

THE GRAPHIC IMAGES OF ESKIMO PRINTS

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A THESIS

in

The Department of Fine Arts

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Arts in Art Education  
Sir George Williams University  
Montreal, Canada

July, 1972

## ABSTRACT

### The Graphic Images of Eskimo Prints

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Prints by Canadian Eskimo artists have been studied to determine the characteristics of the graphic images and the extent of their similarities and differences. A collection was selected from all the catalogued prints. It is representative of the various types of graphic images and illustrates the variety and diversity of the prints characteristics. Information about the prints and their graphic images are included with each selected example.

An analysis of the graphic images resulted in the distinction of six major categories. They are: a single image presented in an open spatial field, a design extended from a central image, an over-all design which extends to fill the format, two or more figures represented together without ground, non-visual spatial orientation, and perspective space.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the Arctic Institute of North America for the use of their written material and The National Museum of Man in Ottawa for making their collection of original prints available to me. I am grateful to Canadian Arctic Producers Limited and La Fédération des Coopératives du Nouveau-Québec for their assistance, for permission to reproduce the prints, and for the donation of the print catalogues. I am thankful to Helga Goetz of The National Museum of Man, Professor A. Pinsky, and Professor R. Harper, for their assistance and for undertaking the reading of my thesis. I would also like to thank Mr. M. Somers for all his assistance.

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**PART ONE:**

**INTRODUCTION**

## Chapter 1

### THE STUDY

#### TOPIC

The graphic images of the prints by Canadian Eskimo artists have some characteristics which are similar and some that are varied and diverse. This study is concerned with the graphic images, their compositional characteristics, and their similarities and differences. All the catalogued prints by Canadian Eskimo artists were examined in relation to one another, and from these a representative collection of prints has been selected for presentation.

The purpose of the study is to distinguish and reveal the various characteristics of the graphic images and point out their differences. The prints were selected to be representative and illustrate the types of graphic images that exist. The print collection also acts as a framework for pointing out information about the prints, their graphic images, and the influences which have affected them.

The study is designed to provide educators and other interested persons with both a written reference source and a representative collection of prints. It is also needed to emphasize the particular differences that exist within the prints which have been known primarily for their ethnical similarities.

The presentation takes into account the indigenous Eskimo culture and the history of their art as well as the Euro-American art standards which are now commonly applied to Eskimo prints. A dis-

inction is made between the image as conceived by the artist and the image as seen in terms of Euro-American art standards and aesthetics. To reconcile the mounting confusion about the cross-cultural influences on Eskimo prints, consideration is given to both the cultural and accultural circumstances which have affected the prints so they may be seen in proper perspective.

The study is limited to all the catalogued prints by Canadian Eskimo artists between 1959 and the spring of 1972. This includes approximately 1,500 prints that appear in the print catalogues from Cape Dorset, Povungnituk, Holman Island, and Baker Lake.<sup>1</sup> The study is confined to the graphic images of the prints only. However, their relationship to other Eskimo graphic art forms is considered.

The study covers thirteen years of printmaking, but it does not place the prints in a developmental framework or a historical sequence .

#### PROCEDURE

The study was begun by gathering background information about the Eskimo, his history, culture, and art. In addition, many summers spent in the Arctic acquainted me with the Eskimo and the environment in which he lives today. All the catalogues of Eskimo prints were collected, which include twelve from Cape Dorset, six from Povungnituk, seven from Holman Island, and two from Baker Lake.<sup>2</sup>

The catalogued prints were studied in terms of the distin-

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<sup>1</sup>See Bibliography: Catalogues, p. 94.

<sup>2</sup>See Appendix, p. 90.

guishable characteristics of their graphic images. Categories representing six major distinguishing characteristics were established, and about 120 prints were tentatively selected to illustrate them. Originals of the selected prints were then studied more closely. From these, forty-four prints were finally chosen as being representative of the graphic images, subjects, themes, styles, formal elements, and types of representation.

The graphic images of the selected prints are described in terms of the major distinguishing characteristics, and the prints have been organized accordingly.<sup>1</sup> Information about the prints and their graphic images were incorporated with the descriptions and presented with the print reproductions.

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapters 8 to 13.

## Chapter 2

### THE ESKIMO AND HIS ART

#### EARLY HISTORY

The Eskimos arrived on this continent from Asia about 5,000 years ago and made their way, in several stages, from the Bering Strait across the Arctic to Greenland.<sup>1</sup> Archaeologically, this time is divided into four periods,<sup>2</sup> and most literature on the history of Eskimo art is written to correspond with these periods.

The Pre-Dorset culture represents the first period which dates from about 3,000 B.C.<sup>3</sup> It developed in the area around the Bering Strait and was composed of small wandering bands of people living "...a basically Eskimo way of life...."<sup>4</sup> It is assumed that their art was associated with their magico-religious culture and shamanistic beliefs.<sup>5</sup> The shaman was an important member of the community who had magical powers and the ability to influence the spirits. Although little is known about their art, a small amount of

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<sup>1</sup>William E. Taylor Jr. and George Swinton, "Prehistoric Dorset Art," The Beaver (1967), p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>5</sup>Walter J. Hoffman, "The Graphic Art of the Eskimos," Annual Report (1895), p. 773.

carving has been found that represents both "...animals and naturalistic human faces."<sup>1</sup>

The Pre-Dorset culture evolved into the Dorset culture in the Central Canadian Arctic sometime between 1,000 B.C. and 800 B.C.<sup>2</sup> The small scale art of this period<sup>3</sup> was marked by a simple and sparse use of ornamentation and an emphasis on the form.<sup>4</sup> Charles Martijn studied the art of this period and found that "superb miniature carvings of animals and human beings, often along stylized lines, represent a distinctive aspect of this tradition."<sup>5</sup>

Art of the Dorset period was also primarily shamanistic. Amulets and ceremonial objects were made for magico-religious purposes,<sup>6</sup> and stylized carvings were produced as part of the hunting cult.<sup>7</sup> Small carvings of birds and animals were made to appease the spirits of those they hunted.<sup>8</sup> A few ivory animal carvings have been found in which the interior skeleton is graphically represented on its outer surface.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Charles A. Martijn, "A Retrospective Glance at Canadian Eskimo Carving," The Beaver (1967), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Taylor (1967), p. 34.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>4</sup>Jorgen Meldgaard, Eskimo Sculpture (1960), p. 24.

<sup>5</sup>Martijn (1967), p. 8.

<sup>6</sup>Swinton (1967), p. 39.

<sup>7</sup>Meldgaard (1960), p. 26.

<sup>8</sup>Taylor (1967), p. 46.

<sup>9</sup>Meldgaard (1960), p. 24.

A different Eskimo group began spreading its way across the Arctic from Alaska in about 1,000 A.D.<sup>1</sup> This was the Thule culture composed of large organized bands of whalers. The hunting of whales necessitated organized communities which in turn led to a generalization and unification of Eskimo culture and art.<sup>2</sup> For this reason, Thule art is generally considered less impressive than the art of other Eskimo periods.<sup>3</sup> Martijn tells us that "artists availed themselves of simple line motifs, and customarily drilled rows of decorative dots on tiny flat-bottomed birds and other animal effigies."<sup>4</sup>

The art of this period was primarily graphic rather than plastic.<sup>5</sup> That is, birds and animals that were incised on pieces of antler or ivory were placed within rectangles or boundary lines. This isolated the image so that it remained a graphic representation rather than allowing it to exist as an integral part of the plastic form on which it was incised.<sup>6</sup>

The Thule culture began to disappear with the decline of whales and the harsh climatic changes during the seventeen hundreds. As a result, the large communities broke up into smaller nomadic

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<sup>1</sup>Martijn (1967), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Meldgaard (1960), p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>William E. Taylor Jr., "found art - and frozen," artscanada (1972), p. 35.

<sup>4</sup>Martijn (1967), p. 8.

<sup>5</sup>Joan M. Vastokas, "Continuities in Eskimo Graphic Style," artscanada (1972), p. 72.

<sup>6</sup>Vastokas (1972), pp. 72-73.

groupings.<sup>1</sup> These small groups scattered throughout the Central Canadian Arctic, and they were the Eskimos met by European explorers and traders in the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> The recording of information about the Eskimo marked the beginning of the historical or traditional period. White-Eskimo contact took place regularly throughout the Arctic during the nineteenth century. Explorers and traders anxious to trade with the Eskimo for small carvings and souvenirs encouraged the production of art objects,<sup>3</sup> and the acculturation of the Eskimo had begun.

#### TRADITIONAL PERIOD

The term 'traditional', when applied to the Eskimos and their art, is a generalization. However, despite many differences among Eskimo peoples and the vast geographical regions that they inhabit, all Canadian Eskimos have a great deal in common. Their culture and language are basically similar, and although the Eskimos live on both the coast and inland tundra, the environment of both regions is treeless and characterized by long and cold winters. The resourcefulness and adaptability necessary for survival in the harsh Arctic are attributes common to all Eskimos. The term 'traditional' is helpful in relating basic information about the Eskimo at the beginning of the historical period as long as it is realized in a generalized sense.

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<sup>1</sup>Martijn (1967), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Taylor (1972), p. 35.

<sup>3</sup>Martijn (1967), pp. 10-11.



Traditionally, Eskimo art was closely related to the activities of daily life, the hunting cult, and their magico-religious beliefs.<sup>1</sup> Landscape was only something important as it supported life, and in their art it sometimes acted as a background to support the images and activities of living things. More often, images were presented independently without the addition of supporting ground. Traditional subject matter centered around the human figure, spirits, birds, fish, and animals.

The carvings of the traditional Eskimo were designed for a variety of purposes. Charles Martijn points out four major functions served by Eskimo carvings.<sup>2</sup> One was the decorative function which was primarily the adornment of utilitarian objects with human and animal forms. Another was the magico-religious function of good-luck charms, amulets, and shamanistic art pieces used for ceremonial purposes. A number of carvings were also made for toys and use in games, and probably some carvings were executed purely for self-entertainment.

The economic function was an additional one which came with the arrival of the White-man to the Arctic.<sup>3</sup> The Eskimos traded small carvings and artifacts with the explorers and traders throughout the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. At this time, most of their art was produced for the souvenir trade which encouraged production as well as an emphasis on the ethnical char-

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<sup>1</sup>See *infra*, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Martijn (1967), pp. 5-19.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

acteristics of their work.<sup>1</sup>

#### CONTEMPORARY PERIOD

Contemporary Eskimo art begins with the distinctive form of carvings which developed during the years 1949 to 1953.<sup>2</sup> It was characterized by increased size<sup>3</sup> and the adoption of a fixed point of view.<sup>4</sup> Increased productivity and the recognition of Eskimo art by European and North American countries also began at this time. Eskimo art had been encouraged during the early part of this century by the Hudson Bay Company and the Canadian Handicrafts Guild,<sup>5</sup> although no great changes took place until 1949. James Houston convinced the Canadian Handicrafts Guild to make a test purchase of carvings from Baffin Island to see if their work was marketable in the South.<sup>6</sup> The Canadian Handicrafts Guild accepted the challenge, and a collection of work was sent to Montreal for exhibition and sale in 1949.<sup>7</sup> It was a great success, and a new economic potential was opened up for the Eskimos. The Department of Mines and Resources contributed financial assistance to help establish the production

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<sup>1</sup>George Swinton, "Eskimo Art - A Living Art Form," in Eskimo of the Canadian Arctic (1968), p. 234.

<sup>2</sup>Martijn (1967), p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>5</sup>George Swinton, Eskimo Sculpture (1965), pp. 48-49.

<sup>6</sup>James Houston, "Eskimo Sculptors," The Beaver (1951), p. 35.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

and distribution of Eskimo art.<sup>1</sup>

Printmaking began at Cape Dorset in 1957. James Houston, who was a practicing artist, acted as technical advisor.<sup>2</sup> Two printmaking processes related to art forms with which the Eskimo was already familiar were introduced to them.<sup>3</sup> One was the stencil print in which ink was brushed or sprayed through the cut-out parts of a sealskin or waxed cardboard. Making the stencil was not unlike the process that had been traditionally used in making appliqué garments.<sup>4</sup> The other method was the stone cut.<sup>5</sup> Stone blocks were smoothed and polished, and the negative areas of the print were carved away. Ink was rolled on the low-relief image that was left on the printing block. Paper was then pressed on the block to receive the image.<sup>6</sup> The preparation of the stone printing block was no problem since the artists had already established themselves as successful stone carvers. After some experimentation with these two processes, the first collection of stone cut and stencil prints was marketed with great success at Stratford Theatre in Ontario.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Houston (1951), p. 39.

<sup>2</sup>James Houston, Eskimo Prints (1967), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Eskimo Graphic Art 1962 (cat.), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Edmund Carpenter, "Artists of the North," Natural History (1962), p. 12.

<sup>5</sup>Eskimo Graphic Art 1960 (cat.), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Houston (1967), pp. 16-18.

Houston studied for a short while in Japan and then returned with new knowledge to assist the Eskimos with the production of their first catalogued prints which were released in 1959.<sup>1</sup> Four artists were chosen to be printmakers, and they transferred the drawings of other artists into editioned prints.<sup>2</sup> In 1961 engraving on copper plates was introduced. This was a more direct method of printmaking permitting the artists to carve their images directly into the plate.<sup>3</sup> A new collection of Cape Dorset prints has been released yearly with the exception of 1964.

Povungnituk began experimenting with stone cut prints in 1961 after many years of successful stone carving.<sup>4</sup> The first catalogued prints were sent South for exhibition and sale in 1962 after the arrival of Victor Tinkl as technical advisor.<sup>5</sup> The Povungnituk Co-operative has since produced six catalogues representing their collections of stone cut prints.

Holman Island is a small community in the Western Arctic where they use limestone for making stone cut prints.<sup>6</sup> They began experimenting in 1961 with the encouragement of Father Tardy, and had

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>4</sup>Eskimo Graphic Art 1962 (cat.), p. 33.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Helen Burgess, "Eskimo Art from Holman," North (1966), p. 16.

their first print exhibition in 1965.<sup>1</sup> Since then, the Holman Island co-operative has produced a yearly collection of prints even though they only have a few artists.

Prints are made with both stencils and stone blocks at Baker Lake in the Central Canadian Arctic. Here the draughtsman and the printmakers are considered of equal importance.<sup>2</sup> The prints are credited with the combined names of the draughtsman, the artist who prepares the stone block or stencil, and the printer. Baker Lake is the newest printmaking area. They have released catalogued print collections for 1970 and 1971.

The Canadian Eskimo Art Committee was formed in the autumn of 1961 to give advice on technical problems and approve the works to be released for sale.<sup>3</sup> The committee composed of professional artists and museum officials makes judgements on the quality of Eskimo art and decides upon the distribution policies.<sup>4</sup>

The Canadian Arctic Producers Limited, in Ottawa, is a non-profit organization formed in 1965 to handle the distribution and sale of Canadian Eskimo art. They are an administrative body with the function of coordinating activities of the Canadian Eskimo Art Committee and the co-operatives.<sup>5</sup> The co-operatives are local organ-

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<sup>1</sup>Burgess (1966), pp. 13-14.

<sup>2</sup>Baker Lake Prints (cat.), (1970), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Eskimo Graphic Art 1962 (cat.), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Martijn (1967), p. 6.

<sup>5</sup>W. T. Larmour, The Art of the Canadian Eskimo (1967), p. 13.

izations operated by the Eskimos themselves. They provide resources and facilities for Eskimo artists and handle the local administration of the printmaking workshops. The administration of Eskimo art in Quebec is handled by the local co-operatives and La Fédération Des Coopératives Du Nouveau-Québec in Levis, Quebec.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

PART TWO:  
PERSPECTIVE

## Chapter 3

### ACROSS CULTURES

The perspective of this study takes into account two important points related to contemporary Eskimo prints and the culture from which they have developed. Firstly, the prints are looked at in terms of cross-cultural aspects, since we are accustomed to standards and values that are different from those of the Eskimo artists. Secondly, contemporary Eskimo prints are a new art form which has resulted from both the indigenous and the accultural elements that are a part of Eskimo life today.

### TWO CULTURAL VIEWPOINTS

This study looks at the prints both in terms of Euro-American art standards and in terms of the artists intentions and interpretations. It is convenient to apply our standard art jargon to the prints when we are studying and analyzing them because of our occidental cultural background. However, we should remember to take into account the context from which the prints come and be objective about relating our own values and standards to the work of Eskimo artists.

The selection and organization of the types of graphic images in this study were governed primarily by Western art concepts such as the spatial function of the picture plane. Equally important however, is the type of representation intended by the artist, since the spatial function of the picture plane has resulted from the type of



representation which the Eskimo artist has employed. Standard Euro-American art terminology is used in describing the prints and the major distinguishing characteristics. We should bear in mind, however, that this terminology is foreign to the Eskimo. Our concept of art is also foreign since the objectification of art was unfamiliar to him until very recently.

