

ᑕᑭᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦ Double Vision: Jessie Oonark, Janet Kigusiuq, and Victoria Mamnguqsualuk



ᑕᑭᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦ Jessie Oonark, Qamani'tuaq (Baker Lake), 1906–1985; Untitled, c. 1972–1973; Wool felt appliqué and cotton embroidery thread on wool duffel. Government of Nunavut Fine Art Collection. Public Trustee for Nunavut, Estate of Jessie Oonark.

Exhibition Guide

Mar 9, 2022 - Mar 31, 2023

Curated by: Candice Hopkins

This project is made with the **support** of the Department of Canadian Heritage, The Goring Family Foundation, Christopher Bredt & Jamie Cameron, and in **partnership** with the Toronto Biennial of Art.

General Information

Double Vision profiles three ground-breaking artists from Nunavut—**Jessie Oonark** and her daughters, **Janet Kigusiuq** and **Victoria Mamnguqsualuk** —and shines a light on a highly distinctive art form called *nivinngajuliaat* (wall hangings) that developed out of government-sponsored craft programs in the Arctic starting in the 1940s and 50s, beginning with the sewing program in *Qamani`tuaq* (Baker Lake) established in the 1960s.

Nivinngajuliaat were conceived by the seamstresses of the community. These brightly stitched textiles feature graphic appliquéd images, often enhanced with embroidery, centering on the dynamics and interrelationships between people and animals. Through these artworks, Double Vision looks at the matriarchal practice of Oonark and two of her daughters, and how women artists in *Qamani`tuaq* mentored one another in producing unique aesthetic and conceptual lineages. The exhibition brings together artworks from public and private collections from across Canada and features remarkable examples of *nivinngajuliaat* alongside seldom seen drawings by Oonark and Mamnguqsualuk and paper collages by Kigusiuq that relate to both the technique and content of the wall hangings.



Martha Noah
is wearing an *amauti*

Jessie Oonark

Victoria Mamngusualuk

Oonark with her family, c. 1973 standing from left: Martha Noah, unidentified, William Noah; Seated from left: Jessie Oonark, Victoria Mamngusualuk, and Samson Kayuryuk, Oonark's grandchildren unidentified. Photo Jack Butler University of Manitoba

Featured artists



Jessie Oonark (1906 – 1985) grew up north of Qamani'tuaq (Baker Lake in English), surviving extreme hardship, starvation, and the death of four of her thirteen children. From the beginning, predating her move to Qamani'tuaq, Jessie was interested in the new and modern. Important in Jessie's practice is the representation of women as well as women's tools, particularly the ulu and clothing such as kamiks and amauti. Characteristic of her practice is its symmetry, which has been described as a kind of "double vision," as well as its bold colours and form. Jessie is considered one of the most influential figures in Inuit textiles, although she only began drawing and working with wool at the age of fifty-nine.



Janet Kigusiuq (1926 – 2005) practice explores the relationship between representation and abstraction. Janet's particular interest was in representing the land—particularly that of the family's summer camp at Kitikat. There, she portrayed the waters, swarms of mosquitoes, lakes, lichen, and the drying of fish. Janet began making collages later in life when her arthritis made it increasingly difficult to create detailed drawings. Collage, with a focus on the interlacing of shape and colour, became a way to further represent the land and life around her. She was known to be inspired by the "in-between time" at dusk and how this shifting light brought out different characteristics in the land. In her works on paper, the between time was represented by a rhythm she achieved through the proximity of forms, making the land itself a pattern.



Over the course of her career, **Victoria Mamnguqsualuk (1930 – 2016)**, often returned to the same character, Kiviuq, in her work. A migrant, Kiviuq travels through different lands, as well as through different times and cultures. The real and the imaginary rub up against each other in these stories in ways that have often confused their interpretation by outsiders. For Inuit, people and spirits commonly 'share the same natural environment.' Victoria's prints, drawings, and textiles are no exception. We see humans convening with snake spirits; fish are monstrously large; and people are often found in a state of transformation, mutating into seals or birds, while animals in turn become human. Importantly, as Victoria says, 'all that is described in [these stories] really did happen once, when everything in the world was different to what it is now.'



ᐅᐱᐅᐱᐅᐱ Jessie Oonark (1906 - 1985)
Untitled, Oomani'tuaq (Baker Lake)
c. 1970; wool felt applique and cotton
embroidery thread on duffel; 120.2 x
130.3 cm. McMichael Canadian Art
Collection, Gift of Sam and Esther Sa-
rick. Public Trustee for Nunavut, Estate
of Jessie Oonark.

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.



Baker Lake, Nunavut. Photo by T.K. Tomlinson. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/baker-lake>

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 qanurtuuqatiginniq – 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 appliqué initiative and other attempts to produce handicrafts in the North for southern markets, and the approach of contemporary textile artists profiled in the exhibition embody the concept of qanurtuuqatiginniq.



