Interconnected Worlds:
Kinngait Drawings in the North and South

by

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Abstract

The critical success of Annie Pootoogook's drawings has often been credited with precipitating a major shift within Inuit art towards more hybridized subject matter that led to the critical recognition of graphic artists such as Shuvina Ashoona, Tim Pitsiulak, Itee Pootoogook, and Jutai Toonoo. Despite being characterized as a stylistic break within Inuit art history, I argue that these drawings display a sense of continuity with older generations of artists in Kinngait. My examination of factors in the contemporary art world indicates that the popularity of Inuit drawing was due to marketing by agents in the southern art world as well as the shift from modernism to the contemporary period. Such shifts altered the demands for authenticity in Inuit art and now privilege hybridized subject matter. I propose that the contemporary art world overlooks the complex ways in which Inuit have responded to modernity and use drawings to aid resiliency.

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This thesis is dedicated to Itee Pootoogook (1951-2014) and Jutai Toonoo (1959-2015).

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INTRODUCTION

Inuit art has consistently defied attempts at categorization and occupies a curious in-between space within the binaries of Western art history. Although defined entirely by the ethnicity of its creators, Inuit art never fit neatly into the category of “ethnographic” art. Although Inuit have longstanding aesthetic traditions, the printmaking and cumbersome stone sculptures they are famous for were previously unknown to a semi-nomadic culture with little use for objects without practical functions. These mediums were imported into the Arctic by the Canadian government as a sort of economic and social welfare project with the aim of selling Inuit culture to a predominately white audience. Additionally, artists created works explicitly for external markets rather than for themselves and thus the art was seen as being more appropriate for gift shops than fine art galleries where commercialism is stigmatized.

Inuit art found initially found success by distancing itself from its “acculturated” nature. The writings of James Houston in the 1950s fictitiously situated Inuit art as an authentic expression of an ancient culture, appealing to the modernist interest in “primitive art”.¹ Despite the growing popularity of Inuit art, the works were often segregated within their own genre and relegated to separate sections within institutions during much of the twentieth century. In the current era, Inuit artists have succeeded in entering the world of contemporary art. Praised by critics for moving away from traditional subject matters towards imagery that reflects the “new North”, Inuit are increasingly included alongside their Southern contemporaries instead of being relegated

1 Heather Igloliorte, “Influence and Instruction: James Houston, *Sunuyuksuk: Eskimo* Handicrafts, and the Formative Years of Contemporary Inuit Art,” MA thesis, (Ottawa: Carleton University, 2006), 98-104.

to separate ethnographic galleries. Not only has the subject matter undergone changes but mediums have as well. The prints and sculptures that came to define Inuit art, while still popular, have lost precedence to large scale coloured pencil drawings. Although there is a diversity of drawing traditions across Inuit Nunangat, the current generation of graphic artists working in Kinngait² has received the most critical recognition. Among this so-called “third generation” of artists, there are four who stand out in terms of critical acclaim: Shuvinai Ashoona, Tim Pitsiulak, Itee Pootoogook, and Jutai Toonoo. Their work has received the most attention for its autobiographical and self-reflexive subject matter. Jutai Toonoo’s work often functions as an introspective journey into his own emotions. *Angry Face* (Figure 1), from a series depicting faces in his community, is meant to give voice to his inner emotional turmoil. The work contains no obvious cultural signifiers that would cause it to be read as strictly Inuit. As such, his work is often described as reflecting the universal human condition rather than a strictly Inuit one. Tim Pitsiulak, meanwhile, creates images of life on the land that are unmistakably Inuit in their subject matter. These are not generic hunting scenes but highly realistic snapshots of the artist’s life which he has chosen to reproduce in coloured pencil. Pitsiulak’s almost photographic realism and the incorporation of modern technology in drawings such as *Shared Catch* (Figure 2) disavows all that audiences in the south might associate with the primitive. Works like these have demonstrated to critics that art can be both Inuit and contemporary.

Despite the recent successes of Inuit artists, the phenomenon of their art

² Kinngait is the Inuktitut name for the Inuit hamlet that many in the south know as Cape Dorset. This thesis will use the English name only when it is historically appropriate. The citizens of Kinngait will be referred to collectively as Kinngaitmiut.

“becoming contemporary” poses new problems. The globalized art world is still heavily informed by Western art discourse. How are we to understand the seamless blend of Western and Inuit iconographies in drawings such as Shuvinai Ashoona’s *Pink Amauti Hood* (Figure 3)? Art historians such as Heather Igloliorte insist that Inuit art has always held different meanings for *Qallunaat*³ than it has for those who create it. It appeals to the primitivist sensibilities of collectors in the south while simultaneously embodying resilience for Inuit through its preservation of knowledge and culture.⁴ Due to this duality, there is always a risk that the subtleties and local significance of Ashoona’s work may be overshadowed as it moves out of Kinngait into the south. Have the changing art discourses of the twenty-first century afforded us a clearer understanding of Inuit art that can bridge the artistic discourses of two very different cultures? Or does Ashoona’s work fulfill long-standing *Qallunaat* demands for authenticity and the exotic Other that have merely shape-shifted with the times?

As a largely overlooked medium that is now at the forefront of contemporary Inuit art, drawings are the ideal case study for an examination of these issues. Until the 2000s, Inuit drawings were not widely exhibited in the south, but following the critical success of Annie Pootoogook they experienced an enormous growth in popularity. I believe that this is a critical moment in Inuit art history which demands a closer examination than it has been given. Often Pootoogook’s work is positioned as a “break” within Inuit art that has ushered in a new generation of artists who are finally free to

3 While the literal translation varies by dialect, *Qallunaat* is an Inuktitut word generally used to refer to non-Inuit people of European descent.

4 Heather Igloliorte, “Inuit Artistic Expression as Cultural Resilience,” in *Speaking My Truth Volume II: Response, Responsibility, Renewal*, (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2009), 119-120.

experiment and depict their modern realities. This narrative conforms too readily to Western myths of exceptionalism and overlooks decades of artistic experimentation in Kinngait. In this thesis, I attempt to understand the why and how of this moment and use Inuit drawings to call attention to the ways in which the Southern Canadian art world continues to categorize non-Western artists on its own terms.

This thesis is about two art worlds; one informed by the European worldviews that I was raised with and the one inhabited by Inuit and their own intellectual traditions. It is important that I situate myself in this project so that readers can make their own assessment of the authoritative voice that inevitably emerges in academic writing. I am not Inuit but *Qallunaat*, of mixed English, Irish, and Scottish ancestry. I was born in Oshawa and have lived in various parts of Ontario for all of my life and thus am examining Inuit art as an outsider to both that land and culture. I was drawn to Inuit art by accident. As an undergraduate I asked for a practicum placement working with archival material and was given the task of cataloguing the Inuit Art Foundation archives. During the year I spent working with these archives, I became fascinated by the people, history, and culture that surrounded the artworks. Additionally, my background as a working class woman made it hard not to relate to the economic hardships and the associated traumas that remain a strong motivation for art production in northern communities. I come to this project with a great deal of solidarity and with the aim of using my privilege to foster understanding between two very different cultures.

The Institutional Acceptance of Inuit Art

Arthur Danto argues that recognizing an object as art requires a particular “atmosphere of artistic theory” that he identifies as the “art world”. Evolving theories, social conditions,

and attitudes surrounding art objects allow different styles and mediums to be accepted as art at different points in history.⁵ It is important to understand the institutional and theoretical background that allowed Inuit drawings eventual acceptance into the intellectual realm Southern institutions refer to as “contemporary art”. Before we can explore the relation of Inuit art to the contemporary art world, it is important to unpack what is meant by “contemporary”. There is little agreement among institutions and academics as to what constitutes “contemporary art” and as a result, there is no current universal definition. To some, it refers to all art made from the 1980s onwards. Others ascribe the label to any work created by a living artist. Although this thesis primarily looks at artworks dating from the time of Annie Pootoogook’s solo exhibition at The Power Plant in 2006, I am more interested in understanding contemporary art as a discursive space than as a fixed point in history, and as a label which ascribes to objects the quality of being innovative and “of the now” and which grants access to specific types of audiences and venues. Art historians such as Terry Smith have argued that the contemporary is a distinct ideology that has emerged in the wake of modernist discourse, but explanations of what characterizes the nature of contemporary art are often vague and unsatisfactory. In sifting through Smith’s opaque prose on the subject, we are left only with the definition that contemporary art is “the institutionalized network through which the art of today presents itself”.⁶ It may be that it is too early to try and define “contemporary” as an era or philosophical movement distinct from modernism or postmodernism. In this thesis, I choose to follow Cuauhtémoc Medina’s notion that the

5 Arthur Danto, “The Artworld,” *Journal of Philosophy* vol. 61, no. 19 (October 1964): 580.

6 Terry Smith, *What is Contemporary Art?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 241.

contemporary is a purposely vague term that, “stands to mark the death of the ‘modern’”⁷ in the aftermath of the critiques of modernism. Medina argues that contemporary art is marked by a lack of contention in its reception and causes artists from all races, classes, and ideologies to inhabit spaces which previously would have separated them. While there are benefits to this sharing of space, such as the recognition of previously overlooked artists and movements, contemporary art spaces can strip artworks of their ability to be subversive by rendering them neutral and tying them to the establishment.⁸

Many scholars place the contemporary as the present period which has occurred after modernism. This is characterized by an increase in international and transnational exhibitions that occurred in the 1990s that is a result of globalization. Globalization has led to greater diversity in the art world which complicates academics’ urges to label and categorize visual culture. Ian McLean discusses contemporary art as a product of globalization after the failure of modernism, categorizing it as a judgement on modernism.⁹ Practitioners of the “New Art History” rejected both the Western narrative of innovation as a linear progression in art and the idea that artistic genius is related to a certain moment of achievement within a culture.¹⁰ In the 1980s, art historians began to move away from a focus on iconography, biography, and style, instead analyzing a

7 Cuauhtémoc Medina, “Contemp(t)orary: Eleven Theses,” in *What is Contemporary Art?*, (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010), 11.

8 Medina, “Contemp(t)orary,” 12-13.

9 Ian McLean, “Contemporaneous Traditions: The World in Indigenous Art/Indigenous Art in the World,” *Humanities Research*, vol. 19, no. 2 (2013): 47-49.

10 Ruth B. Phillips, “What is ‘Huron Art’?: Native American Art and the New Art History,” *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* vol. 9, no. 2 (1989): 163-164.

complex web of social factors surrounding the production of artwork through the lenses of race, class, and gender. Western and Indigenous art began to be shown together within museum exhibitions and resulting critical responses led to changes in thinking about what had previously been deemed “primitive art”.¹¹

Widely publicized controversies over exhibitions, most famously the Museum of Modern Art’s *Primitivism in Twentieth Century Art: the Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* (1984), led to critiques of modernist display practices and its ties to primitivism. Primitivism is an ideological construct which “celebrates” various non-Western cultures as purer and closer to nature albeit less rational and sophisticated.¹² As scholars and curators distanced themselves from primitivism, relational theories of art began to emerge.¹³ Indigenous artists were at last being credited as individuals rather than anonymous producers of art, opening up new possibilities for the reception and display of their work. Related controversies in Canada such as the Glenbow Museum’s *The Spirit Sings* (1988) led to changes in museum practice ranging from a greater inclusion of both “traditional” and contemporary First Nations artworks, to a re-thinking of the way objects were presented, and the emergence of collaborative curatorial practices.¹⁴ These changes

11 Ruth B. Phillips, “Fielding Culture: Dialogues between Art History and Anthropology,” 102-110. *Museum Pieces*, 102

12 Fred Myers, “‘Primitivism,’ Anthropology, and the Category of ‘Primitive Art,’” in *Handbook of Material Culture*, edited by Chris Tilley et al., (London: Sage Publishing Ltd., 2006), 268-269.

13 Ian McLean, “The Necessity of the New: Between the Modern and the Contemporary,” in *Three Reflections on Contemporary Art History*, edited by Nicholas Croggon and Helen Hughes, (Melbourne: Discipline, 2014), 15-16.

14 Anne Whitelaw, “Placing Aboriginal Art at the National Gallery of Canada,” *Canadian Journal of Communication* vol. 31, no. 1 (2006): 197-214.

opened up new possibilities for the study of Indigenous art through the dissolution of hierarchies that segregated traditional objects from fine art.¹⁵

Commercial galleries – where the majority of contemporary Inuit art was and still is displayed – were slower to catch on to these ideological shifts. A survey by *Inuit Art Quarterly* in 1991 demonstrated that while there were a few galleries, primarily in central Canada, presenting solo shows by individual artists, the majority of commercial galleries were staging thematic shows or selling Inuit art alongside that of First Nations artists.¹⁶ Even outside these commercial galleries, the few non-Inuit specific institutions such as the National Gallery of Canada (NGC) that began to seriously collect Inuit art in the 1980s kept the artworks segregated from the work of contemporary Canadian artists.

The application of the “primitive art” label is inaccurate when attached to any form of Indigenous material culture, but even more so in the case of Inuit art, which has always been a quintessentially contemporary art form. From the beginning of the co-operatives, Inuit artists experimented with previously unfamiliar mediums and invented new aesthetic approaches in order to express their culture. Despite this, an appeal to primitivist values has been essential to the marketing of Inuit art to *Qallunaat*. Both James Houston and George Swinton made frequent use of primitivist tropes in their writings on Inuit art by attempting to link artistic practices to pre-contact traditions.¹⁷ The

¹⁵ Phillips, “Native American Art and the New Art History,” 168.

¹⁶ Inuit Art Quarterly, “Who Sells Inuit Art and How?” *Inuit Art Quarterly* vol. 5/6, no. 4/1 (Fall/Winter 1991): 44-51.

¹⁷ It is worth noting that Swinton’s views on Inuit art shifted over time as he began to recognize the modernity of Inuit artists over the course of his life. See Ruth B. Phillip’s “Aesthetic Primitivism Revisited: The Global Diaspora of ‘Primitive Art’ and the Rise of Indigenous Modernisms,” *Journal of Art Historiography* 12 (June 2015): 1-25.

recognition of Inuit art as fine art remained stalled during the latter part of the twentieth century due to the tension between its invented nature and the authenticity primitivism granted it. Throughout most of the twentieth century, exhibitions and scholarship on Inuit art were primary thematic with an ethnocentric Western focus. Inuit artworks were often used as a way to explain pre-contact cultural practices and oral traditions rather than understood as reflections of contemporary Inuit life.

The commercial arts industry valued and promoted the perceived authenticity of Inuit art but fine art institutions found its hybridized and invented nature made such authenticity suspect. Despite its associations with primitivism, Inuit art lacked the explicit connection to traditional aesthetic practices. Inuit art was not “discovered” until the 1950s, was heavily tied to the Canadian government, made explicitly to be sold to a white audience for economic gain, and depicted a way of life that no longer existed. Due to these features, art critics in the 1970s argued that Inuit art was invented and inauthentic¹⁸ Both Inuit artists and Inuit art scholars have maintained all along that despite the ties to commercialism and its short history, Inuit artists imbue their artwork with cultural significance.¹⁹ The majority of the artists working in the years from 1980 to 2000 did not receive Western art education. As a result, artists were not creating the types of politicized postmodern work that allowed some First Nations artists like Bob Boyer and Robert Houle to infiltrate contemporary spaces in Canadian art institutions. The promotional tone of many exhibitions exacerbated doubts by critics about the artwork that were

18 Richard C. Crandall, *Inuit Art: A History*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2000), 54-55.

19 Marybelle Mitchell, “Inuit Art is Inuit Art: Part One,” *Inuit Art Quarterly* vol. 12, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 4-15.

already in place due to the economic motivation for its production.²⁰ Further complicating Inuit art was its relationship with Canadian nationalism. Norman Vorano argues that after WWII, Canada was in need of symbolism that was neither European nor American in order to define itself as an independent northern nation. He argues that the exhibition space is used frequently by governments to construct such symbolic narratives. In the case of Inuit art, exhibitions were used to inspire Canadian nationalism by fostering romantic ideas about the north.²¹ From the successful London *Gimpel Fils* exhibition in 1953 through the 1980s, official exhibitions of Inuit art were staged according to modernist ideals.²²

In conforming to a modernist approach to art, attempts were made to raise the status of Inuit art by promoting individual artistic personalities, although some critics such as Edmund Carpenter vehemently opposed this as a violation of Inuit cultural traditions.²³ The 1960s saw a growing trend towards recognizing Inuit artists as individuals. Notably, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) started collecting artist biographies in 1969, information which could then be distributed to art dealers.²⁴ These

20 Marybelle Mitchell, "Ways of Thinking About Inuit Art: Sharing Power," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 8.

