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Original drawings are direct visual statements, enlivened by the energy and vitality of hand-drawn lines and the frankness and intensity of personal vision. Prints, on the other hand, are deliberately planned and executed translations of drawings in which the final print products are imbued not just with the vision of the original artist but also with the interpretations of the printmaker (or printmakers) and the mediating aspects inherent in the technical process of printing...Therefore, an appraisal of Inuit graphic art based solely or primarily on the interpretation and assessment of the relatively accessible prints neglects the most personal and least commercialized medium of Inuit art, the original drawings.⁷

Prints may represent only one aspect of an Inuit artist's work. Through the drawings, however, it is possible to trace

Cross-Cultural Lines of Inquiry:
The Drawings of Pitseolak Ashoona
by

Christine Lalonde B.A. (Honours)

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in Canadian Art History

Carleton University

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**CROSS-CULTURAL LINES OF INQUIRY:
THE DRAWINGS OF PITSEOLAK ASHOONA**

Submitted by Christine Lalonde, B.A. Honours
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts.

Mame Jackson, Thesis Supervisor
Alan Gillmor, Acting Director: SSAC

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

May, 1995

Abstract

The drawings of Inuit artist Pitseolak Ashoona offer an opportunity to explore and examine the usefulness of established art historical methods and approaches for interpreting art forms which arise outside of Western culture. A critical analysis of the tools of art history, such as formal analysis, artist's biography, and contextualist theories of art, reveal that the values underlying such methods are founded in Western society. When applied to artists whose visual expression arises from quite different cultural sources, these practices become limiting to a fuller understanding of their imagery.

Acknowledgements

In the writing of this thesis I have discovered that learning is as much about the 'getting there' as it is about the final written result. There are many people who have helped, in their various ways, along this path.

My first thanks are to Mame Jackson, my advisor, for her critical and sensitive guidance, strong editorial sense and, beyond this endeavour, for the lessons I will carry with me always. It is my sincere wish that she will view this thesis, as I do, as the outcome of a shared effort.

There have been many people who have taken an interest in my thesis and it is my hope that they will find themselves duly acknowledged within these pages. In particular, I would like to thank Dorothy Harley Eber and Terry Ryan. I am indebted to them for their own work with Pitseolak and for their time and help with my inquiries about her life and work.

I would like to also thank Marie Routledge for her thoughtful and searching comments, as well as, Rosemarie Tovell for her words of encouragement, especially throughout the critical stages of writing.

Kathryn Rumbold and the staff of the Cape Dorset Collection at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection have been a great help and source to me while viewing Pitseolak's drawings. Likewise, the Inuit Art Section at DIAND has greatly aided me by allowing me access to their resources. At both places I have received much encouragement and good cheer.

At Carleton University I have had the good fortune to benefit from participating in a Masters program which encourages free thought and innovation. I would like to acknowledge the quality of teaching and learning I have received from my professors and fellow students in Art History. In addition, Mary Browne, Barbara Stevenson, and Carol Luff have often gone to some lengths on my behalf for which I am grateful.

My family and friends deserve special thanks for helping me to laugh even in the 'thick of things'. To my parents I want to express my gratitude and respect, as every endeavour I do is a reflection of their support and caring.

Most of all, I would like to thank Jim Shewan for living this experience with me every step of the way.

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Introduction

Pitseolak Ashoona was born around the turn of this century on Nottingham Island at Tujakjuak¹, as her family was travelling from Nunavik (Arctic Quebec) to Baffin Island.² Moving into Cape Dorset only when she was in her 50s, Pitseolak³ was born into and led a semi-nomadic lifestyle until maturity. Her life parallels an eventful time in Inuit history, for increased contact with whalers, researchers and other scientists had meant subtle changes in a traditional lifestyle during her childhood...but these were minor compared to the pervasive and rapid changes which were to occur after the 1950s with the intervention of the Canadian government in Inuit society. Pitseolak was a particularly astute person and spoke of the changes occurring in the North,

I know I have had an unusual life, being born in a skin tent and living to hear on the radio that two men have landed on the moon.⁴

Southern presence in the Arctic altered Inuit way of life. Subsistence hunting was replaced by the need for wage employment as Inuit moved 'off the land' to live in permanent communities. A new industry of crafts, carvings, and hand-made 'souvenir' clothing was introduced to Inuit in order to develop economic independence. Out of this cultural upheaval, however, Inuit art has become a means of continuing traditions, sharing knowledge, and affirming values fundamental to Inuit culture. Pitseolak's drawings are located

in this flux of continuity and change. In creating drawings of life as she knew and lived it, her images are a personal expression of her cultural identity.

As a major contributor to the Cape Dorset annual print collections, from 1960 until her death in 1983, Pitseolak gained recognition as a strong and prolific artist. That her images were chosen year after year is tribute to her talent and speaks also of the esteem in which she was held by those involved in Inuit graphic arts. She made over 7000 drawings of which approximately 250 were translated into prints. Her works have been included in numerous group exhibitions shown widely throughout North America and throughout the world. Yet, although Pitseolak was a prominent artist, relatively little has been written about her art in terms of stylistic analysis, thematic development, and personal vision.

Although her life has been well documented through published interviews with Dorothy Eber⁵ and Marion Jackson⁶, attention on the same scale has not been given to her work. The only major retrospective of her drawings was organized in 1975 by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (DIAND) in cooperation with the West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative (WBEC); this exhibit included 100 drawings and was offered for travel to other art institutions. A modest, illustrated catalogue was printed to accompany the show. Except for a brief introduction describing Pitseolak's life, however, little interpretative material regarding the drawings was

included. The works themselves were arranged in such a way as to correlate to anecdotes from her book Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life. In other words, the images were not organized with the intent to give an overview of her artistic achievement. While Pitseolak's works have been recognized and admired by the general public and collectors, no systematic approach has been applied to her oeuvre and in particular to her drawn images.

In the past, not much attention was given, in general, to Inuit drawings unless they were chosen to be made into prints. Because of the importance of the annual collections, prints have been the focus of exhibitions, research and study within the Inuit graphic arts field. In recent years, this emphasis on the printed image has been reconsidered. In her dissertation on Baker Lake drawings, Marion Jackson argued the benefit of studying drawings,

Original drawings are direct visual statements, enlivened by the energy and vitality of hand-drawn lines and the frankness and intensity of personal vision. Prints, on the other hand, are deliberately planned and executed translations of drawings in which the final print products are imbued not just with the vision of the original artist but also with the interpretations of the printmaker (or printmakers) and the mediating aspects inherent in the technical process of printing...Therefore, an appraisal of Inuit graphic art based solely or primarily on the interpretation and assessment of the relatively accessible prints neglects the most personal and least commercialized medium of Inuit art, the original drawings.⁷

Prints may represent only one aspect of an Inuit artist's work. Through the drawings, however, it is possible to trace

experiments, preoccupations, and developments in style and ideas. In order to gain a full understanding of Pitseolak's career as an artist, therefore, I chose to concentrate on her drawn images.

My first intention was to present the drawings of Pitseolak in the context of twentieth century Canadian art using the established tools of art history. The outcome of such an approach, I believed, would be a redressing of the neglect of Inuit art within mainstream Canadian art history. With Inuit art there is the problem, however, of applying the practices of an art historical structure developed for the study of Western or European art. The discipline itself has been largely about Western art and has therefore been based on Western values and perceptions. A dilemma occurs when one attempts to apply Western art historical constructs to artists whose works arise from culturally specific sources.

My thesis is that the standard practices of art history are themselves culturally bound and therefore have limitations in their applicability to the drawings of Pitseolak Ashoona particularly and to Inuit art in general. Through attempting to apply formal analysis, study of artist's biography, and contextualist theories to the drawings of Pitseolak, I intend to demonstrate the specific problems which arise from implementing, instead of adapting, Western tools for understanding visual expression to art forms from non-Western cultures. While concepts of cultural relativism have "insisted

that the standards and beliefs of any culture must be judged upon its own terms, not those of another culture"⁸, it has not been made clear in what ways established Western practices and approaches are inadequate for the study of Inuit art. Such an examination of existing practices is essential before new approaches can be built upon the strengths, rather than the weaknesses of art history as a discipline.

While it was not feasible to apply and examine all relevant practices, approaches and theories utilized in the discipline of art history, I have chosen to focus on three fundamental tools to the study of art: formal analysis, artist's biography and contextualizing ideology.

Chapter I begins by reviewing the introduction of Inuit art as what was initially seen as the exotic expression of the so-called 'primitive' and which led to the treatment of Inuit artists as 'anonymous' producers of art. The Western concept of 'art for art's sake' is set against the realities of Inuit artists. In Chapter II, the usefulness of formal analysis as a means for studying Inuit drawings is examined. It is shown that concepts relating to the formal qualities of art can themselves be culturally specific. In Chapter III, an attempt to consider the artist's biography as a tool for understanding iconography leads to an examination of autobiography and portraiture in Pitseolak's drawings. It is discovered that such images reveal a culturally specific sense of individuality within Inuit culture. Chapter IV addresses the

applicability of contextualist ideologies of art to Inuit images. In particular, the critical apparatus of feminist ideologies is examined in light of Pitseolak's images of women. Finally, in Chapter V, after evaluating the more established practices of art history, the potential for understanding art through current ideologies relating to postmodernism and cross-cultural concepts of art are explored. Pitseolak's images of birds offer an opportunity to examine the ways in which meaning in visual expression is able to oscillate between the personal, cultural, and global.

Methodology

The bulk of my research has been the systematic viewing of Pitseolak's drawings which are the primary source for my thesis. Initially I spent approximately three weeks at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, where the Cape Dorset archive of drawings are temporarily on loan awaiting a new facility to house the drawings in Cape Dorset.⁹ When Pitseolak's drawings were first catalogued by Patricia Ryan in the early 70s, they were recorded and numbered 'as they lay' in the Co-op's drawings storage cabinets¹⁰. While they are roughly chronological, it is not uncommon to find a batch of much earlier works numerically within a batch of later works of a different medium. Given this and the large number of her works, I was not able to develop a more accurate system for dating the works although I have tried to suggest more

specific dates by comparing undated works to dated ones of similar drawing material, paper, or style. As the drawings were organized at a point after the date of the works, they were often dated according to media available in Cape Dorset at a particular time. Of the early drawings few were dated exactly but instead were organized into categories eg. 1959/65, 1966/76, 1977/78. Beginning in the 80s, drawings were dated by the year they were sold to the Cooperative. The initial sampling I considered is as follows:

- 1959/65 - 700 drawings
- 1966/76 - 510
- 1977/78 - 343
- 1979/81 - 197
- 1981/83 - 193

In order to view a fair sampling of Pitseolak's drawings, I selected the number of drawings from each time period to correspond in proportion to the number in total; for example I looked at more drawings from 1959/65 because they number about 4000 in total. The themes developed in this thesis have grown out of my analysis of the drawings themselves.

After returning from Kleinburg and the actual drawings, I continued to view Pitseolak's work, on a regular basis, using the slide library at the Inuit Art Section (DIAND). Under the direction of Helga Goetz (head of the Inuit Art Section from 1975 to 1985), over 5000 of the drawings, dating before 1980, were sent from Cape Dorset to the Prince of Wales Centre in Yellowknife and photographed. This slide collection allowed me to go through the images more systematically and

the themes developed in the initial viewing were supported by further examples of Pitseolak's work.

One additional trip was made to the McMichael to view works dating from the 1977/78 period which were not available in slides and for which a good sampling had not already been seen. The total estimated number of images, upon which my thesis is based, is approximately 4000 drawings, which I calculate to represent almost 50% of Pitseolak's artistic career.

My thesis is also informed by a thorough survey of the literature relating to Inuit art, in addition to consulting with persons key to the study of Cape Dorset drawings and in particular to the work of Pitseolak Ashoona.

The new art history

Pitseolak's drawings are wonderful and strong visual expressions in their own right and worthy of serious attention. As well they have been the impetus for my exploration of the applicability of Western tools of art history to Inuit drawings in general. It has been my intention to have both of these aspects balanced in my thesis. As such, my thesis is not a criticism of the discipline of art history except for the limitations of certain art historical practices and methods when applied to Pitseolak's drawings.

Any questioning of the fundamental methodology of art history, however, can be seen as part of the revisionist

dialogue of the 'new art history'. Hans Belting and Donald Preziosi are among scholars who have re-evaluated the foundation upon which the discipline stands.¹¹ Focussing on the confrontation between "historical" and "modern" art, Belting questions "how art history is to 'explain' the continuity of an ongoing history of art" when modern art itself seems to reject the traditions of "art".¹² The end of art history, he concludes, is only in its traditional practices. Instead,

Art history, obviously, is not yet finished as a discipline. But in some of its familiar forms and methods it is perhaps today exhausted. The breach between two kinds of art history, which treat either historical or modern art, and do this under different paradigms, no longer makes sense...It is perhaps more appropriate to regard the interrogation of the medium of art, of historical man and his images of the world, as a permanent experiment.¹³

Preziosi, in particular, responds to the notion of 'crisis' by means of tracing and exposing the "archaeology of art history"¹⁴,

In order to begin to understand this complex and rather confusing period in the history of the discipline, it is necessary to look more closely at certain assumptions about the nature of art historical knowledge and at the perspectives on the history of the discipline characteristically promulgated by art historians and other humanists today.¹⁵

Whereas the above mentioned have developed their arguments as rhetoric within the discipline of Western art history, Western aesthetics, and Western art forms, others have found revision of the discipline necessary in order to

include and understand the positions and meanings of non-Western art forms. Joan Vastokas is critical of the discipline's reliance on written documents; an emphasis which excludes the art of preliterate peoples,

The reasons for this neglect of native art as a serious research area by art history are many. They are implicit as well as explicit, methodological as well as philosophical...But most of all, the writing of native art history is thought to be a methodological impossibility because of the lack of written documents.¹⁶

With the inclusion of culturally diverse art forms, the boundaries of art history and anthropology have begun to overlap in a process of cross-fertilization which encompasses the many visual expressions of aboriginal artists. Valda Blundell, in a brief but insightful article, comments,

Through their art forms and their understandings of their art-making, Indian and Inuit artists are now playing a crucial role in raising concerns about their portrayal by "academics." Indeed, it is space for their voice in new forms of anthropology and art history that, for me, is the most positive development of recent years.

Within these two avenues, I position myself within the latter whose questioning of the discipline arises more often from consideration of the object rather than with theory. While I recognize that my own writing is situated within art history and that I am indebted to the inquiries of Belting and Preziosi, my thesis is not motivated by criticism of the discipline in theory as much as by the need to find practices and methods with which to understand the drawings of Pitseolak Ashoona.

Endnotes

1. Pitseolak named this camp as her place of birth in her interview with Marion Jackson, quoted from Pitseolak Ashoona interviewed by Marion Jackson, Cape Dorset, 15 February 1979 unpublished; transcript used with the permission of the West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative.
2. Biographical information from Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life, Dorothy Eber, ed. (Montreal, 1971).
3. I have chosen to refer to Pitseolak by using her first name as traditionally this is the name she would have been known by. The adoption of a second or surname was part of an government project in the 1970's, implemented for the purposes of government census lists.
4. Pitseolak Ashoona, Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life, not paginated [69].
5. Dorothy Eber, ed. Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life,; see also bibliography for related works by the same author.
6. Marion E. Jackson, "The Ashoona of Cape Dorset: In Touch with Tradition" North/Nord 29, No.3 (Fall, 1983), 14-18.
7. Marion E. Jackson, "Baker Lake Inuit Drawings: A Study in the Evolution of Artistic Self-consciousness" PhD dissertation (Ann Arbor, 1985), 106, 108.
8. Peter Millard, "Challenging long-cherished beliefs" Inuit Art Quarterly Vol.7, No.2 (Spring, 1992), 9.
9. For more information regarding the role of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection see "Kleinburg North and Dorset South: A Working Model" by Libby Hague Inuit Art Quarterly Vol.6, No.4 (Fall, 1991), 4-11.
10. By the early 70s, the increasing accumulation of drawings required that a system be developed to document and number the works. Patricia Ryan was responsible for cataloguing the drawings according to artist, media, date, size, subject matter and other general data, such as whether a work was signed or used as to make a printed edition. Cataloguing information was entered into a legal size ledger, which I have used throughout my research to verify dates, subject matter and other information regarding signatures and inscriptions.

11. Hans Belting, The End of the History of Art? (Chicago, 1987); Donald Preziosi, Rethinking Art History. Meditations on a Coy Science (New Haven, 1989); other scholars and texts which question the discipline include A.L. Rees and F. Borzello, eds. The New Art History (New Jersey, 1988) and more recently, Keith Moxey, The Practice of Theory, Poststructuralism, Cultural Politics, and Art History (Ithaca, 1994).
12. Belting, 39.
13. Belting, 57.
14. Preziosi, 156.
15. Preziosi, 2.
16. Joan Vastokas, "Native Art as Art History: Meaning and Time from Unwritten Sources", Journal of Canadian Studies Vol.21, No.4 (Winter 1986-87), 8.; other scholars who, because of their work with non-Western art forms, have called into question traditional approaches of art history also include Janet C. Berlo, "Portraits of Dispossession in Plains Indian and Inuit Graphic Arts", Art Journal Vol.49, No.2 (Summer, 1990): 133-141 and Susan Vogel, ed. Africa Explores: 20th Century African Art (New York: 1991).

Chapter I: The Reception of Inuit Artists

The collecting of Inuit art really began with small, carved three-dimensional objects, often made of ivory, which were exchanged in trade. From the middle of the nineteenth century, whalers and explorers travelling in the Arctic would occasionally take home these carvings by Inuit as souvenirs - evidence of the existence of a foreign and exotic race. Rarely were these early pieces signed nor was the name of the artist recorded. In one sense, the relative anonymity of Inuit artists was part of a larger colonial attitude toward 'primitive' people in general. It was believed by Europeans that smaller societies were less further along the evolutionary path than Western 'civilization'. Likewise, it was thought that a collective mentality existed and this was judged to be inferior to the Western value of individuality. Franz Boas, critical of this attitude, observed, "We like to see this distinction [between primitive and civilized mentality] in greater mental freedom from social bondage expressed in a free critical attitude that makes possible individual creativeness."¹ Implicit within this attitude, then, is the presumption that "self-expression to a thoroughly tribalized mind is meaningless - there is no self to express."² Inuit artists seen as belonging to an egalitarian society were not recognized as having 'individual creativeness'. Hence, the treatment of the artists as anonymous seemed appropriate and was not questioned. While it

is true that Inuit did live and travel in small numbers, in which the sense of the group was strong, the idea that this would negate a personal sense of self may be a wrong assumption distorted by the Western focus on individualism.

The first step toward recognition of these "whittles" as art, and of the contemporary period of Inuit art in general, is usually set as the 1949 exhibition of Inuit sculpture from Nunavik at the Canadian Handicraft Guild in Montreal.³ Even at that time, however, the "public was reacting to the 'Eskimo-ness' of the pieces, their exotic and 'primitive' appeal."⁴ This early reception of Inuit sculpture was extremely important for it set the tone for writing about Inuit art. The residue of the colonial attitude toward smaller societies lingered with the result that Inuit artists were seen as a homogeneous group without individual style or development. The introduction to a National Gallery 1951 exhibition catalogue for Inuit sculpture begins, "As in all genuinely primitive art, there is little evolution in style to be observed."⁵ Further still, Peter Millard sees this attitude existing in the romantic myth of the North,

There still lingers in the minds of some southern people, for instance, a nostalgic yearning for a romantic north of organic simplicity and pre-industrial innocence - a kind of frozen pastoral. Anonymity is a necessary characteristic of such a dream.⁶

Other explanations for the lack of individual treatment by southern authors may be found in the barriers (geographical, cultural, and linguistic) between the earliest

writers and the artists themselves. Inuit artists producing these works for a Southern audience must have seemed so distant to the authors that it is not surprising that they lacked a sense of reality, much less of individuality.