Google Maps. <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Baker+Lake,+NU/@64.2278163,-95.421835,10z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x-521a9b9b8f30495f:0xffbb66cd466968e3!8m2!3d64.317604!4d-96.022001?hl=en>

History of Qamani'tuaq

Qamani'tuaq meaning "where the river widens" or in English, Baker Lake, is a hamlet located in mainland Nunavut in the Kivalliq Region, and is known for being the only inland community. It is the fourth largest community in Nunavut. The area has always been a historical gathering place for Inuit people for hunting and fishing, and in 1916 became a Hudson's Bay Company trading post.

During the 1950s, the government moved people from inland camps to Baker Lake due to threats of starvation caused by caribou scarcity. The community is now home to 11 different and distinct Inuit groups: the Ahiarmiut/Ihalmiut, the Akilinirmiut, the Hanningajurmiut, the Harvaqturmiut, the Hauniqturmiut, the Illuilirmiut, the Kihlirniirmiut, the Natsilingmiut, the Paallirmiut, the Qaernermiut and the Utkuhiksalingmiut.

In 1979, the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITK) took the Canadian government to court for bringing mining companies to the area, where Inuit people exercised their land rights by hunting for caribou, particularly the Kazan River. The community continues to be known for its gold mining, employing about a third of the residents.

In addition to mining, the community is known for nivinngajuliaat wall hangings. Different regions of Nunavut are known for different styles, for example: Arviat, Nunavut, is where textiles were traditionally embellished with heavy applique through beading and creation of 3-dimensional figures, and Pangnirtung, Nunavut is known for large-scale woven pictorial tapestries.

Oonark and Kigusiuq were born in the Back River area (200 km north of Qamani'tuaq) but both moved to the area, like many other artists from their generation who previously lived a traditional life inland, to pursue their artistic practices. In 1992, the Jessie Oonark Arts and Crafts Centre opened, and has become a work space for artists from the community. It not only includes studio space for sewing, but also, stone carving, print making and jewellery.

Contemporary Artists From Baker Lake

The following list of artists, are other artists from or based in the Quamani'tuaq (Baker Lake) community known for nivvinngajuliaat (wallhangings) and other Inuit crafts such as printmaking, stone carving and drawing.

[Lucy Angoyuaq \(b.1962\)](#)

[Irene Avaalaqiaq \(b. 1941\)](#)

[Elizabeth Angrnaqquaq \(1916-2003\)](#)

[Jimmy Kamimmalik](#)

[Marie Kuunnuag \(1933-1990\)](#)

[Janet Nungnik \(b. 1954\)](#)

[Ruth Qaulluaryuk \(b. 1932\)](#)

[Marion Tuu'luq \(1910-2002\)](#)

Paula Ikuutaq Rumbolt is experienced in developing and instructing Inuktitut and traditional Inuit arts programming and has written two books based on Inuit legends. She is one of the co-founders of Hinaani Design and contributes to development and direction of the company as well as being the first point of contact for customers. She is based in her hometown of Baker Lake.



Artist Spotlight: Janet Nungnik. Inuit Art Foundation.

Definitions/Important Terms

1940s & 50s – during these decades, the Canadian government invested in handicrafts, stone carving, and later printmaking in communities in Nunavut

Abstraction – a method of art-making by which an artist focuses on ideas, form, colour, organic shapes, among other elements, as opposed to recreating figurative images that represent reality

Amauti – is the parka worn by Inuit women, typically their child is carried in a baby-pouch below the hood

Appliqué – is a type of decorative needlework that attaches smaller pieces of fabric onto a large tapestry

Duffel – is a type of fabric that is tightly woven and made of wool

Handicrafts – (particularly the case in Qamani'tuaq) is a women's practice, mentoring one another, producing unique aesthetic + conceptual lineages

Kamiks – traditional seal skin boots made by Inuit people

Kiviuq – A migrant, he travels through different lands as well as through different times and different cultures. He is one of the oldest figures in Inuit oral tradition. and his stories likely go back thousands of years. He resurfaces at significant moments—he is known to have intercepted a Soviet satellite flying over the Arctic during the Cold War (during this period the Canadian Arctic was the front line, and Inuit first-hand witnesses), and after many lives passed in the world of the white man, he finally returned home to forewarn of what he saw while away.



ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ Victoria Mamnguqsualuk (1930–2016), Qamani'tuaq (Baker Lake), Untitled (Face/wolves); coloured pencil drawing; 55.5 x 75 cm. Collection of the Canada Council Art Bank.

Matrilineage – familial lineage traced through the maternal line

Nivinngajuliaat – Inuit wallhangings from Qamani'tuaq, or Baker Lake

Symmetry – when two sides are identically mirrored to each other

Ulu – is an all-purpose knife traditionally used by Inuit women

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.