21 Norman Vorano, "Inuit Art in the Qallunaat World: Modernism, Museums, and the Popular Imaginary, 1949, 1962." (PhD thesis, University of Rochester, 2007), 341.

22 Vorano, "Inuit Art in the Qallunaat World," 342.

23 Auger, *The Way of Inuit Art*, 114.

24 James Sinclair, "Privacy Concerns Halt Distribution of Inuit Artist Biographies," *Inuit Art Quarterly* vol. 21, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 34-35.

biographies tracked alternate names, families, and disc numbers.²⁵ Using Kenojuak Ashevak and Pitseolak Ashoona as early examples, Janet Berlo points out that there is profit for dealers in elevating certain individuals in Inuit art from “a sea of anonymity” to fit the Western conception of artistic genius and generate interest within art markets.²⁶ While some artists such as Kenojuak Ashevak, were able to garner a considerable amount of fame, the subject matter of the art works was still primarily pre-contact life, which made it hard for them to be assimilated into the broader world of contemporary art. The exhibitions of the 1990s revealed a growing trend towards exhibitions showcasing the work of a single artist, and commercial galleries followed suit. In 1999, the dealer John Houston remarked that his clients had switched from buying expensive sculptures, regardless of their authorship, to wanting to know the particular biographies of “master” artists before making a purchase.²⁷

The hybridized and commercialized nature of Inuit art prevented it from gaining status as “contemporary” in the same way that First Nations art was beginning to be accepted within fine art institutions. Simultaneously, when primitivism fell out of favour, this damaged the art’s commercial appeal. By the 1990s, Inuit art was in crisis. In 1999, there was speculation that the market for Inuit art had crashed, following a steady decline in sales since the 1970s – the same time period during which scholars were beginning to

25 Disc numbers were codes inscribed on wearable discs that were assigned to Inuit in lieu of last names. Artists sometimes signed their artworks with their disc number prior to Project Surname

26 Janet Berlo, “Drawing (upon) the Past: Negotiating Identities in Inuit Graphic Arts Production,” in *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, edited by Ruth Phillips and Christopher Steiner, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 184.

27 David Staples, “Cape Dorset in Crisis,” *The National Post*, March 27th, 1999: 6.

challenge the category of “primitive art”.²⁸ From 1980 to 1982, sales of the Canadian Arctic Producers (CAP) dropped from 2.88 million to 1.94 million, although this was due in part to the worldwide recession. Printmaking in particular seemed to be in crisis due to a drop in the quality of prints, owing in part to the death of many first generation Inuit artists and the fact that the Canadian Eskimo Arts Council (CEAC) — whose mission was in part to ensure high quality art — had also rejected a record number of prints that they perceived as being more akin to illustrations than fine art.²⁹ As will be demonstrated later on, drawing remedied this problem and have been credited for “reviving” Inuit art in the contemporary moment.

Theorizing Drawings

It is important to examine the medium of drawing itself and its place within art history. At its very basic definition, drawing is the act of marking surfaces with lines. Most theorizations of drawing within art history have grown out of European schools of thought where drawings are either seen as preparatory works for paintings within the academic tradition or as a part of commentary on twentieth century modern art movements.

The English art critic John Berger wrote extensively on the medium of drawing. He felt that unlike the constructed nature of paintings, drawing is a form of personal discovery, calling drawing “...an autobiographical record of one’s discovery of an event

28 Fred Myers, “‘Primitivism’, Anthropology, and the Category of Primitive Art”, in *Handbook of Material Culture*, Edited by Chris Tilley et al., (London: Sage Publishing Ltd., 2006), 267.

29 Richard C. Crandall, *Inuit Art: A History*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2000), 251-260.

– either seen, remembered or imagined.”³⁰ Inuit drawings can be read through this lens. Drawings were initially introduced as a way for missionaries and other explorers in the North to bypass linguistic barriers and learn about Inuit. Often we approach Inuit art as a way to learn about an exotic culture, but this process can function in reverse as well. Drawing allows us to gain insight as to how Inuit “discovered” *Qallunaat* and negotiated the rapid changes wrought by colonization. Berger also argues that a finished work – such as a painting – constructs rather than discovers. In contrast to sculptures and prints, which can be influenced by *Qallunaat* art advisors involved with the co-operatives, drawings may provide a glance into the creative process before this intervention occurs.

Writing from an anthropological point of view, Tim Ingold addresses the act of drawing in his work on the significance of line. He argues that everyone and everything in this world is made from series of interconnected lines.³¹ Writing about the anthropology of lines, he breaks them into two main categories: threads and traces. A thread is a series of lines that have surfaces and are woven. Traces are more closely related to the act of drawing, as they are lines which are placed onto a surface.³² The creation of lines is tied to travel and movement, Ingold uses the term “wayfaring” to refer to this relationship:

The wayfarer is continually on the move. More strictly, he *is* his movement... the wayfarer is instantiated in the world as a line of travel. It is a line that advances

30 John Berger, “Drawing” in *John Berger: Selected Essays*, edited by Geoff Dyer, (New York: Pantheon Books, 2001), 10-11.

31 Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), 5.

32 Ingold, *Lines*, 41-43.

from the tip as he presses on in an ongoing process of growth and development, or of self-renewal. As he proceeds, however, the wayfarer has to sustain himself, both perceptually and materially, through an active engagement with the country that opens up along his path... Indeed, the wayfarer has no final destination, for wherever he is, and so long as life goes on, there is somewhere further he can go.”³³

Ingold believes that the creation of lines, through the act of wayfaring is “our most fundamental mode of being the world.”³⁴ Both Berger's and Ingold's theories suggest a theoretical link to Inuit thought as it pertains to drawing. The observational and experiential nature of drawing that both authors argue for lends itself naturally to Inuit worldviews or *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* which prizes this type of knowledge as the best practice through which to become a complete or true person.

Methodology

My approach includes close readings of the artworks. As my ability to travel was limited, I consulted publicly available images such as reproductions inside published literature and works within gallery collections. The major galleries that served as the source of my images were the National Gallery of Canada and Fehleley Fine Arts in Toronto. I believe that these sources provide a sufficient overview of Inuit drawings that are accessible today in the fine art and commercial spaces of Southern Canada, although they only represent a small sample of what has been produced since the 1950s. There is an enormous archive of drawings available in institutions, particularly the archive of

33 Tim Ingold, “Against Space: Place, Movement, Knowledge,” in *Boundless Worlds: An Anthropological Approach to Movement*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 35.

34 Ingold, “Against Space,” 35.

100,000 drawings from Kinngait that is held at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection and the more recent body of contemporary work held at Kinngait Studios. There are also many drawings held within private collections. I was not able to access these resources but they would be beneficial for further investigations.

I have attempted to use the artists' own words for the interpretation of their artworks. Again, travel to the Arctic was not within my research budget so I drew from available interviews. I was able to transcribe words from Tim Pitsiulak taken from the symposium at the Art Gallery of Ontario held in conjunction with the *Inuit Modern* exhibition. Jutai Toonoo gave extensive interviews for the CBC's *Eye on the Arctic* which I was able to access. Itee Pootoogook and Shuvinai Ashoona are underrepresented in comparison. Pootoogook, who passed away in 2014, was a very private person and did not give many public interviews or artist talks. Ashoona suffers from severe bouts of mental illness that affect her lucidity and make her speech patterns hard to follow. I did not believe myself qualified to accurately draw conclusions from her words and worried about the ethical considerations involved in making an attempt. When reading Ashoona's work, I primarily draw from iconographical analysis. I interviewed both Patricia Fehleley and William Ritchie, both of whom have spent considerable time with the artists, in order to gain additional information. Not having the means to conduct interviews with artists themselves is a major hindrance to this thesis and vital for future investigations into this topic in order to gain a fuller understanding of their work. It is imperative that the reader of this thesis understand that because of these limitations, what I am able to offer is an interpretation based on the understanding I have reached through my interviews with key intermediary art world figures and artist interviews which have been published. A future,

more extensive research scope would provide for additional opportunities to talk directly with artists.

I have relied on social art history in order to give context to the artist's works. This has mainly been accomplished through the use of secondary sources that allow for a better understanding of the cultural, political, and economic factors that surround their art production. Because there has as yet been relatively little scholarship and critical analysis on contemporary drawings, I consulted the artist files at the National Gallery of Canada and I made extensive use of the *Inuit Art Quarterly* archives, especially their exhibition reviews. I also found exhibition reviews from various media sources in order to research the reception of these drawings in the south over time.

Literature Review

The inclusion of Inuit art within art historical scholarship is relatively new. Initially considered tourist art or ethnographic curiosities, Inuit art before the 1970s was written about outside the discipline of art history, by anthropologists, collectors, and artists who were involved in Arctic co-operatives such as James Houston and George Swinton. Due to this, there are many gaps within Inuit art history that scholars are still attempting to fill. In order to demonstrate the work that needs to be done, this literature review considers three related topics that have been covered to varying degrees by the existing scholarship: contemporary Inuit art, Inuit drawings, and the works of the individual artists.

Many of the key texts on Inuit art history do not cover works created after the early 1990s³⁵ and most of the detailed scholarship on Inuit art production after this period

35 The most oft-cited being George Swinton's *Sculpture of the Inuit* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1994), Ingo Hessel's *Inuit Art* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1998), and Richard C. Crandall's *Inuit Art: A History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2000). These books offer a broad historical survey of Inuit art from "prehistoric" times up until the date of publication with emphasis on aesthetics, cultural

can be found within a few large exhibition catalogues. An important exception to these catalogues is Emily Auger's *The Way of Inuit Art: Aesthetics and History in and Beyond the Arctic* (2005). In this book, Auger examines European influences on Inuit art as well as the ways in which Inuit art has influenced those outside the Arctic. The book is noteworthy for examining the impact of theories such as primitivism on Inuit art as well as contrasting Western and Inuit attitudes towards aesthetics, art making, and the relationship of Inuit art to postmodernism. She argues that Inuit art can be classified as postmodern because it does not adhere to Western notions of individuality.

Darlene Coward Wight's *Creation and Transformation: Defining Moments in Inuit Art* (2012) is the catalogue of an exhibition of the same name held at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. It is one of the first histories of Inuit art that includes works created after the 1990s. This period is covered in a chapter written by Christine Lalonde called, "New Directions in Inuit Art Since 2000." Lalonde's essay documents developments in contemporary Inuit art such as the shift in subject matter towards modern imagery and the increasing number of artworks dealing with autobiographical themes. She also briefly introduces the works of Shuvina Ashoona and Tim Pitsiulak in this context, as well as other contemporary artists who are outside the scope of my thesis.

One of the most extensive collections of writings on contemporary Inuit art can be found within another exhibition catalogue, *Inuit Modern: Masterworks from the Samuel and Esther Sarick Collection* (2011). The book contains essays from respected scholars such as Gerald McMaster, Ingo Hessel, Christine Lalonde, and Heather Igloliorte. They address such topics as the new social realism that has been developing in Inuit art, the

inspiration, regional differences, and techniques.

rise of the artist as an individual, cultural hybridity in modern Inuit identity, and the use of art as a form of cultural resiliency against the effects of colonization. The various essays in the book are effective at capturing broad themes and mention many of the artists that this thesis will examine, although there are generally no more than a few paragraphs devoted to them and, once again, the scope of an exhibition catalogue does not include detailed, local case studies. The *Inuit Modern* catalogue also omits a discussion of the large-scale drawings that are prominent within contemporary Inuit art, focusing mainly on printmaking and sculpture.

There have been various studies of Inuit drawings written from anthropological perspectives and by scholars who have examined drawings as a way to understand the creative process behind prints.³⁶ Marion Jackson was the first scholar to focus exclusively on Inuit drawings. Her doctoral dissertation on the graphic works of Baker Lake considered the artistic merit of Inuit drawings for the first time. Jackson's research contributed to an exhibition and catalogue entitled *Contemporary Inuit Drawings* (1987). Like much of the previous literature, the essays in the catalogue provide a very broad overview of Inuit drawings and cover many different regions including Kinngait. Drawing from her doctoral research, Jackson writes about the historical context of Inuit drawings, their stylistic qualities, and the differences between the documentary efforts of the first generation of artists and the concern for aesthetics in the drawings of the second generation. Jackson's catalogue and her collaboration with Marie Routledge on *Pudlo: Thirty Years of Drawing* (1990), a catalogue for an exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada of the same name, are currently the only books which are exclusively devoted to

36 An example of this is Dorothy LaBarge's exhibition catalogue, *From Drawing to Print: Perception and Process in Cape Dorset Art* (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1992).

Inuit drawings and frame them as fine art.

Information regarding individual artists rarely exists outside of exhibition catalogues, most of which are small brochures published by the host galleries such as the Marion Scott Gallery in Vancouver and Feheley Fine Arts in Toronto to accompany exhibitions. Although commercial, these sources provide valuable information and artist statements. The brochures from Feheley Fine Arts are especially valuable as the gallery's owner, Patricia Feheley, is one of the most important and influential figures in contemporary Inuit art and was directly responsible for the promotion of drawings as a contemporary art. Information on many of the artists is also available from short essays and interviews in published journals such as *Border Crossings*, *Canadian Art*, and *The Walrus*.³⁷ These pieces can be characterized as cultural and art criticism rather than as academic studies, lack in-depth interpretation, and frequently focus on many of the same themes; the artist's biography, the novel quality of their work, and cultural hybridity. *Inuit Art Quarterly* is the only academic publication to include longer features on individual artists. However, the journal is generally geared towards collectors and while it does a good job of bringing awareness to Inuit art, the essays on these emerging artists are often written by gallery owners and have a tendency to be more promotional than analytical in tone.³⁸

Of the individual contemporary artists that this thesis examines, Shuvinai Ashoona has received the most critical attention. The exhibition catalogue, *Three Women*,

³⁷ For more details, see the articles by Robin Laurence, Michelle Lewin, and Sarah Milroy in the bibliography.

³⁸ An example of this can be seen in Robert Kardosh's piece, "The New Generation: A Radical Defiance," in *Inuit Art Quarterly* no. 23, vol.4 (Winter 2008): 20-30.

Three Generations: Drawings by Pitseolak Ashoona, Napatchie Pootoogook, and Shuvinai Ashoona (1999) situates Ashoona's work as a continuation of the graphic works created by her aunt and grandmother. Another exhibition catalogue, Sandra Dyck's *Shuvinai Ashoona: Drawings 1993-2007* (2011) examines Ashoona's place within the history of Inuit art, her biographical details, the motifs she frequently employs, and her thematic devotion to landscapes and scenes from the past. Dyck also published a scholarly essay on Itee Pootoogook in a brochure for Feheley Fine Arts. There is no significant scholarship devoted to Jutai Toonoo or Tim Pitsiulak aside from short, informal articles and brief mentions in broader essays on contemporary Inuit art although there is a pending catalogue by Dyck and Leslie Boyd for the 2013 *Dorset Seen* which will correct this.

This thesis remedies some of these gaps by placing contemporary Kinngait drawings within a larger art history. It aims to demonstrate not only how they have developed over time but also to examine their meaning in the cultural context in which they were created and their reception in the artistic centres of Southern Canada. I have organized this thesis into three chapters. The first chapter examines the history of drawings in Kinngait starting with the beginning of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative. My aim here is twofold; first, I hope to fill a gap within Inuit art history by creating a more complete narrative of drawings in Kinngait. Secondly, I will argue that the works of the contemporary artists do not represent a break from older styles of Inuit art but are a continuation of artistic experimentation with themes such as hybridity, autobiography, and fantastical imagery that have existed in the community since the early days of the co-operative movement.

In the second chapter I examine the art world of Southern Canada to determine how these drawings were granted access into contemporary art institutions, how they were marketed, and how they have been received by institutions. I look at changing theoretical approaches within the contemporary art world that have required new definitions for authenticity for Inuit art. I argue that the quality of hybridity within subject matter is essential to the reception of an Inuit artist's work as contemporary and that, due to this, the local significance of the drawings becomes overshadowed as they are absorbed into the broader category of global contemporary art.

The final chapter in this thesis proposes that we can understand these works, not as conforming to theories of cultural hybridity in which the artist is stuck somewhere in a false dichotomy of the traditional and the contemporary, but, rather, as an expression of Inuit resiliency as they adapt to modernity and reproduce their own identities and traditions within it .