The Eskimos have no word in their language for art, and the closest word that approximates it is 'making'.<sup>1</sup> Art was to them, simply making something well, and the Eskimos would not think of making it any other way. The process of doing art was more important for the Eskimos than the product because it was the making and entering into the experience of creation that was of value.<sup>2</sup> In traditional times, small carvings would be left casually behind.<sup>3</sup> It had been made; it was done. The active participation of the artist and the material with which he worked gave a oneness to the creative act and prevented art from being detached from its creation. No distinction was made between art objects and utilitarian objects. Form and function truly existed together.<sup>4</sup>

#### A NEW ART FORM

Contemporary Eskimo prints are a new art form that reflect the influences of the Eskimos' inherent tradition and the assimilated

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<sup>1</sup>Edmund Carpenter, Eskimo (1959), p. 34.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

characteristics which result from the Eskimos' accultural circumstances. Like the art of other people, Eskimo art has always been linked with their culture and the history that has preceeded it.<sup>1</sup> Franz Boas has said that a culture is determined by the way in which it combines and develops its own cultural material with the cultural material of others.<sup>2</sup>

This is significant when we consider that the Eskimo culture is changing rapidly with the assimilation of a new culture, even though much of their heritage remains. Furthermore, no art can be looked at as something isolated from culture if we are to appreciate its full meaning.<sup>3</sup> To fully enjoy and understand the various images of Eskimo prints, we must know the cultural context from which they come<sup>4</sup> and be perceptive to the new influences upon them.

Contemporary Eskimo prints are not primitive, nor are they occidental. They can only be considered 'primitive' in the limited sense that they have a spontaneity and seemingly naive quality. This results from the Eskimos' simple and direct approach and the way they view the world. Although many characteristics of the prints are a result of contact with non-Eskimos, the prints cannot be considered Western because of the many characteristics which stem from their heritage prior to White contact.

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<sup>1</sup>Leonhard Adam, Primitive Art, (1963), p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>Franz Boas, Primitive Art, (1951), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Joan M. Vastokas, "Continuities in Eskimo Graphic Style," artscanada (1972), p. 81.

<sup>4</sup>Larmour, The Art of the Canadian Eskimo, (1967), p. 14.

## Chapter 4

### INDIGENOUS CHARACTERISTICS

The indigenous characteristics of contemporary Eskimo prints are either ethnical, regional, or individual in origin. They are inherently related to the cultural and environmental circumstances from which the Eskimo has come.

#### ETHNICAL

It is primarily the ethnical characteristics that have resulted in the international recognition and appeal of Eskimo prints. Following are some of the curious aspects of the traditional Eskimo culture which are inherent influences on the prints.

The Eskimo language is structured very differently from ours and contains many characteristics related to their peculiar ecological setting.<sup>1</sup> Because language is so closely akin to culture, the Eskimo language reveals many concepts and orientations that are a part of their heritage.<sup>2</sup>

In the Eskimo language, all objects are viewed two-dimensionally,<sup>3</sup> and the dimensions of objects and their placement in space

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<sup>1</sup>Raymond E. Gagné, "Spatial Concepts in the Eskimo Language," in Eskimo of the Canadian Arctic (1968), p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 33-34.

are more accurately localized in their language than ours.<sup>1</sup> Objects are classified according to their length and width and fall under two general classifications of equal or unequal dimensions.<sup>2</sup> Within a few words an Eskimo can indicate the position of a seal on the ice or a community on a piece of land. His conception of the land is like a floor plane, imagined from above, showing the relative parts on a flat surface. His reference to objects or positions on it are dependent upon their relative position on this planar surface. The influence of this conceptual mode can be seen in the non-visual spatial organization that is characteristic of so many Eskimo prints.<sup>3</sup> It is also indicative of the persistent two-dimensional image and the visual clarity which is so common.

The particular spatial-temporal orientation of the Eskimo is also evident in their language. Time as we know it was not a part of the traditional Eskimos' way of life, but position and placement were an integral part of their livelihood on the barrens.<sup>4</sup> In their language, a case system concerned with shape and placement is more predominant than the tense system.<sup>5</sup> Time is all important in our language, and tense is a controlling constituent; but in Eskimo, localizers concerned with hereness/thereness, insideness/outsiderness,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>3</sup>See *infra*, p. 72.

<sup>4</sup>Edmund Carpenter, *Eskimo* (1959), p. 13.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

and upness/downness, control the language.<sup>1</sup> Time was not relevant in the Eskimo culture, and their language lacks words to express it.<sup>2</sup>

Time and space, in fact, are not conceptually separated in Eskimo.<sup>3</sup> Nouns and verbs are joined together so that 'here', 'now' simply becomes 'herenow'.<sup>4</sup> Words in the Eskimo language represent a oneness or coming together of the subject and its action.<sup>5</sup> We are so familiar with the chronological mode of relating to events, that we can be confused by the graphic images of Eskimo prints if we are not aware of the orientation of the artists who created them.<sup>6</sup> In the prints, pictorial composition is more often governed by spatial relationships than temporal sequence.

The traditional Eskimo was not orientated to spatial enclosure.<sup>7</sup> The Arctic environment is an open expanse that extends in all directions, and most often it is formless. The horizon is indistinguishable for much of the year when the sky and ground become one encompassing space.<sup>8</sup> The Eskimo is oriented to this unlimited space,

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<sup>1</sup>Gagné (1968), p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>3</sup>Carpenter (1959), p. 25.

<sup>4</sup>Edmund Carpenter, "Image Making in Arctic Art," in Sign Image Symbol (1966), p. 206.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 206-208.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>7</sup>Carpenter (1959), pp. 18-19.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

and it is not surprising that in the majority of prints the subject is placed in an open spatial field without indication of background or landscape setting.

The Eskimos' sensual relationship with the real world is dominated by the acoustic rather than the visual sense that is so important to us.<sup>1</sup> Spatial location is primarily comprehended acoustically rather than visually, since space is perceived more by the ear than the eye.<sup>2</sup> Wind is therefore very important in the Eskimo world.<sup>3</sup> It's direction and intensity are sensually judged by the Eskimo traveller or hunter, and he can fix his position in an otherwise boundless space where visual orientation is greatly limited. The open space which is so characteristic of the prints is indicative of this distending acoustic space.

The Eskimos do, however, have tremendous powers of observation and memory in seemingly empty spaces.<sup>4</sup> This keen sight and memory result in an intense knowledge of the game that they hunt and allows them to graphically represent animals with appropriate gestures and anatomical details.<sup>5</sup>

The Eskimos have long been noted for their emotional rest-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 30-31.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>5</sup>Walter J. Hoffman, "The Graphic Art of the Eskimos," Annual Report (1895), p. 791.

restraint<sup>1</sup> and joy of life.<sup>2</sup> It is well expressed in their word 'ayor-ama' which means it is so, nothing can be done about it.<sup>3</sup> It is a care-free attitude that allows them to exist happily with all their problems of life and survival.<sup>4</sup> Their very tentative existence and dependence upon a harsh environment is a part of their life and is closely related to the emotional restraint which is so evident in their prints.

The magico-religious nature of the traditional Eskimos' beliefs, that were so closely tied to their culture and art, can still be seen in their prints today. The shamanistic beliefs and associated mythology are still a dominant theme. These beliefs were associated with the creation of man and animals, and the spirits that controlled life and death. A basic concept found in the prints is the Eskimos' reverence for each thing, whether living or not. For the Eskimo, everything has a spirit or 'innua',<sup>5</sup> and should be respected for its existence. The spirits of the animals and birds that were hunted as game were well respected, and the ritual and tradition associated with the hunt were closely adhered to. It is not surpris-

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<sup>1</sup>Dorothy Jean Ray, Artists of the Tundra and the Sea (1961), p. 152.

<sup>2</sup>Paul Riesman, "The Eskimo Discovery of Man's Place in the Universe," in Sign Image Symbol (1966), p. 233.

<sup>3</sup>Raymond de Cocola and Paul King, Ayorama (1955), p. 4.

<sup>4</sup>Jorgen Meldgaard, Eskimo Sculpture (1960), p. 8.

<sup>5</sup>James Houston, Eskimo Prints (1967), p. 53.

ing that the Eskimo portrays a single visual image with such import.

## REGIONAL

Many differing characteristics in the prints can be attributed to the regions from which they originate. Thousands of miles separate groups of Eskimos both culturally and geographically, and even though their basic way of life is similar, there are many variations from one place to another. Legends and myths are often similar but differ in detail, and although the Eskimo language is common throughout the Arctic, the dialects differ greatly. Within the Canadian Arctic, geographical location, weather patterns, availability of game, and systems of transportation, all lead to differences in the Eskimo peoples and their art.

The isolated stretch of Arctic coast between the mouth of the Mackenzie River and Alaska accounts for the differences in the heritage of the Canadian and Alaskan Eskimo.<sup>1</sup> This is especially relevant in the field of art since the Alaskan Eskimo was introduced to extensive acculturation at the beginning of this century when the souvenir art trade and commercial marketing of Eskimo art began in that district. On the contrary, this development did not take place in the Canadian Arctic until 1950.

## INDIVIDUAL

Individual artists are the third and most important factor which affect the images of the prints. Personal expression and the

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<sup>1</sup>William E. Taylor Jr. and George Swinton, "Prehistoric Dorset Art," The Beaver (1967), p. 42.



creation of art are something individual regardless of how dependent they may be upon cultural, environment, or period influences. The Canadian Eskimo artists have distinctive individual styles, and their work is easily recognizable by their personal imagery. Eskimo artists first came to be known by way of their ethnical commonality, but now emphasis is shifting to the styles of individual artists. George Swinton has said that the success of contemporary Eskimo art "...depends most on individual form and not on collective style."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>George Swinton, Eskimo Sculpture (1965), p. 20.

## Chapter 9

### ASSIMILATED CHARACTERISTICS

The accultural nature of contemporary Eskimo life, the influences of commercial encouragement, and the new tools and techniques that have been introduced, are all evident in the prints. They have resulted in the characteristics which the Eskimos have assimilated into their new art form.

### ACCULTURAL

The rapid acculturation which is taking place is influencing the images of Eskimo prints. The assimilated characteristics of the prints are related to the transitional nature of their culture today. These characteristics are not superficially implanted but are united with the indigenous characteristics, and therefore the distinction between them is not always clear. There are also many characteristics which can be attributed to non-Eskimo influences such as subject matter and increased use of perspective space.

The Eskimo has been noted for his adaptability and flexibility which allow him to assimilate a new culture so well.<sup>1</sup> The new ideas and materials that have come to the North in recent years appeal to the Eskimo. He wants to integrate our culture into his own, even if

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<sup>1</sup>W.E. Willmott, "The Flexibility of Eskimo Social Organization," in Eskimo of the Canadian Arctic (1963), p. 149.

it means the sacrifice of some traditional heritage.<sup>1</sup> New religion, new ways of life, and new art forms are all met with enthusiasm. They are becoming a part of the Eskimos' new way of life and are reflected in their prints.

#### COMMERCIAL

The commercial nature of Eskimo art at the present time and the resulting influence on the graphic images of the prints are not unlike the economic aspects of art in the rest of the Western world.<sup>2</sup> Since the major commercial encouragement began in 1943, Eskimo art has achieved a place in the art world it did not have before. However, the economic benefits are not a new development for Eskimo art. For hundreds of years the Eskimos have been carving and trading for material goods,<sup>3</sup> and our concept of the traditional Eskimo was formed at a time when their culture was already influenced by our expectations. In fact, Swinton has said "...that economic motivation has been a prime factor in the creation of Eskimo art during the past century and a half."<sup>4</sup> We should be perceptive to the changes which result from commercialism, but we should not assume that all these changes are undesirable.

Besides the direct influences on the art itself, increased com-

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<sup>1</sup>George Swinton, Eskimo Sculpture (1965), p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>4</sup>George Swinton, "Eskimo Art - A Living Art Form," in Eskimo of the Canadian Arctic (1963), p. 223.

mercialism has encouraged the production of Eskimo art which is playing an important role in the recording of traditional Eskimo life and legends. It is also bringing a necessary income to many Eskimo people.

#### NEW TECHNIQUES

The new techniques and tools adopted by the Eskimo have enabled him to broaden his forms of art expression. At the same time, they have resulted in stylistic and compositional changes. The most important change has been the use of flat rectangular paper for graphic representation.<sup>1</sup> This has necessitated new structure and encouraged new compositional innovations.<sup>2</sup>

The imagery in all forms of Eskimo graphics have similar relationships even though the media or equipment may vary. The major distinguishing characteristics that are explained in the following section are common to Eskimo drawings, tapestries, and prints.

In a drawing exhibition in 1970, Conark,<sup>3</sup> a well known artist from Baker Lake, made use of five out of six of the major distinguishing characteristics as described in this study. The first exhibition of woven tapestries by Eskimo artists from Pangnirtung con-

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<sup>1</sup>The original prints usually have a very large border so that the edges of the paper do not interfere with the images. The print reproductions in the catalogues and in this study have been cropped, and the relationship of the size of the image and the format is not accurate.

<sup>2</sup>Joan M. Vastokas, "Continuities in Eskimo Graphic Style," artscanada (1972), p. 73.

<sup>3</sup>Conark - Pangnark (cat.), (1970).

tained images that corresponded, with few exceptions,<sup>1</sup> to the six major distinguishing characteristics of this study.<sup>2</sup> The same fundamental types of representation and function of the picture plane underlie all recent Eskimo art that involves graphic representation.

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<sup>1</sup>In the tapestries, the category representing over-all designs made use of abstract geometric pattern rather than the fluid compositions of the prints.

<sup>2</sup>Woven Tapestries by Eskimo Artists of Pangnirtung was an exhibition held at the Canadian Guild of Crafts in Montreal from March 31 to April 29, 1972.

PART THREE:  
THE GRAPHIC IMAGES

## Chapter 6

### CHARACTERISTICS

There are many characteristics that could be used as criteria for selecting prints which are representative of the graphic images. Following are some of the characteristics that were considered but not found to be the major characteristics which were indicative of the variety and diversity of the graphic images. They are, however, all relevant information about the graphic images and did influence the selection of prints within the six major categories that were established.

The subject matter of Eskimo prints is primarily birds, fish, animals, the human figure, and images of spirits. Nearly every print contains one of these subjects. They may be presented alone or combined into compositions with sleds, boats, igloos, and other objects associated with daily life. The earth and landscape, however, are only of interest as they relate to human life.<sup>1</sup>

Common themes which are used for depicting these subjects include myths, legends, and tales.<sup>2</sup> Mythological themes, which have not yet been forgotten by the older members of the community, are those connected with magico-religious beliefs of the traditional

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<sup>1</sup>Larmour, The Art of the Canadian Eskimo (1967), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>The contexts of these words are the same as those expressed by Evie Ikidluak of McGill University in a talk Eskimo Legends given at the November meeting of the Saint James Literary Society.

Eskimo. Many of the prints portray hunting scenes and the associated spirits that were a part of the hunting cult and shamanistic beliefs. The legends are historical accounts and stories from the past relating to the creation of man and animals. They are not always easily distinguishable from mythology because of the inclusion of supernatural elements. The tales depict daily life in the Eskimo world and tell entertaining stories from the past.

The styles of the images are naturalistic, designed, symbolic, and even abstract. They are found in both early and recent prints from all the printmaking areas and do not indicate any particular period or location. These styles, the interpretations made by individual artists, and the technical influences which have affected them, are discussed later in relation to particular prints.

The formal handling of subject matter includes extensive variations of the principles and elements of design. Because the prints include such a varied use of formal elements, and only broad generalizations could be made, this information is related in the discussion of individual examples.

Eskimo artists generally make use of three types of representation in contemporary prints. The first, a single visual image, is the most dominant type and has been found in Eskimo art since traditional times. In this type of representation the picture plane's primary function is to support the image. The second type of representation comprises designs composed of several component parts which are usually symmetrical or extend from a central focal point. The subject acts as a motif or center of interest for the designs



which are purely visual combinations which extend over the relatively planar surface. The third type of representation is narrative. Events are portrayed, stories are told, or information is presented by combining two or more figures into a related composition. In this type of representation the function of the picture plane is often to represent real space and placement, and sometimes it acts as a recession-al plane indicative of perspective space.

## Chapter 7

### MAJOR DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

The print collection was organized into six categories according to the major distinguishing characteristics established after a visual analysis of the prints. The categories relate primarily to the types of representation used by the artists, the resulting space, and the function of the picture plane. They are explained in chapters 8 to 13 in conjunction with the prints which represent them.

The distinctions between the categories are not always rigid because of the extensive variations and combinations of the characteristics in the prints themselves. Many prints could be placed in more than one category because they combine more than one characteristic. However, most prints usually have a dominant characteristic which is easily distinguishable. The sequential arrangement takes into account the proximity of a print to its neighbouring category. Prints are also included which do not fit entirely into one category but show the transition from one to the other.

