

The Auction Market for Contemporary Inuit Art

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by

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of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
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Abstract

This thesis is an examination of Inuit art auctions. It includes a history of Inuit art auctions in Canada and internationally, which demonstrates the rise of Waddington's to the dominant place in the market it now holds. This is followed by chapters focused on a case study of one Waddington's November 9th 2009 auction of Inuit art. Chapter 2 is an analysis of the events and publications which preceded auction. The next chapter is a discussion of the auction itself. The thesis concludes with a chapter regarding the repercussions of the case study and of auctions of Inuit art in general. The thesis demonstrates that auctions are a dynamic arena for affixing an economic or exchange value, and they often provide re-assessments of a work or of the entire justification system for an art form. Therefore, auction institutions clearly have significance for all involved in Inuit art.

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I would like to earnestly thank all those who I interviewed for this thesis. Their words not only made evident each of their important positions in the market for Inuit art but they made this thesis project valuable and unique.

My family also contributed in a large way to this thesis. Discussions with my grandmother, uncles, aunts and cousins about art, culture, history and the art market contributed to the shape of this paper. My mother, sister and father's enthusiasm for my interests influenced me to begin the work at Ritchie's auction house that caused my initial interests in Inuit art auctions. Since that time they have been eager to help and support me whenever possible. Thanks also to Mike, who always had the patience to listen to thesis-rants, to proofread and who has also shown his skill in providing useful distractions from the work whenever they were necessary.

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Preface

The desire to collect is instilled in North American children at a young age. McDonald's encourages kids to collect all six, ten or fifteen plastic, Happy Meal toys. When I was growing up in Toronto in the 1990s, my friends and I collected TY Beanie Babies which were individuated by names, authenticity tags, and numbers. The market value of these stuffed animals could be tracked on the manufacturer's website, and so I learned that the utility of the stuffed-animals was not only their cuddly physical properties, but their value. Collecting, it seemed, was a pursuit of valuable objects. However, my mother pointed out an impediment to these early collecting activities. She argued that: "The website may say that each toy is worth forty dollars, but where could you sell them for that price?" I discovered that to be a collector or a seller of collectible objects, you must have access to a suitable marketplace which brings buyers and sellers together.

Many years after assessing a "Happy Meals" collector, when I was studying Anthropology at Trent University, I reflected on the collector's dilemma again. This time, however, my concern was for Inuit art and not stuffed animals. In the summers of 2006 and 2007 I spent time assisting the Inuit art specialist at Ritchie's auction house, now defunct, in Toronto. Ritchie's regularly received consignments of Inuit art along with Canadian art consignments, but these pieces always failed to reach the price points of similar works selling at Waddington's auction house only a few blocks away. Therefore, if I had a work of Inuit art that I felt was valuable, Waddington's Inuit art auctions seemed better able to generate the highest prices. How are the high price points reached? Why is the market at Waddington's so good at generating them? Waddington's sales,

held twice a year in Toronto, are known to attract a wide variety of dealers and collectors from Canada, the United States and Europe. These collectors and dealers congregate at each auction where they assign prices to works of Inuit art and redistributing them to buyers. Waddington's auctions seem to solve the principal dilemma of the art collector and the art dealer: they have provided a dedicated and documented marketplace for Inuit art since 1978. [Figure 1.1] However, is that the only feat this institution has accomplished?

Over the following years, I was determined to examine the reasons for the continued success of Waddington's Inuit art auctions. This auction house, more than any others in Toronto, in Canada and internationally, has developed a record-breaking market for a very specialized art form. I enrolled to complete my MA in art history at Carleton University, Ottawa, so that I could fully investigate this phenomenon.

Introduction

The art auction is a system of market-implicated events which cumulatively create both price and object identities based on auction-specific processes. The principles relied on in the art auction, however, are shared with many other institutions operating in the art/culture system. Information about art works and participants is funneled in before and during a sale, and new information created at auction is subsequently distributed throughout the art world. As Joseph Alsop discusses,¹ art auctions are a part of the interconnected art-culture system which involves art dealing, art collection, art history, revaluation of art and many other “by-products”.² All of these institutions, despite any apparent rivalries that may exist between them, function co-operatively to contribute the “rare art traditions”. Inuit art auctions, therefore, are important components of a larger Inuit art system which functions to preserve itself and its associated events and systems. Previous examinations of the systems of production, writing, and circulation of Inuit art which have not taken auctions into account are, I argue, incomplete.

This project is an examination of the auction market for Inuit art. The thesis begins with an historical account of the growth and development of Western art auctions and Inuit art auctions. I then analyze this system by providing an ethnography of one particular sale of Inuit art that took place at Waddington’s auction house in November, 2009. I chose to use one particular case study to demonstrate the extent to which an auction is shaped by a specific history and by the acts of individuals within a unique contemporary context. At the auction, I watched individuals participate, while

¹ Joseph Alsop, *The Rare Art Traditions: The History of Art Collecting and its Linked Phenomena wherever these have appeared*, 1st ed. (New York : Harper & Row, c1982), 15.

² *ibid.* 15.

participating myself. I was therefore never an objective witness to the events. Like everyone else involved in the sale, I held certain pre-conceived assumptions and desired a particular outcome. In this thesis I tell the story of this auction based on my own subjective scrutiny as a participant-observer. I am aware that as a student of art history and anthropology I am already deeply entangled in the far-reaching web of art-culture. Therefore, this project necessitates a self-reflective approach.

In my study of Waddington's Fall 2009 Inuit Art Auction, I take into account two powerful art world forces: the interconnected-ness and co-dependence of all aspects of the art world and the reliance of art-culture on the maintenance of boundaries. I analyze a wide variety of texts produced by art historians, art institutions and art dealers. I also provide the results of interviews that were conducted with an Inuit art dealer, Inuit art collectors, Inuit artists, and Waddington's Inuit art specialists. Paralleling the world of Western art on which it depends, the auction is composed of inter-connected sub-events which all contribute to the larger system. I examine these events to discover if and how they function as aggregates, collaboratively forming Waddington's 2009 auction of Inuit art. Overall, the component systems of the art world which include art sales, exhibition, critique and production are complex, contested, shifting and often ambiguous. I examine how a specific Inuit art auction works to sustain certain boundaries, such as the boundary between a masterwork and a less valuable work, or between a reliable source for knowledge about Inuit art and amateur speculation.

I investigate the auction as a system which uses information distributed in many places and times to both maintain and re-evaluate this hierarchy of Inuit art objects. For example, the sale of one *Migration* sculpture by Joe Talirunili for \$280,000 at a

Waddington's auction in 2006 confirmed that the work and works like it should be considered masterworks due to their "worth". In essence, Waddington's Inuit art auction contributes just as much to what is perceived as the Inuit art canon as art historians, artists, dealers and collectors do. Criteria of authenticity (concepts of what makes objects valuable) are created, disseminated and added to through the auction process.³ The characteristics of particular objects are also re-inscribed as they are revaluated and redisplayed at auction.

I examine in this project the systems and technologies employed during Waddington's fall 2009 Inuit art auction. These informational channels were used to assimilate the alterity of Inuit artists and subject matter and to transmit particular, strategic conditions of production.⁴ These systems and technologies include such representational media as Waddington's website and advertisements. They include the catalogue for the auction, the media publications released before and after the auction, the actions of the participants in the sale, and the reaction after the auction.

Inuit art auctions, and particularly Waddington's auctions, contribute in a significant way to the construction of Contemporary Inuit art as a socially and culturally meaningful art form affiliated with equally meaningful economic revenue. Like all other Inuit art institutions, the auctions broadcast in many places and times what can be regarded as masterworks of contemporary Inuit art. [Figure 1.2] However, unlike other marketing agencies, Inuit art auctions allow individual participants to become directly and actively

³ Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher Burghard Steiner, "Art, Authenticity and the Baggage of Cultural Encounter," in *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, eds. Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher Burghard Steiner (Berkeley : University of California Press, c1999), 19.

⁴ George E. Marcus and Fred R. Myers, "Introduction," in *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology*, eds. George E. Marcus and Fred R. Myers (Berkeley : University of California Press, c1995), 34

involved in the creation of prices, high and low, which move out from the auction sphere to affect all other areas of the market. In other words, auction information is particularly important because it is information about the exchange value of Inuit art objects--an exact measure of what buyers will voluntarily pay. No other art world player produces this information.

1.1 Major Questions

Scholarship has long demonstrated that art works are not produced in isolation from the art world which characterizes these objects as valuable “fine art”. Walter Benjamin stated that when objects are placed into the bounded, modern, category of fine art they are given a singularizing value which differentiates them from mass-produced commodities.⁵ Alfred Gell argued that art objects, in the particular socio-cultural contexts that categorized them thus, are understood as secondary social agents with the power to influence the actions of humans.⁶ Specifically, the category “art” with all its sub-disciplines is a distinctly Western concept. Furthermore, as Howard Becker demonstrated, in Western culture, art objects are produced within a system which concurrently creates and maintains the grouping of objects known as artworks.⁷ This system is dependent upon the continued production of artworks (and so the viability of being an “artist”), and on the perceived value of art. Therefore, all institutions and players in the art world, responsible for the production, sale, critique, display and distribution of

⁵ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility: Second Edition," in *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty and Thomas Y. Levin. Anonymous (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 20-24.

⁶ Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 1998), 17.

⁷ Howard Saul Becker, *Art Worlds*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, c1982), 4.

art works, have a common interest in maintaining the stability of production and the value of the products. From these arguments, it is possible to conclude that Inuit art is a field in the wider art system which is maintained by activities such as art history, art display and art sale. How do Inuit art auctions uphold the value of Inuit art as a category while ensuring its continuing supply of product?

Inuit art auctions employ a specific method to uphold the value of art. As Marx notes, the value of an object is dependent upon its place in the differentiated social sphere.⁸ The position of Inuit art within the hierarchy of all commodities must be continually defined. The hierarchies of quality within the category itself must also be maintained and broadcast to a wide audience. Therefore, the effective and continuous dissemination of information is very important. How is this achieved? As Arjun Appadurai argued, the contemporary condition is defined by its lack of solid and static social forms.⁹ Massive and rapid movements of people, money, technology, images and ideology constitute the contemporary landscape.¹⁰ In this context, there is a need for systems of social differentiation which can meet the requirements of continually changing social forms. According to Appadurai, cultural systems, such as auctions, which produce value *and* represent valuable commodities, are the arenas where people and objects are most effectively differentiated in the contemporary context.¹¹ Specifically, auctions of contemporary Inuit art create and disseminate across many places and times hierarchies among works that are based on price. These hierarchies are linked to

⁸ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Capital* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1954-1967), 52.

⁹ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, c1996), 10.

¹⁰ *ibid.* 7.

¹¹ *ibid.* 10.

knowledge and privilege among the buyers, sellers and auctioneers involved in auctions. Auctions place both objects and participants into a stratification of power and influence. In this thesis I examine how a hierarchy of works for sale (linked to a differentiated sphere of participants) was created and broadcast at one specific auction of Inuit art. How is the auction system for collectors, dealers, curators and all others implicated in the field of Inuit art?

The auction is a politically useful institution for the Inuit art world because it produces a record of high monetary worth.¹² Such a record provides evidence for policy makers of the value of art and culture. Since the 1980s, the decline and criticism of government spending in the arts and culture sectors in Canada have revived the political nature of art making. This is especially true for Aboriginal artists, who have harnessed art production as a means to self-express, to earn a livelihood, to maintain cultural traditions (especially aesthetic) and to work towards self-governance and self-determination. For many North Americans, the active conservation of art institutions has also become a form of political resistance to Right-wing policy.¹³ How is the Inuit art auction affected by the political forces which have been critical of the value and monetary worth of art? How does the auction market for Inuit art affect the attempts of Aboriginal groups to become self-governed and empowered in order to move beyond the colonial arrangement? What are the relationships between artists, primary market agents (dealers) and auction agents?

The auction house affects all the agents and objects implicated in the production, circulation, display, collection and evaluation of Inuit art because it ties the price of Inuit

¹² McLean, Personal telephone interview with Duncan McLean, Ottawa, 2010.

¹³ Marcus and Myers, *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology*, 24.

art works sold across the system to a perceived “fair market price”. As Haidy Geismar has argued, the auction is partially determined by pre-auction events and publications which provide certain information about lots for sale that contributes to their appeal for patrons.¹⁴ These information sources are engineered entirely by the auction house and they are distributed to a community of patrons. However, the unique feature of this art institution is that it gives buyers power to dynamically participate, even destructively if they so choose, in the creation of prices. How do buyers behave at the auction, and what is the outcome of their behavior? How do auctions of Inuit art operate as public events while still conserving their own values and preventing subversion?

By disseminating the market price of art works, especially of works that have been defined as canonical by curators, historians, collectors and dealers, the auction house justifies the utility of the middlemen operating in Inuit art world. This is important, because the auction house both draws on information created by these players and relies on the continued success of their efforts in proving the cultural value of Inuit art. As Shannon Bagg has discussed, Inuit artists are rarely in denial of the economic needs their art-making fulfills.¹⁵ Meanwhile, the financial basis of art conflicts with romanticized, Western notions of the expressive artist. This uneven distribution of ideology between cultures (dominant Western and colonized) could potentially reduce the perceived worth of Inuit art. Historically, therefore, non-Inuit have played a key role in maintaining the category of Contemporary Inuit art in Canada and internationally: “as a conceptual

¹⁴ Haidy Geismar, "What's in a Price?" *Journal of Material Culture*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2001): 34.

¹⁵ Shannon Bagg, *"Without carving how would I survive?" Economic Motivation and Its Significance in Contemporary Inuit Art*, MA Art History (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1997), 9.

category with social, cultural and national value”.¹⁶ This has been accomplished on one level to serve the political, economic and social desires of a dynamic group of middlemen such as James Houston who have acted as “cultural brokers”. Today, many individuals (curators, historians, collectors, dealers, auction houses) work to contribute to a discourse of Inuit art which is imbued with cultural value which attracts a non-Inuit audience for the art. How does the auction I observe represent and maintain a certain value-laden version of Inuit art? How does it rely on the efforts of other Inuit art world players?

Many new auction technologies are employed to broadcast information about Inuit art and about Inuit art auctions by the auction house. Waddington’s has distributed catalogues before Inuit art auctions since 1978. They have also advertised their sales widely, using high prices reached at previous sales and images of valuable works for sale to attract buyers and consignors. Since the early 2000s, Waddington’s has employed web technologies as a means to distribute their Inuit art publications more widely than ever. [Figure 1.3] Now the auction house offers online auctions so that people all over the world can participate in Inuit sales. What technologies has the auction house employed to promote their activities, and what do these technologies accomplish?

I argue that Waddington’s auctions of Inuit art both legitimate the category of Inuit art (associated with high economic worth) and a hierarchy of works within that larger grouping (based on price). Similar to the achievements of art history and art criticism, Inuit art auctions achieve this organization of art objects in the popular imagination through the distribution of information about works that have been sold or that will be sold. Art history and art criticism evaluate objects and distribute these

¹⁶ Norman D. Vorano, *Inuit Art in the Qallunaat World: Modernism, Museums and the Popular Imaginary, 1949-1962*, Doctor of Philosophy (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester, 2007), 503.

valuations at specific times. Criticism deals with artworks when they are initially produced, purchased or displayed.¹⁷ Art history operates some years later, in many cases after the works have been exchanged so many times that they appear to have a stable, objective identity. Art auctions are responsible for the re-evaluation of objects between these time periods and at any time in the social lives of objects. Also, art auctions allow members of the public to contribute directly to the distribution and to the inscription of objects' social identities. Nevertheless, this process (although it may appear democratic) relies on a hierarchy among auction participants that is driven by a distribution of economic power and knowledge.

Therefore, the circulation and accessibility of information about works both before and after art auctions greatly affects sales. Without discrepancies of information among participants (from how much each bidder is willing to spend, to the provenance of lots, to probable fakes offered for sale), the auction would fail. A lot of information is distributed by the auction house. Waddington's publishes and broadcasts specific messages about lots so they can influence the response of recipients. Waddington's circulates information in their catalogue, their preview, in advertisements and on departmental web pages. Its Inuit art specialists communicate their authority about Inuit art, and also distribute information about lots to particular patrons. Despite the auction house's attempts to supply all the information desired by bidders, knowledge from outside sources also enters the market. This information comes from dealers, critics, artists, market analysts and art historians. As Alsop and Becker have demonstrated, all members of a particular art world are complicit in maintaining the ordering of the art-

¹⁷ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 131.

culture system.¹⁸ Outside information, which appears at first glance to be threatening, can reinforce the auction's work by both giving authority to certain auction house evaluations and by creating the hierarchy of knowledge that stimulates bidding.

This relationship between auction house, artist, art historian, art critic, art collector and art dealer benefits all parties. Specifically, the work of Waddington's Inuit art department has increased the market value of Inuit art works and has given visibility to this genre of work. This has been accomplished mainly through the dissemination of information about successful sales. By holding auctions containing highly touted lots, Waddington's has contributed to the business of Inuit art dealers (specifically in Toronto) and has played a role in maintaining the feasibility of producing and collecting Inuit art. Waddington's has also contributed to the field of art history through its continuing publication of market information about Inuit art which began in 1978. Nevertheless, Waddington's business also presents challenges to the world of Inuit art. The auction house provides tough competition for dealers wishing to sell early Inuit works, undermining the auctions of other art world players. It also does not recompense artists for sales of their creations, which reduces the potential financial security of art making, limiting the number of full-time artists working. This could destabilize the flow of art into the institutions. Waddington's has also encouraged the success of international bidders who compete against Canadian collectors for lots. The auction house implicates all Inuit art world players, and they affect these players differently. With this project I hope to shed light on the connections and circulations of people, capital, information and objects (presently and historically) that Waddington's Inuit art auctions facilitate.

¹⁸ Alsop, *The Rare Art Traditions: the History of Art Collecting and its Linked Phenomena wherever these have Appeared*, 17; Becker, *Art Worlds*, 35.

1.2 Review of the Literature

Janet Berlo and Ruth Phillips argued that Inuit art is “multi-vocal”: it fulfills the disparate needs of all those implicated simultaneously.¹⁹ For example, for consumers of Inuit art which depicts traditional Inuit scenes, the work may fulfill a modern need for a primitive, un-spoiled and romanticized “other” culture.²⁰ For Inuit producers, representing old traditions in carving helps keep has those practices alive, facilitates cultural pride, and empowerment.²¹ What Berlo and Phillips did not examine was how middlemen, and other support people located in the interconnected “Inuit art system”, have benefited from their involvement. If examined in isolation, it appears that Waddington’s Inuit art auctions serve the simple function of selling works of Inuit art to buyers. Directly, buyers, sellers and auctioneers are implicated, while other collectors, dealers, curators, historians and artists are affected indirectly because auctions re-evaluate the quality and worth of objects for sale. In this way, auctions are caught up in an applied system of classification that defines the monetary value of art works, establishes authentic sources of these objects, and reinforces the value of collecting. The socio-cultural meanings of art works, as well as their economic worth, are negotiated during the various stages of the auction by its diverse participants. The auction is therefore part of the process of commoditization, whereby the socio-culturally specific, qualitative understandings of labor and usefulness of objects are either replaced or altered by apparently objective numerical measurements of value. Many theorists have discussed how the Western system of art objects works, how it is related to commoditization, and

¹⁹ Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 168.

²⁰ *ibid.* 168.

²¹ *ibid.* 168.

how the meaning and worth of artworks interact when these objects are in transit, particularly at auction. Gell discusses the basic relationship between artworks and their socio-cultural meaning. Recent studies by Marcus and Myers, Berlo and Phillips, Graburn and Steiner demonstrate the issues that surround the exchange of indigenous artistic and touristic productions. Geismar and Satov address the auction particularly, showing how the economic and socio-cultural meanings of indigenous artworks are dealt with and disseminated in these unique participatory exchange events. Finally, Vorano addresses the political questions that arise when Inuit art works are circulated.

This thesis is a study of objects in transit, specifically a category of objects known as artworks. As James Clifford would argue, these objects are therefore located within the art-culture system. Clifford defines the art-culture system as the ideological institution employed by the West to re-contextualize and assign new meaning to “exotic objects”.²² Clifford posits that the collection of art-culture is tied to the modern ideal of the self as owner and is employed as a means to make and remake the self based on the possession of meaningful categories of objects.²³ The basis for the place of these categories is a certain organizational system. In the modern West, all objects are ordered into a hierarchy of collectible categories which reflect a “rational taxonomy” of the wider world composed of cultures, genders, ethnicities, classes and political alignments. Therefore: “By virtue of this system a world of *value* is created and a meaningful deployment and circulation of artifacts maintained.”²⁴

²² James Clifford, “On Collecting Art and Culture,” in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff. (London: Routledge, 1998), 107.

²³ *ibid.* 96.

²⁴ *ibid.* 97.

Clifford's work sheds light on how the categorical organization of objects in the West produces meaning, worth and justifies the exchange of the objects. The art-culture system is not composed of objects and discursive categories alone, but it relies on agents to produce, circulate, collect and evaluate artworks. In his writing, Alsop argues that collectively, art collecting, art history, art markets, art museums, art fakery, the transformation of ways of seeing; antiques and extremely high prices for art constitute the "rare art traditions".²⁵ Alsop defines this art world as an integrated and highly organized behavioral-cultural system which is constituted specifically in the Western world.²⁶ Alsop creates a social history of art in the West to demonstrate the reliance of the "rare art traditions" on its constituent systems. Like Alsop, Howard Becker argued that there is a certain division of labor in the West which leads to the production, circulation, display, collection and discussion of different types of art works. He names these systems art worlds:

An art world is an established network of cooperative links and divisions of labor among participants. [. . .] Art worlds do not have boundaries around them, so that we can say that these people belong to a particular art world while there people do not. It is not useful to draw a line separating those who belong to the art world and those who do not. Instead we look for groups of people who cooperate to produce things that they call art and for other people who are also necessary to that production, gradually building up a complete picture of the entire network. And all these roles can change.²⁷

Unlike Alsop, Becker argued against normative theories that suggest certain pre-requisites are necessary before art can be produced. These theories underestimate the

²⁵ Alsop, *The Rare Art Traditions: The History of Art Collecting and its Linked Phenomena wherever these have Appeared*, 17.

