article on James Houston and the phenomenon of armchair tourism to W. Jackson Rushing's *Native American Art in the Twentieth Century*. In it, Potter commented on the contradiction between encouraging Inuit to finish and make work according to Western tastes and standards, but absent of Western subject matter, as she writes Houston has done in *Eskimo Handicrafts*.⁴⁵ Potter also compares the tone of Houston's writing in the booklet to some of the promotional articles he wrote in the years following its publication.

Finally, George Swinton has weighed in heavily on the impact of *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts*. In response to the accusations that "white men and white values have changed and corrupted Eskimo art,"⁴⁶ Swinton rebutted in *Sculpture of the Inuit* that white influence had changed but not degraded Inuit art. Citing *Eskimo Handicrafts* as an example, Swinton stated:

Even a booklet, prepared by Houston in 1951 to instruct the Eskimos in arts and crafts and in the anticipated demands of the market, had more good than bad influences, if any at all. The beneficial effects were that more carving was done with greater care, that people were reminded of their responsibility to carve as only they and not the white man could, and that in fact the white man wanted to buy their carvings because they were something that the Eskimo could do well.

However, the booklet also led the Eskimos to believe that the *kablunait* (Swinton's italics) wanted specifically those carvings which were illustrated and no others. And here, by ill fortune, Houston's instructions, which were meant to permit as much leeway as possible, had the opposite effect. But generally speaking, the booklet was largely ignored by the "good" carvers and only affected the marginal carvers who could do no better than to produce for the souvenir market. And that was precisely the pamphlet's purpose, for it was issued to provide some sort of economic base, other than welfare, in those areas that were economically depressed. The book never reached far beyond Ungava. I could only find traces of it in Port Harrison, Povungnituk, and Ottawa- and it was withdrawn from circulation and even office use before the middle fifties.⁴⁷

Swinton has dismissed the impact of *Sunuyuksuk* on the development of Inuit art as negligible, citing the souvenir function and the concentrated circulation of the booklet as evidence of its lack of influence. But in a concerted effort to downplay the commercial tourist elements of early Inuit artistic production, has Swinton discounted the influence of the booklet to preserve the reputations of "good" carvers?

While these excerpts do highlight some of the important avenues that will require further investigation, the overall impression given by this body of literature and the anecdotal treatment of the booklet within the discourse of Inuit art is that *Eskimo Handicrafts*, and the objects it suggested for production, represented an isolated incident in the early development of a contemporary art form. This is true; in that the booklet signifies a specific period of handicrafts and 'curio' carvings, which has been effectively invalidated and replaced by a much more successful era of Inuit fine art. The unpopular handicrafts and transcultural items have all but disappeared from today's art market, and the

carvings, while the subject matter in many ways still correlates to the sculpture of today, have changed so significantly in scale, style, and materials as to be almost incomparable. Because of its obvious shortcomings and the failure of that early venture, the booklet has received dismissive treatment. This thesis will be a reexamination of this literature and the broader treatment of *Sunuyuksuk*.

The Changing Nomenclature of People, Peoples, and Terminology

Since the official separation of the new territory of Nunavut from the Northwest Territories in 1999, many of the communities have officially changed their names back to what they were originally called by the Inuit. Frobisher Bay is now Iqaluit, Eskimo Point is called Arviat, Coppermine is now Kugluktuk, and Cape Dorset is Kinngait, with many other examples. The Inuit territory in the northern third of the province of Quebec, Nunavik, has also undergone name changes in recent years. Port Harrison is now Inukjuak, Fort Chimo is now Kuujjuaq, and Sugluk is now Salluit. For the purposes of this paper, which deals with the in the mid-twentieth century, I have kept the names of places as they were during the period under discussion; for clarity, the first time each community appears in the paper the proper name is provided in brackets behind the former title. Furthermore, names of places have often been spelled differently over time or in different sources; for example, Igloolik is sometimes spelled Iglulik. In this case I have followed a similar approach. In addition to the discrepancies in the spelling of place names, the spelling of the names of some artists have also varied considerably over time or in different sources, this problem is resolved in a similar fashion where possible. Most of the spelling variations in the names of places and people may be attributed to the

phonetic interpretations of the various non-Inuit who wrote about the Inuit in the mid-twentieth century.⁴⁸

In keeping with the vernacular of the period under discussion, the term ‘Indian’ instead of Native North American, First Nations, indigenous or aboriginal occurs throughout this text, as does the term ‘Eskimo’ in place of the current Canadian ‘Inuit,’ where it is appropriate. Likewise, the anachronism ‘White’ occurs in place of European, or Euro-Canadian, or American, where the term is historically appropriate. In order to convey the ironic distance between these words or phrases and their original contexts, I have often employed quotations around the term the first time it is used. This also includes terms such as ‘primitive,’ or ‘authenticity.’ Once these terms have been properly introduced I have dropped the quotations, assuming the reader will understand my usage and the context in which it is employed.

¹ The Canadian Handicrafts Guild, now known as the Canadian Guild of Crafts, changed its name in 1967.

² “Sunuyuksuk” means “things which can be made,” in Inuktitut (James A. Houston, *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts* (Montreal: Canadian Handicrafts Guild with the approval of the Department of Resources and Development, North West Territories Branch, 1951). The spelling of the title varies from source to source (for example; “sanajasak” in Ingo Hessel, *Inuit Art: An Introduction*, (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1998), “sunuyusuk,” in Kristen Potter, “James Houston, Armchair Tourism, and the Marketing of Inuit Art,” *Native American Art in the Twentieth Century*, ed. W. Jackson Rushing (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), “Sanayaksak” in Nelson H.H. Graburn, “Inuit Art and the Expression of Eskimo Identity,” *The American Review of Canadian Studies*, Vol. XVII, No. 1, (Spring 1987), and later “Sunuyuksuk,” in Graburn, “Authentic Inuit Art: Creation and Exclusion in the Canadian North,” *Journal of Material Culture*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2004), but the spelling of the word is not found anywhere on or in the booklet in the English. For the purposes of this paper I have employed Graburn’s latter version.

³ For examples of this distribution see Appendixes B. and C.

⁴ Graburn, “Authentic Inuit Art,” 148.

⁵ Houston, *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts*, 1.

⁶ Houston, *Sunuyuksuk*, 1.

⁷ Helga Goetz, *The Development of Inuit Art* (Hull: The Department of Indian Affairs, 1985), 17.

⁸ Ruth Phillips and Christopher Steiner, "Art, Authenticity, and the Baggage of Cultural Encounter," *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds* eds. Ruth Phillips and Christopher Steiner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 19.

⁹ Ruth Phillips, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900* (Seattle: University of Washington Press; Montreal, Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 14.

¹⁰ "Our 5000 Year Heritage: Meeting of Two Worlds" *Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami* website, <http://www.itk.ca/5000-year-heritage/index.php> (Web Accessed on July 23, 2006).

¹¹ Leah Dilworth, *Imaging Indians in the Southwest: Persistent Visions of a Primitive Past*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 4.

¹² *Ibid.*, 5.

¹³ For further discussion see Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

¹⁴ Shelly Errington, *The Death of Authentic Primitive Art and Other Tales of Progress* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 30.

¹⁵ Errington, *The Death*, 30.

¹⁶ James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 200.

¹⁷ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1984), 146.

¹⁸ Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, revised edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 8.

¹⁹ Olu Oguibe, "A Brief Note on Internationalism," *Global Visions* (London: Kala Press, 1994), 51.

²⁰ Interestingly, Graburn's involvement with non-Western tourist arts began in 1959, when as a graduate student of anthropology he was sent to Sugluk (Salluit) to study the Eskimos of the Hudson Strait region. There he discovered that the Inuit were engaged in the production of carvings for non-Inuit, either directly or indirectly, through trade with visiting ships, or for sale to the white residents of their community, the Hudson's Bay Company, and Northern Service Officers. Later he discovered a similar practice in Lake Harbour. By that time, of course, a body of promotional writing had been published in Canada and abroad (mostly by Houston) that publicized this contemporary art as the newly discovered continuance of an ancient, spiritual, and animistic practice. Graburn's experience among the Eskimos was in contrast to this body of promotional literature on Inuit art, and thus began his research into the cross-cultural productions of non-Western, tourist-based art forms. For more information see Nelson H. H. Graburn, "Ethnic and Tourist Arts Revisited," in *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, eds. Ruth Phillips and Christopher Steiner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 335- 343.

- ²¹ For a discussion of transculturalism and transitional processes see Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*. (Translated by Harriet de Onís. London: Duke University Press), 1995.
- ²² Nelson H.H. Graburn, "Introduction," *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World*, Nelson H. H. Graburn ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 2.
- ²³ Paul Aspelin, "The Anthropological Analysis of Tourism: Indirect Tourism and Political Economy in the Case of the Mamainde of Mato Grosso, Brazil," *Annals of Tourism Research* 4, (January/February 1977), 137.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 144- 145.
- ²⁵ Potter, "Armchair Tourism," 42.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 6.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*
- ³⁰ For a discussion of the middleman and his role in the African art market see Christopher Steiner, *African Art in Transit*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 40- 79.
- ³¹ Eric Cohen, "Investigating Tourist Arts," *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 11, No.3, (Special Issue 1984), 2.
- ³² James A. Houston, *Confessions of an Igloo Dweller* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1996), 156.
- ³³ Hessel, *Inuit Art: An Introduction*, 30.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 190.
- ³⁵ Nelson H. H. Graburn, "The Discovery of Inuit Art: James A. Houston-Animateur," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, Vol.2, No.2, (Spring 1987), 4.
- ³⁶ Nelson H. H. Graburn, "The Discovery of Inuit Art: James A. Houston-Animateur," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, Vol.2, No.2, (Spring 1987), 3- 4.
- ³⁷ Nelson H. H. Graburn, "Inuit Art and the Question of Eskimo Identity," *The American Review of Canadian Studies*, Vol. XVII, No. 1 (Spring 1987), 52.
- ³⁸ Nelson H. H. Graburn, "Eskimo Art: The Eastern Canadian Arctic," *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World*, ed. Nelson H. H. Graburn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 42.
- ³⁹ Goetz, *Development*, 15-17.
- ⁴⁰ Helga Goetz, "Inuit Art: A History of Government Involvement," *In the Shadow of the Sun: Perspectives on Contemporary Native Art* (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1993), 363.
- ⁴¹ Houston, *Sunuyuksuk*, 1.
- ⁴² Charles A. Martijn, "A Retrospective Glance at Canadian Eskimo Carving," *The Beaver* (Autumn 1967), 15-16.
- ⁴³ Charles A. Martijn, "Canadian Eskimo Carving in Historical Perspective," *Anthropos*, Vol. LIX, (1964), 564.

⁴⁴ Darlene Coward Wight, "The Handicrafts Experiment, 1949-53," *The First Passionate Collector: The Ian Lindsay Collection of Inuit Art*, (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1990), 65, 80-81.

⁴⁵ Potter, "Armchair Tourism," 45.

⁴⁶ George Swinton, *Sculpture of the Inuit*, 3rd revised edition (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1999), 131.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 131- 133.

⁴⁸ Another factor that contributed to non-Inuit confusion over Inuit names is that, during the period in question, many Inuit did not have surnames. In the 1930's and 40's government administrators had begun the intermittent practice of assigning identification numbers to Inuit. In 1944 the Inuit were incorporated into the Canadian welfare system, and in order to receive a family allowance children had to be registered. A federal proposal was passed at this time to register the entire Inuit population, categorized according to where a person lived. "E" for East, "W" for West, followed by a regional number and a 3-digit identification. This practice continued until the 1960's, when the first Inuk member of the Northwest Territories legislative assembly, Simonie Michael, took action so that people no longer had to be known by a number, and thus began Project Surname. Freelance writer Ann Meekitjuk Hanson wrote in her 1999 article "What's in a Name?" that "Abe Okpik, a respected Inuk from the western Arctic, headed the project. Between 1968 and 1970, Abe visited every Inuit home and asked the families to choose a name. The head of the family picked a surname — often a relative's given name — and we were no longer known by numbers." Ann Meekitjuk Hanson "What's in a Name?" *Nunavut '99*, (1999) <http://www.nunavut.com/nunavut99/english/name.html> (accessed August 5, 2006).

II. The Government, The Guild, The HBC, and Houston: A 'Historic' Collaboration

James Houston's legendary involvement with the advent of contemporary Inuit art is a familiar story to even the casual Inuit art enthusiast, but in many ways, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, the traders and post managers of the Hudson's Bay Company, and even the federal government had been laying the groundwork for an Inuit crafts and carvings industry well in advance of Houston's "discovery" of Inuit art. The phenomenon of this "breakthrough" moment, as Ruth Phillips has explained, is never as spontaneous or dramatic as it appears to be, and is often the end result of a long history of convoluted interactions that are "intellectual, social, political, and economic, as well as formal, aesthetic, and individual."¹ However, as Virginia Watt wrote in the 1980 Inuit art collection catalogue *Canadian Guild of Crafts, Quebec*, "James Houston was the right man at the right time,"² whose serendipitous encounter with the Inuit people of Port Harrison (Inukjuak) in 1948 became a catalyst to the momentous collaboration between Guild, the government, and the HBC.

In this chapter I will investigate the activities of these individual organizations in relation first to First Nations and later Inuit art, that led up to Houston's hiring and the publication of the booklet. I will examine the motivations each had for investing time, money, and effort in the development of a handicrafts and carvings industry in the North. I will also delve into the instrumental involvement of key individuals, most significantly Mr.

Houston, and the events that conspired to bring these separate parties together to cultivate a crafts and carvings industry in the North.

THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY

I would ask for you to be more diligent in trapping so that with the foxes you catch you will be able to buy better guns, seal nets, and hunting equipment so as to make it easier for you to obtain a supply of food. The more fur you catch, the more seals you obtain, the more of the white man's goods we will bring into the country for your use.

*-Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company,
addressing the Eskimos of Baffin Island and Hudson Bay,
1934, in Canada Moves North, 1948*

The Establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company in North America

From 1670, when the rights to "sole trade and commerce" were first granted to the "Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay," until 1869, when the Deed of Surrender was signed, the Hudson's Bay Company held a monopoly on trapping and trading rights in what was then Rupert's Land.³ Even though the Company was technically under British rule, in North America it was essentially an independent commercial power, with a monopoly on trade, the authority to create and enforce laws, to build trading posts and forts anywhere within Rupert's Land, and to enter into trade agreements with the native people.⁴ The Hudson's Bay Company continued to enjoy this dominance until 1869, when it was compelled to sign over almost all that territory so that Great Britain could turn the land over to the newly formed Dominion of Canada.

Despite losing the benefit of absolute authority after signing the Deed of Surrender, the Hudson's Bay Company continued to hold a position of power in the newly "civilized" country, as the primary contacts between the aboriginal peoples in Canada and the newly created government. As Arthur J. Ray wrote in *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age*, it was believed that since the Company traders had an established relationship with the native people in Canada, using them to communicate with and distribute government funds to the native population might help the government to avoid the conflicts the United States were having with Indians.⁵ The Company had also began developing a retail business in addition to the trade industry, and it was building department stores in growing cities across the country.

By the beginning of the First World War, however, the Company was encountering more and more competition for the fur trade in Canada. With the expansion of railroads and further settlement into the former frontier of the industry, the HBC believed that the best strategy for returning to its former monopoly would be expansion into relatively untouched territory.⁶ While a small number of whalers- turned- traders such as Charlie Klengenber, Joe Bernard, and Captain C. T. Pedersen had established independent posts amongst Eskimo bands in the Coronation Gulf as early as 1905,⁷ fur trade with the Eskimos was largely unexploited until the HBC opened fourteen new posts across the North in the period between 1910 and 1920.⁸ The onset of war had caused an increase in fur prices, and the value of arctic fox pelts was on the rise, so the Company set about establishing posts in the Arctic. The 1920's were a booming time in the fur industry in the Dominion, but that would change dramatically in the years between the two great wars.

Relations with Native Peoples and the New Dominion

While the Company held a monopoly over the trading rights of Rupert's Land, aboriginal trappers and their families had little choice but to give the Hudson's Bay Company their loyalty, and in turn as the sole providers of the Company's only product, furs, the traders had no option but to treat the natives with reciprocal loyalty. However, a decreasing animal population coupled with the economic downturn brought on by the depression years between WWI and WWII strained relations between the aboriginal trappers and the white traders who had previously sustained them.⁹

In the past the Company had retained the loyalty of native trappers by providing them with credit for supplies prior to the hunt, or by allowing those hunters to accumulate debt in times of scarcity. This system was a key factor in ensuring the faithfulness of trappers to the HBC over competing interests after confederation. As Ray explains, "not only did Indians depend on receiving it, but they believed the company had an obligation to provide it. Credit represented a kind of reciprocal obligation which was very compatible with Indian notions of mutual trust (balanced and general reciprocity), and as long as competitors extended credit, the Hudson's Bay Company had no choice but to do likewise."¹⁰ The HBC had also offered relief for the elderly, the sick and the destitute,¹¹ and thus had gained significant loyalty from the Indians with whom it dealt. While this was a mutually beneficial relationship, the power was skewed in favour of the Hudson's Bay Company, which both supplied the merchandise necessary to guarantee a successful commercial hunt and set the prices and trade value of the pelts the natives provided. The cost of the relief and credit was small in relation to the profits generated by the loyalty of the native labourers,¹² and the manufactured dependency on trade goods allowed the

Company to view itself as the paternalistic guardians of the Indians and Eskimos.¹³ Alooook Ipellie has written that during lean years the HBC was the only certain source of provisions, and the understanding that no Inuk who came to a post would starve virtually guaranteed Inuit loyalty and the Company's monopoly of the fur trade in the North.¹⁴ At the time government interfered very little in trade, and competition from independent traders was minimal, causing Richard Finnie to equate the power of the HBC with "economic enslavement."¹⁵ The Company asserted this authority over the economy of the native population, and thus over the fur trade of Canada, for several decades following confederation.

However, in the period between the two wars, a number of contributing factors made it more expensive for the Hudson's Bay Company to continue this support and it increasingly turned to the newly formed federal government for assistance. Animal stocks had been depleted and the government-introduced conservation programs did not take the native dependence on wildlife into account.¹⁶ The new white immigrant population of Canada began to infringe on the trapping industry, either enticed by the profits before the first war, or forced by poverty during the depression.¹⁷ Author and filmmaker Richard Finnie wrote in *Canada Moves North* that independent traders had arrived in the North in areas that had established Company posts, and the Hudson's Bay Company bought them out to guard their interests.¹⁸ The Inuit, who didn't have the Indians' long-standing relationship with the traders but who were treated as "Indians" by the Company,¹⁹ were also at the brink of starvation, especially in Quebec, and the question was increasingly becoming, "whose responsibility are the Indians?"

Disagreements over the responsibility for native welfare came to a head in that transitional period. The Company had hoped the federal government would continue to have Company traders distribute funds as officers of the state, so that while the funds technically came from the government, the traders would retain the position of primary financial contact with the native people and thus retain their position of authority in the remote communities.²⁰ This process worked well when little aid was needed, but whenever the Company put pressure on its post managers to improve profit margins, the traders were inclined to pass the burden of relief solely to the government. In 1924 the Northwest Territorial government publicly accused the HBC of skimming profits in the good years and making the government financially responsible in the bad. In response to these charges the Development Department of the HBC began a two-pronged approach to dealing with native welfare: the improvement of native nutrition, and the expansion of “home industries.” In 1926 they began to encourage the production of native crafts to sell to tourists, mainly as a means of livelihood in the summer months. “By discouraging ‘idleness,’ it was thought that the proposed cottage industries would boost natives’ morale and contribute to their physical wellbeing.”²¹ In 1927 the Company presented these two initiatives to government officials at a conference on native welfare, using toy seals made by Inuit as examples of their progress.²²

The government, in turn, attempted to make the Hudson’s Bay Company exclusively responsible for the Inuit living in proximity to the newly established trading posts in the North.²³ For example, in 1934 the federal government began the infamous “Dundas Harbour colonization experiment” in which it tried to force the Company to take full

financial responsibility for the Inuit who had settled around their post in exchange for the license or permit to establish a trading post there.²⁴ According to Richard Diubaldo in *The Government of Canada and the Inuit: 1900- 1967*, this was yet another attempt by the federal government to shirk its responsibility for the Inuit in the North. The HBC, or the “Hungry Belly Company,” as it was later nicknamed by the Inuit who relied on the Company for food in times of hardship, was used to being solely responsible for Inuit welfare.²⁵ However, eventually, the government did assume control over economic and social assistance for the Inuit, for better or for worse. Because there was much less reciprocity between the native people and the government than there had been with the HBC, “there is no doubt that the company paternalism of the pre-confederation era better served [northern native] survival needs than did the state paternalism that the Canadian government reluctantly began to develop during this period of transition. ”²⁶

THE GOVERNMENT

In all of the Inuit communities across the Arctic, the story was the same. The government did what it wanted to do and when it wanted to do it. There was absolutely no opposition from the Inuit to any of the projects the government brought in. All Inuit people in the Arctic were treated like infants by the paternalistic government.

-Alootook Ipellie, “The Colonization of the Arctic,” 1992

Sovereignty and Social Assistance in the Transitional Period

As mentioned earlier, the federal government in the newly formed Dominion had a decidedly *laissez-faire* approach to governing the Inuit, and was initially more interested

in asserting national borders than it was in the Inuit who lived within them. The first government “presence” in the Canadian Arctic came in 1903 in the form of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. As Diubaldo explained, the RCMP were mainly concerned with keeping out foreign whalers and explorers and maintaining Canada’s hold over part of the Arctic, and they generally left the fate of the Inuit to the missionaries and traders.²⁷ Inuit were not considered “Indians” by law and therefore did not technically merit any special consideration under the Indian Act. While the Department of Indian Affairs had unofficially been supporting missionary education and health programs since about 1880, it was only in 1924 that an amendment was made to the Indian Act to include “Eskimo affairs” under the jurisdiction of the Department of Indian Affairs. In 1927 that responsibility was transferred to the Northwest Territories Administration.²⁸ Throughout this time the Inuit maintained a neutral legal status, perhaps primarily out of governmental parsimony, but in the 1930’s it was becoming harder and harder for the federal government to ignore the plight of the Inuit. The Inuit, who had first been changed from hunters to trappers by the Hudson’s Bay Company, were also now changed from independent and self-supporting to relying heavily on social assistance in the newly settled communities in the eastern Arctic.²⁹ In northern Quebec in particular, the Inuit were on the verge of starvation. In 1937 the provincial government took the federal government to court over responsibility for the welfare of the Inuit, and in 1939 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the Inuit, like the Indians, were definitely the responsibility of the federal government.

During these years the handicrafts trade began to be examined as a viable means of aiding the Inuit to regain self-sufficiency. As an industry that required little machinery or

overhead, it seemed to be work well suited to remote areas of the north, and in the *1927-28 Annual Report* of the Department of the Interior the development of Eskimo handicrafts was seen as an avenue “for which nature has fitted them.”³⁰ As early as 1923 a government collection had been created, which was displayed at the office of the Northwest Territories Branch.³¹ In 1938 some work collected by the Eastern Arctic Patrol ships was included in the National Gallery of Canada’s display at the New York World’s Fair to introduce the public to the Indian and Eskimo craft of the Yukon and Northwest Territories. It was hoped that a market could be found for Inuit handicrafts and carvings, especially for the sick, elderly and orphaned Inuit residents of two church-run Industrial Homes in the North who were entirely dependent on the state for social assistance. One program specifically mentioned that a government grant to the Homes had been provided under the agreement that ailing or aging Inuit who became a burden on hunters in the camps would be admitted and instructed in handicrafts.³²

The first indication of the economic potential of the carving industry came not from government initiatives but from the Hudson’s Bay Company. In the 1940’s the influx of American military personnel to the Arctic created a brief but inflated market for Inuit souvenirs. The Company supplied the demand for ivory carvings by freighting hundreds of pounds of raw ivory into Lake Harbour (Kimmirut), which was distributed amongst the Inuit on credit, with the cost of the ivory deducted from the price of the finished piece. While these works generated thousands of dollars in the North, there was still very little interest in the South for Inuit crafts and carvings.³³ With the onset of World War II government handicrafts programs were curtailed, and after the war the cause would be taken up by a philanthropic organization whose motivations would differ

significantly from those of the Company's and from government's political and economic goals.

THE CANADIAN HANDICRAFTS GUILD

The Formation of the Guild

When the arts and crafts of a country gain recognition that country takes a new position in the respect of the world. No nation began with fine buildings, great sculptures, noble paintings. They all began with the lowly crafts. The savage who scratched a rude picture on the rock, the woman who made a jar in which water could be stored, the weaver who made her loom out of a couple of branches, these were the founders from whose efforts Art finally reached the heavens, and has strewn the earth with beauty.

- *Mary A. Hulbert, in Sketch of the Activities of the
Canadian Handicrafts Guild and the Dawn of the Handicraft
Movement in the Dominion, 1929*

The Canadian Handicrafts Guild, now known as the Canadian Guild of Crafts, began as a branch of the Women's Art Association of Canada (WAAC). Two members of the Montreal Branch, Alice Peck and May Phillips, were particularly interested in preserving the decorative arts of Canada, and to promoting these 'minor arts' as important, "not only to the development, mental and physical, of the craftsmen and women scattered throughout our vast land, but also as an asset to the Dominion itself."³⁴

In October of 1900 the Montreal women mounted their first exhibition of these handicrafts, comprised of objects on loan from branch members and private collectors. A large part of the exhibition was composed of contemporary home-based crafts, but half of

the objects were historical, including a number of aboriginal works. While there were few contemporary Native contributions, Peck and Phillips invited women from Kahnawake to view the historical collections of Indian basketry on display in hopes of inspiring these women to improve the basketwork in their own community.³⁵ According to Ellen McLeod in the 1999 book *In Good Hands: The Women of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild*, that exhibition was the first display which brought Indian works and other arts and crafts together in an “art” exhibition in Canada.³⁶ This was a point of pride for the Montreal Branch, who placed Indian art high on their agenda and who believed that all handicrafts should be appreciated for their inherent artistic value, regardless of their status as “low” or “decorative.”³⁷

The October 1900 exhibition, the first of many like it, was both a financial and critical success. The exhibition generated a small profit, was attended by over eight- thousand, and was well received by the public.³⁸ Based on this success, the group later held similar exhibitions in 1901 and 1902, and, following that, were able to open the quaintly named “Our Handicraft Shop,” which only sold hand-work made in Canada. However, all the attention garnered by the women in Montreal strained relations between the Toronto-run Women’s Art Association of Canada and its Montreal Branch, and so in 1906 the women of the Montreal-based Home Arts and Handicrafts Committee decided to separate from the WAAC and form a new organization, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild.³⁹

A Growing Concern to “Preserve” Indian Culture

Even before the official formation of the Guild, Alice Peck and May Phillips had been campaigning to revitalize Canadian handicraft traditions, and in the decade following

incorporation the Guild buoyed its efforts to stimulate and support a market for all manner of French Canadian, immigrant, and Indian hand-made arts. Before their philanthropic efforts were curtailed by the onset of the First World War, the women of the Guild had gained an international reputation through their promotion of native crafts at home at abroad, as well as for the solicitation and adjudication of Indian craft competitions in Canada.⁴⁰

As a non-profit organization whose mandate was about preservation and education, the Guild's purpose was not to commodify indigenous arts but to encourage work that bore the characteristics of uniqueness and respect for tradition. In some ways the Guild both created and gratified the demand for "authentic" native arts amongst tourists, and thus contributed in part to the demand for cheaper, and even "fake" products. However, this undesirable commoditization was the necessary byproduct of their attempts to revive what they saw as the most important and "traditional" indigenous arts. There needed to be a market of "fine art" standards to elevate prices and thus encourage good work. "By exhibiting Indian arts and crafts in the art gallery, the Guild gave them a stature above 'curio.'" ⁴¹ McLeod writes that the effort by this group of upper class white women to "preserve" native culture through the creation of a market for aboriginal art was both presumptuous and naïve.⁴² However, in the belief that it would be possible to prevent aboriginal arts from "disappearing altogether," the Guild stood apart from its contemporaries in the perception of Indians in their time.

