

MIA

Museum of Inuit Art

Dear Subscriber,

Thank you for subscribing to our monthly e-Newsletter, keeping you up to date on important events and happenings at the Museum of Inuit Art, southern Canada's only public museum dedicated exclusively to Inuit Art.

What's on this month:



New David Ruben Piqtoukun Piece

MIA is pleased to announce the arrival of its newest masterpiece -sculpted by David Ruben Piqtoukun from Paulatuk NWT/ Jackson's Point, Ont. Sculpted from an Ancient Whale skull which was transported from the tiny community of Paulatuk via Sealift in the summer of 2008 to Piqtoukun's southern home in Jackson's Point, this piece was completed in December of 2009.

Experience MIA's Latest masterpiece now on display in the Museum's Pedestal Gallery.

Born in 1950, David Ruben Piqtoukun grew up in the Paulatuk area of the western Arctic. One of fifteen children, the Piqtoukun family inherited a traditional migratory lifestyle in camps along the coast of the Mackenzie River Delta. In 1967, he was sent to a Catholic residential school where he received a western education. This experience of "living between two worlds" resulted in the artistic explorations for which he is renowned. David Ruben Piqtoukun creates sculptures that explore traditional shamanistic wisdom and also express the realities of modern life for Inuit whose lives have been drastically impacted by modern Western culture. In 1998, the Sculptors Society of Canada invited Piqtoukun to become a member. As one of the most celebrated Inuit artists, his work is included in several permanent collections and his exhibitions have taken him all over the world. As an artist Piqtoukun strives to express his Inuit heritage through art. His love of diverse beauty and colour of stone from around the world is reflected in his exploration of materials. Although his work has become increasingly abstract since the 1990s, it remains inspired by Inuit legends and rituals. Just as the shaman mediated between the worlds of humans and spirits, so does Piqtoukun's art reconcile traditions and change.

Current Exhibitions



Inuit Dolls from the Esther Sarick Collection, an exhibition curated by the Museum of Inuit Art, presents the wider context of doll-making, showing 40 examples of traditional and contemporary Inuit dolls from across the Canadian Arctic in a wide variety of materials and regional clothing styles. This exhibition will be open for viewing at the Museum of Inuit Art until January 31, 2010.

In Photo:

Martina Pisuyui Anoee

(born 1933)

Arviat (Eskimo Point), Nunavut

Old Tattooed Woman with Walking Stick, c. 1998-99

Sealskin, seal fur, muskox hair, wood, thread

Collection of Esther Sarick

Photo by Dieter Hessel



The Inuit Sea Goddess exhibition looks at the Inuit legend of the Sea Goddess and its various regional variations, in both sculpture and graphics. This exhibition is in its last week- ending January 15, 2010, so make sure to see it!

The following is an excerpt from curator Ingo Hessel's book, *Inuit Art: An Introduction*, and details the story of the Sea Goddess.

Sea Goddess, the most famous and powerful being in Inuit mythology, is known by many names, including Sedna, Nuliajuk and Taleelayu. The myth of the Sea Goddess exists in different versions in various regions of the Arctic, and this brief retelling is based on one of the better known accounts from northern Baffin Island:

A young woman (Sedna), after refusing the offers of many suitors, eventually married a sea bird. The bird, having promised her a life of luxury, took her to an island. Sedna discovered too late that she had been deceived, for her life on the island was in fact miserable. Upon hearing of her unhappy fate, Sedna's father came to the island to rescue her and killed the bird-husband. The two escaped the island in the father's boat but were pursued by the bird's friends, who created a terrible storm which threatened to swamp the small vessel. In a panic, the father threw Sedna overboard to save himself, but she clung to the side of the boat. Desperate to make it to shore, the father chopped off Sedna's fingers one joint at a time. Her severed finger joints transformed into whales and seals, and Sedna herself sank to the bottom of the sea and became a powerful spirit.

Sedna's sacrifice produced a bountiful harvest of sea mammals for Inuit, but there was a price to pay. The people were obliged to obey many rules and taboos to keep Sedna happy; if these taboos were broken, she might withhold her creatures from the community and whip up fierce storms, which would lead to starvation. One of the chief tasks of the shaman was to appease Sedna and to intercede with her in times of crisis. An annual Sedna Festival was held in some regions as an indication of the people's appreciation and respect.

Sedna's general appearance is quite similar to that of a mermaid; she is usually depicted with the upper body of a woman and the tail of a whale or other sea creature. Another physical characteristic is her hair. A shaman could curry Sedna's favour by travelling to the bottom of the sea to comb and braid her tangled hair.

From *Inuit Art: An Introduction* by Ingo Hessel, Curator, Museum of Inuit Art

In Photo:

Kiawak Ashoona, OC, RCA

Kinngait (Cape Dorset)

Sea Goddess, 1958

Stone

On Loan from Collection of the Canadian Guild of Crafts, Montreal

Photo by Dieter Hessel

[Watch The Inuit Sea Goddess on the MIA Website](#)

Thank you for your continued support of the Museum of Inuit Art. Don't forget about our great membership opportunities, available online or at our Front Desk - allowing unlimited access to the MIA for a full year, as well as membership discounts, special exhibition openings, and more.

Regards,

Museum of Inuit Art
www.miamuseum.ca