No single principle of selection or arrangement was decided upon before the prints were analyzed visually. The categories were established independently according to the distinguishing characteristics. They do, however, resemble many points made by other authors on the images of Eskimo prints. An article by Dr. Joan Vastokas on the Continuities in Eskimo Graphic Style is especially relevant as

she describes many characteristics and makes several points which are also mentioned in this study.<sup>1</sup> In this article Dr. Vastokas also speaks of the "...vast range of compositional possibilities available to the contemporary Eskimo printmakers...."<sup>2</sup>

The final selection of prints was influenced by subject, theme, style, formal elements, and type of representation, so that the prints would be as representative as possible. The selected prints are also illustrative of each location, each printmaking technique, and the thirteen years which this study covers.

The prints are presented along with the descriptions of the major distinguishing characteristics and other information about the prints. Influences on the graphic images and information about the production of the prints are related throughout.

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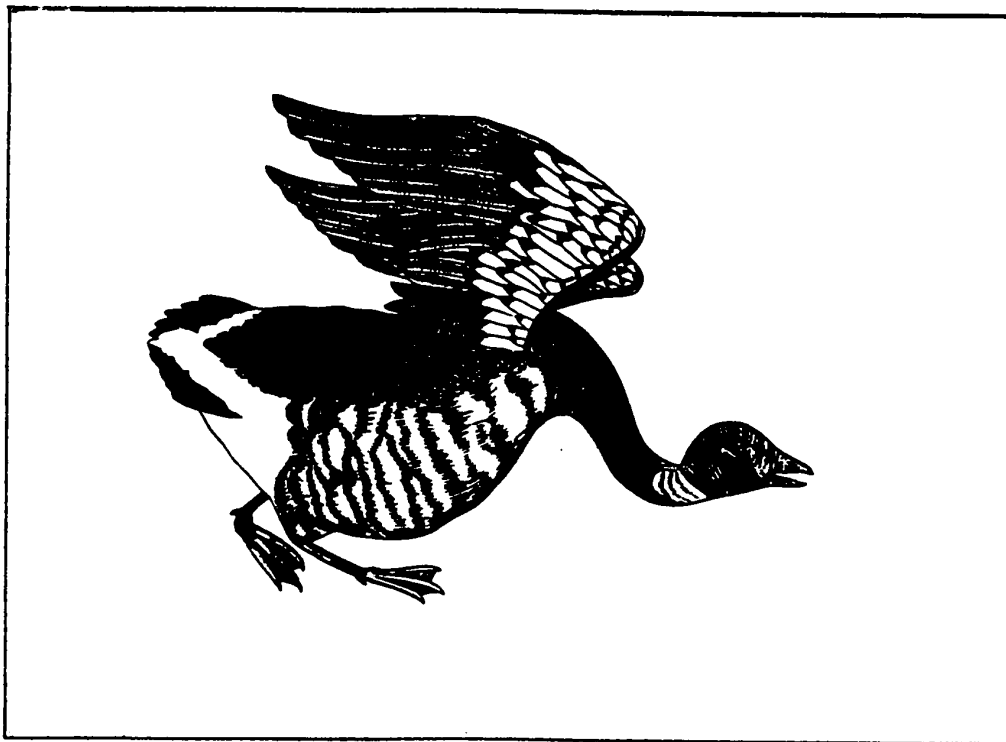
<sup>1</sup>Joan M. Vastokas, "Continuities in Eskimo Graphic Style," artscanada (1972), pp. 69-83.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

## Chapter 8

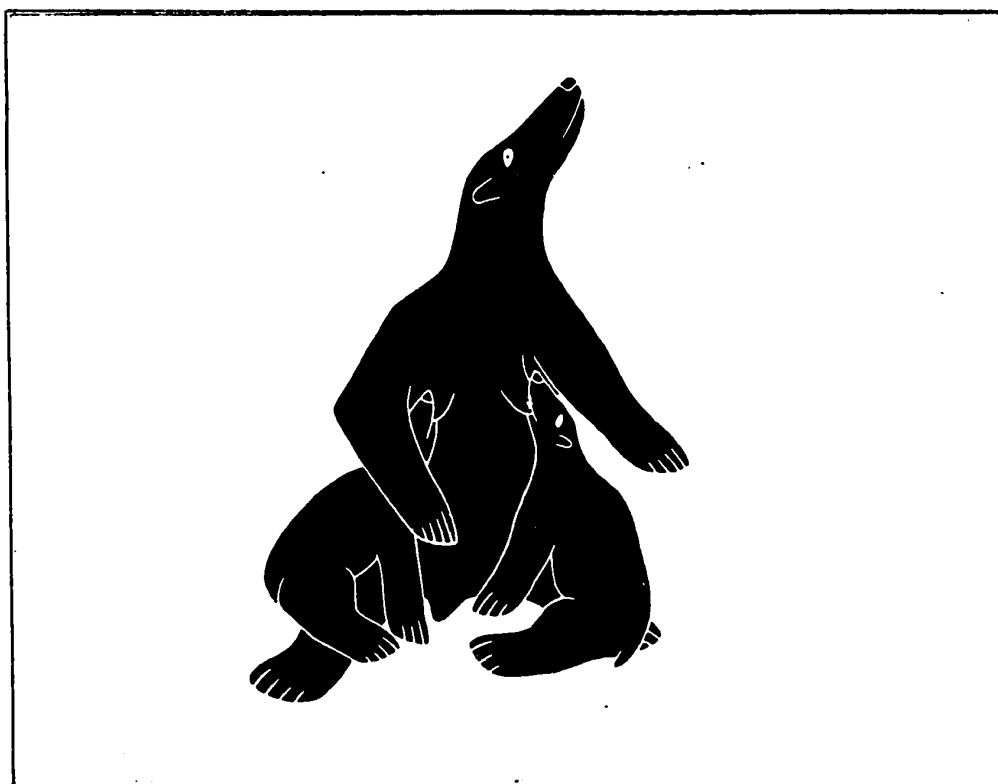
### SINGLE IMAGES

A single visual image presented in an open spacial field is the major distinguishing characteristic represented by the first category. The subject of these prints is a single figure or a closely connected group of figures which appear as a single image. It is usually centrally placed within the format without background or other spatial indications in the surrounding area. Both two-dimensional and three-dimensional images from each printmaking area are represented in a variety of styles.



1. Kananginak, CANADA GOOSE,  
Cape Dorset, 1966.

The first engraving by Kananginak is a CANADA GOOSE (1) presented in an open spatial field. The image is rendered in a three-dimensional manner. A degree of naturalism results from the use of detail, gesture, and the addition of texture, although the tonal variations do not emphasize the third-dimension of the bird. The textural effect, which is appropriate for representing feathers naturalistically, results from the stylistic rocking of the burin. This engraving technique, which usually appears as texture, is characterized by a zig-zag line which is popular in many Cape Dorset prints.



2. Kalvak, BEAR FEEDING CUBS,  
Holman Island, 1969.

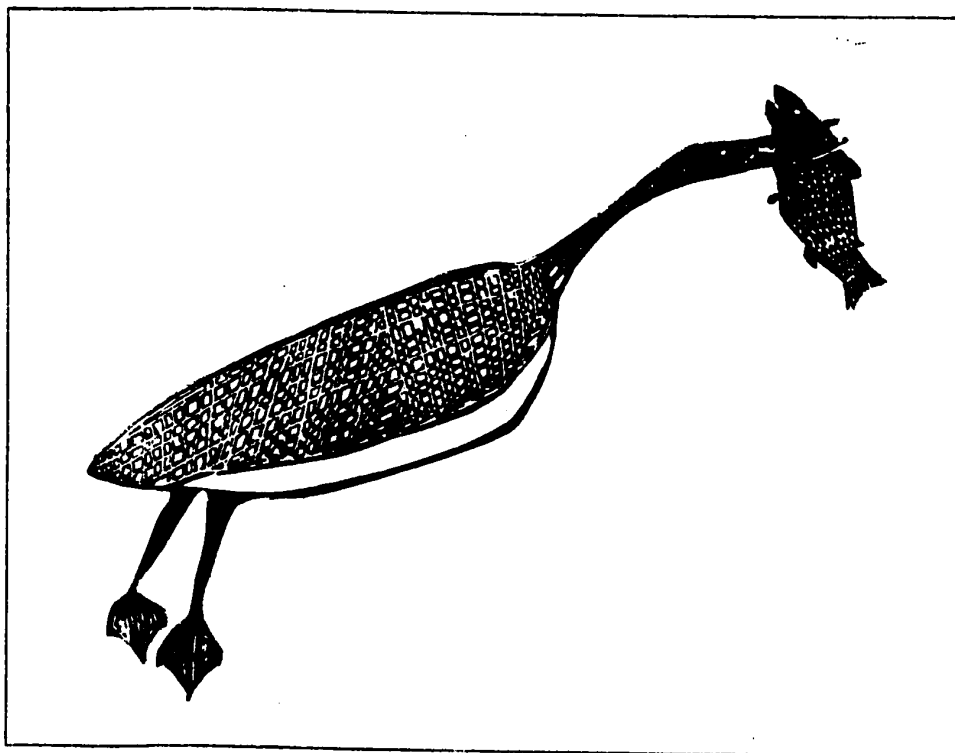
The stone cut of BEAR FEEDING CUBS (2) appears as a single visual image since all three bears overlap and appear as a unit. The image is intensified by the contrast of the solid black figures against the white of the paper. The silhouette is interrupted only by a minimum of contours achieved by incising the stone block before printing. These interior contour lines, which overlap and give a third-dimension to the subject, are common in the prints from Holman Island where two-dimensional renderings are rare.



3. Davidialuk, FACE,  
Fovungnituk, 1964.

Davidialuk's print is a single FACE (3) presented in an open space. It is typical of the work of Fovungnituk artist's because of the contour-like shape that encompasses the head. This is an arbitrary shape which results from the area being left on the stone block to print, rather than being cut away as in most prints from the other printmaking areas. For the artist, this arbitrary shape is more indicative of open space than the rectangular paper on which he prints; he has no intention of leaving it to create enclosed space.

The texture in the upper part of the print is caused by the rough surface of the stone block. The images of Fovungnituk prints



4. Ikseetarkyuk / Oosuah, BIRD CATCHING FISH,  
Baker Lake, 1970.

are often altered to incorporate the surface textures of the stone printing block. In this case, the texture unites with the spontaneous and direct rendering of the hair. The nose and the pattern representing tattooing characterize prints from all the printmaking areas.

BIRD CATCHING FISH (4) is a single stylized image from Baker Lake. The artist was particularly interested in design; however, one still finds a concern for anatomical structure and detail. The pattern on the bird's back is deliberately varied and carefully controlled. It flattens the body of the bird, but the figure retains its third-dimension because of the overlapping of the bill and fish. Each part of the image has been shifted for ease in recognition. This kind of visual clarity appears over and over again in all types of

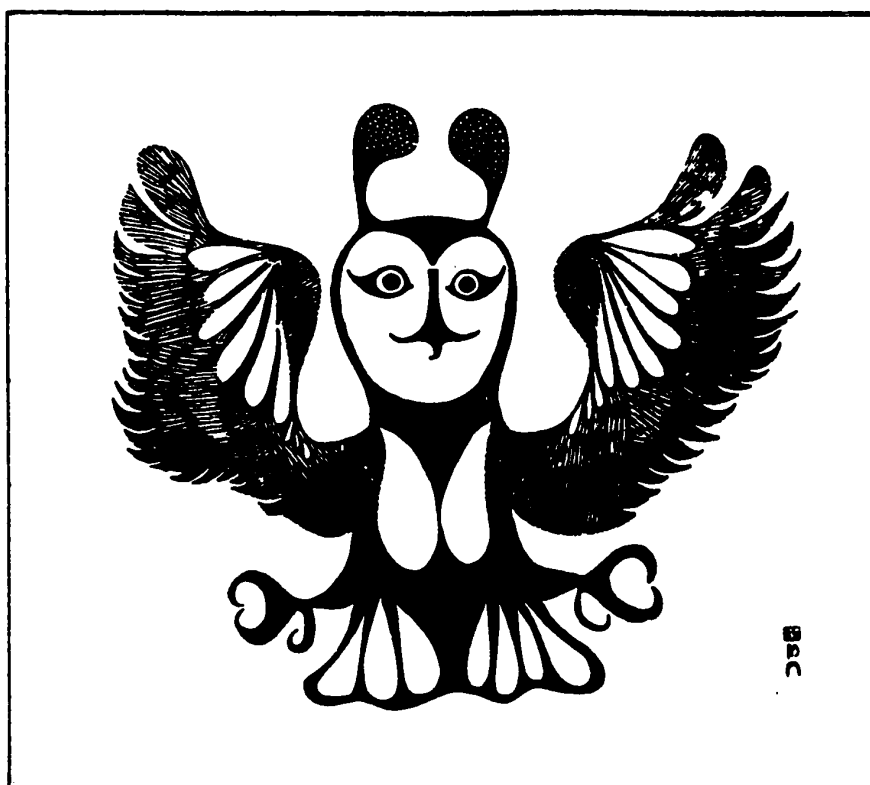




5. Pudlo, ARCTIC ANGEL,  
Cape Dorset, 1969.

Eskimo graphic representation.

Pudlo's ARCTIC ANGEL (5) has a very large spatial field. The subject is handled in a linear manner which results in a transparent effect. One readily notes this transparency at the shoulders, where the area representing the arm shifts to negative ground. The large format and the translucent quality of the paper used, intensify this transparency. Other parts of the image also have dual roles. Note the cross-like shape below the neck which functions both as an opening in the garment and a cross. The angel and cross are both new religious symbols for the Eskimos but are still not popular subject matter for their prints.



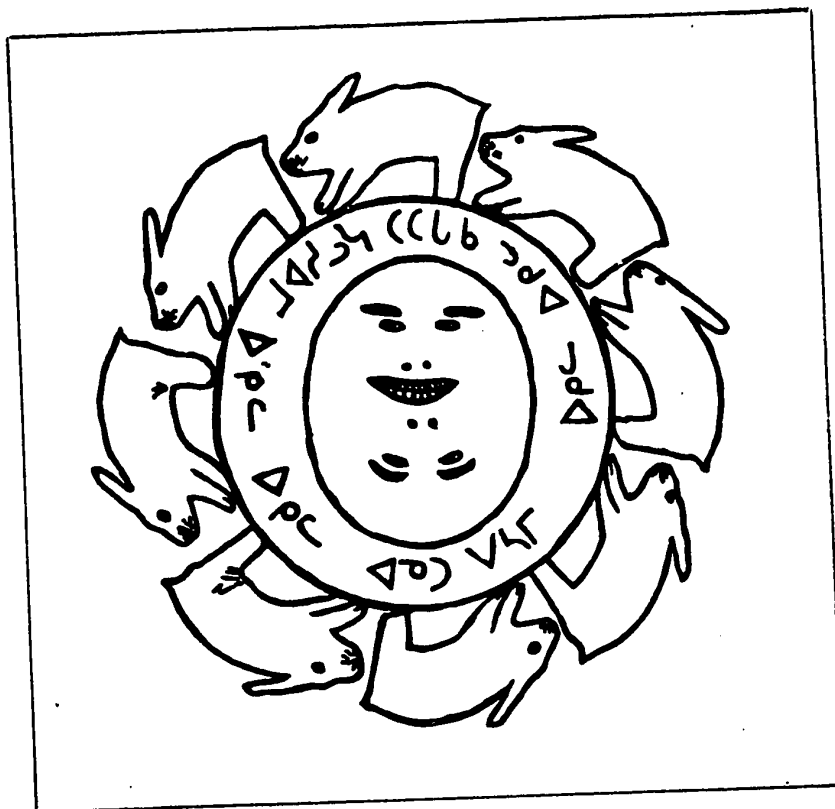
6. Eliyah, BIRD OF SPRING,  
Cape Dorset, 1966.

BIRD OF SPRING (6) is a two-dimensional image in which the subject is used to carry an abundance of texture and color. The primary concern is for a decorative image. This interest in design and decoration characterizes many prints from Cape Dorset but is uncommon in other printmaking areas. The tear-drop shape is repeated throughout the image in many variations. The sharp edges of the tear-drops contrast sharply with the textural surface created by the thick mottled ink used in the printing and the textural patterns which have been carved into the surface of the stone block.