²⁶ *ibid.* 16.

²⁷ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 35.

flexibility of the art world.²⁸ Often, the production, distribution and evaluation system simply adapts and work is still produced.²⁹ Becker argued that conventionally, certain players (artists, art dealers, art critics, collectors, policy makers, art material suppliers, art historians, curators, auctioneers) work together in a highly organized, collaborative system to produce art in the West. He analyzed the roles of these contributors. In this thesis, a study of a particular Inuit art auction is used to demonstrate the reliance of this institution on other political, cultural, ideological and economic processes and agents. Overall, although it is in constant flux, these processes and agents form what I will refer to as the “Inuit art world”. Also, I take from Becker and Alsop the notion that all participants in Inuit art auctions contribute to the continued existence of the art form, while there is also consensus among these players who support Inuit art.

Current art worlds, like all spheres of contemporary culture, are characterized by an increasingly fast pace that facilitates a rapid circulation of objects, agents, money and information.³⁰ As anthropologist Arjun Appadurai discussed, auctions are important art world institutions which strongly articulate the rapidity of the contemporary climate.³¹ In the mid-1980s, Appadurai concluded that economic processes which function in the same way auctions do are found throughout the world—not just in the West.³² Appadurai

²⁸ *ibid.* 4.

²⁹ *ibid.* 6.

³⁰ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, Minn. : University of Minnesota Press, c1996), 10.

³¹ *ibid.* 10

³² Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, 22.

named such systems “tournaments of value”.³³ Tournaments of value are periodical events which are removed from usual economic activity. In this way, they function in a manner similar to that of social performances, according to anthropologist Victor Turner.³⁴ Auction-like occurrences limit participation to those in positions of power. They are used to socially determine status among this privileged caste of participants. As noted above, Appadurai stated that the most important force in an exchange system is the flow of knowledge, which restricts, subverts and diverts the movements of objects under the guise of forces such as taste, ideology and inter-cultural distance.³⁵ Appadurai argues further that objects have social identities which are derived from their context-specific meanings.³⁶ Objects take on new social and economic meanings when they are moved across cultural, economic, political, social, geographic and temporal bounds.

It is possible that people do not only work on objects, but objects also have the power to work on people. Anthropologist Haidy Geismar, in her study of an indigenous art auction, suggests that in a specific historical and cultural context, certain pieces have the agency in themselves to shape prices and so they are not dependent upon community interaction:

By incorporating the social agency of both objects and persons into the construction of price we may view the auction as a performative tournament (with a catalogue-script, a stage, an

³³ *ibid.* 22.

³⁴ Victor Witter Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: the Human Seriousness of Play* (New York City: Performing Arts Journal Publications, c1982), 13-14.

³⁵ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, (Minneapolis, Minn. : University of Minnesota Press, c1996), 10.

³⁶ Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, c1986) 42.

audience, and so on) within a series of events taking place over a variety of places, times and media.³⁷

In this respect, Geismar drew on the work of Alfred Gell, British social anthropologist, who discussed the way in which art objects can become social agents within a particular socio-cultural context because they are perceived as having an influence over other agents.³⁸ As Gell notes, “Art objects are not self-sufficient agents, but “secondary” agents, in conjunction with human associates.”³⁹

Objects, people and ideas are all implicated in the continual maintenance and transformation of art worlds, such as the Inuit art world. However, art worlds that revolve around the production and circulation of art objects by colonized and indigenous groups have particular characteristics which have been the focus of numerous studies. In their seminal text *Native North American Art*, Phillips and Berlo discuss the process by which Indigenous-made objects take on two meanings: one among their producer group and another among the consumer culture.⁴⁰ How does movement across cultural, economic, social and geographic bounds affect entire categories of objects? Recent cultural theorists, notably Christopher Steiner and Fred Myers, have shown that the exchange value and the social meaning of indigenous art objects are not mutually exclusive or stable and inalienable characteristics.⁴¹ Value and meaning are conferred based on the

³⁷ Haidy Geismar, "What's in a Price?" *Journal of Material Culture*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2001): 27.

³⁸ *ibid.* 43.

³⁹ Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 1998), 17.

⁴⁰ Janet Catherine Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, *Native North American Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 214.

⁴¹ Marcus and Myers, *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology*; Christopher Burghard Steiner, *African Art in Transit* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 63.

situation of objects within various locally-bound “regimes of value,” specific contexts in which both understandings of social meaning and exchange value are equally expressed.⁴² In this way, non-Western objects take on new social characteristics when they are absorbed into Western systems, but these characteristics cannot be generalized or abstracted. The movement of “non-Western” things into Western institutions does not necessarily empty an entire category of objects of meaning within their original cultural context. Alexis Bunten wrote that Northwest Coast Chilkat blankets, for sale in tourist and collector markets, are still very meaningful for Native Alaskans who use them as personal decoration in ceremonies.⁴³ In this case, a minimum of two disparate understandings of the utility of these objects exist in the world concurrently.

In his examination of the market for contemporary African art, Steiner set out to create a “multi-local” ethnography which would demonstrate the influence of such processes as pluralism, heterogeneity, crisis, conflict and transformation on the sale and production of African art.⁴⁴ To accomplish this, he created a biography of African art objects as they moved through many places and times, entering into relationships with many agents along the way. In my study, I used this object-biography approach as I examined the many places and times that lots of Inuit art travel through. Through his methodology, Steiner was also able to demonstrate how African art objects are temporarily transformed from art objects into commodities and vice versa through their

⁴² *ibid.* 63.

⁴³ Alexis Bunten, "Commodities of Authenticity: When Native People Consume their own 'Tourist Art'," in *Exploring the World*, eds. E. Venbrux, P. S. Rosi and R. L. Welsch (Long Grove, IL.: Waveland Press, 2006), 317.

⁴⁴ Steiner, *African Art in Transit*, 2.

transit through the market. I drew on this understanding of commoditization and commodification, in that an object does not simply trade its singularized, artwork status for a commodity identity, and the relationship between these two characteristics is in constant flux. Steiner's work also shows how the many layers of middlemen working in the African art market shed light on certain conditions of production, while masking others, to suit the tastes and ideologies of buyers.⁴⁵ Inuit art auction houses operate similarly as brokers. In their many distributed events and publications, they engage in a dynamic game of revealing and concealing in order to cater to the tastes, fashions and ideologies of buyers, consignors, and all other implicated art-world players. The art auction houses, like other brokers, have at their disposal knowledge of about patterns of collection within their institution, and they are therefore a uniquely empowered player.

In 1971 Nelson Graburn conducted a study in which he monitored audience responses to an exhibition at the Hearst Museum, U.C. Berkeley of Inuit and Cree art. He concluded that reactions to the Inuit work were typically positive because these works were closer in appearance to conventional, Western works of fine art.⁴⁶ The Cree work, on the other hand, did not have this fine art appearance and therefore was not as well received.⁴⁷ Also, Graburn discovered that the participants in his study were unaware of the economic need that art production fulfilled for the Inuit. Graburn's study shows that while artworks can serve economic needs for producers, the same works cater to the

⁴⁵ *ibid.* 6.

⁴⁶ Nelson H. H. Graburn, "'I like things to look more different than that stuff did': An Experiment in Cross-Cultural Art Appreciation," in *Art in Society: Studies in Style, Culture and Aesthetics*, eds. M. Greenhalgh and V. Megaw (London: Duckworth and Co., 1978), 64.

⁴⁷ *ibid.* 65.

completely different needs of consumers. This study illustrates the multiple, context-specific meanings accrued by Inuit art objects and by Inuit art practice.

Art Auctions are institutions for the exchange of artworks that operate according to conventions and methodologies that have been discussed by Charles Smith, Murray Satov and Haidy Geismar. Charles Smith, professor of sociology at the City University of New York, also discussed how auctions function in general. He emphasized the pivotal role that social behavior plays in determining the ultimate price paid for objects at auction. Smith stressed the importance of community consensus in the determination of prices at auction:

Auctions are not exclusively or even primarily processes for matching the individual preferences of rational buyers and sellers as assumed in most economic models, they are rather processes in which buyers and sellers often acting as members of some group and with the interest of such a group in mind -- attempt collectively to resolve questions of price and allocation in a way that will be acceptable to all parties.⁴⁸

Smith stated that when an object is auctioned, its identity is completely reconfigured through social processes.⁴⁹ Smith did not discuss how auctions are affected by their historical, cultural and geographic contexts. He did not address what contributes to a desire to participate in an auction or how the institutional conventions of the auction can be upheld or subverted. Smith did not explore how non-Western objects move differently through the auction or how these works are represented before, during and after a sale.

In the mid 1990s, Murray Satov, a Canadian anthropologist by training and Haidy Geismar, a professor of anthropology at New York University, addressed what is at stake

⁴⁸ Charles W. Smith, *Auctions: the Social Construction of Value*, (New York; London: Free Press; Collier Macmillan, c1989), 4.

⁴⁹ *ibid.* 4.

when non-Western objects are exchanged via the Western auction system. Specifically, Satov analyzed British auctions of ethnographic objects while Geismar examined the auction market for tribal artifact auctions.⁵⁰ Satov concluded that at Christie's auctions of Tribal artifacts, a prearranged flow of knowledge is vital to the success of the sale according to those implicated.⁵¹ Satov also demonstrated that the auction house is a very important distributor of knowledge and aesthetic information, which are both vital for the Western consumption of non-Western objects.⁵² In this way, the Christie's auctions made clear to collectors the hierarchy into which objects for sale are organized. As Appadurai argued, knowledge works to simultaneously stratify collectors into a power hierarchy while it organizes objects according to value.

In her examination, Geismar also demonstrated that auction information sources, such as the catalogue and the preview, work to script the subsequent sale.⁵³ In this way, auction outcomes are affected by many events and places. Geismar contended that the main tension at the auctions she examined was the relationship between those seen as auction-community insiders and outsiders.⁵⁴ The community consensus that Smith argues for is not required at auctions. Geismar suggested that auctions are public events likened to community performances, which allow anyone to bid.⁵⁵ Any participant could disrupt

⁵⁰ Murray Satov, "Catalogues, Collectors, Curators: the Tribal Art Market and Anthropology," in *Contesting Art: Art, Politics and Identity in the Modern World*, ed. Jeremy MacClancy (New York: Berg, 1997), 215-241.

⁵¹ *ibid.* 228.

⁵² *ibid.* 231.

⁵³ Haidy Geismar, "What's in a Price?" *Journal of Material Culture*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2001): 26-27.

⁵⁴ *ibid.* 42.

⁵⁵ *ibid.* 42.

the bidding process, forcing the rest of the community to act in response to reify their collective understanding of the rightful price of a tribal art object.⁵⁶ Many auction mechanisms are put in place to prevent subversion by bidders, thereby conserving price estimates and hierarchies laid out in pre-auction events and publications. The flow of knowledge is used in the conservation of price, as it is achieved through the imposition of definitions of authenticity that create value hierarchies among works for sale:

Objects can only be sold if they are authentic enough for the market, but not so authentic as to be removed from the world of commerce and replaced in indigenous museums. This dilemma of the market relies on a self-conscious and highly ironic construction of authenticity that plays a vital role in the establishment of object identities within commercial transaction.⁵⁷

Auction houses also uphold their conservative ideals by facilitating a hierarchy of aesthetic and cultural knowledge among participants, which gives some individuals more power while preventing disagreements in attribution.

Any sale of Inuit art has ramifications for all the art world players implicated in the production, circulation, display, collection and evaluation of the art. The political issues at stake when Inuit art is exchanged at auction are therefore particularly relevant. Shannon Bagg's work demonstrates that the Inuit art world functions to actively promote contrasting and context-specific meanings of artworks. It is by necessity engaged in concealing certain conditions of production, while promoting others. Specifically, Bagg conducted interviews with many contemporary Inuit artists from Cape Dorset in the late

⁵⁶ *ibid.* 27.

⁵⁷ *ibid.* 26.

1990s to discover the degree to which they were motivated by economic considerations.⁵⁸ She discovered in her interviews that a desire for material remuneration prompted the artists to produce.⁵⁹ Bagg argued that the artists' freely expressed desire challenges Southern notions of art production.⁶⁰ I interpret this conclusion as demonstrative of the historical power wielded by middlemen who have so successfully created, maintained and strategically communicated the circumstances of production and consumption cross-culturally. Bagg concludes that her study has great implications for art historians who must evidently include discussions of the economic motivations that lead to certain works being produced.⁶¹ In other words, the brokers known as art historians must now incorporate a new type of information in their textual accounts to match the continually evolving tastes of art-system players or to give a description of the system as a whole.

Vorano's work has been paramount in establishing a literature on how Inuit art is engaged in processes of commodification. In a historical overview of all the visual media which have moved between Inuit and non-Inuit groups, he analyzed the pivotal role played by the middlemen described by Bagg in the establishment of contemporary Inuit art. As Vorano argues, Western consumers have been exposed to carefully placed and designed representations of Inuit people and objects for hundreds of years.⁶² The messages about the Inuit in the West were and still are promoted and circulated by a

⁵⁸ Bagg, *"Without carving how would I survive?" Economic Motivation and Its Significance in Contemporary Inuit Art*, 31.

⁵⁹ *ibid.* 58.

⁶⁰ *ibid.* 58.

⁶¹ *ibid.* 63.

⁶² Vorano, *Inuit Art in the Qallunaat World: Modernism, Museums and the Popular Imaginary, 1949-1962*, 47.

group of middlemen who use insight into Western desires and ideologies to maintain their institutions.⁶³ Specifically, agents mediating between Inuit and Qullunaat groups were able to create Inuit art due to the emergence of “Native art” as a tenet of Modernism and due to certain policies of the Canadian Government.⁶⁴ Mediating agents are also self-interested.⁶⁵ These individuals required a degree of ingenuity as well as an entrepreneurial drive to accomplish their goals. Finally, Vorano noted that the roles of middlemen are not fixed, but temporary and flexible. They often change to meet the new needs of producers and consumers, or the tactics of the brokers themselves.⁶⁶ Therefore, it was these individuals who worked to maintain the categories and hierarchies of objects that benefited their endeavors. Like the middlemen, Waddington’s auction house engages in the representation, promotion and circulation of Inuit objects. It therefore promotes a specific category of Inuit art, its place in the wider world of objects, and the type of Inuit work that is considered most valuable.

1.3 Methodology

The principal methodological design for this project is derived from both the traditions of art writing and from ethnography. By using art writing alone, my study would be limited to an examination of the Inuit art sold at auction or of the representations of contemporary Inuit art published by auction houses. This would be inadequate, as George Marcus and Fred Myers point out: “Representation oriented studies are very partial and only coincidentally address art worlds themselves -- their

⁶³ *ibid.* 26.

⁶⁴ *ibid.* 502.

⁶⁵ *ibid.* 504.

⁶⁶ *ibid.* 508.

institutional, discursive and value producing complexities -- as historic and contemporary spheres of activity.”⁶⁷

I frame the auction as a system of market-implicated events which determine price and help create objects’ identities (consisting of monetary worth and location in a hierarchy of Inuit art) based on specific principles and processes. In this way, I investigate each stage of the auction (the catalogue, the view, and the sale) as contributors to the outcome of the auction process. Geismar stresses that it is a very specific economic auction culture which contributes to price rather than global, homogenous pressures of supply and demand.⁶⁸

Specifically, I create an ethnographic survey of one particular sale of Inuit art that took place at Waddington’s Auction House in November, 2009. I chose to use this particular auction as a case study because it represented the organization and operation of current Inuit art auctions. This auction was located in a specific temporal, ideological, cultural and spatial context and involved certain technologies and systems in a particularly contemporary manner. My choice of case study helped me to answer how Inuit art auctions operate to uphold a certain notion of Inuit art, quality, and successful transaction involving Inuit art. My use of the specific case study also allowed me to demonstrate how specific historical context affects auctions.

Using primary and secondary source research, interviews and participant observation, I explore Waddington’s fall 2009 Inuit art auction as a dynamic discursive and value producing event. For this particular study I used a number of textual sources including historical information about Waddington’s auctions and about Inuit art auctions

⁶⁷ Marcus and Myers, *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology*, 2.

⁶⁸ Geismar, *What's in a Price?*, 26.

in general from academic publications, press releases and newspaper publications. I also use these sources to shed light on the process of the auction and the preview. During my study, I located historical Waddington's Inuit art auction advertisements within many of these secondary sources. I use these to analyze the economy of information at both past auctions and at the fall 2009 auction. The auction catalogues and the auction website, are primary sources that to shed light on historical Inuit art auctions and aid my examination of the forces that affected participant behavior at Waddington's fall 2009 Inuit art auction.

In addition to these many textual and archival sources, I interviewed a number of stake holders who were directly involved or affected by Waddington's Inuit art auctions. These included a Toronto dealer of Inuit art who has worked collaboratively with Waddington's to improve the local market for Inuit art, an Inuit artist who shared her reactions to Inuit art auctions, the two staff members from Waddington's auction house who were responsible for the auction and all its affiliated events and publications, and a collector who has been a long-time patron of the sales. I draw on these interviews to show the range of opinions concerning the value, operation and repercussions of the fall 2009 auction, my subjective observations of the events surrounding the November 9th, 2009 auction and I also draw on observations of the preview. I watched the behaviour of all participants in order to determine how they reacted to each other, to auction house publications, to the art objects and to auction staff.

1.4 Chapter Outline

In Chapter One I present a history of Inuit art auctions and discuss their relationship to the longer history of Western art auctions, and to the historical power the auctioneers, auctions and auction publications have wielded. This chapter provides an ideological, cultural and economic context for the following case-study. Finally, Chapter One sheds light on the many interactions the various players in the Inuit art system have had with auction agents and how auction agents have acted as mediated middlemen in the past.

Chapter Two begins my case study of Waddington's fall 2009 Inuit art auction. It focuses on the pre-sale publications and events: the auction catalogue, the auction advertisements, the auction website and the auction preview. Here I analyze how each shapes the subsequent sale and how agents such as dealers, collectors and artists react to and consume them. I discuss the circulation of these varied sites to shed light on how they create Inuit art as a category and establish a hierarchy of quality.

The third chapter is a further account of Waddington's Fall 2009 Auction of Inuit Art. I address how patrons interact and behave at the auction, how the auctioneer caters to his audience and how the art works impact the different parties within the auction context. I examine communication, the economy of information, planning versus spontaneity and the political opportunities presented by the sale. I also build upon various theoretical models which have been used to examine art auctions in the past. I demonstrate how Waddington's fall 2009 Inuit art auction worked to reify (or not) a certain version of the Inuit art canon.

The concluding chapter is intended to accomplish two goals. First, I examine the possible ramifications of the auction both short-term and longer-term in relation to earlier sale. Because of the time frame of the thesis, however, I argue that more research is required for a more comprehensive analysis. Secondly, I discuss how Inuit art auctions articulate certain political and ideological ideals and goals compared to other venues for the sale of Indigenous art situated around the world and on the different implications for the people I interviewed.

A History of Inuit Art Auctions

Waddington's auctions of Inuit art have provided a unique and very visible market where both buyers and sellers gather and negotiate price. The auctions allow for the assignment of differentiated values by bidders who are hierarchically arranged according to the different information each has. Information (about an artwork's previous restorations, possible fakes, the historical significance of an artwork, etc.) and participants (collectors, dealers, and curators) enter the auction market from other branches of the Inuit art world. As a representational institution, auctions disseminate information arising before and after sales via catalogues, advertisements, previews and websites. As Becker suggested, the auction market has the potential to shape the Inuit art world and perhaps Inuit art objects. The current dominant position of Waddington's is due to its position within particular historical, political and socio-cultural contexts. This chapter, a history of Inuit art auctions, will help contextualize the auction of November 9th 2009, the topic of chapters two and three. I present a history of Inuit art auctions and relationships that have influenced the market that now exists.

2.1 Early Auctions

The contemporary art auction is descended directly from a Western mode of property acquisition and redistribution probably first used before the 5th century BC, as mentioned by Herodotus. It is probable that auctions as modes of exchange were developed in ancient Babylonian society.⁶⁹ [Figure 2.1] The Babylonian wife auctions, or virgin auctions, were a public process of exchanging that defined "property", set the terms of

⁶⁹ Jeremy Cooper, *Under the Hammer: The Auctions and Auctioneers of London* (London: Constable, 1977), 15.

exchange and established its corresponding value.⁷⁰ This process was made transparent by the auctions to all participants. Perhaps more importantly, the auction also made socially clear the exclusive caste of individuals who could be property owners. According to Robert Doyle, the Babylonian wife auction was appropriated by the Greeks.⁷¹ Technically speaking, these first auctions operated in what is now colloquially referred to as the Dutch (or descending) bidding system in which an initial high price is named by an appointed auctioneer and participants place lower offers until the seller finds a buyer who offers an agreeable bid.⁷²

Herodotus provides accounts of auctions from the 5th century BC.⁷³ Later, this Greek auction style was adopted by the Romans for selling estates, war plunder and other personal property.⁷⁴ Even at this early date, the auction was used as a vehicle for moving objects in and out of particular social, cultural and political zones. The Roman state established supremacy over auction trade through the establishment of a regulatory system, which granted licenses to appointed auctioneers (called *Magister Auctionarium*).⁷⁵ Our current word “auction” comes from the Latin term *auctio* (meaning “increase”).⁷⁶ Licensed auctioneers were responsible selling items to buyers on behalf of

⁷⁰ *ibid.* 15; Robert A. Doyle and Steve Baska, *History of Auctions: From Ancient Rome to Today's High-tech Auctions* (Frankfort, Indiana: National Auctioneers Association, 2002), 20.

⁷¹ *ibid.* 20.

⁷² *ibid.* 21.

⁷³ *ibid.* 15.

⁷⁴ Cooper, *Under the Hammer: The Auctions and Auctioneers of London*, 15.

⁷⁵ Doyle and Baska, *History of Auctions: From Ancient Rome to Today's High-tech Auctions*, 22.

