

Inuit Art Today

by the Inuit Art Foundation

“Artists must see and respond to [a] new Arctic reality, perhaps by choosing to become social and cultural activists. [By] providing young artists with a range of tools, [they] will find new forms of expressions in an ever-changing Arctic world. In many ways it feels like a new beginning.” —Abraham Anghik Ruben

Inuit art is one of the most vibrant, varied, thriving, and relevant art forms in Canada today. Covering the entire range of fine art disciplines and beyond, Inuit artists are continuously innovating to create vital commentary on contemporary life in the North and beyond. These artists stand confidently on the world stage at international exhibitions such as documenta and the Venice Biennale, while representing the unique and critically important perspective of Inuit.

Inuit have been producing arts and crafts with incredible attention to detail, form, and functionality for centuries. Their art has taken many forms, including traditional Inuit tattooing, meticulously constructed skin clothing, tools for hunting and fishing, and ivory miniatures created for entertainment and trade. The birth of the modern Inuit art movement finds its roots in the 1940s, beginning with the production of soapstone carvings in Nunavik (northern Quebec). Since then, the production of art has flourished in nearly every community in Inuit Nunangat (the Inuit homeland in Canada), which includes Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut (Arctic Labrador), and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (Northwest Territories and the Yukon). Inuit artists have explored nearly all media, including drawing, printmaking, weaving, sewing, ceramics, photography, filmmaking, basket-weaving, and clothing production—as well as sculpture in bone, stone, ivory, wood, and metal.

Today, Inuit artists—who have always been early adopters and adapters of new technologies—are availing themselves of an ever-broadening range of materials and techniques to produce critical, engaging, and forward-thinking work. Artists are expressing what they see and experience in their everyday lives, and subjects such as climate change and environmental stewardship, cultural and political sovereignty, and celebrations of community and cultural heritage are

just some areas of their artistic inquiry. And, like earlier generations, Inuit artists are making work that incorporates traditional knowledge and storytelling while foregrounding narrative and community.

Founded in 1987, the **Inuit Art Foundation** is the only national Inuit organization dedicated to the support of

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Inuit art and artists. For over thirty years the IAF has provided professional development and support services to Inuit artists and arts administrators. Its initiatives include the *Inuit Art Quarterly*, the only magazine devoted to Inuit and Arctic arts; the Igloo Tag Trademark, which protects artists from cultural appropriation and theft; the Inuit Artist Database, a first-of-its-kind biographical resource for artists to receive support in creating online CVs—and more.

The IAF provides ways for those outside of Inuit Nunangat to access the varied and vibrant art made by Inuit and is your resource for remaining connected with Inuit artists. How can we connect you?

inuitartfoundation.org

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