## Chapter 9

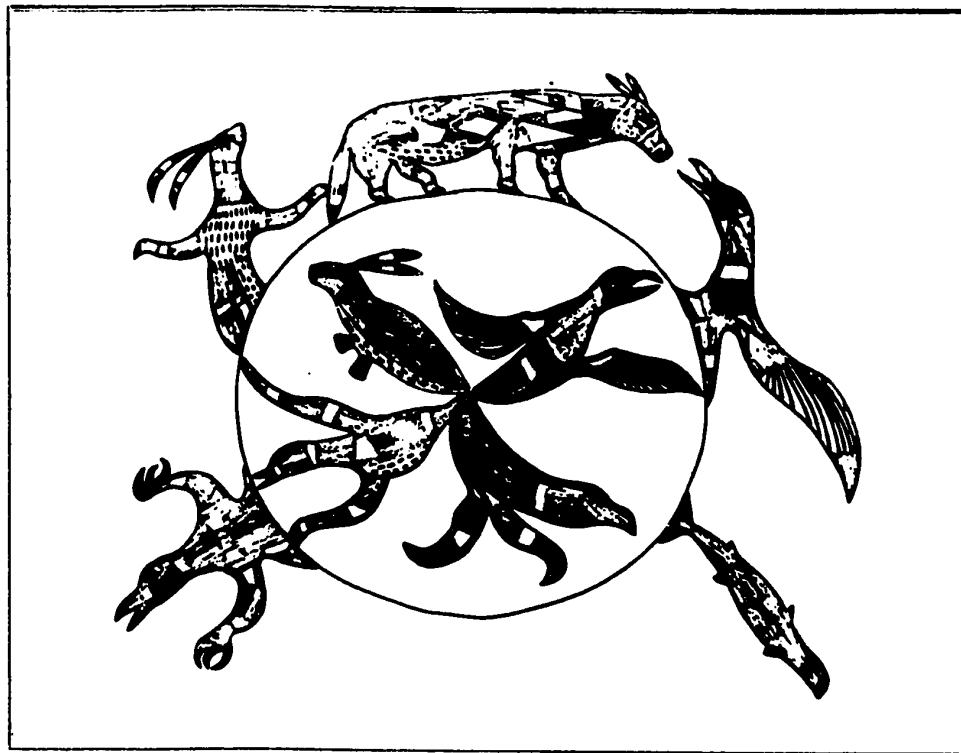
### EXTENDED DESIGNS

The major distinguishing characteristic of the second category is a combined or extended design which is found mostly in Cape Dorset prints. Two or more figures or component parts are combined into a single design. These have a central focal point or a vertical axis bisecting the approximately symmetrical image. They are characterized by four types of construction. Sometimes the design is circular and radiates from a central point, and in some cases it is an approximately symmetrical image extending from a vertical axis. Those which extend from a vertical axis are composed of figures repeated horizontally, placed in a vertical totem, or expanded horizontally with the addition of decorative motifs.



7. Toongooktook / Ikseegah, CALENDAR,  
Baker Lake, 1971.

CALENDAR (7) is a design composed of three concentric circles. The outer one is a circle of rabbits representing the passing days, and the second is syllabic text repeating the theme. The inner circle contains a face that can be turned either way up to appear as a smile or a frown according to whether the days are good or bad. The title and edition number appear on both the left and right hand side of the print so that one will be upright whichever way the print is turned. The linear representation of this stone cut is typical of Baker Lake, whereas the linear work from Cape Dorset usually results from an engraving rather than a stone cut.

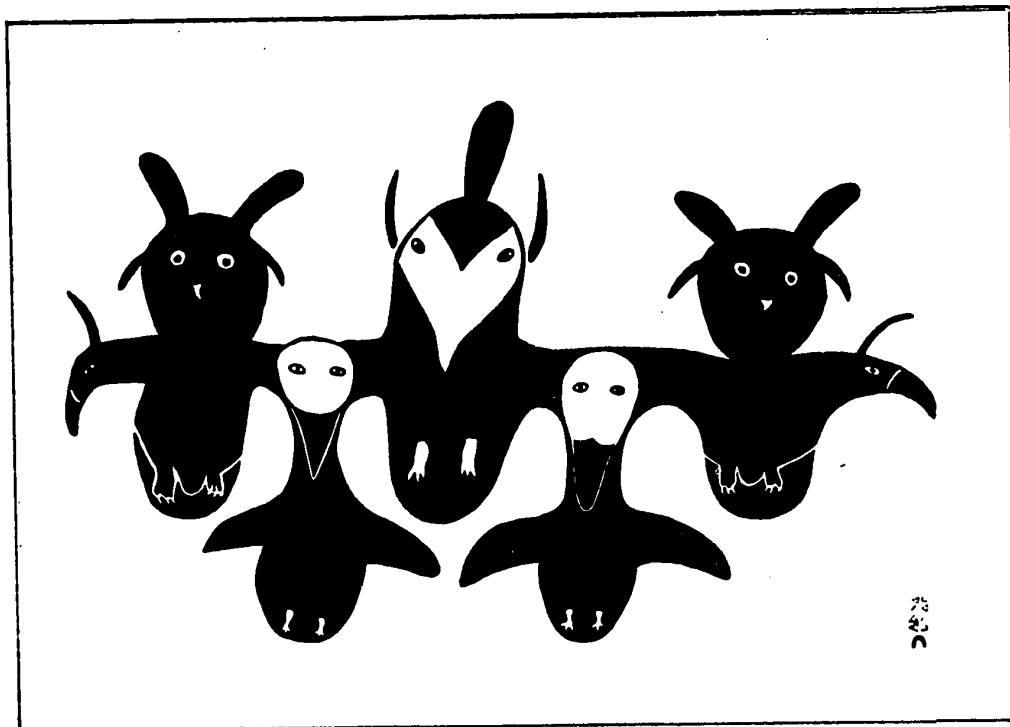


3. Johniebo, *ANIMAL CYCLE*,  
Cape Dorset, 1966.

Johniebo's engraving (8) is another design based on the circle. The circle acts as a ground for the outer figures, and its center is the point from which the inner figures radiate. The circular image has been treated as a more rectangular shape as it approaches the edges so that it will fit comfortably into the format.

The animals contain an abundance of design variations, textures, and variegated color. The arbitrary designing and texture that are used to decorate the animals result from a concern for the design itself rather than the subject.

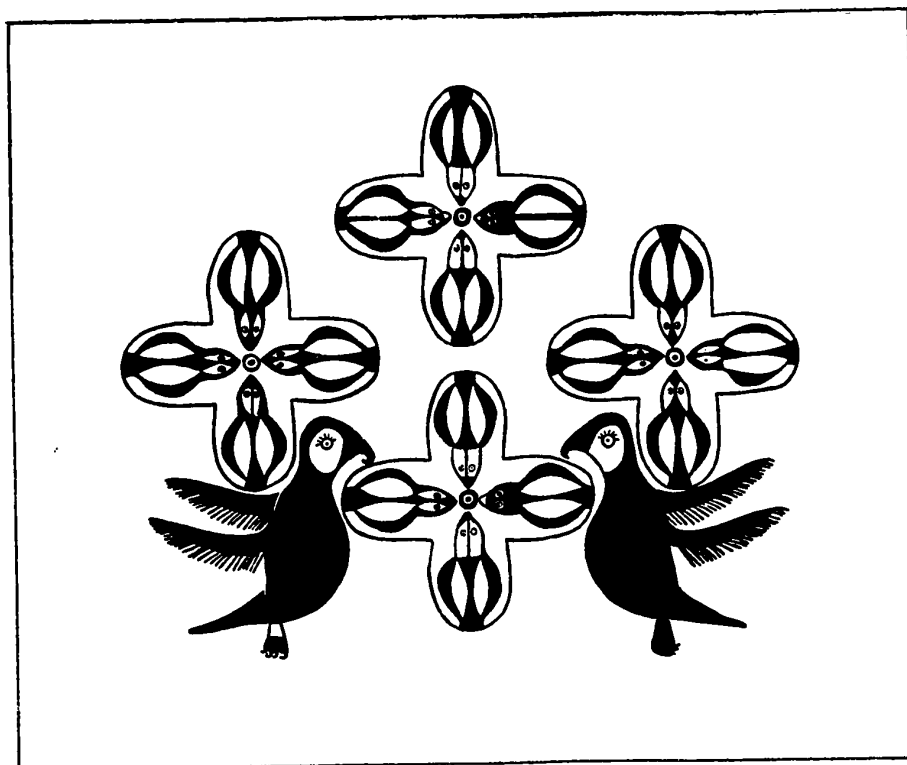
QUINTET (9) is an approximately symmetrical design with a vertical axis bisecting five variations of a bird. The term 'ap-



9. Alashua, QUINTET,  
Cape Dorset, 1968.

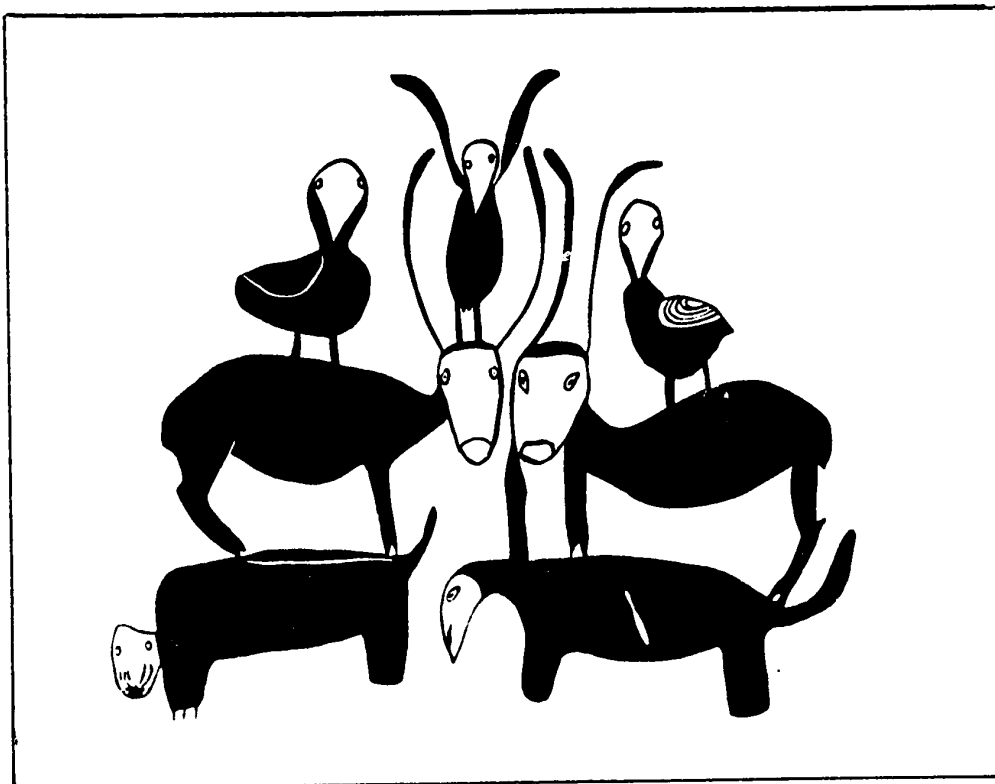
proximately symmetrical', which in most cases applies to the symmetry in Eskimo prints, simply means that the image is generally symmetrical in terms of impression. However, on closer examination it can be seen that both lack of precision and the artist's desire for variation result in incomplete symmetry.

This print is a particularly good example of the subtle variance and the innovative sense so often noted in Eskimo prints. The bills, feet, and general contours vary from bird to bird. Textural variation is created by the mottled surface of thick ink that fuses from green at the top to black at the bottom.



10. Anna, REFLECTIONS,  
Cape Dorset, 1970.

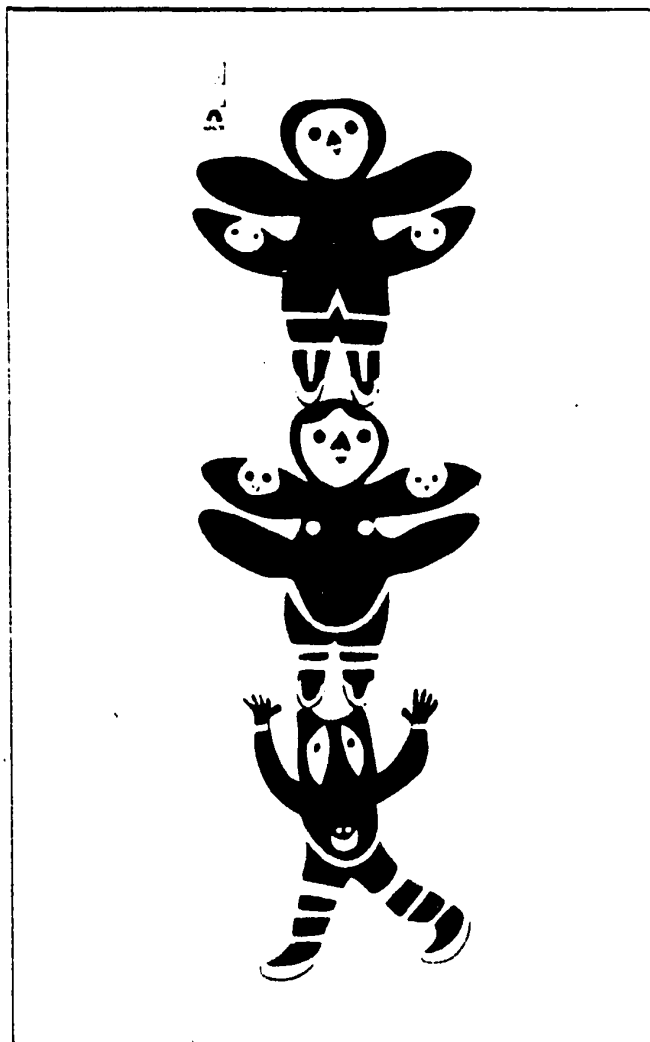
\* REFLECTIONS (10) is a stone cut which also contains variations of a subject, but the composition is quite different from that of the previous print. The basic structure is symmetrical both vertically and horizontally with the addition of two large bird profiles which are only vertically symmetrical. The subtle variations of the eyes, the structural shape of the bodies, and the patterns, are all a part of the intricate visual relationships. Even the large profiles have many slight differences which are, at first, not readily apparent.



11. Pitseolak, CARIBOU AND BIRDS,  
Cape Dorset, 1963.

In CARIBOU AND BIRDS, (11) Pitseolak exhibits her sophisticated sense of design. The change in direction of the lower left hand figure and other variations on the symmetry intensify the complexity of the visual elements. Various portions of the figures are placed in frontal, three-quarter view, and profile positions. These result in an alteration of what would otherwise be a primarily two-dimensional image. The addition of the leg below the right hand caribou head changes the body profile to a frontal view. The image is much like a totem design in which birds and animals are graphically built one on top of the other.





12. Saggiassie, SPIRITS AT PLAY,  
Cape Dorset, 1961.

Placing images on top of each other to form a totem is more clearly illustrated in SPIRITS AT PLAY (12). The central axis, which appears over and over again in Cape Dorset prints, is a manifestation of combining what is seen and what is known simultaneously. The Eskimo, so familiar with the game he hunts, is strongly influenced by the symmetry of both man and animals.

This subject from the unnatural world takes on characteristics



13. Pitseolak, EVE AND SERPENT,  
Cape Dorset, 1968.

of birds and human beings. The top two figures are virtually replicas, but many variations can be seen on closer examination. The hard edge of the silhouette resulting from the stencil technique contrasts with the softer effect achieved by spraying variegated color through the stencil.

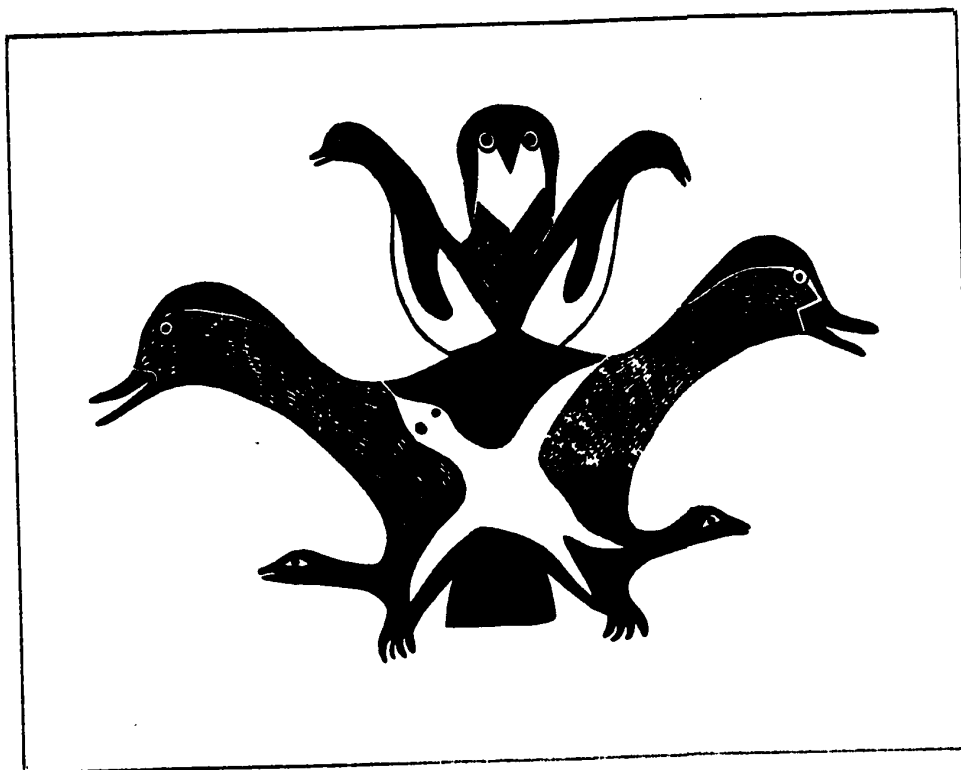
Pitseolak's EVE AND SERPENT (13) is also presented in a totem, but the structure is quite different from the previous print. The



14. Paunichea, COMPOSITION #1,  
Cape Dorset, 1968.

symmetrical elements in the image are four pairs of heads and one pair of arms placed in a totem position. To this Pitseolak has added a profile of the serpent, a frontal head, a combined profile and frontal view of Eve, and a frontal view of the head of a walrus. These four white figures contrast with the mottled orange and red texture behind them. The new religious subject has not been represented differently from any other type of subject.

