

News of the arts

Eskimo art settles in France

An Inuit sculpture, presented by the Canadian Parliament to the Council of Europe as a symbol of the friendship between the two institutions and of their common concern for human rights, has been shipped from the Arctic and assembled by Inuit artist, Percy Tutannuak near the entrance of the Palais de l'Europe in Strasbourg, France.



Martine Bresson

Far from the barren landscape of the Arctic, this inukshuk, assembled by Percy Tutannuak, assumes its new position outside the Palais de l'Europe in Strasbourg.

According to Library of Parliament researcher Françoise Coulombe, Canada's northern landscape is dotted with great rock monuments called inukshuit. Some of these monuments are roughly imitative of a man standing or crouching, which is not surprising, since the Inuit word "inukshuk"* means "something acting in the capacity of a man".

Possibly prehistoric

The monuments may well date back to prehistoric times in the Arctic, since the Inuit say the large stone figures were there before they came. Most of the inukshuit still in existence date from the time of the Thule culture, which existed in this region from 1200 A.D. However, some of them were actually erected much more recently by the Inuit, direct descendants of the Thule culture, and even by some white explorers wishing to mark

*Inukshuit is used as the plural to respect the Inuit pronunciation.

their passage through the Arctic region.

Some inukshuit were used as landmarks for boat or sled navigation during winter when snow covered animal tracks and weather conditions impaired visibility. Located on the migratory routes, these ancient beacons are often found in rows and can be seen for at least several kilometres.

Some inukshuit may have been used in connection with certain rites, ceremonies or superstitions. Less than 100 years ago the Inuit were still erecting them on Enuks Point on Baffin Island, as if to appease the spirits of the waters before this dangerous crossing was attempted.

Inukshuit played an important part in hunting in this barren, treeless land. Apparently they tended to attract the caribou rather than frighten them away. The Inuit believe that the Tunit used inukshuit to direct the movements of caribou herds and to make them follow a certain route so that the animals could be killed.

The inukshuk system made it possible for the stampeding caribou to be led to within the short range of the hunters' spears and bows. So elaborate and effective was the system, that Dr. William E. Taylor, an archaeologist who is now director of the National Museum of Man in Ottawa, has remarked on the similarities between the method used by the ancient hunters and tactics described in modern military manuals.

Whatever the motives of their builders were, the inukshuit are undeniably surrounded by an air of mystery, as if what they conceal about the rich past of the region has not been fully revealed.

Top pop singer does well in U.S.

Canadian singer Dan Hill, whose recording *Sometimes When We Touch* was in the "Top 10" popularity chart in the United States, is also doing well on U.S. television, with recent appearances on the *Merv Griffin Show* and *Midnight Special*.

Hill has co-written three new songs with Barry Mann, with whom he also wrote *Sometimes When We Touch*, and recently embarked on a major tour of concerts with U.S. singer Art Garfunkel. He is also appearing in clubs in New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

In Canada, *Longer Fuse*, the album from which the single was taken, is a Platinum record, and seems certain to become a Gold in the U.S. Hill, meanwhile

is working on material for his next album.

The success of the single — which was a number one hit in Canada — led to a revival of interest in his first U.S. album and, recently, Hill had a Top 10 single and two albums rising in the Top 100, where he was vying for chart positioning with another Canadian singer, Gordon Lightfoot.

NAC orchestra pleases Germans

The National Arts Centre orchestra won enthusiastic acclaim for its opening performance in West Germany recently. Repeated demands for curtain calls punctuated the West Berliners' feverish response to the program at the new Philharmonic Hall, which opened with Canadian contemporary composer Harry Somers's *Those Silent, Awe Filled Spaces*.

The concert was attended by Canadian Ambassador J.G. Halstead and his wife, and Director General of the National Arts Centre, Donald McSweeney.

The musicians, who arrived in West Berlin from Naples, the last stop on their tour of Italy, were committed to 13 more concerts in West Germany.

London artist dies

Jack Chambers, 47, Canadian artist, filmmaker and writer, died in London, Ontario on April 13 of leukemia. He had been ill since 1969.

In 1956, Chambers was awarded the state prize for painting at the Royal Academy in Spain, where he took his formal training, and two years later was presented with the Paular Scholarship for landscape painting in Spain. An exhibition of his work at the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1970 was the second retrospective given a Canadian artist in mid-career at the museum.

In 1973, the Banff School of Fine Art awarded him a gold medal and honorarium, given annually to a distinguished contributor to the arts.

Chambers founded the London Film Makers Co-op in 1967 to encourage the making and distribution of personal films. The National Gallery purchased three of his in 1971.

One of Chambers's most famous paintings is *Sunday Morning*, a portrait of his two sons watching television in a room of his home.