The commonly held opinion was that the Indian and his culture would soon be completely lost to the onslaught of European “civilization.” As Ruth Phillips wrote in the introduction to *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900*, “the nostalgic aura constructed around Indians by the tourist discourse of the second half of the nineteenth century depended on the idea of their imminent and inevitable disappearance.”⁴³ This belief in the ‘vanishing native’ spurred a voracious period of collecting ethnographic and artistic ‘remnants’ of the ‘dying’ cultures by both major institutions and private collectors, in Canada and around the world. In *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships between Museums and First Peoples*, the task force report jointly sponsored by the Canadian Museums Association and the Assembly of First Nations in 1992, the museum’s practices of collecting and exhibiting cultures in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries was summarized this way;

Over the years museum exhibitions have usually been based on the assumption that Aboriginal peoples were extinct or on the verge of vanishing. A great portion of existing collections were gathered at the turn of the century when museums and private collectors rushed to collect cultural materials from Aboriginal communities, which according to the social, scientific and political philosophy of the time were believed to be well on the way to extinction. Some museum exhibitions reinforced a public perception that Aboriginal cultures existed only in the past and that they were incapable of change. Such perceptions continue to support the mistaken notion that aboriginal cultures are inferior.⁴⁴

While the women of the Guild shared in this widespread belief that aboriginal people and their cultures were rapidly declining,⁴⁵ their reaction differed significantly from that of the national museums and institutions. Rather than participate in the rapacious collecting of “vanishing Indian” artifacts, they instead actively sought to revive the “authentic”

practices by encouraging Indians to become experts in their handmade arts, and to re-introduce intergenerational instruction from elders to youth on a community basis. The women of the Guild believed that both a culture and a nation were defined and distinguished by their artistic production. Therefore, losing an aspect of an artistic tradition could be equated with losing a piece of Canadian identity. Conversely, assisting a culture in “peril” would serve to strengthen Canada’s national identity, an issue that would in later years come to be of great importance to the federal government.

During the First World War the Guild had continued in its efforts, and the shop in Montreal thrived despite the cancellation of many of its branches and programs and the cessation of government support. After the First World War, the Guild successfully resumed its widespread campaign for the preservation of handicrafts in Canada with a renewed focus on Indian arts.

Alice Lighthall

It was in this period of the 1920’s that Alice M. Schuyler Lighthall took an active role with the Guild, and she quickly became one of their leading authorities on and proponents of Indian art. A life-long philanthropist, Lighthall was a member of many charitable organizations, did voluntary research for the Westmount Historical Society, and served as a nursing aide in France during the First World War.⁴⁶ Her father, a lawyer and noted scholar of Iroquois history, was elected an Honorary Chief of Kahnawake out of respect for his historical writings and voluntary defense of Indian rights in several proceedings. Lighthall brought her father’s passion for Indian rights to the Guild and

campaigned on its behalf not only for the preservation of aboriginal artistic traditions but also for amendments to the Indian Act.⁴⁷ In 1931 Lighthall organized the annual Guild exhibition and arranged to include western Indian and Eskimo pieces borrowed from both Indian Affairs and the Northwest Territories Branch of the Interior Department. In 1932 she led the Guild to lobby the government on behalf of Indian craftspeople to protect their handiwork from competition from imported Japanese “fakes.”⁴⁸ This work led Lighthall to inaugurate the Committee of Indian Work in 1933, and to focus its energies on the preservation and protection of indigenous art.

The Guild members were also distressed by the rapid decline of the old standards for Indian work that they thought they had firmly established in the first decade of the twentieth century. Fearing that Iroquois and other indigenous youth were not receiving instruction in their traditional arts, the Guild, under direction of Alice Lighthall, appealed to the government to provide arts education on reserves. However, the assimilative policy set forth by the Indian Act prevented the Department of the Interior from taking action, and so the Guild proactively assigned themselves to the task of creating a pictorial record of the Indian material in Montreal museums to be used as a tool for arts instruction in Native communities.⁴⁹ The contrast between the success of these initiatives and the lack of support from the government must have reinforced a sense of urgency within the Guild, Lighthall reported in the *Canadian Handicrafts Guild 1935 Annual Report* that her appeals to the government over amendments to the Indian Act had fallen on deaf ears; “It was made very clear that the official attitude toward these people [...] was a desire to turn them into imitation Whites as soon as possible.”⁵⁰ It was apparent to the Montreal women

that they had a responsibility to act swiftly and politically for the preservation of native arts.

Taking action, the Guild undertook a nationwide survey of the state of Indian arts and crafts by convincing the Indian Affairs Branch to compel all its Indian Agents to fill out a detailed questionnaire. The form asked for details on the types of work in production, what materials and techniques were being used, the availability of resources and able instructors, and the quality of the results. The final question on the survey read, "If there is little such traditional work being done at present, would the finding of an outlet for it stimulate its revival?"⁵¹ As McLeod notes, this question was highly significant because it highlighted the potential role of the Guild to become an agent for the revitalization of Indian work.⁵² While many of the arts and crafts were found to be in rapid decline, it was decided that if a market could be found then a revival would be highly beneficial to the aboriginal communities and the preservation of their arts. As a result, the Department of Indian Affairs created the Medical Welfare and Training Division in 1936. Its role was to generate programs that encouraged the production and sale of handicrafts in addition to being responsible for education, employment, agriculture and health.

As Tom Hill pointed out in his essay "Indian Art in Canada: An Historical Perspective," the women of the Guild were not alone in their efforts. On the west coast of Canada the Society for the Furtherance of B.C. Indian Arts and Crafts was founded in 1940 with a similar mission to promote Indian arts through organized competitions and the exhibition of work. Directed by Alice Ravenhill, the Society also lobbied the government for

financial and political support, but as Hill noted, the influence of the Guild was greater because proximity of the Guild to Ottawa's politicians made them more successful in obtaining federal support. Hill also highlighted the contributions of several Indian communities who, because of direct contact with markets for their work, were able to keep their artistic traditions alive independently. However, that "realm of influence was really centered in its own community," and could not compare to the national impact of programs such as those of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild.⁵³

The Indian and Eskimo Committee

All these advances in the Guild's efforts to stimulate a Native crafts industry came to a head in 1939, when the Indian Committee of the Guild voted to change its name to the Indian and Eskimo Committee, and to add the promotion of Eskimo work to its existing operations.

The Guild had held an exhibition of Eskimo Arts and Crafts at the McCord Museum almost a decade before, and "the artifacts and carvings captured the imagination of the public and the press alike."⁵⁴ In 1938 Major David McKeand, Secretary of the Northwest Territories Council in charge of the Eastern Arctic Patrol, had brought a selection of Eskimo grass works collected on the *Nascopie* expedition to the Guild's annual meeting. McKeand hoped that the Guild would "take up the work of encouraging Eskimo handicrafts through white women now in the arctic."⁵⁵ He had vigorously petitioned the Northwest Territories Council to pursue handicraft development after observing a growing demand for Eskimo-made fret saw wooden puzzles of arctic scenes. His idea

was that these puzzles could be sold as souvenirs in the north, with the surplus being shipped to markets in the south.⁵⁶ He had urged the Council to support the program to provide economic opportunities for Eskimos who relied upon trapping for their livelihood, as the decline in the fur trade had left many Inuit struggling to support themselves. When the Council failed to act on his proposal, McKeand turned to the Canadian Handicrafts Guild to aid in this development. He wrote to Alice Lighthall on March 18th, 1941 to see if there was anything that could be done to aid the development of Eskimo handicrafts before the Eastern Arctic Patrol sailed north in the summer,⁵⁷ and he subsequently became the Northwest Territories Administration representative of the Indian and Eskimo Committee.

The first collaboration between the Guild and the Northwest Territories administration was the creation of a one-page list of *Suggestions for Eskimo Handicrafts* to be distributed by the *Nascopie* on its summer voyage “to every post where there was a white woman, missionary, nurse or teacher, wife of a Factor, or an R.C.M.P man.”⁵⁸ The list was compiled by Lighthall, who consulted with anthropologist Diamond Jenness of the National Museum of Canada on its creation. It began with this introduction:

The native work of the Eskimo is unique in the world to-day. It is a survival of crafts that were carried out by very early man, and that for countless generations have been adapted to the life they live in the cold Northern climate.

In our civilization we have lost much of the skill that our ancestors had in adapting to their needs the things they found at hand. In any work we do with the Eskimo, it would be well to remember this and that we should encourage them to

use their own materials and methods rather than imitate ours. We have a responsibility of not letting them forget their own arts.⁵⁹

Four categories were listed on the page as important areas to focus the efforts of the Eskimo; basketry, carving, soapstone work, and fur and skin work. The list suggested holding adjudicated exhibitions to encourage all participants to improve the quality of their production. While seventy-five copies of the list were distributed widely in the north, very little is known about the results of this project as the Second World War severely limited any initiatives on behalf of the Eskimo, and plans were put on hold until after the war ended.⁶⁰

THE POST- WAR PERIOD

I think the new times started for Eskimos after the white people's war, when the white men began to make many houses in the Arctic. Eskimos began to move into the settlements and then the white people started helping us to get these houses. That's why life changed. I don't think everybody was too fond of moving from the camps, but they still came anyway. [...] They are working for the white man now.

-Pitseolak Ashoona, in Pitseolak: Pictures out of my Life, 1971.

Growing Concerns Over Inuit Welfare

As we have seen, prior to the Second World War, the federal government's policy for dealing with the Inuit was one of non-interference and little economic support, but in the period after the war and in the beginning of the Cold War growing concerns over Canada's sovereignty over the Arctic brought national attention to the Inuit living within Canada's northern border.⁶¹ An increased dependency of the Inuit on governmental

support in lieu of a white fox trapping industry lead the northern administration to renew its efforts to develop a handicrafts industry in the post-war period. Growing concerns over the uncertain and cyclical fluctuations in the supply of white fox put pressure on the government to take more action than had previously been supported. In this period of increased and reluctant paternalism the handicrafts industry was one of the first experimental developments introduced to replace the fur trade. It was also one of the first opportunities for the subjugated Inuit to regain a necessary measure of self-reliance.

When Major McKeand retired in 1945, James Wright, Chief of the Arctic Division, took over the responsibility of the Eskimo handicrafts industry. Wright suggested to the government that if a program were to be successful, then improved equipment and instruction would be necessary. He also began studying the possibility of using the craft industry to benefit ill or handicapped Inuit living in institutions, as well as orphans and the very old.⁶² The Northwest Territories Council was particularly concerned over the outcome for Inuit polio victims hospitalized in Chesterfield Inlet (Igluligaarjuk), some of whom had residual paralysis and could not return to their original way of life. Prior to the second World War R. A. Gibson, Deputy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories Administration Office, had written to Major McKeand regarding the possible installation of small equipment in infirmaries to facilitate the making of various Eskimo crafts.⁶³ By supplying Eskimo designs and appropriate instruction, Gibson felt this opportunity could provide the Inuit with a means for subsistence.

In 1947 Wright contacted the Hudson's Bay Company and requested that they provide a representative selection of Eskimo crafts and carvings for the purposes of a government-sponsored exhibition in hopes of kindling public interest in the trade. The response from the Company was that they did not have a current collection of any significance, but promised to try and acquire some works the following summer. No further action was explored until 1949, when the commercial power of the Hudson's Bay Company, the economic motivations of the federal government, and the philanthropic efforts of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild would come together to develop an Inuit arts industry in the North, united by the efforts of one enthusiastic young art instructor.

JAMES HOUSTON

We went beyond Inukjuak, to Canso Bay. Some Eskimos hurried the doctor up to the tent where the baby and mother were, and I looked around me. I saw short, sturdy brown people, all talking away and laughing. I saw rocks, the autumn tundra, long skeins of ice drifting south to melt in Hudson Bay, and I knew this was the place I'd been looking for.

-James Houston, in an interview with Mary D. Kierstead, "The Man," 1988.

James A. Houston: Aspiring Artist, Aspiring Adventurer

Artist and author James Archibald Houston was born in Toronto in 1921. His interest in art began early. Initially encouraged by his parents and teachers, he later took art classes at the Art Gallery of Toronto, where he received instruction from Arthur Lismer. When Houston was twelve, Lismer returned from a trip to Africa, and as Houston recalled in a *New Yorker* interview many years later, Lismer came dancing into the classroom wearing

a huge African mask, and played a recording of drums and singing. “I was hooked forever on primitive peoples,” Houston said, “Lismer changed everything for me, I was going to travel and draw.”⁶⁴

It would be 1948 before Houston realized this goal. In 1939 Houston enrolled in the Ontario College of Art where he studied for a year. Then World War II began, and in 1940 he enlisted in the army and served with the Toronto Scottish Regiment for five years, during which time he became an instructor with the first Canadian military ski school and was posted in British Columbia and Labrador. These were Houston’s first excursions north, and he wanted to go further.⁶⁵ After the war, Houston studied life drawing for a year at L’École Grand Chaumière in Paris, returning to Canada in 1947. He bought a one-way ticket to Moosonee, Ontario, on the southern tip of James Bay, and ended up in Moose Factory, an island on the Moose River where the HBC had a trading post.

Like many young Canadian artists at the time, Houston was inspired by the Group of Seven and Emily Carr, who decades earlier had established the vast Canadian landscape as their primary subject matter and who had traveled extensively in the West and North to capture this landscape on canvas. In Ann K. Morrison’s “Nationalism, Cultural Appropriation and an Exhibition” the author explains that “their journeys have been equated with the nineteenth-century ideal of personal enlightenment through the testing grounds of the wilderness, their status as avant-garde artists reaffirmed through their imagery and use of paint.”⁶⁶ Nelson Graburn wrote in the 1986 article “Inuit Art and

Canadian Nationalism: Why Eskimos? Why Canada?" that the art of the Group of Seven appealed to the Canadian public and to aspiring artists like Houston because it both asserted a national identity separate from America and Great Britain, and captured the romantic idealization of the Canadian outdoors.⁶⁷ While following in the tradition of the Group of Seven was a common path for young artists of his day,⁶⁸ it was undoubtedly Houston's early encounters with Arthur Lismer that not only influenced his decision to travel north, but, more significantly, inspired him to pursue contact with the "primitive peoples" of Canada.

Houston "Discovers" Inuit Art

In Moose Factory Houston brought this dream to fruition when he took the opportunity to live in a place that he called "almost untouched by civilization,"⁶⁹ and to draw his newest subjects, the Swampy Cree Indians. He was permitted to stay in the HBC staff house and he became acquainted with a local bush pilot named George Charity and with the Indian Health Services resident surgeon, Dr. Herbert Harper. It was this pair who gave Houston the chance to travel even further north, to Port Harrison (Inukjuak,) on that fateful day in 1948.

The opportunity presented itself in September when Harper was called to Port Harrison for a medical emergency, and Charity invited Houston to fly up with them for free. Upon arrival, Houston immediately began sketching the Inuit and was, in turn, surprised and inspired by their artistic abilities. Over the course of his first visit Houston continued sketching, and exchanged his own drawings for stone and ivory carvings. He assumed

that the Inuit carvings he received were very old, but when he showed the pieces to an HBC trader in Inukjuak he was surprised to learn that they had probably made within the week. Rather than being disappointed, Houston was excited to learn that carving was still practiced in the north.⁷⁰

Upon his return to Grand'Mère, Houston brought his collection of carvings to the Canadian Handicrafts Guild in Montreal to show the work to Alice Lighthall and Jack Molson. On November 18, 1948, Houston presented a proposal to the Indian and Eskimo Committee regarding the development of Inuit handicrafts in the Arctic. In the meeting Houston mentioned the names of two white women, Miss Woodrow and Miss Andrews, who lived in Port Harrison and who had requested that he return the following summer to assist them in the development of handicrafts in their community.⁷¹ The Guild responded positively to Houston's idea to return to the North to purchase carvings for sale in Montreal, and in that meeting discussions began on involving the Hudson's Bay Company in a collaborative effort to develop a handicrafts industry.

Acting on this new plan, Jack Molson of the Guild contacted Clifford Wilson of Hudson's Bay House in January of 1949 to make arrangements for Houston's return to Port Harrison. Although Wilson and the Company had reservations about the potential of such a venture, it was agreed through a series of letters that the Guild would be allowed to deposit funds with the HBC so that Houston could obtain food and supplies for himself and an Inuit assistant.⁷² In addition to these funds, the Guild deposited \$1100.00 for the purchase of Eskimo crafts and carvings, using a system suggested to Houston by Port

Harrison post manager Norman Ross, the trader whom he had met on his initial journey north.⁷³ Houston would write chits to the Inuit in exchange for the handicrafts he wanted to bring back to Montreal, and the Post Manager would honour them as cash. In one letter to Wilson, Molson added that “Mr. Houston felt that this might assist the Company to some extent in that the Eskimos would not, during the summer months, have to be advanced as much credit as in the past to enable them to live, as they would be able to obtain stores in exchange for their handicrafts.”⁷⁴ This detail was surely an attractive feature to the Company, which was still engaged in providing credit to Inuit trappers and their families. With the particulars of this transaction agreed upon by the Guild and the HBC, Houston returned to the eastern Arctic for a crafts and carvings test-purchase in June of 1949, using the revised edition of the Guild publication *Suggestions for Eskimo Handicrafts* as a buying guide (fig. 2.1).⁷⁵

Government Involvement at the End of the Decade

In July of 1949, while Houston was still in the North, R.A. Gibson, Deputy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories Administration Office, contacted the Guild to inquire about the extent of its involvement with Eskimo handicrafts. As Nelson Graburn reported in his article “Authentic Inuit Art,” the government had heard about Houston’s efforts and “realized they had been ‘scooped,’ and had lost control of the direction of the project to introduce commercial crafts for the destitute Inuit.”⁷⁶ Acting quickly to regain authority over this venture, Gibson invited Lighthall to Ottawa to interview her about the Guild’s involvement in the north, which, as Lighthall pointed out, had begun at the suggestion of Gibson’s predecessor, Major McKeand.⁷⁷ While Gibson claimed that the Department had

already made arrangements for handicrafts instruction to begin in the following autumn under the tutelage of four southern instructors, Virginia Watt has reported that there is no evidence that this decision was made prior to its discovery that the Guild had employed Houston.⁷⁸ In any case, from that point onward Gibson expected full cooperation from the Guild in the initiative, suggesting that the Department's Chief of the Arctic Division, James Wright, could become a member of the Indian and Eskimo Committee, and that in turn a member of the Guild could join the newly proposed Arctic Division's committee on Inuit crafts and carvings.⁷⁹

In comparison with the Guild, whose focus was the creation of an Eskimo handicrafts industry that, while profitable, emphasized quality, skill, and the revival of tradition, the Department was primarily interested in the economic benefits of this new trade. When Wright attended his first meeting on October 25, 1949, he highlighted that the government's first priority was to provide support to the polio victims living in Chesterfield Inlet, and he stressed that a handicrafts industry was important primarily as a source of self-sufficiency for the Inuit, who would benefit from the trade in times of trapping scarcity.⁸⁰ Lighthall reminded Wright that as a non-profit organization, the Guild would require financial support in order to collaborate with the government in this venture, and so Wright suggested that the Guild apply for a government grant to cover the cost of expenses associated with continuing its work in the Arctic.⁸¹ As has been previously noted, the Guild had been very critical of the federal government's involvement with Indian arts and crafts in the past, so it was with hesitation that it

considered applying for a grant from the Department of Mines and Resources, Northwest Territories Branch.

However, before the Guild could apply, Deputy Minister H.L. Keenleyside wrote a letter, dated November 17, 1949 to Louisa Currie, then President of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild. In it, Keenleyside acknowledged that his department was impressed by the work undertaken by Houston and the Guild, and that it was very interested in developing any industry that would replace the Inuit dependency on the white fox. He laid out the suggestions of his office and the conditions which the government would require in order to provide the Guild the financial support it needed to proceed.

We are anxious to introduce new industries at suitable points to improve the Eskimo economy and the proven ability of the natives in producing characteristic handicraft articles holds promise for developing a small industry in this field if the Eskimo production can be properly organized and outlets to suitable markets provided.

We have been considering the advisability of employing a handicraft specialist to organize this work generally but with particular reference in the coming year to assisting in the re-training of some thirty or more Eskimos at Chesterfield Inlet who suffer from some residual paralysis as the result of a epidemic of poliomyelitis last year and who are now unfitted to earn their living at trapping. Recently Mr. Houston visited this office and it has appeared after discussion with him that perhaps the Canadian Handicraft Guild might be prepared to handle this project for us.

Briefly, the suggestions we advance for your consideration are as follows:

1. The Guild might employ a capable handicraft instructor (preferably Mr. Houston) who would proceed to the Arctic to organize the instruction of Eskimos in native handicrafts and, where possible, educate people as instructors to carry on after his departure.
2. The Guild might undertake the supervision of manufacture and marketing of the products.
3. The Guild might sponsor the publication of a simple book of instruction to Eskimos on handicrafts. This booklet should be in Eskimo syllabics as well as in English and suitably illustrated.
4. The Guild would co-operate closely with this Administration in the selection of sites at which the handicrafts industry should be developed.

We are, at the present time, faced with the necessity of having handicrafts instruction arranged at the Roman Catholic mission at Chesterfield Inlet for the polio victims there. It is hoped that the mission teachers, if properly instructed, may be able to carry on this work after your instructor leaves. This project should be begun next spring and we shall be glad to co-operate in arranging air transport for the instructor. While the polio victims are our first concern, there is, of course, a large population of able-bodied natives tributary to Chesterfield who might be taught handicrafts as at Port Harrison.

5. Depending on the success of the venture at Port Harrison and Chesterfield Inlet, the work of your instructor might be extended to other suitable areas in the Northwest Territories
6. In consideration of the services rendered this Administration we would be prepared to make a grant to the Guild to cover Mr. Houston's salary and expenses, the cost of the booklet of instructions and any incidental out-of-pocket expenses incurred by the Guild on this project.

I should be glad to have your views on the above suggestions together with an estimate of the amount of money which you would require for the first year

should your Guild decide to work with us on this project. It is expected that there will be a meeting of the Northwest Territories Council on December 1 and we would like, if possible, to have any arrangements you may propose decided upon at that meeting.⁸²

The Guild agreed to a full cooperation with Keenleyside and the Department of Mines and Resources, and informed him that the Guild had gone ahead and hired Houston as their Arctic representative. Currie also stated that the Guild would train the polio victims, cooperate with the Northwest Territories Administration, and create the instructional booklet. She outlined the financial requirements of the agreement, including airfare and specific travel costs, Houston's salary, the publication of five thousand illustrated colour booklets in English and "Eskimo," and made a special provision for the purchase of unsaleable goods, "which it is felt will have to be made to encourage incapacitated Eskimo in the early stages of handicraft training." The expenses also covered the cost of living and craft supplies. These anticipated expenditures totaled eight thousand dollars and were submitted in the application for the government grant, which the Department approved at its next meeting. The grant excluded the purchase of works and the resale of those works in the south, as that was to be left entirely to the Guild's discretion, as were the profits or losses also expected to be the Guild's responsibility. In January of 1950 the three separate parties and Houston agreed upon all final arrangements, and Houston returned north in early March. The instructional booklet, *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts*, which Houston would write and illustrate while on sojourn in the south, would not be published until 1951.

¹ Ruth B. Phillips, "Morrisseau's 'Entrance': Negotiating Primitivism, Modernism, and Anishnaabe Tradition," *Norval Morrisseau: Shaman Artist*, ed. Greg A. Hill. (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2006), 46.

² Virginia Watt, "The Beginning," *Canadian Guild of Crafts, Quebec* (Montreal: Canadian Guild of Crafts Quebec, 1980), 12.

³ Named after Prince Rupert, this land mass totaled over 4 million square kilometers and most of it had never been seen by English explorers at the time King Charles granted them control over it. In today's terms, the area covered the entire provinces of Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, as well as Quebec north of the Laurentian Hills and west of Labrador, plus the southeast corner of the Northwest Territories and the southern half of Alberta.

⁴ Hudson's Bay Company, "HBC Heritage, "Our History- Overview,"

<http://www.hbc.com/hbcheritage/history/overview.asp> (accessed on July 01, 2006).

⁵ Arthur J. Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 154.

⁷ Richard S. Finnie, *Canada Moves North* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1948), 30.

⁸ Richard Diubaldo, *The Government of Canada and the Inuit: 1900- 1967* (Ottawa: Research Branch, Corporate Policy, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1985), 29.

⁹ Harold A. Innis, *The Fur-Trade of Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1927), 49.

¹⁰ Ray, *Canadian Fur Trade*, 85.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹² Ray noted that when viewed as the necessary cost of collecting furs, the credit-debt system was very inexpensive. "The ratio of uncollected Indian debt was below 6 percent of the value of returns in the late nineteenth century." Furthermore, Ray explained, the profit margins were even higher than estimated, when taken into consideration the fact that advances given to natives were based on goods whose value was marked up at least 100 percent, and even under encouragement from competing traders natives rarely defaulted on loans. Ray, *Canadian Fur Trade*, 85-86.

¹³ In Robert E. Pinkerton's *Hudson's Bay Company* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1931,) the author discusses with pride the Hudson Bay Company's paternalism over Native North Americans. Pinkerton writes that traders knew the Indian best; "The critic of the fur trade, the sentimentalist, and at times the anthropologist, has never understood the Indian. The Hudson's Bay man understood him perfectly, and upon that understanding his rulership was based. [...] He knew, in short, that the Indian was essentially a child and must be controlled as a child." 331. Also; "No corporation has ever been actuated by so fine a spirit among its employees. [...] They knew their policy was just, and their treatment of the natives was wise and paternal, and they knew only chaos could result from free trade. [...] No matter what the charges rampant democracy has made, their stewardship remains as the world's finest example of the white man's contact with an inferior race." 345.

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- ¹⁴ Alooook Ipellie, "The Colonization of the Arctic," in *Indigena: Contemporary Native Perspectives* eds. Gerald McMaster and Lee-Ann Martin (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1992), 44.
- ¹⁵ Finnie, *Canada Moves North*, 34.
- ¹⁶ Ray, *Canadian Fur Trade*, 200.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 199.
- ¹⁸ Finnie, *Canada Moves North*, 30.
- ¹⁹ Diubaldo, *The Government*, 42.
- ²⁰ Ray, *Canadian Fur Trade*, 49.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 219.
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ It would be 1939 before the Supreme Court of Canada would declare that the Inuit were, like other Canadian aboriginal groups, the responsibility of the federal government. For a detailed discussion of the debate and subsequent court proceedings see Diubaldo, *The Government of Canada*.
- ²⁴ Diubaldo, *The Government*, 40.
- ²⁵ Ipellie, "The Colonization of the Arctic," 44.
- ²⁶ Ray, *Canadian Fur Trade*, 49.
- ²⁷ Diubaldo, *The Government*, 14.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 36.
- ²⁹ Marybelle Mitchell, "Social, Economic, and Political Transformation Among Canadian Inuit from 1950- 1988," *In the Shadow of the Sun: Perspectives on Contemporary Native Art* (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1993), 333.
- ³⁰ *1927- 1928 Annual Report* (Ottawa: Department of the Interior, 1928.)
- ³¹ Helga Goetz, *The Development of Inuit Art* (Hull: The Department of Indian Affairs, 1985), 7.
- ³² Unfortunately, little is known about the outcome of this venture, as it appears that the government did not monitor or administer the program after the grant was given. Goetz, *The Development of Inuit Art*, 32.
- ³³ Helga Goetz, "Inuit Art: A History of Government Involvement," *In the Shadow of the Sun: Perspectives on Contemporary Native Art* (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1993), 359.
- ³⁴ Mary A. Hulbert, *Sketch of the Activities of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild and the Dawn of the Handicraft Movement in the Dominion* (Montreal: Canadian Handicrafts Guild, 1929), 1.
- ³⁵ Ellen E. McLeod, *In Good Hands: The Women of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill- Queens University Press for Carleton University, 1999), 97.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 97.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.
- ³⁸ Hulbert, *Sketch of the Activities*, 2.
- ³⁹ For an elaboration of the breakdown of relations between the Toronto and Montreal Branch of the WAAC see Chapter 5, "Breakaway: 1904- 1907," in McLeod, *In Good Hands*, 115- 139.
- ⁴⁰ McLeod, *In Good Hands*, 147.

