



Lucy, Owl With Young. Stone cut, 14 x 18, 1963

Lucy's owls move across the paper with staring eyes. The young birds display a childlike source of energy. Lucy is one of the few artists of West Baffin Island to disregard the usual practice of outlining a figure, and this habit gives her stone cut figures a special feeling of fur or feathers.

Lucy was born in Sugluk across the Hudson Strait from the Foxe Peninsula. Following the

death of her father, when she was very young, she moved with her mother to Baffin Island to be with relatives. When she was a young mother with children, her husband, Tikitok, and many others in their camp were stricken with whale poisoning. Over one half of the people died. After this disaster, the remaining people, including Lucy and Tikitok, left that poisoned place and made another camp near Cape Dorset.

In 1959 the Eskimos formed the West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative, and in the spring of 1960 we sent a series of prints south. The shows and sales were completely successful. At that time I said I'd soon leave and place it all in their hands, and when the time came I felt I had to go, though I didn't really want to.

How does the new printmaking relate to the old carving? Very much the same, I think. If you can honor a seal in the round, you can do it in the flat. The concept of printmaking was new to the Eskimos, but the images and ideas they created were firmly based on centuries of ancient Eskimo traditions, myths, and skills. Maybe there's been some change. Before, if they made a good seal, that was good. If not, that was OK. Selling the work may have changed the attitudes somewhat.

One of the most important effects has been on Eskimo women. Eskimos are strong family people, who greatly respect one another. But the men have always done the carving. The women were magnificent sewers and masters in the art of skin appliqué, the ancient art of cutting silhouette forms and designs from animal hides, to

sew on clothes as decoration. When printing came, many of them began to do that, first by stenciling from their appliqué cutouts, then by carving and etching blocks. Dreams are very important to Eskimos, and the men seem to agree that the women dream more, which is why they make such splendid images.

The printmaking gave the women an income from the outside, which helped, but more importantly they thrived in the new appreciation of their work. "Do people really like that?" a young woman named Kenojuak asked me. "You bet," I said. "That's nice."

I think Kenojuak is the best artist Canada has ever produced. Many art museum directors think that too. She once said, "Making images is a transference from the real to the unreal." I think that statement is just right. The woman Oonark is another great one. And Tiktak, a man carver, will be known like Giacometti.

We sold one of Kenojuak's first prints, *The Enchanted Owl*, for \$100 each. It now sells instantly for \$4,000, and there are many people who know where every one of the fifty are, and wait for one to come up for sale.