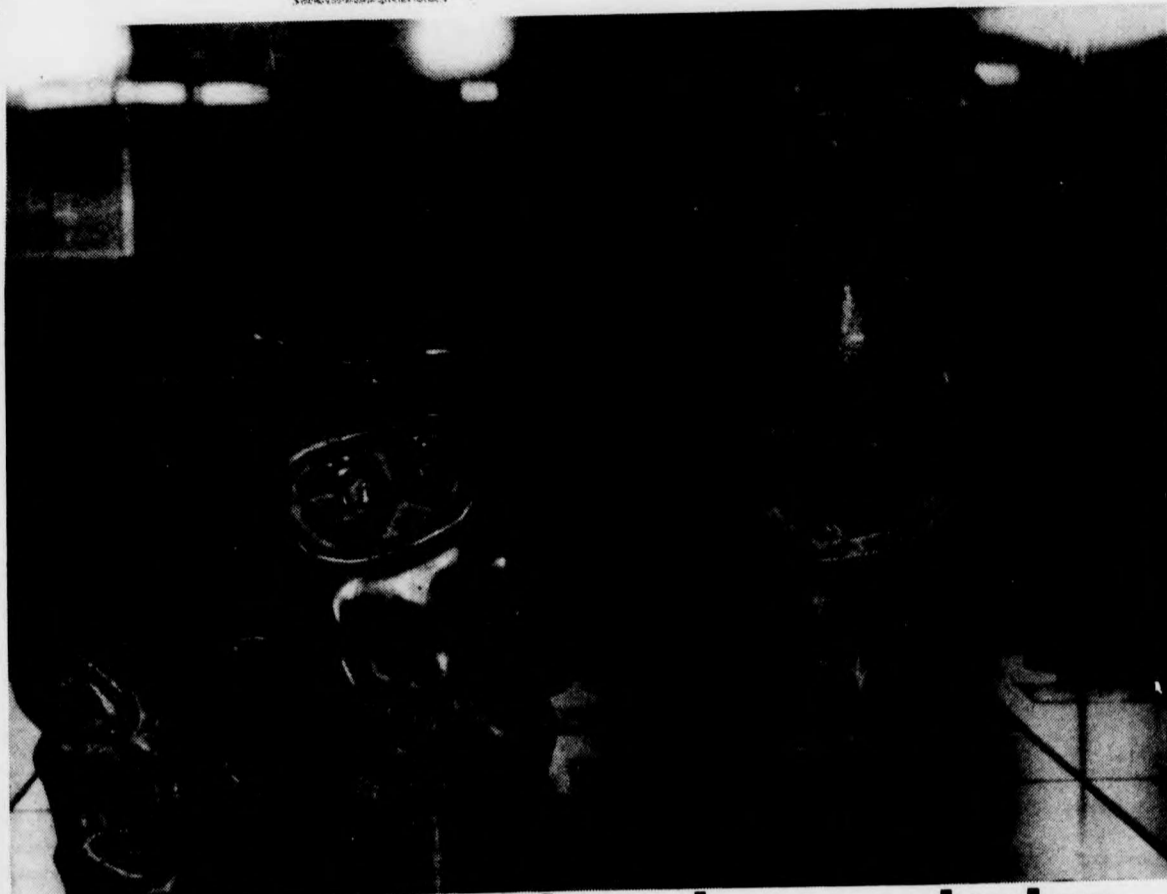


Arts



AGYU's exhibition demonstrates York's commitment to Inuit art

By G. "HOWIE" MARR

The Art Gallery of York University's (AGYU) "Sananguaq Exhibition" is an impressive exhibition which demonstrates the university's commitment to Inuit art.

The works currently on display represent only a portion of the over 300 items in the York collection. The show features 55 prints, 10 archaeological pieces, and 67 sculptures representing the neolithic, Cape Dorset, and contemporary periods in Inuit art. "The works are being displayed together to show similarities between the ages," according to guest curator Cynthia Cook.