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- ⁴¹ Ibid., 217.
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900* (Seattle: University of Washington Press; Montreal, Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 14.
- ⁴⁴ "Results of Consultations," *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships between Museums and First Peoples, Report of the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples* (Ottawa: Canadian Museums Association, 1992), 7.
- ⁴⁵ McLeod, *In Good Hands*, 210.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., 220.
- ⁴⁷ Virginia Watt, "Alice M.S. Lighthall: 1891-1991," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, Vol.6, No.4, 46.
- ⁴⁸ Lighthall discussed these fakes in a letter to anthropologist Diamond Jenness dated June 1st, 1941. Lighthall wrote that the imported imitations "spoiled the market for our own good things for a long time," and indicates that she had collected Japanese forgeries of totem poles as far east as Montreal. On a positive note, she wrote, "One thing that the War has done is to stop that!" Canadian Guild of Crafts Quebec Archives (CGCQ) [C10 D1 017]
- ⁴⁹ McLeod, *In Good Hands*, 223.
- ⁵⁰ Alice Lighthall, "Indian Work," Canadian Handicrafts Guild, *Annual Report*, 1935. CGCQ [C10 D1 010]
- ⁵¹ McLeod, *In Good Hands*, 224.
- ⁵² Ibid.
- ⁵³ Tom Hill, "Indian Art in Canada: An Historical Perspective," *Norval Morriseau and the Emergence of The Image Makers* Eds. Elizabeth McLuhan and Tom Hill (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1984), 18.
- ⁵⁴ Watt, "The Beginning," 11.
- ⁵⁵ Alice Lighthall, *Annual Report of the Indian and Eskimo Committee*, 1941. CGCQ [C10 D1 017]
- ⁵⁶ Helga Goetz, *The Development of Inuit Art* (Hull: The Department of Indian Affairs, 198-), 8.
- ⁵⁷ Correspondence from David L. McKeand to Alice Lighthall, March 18, 1941. CGCQ [C10 D1 017]
- ⁵⁸ Lighthall, *Annual Report*, 1941.
- ⁵⁹ *Suggestions for Eskimo Handicrafts*, 1941. CGCQ [C10 D1 017]
- ⁶⁰ Goetz, *Development*, 9.
- ⁶¹ Diubaldo, *The Government*, 163.
- ⁶² Goetz, *Development*, 10.
- ⁶³ Nelson H. H. Graburn, "Authentic Inuit Art: Creation and Exclusion in the Canadian North," *Journal of Material Culture*, Vol. 9, No.2, (2004), 144.
- ⁶⁴ Mary D. Kierstead, "Profiles: The Man" *New Yorker*, August 29, 1988, 34.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., 34.
- ⁶⁶ Ann K. Morrison's "Nationalism, Cultural Appropriation and an Exhibition," *Rhetorics of Utopia: Early Modernism and the Canadian West Coast Collapse* 5 (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Forum Society, 2000), 97.

⁶⁷ Nelson H. H. Graburn, "Inuit Art and Canadian Nationalism: Why Eskimos? Why Canada?" *Inuit Art Quarterly*, Vol.1, No.3, (Winter 1986), 5.

⁶⁸ So much so, Graburn writes in "Why Eskimos?" that "such was the outpouring of works that they destroyed the Group of Seven itself," causing the members to disband in 1933. "Three of the group- Varley, Jackson, and Harris- traveled even further north, to the true Arctic, sketching and painting the barren lands, the icebergs and wildlife, as well as the native peoples. The period from 1933 to World War II was, however, the doldrums for Canadian artistic nationalism," 4.

⁶⁹ Kierstead, "The Man", 37.

⁷⁰ Textual accounts of the period between 1948 and 1953, from the time of Houston's first encounter with the Inuit until the end of the "handicrafts experiment," are rife with inaccuracies, errors, and conflicting information. While the key elements are usually consistent, the minor details vary significantly. For a discussion of the varying facts, and reasons for the discrepancies, see Richard C. Crandall, *Inuit Art: A History* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2000), 47- 101.

⁷¹ Watt, "The Beginning," 12.

⁷² Jack Molson to Clifford P. Wilson, January 7, 1949. CGCQ [C10 D1 024]

⁷³ Darlene Coward Wight, "The Handicrafts Experiment, 1949-53," *The First Passionate Collector: The Ian Lindsay Collection of Inuit Art* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1990), 53.

⁷⁴ Jack Molson to Clifford P. Wilson, January 7, 1949. CGCQ [C10 D1 024]

⁷⁵ For a detailed comparison of the list of articles and prices Houston was supposed to follow versus the actual purchases of the trip, see Wight, "The Handicrafts Experiment," 55-60.

⁷⁶ Graburn, "Authentic Inuit Art," 147.

⁷⁷ Watt, "In Retrospect," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Summer 1988), 27.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Watt, "the Beginning," 12.

⁸⁰ Watt, "In Retrospect," (Summer 1988), 27.

⁸¹ Wight, "The Handicrafts Experiment," 61.

⁸² H.L. Keenleyside to Mrs. G. S. Currie, November 17, 1949. CGCQ [C10 D1 023]

III. Investigating the Booklet: Precursors and Content

In the first chapter, I demonstrated that the intention of founding and funding the initial handicrafts experiment was to create a viable economic substitute for the rapidly declining fur trade. While the underlying motivations of the government, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, and the Hudson's Bay Company may have varied significantly, they shared a common paternalistic objective of assisting the struggling Inuit to regain self-sufficiency. Working on its own to create a crafts and carvings industry, each organization had made only minor advancements, but united under the enthusiastic direction of James Houston they were poised to achieve unprecedented success.

However, in the uncertain beginnings of this fledgling industry the collaborators faced a considerable dilemma. Helga Goetz aptly identified their predicament when she wrote: "How does one generate production of crafts in one culture for sale to another, foreign culture without giving instruction in some form or other?"¹ Certainly, as Nelson Graburn has reported, the Inuit did not know "what the white man wanted,"² but they were eager to reclaim self-reliance. The solution proposed by the government and accepted by Houston and the Guild was to publish an instructional guidebook to making objects that could be considered "useful and acceptable to the white man."³

As we have also seen, this was not the first such attempt. In this chapter I will review the precursors to the 1951 booklet in terms of both style and subject matter. I will examine the specific content of *Sunuyuksuk*, focusing on the objects depicted and "suggestions" put forth. I will then investigate the influence that the booklet had on technique,

appearance, and materials during the transitive period at the “dawn” of contemporary Inuit art.

In order to locate the significance of *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts* in the history of contemporary Inuit art, it is first necessary to examine in brief the antecedents for Inuit artistic production, from the pre-contact period to the earliest contact with Europeans. Thousands of years of autonomous Arctic history illustrate that there was no single continuous ancient tradition for the contemporary Eskimo to build upon, and the centuries of trade with Europeans had created an Inuit arts industry tailored to the desires of non-native consumption. In this chapter I will first examine the earliest “art” objects of archeological discovery, which will demonstrate that some of the objects in Houston’s booklet did derive from Eskimo prehistoric traditions, albeit far divorced from their original functions. I will then examine the historical precedents for the commercial production of Eskimo crafts and carvings for the purpose of trade with Europeans, before moving on to an examination of the booklet itself.

Pre-contact Carving and the Ancestry of the Eskimo

The earliest ancestors of the contemporary Canadian Inuit crossed the Bering Strait from Asia to what is now northern Alaska over 5000 years ago, and migrated east across the Canadian Arctic. Known as the Pre-Dorset or Palaeo-Eskimo, they made very few objects that can be considered ‘art.’ However, a number of animal likenesses and diminutive masks carved in ivory have been found, dating back over 3500 years (*fig. 3.1*).⁴

The second phase in pre-contact Arctic culture, identified by archeologists as the Dorset Tradition,⁵ developed from within Pre-Dorset culture around 800 B.C. Hundreds of human and animal figurines, amulets, masks, maskettes, and other ivory and bone carvings have been recovered from this era (*fig. 3.2*). The most fascinating of these are the deeply incised “floating” or “flying” polar bear ivory carvings (*fig. 3.3*) from the Middle Dorset period (A.D. 1- 600), and the “face clusters” carved in antler (*fig. 3.4*) from the Late Dorset (A.D. 600- 1300).⁶ In their co-authored article, “Prehistoric Dorset Art: A Discussion by an Archeologist and an Artist,” William E. Taylor, Jr. and George Swinton both speculate that almost all of the carvings discovered from the Dorset Tradition had a magical, shamanic, or religious purpose.⁷ While rarely engraved or decorated, even weapons and tools of the Dorset people were skillful and beautifully made, and the carvings of the Late Dorset period are viewed as the most developed art of the pre-contact Eskimo.⁸

Dorset culture thrived until approximately 1000 A.D., when the Alaskan Thule immigrated into the central arctic and all but obliterated the indigenous population.⁹ The ‘art’ of this northern maritime tradition¹⁰ differed significantly from that of the Dorset in both purpose and appearance, and there is little continuity from one culture to the next. For example, while Dorset art is suspected to have had specific shamanic functions, Thule art is believed to have been created for personal use, to “ensure efficient hunting or to enrich daily life.”¹¹ Another distinction is that Thule art was essentially pictorial and graphic, characterized by geometric patterns, lines, and dots. The Thule commonly engraved tools and utensils with this graphic art, and also made tiny dolls and animal

figures covered in the distinctive dot patterns created by the bow drill (*fig. 3.5*).¹² The art of the Thule is remarkably homogeneous, and Danish archeologist Jørgen Meldgaard has suggested that this uniformity in art and society can be attributed to the intense communal co-operation required to hunt whales in the Thule era.¹³ In any case, in the seventeenth century, environmental change would cause the disintegration of that society and its artistic traditions.

Harsh climate changes during the “Little Ice Age” (A.D 1600 to A.D. 1850) caused the open water where the Thule whaled to freeze up, and the large whale-hunting communities gradually broke into smaller nomadic groups who relied more heavily upon seals and caribou for survival. Their direct descendents were the first to encounter European explorers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By the time of that contact these ancestors of the contemporary Canadian Inuit had largely lost the structure and sophistication of Thule culture and their carvings had likewise considerably diminished “in number, inspiration, and quality of execution.”¹⁴

Carving Fulfills a New Purpose

Prior to contact with Europeans, carving had served four primary functions for the Inuit: as decoration of utilitarian objects, for magical or religious purposes, for the creation of toys and games, or as personal amusement.¹⁵ Anthropologist Charles A. Martijn has effectively described these categories in a number of articles that examine the object record and the related historical accounts of early white explorers in the Arctic.¹⁶

However, by the early 1800's, all Eskimo groups in the Canadian North (with the exception of the most remote and isolated bands living on the coast or islands of the Central Arctic) had experienced prolonged contact with Europeans, and the various functions of all prior carving practice had been displaced by a new primary purpose. In order to barter for European trade goods Inuit eagerly began producing figurines and miniatures as souvenirs, and carvings became commodities of cultural exchange. As early as 1821, William Parry recounted that the Inuit who met his ships along the shores of the Baffin Island were eager to trade their ivory models for "any trifle we choose to give them."¹⁷ Certain types of carvings and models of traditional tools, toys, and amulets, were in high demand and in response the Inuit carvers produced these carvings in quantity for trade with Europeans. As Swinton has pointed out in *Sculpture of the Inuit*, it was in this period that Inuit commercial art production first began.¹⁸

Explorers, then, were the first to trade with the Arctic Inuit, beginning in the sixteenth century, and, following that, professional traders began establishing posts in the North. As illustrated in the previous chapter, the Hudson's Bay Company became the predominant commercial presence in the Canadian Arctic, and post managers traded weapons, ammunition, foodstuffs, and other hunting supplies to the Inuit who camped around their stations. While furs were paramount, the Company was also involved in a minor way with the purchase of souvenirs for sale at its posts from the period of earliest contact. The HBC factors encouraged Inuit carvers to create the most saleable subject matter, works that reflected the outsider's view of what Eskimo life was like. Usually

these carvings were sold to white people who visited the Company stores or posts in the north, and were not sent to the south for sale.¹⁹

After trading posts were established, settlements were usually further expanded by the introduction of one or two church missions. Roman Catholic and Anglican missionaries also stimulated handicraft production and exerted considerable influence over the content of the crafts and carvings. The missions encouraged the use of Christian imagery, and figurines began to be carved wearing clothing,²⁰ which in addition to making them chaste also suited the market desire for a “typical Eskimo appearance.”²¹

Prior to and throughout the entire Historic Period, whalers and fishermen traded with the Eskimo on the coast of Labrador, around the Hudson Bay, and within the Canadian Arctic archipelago. Marybelle Mitchell has explained that it was the early trade with these whalers that stimulated a plethora of new needs that could only be satisfied by European goods.²² In “Canadian Eskimo Carving in Historical Perspective,” Martijn notes that men, women and children all participated in the exchange, and lists model igloos, dogsleds, and kayaks as among the most popular items.²³ In Richard Finnie’s *Canada Moves North*, the author recounts that whalers also introduced Inuit to the manufacture of steel traps and the decorative art of scrimshaw, and created a market for non-Inuit items such as cribbage boards and cigarette cases (*fig. 3.6*).²⁴ These encounters between white whalers and the isolated Inuit were thus the first to stimulate the production of transcultural objects.

Art- Making Repositioned in the Contact Era

By the 1940's the production of crafts and carvings had already begun to take on new significance for the Inuit, who looked to their white contacts in the North for direction in what the Southern market desired. As we have seen, during these years the two primary parties involved in the development of Eskimo cottage industries were the Hudson's Bay Company and the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, whose judgments of style, subject matter, and quality differed significantly.

The Hudson's Bay Company post managers encouraged the Inuit to carve naturalistic portrayals of pre-contact daily life, to suit the European taste for realism in the first half of the twentieth century (*fig. 3.7*).²⁵ These carvings were almost always ivory. Although it was reported in 1949 that a few carvers were working in soapstone, the Company factors, who regarded the soft stone as too breakable and clumsy, generally discouraged this medium because they believed results would have "little appeal to the curio collector."²⁶ The main customers of Hudson's Bay Company Inuit carvings were white people working or travelling in the North who preferred souvenir 'curiosities' of the Arctic to objects like basketry, sealskin mitts and boots, and caribou skin articles. While the Port Harrison station and other northern posts stocked these functional goods, the Company did not believe these items could be marketed in the south,²⁷ as I will discuss further below.

The Canadian Handicrafts Guild, on the other hand, actively promoted the creation of functional handiwork. Like the Hudson's Bay Company, the Guild encouraged Inuit to

create small-scale ivory carvings, but their primary suggestions urged the production of utilitarian objects such as grass baskets, sealskin clothing and accessories, and soapstone “small bowls and ash trays in the manner of their own cooking pots and lamps.”²⁸ To the women of the Guild, these functional objects and especially those based on objects used in the pre-contact period, reflected the highest degree of Eskimo ‘authenticity.’ The Guild insisted that “things made for sale are much more attractive when the native character is kept.”²⁹ Like the HBC, they stressed quality and workmanship, but they believed that the primary market for Inuit-made goods would be in functional objects rather than souvenir ‘curio’ carvings.

The Experimental Purchases- A Foundation for the Booklet

Prior to the publication of *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts*, Houston had revisited the Arctic on two separate occasions to acquire handicrafts and train the Inuit in craft production. The articles he collected on these trips, together with items already in the Guild’s collection and others he had seen or acquired in 1948 would form basis for the booklet’s content and character. As previously noted, Houston used the 1947 *Suggestions for Eskimo Handicrafts* as a general guide during his second trip north.

In addition, Houston had been given an authorized inventory of specific Eskimo articles, with price guidelines, to be procured for sale and exhibition at the Guild shop in Montreal. Darlene Coward Wight has reported that Houston partly ignored these instructions, purchasing a higher percentage of carvings than was originally intended by the Guild.³⁰ For example, because the Guild believed that the Montreal market would be

most receptive to “useful” objects, so they suggested the purchase of dozens of pairs of sealskin boots and slippers, one dozen sealskin shoulder bags, baskets, gloves, mats and numerous other functional articles. Of the carvings they requested, most were also utilitarian objects, such as ivory goose wing brush handles, paperweights, letter openers, and matchstick holders, and one dozen “various objects” in soapstone, presumably the “small bowls and ash trays” from the *Suggestions* list.³¹ However, according to the summary of purchase slips compiled by Wight, Houston did not collect any paperweights or “paper knives,” as requested, and the carved ivory he did purchase was much more varied than the Guild authorized. This selection included cribbage boards (for which Houston paid higher than average prices), model dog teams with sleds, rings, animals, a bracelet, penholders, a needle case, and a man in a kayak. He also purchased many more stone articles than were requested, including animals, birds, and Eskimo figures hunting and fishing, as well as a number of ash trays, matchstick holders and boxes.³²

Additionally, Houston did purchase quantities of the items on the Guild’s list. There were many articles of sealskin clothing, purses, boots, and slippers, twelve goose wing brushes, belts, pouches, and woven sashes, full-sized tools and hunting spears, fifty-five baskets (much less than ordered), and even a full-scale kayak, commissioned by Houston for \$35.60.³³

Not only did Houston take liberties with his buying guide, in terms of quantities and objects, but the prices Houston paid for individual objects also fluctuated considerably. In his 1949 “Report of Purchases” Houston stated, “At this early stage of development when no article is standardized, any object (for example a stone carving) may be worth 25 cents

or \$25.00. Also, the weaving quality of baskets varies so greatly that it is almost impossible to price them by size.”³⁴ Wight significantly observed that the prices the Guild listed for individual articles were much higher, in many cases, than Houston paid. Nevertheless, “while \$0.75 seems very little to have paid for a stone carving, it was a lot of money at the time for people in very straitened circumstances. [...] There were few preconceived notions of what was desirable, and what was not, and Houston encouraged everyone to try their hand, if only for a few cents.”³⁵ The November sale of Houston’s Port Harrison collection was a great success.³⁶ Later, many of these same objects would appear in the illustrations of *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts*.

In 1950, after the Guild agreed to government sponsorship, Houston’s purchasing power was increased dramatically, with a grant of \$8000.00 given to cover all of Houston’s expenses, including the 1100.00 dollars spent in the Eastern Arctic the year before. Although the Guild was still responsible for the purchase and resale of the works Houston collected, the grant allowed him the freedom to travel to more communities, and covered the cost of supplies and shipping from the Arctic.³⁷ In March of 1950, Houston again travelled north, first returning to Port Harrison, before visiting Povungnituk and Cape Smith (Akulivik), this time with a new mandate to purchase for public consumption.³⁸ In his 1949 “Report of Purchases,” Houston wrote that the experience of selling the works in Montreal “increased our knowledge of the market value,” and he began encouraging the production of what he believed to be the most saleable crafts and carvings.³⁹ Houston also fulfilled another aspect of the agreement between the Guild and the government to “educate people as instructors to carry on after his departure.”⁴⁰ He made arrangements

for these other white people in the North to continue purchasing handicrafts with the credit he left at the Hudson's Bay Company posts in each community.⁴¹

While assistance from other these other handicrafts instructors was a key factor in the sustainability of the program after Houston left any given community, it was his initial efforts to foster development, and the arrangements he made for its continuation in his absence, that guaranteed the success of the program in the North and the South. Houston provided direction and encouragement to the Inuit, trained white instructors, allotted funds for ongoing purchase, and selected the works for exhibition in the South. Based on the favorable outcome of these ventures in October of 1950 Houston was again granted government funds for work to be carried out throughout the following year. By that time many communities were actively participating in the handicrafts industry, and sales in the south were brisk. After a brief hiatus, Houston and his new wife Alma Bardon returned to the Arctic, this time visiting settlements on Baffin Island and around the Ungava Bay.⁴²

Suggestions: Drawn and Circulated

It has been reported by numerous sources that prior to the creation of *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts*, Houston made sketches of the Eskimo crafts and carvings he saw, and circulated these drawings for the purposes of instruction. George Carpenter of *The Gazette*, who interviewed Houston for the Guild's exhibition opening on November 19, 1951, wrote "Jim makes drawings of any new and authentic Eskimo carvings and passes them around to other bands."⁴³ In *Ethnic and Tourist Arts*, Graburn reported that Eskimo

carvers told him “Mr. Houston made small drawings with a pencil on paper and asked if they could be copied in soapstone, saying that these carvings would be bought.”⁴⁴ In Martijn’s article “Canadian Eskimo Carving in Historical Perspective,” the author cited a communication with Guy Mary-Rousselière in 1961, which disclosed that in “Repulse Bay, and no doubt other settlements as well, the Hudson’s Bay Company store had on display a big placard of drawings by Houston, providing the Eskimos with some ideas on what kind of carvings they ought to be making.”⁴⁵ A 1950 National Film Board photograph of a Hudson’s Bay Company store display shelf in Inukjuak, Quebec, further corroborates this statement (*fig. 3.8*). Martijn also quoted several extracts from Departmental statements regarding Houston’s 1951 activities, made by External Affairs in 1954 and Resources and Development in 1953. In one report, it was stated that “During the Eastern Arctic Patrol, collections (of Hudson Bay carvings) were exhibited to Eskimos in the most northerly regions of Baffin Island,” and in another “Work of the Eastern Arctic people was being studied in the West (Arctic) by means of visual aids” (*fig. 3.9*).⁴⁶ These statements both establish an origin for the illustrations in *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts* and illuminate Houston’s instructional approach in the late 1940’s and early 1950’s. Using drawings Houston surmounted any language barrier between himself and the Eskimo, and conveyed to the Inuit what they should make, based upon what he had seen and chosen to copy from what other Inuit were making in separate regions of the Arctic. In this way, Houston had already begun, however innocently, to assert direct authority over Eskimo production based on his personal preferences.

In the past Hudson Bay Company factors had been largely responsible for determining the style and subject matter of the Inuit carvings and crafts they collected, either through direct instruction or the subtler route of paying better prices for the particular objects they favoured. The taste of the individual trader, in combination with the influence of the close-knit carving peer groups around a settlement, can account for the recognizable similarities in style that make many of the earliest carving communities distinct.⁴⁷

However, the realm of influence of any one trader or store manager was generally limited to the region around his post, and to the Inuit who chose to trade their merchandise with him. If Eskimo craft commodities ever left the original site of their purchase, they were sent to one of two distribution locations in the south, Montreal and Winnipeg, and it would therefore have been rare in those early days of the industry's development for the Inuit of one trading post settlement to see the arts production of another.

Houston's approach to instructing through the circulation of illustrated cards both changed the manner in which Inuit received their "inspiration," and also widened their repertoire. By encouraging Inuit to copy indiscriminately from unrelated or incongruent Inuit groups, it is evident that in the early years of the handicrafts experiment, Houston dismissed the significance of regional or cultural diversity amongst the Inuit, at least in regards to artistic production. In the introduction to *Eskimo Handicrafts* Houston wrote "although the articles illustrated are not produced in all areas of the Arctic they are purely Eskimo and could be made wherever materials are available."⁴⁸ While Houston does not specify the regional origins of any of the objects, there are several articles illustrated in

the booklet that Houston would have knowingly introduced from one region of the Arctic to another.

The Objects Illustrated

One obvious example of this introduction of foreign objects to new areas of the Arctic is grass basketry. In *Eskimo Handicrafts*, four of the twenty-eight pages are allotted to demonstrating their potential styles and decorative techniques, and nine variations are presented (*fig. 3.10*).⁴⁹ Basketry had already been identified as a possible avenue for handicrafts by the women of the Guild in the period between the two wars, and had appeared on the Guild's list *Suggestions for Eskimo Handicrafts*. In the 1941 annual report of the Indian and Eskimo Committee, Alice Lighthall wrote that during the previous year Major McKeand had presented a collection of "crudely made grass affairs, in grotesque shapes imitating objects in use, or seen by the Eskimos who made them."⁵⁰ Those baskets had come from Cape Wolstenholme, in Quebec, just 30 kilometres south east of Iqaluit, and while they were "crude," they were evidence that the craft had spread west from the Ungava Bay and Labrador, where Moravian missionaries had first introduced basketry to the Inuit. Lighthall explained, "The art of basketry, for instance, is only practised among the Eastern Eskimo of a limited district in Ungava, that being practically the only source of grass in the Eastern Arctic. It was taught to them by Moravian missionaries about 200 years ago. Contact with white civilization is no new thing to them!"⁵¹

It is interesting to note that while, as Lighthall mentioned, many areas of the Canadian Arctic did not have an indigenous supply of grass or a tradition of basketry to build upon, the “authenticity” of Eskimo basketwork was unquestioned. Perhaps this is because basketry was common among the Alaskan Eskimos and Aleuts, or possibly because of the Guild’s involvement with Indian basketry over the preceding decades.⁵² In any case, the works depicted in *Eskimo Handicrafts* were no longer “grotesque” or “crudely made affairs.” These commercial baskets were embellished with ivory and stone handles and animal figurines, and were tightly woven with fitted lids.

Houston’s directions for basket-making were mostly practical, promoting the manufacture of goods at the high quality required for sale in the South. He told the Inuit to weave them carefully and use good grass, and to make the handles strong.⁵³

Interestingly, he also encouraged the practice of boiling the grass with net dye so that different (and artificial) colours could be woven into the patterns. This is remarkable because the Canadian Handicrafts Guild was largely opposed to the use of “non-native” materials in indigenous home arts, as their countless publications and the introduction to the booklet expressed. On the bottom of the first page of *Sunuyuksuk* Houston wrote, “The Eskimo should be encouraged to use only the materials native to his land, such as ivory, stone, bone, skins, grass, copper, etc. The introduction of wood, cloth, and metals into his art destroys the true Eskimo quality and places him in competition with craftsmen elsewhere who have complete mastery of the materials.”⁵⁴ This statement echoed earlier Guild sentiments in *Suggestions for Eskimo Handicrafts*, which instructed the white women who taught the home arts to Inuit to “encourage them to use their own materials

and methods rather than imitate ours.”⁵⁵ In the 1922 Guild bulletin entitled “Suggestions for Home Workers,” instruction number nine reads, “INDIAN BASKETRY and BEADWORK- So purely native to our country. To be of value it must keep its Indian character in design, colour, material, and workmanship.”⁵⁶ These statements all attest to a primary interest of the Guild: the preservation of “authenticity” in aboriginal art. To the women of the Guild and the era in which they operated, native artistic and cultural “authenticity” existed only within very specific parameters, making it very curious that their *Eskimo Handicrafts* publication would contain such a contradiction.

The Guild held functional objects in high esteem, especially those objects illustrated in the booklet that had existed in the pre-contact era. As has already been demonstrated in the beginning of this chapter, many of these “traditional” objects were rapidly losing their customary functions, and being produced for the purposes of trade. While these items were not always meant for non-Inuit consumption, and were still functional in Inuit society, many would have only held “curiosity” value to European and Euro-Canadian collectors. On page 8 Houston drew a harpoon head, a model snow knife and a woman’s knife, the primary uses of which were respectively hunting, making igloos, and skinning animals, and on page 25, he illustrated the goose wing brush, used to dust snow from fur clothing to prevent freezing. In order to make these objects appealing as “collectibles” in the south, Houston reiterated the instructions from the introduction to carefully polish all the ivory models, and to thoroughly clean any skin or fur products to insure all the smell is removed. In his instructions, Houston repeatedly expressed the importance of finishing the items to Western tastes, despite the emphasis placed on keeping the “native”

character. Other items that required this careful cleaning and finishing included articles of clothing, footwear, and accessories made of sealskin, as illustrated on pages 19- 23.

These recommended items displayed varying levels of transculturalism; from the relatively un-acculturated kameks, mitts, and slippers; to the vests and buttoned sealskin coats that bore a distinct resemblance to Western tailoring, and finally those objects demonstrating the highest degree of colonial influence; a purse, a sealskin rifle case, and a belt with an attached skin pouch to carry bullets (*fig. 3.11*). For many of these items, Houston encouraged the use of decorative ivory buttons, pegs, and clasps, and for all of the pieces Houston stressed the importance of careful finishing, and ensuring all the smell was removed.

Abiding by these contradictory specifications of “keeping the native character” but finishing according to Southern specifications was regarded as necessary were objects to appeal to the underdeveloped tourist market, or so it was imagined. Prior to embarking on the handicrafts experiment Clifford P. Wilson of the Hudson’s Bay House had warned the Guild about the difficulties in marketing Inuit handwork in the South, and the “smell” of handmade skin articles was his primary argument against that development. Time would prove the HBC right on many of the objects that had given them pause. In a letter to Jack Molson of the Guild, dated February 11, 1949, Wilson urged the Guild to reconsider some of its selections:

I do feel you should know a bit more about this project before definitely deciding on it. The sealskin items produced by the Port Harrison Eskimos consist of boots, slippers, mitts, and model kayaks. They are made from sun-dried hides softened by hand- a curing method which retains all the unpleasant odor of the seal. If the

articles become wet they dry hard and are useless until softened again by the native hand method. In addition to this, the women of Port Harrison, being on the fringe of civilization, are notably poor skin sewers. The soapstone models of implements and animals are inclined to be crude because the material is so breakable. The ivory carving is much inferior to that done farther north, and the caribou skin garments, as I mentioned before, have a revolting smell, as well as a great attraction for moths. I know from experience in the museum that once a moth gets into caribou skin he is there for good, or at least his descendants are.⁵⁷

In the very next sentence, Wilson states, “As you know, the Company has always encouraged the development of handicrafts among the Eskimos and Indians...” but goes on to explain that while tourists aboard the *Nascopie* would sometimes purchase a small amount of the “rather crude ivory work,” the smell of everything else largely deterred them from purchasing any other souvenirs. Wilson had earlier referred to the smell of skin items, saying they were “hardly the kind of thing you could sell in your stores [...] the smell and shedding of hair soon make them obnoxious.”⁵⁸ Wilson also forewarned about the smell of the eiderdown and duck feather blankets later illustrated in Houston’s booklet, but Molson responded that the Guild would still purchase these works on the grounds that these items would be valuable for exhibition purposes or “for sale to curio collectors,” who visited the Guild Shop from the United States.⁵⁹

The feather blankets Clifford alluded to were among the first objects that Houston collected on behalf of the Guild. In the *Canadian Guild of Crafts, Quebec* Inuit arts and crafts collection catalogue, a loon and eider duck skin mat that almost exactly matches Houston’s illustration is depicted in a photograph, and is undoubtedly his inspiration for the booklet (*fig. 3.12*). While several of the illustrations match objects known in a variety

of public and private Canadian collections, it can be difficult to say with certainty which of these were created in direct imitation of Houston's drawings, and which Houston used to copy from to make his illustrations. This is because, as a number of sources have indicated, many Inuit eagerly replicated the objects in the booklet closely, and numerous examples of like objects were produced in a very short span of time.⁶⁰ Also, as noted, Houston had been in the practice of circulating drawings of Inuit carvings prior to the booklet's publication, and many of the placard drawings resemble the items later included in the booklet. It can therefore be difficult to ascertain which carvings were made from which source. In addition, a lack of attribution for many objects is a problem. In the period before publication of the booklet, Inuit carvings were not designated "art," and the producers of these objects not titled "artists," so names of artists were often not asked, and not recorded during the years preceding the development of a fine art status.⁶¹ Fortunately, as collector Ian Lindsay purchased "whole tables" worth of Inuit objects at the Guild Shop from Houston's first buying trips,⁶² and many of Houston's early collected works remain in the Guild's permanent collection, it is possible to identify a number of the objects Houston likely used as models.