CHAPTER 1

An Unbroken Line: The History of Drawing in Kinngait

Situated on Qikiqtaaluk is the small Inuit community of Kinngait, commonly known to Southerners as Cape Dorset. Since James Houston helped established what would become the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative in the late 1950s, Kinngait has long been regarded as the capital of Inuit art, and Kinngaitmiut artists such as Kenojuak Ashevak created iconic images that often functioned as the world's introduction to Inuit culture. The dominant mediums to emerge from these studios were printmaking and sculpture, and the release of the annual Cape Dorset print collection became an annual highlight in the world of Inuit art. The art of this period primarily featured images of wildlife and pre-contact practices and beliefs. Although the beginning of this artistic endeavor coincided with an aggressive period of Arctic colonization that would drastically alter Inuit life, there appeared to be little evidence of these massive changes in their artwork.

In recent years there has been a shift away from classic imagery towards more explicitly transcultural artworks. Since Annie Pootoogook first rose to prominence in 2006 through the production of such drawings, Kinngait has become renowned for its large-scale coloured pencil drawings by resident artists such as Shuvina Ashoona, Tim Pitsiulak, Itee Pootoogook, and Jutai Toonoo. Referred to as “third generation artists,” they are praised by Southern institutions for experimenting with new mediums and imagery, and are often mistakenly written about as having broken with Inuit art traditions. This misconception is understandable given that there is no thorough written history of drawings in the community. In compiling a more complete history of Kinngait drawings

in this chapter, I will demonstrate that these artists are building upon a pre-existing artistic tradition which bears witness to the pressures of colonization through documentation, personal narratives, and hybridity.

Given the lack of paper-making materials native to the Arctic environment, drawings on paper are a relatively recent phenomenon in Inuit culture. However, the incision of linear designs onto available materials such as ivory can be traced back to the the ancestors of modern day Inuit, the Thule, and continues to the present day. In some cases these were linear and dot designs adorning utilitarian objects and jewellery but narrative hunting and camp scenes are sometimes observed on bow drill and knives from Thule sites.³⁹ Inuit in various Arctic communities have been creating drawings on paper sporadically since the material was introduced through initial contact with explorers and missionaries at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Even Robert Flaherty collected Inuit drawings in a location not far from Kinngait between 1913 and 1914.⁴⁰

The development of drawing as a deliberate artistic practice in Kinngait ran parallel to the advent of the printmaking program at the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative in the early 1950s, although James Houston noted that Inuit in the community already seemed to be familiar with drawing materials upon his arrival in 1951.⁴¹ In the 1960s, Houston and his then arts-advisor Terry Ryan encouraged Kinngaitmiut to make drawings, often with the intention of creating an image archive for the co-operative that

39 Richard C. Crandall, *Inuit Art: A History*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2000), 19.

40 Crandall, *Inuit Art: A History*, 39.

41 Dorothy LaBarge, *From Drawing to Print: Perception and Process in Cape Dorset Art*, (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1992), 11.

might be later used for prints.⁴² In the thirty years that followed an archive of about 100,000 drawings was produced in Kinngait. In 1991, the works were removed from the community and have been stored for safekeeping by the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinberg, Ontario.⁴³

In the early years, graphite pencils were the primary drawing tools that artists used. The coloured pencils that have since become the predominant medium of contemporary drawings were introduced in the 1960s. Felt markers also made their appearance during this time period and were taken up by many artists such as Pitseolak Ashoona.⁴⁴ The drawings from this early period of modern Inuit art were diverse in both subject matter and style. Some artists drew fantastical imagery of spirits and shamans, while others, like Peter Pitseolak, imbued their work with a strong narrative quality and an emphasis on documentary realism.

Early drawings from Kinngait were full of unusual imagery, perhaps owing to the fact that artists were given materials and were prompted to draw without much guidance-- although they were sometimes encouraged to depict traditional stories. Terry Ryan, who served as the arts advisor for the co-operative at the time, explained that results were often experimental; artists having no prior exposure to image-making of this kind, were uninhibited in the types of images they drew. They sometimes drew figures from legends and at other times drew unrecognizable figures from their imagination; the

42 Jean Blodgett and Susan Gustavison, *Strange Scenes: Early Cape Dorset Drawings*, (Kleinburg, ON: McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1993), 11.

43 Blodgett and Gustavison, *Strange Scenes*, 5.

44 Nasby, "Contemporary Inuit Drawings," 6.

composition was often dictated less by an urge to depict a certain subject than by a desire to use up space on the paper in creative ways.⁴⁵

This experimental aspect of drawing continued as the printmaking program in Kinngait grew, although there was a difference between the imagery in prints and in the drawings. As Marion Scott Gallery director and curator Robert Kardosh explains:

...alternative visions that challenge or confound Southern expectations usually find expression in drawings, as opposed to the more heavily marketed limited-edition prints. The latter must sell in sufficient numbers to recover the costs associated with operating a northern print shop, a condition that encourages printmakers to follow the established tastes of the Inuit art market. Drawings, by contrast, are relatively inexpensive to produce and therefore inherently less market-driven than prints, making them a more suitable medium for the presentation of unconventional, even subversive, types of imagery.⁴⁶

For this reason, scholars such as Janet Berlo, Marion Jackson, and Judith Nasby have argued that drawings are a more accurate representation of Inuit artistic expression. While there were many artists making drawings in a variety of styles, it would be too large a task, and beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss the artistic output of each individual artist during these years. Instead, I will focus on the work of three particular artists whose works function as stylistic precursors to the contemporary drawings that are produced in Kinngait. It is important to note that these were not the only artists engaging with these

⁴⁵ Blodgett and Gustavison, *Strange Scenes*, 9-10.

⁴⁶ Robert Kardosh, "The Other Kananginak Pootoogook," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 16.

themes at the time; many were experimenting with a variety of subjects during this time. I have chosen to focus on artists who appear to have been the most influential among their peers. These artists are Pitseolak Ashoona, Kananginak Pootoogook, and Pudlo Pudlat, all of whom were part of the first generation of artists working in the Kinngait studio. All, as I will show, introduced elements of autobiography, documentation, and hybridity into their drawings as a reaction to the seismic changes brought about by colonialism.

Kananginak Pootoogook's Documentary Realism

Kananginak Pootoogook was born in 1935 near Kinngait. An influential figure in the formative years of Inuit art, Pootoogook was one of the four original artists who worked with James Houston, and who served as the president of the West Baffin Eskimo co-operative from 1959 to 1964. He was a prolific artist, having made around 1,500 drawings and was also one of the most frequently published; 300 of his compositions were made into limited edition prints.⁴⁷

Pootoogook is the nephew of Peter Pitseolak. As Terry Ryan has pointed out, in the early days of Inuit art making the entire Pootoogook clan seemed to share a preference for detail and realism in their works.⁴⁸ Kananginak Pootoogook's former life as a hunter informed the highly detailed images of Arctic wild life that made him famous to Southern audiences. However, in a little known body of drawings from the 1990s, Pootoogook began to depict the effects that the appearance of *Qallunaat* in the Arctic had had on Inuit culture. He drew images of RCMP officers, priests, and camera-wielding

47 Robert Kardosh, "The Other Kananginak Pootoogook," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 11.

48 Jean Blodgett and Susan Gustavison, *Strange Scenes: Early Cape Dorset Drawings*, (Kleinburg, ON: McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1993), 15.

tourists, some of which had a critical quality that was novel in contrast to the more canonical examples of Inuit art. An untitled drawing from 1996, for example, (Figure 4) shows a *Qallunaat* and an Inuk drinking wine from glasses. The *Qallunaat* is seated, smiling at the Inuk who appears to be intoxicated and rolling on the ground. Underneath the image, Pootoogook has written in Inuktitut syllabics: “This is the Inuk man’s first drink ever. Even though it’s only wine he is very intoxicated. This is the beginning of alcoholism.” Kananginak Pootoogook also made many drawings that functioned as a form of auto-ethnography, creating several compositions, such as *Boats I Have Known* (Figure 5), showing arrangements of tools and technologies, both traditional and modern, floating on a white background. He continued to create these drawings up until his death in 2010.

In all his images, whether he was depicting wild life or the effects of colonization on Inuit culture, Pootoogook’s goal was to create what Kardosh has termed “accurate visual documentation” in his artwork.⁴⁹ This is reinforced by his use of syllabic text on many drawings, to further explain the scene that was being depicted.⁵⁰ This documentary realism and many of the motifs that Pootoogook explored would become one of the biggest influences on contemporary Kinngaitmiut artists.

Pudlo Pudlat’s Fantastical Hybridity

Pudlo Pudlat was born in 1916 and lived a traditional lifestyle before settling in Kinngait in the mid-1960s, when a hunting accident occurred which drew him to the hamlet for

49 Robert Kardosh, “The Other Kananginak Pootoogook,” 18.

50 Ibid, 15.

medical treatment.⁵¹ Pudlat began as a sculptor but was not adept at the medium; his work was described by Marie Routledge as “rather square, blockish, and often awkward.”⁵² His earliest known drawings date from 1961. While he was initially known to audiences in the south for his prints, Pudlat’s largest artistic output consists of the almost 4,500 drawings he made in his lifetime.

In his earlier works, Pudlat drew traditional subject matter such as human figures and animals although he refrained from depicting shamans because his grandmother and mother had never told him about shamanism and he had never personally seen a shaman.⁵³ In the 1970s, he began to incorporate images of modern technology into his works such as airplanes. Mixed media drawings such as *View from the Ice* (Figure 6) depict tiny Inuit figures contemplating the intrusion of these new technologies as airplanes and helicopters fly overhead. His work became more and more fantastical, sometimes portraying scenes of giant animals and anthropomorphized vehicles. When asked about the change in subject matter, Pudlat said:

In those days I used to draw images of what I’d seen and knew about – and we were using only pencil and ordinary paper which Saumik [James Houston] had given us. When I first started drawing I would try to draw realistic images, but it was very difficult. Now I know it doesn’t have to be like that. I’ve seen some drawings done by *Qallunaat* and they are not very realistic. After having seen

51 Marie Routledge, “Thinking on Paper: The Drawings of Pudlo Pudlat,” in *Pudlo: Thirty Years of Drawing*, ed. Marion E. Jackson and Marie Routledge, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1990): 16.

52 Ibid, 17.

53 Inuktitut Magazine, “An Interview with Pudlo Pudlat,” *Inuktitut Magazine* no. 74 (1991): 46-47.

drawings like that, I feel more comfortable because I can draw any way I want.⁵⁴

The bright colours and humour evident in many of Pudlat's drawings of technology read as whimsical and uncritical of *Qallunaat* culture. However, an interview with Pudlat in a 1991 issue of *Inuktitut Magazine* following his solo exhibition reveals his mixed feelings about the changes in his community. When he was asked about whether or not he drew modern imagery because he found it to be useful he replied:

It is quite difficult to express feelings in the images we draw. Sometimes when I draw, I try to express joy and sadness in the pictures but it is quite hard. The *Qallunaat* have brought with them to the Inuit homeland things that were unknown to us, some of which destroy our way of life and make us very depressed. On the other hand, some are also very useful and help us to live much easier. I do not say this to criticize the *Qallunaat*. I am simply saying what I think and I try to express those things in my drawings sometimes.⁵⁵

Pudlat's response is indicative of the many mixed reactions that Inuit had to modernity in the Arctic; some Inuit were grateful for new technologies that could make life easier but also fearful of the threat to their culture and way of life. The surreal imagery Pudlat employs reflects a transcultural reality that is an important precursor to the fantastical images by Shuvina Ashoona that blend both *Qallunaat* and Inuit themes as well as a fascination with technology demonstrated in the works of Tim Pitsiulak and Itee Pootoogook.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 46.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 44.

Pitseolak Ashoona's Autobiographical Narratives

Pitseolak Ashoona was born sometime between 1904 and 1908. Like Pudlo Pudlat, she spent most of her young life living on the land in Southern Qikiqtaaluk before settling in Kinngait during the late 1950s after the death of her husband. In lieu of remarrying and to support her children, Ashoona initially worked for Alma Houston as a seamstress for the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative but was inspired to begin drawing after looking at the work of her cousin, Kiakshuk.⁵⁶

Pitseolak Ashoona is notable as one of the first Inuit artists to explicitly incorporate autobiography into her drawings. The book *Pictures Out of my Life* and the NFB film adaptation were seminal moments that tied biography and art together in a way that was unprecedented for Inuit artists. As Christine Lalonde points out, the communal nature of Inuit culture meant that autobiographic references were not as explicit as they are in Western art. In works such as *Eskimos on a Sealskin Boat* (Figure 7), Ashoona depicts her memories using generic groups of figures rather than recognizable individuals in keeping with the notion of a shared history and identity.⁵⁷

Ashoona also referenced the art industry in her drawings. This is evident in a drawing created in 1963 entitled *The Critic* (Figure 8) which depicts two artists excitedly holding up artworks in hopes of trading them for a hunter's bird. Due to this and the many similar drawings in which Ashoona depicts herself tied to art production, curator Christine Lalonde argues that she was one of the first Inuit to think of herself as an artist

⁵⁶ Lalonde, *Pitseolak Ashoona: Life & Work*, 10-12

⁵⁷ Lalonde, 45.

engaged with the art world.⁵⁸ Although less concerned with realism than Kananginak Pootoogook, Pitseolak's art also exemplified a documentary urge. An untitled drawing created between 1966 and 1976 (Figure 9) depicts an arrangement of women's tools. Her art could also be considered as documentary because of the way it captures the details of pre-settlement life.

Pitseolak died in Kinngait in 1983 but the practice of drawing and many of the same themes were taken up to an even greater extent by her daughter, Napachie Pootoogook, who in turn passed the themes to her daughter Annie Pootoogook. The themes with which Pitseolak engaged and especially her incorporation of autobiographical details, and her self-reflexive representation of the Inuit art industry, gets adopted by all of the contemporary Kinngaitmiut artists.

Exhibition of Inuit Drawings Prior to 2000

The exhibition history of Inuit drawings demonstrates a gradual change in Southern Canadian attitudes towards them as a mode of artistic expression. In 1968 the Lofthouse Gallery in Ottawa presented felt marker drawings from Kinngait entitled *A Collection of Original Drawings by Cape Dorset Artists* in conjunction with an exhibition of Davidee Kagvik's sculptures. The following year Toronto's Isaacs Gallery mounted *Eskimo Drawings: Cape Dorset*, a small show of twelve drawings. The 1970s saw *Baker Lake Drawings* (1972) held at Innuity Gallery of Eskimo Art in Toronto. *Drawings by Pitseolak* was also held at the Innuity Gallery a few years later (1975). That same year, *Original Drawings by Nine Cape Dorset Women* (1975) was exhibited at the Gallery of Fine Canadian Crafts in Kingston.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 21-22.

There was an increase of exhibitions featuring Inuit drawing during the 1980s. As was typical of Inuit art exhibitions at the time, group shows were favoured over solo exhibitions. Notably, there were several exhibitions which examined drawings in relation to the printmaking process, such as the Winnipeg Art Gallery's *Baker Lake Prints and Print Drawings* (1983) and the Glenbow Museum's *From Drawing to Print, Perception and Process in Cape Dorset Art* (1986). *North Baffin Drawings* (1986) was staged by the Art Gallery of Ontario. In 1980, at the urging of curator Jean Blodgett, the MacDonald Stewart Art Centre focused its collection on drawings.⁵⁹ In 1987 the Centre mounted *Contemporary Inuit Drawings* which billed itself as "the first major exhibition of Inuit drawings produced over the last 25 years."⁶⁰

Commercial galleries exhibited drawings during this period as well. In Quebec City, Galerie aux Multiples presented a solo show of Parr's work in 1988 and Feheley Fine Arts organizing a group show entitled *Drawings of the 1960s from Cape Dorset* the following year. A similar show, *Cape Dorset Drawings* (1982), was held at Godard Editions in Calgary and the growing popularity of Pitseolak Ashoona led to *Pitseolak: Original Drawings* (1982) at the Houston North Gallery in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia.

