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December 7, 2019 – August 30, 2020

### Exhibition Guide

Curatorial Lead: Roxane Shaughnessy

Project Advisor: Heather Igloliorte

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Image: Parr (1893-1969), *Parr's People* (detail); cotton sateen twill; screen printed; 488 X 114 cm. Reproduced with the permission of Dorset Fine Arts.

***Printed Textiles from Kinngait Studios*** presents the little-known story of a group of Inuit artists and printmakers who produced a collection of graphic textiles in Kinngait (Cape Dorset), Nunavut in the 1950s and 60s – a period of social change that disrupted traditional language and relationships to the land. Made for interior décor during a period when artist-designed textiles were popular in North America and Europe, these mid-century designs depict legends, stories, and traditional ways of life. They provide vital points of connection between contemporary Inuit community members and the creativity and resourcefulness of previous generations. *Printed Textiles from Kinngait Studios* traces the evolution and impact of this textile initiative on Inuit graphic arts and explores its legacy through the work of Inuit fashion designers working today.

The exhibition includes over 40 textiles that were printed at Kinngait Studios in the 1950s and 60s, four paper prints, textiles that demonstrate other Inuit graphic art traditions, archival photographs, a digital interactive app that includes interviews with members of the Kinngait community, new work by three Inuk fashion designers, and animated films from the National Film Board of Canada. Many individuals in the North and the South worked with the Textile Museum of Canada to shape this project; their generosity and willingness to share stories, memories and experiences will build an unprecedented legacy for generations to come.

Featured fashion designers: Martha Kyak of InukChic; Nooks Lindell of Hinaani Design; and Tarralik Duffy of Ugly Fish

**Featured artists and printmakers:** Anna Kingwatsiak (1911–1971), Anirnik Oshuitoq (1902–1983), Eegyvudluk Pootoogook (1931–2000), Innukjuakju Pudlat (1913–1972), Ishuhungito Pootoogook (1939–), Iyola Kingwatsiak (1933–2000), Kananginak Pootoogook (1935–2010), Kenojuak Ashevak (1927–2013), Lukta Qiatsuk (1928–2004), Lucy Qinnuayak (1915–1982), Mary Samuellie Pudlat (1923–2001), Osuitok Ipeelee (1922–2005), Ovilu, Parr (1893–1969), Paunichea (1920–1968), Pitseolak Ashoona (1904–1983), Pudlo Pudlat (1916–1992), Sharni Pootoogook (Sharnee) (1922–2003), Sheouak (1923–1961), Sorosilutu Ashoona (1941–), Ulayu Pingwartok (1904–1978).



## Inuit Nunangat

The establishment of Nunavut on April 1, 1999 represents the largest land claim settlement in Canadian history. The Inuit Homeland (Inuit Nunangat) also includes the Inuvialuit Settlement Region in the Northwest Territories, Nunavik (northern Quebec), and Nunatsiavut (Newfoundland and Labrador). While Inuktitut is the language spoken by most Inuit, Inuinnaqtun and Inuvialuktun are also spoken.

The Nunavut Land Claim Agreement was signed on May 25, 1993, in Iqaluit, by representatives of the Tunngavik Federation of Nunavut, the Government of Canada, and the Government of the Northwest Territories. Tunngavik Federation of Nunavut was established in the 1980s to negotiate treaties and land claims in the eastern part of the Northwest Territories. Government policy, education curriculum and daily life in Nunavut are informed by Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ), a set of values and practices that are considered to be timeless. The IQ concept of qanurttuqatiginniq – the ability to adapt, innovate and creatively find solutions to problems – has particular contemporary relevance and importance due to rapid societal and environmental changes in northern communities. The fabric printing

initiative and other attempts to produce handicrafts in the North for southern markets, and the approach of contemporary fashion designers profiled in the exhibition embody the concept of qanurtuuqatiginniq.

## **Inuit Clothing**

Traditional Inuit clothing was made from animal skins with sinew used as a sewing thread. Layering is critical to reducing drafts and trapping warm air; for example, footwear consists of slippers, stockings and boots (kamiik) worn in different combinations. Seal and caribou are most commonly used in footwear – seal is water resistant, and caribou provides excellent insulation. Skin boots do not build up condensation.

Amauti are parkas with a built-in pouch below the hood, allowing women to carry young children up to two years of age. The pouch is large enough to allow the child to be moved from the back of its mother to her front for breastfeeding without exposure to the elements. This means of carrying the child also nurtures bonding between mother and child.