One work in the collection catalogue that stands out as a likely inspiration for an illustration is a small stone and ivory head, carved by Kadloo (Levi) Kalluk from Arctic Bay. (*fig 3.13*) The piece, which corresponds to Houston's illustration on page 11, is described as "a full sized shaman's mask made from stone and ivory."⁶³ The shape of the eyes, the number of lines drawn on the forehead and cheekbones, and the placement of the labrets, all corresponding exactly to Houston's drawing, are strong indications that

Houston modelled his illustration on the work.⁶⁴ In addition, the fact that Houston has written “made from stone *and* ivory,” not “made from stone *or* ivory,” as he has given the carver the option to do on pages 5, 9, 13, 24, 29, and 30,⁶⁵ implies that he is working from Kalluk’s work, and not vice versa. There is also a grass basket in the Guild catalogue that has been identified by Virginia Watt as the prototype for Houston’s booklet, (*fig. 3.14*), and a number of other articles that may have been used as models. Some of the objects, such as the lidded basket, (*fig. 3.15*) closely match Houston’s designs but are not distinctive enough to confirm.

From the Ian Lindsay collection, two pieces stand out as the likely basis of Houston’s drawings. These have been identified by Darlene Wight Coward and are noted in the collection catalogue *The First Passionate Collector*. The objects, both from 1950, are the match holder and needle case depicted on page 7 of *Eskimo Handicrafts*, examples of “some small things you can make in ivory” (*fig 3.16*).⁶⁶ There are also other works in that collection that closely resemble Houston’s illustrations, and were likely inspired by or the inspiration for the booklet. These include a harpoon head (*fig 3.17*), and a 1951 cup in the shape of a face (catalogue no.18). In addition, several works from the Ian Lindsay collection have the dotted “bush-like” inlay design, which appears on the drawings of the matchstick holder and the harpoon head in *Sunuyuksuk*. Gerhard Hoffman has remarked on the use of decoration on Inuit tourist art, arguing that because this Inuit art is made for the commercial market and depends upon non-Inuit appraisal for its value, so too does the appreciation and understanding of its decoration rely on its valuation by White critics and collectors.⁶⁷ Carvings based on these primitive-looking “bush-like” drawings and

‘stick’ drawings of Arctic animals⁶⁸ would have been appealing to souvenir buyers for their naivety and primitive appearance. Again, Houston was copying from works already produced for the much smaller, localized handicrafts trade, but in selecting these works for circulation to other carvers within a wider sphere he was in demonstrating his own hegemonic and modernist preference for an imagined pre-modern “authenticity.”

One of the most controversial, and confusing, objects included in the guide is undoubtedly the “totem pole,” illustrated on page 11 (*fig. 3.18*). The most intriguing aspect is not that Houston chose to include totem imagery in an Inuit art instructional guide, but that examples of these totem poles predate the booklet’s publication. The Ian Lindsay collection houses numerous examples of these objects, several of which were created in 1950.⁶⁹ Regarding this strange early Contemporary Period phenomena, Hessel has stated, “Totem imagery is not inconsistent with Inuit spiritual beliefs,”⁷⁰ and it is true that vertical sculptures are often used to represent the transformation from humans to animals, and vice versa, or express the kinship between man and the natural world.⁷¹ However, Houston’s drawing of a totem pole is clearly influenced by Northwest Coast Indian style, even if he never refers to the piece as a totem pole, saying only, “the animals carved from a single piece of stone as seen above.”⁷² The drawing noticeably influenced the production of several similar carvings in the Ian Lindsay collection, and there is another in the collection of the Canadian Museum of Civilization (*fig. 3.19*), which was donated by Lindsay, and which is so nearly identical that it could feasibly have been the model for Houston’s drawing. As Hessel wrote, it is very difficult to determine which were copies and which were not, as even the early carvings could have been drawn from

other sources.⁷³ Wight adds that one explanation is that Houston saw the aforementioned “transformation” style imagery and was inspired to combine this style with “his own Northwest Coast-flavoured drawings.”⁷⁴ One final possibility posited by this text is that Houston was inspired to suggest the creation of totem poles based on ones he had seen in Alaskan Native Arts and Crafts catalogues, which have already been identified as the stylistic basis for the booklet (*fig. 3.20*). A limited knowledge of Inuit art and artifacts,⁷⁵ combined with a general disregard for regional diversity⁷⁶ and an interest in Indian art,⁷⁷ may account for Houston’s most peculiar illustration. As to the question of the why totem pole production predates booklet publication, it is still plausible that Houston was the originating source. Many of the drawings he used for instructional purposes prior to the booklet later appear in similar form in the booklet, so it is possible that Houston had likewise circulated a totem pole drawing prior to *Eskimo Handicrafts*. These actions would be consistent with Houston’s instructional style.

The Alaskan Native Arts and Crafts catalogues may have had a greater impact on the content of Houston’s booklet than has been explored. I noted earlier that Molly Lee, while a student of Graburn’s, saw a copy of *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts* and suggested that the style of the guide was based upon the annual ANAC catalogues published in the 1930’s and 1940’s. Graburn confirmed this hypothesis in 1987, in an article in *Inuit Art Quarterly*.⁷⁸ These catalogues were produced in collaboration between the U. S. Department of the Interior Indian Arts and Crafts Board and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, who established a clearinghouse for native crafts to provide a market for Alaskan Indian and Eskimo work in the 1930’s and 1940’s, and to educate the public

about how to distinguish between genuine native articles and Japanese fakes.⁷⁹ There are many similarities between the ANAC catalogues and *Eskimo Handicrafts*, as well as many remarkable resemblances between the two carvings industries and their development, although it should be noted that the Alaskan Eskimos had been accustomed to the manufacture of tourist art long before the Canadian Eskimo, because of their prolonged and continuous contact with settlers and prospectors from the time of the Yukon gold rush.⁸⁰

The first of these similarities is in the collection and distribution of objects. Through the ANAC clearinghouse, Alaskan Eskimo arts and crafts were collected from many separate Eskimo bands and distributed to non-native dealers and distributors.⁸¹ In a similar fashion, Houston and the Hudson's Bay Company collected works from across the Canadian Arctic but distributed them in the South, first through the Guild shop and Hudson's Bay Houses, and later to dealers and galleries, as will be elaborated in the following chapter. A second similarity noted by Dorothy Jean Ray in 1971 needs no elaboration: "until recently, an emphasis was placed wholly on traditional designs."⁸² However, Ray then observes that many similar techniques were used to stimulate both Canadian and Alaskan carvers, citing Martijn's "Canadian Eskimo Carving in Historical Perspective," for confirmation of these "coincidences:"

Suggestions were given as to what would be the most "saleable" objects; the Eskimos were provided with illustrations, guide manuals, film strips, and even other Eskimo carvings to use as guidelines (some were pictures of ashtrays, cribbage boards, and match holders!); and the "best" carvings (according to Western standards) were purchased. [...] Every carving was aimed at the non-

Eskimo buyer because ‘all carvings are destined for export to the Kabloona world, there to grace the white man’s mantelpiece.’⁸³

Ray calls these coincidences “doubly perplexing” in consideration of the differences between the styles of Alaskan and Canadian Eskimo art, but taking the later discovery by Lee into consideration, it is clear that these similarities are probably not coincidences at all. These commonalities reinforce the theory that *Eskimo Handicrafts* was in fact based directly on ANAC annual catalogues. Further verification is provided by the fact that Deputy Commissioner R.A. Gibson had contacted ANAC Clearing House Manager D.L. Burrus in November of 1949, just months after commencing the ‘Eskimo project’ with the Guild, and had requested information on the U.S. Cooperative for Eskimos in Juneau, Alaska.⁸⁴ In response Gibson had received a letter explaining the ANAC procedures for collecting and distributing works, and a list of the most popular items including moccasins, dolls, baskets, carved ivory animals, and totems. In addition, Burrus attached a three-page promotional document on the totem poles of the Alaskan Natives, as well as information on basketry and Chilkat blankets.⁸⁵ This new evidence, discovered in the National Archives of Canada, indicates that Gibson was aware of the ANAC clearinghouse and catalogues in 1949, and therefore supports claims that Houston, under the employ of the Northwest Territories Administration, was also likely to have seen these publications prior to creating *Eskimo Handicrafts*.

There were many similarities between the content of ANAC catalogues and *Sunuyuksuk*. The ANAC catalogues, while directed at dealers and the market, also told the carvers how to finish their work to White standards, that “traditional” subject matter would sell

best, and what types of subject matter would appeal to the market.⁸⁶ The Alaskan publication also favoured the creation of ivory Arctic “scenes;” the “Eskimo Hunting Polar Bear” from the ANAC catalogue is comparable to the hunting scenes in Houston’s guide on pages 14 and 29 (*fig. 3.21*). There are also model kayaks and dog teams in the catalogue, which are similar to kayaks and dog teams suggested in *Sunuyuksuk*. In fact, Arctic animals and their human co-habitants, engaged in stereotypic “scenes” such as hunting and fishing, make up a large number of the suggestions in Houston’s book.⁸⁷ In the instance of these Arctic “scene” carvings, the animals and figures would have been accessible, iconic representations of their producers, at least in how they were imagined by their consumers. These carvings, also described as “moments in time,” likewise represented a departure from earlier carvings in that they favoured viewing from a particular angle. For example, many of the figures in these “moments” were pegged to bases, which made them suitable for tabletop display. This was a new way for Inuit to conceptualize carvings, which had previously been usually created in the round, and often favoured no one perspective, as many of the earlier, small-scale ivory carvings were meant to be held in the hand.⁸⁸ Once the Inuit had been taught to visualize in this manner, the style of carvings began to change to suit this Southern taste. As Martijn has noted, the introduction of pedestals is a purely Western innovation.⁸⁹

Another consistency between the ANAC catalogues and *Eskimo Handicrafts* is the inclusion of transcultural objects such as the ashtrays and cribbage boards noted by Ray. In “Alaskan Native Arts and Crafts,” Ray wrote that the Yukon souvenir market demanded the imitation of foreign “knick-knacks,” such as toothpick holders, cane

handles, and decorative ivory gavels.⁹⁰ Alaskan Eskimo carvers, whose economic situation was comparable to the Inuit in Canada, also produced according to the tastes of the tourist market in order to survive.⁹¹ The ANAC catalogues, while emphasizing traditional designs, still included decorated needle cases and the like.⁹² In the 1995 *Confessions of an Igloo Dweller*, Houston wrote that shortly after he had been given his first carvings on a visit to Inukjuak River, he had a conversation with Hudson's Bay Company postmaster Norman Ross about some Inuit who were making art for sale in the south. Houston was showing Ross some small animal carvings he had received in trade. "Norman added 'you should see the ivory cribbage boards they make up at Lake Harbour. These people around here are no good at that saleable kind of work. We don't buy carvings here.' Well, I thought, imagine that. [...] I wasn't interested in cribbage boards or ashtrays, but I loved the look and feeling of the two best carvings in my hands."⁹³ Why, if he wasn't interested in cribbage boards and ashtrays in 1948, did Houston include these images of non-Inuit objects in *Eskimo Handicrafts?* (fig. 3.22) When Houston suggested in his booklet that the Inuit make items such as cigarette boxes and ashtrays, did he perhaps do so with hesitation, trying to promote handicrafts he thought were inferior but more saleable? It has been demonstrated that the Guild believed these items would be found "useful and acceptable to the white man," but as it would be soon discovered, these items would be deemed "inauthentic" by the Southern market, whose preferences were still deeply entrenched in the hegemonic belief that the Inuit were a primitive, "untouched" society.

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- ¹ Helga Goetz, *The Development of Inuit Art* (Hull: The Department of Indian Affairs, 1985), 17.
- ² Nelson H. H. Graburn, "Inuit Art and the Expression of Eskimo Identity," *The American Review of Canadian Studies*, Vol. XVII, No. 1 (Spring 1987), 51.
- ³ James A. Houston, *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts*, translated by Sam Ford and Frederica Woodrow. (Montreal: Canadian Handicrafts Guild and the Department of Resources and Development, 1951), 1.
- ⁴ Ingo Hessel, *Inuit Art: An Introduction* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1998), 13.
- ⁵ The Dorset people are so named after the community "Cape Dorset," where the first archeological remains of their culture were discovered by noted anthropologist Diamond Jenness in 1924.
- ⁶ Hessel, *Inuit Art*, 14.
- ⁷ George Swinton and William E. Taylor, Jr. "Prehistoric Dorset Art: A Discussion by an Archaeologist and an Artist," *The Beaver* (Autumn 1967), 44.
- ⁸ Taylor, "Prehistoric Dorset Art," 32.
- ⁹ Martijn, "A Retrospective Glance," 8.
- ¹⁰ The term "tradition" here is used to identify a specific way of life led by a group or groups of people in a specific time and place, as determined by archeological evidence.
- ¹¹ Hessel, *Inuit Art*, 16.
- ¹² Patricia Sutherland, "The History of Inuit Culture," *In the Shadow of the Sun: Perspectives on Contemporary Native Art* (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1993), 328.
- ¹³ Jørgen Meldgaard, *Eskimo Sculpture*, (London: Methuen, 1960), 27.
- ¹⁴ Charles A. Martijn, "Canadian Eskimo Carving in Historical Perspective," *Anthropos*, Vol. LIX (1964), 554.
- ¹⁵ Even though Franz Boas wrote in 1927 that "it must be remembered that all the Eskimo tribes, east and west, are very fond of carving and that they produce many small animal figures that serve no practical purpose but which are made for the pleasure of artistic creation, and that many of their small implements are given animal forms," this form of "personal amusement" is not to be confused with the purely Western notion of "art for art's sake." Franz Boas, *Primitive Art* (New York: Dover, 1927), 124.
- ¹⁶ Martijn "Canadian Eskimo Carving in Historical Perspective," (1964); "A Retrospective Glance at Canadian Eskimo Carving," *The Beaver* (Autumn 1967).
- ¹⁷ William E. Parry, *Journal of the Second Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1824), 24.
- ¹⁸ George Swinton, *Sculpture of the Inuit*, 3rd revised edition (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1999), 119.
- ¹⁹ Fur trader Peter Murdoch, posted on Baffin Island and in northern Quebec in the late 1940's and early 1950's, said that "during and after the war, many carvings made by the people of Lake Harbour and Frobisher Bay (Iqaluit) were sold to American personnel at the Frobisher Bay base, while the rest were sent to the HBC warehouse in Montreal. I understand that some were forwarded to England for resale there." Marybelle Mitchell, "A Peripatetic Trading Post Clerk," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, Vol.10, No.2 (Summer 1995), 57.

²⁰ Prominent collector Ian Lindsay has noted that early anonymous carvings “often revealed a conspicuous naturalism in the representation of genitalia in male human beings and in anal configurations in animal figures, but such naturalism was discouraged by missionaries and others in authority, and these features were rarely seen in the later, more stylized carvings- though such genital representation is now being revived.” Ian Lindsay, “A Look Back at the Early Days: Some Personal Thoughts,” *The First Passionate Collector: The Ian Lindsay Collection of Inuit Art* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1990), 23-24.

²¹ Martijn, “Canadian Eskimo Carving,” 559.

²² Marybelle Mitchell, “Social, Economic, and Political Transformation Among Canadian Inuit from 1950 to 1988,” *In the Shadow of the Sun: Perspectives on Contemporary Native Art*. (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1993), 333.

²³ Martijn, “Canadian Eskimo Carving,” 559.

²⁴ Richard S. Finnie, *Canada Moves North*, (Toronto: MacMillan, 1948), 212.

²⁵ Hessel, *Inuit Art*, 26.

²⁶ From Manager, Western Arctic, Central Post Division to the General Manager, Fur Trade Department, Winnipeg, Feb.4, 1949, quoted in Wight, “The Handicrafts Experiment,” 50.

²⁷ Wight, “The Handicrafts Experiment,” 51.

²⁸ *Suggestions for Eskimo Handicrafts*, 1941, CGCQ [C10 D1 017]

²⁹ *Suggestions for Eskimo Handicrafts*, 1941, CGCQ [C10 D1 017]

³⁰ Wight, “The Handicrafts Experiment,” 55-71.

³¹ List of Eskimo articles, signed by C.J.G. Molson, dated January 14, 1949 CGCQ [C10 D1 024]

³² Wight, “The Handicrafts Experiment,” 59.

³³ Wight, “The Handicrafts Experiment,” 60.

³⁴ James Houston, “Report of Purchases,” 1949, in Virginia Watt, “In Retrospect,” *Inuit Art Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 3, (Summer 1988), 23.

³⁵ Wight, “The Handicrafts Experiment,” 60.

³⁶ The sale was a great success, but not as great a success as Houston often reported. Houston claimed that the sale, scheduled to last a week, was sold out in just three days. However, Wight has discovered that this claim is false, as the Canadian Handicrafts Guild still had “Eskimo Crafts” in stock at their store in December, a month after the sale’s end. Wight estimates that 10% of the carvings were not sold at that time, in addition to a variety of other articles not sold. Wight, “The Handicrafts Experiment,” 62.

³⁷ “Estimate of expenses re Eskimo work proposed for season 1950 and for work done in 1949,” dated November 25, 1949, CGCQ [C10 D1 023]

³⁸ Virginia Watt, “The Beginning,” *Canadian Guild of Crafts, Quebec*. (Montreal: Canadian Guild of Crafts Quebec), 13.

³⁹ Houston, “Report of Purchases,” in Watt, “In Retrospect,” 23.

⁴⁰ H.L. Keenleyside to Mrs. G. S. Currie, November 17, 1949. CGCQ [C10 D1 023]

⁴¹ Helga Goetz has championed the contributions of a number of these teachers, welfare administrators, and other agents of the government, for aiding in the development of the crafts industry after Houston departed. Among these volunteers was Margery Hinds, a teacher/welfare administrator who encouraged the use of natural dyes and developed new

ways of tanning skin; and Douglas Lord, the first government teacher in Coppermine, who used the pictures of tools and implements from Diamond Jenness' *Report on the Material Culture of the Copper Eskimo* to persuade the Inuit to try making models from objects of the past. Helga Goetz, *The Development of Inuit Art*, 19.

⁴² Wight, "The Handicrafts Experiment," 68.

⁴³ George Carpenter, "Tuktu-Angot, North Spirit in City to Guard Eskimo Art," *The Gazette*, Montreal, Monday, November 19, 1951, 3.

⁴⁴ Nelson H.H. Graburn, "Eskimo Art: The Eastern Canadian Arctic," *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Third World*, ed. Nelson H.H. Graburn (Berkeley: University of California Press), 42.

⁴⁵ Martijn, "Canadian Eskimo Carving," 564.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ George Swinton, *Sculpture of the Inuit*, 3rd revised edition (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1999), 17-22.

⁴⁸ Houston, *Sunuyuksuk*, 1.

⁴⁹ Houston, *Sunuyuksuk*, 15-18.

⁵⁰ Alice Lighthall, *Annual Report of the Indian and Eskimo Committee*, 1941. CGCQ [C10 D1 017]

⁵¹ Alice Lighthall, *Annual Report of the Indian and Eskimo Committee*, 1941. CGCQ [C10 D1 017]

⁵² Nelson H. H. Graburn, "Inuit Art and the Expression of Eskimo Identity," *The American Review of Canadian Studies*, Vol. XVII, No. 1, (Spring 1987), 60.

⁵³ See instructions for pages 15, 16 and 18 of *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts* in Appendix A.

⁵⁴ James A. Houston, *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts*, (Montreal: Canadian Handicrafts Guild with the approval of the Department of Resources and Development, North West Territories Branch, 1951), 1.

⁵⁵ *Suggestions for Eskimo Handicrafts*, 1947, CGCQ [C10 D1 022]

⁵⁶ *Suggestions for Home Workers*, 1922, CGCQ [C11 D2 080]

⁵⁷ Clifford P. Wilson to C.J.G. Molson, February 11, 1949. CGCQ [C10 D1 024]

⁵⁸ Clifford P. Wilson to C.J.G. Molson, January 12, 1949. CGCQ [C10 D1 024]

⁵⁹ C.J.G. Molson to Clifford P. Wilson, January 20, 1949. CGCQ [C10 D1 024]

⁶⁰ Helga Goetz, *The Development of Inuit Art*, 16- 17.

⁶¹ In 1961 Dorothy Ray wrote in *Artists of the Tundra and the Sea* that the anonymity of "primitive" art is founded in the perspective of the collectors, not the artists, and that just because works were unsigned did not mean that they were the anonymous, collective output of the homogenized primitive.⁶¹ However, owing to the persistent hegemonic narratives of modernism and primitivism in the first half of the twentieth century, it was often only later that names of artists were recorded; community origins, and the dates of collection are far better known. There are also notable exceptions to this unfortunate anonymity, existing because of Houston's records and personal accounts. Dorothy J. Ray, *Artists of the Tundra and the Sea* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1961), 154.

⁶² Darlene Coward Wight, "Introduction," *The First Passionate Collector: The Ian Lindsay Collection of Inuit Art*, (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1990), 13- 14.

⁶³ See instructions for page 11 of *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts* in Appendix A.

⁶⁴ Darlene Coward Wight has suggested that this mask was not in fact drawn from Kalluk's carving, but that Houston modeled his illustration on the "ancient Eskimo carvings excavated in the Igloodik area, now in the Churchill Museum," as he has written about in the 1954 publication *Canadian Eskimo Art*. She has also noted that Alaskan Eskimos more commonly wore the labrets, a traditional facial decoration.

⁶⁵ See instructions for these pages of *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts* in Appendix A.

⁶⁶ See instructions for page 7 of *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts* in Appendix A.

⁶⁷ Gerhard Hoffman, "The Aesthetics of Inuit Art: Decoration, Symbolism and Myth in Inuit Graphics; Material, Form, and Space in Inuit Sculpture; The Context of Modernism and Postmodernism," *In the Shadow of the Sun: Perspectives on Contemporary Native Art*. (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1993), 384.

⁶⁸ For examples of the "bush-like" motif and other drawn decoration see the illustrations in this text for *Fig. 3.14a*, *Fig. 3.16a-c*, *Fig. 3.17a-b*, and *Fig. 3.22b*.

⁶⁹ See *The First Passionate Collector*, catalogue nos. 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, pages 103-105.

⁷⁰ Hessel, *Inuit Art*, 30.

⁷¹ Wight, footnote to catalogue no.27, *The First Passionate Collector*, 105.

⁷² See instructions for page 11 of *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts* in Appendix A.

⁷³ Hessel, *Inuit Art*, 30.

⁷⁴ Wight, "The Handicrafts Experiment," 65.

⁷⁵ Martijn, "Canadian Eskimo Carving," 577.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 564.

⁷⁷ See Mary D. Kierstead, "Profiles: The Man" *New Yorker*, August 29, 1988; Chapter 1 of this text, "James A. Houston: Aspiring Artist, Aspiring Adventurer;" and Nelson H. H. Graburn, "The Discovery of Inuit Art: James A. Houston-Animateur," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, Vol.2, No.2, (Spring 1987).

⁷⁸ Nelson H. H. Graburn, "The Discovery of Inuit Art: James A. Houston-Animateur," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, Vol.2, No.2, (Spring 1987), 3- 4.

⁷⁹ The problem of Japanese "fakes" occurred simultaneously in Alaska and in Canada. However, as reported in the previous chapter, the Guild had more difficulty in Canada convincing the Department of Indian Affairs to take action and educate the public.

⁸⁰ Dorothy Jean Ray, "Alaskan Eskimo Arts and Crafts," *The Beaver* (Autumn 1967), 80.

⁸¹ Dorothy Jean Ray, *Eskimo Art: Tradition and Innovation in Northern Alaska* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 56.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁸⁴ Letter from D.L. Burrus to R.A. Gibson, November 4, 1949. National Archives of Canada (NAC) [RG85 Vol. 108 File: 255-1 pt.1.]

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Dorothy Jean Ray, "Alaskan Eskimo Arts and Crafts," *The Beaver* (Autumn 1967), 84-85.

⁸⁷ See the instructions for pages 3, 4, 5,9, 14, 24, 26, 27, and 29 of *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts*, in Appendix A.

⁸⁸ Edmund Carpenter, Robert Flaherty, and Frederic Varley, *Eskimo* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 43.

⁸⁹ Martijn, "Canadian Eskimo Carving," 573.

⁹⁰ Ray, "Alaskan Eskimo Arts and Crafts," 81.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 85.

⁹³ Houston, *Confessions of an Igloo Dweller*, 12.

IV. Sunuyuksuk: Reactions, Productions, and the Transformation of Promotional Practice

During the years following the publication of *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts*, between 1951 and 1953, the Inuit arts and crafts industry, as it had been known and imagined, dramatically changed in unforeseen ways. The failed attempts to foster handicrafts in the Arctic before the War now worked to the industry's advantage. The exotic unfamiliarity of this undiscovered art and its isolated source of origin allowed the promoters to romanticize its creators unchecked and the southern primitive art market to accept this invented mythology.

As correspondence between the Guild and the Hudson's Bay Company has revealed, the promise of *Sunuyuksuk* was its potential to create a viable "curio" market.¹ The suggestions for carvings were for "some small things you can make," and although scale is never mentioned in the booklet, all of the carvings that may be made of stone are also those recommended to be made in ivory, implying that the desired scale would also be comparable to the maximum dimension of ivory pieces. However, almost immediately following the publication of the booklet, carving practices began to transform, due as much to the tastes of discerning patrons in the south as to the new approaches adapted in the north. Stone was both more accessible and less expensive than ivory, and good prices for larger scale works in the south created a favorable atmosphere for stone carving to rapidly overtake its more conventional predecessor. While the trend began with only a

handful of “good” carvers, within three years stone carving would emerge as the most sought after Inuit art production.

Faced with this new appreciation of the sculptural ‘art’ of the Inuit, the ‘acculturated’ souvenir productions intended to appeal to the “Kabloona” were having an opposite effect, and the response to the booklet was overwhelming negative. The Inuit eagerly reproduced the illustrated suggestions and followed its instructions, but because they did so too closely, the result was numerous examples of uncreative, unsaleable, and very similar objects. The Guild’s stock of handicrafts sat on the shelves, the smell, as the HBC predicted, making many goods highly unappealing. The government soon denounced the booklet for both its didactic tone and content. While criticisms of the “souvenir” goods were many, stone carvings in the south were gaining an elite following. For these new carvings to be a success, the promotion of the art and artists would have to be dramatically changed within a short span of time in response to modern tastes, and in light of recent criticisms. It quickly became apparent to Houston that the souvenir market that had been envisioned for Eskimo work had ignored its true potential as a new modern, primitive art.

Rather than dwelling on the shortcomings of the handicrafts initiative, or continuing its avid promotion, Houston made an about-face. This shift is evident in his promotional activities in both the North and South, in his writings and collecting, and especially in his instructional practices. Eric Cohen has noted that “intermediaries” such as Houston often affect the content of production because of the spatial and cultural distances usually

found between products and their marketplaces.² In his newfound position of control and authority, Houston was able to direct both the production and promotion, shaping the industry into the success it is today.

Dorothy Ray wrote in 1977 that Canadian contemporary Inuit art emerged as an unprecedented success “which even the most extravagant dreams or best-planned project could not have anticipated or achieved.”³ This chapter will examine the period of that emergence, from its tenuous beginnings in the souvenir industry to its international acceptance as Art.