From its inception, the identification of individual artists was stronger in the graphic arts than in the sculpture. The prints from Cape Dorset identified graphic artists by including their names in the form of a stamp. Houston described the process,

I had suggested to the artists and printmakers that they might create a small signature block with which to stamp their prints. The name would be written in syllabics...The signatures may be easily read by any Eskimo of the Eastern Arctic and serve to identify permanently first the artist who created the design, then below the artist the printmaker who made the print series, and then below his name the small igloo shape identifying Cape Dorset.⁷

Soon many Inuit artists were known by name and collectors vied for a 'Pitseolak' or a 'Kenojuak'. And yet, despite the recognition of individual artists, the treatment of Inuit art remained somewhat generalized. Initially this was reinforced through promoting the prints "as a function of group expression by romanticizing the Inuit culture and relating contemporary Inuit arts to the vision and collective ethic of the traditional culture."⁸ Houston, who began by marketing Inuit sculpture, knew of the real need for income in the North and so promoted the prints in a way he knew they would be appreciated, as expressions of an exotic culture. In order to underline the 'authenticity' of the prints, Houston emphasized

the link between their production and traditional Inuit activities. In his 1967 book, Eskimo Prints, Houston maintained that it was from the "ancient practice of cutting silhouette forms and designs from animal hides to be sewn onto clothing" that the idea of stencil prints came to him,

It occurred to me that paint could be brushed through the openings to form strong stenciled images. This stencil process later proved to be an important method of reproduction growing directly out of an age old Eskimo practice.⁹

Many of the earliest stencils, such as Pitseolak's **Mother Birds Protecting Young** (1961), were identified by inscriptions on the prints as sealskin tencils. And yet, Jean Blodgett has discovered that "in the early days sealskin was used experimentally for stencils, [but] it was not successful and was never used for producing an edition of prints."¹⁰ Clearly, while the idea for the stencil print was inspired by traditional Inuit sewing techniques, Houston nonetheless felt the need to emphasize a direct link to the process of printmaking for these early images.

Even though the artists were identified by name their cultural identity (ie. as "Eskimo") was emphasized. For example, when Pitseolak visited Montreal in 1971 to celebrate the publishing of Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life, various newspaper headlines read, "Eskimo, over 70, published book", "Eskimo artist writes life story", and "Eskimo artist visits big city."¹¹ While the 60s saw the emergence of a knowledge of Inuit artists as individuals, the residue of perception

from the earliest colonial biases is apparent in these articles. I would argue that the artists' Inuktitut names were 'exotic' and foreign, and in fact, that it was the names which were known while the individuals remained unperceived and anonymous.

The pervasive danger of this generic view was that it created a bias which denied Inuit status as true artists according to Western standards which privileges individuality. This fundamentally Western value has influenced the structure of art history as a discipline. "It would probably be reasonable to characterize the academic study of arts as focusing on the life and work of named individuals."¹² Without the acknowledgement of Inuit artists as individuals the outcome has been that Inuit art "is still regarded with unease and uncertainty by many curators, with the result that Inuit art has not received the benefit of the scrutiny that southern art receives."¹³ Janet Berlo, an art historian sensitive to these issues, has argued that,

the pronouncements about art and culture by those of us who study ethnographic arts have all too often been based on normative statements about the group, about tradition, about a collective aesthetic, instead of what is specific and individual.¹⁴

Kenojuak Ashevak, Pitseolak Ashoona, Pudlo Pudlat represent a few among many Inuit artists, who are internationally acknowledged as artists. Despite increasing recognition, however, I propose that the concept of the Inuit artist is still determined within Western cultural parameters. We may

not really have dealt with how the twentieth century concept 'artist' clashes with the realities of art production in the North. This chapter focuses on concepts of 'artist' by considering, first, Pitseolak's motivations for becoming an artist, and second, her consciousness of self-as-artist.

Economic Motivations

It is instructive to begin by looking to the point at which Pitseolak became an artist. In the late 1940s Pitseolak suffered a crisis that was to alter her personal life - the death of her husband Ashoona. As a woman and as a widow with children, she would traditionally have needed to remarry in order to survive and provide for her family. Pitseolak, however, never remarried; drawing eventually provided her financial independence and personal freedom. After almost ten years of hardship, depending on others for food and the essentials of survival, Pitseolak began to draw,

I heard that Kiakshuk was drawing, and he was my very close relative - my mother's sisters son. Kiakshuk was drawing a lot and I wanted to do drawings, too, to make money. I bought some paper myself and I think I made four small drawings...I took these drawings to Jim's office. I was scared to go there at first but he gave me money - I think it was \$20.¹⁵

The idea of artists so obviously producing for cash is disturbing to many people in the visual arts field - to the point that it negates the art form's validity in their eyes. This economic motivation is thought to suggest a lack of creativity which then leads to the assumption that no

individual self-expression is involved and, in circular fashion, no need to identify the artist,

The identity of particular artists loses its importance, since they are participating in aesthetic production much as a factory worker would contribute labour to an assembly line. A conceptual jump is then made from the artists' lack of individual creativity to the artists' lack of individual identity.¹⁶

It is important to recall that a denial of the link between money and art has developed only since the Renaissance. There is little evidence in the earlier periods of Western art history, such as during Medieval or early Renaissance periods, to suggest any discomfort with the commercial aspects of art production. Contracts between artist and patron from these periods support much of the archival research. It was during the transition from the Medieval concept of 'craftsman' to the Renaissance 'artist' that we have, as E.H. Gombrich terms it, the switch from "commission to mission." The Renaissance artist was more concerned with the mission "to add to the glory of the age through the progress of art."¹⁷ Contracts were then perceived as limiting to the creative prowess of the artist. It is from this concept that today's expectations stem. The assumption that a contradiction exists between money and art is now rooted in Western society.

It is also important to note that while this conflict might exist for the receivers of her art, this does not mean that it did for Pitseolak. In the lifestyle and thought patterns in which she was raised there was a high value,

essentially based on survival, on whether a thing was well designed and finely crafted. Statements by other Inuit artists of Pitseolak's generation communicate this ethic. Elisapee Ishulutuq, from Pangnirtung, explains,

Why are Inuit such good artists? I think it is because of strong will and determination, the determination to make something, carvings or drawings, because of need...I feel that if a person is determined and enthusiastic about their work, they will be a lot more creative...It is like sewing garments, when you first start sewing duffel socks. Each time you make another pair of duffel socks, you do much better than the time before. It's the same idea: each time you sew, each time you draw, it's much, much better than before.¹⁸

Osuitok Ipeelee, one of Cape Dorset's most renowned sculptors, likewise discusses his carving in terms of a work ethic - but not one that is limiting,

It takes planning to be a carver. I know what I'm going to be working at tomorrow. We have to go by our watches; we have to work enough hours just as you do in a job. What's different in carving is that we make up our minds and choose what to make...People in the south aim to be good at their jobs. Well, this is the job I try to do; you have to be good at it.¹⁹

Implicit in these statements is the equation between traditional activities to meet needs, dependent on the quality of work, transferred to the making of art forms. This ethic, I believe, was a determining factor in Pitseolak's approach to art-making. When she began to draw she looked to learning how to do it the best she could. This becomes evident in the inquisitive and experimental nature of her drawings which is explored in the next chapter. The fact that she received money (which meant survival in a new sense) should not

automatically deny the sincerity of her efforts.

Finally, it is essential to consider the economic conditions found then and even today in the North. It is true that if artists were not paid for their drawings, they probably would not draw - because they would have to find some other occupation to bring in an income to support themselves and their families.²⁰ When, in the late 1970s, Jackson conducted interviews in Cape Dorset, the artists were paid in order to compensate them for their time not spent in drawing.²¹ It must be recognized that in the economic environment of Arctic communities the luxury of time to pursue activities for personal pleasure is secondary to economic pressures. The point which must be stressed is that the economic need does not deny the pleasure of making art but instead that the two are intricately bound to each other. The necessity in the North for efficiency of action and resourcefulness in managing materials is part of the cultural context of Inuit drawings.

Cultural Motivations

An additional motive for producing so many images was Pitseolak's desire to record what she saw as a changing way of life. She learned a new medium for preserving the knowledge that she wanted to share with people outside of her culture as well as with future generations of Inuit. She is, in fact, best known for this aspect of her work and is often

described as a visual historian for her depictions of life on the land.

It may be argued that this desire to preserve knowledge in visual form, either for future generations or for a foreign audience in the South, created a formula subject matter which might be regarded as more interesting to an anthropologist than an art historian. Inuit graphic art has a unique place in the issue of acculturation of native art. Undeniably, the print medium was introduced to Inuit and as such can be called "art of acculturation" which Nelson Graburn defines as "art production, which differs significantly from traditional expressions in form, content, function and medium."²² There is also the question of whether or not (or to what degree) the subject matter of the prints (and so the drawings) were influenced by the demands of the market. Even Pitseolak will tell, "When James Houston, whom we call Sowmik - the left-handed one - came to Cape Dorset and told me to draw the old ways, I began to put the old costumes into the drawings and prints."²³ Such a position, however, might be seen as denying the artist any claim to self-expression. Throughout the history of Western art, artists have found ways to work within parameters without obstructing their freedom of expression. It is an essential artistic problem, one might even argue, in terms of manoeuvring between limitations and potentials. While artists, in previous centuries, worked within the boundaries of the artist-patron relationship, they now respond to the

demands of the art market. The main difference is that, whereas in the past, the artist knew precisely what the requirements of a specific patron were, now that relationship is more distant. This is especially true in the case of Inuit artists since they rarely meet the collectors who have bought their pieces, or even the dealers who sell their works in the South.

The question of the acculturation of subject matter has long been recognized as a problematic area within Inuit art and one where more research is required before the degree of influence can be determined. What is more important, however, is the culturally affirming function which Inuit images have within a changing, dynamic culture. "The new work grew out of the current situation of the Inuit, reconciling abrupt social and cultural change with the continuity of traditional values and aesthetics."²⁴ In spite of the external influences and demands of a Southern market, Inuit art has come to play a formative role essential within Inuit culture.

As many critics have remarked, the economic incentive does not suffice to explain the mobilization of so much talent among the Inuit for artistic creativity. Art has been produced of a quality far greater than that required for the white tourist.²⁵

Likewise, Berlo argues for the inherent importance of Inuit images for Inuit, "These acts of self-representation do signify power, authenticity, and identity within their own culture"²⁶ The images in Inuit prints are individual expressions which give voice to a sense of shared cultural identity.

In this context, it must be emphasized that images of the past as Pitseolak lived it, become a means for representing her sense of cultural identity quite separate from the economic benefits. Swinton has maintained that "In many ways, the contemporary art of the Inuit has become one of their strongest identity affirmations"²⁷

While producing in the cultural vacuum created through the replacement of traditional Eskimo values by the attitudes of Western technology, the Eskimo artists - at first producing for non-Eskimo consumers - gradually found in art a means of cultural and ethnic self-affirmation. That meant that art production no longer was valid only for the satisfaction of economic needs but instead could become a factor in affirming spiritual, cultural, and ethnic ends.²⁸

This is borne out in statements by Inuit expressing the pride they feel, "Talented artists who can do drawings and carvings can show our children what life was like, and those things can be useful in their future and in helping our children to make something of themselves."²⁹ This function of Inuit art cannot be underestimated. This is, in essence, one of the sustaining strengths of Inuit art.

The talent of Inuit artists

The second point to address in this chapter is the cliché that Inuit artists are ordinary people who simply sit down and make art in a 'natural' way, a view which downplays the consciousness of their efforts and sets them outside the Western notion of the artist as developing her/his style and or craft through the conscious resolution of artistic

problems. Pitseolak often mentioned how she felt about this, "Does it take much planning to draw? Ahalona! It takes much thinking."³⁰ An important part of the initial appeal of the earliest prints, such as those by Pitseolak, was their ethnographic charm. The 'primitive' style of representation served to heighten the indigenous subject matter, and the 'naive' or 'natural' talent of the artists was emphasized by the earliest promoters of Inuit art.³¹ The term 'primitive' also set the standard by which Inuit art was judged. Adjectives such as "crude" or "primitive" suggest a lack of refinement which in turn suggests a lack of sophistication, mental and technical, on the part of the artist. Such terms,

are often used as convenient handles in popular and professional art criticism to denote an absence of refinement or sophistication, particularly with regard to craftsmanship or to the refined and intellectual "high culture" artforms of Western Europe, India, and China...[S]uch "linear" value comparisons are no longer tenable.³²

A 1969 journalistic description of Cape Dorset drawings described them as, "childlike drawings in nursery colours...like innocent documentary."³³ Such a view of the art may be linked to the general perception of Inuit as cheerful, happy-go-lucky people - an impression which is obviously laden with judgement. Yet, by tracing the stylistic and thematic developments so prevalent in Pitseolak's drawings it becomes obvious that her effort toward visual expression was as determined and consistent as any artist coming from a Western formal fine arts education. This itself, the idea of

training, is perhaps another aspect which needs to be re-examined. Since the Renaissance, with the break away from guilds, the master with whom artists studied becomes as important as their own work. This kind of privileging of formal training automatically negates the efforts of any artist outside this circle. Women artists in Western art history experienced this with their exclusion from the academies in the eighteenth century.³⁴ Especially in the twentieth century, with the increase of abstraction and non-representational art, the hierarchy which places status on the art academies intensified. While the occasional artist offered training in specific media, such as in the early 60s when engraving was introduced in Cape Dorset by Alexander Wyse, or in the late 70s when KM Graham encouraged artists to explore the use of acrylics, rarely have Inuit of Pitseolak's generation had the opportunity to study art techniques or methods. Despite the introduction of certain techniques, there has been a bias against Inuit artists obtaining sustained training for fear of contaminating their 'natural' ability with Western notions. This attitude is apparent in the following statement, made as recently as 1994, "Trained southern Canadians with preconceived sophisticated ideas about what "art" is are now influencing the northern native students, filling their heads with alien concepts of art."³⁵ Implicit in this criticism is the paternalistic view that, first Inuit artists do not have "sophisticated ideas"

themselves and are therefore easily influenced, and second that Inuit artists should not be allowed to evolve but instead should keep producing art in a static vacuum out of fear for the apparent fragility of their own culture.

The question arises, if the predominant concept of 'artist' does not easily apply to Inuit artists, then is there an Inuit concept 'artist'? Did Pitseolak identify herself as 'artist'?

Pitseolak Ashoona, an Inuk artist

It is possible, from quotes by Pitseolak in her interviews, to ascertain that she did in fact have a consciousness of herself as an artist (even if we need to be aware of a different notion of artist). She was proud of her artistic achievements. When showing her Royal Academy of Arts diploma she told Dorothy Eber, "I got it for being a good artist."³⁶ At other times, she discussed her technique and approach to drawing in some detail with Marion Jackson. What also becomes apparent in these discussions is that Pitseolak was quite aware of her own progress as an artist,

Pitseolak: Before, I used to think first -- think really hard what I am going to put on paper. I am not like that right now.

Jackson: So your way of drawing has changed over the years?

Pitseolak: Yes, my drawings have changed...I have talked about drawing to other people. What I have said to people is something like if a person once starts to draw, perhaps that person's drawing wouldn't be all that good,...but his

or her drawings would improve --- like I did.³⁷

Pitseolak had a consciousness about her role as artist and of the communicative power of her images. Such drawings as **The Critic** (ill.3), suggest an "artistic reflexivity" in her ideas about making art.³⁸ It is significant to note that Pitseolak would also sign her drawings with "This is Pitseolak's drawing."³⁹

Jackson, in her dissertation on Baker Lake drawings, developed a two-generation theory to distinguish the stylistic characteristics she observed between artists who grew up on the land and younger artists who moved into settlements during their formative years. One significant difference she noted between the two generations was the artists' attitudes toward drawing. Of first-generation artists, Jackson writes,

People of this generation had little consciousness of self-as-artist or self-as-creator; they simply drew the world as they knew it with no real awareness of their own powers to intervene or shape the world.⁴⁰

While no one has yet systematically applied Jackson's model to Cape Dorset drawings, it may be that certain variables she identified will differ from community to community. For example, while Cape Dorset artists such as Parr, Pootoogook, and Kunu do share similar stylistic characteristics with Baker Lake first-generation artists, others, like Pitseolak and Pudlo, fit neither within the first nor second-generation. It may be that a transitional generation is present in Cape Dorset with a different set of stylistic characteristics. In

addition, it may be that the general consciousness of self-as-artist is higher in Cape Dorset because of an earlier involvement in the arts with a greater concentration of renowned artists. It has been remarked that "[i]n no other Inuit community has the making of art been such an integral part of the lives of its inhabitants."⁴¹ This intensity of artistic production and the cultural climate explains Pitseolak's consciousness of her identity as artist. It may be claimed that the attention Cape Dorset artists have received has accelerated this consciousness so that even the elder artists have a developed sense of it. "Many Inuit across the Arctic are now developing a conscious identity as artists; but this process is most evident in Cape Dorset, where artists benefit from the constant strong support of managers and advisors, and a healthy cooperative."⁴² Yet, when Jackson observes,

The confidence the artists of this first generation exhibited in responding to the early requests for drawings relates to the grounding they derived from the authority of their collective culture...For them the issue in picture-making was to draw the vision that their culture had instilled in them, not to invent the vision.⁴³

this is certainly true of Pitseolak. Such a confidence, founded in "deep-rooted thinking patterns"⁴⁴, literally pervades her images - images of life as she lived it.

Concluding observations

Western attitudes toward Inuit artists have often been distorted by concepts of the 'primitive'. These misperceptions can be addressed through an awareness of Western societal values underlying concepts of art production and artists. Such an inquiry cannot, however, create a new or distinct definition of artist to apply to Inuit. There is still the need for more participation from within Inuit society before a fuller definition of artist can be understood. From her comments, it is clear that Pitseolak did have a sense of identity as an artist. Instead of seeking for distinctly Inuit concepts, it is more feasible at this time to expand and broaden the existing notions of artist to include Inuit perceptions and in doing so to work towards achieving a culturally balanced understanding of artists and the creation of visual expression.

Endnotes

1. Franz Boas, Primitive Art (New York, 1955 [1927]), 3.
2. Jay Scott, "I lost it at the trading post", Canadian Art Vol.2, No.4 (Winter/December, 1985), 35; quoted by Peter Millard, "Contemporary Inuit Art - Past and Present" The American Review of Canadian Studies Vol.XVII, No.1 (Spring, 1987), 24 - although Scott is referring to pre-contact Indian art, Millard argues that "the sentiment can be taken as representing wishful thinking on the part of many southern purchasers of modern Inuit art."
3. Marie Routledge and Ingo Hessel, "Contemporary Inuit Sculpture: An Approach to the Medium, the Artists, and their Work" In the Shadow of the Sun. Perspectives on Contemporary Native Art (Hull, 1993), 443.
4. Routledge and Hessel, 447.
5. Unidentified author, Eskimo Sculpture (Ottawa, 1951), 4.
6. Peter Millard, "Contemporary Inuit Art - Past and Present", The American Review of Canadian Studies Vol. XVII, No.1 (Spring 1987), 24.
7. James Houston, Eskimo Prints (Massachusetts, 1967), 27.
8. Marion E. Jackson, "Personal Versus Cultural Expression in Inuit Prints", Print Voice (Edmonton, 1984), 22.
9. Houston, 15.
10. Jean Blodgett, In Cape Dorset We Do It This Way. Three Decades of Inuit Printmaking (Kleinburg, 1991), 40 - see also page 25 where Blodgett identifies the source for this information as Kananginak Pootoogook and Terry Ryan.
11. Montreal Gazette, n.d; Winnipeg Tribune, 2 October 1971; Montreal Gazette, 2 October 1971; newspaper clippings available in the artist's file, Inuit Art Section, Dept. of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Hull.
12. Sally Price, Primitive Art in Civilized Places (Chicago, 1989), 56.
13. Millard, 23.
14. Janet Catherine Berlo, "Autobiographical Impulses and Female Identity in the Drawings of Napachie Pootoogook" Inuit Art Quarterly Vol.8, No.4 (Winter 1993), 6.