⁷⁶ Cooper, *Under the Hammer: The Auctions and Auctioneers of London*, 15.

sellers, and they probably manipulated both groups to create desired results.⁷⁷ Like Greek auctions, Roman auctions would have both naturalized certain modes of exchange and acquisition and reproduced a social hierarchy of both people and objects.⁷⁸

Auctions retained their political, social and economic usefulness, a marker of the unique importance of these sales that allow buyers, objects, sellers and auctioneers to come together to transform value. Specifically, auctions were harnessed by dominant political powers to convert newly acquired property into capital. The sales also allowed political agents to maintain a specific power hierarchy by preventing the participation of certain individuals and by facilitating sales of particular objects. Ideologically, the auction as an institution reinforced the self-appointed rights of political regimes to claim certain property. For example, beginning in the 7th century, the Church held descending auctions which contained the belongings of deceased monks. These possessions were sold to the wealthy who could indirectly contribute to the Church through the auction process.⁷⁹ A few centuries later, the French state began using descending auctions to sell off the belongings of executed criminals to raise funds.⁸⁰ In addition to giving certain agents the rights to claim and distribute property, auctions were used by political regimes to make their power visible in economic systems which they could otherwise not

⁷⁷ The first use of the English term “auction” appeared in Warner’s 1595 translation of Plautus’ *Menaechmi* V. vii. In this volume, the author described an auction where slaves and goods would be sold, based upon an original text (a comedic play) by Plautus from the second century BCE.

⁷⁸ Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation),” in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review P., 1971), 185.

⁷⁹ Doyle and Baska, *History of Auctions: From Ancient Rome to Today's High-tech Auctions*, 22.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

influence significantly. For example, King Henry VII implemented a system for licensing British auctioneers, much like it was in the 2nd century BCE.⁸¹

Indirectly, Inuit-made works and auctions have shared a relationship for hundreds of years. By the 17th century auctions had become common institutions harnessed to redistribute property in Europe and representations of Inuit and objects made by Inuit also began to circulate on the continent. As Vorano argued, the reception of Contemporary Inuit art in the mid-twentieth century was not simply a direct result of the *ex nihilo* marketing attempts made by the Canadian Government (and other affiliated institutions).⁸² Contemporary Inuit art (and its corresponding market) arose after consumers had been conditioned for centuries by representations of Inuit and artistic works made by Inuit. From the sixteenth century when Martin Frobisher first made his voyages to Baffin Island, Inuit were represented by European artists, promoters and exhibitions.⁸³ [Figure 2.2] These representations reflected not only ongoing contact between Europeans and Inuit, but various representational tropes harnessed by Europeans to serve political and ideological ends. The European trade in Inuit made objects, representations of Inuit and Inuit increased during the 16th century when exploration and colonial expansion intensified.⁸⁴ Suddenly, there was an organized supply system to meet the demands for “exotic” Inuit artifacts. Such an organized trade facilitated a socially visible categorization of Native American objects as rarified categories that were arranged hierarchically in the popular imagination and were related to colonial narratives,

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² Vorano, *Inuit Art in the Qallunaat World: Modernism, Museums and the Popular Imaginary, 1949-1962*, 64

⁸³ *ibid.* 82.

⁸⁴ *ibid.* 92.

such as the reification and classification of races. Even at this early date, the complete integration of objects made by Inuit and other North American aboriginal groups into European ideological categories suggests that many objects were likely redistributed at auction.

By the late 17th century, a new auction system was established in England. The “English Auction”, or ascending auction, is defined as: “A public sale in which each bidder offers an increase upon the price offered by the preceding, the article put up being sold to the highest bidder”. Because they are always ascending auctions, Waddington’s auctions of Inuit art originated in form (not in content) in England in the 17th century. English ascending auctions, initially held in coffee houses and inns, were unique because they were designed to be accessible to the middle classes.⁸⁵ By the end of the 17th century, English auctions occurred almost exclusively in designated locations (auction houses or marts).⁸⁶

In 1766, James Christie established an auction business for selling “pictures” called “Christie’s” and Samuel Baker established “Sotheby’s” for selling books in 1744.⁸⁷ Phillips opened its doors in London shortly thereafter. [Figure 2.3] Via these auction houses, individuals used economic capital and competitive behavior in the accumulation of carefully chosen objects which reflected their taste, education and their social standing.

⁸⁵ Cooper, *Under the Hammer: The Auctions and Auctioneers of London*, 17.

⁸⁶ Oxford English Dictionary, *auction*, *n.*; At this time, auctioneer Christopher Cock operated estate auctions at the Great Room in Covent Garden. This auctioneer was the first to actively promote his upcoming auctions using advertisements. By integrating representational and widely disseminated media into the auction process, Cock gave the institution the potential to influence the same audiences as primary market dealers who did not give buyers control over price negotiation. Needless the say, the popularity of English auctions increased.

⁸⁷ “About Us-- Corporate History,” in Sotheby’s [database online]. New York [cited 2010]. Available from http://www.sothebys.com/about/corporate/as_corphistory.html; “Our History,” in Christie’s [database online]. London [cited 2010]. Available from <http://www.christies.com/about/company/history.aspx>.

The social ordering of the auction participants, which revolved around knowledge, was linked to a differentiation of the objects for sale. The public nature of the process gave it a visibility that conferred prestige to those able to conspicuously spend on sought after items. Auctions also provided a clear indicator of public tastes for private dealers.⁸⁸

As descending auctions prospered in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, they were adopted by many entrepreneurs in North America. Andrew Paisley opened one of Canada's first auction houses in 1850 on Yonge St. in Toronto known as "Henderson's".⁸⁹ [Figure 2.4] Soon after, his son Charles joined him in managing the business and the renamed auction house, "C. M. Henderson & Co.", which was moved to 128 King Street East.⁹⁰ Although the auction house probably sold some art, it had no particular speciality.⁹¹ Like European auction houses, this public auction house gave patrons the ability to negotiate price while making visible their knowledge, wealth and power. It also made clear the desirability of the diverse objects for sale by advertising its sales and publishing its catalogues in *The Canadian Gazette*.⁹² [Figure 2.5] According to the catalogue, this auction contained twelve lots of unclaimed, assorted goods (tools, clothing, and mechanical parts) collected by the Grand Trunk Railway Company.⁹³ This

⁸⁸ France opened its first art auction house, The Hôtel Druout, nearly 100 years after England, in 1854. The title "hôtel" had been used in France to describe the lavish city houses of aristocrats since the 13th century. Beginning in the regency period and continuing through the 18th century, a "hôtel" was a luxurious city meeting place for the aristocracy. The name of the first Paris auction house carried with it symbolic meaning which suggested an affiliation with luxurious, aristocratic life.

⁸⁹ Waddington's, "History," in *Waddington's Inuit Art Department website*, 2010, accessed October 10th, 2009, <http://www.waddingtons.ca/pages/home/index.php?c=about/history.php>.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*

⁹¹ *ibid.*; C. M. Henderson's, "Auction Sale: Henderson's Auction Rooms," *The Canadian Gazette*, 1865, 298-299.

⁹² C. M. Henderson's, "Auction Sale: Henderson's Auction Rooms," *The Canadian Gazette*, 1865, 298-299.

⁹³ *ibid.*

English-style auction house in Toronto eventually became “Waddington’s, McLean and Co”.

2.2 The Birth of an Auction Market for Inuit Art

Art auction houses in North America did not flourish until the early twentieth century.⁹⁴ The first was the American Art Gallery (AAG) in 1883. Like its European counterparts, this institution was conservative in its tastes, specializing in “old master” work and not contemporary art.⁹⁵ By re-selling, they made visible the enduring economic value of old works over others. To complement these operations, the AAG opened during the period in which four prominent public museums opened in North America: the Smithsonian (1846), the Peabody Museum at Harvard (1856), the American Museum of Natural History (1869), and the Royal Ontario Museum (1914).⁹⁶ These four institutions were monuments to progress and development. For the edification of mass audiences, they brought vast collections of artifacts from many Native American groups to urban viewers, using geographical distance to distinguish between the colonizers and the colonized.⁹⁷ They educated viewers about cultural and social value in Native American

⁹⁴ Robson, *Prestige, Profit, and Pleasure: The Market for Modern Art in New York in the 1940s and 1950s*, 8.

⁹⁵ *ibid.* 9.

⁹⁶ Smithsonian Institute, “History: The History of the Smithsonian,” in *Smithsonian Institute website*, April 2008, accessed April 4th, 2010, <http://www.si.edu/about/history.htm>; Yale Peabody Museum “A Short History of the Yale Peabody Museum,” in *Yale University Peabody Museum website*, 2009, accessed April 2010, <http://www.peabody.yale.edu/archives/ypmhhistory.html>; American Museum of Natural History, “American Museum of Natural History Timeline,” in *American Museum of Natural History website*, 2009, accessed April 2010, <http://www.amnh.org/about/history.php>; Royal Ontario Museum “About Us: Our History,” in *Royal Ontario Museum website*. 2010, accessed April 2010, <http://www.rom.on.ca/about/history/index.php>.

⁹⁷ Vorano, *Inuit Art in the Qallunaat World: Modernism, Museums and the Popular Imaginary, 1949-1962*, 177.

objects. In other words, the museums helped increase the economic value of Native American objects by fueling a direct and secondary market for such items.

“Ethnographic” objects made by Aboriginal North Americans were not sold as art until the 1920s, at the earliest. Regardless, there was scarcely an auction market for modern art until the first auction of contemporary art at the Hotel Druout in 1914, which was followed by many others in the 1920s.⁹⁸ The North American market for modern art was fostered in the early twentieth century by the opening of public art museums featuring modern art, such as the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in 1928 in New York.⁹⁹ This was followed by the creation of the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1930, and eventually dealerships of modern art, such as Knoedler’s, which opened in 1946. These institutions were vital in the establishment of support for a modern art auction market because dealers directly support artists and therefore created a stable flow of art into the market. Auctions, while they do not directly support artists, still rely on a sufficient supply of saleable art. Therefore, by 1939, Parke-Bernett Galleries in New York were holding auctions of “Modern Paintings and Sculptures”.¹⁰⁰

The market for Native American artifacts was historically tied to the modern art market because, as Rushing states: “The recognition of Indian *Art* was coincident with the emergence of Modernism in America”.¹⁰¹ Avant-garde modernists in New York, concerned with the expressive potential of “significant forms”, began to see the value in

⁹⁸ Robson, *Prestige, Profit, and Pleasure: the Market for Modern Art in New York in the 1940s and 1950s*, 8.

⁹⁹ *ibid.* 11.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.* 277.

¹⁰¹ W. Jackson Rushing, *Native American Art and the New York Avant-Garde: A History of Cultural Primitivism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), xi.

“unpolluted” and vital North American indigenous art forms.¹⁰² After several notable exhibitions of “Tribal Art” beginning in New York in the 1920s, the aesthetic properties of Native American objects were promoted by interested agents as their most valuable characteristics (as opposed to their ethnographic value). Auctioneers, as middlemen implicated in the promotion and distribution of modern art, soon became involved with Native American “art”.

Inuit objects initially collected by American whalers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were quickly absorbed into the auction market. This was fueled by an avant-garde desire for Native American “art” in the 1940s, 1950s and into the 1960s. An auction held on September 24th to 28th, 1946, at Sotheby Parke-Bernett Inc. in New York, titled “Objects of Art of Three Continents & Antique Oriental Rugs of the Extensive Collection of the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation”, featured a group of six Inuit objects which included pipes, clothing, miniature models of kayaks and several jars.¹⁰³ Subsequently, on November 11th, 1950 Kende Galleries Inc. in New York held an auction of “Primitive Art of Africa, the Americas, the Pacific Islands; African wood sculptures, ivories, Benin bronzes; Mexican sculptures, masks, pottery, textiles; Central American, New Guinea and New Zealand Early Art; also of the American Indian and Eskimo Tribes” .¹⁰⁴ The sale had five lots of Inuit artifacts from the collection of Frederick Knize, which included objects which would have been collected as “souvenirs”

¹⁰² *ibid.* ix.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Kende Galleries at Gimbel Brothers, *Primitive Art of Africa, the Americas, Pacific islands*, (New York: Kende Galleries, 1950), 1.

in the early twentieth century such as ivory miniatures of animals, a miniature model of an umiak and several bone pipes.¹⁰⁵

Sixteen years later, the auction market for primitive art was still strong in New York and an auction was held that referred to “Eskimo art” specifically. In March 1969, Sotheby Parke-Bernett in New York held an auction called “African, Oceanic, American Indian and Eskimo Art”.¹⁰⁶ The sale contained ten lots of Inuit artifacts and souvenir works.¹⁰⁷ There were tools such as uluiit, weapons and ivory miniatures of human figures and animals, consigned in its entirety from the Knud Rasmussen collection.¹⁰⁸

It was not until January of 1970 when Parke-Bernett Galleries in New York held its first auction exclusively comprised of Native American and Inuit art.¹⁰⁹ The auction was entitled “Eskimo and American Indian Art” and it contained six lots of Inuit objects consigned from the collection of Jay C. Leff of Uniontown, Pennsylvania.¹¹⁰ The collection included two animal-shaped ivory miniatures, a miniature model of a kayak, two hunting tools and one early contemporary stone carving of a bear approximately 6 ¾

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.* 1.

¹⁰⁶ Sotheby Parke Bernet Inc, *African, Oceanic, Eskimo and American Indian art*, (New York: Sotheby Parke Bernet Inc, 1969), 1.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.* 3.

¹⁰⁹ New York Times, "U.S. Chippendale to be Auctioned," *New York Times*, Jan. 25 1970, 68.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.* 68.

inches tall.¹¹¹ The estimates for the works ranged from \$20 dollars for a spear point to \$575 for a small ivory figurine of a whale.¹¹²

Before the 1970s, many developments had taken place in the establishment of Inuit art as an economically viable and unique art form. Although these developments did not have a large effect on the auctions Eskimo objects mentioned above, they did shape subsequent sales in Canada. In the early twentieth century, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild had begun to sell and promote “Eskimo Crafts”.¹¹³ Through women-intermediaries such as Alice Lighthall, this organization aimed to: “steer the production and collection of “traditional” Inuit objects for sale in the South”.¹¹⁴ The Guild’s demand for functional and traditional objects (that did not fit into the new avant-garde market for “stand-alone” and non-utilitarian works) contributed to their lack of success before 1948. Vorano states that the kind of carvings desired in Southern markets did exist in small numbers before the intervention of James Houston, an artist from Quebec trained in the Modernist tradition, however, these were simply not marketed and distributed by Southern brokers.¹¹⁵ Needless to say, when Houston, educated in modern art, was presented with non-utilitarian carvings by Naomialuk, he recognized objects that would be desirable to a

¹¹¹ Parke-Bernet Galleries, *Eskimo and American Indian Art* (New York: Sotheby Parke Bernet Inc, 1970), 1-4.

¹¹² *ibid.* 1-4.

¹¹³ Vorano, *Inuit Art in the Qallunaat World: Modernism, Museums and the Popular Imaginary, 1949-1962*, 237.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.* 238.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.* 243.

modern art audience. He contacted the guild and asked for a loan so he could return north and collect a number of similar works on its behalf.¹¹⁶

The widely discussed “first exhibition of Inuit art” took place at the guild shop in Montreal on November 21st, 1949.¹¹⁷ The show was followed by a wealth of newspaper articles and publications promoting the Inuit work on display (as both “contemporary art” and “craft”) and the experience of going to the exhibition.¹¹⁸ The National Gallery of Canada held an exhibition of Inuit carvings in 1952 called “Eskimo Art”, making Inuit work a visible part of the national museum repertoire. Other middlemen, such as Charles Gimpel, worked to disseminate a concept of Inuit art in Canada and internationally that better fit within the bounds of “modernist primitivism”.¹¹⁹ Influenced by an article of James Houston’s entitled “In Search of Contemporary Eskimo Art” which appeared in *Canadian Art*, Gimpel held an exhibition to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 at the *Gimpel Fils Gallery* in London, U.K., where Inuit objects were strictly promoted as “modern art”.¹²⁰ The following year, an American distributor began promoting Inuit “art” in that country also. Overall, the creation of the category “Contemporary Eskimo art” was an international project, involving many intermediaries promoting and distributing this category in the popular imagination over the course of

¹¹⁶ Marybelle Mitchell, "History at a Glance," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 14, no. 4 (1990/1991), 24.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.* 24.

¹¹⁸ George Swinton, *Eskimo sculpture. Sculpture esquimaude* (Toronto,: McClelland and Stewart, c1965), 43.

¹¹⁹ Vorano, *Inuit Art in the Qallunaat World: Modernism, Museums and the Popular Imaginary, 1949-1962*, 328; Judy Hall. "Charles Gimpel: Early Promotion of Inuit Art in Europe." *Inuit Art Quarterly* vol. 24, no. 1 (2009): 34.

¹²⁰ Vorano, *Inuit Art in the Qallunaat World: Modernism, Museums and the Popular Imaginary, 1949-1962*, p. 318; Judy Hall. "Charles Gimpel: Early Promotion of Inuit Art in Europe." *Inuit Art Quarterly* vol. 24, no. 1 (2009): 34-35.

several years.¹²¹ Vorano also notes that because Inuit art was initially so inextricably implicated in the project of “modernism”, the language of modernism has left an indelible mark on Inuit art discourse.¹²² I argue that the market for modern art (and its affiliated market for Native American objects) shaped the market for Inuit art in Canada. Specifically, dealers, such as the Guild sold and promoted the art and directly supported artists as well as its growing marketing structure, such as co-operatives. With the continual flow of both support to artists and art work to the market, auction houses in Canada were soon able to become involved in the Inuit art world.

The involvement of Canadian auction houses in the market for post 1949 Inuit art began in the 1970s. Overall, this decade saw the greatest change in the auction market for Inuit art in Canada (and internationally) whereby auctions went from including a few works of “Eskimo Art” to including hundreds of lots of “Contemporary Inuit Art” (note the transition in the title of the work).

The process began in January 1972 when Montreal auction house Fraser Bros. Ltd. held an auction called “*Primitive Art: African and Eskimo*”.¹²³ The sale contained 49 lots of post-1949 Inuit sculpture from Pangnirtung, Frobisher Bay, Igloolik and Lake Harbour.¹²⁴ Of the 49 lots, 48 were sold at the auction.¹²⁵ The highest price paid for an Inuit work at the auction was \$180 for *Man—Boy—Dog* by Eva of Lake Harbour.¹²⁶

¹²¹ Vorano, *Inuit Art in the Qallunaat World: Modernism, Museums and the Popular Imaginary, 1949-1962*, 309.

¹²² *ibid.* 242.

¹²³ Montreal Fraser Bros., *Primitive art- African & Eskimo, Antiques and Fine Period Inspired Pieces, Oriental Rugs, Original Graphic Art* (Montreal: Fraser Bros., 1972), 1.

¹²⁴ *ibid.* 1.

The auction market continued to develop in Montreal. In December of the following year, Jacoby's House of Antiques of Montreal held an auction of antiques and art.¹²⁷ The sale of 1130 lots featured 17 lots of early contemporary sculpture and pre-1949 souvenirs and ivory miniatures.¹²⁸ In 1974, Christie, Manson & Woods in Montreal held an auction of Canadian paintings, prints, drawings and sculpture which included one session called "*Canadiana and Rare Indian and Eskimo Carvings and Prints*".¹²⁹ This was probably the first auction to contain both contemporary Inuit sculpture and prints.

Auctions of Inuit art also took place in Western Canada during the 1970s. Maynards auction house in Vancouver held an auction of "*Canadian Paintings and Native Art*" in 1975 which featured fifty lots of contemporary Inuit prints, sculpture and historic ivory miniatures.¹³⁰ Twenty-eight of the fifty lots did not sell at the auction.¹³¹ The prices reached ranged from \$25 (*Bird* sculpture by M. Aucie) to \$350 (*Man and Seal* sculpture by Josie Aulukie of Inoujouac).¹³² These prices were significantly lower than the prices reached for the Canadian paintings at the auction.¹³³

¹²⁵ Montreal Fraser Bros., *Prices Released: Primitive art- African & Eskimo, Antiques and Fine Period Inspired Pieces, Oriental rugs, Original Graphic Art*, (Montreal: Fraser Bros., 1972).

¹²⁶ *ibid.*

¹²⁷ Jacoby's House of Antiques, *Antique and Art Auction Sale*, (Montreal: Jacoby's House of Antiques, 1973).

¹²⁸ *ibid.*

¹²⁹ Christie, Manson and Woods (Canada) Ltd., "*Catalogue of 19th and 20th Century Paintings, Watercolours, Drawings and Prints by Canadian Artists, Bronzes by Canadian Sculptors, Canadiana and Rare Indian and Eskimo Carvings and Prints*," (Toronto, 1974), 1.

¹³⁰ Vancouver Maynards, *Canadian Paintings, Eskimo Sculpture, Indian Artifacts, Modern Graphics*, (Vancouver: Maynards, 1975), 1-10.

¹³¹ Maynards, "*Prices Released: Canadian Paintings, Eskimo Sculpture, Indian Artifacts, Modern Graphics*," (Vancouver, 1975).

¹³² *ibid.*

Despite some Western sales, Montreal remained the epicenter of the market until the final years of the 1970s. The first exclusively Inuit art auction was held by Christie, Manson & Woods (Canada) at the Ritz Carleton Hotel in Montreal in 1975.¹³⁴ The sale was entitled “*Important Eskimo Prints, Drawings, Paintings & Carvings*”.¹³⁵ This auction was also the first to contain Inuit drawings. The sale offered works from important private collections including from the collection of Ian Lindsay of Montreal and Roy G. Cole of Hamilton.¹³⁶ The growth of such auctions in the mid 1970s was sustained by a steady supply of “classic” art and a predictable demand. This was facilitated by a flow of quality consignments from reputable collectors into the auction house, which lead to a growing audience for the art auctions.¹³⁷ The consignments to the auction house from well-known collectors reinforced the early market in Montreal, and the prices realized rose accordingly. The works in the sale sold for \$75 (*Seagull* [1958] sculpture by Levi Amidilak of Port Harrison) to \$4500 (*The Enchanted Owl* [1960, green tail] by Kenojuak Ashevak).¹³⁸ [Figure 2.6] The catalogue noted that George Swinton of Carleton University was the outside consult at auction, which lent academic credibility to

¹³³ *ibid.*

¹³⁴ Feheley, *Inuit Art at Auction*, (Ottawa: Inuit Art Foundation, 1990), 52-53.

