

PRESS RELEASE



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LAND, ICE, COSMOS

April 1 — May 6, 2023



Vancouver, BC — Marion Scott Gallery is pleased to present *Land, Ice, Cosmos*. Opening on Saturday, April 1 and continuing until May 6, the exhibition showcases a diverse array of works by seven Inuit artists, including Tony Anguhalluq, Shuvinai Ashoona, Irene Avaalaaqiaq Tiktaalaaq, Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory and Jamie Griffiths, Elizabeth Nutaraaluk Aulatjut, Pauta Saila, and Lucy Tasseor Tutsweetok. While the featured works span a variety of different mediums, such as video installation, prints, drawings, textiles, and sculpture, they each seek to express evolving relationships to and engagements—both materially and spiritually—with ancestral Inuit lands, worldviews, and traditions.

The exhibition includes three different renditions of a *qulliq*, an Inuit oil lamp made of soapstone, by Kinngait's Shuvinai Ashoona. Dating from 2003 to 2006, each drawing reflects the artist's preoccupation with the subject matter and the evolving representational techniques employed throughout her artistic practice over the years. In her 2003 drawing, Ashoona relies on dense, detailed linework and shading to depict the rocky tundra upon which the *qulliq* rests, while her 2006 composition employs a more minimalistic approach, completely forgoing any depiction of a backdrop in favour of a concentrated exploration of the lamp's shape and function.

The coloured pencil drawings of Qamani'tuaq (Baker Lake)-based artist Tony Anguhalluq add a sense of vibrancy and dynamism to the exhibition. Anguhalluq's bright, dreamy representations of Inuit hunting scenes are sparsely populated by lone figures and animals who occupy the land at different points and varying scales. The artist's use of multiple, flattened perspectives centres the Arctic landscape as a fundamental aspect in the continuance of traditional Inuit activities and lifestyles, while also portraying contemporary developments such as the use of hunting rifles alongside bows and arrows.

A large scale photographic print created by Iqaluit-based, multidisciplinary artist Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory in collaboration with British-Canadian filmmaker Jamie Griffiths captures Williamson Bathory at a dramatic moment in the midst of *uaajeerneq*, a Greenlandic Inuit mask dance which functions as a form of expressive storytelling. Reflecting on the importance of the dance within her artistic practice, Williamson Bathory explains that "*Uaajeerneq* plays with four main themes: our humility as human beings in the vastness of the universe and our connection to our ancestors, sex, fear, and hilarity."¹ Also included in the exhibition are two video installation works which serve as mediations on the artist's relationship with her northern homelands and depict her process of preparing for *uaajeerneq*.

¹ "Q & A with Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory," The Chan Centre for the Performing Arts at the University of British Columbia, January 9, 2018, <https://chancentre.com/news/q-a-with-laakkuluk/>.

Three embroidered wall-hangings by Qamani'tuaq-based artist Irene Avaalaaqiaq Tiktaalaaq, inspired by Inuit spirituality and shamanistic themes, make use of decorative stitches and flowing, appliquéd forms to depict human figures and animal spirits in states of transformation and flux. Influenced by her childhood growing up in nomadic camps around Qamani'tuaq, Avaalaaqiaq Tiktaalaaq draws from a repertoire of oral histories and experiences passed down by her relatives and community members. "Whenever I see my wall hangings they remind me of my life...I always remember my grandmother and the stories and legends she told me," she says.²

Arviat's Elizabeth Nutaraaluk Aulatjut is represented in the exhibition by two sculptures which aptly demonstrate the minimalist, organic, and self-contained qualities that often characterise carvings from this coastal region. Choosing to work around the jutting shapes and rough, jagged surface of the stones from which they are carved, Nutaraaluk Aulatjut fashions semi-abstracted, triangular faces, with features that are accented by caribou antler inlays. Her work is complimented by that of artist Lucy Tasseor Tutsweetok, who also hails from the community of Arviat. Utilising a similarly pared-down style that emphasises the natural curvatures of the material, Tasseor Tutsweetok creates mountainous 'face clusters,' in which subtly hatched facial features emerge from within the contours and protrusions of the steatite stone that forms the basis of her sculptures.