15. Pitseolak, Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life (Montreal, 1971), not paginated [57,59].
16. Price, 59.
17. E.H. Gombrich, "The Renaissance Conception of Artistic Progress", Norm & Form: Studies in the art of the Renaissance (Oxford, 3rd ed. 1978), 3.
18. Elisapee Ishulutuq, quoted by Dorothy Eber, "Talking with the Artists" In the Shadow of the Sun, 432-433.
19. Osuitok Ipeelee, quoted by Dorothy Eber, In the Shadow of the Sun, 440.
20. Observation made by Terry Ryan, **Personal interview with Terry Ryan**, Toronto, 26 January 1995.
21. Jackson, **Personal interview with Marion Jackson**, Ottawa, 6 January 1995.
22. Nelson Graburn, Introduction Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World (Berkley, 1976), 5.
23. Pitseolak, not paginated [39].
24. Routledge and Hessel, 449.
25. Gerhard Hoffman, "The Aesthetics of Inuit Art: Decoration, Symbolism and Myth in Inuit Graphics; Material, Form and Space in Inuit Sculpture; The Context of Modernism and Postmodernism", In the Shadow of the Sun, 383.
26. Berlo, 11.
27. George Swinton, "Contemporary Inuit Aesthetics: Touch and the Real", Arts & Culture of the North Vol.III, No.2 (February, 1979), 143.
28. Swinton, Sculpture of the Eskimo (Toronto, 1972), 25-26.
29. Annie Manning, "My Career Experiences", Inuit Women Artists, (Vancouver, 1994), 245.
30. Pitseolak, not paginated [65].
31. In art history, the term 'naive' is generally used to refer to artists who are self-taught and without a formal arts training. However, when applied to Inuit artists it takes on an additional meaning in that as 'primitive' people they were often described as 'childlike', 'innocent', and 'happy-go-lucky'.

32. Swinton, Sculpture of the Eskimo, 119.
33. Kay Kritzwiser, "Eskimo art conveys innocence", The Globe and Mail, Toronto, 1 December 1969.
34. see Linda Nochlin, "Why have there been no great women artists?", Art and Sexual Politics (London, 1973),
35. Bryan Pearson, "The rise and decline of Inuit Art - Part II" Nunatsiag News 11 January 1994; it is interesting to note that Pearson is writing from Iqaluit and that his criticisms are likely directed at the Arctic College campus located there; in the same article, Pearson attacks the notion of Inuit sculptors using power tools - which is a further debate underlining the bias that Inuit art should remain static. While Pearson is not actively involved in Inuit art, his opinions are unfortunately shared by a number of people who are considered authoritative where the production of Inuit art is concerned.
36. Pitseolak quoted by Dorothy Eber, "Eskimo Tales", Natural History Magazine Vol.LXXXVI, No.8 (October, 1977), 128.
37. Pitseolak, quoted from Pitseolak Ashoona interviewed by Marion Jackson, Cape Dorset, 15 February 1979, unpublished; transcript used with the permission of the West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative.
38. Berlo, 8; Berlo also sees this awareness as passed onto Pitseolak's daughter Napachie Pootoogook, for example in such images as Drawing of My Tent, stonecut and stencil, 1982.
39. Syllabic translation, CD.027.5019, by Alooook Ipellie, 16 January 1995; see Notes on Drawings for complete translation.
40. Marion Jackson, "Baker Lake Inuit Drawings: A Study in the Evolution of Artistic Self-consciousness" PhD. dissertation (Ann Arbor, 1985), 210.
41. Routledge and Hessel, 454.
42. Routledge and Hessel, 455.
43. Jackson, "Baker Lake Inuit Drawings", 211.
44. Jackson, "Baker Lake Inuit Drawings", 214.

Chapter II: Formal Analysis in Cultural Context

An approach to Inuit art which does not isolate it from the general discourse of art calls for the use of art historical methods and practices that have been in the discipline of art history over the past century. One of the earliest and best established practices is the formal analysis of style. An emphasis on form and style has dominated the study of art, especially escalating during the twentieth century with the ideas advanced by Roger Fry (1866-1934) and Clive Bell (1881-1964) in the development of a formalist approach to art. In particular, during the 1950s with the rise of non-representational art and Abstract Expressionism, the focus on formal elements of a work was taken to extreme limits, to the denial of subject matter. Form became content. With New York critic Clement Greenberg leading the way, critics and art historians evaluated art based strictly on formal qualities. Founded on the notion of an 'aesthetic experience' - a sensation unique to art - it followed that "art must reside in a separate context, outside of ordinary life experiences...[and] that what is artistic and aesthetic about an art object is not its subject matter but its formal qualities."¹ It was into this critical context that Inuit prints entered in the 1960s.

This 'modernist' attitude no longer exclusively dominates writing and thinking about art. Nonetheless, the formal analysis of a work remains a tool of art history which

suggests the persistence of the belief that the essential qualities of art are found in the elements of form.

For Inuit art to take its place as a valid art expression it is thought that individual artists work must be able to stand up to this 'test'. Are Inuit images compositionally balanced? Does the artist utilize the elements of form in a prescribed manner? Is a sculpture by Karoo Ashevak as good as one by Henry Moore? There was an apparent effort to validate Inuit art, by comparing it stylistically with the work of famous Western artists. Charles Gimpel, for example, thought it a great honour for Inuit artists "that Leigh Block and Joseph Hirshhorn in the United States, two of the world's greatest collectors, have Eskimo carvings; this is an honour not often accorded to many Canadian sculptors."² It is, however, also true that,

A sensitive survey of the works of any strong Inuit artist can reveal stylistic individuality and inventiveness that distinguishes his or her work[s] from those of other Inuit artists. Further, it is possible to trace a definite progression and development of personal style and artistic interest in the works of many Inuit artists.³

Instead of viewing a formal analysis as a test set against Western standards of form, a close study of the drawings of Inuit artists dispels the myth of the 'primitive's' lack of evolution of style as discussed in Chapter I.

By examining a selection of drawings we can see Pitseolak's stylistic development through her experimentation with the visual elements. One thing that does appear to be a

characteristic of Pitseolak was her inquisitive approach to her medium. Constantly she explored her media and experimented with the visual formal qualities of colour, line and space until she mastered these to the point of developing her style, her visual self-expression.

Stylistic evolution of colour

Many of the Cape Dorset works can be dated by the type of paper and drawing instruments used. Initially, from the late 50s until 1965, only graphite was available to the artists. Later, in 1966, coloured pencils were introduced. The next year, 1967, felt or felt-tip pens largely replaced the coloured pencils. These, occasionally in combination with coloured pencils, remained the most popular drawing instruments until 1975 when the felt-tip pens were no longer used because of problems with the permanence of their colour.⁴ It is interesting to see Pitseolak's initial attempts lead to personal mastery of each of these different media. Some drawing materials shared common characteristics and therefore posed fewer problems, for example the replacement of felt pens with coloured pencils. They did, however, require some adjustment and learning before Pitseolak was able to use them freely in an expressive way.

This process of discovery was further affected by the range of colours available at any given time. In many ways the initial scarcity of coloured pens or pencil may have been a

good thing. Having only graphite available until 1965, Pitseolak had years in which to master her draftsmanship before moving into colour. In the earliest drawings, she developed the method of creating a outline which was then roughly filled in (ill.4). This initial emphasis on line was crucial as it strengthened Pitseolak's skill and, in fact, developed to become her strongest element. Also important at this stage was learning to work in positive and negative, both for compositional structure, as well as for texture to create variety and visual interest (ill.9). By 1965 many of Pitseolak's graphite drawings demonstrate an accomplished use of the media, as well as a confidence with drawing techniques.

The most challenging adjustment was to move from graphite to coloured pencils and to learn how these translated onto paper. The earliest colour drawings are erratic as if Pitseolak was beginning to learn again (ill.5) and adopting the previous method of outline and filler. Often her use of colour was unsuccessful, as in the overly dark and undifferentiated use of navy in the background. It is likely that in experimenting she tried to use all of the coloured pencils available. Pitseolak really came into her own with the use of the felt-tip pen. In the rich and vibrant colour she found a way to express the *joie de vivre* which strongly characterizes her work. By this point she has learned to control the combination of colour and that a reduced palette is often stronger (ill.6) than a disarray of many colours.

Still, when necessary she can use a wide range of colours as in the festive drawing (ill.7), in which she communicates the vibrancy and liveliness of the birds. Dorothy Zber remembers how reluctant Pitseolak was to give up these pens when it was discovered that the colour was fugitive.⁵ The switch back to coloured pencil might have frustrated Pitseolak but, in one sense, the muted colours suited the subdued quality of her later drawings. For example, in the drawing of a solitary woman resting before a cairn (ill.8) the muted, soft colours of tan, black and blue mesh with the subdued gentle quality of the subject. Because of her early works in graphite, where she learned to control the contrast of the dark line against the paper, Pitseolak is still able to combine light and dark, translated into colour to dramatic effect. It is also interesting in tracing development to compare the early 1966 coloured pencil drawing (ill.4) with this later, more accomplished use of colour combination.

While analysis of the visual elements, such as colour, can give insight into Pitseolak's ability to resolve artistic problems, it does not take the viewer very far towards interpreting or understanding meaning in her drawings.

Cultural perspectives and the formal qualities of art

For the Modernists, the formal qualities of art were seen as transcending differences in sociocultural conditions. "Art is seen as transcending culture, operating according to its

own internal laws, above and apart from the mundane, practical affairs of human existence with which authentic art is perceived as having little to do."⁶ In this way, it was believed that in the formal qualities of art a universal aesthetic prevailed when in actuality, the visual elements valued in this Modernist aesthetic were strictly based in Western culture. This attitude many would claim is of the past and not existing in the current postmodern environment. In the practice of formal analysis, however, such notions continue to exist. It must be recognized that within diverse cultures, different meanings are attributed to certain formal elements. The colour red, for example, may signify passion, earth, body over matter in Western art whereas in another culture its meaning may be radically different.

*The potential of style and form analysis as a tool for the interpretation of "general" or intrinsic meaning, in addition to its more common value for chronological ordering, has not been sufficiently examined or thoroughly exploited. In particular, the symbiotic relationship between form and iconography has been neglected in theories of artistic expression. Nevertheless, a few recent studies have shown that information about function and meaning is communicated by formal means - that is, by composition, structure, colour, texture, line and the arrangement of images and motifs - either alone or in combination with observations on representational or abstract subject matter."*⁷

While the analysis of formal qualities of art remains a useful tool for discussing style and development, one must remain aware of the possibilities for different cultural interpretations of these seemingly 'universal' elements.

Visual Space

The organization of space on the paper surface is one of the essential formal challenges for any graphic artist. It is not surprising, growing up on the land around Baffin Island and living a semi-nomadic lifestyle until well into her adult years, that Pitseolak drew many images of the land. This necessitated a need to develop a way to depict visual space. Rational one-point perspective is common to Western art and so ingrained in Western thinking that it is taken for granted as the 'norm'. While initially the lack of one-point perspective was attributed to the lack of skill and sophistication of Inuit artists, Marion Jackson has put forward the argument that Inuit drawing style may represent a different concept of space.⁸ Jackson writes that in contrast to the "illusion of three-dimensionality and spatial and temporal unity...Inuit drawings, on the other hand, favour visual immediacy over naturalistic coherence."⁹ Still further, she situates the use of perspective,

From the mid-15th century to the beginning of this century, most Western artists created, with varying degrees of success, highly-rational pictorial imagery based on rules of perspective and grounded on the classical idea that the universe was ordered and explicitly rational in terms of geometry. Pictorial representation of rational three-dimensional space viewable from a single vantage point is so integral to the Western experience that it is taken for granted as "natural" rather than as a highly-ordered construction conditioned through a distinctive and pervasive world view.¹⁰

While Pitseolak often comes close to depicting rational space this can be attributed to her keen power of observation and to

a conscious effort to develop a means of spatial representation, rather than to an attempt to copy a Western convention.

Like many Inuit women artists, Pitseolak drew on her skills from sewing when initially beginning to work with pencil on paper. In early graphite drawings (ill.9), it is common to find motifs that are drawn and then redrawn in the opposite direction, as if mirroring the image; for example, as seen in the four walrus heads to the farthest left. Such a device may be rooted in the designing of clothing used to follow the symmetry of the human body. Pitseolak also uses the device of breaking down the paper surface into registers which eventually develop into clear divisions of space with different activities occurring within them.¹¹ The women dancing (ill.9) are quite removed from the bird and walrus creatures drawn below. The next step in a progression toward visual space is the inclusion of actual groundlines which separate the space and at the same time unify it in our perception. The registers (ill.10) can almost be understood as fore-mid-backgrounds but it is not until a figure moves off the groundline, as in the seated figure (ill.11), that we understand the space as distance. Now it is possible to communicate the effect of figures moving across the land. Through the many depictions Pitseolak drew of travelling she developed the ability to place her figures in the land. A drawing of a camp settled between hills (ill.12) demonstrates

how, through her observation and gradual experimentation, Pitseolak is able to communicate the layered and hilly landscape around Cape Dorset - the inuktitut name is Kingnait meaning "big hills". The perspective in Pitseolak's drawing may appear distorted to Western viewers which, in fact, demonstrates how the experience of space is shaped through geography and environment. Anyone travelling in the North will likewise recognize the depiction of the stark outline of the stone markers on the horizon line. Visual space has become fluid and the transition from foreground to background is easily understood.

While a formal analysis of her drawings can give us insights into Pitseolak's development as an artist; the drawings gain more meaning if we look to possible personal and cultural sources for aspects of these formal qualities. Pitseolak's images of the land, for example, are not just about technique or simply visual exercises. They are also an expression of her emotional ties and experiences and her effort is as much about communicating this as it is to depict the geography. In later drawings (ill.8), figures, now usually only one or two, become progressively smaller and are dominated by the land. This can be seen as a refinement in her style but also suggest a nostalgia for that immediate relation to the land. Perhaps it is possible to view these later works of Pitseolak as communicating some regret for the passing of a semi-nomadic way of life. The syllabics for the drawing

(ill.13) of the uninhabited landscape read "This river is empty of Inuit although some had been there before."¹²

Cultural meaning and style

John Fischer has also attempted to explain the relationship between elements of formal organization and social structure. Fischer notes that there has been an acknowledged connection between overt subject matter and historical social condition, such as religious art of the Middle Ages. "But", he continues,

connections between social conditions and general features of style have also been postulated: romanticism versus classicism, for instance, have been explained as related to the position of the individual in society and to the rapidity of social change. While these explanations of style are often convincing and appear profound, from an anthropological point of view they suffer from being limited, for the most part, to artistic data from various branches of European civilization.¹³

His conclusions are based on the premise that "a very important determinant of the art form is social fantasy, that is, the artist's fantasies about social situations that will give him security or pleasure."¹⁴ Fischer establishes two oppositional types of societal structure - the authoritarian with its basis in social hierarchy as organizing principle, and the egalitarian with its basis in equal status and cooperation. Fischer then outlines the pictorial elements attributed to each type, as follows:

1) Design repetitive of a number of rather simple elements should characterize the egalitarian societies; design integrating a number of unlike

elements should be characteristic of the hierarchical societies

2) Design with large amount of empty or irrelevant space should characterize the egalitarian societies; design with little irrelevant (empty) space should characterize the hierarchical societies.

3) Symmetrical design (a special case of repetition) should characterize the egalitarian societies; asymmetrical design should characterize the hierarchical societies.

4) Figures without enclosures should characterize the egalitarian societies; enclosed figures should characterize the hierarchical societies.¹⁵

While the purpose here is not to evaluate Fischer's observations, it is useful to this thesis, to apply one of his hypotheses relating to style and social structure. He explains,

The reasoning behind the first hypothesis, an association between visual repetition and egalitarian societies is perhaps obvious. Security in egalitarian societies depends on the number of equal comrades ego possesses. By multiplying design elements one symbolically multiplies comrades. That the repeated design elements themselves tend to be simple rather than complex also follows the basic assumption that design elements are symbolic of members of the society, since, first, it is easier to maximize repetition with simple elements than with complex elements, and second, with the need to de-emphasize actual interpersonal differences in the society, typical persons would be conceived of as relatively simple, with emphasis on their relatively few near uniform features, and will be symbolized in art accordingly.¹⁶

This observation offers an interpretation for the repetition of motifs in Pitseolak's drawings, for example (ill.9), as founded in Inuit egalitarian society. It also gives another possible explanation for the use of registers and the uniform

arrangements of motifs.

Jackson has also attributed this repetition of motifs to the thought patterns of Inuit,

In contrast, the Inuk artist Pudlo Pudlat noted the absence of Western mathematical thought in traditional Inuit culture when he said, "in the old days, we didn't have one - two - three.' We just had 'one - one - one.'" Pudlo's statement bespeaks experience and patterns of thinking quite different from those of the West. Similarly, an Inuk hunter approached by ethnologist Knud Rasmussen in the Back River area of the Keewatin District in the 1920s was unable to calculate for Rasmussen the number of animals that his hunting group had killed during the preceding season. When given paper and pencil, however, the hunter quickly drew [an] image, showing Rasmussen exactly how many and what type of animals had been killed, using the thinking pattern described by Pudlo - "one - one - one."¹⁷

Both arguments demonstrate that the reasoning behind formal elements is not strictly aesthetic and that patterns of thinking characteristic of a culture play a role in the arrangement of visual elements. The meaning of formal elements and their arrangement can be traced to meaning within the culture itself.

The potential for such a hypothesis is demonstrated in the drawings of Pitseolak with her use of line with its quality of movement.

Living motion through line

Line is the most direct and expressive of the visual elements. Pitseolak's skill with line is undoubtedly her strongest talent. She once described her drawing technique as "I draw the whole thing first and then I colour it. I do the

whole drawing before I finish it."¹⁸ Only after setting down the fundamental structure with line, does Pitseolak build up her image with colour. This explains the visual predominance of line and accounts as well for its spontaneous quality and almost nervous energy. Further, it is interesting to observe that Pitseolak makes no attempt at modelling or shading and yet her forms have bulk and substance. In what is likely an unfinished drawing¹⁹ (ill.14) we have the opportunity to consider Pitseolak's initial step in drawing - the placing of line. The three figures have very few graphic details and yet their bodies have bulk as do the packs they carry. The crossing over of the legs of the last figure communicates the strain of his heavy pack. Always line is the foundation. Perhaps, line can be viewed as both an abstract and representational element for Pitseolak. In her drawing of a river (ill.15) the line itself represents the flowing water but where the line is flowing itself it takes on a life of its own. Line seems to be used both to create the illusion of movement and to reinforce through formal means a sense of movement and rhythm (ill.16).