COMPOSITION #1 (14) is an approximately symmetrical totem-like design with outward extensions on both sides of the vertical axis. The component parts join together and create visual relationships which increase the dimensions of the design. While most of the image remains flat, a three-dimensional effect is achieved by the



15. Lucy, BIRD TOTEM,  
Cape Dorset, 1971.

claws grasping the seals at the bottom of the design. The addition of the four heads is a typical example of the manner in which designs are extended from a central axis in many Cape Dorset prints. Such heads are usually placed in pairs that face towards or away from each other.

Lucy's BIRD TOTEM (15) is a composition which exhibits design extension from a central figure. Visual complexity results because the central image is a top view, the three pairs of birds extending on the left and right are profiles, and a bird in frontal position is placed at the top. Two-dimensional images comprised of different

views are also found in other Eskimo art forms.<sup>1</sup> Since the Dorset period, images have been superimposed and different points of view have been combined into a single pictorial image.<sup>2</sup>

This stone cut, like so many others, appears symmetrical in many areas, but on closer examination many variations can be noted. The textural variations have been achieved by incising the stone block and by printing the bright colors with a thick ink to give a mottled effect.

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<sup>1</sup>Edmund Carpenter, Eskimo, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup>Joan M. Vastokas, "Continuities in Eskimo Graphic Style," artscanada, p. 78.

## Chapter 10

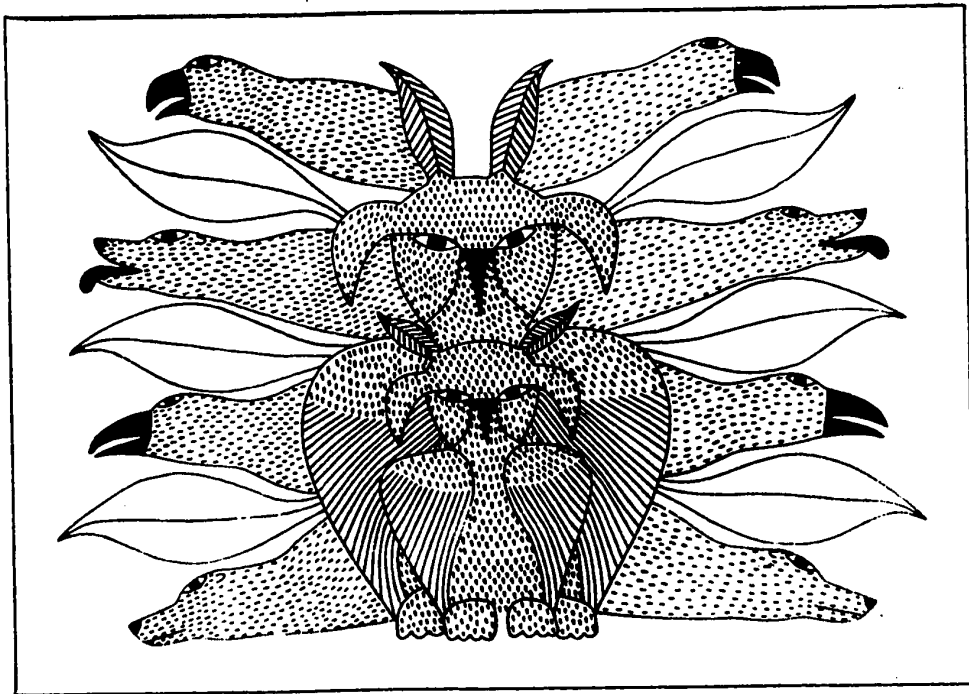
### OVER-ALL DESIGNS

The over-all design which results when an image is extended to fill the format represents a characteristic that is peculiar to Cape Dorset. These images do not necessarily have a central focal point, but they are designed to cover the entire rectangular format of the picture plane. Although the third-dimension may be indicated, the designs usually retain a shallow depth of field and sometimes appear very much like pattern.

Houston suggests that the connecting patterns that create over-all designs owe their origin to the appliqué work done by Eskimo women.<sup>1</sup> They also represent a new non self-contained image. The paper exists as an object itself rather than a support since the image is extended to the edges of the format.

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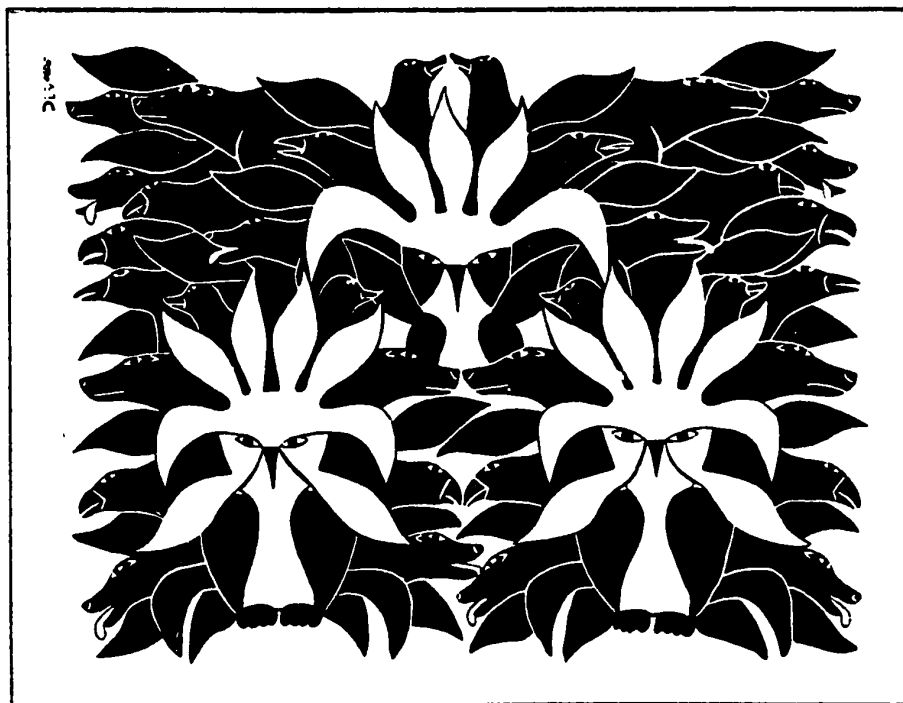
<sup>1</sup>James Houston, Eskimo Prints, p. 36.



16. Kenojuak, *ANIMAL KINGDOM*,  
Cape Dorset, 1967.

*ANIMAL KINGDOM* (16) illustrates how an over-all design is extended from a vertical axis. It could easily fit into the previous category except that it takes on a rectangular shape consistent with the edges of the paper. The frontal view of a small owl is placed in front of a larger one, and the heads, necks, and feathers of the birds extend outwards.

The linear treatment of the subject and the textural effect of the short strokes demonstrate a characteristic which results from the engraving technique used at Cape Dorset. The beaks, tongues, noses, and eyes are solid colored areas which are typical of Kenojuak's more recent engravings.

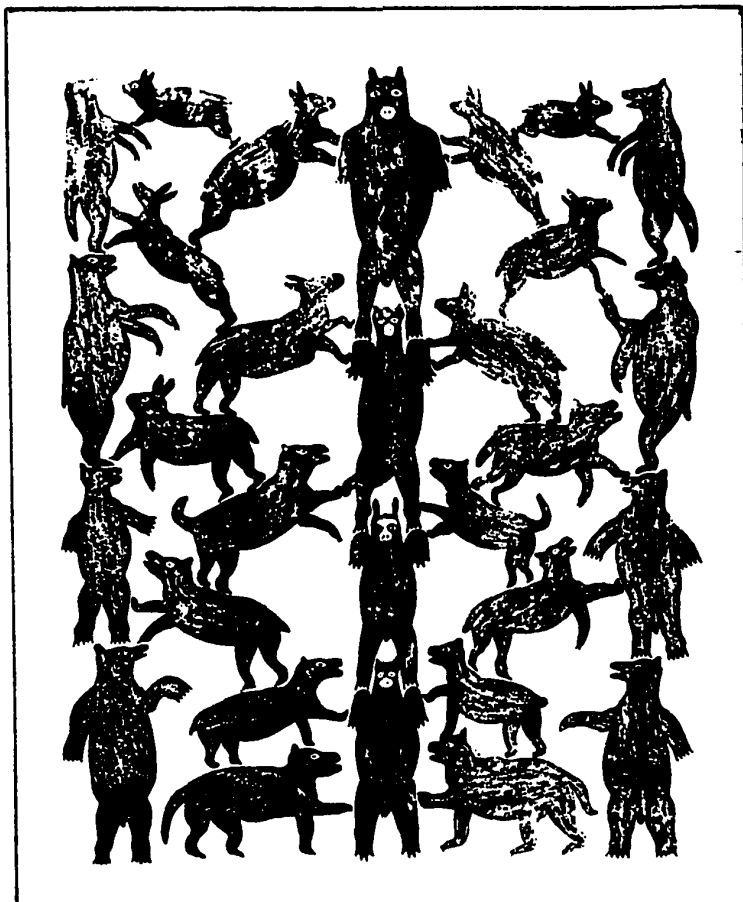


17. Kenojuak, COMPOSITION,  
Cape Dorset, 1967.

COMPOSITION (17) is a stone cut by Kenojuak from the same year as the previous print. Here, the design expands outward from the frontal view of three owls and fills the available space within the format. It is approximately symmetrical about a vertical axis and is structured around the three owls that act as focal points. The design expands with the addition of feathers, birds, and animals.

The three parts of the design, each centered with an owl, merge carefully together and create fluctuating positive and negative areas in the central portion of the print. Incised lines are added to some of the silhouette shapes and additional texture results from the mottled and variegated color.





18. Jamasie, ANIMAL ACROBATS,  
Cape Dorset, 1971.

Jamasie's ANIMAL ACROBATS (18) is an over-all design that has been extended from three totems. Between the three vertical pillars of animals, others have been added to create an over-all pattern. Some detail has been added to the animals, and texture results from the characteristic rocking of the burin.

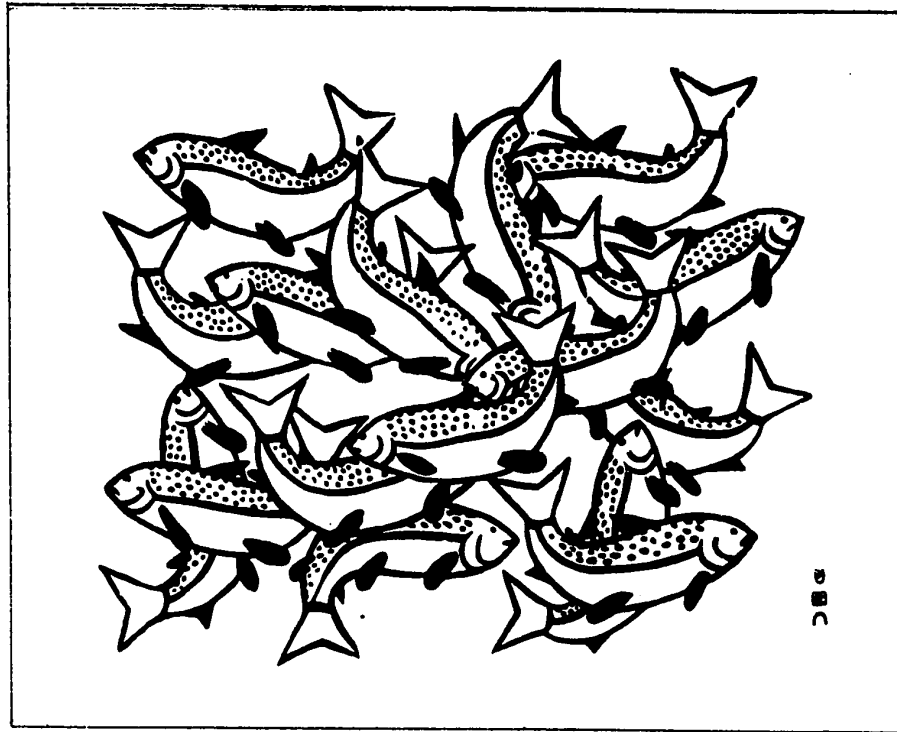
In most over-all designs the parts of the image are joined together or overlap. In this print, however, each animal is a separate unit, and they are united only as a result of their close proximity and directional placement.



19. Kenojuak, A VISION OF ANIMALS,  
Cape Dorset, 1961.

A VISION OF ANIMALS (19) is another type of over-all design that was popular in the early 1960's. In this stone cut, animals and birds are designed so that they graphically join together into a continuous two-dimensional image. There is no focal point, and the design becomes a pattern confined to the rectangular format.

An excessive number of extremities have been added to the figures to complete the visual impression. The negative spaces are important shapes which fluctuate with the solid silhouette areas. They often appear as positive shapes when the print is viewed at close range.



20. Pootagook, FISH IN A POOL,  
Cape Dorset, 1966.

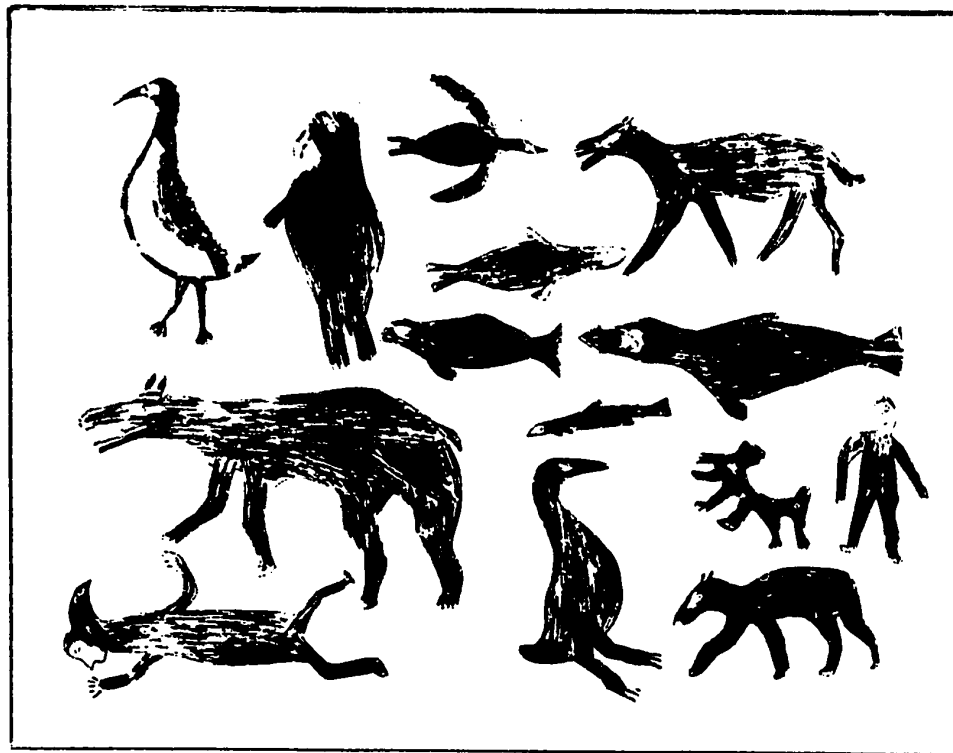
FISH IN A POOL (20) is created by repetition of a motif within a rectangular format. The fish overlap and appear in a variety of gestures which indicate three-dimensions, but the uniform size and placement of the fish retain the shallow depth of field and the relatively planar surface.

The print is textured with the thick ink and variegated color which was so popular in the middle of the 1960's. It is also an example of the repetition of a single image to create a design, which is also found in Cape Dorset fabric printing.

## Chapter 11

### TWO OR MORE FIGURES

The fourth category comprises those prints in which two or more figures are placed in an open spatial field without any indication of background, horizon line, or other spatial clues. These prints fall into two main types. The first is comprised of figures singularly placed in which the figures create only a compositional space. In the second, the space becomes a recessional plane because the figures are placed according to perspective. The second type results from a group placement of figures which have been positioned relative to each other according to visual reality.



21. Ottochie, no title,  
Cape Dorset, 1962.

Ottochie's print (21) is composed of several singularly placed figures. They have been arranged to fit comfortably together within the format without touching or overlapping. The figures are placed on the same picture plane without a temporal or spatial concern.

