



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EXHIBITION: *Cultural Reflections: Inuit Art from the Collections of the Dennos Museum Center and Power of Thought: The Prints of Jessie Oonark*

DATES: May 3- July 25, 2003

OPENING RECEPTION: Sunday, May 11, 2003 2-5 p.m.
Judith Nasby, Director, Macdonald Stewart Art Center and Inuit Art Specialist, will speak at 3 p.m.

LOCATION: Kresge Art Museum, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Mich.

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Inuit Art at Kresge Art Museum

E. LANSING, MICH. --- From May 3 through July 25, 2003 Kresge Art Museum presents two exhibitions highlighting the rich and energetic work of Inuit artists. The first, *Cultural Reflections: Inuit Art from the Collections of the Dennos Museum Center*, presents over 40 stone sculptures and prints from the extensive collections of Inuit art held by the Dennos Museum Center of Northwestern Michigan College. The second, *Power of Thought: The Prints of Jessie Oonark*, presents 40 prints in the first one-person exhibition of this leading Inuit artist. These exhibitions at Kresge Art Museum are made possible with the generous support of MSU Canadian Studies, ProNational Insurance Company, and the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs and the National Endowment for the Arts.

The artwork in *Cultural Reflections* includes sections related to nomadic life, survival, arctic wildlife and the spirit world. The Dennos Museum Center's art collection boasts one of the largest and most historically complete public collections of contemporary sculpture, prints and drawings by the Inuit artists of the Canadian Arctic to be found in the United States. The collection is comprised of the art works of over eighty Inuit artists from various communities across the Canadian Arctic. *Cultural Reflections* and *Power of Thought* are the first exhibitions of Inuit Art at Kresge Art Museum. These sculptures are carved of serpentine stone, which has a wide color range and takes a high polish. Less than a foot tall these somewhat abstracted animal and human forms are lively depictions of daily activities, animals, birds, fish, and spiritual beings.

Power of Thought makes its seventh stop at Kresge Art Museum on an international tour organized by the Marsh Art Gallery, University of Richmond Museums, Virginia. These brilliantly colored stone cut, stencil, and silkscreen prints by one of Canada's most important Inuit artists, Jessie Oonark (1906-1985) were created between 1970 and 1985.

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Born near Baker Lake in the Canadian Central Arctic, Oonark experienced firsthand the major changes and crises that faced the Inuit during the twentieth century. She lived a fairly typical Inuit nomadic existence based on tribal communities and traditions until 1958, when she, along with hundreds of other Inuit faced starvation due to lack of caribou and other sources of food. The Canadian government established a settlement for the Inuit in Baker Lake. To survive in the new wage-based society, she took on odd jobs such as sewing, cooking, cleaning, and housing children.

Oonark began her artistic career in Baker Lake when she was in her mid-fifties, creating hundreds of drawings and textile works. She received recognition early, and her drawings were featured in each of the Baker Lake Annual Print Collection catalogues from 1970 to 1985. She was elected to the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts and later recognized as a Companion to the Order of Canada. Oonark's work was featured in numerous group exhibitions in Canada and internationally, and in 1986, she was honored posthumously with a one-person retrospective at the Winnipeg Art Gallery in Manitoba.

Through her art, Oonark was able to explore and reinvent many facets of her life, the land, and the traditional activities, mythology, intellectual culture, and environment that shaped her artistic vision. The prints in the exhibition reflect the artist's psychological and personal journey, as she intellectualized and explored the complex cross-cultural and social relationships that marked Inuit life at that time. Oonark's sophisticated visual imagery is most forcefully and clearly expressed in the print medium. Strong central images and bold designs characterize her most successful images.

On Sunday, May 11 at 3 p.m. at the opening reception, Judith Nasby, Director, Macdonald Stewart Art Center and Inuit Art Specialist, will lead a gallery walk through both exhibitions. The reception and gallery walk are open to the public and free of charge.

The Power of Thought exhibition and international tour are organized by the Marsh Art Gallery, University of Richmond Museums. Guest curated by Marie Bouchard, Canadian art historian and Executive Director, St. Norbert Arts Centre, Winnipeg, the exhibition features prints lent courtesy of Judith Varney Burch, Arctic Inuit Art, Richmond, Virginia. The exhibition is made possible and the generous support of the University's Cultural Affairs Committee. An exhibition catalogue, published by the University of Richmond Museums, is available for purchase in the Kresge Art Museum Store.

For a listing of public programs focusing on Inuit culture please visit www.msu.edu/unit/kamuseum/events. A preview of works from *Cultural Reflections: Inuit Art from the Collections of the Dennis Museum Center* and *Power of Thought: The Prints of Jessie Oonark* is available at www.msu.edu/unit/kamuseum/exhibitions.

Kresge Art Museum is located on the campus of Michigan State University at Auditorium and Physics Roads in the Kresge Art Center. The museum hours through May 23 are: Monday through Friday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., Thursday until 8 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday noon- 5 p.m. Beginning May 27 the museum's summer hours are: Tuesday through Friday 11 a.m.- 5 p.m., Saturday and Sunday noon- 5 p.m., closed on Monday. Admission is free to Kresge Art Museum and many of its public programs. For additional information call 517/355-7631 or visit www.msu.edu/unit/kamuseum.

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