"Walking, jumping, running - I've even done skipping".²⁰ A distinct characteristic of Pitseolak's style is her interest in movement, expressed both in her energetic line as well as in the activities of the figures depicted. Pitseolak's interest in the animal and human figure in motion may be linked to her previous semi-nomadic lifestyle. Although

living in the settlement at the time of these drawings, Pitseolak was able to re-experience life on the land, constantly moving from season to season, through her images.²¹ It is relevant to note that her figures are joyous and lively in their movement, and that this is communicated through her animated use of line. Jean Briggs has commented on the happiness she observed, among the Utkuhikhalingmiut, which was associated with breaking camp and travelling out, "A happy bustle pervades a camp that is preparing to move. Packing is done at double-quick tempo, orders given and obeyed with a vigour."²² Building upon Fischer's premise that social fantasy is a key determinant in visual images, it is possible to understand Pitseolak's line as related to gesture, as related to motion, itself a positive element of life. This vitality of movement and gesture is the source of the power of Pitseolak's joyful and energetic line.

Even in the early drawings, Pitseolak is able to communicate a fluid movement in her figures. Despite the awkward proportions (ill.17) the two running figures have energy and force. The child reaching toward the man, the diagonal thrust of line, is an additional gesture which causes the interaction between the figures to appear intensified. Pitseolak would often depict a group of people moving across the land, or even in a race (ill.18). The movement of the running figures is light and graceful and the interaction, in hand and body gestures, between the group is strong. The line

is confident, assured and carries the viewer's attention across, from running figure to figure in visual rhythm with their motion. Traditional Inuit games and activities gave Pitseolak plenty of choices for subjects involving movement. The drum dance (ill.19) was another occasion for representing the action of a number of figures, in addition to a number of viewpoints such as from the front, side or back. In this whimsical version of dancing birds, it is the curving and dipping lines of the wings, not the actual bodies in motion, which creates the effect of motion with so much grace and *joie de vivre*. In a slightly later drawing (ill.20) Pitseolak's human figures show a better understanding of the body in motion and yet the figures appear to be frozen rather than fluid. In an even later drawing, with accordion rather than drum (ill.21)²³, she has captured both the understanding of gesture, such as seen in the twisting of the torsos, as well as the control of line to create the sensation of movement in general. The real force or expression of movement in Pitseolak's images comes from the combination of her powers of observation, her cultural experiences of a semi-nomadic life, and her inquisitive line.

Concluding Observations

As Rudolf Arnheim notes,

The way we do art criticism these days is to take the artist pretty much out of his environment. We look at the work as something that is quite isolated from its social context. That's okay, I

think, when we are dealing with the likes of de Kooning, Rauschenberg or Andy Warhol. You can go quite far that way. But it seems to me that you would be missing a precious element in the case of Inuit art if you do this, because it clearly demonstrates how something can come out of the condition of its environment, of its history, of its experience.²⁴

While Inuit art should be studied as any other art form, it is necessary to be aware of the cultural underpinning in the tools of art history. Form may itself embody meaning and that meaning may be culturally specific. It is not being segregationist or anthropological, therefore, to consider Inuit art within the context of Inuit cultural values. A view of Inuit art, isolated from its cultural context, does not give it any greater status as art. Formal analyses of Inuit graphic images are empty and meaningless in themselves if analysis is based only on Modernist notions of 'pure form'. As Vastokas points out, more research is needed into the range of cultural meanings linked to forms and their arrangement. Even so, while formal and stylistic analysis are useful tools, they are not enough in and of themselves to gain full understanding of visual expressions.

Endnotes

1. Christine Lalonde, "Clement Greenberg, Continuity and Change 1939-1965" unpublished Honours thesis (Carleton University, 1992).
2. Charles Gimpel, "A Collectors View" The Beaver (Autumn, 1967), 72-73.
3. Marion E. Jackson, "Personal Versus Cultural Expression in Inuit Prints", Print Voice (Edmonton, 1984), 22
4. Based on information supplied by Terry Ryan, chronology developed by Marie Routledge and Marion Jackson in Pudlo: Thirty Years of Drawing (Ottawa, 1990) 41-52; also Jean Blodgett, Kenojuak (Toronto, 1985), 50.
5. **Personal communication with Dorothy Eber**, 10 March 1994; the problem with the felt-tip pens fading in colour or bleeding through to the next drawing was discovered in the mid-70s - see also Blodgett, Kenojuak, 50.
6. Joan Vastokas, "Native Art as Art History: Meaning and Time from Unwritten Sources", Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes Vol.21, No.4 (Winter 1986-87 Hiver), 9.
7. Vastokas, 28-29.
8. Marion E. Jackson, "Concepts of Space and Time in Inuit Art" unpublished paper given at Ninth Inuit Studies Conference, Iqaluit, N.W.T, 12-15 June 1994; for other interpretations of Inuit perception of space see Cynthia Waye Cook, From the Centre, The Drawings of Luke Anguhadlug (Toronto, 1993), Edmund Carpenter, Eskimo Realities (New York, 1973) and Joan Vastokas, "Continuities in Eskimo Graphic Style", artscanada 27, No.6 (Dec 1971/ Jan 1972), 69-83.
9. Jackson, "Concepts of Space and Time", 4.
10. Jackson, "Concepts of Space and Time", 7.
11. Ryan suggests the spacing of images was determined by the size of the paper, or that it may be explained by the artist coming back to the same piece of paper at a later date to make an additional drawing. When paper was scarce it would often be torn into smaller pieces or reused in resourceful ways. **Personal interview with Terry Ryan**, Toronto, 26 January 1995.
12. Syllabic translations, by Alootook Ipellie, Ottawa, 16 January 1995.

13. John L. Fischer, "Art Styles as Cultural Cognitive Maps", Art and Aesthetics in Primitive Societies (New York, 1971), 172.
14. Fischer, 173.
15. Fischer, 175-176.
16. Fischer, 177.
17. Jackson, "Concepts in Space and Time", 8.
18. Pitseolak, quoted from **Pitseolak Ashoona interviewed by Marion Jackson**, Cape Dorset, 14 May 1979, unpublished; transcript used with the permission of the West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative.
19. suggested by Ryan, **Personal interview with Terry Ryan**, Toronto, 26 January 1995.
20. Pitseolak quoted by Dorothy Eber in When the Whalers Were Up North (Kingston, 1989), 69.
21. Ryan has observed that the subject of the drawings is usually related to the season, for example, images of fishing will be brought to the Co-op during the summer fishing season, **Personal interview with Terry Ryan**, Toronto, 26 January 1995.
22. Jean Briggs, Never in Anger (Massachusetts, 1970), 32.
23. Translation of syllabics listed in Notes on Drawings.
24. Rudolf Arnheim, interview in "Folk art? Fine art?", Inuit Art Quarterly Vol.1, No.2 (Summer 1986), 5.

Chapter III: Artists' Lives and Autobiography

Once it is recognized that formal analysis is not enough in itself to understand images, one may be tempted to turn the focus of interpretative methods to subject matter. In Western art history, a study of subject matter is associated with iconography and often relates to literary or historical allusions. In Pitseolak's drawings, however, images are drawn from life experience. It seems reasonable, therefore, to examine the subject matter of her drawings by looking to the life or biography of the artist.

Within Inuit art, there is still much research to be done as little is known regarding artists' lives. A remarkable aspect in the study of Inuit art is that, due to a scarcity of written documents, artists' life histories can often be known only if the artists themselves have recorded their experiences in some form of autobiography. In the case of Pitseolak, it is possible to examine the usefulness of artists' biography for understanding Inuit drawings as her life has been well-documented by Dorothy Eber. Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life is essentially an autobiography, Pitseolak's story in her own words, albeit edited and translated into English.¹ Eber was aware of the importance of oral tradition in Inuit culture, and her approach to recording Pitseolak's verbal biography is sensitive to this heritage. Additionally, it has been commented that Pitseolak, in contrast to other Inuit artists², often drew autobiographical images. She has the reputation of

being both a chronicler of Inuit culture as well as an artist whose subject matter is based on her own experiences and life. Jean Blodgett, for example, comments, "Many Pitseolak works are imbued with a strong personal element illustrating actual people and events as she remembers them from her past."³ Indeed a large part of the appeal of Pitseolak's images stems from their intimacy. We instinctively feel that they are personal experiences which she is able to communicate to us through visual means. Marie Routledge has noted this quality,

Pitseolak brings to her images a sense of personal involvement in the events and details of daily life. The excitement of pursuing game, the warm companionship of friends and family, the pleasure of sports, travelling, making camp and the joys of motherhood are but a few of the themes she portrays in an animated and often humorous narrative genre.⁴

If such is the case, it should be relatively easy to connect her actual lived personal experiences with images in her drawings.

And yet the curious and ambiguous nature of these drawings - that they are considered autobiography without making direct statements about herself - is rarely commented on. Although a few drawings have been documented as autobiographical, it is not often possible to identify Pitseolak or any reference to specific events in many of her works. How is it that we understand her works to be autobiographical when often there is nothing to indicate this? What exactly do we mean by autobiographical?

It may be that the Western understanding of

individuality has shaped perceptions of what are considered to be autobiographical works. Pitseolak's drawings provide an opportunity to explore this issue. If we see Pitseolak subsumed within a group, we may assume that she did not have a sense of self. I propose this was not the case. Rather, my point is that her way of representing herself was different from the way a Western artist might approach self-representation. The reason for such a disparity may be twofold. First, as an artist, Pitseolak was essentially called upon to create representations of cultural identity and in order to do so moved easily between portraying personal and cultural experiences; and second, a concept of self fundamentally different from that of Western society may exist within Inuit culture requiring a revision in the Western concept of autobiography.

Personal and cultural experiences

It is fortunate that some drawings by Pitseolak have been documented as autobiographical. The earliest may be a drawing for the print, **Perils of the Sea Travellers** (1960), in which James Houston claims Pitseolak depicts herself in the umiak among the sea creatures (ill.22).⁵ The fact that it is Pitseolak, however, is not convincing as her identity is not emphasized. It is precarious to assume that Pitseolak specifically thought of that figure as herself. In the actual drawing for the print there are no syllabics to identify the

subject. What is more revealing, in terms of autobiography, is the theme of crossing the water and of the fear involved. For many Inuit, Pitseolak's family included, the migration from Nunavik across the straits to Baffin Island was a traumatic and intense experience. A more subtle reading of this image may then be of Pitseolak's emotion of fear and the dangers involved in surviving such an ordeal. The question that emerges is whether one needs to refer to oneself specifically in order to describe the personal experiences one lived and shared with others.

The next drawing (ill.23) is useful to consider in terms of the problematic nature of looking at Pitseolak's drawings as autobiography. It may be to this drawing that Ann Meekitjuk Hanson is referring to when she recalls,

I was translating Pitseolak's book Pictures Out of My Life with Dorothy Eber in the early 1970s while I was expecting our fourth daughter, Udluriak. Pitseolak wanted to show me how she had babies before doctors and nurses. Through her art, Pitseolak drew three women delivering a baby the way she remembered it, in vivid colours, representing a happy time.⁶

It is clear that Pitseolak is referring to her own lived experiences and yet she does not visually express this in terms such as "this is me", or "this happened to me". Instead her personal experience is translated into general cultural terms of how Inuit women experienced giving birth. The syllabics read, "Pitseolak Here she is about to give birth."⁷ The ambiguous placing of her name makes it unclear whether Pitseolak was signing the work or actually referring to

herself in the image. This ambiguity, I would argue, is not accidental but instead in itself reflects a way of representing the self. The text for Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life includes the following excerpt, "When Namoonie, my first son, was born, three women held me. It was like that in the old times - there were always women who helped."⁸ In the position of artist, as a 'visual historian', Pitseolak oscillates between voicing her immediate personal experiences and those which were experienced culturally, by Inuit women in general.

Yet, the dependence of this explanation on external factors, i.e. Pitseolak's role as chronicler and artist, does not fully account for the ambiguous nature of drawings of specific community events or of people other than herself. Deeper clarification must be sought from within Inuit society.

Shared experience and cultural autobiography

In another drawing, (ill.24) Pitseolak identified herself, her mother and her father in the act of catching geese. There are no syllabics to identify the figures nor are the figures distinguished in terms of their appearance; the subject was identified by Pitseolak to Terry Ryan when she brought the drawing in to the Co-op.⁹ Instead it is significant that while the drawings are autobiographical, they depict group activities without giving focus to any of the individuals. John Fischer, in his study described in Chapter

II, observed that in egalitarian societies "with the need to de-emphasize actual interpersonal differences in society, typical persons would be conceived of as relatively simple, with emphasis on their relatively few near-uniform features."¹⁰ Fischer's hypothesis lends a new interpretation to such images by Pitseolak. In a drawing of her father (ill.25)¹¹, not only is he unidentified but he is shown engaged in the common and traditional Inuit occupation of building an inukshuk. An additional observation to be made is the unlikeliness that the Southern viewer would assume or even question whether these images were of specific people. This particular drawing was made into a print, **The Inukshuk Builders** (1968), and became a popular image without general knowledge of its real subject matter. This reception of the print indicates the disparity between the perception of Inuit images simply as representations of the 'old ways' and the actual meaning of the subject matter drawn by the artist.

Pitseolak's drawings are occasionally about specific community events, such as (ill.26). It is likely, however, that Pitseolak supplied this drawing in response to a request from Eber who was collecting images and information about the whaler's presence in the North. Even so, such images give evidence of the significance which community events had for Inuit. As Eber notes in her introduction to Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life, "Readers may notice that in her story Pitseolak never uses dates. Like most Eskimos of her

generation, she relates all events to other important happenings - the building of the first Hudson's Bay Company..."¹² In an interview with Eber, Pitseolak explained that, as a child, her family would make their camp near the wreck of the *Polar Star*, "We had no wood up here until the *Polar Star* was wrecked." The syllabics for this drawing refer to this memorable sinking of the ship which then becomes a seasonal referent for Inuit, "During the early fall the tide washes kelp and other things up on the shore."¹³

Similarly, in a drawing owned by Marion Jackson, Pitseolak portrayed a male hunter eating meat while seated at the base of a hill. It appears to be a generalized depiction and the syllabic inscription simply specifies that the hunter is eating and enjoying his food. The sun in the drawing, however, is in full eclipse by the moon and Jackson recalls that there was a full eclipse of the sun visible in Cape Dorset in the spring of 1979 when this drawing was made. Pitseolak's images suggest a dynamic, for Inuit, through which personal experiences are shared, and so become shared history. "The self becomes part of history."¹⁴ While the subject matter is specific for the artist, for the Southern audience the figures appear anonymous and the scene generic. And yet we sense that the works are not simply anonymous documentary of the 'old ways'. Pitseolak communicates a consciousness of herself but through the thought patterns of her upbringing - as an Inuk.

Inuit traditions of autobiography

Beginning early in her artistic career, Pitseolak included syllabic writing with her images - a further indication of her effort to communicate. Robin McGrath points to the influence of comic books in the North for the combination of image and text.¹⁵ She also notes that, "Storytelling and illustration are inextricably linked in the Inuit oral tradition. Adults used bone and ivory carvings as well as string figures, puppets, face-making and dance to enhance verbal narratives."¹⁶ In this sense, the visual is linked to the oral tradition. From Eber's interviews it is apparent that Pitseolak often thought of her images as having a storyline which she vocalized. If so, it is possible to discuss the oral and visual as related forms of autobiography. McGrath's article on Inuit women's written autobiography explains the generality of Pitseolak's images in terms of the traditional upbringing for women within Inuit culture. McGrath noticed a disparity between stories of Inuit men and women,

A close look at the works reveals several interesting points: first Inuit men tend to pattern their autobiographies upon already established narrative structures borrowed from the epic tradition; secondly, Inuit women appear to observe a taboo against drawing attention to themselves as mature adults and therefore they either confine their autobiographical writings to memories of pre-adolescence, or they do not write about themselves until they are approaching old age; and third, Inuit women who wish to discuss their lives frequently fictionalize them and, in contrast to the male writers, use autobiographical elements to structure stories rather than the other way around, thus circumventing the taboo.¹⁷

This observation of written autobiography appears to be valid in the context of Pitseolak's work. In both her syllabic inscriptions and images, as in the drawing (ill.23) and verbal description of childbirth, experiences are communicated in a generalized way. Still further, compared to more directly autobiographical drawings by male artists, such as Kananginak Pootoogook's depiction of his baptism aboard the *Nascopie*¹⁸, Pitseolak represents herself in the third person. Given the cultural background, as an Inuk woman, it seems reasonable that she would use this 'fictionalizing' approach to express herself visually. In a more general context, McGrath refers to Edmund Carpenter's observation that,

in Inuit tradition, storytellers speak as many-to-many, not as person-to-person, because by handing on stories they are speaking for past generations to future generations, acting as a link between the two without making any overt statement of their own."¹⁹

The drawings, too, are autobiographical and yet depict group activities without prominence given to any of the individuals. Instead, it may be that such drawings by Pitseolak reflect a concept of self as related to society which differs markedly from the Western understanding of the individual.

Being and Belonging in Inuit culture

In exploring the question of individuality and autobiography, there is a need to distinguish between Pitseolak's generation who lived most of their lives on the

land, and younger Inuit artists who have grown to maturity in communities. On the one hand, their lived experiences are obviously distinct from each other as with any two generations. With the transition from a semi-nomadic to settlement way of life one might expect changes in attitudes and values, especially concerning relations to the group. As Pitseolak observed, "in those days we didn't bother counting people."²⁰

The relation one has to others determines ones sense of self and identity. Partly, this arises as one distinguishes self from others. Yet, a number of complex variables are involved in ones perception as psychologist R.D. Laing has noted,

A person's 'own' identity cannot be completely abstracted from his identity-for-others. His identity- for-himself; the identity others ascribe to him; the identities he attributes to them; the identity or identities he thinks they attribute to him; what he thinks they think he thinks they think....²¹

In Western society, individuality or one's sense of one self as distinct from others has a high value.

Every adult human being is aware of a distinction between himself and the people and things around him. Nevertheless, it is true that Western culture, and the Western type of education, has developed this sense of individuality to an extent exceptional among the civilizations of the world.²²

In this manner, the individual is often seen as dominant in relation to the general society. Studies by anthropologist Mary Douglas suggest the more a society is fragmented and divided into hierarchies, as is the case in Western society,

the more the ego of its leaders will overshadow the general populace.²³ If leaders are admired as individuals, then individuality itself comes to be revered. Autobiography, then, is about the self. But what happens in cultures where the sense of self is different from the sense of self celebrated in Western culture? What form does autobiography then take?

Once the existence of Inuit autobiographical works is established, it is useful to examine how these differ from the Western concept of autobiography. Is it possible that Inuit artists refer to the self but in such a way that Western viewers fail to recognize it because of cultural differences in the understanding of individual and collective identity?

Within traditional Inuit culture the individual was strongly linked to the group for existence. The semi-nomadic hunting lifestyle required close cooperation. The seasonal distribution of game, necessary for food, clothing, heat, and tools, required that Inuit society develop mobility and the "ability to plan with a high degree of effectiveness where to locate, what resources to seek and how to exploit them at a particular season".²⁴ The balance of available resources also determined the concentration of people. "In these circumstances of Arctic life, Inuit were able to create and maintain intensive relationships with each other that made possible, and in fact demanded, close cooperation".²⁵ Lee Guemple comments on the closely intertwined ideas of 'being and belonging',

Inuit relied heavily on contacts with people that Western society would label neighbours, friends or associates. However, Inuit did so with this difference: they attempted to integrate all these individuals into a network of kinship and thus to find a way of calling all these people "relatives" of one sort or another.²⁶

In this way the non-related individual was integrated and received both status as well as responsibility within the group.

