

Inuit Art

QUARTERLY

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Maannaujuq Inuit Sanannnguaqsimajangit Tauttungillu
Contemporary Inuit Art & Perspectives

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(1929–2006 Qamani'tuaq)
—
Untitled (Dream scene) (detail)
1989
Duffel, felt and embroidery thread
91.4 × 115.6 cm
COURTESY EXPANDINGINUIT.COM
- ABOVE**
- Kudluajuk Ashoona**
(1958–2019 Kinngait)
—
Untitled (Figure in kimono)
2017
COURTESY MADRONA GALLERY
REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION
DORSET FINE ARTS
- LEFT**
- Unidentified artist**
(Nain)
—
Embroidered square with inukuluit
n.d.
COURTESY THE PEARY-MACMILLAN ARCTIC MUSEUM, BOWDOIN COLLEGE
PHOTO LUC DEMERS

Mark Igloliorte

Eskimo Roll

BELOW
Mark Igloliorte
(b. 1977 Vancouver/
Corner Brook)
—
Eskimo Roll
2017
Video loop, 3m 32s
COURTESY MARION SCOTT
GALLERY

by Stuart Keeler



The title is an ironic and bold acknowledgement of the colonization of the kayak. Over the past century, the kayak has been appropriated from an agile seal hunting vessel to a moneyed weekender's leisure craft.

Set against the panorama of English Bay in Vancouver, BC, a lone figure in a kayak—interdisciplinary artist Mark Igloliorte—wields a double-ended paddle, attempting to successfully right himself on camera. What follows is *Eskimo Roll* (2017), a three-minute video work that documents a performance by Igloliorte, created in collaboration with artist Navarana Igloliorte.

The video's composition is painterly: grey-blue water meets grey peaked mountains; the dappled sprawl of the city stretches across the background. It could be idyllic, save for a smattering of shipping tankers that interrupt the waterline, anchoring this work to its specific locale. Regardless of its setting, however, and the allure of its visual poetics of place, the work functions as a powerful catalyst for conversations centered on colonialism, class, environmentalism, identity, terminology and language, all of which implicate us, as viewers, through the act of observing.

The title refers to a self-rescue technique of righting a capsized kayak without leaving the vessel. The motion represents a complete circle: from above water to being submerged, and coming back to the start position. It is powered by body weight and command of

the oar and, evident in Igloliorte's piece, practice. Not yet mastered, we watch him attempt the action again and again, as though claiming ownership to the dubious name through repetition.

Using the name of the maneuver as his performance's title is an inherently ironic and bold acknowledgement of the colonization of the kayak. Over the past century, the kayak has been appropriated from an agile seal hunting vessel to a moneyed weekender's leisure craft. By titling the piece *Eskimo Roll*, and without acknowledging the derogatoriness of the term, the artist calls upon the viewer to confront this history and reflect upon the effect of this casual derision of identity, despite the boat's and the maneuver's Inuit lineage. Here, the lone kayaker re-instating this history through repetition hints at the wider efforts of those who protest historical erasure and look to resolve the complexity of classification.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980), philosopher Michel de Certeau reminds us that performance is an investigation of the mind, body and spirit, which is tangible in *Eskimo Roll* as each oar stroke waves back at centuries of Inuit history, lived experience

and cultural traditions. Igloliorte's performance turns the maneuver into a palimpsest: a new work laid upon a used canvas that still bears visible traces of its earlier form.

Eskimo Roll was acquired in 2019 by the TD Corporate Art Collection, which has been collecting Inuit and other Indigenous art in addition to non-Indigenous contemporary art since 1968 and aims to curate works that reflect the vital conversations happening in our communities. *Eskimo Roll* addresses many topical issues of identity and place, and offers an interesting space for thought provoking self-reflection.

It is my hope that visitors to downtown Toronto, ON, will meet it when we play the film on the public screen at the Bay and Queen TD Branch from March to June in 2020. Flanked by new and old City Halls and Nathan Phillips Square, the Bay and Queen intersection is both a landmark, as well as a platform to view the current of ideas. I feel fortunate, as Senior Curator of the collection, that I will be able to visit with this piece frequently this spring.

—
Stuart Keeler is Senior Curator of the TD Bank Art Collection.