Cook graduated from York Fine Arts with her master's, and did her thesis on Inuit art. She also has direct experience with the Inuit that includes travels to the North. In addition to the York exhibition, Cook has also worked on the McMichael Canadian Inuit exhibit.

"One of the AGYU's mandates has been aimed at Inuit art," says Cook. York began collecting Inuit art in 1969, and the AGYU collection started with the purchase of major private collections, including the

A.H. Fitzgerald, the Paul Duval, and the Kamchatka Adventure collections.

As a consequence, the AGYU collection is extremely diverse, and includes work from all periods of Inuit art. The prehistoric and historic periods span the Thule (1000 AD to 1700 AD), Dorset (1000-800 BC to 1000 AD), and pre-Dorset cultures (2500 BC to 1000 BC). Most of the Thule works were carved in ivory tusks of sea animals, and include representations of women and birds.

In contrast to the Thule sculptures are works from the contemporary periods. In this sculptures the heavy influence of traders from the Hudson's Bay company—who were buying up Inuit sculptures for sale abroad—is strongly felt. The sculpture vary in size, but tend to be larger, with soapstone replacing the traditional materials of ivory, bone, and wood.

According to Cook, many of the older pieces were "carved by people who lived on the land, and they depict that experience. Today the Inuit are influenced by our television and our houses." Despite the affect of white man on recent Inuit scul-

tures, the primary subject matter remains the same: mythology.

In the area of printmaking, the collection focuses on the first decade of printmaking at Cape Dorset (1959-1969). The AGYU collection includes prints by 28 artists, with subject matter emphasizing the family, and daily activities such as hunting and fishing. For example, "Two Men Discussing Coming Hunt" is exactly as the title suggests, while "Man Carrying Reluctant Wife" is a humorous piece juxtaposing the evil smile of the husband and a responding look of bewilderment from his wife. Careful examination of the prints affords the viewer considerable insight into the daily life and culture of the Inuit.

Cook says she sees a "strong future for Inuit art, but feels it might take a "different direction," from its traditional roots. "The Inuits will be competing with southern artists as artists . . . they don't want to be racially segregated."

The current exhibit will run until the end of January, with a catalogue of the collection planned for the spring.

Lee's latest work is out of this world

By HOWARD KAMAN

As children, most of us had a favourite book, a particular title which we consistently asked to be read at bedtime. For many of us, that book was *Alligator Pie*, Dennis Lee's classic which has entertained Canadian kids for years. But despite most people's familiarity with this enormously popular volume, the general public seems uninformed about Lee's other works, such as 1972's *Civil Elegies*, for which he won the Governor-General's Award.

His newest work, *The Difficulty of Living on Other Planets*, is described in the press release as being "for older kids of all ages." It is not a children's book, but neither is it strictly for adults. In fact, Lee has succeeded in crafting poetry suited to all age groups.

The book succeeds on many levels: social commentary, black humour, and childish fantasy. In pieces like the blunt, single-stanza poem "When I Went Up To Ottawa," he flatly, yet comically, states his opinion on free trade. Adding to the effect is an illustration, showing a man (Mr. Mulroney, perhaps?) placing stars and stripes on our Cana-

dian flag. The drawing, along with the many others by artist Alan Daniel, enhances the poetry and lightens the visual tone of the book.

In "The Revenge of Santa Claus," Lee tells the story of how St. Nick gave the world's department store owners everything they have coming to them for the way they act around Christmas time. Without ruining the humour of the piece, let it be said simply that Lee's solution to the commercialization of the season is unique and inventive.

In "The Mouse and the Maid," Lee fashions an ingenious letter to the reader, giving her/him the choice of deciding the poem's end. Then, declaring the vote a tie, he presents all three possibilities offered in his proposal.

Lee's work is fine storytelling in every sense of the word. It is witty, thought-provoking, insightful, and often downright hilarious. With a flair for light, humorous pokes at reality, we now have a book for all seasons: for quietly reading to ourselves, or for reading aloud to share the enjoyment. *The Difficulty of Living on Other Planets* is a book with many sides, and many hidden treasures.



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