¹³⁵ Christie, Manson and Woods (Canada) Ltd., *Catalogue of Important Eskimo Prints, Drawings, Paintings & Carvings...at the Ritz Carlton Hotel, Sherbrooke St. West, Montreal on Wednesday, October 22nd., 1975 at 8 P.M. precisely.* (Montreal, 1975), 1.

¹³⁶ Feheley, *Inuit Art at Auction*, (Ottawa: Inuit Art Foundation, 1990), 52-53.

¹³⁷ Duncan McLean, Personal Telephone Interview, Ottawa, 2010.

¹³⁸ *BRIEFLY Inuit Art Auction to be Largest Ever* (Toronto: Canada Newspapers Co., Ltd.: 1980), 21.

the early auctions.¹³⁹ The need for an outside “specialist” demonstrates the presence of necessary knowledge to evaluate estimates and reserves, and it further illustrates that the auction house was not yet in possession of “in-house” specialists. In this way, since the first auctions of Inuit art, there existed a relationship between auctioneers and other players from the Inuit art world.

In the 1970s there was still some movement in the Inuit art auction market in New York, the biggest market for modern art. However, no specifically Inuit art auctions were held there, which demonstrates the ongoing “regional” appeal of Inuit art. In April of 1977, Sotheby Parke-Bernett Inc. held an auction of “Southwest, Plains & Woodlands, Eskimo and Northwest Coast art of the American Indian” which contained 194 lots of Inuit historic souvenirs, ivory miniatures, scrimshaw and artifacts.¹⁴⁰ The Inuit objects came from the collections of Mrs. & Mr. Jerry Turner of Texas, Ms. Ann Marie Magnussen of New York, Colonel Jerry E. H. Morrison of Canada and Geoffrey W. Tupling also of Canada.¹⁴¹ These lots were given estimates of between \$100 and \$1,200 (for a heavily sculpted ivory tusk), less than the prices being realized in Montreal auctions.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Christie, Manson and Woods (Canada) Ltd., *Catalogue of Important Eskimo Prints, Drawings, Paintings & Carvings...at the Ritz Carlton Hotel, Sherbrooke St. West, Montreal on Wednesday, October 22nd., 1975 at 8 P.M. precisely*, (Montreal: Christie, Manson and Woods (Canada) Ltd., 1975), 2.

¹⁴⁰ Sotheby's (Firm), *Southwest, Plains and Woodlands, Eskimo and Northwest Coast Art of the American Indian* (New York: Sotheby's (Firm), 1977).

¹⁴¹ *ibid.* 2.

¹⁴² *ibid.* 22.

Less than a decade after C.M. Henderson & Co in Toronto became Waddington's auction house in 1969, Toronto saw its first auctions of Inuit art.¹⁴³ By 1978, Waddington's had received the collection of Inuit art amassed by the recently deceased Toronto dealer William Eccles, a pioneer dealer of Inuit art at the Eskimo House gallery in the venerable Royal York Hotel.¹⁴⁴ Eccles died without a will, and his collection, some of which was bought at auction, was taken over by a public trustee who asked Waddington's to sell it. It is clear that an auction market for Inuit art could not develop without the collaboration of at least two branches of the art world (primary and secondary markets). In this case, Eccles, a well-known and respected dealer, had the collection he amassed based on his expertise and knowledge passed on to Waddington's.

Waddington's was managed by Ronald McLean at the time, but McLean assigned the management of the Eccles auction to his son, Duncan.¹⁴⁵ [Figure 2.7] Due to his lack of knowledge about Inuit art, Duncan McLean got in touch with John Robertson, Ottawa gallery owner and with George Swinton in Winnipeg, the latter whom wrote a foreword about his late friend Eccles for the catalogue.¹⁴⁶ To promote the sale, McLean used Eccles' mailing list to contact Inuit art collectors and dealers.¹⁴⁷ Obviously, the success of the Eccles sale was due to the involvement of so many influential and

¹⁴³ This particular auction house was known in the late 1970s as Waddington, McLean and Co. Ltd. (I refer to it in this paper as "Waddington's").

¹⁴⁴ Richard C. Crandall, *Inuit Art: A History*, (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, c2000), 226.

¹⁴⁵ Gustavison, *Auctioning Inuit Art* (Ottawa: Inuit Art Foundation, 2002), 22.

¹⁴⁶ Robertson was the owner of *Robertson Galleries* which sold Inuit art in Ottawa, one-time member of the *Canadian Eskimo Arts council* and president of the Art Appraisers Association; Gustavison, *Auctioning Inuit Art* (Ottawa: Inuit Art Foundation, 2002), 23.

¹⁴⁷ Gustavison, *Auctioning Inuit Art* (Ottawa: Inuit Art Foundation, 2002), 23.

experienced Inuit art players who coalesced around the reputations and expertise of Eccles, Swinton, and Robertson.

The opening pages of Waddington's February 1978 Inuit art auction catalogue contained a quote from Edmund Carpenter, an anthropologist known for his controversial critique of Contemporary Inuit art as a Western art form due to Houston's involvement and due to its audience.¹⁴⁸ The catalogue also featured listings of the lots, accompanied by high-quality, black-and-white photographs of many of the works. These photographs typically contained many works positioned in three-quarter profile inside a single frame. The catalogue also included a map of the Canadian arctic showing the locations of many Inuit communities, typical of Inuit art exhibitions then and today.¹⁴⁹

The sale of the Eccles collection of Inuit art attracted the biggest crowd ever at Waddington's auction, and no doubt influenced the company to expand its efforts in this area.¹⁵⁰ In attendance were private collectors, dealers and museum personnel from Canada, the United States and Britain. In this way, the success of the sale was not only determined by the participation of other Inuit art experts and aficionados before the auction, but on the number of diverse Inuit art world players in the bidding. At the auction, these experts were given the opportunity to compete for works, casting themselves into a differentiated organization based on power and knowledge which was made visible in the bidding wars. Among the Inuit art connoisseurs, the sale raised a great deal of attention because Eccles had not disposed of any works from his private

¹⁴⁸ Crandall, *Inuit Art: A History*, 129, 202; Waddington's, *The William Eccles Collection of Eskimo Art Comprising Carvings of Soapstone, Ivory and Bone Etchings and Stone Block Prints* (Toronto: Waddington's, 1978), 3-4.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Gustavison, *Auctioning Inuit Art* (Ottawa: Inuit Art Foundation, 2002), 23.

collection before he died, and therefore the assemblage was deemed valuable due to its completeness. There were 350 registered bidders,¹⁵¹ but more than 350 catalogues were sold, indicating that since Waddington's first sale of Inuit art, many people had become interested in watching the auctions unfold or in collecting the catalogues for the information they contained.

The auction of the 400 lots took up two evenings. According to Crandall the gross income from the sale was \$180,000.¹⁵² However, Pat Fehleley, in a 2002 interview with Susan Gustavison, stated that the revenue generated was closer to \$250,000.¹⁵³ This total is more likely, as James Purdie wrote in *The Globe and Mail* that sales had already totalled \$102,000 by the end of the first session of the sale.¹⁵⁴ Purdie also noted that a print of a muskox by Pudlo of Cape Dorset sold for \$1,800 during the first evening of the sale. The same print had sold at auction in 1974 for \$800 and again in 1976 for \$1,500.¹⁵⁵ The history of this print alone at auction demonstrates the early growth of the market.

At the early stage, the effects of media attention on auctions of Inuit art were very clear. The Guild's initial exhibition and promotion of Inuit art attracted widespread attention and in many ways contributed to the strength of the market, an important pillar of support for the auction itself. The Eccles estate auction was presented ahead of

¹⁵¹ James Purdie, "Inuit Art Auction Draws Buyers from Europe, North America," *The Globe and Mail*, Jan. 24th, 1978, P4.

¹⁵² Crandall, *Inuit Art: A History*, 226.

¹⁵³ Gustavison, *Auctioning Inuit Art* (Ottawa: Inuit Art Foundation, 2002), 23.

¹⁵⁴ Purdie, *Inuit Art Auction Draws Buyers from Europe, North America*, 4.

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.* 4.

the sale as important business news in *The Toronto Star* and in *The Globe and Mail*.¹⁵⁶

As a result of the *Globe* article two important Canadian collectors, Fred Ellis (a teacher living in Australia) and an un-named collector from Mississauga read about the success of the auction. The article later persuaded these individuals to consign their own important collections to Waddington's.¹⁵⁷

In June of 1978 Waddington's held another auction of Inuit art in Toronto entitled "*Important Sale of Inuit Art*".¹⁵⁸ The auction included the remainder of William Eccles' collection of Inuit art, the Rosemont Collection of Inuit art from Scotland and works from the Kamchatka Venture Collection.¹⁵⁹ This was the first auction of Inuit objects to used the term "Inuit" in the place of "Eskimo". The sale consisted of 415 lots, including 295 carvings, 115 prints, and a number of artifacts.¹⁶⁰ The works were dated from the early twentieth century to 1975 and their estimates ranged from \$50 to \$7500.¹⁶¹ Like the catalogue for Waddington's February 1978 auction of Inuit art, this catalogue contained a map of the Canadian Arctic. The sales at the auction reached a total of \$160,000.¹⁶²

On April 30th 1979, Waddington's held an auction of Inuit art in Toronto again called "*Important Sale of Inuit Art*", comprised of 510 lots, principally from the collection of

¹⁵⁶ Crandall, *Inuit Art: A History*, 226.

¹⁵⁷ Gustavison, *Auctioning Inuit Art* (Ottawa: Inuit Art Foundation, 2002), 23.

¹⁵⁸ Waddington's, *Important Sale of Inuit Art, Comprising Carvings of Soapstone, Ivory and Bone, Engravings and Stone Block Prints*, (Toronto: Waddington's, 1978).

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.* 2.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.* 2.

¹⁶¹ *ibid.* 2.

¹⁶² Crandall, *Inuit Art: A History*, 226.

Fred Ellis.¹⁶³ The auction included lot 260a, *Sitting Hunter Carving* by Charlie Inukpuk of Port Harrison, which sold for \$10,000, a record price.¹⁶⁴ The 1960s print *The Enchanted Owl* by Kenojuak Ashevak of Cape Dorset (lot 110) was purchased for \$15,000, a record price for prints.¹⁶⁵ [see Figure 2.6] Overall, the auction's sales totaled \$265,000.¹⁶⁶

In March 1979, probably as a direct result of the successful Waddington's auction held the previous year, Sotheby Parke-Bernett in New York City enlarged its Canadian operations to include Inuit Art.¹⁶⁷ Auction houses such as Christie's in New York, Phillips in Toronto, Christie's and Sotheby's in London (U.K.) and the much smaller Appleton Galleries in Edmonton held auctions which included Inuit art.¹⁶⁸ The Inuit art sold was placed into the categories "Ethnographic art", "Primitive Works from the Americas", "Tribal art" or "American Indian Art" by the various auction houses.¹⁶⁹ Of these auctions, only the sale at Appleton Galleries on September 20th and the sale at Phillips in Toronto in October sold exclusively Inuit work.¹⁷⁰ It is nevertheless clear that, by 1979, Inuit art auctions had moved beyond "regionalism".

¹⁶³ Waddington's, *An Important Sale of Inuit Art Comprising Carvings in Stone, Ivory and Bone Engravings and Stone Block Prints, Ethnographical Artifacts, North American Indian Art and Artifacts* (Toronto: Waddington's, 1979), 1.

¹⁶⁴ Waddington's, *Prices Released: Important Sale of Inuit Art, Comprising Carvings in Stone, Ivory and Bone, Engravings and Stone Block Prints, Ethnographical Artifacts, North American Indian Art and Artifacts* (Toronto: Waddington's, 1979).

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Crandall, *Inuit Art: A History*, 237.

¹⁶⁷ Gordon, *Interest in Collecting Fired Auction Career*, (Montreal: The Gazette, 1979), 5.

¹⁶⁸ Crandall, *Inuit art: A history*, 237.

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*

2.3 1980s

The most important auction houses involved in the sale of Inuit art during the 1980s included Waddington, McLean and Co. (Waddington's in Toronto), Sotheby Parke-Bernett (Canadian divisions stationed in Toronto and Montreal) and D & J Ritchie (in Toronto). Because there were three auction houses based in the same city, Toronto emerged as the major venue of Inuit art in the secondary market. Nevertheless, this secondary market was supported by an equally strong primary market for Inuit art in the city. By the end of the decade (likely as a strategic maneuver to overcome competition) Sotheby Parke-Bernett (Canada) and D & J Ritchie (Ritchie's) stopped holding exclusively Inuit art sales but included Contemporary Inuit work in their Canadian Art auctions.¹⁷¹ The scope of Toronto's secondary market for Inuit art facilitated the accumulation of stock by local Inuit art dealers and the consignment of works to a very centralized group of auction institutions by collectors. In other words, Toronto became the economic center of the Inuit art world in the 1980s, having overtaken Montreal.

Because the auction market for Inuit art continued to grow in the late 1970s, several sales were held at auction houses in Europe and the United States in the early 1980s. Due to the continued prominence of Modernism in the art world in the 1980s, many auctions containing Inuit art were held internationally, in particular, in New York, London (U.K.) and Seattle.¹⁷² The most important of these was the 1980 auction at Bonham's Auction house in London called "*Contemporary Eskimo Carvings, Paintings and Prints*", which included 114 lots of contemporary Inuit sculpture, drawings and

¹⁷¹ Patricia Feheley, "Inuit Art at Auction," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 5, no. 3 (1990): 52.

¹⁷² Crandall, *Inuit Art: A History*, 238

prints with estimates ranging from 10£-20£ (*Face in Rock* sculpture by John Pangnark) to 350£-400£ (*Mother and Child* sculpture by Johnny Inukpuk).¹⁷³

Nevertheless, the auctions in Toronto during the same year (1980) were the most significant in that they generated the highest prices and contained the most volume. These Toronto auctions not only demonstrated the economic value of Inuit art, but they also legitimized the place of the auction house as a contributing institution in the Inuit art world. On March 3rd and 4th, Waddington's held an auction of Inuit art which featuring 146 prints and 55 artifacts.¹⁷⁴ An imperfect print of Kenojuak Ashevak's *The Enchanted Owl* (1960, red tail) sold for \$14,500 while the sculpture, *Dancing Bear*, by Henry Evvaluardjuk of Iqaluit, raised \$4,300.¹⁷⁵ [Figure 2.8] The auction raised a total of \$250,000.¹⁷⁶ Also in March, Sotheby Parke-Bernett Canada (Toronto) held a sale of Inuit art.¹⁷⁷ At this auction an imperfect print of Kenojuak's *The woman who lives in the sun* (1960) was bought for \$1,800 and the print *Aero plane* (1976) by Pudlo was sold for \$1,700.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷³ Bonhams's, *Contemporary Eskimo Carvings, Paintings and Prints*, (London: Bonham's, 1980), 1.

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.* 239

¹⁷⁵ Waddington's, *An Important Sale of Inuit Art Comprising Carvings in Stone, Ivory and Bone, Engravings and Stone Block Prints, Ethnographical Artifacts Selected from Local Estates, Institutions and Individuals* (Toronto: Waddington's, 1980), 116.

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.* 239.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.* 239.

¹⁷⁸ Sotheby Parke Bernet Inc, *Price Released: Inuit Art Auction*, (Toronto: Sotheby Parke Bernet Inc, 1980).

Finally, from November 24th to 26th, the largest single assemblage of Contemporary Inuit art on record was sold at Waddington's auction house in Toronto.¹⁷⁹ The auction included 736 lots and featured the works of artists such as Axanguayuk, Samwillie Ekalook, Henry Evvaluardjuk and Charlie Inukpuk.¹⁸⁰ A print of *The Enchanted Owl* (1960, green tail) by Kenojuak Ashevak sold for \$10,000 as did a lithograph portfolio by the same artist.¹⁸¹ [see Figure 2.6]

Probably due to the success of auctions in 1980, 1981 was an important year for the Inuit art auction market. Waddington's took in \$2 million for Inuit art in two auctions.¹⁸² However, the Toronto division of Sotheby Parke-Bernett Inc. also held significant sales during the year. On February 24th (1981), Sotheby Parke-Bernett (Canada) Inc. had an Inuit art auction in Toronto entitled "*Important Inuit and Indian Art*" which brought in a total of \$128,000.¹⁸³ The auction was composed of 230 lots principally from the collections of Alice Mantyka Swinton and A. G. Sims.¹⁸⁴ From the total number of lots, 113 were sold at the auction.¹⁸⁵ The works for sale included *Carved head of Kenojuak* by Sheojuk of Cape Dorset which was purchased for \$3,000; *Walking*

¹⁷⁹ Waddington's, *Inuit Art Comprising Carvings in Stone, Ivory and Bone, Engravings and Stone Block Prints, Ethnographical Artifacts*, (Toronto: Waddington's, 1980).

¹⁸⁰ Globe and Mail, *BRIEFLY Inuit Art Auction to be Largest Ever* (Toronto: Canada Newspapers Co., Ltd., 1980), 15.

¹⁸¹ *ibid.* 15.

¹⁸² Innes, *Popularity of Inuit Art on the Rebound*, (Toronto: The Financial Post, 1986), 38.

¹⁸³ Globe and Mail, *BRIEFLY Inuit Art Auction Fetches \$128,000* (Toronto: Canada Newspapers Co., Ltd., 1981), P19.

¹⁸⁴ Sotheby Parke Bernet Inc, *Inuit and Indian Art and Artifacts* (Toronto: Sotheby Parke Bernet Inc, 1981).

¹⁸⁵ Sotheby Parke Bernet Inc, *Prices Released: Inuit and Indian Art and Artifacts*, (Toronto: Sotheby Parke Bernet Inc, 1981).

Bear by Henry Evvaluardjuk which sold for \$3,200; a stencil of four Muskox by Osuitok which was exhibited in Stratford in 1959 as part of first show of Inuit graphic works and which sold for \$5,000; and a stone-block used to make prints carved by Victor Ekootak of Holman Island which was purchased by the CMCC (Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation) for \$2,200.¹⁸⁶

In July, at another Sotheby Parke-Bernett (Canada) Inc. auction of Inuit art in Toronto, the record price for a single work of Inuit art sold at auction was established when a whalebone carving by Karoo Ashevak of Spence Bay sold for \$19,000.¹⁸⁷ This final price was approximately \$10,000 higher than the estimate placed on the work by the auction house prior to the sale.¹⁸⁸ The final Sotheby Parke-Bernett Inc. auction of Inuit art of 1981 was held in Toronto on December 1st and 2nd. At this auction one *Migration* boat sculpture by Joe Talirunili sold for \$12,000.¹⁸⁹ [see Figure 2.15]

During the mid 1980s, the auction market for Inuit art grew at a slightly slower pace than it had during the preceding years. Nevertheless, Toronto remained the nucleus of the market as regular and record breaking auctions continued to be held there. Toronto's auction houses continued to disseminate the concept of Inuit art as a culturally and economically valuable art form through catalogues and advertisements. For example, in November 1982, Waddington's "*Sale of Inuit Art, Oceanic, North American Indian and Pre-Columbian art and artifacts*" included 223 lots of Contemporary Inuit art. The

¹⁸⁶ Globe and Mail, *BRIEFLY Inuit Art Work Fetches \$19,000*, (Toronto: Canada Newspapers Co., Ltd., 1981), p. P17; Globe and Mail, *BRIEFLY Inuit Art Auction Fetches \$128,000*, (Toronto: Canada Newspapers Co., Ltd., 1981), P19.

¹⁸⁷ *BRIEFLY Inuit Art Work Fetches \$19,000*, 17.

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.* 17.

¹⁸⁹ Sotheby Parke Bernet Inc, *Prices Released: Inuit and Indian Art and Artifacts*, (Toronto: Sotheby's, 1981).

sale featured Kenojuak Ashevak's *The Enchanted Owl* (1960) with an estimate of \$14,000-\$16,000.¹⁹⁰ [see Figure 2.11]

In 1985, for the first time, an auction of Inuit art had severe legal repercussions. Two Povungnituk printstones, Davidialuk's 1969 Printstones for *Eskimo Woman Transformed into a Seagull* and Talirunili's 1966 printstone for *Return of the Survivors from the Floating Ice*, became lots in an auction.¹⁹¹ The stones had been privately purchased, but individuals such as George Swinton and Alma Houston, widow of James Houston, declared the sale a violation of the international convention relating to original prints.¹⁹² La Fédération des Coopératives du Nouveau Québec (FCNQ) was informed of the sale and requested the stones be withdrawn.¹⁹³ The owner demanded the stone be returned, but the court ruled that the previous owner had known the true cultural, historical and monetary value of the printstones and therefore selling them at a public auction was unethical.¹⁹⁴ The stones were given to the CMCC.¹⁹⁵ This debate did not affect earlier purchases of printstones at auction.

What kind of work were collectors at Inuit art auctions in the 1980s looking for? In an interview for the April 5th 1986 edition of *The Financial Post*, Duncan McLean noted that collectors were seeking "high-quality" Inuit works from the late 1950s and

¹⁹⁰ Waddington's, *An Important Sale of Inuit Art Comprising Engravings, Lithographs, Stone cut and Stencil Prints, Carvings in Stone, Bone and Ivory, Wall Hangings, and Indian Art comprising Silkscreens, and Original Works, Carvings in Stone and Wood* (Toronto: Waddington's, 1982), 36.

¹⁹¹ Crandall, *Inuit art: a history*, 273.

¹⁹² *ibid.* 273.

¹⁹³ *ibid.* 273.

¹⁹⁴ *ibid.* 273.

¹⁹⁵ *ibid.* 273.

early 1960s that appealed to a Modernist aesthetic.¹⁹⁶ Concerning the market overall, McLean observed that it was growing by stating that: "A good-quality Dorset print from that period (late 1950s, early 1960s) now fetches as much as \$5,000, and you have to pay as high as \$18,000 to get a print of Kenojuak's enchanted owl".¹⁹⁷ This interview demonstrates the work done in collusion between by art journalists and auctioneers to legitimate Inuit art as an art form imbued with economic and cultural value. Indeed, many articles began to appear that focused exclusively on the works' economic appeal.