The Reception of *Eskimo Handicrafts*: Not “What the White Man Wants”

Reflecting on the introductory period of Inuit art in the late 1940’s, Ian Lindsay explained that when Inuit carvings first made their debut in the south, they were considered to be “native craft,” associated with Indian craftwork.⁴ Before 1949, Lindsay recalled, “few southerners had ever seen an Eskimo, let alone the Arctic. Eskimos were often thought of as being some sort of Indian (when they were thought of at all), who dwelt in igloos and travelled by dogsled in a cold, inhospitable land. And that was about the sum of it.”⁵

The Inuit, in return, had only been exposed to the margins of the dominant culture. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, the contact zone had decidedly always been on Inuit land, and on a small scale, consisting of exchanges with explorers, whalers, missionaries, government police and administrators, or trading post staff. Experience had taught the Inuit to produce for trade crafts and carvings tailored to this limited market.

Therefore, when the handicrafts experiment was initiated and objects were expected to sell in the South, the Inuit had to rely heavily on their white contacts for guidance to create “what the white man wanted.”⁶ As previously noted, post managers of the Hudson’s Bay Company had encouraged the production of “realistic and craftsmanlike depictions of life in the Arctic,”⁷ whereas the Guild had encouraged the production of ‘traditional,’ functional goods, and the whalers, as reported, wanted ‘acculturated’ items for souvenirs. Given these conflicting recommendations, it was reasonable to expect *Sunuyuksuk* would be an asset to the Inuit carvers and craftspeople. In August of 1950, five months before the booklet’s publication, Houston promoted its creation in the press. An article in the Toronto *Globe and Mail* reported that, “to encourage the Eskimo to build up this new venture, [Houston] is writing a book, in Eskimo, entitled *Sinour Ruktahukpeet*, which means Things That You Make. It tells the natives, with illustrations, what goods are most in demand.”⁸ Several other newspapers repeated this press release almost verbatim, and all publicized Houston’s role as an artist creating a new industry for the “Eskimos.”⁹ It is clear that Houston anticipated that this form of encouragement and instruction would have a favorable result.

The response to the booklet was abundant, but not what had been hoped for or expected. While Houston had written that the booklet was intended to “in no way limit the Eskimo,” the didactic tone of the instructions and the simplified illustrations led carvers to believe that those objects, and only those objects, would be “useful and acceptable to the white man.”¹⁰ The posts were inundated with numerous examples of objects like those Houston illustrated, many of which displayed little creative sensitivity or

workmanship.¹¹ While Houston still purchased all the items brought to the Posts he did not feel they were all salable in the south. Douglas Lord, a Coppermine government teacher, was actively involved in handicrafts development in the early stages of production, and he also reported on the “flood” of inferior, souvenir articles, with the warning that this new incentive to make “easy money” was taking hold in Coppermine, and carving was replacing hunting activities.¹² Lord’s opinion reflected the government approach at the time to “keeping the natives native,” and HBC officials likewise expressed concern that carving would cause the Inuit to neglect hunting and trapping.¹³ The latter was clearly the reason that the Company was involved with the Inuit in the first place, and they continued to insist on the “spare time” nature of handicrafts production despite the failing ability of the fur trade to provide Inuit livelihood. However, dietary deficiencies were also a concern; the provisions sold at posts could only partially meet the nutritional needs of the Inuit, and remaining around the posts to carve detracted from hunting activities.

In addition to these criticisms, complaints came from government agents on a variety of points. One government official particularly objected to Houston’s illustration of a hunter stalking a musk ox¹⁴ (*fig. 4.1*). The musk ox was a protected animal under the Game Ordinance, and the government had been trying for years to enforce conservation laws in the north, without much success. The government’s frustration over the hunting of protected species is clear in an excerpt from a paternalistic-and threatening –open letter to the Eskimos written by the Director of the Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch of the Department of the Interior, O.S. Finnie, in 1924:

The Government and the Police say that the people must not kill musk-ox. If any more are killed the Government will be very angry. Traders will not buy musk-ox skins. The Government and the Police are the true friends of the Eskimos. The Eskimos should do as they say because it is right. The Government wishes the Eskimos to be well and happy.¹⁵

This letter and other attempts like it to curtail musk-ox hunting had had little impact on the Inuit over the years, especially in the remote or isolated areas, and as late as 1949 complaints were being received from Western Arctic officials that the Inuit did not follow regulations, or appreciate the need for conservation,¹⁶ and in light of this it is understandable that the illustration received criticism for any reference “that might conceivably convey to the Eskimos that they can now kill musk ox.”¹⁷

The Department was further concerned about the tone of the booklet, which in later years was severely criticized for its “instructional nature.”¹⁸ It became an “embarrassment” to the federal government, causing R.A.J. Phillips, then Chief of the Arctic Division, to call *Eskimo Handicrafts* “unfortunate.”¹⁹ Particularly objectionable were the most condescending captions that accompanied some illustrations. On page 3 Houston wrote, “The small Eskimo man and woman [...] are carefully smoothed and polished. Can you make one?” On page 4 he instructed, “When it is done with great cleverness it is a thing anyone would want. Polish it carefully,” on page 14 he advised, “If they are carefully carved and polished the kaloona will buy them.”

In addition, the didactic instructions, while intended to “in no way limit the Eskimo,”²⁰ were so direct as to contradict that assertion. Statements such as “A man standing over the seal hole; snow blocks for protection. Dressed in skins; ivory face; harpoon in hand,” or “They can be made in any position, either sitting or walking,” seemed contradictorily instructional. The nature of the ‘suggestions’ seemed to leave little room for creativity, and the Inuit interpreted the booklet as a definitive set of rules. The inadvertent negative affects were widespread, and the resulting production was sub par.

While much government criticism was leveled at the booklet, there were still many positive effects from the handicrafts trade. Welfare administrator and teacher Margery Hinds reported on the improvement in morale in the encampments around Port Harrison,²¹ and RCMP officers reported similarly for other locales where welfare payments had decreased.²² At the time the booklet was generally a welcome addition to the government administrators and welfare teachers who instructed and encouraged handicrafts in Houston’s absence. Goetz has reported that the booklet received wide distribution in several Arctic communities, including a number around the Hudson Bay, despite Swinton’s statement that the book had not reached far beyond the Ungava.²³ For example, in the Keewatin District on the west side of the Hudson’s Bay RCMP officers ensured that every family received a booklet in the areas around Eskimo Point (Arviat) and Padlei.²⁴ The welfare teacher in Fort Chimo, Emond (Kuujuuaq, Nunavik) also distributed copies to all the adults in the surrounding camps and urged them to try the work. While the exact number that went into circulation is unknown, 1,500 copies were printed, and shipped into the north.²⁵ The production of carvings and handicrafts

increased dramatically in the communities that received the booklet; Port Harrison, for example, experienced an increase in purchases from \$76 in 1948, to \$11,700 in 1952. In Povungnituk, the increase was from ninety dollars to nineteen hundred dollars in the same time span.²⁶

However, the production, as aforementioned, was not always of a high quality, and as a result was not selling in the south. Eight thousand dollars worth of Inuit handicrafts were shipped to the Guild during 1951, and that figure doubled in 1952, but along with many items that were purchased, were many others that were not. In 1953 when James Wright visited the Guild shop he noticed that large quantities of grass basketry and the “hideously odorous” sealskin clothing, rifle cases, and accessories were not selling.²⁷

Overwhelmed by the quantity, the Guild was forced to temporarily halt purchases, and requested that Houston return from Cape Dorset to resume promotional activities and find a solution to the stock problems.

Stone, Scale, and Style- The First Major Changes

Meanwhile, major changes were taking place in carving practices. One of the first positive developments that *Eskimo Handicrafts* brought about was the widespread introduction of stone as a carving material. While historically soapstone had rarely been used for anything but seal oil lamps and cooking pots,²⁸ small numbers of diminutive soapstone carvings like the caribou Houston had been given on his first trip to Port Harrison had begun appearing in the late contact period.²⁹ Less expensive to purchase and in ready supply, Houston foresaw that this material would be a profitable addition to the

industry and an ideal replacement for ivory, which by the late 1940's was in short supply.³⁰ Found walrus tusk ivory had to be at least a year old to ensure it would not warp or crack, and it had a high intrinsic value, so post managers were reluctant to allow children or novice carvers to practice with it.³¹ Because Houston's favoured method of encouragement was to purchase everything produced, stone carving was ideal as an inexpensive material for the inexperienced carvers to practice with.³²

In addition to being more readily available and a smaller economic investment, stone also facilitated an increase in scale beyond what had been previously possible. Whereas ivory pieces, such as those that inspired *Sunuyuksuk's* illustrations, were on average three inches in length, the new stone carvings grew first to six or eight inches, then to the 'pedestal' or 'tabletop' dimensions.³³ With the change in scale it became more difficult to marginalize these works as 'souvenirs,' or 'native craft.' However, as the firsthand account of Ian Lindsay has described, not all collectors were enthusiastic about the new development; some collectors maintained that the change in scale would fundamentally alter their character,³⁴ and other critics of the 'new' art form, such as Edmund Carpenter, denigrated the shift in materials and size as being the products "Western" influence.³⁵

Despite these criticisms, a market developed for larger scale works, and in the minds of collectors stone quickly became the favoured material. In a lecture in 1977, Houston recounted that around 1950, during a sale and exhibition in Montreal, a larger than usual carving of a human sold quickly, and for a higher than average price, sparking the creation of more works of comparable scale.³⁶ Gradually, each community was

developing recognizable traits, based in part on the different colours and veins of stone, which later became synonymous with different areas. Large-scale antler and whalebone would also gain favour in the Southern art market over the course of the following decades.³⁷

Beyond the individual characteristics of each community, an Inuit 'style' was beginning to emerge in the new stone art, modified as much through outside preferences as by internal occurrence. The formal aesthetic traits of Inuit carvings came under external influence, in the form of direct 'suggestions,' or through the inspiration of other artists whose works were being purchased in the south or at the Post. In "Inuit Art and the Expression of Eskimo Identity," Graburn has repeated the findings of Eigil Knuth, who in 1957 reported that a central commonality of Eskimo stone carvings from Greenland and Canada was their "klumpen" appearance; namely, traits of "clumped, rounded, lumpy, or thick,' as opposed to linear, angular, separated or delicate.³⁸ While this style became quickly recognizable as 'Eskimo,' it was, as Graburn adds, no coincidence that Houston's own artistic sense was well in accordance with the formal "klumpen" characteristics.³⁹ Indeed, the development of rounded or thick forms was actively encouraged. In the introduction to *Sunuyuksuk* Houston wrote, "Stone objects should not have delicate projecting portions which may be easily broken," as a preventative measure against damage during export to the south. In addition, in the 1953 *Eskimo Handicrafts: A Private Guide for the Hudson's Bay Company Manager* pamphlet, Houston recommended that HBC managers selectively purchase works that could be shipped without damage. "A carving with delicate protruding pieces, such as birds' wings,

presents a difficult handling problem and may be easily broken- the best type is the single carving in fairly solid mass.”⁴⁰ In this way, the Inuit were instructed both directly by Houston and indirectly by the purchase of works “with a fairly solid mass” by the Post managers. This ‘practical’ requirement can be said to be at least partly responsible for the “klumpen” appearance that today is so instantly recognizable as Inuit art.

Promoting Modern Primitive Art In the South

The public reacted to the “Eskimo-ness” of these new carvings, and therein laid the exotic appeal of Inuit art.⁴¹ The ‘style’ of the carvings conveyed a sense of the primitive to its audience through the rounded, reductive, and simplified forms of Eskimo figures and animals. Before the widespread “discovery” of contemporary Inuit art in 1948, Inuit crafts and carvings had been generally unknown and unexploited in the South, despite several centuries of trade with whalers, explorers, traders and missionaries in the Canadian Arctic. Attempts to establish an Inuit handicrafts industry prior to the Second World War had been generally unsuccessful, and this relative lack of contact allowed Euro-Canadians in the South to envision the Inuit in a state of primitivity far divorced from the realities of modern life in the South. And at the time, the romantic notions of the ‘Eskimo,’ closely associated with the rugged Arctic tundra and the wild Arctic animals, were in part, a reality, (even though that reality was quickly morphing into another kind of existence all together). This made the new stone carvings highly appealing to the Western art world, as since the 1940’s primitive art had begun to be closely associated with modern art of the avant-garde.⁴²

In contrast, the curio-style carvings suggested in *Eskimo Handicrafts* were getting a poor reception, and steps had to be taken to dissociate the new Inuit art from the ‘acculturated’ objects, which by nature contradicted the myth of Inuit primitivity and thus diminished their appeal to the modernist primitive art market. As James Clifford has explained, in the modern perspective the value of works of non-Western, primitive art could be gauged by their ‘vanishing’ artistic or cultural status, and thus higher prices and appreciation would be applied to the artistic output of those cultures whose imminent disappearance was foretold.⁴³ At the time, Inuit culture was in fact predicted to ‘end.’ Even in the 1950’s and 1960’s, people believed that the culture would soon be extinct; George Swinton has admitted that in 1957, “We looked into the future and said ‘How would it be possible for one’s art to survive when one’s culture is dying?’ [...] We looked at what we thought were its essential factors, and we saw that [the Eskimo] were gradually disappearing.”⁴⁴ In hindsight Swinton recognized the flaw of this reasoning.⁴⁵ However, a precept of modernity was the belief that, for good or for bad, the ultimate triumph of modernization was inevitable and would be absolute. In the 1950’s ‘acculturated’ art was much maligned, and to be ‘authentically primitive’ the arts had to support the Occidental “set of qualities that correspond to their idea of traditional ‘primitive’ life.”⁴⁶ Therefore, it was necessary for the industry’s commercial success that Houston act preemptively to contradict any accusations of Inuit “civilization” or commercialism that would detract from the public reception of this new modern art form.

The first shift in Houston’s promotion of Inuit objects in the art-culture market are noticeable in the changes that occurred in his writing between 1951 and his subsequent

articles in 1952.⁴⁷ For example, in his 1951 article “Eskimo Sculptors” in *The Beaver*, the magazine published by the Hudson’s Bay Company, Houston described the Inuit as “carvers,” and called the objects they produced “Eskimo work,” or “handicrafts.” He describes the “Eskimo Project” as an “industry” and as an aid to the Eskimo economy, but not an ‘art.’⁴⁸ By 1952, however, Houston had begun using the terms Inuit “art” and “artists.”⁴⁹ In his article “In Search of Contemporary Eskimo Art,” Houston immediately sets about ‘naturalizing’ Inuit commercial art production for the reader, the indirect tourists of Inuit culture, by focusing “on the sensationalism of hunters-become-artists.”⁵⁰ After a lengthy introduction that discusses Inuit craftsmanship and the challenges of Arctic life, Houston writes, “When we ask an Eskimo if he carves art objects (sinourak) he replies “Certainly.”⁵¹ This is a significant departure from the 1951 article, where he describes the new industry in terms of a replacement economy for trapping in the summer months. At the end of the 1952 article, Houston adds that the Eskimo “is delighted with the opportunity to improve his living (and to avoid the necessity of Government relief) through the creation of art,” writing that seventy five per cent of the Inuit in the settlements he has visited have begun making Inuit art.⁵² Is this representation of the Inuit a form of “anti-conquest,” as described by Mary-Louise Pratt?⁵³ On the occasion of their entrance into the modern art world, the Inuit artists are portrayed as “natural” artists, who have developed towards this purpose for centuries, and who are “delighted” at the opportunity to not live off the Canadian taxpayer. The Eskimo is homogenized into the collective “they,” and further distilled into the iconic “he,” that as Pratt has demonstrated, is then presented in the timeless present tense.⁵⁴ In this way, carving is represented as a pre-given custom, a trait of all Inuit (or at least seventy-five percent of them). That so

many participate in carving activities because of the government's failure to provide other opportunities for subsistence is coded in the Inuit enthusiasm to fulfill his carving destiny. That Inuit have had an 'industry' is alluded to, when Houston writes, "That these [...] Eskimo cultural groups should be so creative is not surprising for they have always shown great ability in all the crafts they undertake."⁵⁵ However, by 1954 Houston rarely mentioned handicrafts in the media, and his writing began to demonstrate a deeper appreciation for the modern primitivist art market.

By the mid 1950's Inuit art had gained international recognition, markets had been created in the United States and works had been exhibited in the Gimpel Fils gallery in London, and Houston's writing reflected a keen understanding of this new audience.⁵⁶ First, he downplayed commercial production techniques, "Files and saws are now used to some extent but when those are not available the carver readily returns to his old ways,"⁵⁷ and "there is no copying of one another in this work."⁵⁸ Then, he located the Inuit in a timeless, primitive past, pondering, "What motivates this man? What inner spring of consciousness demands an art of him? Perhaps it is a clinging remnant of a forgotten civilization of the Asiatic continent where he almost certainly originated. Perhaps it is a pure worship of craftsmanship which he obviously holds in high esteem."⁵⁹ Houston guaranteed authenticity by associating the Inuit with ancient man, and by implying that the commodities of this commercial art are also the mystical fetishes of a paradoxically prehistoric modern people. Christopher Steiner has written, "Through their relations with Western buyers, urban traders have partial understanding of the world into which African Art objects are being moved. Their experience enables them to discern certain criteria

underlying Western definitions of authenticity. They know, through trial and error, which items are easiest to sell and they can predict which objects will fetch the highest market price. Using this refracted knowledge of Western taste, traders manipulate objects in order to meet perceived demand.”⁶⁰ As has been demonstrated, these statements are applicable to Houston’s position, and he was well aware of his power to authenticate Inuit art in the modernist art market.

Houston’s understanding of the modernist market is further illustrated in his romanticization of Inuit society. In 1954 he wrote, “The Eskimo possesses a cheerfulness and a tranquility of mind to a degree that seems almost unknown in our modern civilization. He finds ample time in his life of hardships to carve fine plastic forms that perfectly portray his cultural rise above his savage surroundings, and show his feelings about the people and the life around them.”⁶¹ These statements appealed to the modernist idealization of pastoral and primitive societies as more peaceful, and more pure than the industrialized world.⁶² For moderns, as Dean MacCannell has written, authenticity, the natural, and thus the ‘real’ are thought to be elsewhere: in other times, in other places, in other cultures, all thought to be both more pure and more simple than their own. The modern world is unstable and mutable, so the conception of the authentic world is necessarily static and distant, and ‘frozen’ in imagined romantic nostalgia.⁶³ In 1955 Houston wrote in *Canadian Eskimo Art*, “Even today, after a century of exposure to European culture, this primitive art persists, original, creative, and virile.”⁶⁴ As has been previously demonstrated, however, carving was in sharp decline before the time of prolonged contact with European culture, and may have only been resuscitated because

of European trade. Nor does this statement identify the art's most recent revitalization through Houston, the government, and their partners in the venture. This promotion facilitated the ability of the modernist buyers who desired 'authentic' primitive art to suppress their knowledge of the conditions of the art's production, allowing them to maintain the belief that the art they collected was both primitive and unique.⁶⁵

However fictitious, Houston's writings facilitated the acceptance of the art as 'authentic.' The Occidental expectations of 'authentic ethnic art' required the art to have had a 'traditional' use in daily life, ceremony, ritual, or especially a magical or religious purpose.⁶⁶ While the archeological findings regarding Inuit pre-contact carvings suggested that Eskimo carvings did once have shamanic, "magico-religious" functions, as discussed in the last chapter, Christian missionaries had long since banished any reference to shamanism in contemporary Inuit society, and centuries of contact and trade with Europeans had divorced carving practices from all of their traditional functions. Things made for a market were notably held in low esteem in the art world in the mid-century,⁶⁷ and critics and connoisseurs were "constantly on guard to extirpate all signs of the 'degradation' of a tradition."⁶⁸ Houston sidestepped this problem by making statements such as, "It is not easy either to analyze the motives of the living Eskimo artists, because they seldom give utterance to abstract thought."⁶⁹

The mythology Houston created was perpetuated in a number of secondary sources that accepted his writings as fact. In a review of Houston's *Canadian Eskimo Art*, Henry Strub repeats, "contact with white men has not yet affected their style which is not self-

consciously primitive but is in the living tradition. [...] Much of the work is evidently done just for fun, but some of it attempts and achieves a deeper meaning and inevitably calls for comparison with some of our greater contemporary sculptors such as Henry Moore.”⁷⁰ Martijn has noted several other sources who repeat Houston’s misinformation,⁷¹ and George Swinton has complained that “there has been published, reprinted, and quoted, a great deal of material, which was entirely misleading and which has established in the minds of even the not-so-gullible public a myth about various aspects of Eskimo carving that bears no resemblance to the facts.”⁷² He criticizes Houston and others for primitivizing the artists, not just the art; Farley Mowat and other fiction writers for romanticizing the Inuit; and anthropologist Edmund Carpenter, for idealizing the pre-contact Eskimo, and being biased against the acculturation of the modern Inuit.⁷³

Promoting Carving Practice in the North

In the Arctic Houston also significantly altered his promotional practices in the years following *Sunuyuksuk*, both in the production and in the purchase of works. For the Inuit, Houston wrote an “Eskimo Bulletin,” with new instructions, and some new suggestions. In the first introductory “bulletin,” printed in Ottawa in May of 1953, Houston explained that the government wanted to help the Inuit to “get a better understanding of what we are trying to do for them.”⁷⁴ While Martijn has already reprinted the second bulletin in one of his articles, it is particularly relevant here and bears repeating. Titled “Handicrafts,” Houston wrote:

Eskimos are becoming well-known for their cleverness in carving. The things some of you make are very good and many people in the white men’s countries

buy them and like them very much. Some things they like better than others and it is to let you know which things are best liked that we are writing this article.

The things they like best are carvings of people, animals and birds. They like the single pieces best, not the ones that are joined or pegged together. They want stone, ivory or bone carvings of people, bears, walrus, seals, caribou, whales, fish, otters, owls, ptarmigan, ducks, geese, seagulls and loons; stone kayaks with kayak-men and a few ivory or stone iglus. They like both large and small carvings but they want good ones, so all the things you make should be carefully and perfectly carved.⁷⁵

Two of the four pages of the handout are dedicated to illustrations (*fig. 4.2*), but it is interesting to note that while the handout is titled “handicrafts,” it contains only images of and suggestions for carvings. This is telling of Houston’s changing instructional style; while he still refers to “handicrafts” activities in reports to the Guild, many of those had been discontinued due to their unsaleability, and carvings were quickly gaining momentum.⁷⁶ Most significantly, on the page before the illustrations, and separated from the other text, Houston has written, “The pictures here are some of the things that have been made by Eskimos. They are not shown to have you copy them but to give you an idea of some things that are wanted. Make your own carvings the way you want but try hard to make them the best you can.”⁷⁷ Clearly, Houston was trying to avoid the pitfalls of *Eskimo Handicrafts* by encouraging the Inuit to be creative, but listing seventeen separate and specific subjects for carvings, complete with illustrations, may have been at variance with his intentions.

In any case, as became evident in the works and the growing fame of individual artists, Houston had significantly altered his promotion to encourage the increase in scale, the use of stone, the new style of carving, and finally, the creativity of the individual artist. Exhibitions in Montreal, as well as the aforementioned international ventures, began to publicize an emergence of “Masters.” Akeeaktashuk (Akeeaktashook), an artist originally from Port Harrison, who had been relocated to Craig Harbour, was one of the few carvers to begin his rise to fame even before *Eskimo Handicrafts*. His work helped to initiate the first interests in the new primitive art in 1950, and he was a featured artist in the Gimpel Fils exhibition in May of 1953, before his sculpture was included in the 1955 booklet *Canadian Eskimo Art*. His work also appears multiple times in Swinton’s definitive text *Sculpture of the Inuit*.⁷⁸ Another artist whose work appeared in both *Canadian Eskimo Art* and *Sculpture of the Inuit* was Amidilak of Kogaluk River, of the East Coast of the Hudson’s Bay, whose carvings were also featured in a number of publications between 1950 and 1953. Boosted by coverage in Houston’s articles, these artists became sought-after by private and public collectors alike, beginning a newfound, if slow to develop, appreciation for Inuit artists as individual talents, not just anonymous carvers.⁷⁹

The Middleman

As previously noted, Houston was the most prolific writer about Inuit art, the most influential promoter of Inuit art in the south, and the instructor with the widest reach in the north, and so he was positioned as a key mediator between all participants in the Inuit art industry. As the “middleman” between the artists and the art market, Houston negotiated a complex role as both purchaser and purveyor of Inuit art, and therefore held

a key position of influence over the direction of the market for contemporary Inuit art and the adjudication of its “authenticity.” Despite the growing influx of government employees, missionaries, RCMP officers and others into the North, communication between North and South after the Second World War remained “slow at the best of times, and nonexistent at the worst of times.”⁸⁰ Christopher Steiner has explained that in art, as in any large-scale commercial venture, the success of the middleman depends upon the separation between the producers and the consumers, and the middleman often restricts the direct interaction of these two groups.⁸¹ In addition, the middleman’s role is to “bridge the gap in communication,” but as Steiner points out, the mediator must be careful in this connection, and guard his role, so as to not make own position obsolete.⁸² Houston, positioned as the primary authority on Inuit art, used his writing both to connect artist and audience and to establish distance between them. Using Houston’s promotional articles about Inuit art from the 1950’s as an example, Potter has argued that armchair tourists of Inuit culture desired its souvenirs based primarily on Houston’s textual accounts, but because Houston never specified how to find the Inuit art, the separation was maintained.⁸³ Therefore, Houston, as author of the principal resource on Inuit art objects, preserved the position of his authority, which enabled him to direct the art according to his personal preferences and control the market by way of his promotional writing.

It has been shown that Houston affected the preferences of the market through his writings, and the production of carvers through his illustrations and texts, especially with *Sunuyuksuk*, and other instructional aids. Houston also mediated between the government

departments that funded the handicrafts experiment, and the Hudson's Bay Company who supplied material, and carried on the purchase of works in his absence. Eric Cohen observes that there are many processes under which a "middleman" can exert authority over the production of tourist arts: "They pass to the producers the preferences and demands of the market; control the quality of products; pass specifications of major marketing agents regarding the types, sizes, forms, finish, and colouration of products; and in some instances pass prototypes of objects, or their photos, to be copied by the local artisans."⁸⁴

To promote the art that Houston believed to be the most saleable in those tentative years, it was necessary that Houston further exert control over the buying practices of the Post managers, who before 1948 had purchased works according to their individual tastes and preferences. In 1953 Houston wrote *Eskimo Handicrafts: A Private Guide for the Hudson's Bay Company Manager*, to give instruction to the northern HBC staff in exactly what should be purchased for sale in the south. Houston introduced the new instructions by saying, "This guide will be of interest to you since certain aspects of purchasing and distributing have changed since the Guild first made its test purchase in 1948," and cites the new markets in the United States and Great Britain as examples of why the managers must do their part to "purchase as carefully and wisely as possible."⁸⁵ Houston explains at some length the pitfalls of the products such as those produced in response to *Eskimo Handicrafts*, which could not be sold either 1) because of poor or careless workmanship, or 2) undesirability. The objects of poor workmanship included the aforementioned rifle cases, sealskin slippers, poorly woven baskets, hasty stone

carvings, and cracked or warped ivory figurines. The undesirable products included sealskin slippers and other skin products, objects made of steel, wood, or other “foreign materials,” and especially “functional objects such as ashtrays, pen holders, match holders, and cribbage boards [which] have been our poorest selling items.”⁸⁶ Houston explains, “This is because our Agents and customers are looking for primitive work by a primitive people. The term primitive does not mean that the work is crude since many primitive people have extremely delicate crafts, but it is true that the ash tray, pen holder, and cribbage board do not represent the Eskimo culture and as a result there is little interest in buying that type of work.”⁸⁷

Houston then goes on to list the most desirable work in order, foregrounding carving as the most saleable and sought-after. He is specific about materials, citing only stone, ivory, and bone; shapes, the previously noted “single carving in fairly solid mass;” and subject matter, “people, walrus, bears, seals, caribou, birds, fish, otter, muskoxen, dogs, fox, igloos, kayaks, and lamps, are the most popular items in the order given.”⁸⁸ The list then standardizes prices according to subject matter, material, and scale, with a highest, lowest, and median price guide. Earlier it had been noted that Houston found it was difficult to standardize pricing, but while this practical assistance to traders was most likely a welcome addition to the guide, it was certainly only one of the difficulties that arose in relation to having so many different people purchasing work for the art market. Seven years after publication of the Company guide, Gordon Robertson declared,

Everyone realizes that the weak link in the organization of the industry is likely to be the original purchaser of the art. The wonder is that traders in remote locations

have been able to do such a good job in the circumstances. While they are given as much guidance as possible, they still have an extraordinarily difficult task. Judgment on prices is almost the easy part. The trader knows in general the kind of pieces that are enjoying the strongest market. His price structure must reflect those facts of life but he must also remain guiltless of the charge that he tells the Eskimos what to carve.⁸⁹

The Aesthetic Appeal of Inuit Art

One of the factors that eased these difficulties and contributed to Inuit art's successful promotion was its aesthetic accessibility, the ease at which meaning could be deciphered from its forms. In contrast to the "primitive" arts of other Native North Americans, this contemporary art form was easily "understood" by the public. Free from "abstracted" or codified symbolic meanings, the reductive and expressive forms, and the recognizable subject matter, catered to the primitivist market. As Paula Ben-Amos wrote in 1973, "Tourist art [...] operates on a minimal system which must make meaning accessible across visual boundary lines. In order to do this, certain formal and semantic changes must take place; [...] reduction in the semantic level of traditional forms, expansion of neo-traditional and secular motifs, and utilization of adjunct communicative systems."⁹⁰ Ruth Phillips concurs that the "logic of consumerism" in a cross-cultural art market encourages producers to use iconic, and generic, imagery.⁹¹

Furthermore, Eric Cohen has explained that the trend towards naturalism and recognition in tourist art is often accompanied by an opposite trend towards abstraction, sometimes influenced by Modern art styles. In contrast to the development of easily recognizable traits, individual "ethnic" artists develop personal styles characterized by individualism.⁹²

Thus, as Gerhard Hoffman has explained, Inuit art appealed not only to the wider public, who recognized the overt iconic imagery, but also to the elite modernist primitivists, for whom aesthetic symbolism is linked to the understanding that in art there are levels of difference in appreciation of the art object that go beyond what is expressed on the surface. “The symbolic message of art is brought out only indirectly, through form and its tensions and ambivalences.”⁹³ Clifford also notes that in the art world, critics and connoisseurs assign value based on more than just aesthetic criteria, as the concept of what is aesthetically pleasing is mutable and can change rapidly.⁹⁴ Other evidence of Inuit arts acceptance in the modernist primitive art market can be found in the many comparisons between Inuit artworks and artists with Western art “masterpieces” or “masters.” In a book review of *Canadian Eskimo Art*, Strub writes, “The Eskimo sculptures from life, but not in realistic detail such as is found in Rodin. It is more reminiscent of Maillol showing love of life, of form, of texture and of rhythm. It is a strange coincidence that Eskimo artists have independently arrived at so many conclusions that we associate with what is most modern in art.”⁹⁵

Of course, this is not a strange coincidence, but a matter of design. Houston was a modernist artist, whose exposure to the Group of Seven, life-long interest in “primitive peoples,” and arts education in Paris placed him in an extremely receptive position to the precepts of mid-century modernist primitivism. Houston had studied art in France in 1947, at a time when, as Clifford has noted, primitive art had begun to be closely associated with modern art of the avant-garde.⁹⁶ Martijn has written that “as an artist in his own right, and having been imbued at art school with all of the values and ideas

peculiar to Western art tradition, he could not help but interpret Eskimo carving wholly on the basis of what his training had taught him. Almost unconsciously, Houston ended up imposing his Euro-Canadian art concepts on the acquiescent Eskimo carvers who benefited from his hints and advice by making their handiwork as acceptable as possible to southern buyers.”⁹⁷ In this process the Inuit artist “turns modernist primitivism into indigenous modernity.”⁹⁸ Because of Houston’s artistic influence, his “suggestions” and instructions, it is clear that it was not only primitivism that was appealing about mid-twentieth century Inuit art, but the modernism of it as well.

