

Inuit art exhibit part of Olympics celebrations

The people Within – Art from Baker Lake, an intriguing exhibition, conceived as part of the festival of Canadian culture to be held during the Olympics, is the work of eight Inuit artists from the Sanavik Co-operative, Baker Lake in the Northwest Territories.

The exhibition, which opens June 25 at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, will be displayed there until August 5 and then moved to the Saidye Bronfman Centre in Montreal from August 16 to September 3.

The People Within is the first major Inuit exhibition the Art Gallery of Ontario has ever organized and presented. George Swinton, who wrote the preface to the Baker Lake (Sanavik Co-operative) Sculpture catalogue of 1974, comments: "The Sanavik Co-op still is the conspicuous and the Inuit-operated centre of art activities and the creativity-generating force in the great and sprawling inland community some 180 miles west of the Hudson Bay shores."

The community of Baker Lake is situated at the northwest corner of its namesake. The area, named for the brothers Sir William and Richard Baker of the Hudson Bay Company in 1762 by the explorer Captain Christopher, was served by various trading posts. It was only in 1936, however, that the



Drum Dance Gathering by Luke Iskiktaaryuk. (Caribou antler, 1972.)

Company established their buildings on the present site.

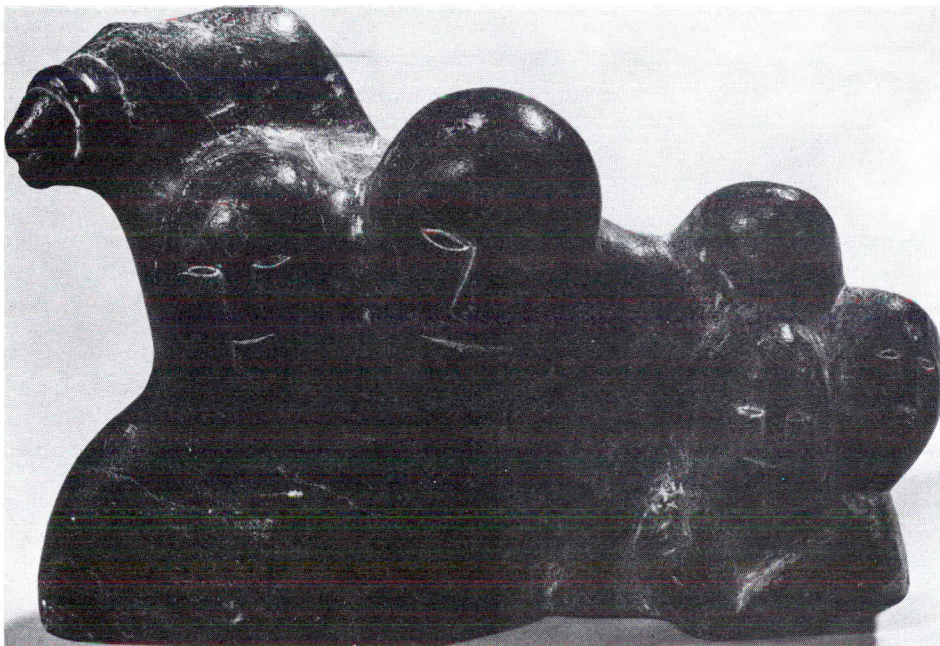
The artists are Silas Aittauq, Luke Anguhallug, Ruth Annaqtuusi, Luke Iksiktaaryuk, Tuna Iquiliq (Erkoolik), Janet Kigusiuq, Jessie Oonark and Simon Tookoome. Their unique style reflects the personal expressions of an inland people interpreting the imagery of a life where traditions are rapidly

disappearing from memory as well as practice. The images, often seemingly simple, are compressed to communicate with great impact.

Some 89 works make up the exhibition, including drawings, stone-cut and stencil prints, sculpture of soapstone and caribou antler, and a collection of 12 felt appliqué wall hangings by Jessie Oonark, some of which are on public view for the first time. One of the most spectacular wall hangings – 13 by 21 feet – on loan from the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, has never been exhibited in Toronto and Montreal.

The exhibition, co-ordinated by Reissa Schrager, has been made possible with assistance from Benson & Hedges (Canada) Ltd and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. Benson & Hedges' support of the visual arts, which dates back to 1959, includes not only sponsorship of major museum exhibitions but such public projects as the commissioning of Art Walls – 15 huge murals by leading Canadian artists on the exterior walls of prominent buildings in Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg and Quebec City.

(Photos courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario.)



Family with Musk Ox by Silas Aittauq. (Stone, 1972.)