In the late 1980s, more institutional collusion took place which signified worth of Inuit art and justified the roles of the many middlemen and brokers operating to uphold the values of the Inuit art world. In October 1988, Waddington's began an advertising tradition that continues. The auction house placed an advertisement in *Inuit Art Quarterly* (IAQ), a magazine devoted to Inuit art.¹⁹⁸ [Figure 2.9] The advertisement was one full page and it announced the fall sale of Inuit art taking place on Dec. 7th, 1988. By tying itself to the only publication dedicated to Inuit art, Waddington's accomplished many goals. First, the auction house reached a target audience by promoting its sales in a publication widely circulated among Inuit art dealers and collectors. By consistently associating itself with a scholarly journal, the auction house may also have encouraged buyer and seller confidence at Waddington's.

By 1989, the auction market for Inuit art entered into a new period of growth. Waddington's held an auction on June 1989 which included many of the pieces featured

¹⁹⁶ Innes, *Popularity of Inuit Art on the Rebound*, (Toronto: The Financial Post, 1986), 38.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.* 38; Waddington's, "An Important Collection of Approx. 200 Carvings and 75 Prints," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 3, no. 4 (1988): 24.

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.* 24.

in George Swinton's landmark and very popular 1965 book *Eskimo Sculpture*.¹⁹⁹ Here again, the auction house drew on another player in the Inuit art world with common interests in upholding the value of the art form. A sculpture by Davie Atchealak sold at the auction for \$45,100, setting a record for the highest sale price.²⁰⁰ [Figure 2.10] *Standing Inuit woman* by Josephée Angnako sold for \$5,500 and a dancing bear by Pauta Saila was purchased for \$24,000.²⁰¹ After this significant auction, the results were mentioned in the "News" section of *Inuit Art Quarterly* magazine.

In the wake of a wave of new American collectors of Canadian art, a Canadian federal policy was put in place to reduce the power of these buyers. In 1989, Canada created the "*Cultural Property Import and Export Act*", which targeted the sale and distribution of art, including Inuit art, internationally. The act prevented the export of "Objects of outstanding significance or national importance". According to the revisions, anyone seeking to export "objects of ethnographic art" or "objects of fine art" needed a permit.²⁰² A permit was also required to export objects worth over a certain monetary amount or over a certain age.²⁰³ Finally, the act empowered the Canadian government to buy back any works that had been exported previously.²⁰⁴ Not only would this policy have slowed the movement of objects out of the country, but it also influenced a growing awareness of the long-term effects of art expatriation.

¹⁹⁹ Waddington's, *Inuit Art* (Toronto: Waddington's, 1989).

²⁰⁰ Christopher Hume, "Inuit Artist Takes on a Whale of a Sculpture," *Toronto Star*, July 13th, 1989, D1.

²⁰¹ Marybelle Mitchell, "In Other News," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 4, no. 3 (1989): 34.

²⁰² Crandall, *Inuit Art: A History*, 311.

²⁰³ *ibid.* 311.

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*

2.4 1990s

By 1990 Waddington, McLean and Co. had established itself as the most important auction house for Inuit art due to both the size and scope of its auctions, as well as because of the well-known, expert participants that it attracted. In 1990 alone, they sold over 1400 Inuit works.²⁰⁵ Waddington's operations served to re-evaluate Inuit art works, to re-distribute the works of old collectors to new collectors and to strengthen the perceived economic worth of Inuit art as a good investment for buyers.

The March 1990 Sale of Inuit art at Waddington's established several significant final sale prices.²⁰⁶ *Dancing Bear* by Iqaluit artist Davie Atchealak was purchased for \$19,800; a boat sculpture by Joe Talirunili entitled *The Migration* sold for \$20,350; and a whalebone carving of a drummer by Karoo Ashevak from Cape Dorset and Taloyoak raised \$29,700.²⁰⁷ [see Figure 2.15] Clearly, by the 1990s, a hierarchy had been established within the category of Inuit art based on past auction results. For example, sculptures by Joe Talirunili and early prints by Kenojuak Ashevak had historically achieved consistently high prices at auction. As a result, these works continued to be sought after in subsequent sales. Works that had been included in art historical publications or had been collected by significant Inuit art players were also featured high in this hierarchy, therefore selling for high prices at auction as well.

In addition to the many significant objects sold at Waddington's Inuit art auctions in the 1990s, there were also many important participants who further legitimated Inuit art and Inuit art auctions. At Waddington's spring 1996 sale of Inuit art, Canadian Prime

²⁰⁵ Feheley, *Inuit Art at Auction*, 52-53.

²⁰⁶ Crandall, *Inuit Art: A History*, 320.

²⁰⁷ *ibid.* 320.

minister Jean Chrétien won a bidding war that lasted until past midnight for a stone carving by Mikisiti Saila of Cape Dorset.²⁰⁸ The fact that this became news is, in itself, was a characteristic of the media's growing fascination with auctions. In the subsequent fall 1996 sale, over 300 bidders participated. The auction raised \$250,000 on its first evening session alone. A print of *The Enchanted Owl* (1960) by Kenojuak Ashevak was sold for \$18,000, maintaining but not exceeding the previous record for this work.²⁰⁹ [see Figure 2.11]

Despite the continued growth of Waddington's auctions of Inuit art in the late 1990s, the auction house still had not created a department devoted exclusively to Inuit art. At that time, Inuit art was sold out of Waddington's Inuit and Canadian art department, managed by Duncan McLean. Waddington's fall 1998 sale of Inuit art included 421 lots principally from the collection of Janet and George Diveky.²¹⁰ The auction attracted 200 bidders from Toronto, Montreal, Scotland, Germany, England, Vancouver, Winnipeg and Edmonton.²¹¹

In the early 1990s, an economic recession impinged on global art markets. After his fall 1998 auction, Duncan McLean discussed how the downturn had affected his business. He commented that the market for Inuit art was immune to the recession of the early 1990s because the overall prices for the works were very reasonable (generally

²⁰⁸ Val Ross, "NORTHERN EXPOSURE The Mainstreaming of Inuit Art," *The Globe and Mail*, Jan 13th, 1996, C1.

²⁰⁹ *ibid.* C1.

²¹⁰ Judy Stoffman, "Picasso of North Star of Inuit Auction," *Canadian Press NewsWire*, Nov. 17th, 1998, 1.

²¹¹ *ibid.* 1.

ranging from \$500-2500) and the quality was very high.²¹² However, contrary to McLean's statements, in a 1999 interview, Bernard Murdoch of La Fédération des Coopératives du Nouveau-Québec commented that sales of Inuit art had been in decline since 1981, when interest rates "shot up".²¹³ Did the recession of the early 1990s affect the primary market for Inuit art more than the secondary market? If yes, what might this demonstrate about the nature of the Inuit art market?

In the 1990s in the wake of the "*Cultural Property Import and Export Act*", the movement of Inuit art objects beyond national borders became a growing concern. Specific apprehension about Waddington's Inuit art auctions developed because many of the works in the sales were sold to international (American, specifically) bidders. As these concerns developed, a report was published which disclosed the percentage of works sold at the auctions which left the country after the sale. In a January 1996 wire service article, it was announced that at Waddington's fall 1995 auction, of the 65 major sculptures sold, 37 works were sold to Americans and three to Germans.²¹⁴ This was a concern because it is arguable that foreign collectors who are far from Waddington's are not as likely to consign works back to the auction house or to sell works to Canadian collectors and dealers. Still, participation in Inuit art auctions by non-Canadians signaled to many people, though perhaps not to FCNQ, the overall health of the Inuit art world.

²¹² *ibid.* 1.

²¹³ David Staples, "Cape Dorset in Crisis: For the Unsentimental Inuit, Art is Simply a Great Way to Make Money. The Trouble is the Market has Crashed," *National Post*, March 27th, 1999, 6.

²¹⁴ "Arctic Art Commands High Price," *Canadian Press NewsWire*, Jan. 23rd, 1996, 1.

2.4.1 Online Auctions

In the late 1990s, the Internet transformed the international auction business. In 1997, while it was operating 2 million online auctions a month, the company formerly called AuctionWeb changed its name to eBay.²¹⁵ By 1999, the possibilities offered by the Internet caused many auctioneers to consider running some portions of their operations online, and in October of 1999, Sotheby Parke-Bernett partnered with Amazon.com. In response to this partnership and to the growth of the online auction market, Duncan McLean discussed the risks to auction business presented by the web in *Canadian Art Magazine*:

The kind of chemistry that's generated in a room with all those people -- where it's more or less spontaneous, where you either buy it now or forget it -- that's where you get that wonderful chemistry where you set record prices. But if someone has two weeks to look at it on the Net, you lose that chemistry. And there are other disadvantages. You can't see the art particularly well. You certainly can't see its condition, and you can't put a black light on it. So there are disadvantages, particularly for the buyer. But there are disadvantages for sellers too. Your average fellow with a collection of Inuit art out of Vancouver has about eighty pieces, so what's he going to do? Put eighty pieces on the Internet and nursemaid it for the next three years trying to sell it? It's incredibly time intensive, as opposed to putting it in an auction and it's done in a night.²¹⁶

The internet also posed a threat to the power of the auction to assemble patrons in a single physical place and time. In a large and present group, auction participants can make social connections and bonds that encourage them to return to the same auction in the future.²¹⁷ Other institutions selling Inuit art near Waddington's auction house also

²¹⁵ Ken Hillis, "Introduction", in *Everyday eBay: Culture, Collecting, and Desire*, eds. Ken Hillis, Michael Petit, and Nathan Scott Epley (New York: Routledge, 2006.), 1.

²¹⁶ Gardner et al., *Primer: Auctions* (Toronto: McLean Hunter, 1999), 26.

²¹⁷ Christa Ouimet, e-mail interview with the author, Toronto, 2010.

benefitted from having a crowd of Inuit art collectors in the city at the same time. Perhaps in response to the threat posed by the internet, Duncan McLean and Patricia Feheley (of Feheley Fine Arts, a commercial Inuit art gallery in Toronto) decided to promote the benefits of travelling to Toronto for Waddington's auctions by arranging a weekend of Inuit art events held at both the auction house and at the private gallery. The pairing of the two events encouraged collectors to travel to Toronto to participate in the auction and to visit the gallery. Did these weekends attract new patrons to either institution? Patricia Feheley commented that they rarely did, but they did attract patrons on a regular basis who otherwise seldom travelled the distance to visit her gallery.²¹⁸ In November of 1999, in conjunction with Waddington's fall auction of Inuit art, Feheley Fine Arts held an exhibition of works by Sheojuk Etidlooie. At the same time, Waddington's sales significantly exceeded results of previous years, as a dancing bear sculpture by Pauta Saila of Cape Dorset sold for \$41,400, a work by Osuitok Ipeelee also of Cape Dorset sold for \$28,750 and a *The Migration* boat by Joe Talirunili sold for \$50,600.²¹⁹ [Figure 2.11] The sales at the auction totaled \$810,000. The sometimes uneasy relationship between the auction house and the primary dealers found a mutually beneficial arrangement in the face of the Internet threat.

²¹⁸ Patricia Feheley, Personal Interview with Patricia Feheley, Toronto, 2010.

²¹⁹ Waddington's "Past Inuit Art Auctions," in Waddington's Inuit art department website, 2010, accessed April 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/past/>.

2.5 2000- Spring 2009

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the scope of Waddington's Inuit art auctions greatly expanded again. Despite McLean's resistance to the internet, Waddington's operations began to take advantage of the web a few years later. As a means for providing services and information, the online resources supplied by Waddington's website allowed patrons to quickly gain vast amount knowledge about the art form. In this way, the web became the primary means through which the auction house communicates hierarchies of Inuit art works (differences between 'good art' and 'not good art'). Inuit art was also assigned a new position of privilege by Waddington's, which hired Christa Ouimet, an additional Inuit art specialist.

After the growth of the 1990s, Waddington's no longer sold Inuit art out of its Canadian art department, but created an exclusive Inuit art department. It was the only such department in the world at the time, making clear the size and influence of the auction house's Inuit art operations. The development of Waddington's Inuit art department represented the auction house's recognition of the centrality of Inuit art in their business and therefore their prediction that the art form would continue to be profitable. In terms of their human resources, the development of Waddington's department of Inuit art demonstrated that Waddington's auction house was uniquely equipped with an internal "specialist" and was focused to operate important auctions of Inuit art.

Waddington's Fall 2000 sale of Inuit art contained the collection of Elizabeth Hite Jennings. The sale was composed of 440 lots and counted 300 registered bidders.²²⁰ At

²²⁰ Marybelle Mitchell, "Record-Breaking Auction", *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 17, no. 2 (2002), 51.

the auction, there were more spectators than registered bidders, reflecting the fact that many people came just to watch the bidding process.²²¹ Continuing the pattern of works sold for high prices in past sales selling for high prices again, one *Migration* by Joe Talirunili sold for \$50,000 during the final day of the sale, while *The Enchanted Owl* (1960, green tail) by Kenojuak sold for \$11,000. [see figures 2.6 and 2.14] At this auction, Waddington's set the record for total sales at an Inuit art auction by raising \$1.2 million.²²²

By the first decade of the new millennium, the prices paid for Inuit art works at auction were equal to the prices paid for sought after Canadian pieces.²²³ In Waddington's 2001 fall sale, one *Migration* by Joe Talirunili of Povungnituk set the new record for the highest prices paid for a single Inuit work by selling for \$87,500.²²⁴ [see Figure 2.14] In 2001, according to Anthony Westbridge, only 22% of Canadian art works sold for over \$5,000.²²⁵ Therefore, Waddington's sales put Inuit art in the upper echelons of the market. A red print of Kenojuak's *The Enchanted Owl* (1960) set a record for the highest price paid for an Inuit print by reaching a hammer price of \$58,650, greatly surpassing its estimate of \$15,000-\$20,000.²²⁶ Finally, \$183,300 was paid for 39 prints

²²¹ Susan J. Gustavison, "Auctioning Inuit Art," *Inuit Art Quarterly* vol. 17, no. 2 (2002), 27.

²²² *ibid*, 20.

²²³ Anthony R. Westbridge, *Made in Canada!: An Investor's Guide to the Canadian Art Market : a 25 Year Business Analysis of the Canadian Art Market: Who's hot, Who's not, and Who's next!* (Vancouver: Westbridge Publications, 2002), 12.

²²⁴ *ibid*, 21; Marybelle Mitchell, "Record-Breaking Auction", *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 17, no. 2 (2002), 51.

²²⁵ Anthony R. Westbridge, *Made in Canada!: An Investor's Guide to the Canadian Art Market : a 25 Year Business Analysis of the Canadian Art Market: Who's hot, Who's not, and Who's next!* (Vancouver: Westbridge Publications, 2002), 12.

²²⁶ Gustavison, *Auctioning Inuit Art*, 20

from the Cape Dorset Annual collection of 1959. This hammer price set the record for the highest price ever paid for a single lot at an Inuit art auction.²²⁷ The reported buy-in rate (the number of works not sold to bidders at the auction) at Waddington's fall 2001 auction of Inuit art was the smallest ever for an Inuit sale.²²⁸ Many of the works that were sold at this 2001 auction were bought by international collectors from the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany or France. Private collectors in Canada also participated. However, major Canadian public art institutions with interests in Inuit art (the National Gallery of Canada, the Winnipeg Art Gallery) did not participate in the bidding due to meager accession budgets.²²⁹

Collaboration between Inuit art professionals was still important in Waddington's auctions of the 2000s, despite the knowledge and expertise of Duncan McLean. As in 1999, in the early 2000s Waddington's paired its auctions with complimentary events and exhibitions at Feheley Fine Arts.²³⁰ In fall 2001 Waddington's and Feheley Fine Arts co-hosted a reception featuring a speaker from Labrador.²³¹ After the fall 2001 sale, Duncan McLean discussed in an interview with Susan Gustavison (the Inuit art historian who published a much lauded history of the *Canadian Eskimo Arts Council*), printed in *Inuit Art Quarterly* magazine that he had also worked to prepare for the auction with the assistance of Patricia Feheley, the Inuit art specialist and writer who continues to own Feheley Fine Arts in Toronto and Terry Ryan, the Director of Dorset Fine Arts, the

²²⁷ *ibid.* 24

²²⁸ *ibid.* 24

²²⁹ *ibid.* 24

²³⁰ Feheley, Personal Interview with Patricia Feheley, 2010.

²³¹ Gustavison, *Auctioning Inuit Art*, 26

marketing arm of the Cape Dorset Cooperative.²³² Clearly, collaboration between various branches of the Inuit art world was important for the production and promotion of auctions, which in turn promoted and justified the efforts of those who assisted the auctioneer. In 2001 Waddington's hired Christa Ouimet, a graduate of Carleton University's Art History department, as its new Inuit art specialist. [Figure 2.12]

Most likely in response to the success achieved at other Inuit art auctions, 2002 saw the first of a series of charity auctions of Inuit art. These auctions were initially held in Ottawa at the National Gallery of Canada, but were soon held at Waddington's. In 2002, a sale of 25 lots which featured the works of six Inuit prisoners from Fenbrook penitentiary was held in Ottawa in March, raising \$14,000 which went to the United Way, the Prison Arts Foundation, and the Illitiit Society of Nunavut.²³³ Many such charity auctions were held in Ottawa in the subsequent years and Waddington's followed suit on March 2nd, with a charity sale of Inuit art which included the works made by Inuit prisoners from Fenbrook penitentiary. The proceeds of the sale went to the Illitiit Society of Nunavut and to pay for stone for the prisoners supplied by Arctic Co-operatives Ltd.²³⁴

In the fall of 2002, Waddington's auction of Inuit art established a new record sales total of \$1.3 million.²³⁵ A wall-hanging by Jessie Oonark which had adorned the National Arts Center from 1975-2001, sold for \$140,000. With the help of Ms. Feheley, the fall

²³² *ibid.* 27

²³³ Marybelle Mitchell, "Waddington's Holds Inuit Art Auction," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 4 (2003), 36; Marybelle Mitchell, "Inmates Donate Works to Charity Auction," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 4 (2003), 36.

²³⁴ Stoffman, *Silencing Old Demons through Art* (Toronto: Toronto Star, 2003), O3; Marybelle Mitchell, "Another Record-Breaking Auction for Waddington's," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2003), 52.

²³⁵ Marybelle Mitchell, "Another Record-Breaking Auction for Waddington's," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2003), 52.; Mitchell, *Waddington's Holds Inuit Art Auction*, 36.

2002 auction was arranged in conjunction with a weekend of events for patrons, which included a presentation by Marie Routledge, Curator of Inuit art at the National Gallery of Canada. The events also included opportunities for patrons to meet artists of the Toonoo family, a well-known artistic family from Cape Dorset, who had been invited to Toronto for the “Toonoo’s Legacy” exhibition at Feheley Fine Arts.

On November 3rd and 4th 2003, Waddington’s 25th annual fall sale of Inuit art took place in Toronto²³⁶. The auction featured 500 carvings and 100 works on paper or cloth, including 27 original drawings in felt-tip pen by Pitseolak Ashoona featured in Dorothy Harley Eber’s book, *Pitseolak: Pictures out of my life*.²³⁷ There were 300 registered bidders and sales totaled 1.6 million over the two evening sessions.²³⁸ Before the sale, Waddington’s and Feheley Fine Arts held a gala preview evening which included a talk by freelance curator Marie Bouchard about the textile works of Marion Tuu’luq and a film screening of *Caribou Kayak* (in which elders discuss the production of Netsillingmeot kayaks) by Michael Mitchell.²³⁹ At the auction, a wool wall-hanging by Jessie Oonark with an estimate of \$20,000-\$25,000 sold for \$48,300 while a 1950s era igloo carved by an Unknown artist from Inukjuak was purchased for \$13,225.²⁴⁰ Two sculptures by John Tiktak of Rankin Inlet were purchased for \$34,500 and \$63,250.

²³⁶ *ibid.* 36.

²³⁷ *ibid.* 36.

²³⁸ *ibid.* 36.

²³⁹ *ibid.* 36.

²⁴⁰ Waddington’s, “Past Inuit Art Auctions”, in *Waddington’s Inuit art department website*, 2010, accessed April 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/past/>.

In 2004 and 2005, Waddington's Inuit Art Department hosted a well attended auctions of Inuit art in which bidders continued to break price records. The ongoing strength of the auction house as both a representation and value producing institution was clear with a November 2004 sale raising a total of \$1.6 million, followed by a \$1 million total in 2005.²⁴¹

In response to apprehension concerning the continued success of international, rather than Canadian buyers at Waddington's sales, Duncan McLean was interviewed in November 2005 by arts reporter James Adams of *The Globe and Mail*. He stated that 70% of the buyers at Waddington's Inuit art auctions are Canadian.²⁴² Nevertheless, fears concerning the expatriation of Inuit art intensified as the Canadian dollar descended in value compared to American currency. After a modest, regional start in the 1970s, Waddington's buyers had grown so international that they provoked debates about the expropriation of Canada's "National Culture".

By 2006, Waddington's Inuit auctions were producing never before seen prices for a number of Inuit art works, in particular, by well-recognized artists active in the 1950s and 1960s. These works were the objects with known records of success at auction. Waddington's Spring 2006 sale included 794 lots and resulted in the sale of Joe Talirunili's *The Migration* for \$278,500, shattering old price records.²⁴³ [Figure 2.13] The

²⁴¹ Canada NewsWire, "Media Invited to View Inuit Art, Interview Expert," *Canada NewsWire*, Nov. 4th, 2005, 1.

²⁴² James Adams, "Inuit Art: This is Where it's at," *The Globe and Mail*, Nov. 7th, (2005), 1.