Jessie Oonark (1906 - 1985), Qamani'tuaq (Baker Lake),
Untitled, 1977; wool felt appliqué and cotton embroi-
dery thread on wool duffel; 80 x 153 cm. Collection of
the Canada Council Art Bank.

Ulu

Kamiks

Amauti

Discussion Questions

1. How do these artists use the elements and principles of design in their work? Think about the types of shapes and colours they utilize.
2. How are the artists' spirituality, personal connections to the land, and worldviews, expressed through the artform of nivinngajuliaat (wallhangings), and in the case of Janet's work, collage?
3. Like Jessie and her two daughters, what are the matrilineal or familial artistic practices passed on in your family? Why is it important to connect to our ancestry through crafts?

What are the elements and principles of design? (Page 18, [Ontario Curriculum](#))

- Elements: line, shape and form, space, colour, texture, and value.
- Principles: contrast, repetition and rhythm, variety, emphasis, proportion, balance, unity and harmony, and movement.

What is the critical analysis process? (Pages 23-28, [Ontario Curriculum](#))

The critical analysis process includes the following aspects:

- initial reaction
- description
- analysis and interpretation
- expression of an informed point of view
- consideration of cultural context

For further exploration of the elements and principles of design and the critical analysis process, apply these to the related activities below.

Related Activities

1. Inspired by Jessie Oonark and her daughter, Victoria Mamnguqsualuk, create a composition using appliqué/ hand stitching techniques, that reflect on your own personal world view, histories and culture. See examples of appliqué across the globe on the next page.
2. Inspired by Janet Kigusiuq's works, create an abstract tissue paper collage that reflects on your natural environment and surrounding landscapes, for example: summer camp, the school yard, pets, a garden at a local park, etc. Instructions for this activity on page 12.
3. Inspired by Jessie Oonark's symmetrical "double visions", create a mirror image drawing of your family. Include representations of the tools your family uses in their home, the food you eat, and the activities you do together.
4. Research one of the contemporary artists from Quamani'tuaq (Baker Lake) listed on page 6. Answer the following questions: What does this work make you think of? What do you like or dislike about the work? What message do you think their work conveys? Does learning more about the artists' life influence your interpretation of their work?

Examples of Appliqué Across the Globe



Bag; c 1960-1970; Inuit; North America: Canada, Northern Canada; L 31 cm x W 40 cm; Textile Museum of Canada Collection; T03.50.2.



Janet Anautilik Nungnik, Waiting for Husband, 1992; wool and glass bead; L 87 cm x W 70 cm. Textile Museum of Canada Collection. Gift of Enid Rae MacLachlan. T96.0059.



Blouse Panel; 1965 - 1975; Kuna; North America: Central America, Panama, San Blas Islands; L 44 cm x W 35 cm; Textile Museum of Canada Collection; T94.0988.



Apron; c 1970; North America: Canada, Western Canada, British Columbia; L 70 cm x W 62 cm; Textile Museum of Canada Collection; T04.30.1.

Items from the Textile Museum Collection



Banner Fragment; c 1900 - 1999;
Africa: West Africa, Benin; L 79
cm x W 25 cm; Textile Museum
of Canada Collection; T04.34.3.



Bedding Cover (Detail); c 1940 - 1960;
Asia: South Asia, India, Western India,
Gujarat, Saurashtra; L 167 cm x W 103
cm; Textile Museum of Canada Col-
lection; T86.0259.



Apron; 1940; Gejia (Ge); Asia: East
Asia, China, Southern China, Guizhou
Province; L 42 cm x W 45 cm;
Textile Museum of Canada Collection;
T92.0270.

Tissue Paper Collage Activity

Materials needed



Fine Art Examples

Much like Janet Kigusiug who in the last ten years of her life after she developed arthritis, began making tissue-paper collages, Modern artist Henri Matisse turned to paper cutting after becoming ill. Due to accessibility needs, artists sometimes turn to new mediums.



ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ Janet Kigusiug, Composition, Qamani'tuaq (Baker Lake), 1996 – 2000; tissue, acrylic polymer, paper collage. Courtesy of Feheley Fine Arts. Public Trustee for Nunavut, Estate of Janet Kigusiug Uqayuittuq."



The Parakeet and the Mermaid (La Perruche et la Sirène)" (1952), by Matisse. Ruth Fremson/The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/10/arts/design/henri-matisse-the-cut-outs-a-victory-lap-at-moma.html>

Use tissue paper to create colourful landscapes:

1. Cut or tear tissue paper and play around with your composition, test out where you want certain shapes to be and what looks good to you.
2. On a blank sheet of paper in your sketchbook or looseleaf, arrange the tissue paper composition of your liking and lay it out.
3. Start to glue the shapes down with glue stick, white glue, or paper maché mix.