The linear texture indicates the musculature and anatomy, especially around the tops of the legs. It is sensitively applied, and the seemingly random tonal variations caused by the texture are carefully controlled. This scratchy texture has been common since 1962 when engraving and etching were introduced as new printmaking techniques.

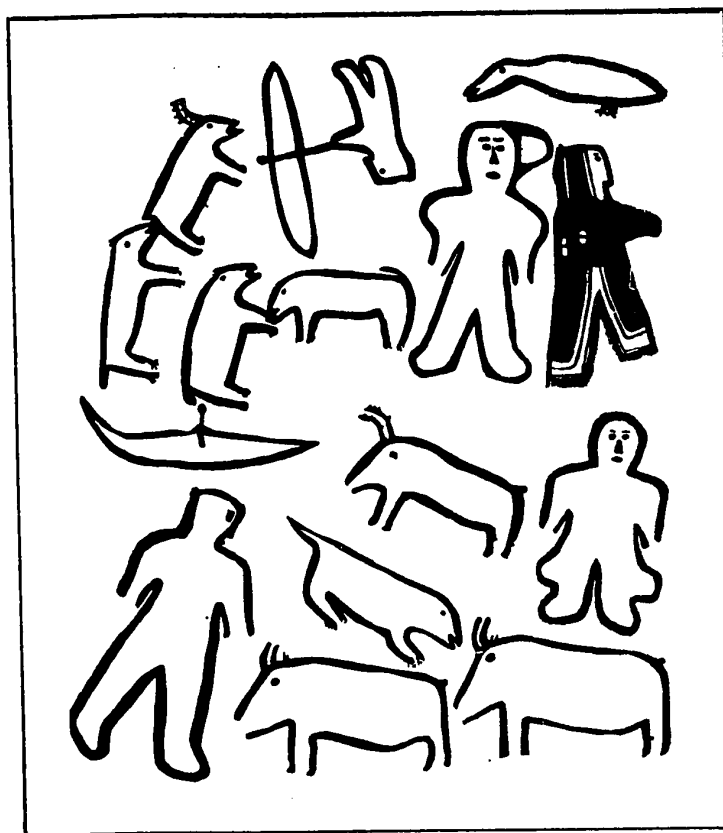


22. Quananak, MAN AND GAME,  
Povungnituk, 1964.

MAN AND GAME (22) is an example of a Povungnituk print with singular placement in an open spatial field. Although the contours of the figures have been widened, the area between them and the edge of the stone printing block has been left to print, and so the arbitrary shape of the stone block is visible.

Figures from both the natural and supernatural worlds are included in a composition that is not representative of visual space. The animals, the spirits of the hunt, and the man with a fish are a graphic representation of hunting and fishing activities.

Most Povungnituk artists carve directly into the stone without drawing beforehand. If they do draw before they begin cutting into the stone printing block, the drawing is usually altered a great



23. Itoolookutna / Kallooar / Kannak, LEGENDS,  
Baker Lake, 1970.

deal as they work.<sup>1</sup>

LEGENDS (23) is composed of many figures singularly placed in an open spatial field, and the top-bottom orientation is not maintained as it is in most prints. The image is like a historical recording with only the necessary elements of the legend represented, and no attempt has been made to place the figures into a composition representing visual perspective. Many of the open-form figures have

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<sup>1</sup>Povungnituk 1970 (cat.), p. 7.



24. Kalvak, FATE OF A CARIBOU,  
Holman Island, 1967.

a break in the contour at the hands of humans and the feet of animals. These linear contours, which only become figures when they are visually completed, give a naive or primitive appearance. In this print, the heavy black linear representation contrasts with the solid black of the garment in the upper right hand corner.

In Kalvak's FATE OF A CARIBOU (24), a caribou, bird, and bear are presented in an open space. The three figures are indicated without perspective relative to each other; however, they are placed in positions that could plausibly be representative of perspective space.

The figures are basically silhouette shapes with the addition of some incised lines and linear detail. The bear, and even the bird,





25. Annie Mikpigak, WALRUS AND SEAL,  
Povungnituk, 1969.

have teeth to show the action of the scene. The limestone used for printing blocks at Holman Island is particularly suitable for incising these thin and detailed lines which are very characteristic of their work.

WALRUS AND SEAL (25) is a Povungnituk print in which the shape of the printing block controls the composition, and the placement of the walrus and seal represent only a compositional space. The arbitrary contour of the image results from the rough texture and shape of the stone block.

Incised lines represent the life functions of the animals. The vital parts of the interior are combined with the exterior, creating a transparency almost like an x-ray image. The simultaneous representation of what is seen and what is known has appeared in Eskimo graphics since traditional times.<sup>1</sup> The "...all-at-onceness" of the image typifies the disregard for temporal sequence. This is a characteristic of many types of Eskimo graphic representation.<sup>2</sup>

HELPED BY SPIRITS (26) is an image controlled by the necessary elements of the magico-religious subject. The open spatial field is appropriate for representing a subject where no distinction is made between the real and dream worlds or the ground and sky. The relationship of parts is confusing when we try to impose a chronological story line on the image since it is intended only as a graphic representation of component elements of the legend.

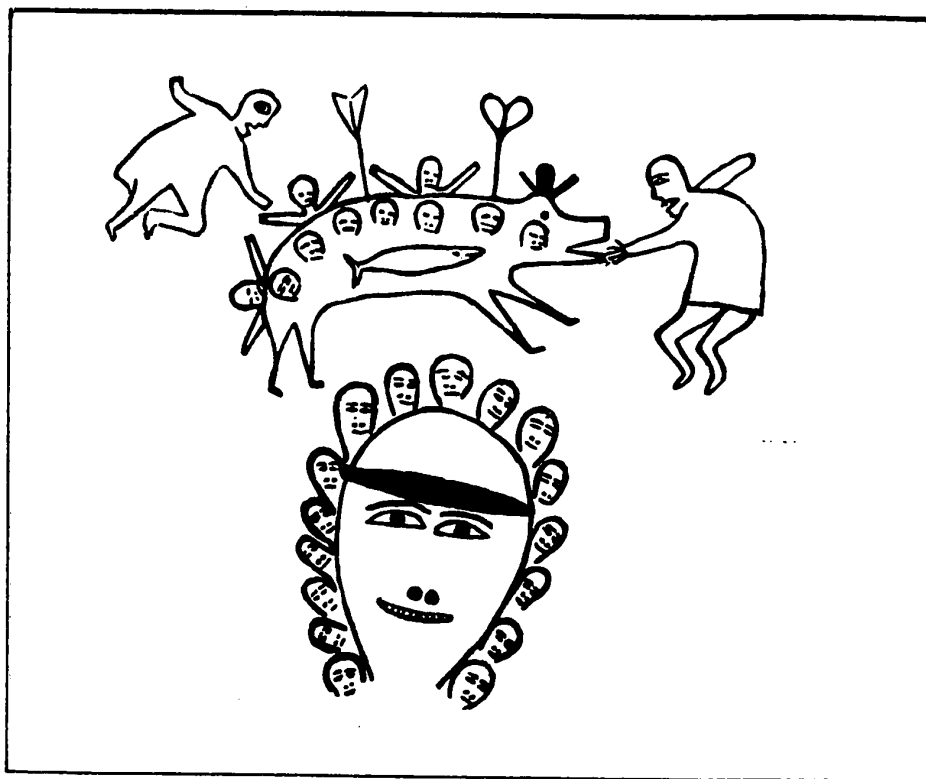
The upper and lower parts of the print are not compositionally related. They each exist in their own space, independent of their surround. Such 'accidental' organization is characteristic of Eskimo graphic representation<sup>3</sup> and is very typical of the prints from Baker Lake.

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<sup>1</sup>Edmund Carpenter, Eskimo, pp. 54-55.

<sup>2</sup>Edmund Carpenter, "Image Making in Arctic Art," in Sign Image Symbol, p. 216.

<sup>3</sup>Edmund Carpenter, Eskimo, pp. 52-53.



26. Onark / Toodlik / Ikseegah, HELPED BY SPIRITS,  
Baker Lake, 1971.

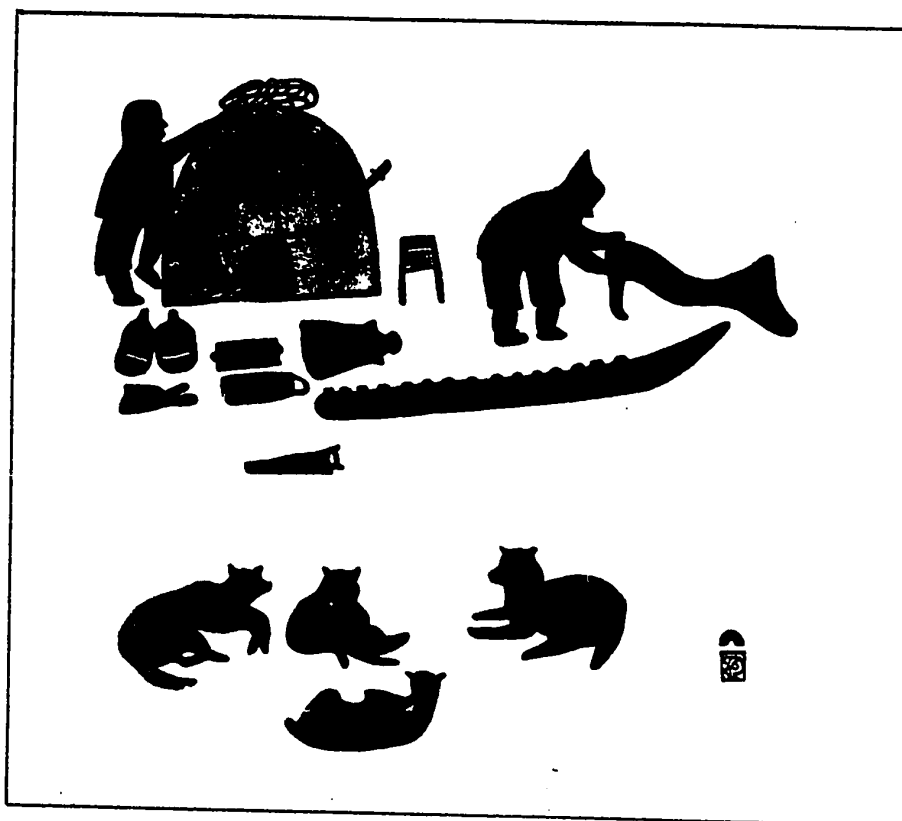
In MY PEOPLE (27), the figures have an independent unity, but Parr has carefully placed them so they will fit comfortably together within the format without overlapping. The composition remains on a planar surface because of the arrangement and the lack of perspective relative to actual space. The size variations are related to the significance of the figures and not to perspective representation. This type of image, so much like a historical rec-



27. Parr, MY PEOPLE,  
Cape Dorset, 1961.

ording, is typical of Parr's narrative prints. The scratchy linear texture that breaks the silhouette shapes is also characteristic of Parr. The spontaneous quality that results from Parr's direct and uninhibited expression gives his work a primitive and naive appearance.

The following three prints are composed in an open space without indication of background, but their placement is indicative of perspective space.



28. Niviaksiak, SNOWHOUSE BUILDERS,  
Cape Dorset, 1959.

In SNOWHOUSE BUILDERS (28), the paper on which the image is printed acts as a recessional ground for the figures. Depth in space is represented by the position of the figures on the picture plane with the closer ones appearing at the bottom. They are seen from angles that are best suited for clear representation.

This print, like so many others from Cape Dorset, is concerned with visual clarity and the presentation of the necessary elements of the image.



29. Paunichiak, ESKIMO FISHING SCENE,  
Cape Dorset, 1963.

The ESKIMO FISHING SCENE (29) is indicated without the addition of supporting ground, but the diminishing size of the figures indicate perspective and cause the paper to act as a recessional plane.

The influence of the stencil technique is seen in the simple shapes and the separation of the component parts of each figure. The proximity of the component shapes allows the figures to be visually completed even though the stencil has interfered with their contours. The figures are sprayed through the stencil in various colors that are less solid in the prints than they appear in the reproductions.



30. Joe Talirunilik, HUNTING ON LAND AND SEA,  
Povungnituk, 1966.

The figures in HUNTING ON LAND AND SEA (30) are placed on the picture plane in a position that could plausibly represent visual space. The figures are systematically placed relative to each other in approximately the positions they would occupy in a perspective view. The flying birds are placed at the top, and the bird on a branch is placed lower on the picture plane. The land animals and human figures are placed lower still, with the sea animals at the bottom.

The image makes use of some figures which remain primarily silhouette while others are incised and textured. Transparencies are created when two overlapping portions are contoured such as the area where the harpoon crosses the face.

## Chapter 12

### NON-VISUAL SPACE

Non-visual spatial orientation is a fifth major distinguishing characteristic. In this type of representation, the ground is established and indicated as conceived of from above. This ground is a schematic representation much like a floor plan, and the figures are placed on it in front, side, and three-quarter views, as they would be seen in a perspective view. It is a conceptual mode of relating to space and placement which makes use of diagrammatic representation.



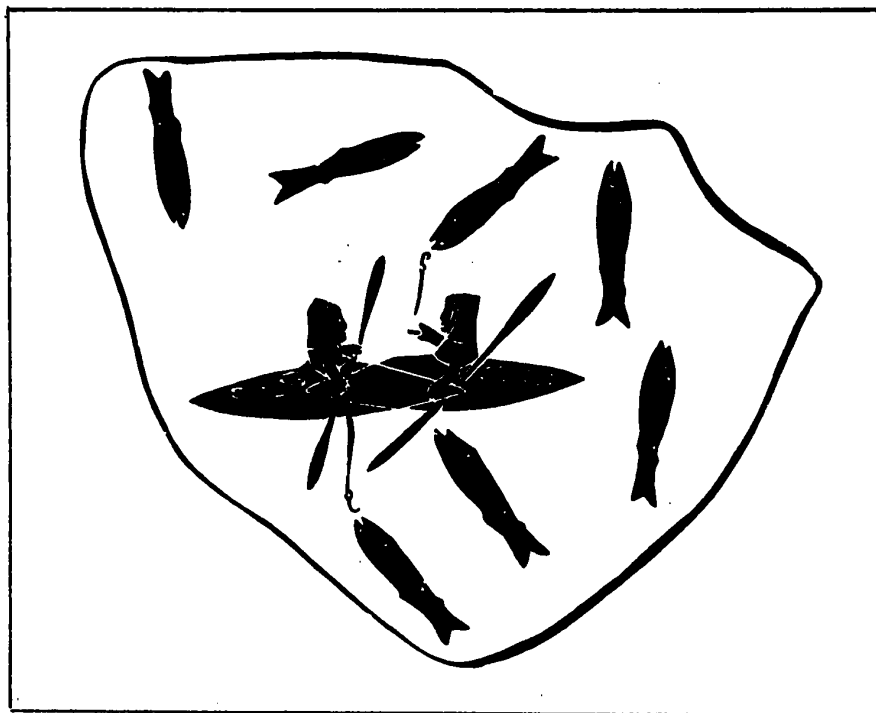


31. Joe Talirunilik, WINTER AND SUMMER HUNTING,  
Povungnituk, 1968.

WINTER AND SUMMER HUNTING (31) illustrates the placement of many figures on an open ground as seen in the last chapter, and it is also indicative of non-visual spatial orientation. Placement is dependent upon an assumed ground which is conceived of from above, and the figures are placed on this ground in side, front, or three-quarter views.

The composition is spatial rather than temporal in orientation as the ground acts as both ice and water, representing two seasons simultaneously. The circular arrangement that replaces the top-bottom orientation of most prints is a more accurate representation of direction and placement. The large number of little figures in one composition is a characteristic found only in Povungnituk prints.

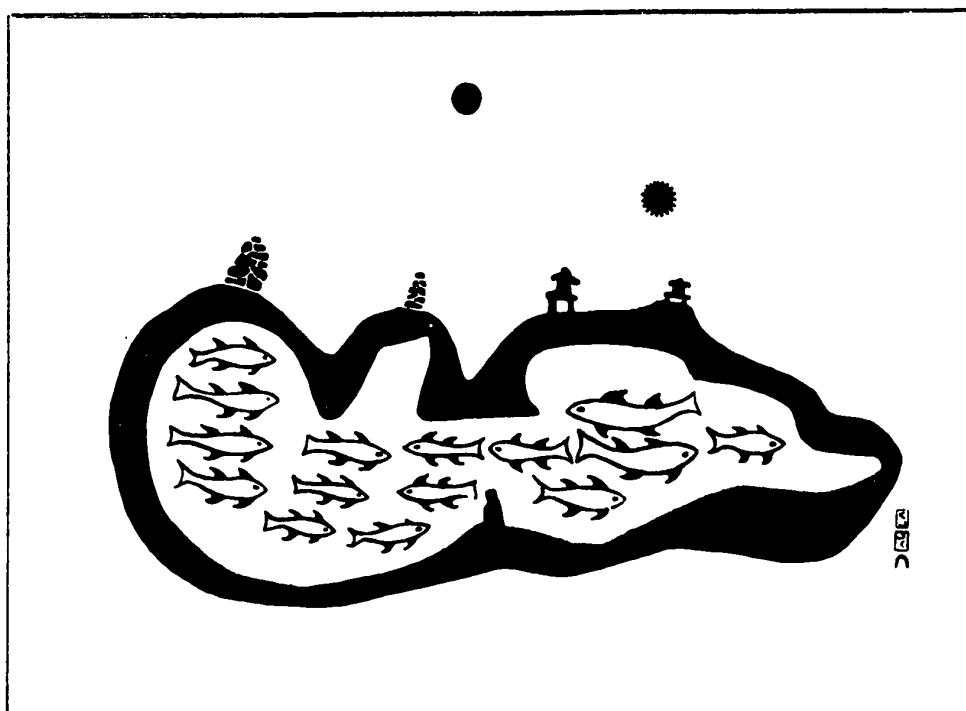
In all the following prints in this category some ground or surrounding markings are indicated.