²⁴³ Canada NewsWire, "Classic and Unusual Sculpture Highlight Waddington's Auction of Inuit Art," *Canada NewsWire*, Nov. 7th, 2006; Canada NewsWire, "Highest Price ever for a Canadian Sculpture, \$278,500, Paid for Work of Inuit Art at Waddington's Auction," *Canada NewsWire*, April 24th, 2006, 1.

work enormously exceeded its estimate of \$40,000-\$60,000.²⁴⁴ As a result of this sale, an Inuit artist joined the ranks of the approximately 32 Canadian artists (both living and dead) whose work has sold for over \$100,000.²⁴⁵ As Duncan McLean commented in 2010, the information produced by the auction house has been clearly beneficial to all the other branches of the Inuit art world because it makes very visible the monetary value of the art form.²⁴⁶

By November 2006 Waddington's departmental website had grown to include an online version of its catalogue. This was probably done for the convenience of absentee and international bidders who were not always able to acquire the catalogue.²⁴⁷ By posting this valuable auction resource online, Waddington's made their auctions more accessible. However, the auction house did not offer Inuit art auctions at this time. Waddington's expanded its online operations further by launching its website, "Katilvik, Inuit art Community", designed to be an "online place to share information about Inuit art and culture".²⁴⁸ [Figure 2.14] It provided appraisal services, an opportunity for patrons to view Inuit art market information, and a tool for translating syllabics and researching Inuit artists. This online resource gave auction participants a very effective and easy way of gathering information directly from the auction house. Nevertheless, as Chris Bredt argued, it is important for serious collectors to consult sources outside of the auction

²⁴⁴ *ibid.* 1.

²⁴⁵ Westbridge, *Made in Canada!: an Investor's Guide to the Canadian Art Market : a 25 Year Business Analysis of the Canadian Art Market: Who's Hot, Who's Not, and Who's Next!*, 12.

²⁴⁶ McLean, Personal telephone interview with Duncan McLean, Ottawa, 2010.

²⁴⁷ Ouimet, E-mail Interview with the author, Toronto, 2010; McLean, Personal Telephone Interview with Duncan McLean, Ottawa, 2010.

²⁴⁸ Waddington's, *Katilvik.com, Online Inuit Art Community website*, 2007, accessed November 2009, http://www.katilvik.com/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1.

house to apprehend forgeries and to detect if large scale restoration has taken place on Waddington's lots.²⁴⁹

Despite its efforts, Waddington's 2007 sales fell short of those of the remarkable previous year, with a spring auction totaling \$975,000. Later in the year, the auction house held its first online auction of Inuit art. These auctions were introduced because of their low cost, accessibility, and because of Waddington's increasingly large stock of Inuit art consignments.

In 2008, online Inuit art auctions became increasingly important. Ten were held throughout the year. Waddington's spring auction, from April 14th-15th, which followed two online auctions, produced some high price points, including a circa 1950s sculpture of a mother and child by an unknown artist for \$60,000—a price \$50,000 over its estimate.²⁵⁰ [Figure 2.15] A few months later, the global economic recession that plunged the art market into a downturn did not seem to have an immediate impact on Waddington's sales: the auction house sold an edition of Niviakie's *Man at Seal Hole* for \$64,600 in their November sale.²⁵¹ [Figure 2.16] McLean reported to the *National Post* that the Inuit art market is "recession proof", not subjected to the full force of market sways due to the rarity and quality of the works.²⁵² Still, Christa Ouimet noted that

²⁴⁹ Chris Bredt, Personal Telephone Interview with Chris D. Bredt, Ottawa, 2010.

²⁵⁰ Waddington's, "Past Inuit Art Auctions", in *Waddington's Inuit art department website*, 2010, accessed April 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/past/>

²⁵¹ Eric Konigsburg, "Is Anybody Buying Art These Days?" *The New York Times*, March 1st, 2009; Waddington's, "Past Inuit Art Auctions", in *Waddington's Inuit art department website*, 2010, accessed April 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/past/>

²⁵² Adam McDowell, "A Picture of Health? A Grim Economy has Hurt Art Sales Worldwide, but Auction Houses Remain Optimistic about the Canadian Market," *National Post*, Nov. 10th, 2008, AL4.

though Inuit art is of a very high quality and comparatively affordable, the auction market for Inuit is not invulnerable to economic downturns.²⁵³

I planned to conduct my field observation of a Waddington's auction in 2009. The year began with three online auctions (one a month) that produced moderate prices. According to Chris Bredt, online auctions still do not compare to real auctions because they are known to contain less important work and because shipping work is costly and risky. As a result, online sales can rarely match the results of other auctions. In April 2009, despite McLean's claims made the previous year, Waddington's Inuit art auction delivered low and disappointing results. One notable price reached, according to the Waddington's website, was for a circa 1950 sculpture of a mother and child by an unknown artist very similar to the one featured in the spring sale the previous year. Despite the physical and historical similarities shared by these two works, the sculpture in the spring 2009 auction sold for \$25,000—a figure still over its estimate but far below \$60,000.²⁵⁴ [Figure 2.17] Clearly the recession was taking its toll, even on the “recession proof” Inuit art markets.

After a few more online auctions, Waddington's fall 2009 auction of Inuit art was fast approaching. Clearly, this auction house still resembled its historical counterparts in that it accords social differentiation and meaning to both objects and people implicated in its operations. The auction market for Inuit art has also been marked historically by a large amount of collaboration among Inuit art world players. Overall, the history of this market sheds light on the shared interests of those holding Inuit art auctions, those selling

²⁵³ Ouimet, E-mail Interview with the author, Toronto, 2010,

²⁵⁴ Waddington's, "Past Inuit Art Auctions", in *Waddington's Inuit art department website*, 2010, accessed April 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/past/>

at Inuit art auctions, and those patronizing the auctions. In many cases, individuals have occupied more than one of these roles over the years. Inuit art auctions have made visible the economic, social and cultural utility of Inuit art in Canada and internationally. They have also, therefore, made clear the usefulness of all the individuals and institutions involved in the art form. The question that emerges from this history is how Inuit art has been shaped by the auction distributor. I will tackle this in the final section of the paper.

In the next chapter I will begin my case study of Waddington's fall 2009 auction of Inuit art with an analysis of the pre-auction publications and events. These information channels build on historically established auction conventions. They take information produced by other art institutions or at past auctions and they provide it for the patrons of an upcoming sale in an effort to create new information which can, in turn be re-circulated through the system.

Pre-Auction Events

Smith describes the auction as a temporally and spatially bounded event wherein bidders compete for ownership of a set of objects for sale.²⁵⁵ Many types of participants interact socially to construct, to determine value and to move the objects for sale. An auction not only exists as a specific site, but it also includes subsidiary events and publications that take place prior to the sale. These auction components build a texture of information that enters into play during the subsequent bidding and sale.

The auction I examine is made up of several distinct yet interconnected “by-products” that operate collaboratively to contribute to the outcome of the event.²⁵⁶ These pre-auction events also socially reproduce the auction as an institution by disseminating positive information about the auction itself and Inuit art more generally which constitutes a justification for the whole process. By communicating this information, the auction house makes the work of consignors, artists and buyers (as well as auctioneers, dealers, historians, etc.) important. In this case study of Waddington’s Fall 2009 Auction of Inuit Art, I explore how events prior to the sale helped assure favourable auction results for the Inuit art world and for the auction house. Did the distribution of information before the sale via pre-auction proceedings establish a certain durable flow or economy of information about lots for sale and about the auction process? How did pre-auction events and publicity information order objects and people into a stratification of power and influence? Who else from the Inuit art world was implicated in the auction preview, advertisements, catalogue and website? These are the questions that are

²⁵⁵ Smith, *Auctions: the Social Construction of Value*, 3, 14.

²⁵⁶ Alsop, *The Rare Art Traditions: the History of Art Collecting and its Linked Phenomena Wherever these have Appeared*; Becker, *Art Worlds*, 16.

examined in this chapter. As I showed in Chapter 1, auction results *are* shaped by a set of conventions born out of historical circumstance. Here I will examine how pre-auction events are fashioned to influence the outcome of the auction.

The specific events which took place prior to the fall 2009 auction included the publication of a catalogue, a website and advertisements, and the staging of a preview. Each of the four elements included both textual and visual information that described lots for sale or lots sold at Waddington's in the past and defined high and low quality in Inuit art. As I will argue, these pre-auction publications were used by the auction house to skilfully stage objects for sale (from consignors) in a way that made them attractive to buyers. I begin with an analysis of the catalogue and all its component elements. I then proceed to an examination of the advertisements for the sale and Waddington's Inuit art department website. Finally, this chapter ends with an account of my observations of the preview held before Waddington's 2009 fall auction.

3.1 The Catalogue

Haidy Geismar suggests that the catalogue for an auction acts as a script which sets out the rules and possibilities that pre-determine the sale to an extent.²⁵⁷ The physical components of the Waddington's catalogue included catalogue entries, images, embellishing text, and pre-sale estimates; these drew attention to certain works and not others. These elements also drew from art historical methodologies. The catalogue was made accessible to a specific group through a deliberate distribution strategy, based upon access to important information. In this sub-section, all of the influential components of Waddington's fall 2009 catalogue of Inuit art will be examined.

²⁵⁷ Geismar, *What's in a Price?*, 34.

The catalogue was published as a booklet approximately four weeks before the auction was scheduled to take place on November 9th, 2009.²⁵⁸ [Figure 3.1] The soft-cover print version was available in full-colour mail-order, or could be purchased directly from the auction house in Toronto. According to Pat Feheley, a paper copy of the catalogue is an almost compulsory accessory for those who wish to attend the preview and eventually participate in the sale.²⁵⁹ Collector Chris Bredt, whom I interviewed for this research, noted that the catalogue is very important to have before the sale.²⁶⁰ Bredt claimed he often acquires two copies: one to use for the auction and the other to keep as a record of the sale.²⁶¹ The accessibility of the paper catalogue targeted a very limited audience, which stands to reduce the “openness” of the auction to the outside participants. Collectors use the catalogue to research lots for sale they are interested in (sometimes with the help of Inuit art dealers and specialists outside the auction house) and to collect observations about these works at the preview. The catalogue can be treated by patrons as a portable and physically durable record or log where all the information necessary to ensure successful bidding on valuable lots is recorded before the auction.

In addition to its catalogue booklet, Waddington’s published an electronic version of the catalogue for the fall 2009 auction of Inuit art that can be viewed on a PDF at no cost. Online catalogues broaden the distribution of the booklet, allowing casual web-surfers

²⁵⁸ Ouimet, E-mail interview with Christa Ouimet, Toronto, 2010.

²⁵⁹ Feheley, Personal interview with Patricia Feheley, Toronto, 2010.

²⁶⁰ Bredt, Personal Telephone interview with Chris D. Bredt, Ottawa, 2010.

²⁶¹ *ibid.*

previously unfamiliar with Waddington's auctions to become aware of the lots contained within up-coming sales.

Duncan McLean and Pat Feheley also noted that the online catalogues facilitate the participation of international or remote bidders already aware of the auctions.²⁶² As shown in the preceding chapter, international participation in Waddington's auctions of Inuit art has been steadily growing. According to Duncan McLean, this is due to the high quality and uniqueness of Inuit art.²⁶³ In the past, local bidders have been threatened by increasingly competitive international bids, especially from the United States, where a strong dollar has given American bidders a strong advantage in Canadian auctions.²⁶⁴ Therefore, the availability of a catalogue online for the benefit of absentee participants demonstrates the auction house's increasing confidence in these distant players. But the involvement of absentee bidders may be limited due to several obstacles, namely the reliance on catalogue photographs and information in lieu of seeing the actual work of art. As I will demonstrate later in this section, catalogue photographs can be deceiving. Second, the cost and risks associated with shipping large sculptures may prevent international bidders from becoming heavily involved in sales of this type of work.

Patrons who purchased the hard copy catalogue did not do so without either knowledge of Waddington's auctions or knowledge of Waddington's Inuit art auctions. They therefore belonged to the large, although not static, community of potential auction participants. These patrons participating in pre-auction events in-person may have been at

²⁶² McLean, Personal Telephone interview with Duncan McLean, Ottawa, 2010; Ouimet, Personal e-mail interview with Christa Ouimet, Toronto, 2010.

²⁶³ McLean, Personal Telephone interview with Duncan McLean, Toronto, 2010.

²⁶⁴ Bredt, Personal Telephone interview with Chris D. Bredt, Ottawa, 2010.

an advantage in bidding because they had access to the information that others did not.²⁶⁵

The online edition of the catalogue, on the other hand, allowed new patrons and remote bidders to involve themselves in the auction. Although many bidders now use both non-digital and digital versions of the catalogue, individuals who relied on only the online version may be disadvantaged due to both their potential distance from the objects and to their potential inexperience with the auction process. Overall, the distribution of the catalogue (as two versions) did allow for a hierarchy of empowered versus disadvantaged bidders to exist.

I collected my copy of Waddington's fall 2009 Inuit art auction catalogue from the auction house on November 5th after I had spent several weeks looking through it online. At first glance, the catalogue was very attractive. The front cover featured a full-page colour-photograph of lot 242 (*Hunched Figure* by John Tiktak).²⁶⁶ As I turned to page seven of the catalogue, I observed that the book was 140 pages in length and it contained a colour photograph of every lot in the upcoming sale. The catalogue also contained a long textual entry describing each lot (including a pre-sale estimate of the object's monetary worth) and extra historical or curatorial writing about selected lots.

3.1.1 Catalogue Entries

As discussed by Satov, a catalogue entry is designed to provide the potential bidder with all the information he or she needs to place a rational bid.²⁶⁷ Were all the important elements of the lots described in the catalogue entries? What kind of effects

²⁶⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶⁶ Waddington's, *Waddington's Inuit Art: Monday 9 November 2009* (Toronto: Waddington's, 2009), 1.

²⁶⁷ Satov, *Catalogues, Collectors, Curators: the Tribal Art Market and Anthropology*, 222.

could deliberate inclusion and exclusion of information have? How did the auction catalogue entries draw on conventions established in other fields?

In many ways, auction catalogue entries served the same purpose as captions in art historical publications, such as a 1996 exhibition catalogue entitled *Between Two Worlds: Sculpture by David Ruben Piqtoukun* published by the Winnipeg Art Gallery. I examined the catalogue entry for lot 289 (the 2004 sculpture *To Trap the Mischievous Bird Man* by David Ruben Piqtoukun) from Waddington's fall 2009 Inuit art auction.²⁶⁸ [Figure 3.2] *Sedna Lives* featured in the 1996 exhibition catalogue from the Winnipeg art gallery.²⁶⁹ [Figure 3.3] In both texts, the important elements of the works were described in captions adjacent to large, color photographs. I will focus here on the content of the captions rather than the appearance of the catalogue photographs. I will use the distinction between seventeenth-century Dutch style of descriptive representation versus representation devoted to narrating an account of action outlined by Svetlana Alpers in her seminal text *The Art of Describing: Art in the Seventeenth Century* to guide my analysis.²⁷⁰

The two catalogue entries differed in the specific information they contained. The entry from the Waddington's catalogue for lot 289 included the following information: lot number, artist, artist's disc number, artist's community, title of the work, medium of work, location of signature, the dimensions of work and the work's estimated value in

²⁶⁸ Waddington's, *Waddington's Inuit Art: Monday 9 November 2009*, 115.

²⁶⁹ Piqtoukun and Wight, *Between Two Worlds: Sculpture by David Ruben Piqtoukun* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, c1996), 21.

²⁷⁰ Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), xxv.

Canadian dollars.²⁷¹ The textual information in the exhibition catalogue about *Sedna Lives* included the item number of the work; the name of the work; the date, the medium, the metric dimensions, and its current ownership.²⁷² The differences in the “tombstone” entries evidenced the subjectivity of apparently objective description.²⁷³ Despite the similar size and appearance of the two descriptive entries, what qualified as the “essential” information was subjective and unstable. It is significant that the auction catalogue included a price estimate, information that is hidden in the curatorial text. Yet, price estimates are unfixed characteristics which will not be made concrete until the instance of final sale. Therefore, although both texts rely on a common descriptive technique, this auction catalogue shows its place in a diachronic, economic, performance narrative which is the final judge of the object’s identity. This style of tombstone writing can be compared to the Italian Renaissance mode of representation discussed by Alpers (initially described by Giorgio Vasari) that focuses on conveying stories of human activity.²⁷⁴ The tombstone label of the art gallery catalogue, on the other hand, focuses on representing the object through descriptive means alone, like seventeenth century Dutch painting.²⁷⁵ It describes the objective, factual and unchanging characteristics of the work

²⁷¹ Waddington's, *Waddington's Inuit Art: Monday 9 November 2009*, 115.

²⁷² Piqtoukun and Wight, *Between Two Worlds: Sculpture by David Ruben Piqtoukun* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, c1996), 21.

²⁷³ Louis Marin, *Utopics: Spatial Play* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ; London: Humanities Press; Macmillan, 1984), 4.

²⁷⁴ Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), xxv.

²⁷⁵ *ibid.*

of art and it does not show any connection to any human activity, save the original efforts of the artist.

3.1.2 Catalogue Photography

Along with catalogue entries, Waddington's fall 2009 Inuit art auction catalogue contained a colour photograph of each lot. As Satov states, the inclusion of large photographs in auction catalogues demonstrates an emphasis on aesthetics and alludes to the importance of visual information for potential buyers.²⁷⁶ The style of catalogue photography originates both from the art world and from the world of private enterprise—two spheres which are intertwined due to the indubitably commercial nature of the art world.²⁷⁷ As discussed by Anandi Ramamurthy in her analysis of commercial photography, many commercial organizations use an objective and illustrative photographic style which emphasizes the non-subjective and mechanized gaze of the camera.²⁷⁸ Despite the use of this style, the photograph (similar to the narrative description) is taken by a human photographer and is caught up in a game of strategic revealing and concealing. By presenting one visual manifestation of a commodity, the photograph empowers the choices of the rational consumer who will use the optical “truths” they have gathered to decide which object to purchase. This practice reveals an emphasis on the power of seeing as the principal means to buy.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁶ Satov, *Catalogues, Collectors, Curators: the Tribal Art Market and Anthropology*, 219.

²⁷⁷ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 2.

²⁷⁸ Anandi Ramamurthy, "Constructions of Illusion: Photography and Commodity Culture," in *Photography: a Critical Introduction*, ed. Liz Wells (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 176.

²⁷⁹ Satov, *Catalogues, Collectors, Curators: the Tribal Art Market and Anthropology*, 219.

Waddington's fall 2009 Inuit art auction catalogue subscribes to the style of illustrative commercial photography discussed by Ramamurthy.²⁸⁰ It contained photographs of each lot isolated on a neutral background which simultaneously privileged an aesthetic reading of the works while concealing the process of photographic production. [Figure 3.4] Prints, wall-hangings and all other works on paper appeared in the catalogue as high-quality colour images which did not include any space beyond the limits of a work. The photographs hid their photographer and the location where the photograph was taken, erasing their places in the increasingly rapid flow of people, money, technology, image and ideology.²⁸¹ They presented the lots as if they were the creations of Inuit artists, removed from the stream of commerce. Nowhere in Waddington's fall 2009 Inuit art auction catalogue was the name of the photographer mentioned. This erasure imbued the catalogue images with objectivity and truthfulness, thus encouraging consumers to choose works based on catalogue information alone.

Contemporary curatorial and auction house Inuit art catalogues contain different descriptive text that reinforces the divisions between these institutions. Yet, because the catalogue photography from art galleries and art auction houses is so similar, it blurs both the distinction between these institutions and between their publications. Because of the photographic style that was employed (resembling art historical and art critical photography), Waddington's Inuit art auction catalogue was imbued with authority in the Inuit art world. Auction catalogues, in most cases, have a different scope than art historical texts because they contain price estimations which demonstrate their focus on price. As several of my interviewees noted, many patrons collect auction catalogues for

²⁸⁰ Ramamurthy, *Constructions of illusion: photography and commodity culture*, 176.

²⁸¹ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, 34.

posterity likely because of the art-historical qualities of the volumes.²⁸² Satov came to the same conclusion in his examination of Christie's Primitive and Tribal art auction catalogues.²⁸³

Pragmatically, catalogue photography reveals and conceals in a way that benefits consignors and the auction house. A critical examination of the photographs in Waddington's fall 2009 Inuit art auction catalogue reveal the role of the auction house as a middle-man institution. Auction house publications and staff go between consignors and buyers to create the most successful auctions possible. As was demonstrated in the case of lot 124, the objective appearance of catalogue photographs can be problematic for bidders. Lot 124 was a 1961 print called *Three Blue Birds* by Lucy Qinnuayuak.²⁸⁴ [Figure 3.5] In the catalogue, the print appears in good condition on uniformly coloured white paper. This appearance attracted potential bidders, such as myself. However, at the preview, lot 124 appeared in less than good condition. The catalogue photograph focuses specifically on the images of the birds. It did not include the space previously covered by a frame and mat. This image masked the crumbling, heavily yellowed paper which surrounded the *Three Blue Birds* at the preview, to the chagrin of patrons. The birds themselves were also on slightly yellowed paper. For bidders who could attend the auction events, the discrepancy between the photograph of this lot and its physical manifestation was clear. However, this difference presents a danger to absentee bidders. As Pat Feheley noted, some experienced collectors get around this dilemma by hiring

²⁸² Bredt, Personal telephone interview with Chris D. Bredt, Ottawa, 2010

²⁸³ Satov, *Catalogues, Collectors, Curators: the Tribal Art Market and Anthropology*, 215-216.

²⁸⁴ Waddington's, *Waddington's Inuit Art: Monday 9 November 2009*, 50.

dealers to inspect works on their behalf.²⁸⁵ The success of this process, therefore, requires the active participation of many players.

In the Waddington's catalogue, photographs were used to place works in a hierarchy based on a combined commercial and art historical importance, achieved very simply through the use of discrepancies in photograph size. The photographs in the book ranged from one whole page to less than one-sixteenth of a page, a scale that did not necessarily correspond to their actual size. Lots, such as lot 87, for example was an antler sculpture called *Caribou Shaman* by Peter Assivaaryuk of Baker Lake, and was illustrated by a full page photo and by several smaller photos also, showing details.²⁸⁶

[Figure 3.6] As Satov suggests, the emphasis given to certain objects immediately demonstrates the most important lots for auction.²⁸⁷ Typically other emphatic elements in the catalogue, such as high pre-sale estimates, illustrious provenance and lengthy embellishing text, are accompanied by lots with large photographs. For example, lot 115, Kenojuak Ashevak's *Woman who lives in the Sun* had an estimate of over ten thousand dollars and was described by two paragraphs of embellishing text, whereas most objects have no embellishing texts.²⁸⁸ [Figure 3.7]

To summarize, the photographs in Waddington's 2009 fall auction of Inuit art catalogue presented clear affiliations with other branches of the Inuit art world. They also demonstrated the place of the auction house as an intermediary operating between buyers and sellers and very clearly placed works into a hierarchy of importance.