Drawings received even greater attention during the 1990s. Some exhibitions included *Contemporary Inuit Drawings: The Gift Collection of Frederick and Lucy S. Herman* (1993) at the Joseph and Margaret Muscarelle Museum of Art. Feheley Fine Arts held *Women Who Draw: 30 Years of Graphic Art from the Canadian Arctic* (1993) and *Summer Migration: Drawings from the Late 1960s by Pitseolak Ashoona* (1996). *Strange*

⁵⁹ Crandall, 294.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Scenes: Early Cape Dorset Drawings (1993), which was held at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, contained seventy-eight works by thirty-nine artists from the earliest days of artistic experimentation in Kinngait. Reviewing the exhibition, Patricia Feheley wrote, “It seems evident that these drawings represent a pure expression and that the intention or meaning of the art itself was rarely considered by these early artists of Cape Dorset.”⁶¹

A sign of the potential for change was an exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada (NGC) entitled *Pudlo Pudlat: 30 Years of Drawing* (1990). This is significant, because even though Pudlat was primarily known by Southerners during this period for his prints, he became the first Indigenous artist to have a solo show at the NGC on the merit of his drawings. The NGC held two other exhibitions in the following years, *From the Centre: The Drawings of Luke Anguhadluq* (1993) and *Pencil to Paper: Early Drawings by Parr* (1997). Notably, these exhibitions were similar to the Pudlat exhibition in that they focused on drawings as the product of a single artist rather than being a thematic or group show. These shows coincided with an increase in the purchase of Inuit drawings by the NGC. The gallery had received several Inuit drawings within larger donations from the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) as well as individuals such as Dorothy Stillwell and Budd Feheley.⁶² Despite a few purchases of Pudlo Pudlat and Jessie Oonark drawings in the mid-1980s, the NGC did not begin regularly purchasing drawings until the 1990s.

61 Patricia Feheley, “Strange Scenes – Early Cape Dorset Drawings,” *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 3 (Fall 1993): 38.

62 Dorothy Speak, “It’s Inuit. Where Do You Put?” *Inuit Art Quarterly* vol. 3, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 4-7.

Three Women, Three Generations: Drawings by Pitseolak Ashoona, Napatchie Pootoogook and Shuvinai Ashoona (1999) at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection examined drawing over several generations, positioning Inuit drawing as a dynamic and evolving art form. In a reflection on the experience of putting the exhibition together, curator Jean Blodgett noticed that Shuvinai's work appeared to be very different from that of her aunt and grandmother and appealed to a difference audience:

Strangely enough, it was the Shuvinai drawings that were hardest to select; I was trying to fit just one more onto the gallery walls until the day before the opening. Her works are so unusual, so well drawn and so appealing; each is attractive and complex enough to reward closer examination. And since the exhibition has been on display, many visitors -- especially those not familiar with Inuit art -- have seemed to prefer the Shuvinai drawings.⁶³

In her observation, Blodgett appeared to foreshadow the coming changes surrounding Inuit art in the new millennium.

Annie Pootoogook and the Rise of Drawings

In 2004, Greg Younger-Lewis wrote in an article for *Nunatsiaq News* that there was a decline in Inuit drawing due to pressure from art collectors and dealers who found sculpture to be a much more profitable endeavor for artists.⁶⁴ The article features quotations from a then thirty-four year old Annie Pootoogook who became world-renowned for her stark coloured pencil drawings just two years later. Pootoogook is now

63 Jean Blodgett, "Three Women, Three Generations: Drawings by Pitseolak Ashoona, Napatchie Pootoogook and Shuvinai Ashoona," *Inuit Art Quarterly* vol. 15, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 48.

64 Greg Younger-Lewis, "Historic drawings abandoned, unseen." *Nunatsiaq News*. February 27th, 2004.

the most influential figure in contemporary Inuit art. Her work changed the way that Inuit art was perceived and put drawing on the map as a medium in its own right.

Pootoogook was born in Kinngait in 1969 into a family with a rich artistic heritage. Although often credited with democratizing subject matter in Inuit art, as we have seen, Pootoogook's depiction of the everyday is linked to the practices of her precursors. She has credited Kananginak Pootoogook as being an inspiration in some of her interviews⁶⁵ and her link to him can be seen in her many still-life arrangements and in images that address the impact of colonization. Pootoogook also often pays homage to the artistic influence of her grandmother, Pitseolak Ashoona, and mother, Napachie Pootoogook. Both women make frequent appearances in Pootoogook's drawings, sometimes as the main subject and other times they are present in framed photographs hung in the background or represented through personal objects such as Ashoona's thick black-rimmed glasses. *Drawing in Bed* (Figure 10) is a depiction of the artist's grandmother drawing in bed, as was her practice when she suffered from health problems. Similarly, in *My Mother and I* (Figure 11), Pootoogook depicts herself as a small child watching while her mother, also seated in bed, works on a drawing.

Although Pootoogook's artwork is a departure in that it is more explicitly transcultural than the work of her contemporaries – there were no images of Inuit playing *Super Mario Bros* in earlier decades – the inspiration and intention of her art remains the same as earlier generations. Her artwork is different in that it reflects the present day reality of her community rather than scenes from life on the land. Her images of sexuality drew particular attention, as did those of addiction and domestic abuse. These themes

65 Patricia Feheley, "Modern Language: The Art of Annie Pootoogook," *Inuit Art Quarterly* vol. 19, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 12.

were not new to Inuit art, for artists such as Ovilu Tunnillie and Manasie Akpaliapik had explored the effects of alcoholism in their sculptures during the 1980s and 1990s. Even the drawings of Pootoogook's own mother Napatchie Pootoogook and her uncle Kananginak Pootoogook featured similar motifs. Her drawings were noticed by Patricia Feheley, the prominent Toronto Inuit art dealer, who created an exhibition of her work entitled *The Unexpected* in 2002 (along with works by Jutai Toonoo). Another exhibition, *Moving Forward: Works on Paper by Annie Pootoogook*, ran at Feheley Fine Arts for a month in 2003. These exhibitions demonstrated to Feheley that Pootoogook's work was commercially viable.⁶⁶

When, in 2006, Nancy Campbell curated an exhibition of Pootoogook's work at the Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery in Toronto the "rules" for Inuit art seemingly changed overnight. This show initiated a series of critical successes that led to the bestowal of the prestigious \$50,000 Sobey Art Award and several prominent artist residencies. The following year she exhibited at the Biennale de Montréal as well as the Basel Art Fair and Documenta 12, and her drawing *Cape Dorset Freezer* (Figure 12) was acquired by the NGC. As we have seen, other artists had created drawings that addressed the contemporary realities of Inuit life before Pootoogook's critical success, but she was the first to be noticed on a large scale. This was a shift which seemed to precipitate a number of artists beginning to focus the majority of their art production on drawings.

Graphic Artists of the "New North"

An important figure in the shift towards drawings is Bill Ritchie, who has been involved with Kinngait Studios since 1988 and has acted as the studio manager since 2010,

⁶⁶ Ibid.

replacing Jimmy Manning. About this transition, Ritchie said:

The older [artists] were the core and Jimmy was running with them because there was already a market for them and it was easy to run with the elders. But Terry Ryan knew that these guys are getting older and what are we doing if we are just promoting what's tried and true? What about the youth? We have to do something to bring the youth up along, have them fit into the system so that they too can benefit from it... that's where I was hired."

Ritchie is quick to point out that Annie Pootoogook was not the pivot in terms of the popularity of drawings as a medium of choice in Kinngait. The contemporary popularity of drawings, according to Ritchie, was the result of several different developments in Kinngait during the 1990s. In 1991, When the McMichael took the archive of drawings that Terry Ryan has collected for the printmaking program, Dorset Fine Arts recognized that there was a growing interest in the medium. From that point on, the organization considered drawings to be economically viable. Kinngait Studios began to stock Derwent coloured pencils and a variety of papers.⁶⁷

Economics was only a part of this transition. Another driving force was an atmosphere of creativity and experimentation at Kinngait Studios during the 1990s and early 2000s. As for the change in scale, large format drawings were first introduced to Kinngait in the late 1990s when visiting artist Ludmila Armata demonstrated to a small group of artists in Kinngait how to work with oil stick on large paper.⁶⁸ Also during this

⁶⁷ Bill Ritchie. Phone interview with the author, August 29th, 2016.

⁶⁸ Jessica Newton, "Drawing Large in Cape Dorset," *Inuit Art Quarterly* vol. 26, no. 3 & 4 (Fall/Winter 2011): 14.

time, older artists such as Kenojuak Ashevak, Sheojuk Etidooie, and Arnaqu Ashevak paved the way by experimenting with drawings, watercolour, and scale, in part because Ritchie had introduced them to watercolour paper. While the artists did not take to the medium of watercolour, many continued drawing on paper, and it became the medium upon which Annie Pootoogook created her famous *Cape Dorset Freezer* (Figure 12). It is notable that in 2002, Shuvinai Ashoona created a large landscape drawing, although it was comprised of multiple smaller pieces of paper rather than a single large piece. This work, depicting a map of the community, was purchased by Ed Pien during his visit to Kinngait Studios. Ritchie credits this as, “the first large format self-imposed drawing that I had seen and that came out of Shuvinai and her own mind.”⁶⁹ Another influence was a prestigious commission Kenojuak Ashevak received from Rideau Hall. She created four twelve-foot drawings in 2003. Three years later, another workshop held by Paul Machnik re-introduced the idea of large drawings. This workshop was attended by Shuvinai Ashoona and Jutai Toonoo. According to Ritchie, this move towards drawings met with some trepidation at Dorset Fine Arts.

Leslie Boyd Ryan, she was the director at the time when these big drawings were happening. She was really nervous. She didn't think that a) there was a market for these big drawings; and then b) when people started getting excited about the big drawings she didn't think there were enough big drawings to serve the market.⁷⁰

Fortunately, Ryan's anxieties about the drawings proved unfounded. Over a period of about five years, the sales of drawings came almost to equal those of prints. In response

⁶⁹ Bill Ritchie. Phone interview with the author, August 29th, 2016.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

to this interest, the space within Kinngait Studios that had previously held the archive of drawings from the co-op's earlier days was renovated and converted into a drawing studio.⁷¹ The group of artists who began to frequent this new space – Tim Pitsiulak, Itee Pootoogook, Shuvinai Ashoona, and Jutai Toonoo – became the avant-garde of contemporary Inuit drawings in Kinngait.

Tim Pitsiulak

Tim Pitsiulak was born in Kimmirut in 1967 and moved to Kinngait in 2001. He began drawing when he was nine years old and learned carving from his parents Temela and Napachie Pitsiulak.⁷² Pitsiulak is the artist at Kinngait Studios with the most formal training. He studied jewelry making at Arctic College and took part in various workshops offered by the Nunavut Arts and Crafts Association (NACA). His statements during a symposium in 2011 reveal his particular love for the medium of drawing:

I started drawing in school at a very young age. Ever since I have been drawing 'til now which I love. I love making art ever since. At first I used to draw with fine liners and no colour back home in Kimmirut. When I got older, I started using colour. I took some painting course up north and now I can make art with all mediums and I enjoy it. I have never taken formal art classes, I learned from myself.⁷³

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Inuit Art Foundation, "Timootie Pitsiulak: Detailed and Dynamic Realism." *Inuit Art Quarterly* vol. 23, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 10-15.

⁷³ Heather Igloliorte, Michael Massie, and Tim Pitsiulak, "Session 3: Contemporary Inuit Art," (panel, Inuit Modern: An AGO Online Symposium, Art Gallery of Ontario. Toronto, ON. April 1st, 2011). https://squirrel.adobeconnect.com/_a751959191/p27365196/?

Pitsiulak is the nephew of Kenojuak Ashevak, one of the most famous printmakers in Inuit art history known for her fantastical images of birds. However, his art seems more aligned with documentary realism than with Ashevak's imaginative formal experiments. Pitsiulak is an avid hunter and his passion for the land and its animals informs his artwork. He creates large pencil crayon drawings with a high emphasis on realism. The majority of his work depicts outdoor wildlife and hunting scenes. Although they are not unlike the predominant subject matter of the classic-era of Inuit art, they are often distinguished by visual markers of modernity such as rifles and motorized vehicles. The realism of his work is informed by photographs that Pitsiulak takes while out on the land, which he later uses as references. Pitsiulak has said that he does not work up the larger works from smaller sketches but begins to draw immediately on the large paper he is given.⁷⁴

Like Pudlo Pudlat, Pitsiulak's art embodies a fascination with introduced technologies and how they intertwine with traditional Inuit values, although his art is less fantastical in nature and more aligned with the documentary realism of artists like Kananginak Pootoogook. This fusion of styles is best represented in drawings like *Untitled (Cockpit)* (Figure 13), a highly detailed and realistic depiction of the land seen through the front window of a plane that demonstrates how the experience of the land is often mediated through technology.

Pitsiulak has enjoyed a great deal of success as an artist. He has had numerous solo shows at Feheley Fine Arts. Many of his drawings are in the permanent collection of

launcher=false&fcsContent=true&pbMode=normal [accessed January 19th, 2016]

⁷⁴ Ibid.

the NGC and his work has been included in prestigious exhibitions such as *Inuit Modern* (2010) at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) and the NGC's *Sakahàn: International Indigenous Art* (2013). His drawing of bowhead whales was chosen to adorn Canadian currency commemorating the centennial of the Arctic expedition.

Itee Pootoogook

Itee Pootoogook is another artist who created highly realistic, photo-based drawings.

Born in Kimmirut in 1951 to artists Ishuhungitok and Paulassie Pootoogook, he moved to Kinngait as a small child and made his first drawings in the mid-1980s, but took almost a decade-long break from the practice when he temporarily moved to Pond Inlet.

Pootoogook was not well known until his drawings were shown in 2006. After his first solo exhibition in 2010, he became much sought after; the AGO purchased a piece for its contemporary collection from the Fehleley Fine Arts booth at Art Toronto.⁷⁵

Much of his work can be divided into two categories: landscapes and portraits.

Pootoogook has a tendency to emphasize strong horizontal lines in his compositions and pays particular attention to the quality of light. His work is frequently discussed in terms of its formal properties and he is often compared to artists like Alex Colville and David Thauberger. Works such as *Hudson's Bay Company Warehouse* (Figure 14), which focus on the colourful, square architecture of Kinngait, seem in particular to lend themselves to this type of analysis. Like Pitsiulak, Pootoogook's art is often based on photographs taken from a digital database at Kinngait Studios filled with thousands of photographs that artists and Bill Ritchie have taken.⁷⁶ Speaking of the importance of Pootoogook's work,

⁷⁵ Ellis Quinn interview with Patricia Fehleley, RCI Eye on the Arctic. September 20th, 2013. <http://www.rcinet.ca/eye-on-the-arctic/2013/09/20/feature-interview-artist-itee-pootoogooks-unique-take-on-contemporary-inuit-life/> [accessed March 3rd, 2016]

⁷⁶ Quinn, RCI Eye on the Arctic, 2013.

Robert Kardosh says,

I would describe it as very contemporary. It doesn't necessarily look like Inuit art or what most of us are used to thinking when we think of Inuit art. He brought a sense of dimension to the Inuit drawing tradition. So he wasn't creating work that was decorative necessarily but much more realistic and much more – very reflective of his world as it is today... He really develops his career on the basis of his drawings as have a number of contemporary artists working in Cape Dorset right now. He was a part of the trend or shift towards drawing and he was one of the artists who was making his career on the basis of his drawings rather than his prints.⁷⁷

Pootoogook had successful solo exhibitions at the Contemporary Art Gallery in Vancouver and the MacLaren Art Centre in Barrie, and also had his work included in the *Inuit Modern* exhibition. Unfortunately, just as art critics were beginning to take note of his artistic production, Itee Pootoogook died from cancer in 2014, at the age of 63.

Shuvinai Ashoona

Perhaps the most critically celebrated Inuit artist to arrive on the contemporary art scene since her cousin Annie Pootoogook, Shuvinai Ashoona is known for her highly idiosyncratic and personal approach to drawing. Ashoona began drawing in the mid-1980s, although she did not start selling her work through the co-op until about 1993.⁷⁸ She is different from her contemporaries in that her drawings do not appear to subscribe to any form of narrative realism. Ashoona uses a deeply personal iconography that blends

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Sandra Dyck, *Shuvinai Ashoona: Drawings*, (Ottawa: Carleton University Art Gallery, 2009), 20.

and incorporates a wide range of subject matter that is often challenging to interpret.

At first glance Ashoona's work seems very different from the art production of her extended family members in its detail, complexity, and the dreamlike quality of her images which mix together a range of iconographies from diverse sources such as religion, television, Inuit culture, and her own imagination. Yet the fantastical themes in Ashoona's drawings are not new in Inuit art history. The collection of drawings produced in Kinngait during the late 1950s and early 1960s shows similar images to those seen in the exhibition catalogue for *Strange Scenes: Early Cape Dorset Drawings*, and shares thematic similarities to older generations of artists in the community such as Pudlo Pudlat and Kenojuak Ashevak.