32. Emerak, LAKE FISHING,  
Holman Island, 1970.

In Emerak's LAKE FISHING (32), the outer contour is a non-visual representation of the lake. The surface of the lake thus created, acts as a recessional plane for the perspective views of two fishermen in kayaks. The lake becomes a vertical plane for the presentation of the fish which are positioned for maximum clarity. The kayaks, which have been hooked together for safer fishing, appear transparent as the contours of both are shown where they overlap.

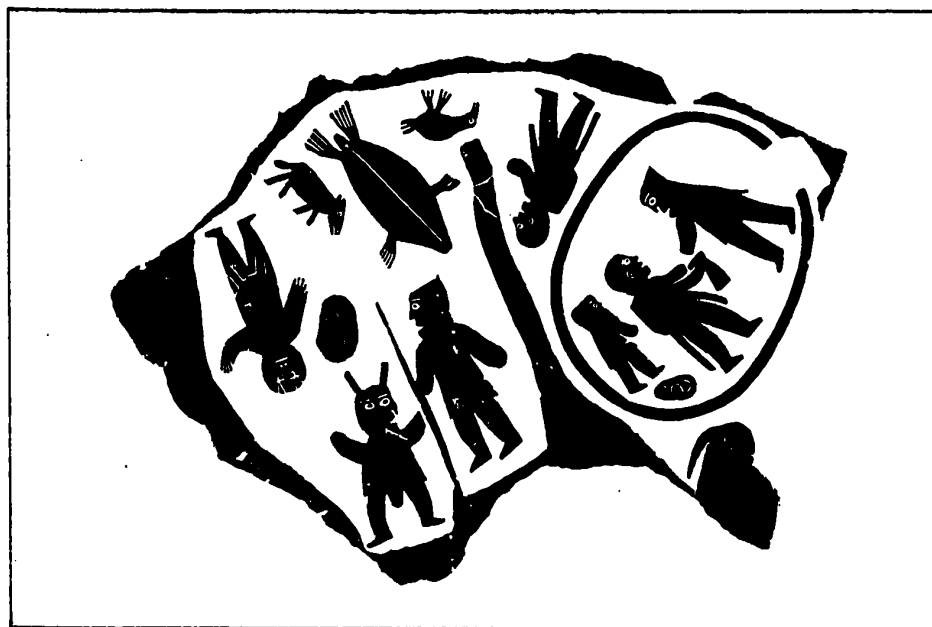
The top-bottom orientation is retained for the central figure, but the fish have been placed in a variety of positions which are indicative of their actual placement and direction in terms of schematic representation.



33. Pudlo, FISH LAKE,  
Cape Dorset, 1966.

FISH LAKE (33) is a more complex representation of what exists both within and above the lake. The heavy contour acts as a schematic ground showing the relationship of the lake's parts. This enclosed area becomes a vertical plane for the presentation of the fish, and the upper contour of the lake takes on the role of a horizon on which the rocks can sit.

The spatial relationships are well represented while the temporal is ignored. Both the sun and moon are placed in the sky at the same time, showing day and night simultaneously. A spatial, rather than a temporal orientation, is a characteristic found at each of the printmaking areas.

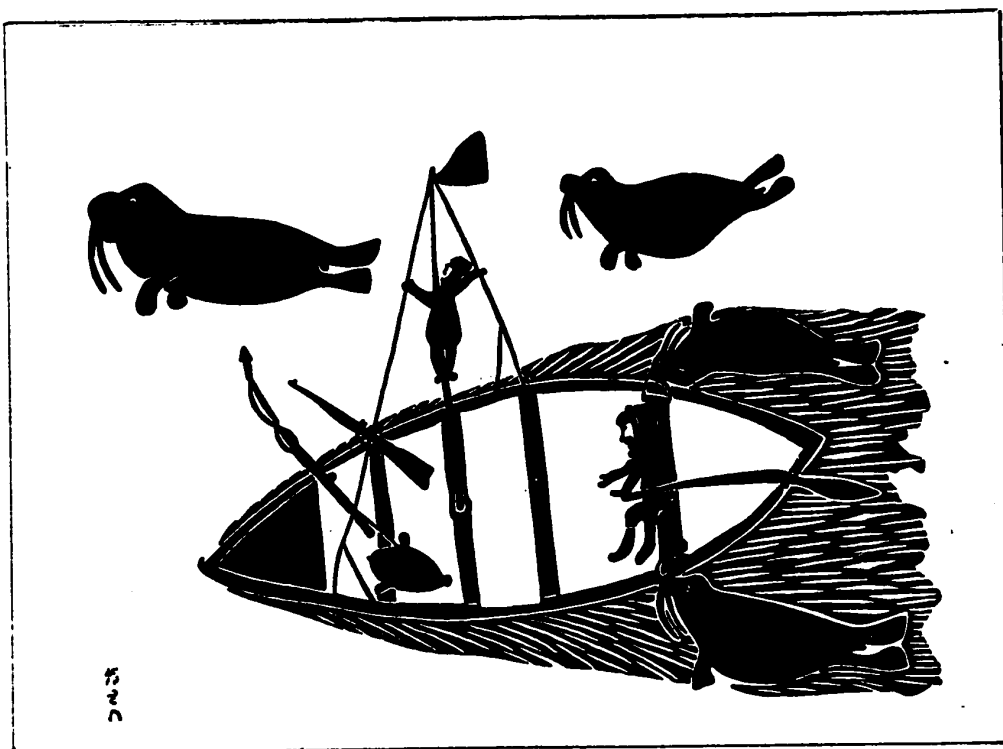


34. Siasi Ateitoq, PASSING AWAY OF ONE HUNTER,  
Povungnituk, 1966.

PASSING AWAY OF ONE HUNTER (34) is a Povungnituk print with a circular ground. The igloo is schematically represented, and the contour of the stone printing block becomes a ground on which side, front, and three-quarter views of figures are placed somewhat relative to it. The ground becomes a symbolic representation of a walrus in the lower right hand corner. Representing a figure by only showing a portion has been used in Eskimo graphic representation since ancient times.<sup>1</sup>

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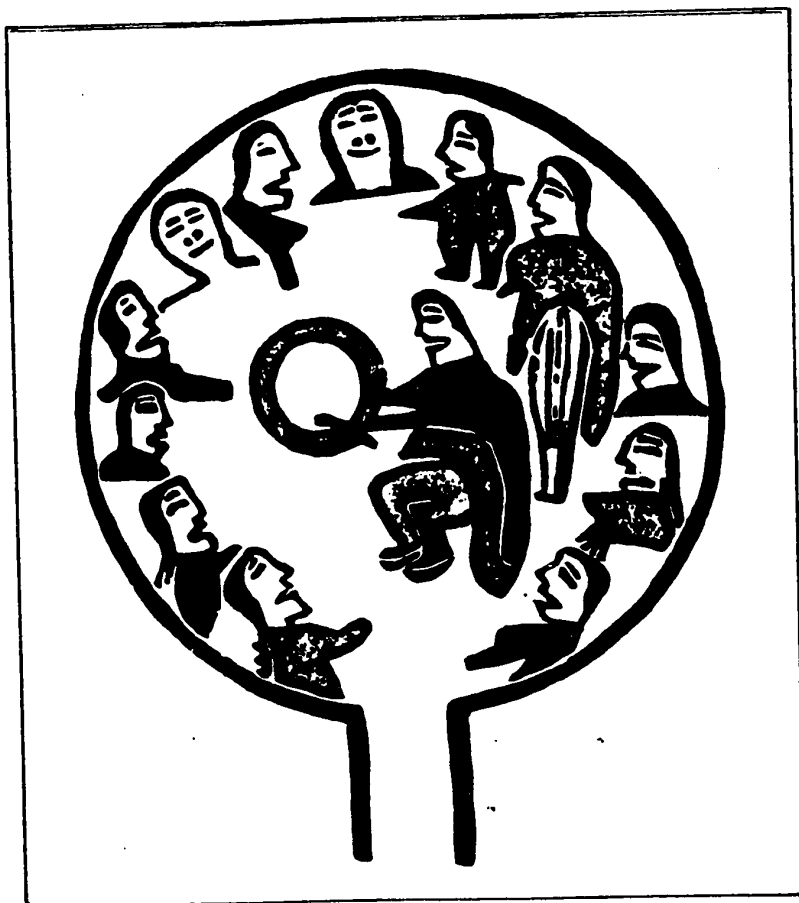
<sup>1</sup>Walter J. Hoffman, "The Graphic Art of the Eskimos," Annual Report, p. 798.



35. Eleeshushe, WALRUS HUNT,  
Cape Dorset, 1970.

In WALRUS HUNT (34), the hull of the boat is represented in terms of the most practical spatial orientation for the hunter. The hull represents the useful parts of the boat and its relative spatial relationships. The mast and other elements are then added to this ground. Two of the walruses are added in the available space in a clearly recognizable position, independent of the water. Details are then added to the water indicating the forward motion of the boat, and other appropriate details are added to clarify the image.

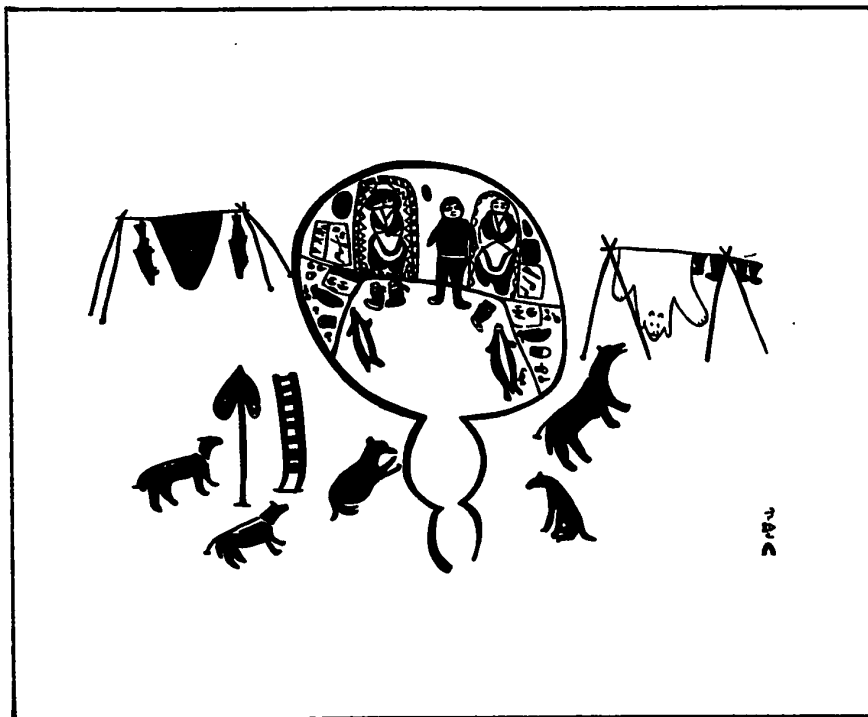
The following three prints illustrate the non-visual spatial orientation used in depicting igloos.



36. Oonark / Kallooar / Amarouk, DRUM DANCE,  
Baker Lake, 1970.

The outer contour in DRUM DANCE (36) represents an igloo with its doorway indicated at the bottom. Frontal and side views of partial and complete figures are then placed in the igloo according to their relative positions in the schematic space. The activity and the participants are clearly indicated.

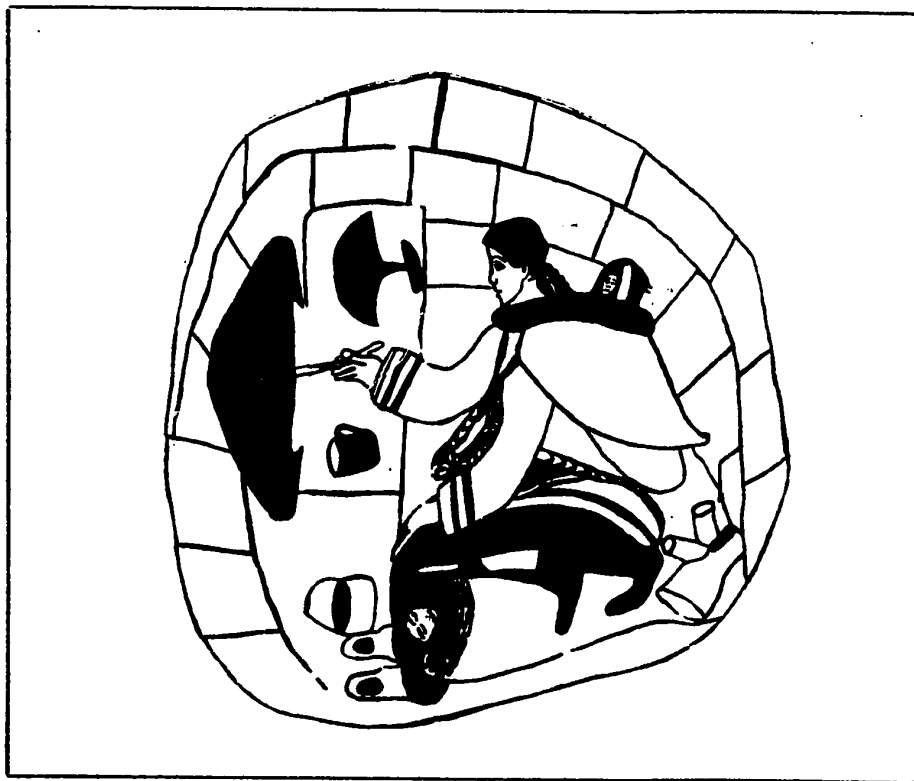
The figures are represented in a variety of positions and attitudes, but they all retain a top-bottom orientation. The heavy linear quality and the bright colors are typical of prints from Baker Lake.



37. Lucy, SPRING CAMP,  
Cape Dorset, 1970.

SPRING CAMP (37) is a scene in which the igloo acts as a ground. The igloo is a diagrammatic structure for the placement of figures in their relative positions. Outside the igloo the ground appears as a recessional plane because of the side views of the objects placed on it. The top-bottom orientation of the plane is retained, and the structure of the igloo has the typical lower exit.

The style is kept to a linear and silhouette representation. All the objects associated with daily life are carefully layed out, and each object is represented in its most advantageous position for easy recognition. Great care has been taken with the detail of the household items, even to the extent of the decoration on the sleeping bags.



38. Ulayu, WOMAN TENDING FIRE,  
Cape Dorset, 1965.

In WOMAN TENDING FIRE (38), the shelf and objects are represented in positions relative to the outer contour of the igloo. The igloo is basically diagrammatic with the addition of the perspective representation of the snow blocks and the side view of the central figure. The dominance of the woman retains the top-bottom orientation and the primacy of the figure within its surround.

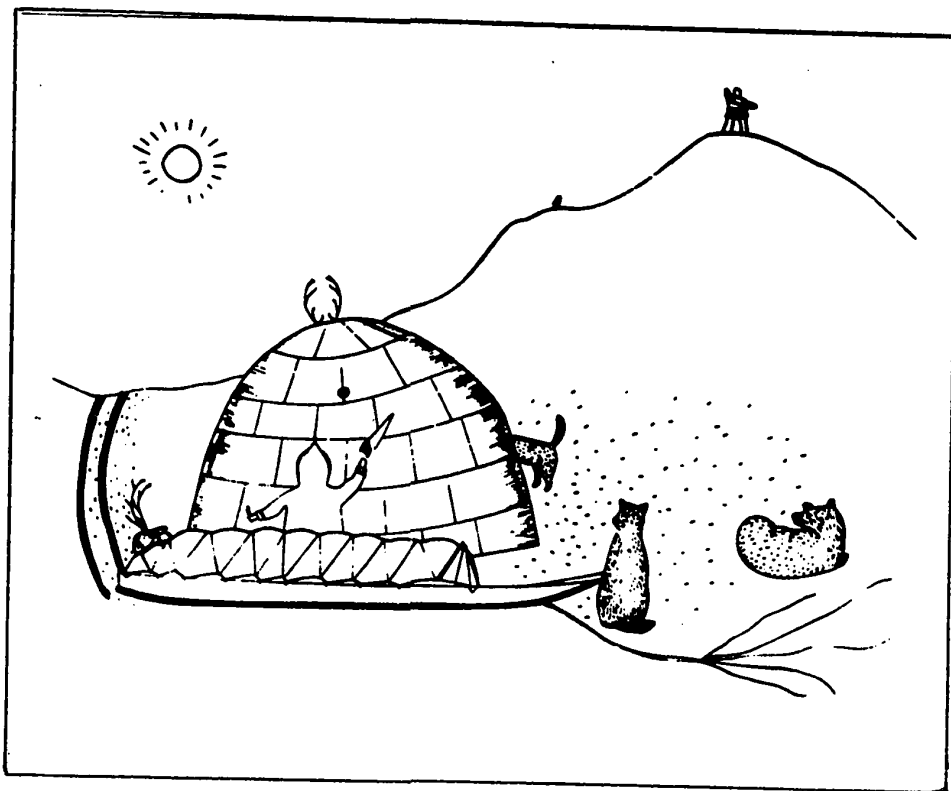
This is the only silkscreen in this collection. Although the silkscreen is used by Eskimo artists, it has not become a popular printmaking technique.