Rounding out the show is a large sculpture by master carver Pauta Saila which constitutes a prime example of the 'dancing bear' motif that the Kinngait artist was widely recognized and celebrated for. Speaking on the expressive, emotive nature of his work, Saila has commented that "I like to carve what I feel, not merely what I see. It is the feeling that goes along with whatever one is doing. I also think about the material, the stone...I do what the Creator wants me to do, not merely by seeing but feeling too."³ Balancing upright on one foot, the bear exudes a sense of energy and movement that is emphasised by its rounded curves and playful posture. The marbled, polished stone is punctuated by the ingenious insertion of four nubs, made from antler, which serve as the animal's teeth, giving its contoured form a powerful presence.

² Quoted in Judith Nasby, *Irene Avaalaaqiaq: Myth and Reality* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 3.

³ Quoted in Bernadette Driscoll, *Uumajut: Animal Imagery in Inuit Art* (The Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1985), 46.

Tony Anguhalluq (b.1970) was born in Churchill, Manitoba, but has always lived in the Nunavut community of Qamani'tuaq. A member of the Utkusiksalingmiut (“people of the soapstone pots”), he was adopted and raised by Luke Anguhadluq and Marion Tuu'luq, both prominent artists of the first generation. In the mid-1990s, Anguhalluq was invited to participate in a local printmaking workshop where he discovered his own talent for two-dimensional image making. His drawings and prints are found in many important private and public collections, including the National Gallery of Canada, the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Smithsonian.

Shuvinai Ashoona (b.1961) is one of Canada's foremost contemporary artists. Based in the remote northern community of Kinngait on southern Baffin Island, the third-generation Inuk artist has been gaining ever more attention, nationally and internationally, for her drawings and prints, in which she fuses fantastical and everyday imagery. Ashoona is the winner of the 2018 Gershon Iskowitz Prize, one of Canada's top art prizes, and her work is currently featured in *The Milk of Dreams*, the central exhibition of the 59th Venice Biennale, where she received a Special Mention. She has had solo exhibitions at the Art Gallery of Ontario, The Power Plant, The Vancouver Art Gallery, and ICI Miami. Her work is in numerous private and public collections including the National Gallery of Canada, the Smithsonian, the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Art Gallery of Ontario, ICI Miami, Winnipeg Art Gallery and the Remai Modern.

Irene Avaalaaqiaq Tiktaalaaq (b.1941) was born on the north shore of Tebesjuak Lake near Qamani'tuaq, Nunavut, where she settled permanently in 1958. As a prolific, multi-disciplinary artist working in print, drawing, sculpture, and textile, Avaalaaqiaq Tiktaalaaq has been internationally recognized and celebrated for her unique vision which draws on Inuit oral history alongside her own lived experiences on the land. Throughout her long career, her work has been exhibited at global venues such as the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art in Verona, Italy, the Winnipeg Art Gallery, and the Textile Museum of Canada in Toronto. In 1999, she was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws from the University of Guelph, in recognition of her contributions to Inuit and Canadian art. She is an inducted member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts.

Jamie Griffiths is a digital artist, performer, and filmmaker hailing from South London, England. She emigrated to Vancouver, BC in 1989, where her performance and photographic work focused on outsider cultures and LGBTQIA communities in the 1980's and 90's. In later years she began using experimental digital technology, live performance, and film to explore issues of colonialism, cultural conflict and displacement through a critical and autobiographical lens. Since 2015 she has been based in Iqaluit, Nunavut, where she often collaborates with multidisciplinary Inuk artist Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory. She is a co-founding member of the Ikumagialiit Performance Art Band with Williamson Bathory, Cris Derksen and Christine Tootoo.

