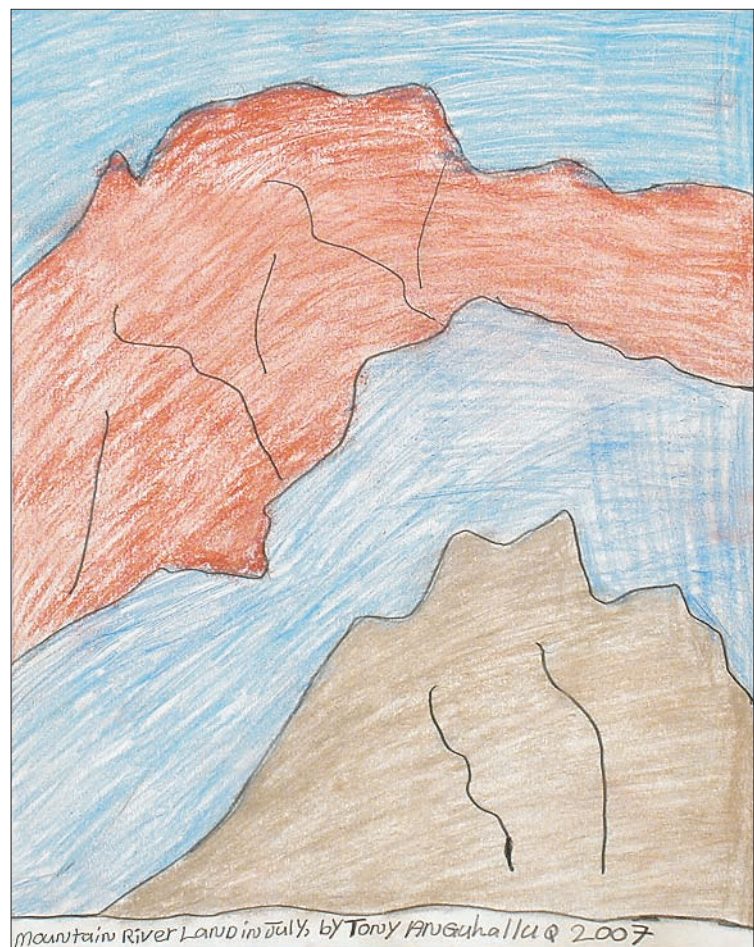


## VIEWFINDER

Evocative of Matisse, Gauguin, Bonnard and Japanese block prints, the work of Tony Anguhalluq offers...



# A RARE LOOK AT THE NORTHERN LANDSCAPE



### TONY ANGUHALLUQ: DRAWINGS

Marion Scott Gallery, 308 Water St.  
Opens today and runs to Jan. 6, 2008

BY LLOYD DYKK  
VANCOUVER SUN

**T**ony Anguhalluq has a new showing of drawings from the area around Baker Lake, Nunavut, where he lives in the far North. It's even more exciting than his first one, which was held last March at the Marion Scott Gallery.

This show was originally to include sculptures (the Churchill, Man.-born Anguhalluq, pictured above, is also a carver) but political bureaucracy kept quarried stone from arriving at the Baker Lake collective in time, so only one sculpture came in and the show had to be retitled *Tony Anguhalluq: Drawings*.

When I raved about that first show, responses included, "My kid could do that," according to one person. Uh-huh. Then I would get that kid to try.

Very few gifted adults could begin to equal the accomplishments of this 37-year-old adopted son of Inuit artists Luke Anguhalluq and Marion Tuu'luq. His first show at the Marion Scott sold out even before opening and the buyers included some knowing collectors and art patrons, including Esther and Samuel Sarick, who have already bought eight of the present works, which will join their other Anguhalluqs at the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Samuel Sarick considers Anguhalluq to be on a par with the American landscape abstractionist Milton Avery. And some of Anguhalluq's work was also chosen to be included in the 13th Biennial of Naïve and Marginal Art, now being shown in Jagodina, Serbia. Lovely, except Anguhalluq is not a "naïve" artist.

There are 36 pieces in the show, most of them 24 by 19 inches (priced at \$800), and some 14 by 11 (priced at \$500). The smaller ones are mainly unpeopled and are like meditations on the landscape. The larger ones include human figures and the animals of the north: muskoxen, fish, caribou, dogs.

What may astonish you is that they are all so utterly different from one another, while remaining individually complete.

What surprises curator Robert Kardosh is that Anguhalluq's work is so different from the usual focus of the Inuit of the Canadian Arctic, which tends to be on the people themselves and their spirits. Anguhalluq has that rare tendency to look at the landscape itself, and in a part of the world where the inhabitants' connection with the land borders on the mystical, as the feeling is said to be around the Baker Lake township.

Anguhalluq has probably never seen a Japanese woodblock, nor would he likely know the word *graffito*, which means only "scratched." The important thing is that some mysterious natural sophistication has given him his technique, a language to respond to what he sees when he looks at a landscape.

There is a definite sharing of sensibilities with the Japanese in his jagged lines, which signify mountain ranges seen from a distance, and in his suggesting of illusionistic depth to a flat surface by juxtaposing blocks of colour.

These colours are often ravishing when placed next to each other — tones of pewter and terra cotta, teal, browns, blues, reds and yellows. There's a striking vigour and sureness to his strokes, and the occasionally deep, almost gashed pencil lines in vector-like strokes are somehow just right.

Gallery owner Judy Kardosh says that at first there was only one work in the show that she didn't like, one of ducks on a pond. There was something "spidery" about those ducks, she says, until she realized that those lines represented motion. It has now become her favorite work of all.

It's not only the Japanese that Anguhalluq evokes. Essentially he speaks the same language as Matisse, Gauguin and Bonnard.

There is a kinetic immediacy that separates drawing from other media. And there is something else.

"This is what the modernists tried to do," says Robert Kardosh. "To break out of that trap of realistic mimicry and acknowledge the flatness of the picture surface."

That flatness is seductively beautiful. You may not be sure just where you are, looking at an Anguhalluq, and you may not get caught up in the narrative (he evidently doesn't want you to) but there is a definite sense of Zen coming from the spirit of those hills, mountains, rivers and rocks. In most art, they'd be backdrops. Here, they're the main event.

ldykk@png.canwest.com