## Chapter 13

### PERSPECTIVE SPACE

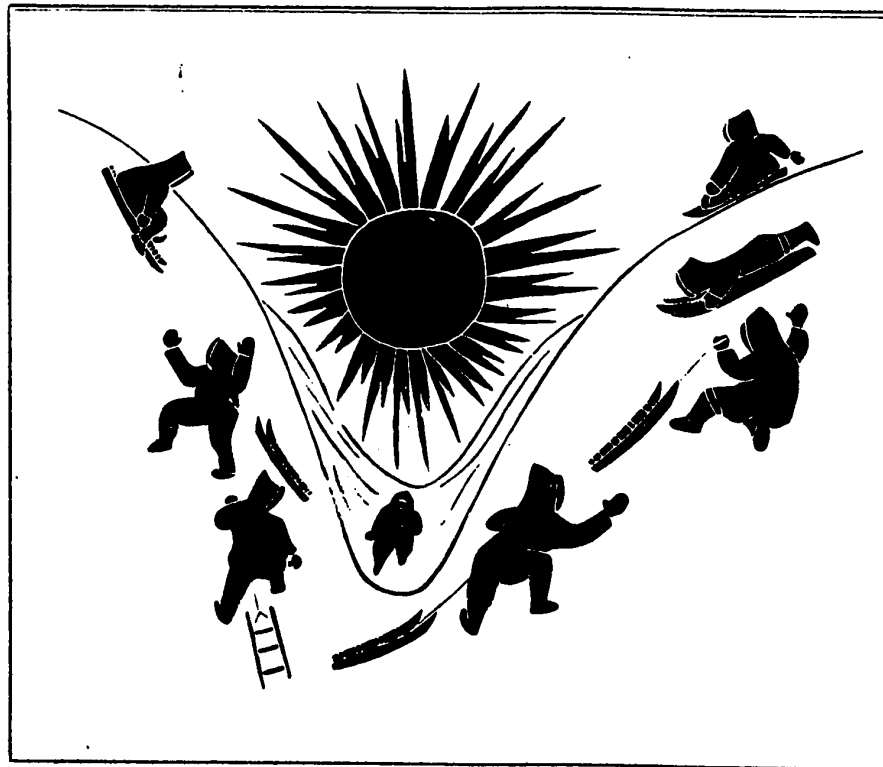
Perspective space is the distinguishing characteristic of the sixth category. A recessional plane is reinforced with the addition of a ground or other markings that establish a perspective view of space. Figures are then placed on this ground according to the visual reality of perspective space. The artists employ overlapping, diminishing size, and other characteristics of single point perspective.



39. Kananginak, CAMP SCENE,  
Cape Dorset, 1968.

Kananginak's CAMP SCENE (39) is a perspective view of a scene with a horizon line separating the sky and ground. The picture plane functions as a recessional ground, and the figures are placed in space according to visual perspective. Size, placement, and overlapping are indicated according to perspective space.

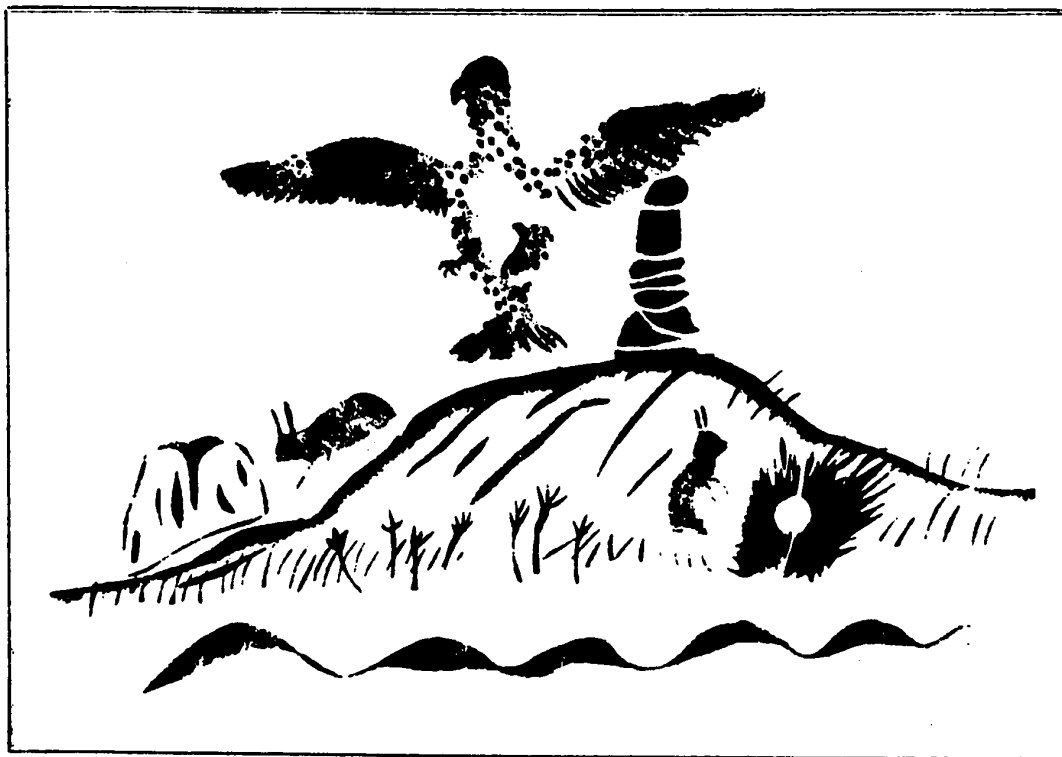
Primarily, the engraving is linear. The addition of short strokes to the igloo and dots to the dogs and ground indicate tone and approximate naturalistic representation. This shading is limited however, and the harsh contours flatten the figures so that a strong three-dimensional effect is not achieved.



40. Alikmak, SLIDING IN THE SUN,  
Holman Island, 1971.

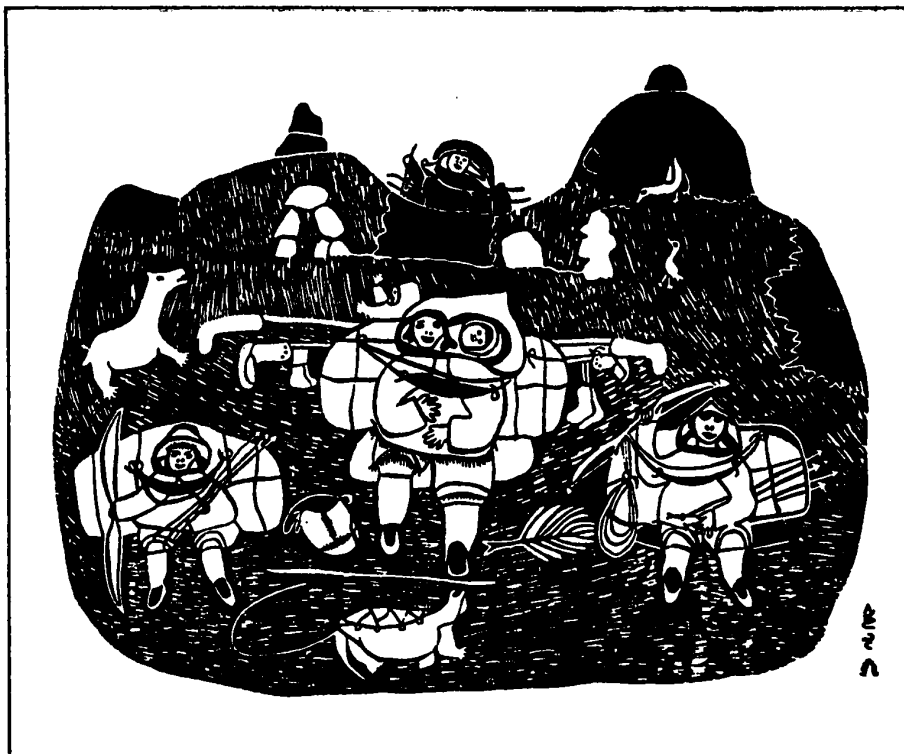
SLIDING IN THE SUN (40) is a Holman Island print in which a landscape setting acts as a ground. It is a perspective view, although the similar size of most figures retains the shallow depth of field. Each figure is handled with incised lines which create three-dimension, but the ground is represented with a minimum amount of linear markings that do not increase the spatial depth.

The print is colored with bright red in the center of the sun which diffuses to black as it approaches the edges of the print. The arbitrary color change is characteristic of many contemporary Eskimo prints.



41. William and Martha Noah, TUNDRA,  
Baker Lake, 1970.

TUNDRA (41) is a stencil print from Baker Lake. The focal point is a bird which hovers in an unnatural position on the picture plane, seemingly unrelated to the landscape setting. The land is indicated with additional markings, and the water is symbolically represented with a wavy line. The grass and twigs are a part of the landscape that are not commonly seen in Eskimo prints. The details indicate the nature of the figures and the tundra in which they are found. Tonal variations and textural effects are created by the spray technique which is often used at Baker Lake.



42. Pitseolak, SUMMER JOURNEY,  
Cape Dorset, 1970.

Pitseolak's SUMMER JOURNEY (42) is a perspective view using overlapping, diminishing size, and textural direction to create a recessionary plane. On this ground are placed the figures that are very indicative of the summer's journey and all that it entails. This print, like many others by Pitseolak, is full of a variety of colors and textures.

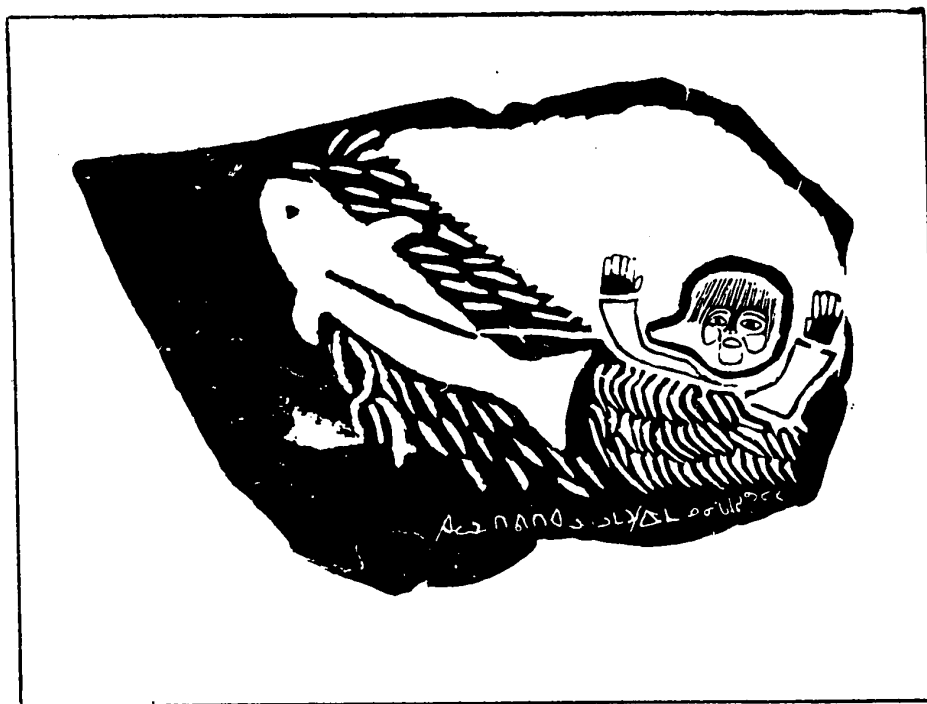
The landscape has its own contour and is independent of the paper's edge. The strong contrast of the whole scene against the paper gives an impression of a single image. It is placed on the paper, but the paper has not become an integral part of the composition. It is merely a support for the image.



43. Syollie Arpatuk, FAMILY HUNTING,  
Povungnituk, 1964.

The ground acts as a base for the figures in FAMILY HUNTING (43). It is a very detailed composition with extensive use of texture, incised line, and crowded figures which are all typical of Povungnituk. Such details are common elements that are more representative of naturalism than stylization. These very evident naturalistic qualities are characteristic of many Povungnituk artists.

The necessary elements of the scene, such as the game and tools associated with the hunt, are all represented. An image of a spirit, a mosquito, and even worms have been included.



44. Davidialuk, LEGEND OF LUMAK,  
Povungnituk, 1964.

LEGEND OF LUMAK (44) is not distinctively a perspective scene, but it is intended to represent visual space. The picture plane is used as a recessional ground with the area surrounding Lumak representing sky and the black area representing water. The continued contour which encloses the sky is again a result of the technique of cutting the stone block that is used at Povungnituk.

The waves in the water represent the action of the whale pulling Lumak through the water. The evil woman who tried to attach her husband's harpoon to the whale so he would be carried out to sea, became entangled, and is subject to the fate intended for him. The subject is a popular legend which has many variations throughout the Arctic.

## Chapter 14

### CONCLUSION

This study has illustrated some of the variety within the graphic images of prints by Canadian Eskimo artists and resulted in the distinction of six categories. It was found that the graphic images are characterized by one or more of the following: a single image presented in an open spatial field, a design extended from a central image, an over-all design which extends to fill the format, two or more figures represented together without ground, non-visual spatial orientation using a conceptual mode of relating to space, and perspective space representative of visual reality.

Specific correlation between the information presented in the perspective and the information revealed with the prints was not extensive. The influences that affect the graphic images are innumerable and not easily distinguishable. Although I believe a strong correlation exists, it would take extensive research and study isolate the influences upon the graphic images and specify their origin. It is hoped that this study stimulates interest in the possible correlations and exhibits the complexity of the influences and the variety of graphic images that have resulted.

This study was not intended as a defence for the 'new art form' which the contemporary prints represent. However, I strongly feel that the prints are an honest representation by Eskimo artists



of the world in which they live today. I feel that the conceptual orientations expressed in the perspective of this study are directly manifested in the prints, and the language which they still retain, is a governing constituent in their conceptual mode. The Eskimos have not lost all of their heritage, and the images still reflect the thinking and believing of the Eskimo people.

The study did not deal with the relationship between the characteristics of graphic representation that correspond to the graphic representation of other art forms. The art of children and native peoples contain many of the same characteristics which are found in Eskimo prints. Now that some of the characteristics have been isolated, it would be possible to deal more specifically with the correlations that do exist.

The purpose of this study was not to make a distinction between the indigenous and assimilated characteristics. However, during the study, I have realized the importance of their relationship. In a country which is still forming a new culture from the assimilation of others, the educational implications of the influences upon our art, and especially the art of children, are vast. I hope that the material in this study has magnified this issue and encourages further investigation into art education across cultures.

## APPENDIX

The catalogues containing the print collections appear in the bibliography, however, many of them lack complete details of publication. Following is a list of the print collections used in this study and a number that corresponds to the catalogues in which they may be found. The numbers refer to the catalogues as listed at the end of the bibliography.

The Povungnituk catalogues are distributed by La Fédération des Coopératives du Nouveau-Québec in Levis, Quebec; and the Cape Dorset, Holman Island, and Baker Lake catalogues are distributed by Canadian Arctic Producers Limited in Ottawa.

Cape Dorset	1959. . . .	5	Holman Island	1965. . . .	15
	1960. . . .	6		1966. . . .	16
	1961. . . .	7		1967. . . .	17
	1962. . . .	8		1968. . . .	18
	1963. . . .	9		1969. . . .	19
	1964-65 . .	10		1970. . . .	20
	1966. . . .	11		1971. . . .	21
	1967. . . .	12	Povungnituk	1962. . . .	8
	1968. . . .	13		1964. . . .	23
	1969. . . .	14		1965. . . .	24
	1970. . . .	4		1966. . . .	25
	1971. . . .	3		1968. . . .	26
				1969. . . .	27
Baker Lake	1970. . . .	1			
	1971. . . .	2			

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