Image: Ema Natakok (Salliq, Nunavut); Kamiik; furred and depilated sealskin, whale sinew, wool cloth, thread. Collection of the Bata Shoe Museum, P87-0121.



Image: View of Cape Corset, August, 1961. B. Korda, Library and Archives Canada, e006609588.

## **History of Kinngait**

Kinngait is a small hamlet situated on Dorset Island, one of a series of small islands connected at low tide to the Foxe Peninsula of Baffin Island. This region has been inhabited for at least two thousand years, first by the Tuniit or Dorset people, and they by Inuit. Family groups moved between hunting grounds in the region according to the migration of game and environmental conditions – typically they lived on the mainland in the winter and offshore islands in the summer.

Referencing the local geography, Inuit have referred to the area as Kinngait, meaning “mountain,” or Sikusilaq, meaning “where there is no ice.” The community has also been referred to as Cape Dorset. Captain Luke Foxe, thought to be the first European to visit the region during his 1631 voyage, named the location for the fourth earl of Dorset, an English courtier who encouraged colonization.

Settlement patterns in the region began to change in the early twentieth century as contact between Inuit and Qallunaat (non-Inuit) became more regular. A Hudson's Bay Company post was established in Cape Dorset in 1913; Christian missions were established by the Catholic and Anglican church in 1939 and 1961 respectively. Ships bringing supplies to the region also brought influenza and tuberculosis; many Inuit were treated in the South, some never returning to the North. Environmental conditions affected hunting patterns; food shortages were reported in the area during the winter of 1949/1950. Inuit were also relocated to settlements further North as part of the Canadian government's attempts to assert sovereignty in the Arctic during the Cold War. There was an increased dependence on the state for food, health care, and economic support as a result of these changes.

### **Development of the Printing Studio in Kinngait**

In the 1950s, the federal government of Canada was promoting artistic production in northern communities as a means of economic development. Sanaanguabik, "the place where things are made," opened in Kinngait in 1956. James Houston, first employed as a Northern Service Officer in the community, and his wife Alma, supported the production of stone carving but other craft practices were also encouraged. Alma initiated a sewing centre that produced dolls, clothing, and beadwork, and James introduced printmaking in 1957. James Houston had first travelled north as a representative of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild in 1949; Inuit artists were encouraged to sell work to the Hudson's Bay Company post that would then be resold to the guild. In December 1958, the first printmakers to work with Houston had their first public sale at the Hudson's Bay Company store in Winnipeg.

Due to its success, a commitment was made to produce regular collections of work to be sold, and in 1959 the West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative (WBEC) was established so that community members could participate directly in the economic development of their community through the sale of art. It is important to note that the WBEC has always been involved in much more than the sale of arts and crafts from the community; to this day they have an extensive retail role in the community, selling snowmobiles and other supplies and equipment, as well as handling property rentals and contracting.

The subject of this exhibition – the textile printing enterprise in the early years of the WBEC – demonstrates the spirit and the scope of experimentation that was happening at the studio throughout the 1960s. While textile printing production was deemed not viable, prints and drawings on paper developed a large national and international market. Dorset Fine Arts, the wholesale marketing division, with an office and gallery, was established in Toronto in 1978. Kinngait Studios, the printmaking branch of the WBEC, moved into the newly opened Kenojuak Cultural Centre when it opened in September 2018. The centre is named for Kenojuak Ashevak, one of the community's most recognized artists, best known for her print *The Enchanted Owl*.



Image: Kananginak Pootoogook at work, Kinngait Studios, 1966. Library and Archives Canada, Charles Gimpel fonds, e004922706.

## **Kinngait Artists and Printmakers**

Artists in Kinngait bring their drawings to Kinngait Studios, and it is the printmakers who then transform them into prints. The printmakers involved in the textile printing enterprise had to consider how to translate an artist's drawing into a motif that could be used to create a repeating pattern on cloth. They had to consider that the fabric might be used to make clothing or housewares and thus how the pattern would translate visually when the fabric was cut and draped. Most of the printed textiles in the exhibition are displayed as yardage but included are a set of curtains and a button-up shirt made from the printed cloth. There are also framed prints that demonstrate how the same motif was translated into a print to be hung on the wall as a work of art, or into a repeating pattern to be printed on cloth.

