

ESKIMO ART EXHIBITION

The following is a partial text of remarks by Mr. Arthur Laing, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, at the opening of the Exhibition of the 1966 Collection of Cape Dorset Graphic Art in Montreal on November 16:

Six years ago, in 1960, the first formal exhibition of Cape Dorset graphic art was opened in this city at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

That event established the remarkable and versatile talents of our Canadian Eskimo artists. They were already known round the world for their soapstone sculpture. Now they had turned their abilities to a new medium – the sealskin and stone-cut prints....

It was in this building that one of the first exhibitions of Eskimo art was held. In the fall of 1949, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild offered about 1,000 splendid soapstone carvings at a sale that was advertised to last a week. At the end of three days every carving was sold....

The sale of carvings attracted the immediate interest and support of my Department – then the Department of Resources and Development. The Department asked the Canadian Handicrafts Guild to extend its search for carvings and offered a three-year grant to cover the salary and travelling expenses of James Houston, the Toronto-born artist who had purchased the carvings on behalf of the Guild.

From this beginning, Eskimo art has gone on to gain recognition from art galleries and critics around the world. In the centennial year, exhibitions of Eskimo sculpture and graphic art are scheduled for ten European countries. Tentative arrangements have been made to hold shows in the Far East, in Japan and India. Several successful shows have recently been held in galleries in the United States, and more are being arranged for the year ahead. In Canada, Eskimo art will be shown in every province – from Newfoundland to British Columbia....

MURALS FOR EXPO

Tonight we are honoured to have with us two Eskimo artists of recognized ability. Eliyah and Kumakalu, from Cape Dorset, are in Montreal at the present

time. They have been commissioned to create a series of murals for the Canadian pavilion at Expo '67. I understand that they are carving in relief on both soapstone slabs and on fine plaster. It is the first time that these gifted young men have worked in plaster, on a vertical surface and I understand that they are making extremely good progress....

It is natural to ask how the future of this art will relate to the future of Eskimo society. The question is complex. Part of the answer undoubtedly lies in the hearts and hands of young artists such as Eliyah and Kumakalu.

DESIGNS ON FABRICS

Today, they are working in a period of change, and in change art has always flourished. The modern world has reached into the isolation of the Arctic to bring new materials and new methods of expression. The Eskimo artists are experimenting and adapting to them all. As you know, their highly original designs are now appearing on fabrics. In fact these designs – as a group – were awarded the 1967 National Design Council award presented in conjunction with the Department of Industry on June 15 this year. For the first time in history, the Eskimo people have the use of colour and paper. They are producing arresting results.

In the years to come, there will be other changes. Regular wage employment will occupy the long storm-bound winter hours of more and more of the Eskimo people. This change will come, and I, for one, look forward to the day. It will mean warmer houses, more food, and a better life for all our northern citizens.

I do not believe, however, that this pattern of life will mean the death of Eskimo art. Its roots are too long and deep in the past; its flowering today reveals a strong adaptable talent. We have every reason to expect the Eskimo people will continue to produce a high percentage of gifted artists.

Who can explain a rich concentration of native talent? The Welsh are noted for their singers, the French for their cuisine, the Icelanders for their poetry. At this point, I believe I can say that the Eskimo race will be known for their art through many years to come....

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TOP AWARD TO A-SCIENTIST

The Prime Minister has announced that Dr. Wilfrid Bennett Lewis, senior vice-president (Science) of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, has won the first Outstanding Achievement Award of the Public Service of Canada. This prize, the highest that the Government can make to a public servant, will be presented to Dr. Lewis by His Excellency the Governor-General in a ceremony at Government House in December.

The Outstanding Achievement Award consists of a citation in the form of an illuminated address signed by the Governor-General and the Prime Minister, and an honorarium of \$5,000. It has been

introduced by the Government of Canada to honour exceptional accomplishment in the national interest and for the public service.

REMARKS OF PM

In a letter to Dr. Lewis, advising him of his selection as first winner of the award, the Prime Minister said:

“The major role you have played in the realization of the objectives of the Canadian nuclear power programme has brought considerable international credit to Canada and to Atomic Energy of Canada.... The success which this programme achieved is due, in great part, to your personal ability, foresight and dynamic leadership. You have made a major contri-