Every kinsmen was entitled by right to the share of the catch of any household in the local hunting group; and ideally it should be an equal share to that of any other family. The reasoning behind this rule is self-evident. In a community in which every person was potentially dependent on every other for their well-being in times of shortage, it was important not to make fine distinctions about who should receive what portion of the catch. An ethic of equality ought to prevail - and did.²⁷

This aspect of Inuit life was surely ingrained in Pitseolak as a child and sustained to maturity. It is important to remember that for years after Ashoona's death Pitseolak relied on the help and sharing of others to feed herself and her young family. Her daughter Napachie Pootoogook, remembers, "It was sad at times, too. I remember we grew up with the help of other Inuit there who supplied us with food to eat. I am very grateful to the other Inuit who supported us."²⁸ It is not surprising that a number of Pitseolak's drawings deal with this ethic of cooperation and sharing. Many images of camp life show a group of people sharing in the feast (ill.27) or performing individual activities for the mutual benefit of the camp (ill.12). These images represent a shared life, but more than that they embody

the Inuit sensibility of community cooperation. In a sense, Pitseolak was not simply concerned with depicting the material knowledge of the 'old ways' but also with recording the values that accompanied this lifestyle. Perhaps she felt that, with a departure from the old traditions, the less tangible values ingrained in this experience would disappear along with the practical knowledge. Pitseolak is also presenting a group-autobiography in these images in that she is using them to communicate cultural identity. Julie Cruikshank has noted the importance of this kind of interpretation in sustaining cultural identity,

Looking at how individuals take these shared cultural traditions - their statements of identity - and how they use them to interpret events from their own experience and then pass them on to succeeding generations may add a different perspective to debates about cultural persistence and cultural change."²⁹

Another indication of the egalitarian sensibility of Inuit is found in the practice of naming a newborn child (referred to as "sauniq" meaning namesake) after another relative or member of the community, often the most recently deceased.³⁰ It was believed that the sharing of the name from the older person to the newborn also meant the sharing of personality and abilities.

The name-spirit linked the child to the past, to his ancestors, for the name came to the child from some living or dead incumbent who also possessed the name and with it the attributes that the child inherited. These included character and personality traits, aptitude for certain skills, and so on. Thus the naming of the child was not precisely the giving of a name; it was more like bestowing or

confirming a share in an identity.³¹

So closely linked was the sharing of names with characteristics that it was also held that the newly named person would have the same relationship as did her/his namesake. For example, if a child were named after a maternal grandfather then that child would be both the father of his mother as well as her child.³² In this way a child was born into a complexly interwoven system and with a bond to many people in the community on many different levels. Beyond how naming practices affected relations with those living, this system of naming also created a bond between the child and the recently deceased as well as with a lineage of similarly named ancestors.

Thus from the moment of birth and naming, an Inuk was aware that complex attributes to his/her personality were shared with others, past and present. Identity was shaped by multiple influences with strong bonds to others in the same society of the camp - reinforcing a sense of collective, shared identity. This system of naming had the highly practical outcome of reinforcing ones connections and responsibilities to others, thus supporting the group.

The cooperation that sharing of a name might inspire was practically boundless. Since the logic of the usage stipulated that the bearers of the same name, in effect, shared an identity, they could deny each other nothing.³³

And yet this is not to suggest any conflict to the sense of ones individuality. In reference to the treatment of Inuit

artists many authors have rebelled against "their mythical collectiveness."³⁴ While it is worthwhile, as argued in Chapter I, to look at the work of individual artists, it must nonetheless be understood within the cultural context. What most authors react to is the Western notion that any suggestion of strong collective identity automatically denies ones individuality. On the one hand, to view Inuit art as homogeneous is not a valid approach. As Inuit art forms enter into the existing schema of art, to deny the individuality of expression is to devalue it by Western standards. This belief may be based on the assumption that, from the outside, the collective society causes individuals to be seen as anonymous. On the other hand, it would appear that within traditional Inuit societal structure this conflict, by necessity, is minimal. In fact, given the small scale it is more likely that individuals had a greater sense of self than those born into the anonymous masses of Western society. Certainly people knew each other, probably in greater depth than Westerners can claim to know their neighbours. "Only in large-scale societies is anonymity truly possible...it is in this milieu, in fact, that writing itself and the signing of works of art works were developed to offset the growing lack of individuality."³⁵ It seems, in fact, that naming and inherited relationships, as parent, grandparent and elder, gave children more respect and helped develop a sense of self and their place in the world. Personal autonomy develops, "because an individual's

personality and aptitude for skill acquisition was in large degree derived from the namesake, that individual was "fated to make his/her own way, as best he/she could, in the world, again stressing to the individual the importance of self-reliance."³⁶ Within Inuit society, Pitseolak was able to identify herself as individual without conflict regarding her cultural identity. To live within an egalitarian structure is not to deny that "differences of prestige between individuals inevitably exist, [but] it is considered bad taste to call attention to them."³⁷

It seems to follow that if the concept of individual identity is different from our Western sense that autobiography would also be different. Cruikshank discovered this in her interviews with three Alaskan aboriginal women and wrote,

Those of us raised in a Western tradition tend to approach life history with certain preconceptions about what constitutes an "adequate" account of a life. The familiar model comes from written autobiography -- an author's chronological reflections about individual growth and development, often presented as a passage from darkness to light. Yet this form of exposition is relatively recent and began to appear regularly only after the eighteenth century. Since then it has become so well entrenched, so structured a convention, that it has come to seem "natural" to Western readers and a form not requiring explanation.³⁸

If the Inuit sense of self is so closely linked to sense of group, then autobiography might not be specific or individual in the same sense that it is in Western culture. For Inuit,

claiming "this is what we did" might automatically be understood "this is what I did". Thus Pitseolak's images, and the understanding of self inherent in them, present a concept of autobiography different from the Western concept which is based on notions of the "cult of personality" and truth to naturalistic depiction of unique individuals.

Portraiture

Portraiture is one genre which lends itself particularly well to an examination of the concept of the individual. If autobiography is about how one represents ones self and life, then portraiture is about how individuals are portrayed, and thus perceived by artists.

Although the roots of Western portraiture appear in the medieval period, when artists depicted the patron within a religious scene, secular portraiture flourished during the Renaissance. It should be noted, however, that the Romans were interested in the portrait, especially the portrait bust, and even in the classical period we find the idea of portraits linked to the cult of the individual. After the fall of the Roman Empire there was a great decline in portraiture.³⁹ Lasting until the Renaissance, when the "[c]ommemoration of the individual was joined by new motives of self-aggrandizement and the glorification of personalities, which...resulted in the unprecedented flowering of portraits."⁴⁰

With the increase in portraiture during the Renaissance there developed a related and parallel development of increasing naturalism. From this stems our general prerequisite that a portrait of a person look like that person, including distinguishing features and details.

Is there a similar evolution of portraiture in Inuit culture which suggests a concept of the individual and self? Although the graphic images associated with Inuit art have their beginnings in the post-contact period, a longer history of representational imagery exists. While any interpretation of archeological artifacts is speculative, the early Dorset carvings with many faces are often thought to represent ancestors and communities. In this sense, the idea of representing the self or others may not be unprecedented in Inuit culture. Once again, the multiple-faced pieces seems to place more importance on the collective than on isolated images of highly individualized persons. It may be that with the emphasis of the self as part of a larger whole, it would be logical for Inuit to depict a person but with only a few individual characteristics. To stand out too much, for a person to be too distinct, would be contrary to the group ethic.⁴¹

Tattooed Woman 1963 (ill.28) is a well-known print by Pitseolak. It has been widely reproduced and illustrated and included in countless exhibitions. What is not generally known is that it is from a drawing which the artist claimed she did

of her mother.⁴² Once this is realized, however, what had seemed to be a general image of an Inuk woman suddenly develops a highly distinct character. Despite the lack of distinguishing features, now the viewer knows that Pitseolak's mother had facial tattoos, and we see the woman's soft expression and curving arms through Pitseolak's experience of her as 'mother'. As with autobiographical images, the fact that we would not assume the woman to be an specific person is highly significant. It is likely that the lack of naturalism would lead the Western viewer to assume this is a generalized representation of "Inuk woman" rather than a portrait.

During the Roman Empire and in the Renaissance, portraiture was for the glorification of the patron. Therefore a 'real' or idealized likeness was essential. In the twentieth century Western artists, reacting against the limitation of naturalism set during the Renaissance, turned away from naturalism as an end in itself. But even in their rejection, they acknowledge that their 'starting point' is naturalism in that they were reacting against *Western standards of representation*. Western audiences, accustomed to naturalism, might be blind to other indicators of identity found in Inuit drawings. A historian of eighteenth century art, Hal Opperman has noted that, "the experience of 20th century art has made us aware again of the validity of the naive approach...[yet] we are not willing to admit that Western Naturalism is not, and never has been, the norm."⁴³ Pitseolak's drawing was

apparently based more on her memories of her mother than on a need to identify or glorify her mother to others. As with the autobiographical scenes the real identity of the person is known to the artist but not to the viewer.

There may be similar reasons behind another drawing, **Portrait of Ashoona** (ill.29). The portrait - it is obviously a portrait - has no syllabics or indicators other than the title to identify the "sitter" as her husband.⁴⁶ And yet it is obvious that this drawing is of a specific person. The beard is a distinct feature; most Inuit men do not grow facial hair. A photograph of Ashoona offers the opportunity to compare Pitseolak's portrait with a photographic likeness to see if there is, in fact, physical resemblance in the drawing. While the photograph of Ashoona depicts him as a younger beardless man there are, nonetheless, some similarities in the way in which Pitseolak has drawn the eyes and brow. Aside from physical representation, however, Pitseolak has captured a particular character about the face as well. For example, the playful touching of the tongue to the nose is distinctive and suggestive of personality. In this sense, the portrait tells more about Ashoona than the photographic likeness does. Drawn portraits often capture more than the likeness or physical character of the sitter; they as often tell something about the artist. Pitseolak's portrait communicates some of her feelings toward the sitter by including his humourous gesture;

a trivial detail which, nonetheless, reveals a sense of intimacy. What caused Pitseolak to draw this highly individualized portrait? Perhaps in her portraits, as with her drawings, she found a way to relive and re-experience the past, and in particular a way to remember loved ones.

Inuit as individual artists

Focussing on the artist's biography to enlighten works of art may be problematic with Inuit art because of culturally-specific concepts of the role of autobiography and the individual's relationship to society. We must constantly ask whether we are interpreting the significance of lived experiences and events correctly. Until the position of the individual in Inuit society is better understood, until more notice is given to Inuit expressions of this aspect, Western understanding will be incomplete. Currently, it is necessary to question what effect the singling out of individuals has had on Inuit society. Is it possible that attention given to certain individual artists may destroy the balance previously felt between the individual and group? Kenojuak once expressed the discomfort she felt within her own community because of her fame and wealth as a young woman.⁴⁵ Pitseolak was likewise concerned, "Sometimes, when I am the only one who is given papers to draw on, I am scared that the other women will become jealous of me. Sometimes I feel sorry when other people don't have papers - papers I can get."⁴⁶ While it is

beneficial to study the work of Inuit artists as individual expressions, this need not mean that focus on the individual artist must be isolated from cultural contexts. What is needed is a better understanding of the role which individual Inuit artists have to play within Inuit communities today.

Concluding Observations

An attempt to understand iconography by looking to an artist's individual lived experiences has limitations when applied to Inuit drawings. Seeking to understand the subject matter of Pitseolak's drawings by focussing on her personal lived experiences raises questions regarding culturally-specific forms of autobiography. By exploring the nature of Pitseolak's autobiographical images, we gain insight into the relationship between individuals and others within Inuit social structure which is different from that found in Western society. The result of such an awareness, then calls into question art historical emphasis on individual artist's biography. The study of an artist's life, as first advanced by Vasari in the fifteenth century, has been criticized for its glorification of the individual as genius. This critique, seems especially appropriate in the case of Inuit art where autobiographical images may communicate personal and cultural experiences as well as a sense of personal and cultural identity - the two in balance and one not a denial of the other.

Endnotes

1. Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life Dorothy Eber ed. Quatsia Ottochie, Annie Manning, and Ann Meekitjuk Hanson trans. (Montreal: Design Collaborative Books, 1971); the book was available in two bilingual versions - English-Inuktitut, and French-Inuktitut.
2. This may be a misperception due to little real knowledge of the subject matter of Inuit drawings and is definitely an area needing more research.
3. Jean Blodgett, Grasp Tight the Old Ways: Selections from the Klammer Family Collection of Inuit Art (Toronto, 1983), 128.
4. Marie Routledge, "Travelling on Foot", National Gallery of Canada acquisition file, unpublished, December 1985.
5. James Houston, "Eskimo Graphic Art, Before 1957 - After 1957" Canada Today Vol.2, No.4 (April, 1971) 6; Houston has written "Pitseolak shows herself in a gay dream sequence as the small central figure in a sealskin woman's boat."; this is somewhat problematic as Houston does not record his source for identifying Pitseolak and since she herself does not indicate this on the drawing in syllabics.
6. Ann Meekitjuk Hanson, "Good Memories" Inuit Women Artists (Vancouver, 1994), 242.
7. Syllabic translations by Alooook Ipellie, Ottawa, 16 January 1995. - see also Notes on Drawings.
8. Pitseolak, Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life (Montreal, 1971), not paginated [20].
9. This was related to Dorothy Eber by Terry Ryan during the time that she was interviewing Pitseolak in the early 70s. **Telephone interview with Dorothy Eber**, 5 January 1995.
10. John L Fischer, "Art Styles as Cognitive Maps" Art and Aesthetics in Primitive Societies (New York, 1971), 177.
11. Pitseolak identified this image of her father to Dorothy Eber during interviews for the National Film Board film **Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life** (1972). **Telephone interview with Dorothy Eber**, 5 January 1995; image identified and confirmed by fax, 19 January 1995.
12. Eber, ed. Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life, not paginated [vii].

13. Pitseolak quoted by Dorothy Eber, When the Whalers Were Up North (Kingston, 1989), 72; syllabic translation for drawing provided on the same page.
14. George Swinton, Introduction to Shadows by Armand Tagoona (Ottawa, 1975), 2.
15. Robin McGrath, "The Influence of Comics on Inuit Art and Literature", Inuit Art Quarterly Vol.4, No.1 (Winter, 1989), 4.
16. McGrath, 2.
17. Robin McGrath, "Circumventing the Taboo: Inuit Women's Autobiographies" unpublished paper presented at the Seventh Inuit Studies Conference, Fairbanks Alaska, 19-23 August 1990, 215.
18. Kananginak Pootoogook Baptism on the M.V. "Nascopie", coloured pencil and black felt pen over graphite on wove paper, 1992, Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Accession number 37711.
19. McGrath, "Circumventing the Taboo", 222.
20. Pitseolak, not paginated [21].
21. R.D. Laing, Self and Others (London, 1961), 70.
22. Colin Morris, The Discovery of the Individual 1050-1200 (Toronto, 1972), 1.
23. Mary Douglas, cited by Loren Patridge and Randolph Starn, A Renaissance Likeness. Art and Culture in Raphael's Julius II (Berkeley, 1980), source not noted; see instead Douglas' Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975).
24. Lee Guemple, "The Institutional Flexibility of Inuit Social Life" Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Report (Ottawa, 1976), 181.
25. Guemple, 182.
26. Guemple, 182.
27. Guemple, 183; the share was not of equal portions, however, and division of food was determined by complex variables.
28. Napachie Pootoogook quoted in Inuit Women Artists, 135-36.
29. Julie Cruikshank, Life Lived Like a Story (Lincoln, 1990), 12.

30. Mitiarjuk Nappaaluk, "The Inuit Encyclopedia of Mitiarjuk", Tumivut 5 (Winter/Spring, 1994), 74.
31. Guemple, 184.
32. Names were give to either sex adding to the complexity of relationships, indicating that relationship was more important than gender. This also suggests that personality characteristics were not necessarily considered to be gender-related as they are in Western society.
33. Guemple, 184.
34. George Swinton, "Contemporary Inuit Aesthetics: Touch and the Real", Arts & Culture of the North Vol.III, No.2 (February, 1979), 145.
35. Nelson Graburn (ed.), Introduction, Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World (Berkeley, 1976), 21.
36. Guemple, 184-185.
37. Fischer, 175.
38. Cruikshank, ix.
39. Adelheid M. Gealt, Italian Portrait Drawings, 1400-1800. From North American Collections (Indiana, 1983), 1.
40. Gealt, 2.
41. McGrath comments on the criticism that Pitseolak received after publishing Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life and attributes this to Pitseolak decision to "put herself forward", "Circumventing the Taboo", 217.
42. Pitseolak identified this printed image as representing her mother to Dorothy Eber. **Telephone interview with Dorothy Eber**, 5 January 1995; identity of image confirmed with Eber by fax, 19 January 1995.
43. Hal N. Opperman, "The Inuit Phenomenon in Art-Historical Context" Inuit Art Quarterly Vol.1, No.2 (Summer, 1986), 2.
44. Some effort was spent in trying to verify the identity of the sitter - see Note on Drawings.
45. Jean Blodgett records this in Kenojuak (Toronto, 1985), 73.
46. Pitseolak, not paginated [67].

Chapter IV: Feminism and Images of Inuit Female Identity

Once the Western art historical tools of formal analysis and individual artist biography are recognized as limited methods for understanding Inuit drawings, it becomes apparent that an approach which looks to broader contexts of art production is necessary. With Inuit art it seems obvious to situate artists' drawings by comparing their work with that made by other Inuit. In the past, there have been many group shows organized according to thematic or regional parameters; by far outnumbering the solo exhibitions of individual Inuit artists. Group shows themselves are not problematic. What is problematic, however, is the reasoning which groups Inuit works based on old prejudices toward 'primitive' art and dictates how this art should be exhibited. Still further, it creates a segregationist approach which treats the works as though they exist in a cultural vacuum or are only valuable as part of a collectivity. A criticism of this approach is valid, as Inuit are no longer isolated and their culture is not static; television, radio, and multimedia connect all the world. Many Inuit artists themselves have travelled around the world and have first-hand experiences of other cultures. Current ideas about 'globalism' argue for a different treatment of works of art. It is now seen as more useful to ignore cultural boundaries and, instead apply theories and approaches cross-culturally.

Peter Millard has stressed the need for the application

of theory to Inuit works, while at the same time recognizing potential limitations,

The problem of theory soon becomes evident. Many of the reviews avoid theory altogether, relying heavily on simple facts, such as the biography of the artist, or the way the exhibition is presented, and then bringing in some straightforward formal analysis of the works. Such reviews do not take us very far...If the work is part of an established tradition, it is a question of applying the existing theory to the work and seeing how successfully it meets it or expands it. But if the work in question is new, as was Inuit art, then a theory must be formed, or at least existing ones modified.¹

Millard's argument provides a starting point for an examination of the usefulness of contextualist theory when applied to the drawings of Pitseolak.

There has been increasing attention and interest in the work of Inuit women artists - both individually and as a group. From the mid-1970s (coinciding with 1975 International Year of the Woman) to the current Canadian Museum of Civilization show, **Isumavut, The Artistic Expression of Nine Cape Dorset Women**, there have been at least twelve exhibitions organized around the work of Inuit women artists.² In this light it seems reasonable to consider whether feminist theory may contribute new insights into understanding the significance and meaning of art by Inuit women.

Feminist Framework and Inuit Women Artists

The entrance of Inuit women into the art world is as unprecedented as the Inuit art phenomena in general.