Few of the textiles the Museum took into its care from the WBEC have a mark to indicate the artist and printmaker. By looking through databases of the annual print collection sold through Dorset Fine Arts, specific artists have been identified for many of the printed motifs. Some of the designs were licensed and later printed in the south. These textiles have text printed along the selvedge that indicates the name of the design and artist and their trademark as part of the WBEC. Interviews with some of the current generation of Kinngait artists, as well as images of their work, are included in the digital interactive app found on tablets throughout the exhibition.

## **Development of the Exhibition**

Curatorial staff from the Museum were invited to the offices of Dorset Fine Arts in 2016 to view a collection of printed textiles that had been transferred there from Kinngait Studios. Museum staff were immediately captivated and intrigued by the vibrant designs and were inspired to learn more about the story behind the cloth. William Huffman, the Marketing Manager of Dorset Fine Arts, generously facilitated the transfer of the collection of over 200 textiles to the Museum as a long-term loan through an agreement with the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative in 2017.



The Museum received support from the Department of Canadian Heritage Museums Assistance Program to develop a touring exhibition, catalogue, online resources, educational tools and programming to ensure access to and new scholarship about this collection. Curatorial Lead Roxane Shaughnessy made two research trips to Kinngait, bringing the story of the fabric printing enterprise back to the community, and conducting interviews with members of the community to learn about the significance of the printing enterprise on the community today.

### **Fabric Analysis**

Conservator Hillary Anderson did a fibre analysis of the textiles when they first came into the Museum's care. Textiles were grouped by fabric type according to their look and feel, and threads were removed from along the selvedge of one piece of cloth in each group. Because of the unfinished edges on the textiles, this could be done easily without compromising the care of the textiles.

Each fibre sample was first analyzed through a burn test. How a fibre reacts when it is set on fire can determine whether it is a synthetic fibre or natural fibre. It is also possible to differentiate between protein (animal-sourced) and cellulose (plant-sourced fibres). For example, synthetic fibres will melt rather than burn. Protein fibres smell like burning hair, whereas cellulose fibres smell like burning paper. In particular, wool is self-extinguishing.

The fibre samples were then examined under a microscope. The threads were untwisted, and the fibres opened up; they were placed on a slide with a drop of distilled water before being placed under the microscope. The visual look of the fibre was able to further narrow down what it could be. For example, a fibre sample that burned well and smelled like paper in the first test (indicating a cellulose fibre) was revealed to be ramie under the microscope.

### **Fashion Designers**

The exhibition includes new work by three contemporary Inuit artists who are exploring and celebrating identity through fashion design. Their work is inspired by the printed textiles, traditional Inuit garment construction and textile techniques, and contemporary issues.



**Tarralik Duffy** is a multidisciplinary artist and writer who lives and works between Salliq (Coral Harbour), Nunavut, and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. From jewelry and apparel to graphic works, Tarralik's creative output shares distinctly Inuit experiences, often infused with a dose of both humour and pop culture.



**Nooks Lindell** is the creative lead and designer at Hinaani Design, a collaboration of creative minded individuals from the Kivalliq region of Nunavut. The team engages in various modern design projects that reflect the culture, language, and land of Inuit. Nooks is an Inuk artist and grew up in Arviat on the shores of Hudson Bay. He continues to live there with his family. He is actively regaining fluency of his first language, Inuktitut, through family, friends, and art. Nooks also participates in traditional Inuit activities. He creates traditional tools and is learning to sew with qihik (sealskin).



**Martha Kyak** is a self-taught artist and seamstress. She grew up in Pond Inlet, Nunavut, the youngest of eleven children. Most of her family members are creative, artistic, and in the field of education. When living in Pond Inlet, Martha had her own retail store selling sewing supplies and other items. Her passion has always been sewing and designing as she grew up watching her mother and sisters sew. True to her Arctic roots, sealskin is featured predominantly in many of her designs. Martha is currently an instructor in the Inuit Studies Program at Ottawa-based Nunavut Sivuniksavut, an affiliate of Algonquin College, where she teaches Inuit history, Inuktitut, and sewing. She is a graduate of McGill University.

