



CANADIAN WEEKLY BULLETIN

INFORMATION DIVISION • DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS • OTTAWA, CANADA

Vol. 16 No. 11

March 15, 1961

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ART FROM THE ARCTIC

The following is an address by Mr. Walter Dinsdale, Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources, on February 28, at the opening in Ottawa of the 1960 exhibition of Canadian Eskimo graphic art:

"This is, I think you will agree, an event of national historical importance. We have been invited by a group of world-renowned artists to attend the first showing of their 1960 collection of graphic art. All of them are Canadian Eskimos. Their studios are in snow houses and canvas tents on the beautiful arctic tundra of South Baffin Island. Few of these artists have ever seen an art gallery; indeed, most have not been outside the Arctic. Yet tomorrow similar exhibitions will open in many cities across Canada and in the United States.

"Most of these original sketches are done in camps, away from the main settlement of Cape Dorset. Most of the sealskin, stencils and stone blocks from which the limited edition of prints is taken are worked on by the light of flickering seal-oil lamps in snow houses or by natural sunlight in the summer tents. The printing is done at Cape Dorset by highly-skilled Eskimo artisans who work in close consultation with the artists. Yet, even though it is only a little more than a year since Cape Dorset stone-cut and sealskin-stencil prints were first shown to the world outside, these artists have brought great fame and honour to our country.

"The renown of these artists did not begin with their graphic art. Like Eskimos in many

other communities, they have long carved in stone, and are continuing to execute work of undiminished quality. Their carvings have been shown in all the leading galleries of North America and Europe, and have raised Canada's reputation in the world of art. The graphic arts are but one new outlet for their extraordinary artistic talents.

GROWING REPUTATION OF ESKIMO PRINTS

"During this past year their works have been acquired for the permanent collections of some of the world's most renowned art galleries and museums, including our own National Gallery, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The prints have found their way into the homes of discriminating private collectors. Widely respected critics on this continent and in Europe have been excited and impressed with this art. This has happened not because of a paternalistic sentimentality toward the Eskimos, but because their work is recognized internationally as the vital visual expression of a highly artistic people. Art galleries do not traffic in sympathy or in paternalism when they add to their permanent collections. Neither do private collectors. The background of the artist can have little bearing on the selection of works to be added to their collections. This Eskimo art has reached beyond the boundaries of our nation, because it is recognized by connoisseurs as an important new art form. For that our whole nation can be grateful; we can all take pride that inter-

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