Especially, "[i]n contrast to the position of women in the history of Western "fine" art, Inuit women were more readily accepted as creators and artists."³ Some explanation of this can be found within Inuit culture and the changes occurring in the North,

Within traditional Inuit division of labour, women generally spent more time indoors than did men due to the nature of their tasks. It was, therefore, more convenient for women to find the time and a comfortable atmosphere to make drawings, perhaps facilitating an easier passage from traditional skills to newer ones... It must also be added that the newness of "fine" art production among Inuit meant that women did not have to struggle against patriarchal canons, as had been the case for women in Western art history.⁴

When this is the case, then, is it possible to apply critical feminist theories to the images of Inuit women artists? In one sense the answer must be "no". Feminist positions, such as put forward by Linda Nochlin or Griselda Pollock, rely on the re-evaluation of the patriarchal canon and its influence on the structure of art history as a discipline. As Inuit art has developed outside of the long history of Western art, it is likewise outside of much of the rhetoric. For example, Linda Nochlin's ground-breaking article **"Why have there been no great women artists?"**⁵ is not directly relevant to Inuit art since Western collecting audiences have accorded Inuit women artists status equal to male artists. Whereas European and Euro-North American women were excluded from the all-important training of the academies, Inuit women were free, as were men, to develop their own styles and themes. The lack of

a predilection for mimetic art also meant that Inuit artists were not advantaged or disadvantaged by lack of accessible training.

Griselda Pollock and Rosita Parker, whose position both contrasts with and complements Nochlin's, argue that there have been great women artists throughout the history of Western art. In **Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology**⁶ they argue that it is only in the twentieth century that women artists have been written out of history. As Inuit graphics only began in the 1960s, the work of Inuit women artists does not need to be traced back through history and reinstated as Pollock and Parker call for.

While these arguments represent only two positions out of a large and growing body of theoretical literature, it soon becomes apparent that feminist theories, like other art historical theories, situated in Western art rhetoric, may have limited applicability to Inuit art.

On the other hand, it is false to believe that the favourable position of women Inuit artists owes nothing to the arguments put forward by feminist theories which criticize the canon of art as having been largely patriarchal...and ethnocentric. Since both groups are the "other" in position to the dominant male Western viewpoint, both essentially challenge the status quo. As Griselda Pollock writes, "Demanding that women be considered not only changes what is studied and what becomes relevant to investigate but it

challenges the existing disciplines politically."⁷ Likewise Nochlin has maintained,

A feminist critique of the discipline is needed which can pierce cultural-ideological limitations, to reveal biases and inadequacies not merely in regard to the question of women artists, but in the formulation of the crucial questions of the discipline as a whole. Thus the so-called woman question, far from being a peripheral sub-issue, can be a catalyst, a potent intellectual instrument, probing the most basic and "natural" assumptions, providing a paradigm for other kinds of internal questioning, and providing links with paradigms established by radical approaches in other fields.⁸

It is in this sense that Inuit art intersects modern feminist theories. Likewise, it is important to note that since,

Inuit art, along with other forms of aboriginal visual culture, was initially described as "primitive" by the established art world. Women were, therefore, easily accepted as being capable producers within this marginalized artistic milieu. Considered separate from the "fine" art tradition, neither these art forms nor the new perspectives offered by women artists were threatening to the Eurocentric view.⁹

Ironically, the fact that these artists were aboriginal is what aided their way, as women, into the art world.

The two positions, of women and of native, are often aligned in the critical arguments of feminist writings. There is a danger, however, in overemphasizing this apparent solidarity. As Uzoma Esonwanne argues in her essay, **"Feminist Theory and the Discourse of Colonialism"**:

While, for reasons of debate or contestation, an insurgent, oppositional feminist theory may strategically compare the state or condition of women under patriarchy with that of non-Western communities under imperialism, it is risky if not counter-productive to formulate the comparison in

analogical terms which presuppose, imply, or postulate an undifferentiated female subjectivity.¹⁰

Esonwanne is concerned with the misrepresentation of the specificity of issues relating to women in the arts. A critique of feminist theories is often that they represent only one class of women, one race of women and that the ideology often misrepresents and excludes women of minority races. Perhaps for Inuit women artists, the concerns of art production lie elsewhere, outside of gender issues central to Western art history.

From Inuit and anthropologists' accounts it is clear that the gender relations in Inuit culture are different from those of European-based society. As Jean Briggs cautions, "one should be careful not to evaluate Eskimo behaviour in terms of Western values. The same behaviour in two cultures may be differently rationalized and may form parts of different behavioral complexes, so that it has different meaning in each culture."¹¹ The gender positions within Inuit communities are complex and have been subject to different interpretations. While Westerners might tend to view the passive attitude often attributed to Inuit women as submissive and repressive, a description by an Inuk reveals the respect given to Inuit women,

I will always remember my mother. She was a woman who served every member of the family. There were times when she was hurt and disappointed and times when she was happy. For all the years she gave of herself, she received very few rewards and made no complaint. You may think that this is being

submissive. It is not, it is the expression of her strength.¹²

Aspects of traditional Inuit gender relations have, in fact, been carried over into the making of art. For example, James Houston was eager to involve senior male leaders, such as the respected camp leader Pootoogook, in order to validate the art process in the eyes of other Inuit.¹³ It is also curious that while many women have become well-known through the prints, it is the men who have done the cutting of stone and actual printing in Cape Dorset.¹⁴ Since "[m]any Inuit, male and female, were unclear how to designate the activities of drawings and printing within their previous gender-related roles" women were able to participate more freely.¹⁵ It appears that, in Cape Dorset, the traditional division of labour has been maintained in the drawing to print process with the majority of women providing the drawn images which are translated into the print medium by Inuit men.

If women have benefited from the newness of the art-making process, it has not always been without problems. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Kenojuak Ashevak found that her fame and wealth made her life in the settlement difficult, as it was not usual for a young woman to have such a prominent role in the community.¹⁶ Likewise, Pitseolak was often pressured by her family's needs to produce more drawings.¹⁷ While Inuit women were easily accepted in the mainstream of the art world, it has not always made their position in their own communities easy.

As with formalist and biographical approaches (discussed in Chapter I and II) feminist ideologies - although expanding the canon - are also Western based. The critical framework of feminism is not easily applied to the work of Inuit women because of different cultural conditions in gender relationships. It is necessary, however, to enlarge our understanding of Inuit women artists and their work by relying on many of the principles founded within feminist ideologies. That the expression of women offers perspectives distinct from that of male artists, and as such are worthy of serious consideration is a valid premise with which to begin looking at the art of Inuit women.

Gender and style in Inuit graphics

Are there qualities which makes art by Inuit women unique? In a review of the exhibition **Women of the North**, Millard commented "[I]f the only justification for [shows focussing on women's work] is the gender of the artists, we may well be excused for asking 'so what?'"¹⁸

In an attempt to categorize drawn images, Nelson Graburn, who has written widely on the socio-economic factors of Inuit art, arrives at the conclusion that gender differences exist in style as well as in content.¹⁹ Graburn applies his Inuktitut terms "quak" (meaning "frozen or motionless")²⁰ and "sulijuk" (meaning "truth, that which really exists")²¹ to the drawings based on aspects such as "realistic colour,

groundline, single viewpoint, didactic intent...."²² to decide their aesthetic value for Inuit themselves. According to his analysis, "in Cape Dorset the women's work are mostly quak" and refers to a drawing by Pitseolak to demonstrate this frozen quality which he describes as ill-favoured by Inuit.²³ He continues, "Sulijuk is a male-dominated value best expressed in the Inuit admiration of the works of such artists as Kananginak."²⁴ Furthermore, he writes,

Many artists, especially women, do not attempt sulijuk images and many of them claim that they are incapable of doing so, and therefore they emphasize other qualities in their art such as humour, imagination, design and symmetry, or colour for its own sake.²⁵

An initial criticism of Graburn's essay is that he draws his conclusions from a limited number of drawings - those used for the exhibition **Contemporary Inuit Drawings**.²⁶ A second point, would be the exploitation of Inuktitut terms which are based on his earlier studies of Inuit sculpture. The quality of 'movement' is bound to translate differently in two-dimensional media than in objects seen in the round. This may explain why Graburn considered a drawing by Pitseolak, known for her expression of movement, to display "quak". Finally, it would be relevant to know how many Inuit women expressed their lack of skill with depicting "sulijuk" and in what context. In the case of Pitseolak, there are many 'realistic' drawings of implements and tools (ill.34). Dorothy Eber has also noted the ethnographic wealth of Pitseolak's images. She recalls that when anthropologists would believe that an Inuit custom or

piece of equipment was confined to Greenland, "the matter would be found illustrated in a Pitseolak drawing proving its existence on Baffin Island."²⁷ One also wonders how male artists, such as Pudlo with his powerfully designed images such as **Man Among the Loons** (1984), would react to Graburn's conclusions. Most disconcerting of all is that, in his statement, by preempting the quality "sulijuk" Graburn eliminates all Inuit women's art from being favoured by Inuit.

It is significant to compare the notions inherent in Graburn's claim with the following one,

Some women artists tried to emulate Frans Hals but the vigorous brush strokes of the master were beyond their capability, one has only to look at the works of a painter like Judith Leyster (1609-1661) to detect the weakness of the feminine hand.²⁸

Parker and Pollock question the logic of this statement, "But if the 'weakness of femininity is so clear in contrast to the 'masculine' vigour of Frans Hals, why were so many works by Judith Leyster attributed to Frans Hals in the past?"²⁹ While Graburn's idea of the relationship between gender and style is intriguing, certain inconsistencies suggest that further research is needed in this area. Lastly, it must be stated that it may be oversimplification to suggest that Inuit aesthetic can be expressed in two words.

Images of Inuit women

From the moment of birth, the single most determinant factor in life is whether one is born male or female. While

representations of women by men can provide insight into social structure and gender relations, only images of women by women can give voice to female identity. If the accepted belief put forward by feminist theory has been that history is incomplete without the visual expression of women the same can be said to be true regarding Inuit culture and Inuit art.

A strong theme found in Pitseolak's drawings is that of Inuit womanhood and female identity. The degree of variety within this subject indicates its importance to Pitseolak and once again through her many representations of women we gain greater insight into aspects of Inuit culture. Her images of women's tools, motherhood, and domestic scenes speak of the strong role women held within Inuit society. With the changes to the traditional role of women, Pitseolak was able to maintain a strong voice through the media of drawings and prints.

In the past, the clear delineation of activities and roles between Inuit men and women reinforced their sense of self as woman or man. Lee Guemple goes as far as to argue that "males and females, men and women, are characterized in terms of the work they perform. It is both what they do and who they are as categories of beings."³⁰ Certainly, his statements seem to apply to Pitseolak's images of women at work (ill.31) - for they communicate more than just a visual depiction of a task performed by women. They communicate visually the strength of the Inuit woman and that her ability to do these

tasks (ill. 32) is linked to her sense of self. Scenes of women sewing (ill.33) tell of the importance this skill had to Inuit women...and to Inuit men. Briggs observed this,

the skills of women are as indispensable to survival as are those of men, and they are so perceived by men...Without carefully fashioned fur clothing and waterproof skin boots, a man could easily freeze to death...I was told that in the old days a man might commit murder to obtain a good seamstress as a wife, and that if a man froze his feet, it was his wife who was blamed. These stories may be apocryphal, but they express the value placed on the feminine craft of sewing.³¹

The camaraderie of women sharing tasks is often expressed in these images (ill.31 and ill.33); an important element of Inuit women's experience considering their time spent together while men were absent on hunting trips for long periods of time. Pitseolak's drawings of women's domestic implements (ill.34) are carefully organized to demonstrate and share her knowledge of these tools. Images of ulus, the women's knife, as heraldic symbols (ill.35) where a tool becomes metaphor for woman, suggest the degree to which the work a woman does is translated into an abstract concept such as identity.

An extension of this idea of identity through work is that of the Inuit woman as mother. While not directly related, as most women do not think of their children in terms of work or chores, it nonetheless fits within the notion of woman as centre of the family (ill.36) because of the things she does, nurturing and providing for her family's needs. Inuit women traditionally bore large families, and the role of mother (ill.37 and ill.38) is one aspect of female identity quite

strongly conveyed and expressed in Pitseolak's images. As women performed their daily activities, children are often present, sleeping or playing. This interaction, between a mother at work and children at play, is often reflected in Pitseolak's drawings and communicates the responsibility that Inuit women had in balancing the needs of their families. Even the activity of drawing itself had to be worked around the daily routines of the family. Kenojuak, for example, used to draw at night, after everyone had gone to sleep.³²

Pitseolak's images of women, however, suggest a sense of female identity more complex than covered in Guemple's analysis. First, drawings of women at play are prevalent in Pitseolak's work. Some are meant to recall her memories as a young woman, such as the drawing depicting a woman sliding on a frozen sealskin, while others pass on knowledge that is outside of work, such as throat singing (ill.39) a form of music practiced only by women. The syllabics read,

These women are throat-singing. They would do it for a long time since they were trying to out-do one another to the point of getting out of breath. My mother would be one of them and their singing was so incredible to hear. The ones who used to throat sing are now deceased. They are [shown] having a great time.³³

Neither are images of women on the land, often solitary or with a child, or even accompanied by birds (ill.40) explained by the work/gender identity outlined in Guemple's description. There is a connection being made. The isolated figure is not merely depicted in the landscape, but by her composition or

use of colour Pitseolak makes the figure part of the landscape. It is tempting to explore this imagery in the context of the connection between woman and nature. This, however, seems inappropriate in terms of Inuit culture for both men and women live on the land and share this bond to it. Moreover, it must be pointed out that the link between woman and nature is in fact a belief of Western society. While it is true that many societies note the relation between women's menses and the cycles of the moon, between the ability to give birth and the natural life cycle, the lengths to which this has developed into an dialectic between nature/culture and woman/man is deeply ingrained in Western culture and it is obvious that such associations attributed to gender are culturally constructed.

That Inuit women were accepted as artists is appropriate, for without their images the expression of Inuit culture would be incomplete. For what is communicated in these images of Pitseolak is the strength of the role of the Inuit woman and her sense of identity is what is revealed and celebrated. Pitseolak's drawings are, in the words of Berlo, "encoding women's cultural memories in an enduring art form"³⁴

Concluding Observations:

Although some elements coincide, feminist theories which have grown out of Western art history, even those that challenge Western patriarchal ideas, are not easily applied to

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Inuit art. Also noted is the inherit danger of assuming false alliances based on gender, to the subversion of differences in ideology. It must be recognized that many contextualist theories of art are essentially a debate within Western art and exclude other societies. While existing frameworks in the discipline of art history may be used as a starting point for the study of Inuit drawings,

if the artwork [does] not fit the theory one should change the theory not reject the artwork.³⁵

Endnotes

1. Peter Millard, "On quality in art: who decides" Inuit Art Quarterly Vol.7, No.3 (Summer/Fall, 1992), 13-14.
2. Information based on on-going research by author and as such should not be considered complete. This number does not include solo exhibitions of Inuit women artists.
3. Christine Lalonde, with S. Hunchuck, "Patterns of Power" Patiently I Sing: Selections from the Tyler/Brooks Collection of Inuit Art (Ottawa, 1994), 19.
4. Lalonde, 20.
5. Linda Nochlin, "Why have there been no great women artists?" Art and Sexual Politics (London, 1973).
6. Rosita Parker and Griselda Pollock, Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology (London, 1981).
7. Griselda Pollock, Vision & Difference, Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art (London, 1988), 1.
8. Nochlin, 2.
9. Lalonde, 22.
10. Uzoma Esonwanne, "Feminist Theory and the Discourse of Colonialism" ReImagining Women, Representation of Women in Culture (Toronto, 1993), 235.
11. Jean Briggs, "Eskimo Women: Makers of Men", Many Sisters: Women in Cross-Cultural Perspective (New York, 1974), 262.
12. Unidentified, quoted by Norman Hallenday, "Reflection, Shades and Shadows" Collected Papers on the Human History of the Northwest Territories (Yellowknife, 1985), 136.
13. This information was related by James Houston to Marion Jackson. Jackson also observes that Houston is himself from a patriarchal society which may have directed him to involve the male camp leaders in the printmaking experiments. **Personal interview with Marion Jackson, Ottawa, 20 January 1995.**
14. For the division of labour related to printmaking in other communities see Janet Catherine Berlo, "The Power of the Pencil, Inuit Women in the Graphic Arts" Inuit Art Quarterly Vol.5, No.1 (Winter, 1990) 16-26; also by Berlo, "Inuit Women and Graphic Arts: Female Creativity and Its Cultural Context", The Canadian Journal of Native Studies 9 No.2

(1989), 293-351.; in both articles Berlo additionally comments on the financial empowerment which the arts industry has offered native women; Helga Goetz, The Inuit Print/L'estampe inuit (Ottawa, 1977) includes a history of Cape Dorset prints which names the male printers.

15. Marie Routledge, Pudlo: Thirty Years of Drawing (Ottawa, 1990), 18. See also her footnote #18 in which she relates that Kenojuak was initially uncertain whether drawing was an appropriate female activity.
16. Jean Blodgett, Kenojuak (Toronto, 1985), 73.
17. **Personal interview with Terry Ryan**, Toronto, 26 January 1995.
18. Millard, "Women of the North, Exhibition of Art by Inuit Women of the Canadian Arctic at the Marion Scott Gallery, June 6 to July 11, 1992." Inuit Art Quarterly Vol.7, No.3 (Summer/Fall, 1992), 39.
19. Nelson H.H. Graburn, "Reflections of an Anthropologist, Inuit Drawings: The Graphics behind the Graphics" Contemporary Inuit Drawings (Guelph, 1987), 21-29.
20. Graburn, 25.
21. Graburn, 26.
22. Graburn, 24.
23. Graburn, 25.
24. Graburn, 26.
25. Graburn, 27.
26. Graburn's essay was written for the exhibition catalogue which accompanied the show **Contemporary Inuit Drawings** held at the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre, Guelph, Ontario; the exhibition also travelled to the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 13 January - 26 March 1989.
27. **Personal communication with Dorothy Eber**, 10 March 1994.
28. "Women Painters", Saturday Book, 1964, 19; quoted by Parker and Pollock in Old Mistresses, 8.
29. Parker and Pollock, 8.
30. Lee Guemple, "Men and Women, Husbands and Wives: The Role of Gender in Traditional Inuit Society" FTUDES/INUIT/STUDIES Vol.10, No.1-2 (1986), 14.

31. Jean Briggs, 288.
32. Kenojuak Ashevak, Eskimo Artist: Kenojuak National Film Board of Canada, 1964.
33. Syllabic translations by Alootook Ipellie, Ottawa, 16 January 1995.
34. Janet Catherine Berlo, "Autobiographical Impulses and Female Identity in the Drawings of Napachie Pootoogook" Inuit Art Quarterly Vol.8, No.4 (Winter, 1993), 9.
35. Millard, "Challenging long-cherished beliefs" Inuit Art Quarterly Vol.7, No.2 (Spring, 1992), 12.

CHAPTER V: The Potential for Global Interpretation

Through the application of several standard art historical approaches to the drawings of Pitseolak Ashoona, it has been demonstrated that the tools of art history are themselves shaped by cultural values fundamental to Western society. As such, these tools can gain us only partial insight and understanding into Pitseolak's images in particular, and to Inuit art in general. Despite these limitations in Western based methods, however, this does not mean that the established tools of art history are no longer useful. Instead, it is realized that conventional art historical approaches will need to be adapted, reworked, enlarged, redefined and perhaps occasionally abandoned in order to be useful in understanding the visual expression of Inuit.