¹ C.J.G. Molson to Clifford P. Wilson, January 20, 1949. CGCQ [C10 D1 024]

² Eric Cohen, “Investigating Tourist Arts,” *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 11, No.3, (Special Issue 1984), 2.

³ Dorothy Jean Ray, *Eskimo Art: Tradition and Innovation in Northern Alaska* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 59.

⁴ Ian Lindsay, “A Look Back at the Early Days: Some Personal Thoughts,” *The First Passionate Collector: The Ian Lindsay Collection of Inuit Art* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1990), 21.

⁵ Ian Lindsay, “A Look Back,” 21.

⁶ Nelson H. H. Graburn, “Inuit Art and the Expression of Eskimo Identity,” *The American Review of Canadian Studies*, Vol. XVII, No. 1, (Spring 1987), 52.

⁷ Graburn, “Expression of Eskimo Identity,” 52.

⁸ “How to Make It: Artist Writes Eskimo Guidebook,” *Toronto Globe and Mail*, August 12, 1950. LAC [RG85 Vol. 108 File: 255-1 pt.1]

⁹ “Artist Finds Good Market for Eskimo Handicrafts Industry,” *Montreal Gazette*, August 12, 1950, LAC [RG85 Vol. 108 File: 255-1 pt.1]; “Artist Sets Up First Industry for the Eskimos,” *Ottawa Citizen*, August 12, 1950, LAC [RG85 Vol. 108 File: 255-1 pt.1]

¹⁰ James A. Houston, *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts*, (Montreal: Canadian Handicrafts Guild with the approval of the Department of Resources and Development, North West Territories Branch, 1951), 1.

¹¹ Helga Goetz, *The Development of Inuit Art* (Hull: The Department of Indian Affairs, 1985), 17.

¹² Helga Goetz “Inuit Art: A History of Government Involvement,” *In the Shadow of the Sun: Perspectives on Contemporary Native Art* (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1993), 362.

¹³ Ibid.

¹³ Goetz, *Development*, 20.

¹⁴ Memorandum from J.W. Burton to J.C. Cantley, March 6, 1951. LAC [RG85 Vol. 108 File: 255-1 pt.1]

¹⁵ “A Letter from the Government to the Eskimo People: The Caribou are Very Valuable to the Eskimos,” O.S. Finnie, Director of the Northwest Territories And Yukon Branch, Department of the Interior, Ottawa, April 1st 1924. In Richard Diubaldo, *The Government of Canada and the Inuit: 1900- 1967*. (Ottawa: Research Branch, Corporate Policy, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1985), 55-56.

¹⁶ Diubaldo, *The Government*, 57.

¹⁷ Letter from G.E.B. Sinclair to I.M. Plummer, March 6, 1951. NAC [RG85 Vol. 108 File: 255-1 pt.1]

¹⁸ Goetz, *Development*, 15.

¹⁹ Goetz, *Development*, 17.

²⁰ Houston, *Sunuyuksuk*, 1.

²¹ Goetz, “Inuit Art,” 362.

²² Nelson H. H. Graburn, “Authenticity,” 153.

²³ For a sample of the distribution by RCMP officers in the North West Territories see Appendix C.

²⁴ Goetz, *Development*, 16.

²⁵ Letter from G.E.B. Sinclair to A. Lighthall, May 2, 1951. LAC [RG85 Vol. 108 File: 255-1 pt.1]; Letter from I.M. Plummer to G.E.B. Sinclair, May 14, 1951. LAC [RG85 Vol. 108 File: 255-1 pt.1]

²⁶ These figures are estimates by Goetz, and include prices paid by the Guild, the HBC, the Catholic and Anglican missions, and military personnel. Goetz, *Development*, 22.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ernest S. Burch, Jr., “Canadian Inuit Culture 1800- 1950,” *In the Shadow of the Sun: Perspectives on Contemporary Native Art* (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1993), 305.

²⁹ Nelson H. H. Graburn has recorded that in Sugluk, (Salluit) an Inuk told him that before soapstone was in regular use for carvings, in the early 1940’s, he had carved some souvenirs out of a used soapstone pot when he ran out of ivory, and sold them to the whalers. The Hudson’s Bay Company would not purchase them at the time, but he could trade them to sailors, so subsequently a number of other Eskimos also carved soapstone figurines for trade. Graburn, “Eskimo Art: The Eastern Canadian Arctic,” *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Third World*, ed. Nelson H.H. Graburn (Berkeley: University of California Press), 42-43.

³⁰ Goetz, *Development of Inuit Art*, 13.

³¹ Darlene Coward Wight, “The Handicrafts Experiment, 1949-53,” *The First Passionate Collector: The Ian Lindsay Collection of Inuit Art* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1990), 71.

³² James Houston, “In Search of Contemporary Eskimo Art,” *Canadian Art*, Vol. IX, No.3 (Spring 1952), 104.

³³ George Swinton, *Sculpture of the Inuit*, 3rd revised edition (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1999), 142.

³⁴ Lindsay himself was excited by the new tendency towards escalating scale; he wrote that he believed even the smallest carvings had an “inherent monumentality” that could

only benefit from enlargement. Ian Lindsay, "A Look Back at the Early Days: Some Personal Thoughts," *The First Passionate Collector: The Ian Lindsay Collection of Inuit Art* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1990), 21.

³⁵ Edmund Carpenter has often repeated the assertion that Inuit art was not "Eskimo" at all, saying stone carving and printmaking were "White" and "inauthentic." See Carpenter, *Eskimo Realities* (New York: Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, 1973), 195.

³⁶ James Houston, quoted in Wight, "The Handicrafts Experiment," 83.

³⁷ When whales were declared an endangered species in 1972, the market for whalebone pieces dropped 70 %. Graburn, "the Expression of Inuit Identity," 59.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 61.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁴⁰ James Houston, *Eskimo Handicrafts: A Private Guide for the Hudson's Bay Company Manager*, (1953). CGCQ [C10 D1 055]

⁴¹ Marie Routledge and Ingo Hessel, "Contemporary Inuit Sculpture: An Approach to the Medium, the Artists, and Their Work," *In the Shadow of the Sun: Perspectives on Contemporary Native Art* (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1993), 447.

⁴² James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 242.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 223.

⁴⁴ Swinton, *Sculpture of the Inuit*, 107.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Jacqueline Delange Fry, "Contemporary Arts in Non-Western Societies," *artscanada*, special issue (December 1971/January 1972), 96.

⁴⁷ For a discussion of the movement of objects in the "art-culture" system, See Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 215- 251.

⁴⁸ James A. Houston, "Eskimo Sculptors," *The Beaver* (June 1951), 34-39.

⁴⁹ James A. Houston, "In Search of Contemporary Eskimo Art," *Canadian Art*, Vol. IX, No. 3 (Spring 1952), 99- 104.

⁵⁰ Christine Lalonde, "Status 2000: Presenting Contemporary Inuit Art in the Gallery Setting," ed. Lynda Jessup, *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery*, (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2002), 195.

⁵¹ Houston, "In Search," 99.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 104.

⁵³ Mary- Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 7.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁵⁵ Houston, "In Search," 99.

⁵⁶ For a discussion of the Gimpel Fils exhibition and other mid-century exhibitions see Norman Vorano, "Inuit Art in a Qallunaat World: Museums, Modernism and the Popular Imaginary, 1949-1962" (Ph.D. diss., University of Rochester, 2006).

⁵⁷ Houston, "Contemporary Art of the Eskimo," 44.

⁵⁸ Houston, "In Search," 100.

⁵⁹ Houston, "Contemporary Art of the Eskimo," 43.

- ⁶⁰ Christopher Steiner, *African Art in Transit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 131.
- ⁶¹ Houston, "Contemporary Art of the Eskimo," 41-43.
- ⁶² Shelly Errington, *The Death of Authentic Primitive Art and Other Tales of Progress* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 30.
- ⁶³ Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 3.
- ⁶⁴ James A. Houston, *Canadian Eskimo Art*, (Ottawa: Ministry of Northern Affairs and National Resources, 1955), 7.
- ⁶⁵ Ruth Phillips, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900* (Seattle: University of Washington Press; Montreal, Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 7.
- ⁶⁶ Fry, "Contemporary Arts," 96.
- ⁶⁷ Shelley Errington, *Death*, 137.
- ⁶⁸ Fry, "Contemporary Arts," 96.
- ⁶⁹ Houston, *Canadian Eskimo Art*, 27.
- ⁷⁰ Henry E. Strub, "New Books on the Arts: Canadian Eskimo Art," *Canadian Art*, Vol. XII, No.1, (Autumn 1954), 32.
- ⁷¹ Charles A. Martijn, "Canadian Eskimo Carving in Historical Perspective," *Anthropos*, Vol. LIX, (1964), 578.
- ⁷² Swinton "Eskimo Carving Today," *The Beaver*, (Spring 1958), 41.
- ⁷³ In 1973 anthropologist Edmund Carpenter published the book *Eskimo Realities*, describing the people, their way of life and beliefs as they were in the "prehistoric" and "historic" periods, in opposition to the "realities" of 1973. The book opens with a dramatic romanticization of the Arctic, and ends with generalizing statements about religious beliefs, artistic anonymity, and what an "Eskimo artist" is. In his critique of stone carving and printmaking as "non-Inuit" art forms, in contrast to the pre-contact and therefore "authentic" forms, he writes; "That Eskimo artists have the desire and confidence to improvise is a happy situation. I regret, however, that the new ideas and materials they employ are supplied by us, not selected by them. We let the Eskimo know what we like, then congratulate them on their successful imitation of us." Edmund Carpenter, *Eskimo Realities* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1973), 2-4.
- ⁷⁴ James Houston, "Foreword," *Eskimo Bulletin*, Vol.1, No.1 (Ottawa, May 1953), 2. CGCQ [C10 D1 056]
- ⁷⁵ James Houston, "Handicrafts," *Eskimo Bulletin*, Vol.1, No.2 (Ottawa, June 1953), 1. CGCQ [C10 D1 056]
- ⁷⁶ The Houston's were still involved in the purchase and promotion of "women's work," mostly sealskin appliqué wall hangings and some clothing items. These efforts were reported in a November 3, 1951 article in the *Montreal Star*, "Finds Cold Arctic Inhabited By Warm-Hearted People," in an interview with Alma Houston. CGCQ [C10 D1 038]
- ⁷⁷ James Houston, "Handicrafts," 2.
- ⁷⁸ See Swinton, *Sculpture of the Inuit*, illustration nos. 72, 153, 274, 301, 503, and 840.
- ⁷⁹ For a discussion of those "famous" carvers whose work appears in the Ian Lindsay Collection, see Darlene Coward Wight, "The Handicrafts Experiment," *The First*

Passionate Collector: The Ian Lindsay Collection of Inuit Art (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1990), 85- 86.

⁸⁰ Virginia Watt, "In Retrospect," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 3, (Summer 1988), 24.

⁸¹ Steiner, *African Art*, 25.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 131.

⁸³ Kristen K. Potter, "James Houston, Armchair Tourism, and the Marketing of Inuit Art." In *Native American Art in the Twentieth Century*, ed. W. Jackson Rushing (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), 44.

⁸⁴ Eric Cohen, "Investigating Tourist Arts," *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 11, No.3, (Special Issue 1984), 2.

⁸⁵ James Houston, *Eskimo Handicrafts: A Private Guide for the Hudson's Bay Company Manager*, (1953), 2. CGCQ [C10 D1 055]

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ R. Gordon Robertson, "The Carving Industry of Arctic Canada," *The Commerce Journal*, (Spring 1960), 53.

⁹⁰ Paula Ben-Amos, "Pidgen Languages and Tourist Arts,' (manuscript), in Nelson H.H. Graburn, " 'I like things to look more different than that stuff did': An Experiment in Cross-Cultural Appreciation," in *Art in Society: Studies in Style, Culture, and Aesthetics*, eds. M. Greenhalgh and J.V.S Megaw (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), 66.

⁹¹ Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 10.

⁹² Cohen, "Investigating Tourist Arts," 5.

⁹³ Hoffman, "The Aesthetics of Inuit Art," 391.

⁹⁴ Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 223.

⁹⁵ Strub, "New Books," 32.

⁹⁶ Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 242.

⁹⁷ Martijn, "Canadian Eskimo Carving," 577.

⁹⁸ Ruth B. Phillips, "The Turn of the Primitive: Modernism and Indigeneity in Settler Art Histories," (paper presented at *Annotating Art's Histories: Exiles, Diasporas, and Strangers*, Institute of International Visual Arts, London, 6-7 July 2006), 3.

V. Conclusion

As I stated in the introductory chapter, the purpose of this thesis has been to recognize the impact that James Houston's 1951 booklet *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts* had on changes in the promotion and production of Inuit handicrafts and carvings during the 'dawn' of Contemporary Inuit art. I have demonstrated that the booklet, while often referred to, has historically been regarded as inconsequential, due to its negative reception in the South and the poor quality of the resulting production in the North. However, my main argument has been that the booklet, as an extension of Houston's activities in the beginning, and, later on, as a catalyst of change that ultimately separated the souvenir crafts from the more successful stone sculpture, has had a greater impact on the development of contemporary Inuit art than has been previously considered.

To demonstrate this, in the second chapter I examined the economic, social, and political climate that made the introduction of an Inuit handicrafts industry both necessary and viable in the North. The Northwest Territories Branch of the Department of Mines and Resources, the Hudson's Bay Company, and the Canadian Handicrafts Guild had all been nominally involved in developing crafts and carvings in the Eastern Canadian Arctic prior to the onset of World War II, and each group had its own motivations for renewing handicrafts production following the war. However, as I have shown, these three organizations remained separate, until in 1948 they were united under the efforts of James Houston. In that chapter I explored Houston's personal and professional background, and demonstrated that as an European-trained artist, with a life-long interest

in 'primitive' art and peoples, Houston was the "the right man at the right time"¹ to unite the philanthropic goals of the Guild with the financial support of the government and the influential power of the HBC in the Canadian Eastern Arctic.

Building upon that foundation, in the third chapter of this thesis I then examined the difficulties that the collaborators faced in relation to this new venture, and how James Houston addressed these obstacles. The greatest difficulty was that the Inuit had been exposed only marginally to Euro-Canadian culture prior to the mid-twentieth century, and thus did not know what types of handicrafts and carvings to produce to appeal to a southern market.² However, as I have shown, Houston had been successful in his efforts to stimulate initial handicrafts production between 1948 and 1951, and in light of these successes it was reasonable for Houston and his collaborators to believe *Sunuyuksuk* would be a favorable solution and a positive supplement to his ongoing instructional activities. In the third chapter I also examined the historical precedents for carving practices and trade, beginning with the functions of pre-contact carving and its subsequent re-positioning in the contact era. I then looked at the most recent precursors to the booklet; the experimental purchases Houston made in 1949-1950, the different instructional techniques he utilized prior to 1951, and finally, the Alaskan Native Arts and Crafts catalogues. I was able to contribute to the research on this period through discoveries I made about the relation of *Eskimo Handicrafts* to ANAC catalogues, and I proposed some new theories regarding the inclusion of the 'totem' imagery in the booklet. In addition, through a study of the content of the booklet and the accompanying 'suggestions,' I was able to draw new comparisons between existing objects and

Houston's illustrations, and to investigate a variety of the more remarkable inclusions in the booklet. This chapter facilitated a greater understanding of the booklet as an extension of Houston's existing instructional methods, and as such, also provided some insight into the market for Inuit handicrafts, as it had been perceived prior to *Sunuyuksuk*'s creation.

In the fourth chapter it was first necessary to detail the immediate effects of the guide on production and the market, for as I noted, the response to the booklet was abundant, but not what had been hoped for or expected. As I explained, while there were many noticeable benefits to the Inuit from the handicrafts industry, *Eskimo Handicrafts* and its resulting productions were received very poorly by the government and the public. However, at the same time, stone carving was becoming popular as a new, modern, primitive art form, and major changes were also thus beginning to take place in the North. Faced with the complete failure of *Sunuyuksuk*, and the growing acceptance of stone carving by national and international art cognoscenti, I demonstrated that Houston, acting as 'middleman' between North and South, was able to use his position to promote Inuit art and artists as modern, neo-primitive artists. Houston's new focus on the development and promotion of the talents of individual artists are tied to his reaction to the failure of handicrafts, and, on a deeper level, to his longer interest in modernist primitivism. I have shown that as the primary contact between North and South in relation to handicrafts developments, Houston was positioned as the key influence on both the white administrators and the Eskimo producers. Because of his authoritative position, he was able to control the direction of the initial handicrafts experiment, and later, was capable of dramatically altering that course of action for the eventual benefit of

all those involved. His ambassadorship for the industry led to an unprecedented collaboration between the government, the Inuit, the trade industry, and a philanthropic organization, each with very different agendas in relation to Inuit handicrafts development. Of course, no industry could become self-supporting based on promotion alone, no matter how influential or charismatic its promoter. Perhaps the most important factor, considered briefly in the conclusion of the fourth chapter, is that contemporary Inuit art created, and has maintained, simultaneous appreciation by the general public and amongst discerning modernist art collectors. I have explained this sustaining allure of Inuit art as being basically two-fold: first, because it was more aesthetically accessible than many other neo-primitive art forms, and second, that it held appeal as a modern art for its ability to be read on many levels of meaning and significance.

One of the main underlying purposes of this thesis has been to identify the nature of outsider influence over commercial art production in the formative years of contemporary Inuit art and to locate *Sunuyuksuk* within this larger, lesser known history. I have done so by situating the booklet within a broader social, economic, and political context, and by positioning it chronologically within a long history of outside intervention on Inuit crafts and carvings production. However, it was not my intention to create an exhaustive study of all of the factors that contributed to the emergence of Inuit fine art practices during the “handicraft experiment,” and as such, I would like to acknowledge that there are other elements that may be considered influential during the development period. In my research I have encountered a number of complementary factors that may have conspired with the areas addressed by this thesis to cause the dramatic shift from handicrafts and

'curio' carvings. One reoccurring example is the way in which Inuit art was promoted and marketed in opposition to 'Indian' arts and crafts. In the formative years of Inuit art, great care was taken not just to dissociate Inuit art from the handicraft market, but specifically from the market of native craft. In the earliest articles, when Inuit art came precariously close to being exposed as the much-maligned genre of "souvenir," Houston worked to set Inuit art apart from Indian crafts: "We also see in his work a reflection of playfulness and good humour- a quality rarely found in our Indian arts. The surge of civilization that swept the continent in the past century stamped out many Indian ritualistic tribal arts, and later replaced them with meaningless souvenir trade. But their geographic remoteness protected the Eskimos, who were by-passed, and the link between the past and present in their art is yet unbroken."³ This is just one possible avenue that I have identified for further research, and I have no doubt that many other factors exist that I am not aware of, and that will someday be illuminated.

Dorothy Jean Ray noted in *Eskimo Art* that both Charles A. Martijn and George Swinton remarked that they still do not know "how it all happened," but this "unprecedented art style" resulted in something which even the most extravagant dreams or best-planned project could not have anticipated or achieved.⁴ Post managers and administrators in the Hudson's Bay Company had expressed doubt over its success in the formative years,⁵ and even Houston underestimated the potential as a neo-primitive modern art, but within a short number of years the industry began to grow exponentially. By 1953, the end of the "Handicrafts Experiment," Inuit art had been catapulted into the international art market. The Guild was overwhelmed with the amount of work and the volume of sales, and other

outlets had to found by Houston in the United States to accommodate the demand for Inuit art. As Marybelle Mitchell has reported, while the troika of the Guild, the government, and the Hudson's Bay Company had laid the foundation of the carving industry in the 1950's, it is under Inuit cooperative control that that industry has become a multi-million dollar business.⁶ And it is fortunate that the venture has been such a success; the handicrafts and carvings trade was one of the few initiatives supported by the Canadian government to alleviate the problems that colonial expansion into the North and the decline of the fur trade had caused. Inuit art is now internationally recognized, and while the number of Inuit participating in the arts today is much less than 'seventy-five percent' of the population, fine art, and handicrafts to as lesser degree, are still profitable ventures in the North. Cape Dorset, for example, has been recently declared Canada's most artistic community, with the highest per capita number of artists than anywhere else in the country.⁷

As I stated in the introduction, ironically, the failure of *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts* now appears to have had a constructive and beneficial impact on the development of contemporary Inuit art. While handicraft production – the creation of “useful and acceptable” objects like parkas, mitts, and slippers – is still an important industry in the North, the real success of Inuit art has been its separation from craft and its evolution as a “fine art”: from miniature ivories to large stone carvings, wall hangings, drawings and prints. While the industry may have gradually evolved to the dominant stone carving and printmaking of today, perhaps the most immediate shift occurred in Houston's thinking about and reaction to the industry. While his contributions to the development of Inuit art

are many, Houston's most significant contribution in this transitional period was in how quickly he perceived the limitations of the souvenir trade, changed direction, and began the revitalization of Inuit artistic production in the formative years of contemporary Inuit art.

¹ Virginia Watt, "The Beginning," *Canadian Guild of Crafts, Quebec* (Montreal: Canadian Guild of Crafts Quebec), 12.

² Nelson H. H. Graburn, "Inuit Art and the Expression of Eskimo Identity," *The American Review of Canadian Studies*, Vol. XVII, No. 1 (Spring 1987), 51.

³ James Houston, "In Search of Contemporary Eskimo Art," *Canadian Art*, Vol. IX, No. 3 (Spring 1952), 99.

⁴ Dorothy Jean Ray, *Eskimo Art: Tradition and Innovation in Northern Alaska* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 59.

⁵ Irving Gardiner to J. W. Anderson, April 21, 1950, reprinted in Darlene Coward Wight, "The Handicrafts Experiment, 1949-53," *The First Passionate Collector: The Ian Lindsay Collection of Inuit Art* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1990), 63.

⁶ Marybelle Mitchell, "Social, Economic, and Political Transformation Among Canadian Inuit from 1950- 1988," *In the Shadow of the Sun: Perspectives on Contemporary Native Art* (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1993), 343.

⁷ "Cape Dorset Named Most 'Artistic' Municipality" *cbc.ca*, February 13, 2006, <http://www.cbc.ca/story/arts/national/2006/02/13/report-artistic-capedorset.html> (Web Accessed on August 14, 2006).

Figures

All references to *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts* in this section refer to the booklet written and illustrated by James A. Houston, with translation by Sam Ford and Frederica Woodrow, published by the Canadian Handicrafts Guild and the Department of Resources and Development in January of 1951. The illustrations were photographed from the copy in the archives of the Canadian Guild of Crafts Quebec.

The booklet measures 20.0 x 14.5 cm. The illustrations are each an 11.0 cm square.

The suggestions, which were written in syllabics below each illustration and translated in English on the last two pages of the booklet, are listed in English in Appendix A.

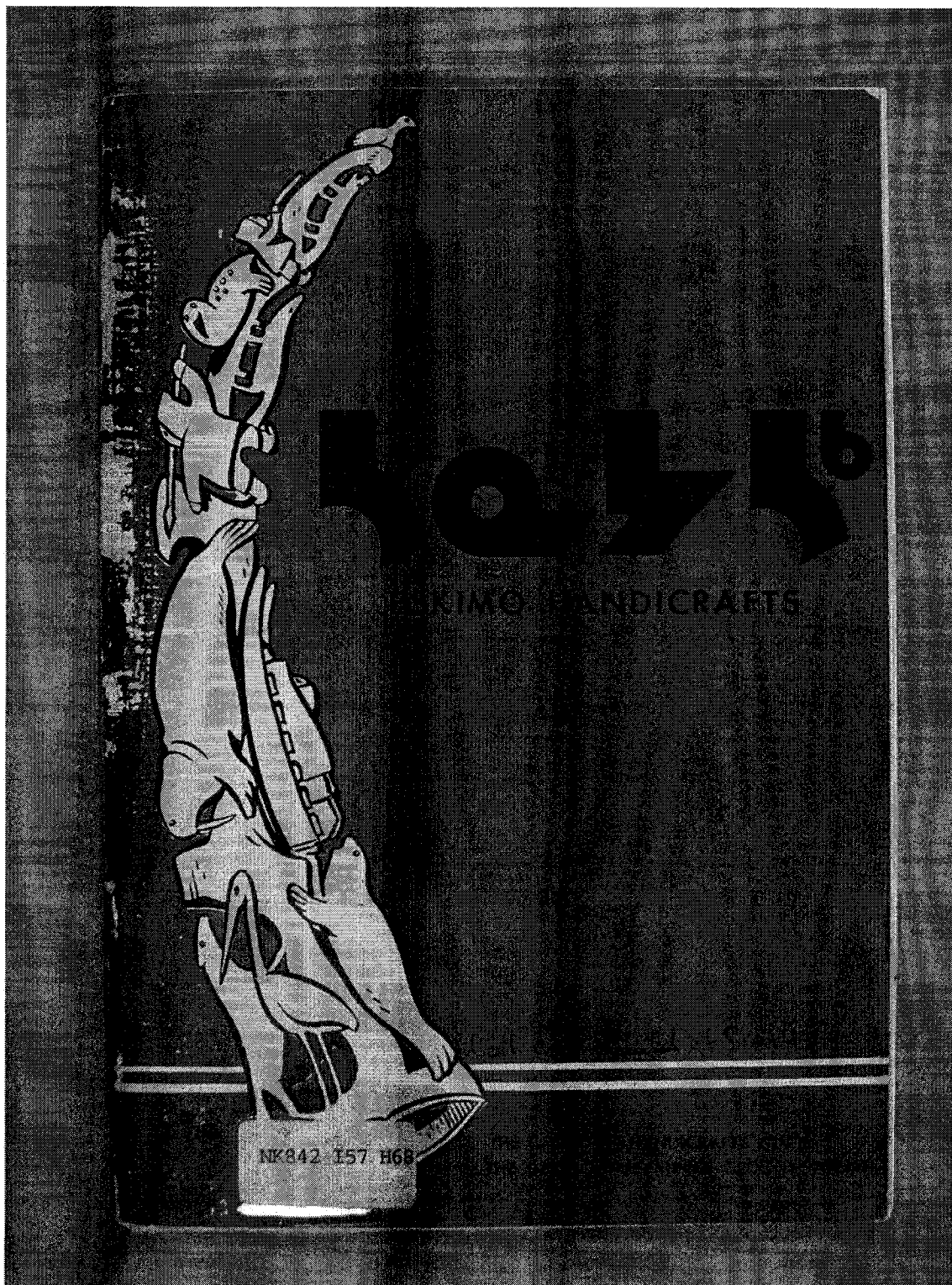


Fig. 1.1. *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts* cover page, 1951.

aup

1951



T HIS PAMPHLET IS PUBLISHED BY THE CANADIAN HANDICRAFTS GUILD WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT NORTH WEST TERRITORIES BRANCH.