Ashoona's early works were meticulously detailed black and white landscapes, often from an aerial perspective common in Inuit art that has its roots in the way elders drew their recollections of the land.⁷⁹ The unusual juxtapositions and dreamlike quality of her works frequently suggest comparisons to Surrealism and are unique among artists in Kinngait. Disturbing imagery such as suicide victims and strange monsters drawn from television and film appear in her drawings. Around 2009, images of globes began to feature prominently in her compositions. The composition of *Interconnected Worlds* (Figure 15) is filled to the brim with globes. The formations of continents on the globes signal that these worlds are different than earth. Thin wavering humanoid figures emerge from the worlds and stretch their arms towards others. The elusiveness of fixed meaning for observers may be a part of her appeal.

Jutai Toonoo

79 Nancy Campbell, "The Colour of Ice," *Canadian Art* vol. 29, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 114-118.

Of all the graphic works in Kinngait, Jutai Toonoo's drawings are the least like conventional Inuit art. Born in Kinngait in 1959, Toonoo was initially better known for his sculptures, but after the critical success of Annie Pootoogook he turned his attention to drawing almost exclusively.⁸⁰

Toonoo was unique among his cohort of graphic artists, as he often drew with oil sticks and was a prolific sculptor as well. He is also one of the few Inuit artists to depict self-portraits and nudes. Toonoo's artwork contains a high degree of emotional expressiveness. Frequently, a certain crassness that is unusual in Inuit art can be seen in his drawings. For example, in works such as *Shitty Summer* (Figure 16), Jutai draws an Arctic landscape and covers it with multiple repetitions of the word "shit", an effect that only becomes perceptible when the viewer moves close to the work. It is works like these which led Bill Ritchie and others to describe Jutai as a sort of provocateur:

He did a series of lithographs that we weren't allowed to print... He'd just take a fat wide litho crayon and do this scribble all over the stone and then he'd write 'old women with young men, old men with young women'. The director at the time, Leslie Boyd, said, 'There's no way on earth we're going to print that'. This was Jutai, he was always trying to make someone react somehow. He loved it.⁸¹

Toonoo has had two major solo exhibitions at Fehleley Fine Arts and his work was also included in *Shine a Light: Canadian Biennale* (2014) at the NGC, which owns eight of his drawings. Toonoo's career was cut short in 2015 when, at the age of 56, he passed

80 James Adams, "Jutai Toonoo: Inuit sculptor went against the grain," *The Globe and Mail*. Obituary. February 7th, 2016. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/art-and-architecture/jutai-toonoo-inuit-sculptor-went-against-the-grain/article28640452/>

81 Bill Ritchie. Phone interview with the author, August 29th, 2016.

away at his drawing table.

Continuity in Kinngait Drawings

Through the rise of various feminist, Marxist, and postcolonial theories in the latter part of the twentieth century, art historians have acquired new tools for considering the larger social conditions behind artistic phenomena. Despite this, there is still a tendency to romanticize moments where revolutionary breaks seem to occur or instances where artistic visionaries come out of obscurity and forever change the rules with their originality. The works of Kananginak Pootoogook, Pudlo Pudlat, and Pitseolak Ashoona demonstrate that the qualities of transcultural subject matter, documentary realism, and autobiography were present from the early days of the co-operative movement in Kinngait, but were overshadowed during their lifetimes by the demand for “traditional” subject matter in the south and the emphasis on prints over drawings. Although the formal qualities and scale of the contemporary works have changed, artists in Kinngait have long been involved in a tradition of finding experimental ways to react to their surroundings. This impulse is sometimes expressed in the form of documentary realism in the artworks of Tim Pitsiulak and Itee Pootoogook, and at other times this reality is filtered through a more deeply personal lens, such as in the work of Shuvinai Ashoona. By looking at the history of drawing in Kinngait, we can see that Annie Pootoogook and other third-generation artists who came after her are not radicals who broke with “traditional art”, but individuals connected to one another through their shared studio space and strong ties with kin.

CHAPTER 2

Kinngait Drawings in the South: Inuit Art Becomes “Contemporary”

In an interview about Annie Pootoogook’s ground-breaking exhibition at The Power Plant, Nancy Campbell remarked, “I’m a curator of contemporary art, not specifically Inuit art.”⁸² Campbell’s statement refers to the longstanding divisions between Inuit art and the rest of art produced in Canada. Yet, as established in the previous chapter, neither drawings nor their hybridized subject are new; they have always been a current running through Kinngait drawings. So what conditions changed in the Southern art world that allow these works to now be read as “contemporary”? The quality of the drawings that is most often commented upon is the hybridized subject matter wherein traditional Inuit culture is blended with signifiers of modernity. I believe that this is key to understanding how Inuit artists were able to gain currency in the contemporary art world when modernism, and by extension primitivism, fell out of favour.

Inuit Art and Authenticity

The notion of authenticity has a troubled relationship with Inuit art. Authenticity is the quality of realness in art, an attribute that results from concrete knowledge that the origins of an art object are true to the culture of the producer. Authenticity is important in art because it is inseparable from value. For much of the art world, having proof that an object was created by a certain artist grants the right to be considered “authentic”. As Inuit art has been primarily managed and written about by *Qallunaat*,⁸³ the conditions for

⁸² Jackie Wallace, “Redrawing the boundaries of Inuit art.” *Nunatsiaq News*. June 30th, 2006.

⁸³ Including the author of this thesis.

authenticity are rarely decided by Inuit themselves but are subject to different and stricter standards than the work produced by *Qallunaat* artists. Deborah Root argues that for many collectors of Inuit art, “authenticity refers to what is sometimes termed the ‘ethnographic present,’ a timeless place untainted by modernity.”⁸⁴ Root points out that “authenticity” can be used to talk about traditional imagery as well as imagery that reflects the contemporary reality of Inuit.⁸⁵ This is a very recent development in the reception of Inuit art. Norman Vorano’s research examines how authenticity was constructed in relation to modernism during most of the twentieth century. Vorano argues that James Houston marketed Inuit to Southern audiences as “natural bohemians” because of their supposed distance from the rest of civilization. This imagined space between Inuit and modernity granted their artworks authenticity.⁸⁶ While modernism located authenticity in an pure, uncorrupted past represented by Indigenous artists, the contemporary period makes different demands. According to the art critic Boris Groys,

Being contemporary can be understood as being immediately present, as being here-and-now. In this sense, art seems to be truly contemporary if it is authentic, if for instance it captures and expresses the presence of the present in a way that is radically uncorrupted by past traditions or strategies aiming at success in the future.⁸⁷

84 Deborah Root, “Inuit Art and the Limits of Authenticity,” *Inuit Art Quarterly* vol. 23, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 18.

85 Root, “Limits of Authenticity,” 21.

86 Vorano, “Inuit Art in the Qallunaat World,” 317.

87 Boris Groys, “Comrades of Time,” in *What is Contemporary Art?*, (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010), 23.

According to Vorano, Houston's efforts to associate Inuit sculpture with modern art during the 1950s helped revive the art form in a period of declining sales.⁸⁸ As I will argue, at the turn of the millennium the redefinition of Inuit drawings as belonging to the contemporary period would achieve the same feat.

Hybridity as Cultural Authenticity

The term "hybridity" is often used to describe subject matter of contemporary Inuit art in which traditional practices and introduced commodities exist side by side. Hybridity is also an important concept within postcolonial theory. Homi K. Bhabha is the scholar most commonly associated with hybridity. For him, hybridity is produced when colonizers impose their culture onto the colonized, creating hybrids which establish new discourses and authorities.⁸⁹ Because hybridity de-essentializes and complicates the notion of authentic culture and turns the colonial gaze upon itself, Bhabha frames it as a form of resistance.⁹⁰ In Inuit art, hybridity often refers to imagery which includes both signifiers of traditional Inuit culture and modern Western objects. As Root points out, the modern construct of authenticity leaves Inuit art in a double-bind, valued simultaneously as primitive and devalued as culturally inauthentic.⁹¹ The way that Inuit art was being perceived needed to change in order to sustain the market and the vogue for hybridity presented a solution. Theories of cultural hybridity place the artist neither in the present

88 Vorano, 337.

89 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), 36.

90 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 112.

91 Root, "Limits of Authenticity," 19.

nor in the past but in a constant oscillation between the two poles, creating a new space for Inuit art after modernism had lost its ideological clout within the art world.

Jonathan Friedman points out the problems that can arise in this process. He argues that, as the global art world moves away from the neat classifications of modernism, theories of hybridity tend to oversimplify matters of identity and race:

...the intellectual cosmopolitan reaction to that process, one that contains a highly ambivalent posture with regard to the ethnification process itself and the desire for something broader, more global, truly cosmopolitan and above it all. This is the hyphenated reality of the postmodern cosmopolitan, a reality that is defined not by the modern, the abstract, but by the plurality of knowledges, of cultures and of their continuous fusion.⁹²

Theories of hybridity in contemporary Inuit art thus run the risk of reinforcing the essentialist dichotomy between the traditional and the contemporary. Additionally, they exclude and devalue Inuit artists – of whom there are still many – who prefer to create artworks depicting pre-contact life or who work in mediums still associated with the category of craft.

Positioning Kinngait Drawings as Contemporary

However, hybridized subject matter itself does not entirely explain the success of Kinngait drawings, as there are artists working in other mediums with similar themes who have not had the same amount of critical recognition. It is worth examining why the medium of drawing in particular became the face of contemporary Inuit art. The

92 Jonathan Friedman, "Global Crises, the Struggle for Cultural Identity and Intellectual Porkbarrelling: Cosmopolitans Versus Locals, Ethnic and Nationals in an Era of Dehegemonisation," in *Debating Cultural Identity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, edited by Pnina Werbner and Tariq Madood (London: Zed Books, 1997), 75.

prominence of drawings by non-Indigenous artists in the contemporary art world may have influenced the positive critical response to Inuit drawings. When Pootoogook's work first entered the Southern art market in 2002, Canadian artists such as Betty Goodwin and Ed Pien, as well as Marcel Dzama and the other members of the Royal Art Lodge were receiving critical recognition for their works on paper.⁹³ In the United States, the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) held a survey of contemporary drawings entitled *Drawing Now: Eight Propositions* in that same year which featured works from critically successful artists such as Chris Ofili, Takashi Murakami, and Kara Walker. The next year, the Vancouver Art Gallery exhibited *Drawing the World* together with a companion exhibition, *Where the River Widens, Drawings by Baker Lake Artists*.

Although drawings are generally more sought after and highly valued than prints in Western art, Inuit art differed drastically throughout the twentieth century in that drawings frequently sold for much less on the art market than the famous prints for which they formed the basis.⁹⁴ As Inuit artists have come to be viewed through the Western framework of contemporary art, the value of drawings has been adjusting accordingly. Drawings by Kinngait artists such as Tim Pitsiulak and Shuvina Ashoona are being retailed for \$1,000 to \$3,500, while prints by the same artists range from \$400 to \$700. In the contemporary art world, drawings move away from the stigma of commercialism that has plagued Inuit art. Unlike prints, which require multiple people to produce an image, drawings tend to be viewed as more authentic and indexical expressions of the individual

93 Sarah Milroy, "Back in the Mood for Simple Pleasures," (*The Globe & Mail*, December 1st, 2001), R12.

94 Av Isaacs, "Different Rules for Different Artists," *Inuit Art Quarterly* vol. 5, no. 4 (Fall/Winter 1990/1991): 56.

artistic persona.”⁹⁵

The embrace of Inuit drawings as contemporary was not, however, accidental, but was spearheaded by influential figures in the Canadian art world. Patricia Feheley is one of the most important figures involved in moving the public conception of Inuit art away from its associations with tourist arts and primitivism. Feheley has long admired the medium of drawing, both by Inuit and *Qallunaat* artists, and had curated exhibitions of drawings long before the current trend began.⁹⁶ She has made a concentrated effort throughout her career to reposition Inuit art and have southern audiences respect it as a vital, contemporary art form. Feheley’s father, Budd Feheley, was an advertising executive who was involved with the Inuit art industry from its beginnings in the 1950s. He opened Feheley Fine Arts in 1961. After Patricia took over in 1992⁹⁷ she set about making major changes to the gallery. In 1998, she decided to move the space to Hazelton Avenue, which a Toronto neighbourhood known for trendy contemporary galleries. In my interview with her, Feheley recollected how visitors on gallery crawls around the neighbourhood would open the doors to her gallery and be immediately repelled after discovering it contained Inuit art.⁹⁸ In addition to moving her gallery away from tourist spaces, Feheley began to treat Inuit artworks in the same way as other contemporary Canadian artists. She mounted solo shows of featured artists and accompanied the

⁹⁵ Deanna Petherbridge, *The Primacy of Drawing: Histories and Theories of Practice*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 431.

⁹⁶ Patricia Feheley. Phone interview with the author, September 1st, 2016.

⁹⁷ Budak, 43-49.

⁹⁸ Patricia Feheley. Phone interview with the author, September 1st, 2016.

exhibitions with catalogues, brochures, and artist statements. "I deliberately choose to do this," Fehleley said, "because it was how contemporary art is treated and how Inuit art has never really been treated. All of that kind of thing which is so obvious for contemporary commercial galleries was not happening at all. So it was a concerted effort on my part to move it into the mainstream."⁹⁹

Fehleley astutely saw how Inuit art was changing and recognized the importance of cultivating and promoting the individual geniuses of different artists. As an original board member of the Crafts Project Liaison Committee that provided funding to INAC's Inuit artist biography database she protested their decision to pull the biographies in 2006. In an interview with *Inuit Art Quarterly*, Fehleley said:

Access to biographical material is absolutely key to educating the public about an artist and therefore promoting sales of their work... [The database] sparked an incredible change in how people looked at Inuit art and it couldn't have been done by the individual galleries because of language, access and other communication barriers)' And that is still the case. If you don't have that, then you're back to dealing with the faceless Inuit artist, the way it was in the 1950, and 1960s, when people didn't pay that much attention to the individual.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ James Sinclair, "Privacy Concerns Halt Distribution of Inuit Artist Biographies," *Inuit Art Quarterly* vol. 21, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 34.

In the 1990s, Feheley recognized that Inuit art needed a new star in order to remain relevant in the contemporary art market.¹⁰¹ She found one by chance in 2001 during a visit to Kinngait Studios when Bill Ritchie suggested that Feheley take a look at Annie Pootoogook's work. She took some of Pootoogook's drawings back to her gallery and eventually placed them in a group exhibition entitled *The Unexpected* in 2002. The reception of Pootoogook's work from both within and without the Inuit art world, demonstrated to Feheley that the works were viable and that collectors of all kinds were beginning to open up to non-traditional imagery in Inuit art. This was confirmed after Pootoogook's solo show at The Power Plant in 2006 where collectors of contemporary art who normally did not purchase Inuit work began flooding into Feheley's gallery. "Art collectors," Feheley says, "need to have their tastes validated."¹⁰² After 2006, it became easier for Feheley to introduce collectors to the works of other artists such as Tim Pitsiulak and Jutai Toonoo. The drawings currently make up most of the gallery's sales and Feheley credits the transition to drawings for allowing Feheley Fine Arts to survive during the recession.¹⁰³

101 Budak, 43-49.

102 Patricia Feheley. Phone interview with the author, September 1st, 2016.

103 Ibid.

Feheley Fine Arts is also notable among Inuit galleries for its participation in the now-ubiquitous annual international art fairs of contemporary art, such as Art Toronto, Feature Contemporary Art Fair, and Papier: Contemporary Art Fair of Works on Paper.¹⁰⁴ In 1999, one year after moving her gallery to Hazelton Avenue, Feheley entered Art Toronto. She was hesitant to do so at first because of the small size of her gallery, but realized that the role of a dealer is to support the market; the art fairs gave Feheley a chance to place Inuit art within an international, contemporary show. Feheley Fine Arts did well at Art Toronto and has participated in the fair every year since. The Art Gallery of Ontario, which is known for making high profile purchases at Art Toronto, purchased several works from Feheley Fine Arts during these fairs. At the time, these purchases came as a shock to other gallerists but demonstrated to Feheley as well as to the larger Canadian art world that attitudes towards Inuit art had changed.¹⁰⁵

The Toronto-based curator Nancy Campbell has also been highly influential in popularizing Kinngait drawings as contemporary art. Prior to working at The Power Plant, Campbell had already been exposed to Inuit art, having worked at the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre in Guelph. Gregory Burke, who was the director of The Power Plant in 2006, visited Feheley Fine Arts and saw Annie Pootoogook's first solo show. Interested by what he saw, Burke became the initial force behind Pootoogook's introduction to the contemporary art world. Burke brought on Campbell to curate Pootoogook's work, confident that she had enough expertise to enable the gallery to handle the work with an in-house curator. Following Pootoogook's 2006 exhibition, Campbell maintained her

104 James Adams, "Toronto welcoming simultaneous art fairs as popularity and profits soar." *The Globe and Mail*. October 21st, 2015.