Today the discipline of art history is itself going through a period of self-examination in which the previously accepted canon of art historical study is opening to a wider range of aesthetic expression from diverse areas of the globe. Called into question is the notion of the so-called 'universal' aesthetic which has dominated Western art history. As Thomas McEvilley explains,

It now can be recognized that Modernist internationalism was a somewhat deceptive designation for Western claims of universal hegemony. In hopes of entering the international art discourse, a non-white or non-Western artist was to repress his or her inherited identity and assume a supposedly universal one; but that "universal" identity was just the emblem of another tribal cult that temporarily had the upper hand.¹

Now 'one culture of many cultures' the idea of the Modernist universal of the 50s has been replaced with that of globalism in the 90s. Again McEvelley writes,

A more genuinely global array of voices and visions comprises its project of cultural balancing. While it affirms cultural differences as too real to be ignored, this process also relativizes them, denying that any of them amounts to an absolute or universal, or can ever again pretend to with a transcendent status.²

Is it, then still possible to talk about images, motifs, symbols as having, if not a universal, then a human relevance and shared meaning? Or is meaning in art works to be designated by culturally-specific sources? What will be the form of discussion of art for the future? McEvelley offers a suggestion,

A model which might express our moment of realization more accurately is an array of dissimilar line fragments flung randomly down on the page, some intersecting others, some paralleling others, some more or less isolated. We are entering a period when every ethnic group or bonding group or community of taste or belief will write and rewrite its own fragment of history, and probably in many conflicting versions. A more or less unconnected array of micro-narratives will replace, for a time, the single meta-narrative. If this process goes uncontrolled - without, that is, the premature imposition of a new meta-narrative- a general cohesiveness or sense of framework or of mutual relationship may naturally emerge, like a pattern appearing among leaves on the ground after enough of them have fallen.³

McEvelley notes the problem with simply replacing the old meta-narrative with a new yet equally narrow one or with not allowing enough time for a pattern to form 'naturally'. This latter concern is more likely the real risk as it is true that

people are eager for a new order. What may be possible, however, is that advances toward a new framework can be made by trial and error. By acknowledging the limitations of established practices, old tools can be modified and new tools can be created which build on the strengths and compensate for the weaknesses of art history. By looking at a specific theme in Pitseolak's work, that of birds, it may be possible to see how art oscillates between the personal, cultural, and the potential for global interpretation. It may be possible in the current climate of globalism to discover imagery, such as that of birds, which is itself open to many interpretations and meanings across cultures.

Birds

No consideration of Pitseolak's drawings would be complete without a discussion of her images of birds. Of her approximately 7000 drawings more than half included birds as the primary subject matter.⁴ There are a number of themes within her treatment of birds: birds as food - usually women hunting birds or their nests; fantastic and decorative birds - sometimes carrying implements; birds and their young nesting; solitary women and bird(s) on the land; the legend of the blind boy and the loon; and images involving humans in flight, either as winged human-bird creatures or flying on winged animals.⁵ Because many of these drawings were made into prints, Pitseolak was well known for her joyful, exuberant

depiction of fantastically coloured and vibrant birds. Often these were drawn more from imagination than from real observation and, therefore, complemented her more narrative scenes. However, the prints do not give a clear understanding of her interest in birds. Other drawings, not often reproduced as prints and therefore lesser known, are different from those depicted in her printed images of decorative and fantastic birds. The pervasiveness of bird imagery in Pitseolak's drawings invites exploration into the meaning of this imagery.

My name is Pitseolak, the Eskimo word for the sea pigeon. When I see pitseolaks over the sea, I say, "There go those lovely birds - that's me flying!"⁶

It may be that because of her name Pitseolak felt a personal affinity to birds. As mentioned in Chapter III, naming within Inuit culture carried a number of associations. As Thomas Correll notes in his discussion of naming and the Inuit concept of self (soul), not only was naming a way of creating and reinforcing a connection with others, it was also a way of connecting with ones environment,

Men have names and the *nuna* [land] has names. Man and land are related...Thora Katchatag, one of my Unaalirmiut informants, told me that every person had a name with a place name counterpart somewhere in the surrounding country...This practice established a certain intimacy between man and environment. By means of this use of language, one lived in his world as a member rather than as an alien.⁷

Yet another quote by Pitseolak hints towards the depth of

feeling and personal connection she may have felt to birds,

When my husband died at Netsilik even though I had relatives, it was as if my whole family had died - I had no one anymore. Ottochie, my youngest son, was in the *amoutik*. He was the only one who didn't learn how to hunt from his father. Ashoona taught his sons to hunt before he died. After Ashoona died at Netsilik, when the geese were coming south and flying over head down here past Cape Dorset, I used to think, "These geese have been with Ashoona back in Netsilik. They've been at Ashoona's grave". When it was really dark and I could hear the geese overhead, I'd go outside and I'd yell "Goodbye, goodbye!"⁸

It is in light of such statements that we may better understand the number of images which Pitseolak drew depicting a solitary woman (ill.40), usually seated, reaching or even straining toward birds in the sky. Pitseolak repeated this image (ill.41) with variety, throughout her drawings. Clearly the subject held a personal fascination for her.

On the other hand, Pitseolak may have felt attracted to this subject for stylistic and formal reasons because of the freedom of creative expression which drawing birds allowed. Unlike the instances when she was drawing scenes of the 'old ways', she was not tied to depicting things as they were but could instead allow her imagination and her style to flow easily. The relatively simple forms of the birds allowed for easy repetition and so become a vehicle through which Pitseolak could explore aspects of rhythm, pattern (ill.42) and play with the balancing of composition (ill.43). The subject matter of birds was particularly suited to Pitseolak's animated line. With line, she was able to communicate in these

images the spirited and flighty nature of birds which paralleled her own *joie de vivre*. From early drawings (ill.20) throughout her oeuvre (ill.44) Pitseolak's birds gain their fullest expressions when line is used, as in (ill.15), energetically both as a formal element and to translate and echo the motion and flight of birds.

From the large number of Inuit artists who depict birds it becomes apparent that these animals were important to Inuit life and, more specifically, to Inuit women. The number of bird images by Cape Dorset artists in general may be due to the variety of bird species found in this area. Dr. J.Dewey Soper, a naturalist-explorer, spent some years (between 1923 and 1931) on Baffin Island recording the many species and searching for the breeding grounds of the rare breed of blue geese.⁹ A large area to the northeast of Cape Dorset is now the Dewey Soper Bird Sanctuary.

In particular, Cape Dorset women artists such as Kenojuak Ashevak, Lucy Qinnuayuak, and Pitaloosie Saila as well as Pitseolak seem to use birds in a large part of their repertoire. Clues to this significance may be found in traditional Inuit lifestyle and traditions.

Many of Pitseolak's drawings deal with the physical interaction between women and birds (ill.45). Inuit women were especially aware of birds because while men were off for long periods of time hunting the larger game, capturing birds

or gathering eggs was an activity which women could perform close to the home and provide food for their children and other family members. As such birds represented a food source which women could contribute. In this drawing (ill.46) the woman holds up the birds caught. She is the centre of her family as they gather around her, happy that she has provided nourishment.

The return of the migratory birds in the spring was a time of rebirth and plenty and associated with happiness for Inuit. Having survived the dangerous weather of the winter they could relax their guard against the cold for a few months. Soper described the joy associated with the coming of Spring around Nettilling Lake and his account illustrates the many species in this area,

[N]ew bird arrivals were now daily events. Horned larks were among the earliest migrants and were soon followed by Lapland longspurs, pipits, plovers, red phalaropes, purple sandpipers and other shore birds, gulls, loons, and old-squaw ducks. The longspurs were hearty singers of notable talent that brightened all hours around the clock...During those enchanting days working during one part of the 24 hours was almost as good as any other. Despite our fatigue it somehow seemed a sacrilege to go to bed at midnight when the sun was shining brightly and the birds were rapturous with song.¹⁰

The season for best catching birds (ill.24) was during the late summer, when they were moulting. As Pitseolak remembered, "In 'isha', the season when the geese lose their feathers, they are very easy to catch. They can't fly then and you can catch them easily on the grass".¹¹ Through the drawing of

these images Pitseolak was able to relive the happier events of a past lifestyle.¹²

During the seasons of warmth and light, the worlds of women and children expand; there is no longer need to stay close to home to tend fires or to keep small children from freezing. People go for long walks over the tundra or across the now soggy sea ice, sometimes with the excuse of gathering a bit of food - tomcod or birds' eggs, seaweed, clams, or berries; perhaps to hunt for baby birds to "adopt"; or to picnic on bannock and tea, brewed on an outdoor fire. It is an exhilarating season.¹³

While not many of the images have the same nostalgic feeling as the later drawings of the land (ill.8), images of a solitary woman accompanied with a single bird (ill.47) do communicate a poignancy. The syllabics read "I wonder why she is alone?"¹⁴ The link between the bird's ability to fly and how Pitseolak might use this to communicate nostalgia for semi-nomadic life on the land or her fascination with motion will be expanded further in this chapter.

The number of drawings of nesting birds and their young, (ill.48) suggests the bond women might have felt when they observed the birds with their young in relation to their own roles as mothers. Of all her depictions of birds, the nesting mother bird appears to be most often drawn from real observation rather than the fantastically decorative birds of her imagination. As often however, Pitseolak would place women's implements, such as the ulu, in the nest among the chicks. An extension of this imagery, are the whimsical images in which birds fly with women's implements, again most often with the ulu (ill.49), held in their beaks and claws. In a

sense, the bird and ulu may become symbols or emblems of Inuit womanhood for Pitseolak. This interpretation is also suggested by other drawings (ill.50) in which the solitary woman is framed by two large birds in an almost heraldic manner.

Yet the importance of birds to Inuit extend beyond their value as food. Birds became important characters in many Inuit legends and myths, such as "The Owl and the Ptarmigan" and "The Deceitful Raven".¹⁵ Although Pitseolak did not depict many mythological stories, (she admits to not remembering many) the one that she did draw over and over was the legend of "the blind boy and the loon" which was told to her by her father.¹⁶ This story, known widely across the Arctic was told by Pitseolak as follows:

I remember the one about the blind boy who got back his eyesight when a bird took him on his back and dived with him under the sea three times. This blind young man lived with his mother who was cruel to him and, when he returned home and she saw he could see, this wicked mother was so frightened she jumped into the sea. Eskimos believe she became a white whale and is there still - they really believe it.¹⁷

Frequently she illustrated the same two motifs from the story - the part where the loon takes the boy for a ride (ill.51), and the ending when the evil mother is depicted diving into the sea. It is possible that this story fascinated Pitseolak because of the element of flight, especially in the context of her interest in movement. The story, however, embodies many of the values fundamental to Inuit culture such as the necessity of sharing and co-operation (the mother, as

part of her cruelty, cheats her son out of his share of a bear feast) and it is these aspects which might explain its lasting power. It is significant to note, however, that the boy's helpers are birds who, by giving him the power of sight, essentially save his life. Perhaps, even on an unconscious level, this story may refer to the shaman's powers over life and death.

Traditionally the bird had an important role to play in terms of the *angakok* (shaman) and his/her ability to leave the body and thus travel magically. Basing his research on Rasmussen's **Reports of the Fifth Thule Expedition (1921-1924)**, Mircea Eliade writes,

Illness is presumably caused by violation of taboos, that is disorder in the sacred, or by the theft of the patient's soul by one of the dead. In the former case the shaman attempts to cleanse the impurity by collective confessions; in the latter he undertakes an ecstatic journey to the sky or the depths of the sea to find the patient's soul and bring it back to his body. It is always by ecstatic journeys that the *angakok* approaches Takanakapsaluk (Mother of Sea Beasts) in the depths of the ocean or Sila in the sky. He is, besides a specialist in magical flight. Some shaman have visited the moon, others have flown around the earth. According to the traditions, shamans fly like birds, spreading their arms as a bird does its wings.¹⁸

Jean Blodgett has also researched the importance of religious beliefs to Inuit art in The Coming and Going of the Shaman, and writes,

The shaman might fly in a number of different postures: doubled up; with one leg drawn up under him; with legs straight out; and hands behind the back, outstretched, or by his side. The shaman could fly on his own while in human form, but he

might also sprout wings or actually become a bird and fly. Birket-Smith reports two women who one evening saw a shaman flying from Knowles Head to Simpson Bay. "He looked like a bird, throwing off sparks as it flew as from exhaustion." Assuming bird-like form was a popular style of flight. Bird/shamans and shamans with bird attendants, bird extremities, or bird-like appendages are very prevalent in shamanic imagery, both traditional and contemporary.¹⁹

Some of Pitseolak's earlier images are curious and quite suggestive of shamanic ritual or imagery (ill.52 and ill.53) involving humans in some mysterious relation with birds. This interpretation of such drawings, however, brings about problems. In the exhibition catalogue for Strange Scenes, Early Cape Dorset Drawings, Terry Ryan commented on the ambiguous nature of early images such as those by Kiakshuk, a cousin of Pitseolak's (from whom she gained the initial inspiration to draw),

If he did a drawing depicting that story it would be hard to decipher what he was saying, even though he may have done it consciously. So there may well be something in one of his drawings that effectively depicts an occasion when he wasn't a man. So here you have this other being. It echoes back to the whole shamanistic awareness, understanding or involvement. There are things depicted that we still don't understand; in fact, I'm not sure that anyone understands them anymore. Certainly some of the drawings must depict those traditional beliefs. However, as I alluded to earlier, many of the images are just an extension of the pencil.²⁰

Pitseolak claimed that she knew little about shamans although she recalled that her father was almost killed by one and that her family believed in their existence.²¹ And yet Kiakshuk, with whom she lived after the death of Ashoona, was known to

be a shaman, "From another source I heard how Kiakshuk went out on the land and built a snow figure in the form of Pitseolak's brother Napatchee, and shot an arrow through it. Shortly Napatchee died."²² In addition to the unusually mysterious subject matter, it is curious that Pitseolak drew very few of these images and that these appear only in her earliest drawings. Clearly, this is one area where more research is needed. While there is no evidence that Pitseolak was drawing specific shamanic rituals, it is interesting to speculate on the continuity of thought which might persist after the actual belief system has largely disappeared. The relation between older and contemporary thought patterns is not a new notion. In order to interpret meaning of prehistoric objects, art historians will look to "living cultures to interpret archaeological finds in the same location."²³ In this case, the assumption would be that even if shamanism was no longer practiced, elements of the religion would be enmeshed in the societal values to the degree that it might surface in visual images. Moreover, while Christian religions largely replaced the older belief system of shamanism, it is possible that in the process of indigenization²⁴ the shaman's powers of flight and healing were translated into Christian iconography, for example that of the angel.²⁵ Certain images of winged figures (ill.54) are different from images whereby flight is achieved with the aid of feathers (ill.55) or flying animals. Even the woman's flowing gown (ill.54) is a departure

from Pitseolak's usual depiction of traditional clothing and suggests that this figure is not thought of as Inuit. The bird on top of the woman's head, however, calls up imagery of the bird as spirit-helper.

Certainly, the idea of flight has larger implications than just shamanism within Inuit culture. It is possible to speak of Pitseolak's images of people, sometimes half-human, half-bird, flying in terms of magical flight. At the very least we can see how the idea of flight would have appealed to Pitseolak's imagination and love of movement. At the very most, in Jungian terms, such images may bespeak of a "collective consciousness" which Jung describes as the "ancestral heritage of possibilities of representation... not individual but common to all men, and perhaps even to animals, and [which] is the true basis of the individual psyche."²⁶ In this sense, the expression of an individual may even be tied to the expression of humanity as a whole.

The persistence, around the world, of images of birds and symbolism of flight is somewhat astonishing. Almost every society has at one time or other held belief systems which included the concept of magical flight. Eliade has traced the many different versions of the "mythical image of the soul in the form of a bird" and concludes,

Magical flight is the expression both of the soul's autonomy and of ecstasy...This myth of the soul contains in embryo a whole metaphysics of man's spiritual autonomy and freedom...An analysis of the "imagination of motion" will show how essential the nostalgia for flight is to the human psyche.²⁷

Eliade continues to describe how it is from this universal well of belief that the shaman's ability to fly is adopted in order to distinguish him/her from the normal human condition. Since they are considered to be superhuman, flight also becomes a metaphor for their power over death.²⁸

Consequently, while Pitseolak's images of flight may be related to Inuit shamanic practices it may also be possible to view her images in light of the larger, global significance suggested by Eliade - the desire for freedom and the "imagination of motion". In the first chapter, Pitseolak's personal interest in and ability to depict people in motion was explored. It may be that, once again this personal interest stems from her lived experiences. When we recall her life of constant travelling across the tundra, often burdened with packs in addition to a child in the amauti, it is not surprising that she would admire the bird's ability to move easily in the air. The drawing (ill.56) which shows a woman running beneath a bird, her hair whipping out behind her, reads "This woman is trying to catch up with the flying bird and eventually runs under it by running very fast."²⁹ The desire to fly, in this light, becomes the ultimate wish for free motion. It is perhaps this instinctive deep core that Pitseolak reaches in these images which makes them so appealing to us. She captures the dream of humans to leave the earth for the air, to go from nunamiut, "people of the land", to silamiut, "people of the air" which can also mean "of the

world"³⁰. Through her images of flight (ill.57) it becomes possible to travel across time and distance, to real and imaginary worlds.

Concluding observations

The old order of the 'universal' has been recognized as representing the values of a single culture imposed upon rather than shared by many cultures. A new recognition of the voices from diverse cultures has demanded a new way of thinking about how cultures exist. As knowledge about other cultures increases, so does an awareness of differences. And yet, at the same time it is still possible to find shared impulses across cultures and, in doing so, to discover the bonds which make us humans together. Visual expression, such as Pitseolak's bird and flight imagery, may play an important role in the 'global village', offering exciting potential for understanding each other.

Endnotes

1. Thomas McEvelley, Art & Otherness, Crisis in Cultural Identity (Kingston, New York, 1992), 11.
2. McEvelley, 11-12.
3. McEvelley, 144.
4. This number was arrived at by using the subject categories developed by Patricia Ryan during the cataloguing of Pitseolak's drawings. At my request Carri Kamstra, at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, input all the subject categories for the drawings into the Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN) and then conducted a search for the category of birds. The number arrived at reflects only those drawings by Pitseolak which were recorded by Patricia Ryan in the Cape Dorset ledger (7,195 entries) and does not include drawings which may have been sold prior to the cataloguing project in the seventies. However, since the vast majority of Pitseolak's drawings were retained by the WBEC, this number can be considered proportionally accurate.
5. A small number of early, unsigned, drawings involve mysterious and curious images of birds, but for which there is some question as to their attribution as Pitseolak's. In the use of line and in the particular way the faces are drawn, there is the suggestion of another hand. The sorting of these drawings, with the aim to identify the artist, is an area for further research. Based on my observations, supported by Terry Ryan who identified certain drawings as not by Pitseolak. **Personal interview with Terry Ryan, Toronto, 26 January 1995.**
6. Pitseolak, Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life (Montreal, 1971), not paginated [2].
7. Thomas Correll, "Language and Location in Traditional Inuit Society" Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Report (Ottawa, 1976), 178.
8. Pitseolak, quoted by Dorothy Eber "Eskimo Tales", Natural History Magazine Vol.LXXXVI, No.8 (October, 1977), 128.
9. J.Dewey Soper, Canadian Arctic Recollection, Baffin Island 1923-1931 (Saskatoon, 1981); Soper records, on page 91, having a guide by the name 'Ashuna' from around the Andrew Gordon Bay area during his search for the blue geese nesting grounds. A photograph in the National Archives, by Soper (ill.30) of 'Ashuna' has been identified as Ashoona, Pitseolak's husband. - see Notes on Drawings for more

information.