It is the first of a series to be published in Eskimo for the people of the Canadian Arctic, to encourage them in their native arts. It is hoped that these illustrations will suggest to them some of their objects which are useful and acceptable to the white man.

Although the articles illustrated are not produced in all regions of the Arctic they are purely Eskimo and could be made wherever materials are available.

These suggestions should in no way limit the Eskimo.

He should be encouraged to make variations and introduce new ideas into his handicrafts.

However, if the articles are to be saleable to the South, a few points are important:—

1. All articles should be as clean as possible.
2. Skins should have all smell removed. Native tanning is not acceptable.
3. All sewing must be done by hand and sinew should be used when available.
4. Ivory should be aged one year or more, or else it has a tendency to warp or crack.
5. Inlay in ivory should be of tough consistency or it will fall out in a short time.
6. Stone objects should not have delicate projecting portions which may be easily broken.

The Eskimo should be encouraged to use only the materials native to his land, such as ivory, stone, bone, skins, grass, copper, etc. The introduction of wood, cloth, and metals into his art destroys the true Eskimo quality and places him in competition with craftsmen elsewhere who have a complete mastery of the materials.

The translation of the Eskimo text beneath each illustration will be found at the end of the pamphlet.

Fig. 1.2. Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts, 1951, page 1.



Fig. 1.3. James A. Houston, 1985. Photo: The Writer's Union of Canada, "James Houston." (Photo: 1985, A. Watson)http://www.writersunion.ca/h/housto_j.htm (Web Accessed on August 02, 2006).

SUGGESTIONS FOR ESKIMO HANDICRAFTS

The native work of the Eskimo is unique in the world to-day. It is a survival of crafts that were carried on by very early man, and that for countless generations have been adapted to the life they live in the cold Northern climate.

In our civilization we have lost much of the skill that our ancestors had in adapting to their needs the things they found at hand.

In any work we do with the Eskimo, it would be well to remember this and that we should encourage them to use their own materials and methods rather than to imitate ours. We have the responsibility of not letting them forget their own arts.

The foundation of all such work should be its usefulness to themselves. (Fur clothing is better for them than cloth. Sinew sewing is better than any machine stitching).

Things made for sale are much more attractive when the native character is kept.

-- They must also be of good quality and workmanship. Articles fulfilling these conditions are sought after by sportsmen and tourists.

BASKETRY: Simple, useful shapes are best in basketry. (Willow root is a good material to use, and in most districts is preferable to grass). As a rule, imitations of objects should be avoided. The work should be even, and as fine as the makers can do. If handles are made, they should be strong.

CARVING: Small models of their own native figures, animals and utensils are interesting. Ivory carvings suitable for brooches, pendants, clips or buckles.- Beads.- Bangles.- Spoons and ladles.- Small boxes.- Needlecases.- Scissors protectors.- Napkin rings.- are all suitable.

SOAP-STONE WORK: Small bowls and ash trays, in the manner of their own cooking-pots and lamps.

FUR AND SKIN WORK: Furs should be well cured if intended for warmer places. -- Boots and parkas for their own wear, and for trappers and sportsmen. -- Purses.- Mats.- Belts of decorative leather designs. Sewing should all be by sinew, if possible to obtain; and always by hand, not machine.

A good way to encourage skilled work is to hold little exhibitions of the people's work, and judge it for quality, encouraging all exhibitors to improve.

These suggestions were drawn up by the Indian and Eskimo Committee of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, in consultation with the National Museum of Canada.

Further inquiries should be addressed to:

Canadian Handicrafts Guild,
2025 Peel Street,
Montreal, P.Q.

Suggestions added by Colonel P.D. Baird: Soap-stone pipes; Duckskin (elder or oldsquaw), or ground squirrel, or weasel rugs or coverlets; Decorated duffel parkas.

Fig. 2.1. *Suggestions for Eskimo Handicrafts*. Revised edition. Montreal: Canadian Handicrafts Guild, 1947. Canadian Guild of Crafts, Quebec, Archives [C10 D1 022].

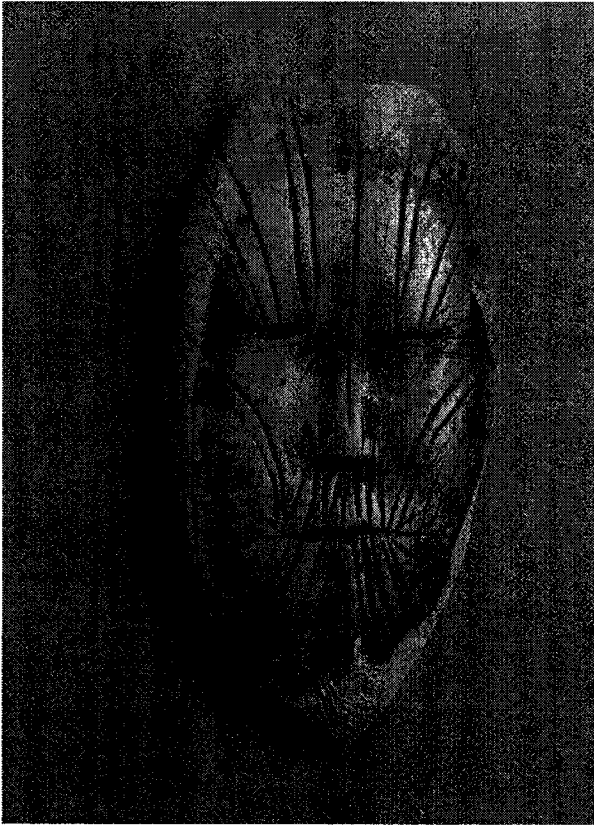


Fig. 3.1. Early Palaeo-Eskimo
(ca. 1700 B.C.)
Devon Island (True Love Lowlands)
Miniature Mask
Ivory 5.4 x 2.9 x 0.8 cm
Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC FIND)
In Hessel, *Inuit Art: An Introduction*, 1998,
fig.8, page 12.

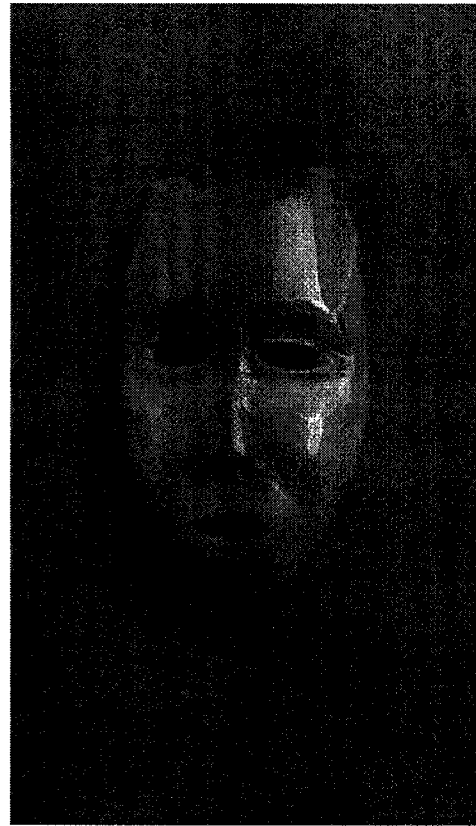
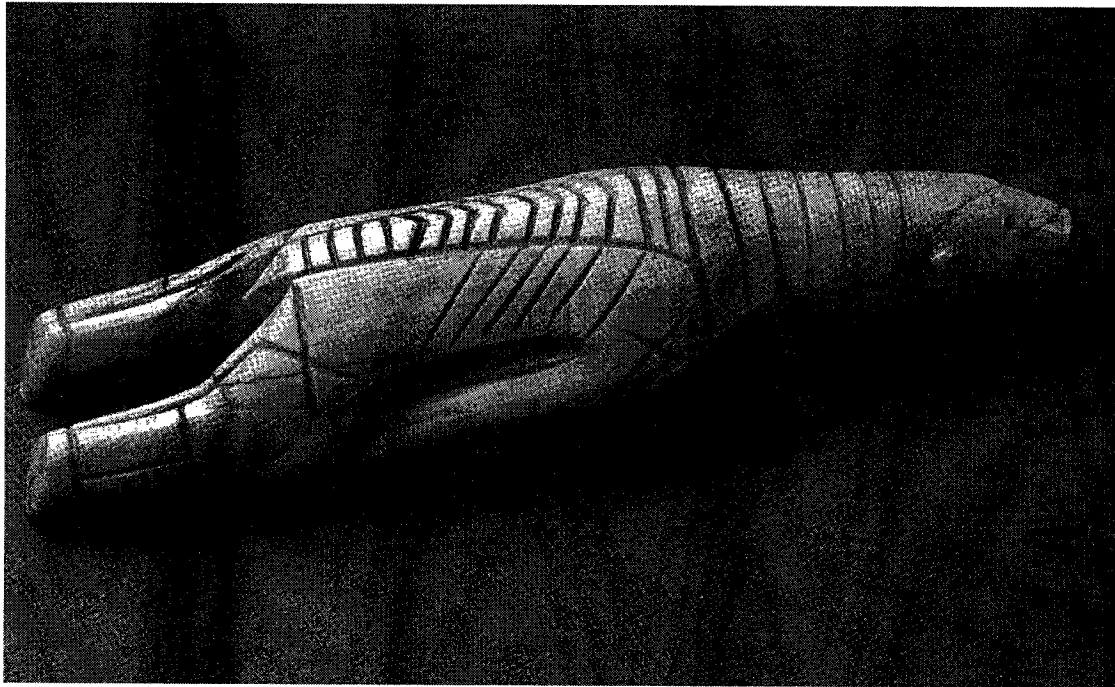


Fig. 3.2. Early Dorset Culture
(ca. 500-1 B.C.)
Hudson Strait (Tyara site)
Miniature Mask
Ivory 3.5 x 2.2 x 0.7
CMC (KkFb-7: 308)
In Hessel, *Inuit Art: An Introduction*, 1998,
fig.8, page 12.



*Fig. 3.3. Middle Dorset Culture
(A.D. 1-600)
Igloolik Area.*

Floating or Flying Bear
Ivory 13.8 x 3.6 x 2.9
CMC (NhHd-1: 2655)

In Hessel, *Inuit Art: An Introduction*, 1998, fig.8, page 15.



Fig. 3.4. Late Dorset Culture
 Igloolik
 600- 1300 A.D.
 Face Cluster
 Antler, 20.3 cm long
 Cambridge University Museum of
 Archeology and Anthropology (1950.411A)
 In Swinton, *Sculpture of the Inuit*, 1991,
 fig. 143, page 112.

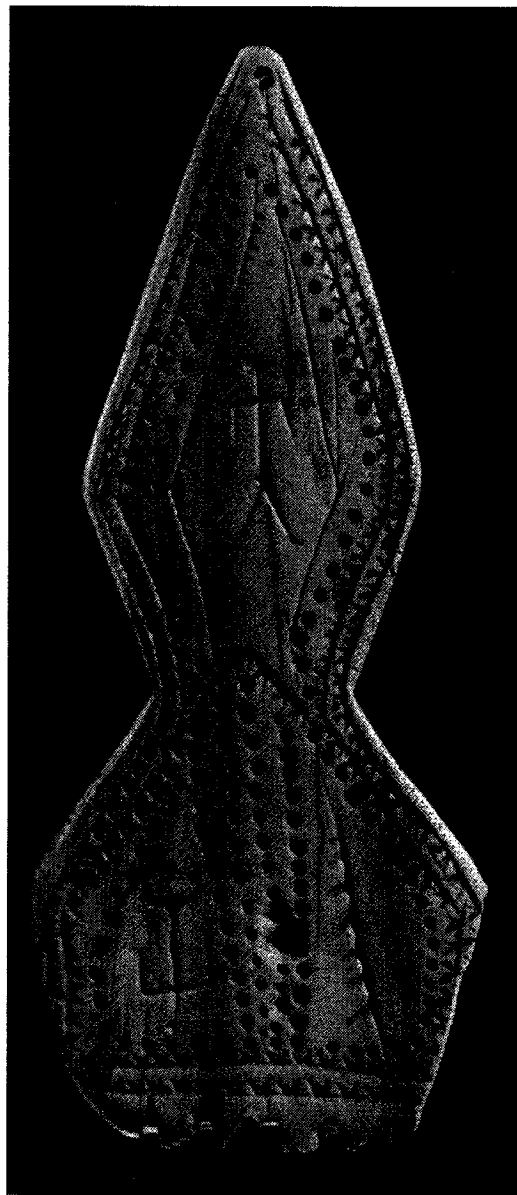


Fig. 3.5. Thule Culture
 Igloolik
 1600- 1850 A.D.
 Engraved Comb
 Ivory, 10.4 x 4.3 x 0.5
 CMC IV-C: 4666
 In Vastokas, "Continuities in Eskimo Graphic Style,"
artscanada Dec 1971/ Jan 1972, fig. 6, page 71.

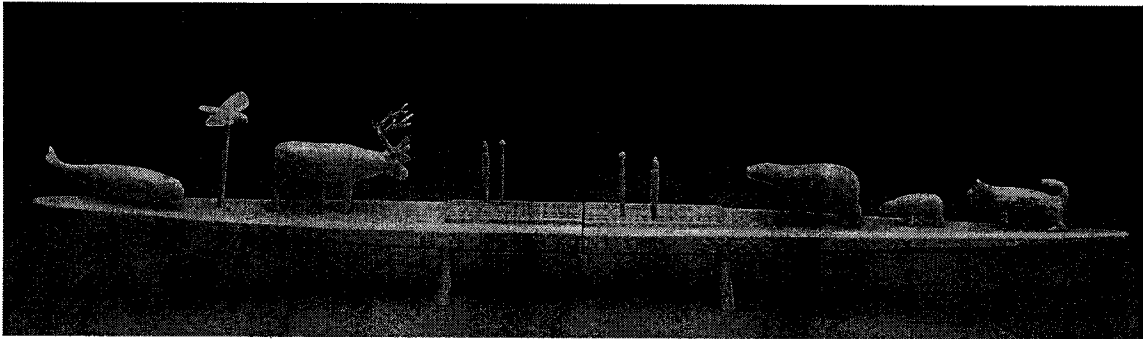


Fig. 3.6. Koviak M. (dates unknown)
Repulse Bay
Late Historic Period (1942- 45)
Cribbage board
Ivory, grey stone inlay, 16.0 x 87.0 x 12.0
Art Gallery of Ontario, Gift of Samuel and Esther Sarick, 1996
In Hessel, *Inuit Art: An Introduction*, 1998, fig.18, page 24.



Fig. 3.7. Mark Tungilik (1913- 1986)

Repulse Bay

1953

Ivory, stone, bone, copper nails and wood, 21.0 x 12.0 x 31.5

Canadian Guild of Crafts Quebec

The Permanent Collection: Inuit Arts and Crafts circa 1900- 1980

Collection no. 021, Catalogue no. 48, page 58.



Fig. 3.8. Display Shelf in Inukjuak, Quebec, 1950. Photo: Wilf Doucette, National Film Board of Canada. In Routledge and Hessel, "Contemporary Inuit Sculpture: An Approach to the Medium, the Artists, and Their Work," in *In the Shadow of the Sun: Perspectives on Contemporary Native Art*, 1993, fig. 4, page 448.

Many of the objects on the shelves below the placards echo illustrations that would later appear in *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts*. There are four stone "totem" carvings, and interestingly, two of them have a walrus head on the base, in close approximation to the illustration on page 11 of *Sunuyuksuk* (See fig. 3.16.) In addition, there is a matchstick holder on the top shelf, and perhaps two more on the second shelf, five baskets with pegged lids, and a sealskin purse.



Fig. 3.9. James Houston displays carvings and crafts in Pangnirtung, in 1951. In "Remembering Saumik: James Houston 1921- 2005," Inuit Art Quarterly, vol.20, no.2, (Summer 2005), special supplement page 2.

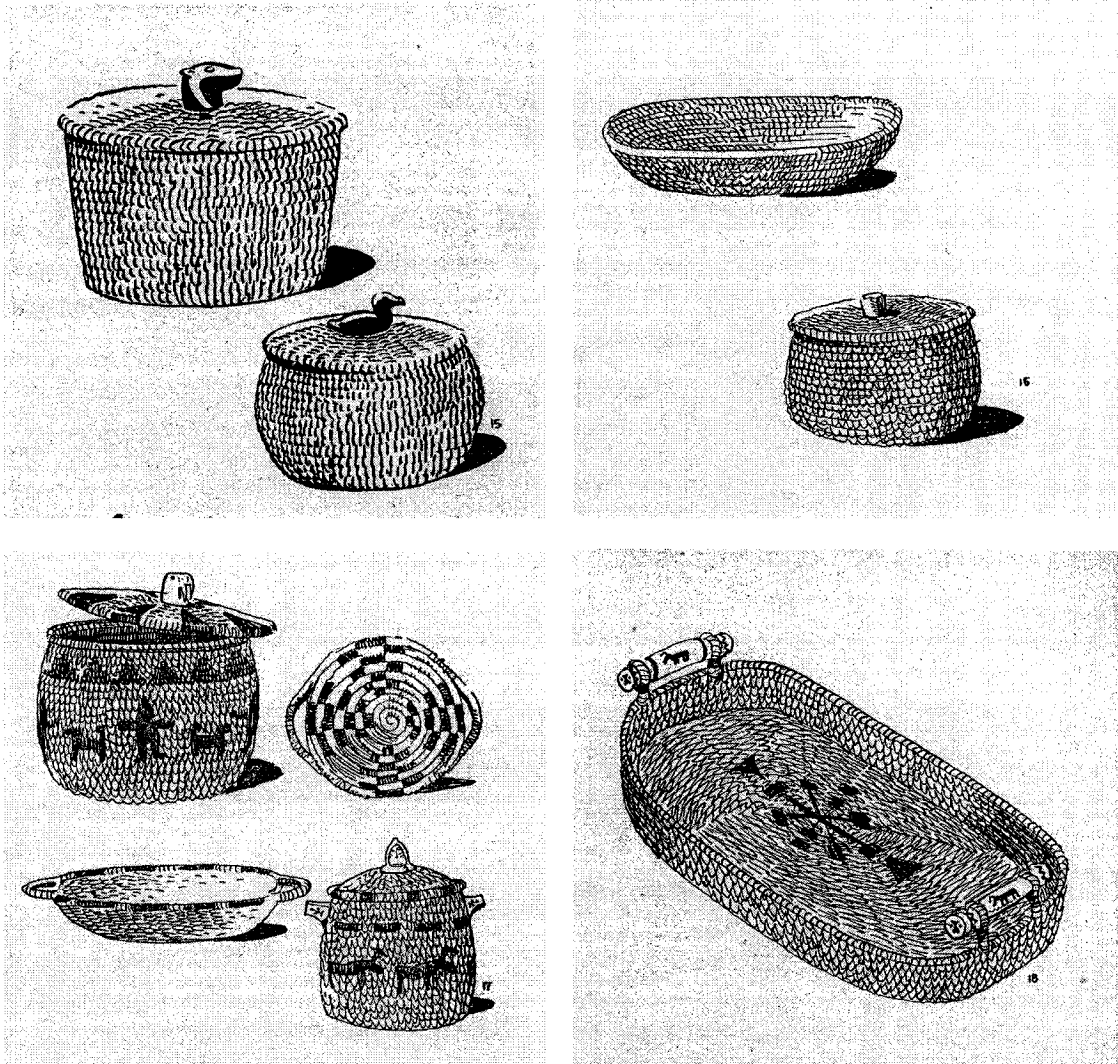


Fig. 3.10. *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts*, illustrations on page 15-18.

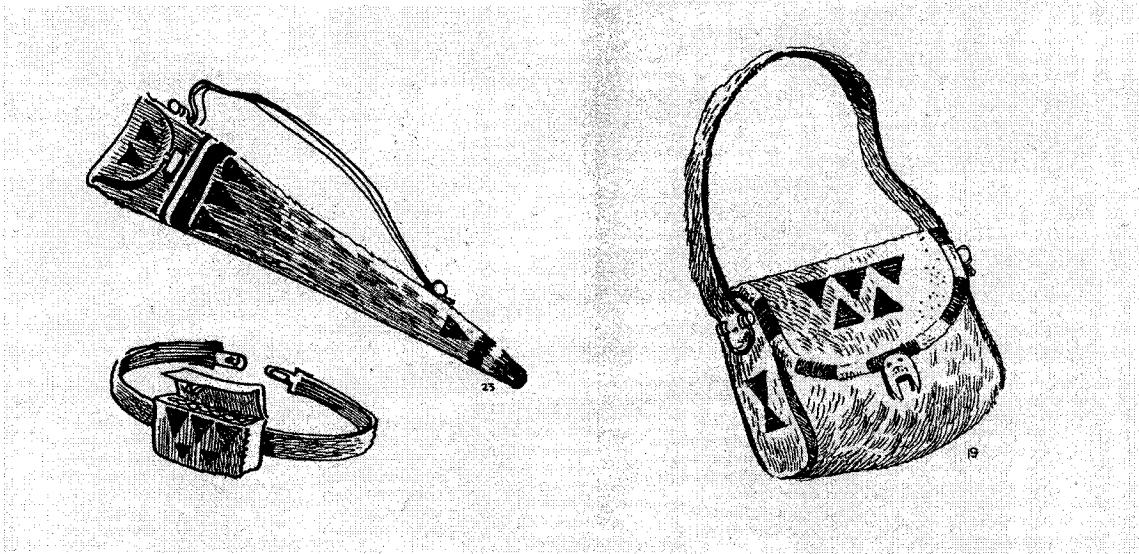


Fig. 3.11a. Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts, illustration on page 23.

Fig. 3.11b. Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts, illustration on page 19.

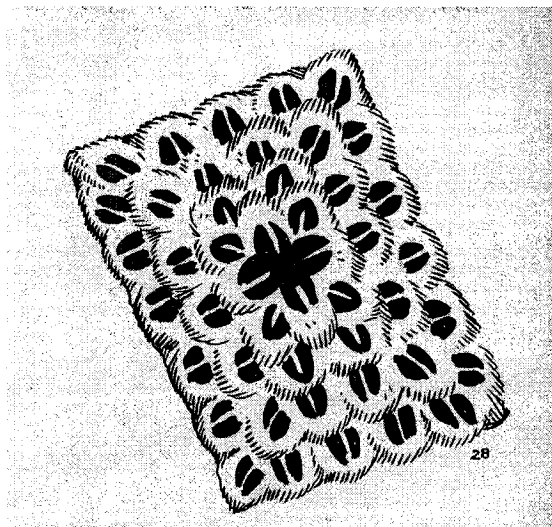
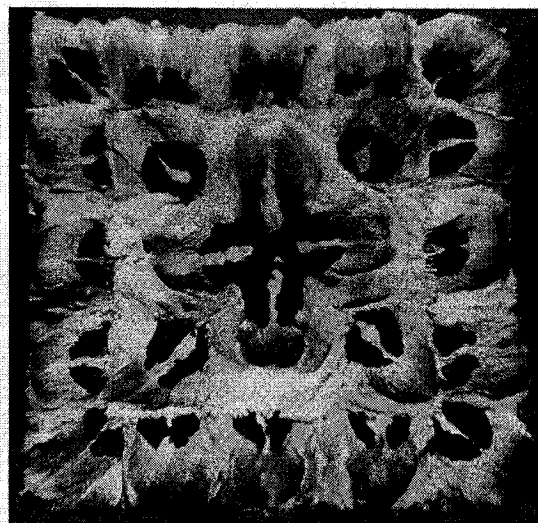


Fig. 3.12a. Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts, Illustration on page 28. Written and illustrated by James A. Houston, translation by Sam Ford and Frederica Woodrow. Montreal: the Canadian Handicrafts Guild and the Department of Resources



*Fig. 3.12b. Unidentified artist
Mat c.1950
1951
Ungava Region
loon and eider duck skins, 39.0 x 41.0
Canadian Guild of Crafts Quebec
In *The Permanent Collection: Inuit Arts and Crafts circa 1900- 1980*. Collection no. 021, Catalogue no.48, page 58.*



Fig. 3.13a. Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts, illustration on page 11.



*Fig. 13b. Kadloo (Levi) Kalluk (1927-)
Arctic Bay
Mask, 1951
stone and ivory, 4.6 x 3.4 x 1.5
Canadian Guild of Crafts Quebec
In The Permanent Collection: Inuit Arts and Crafts
circa 1900- 1980. Collection no. 103, Catalogue no.
42, page 55.*

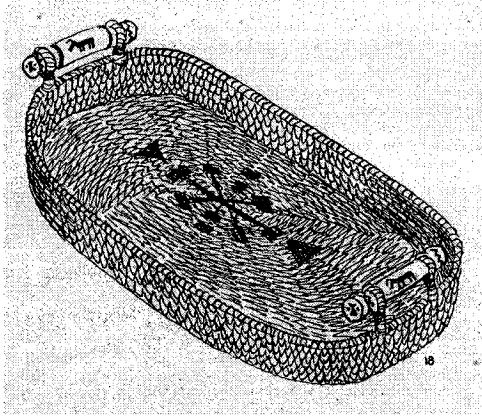
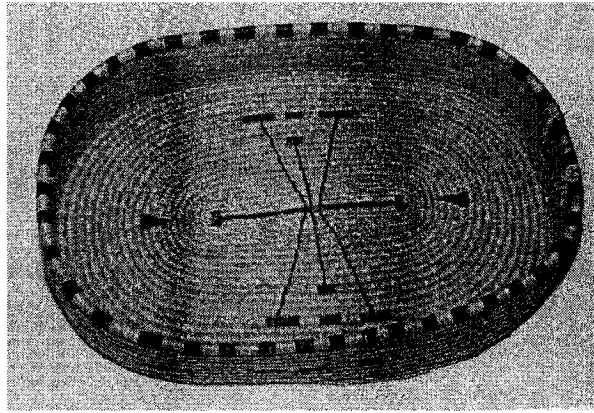


Fig. 3.14a. Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts, illustration on page 18.



*Fig. 3.14b. Unidentified artist
Basket, 1950
Inoucdjouac (Inukjuak)
lyme grass and sealskin, 12.0 x 66.0 x 44.5
Canadian Guild of Crafts Quebec In *The Permanent Collection: Inuit Arts and Crafts circa 1900- 1980.*
Collection no. 012, Catalogue no. 235, page 164.*

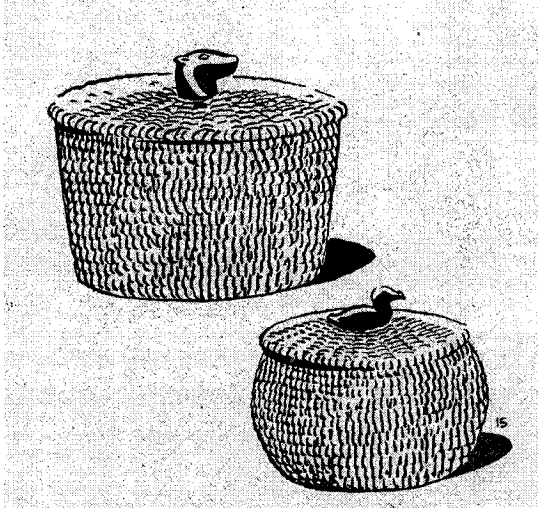
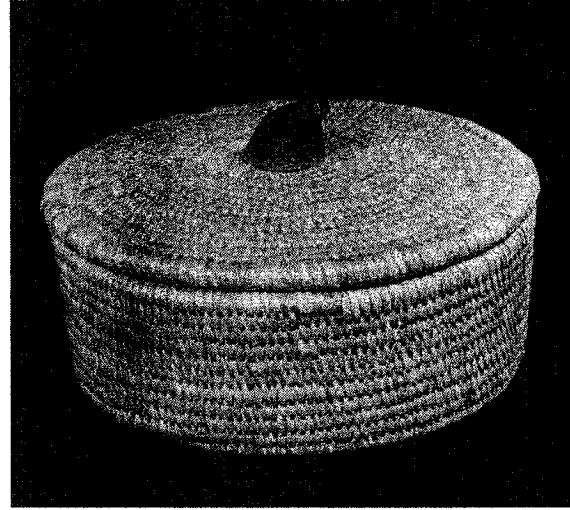


Fig. 3.15a. Sumiyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts, illustration on page 15.