## Activities and Discussion Questions

1. Choose a plant or animal that is indigenous to the Arctic landscape and draw a motif that you can use in a repeating pattern. Consider the use of positive and negative space as you develop your motif and think about how to orient your motif on a piece of paper or fabric to create a pattern.
2. In the 1950s and 60s, textiles were designed for commercial sales by leading artists. The Textile Museum of Canada has presented exhibitions that explore this phenomenon (see Resources below) – what are the similarities in design between each of these projects and the textiles produced in Kinngait?
3. What are the principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (see Resources below)? How do these principles have relevance in the North today? How might these principles be applied to situations in your own community?

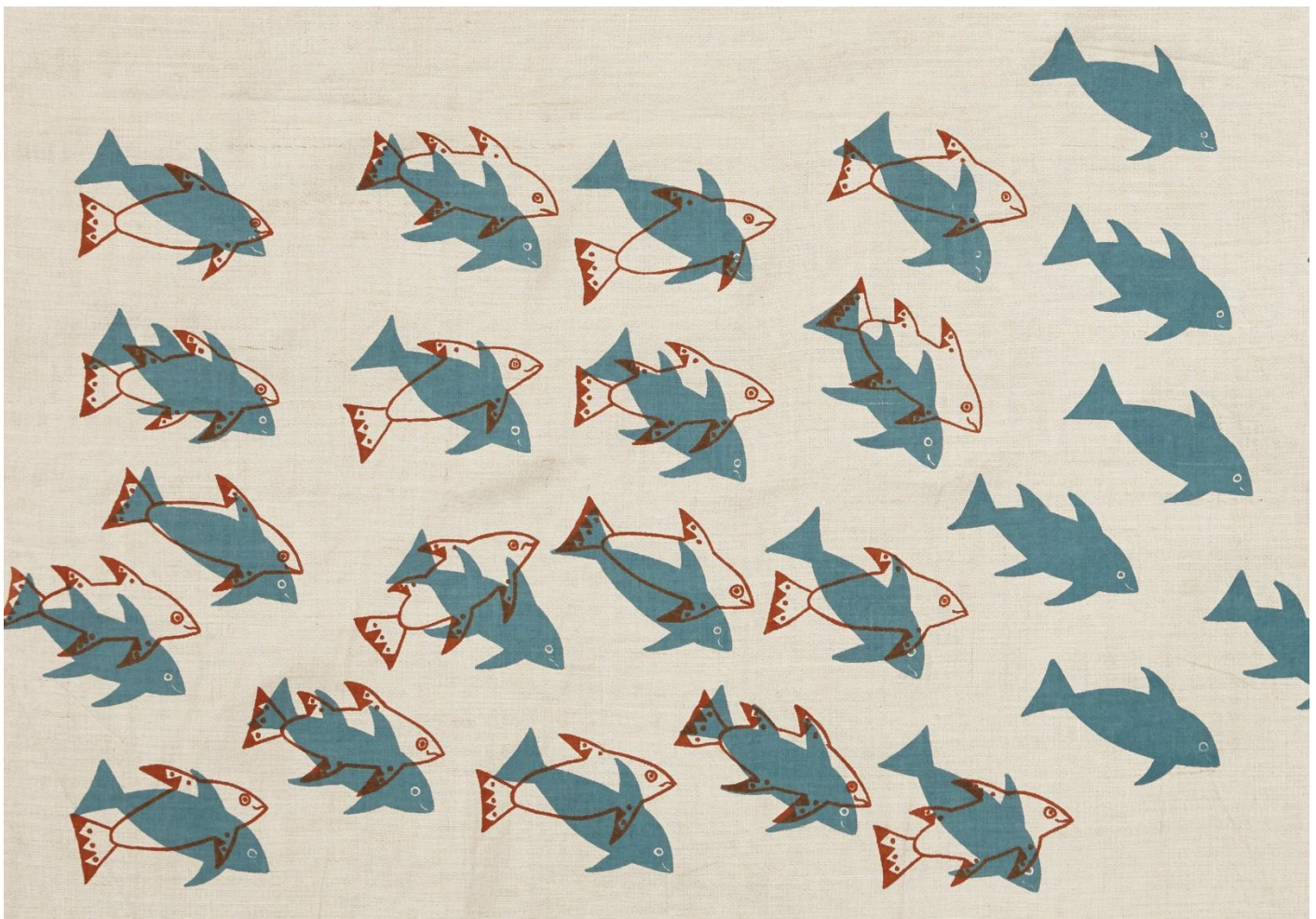


Image: Mary Samuëllie Pudlat (1923-2001), *Fish and Shadows* (detail); linen; screen printed; 88 X 118 cm. Reproduced with the permission of Dorset Fine Arts.