105 Patricia Feheley. Phone interview with the author, September 1st, 2016.

interest in Inuit art. The curator travelled to the Arctic with Patricia Feheley a number of times and listened to the interviews Feheley recorded with artists on other trips in order to learn more about the art.¹⁰⁶ Campbell went on to work with other contemporary Inuit artists. Her primary strategy for positioning Inuit artists as contemporary is staging collaborative shows which pair them with Southern Canadian art stars. Her exhibition at the Justine M. Barnicke Gallery, entitled *Ghost Noise* (2009), paired Shuvina Ashoona with Shary Boyle. At the same gallery the following year she curated *Scream* (2010) with Ed Pien and Samonie Toonoo. Her exhibition *Blue Cloud* (2012), which compared the abstraction of Jack Bush to Ohotaq Mikkigak's large scale pencil crayon landscapes, was also shown at the Justine M. Barnicke Gallery.

The Artworld Reception of Kinngait Drawings

The drawings coming out of Kinngait have become incorporated into the contemporary Canadian art world in a way that no other medium of Inuit art has before, yet this success is relative, for very few of these artists have had solo shows in prominent Southern institutions. In addition to Annie Pootoogook's exhibition at the Power Plant, notable exceptions to this pattern include *Shuvina Ashoona Drawings* (2009), at the Carleton University Art Gallery, and *Itee Pootoogook – Buildings and Land* (2013) at Vancouver's Contemporary Art Gallery. There seem, rather, to be three ways in which Kinngait drawings are generally exhibited: 1) in small solo or group shows at commercial galleries that deal almost exclusively with Inuit art; 2) large group settings such as surveys, biennales, and art fairs; and, 3) smaller shows that pair Inuit and *Qallunaat* artists based on formal similarities. The problems with all of these exhibition formats is that they limit

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

discussions that might educate audiences to understand more fully the uniqueness of Inuit art and culture. Even when an artist like Annie Pootoogook does have a solo show in a contemporary space, there is often a lack of curatorial contextualization. At the Power Plant, Pootoogook's work was double-hung in long rows across the walls, creating a montage of images within the white cube style gallery. There were no didactic panels accompanying the individual artworks, only the artist biography and a comment on the originality of the personal subject matter. The directness of Pootoogook's drawing style and the biographical narrative of an Inuit woman overcoming her troubles to become a contemporary art star took precedence over the significance of the artwork itself.¹⁰⁷ Although displayed in the same way as other contemporary artists, the lack of interpretation given to Pootoogook's art demonstrates the problems that have arisen with the integration of Inuit art into the contemporary art world.

Most of the Inuit artists who have followed Pootoogook have been exhibited in small shows staged by Feheley Fine Arts, the Marion Scott Gallery, and a few other commercial galleries. Outside of the commercial galleries, Kinngait drawings are more often found in biennales and survey exhibitions. The NGC holds a biennale of its recent acquisitions which, by implication, purports to showcase the best of contemporary Canadian art. Whether or not these biennales accurately do so has been a matter of debate among critics, but it is significant that Inuit drawings have been well represented in these shows in contrast to Inuit art in other mediums. The 2012 biennale, *It Is What It Is* included a Shuvina Ashoona drawing, and the 2014 biennale *Shine a Light: Canadian Biennale*, included drawings the NGC acquired by Shuvina Ashoona, Tim Pitsiulak, and

¹⁰⁷ Leah Modigliani, "Annie Pootoogook's Drawings of Contemporary Inuit Life," *C Magazine* (Autumn 2009): 47-48.

Jutai Toonoo. As compilations of new acquisitions, however, these shows offer very little in the way of critical discourse.

Similar issues arise in smaller group shows that compare Inuit and *Qallunaat* artists side by side. One of the earliest instances of cross-cultural art exhibitions in an institutional space was Christine Lalonde's *Artists in the Arctic* (2003). The exhibition was the first to show *Qallunaat* works in the NGC's Inuit galleries. Using the Arctic landscape as a unifying theme, the exhibition paired Inuit works with those of artists such as A.Y. Jackson and George Back in order to see how the Arctic functions as a source of artistic inspiration in different cultures. Unfortunately, recent cross-cultural pairings have been less effective due to their formalist framing. Itee Pootoogook and Tim Zuck's artworks were paired at the McLaren Art Centre for *Slow Sight* (2012), where comparisons of both subject matter and style were made.

This is similar to the previously mentioned *Ghost Noise* (2009), which paired Shuvinai Ashoona and Shary Boyle in terms of the surrealist imagery in both artists' oeuvres. This kind of comparison was made more effectively six years later in the Pierre François Ouellette Art Contemporain's exhibition *Universal Cobra* (2015). Although still driven by formalism, the exhibition showed collaborative works by both Boyle and Ashoona instead of hanging the two artists' works side by side, as had been done in the previous exhibition. Pierre François Ouellette Art Contemporain also organized a show entitled *North-South Encounter* (2014), which presented drawings by artist Ed Pien alongside those of Shuvinai Ashoona, Tim Pitsiulak, Itee Pootoogook, Jutai Toonoo, and Papiara Tukiki. This exhibition was a result of Pien's trip to Kinngait two years earlier as part of a North-South Visiting Artists Residency Program set up by the TD Bank Group.

The show hung the work of Pien and the Kinngaitmiut side by side on the gallery walls, but there was little else in the way of curatorial intervention. It is worth noting that both of these shows were done in collaboration with Feheley Fine Arts and can be considered an extension of the gallery's efforts to solidify Inuit art as contemporary.

Anita Seppä argues that despite the fact that the contemporary art world is today celebrated as global and inclusive, the power structures that upheld Euro-centric views and capitalist systems remain the same as in previous decades. In order to achieve success in the art world, artists still need to be trained within a Western tradition of art history, communicate in the "proper" language, live close to a major cultural centre, build networks of people who work within art institutions, and be able to access to communication and travel technologies.¹⁰⁸

Thus, while the inclusion of Inuit art in exhibitions of Euro-Canadian artists is a breakthrough and responds to a need articulated within the Inuit art world for a number of years, new problems arise when Kinngait drawings are inserted into the paradigm of contemporary art and are forced to operate within a Western value system. On the one hand, the artworks chosen reflect and compliment European aesthetics. On the other hand, discussion of the Indigenous values that inform the art are absent.¹⁰⁹ This problem arose when curator Andrew Hunter inserted a drawing by Itee Pootoogook into the 2014 *Alex Colville* retrospective at the Art Gallery of Ontario. Comparing the works without examining the Inuit artist's own values and motivations -- despite the compliment intended by the comparison -- denies the audience an opportunity to learn about Inuit art

108 Anita Seppä, "Globalisation and the Arts: The Rise of New Democracy, or Just Another Pretty Suit for the Old Emperor?", *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* vol. 2 (2010): 18.

109 Seppä, "Globalisation and the arts," 19.

traditions and harkens back to the modernist display that curators were attempting to move away from during the latter part of the twentieth century.

In Seppä's critique of the global art world, the inclusion of art works from different cultures is motivated less by transnationalism than by the needs of the capitalist system which requires the expansion of the market for contemporary art through the acquisition of new kinds of goods including the "exotic."¹¹⁰ Concrete evidence for the ongoing colonial fetishization of Inuit is provided by how the hybrid imagery of Kinngait drawings has been received. An example is the emphasis scholars and curators place on artworks within Annie Pootoogook's oeuvre that depict shocking images of trauma such as domestic abuse and addiction, in spite of the fact they make up a small portion of her work which includes many more mundane scenes of everyday life or images of individual objects. In a brief review of the artist's exhibition at the National Museum of the American Indian, Leah Modigliani highlights this focus on the troubling aspects of Pootoogook's work,

Rather than reflecting an enlightened embrace of artists from non-Westernized environments into the fold of the international contemporary art world, the fixation on these particular aspects of Pootoogook's art may signal the ongoing impulse of Westerners to locate an image of themselves through constructing, finding, and/or highlighting an image of otherness in Native cultures.¹¹¹

The critical fixation on the representation of trauma in Pootoogook's art has extended to her personal life. Pootoogook struggles with her mental health as well as addiction. In

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 21.

¹¹¹ Leah Modigliani, "Annie Pootoogook's Drawings of Contemporary Inuit Life," *C Magazine* (Autumn 2009): 47-48.

recent years, she has lived on and off the streets of Ottawa. Repeated and intrusive media coverage of her situation and frequent comparisons to the similar sufferings of the Anishinaabe artist Norval Morrisseau during the 1990s may underscore not only society's obsession with trauma but also with primitivist narratives about tragic vanishing natives who are unable to cope with modernity. Traces of primitivism can also be seen in the way that Inuit drawings are sometimes displayed. When Pootoogook's work was shown at Documenta 12, curators Roger Buerger and Ruth Noack reinforced colonialist views of Inuit artists by placing Pootoogook's work next to childhood drawings by Peter Friedl.¹¹² Such decisions highlight the risks of absorbing art made in a highly specific local context and trying to assimilate it into a generalized contemporary art category, and demonstrates why it is important that the cultural context of works not be left behind when dealing with contemporary Indigenous art. Despite these lingering issues, the inclusion of Kinngait drawings in museums, biennales, and international art fairs speaks to the strength of the artworks and is a victory for Inuit artists and those who have long recognized it as a vital art form.

The limitations in effectively curating Kinngaitmiut drawings may account for the lack of deep analysis available. In the ten years that have passed since Annie Pootoogook's Power Plant exhibition, there has been little written about contemporary Inuit drawings. In comparison to the growing literature on other contemporary Indigenous artists in Canada, there is an almost deafening silence on contemporary Inuit art. In comparison, the works of First Nations artists such as Robert Houle and Kent Monkman are easier to read. Such artists are conversant with the canon of Western art

112 Rosemary Heather, "Documenta 12," *C Magazine* (Fall 2007): 26-27.

history and can therefore subvert it. In contrast, most of the artists in Kinngait still lack Western art education. Although there is a tradition of mentoring in the community, it is done within the framework of traditional Inuit knowledge and artists therefore rarely engage with Western traditions in their work. Unlike many First Nations artists who have grown up in intercultural spaces, Kinngaitmiut are still fairly isolated from other art worlds and, although they are greatly affected by the culture of *Qallunaat*, still live in a predominately Inuit community. This culturally specific context makes the artwork hard for critics who are not Inuit art experts to discuss beyond themes of hybridity and authenticity. Exhibition reviews have titles such as, “Inuit art loses the ookpik” and “Beyond the polar bear”. When reviewers discuss the work of Shuvina Ashoona, Tim Pitsiulak, Itee Pootoogook, and Jutai Toonoo, they frequently comment that their work “doesn’t look like Inuit art”. As Cécile Pelaudeix points out:

Contemporaneity, as it is celebrated today, concerns the arts that reflect the hybridity of the contemporary world. It tends to consider the most visible expression of critical statements, forgetting that this is not really new, and to focus on the potential of differentiation within the arts (which might be totally accurate or not) rather than on the dimension of continuity. In such a context, asserting continuity can itself be a political statement, rather than an idealisation of a past way of life.¹¹³

As established in the previous chapter, Kinngait drawings do represent continuity. They have grown out of a specific artistic lineage and bear resemblance to predecessors in the community in content and style. Additionally, not all of this new art contains modern,

113 Pelaudeix, “Contemporaneity in Inuit Art,” 929.

hybridized subject matters. Pitsiulak in particular creates many images of Arctic wildlife as well as traditional stories and beliefs. *Ilangut* (Figure 17) is representative of a familiar motif in Inuit art history. The drawing depicts a running caribou wearing a parka, a common visual device to denote the animal is actually a shaman in the midst of transformation. These types of images are numerous in Pitsiulak's body of work and similar types of imagery are evident, albeit to a lesser degree, in the work of Shuvina Ashoona and Itee Pootoogook. Yet, these pieces are not shown or discussed much outside the commercial realm. In comparison with the rigid definitions of tradition and authenticity that were frequently employed to ghettoize Inuit art in the past, the contemporary period's emphasis on hybridity and newness is well-meaning. Yet artists in Kinngait have always been contemporary. They have engaged with foreign mediums and new aesthetic expressions since the beginning of the cooperatives, and they have constantly engaged in a process of radical artistic experimentation. It is also important to recognize that Inuit traditions and values remain present in their art but are not at odds with its contemporaneity. Bill Ritchie speaks to the relationship of traditional values to the creation of art in Kinngait, and how this quality is often lost as the art objects leave the community:

You learn really quickly in the North, if you spend time there, there's a term that people use. It's called Inuktitut and people in the South think that means the language but it's not the language, it's the way of the Inuit... you'll sit and watch someone draw and somebody will go 'Inuktitut' and they all go 'Hmmm'. They all agree that this is the mind of the Inuit at work. It's a lovely moment when you see these walrus hunters come in, sitting around watching someone draw. It's a special

time and it's something that's missed once the works leaves the North and goes South because it becomes a commodity, it becomes like art.¹¹⁴

The creation of Kinngait drawings as a contemporary art form was not a radical break but, like much of the discourse within Inuit art history, was represented as such by *Qallunaat* agents within the art world. In consequence, elements of Inuit art such as the experience Ritchie describes become lost as the artworks leave one world and enter another. The dichotomy between the traditional and the contemporary exemplified by theories of hybridity that has characterized the reception of these drawing detracts from the qualities inherent in Kinngait drawings which may reflect Inuit values and identity. If the Inuit engagement with the contemporary as we know it in the South is constructed, we must look to the North to learn about what these drawings say about the Inuit experience of modernity.

114 Bill Ritchie. Phone interview with the author, August 29th, 2016.

CHAPTER 3

Kinngait Drawings in the North: Modernity and Resilience

As noted earlier, contemporary art revolves around the new, the quality of being in the here and now. In this context, the images Inuit create to represent their modernity are seen as novel. Yet, as we have seen, Inuit have been negotiating with modernity through their art practices since the colonization of the Arctic intensified in the 1950s. Pudlo Pudlat drew his images of planes and other *Qallunaat* encroachments, just as Tim Pitsiulak records the global warming research vessels that have entered his community (Figure 18). Despite the significant differences that distinguish each artist's individual style and the way aesthetic expression in Kinngait has changed over time, there is a strong sense of continuity in the way this generation of graphic artists make their art. These drawings reflect more than just the mixing of Northern and Southern elements in contemporary life. I would suggest that for Inuit artists, these images embody a history of resilience in their engagement with modernity, one which fortifies Inuit identity and values rather than fragmenting by the false opposition between the traditional and contemporary that is suggested by terms such as "hybridity". Inuit artists are achieving this through their personal experiences of the mundane as they search for visual inspiration within the world around them.

The term resilience, as it is used with regard to Inuit art, was popularized by Heather Igloliorte. She argues that it is a more accurate conceptualization of a specifically Inuit form of resistance because it is less a reaction to outside forces than a means of

strengthening Inuit culture from within.¹¹⁵ Igloliorte believes that resilience can be applied to a range of personal styles, arguing that:

...collectively these artists are expressing the strength and resilience of Inuit culture from an emic, or internal perspective, showing the world around them in a manner that reinforces our centuries-old beliefs and practices while allowing the culture to flourish. Inuit art that expresses cultural resilience takes part in the consolidation and rejuvenation of Indigenous culture and the assertion of autonomy while providing a valuable and nuanced critique of the complex interactions of nearly a century of colonialism and the aggressive evangelization of the Arctic, demonstrating that even a society with a limited population can exercise agency over its own future.¹¹⁶

In Kinngait drawings in particular, we can see the notion of resiliency in how these images correct colonial constructions of Inuit identity meant to strip autonomy and carry the traditional principles of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* into the contemporary moment.

Inuit Modernity

Images of Inuit engaged with modernity may be novel or titillating to southern viewers who expect romanticized stereotypes of sealskin-clad hunters being pulled by dogsled over the tundra. In depicting the mundane and everyday realities of life in Kinngait, the artworks serve to correct these constructions of Inuit identity. The mundane and the everyday are powerful in Inuit art because they counter the tradition of romantic yet damaging depictions of Inuit identity as imagined by *Qallunaat*. The most famous and

115 Heather Igloliorte, "The Inuit of Our Imagination," in *Inuit Modern: The Samuel and Esther Sarick Collection*, ed. Gerald McMaster, (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 2010), 44-45.