Elizabeth Nutaraaluk Aulatjut (1914–1998) was a member of the inland-dwelling Ihalmiut, a sub-group of the Caribou Inuit whose territories centered on the area in and around Ennadai Lake in the Kivalliq Region of Nunavut. In the 1960s, she and her family moved to the coastal community of Arviat, where she was part of a small group of similarly displaced members of her group who took up stone carving following the transition from a semi-nomadic life on the land to sedentary settlements. Considered to be a matriarchal figure within her community, Nutaraaluk Aulatjut's semi-representational images in stone depicting mothers nursing their children, at once tender and elemental, established her as a leading artistic voice of her generation during her lifetime.

Pauta Saila (1916–2009) was born at Kilaparutua camp in southwestern Baffin Island, near the community of Kinngait. Renowned for his large-scale, semi-abstract carvings of 'dancing bears' featuring upright polar bears in lively positions, Saila has also produced drawings, graphic works, and prints alongside his second wife, fellow artist and printmaker Pitaloosie Saila. A life-size, bronze sculpture of a dancing bear created by Saila in 1999 is on permanent outdoor display at Ottawa's Byward Market, and his work has been collected and exhibited by institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, and the Winnipeg Art Gallery. He was inducted into the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts in 2003.

Lucy Tasseor Tutsweetok (1934–2012) was born at Nunalla in northern Manitoba and was a member of the Ihalmiut who lived near and around Ennadai Lake. She later settled in the coastal community of Arviat, and began making stone sculptures in the mid 1960s. This marked the beginning of a prolific career lasting more than four decades. In 1992, she was one of two Inuit artists featured in *Indigena: Contemporary Native Perspectives in Canadian Art*, a landmark exhibition organized by the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Quebec. Her first solo exhibition was held at the Art Gallery of Ontario in 2011, and her work can be found in public collections such as UBC's Museum of Anthropology, the National Gallery of Canada, and the Winnipeg Art Gallery.

Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory (b.1979) is a Kalaaleq (Greenlandic Inuk) performance artist, poet, actor, curator, storyteller and writer. Born in Saskatoon and based in Iqaluit, Nunavut, she performs and exhibits internationally, collaborates with other artists and has been an advocate for Inuit artists. In 2017, Williamson Bathory was the recipient of the inaugural Kenojuak Ashevak Memorial Prize, and in 2021 she was awarded the prestigious Sobey Art Award. Williamson Bathory's work has been featured in many exhibitions across Canada, and was recently included in programming associated with the 2022 Venice Biennale. Her work *Naak silavit qeqqa?*, a two-sided video installation produced in collaboration with Jamie Griffiths,

is featured in a permanent exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario that opened in July 2022.

Marion Scott Gallery is a leading showcase for contemporary Inuit art from the modern era. Founded in 1975 by Marion Scott, the gallery's mission from the outset has been to present fine Inuit art within a contemporary context, often showing it alongside other Indigenous and non-Indigenous forms. In 1989, the directorship passed to Judy Kardosh, Marion's daughter, under whose leadership the gallery began mounting regular group and solo exhibitions, many of which broke new ground by bringing focus and attention to some of Inuit art's most dynamic voices. Now under the directorship of Robert Kardosh, a third-generation family member, the gallery continues to champion the work of artists of Inuit and Indigenous heritage, organizing several exhibitions throughout the year. Active in both the primary and secondary markets, the gallery's programme seeks to celebrate the ongoing evolution of Inuit expression in all media, from its beginnings in the late 1940s and 1950s as a form centred mainly on sculptures and prints, to more recent manifestations encompassing photography, video, performance, sound, painting and large-scale drawings.

Cover image: Shuvinai Ashoona, *Untitled (Qulliq)*, 2004, coloured pencil and pen on paper.

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Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory & Jamie Griffiths
Silaup Putunga Iluani, 2022
inkjet print
46 x 38 in. / 117 x 96.5 cm.