*Fig. 3.15b. Unidentified artist
Basket, 1950
Cape Smith
Lyme grass and stone, 7.0 x 16.5
Canadian Guild of Crafts Quebec In *The Permanent Collection: Inuit Arts and Crafts circa 1900- 1980.*
Collection no. 003, Catalogue no. 214, page 216.*

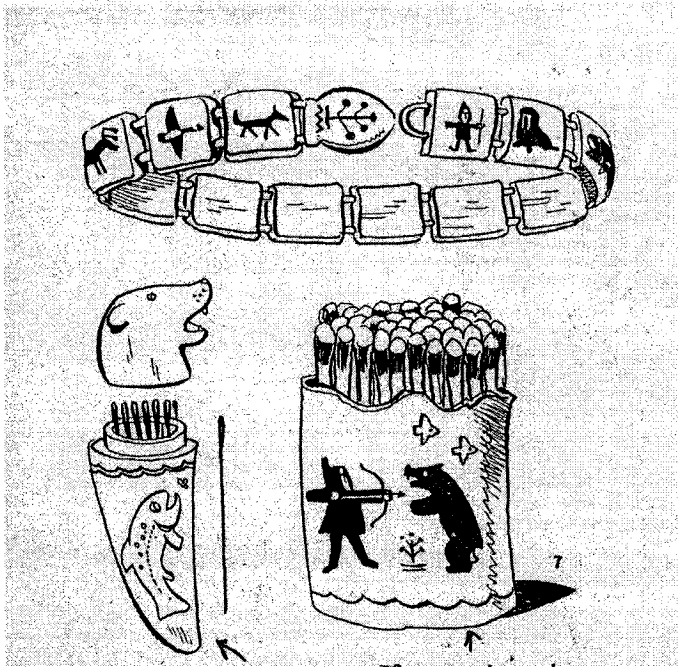


Fig. 3.16a. *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts*, illustration on page 7.

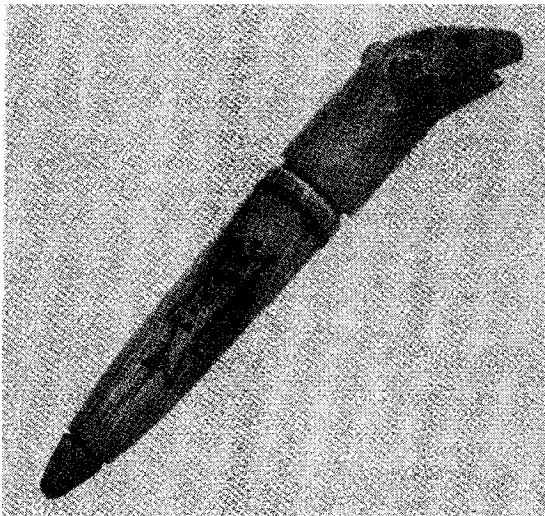


Fig. 3.16b. Unknown artist
Needle case, 1950
Inukjuak
Ivory, black inlay 1.6 x 11.3 x 2.2
Gift of Ian Lindsay, Winnipeg Art Gallery
G-85-424
In *The First Passionate Collector*, catalogue no. 20,
Page 102.

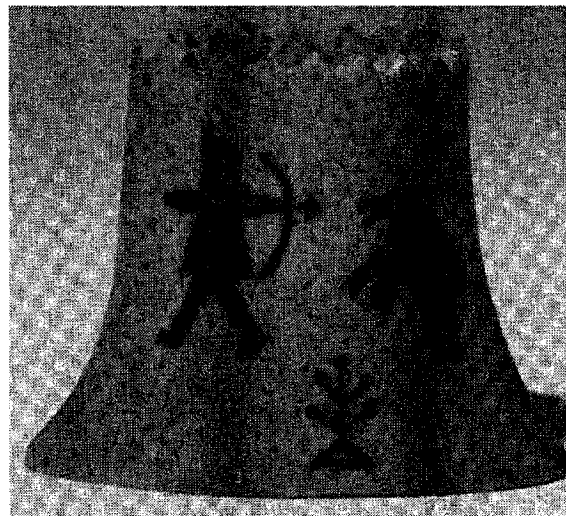


Fig. 3.16c. Unknown artist
Match holder, 1950
Inukjuak
Ivory, 1.9 x 11.3 x 2.2
Gift of Ian Lindsay, Winnipeg Art Gallery
G-85-447
In *The First Passionate Collector*, catalogue no. 19,
Page 102.

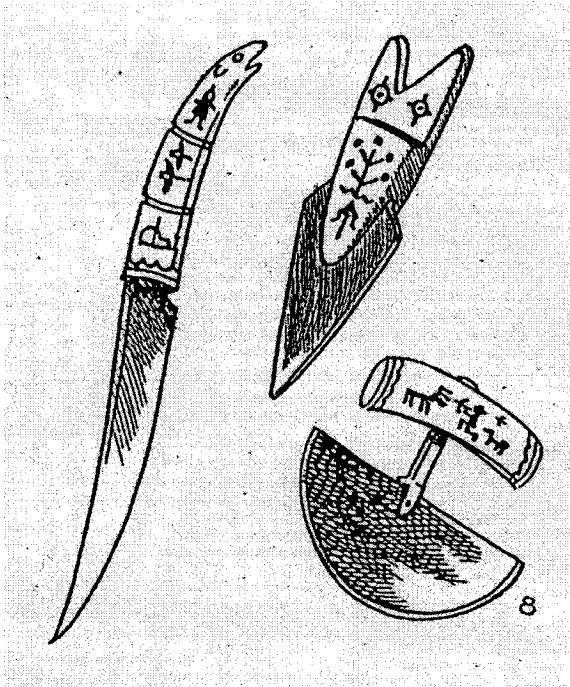


Fig. 3.17a. Sunuyuksuk: *Eskimo Handicrafts*, illustration on page 8.



Fig. 3.17b. Unknown artist
Harpoon tip, 1950
Povungnituk
stone, 1.6 x 4.3 x 9.5
Gift of Ian Lindsay, Winnipeg Art Gallery
G-85-354
In *The First Passionate Collector*, catalogue no.
21, page 102.

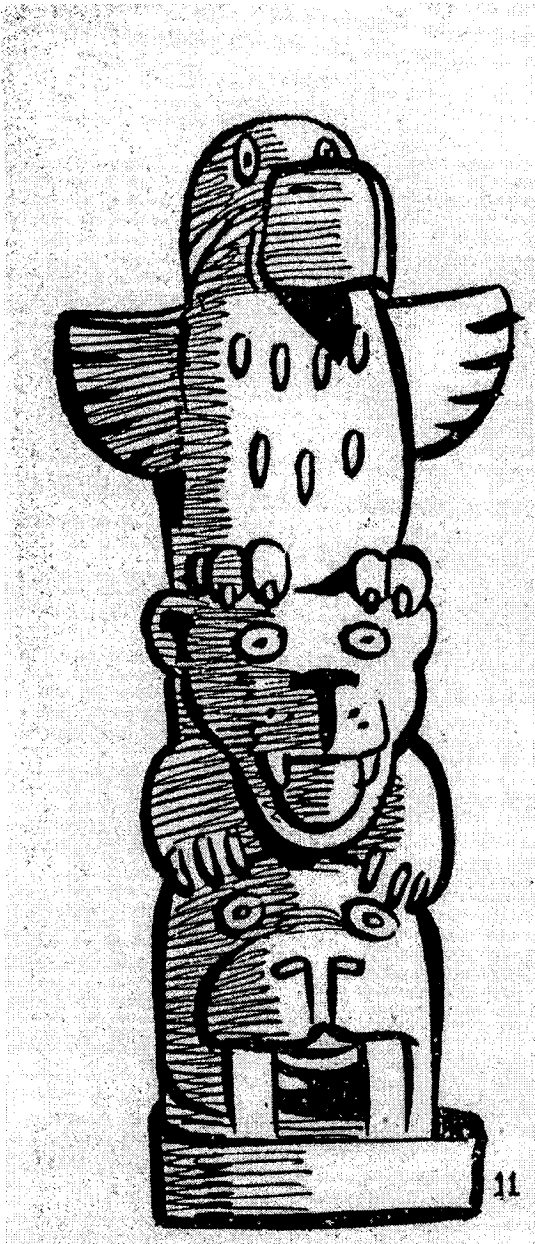


Fig. 3.18. *Sunuyuksuk*: *Eskimo Handicrafts*, illustration on page 11.

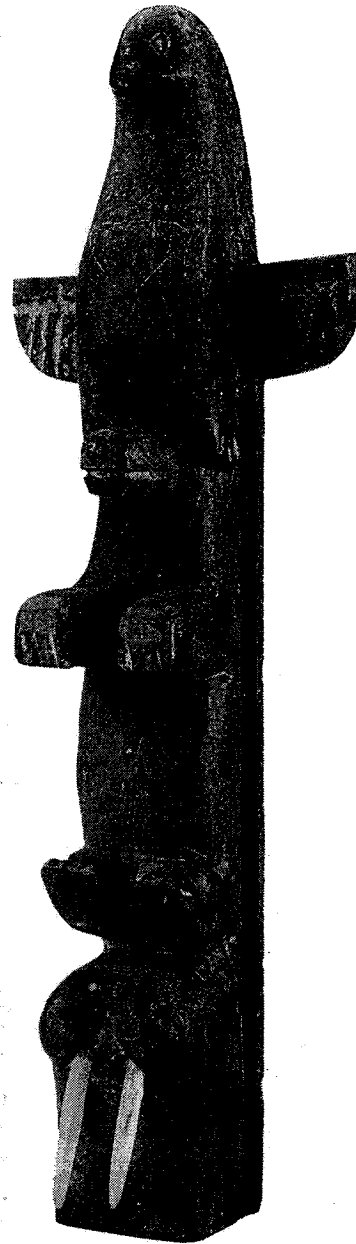


Fig. 3.19. Isa Oomayoualook (attributed)
Animal totem, c.1951
Inukjuak
Stone and ivory, 17.0 x 6.0
Gift of Ian Lindsay, CMC IV-B-1725
In Igloliorte, "By the Book? Early Influences on Inuit Art," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 21, no.2 (Summer 2006), page 33.

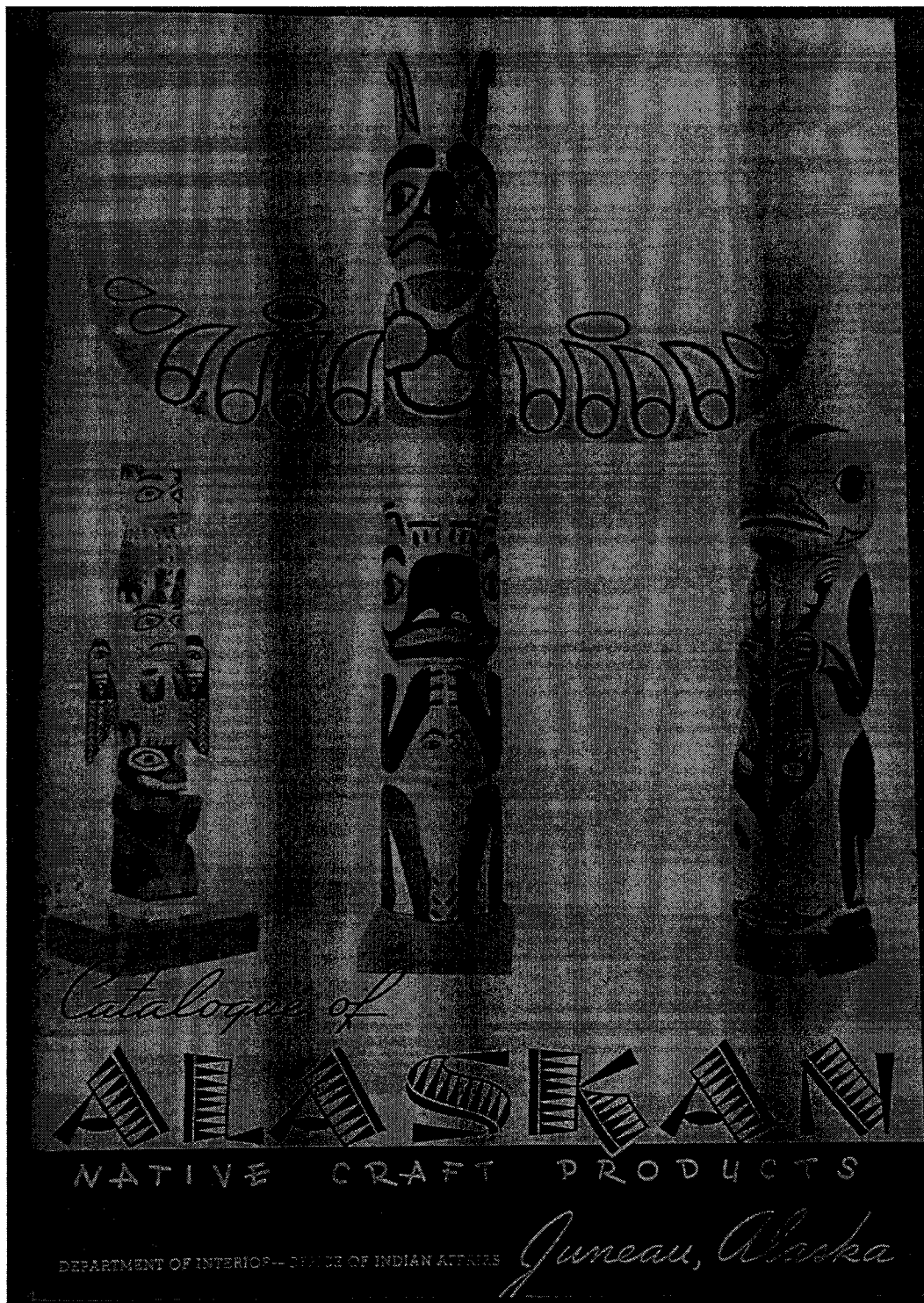


Fig. 3.20. Cover page, *Catalogue of Alaskan Native Craft Products*. Juneau: Department of the Interior-Office of Indian Affairs, 1940.



Fig. 3.21a. Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts, illustration on page 14.

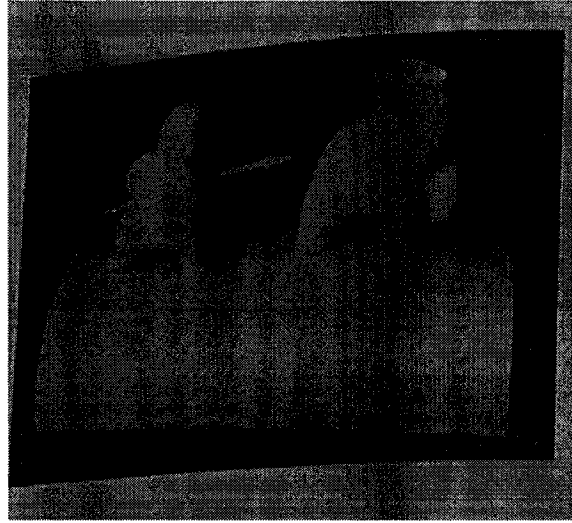


Fig. 3.21b. Unknown artist, Eskimo Hunting Polar Bear, photographic illustration on page 10 of Catalogue of Alaskan Native Craft Products. Juneau: Department of the Interior- Office of Indian Affairs, 1940. Dimensions listed as approximately 5" x 2" x 1 1/2," Polar Bear, 2" x 2".

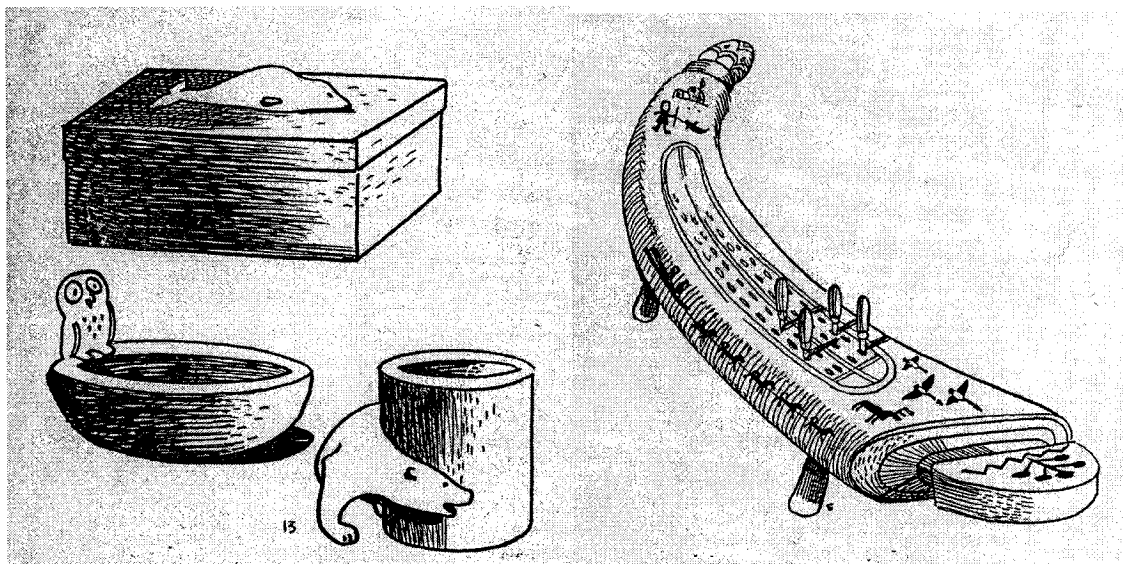


Fig. 3.22a. Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts, illustration on page 13.

Fig. 3.22b. Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts, illustration on page 6.

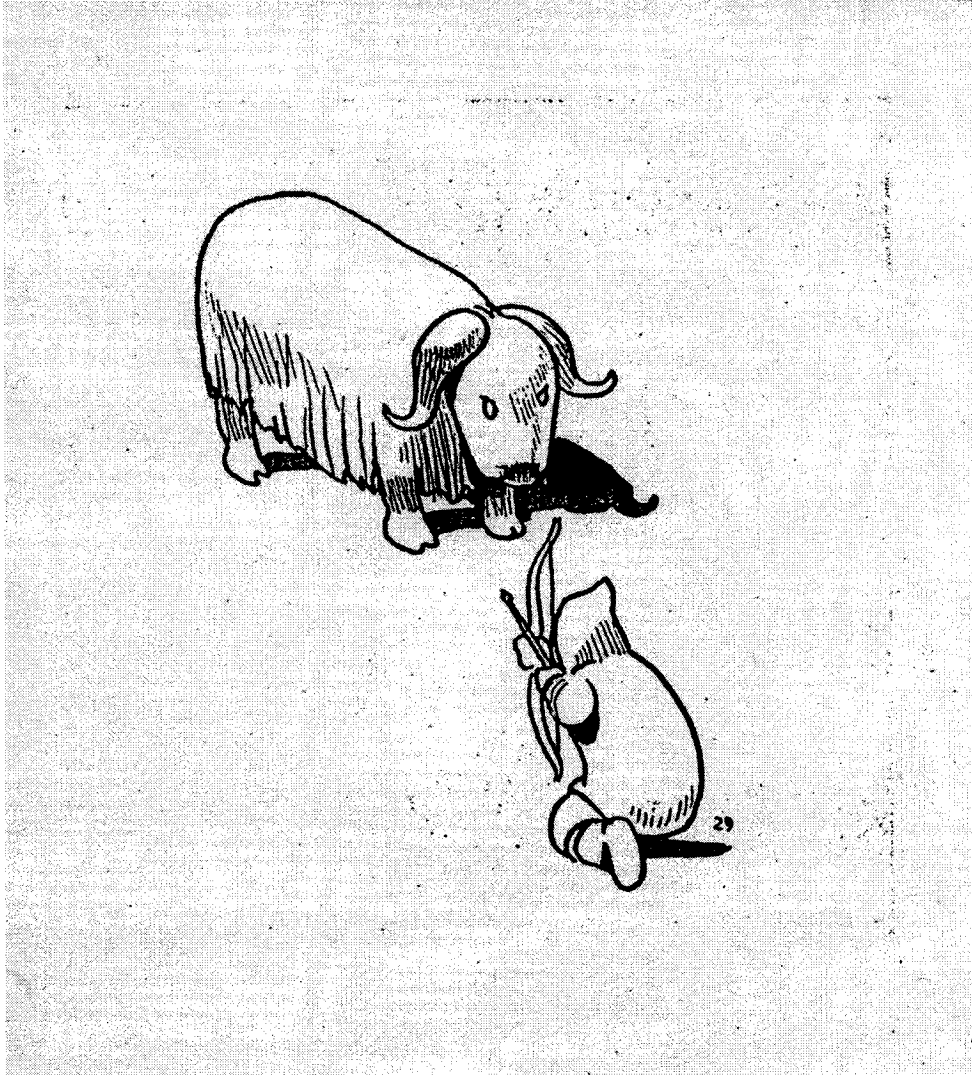


Fig. 4.1. Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts, illustration on page 29.



Fig. 4.2. James A. Houston, "Handicrafts," *Eskimo Bulletin*, Vol.1, No.2 (June 1953), pages 3-4.

Appendix A. English Translation

The Inuktitut syllabic suggestions that accompany illustrations on pages 3- 30 of *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo Handicrafts* are listed here as written, in English, on pages 31- 32 of the booklet.

- | Page | English Translation |
|-------------|---|
| 3. | The small Eskimo man and woman shown above are carved from ivory that is one year old or more. They could be made in any position, either sitting or walking. They are carefully smoothed and polished. Can you make one? |
| 4. | The carved ivory tusk tells the story of the Eskimo hunter. When it is done with great cleverness it is a thing anyone would want. Polish it carefully. Make it from old ivory. |
| 5. | The three bears show some of the ways they may be carved from ivory or stone. Often a bear and a small cub are worth more- or perhaps a man with a spear hunting the bear. |
| 6. | The game board carved from the ivory tusk should have drawings of Eskimo life or animals or birds on it. The polish should be good and the inlay of strong stuff that will not fall out. |
| 7. | Above are some small things you can make in ivory. The needle case, the button, and a match holder made from the end of the tusk, and also a belt with pieces of ivory held together by a piece of seal line. |
| 8. | The small model of the snow knife in ivory, or a full sized one. The harpoon head, full size, and the woman's knife. All are carefully polished. |
| 9. | The caribou can be made in stone with ivory or bone horns, or all in ivory – some eating, standing or lying down. You can polish the stone easily. |
| 10. | Innu Pingwa. This game is very popular. You can best make it out of a large piece of stone and use ivory pegs and perhaps an ivory figure over the hole where the pegs are kept. |
| 11. | A full sized shaman's mask made from stone and ivory, and the animals carved from a single piece of stone as seen above. |
| 12. | Small round dish with ivory figure pegged on top for cigarettes. Small stone lamp with ivory legs holding it up. These are simple and should be smooth and carefully carved. |
| 13. | Stone box, wide enough to hold cigarettes, with ivory or bone figure pegged on top. Small bowl with bird on side and match holder of stone with animal beside it. |

14. Man throwing harpoon, or spearing through ice, dog, walrus, or seal. If they are carefully carved and polished the kaloona will buy them.
15. The grass basket should be carefully and evenly woven. Sometimes you can sew a stone or ivory figure on top to use as a handle.
16. These are other designs of grass baskets that are very useful. Make them strong and even with good grass.
17. These are baskets with designs in them. By boiling the grass with net dye the colour changes and you may then weave different patterns into the baskets.
18. A basket with carved ivory handles. If you put handles on your baskets they should be very strong.
19. This is a sealskin or caribou skin bag. The fat has been removed from the skin so it does not smell, and the flap is kept down by the ivory button or peg, with a design in the ivory.
20. The kameks and slippers are made from seal skin that does not smell. The sewing has been done very carefully.
21. The seal skin belt and purse are made to fit a woman over the koolitak. It has an ivory buckle on the belt and clasp on the purse. The mitts are of seal skin or caribou, with fur design on top.
22. The koolitak is made from sealskin with a strap to carry it over the shoulder. It is open down the front and fastened with ivory buttons. The other is a coat without sleeves, also made from sealskin or caribou.
23. The rifle case is made from sealskin with a strap to carry it over the shoulder. The belt goes around the waist and has a pouch the size of a box of cartridges to carry bullets in.
24. A dog team and komatik carved from ivory or stone with a driver and perhaps some seal on the sled. Also a man or woman with child on back dressed in skin clothing with ivory face.
25. The goose wing brush. All the meat cleaned away carefully so it will not smell, and a carved ivory or stone handle, or a handle of grass.
26. A man in a kayak covered with caribou skin so it will not smell. The man dressed in skins with ivory face. All the kayak's equipment.

27. A man standing over the seal hole; snow blocks for protection. Dressed in skins; ivory face; harpoon in hand. This could also be made all in ivory or stone.

28. This is a feather blanket. It is made from eider duck skins and trimmed around the edge with fur. The duck skins are placed carefully for a design.

29. The musk ox is made from ivory, bone or stone. The men standing in a ring are made from the round part near the bottom of the walrus tusk.

30. An Eskimo game made from ivory or bone, with holes to spear animal when thrown in the air.

Appendix B. Distribution of Eskimo Handicrafts by Education and Welfare Services

Department of Resources and Development, Ottawa, June 15, 1951. File No. 9543, Record Group 85, Vol. 108 File 255-1 pt. 1.

“Memorandum for Mr. Cantley: Distribution of the pamphlet entitled- *Eskimo Handicrafts*. Education and Welfare Services have distributed this booklet to the following extent:”

School	Quantity
Coral Harbour, Territorial	4
Tuktoyaktuk, Territorial	4
Fort Chimo, Territorial	4
Cape Dorset, Territorial	4
Coppermine, Territorial	4
Port Harrison, Territorial	4
Ivuyivik, Roman Catholic Mission, P.Q.	3
Baker Lake, Roman Catholic Mission, N.W.T.	3
Koartak, Roman Catholic Mission, P.Q.	3
Pond Inlet, Roman Catholic Mission, N.W.T.	3
Repulse Bay, Roman Catholic Mission, N.W.T.	3
Anglican Residential, Fort George, P.Q.	3
Roman Catholic Residential, Fort George, P.Q.	3
Padlei, Roman Catholic Mission, N.W.T.	3
Pelly Bay, Roman Catholic Mission, N.W.T.	3
Baker Lake, Anglican Mission, N.W.T.	3
Eskimo Point, Roman Catholic Mission, N.W.T.	3
Padlei, Northern Canada Evangelical Mission, N.W.T.	3
Pond Inlet, Anglican Mission, N.W.T.	3
Maguse River, Canadian Interior Mission	3
Wakeham Bay, Roman Catholic Mission, P.Q.	3
Arctic Bay, Roman Catholic Mission, N.W.T.	3
Thom Bay, Roman Catholic Mission, N.W.T.	3

Igloodik, Roman Catholic Mission, N.W.T.	3
Garry Lake, Roman Catholic Mission, N.W.T.	3
Sugluk, Roman Catholic Mission, P.Q.	3
Pangnirtung, Anglican Mission, N.W.T.	5
Lake Harbour, Anglican Mission, N.W.T.	3

Appendix C. Distribution of *Eskimo Handicrafts* by Royal Canadian Mounted Police Detachments, and Accompanying Letter from G.E.B. Sinclair
 Department of Resources and Development, Ottawa, June 16, 1951. File No. 9543,
 Record Group 85, Vol. 108 File 255-1 pt. 1.

<u>RCMP Detachment</u>	<u>Quantity</u>
Eskimo Point, N.W.T.	80
Baker Lake, N.W.T.	70
Spence Bay, N.W.T.	70
Moose Factory, Ont.	60
Chesterfield Inlet, N.W.T.	80

The N.C.O. in Charge,
 RCMP Detachment
 Eskimo Point, N.W.T.

Dear Sir:

You are being forwarded today, under separate cover, 80 copies of a booklet entitled "Eskimo Handicrafts," published by the Canadian Handicrafts Guild in cooperation with this Administration. This booklet is an attempt to convey useful advice in the making of handicraft articles to the Eskimo in the syllabic script in order that he may increase his income.

Sufficient copies have been printed to put in the hands of each Eskimo family. It would be appreciated if you would distribute these booklets, one to a family, to all Eskimos in your district. Furthermore, we should be glad to have your comments as to how this booklet is received by the Eskimos, and if they are putting it to any practical use.

(signed) G.E.B. Sinclair, Director

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