116 Igloliorte, "The Inuit of Our Imagination," 45.

oft-discussed example of this is Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*. This 1922 silent film was touted as a documentary about the lives of Inuit in Northern Quebec but has since been revealed to have been heavily staged. In Flaherty's film, Inuit are shown as primitive and childlike people who are unable to cope with modernity. The film's main protagonist Nanook (whose real name was Allakariallak), was coached by Flaherty to act "primitive" onscreen by using a harpoon instead of his usual hunting rifle.¹¹⁷ An infamous sequence in film depicts Nanook being introduced to a gramophone. He acts as though he is confounded by the device and even bites the record to test its materiality, a part of a tradition of colonial imagery that depicts Indigenous people as awed by the white man's technology and modernity (the great irony being Flaherty employed Inuit to help with the cameras on the film).

Nanook of the North was extremely popular and broadcast a primitivist view of Inuit. Applying Edward Said's postcolonial theory to an Arctic context, Ann Fienup-Riordan argues that these depictions contribute to "Eskimo-Orientalism", an image of Inuit as culturally pure noble savages who are corrupted by and unable to cope with civilization.¹¹⁸ The view that Inuit were childlike and in need of help became the justification for numerous assimilative policies enacted by the Canadian state, such as residential schooling and forced relocations of communities.

Of course, this depiction of Inuit as childlike and unable to cope with modernity is fundamentally untrue. The subject matter of Inuit drawings from the beginnings of the

117 Daniel Bernardi, *The Birth of Whiteness: Race and the Emergence of U.S. Cinema*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 319-320.

118 Ann Fienup-Riordan, *Freeze-Frame: Alaska Eskimos in the Movies*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), xi-xiii.

Inuit art industry to the present day show Inuit blending introduced technologies and goods into their traditional culture. Despite this, the stereotypes of Inuit as unable to cope with modernity disseminated by *Nanook of the North* are not a thing of the past but persist to this day. In 2015, filmmaker Dominic Gagnon released *Of the North*-- the title being a nod to Flaherty's original film. Gagnon's mashup film is a compilation of clips amassed from YouTube depicting intoxicated Inuit crashing vehicles, vomiting, and fighting. Despite widespread protest from Inuit about the pejorative way in which the film depicts them, it was screened at multiple film festivals and won a prize at Switzerland's Visions du Réel 2015 International Competition.

Incidents like these show that images of modernity as a mundane part of life within Inuit art remain important and vital. Artwork is the site where many Southern Canadians encounter Inuit culture for the first time, making it a powerful medium for correcting false assumptions about life in the North. Artists have echoed this sentiment in interviews. Speaking on a panel in conjunction with the *Inuit Modern* exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Tim Pitsiulak was asked why he chooses to incorporate modern imagery into many of his drawings,

“We do our best to let people down south know what we have up north. Like the ATV – I think we try to keep contact that we have modern vehicles and people down south that don't know, never been up north think we still live in igloos but we don't. We're modern too up north”¹¹⁹

Pitsiulak was then asked if he struggles between Inuit and modern in the work and he

119 Heather Igloliorte, Michael Massie, and Tim Pitsiulak, “Session 3: Contemporary Inuit Art,” (panel, *Inuit Modern: An AGO Online Symposium*, Art Gallery of Ontario. Toronto, ON. April 1st, 2011).

simply answered, “Never. I don’t”.¹²⁰ This is made explicit in his drawings. In *Skidoo on Canoe* (Figure 19) Pitsiulak depicts traditional and modern technology physically overlaid on one another. On the edge of an ice flow sits a large motorized canoe that is packed with camping supplies in preparation for an excursion on the land. Among these are both a *kamotik* and a skidoo, demonstrating the seamless integration of modernity and tradition in the lives of contemporary Inuit. Neither vehicle is shown as more prominent than the other, both are given equal weight by the artist, hinting that *Qallunaat* technology is not seen as greater or lesser than the traditional technologies and both can be used to strengthen the connection to the land

¹²⁰ Ibid.

Modernity is not only embedded in Pitsiulak's subject matter but in his method of creating art. Bill Ritchie spoke to how the artist is always experimenting with the intersection of art and technology and how this has influenced other artists in the community:

"Tim bought a camera and learned how to use it. Bought lens, upgraded the camera, he's on the land taking photographs. Tim's nature is to always explore something new. He bought a go-pro movie camera and put it on a fishing pole and threw it into the ocean underneath the ice. We were all blown away. He did a series of drawings with go-pros. ... it's about modern culture and Inuit culture joining at the same moment. It gives them a freedom so they aren't locked in this matrix of the past. Having Tim around the studio helps open up other people to the possibilities of what we want. We don't want to be stuck in the past. We want to be contemporary and we want to be moving forward... need to be allowed to do it. We let people do what they want to do."

Itee Pootoogook also frequently engaged with themes of modernity as they are experienced by Inuit in everyday life. Pootoogook's *Watching APTN* (Figure 20) depicts an interior scene. In the foreground is a man seated comfortably in an armchair. The composition is sparse, but Pootoogook includes small markers of modernity – a clock, a coffee maker, and a television set plugged into an outlet. The man watches a television set with a small image of a parka-clad figure atop a snowmobile. Underneath the image on the screen is a line of Inuktitut syllabics that tell us the man is watching the Aboriginal People's Television Network. These signifiers cause the scene to be recognizably Inuit, yet it unmistakably belongs to the contemporary. It is an image that would be common

everyday to people in the north and not dissimilar to Annie Pootoogook's compositions of friends and family watching television. The notable aspect is that there is no tension between the Inuk depicted and modernity, rather, the image radiates a sense of calm perhaps owing to Pootoogook's technique of drawing from photographs.

Jutai Toonoo depicted modernity with a grittier edge than his contemporaries. Rather than focusing on traditional culture, Toonoo often focuses on universal subject matter such as portraits and still lifes that look as if they could have been created by anyone in any location. Still lifes are a mainstay in Inuit drawings, something Bill Ritchie credits to artists searching for subject matter in the middle of winter when it is too cold and too dark to venture outside. Ritchie says that Toonoo in particular had an interest in these compositions, fascinated with the way the energy of an object can change.¹²¹ By depicting everyday objects, Toonoo and the other artists in the studio, whether purposely or not, demonstrate an engagement with modernity. An example of this is *My Ashtray* (Figure 21) which depicts a coke can that Toonoo has been using a makeshift ashtray. On top of the can there is a burning cigarette and two extinguished butts. As in many of his compositions, there is no discernable background, he has filled the space in with dense scribbles of white lines. There is only the suggestion of a surface through the circular shadow cast by the can. It counters popular pristine imagery of the Arctic. This is a North "corrupted" by vices such as soda and tobacco yet these objects are not depicted by Toonoo as a part of a tragedy that has befallen Inuit, merely his personal belongings which make up the ritual of everyday life, as they do for many in the South.

Resilience and Social Commentary

¹²¹ Bill Ritchie. Phone interview with the author, August 29th, 2016.

Kinngait drawings also contribute to resiliency by providing social commentary on issues that are important to Inuit. Although Inuit across Canada have accomplished a great deal in regaining control over their lands and lives, the lingering effects of historical trauma have created obstacles such as unemployment, housing shortages, poverty, food-insecurity, suicide, and high school drop-out rates. While overt social commentary in Inuit art is relatively new, these drawings call attention to these issues in full. Given that the primary audience for these images is in the south, they become a powerful form of cross-cultural communication¹²² There are varying levels of political engagement among the artists at Kinngait Studios. Jutai Toonoo, in the more aggressive manner typical of his art, tackles the harm that Christianity has wrought on Inuit culture. In *Bouncing Ball* (Figure 22), we are treated to a downwards view of the lower part of the body -- presumably showing the artist's legs -- and the floor, on which Toonoo has written: “A thousand years ago the crusaders invaded Jerusalem and killed everyone. one hundred years ago they killed our culture. fuckers! [sic]” A blue rubber ball which hovers over the composition signifies through its implied bouncing motion the tendency of history to repeat itself. Toonoo’s image serves as a witness to the destructive impact of missionaries in the Arctic and also implores *Qallunaat* audiences to prevent similar traumas from happening elsewhere.

The political undertones in Tim Pitsiulak’s work are often subtle but still present. Pitsiulak has created several drawings which address climate change, a serious issue in the North with major effects on Inuit. Climate change affects the wildlife and sea ice that are essential to the survival of Inuit culture and can also pose more immediate and serious

122 Bernadette Driscoll Engelstad, “Inuit Art and the Creation of Nunavut,” in *Inuit Modern: The Samuel and Esther Sarick Collection*, (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 2011), 38.

risks to hunters. It is for this reason that Inuit political leaders such as Sheila Watt-Cloutier have argued that climate change is a human rights issue.¹²³ Pitsiulak's drawing *Climate Change* (Figure 23) depicts an elderly man's face. Half of the man's face is constructed out of sea which Pitsiulak shows as slowly dissolving away. The drawing was a part of an exhibition called *Vanishing Ice: Alpine and Polar Landscapes in Art, 1775-2012* which was held at the McMichael Gallery in 2014. This is an overt example of an Inuit artist using their work in order to educate Southern viewers about political issues that are important in the North.

Shuvinai Ashoona's art, according to Bill Ritchie, is not political in its intent at all. However, by depicting her personal experiences, Ashoona addresses the legacy of colonialism and the intergenerational transmission of historical trauma which has contributed to a high suicide rate in Nunavut; almost unheard of fifty years ago, it is now, ten times the national average. Ashoona's drawing *Carrying Suicidal People* (Figure 24) represents this trend. Speaking about depictions of suicide in her art, Ashoona relates it to her personal experiences with tragedy, "There was a time there was a lot of graves being dug. They began having accidents or dying too soon. The suicidals are close by where I used to draw. People I know."¹²⁴ Ashoona's drawing, which was exhibited in the *Oh, Canada* exhibition organized for the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in 2012, calls our attention to the epidemic of suicide in Northern communities and serves as a way for the artist to work through her own personal trauma.

123 For more on this, see Sheila Watt-Cloutier's *The Right to be Cold*. Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2015.

124 Allison Crawford, "'The trauma experienced by generations past having an effect in their descendants': Narrative and historical trauma among Inuit in Nunavut, Canada," *Transcultural Psychiatry* vol. 51, no. 3 (2014): 354-355.

Kinngait Drawings and *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*

Drawings also contribute to resiliency by advocating for *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*. *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* is difficult to summarize succinctly, as it involves the thinking and philosophy of a culture with a long and regionally diverse history. It encompasses all that was learned from Inuit life, experiences, and worldviews, passed on from one generation to the next. This includes the knowledge of wildlife, hunting techniques, and an understanding of the behaviour and movement of animals. *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* also involves knowing how to create the proper tools in order to survive on the land as well as clothing and transportation. It is derived from the careful observation of the environment for both personal safety and navigation, but also relates to philosophy, law and accepted behaviors concerning the individual, their family, and community.¹²⁵ *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, furthermore, does not refer exclusively to the traditional practices of pre-contact Inuit. Jaypetee Arnakak describes it as a “living technology” that provides a relevant ideological framework for modern Inuit,¹²⁶ which makes it useful to examine in relation to resiliency and modernity. With regards to *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, Heather Igloliorte has argued that artists have taken on the roles of shamans and other knowledge-keepers in contemporary society:

Our ancestors – shamans, hunters, storytellers – were keepers of the collective social memory; now our artists share that responsibility for preserving *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* in their works, by asserting themselves as the true authorities on

125 Government of Nunavut, *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Education Framework*, (Iqaluit: Nunavut Department of Education, 2007), 22-36.

126 Jaypetee Arnakak, “Commentary: What is Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit?” *Nunatsiaq News*. August 25th, 2000.

Inuit culture and confronting the legacies of colonial influence and the more recent mediation of Inuit identity by both the media and the art markets.¹²⁷

I believe this is related to the strong documentary impulse in Inuit art that goes back to the works of early artists such as Kananginak Pootoogook who believed that art could be used to educate younger generations about traditional values. He stated in a 1992 interview that, “Our younger people today know more about the white man's world than they do about the world of their great great grandfathers. Many have never even seen a dog team. For this reason, I think that they should be educated by us - in writing, prints and drawings.”¹²⁸

There is also a tenet of IQ called *pilimmaksarniq* which refers to the development of knowledge through observation and experience. Careful seeing is an important part of traditional Inuit life where noticing changes in weather and environment were the key to survival. This is explicit in Tim Pitsiulak’s work *Passing on Tradition* (Figure 25) in which a man, who by his ball cap might be an image of Pitsiulak himself, kneeling down with a small child pointing at an array of drawings depicting the Arctic landscape in various different seasons. Art is not only used to capture the traditions but to observe and learn about new technologies as well. Tim Pitsiulak’s practice conforms to this. He said, “I like to draw big drawings and I take pictures of ships that come into the community. When they are unusual, that normally, like don’t come up north, I will take pictures of it. I pass by the ship and I take angled – drive around it sometimes – take pictures and will

127 Heather Igloliorte, “The Inuit of Our Imagination,” in *Inuit Modern: The Samuel and Esther Sarick Collection*, ed. Gerald McMaster, (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 2010), 44-45.

128 Inuit Art Foundation, “The Artists Speak: Iyola Kingwatsiak, Kananginak Pootoogook, and Jimmy Manning,” *Inuit Art Quarterly* vol. 7, np. 2 (Spring 1992): 31.

get information as much as I want.”¹²⁹ This is exemplified in Pitsiulak’s drawing *Loadmaster* (Figure 26) in which he documents the arrival of a new garbage collection vehicle in Kinngait.

This sense of observation and experience relates to the Inuit relationship with the land, a subject matter that features prominently in the works of all the artists. Pitsiulak takes the photographs while out on the land and brings them back to his studio where he works them into large-scale drawings. The indexical nature of photography and its use in Pitsiulak’s artwork ties his drawings to his own personal experience of being a hunter out on the land and allows him to share his observations with a wider audience. He said, “I usually go hunting and bring a camera of course. Yes, I take pictures of the land and animals and whatnot and bring them back to the studio and have them downloaded and artists who want to use the pictures to draw which has been happening for awhile now... I am very glad to share my pictures with the artists back home.”¹³⁰

Economic Survival

Art and crafts are a major industry in Kinngait. Sculptures earn Kinngait Studios about \$1 million annually while prints bring in approximately \$800,000 a year even though the population is only 1,300.¹³¹ To create art is to survive in the community. Shannon Bagg’s research on the economic motivation in Inuit art demonstrates the importance of an approach that encompasses the cultural understanding proposed by changing museum

129 Heather Igloliorte, Michael Massie, and Tim Pitsiulak, “Session 3: Contemporary Inuit Art,” (panel, Inuit Modern: An AGO Online Symposium, Art Gallery of Ontario. Toronto, ON. April 1st, 2011).

130 Heather Igloliorte, Michael Massie, and Tim Pitsiulak, “Session 3: Contemporary Inuit Art,” (panel, Inuit Modern: An AGO Online Symposium, Art Gallery of Ontario. Toronto, ON. April 1st, 2011).

131 Margo Pfeiff, “State of the Art,” *Up Here* (September 2014): 44.

practices and the anthropological approach that examines economic incentives. She argues that museums place Inuit art into a Western mould, concealing the realities of art production and what this endeavor means to Inuit.