²⁸⁵ Feheley, Personal interview with Patricia Feheley, Toronto, 2010.

²⁸⁶ Waddington's, *Waddington's Inuit Art: Monday 9 November 2009*, 30.

²⁸⁷ Satov, *Catalogues, Collectors, Curators: the Tribal Art Market and Anthropology*, 219.

²⁸⁸ Waddington's, *Waddington's Inuit Art: Monday 9 November 2009*, 47.

3.1.3 Pre-Sale Estimates

Waddington's fall 2009 catalogue included pre-sale estimates for each lot. According to Waddington's Inuit art specialist Christa Ouimet, figures are based on many varied characteristics which include (but are not limited to) the prices the particular work has raised in previous sales, the physical condition of the object, the trends in the market and the provenance of the lot.²⁸⁹ As Sotheby's stated, pre-sale estimates can sometimes be outdated at the auction when the art market experiences rapid fluctuations.²⁹⁰ In essence, "The pre-sale estimate provides prospective buyers with an important preliminary guide to value".²⁹¹

When asked about the impact that pre-sale estimates can have, Ouimet noted that sometimes these numbers shed very little light on how successful a sale will be.²⁹² However, they are a preliminary strategic guess about how interested bidders will react to certain lots.²⁹³ In this way, pre-sale estimates represent another important area where auction house specialists use honed skills and experience to mediate the offerings of sellers for buyers. The success of auction house staff corresponds to the successes of auction participants. Pre-sale estimates created another clear stratification among lots.

Pre-sale estimates in the Waddington's catalogue I examined ranged from \$100-\$200 for lots 164 and 202 (both small, multi-piece sculptures by unknown artists) to

²⁸⁹ Ouimet, Personal e-mail interview with Christa Ouimet, Toronto, 2010.

²⁹⁰ Sotheby's, "Auction Terms," in *Sotheby's (Firm) website*, 2010, accessed April 2010, http://www.sothebys.com/help/ref/ref_liveterms.html.

²⁹¹ Sotheby's, "Auction Terms," in *Sotheby's (Firm) website*, 2010, accessed April 2010, http://www.sothebys.com/help/ref/ref_liveterms.html.

²⁹² Ouimet, Personal e-mail interview with Christa Ouimet, Toronto, 2010.

²⁹³ *ibid.*

\$35,000 to \$45,000 for the sculpture *Hunched Figure* by John Tiktak that was displayed on the cover of the catalogue. [Figure 3.8] These preliminary monetary evaluations represented the sum of the values of all the component characteristics of lots. They distinguished certain works from others in the sale based on the previous records of sales. In essence, estimates effectively rank lots according to a certain understanding of value before the auction. This information is crucial to the functioning of the auction and it underlines the unique properties of this institution. As Smith notes, although characteristics such as quality, scarcity, and material affect auction outcomes, it is specifically price (imparted to the participants in the estimates and then again in bidding) that determines price at auction.²⁹⁴

3.1.4 Embellishing Text

As Christa Ouimet observed, collectors who are interested in the most important works in a sale are often very knowledgeable and interested in Inuit art history and culture.²⁹⁵ The more information that Waddington's can supply, the more satisfied these participants are.²⁹⁶ In addition to entries, estimates and photographs, the Waddington's catalogue I investigated contained extra text that promoted or described certain lots in detail. Satov has termed auction catalogue text which individuated objects from each other and drew attention to formal beauty and artistic merit as "embellishing text".²⁹⁷ In many instances in the Waddington's catalogue I examined, text which drew attention to specific works both by greater length and the superlatives described by Satov, such as

²⁹⁴ Smith, *Auctions, the Social Construction of Value*, 16.

²⁹⁵ Ouimet, Personal e-mail interview with Christa Ouimet, Toronto, 2010.

²⁹⁶ *ibid.*

²⁹⁷ Satov, *Catalogues, Collectors, Curators: the Tribal Art Market and Anthropology*, 223.

“important” or “rare”. To make certain lots distinctive, Waddington’s took advantage of the transience of contemporary commodities by evoking specific narratives and histories of ownership of the objects as containers of memory and markers of pedigree.

Waddington’s specialists used their insights into the minds (and wallets) of Inuit art collectors to create alluring text on behalf of sellers. The brief embellishing text for works with the highest pre-sale estimates typically consisted of a historical narrative or of information about the artist. An example is the extra text underneath the catalogue entry and photograph of lot 34. This lot was a carving of a dog team done by an artist named Krangun in the Charles Camsell Eskimo hospital in the 1960s.²⁹⁸ [Figure 3.9] It contained a description of the hospital and an account of its function as an occupational therapy institution which supplied Inuit patients with stone to carve.²⁹⁹ In this case, the specific work for sale was muted. Its own process of production and history were erased in favour of another, collective history which it was made to represent. The text drew attention to the place of the work in the history of Inuit/Qallunaat contact and relations. As Hillis discusses, this style of writing about commoditized objects has become widely adopted in the context of contemporary auctions, notably by buyers and sellers on eBay.³⁰⁰ This sort of careful description authenticates a certain version of history that buyers almost always “buy into”.³⁰¹ Appropriated, submissive objects inserted by sellers into exciting historical narratives present bidders with the opportunity to insert themselves into the story.³⁰²

²⁹⁸ Waddington's, *Waddington's Inuit Art: Monday 9 November 2009*, 15.

²⁹⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰⁰ Ken Hillis, "Auctioning the Authentic: eBay, Narrative Effect, and the Superfluity of Memory," in *Everyday eBay: Culture, Collecting, and Desire*, eds. Ken Hillis, Michael Petit and Nathan Scott Epley (New York: Routledge, 2006), 173.

³⁰¹ *ibid.* 171-173.

In other places in the Waddington's catalogue, embellished texts draw from other branches of the art world. For example, lot 242, the sculpture *Hunched Figure* by John Tiktak is accompanied by an excerpt about the artist from a scholarly publication, *The Way of Inuit Art: Aesthetics and History in and Beyond the Arctic* by Emily E. Auger.³⁰³ [see figure 3.8] Such curatorial information assures potential bidders of the academically verified historical and aesthetic importance of certain lots. As Pat Fehleley commented, art collectors (even experienced ones) almost always require reassurance that what they are buying is valuable.³⁰⁴

In addition to these two types of embellishing text, the catalogue drew attention to the provenance of certain lots, and to the particular collector who consigned many of the works to the sale. The third page of the catalogue alluded to the significant pedigree of certain lots by stating in red text that: "Lot numbers in red indicate items from the Ron Gould collection".³⁰⁵ [Figure 3.10] The right column of the fourth page and fifth page of the catalogue were devoted to reflections from M. Gould about his collection. In this text, Gould outlined his work as an employee of Northern Affairs from 1955-1960 working and travelling in Arctic Canada and lobbying to ensure the acceptance of Inuit graphic works (specifically prints) in southern art markets.³⁰⁶ The collection for sale was tied by this text to the birth of printmaking in Cape Dorset. The lots marked in red became records of Gould's involvement and memories. As with the objects described by brief

³⁰² *ibid.* 177-182.

³⁰³ Waddington's, *Waddington's Inuit Art: Monday 9 November 2009*, 98.

³⁰⁴ Fehleley, Personal interview with Patricia Fehleley, Toronto, 2010.

³⁰⁵ Waddington's, *Waddington's Inuit Art: Monday 9 November 2009*, 1.

³⁰⁶ Waddington's, *Waddington's Inuit Art: Monday 9 November 2009*, 4-5.

historical narratives, the lots marked “Ron Gould” gave bidders the opportunity to own history in the form of collectable objects. Furthermore, these lot markers and added text re-assured bidders of the value of the Ron Gould lots as these objects had been selected by an important player in the history of Inuit art in the past.

3.1.5. Conclusions about Catalogue

Waddington’s 2009 Inuit art catalogue, including catalogue entries, its photographs, its estimates and its embellishing text, clearly demonstrated the interests and methodologies common to many branches of the Inuit art world. The mode of distribution of the book helps stratify the audience while the component elements of the book also ranked lots according to their value. All of these techniques help the auction house mediate the relations between buyers and sellers. Waddington’s uses its experience, skill and knowledge to operate on behalf of both groups. Buyers, sellers, and the auction house staff all benefit from successful sales at auction. Artists gain renown and visibility, and curators and art historians are needed to bring new artists to the forefront of the Inuit art world to ensure the continuance of the market.

3.2 Website

Arjun Appadurai describes the current global, political environment as being structured around imagined worlds, or complex, fluid landscapes of collective sentiment.³⁰⁷ These landscapes of sentiment are constituted by the increasingly rapid flow of people, money, technology, image and ideology.³⁰⁸ De-territorialization is the common

³⁰⁷ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, 47.

³⁰⁸ *ibid.* 34.

factor of contemporary experience.³⁰⁹ In such contexts, electronic locations with no connection to physical spaces have been increasingly harnessed to bring disparate groups into an intimacy that allows group identity to be maintained.³¹⁰ At the time of my study, Waddington's Inuit art department website was such a place, offering a variety of resources that were constantly being transformed by the auction house to build a community. The following section analyzes Waddington's Inuit art department webpage and to understand how it affected the economy of information at the subsequent preview and auction, how it tied the auction house's operations to other institutions or to other people (collectors, scholars, dealers, artists) and how it articulated a certain version of Inuit art to appeal to certain viewers.

I consulted Waddington's Inuit art website for several weeks leading up to the auction. Rather than establishing a hierarchy of quality like the hard copy catalogue, its goal is to host an online version of the catalogue, and to provide a continual communication of information to experts in the field, international buyers, and to casual web-surfers. Its wide array of information caters to the widest possible audience, yet, the information is never neutral. Waddington's Inuit art department webpage evokes and understanding of Inuit art imbued with specific socio-cultural values.

Specifically, it presents Inuit art as a historically and culturally important art form with a high economic worth. Its economic value was broadcast through both informational and participatory online resources. Browsers could access electronic catalogues for up-coming "live" Inuit art auctions [Figure 3.11] or for frequent online

³⁰⁹ *ibid.* 38.

³¹⁰ *ibid.* 38.

auctions of Inuit art.³¹¹ [Figure 3.12] From a link entitled *Past Auction Highlights*, viewers could access a page dedicated to the history of Waddington's Inuit art auctions.³¹² The page lists all of the outstanding works which have been sold for record prices at Waddington's spring and fall auction of Inuit art since 1978. The *Prices Released* link serves this function also.³¹³ [Figure 3.13] The website made very visible Waddington's successes in promoting the growth of the Inuit art market since the late 1970s.

Waddington's website also communicates the inherent cultural value of Inuit art and the ability of Waddington's experts to recognize this worth. The link entitled *News and Press* brought visitors of Waddington's Inuit art department in fall 2009 to a list of news story titles or articles.³¹⁴ [Figure 3.14] In October 2009, the page featured a link to an article in which Waddington's Inuit art specialist Christa Ouimet provided appraisals of Inuit works. Waddington's *Specialists* page brings viewers to a page listing the experience and expertise of the Waddington's Inuit art specialists. At the time of the study, Waddington's Inuit art department website both emphasized the knowledge and authority of the departmental specialists, the historical success of its auctions and the value of the department itself as an arbiter of the worth of Inuit works of art. All of these goals are important for an auction house to accomplish.

³¹¹ Waddington's, "Live Auctions," in *Waddington's Inuit Art Department website*, 2010, accessed March 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/19april2010/highlights/0/>.

³¹² Waddington's, "Past Inuit Auction Highlights," in *Waddington's Inuit Art Department website*, 2010, accessed April 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/past/>

³¹³ Waddington's, "Prices Released", in *Waddington's Inuit Art Department website*, 2010, accessed April 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/realised/>.

³¹⁴ Waddington's, "News and Press," in *Waddington's Inuit Art Department website*, 2010, accessed March 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/press/>.

Waddington's Inuit art website articulates a position in the inter-connected art world and in the zone of cyberspace not governed by geographical boundaries. The site provides a list of links to other sites where collectors, artists, dealers, scholars or other art world players could contact one another. Through the "Appraisals" link, it also offers collectors who are scattered across the globe the opportunity to contact Waddington's specialists.³¹⁵ Another link leads to articles from many countries written about Inuit art, underlining the mutability of spatial and temporal borders in an online landscape focused on a particular topic.³¹⁶ [Figure 3.15] For example, in October 2009 this page contained a link to a list of National Film Board productions about the Inuit created between 1949 and 2004 and another link to an article about a recent controversy concerning the use of the term "Eskimo" in the title of a New Zealand candy.³¹⁷ In a sense, the website acts as an virtual center where those interested in dealing, collecting and viewing Inuit art can congregate. This reflects Appadurai's suggestion that a symptom of contemporary de-territorialization is the appearance of sites outside of conventional geography which claim to offer a sense of home.³¹⁸

Waddington's Inuit art department website is a new mechanism through which the auction house distributes its information. However, unlike other media, the website is accessed by an unspecified and therefore unknown public. Ultimately, just as the

³¹⁵ Waddington's, "Inuit Art Appraisals," in *Waddington's Inuit Art Department website*, 2010, accessed March 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/appraisals/>.

³¹⁶ Waddington's, "Inuit Art Articles," in *Waddington's Inuit Art Department website*, 2010, accessed March 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/articles/>.

³¹⁷ Petti Fong, "Kiwi Candy. . . Eskimo Lolly. . . or Racial Slur?" *The Toronto Star* (2009), reproduced on Waddington's, "Inuit Art Articles," in *Waddington's Inuit Art Department website*, 2010, accessed March 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/articles/>.

³¹⁸ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, 38.

defining feature of cultural forms produced in the contemporary context is their fluid nature, so too are auction publications and events, that are constantly changing their methodologies and engaging in different ways with people, technology, finances and ideologies.³¹⁹ Auction house websites are perhaps the most readily changeable pre-auction “publication”, and since its creation in 2002, this website that has changed dramatically will likely continue to change in order to meet the needs of art world players in the future.

3.3 Advertisements

Magazine and newspaper advertisements are important and often published to promote an upcoming auction. Advertisements often emphasize the success of past sales in order to encourage future consignments. In this way, auction advertisements communicate strategic portrayals of the auction to attract both buyers and consignors simultaneously, and by promoting selected lots appearing in future auctions and by relaying the success of sales past, they have also contributed to the canon of Inuit art. Published in a diverse set of magazines and newspapers that preceded the Waddington’s fall 2009, they shed light on the pervasiveness and inter-connected nature of the contemporary art-culture system. During her interview, Pat Feheley noted that those interested in Inuit art collecting represent a highly specialized group of art buyers with particular knowledge and tastes, and observed that these are the people who typically attend Waddington’s Inuit sales.³²⁰ However, in order to attract new buyers and consignors, Waddington’s auction house’s targets a wider group of unspecialized art

³¹⁹ *ibid.* 34.

³²⁰ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, 34; Feheley, Personal interview with Patricia Feheley, Toronto, 2010.

patrons with their advertisements. The advertisements before Waddington's 2009 auction of Inuit art were placed in particular locations in order to target groups who are perhaps unfamiliar with Inuit art but who are interested in Canadian art. In the spring of 2009, one ad appeared in *Vernissage* magazine, the National Gallery of Canada's quarterly.³²¹

[Figure 3.16] The readers of *Vernissage* are not necessarily interested in Inuit art as would readers of the publication *Inuit Art Quarterly* be. *Vernissage* readers represent an audience that has perhaps yet to be knowledgeable about the works that make up the established canon. Also, in August, 2009, *The Globe and Mail* contained a Waddington's (and Joyner's) advertisement promoting the auction sales in general, while featuring the same Niviaxie print as the *Vernissage* copy.³²² [Figure 3.17] Like the *Vernissage* advertisement, *The Globe and Mail* announcement would have reached a wide audience of readers beyond the boundaries of Inuit art.

The auction house also targets audiences with particular interests in Inuit art or Aboriginal art collecting with their pre-auction promotional material. An advertisement for Waddington's department of Inuit art appeared in *American Indian Art* magazine.³²³

[Figure 3.18] A few months later, another advertisement appeared in the fall issue of *Inuit Art Quarterly* magazine.³²⁴ [See figure 1.1] These ads promoted Inuit art specifically, emphasizing Waddington's historical success in the market for Inuit art and were more

³²¹ Waddington's, *Waddington's, Canada's Auction House since 1850*, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2009), 4.

³²² Waddington's, "Waddington's, Canada's most trusted and respected Auction House since 1850," *The Globe and Mail*, August 8 2009, reproduced on Waddington's, "News and Press," in *Waddington's Inuit Art Department website*, 2010, accessed March 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/press/>.

³²³ Waddington's, *Waddington's, Inuit Art Specialists since 1978* (Scottsdale, Arizona: American Indian Art, Inc., 2009), 14.

³²⁴ Waddington's, "Waddington's: Inuit Art Specialists since 1978," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 1 (2009): 8.

likely to reach a group of specialized, regular collectors or dealers of Inuit art. Based on the distribution of their advertisements, it is clear that the auction market for Inuit art is upheld simultaneously by an insular community of “Inuit art world” players and by a larger group of outsiders. Nevertheless, all of these agents share an interest in Canadian art and culture, and are therefore implicated in the interrelated art world.

The varied locations of Waddington’s fall 2009 Inuit art auction advertisements communicate different notions of Inuit art to different audiences. These announcements show the active brokering role taken on by the auction house, which promotes different concepts of Inuit art to suit varied audiences. The placement in *Vernissage* demonstrates an effort by the auction house to show the role of Inuit art within the larger category of important Canadian fine art. The announcement in *American Indian Art* fits Inuit art into the category of Indigenous North American art, while the advertisement in *Inuit Art Quarterly* caters to an audience of patrons who have a specific focus on this Inuit art. These apparently separate spheres composed of active agents are not mutually exclusive but they rely on each other to guarantee their continued existence.

As I have described, aside from their departmental webpage, Waddington’s advertisements are the most widely distributed publications and contributed to a quality hierarchy among the works in the subsequent auction. These publications presented examples of the most “highly anticipated” lots and the most successful past sales to a wide pool of viewers. As discussed in the previous chapter, this work is important as it likely contributes to the continued auction successes of works that have a history of selling for high prices in this marketplace. In the spring of 2009, the advertisement for Waddington’s (including Joyner’s) in *Vernissage* featured a small image of *Man Hunting*

at a *Seal Hole in the Ice* by Niviaxie along with the price the work achieved at the most recent sale.³²⁵ [See figure 3.16] The ad did not specifically promote Waddington's fall 2009 auction of Inuit Art. Appearing concurrently to the spring 2009 *Vernissage* advertisement, the advertisement appearing in *American Indian Art* magazine contained a large colour photograph of a circa 1950s sculpture from Povungnituk which was accompanied by the sale price of the work.³²⁶ Again, it focuses on educating readers of visual and textual information what constitutes "valuable" Inuit art work, to help patrons distinguish between good and better at the preview. This advertisement and the copy placed in *Inuit art Quarterly* also promoted the historically established reputation of Waddington's as the most important secondary market for Inuit art. [See figures 50 and 51] These advertisements show that Waddington's auctions are reliable sources for economically valuable Inuit art works that can be understood as masterpieces. These announcements therefore contributed to the creation of Waddington's Inuit art department as a reputable and branded institution in the Inuit and Indigenous art worlds.

3.3.1 Conclusions about Advertisements

Similar to Waddington's departmental website, the auction house's Inuit art advertisements are didactic. They show images of important Inuit works, teach viewers to recognize quality, and affect how the art works are arranged in the popular imagination. The advertisements relay the auction house's past successes in order to attract buyers and consignors. Also in order to attract these auction participants, the Waddington's advertisements ahead of the fall 2009 auction of Inuit art broadcast differing notions of

³²⁵ Waddington's, *Waddington's, Canada's Auction House since 1850*, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2009), 4.

³²⁶ Waddington's, *Waddington's, Inuit Art Specialists since 1978*, (Scottsdale, Arizona: American Indian Art, Inc., 2009), 14.

Inuit art which catered to audiences with specific tastes and art patrons with less exclusive interests. Overall, Waddington's advertisements have contributed to what is perceived as the canon of Inuit art works and they show the reliance of the market on a multifaceted and interdependent art world.

3.4 The Preview

The auction preview was a social event that lead up to the auction itself, as it took place over several consecutive nights before the sale. As in the catalogue, the objects for sale by consignors are strategically presented for bidders. The atmosphere of the preview facilitates friendly mingling among patrons, but a deliberate staging of the room reminds attendees that a competition for the lots was soon to follow. The preview is the space to which the first three pre-auction publications lead. At the preview, the hierarchy of works is staged in real space and it communicates a specific notion of Inuit art and the Inuit art connoisseur. The preview is didactic, but it relies largely on the information that patrons have procured before the event. Because of its reliance on both outside and inside information, the preview creates a particular economy of information that facilitates a social differentiation among patrons based on knowledge. Although it is public, this event does not reach out to a wider pool of people, but it works to exclude those outside of the community of connoisseurs that form the auction's body of players. The auction preview (or view) included three sessions: Saturday, November 7th, 11am – 4pm; Sunday, November 8th, 11am – 4pm; and Monday, November 9th, 10am – 2pm.

At the preview, the room was arranged by Waddington's specialists to target consigned works and specific collectors. In their interviews, Duncan McLean and Christa Ouimet commented on the importance of creating a handsome preview with an apparent

order to it and my observation bears out this necessity.³²⁷ I arrived at Waddington's auction house late on Sunday afternoon. After making my way through a group of patrons chatting excitedly just in front of the front doors, I joined the patrons lined up to purchase an auction catalogue and then I went into Waddington's main gallery. In the brightly lit room, printed works were grouped by community or artist on the walls while sculpture was ordered by size and importance in display cases on pedestals. The Waddington's Inuit art specialists I interviewed discussed the importance of placing works to their best advantage, with highly anticipated lots at the front of the gallery to impact viewers as they enter the space, and of isolating important works for emphasis.³²⁸ Waddington's also has to contend with more practical considerations, ensuring that no works can be stolen or lost during the preview and that no lots, particularly heavy sculpture, might fall and injure patrons.³²⁹ Overall, the works for sale at the preview were arranged to appear attractive and well-ordered to both consignors interested in selling and potential buyers pursuing high quality lots. Waddington's specialists used their expertise and experience to anticipate the desires of these two groups in creating a preview which appeared successful.