4. Explore the social media sites used by the featured fashion designers to promote their work (see Resources below). Who is their intended audience? What are their key influences?
5. The early printmakers experimented with a variety of materials to transfer designs to fabric. What materials can you use from home or the classroom to make your own printing blocks or stencils?
6. Research one of the artists featured in the exhibition. (The Dorset Fine Arts website has profiles of many of these artists.) What is distinct to their style and chosen subject matter?

## **Resources**

An exhibition catalogue accompanies this exhibition. It features scholarly essays about the history of the textile printing enterprise and early sewing initiatives in Kinngait and how the printed textiles were marketed across Canada; it also features interviews with the featured fashion designers and Jimmy Manny, manager of the printmaking studio soon after the fabric printing production in Kinngait had ceased.

The West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative website provides an extensive history of the cooperative and its role in the community. The Dorset Fine Arts website includes profiles of many of the artists and printmakers working at Kinngait studios.

<https://www.westbaffin.com/>

<http://www.dorsetfinearts.com/>

Qikiqtani Truth Commission was an initiative begun in 2004 to collect testimony directly from Inuit to better understand how government policies, programs and decisions affected them and their families, and profoundly and irreversibly altered their way of life in the decades following World War II. The history of Kinngait during the significant period from 1950-1975 is outlined in a special report available through the Qikiqtani Truth Commission website; the website also includes video testimonials with Inuit Elders that describe traumatic events experienced in the community and should be reviewed by teachers before

considering the use of the resources in the classroom.

<http://www.qtcommission.ca/en/communities/cape-dorset-kinngait>

*Speaking the Inuit Way* is an exhibition developed by the Canadian Language Museum that celebrates the diversity of the Inuit language. This online exhibit presents Inuit writing systems, dialect differences and modern revitalization efforts, and illustrates how the language reflects both historical and contemporary Inuit culture and identity.

<https://www.languagemuseum.ca/exhibit/speaking-inuit-way>

*The Inuit Way: A Guide to Inuit Culture* was developed to address the significant cultural gaps that exist between Inuit and Qallunaat living in the Canadian Arctic. It provides historical context about the significant cultural and societal changes that have occurred in Inuit communities over the past 60 years, as well as extensive information about family and community dynamics, and traditional Inuit values.

[https://www.relations-inuit.chaire.ulaval.ca/sites/relations-inuit.chaire.ulaval.ca/files/InuitWay\\_e.pdf](https://www.relations-inuit.chaire.ulaval.ca/sites/relations-inuit.chaire.ulaval.ca/files/InuitWay_e.pdf)

*Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: What Inuit Have Always Known to Be True* (Fernwood Publishing, 2017), edited by Joe Karetak, Frank Tester and Shirley Tagalik, is the result of a project begun in 2000 with and by Inuit Elders from across Nunavut to preserve important cultural knowledge and traditions, contextualizing that knowledge with Canada's colonial legacy for future generations.

<https://fernwoodpublishing.ca/book/inuit-qaujimajatuqangit>

“Curating Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: Inuit Knowledge in the Qallunaat Art Museum” (*Art Journal*, Summer 2017) by project advisor and Inuk curator Heather Igloliorte outlines a model for curating and thinking about Inuit art that applies Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit to understand Inuit art production in historic and contemporary contexts.

Exhibitions exploring mid-century design at the Textile Museum of Canada include: *Artist Textiles: Picasso to Warhol* was a major international exhibition offering a fascinating overview of 20<sup>th</sup>-century textile designs from some of the world's most renowned artists including Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dalí, Henri Matisse, Barbara Hepworth and Andy Warhol.

<http://www.textilemuseum.ca/exhibitions/artist-textiles-picasso-to-warhol>

*Marimekko, With Love* was a retrospective look at the company's origins and role in shaping a new aesthetics and approach to living through fashion and design. Founded in 1951 by visionary designer Armi Ratia and her husband Viljo, Marimekko not only sparked an international revolution in post-World War II pattern and textile production but captured a new philosophy based on the power of design in everyday life.

<http://www.textilemuseum.ca/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/marimekko,-with-love>

Fashion designer websites:

Hinaani Designs <https://www.hinaani.ca/>

InukChic <https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Artist/InukChic-Martha-Kyaks-Art-and-designs-1463233177244731>

Ugly Fish <https://www.facebook.com/UglyFishDesign>