Discussions over whether or not Inuit art is authentic in relation to the economic motivation that drives the production of art have been a continuing theme in Inuit art history. Inuit artists have never been reticent about expressing the economic motivation for their art production, and this has long been a frustration for well-meaning scholars who sought to distance Inuit art from the associations with commercialism that made it a target for critics. Anthropologists interested in Inuit art have argued that Inuit create art to obtain money and that the production corresponds to the types of imagery and mediums that the market demands. In contrast, art historians have regarded such statements as a threat to the legitimacy of Inuit art. They have argued that the economic incentive is irrelevant and that the quality of work being produced speaks for itself.¹³²

Although economic survival remains a strong motivation for art production in the north, statements by the artists seem to suggest that they do not take into account potential audiences when creating their artworks. Jutai Toonoo, stated:

I never felt any kind of pressure from anyone to do what I do. I have always been free to express how I felt at the moment. Sometimes my work, people think I am really against something... Lots of times it's something I have observed in the community or in the world and I put it in whatever I am working on... Sometimes I do what I think would sell but most of the time I just go and just do whatever I please because I want to do it. Because I like doing it – most of the

132 Shannon Bagg, "Artists, Art Historians, and the Value of Contemporary Inuit Art," PhD thesis, (Queen's University. 2006), 14.

time... I am just conveying what I observe. I am not trying to change the world.¹³³

Tim Pitsiulak answered similarly when asked about whether or not he considered any particular potential audience when creating his art,

“Not at all. I don’t think about the audience at all when I make an art. I just want to show what I can to the people who are interested in Inuit art or whatnot. I don’t think of that at all. Who are the people or whose [sic] going to see my work, I don’t think of that at all. I just want to show my work.”¹³⁴

In an interview with Jutai Toonoo, he talks about his motivation for creating art:

It’s just something I do because I have to make a living here now. But once... I don’t really worry about what goes on out there. There’s somebody else doing that... This is just something I do. I think I’m an artist. Then again, I’m not. ‘Cause I am not doing this for the sake of art. It became something else. It became something I have to make a living with. Feed my kids and please my wife.¹³⁵ Toonoo’s statement seems to imply that artistic expression is not the foremost concern to him, but that he creates his drawings in order to survive. Bill Ritchie’s take is slightly different. From his perspective, economic factors do affect the artworks, but in very subtle ways:

133 <http://www.rcinet.ca/eye-on-the-arctic/portfolio/the-rebel-jutai-toonoo/>

134 Heather Igloliorte, Michael Massie, and Tim Pitsiulak, “Session 3: Contemporary Inuit Art,” (panel, Inuit Modern: An AGO Online Symposium, Art Gallery of Ontario. Toronto, ON. April 1st, 2011).

135 Eillis Quinn, “The Rebel: Jutai Toonoo,” *Eye on the Arctic*, Radio Canada International, February 21st, 2013. <http://www.rcinet.ca/eye-on-the-arctic/2013/02/21/the-rebel-jutai-toonoo/>

Our criticism, our critique, would be economic and unintentionally so... if I know what the dealers are buying, because Dorset Fine Arts in Toronto is always sending us feedback about the drawings that are coming south, who's taking them for shows, who's wanting them for sale... which ones aren't being bought, which ones people aren't interested in so we're knowing that and the artist in Dorset don't necessarily know what we know in our feedback since we're hired to run the show from the co-op. So Annie will bring a drawing in that's not quite what everybody liked. Like, let's say Pat was putting together show. We'd say that Pat's putting together a show about this kind of stuff that we're interested in and she'd steer back what she was doing previously or new stuff that is more interesting to what we want to do and we'd pay her accordingly. If she brought in something that we weren't interested in, we wouldn't pay her as much. If she brought in something that was really interesting and pushing the envelop, we'd pay her more... it's unfortunate but it's a part of the system.¹³⁶

Ritchie is quick to point out that these types of market forces are not unique to Inuit but affect artists from all cultures.

An interesting development in the contemporary drawings is that, rather than making the economic motivation for art invisible, Kinngait artists are creating artworks that self-reference the close ties between art and economics. Shuvinai Ashoona's work *Composition (Art Money)* (Figure 27), in which she depicts a crowd of figures, some of

¹³⁶ Bill Ritchie. Phone interview with the author, August 29th, 2016.

whom are holding globes and others cheques reading “Canada Art Award”, “Japan Art Award” and “Art Foundation”, makes visible the economic motivation for artistic production in the contemporary art world. This is one of many compositions that Ashoona has made treating this theme.

Tim Pitsiulak’s *Carver’s Income* (Figure 28) shows a man walking home carrying plastic bags from Home Hardware. The man walks on top of an enlarged electric grinder, the same type that is used by contemporary sculptors to make stone sculptures. The tool is connected through a cord and plugged into a house in the distance toward which the figure is walking. The drawing is a direct statement about the connection between Inuit art making and economic survival. The choice of an electric grinder may be a comment on the historical controversy regarding Inuit artists and their use of power tools that emerged in the 1980s. Some Southern collectors thought that the use of these tools made Inuit sculpture inauthentic. Meanwhile, Inuit regarded this criticism as *Qallunaat* preventing them from accessing the same tools that Southern artists would use to make their art production less arduous, forcing Inuit to remain “primitive” in their technique. Itee Pootoogook makes a similar statement with *Before Electric Grinder* (Figure 29) which shows the hands tools that were used in the co-operatives to make art before the introduction of modern power tools. The layering of tools in his composition calls to mind the earlier drawings of Kananginak Pootoogook which show taxonomic arrangements of objects. It could be tempting to read these images as exemplifying the introduction of capitalism into the north through the art industry. While Inuit art production is a direct result of this capitalism and has indeed had harmful effects, Inuit have repurposed the activity to fit within traditional models of providing for one’s family

and community in the same way that they have adapted a variety of other foreign influences to suit their own cultural needs. By depicting the economic motivation within works of art, Kinngait artists are laying these debates to rest by visually affirming that the two can co-exist.

Images that reaffirm Inuit resiliency and their engagement with modernity are being crafted by Shuvinai Ashoona, Tim Pitsiulak, Itee Pootoogook, and many other artists in Kinngait. While their art practice is undeniably contemporary, it belongs to a tradition of image making that grew under the pressures of colonialism and demonstrates an Inuit identity that is not fragmented between the old and new, but an identity that is adapting and strengthening itself from within by correcting stereotypes and showing the continuation of Inuit cultural values.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the phenomenon of Kinngait drawings and their entry into the category of contemporary art as it exists in the Southern art world. Although interest in Inuit art has been growing, there is still a dearth of art historians who have taken it up as a field of study and this thesis is only able to skim the surface of an incredibly complicated history. Each artist examined in this thesis deserves to have their work analyzed in greater detail. It would also be worthy to mount in-depth analyses of various exhibitions that have displayed these works and create oral histories from interviewing living artists before they pass on. Although my thesis is weakened for not being able to include these elements, it is my hope that I have provided some insight into the unique challenges the neutralizing world of contemporary art posits for Inuit art and the troubled relationship that arises from ever shifting notions of authenticity that continue to be imposed by *Qallunaat*. With this in mind, it is important that I again reiterate that this represents only my analysis of this phenomenon and I cannot and do not speak for the artists written about in this thesis. While technology has improved access to Inuit artists in the twenty-first century, there are still obstacles when it comes to conducting interviews such as airfare and translation costs that can make primary research in the Arctic out of reach. Nothing can replace the direct voice of the artist when it comes to the interpretation of their works.

To make clear that the phenomenon of contemporary Inuit drawings “becoming contemporary” was not the result of a break starting with Annie Pootoogook, I have

reviewed drawings made by earlier artists from the community, and argued that the works of prominent contemporary Kinngait artists Shuvinai Ashoona, Tim Pitsiulak, Itee Pootoogook, and Jutai Toonoo demonstrate continuity with the earlier generations of artists. I demonstrated that the themes of cultural documentation, hybridity, and autobiography in their practice are a part of a lineage of artistic experimentation. In the second chapter, I address why the contemporaneity of these artists was not recognized until after the critical success of Annie Pootoogook, arguing that displacement of primitivism with new demands for authenticity created a conundrum for the acceptance of Inuit art. I examined the critical roles played by William Ritchie, Patricia Feheley, and Nancy Campbell in the development of Kinngait drawings. I also looked at the construction of authenticity with regard to Inuit art and how it has shifted in relation to the drawings, their hybridized subject matter, and the medium of drawing itself. I argue that the acceptance of Inuit art into the mainstream contemporary Canadian art world has coincided with a problematic silence. This lack of dialogue around contemporary Inuit art is indicative of the ways in which the self-proclaimed global and multi-vocal art world can neutralize the potential for subversion within art that arises in specific local contexts. In the third chapter, I aimed to show that the artists use their work to aid Inuit resiliency by correcting and addressing the effects of colonization.

Inuit art provides a unique case study for how art history has failed to adequately accommodate artists who do not easily conform to Western cultural categories. As a complicated art form with a distinctive history, it is not surprising that the contemporaneity of Inuit art has been overlooked until quite recently. Shuvinai Ashoona, Tim Pitsiulak, Itee Pootoogook, and Jutai Toonoo are creating works with an originality and vitality that have become impossible to ignore. Yet, there is still a tension between the local conceptions of art-making and the global contemporary art world which has resulted in blocked channels of communication. This is unfortunate because the communicative power of Inuit art makes it a powerful way for artists living in remote communities to advocate for themselves. As Inuit art begins to access global art venues, its potential to communicate information will increase as long as these messages are not overwritten by Western contemporary art discourse. Additionally, having access to these broader art markets ensures the future livelihoods of Inuit artists. There needs to be a balance struck between marketing Inuit art as contemporary and making audiences aware of its local significance.

Figures

Figure 1 — Jutai Toonoo. *Angry Face*. 2011. Coloured wax crayon on black wove paper. 112.2 x 76.5 cm. National Gallery of Canada. © Dorset Fine Arts.
<https://www.gallery.ca/cybermuse/servlet/imageserver?src=WI7210599&ext=x.jpg>

Figure 2 — Tim Pitsiulak. *Shared Catch*. 2012. Coloured pencil and ink on paper. 26 x 20 inches. Feheley Fine Arts. © Dorset Fine Arts.

http://feheleyfinearts.com/exhibitions/past/2013Tim/media/22_cpt7347.jpg

Figure 3 — Shuvinai Ashoona. *Untitled (Pink Amauti Hood)*. 2010. Coloured pencil and black felt pen on paper. 246.5 x 124.8 cm. National Gallery of Canada. © Dorset Fine Arts. <https://www.gallery.ca/en/see/collections/artwork.php?mkey=210420>

Figure 4 — Kananginak Pootoogook. *Untitled*. 1996. Coloured pencil and ink on paper. 26 x 20. Collection of Edward J. Guarino. Reproduced from *Inuit Art Quarterly* vol. 22, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 14.

Figure 5 — Kananginak Pootoogook. *Boats I Have Known*. 1981-1982. Etching.
Canadian Museum of History. © Dorset Fine Arts.

<http://www.historymuseum.ca/capedorsetprints/media/images/artefacts/8182-2132-3349-IMG2009-0200-0149-Dm.jpgkaa>

Figure 6 — Pudlo Pudlat. *View from the Ice*. 1979-1980. Acrylic paint, coloured pencil, and black felt pen on paper. Reproduced from *Pudlo: Thirty Years of Drawing*. Page 96. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Figure 7 — Pitseolak Ashoona. *Eskimos on a Sealskin Boat*. Circa 1966-1972. Coloured felt-tip pen on paper. 66.4 x 51.4 cm. Reproduced from *Pitseolak Ashoona: Life & Work*. Page 45. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Figure 8 — Pitseolak Ashoona. *The Critic*. C. 1963. Graphite on paper. 47.6 x 61.1 cm.
National Gallery of Canada. Reproduced from *Pitseolak Ashoona: Life & Work*.

Figure 9 — Pitseolak Ashoona. *Untitled*. Circa 1966-1976. Wax crayon and coloured felt-tip pen on paper. From *Pitseolak Ashoona: Life & Work*. Page 49. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Figure 10 — Annie Pootoogook. *Drawing in Bed*. 2003-2004. Coloured pencil and ink on paper. Reproduced from *Annie Pootoogook: Kinngait Compositions*. Page 39. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Figure 11 — Annie Pootoogook. *My Mother and I*. 2004-2005. Coloured pencil and ink on paper. Reproduced from *Annie Pootoogook: Kinngait Compositions*. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Figure 12 — Annie Pootoogook. *Cape Dorset Freezer*. 2005. 111.5 x 233.1 cm. Coloured pencil, ink, and graphite on paper. National Gallery of Canada. © Dorset Fine Arts.
<http://www.gallery.ca/cybermuse/servlet/imageserver?src=W17189489&ext=x.jpg>

Figure 13 — Tim Pitsiulak. *Untitled (Cockpit)*. 2008. 121.5 x 240.5 cm. Coloured pencil, coloured felt pen, and graphite on paper. National Gallery of Canada. © Dorset Fine Arts. <http://www.gallery.ca/cybermuse/servlet/imageserver?src=W17200024&ext=x.jpg>

Figure 14 — Itee Pootoogook. *Hudson's Bay Company Warehouse*. 2008. Coloured pencil and graphite on paper. 25 x 33 cm. National Gallery of Canada. © Dorset Fine Arts. <http://www.gallery.ca/cybermuse/servlet/imageserver?src=WI7204513&ext=x.jpg>

Figure 15 — Shuvinai Ashoona. *Interconnected Worlds*. 2012. Ink and coloured pencil on paper. 19.5 x 25.5. Fehely Fine Arts. © Dorset Fine Arts.
<http://fehelyfinearts.com/exhibitions/past/2012Shuvinai/media/03CPT6816.jpg>

Figure 16 — Jutai Toonoo. *Shitty Summer*. 2011. Oil stick on paper. 23 x 30 inches.
Marion Scott Gallery. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Figure 17 — Tim Pitsiulak. *Ilangut*. 2014. Coloured pencil on paper. 20 x 25 ½ inches.
Feheley Fine Arts © Dorset Fine Arts.
http://feheleyfinearts.com/exhibitions/past/2015Tim/media/cpt_8802.jpg

Figure 18 — Tim Pitsiulak. *Global Warming Researchers*. No date. Coloured pencil on paper. 19 x 26 inches. Spirit Wrestler Gallery. © Dorset Fine Arts.
http://storage.googleapis.com/gs.spiritwrestler.com/500px/inuit/G80204a_LRG.jpg

Figure 19 — Tim Pitsiulak. *Skidoo on Canoe*. 2011. Black ink and coloured pencil on wove paper. 246.9 x 124.2 cm; image: 235.8 x 114 cm. National Gallery of Canada. © Dorset Fine Arts.

<https://www.gallery.ca/cybermuse/servlet/imageserver?src=W17215015&ext=x.jpg>

Figure 20 — Itee Pootoogook. *Watching APTN*. 2009. Coloured pencil on paper. Image reproduced from Marion Scott Gallery. © Dorset Fine Arts.
<http://www.marionscottgallery.com/EXHIBITIONS/2011/201103-ITEE/images/266L.jpg>

Figure 21 — Jutai Toonoo. *My Ashtray*. 2013. Oil stick on paper. 44 x 30 inches. Feheley Fine Arts. © Dorset Fine Arts.
http://feheleyfinearts.com/exhibitions/past/2013ArtToronto/media/49cpt_7280.jpg

Figure 22 — Jutai Toonoo. *Bouncing Ball*. 2013. Coloured pencil on paper. 41 ½ c 29. ½ inches. Feheley Fine Arts. © Dorset Fine Arts.
http://feheleyfinearts.com/exhibitions/past/2013ArtToronto/media/47cpt_7204.jpg

Figure 23 — Tim Pitsiulak. *Climate Change*. 2011. Coloured pencil on paper. 64.8 x 49.5 cm; image: 235.8 x 114 cm. Feheley Fine Arts. © Dorset Fine Arts.

<http://mcmichael.com/ExploringCapeDorsetArt/images/picture2.jpg>Figure 24 —
Shuvinai Ashoona. *Carrying Suicidal People*. 2008. Coloured pencil and ink on paper.
Reproduced from *Oh Canada: Contemporary Art from North North America*. Page 178.

Figure 25 — Tim Pitsiulak. *Passing on Tradition*. 2012. Coloured pencil on paper. 20 x 26 inches. Feheley Fine Arts. © Dorset Fine Arts.
http://feheleyfinearts.com/exhibitions/past/2013Tim/media/08_cpt7354.jpg

Figure 26 — Tim Pitsiulak. *Loadmaster*. 2007. Coloured pencil and ink on paper. 243 x 122 cm. Canada Council for the Arts. © Dorset Fine Arts. <http://artbank.ca/art-piece/loadmaster/>

Figure 27 — Shuvinai Ashoona. *Composition (Art Money)* 2011. Coloured pencil and graphite on paper. Dimensions unknown. Fehely Fine Arts. © Dorset Fine Arts.
<https://canadianart.ca/online/2012/05/14/ohcanada5.jpg>

Figure 28 — Tim Pitsiulak. *Carver's Income*. 2009. 76 x 56 cm; image: 68.3 x 49 cm. Black felt pen and coloured pencil on buff wove paper. National Gallery of Canada. © Dorset Fine Arts.

<http://www.gallery.ca/cybermuse/servlet/imageserver?src=W17204514&ext=x.jpg>

Figure 29 — Itee Pootoogook. *Before Electric Grinder*. 2009. Coloured pencil and graphite on paper. 19.75 x 25.5 inches. Marion Scott Gallery. © Dorset Fine Arts.
<http://www.marionscottgallery.com/EXHIBITIONS/2011/201103-ITEE/images/269Lm.jpg>

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