10. Soper, 58.
11. Pitseolak, not paginated [45].
12. Terry Ryan has observed that images brought into the Co-op were often related to the seasonal activities associated with that particular time of year. For example images of fishermen would be brought in coinciding with Spring weather which allowed for fishing again. **Personal interview with Terry Ryan** Toronto, 26 January 1995.
13. Jean Briggs, "Eskimo Women: Makers of Men", Many Sisters: Women in Cross-Cultural Perspective (New York, 1974), 265.
14. Syllabic translation by Alooook Ipellie, Ottawa, 16 January, 1995.
15. Titles are from stories recorded by Father Metayer and illustrated by Agnes Nanogak in Tales from the Igloo (Edmonton, 1972) and More Tales from the Igloo (Edmonton, 1986).
16. Pitseolak, not paginated [14].
17. Pitseolak, not paginated [14].
18. Mircea Eliade, Shamanism, Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy (Princeton, 1964), 288-89; Eliade used Rasmussen's reports extensively as a source including Rasmussen's Die Thulefahrt, Intellectual Culture of the Iglulik Eskimos, Intellectual Culture of the Copper Eskimos, and The Netsilik Eskimos: Social Life and Spiritual Culture.
19. Jean Blodgett, The Coming and Going of the Shaman: Eskimo Shamanism and Art (Winnipeg, 1978), 90; see also Bernadette Driscoll, Uumajut: Animal Imagery in Inuit Art (Winnipeg, 1985).
20. Ryan interviewed by Jean Blodgett in Strange Scenes: Early Cape Dorset Drawings (Kleinburg, 1993), 14.
21. Pitseolak, not paginated [9].
22. Eber, "Remembering Pitseolak Ashoona", Arts and Culture of the North Vol.6, No.3 (Fall, 1983), 436.
23. Joan Vastokas, "Native Art as Art History: Meaning and Time from Unwritten Sources", Journal of Canadian Studies Vol.21, No.4 (Winter, 1986-87), 28.

24. Antonio Gualtieri defines indigenization as "a process of cultural adaptation in which the fundamental meanings of an historical tradition are retained but expressed in symbolic forms of another, diverse culture. In 1971, Gualtieri conducted extensive interviews with missionaries in Northern communities to assess the religious policy of indigenization. His results were published as Christianity and Native Traditions. Indigenization and Syncretism among the Inuit and Dene of the Western Arctic (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1984), 1.
25. A recorded precedent for the depiction of angels is the drawings of Pudlo Pudlat - see Marie Routledge and Marion Jackson Pudlo: Thirty Years of Drawing (Ottawa, 1990).
26. Carl G. Jung, "The Structure of the Psyche" ed. Joseph Campbell, trans. R.F.C. Hull, The Portable Jung (Harmondsworth, 1976), 38.
27. Eliade, 479-480.
28. Eliade, 481.
29. Syllabic translation by Alootook Ipellie, Ottawa, 16 January 1995.
30. Translation and meaning as explained by Alootook Ipellie, Ottawa, 16 January 1995.

Conclusion

My study of the drawings of Pitseolak Ashcona has led as much to an understanding of the tools of art historical inquiry (and the limitations of those tools) as to an understanding of Pitseolak's drawings and Inuit art. Western attitudes toward Inuit art have been shaped by societal values and biases. And yet, the only way currently open to discuss Inuit art, until more Inuit participation and literature becomes accessible, is to rely on established art historical methods and approaches. What can be done, however, is to re-examine Western tools in light of their cultural relativism and to adapt them to suit art forms which develop outside of the mainstream of Western art.

Part of the global project of decolonization is a conscious effort - particularly on the part of white Westerners - to understand the image banks of other cultures. This will be no easy matter.¹

While it is nearly impossible for one to notice and change ones unquestioned beliefs, it is essential that an awareness develop of how culturally specific values shape our vision of the world. Before a culturally balanced perception of art forms from the diverse corners of the world can be born, it will be necessary to address the limitations of our current tools. Still the attempt must be made, even if only to ensure that others have something with which to debate as we seek a fuller understanding.

"The risk must be run,
The mark made."

- Virginia Woolf
To the Lighthouse

Endnotes

1. Thomas McEvilley, Art & Otherness, Crisis in Cultural Identity (Kingston, New York, 1992), 131.

Appendix A

Pitseolak Ashoona - Life Chronology

Unless otherwise noted, biographical information is taken from Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life (Montreal, 1971).

- c1907/8 - Pitseolak was born on Nottingham Island in Hudson Bay; her mother was Timungiak and father was Ottochie. Ottochie was adopted son of Peter Pitseolak's uncle Kavavow¹ Pitseolak's family previously lived in Sugluk and left for Nottingham Island in the Spring. Pitseolak had three older brothers and one sister. Pitseolak claims she was born at the camp Tujakjuak.²
- The Spring after she was born her family crossed the Hudson Strait to Foxe Peninsula and Cape Dorset.
- Pitseolak describes travelling in one of three ships (ships from the South) which may have been the Arctic - one of the ships sank in Itidliajuk.³
- Afterwards they travelled onto Frobisher Bay in umiaqs. Her first memory is of a stop in Lake Harbour on way back to Cape Dorset. After arriving on ship, her family travelled across land to Ikalurajuk (past Iqaluit) and spent the winter there before returning to Cape Dorset via Lake Harbour.⁴
- Ottochie, her father dies in spring. Pitseolak and Timungiak go with Ashoona to Ikirasaq near Sakbuk. After her father's death, Pitseolak stayed with her mother and brother, Kavavow, at Nuvujuak.⁵
- c1920's - Pitseolak is married to Ashoona during summer in Cape Dorset by Anglican clergymar. 'Inuitaquuq', outside by the flagpole near the Bay. She was in her early teens.⁶
- c1926 - Pitseolak's first son Namoonie is born; They move from Ikirsaq to Akudluk Island, sailing there in the autumn along with Ashoona's two brothers and their families. They stayed there together for one year.
- 1928 - Qaqaq born on August 19th.⁷
- Pitseolak's family returns to Cape Dorset, to Ikirasaq (with Peter Pitseolak). They still moved a lot - often to Netsilik [Nettilling Lake]. Often

they would spend the summers in Cape Dorset and look for new camps inland in Autumn.

- 1930 - Kumwartok born on October 10th.⁸ Ashoona helped Pitseolak's mother to deliver the baby.⁹
- 1933 - Kiawak born on September 16th¹⁰
- 1938 - Napachie born on June 26th in Sako camp.¹¹
- 1942 - Ottochie born.¹²
- c late 1940's - Ashoona dies at Netsilik (Nettilling Lake). Napachie believes she was around 6 or 7 years old when Ashoona died which places his death c1945.¹³ Pitseolak, young and widowed with children to care for, spends many years relying on help from others in the community. Napachie remembers especially Etungat and Munamee and that they were living in Nuvujuak.¹⁴ Pitseolak says that Namoonie and Qaqaq were still teenagers when Ashoona died.¹⁵
- In the Spring after Ashoona's death Pitseolak and children return to Cape Dorset.
- Pitseolak lived in Peter Pitseolak's camp for a time. Her brother Kavavow was married to Annie (Peter Pitseolak's sister).¹⁶
- c1956 - Jim Houston comes to Cape Dorset. For a couple of years Pitseolak earns a living by sewing socks and parkas.¹⁷ She heard about drawing from her cousin Kiakshuk (her mother's sister's son). After buying some paper herself, makes 4 drawings and sells to Houston at the Co-op.
- 1971 - Pitseolak travels to Montreal for a solo exhibition at the Canadian Handicrafts Guild.
- She also travels to Ottawa for presentation of her book, Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life to National Library by Jean Chretien, Minister of DIAND.
- The National Film Board of Canada make a film, of the same title, based on her book.
- 1974 - She is elected a member of the Royal Canadian Academy.
- 1975 - She is awarded Canada Council Senior Arts grant.

- 1975 - Two films are made by Cinemedia Centre Ltd. -
 'The Way We Live Today' and 'Spirits and Monsters'
 based on Pitseolak's images.
- 1976 - A major retrospective exhibition of her drawings
 is organized by DIAND with assistance from WBEC.
- 1977 - Pitseolak receives the Order of Canada.
- 1979 - She is one of ten Canadian artists commissioned
 by Gallery Moos to produce a print for special
 portfolio in honour of the gallery's 20th
 anniversary.
- 28 May 1983 - Pitseolak dies while in her 70s. She is buried in
 Cape Dorset cemetery beside St. John's Anglican
 church.

Endnotes

1. **Personal communication with Dorothy Eber, 10 March 1994**
2. Pitseolak to Marion Jackson, **Pitseolak Ashoona interviewed by Marion Jackson**, Cape Dorset, 15 February 1979, unpublished; transcript used with the permission of the West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative.
3. Pitseolak to Jackson, 15 February 1979.
4. Pitseolak to Jackson, 15 February 1979.
5. Pitseolak to Jackson, 15 February 1979.
6. Charles and Maureen Kahn, Canadians All: Three Portraits of Our People (Toronto, 1979), 2.; an information sheet in the artist's file, at the Inuit Art Section, gives the date of Pitseolak and Ashoona's marriage as 1922. The source is given as Dorothy Eber and possibly is a form for encyclopedia entry.
7. Qaqaq Ashoona, DIAND information sheet, artist's file, Inuit Art Section, DIAND.
8. Kumwartok Ashoona, DIAND information sheet, artist's file, Inuit Art Section, DIAND.
9. Pitseolak, told to Dorothy Eber "Eskimo Tales", Natural History Magazine Vol.LXXXVI, No.8 (October, 1977), 128.
10. Kiawak Ashoona, DIAND information sheet, artist's file, Inuit Art Section, DIAND.
11. Napachie Pootoogook, DIAND information sheet, artist's file, Inuit Art Section, DIAND; source for place of birth is Jackson interview, Cape Dorset, 16 February 1979.
12. Cape Dorset Disk List, 1969, Inuit Art Section, DIAND.
13. Napachie Pootoogook, in Inuit Women Artists (Vancouver, 1994), 135.
14. Napachie to Jackson, 16 February 1979.
15. Pitseolak to Jackson, 15 February 1979.
16. **Personal communication with Dorothy Eber, 10 March 1994.**
17. Kahn and Kahn, 3.

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List of Illustrations

Entries are organized by title and date, medium and measurements in centimetres, identification number, collection (when known) and photograph or image credit.

The following abbreviations will be used:

West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative	WBEC
McMichael Canadian Art Collection	MCCA
Inuit Art Section, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs	DIAND
National Gallery of Canada	NGC
National Archives of Canada	NAC

- 1) Pitseolak drawing in her tent, June 1967
photograph
courtesy of Evelyn Crees, Nepean
- 2) Map of Baffin Island
- 3) **The Critic**, c1963
graphite, 47.6 x 61.1
AN 36404
NGC; NGC
- 4) **Untitled**, possibly dated June 1962 compared with CD.027 380-81
graphite, 25.5 x 50.7
CD.027 390
WBEC; DIAND
- 5) **Untitled**, 1959/65
coloured pencil, 50.8 x 65.7
CD.027 819
WBEC; DIAND
- 6) **Untitled**, 1966/67
felt pen, 45.7 x 61.0
CD.027 1651
WBEC; DIAND
- 7) **Untitled**, 1979/80
coloured pencil and felt-tip pen, 46.4 x 66.5
CD.027 6419
WBEC; MCCA
- 8) **Untitled**, 1979/80
coloured pencil and felt-tip pen, 51.4 x 66.5
CD.027 6405
WBEC; MCCA

- 9) **Untitled**, dated June 1961
graphite, 45.8 x 61.0
CD.027.364
WBEC; DIAND
- 10) **Untitled**, c1959/65
graphite, 45.8 x 61.1 cm
CD.27.194
WBEC; DIAND
- 11) **Untitled**, c1959/65; possibly July 1962 compared to CD.027.249
graphite, 45.8 x 60.8 cm
CD.27.254
WBEC; DIAND
- 12) **Summer Camp Scene**, c1974
felt-tip pen, 50.6 x 65.4 cm
AN 36414
NGC; DIAND
- 13) **Untitled**, 1966/76
felt pen, 42.4 x 46.5
CD.027.2513
WBEC; DIAND
- 14) **Untitled**, 1959/65
coloured pencil, 50.7 x 65.8
CD.027.907
WBEC; DIAND
- 15) **Untitled**, 1966/76
felt-tip pen, 45.7 x 61.0
CD.027 1548
WBEC; DIAND
- 16) **Untitled**, 1966/76
felt-tip pen, 45.7 x 61.0
CD.027 2095
WBEC; DIAND
- 17) **Untitled**, 1959/65
graphite, 25.5 x 51.0
CD.027 365
WBEC; DIAND
- 18) **The Race**, c1973
felt pen, 45.6 x 61.0
AN 36416
NGC; DIAND

- 19) **Untitled**, 1959/65
graphite, 45.8 x 61.0
CD.027 190
WBEC; DIAND
- 20) **Untitled**, dated June 1962
graphite, 48.8 x 61.0
CD.027 422
WBEC; DIAND
- 21) **Untitled**, 1966/76
felt-tip pen, 56.3 x 76.1
CD.027 1117
WBEC; DIAND
- 22) drawing for stonecut print **Perils of the Sea Travellers**, 1960
graphite, 45.8 x 61.6
CD.027 432
WBEC; DIAND
- 23) drawing for stonecut, **Memories of Childbirth**, 1976
felt-tip pen, 24.1 x 35.6
CD.027 1184; stonecut CDP.27.8.1
WBEC; DIAND
- 24) **Untitled**, 1970
felt pen
illustrated in Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life (Montreal, 1970, not paginated [45]).
- 25) drawing for stonecut print **The Inukshuk Builders**, 1968
coloured pencil
CD.027 1428
WBEC; DIAND
- 26) **Untitled**, 1981
coloured pencil and felt-tip pen, 51.2 x 66.8
CD.027 6601
WBEC; MCCA; also illustrated in When the Whalers Were Up North (Kingston, 1989), 72.
- 27) **Untitled**, c1973
felt-tip pen, 60.9 x 45.8
CD.027 5025
WBEC; DIAND
- 28) **Tattooed Woman**, 1963
stonecut print, 29 1/2 x 24 1/2 inches
Cape Dorset, cat.#22
illustrated in Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life, [10].

- 29) **Portrait of Ashoona**, c.1970
felt pen, 27.5 x 20.5
AN 36418
NGC; DIAND
- 30) **Ashuma**, c1924-31
photograph by J. Dewey Soper
PAC101328
NAC; NAC
- 31) **Untitled**, 1959/65
graphite, 50.7 x 65.5
CD.027 559
WBEC; DIAND
- 32) **Untitled**, 1959/65
graphite, 47.6 x 60.5
CD.027 522
WBEC; DIAND
- 33) **Untitled**, c1967
coloured pencil and felt pen
illustrated in Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life [32].
- 34) **Untitled**, 1966/76
coloured pencil and felt pen, 50.8 x 65.5
CD.027 1357
WBEC; DIAND
- 35) **Untitled**, 1966/76
graphite and felt pen, 35.0 x 41.7
CD.027 1225
WBEC; DIAND
- 36) **Untitled**, 1978
coloured pencil and felt-tip pen, 51.4 x 66.5
CD.027 5120
WBEC; MCCA
- 37) **Untitled**, 1966/76
felt-tip pen, 50.6 x 65.6
CD.027 2974
WBEC; DIAND
- 38) drawing for stonecut, **Memories of Childbirth**, 1976
felt-tip pen, 24.1 x 35.6
CD.027 1865; stonecut CDP.27.8.1
WBEC; DIAND

- 39) **Untitled**, 1966/76
felt-tip pen
CD.027 2277
WBEC; DIAND
- 40) **Untitled**, 1966/76
felt-tip pen, 50.5 x 65.6
CD.027 3342
WBEC; DIAND
- 41) **Untitled**, 1981/82
coloured pencil and felt-tip pen, 51.3 x 66.6
CD.027 7134
WBEC; MCCA
- 42) **Untitled**, c1972
felt-tip pen, 66.0 x 51.0
CD.027 5029
DIAND; illustration from exhibition information package
prepared by DIAND
- 43) **Untitled**, 1959/65
graphite, 50.7 x 65.4
CD.027 653
WBEC; DIAND
- 44) **Untitled**, 1966/76; possibly May 1974 compared to CD.027 3470
felt-tip pen, 50.3 x 66.0
CD.027 3492
WBEC; DIAND
- 45) **Untitled**
coloured pencil and felt-tip pen, 38.5 x 46.0
CD.027 1621
WBEC; DIAND
- 46) **Untitled**, 1966/76
graphite and felt-tip pen, 50.7 x 65.4
CD.027 1604
WBEC; DIAND
- 47) **Untitled**, 1966/76
felt-tip pen, 48.5 x 61.1
CD.027 980
WBEC; DIAND
- 48) **Untitled**, 1980/81
coloured pencil and felt-tip pen, 28.3 x 37.7
CD.027 6629
WBEC; MCCA

- 49) **Untitled**, dated June 1962
graphite, 20.5 x 33.0
CD.027 316
WBEC; DIAND

- 50) **Untitled**, 1966/76
felt-tip pen
CD.027 5049
WBEC; DIAND

- 51) **Untitled**, 1966/76
coloured pencil and felt-tip pen, 51.0 x 65.9
CD.027 2541
WBEC; DIAND

- 52) **Untitled**, possibly c1962-64 compared with CD.027 1228-1232
felt pen, 35.1 x 41.8
CD.027 1247
WBEC; DIAND

- 53) **Untitled**, 1959/65
graphite, 20.5 x 33.0
CD.027 937
WBEC; DIAND

- 54) **Untitled**, 1976
coloured pencil and felt-tip pen, 50.8 x 65.6
CD.027 1345
WBEC; DIAND

- 55) **Untitled**, possibly 1983 compared with CD.027 2879
felt-tip pen, 51.4 x 66.3
CD.027 2874
WBEC; DIAND

- 56) **Untitled**, 1966/76
felt-tip pen, 50.8 x 66.1
CD.027 2969
WBEC; DIAND

- 57) **Untitled**, 1972
coloured pencil and felt-tip pen, 45.5 x 60.7
CD.027 5009
DIAND; illustration from information package prepared by DIAND

Notes on Drawings

Ill.# Cat.#

- 21) CD.027 1117 - the full syllabic translation is "These people are square dancing in Cape Dorset just after the Qalunaat began to arrive. They are having a great time."*
- 28) - the drawing for **Tattooed Woman** was unavailable during my research. It was not brought to the McMichael along with Pitseolak's other drawings. Sandra Barz recalls seeing the drawing and that it had (in syllabics) "Keenie" meaning "who knows". **Personal communication with Sandra Barz**, 10 March 1995. It is likely that the drawing is still in Cape Dorset where approx. 10 000 unidentified drawings remain. Because of the unlocated drawing there has been doubt as to attribution. Without the drawing it is not possible to be certain but in style, this image is strongly characteristic of Pitseolak. Pitseolak has also identified the image as hers.
- 29) AN 36418 - some effort was spent trying to trace the source or reasoning behind the title which identifies the sitter as Ashoona. This drawing was given to the NGC by the DIAND. On the catalogue card **Untitled** was replaced by the current title. None of the past employees at the Inuit Art Section had any information about why the title was changed. It may be that Helga Goetz, who knew Pitseolak, and was at DIAND around the time of the drawing, has further information but was unavailable at the time of my research.
- 46) CD.027 1604 - the syllabic inscription reads "Pitseolak is drawing different images".
- 55) CD.027 2874 - translation of syllabics is "I wonder why this person is levitating".
- 56) CD.027 2969 - translation of syllabics is "This woman is trying to catch up with the flying bird and eventually runs under it by running very fast".
- n/a CD.027 5019 - the full translation is "This is Pitseolak's drawing. The river is flowing into the ice-bound sea.

*unless otherwise noted all translations by Alootook Ipellie.

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