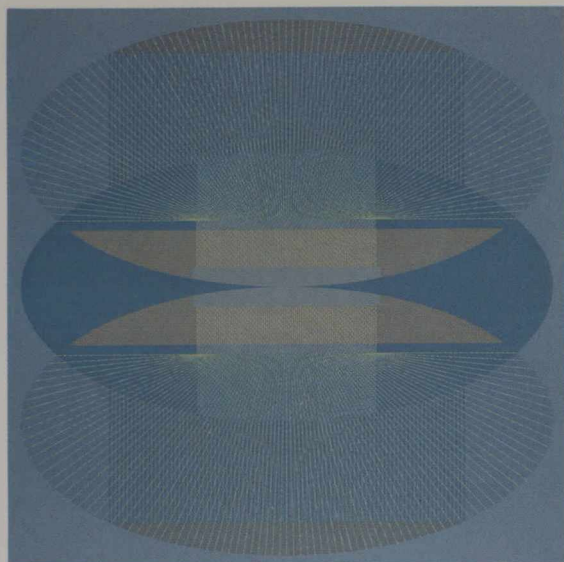




Hop-Scotch, Claude Breeze, oil and lucite on canvas, 96" X 58 5/8", 1963, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

their paintings in an exhibition of international contemporary art, I know my score would be low indeed. To me, at least, the nationality is simply not there. . . . The paintings are . . . to me both individual to their creators and international in their approach." The twenty-four on vivid display are J. W. G. Macdonald, Paul-Emile Borduas, Alfred Pellan, Jack Shadbolt, Jack Bush, Alex Colville, Jean-Paul Riopelle, Harold Town, Roald Bloore, Roy Kiyooka, Kenneth Lockhead, William Ronald, Michael Snow, Joyce Wieland, Jack Chambers, Claude Tousignant, John Meredith, Ted Goodwin, Guido Molinari, Yves Gaucher, Gordon Rayner, Greg Curnoe, Claude Breeze, and Brian Fisher.

From painting we can turn to sculpture of a type indisputably Canadian, yet in a fundamental sense not Canadian at all; the sculptors, Eskimos, were carving soft stone and whalebone before the white man trapped his first beaver. There are two books for consideration: *Sculpture/Inuit*, University of Toronto Press, and *Sculpture of the Eskimo*, George Swinton, McClelland and Stewart. (Selections from the two illustrate "What is an Eskimo" in this issue.) The first, the graphic



Enigma, Brian Fisher, polymer acrylic on cotton canvas, 68" X 68", 1966, Queen's University, Kingston.

representation of an exhibit organized by the Canadian Eskimo Arts Council and shown around the world, is more thorough but less imaginative. The second displays the works of art to much better advantage. Both furnish for the unaware a startling view of Eskimo art: it is sophisticated and we should stop patronizing Eskimos with the ignorant assumption that all of them carve well by natural, homogeneous skill, the way Gypsies read tea leaves. As Swinton puts it, "while carving and other techniques are practiced by many Eskimos, art is by no means a collective activity." There are, as elsewhere, few artists of genius, a good many talented craftsmen, and a few who are no better than the whittlers around a country store. The least talented, however, still have the advantage of a sophisticated tradition and observed technique.

Most of the objects—bears, owls, sea animals, women and children, hunters—have been shaped for centuries, though one is occasionally surprised to turn a page and find a photograph of a beautifully precise miniature ivory rifle or a lovely little handsaw as delicate as a cameo. The Eskimos do have one clear advantage over the weekend artist who snatches a few hours to chisel or daub; as the eminent authority John Houston puts it in an essay in *Sculpture/Inuit*, "Bad weather poses a special kind of leisure." Many of the artists are unknown, but those who deserve to be are known and are identified. Among those of genius are Shecookjuk, of Cape Dorset, represented by "Two Sleeping Families," in grey stone and ivory; Inoucdjouas, of Port Harrison, "Standing Man"; and Povungnituk, whose "Two Loons" has an uncanny grace.

(In next month's issue, we'll look at a dozen other new books.)