The physical preview space was used to cast works for sale into a hierarchy of quality. This was especially clear in the case of sculpture. Unlike the works on paper which appeared to be grouped according by well-known artists and provenance, the sculpture was grouped according to size and price, arranged onto about eight display

³²⁷ McLean, Personal telephone interview with Duncan McLean, Ottawa, 2010; Ouimet, Personal e-mail interview with Christa Ouimet, Toronto, 2010.

³²⁸ *ibid.*

³²⁹ Duncan McLean, "Duncan McLean Responds," *Inuit Art Quarterly* vol. 17, no. 4 (2002): 62-63.

areas according to the size and the perceived value of the works. The first case of sculpture was enclosed with glass and was the first thing encountered by visitors as they entered the room. It was a spectacular display meant to impress new arrivals as discussed by Christa Ouimet.³³⁰ The case held sculpture of high value generally by older generation artists from many regions of the Canadian arctic. Additionally, two display platforms on either side of the entrance doors held larger sculptures with even higher pre-sale estimates. Individuated by their isolation, several enclosed, single work display cases in the center of the gallery held the sculptures with the highest estimates. These cases allowed patrons to inspect the works closely, but prevented them from touching the objects. The smallest works with the lowest estimates were grouped all together in two small display cases on the periphery of the room. Similar to the hierarchy of knowledge/power of patrons, the objects at the preview were made differently affective through the placement in the preview room.

Gell argued that certain art objects are seen as secondary social agents within the modern, Western cultural framework.³³¹ These objects have the power of social causation, as agents are under their influence.³³² The auction preview that I attended allowed me to see that the influential power of certain objects is not consistent. This influence can be strategically manipulated by “primary social agents” such as auctioneers who arrange objects into a hierarchy of quality based just as much or more on price and history of exchange than on physical characteristics. As Phillips and Steiner pointed out,

³³⁰ Ouimet, Personal e-mail interview with Christa Ouimet, Toronto, 2010.

³³¹ Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, 17.

³³² *ibid.*

the identities of objects in transit are inscribed through the process of exchange rather than by their own physical characteristics.³³³

The preview was attended by many different players in the Inuit art world who operated within a hierarchy created by the event's economy of information. The style of display engineered by Waddington's specialists at the preview facilitated a process of evaluation that involved comparing, contrasting and examining the appearance of the lots for sale. In the gallery there was no information posted about these lots. As I observed, and as my interviewees verified, a catalogue was a necessary accoutrement for patrons attending the preview. Each group of viewers had at least one catalogue, some had two, which they often referred to often while examining each of the lots. The auction house had also hung a number of catalogues from the ceiling for patrons to examine if they had not purchased a book. In this way, the catalogue established the basic standard of information among all patrons at the event. However, additional expertise about Inuit art allowed particular patrons to distinguish flawed or heavily restored works, works that surpassed expectations and works that could increase in worth in the future. These individuals were at an advantage. As Pat Feheley noted, many Waddington's clients (dealers, curators, long-time collectors) are just as knowledgeable as Waddington's specialists.³³⁴ At the preview, such empowered connoisseurs were not reliant on any outside help. Other players with less knowledge gained the same knowledge and power as connoisseurs at the preview only if they could acquire sufficient information from outside publications or from connoisseurs themselves. In this way, despite the basic

³³³ Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher Burghard Steiner, "Art, Authenticity, and the Baggage of Colonial Encounter," in *Unpacking Culture: Art and commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, eds. Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher Burghard Steiner (Berkeley: University of California Press, c1999.), 19.

³³⁴ Feheley, Personal interview with Patricia Feheley, Toronto, 2010.

standard created by the catalogue, there is a small group of people that hold a lot of power at Waddington's previews. This economy of information underlines the competitive nature of the auction processes. Nevertheless, as I will discuss, it is in the best interest of these people to share their knowledge in a particular way.

When I arrived, there were about fifty patrons wandering around the gallery in small groups of two to five. There were four Waddington's staff members walking through the gallery answering questions, and four others waiting behind two glass display cases filled with diminutive sculptures. Overall, the atmosphere was very cheerful; people were mingling and making introductions to each other. Bredt and Fehleley argued that the preview is very important for individuals intending to purchase lots at auction because it allows them to inspect works for flaws that catalogue photographs might have hidden.³³⁵ Fehleley noted that she usually tries to attend the previews because Waddington's auctions can often provide an indication of taste shifts in the market for Inuit art. Waddington's auctions can also be a good place for dealers to acquire new stock.³³⁶ She also often provides advice for clients seeking to buy quality work at auction who pay for experts' help at previews.³³⁷ Overall, the information that Waddington's previews can provide makes them important for many art world players. In November 2009, many dealers, collectors (consignors and buyers) and curators attended the Inuit art auction preview. All of these individuals were interested primarily in ensuring their own successes at the preview. However, as Fehleley commented, a successful auction ensures

³³⁵ Bredt, Personal telephone interview with Chris D. Bredt, Ottawa, 2010; Fehleley, Personal interview with Patricia Fehleley, Toronto, 2010.

³³⁶ Fehleley, Personal interview with Patricia Fehleley, Toronto, 2010.

³³⁷ Fehleley, Personal interview with Patricia Fehleley, Toronto, 2010.

a stable market for Inuit art and therefore benefits them all.³³⁸ As I observed, individuals cooperated at the preview by sharing some knowledge while they retained other information. This strategy allowed the clients to collectively create important social connections and to empower certain bidders while conserving the competitive structure of the sale.

Waddington's fall 2009 Inuit art auction preview also broadcast a certain notion of Inuit art connoisseurship which is tied to appreciation of Inuit culture. In this sense, the preview teaches what inclinations constitute a good Inuit art collector, dealer or expert. It demonstrates what interests are necessary to belong to the community of Inuit art world players. In the final hour of the preview, the number of patrons dwindled. Nevertheless, by 4:00pm new arrivals began filling the space in anticipation of the performance by throat singing artists Evie Mark and Akinisie Sivuarapik. As the volume of the crowd rose, the refreshment table was covered in deserts, bannock, cider and mineral water. The patrons moved into the chairs set up in front of the screen. At 4:30 all the seats in the gallery were filled and the hall around them was overflowing with standing spectators. Duncan McLean ascended onto the stage to welcome the audience. He noted that collectors of Inuit art are typically interested in all aspects of Inuit culture, and so the concert of traditional music was very appropriate. This statement caused a brief outburst of chatter in the crowd, which was ended when the performers rose to the stage. The singers performed for about an hour to a very receptive and appreciative audience. After their show, the two women answered many questions. Overall, the event connected the patronage of Inuit art auctions with the act of patronizing Inuit arts and culture in the imaginations of viewers. Ironically, Waddington's auctions do not allow bidders to

³³⁸ *ibid.*

directly support Inuit artists. However, as Pat Feheley noted, the auctions bring stability and visibility to the market for Inuit art.³³⁹ Collectors in town for the sales are also often interested in acquiring contemporary work and therefore in supporting artists directly. These individuals often buy works at contemporary galleries. Putting contemporary Inuit artists (not necessarily fine artists) before an audience of Inuit art patrons makes the preview particularly appealing and important for auctioneers, artists, dealers and collectors. Overall, the atmosphere of the throat-singing performance that followed the preview was celebratory; however there was an underlying tension that foreshadowed that auction competition which was to occur the following evening.

Conclusions

Before Waddington's 2009 Inuit art auction, a catalogue was published, a website was updated, advertisements were released and a preview was held. These pre-auction events and publications circulated information about lots for sale to many art world players in order to cast both objects and people into hierarchies of influence to uphold the subsequent auction. The catalogue used image and several types of text to stratify lots they offered for sale. This book engaged with other spheres of the art world and was engineered by highly skilled auction staff to make consigned works appealing to buyers. Likewise, Waddington's Inuit art department website broadcasts a strategic notion of Inuit art imbued with cultural, social and economic value to wide audiences. The website also articulated the interconnectedness of the Inuit art world and the central place of the auction house in this web of art-culture. Because of their distribution to specific and non-specific audiences, Waddington's auction advertisements made the interconnectedness of

³³⁹ Feheley, Personal interview with Patricia Feheley, Toronto, 2010.

the larger art world clear. The ads also made visible a certain canon of Inuit art that contributed to the quality hierarchy of works at the auction. The preview that was held just prior to Waddington's fall 2009 auction of Inuit art used physical space to make clear a quality hierarchy amongst the works for sale. This event was also structured by a distinct economy of information which encouraged strategic interaction between empowered, experienced patrons and less knowledgeable and disadvantaged players. Through an additional performance event by Inuit artists, the preview both articulated a certain notion of the Inuit art connoisseur and allowed some artists to benefit from proceedings.

Overall, Waddington's pre-auction events and publications set out the possibilities which were to be either upheld or denied at the subsequent auction. Haidy Geismar described the catalogue as the script for the auction.³⁴⁰ I would argue that the pre-auction events and publications shape the script, the set and the audience for the auction which is both improvisational and prearranged. Some pre-auction elements, such as the catalogue which is collected as a record of trends in the market, are also important independently of the sale.

³⁴⁰ Geismar, *What's in a Price?*, 34.

The Auction

On the evening of Monday, November 9th, 2009 Waddington's auction house on Bathurst Street at King in Toronto held its annual fall auction of Inuit art. The auction consisted of 390 lots of sculpture, historic miniatures and souvenirs, wall-hangings, prints and drawings which were sold in a single session starting at six in the evening.

In the first two chapters of this thesis I described how Waddington's auction house hierarchically organized works for sale while it communicated strategic messages about Inuit art. Through history, Inuit art auctions disseminated and reinforced a certain canon of Inuit art objects while establishing a community of important auction participants. These hierarchies of objects and agents naturalized both economic and social value through the collusion of other Inuit art institutions, such as dealerships, magazines and public galleries.

This chapter investigates Waddington's November 2009 auction of Inuit art in order to shed light on how auctions give players the opportunities to involve themselves directly in the creation of value for art works. I discuss the behavior of both auction patrons and the auctioneer to understand whether (and how) these players worked together to generate "super prices", how the auction competitors undermine each other. The auctions are important nodes within the larger ideological art world because they form the an important branch of the art re-sale market, or secondary art market, and contribute to the construction of the Inuit art canon as culturally and economically meaningful. As an ethnography of an auction, this chapter is structured as a chronologically ordered narrative of the auction beginning with a description of its

commencement, followed by my observations of its midpoint and ending with its conclusion.

4.1 A Crowd Gathers: Planning versus Spontaneity

The auction is a unique art world event because it gives participants direct power in the creation and dissemination of the economic value. Auction participants work together to create super-prices, new object identities and new positions of power for themselves within the auction community. In her discussion of primitive art auctions, Haidy Geismar suggested that the auctioneer and the objects for sale can all be considered players in the drama.³⁴¹ Drawing on this theatrical analogy, I apply Victor Turner's theory of the cultural performance to the auction as a socially sanctioned and separated arena in which participants experience heightened emotion and reactivity.³⁴² Also, according to Turner cultural performance can only be carried out during of period of intense interaction among its players.³⁴³ Bidders at the Waddington's auction acted with reference both to lots for sale and to other bidders. As pre-auction events and publications had ordered these lots hierarchically in the collective imaginations of all participants and stratified the players according to different spheres of knowledge. To operate successfully at the auction vis-à-vis the echelons of works and competitors, participants often employed bidding tactics developed before the sale, but the auction also provided many opportunities for unplanned reaction. In this section I will investigate to what degree both prior knowledge and bidding strategies were relied on in comparison with

³⁴¹ Geismar, *What's in a Price?*, 42.

³⁴² Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*, 13.

³⁴³ *ibid.* 14.

spontaneous decisions based on information gleaned during the sale. I hope to shed light on the power of pre-auction events to determine (or not) the outcome of the subsequent auction here.

Patrons arranged themselves in the auction room in relation to information gleaned before the sale. I arrived at Waddington's about twenty minutes before the sale. Many other participants were arriving in a steady stream. Upon entering Waddington's auction hall, visitors generally headed towards their desired seats where they deposited their purses, brief cases and jackets. As Duncan McLean noted, some bidders prefer to sit either at the front or the back of the room, while others just aim to get a seat.³⁴⁴ The front seats of the auction room were already filled when I arrived and the seats in the back were also well populated. People seemed hesitant to sit in the middle rows-- these were occupied by those standing and socializing. The choice of a seat would greatly alter the type of visibility a patron would have during an auction. A seat near the front assured that the bidder could be seen by the auctioneer. I could see that this position would have been best for those who planned on bidding often or quickly. Chairs at the back of the room gave patrons a view of the entire auction. These individuals would have been able to spot who was bidding on what, how many absentee bids came from the telephones. They might even have been able to anticipate the actions of other patrons. When asked about how bidders chose their seats at the auction, Christa Ouimet stated:

They usually want to be in the auctioneer's sight. But there always seems to be a gathering at the back of the room for people to chat and to attempt to stay low profile. When bidders try to be subtle with their bids they risk the auctioneer not seeing them so it's not recommended, but you see it in every auction.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁴ McLean, Personal telephone interview with Duncan McLean, Ottawa, 2010.

³⁴⁵ Ouimet, Personal e-mail interview with Christa Ouimet, Toronto, 2010.

In an interview, Pat Feheley stated that dealers prefer to occupy the positions at the back of the room because this gives them the opportunity to see what collectors are interested in.³⁴⁶ Like a vigilant dealer; I chose a seat towards the back of the room that faced the empty middle seats. From there I had a wide vista of the auction to conduct my participant observation. Once I had chosen my seat, I could observe the central, truly important actions of auction patrons that ultimately shape the outcome of the sale: bids.

The art auction is above all a social process in which people affect people and objects, and objects affect people.³⁴⁷ The crux of the auction is the bidding, which is the competitive game that actually assigns objects new monetary values. In her text “Excitable Speech”, Judith Butler created a theoretical framework that explains the power of language to concurrently “say” and “do”.³⁴⁸ Following Butler’s descriptions of the two categories of speech acts, I argue that bidding is illocutionary speech because placing a bid immediately transforms the characteristics of an object and the positions of other bidders to acquire the lot:

The illocutionary speech act performs its deed *at the moment* of the utterance, and yet to the extent that the moment is ritualized, it is never merely a singly moment. The “moment” in ritual is condensed historicity: it exceeds itself in past and future directions, an effect of prior and future invocations that constitute and escape the instance of the utterance.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁶ Feheley, Personal interview with Patricia Feheley, Toronto, 2010.

³⁴⁷ Denys Sutton, *Christie's Since the War, 1945-1958: An Essay on Taste, Patronage and Collecting* (London: Privately printed for Christie, Manson & Woods, 1959), 3.

³⁴⁸ Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

³⁴⁹ *ibid.* 3

Once a bid is placed, the object for sale is not the same and the bidders competing for it have also been altered. Bidding is “given in the form of a ritual” because the act of auction bidding has been historically established in the West.³⁵⁰ Bids refer to the outcomes of earlier sales of particular works and therefore involve the past. A bid also presupposes that future bids, alike in form, will be made. Defenses against future, hostile, bids are embedded inside each bid. Therefore, a bid works beyond the moment during which it is uttered, referring to both the form and content of past and future bids. Overall, bidders at Waddington’s fall auction of Inuit art placed strategic bids which affected both other participants and lots for sale, which protected against future bids and which built on the results of historical auctions. It is the bids that constitute the majority of the spontaneous or planned actions that will be examined here.

The auction began shortly after Duncan McLean welcomed his audience. The projection screen, programmed to feature a large image of every lot as it went up for sale, was illuminated. [Figure 44] Many audience members, distracted by ongoing conversation, were hushed by others wishing to hear McLean and the various bidders. In anticipation of this tension and slight commotion, the first lots of the auction were lower-quality objects with modest estimates (under \$1000). The bidding for the first lots was very quick, as each object was generally sold in under a minute. The bidding became slower as more people transferred their focus to the sale and the room became quieter. The collector beside me whispered that the first lots of an auction are important because they often set the tone of the sale—the sales of these lots reveal if there are any highly competitive bidders present. Nevertheless, I could not help but notice that many people were still very distracted. A woman two rows ahead of me opened a newspaper and

³⁵⁰ *ibid.* 3

began reading while the woman at the end of my row was knitting a scarf. The gentlemen behind me were quietly giggling about the sing-song tone of the auctioneer. What were the goals of these apparently distracted bidders at the fall Inuit art auction? Were these individuals relying heavily on predetermined strategies? It was clear from my observations of Waddington's auction that bids were both unplanned and premeditated. This perhaps undermined to some degree the advantage of very knowledgeable players, although these bidders could likely prepare for some distracting chatter due to experience at past sales.

As exemplified by the slightly disruptive behavior of those sitting near me, before the auction, bidders generally planned to bid on only a few lots.³⁵¹ This strategy was also made clear fifteen minutes into the sale, as the gentlemen behind me announced that he would only bid on sculpture from Povungnituk. By preparing to vie for selected lots, auction patrons could plan to leave or to arrive at particular times. This is often desirable, as the auction typically runs for over four hours. They could also plan more precisely how much to spend to acquire their selected lots. By setting these limitations on their participation in the auction, bidders minimized their risks. The prevalence of this strategy was noticeable throughout the sale: despite a few late arrivals, after two hours into the auction (by lot 160), about 20% of the initial crowd had disappeared, and by lot 338, the audience had diminished by 50%. Overall, I observed that most bidders used information gleaned before the sale to decide approximately how they would participate in the auction. Therefore, the information disseminated in the catalogue, preview,

³⁵¹ Feheley, Personal interview with Patricia Feheley, Toronto, 2010.

advertisements and website had a profound impact on the sale, as did personal connoisseurship of individual patrons.

Nevertheless, as Patricia Feheley and Chris Bredt noted, participants' pre-auction plans and strategies are not always followed during the sale.³⁵² Feheley noted that patrons often get carried away when competition for an object is high.³⁵³ Bidders diverged from the well-laid plans when they received or lacked social support and reassurance from other bidders. Pat Feheley commented that art collectors are always insecure and seek confirmation from others that what they are buying is valuable.³⁵⁴ As a result, the lots that attract many bidders during an auction are likely to retain all of these contenders and to raise high sale prices. For example, lot 31 was a duffle wall hanging by Irene Avaalaaqiaq Tiktaalaaq.³⁵⁵ [Figure 4.1] This wall hanging attracted only two bidders and sold for \$1,200, a hammer price \$1,300 under its low estimate. The following lot was another wall hanging, this one made by Lucy Ango'yuaq.³⁵⁶ [see figure 4.9] It attracted four or five bidders, and sold for \$250 over its high estimate.

Bidders also often made spur-of-the-moment decisions that were reactive to successes or losses during the sale. According to Nash equilibrium, a mathematical probability theory created by John Forbes Nash proposing the most probable interaction of human players in social, economic and political games and competitions, all

³⁵² *ibid.*; Bredt, Personal telephone interview with Chris D. Bredt, Ottawa, 2010

³⁵³ Feheley, Personal interview with Patricia Feheley, Toronto, 2010.

³⁵⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵⁵ Waddington's, *Waddington's Inuit Art: Monday 9 November 2009*, 14.

³⁵⁶ *ibid.* 14.

individuals will “simultaneously make a best reply to the strategy choices of others”.³⁵⁷

The basic premise of the theory holds true in the auction environment. Pat Feheley noted that bidders go into a Waddington’s auction with an idea of how much they are willing to spend on several lots.³⁵⁸ If bidders could not successfully acquire works they intended to buy during the auction proceedings, they may wait to bid more for the final works on their “lists”. The result is that bidders may spend a lot more than they planned to on certain lots because they feel they are trying to recoup losses.³⁵⁹ Very relevant to these spontaneous decisions is the order of the auction.³⁶⁰ By placing highly anticipated lots into highly concentrated groupings within the larger auction, the auction house ensured that many participants stayed until the end of the auction.

4.2 The Bidding Begins: Conservation versus Subordination of Community

Interests

When the auction had begun and Duncan McLean had risen to the podium, I estimated that there were likely over 150 people in attendance. There was also a large crowd standing and sitting in chairs against the back wall, while others leaned against the side wall towards the back of the room. Clearly, these individuals valued their visibility, because the auction was likely to run for four hours, making standing very tiring. After they established their positions in the room, many of the bidders sat in the small groups they arrived with, chatting and looking over the catalogue for the auction. As in the preview, each small group had a least one copy of the catalogue. Other individuals,

³⁵⁷ K. G. Binmore, *Game Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) 14.

³⁵⁸ Feheley, Personal interview with Patricia Feheley, Toronto, 2010.

³⁵⁹ *ibid.*

³⁶⁰ Bredt, Personal telephone interview with Chris D. Bredt, Ottawa, 2010

meanwhile, walked around the room quietly greeting people and making introductions. This was no surprise, as the auction gathers so many different people interested in Inuit art, notably dealers and collectors. Both Christa Ouimet and Pat Feheley observed the social importance of the auctions in bringing the many Inuit art collectors, dealers and experts (who are often very dispersed) together in one place.³⁶¹ In preparation for the auction, many regular Waddington's patrons arrange gatherings before the auction where they can discuss objects for sale, bidding strategies and past auctions.³⁶² Did all of these individuals desire the same auction results? If no, when did they behave cooperatively at the sale and when did they act with self-interest?

As discussed by Alsop and Becker, all art-world institutions work together to uphold the common interests of the entire system. Art auctions that create record-prices for a certain art form provide an authenticating economic rationale by which all other activities in that particular art world are legitimated. According to Smith, the actions give the opportunity for an exclusive caste of bidders to consensually determine the appropriate prices of lots for sale.³⁶³ Auctions are therefore involved in the processes of re-evaluating and re-inscribing works. As Phillips and Steiner note:

The solution of defining the authenticity of an object circulating in the networks of world art exchange lies not in the properties of the object itself but in the very process of collection, which inscribes, at the moment of acquisition, the character and qualities that are associated with the object in both individual and collective memories.³⁶⁴

³⁶¹ Feheley, Personal interview with Patricia Feheley, Toronto, 2010.; Ouimet, Personal e-mail interview with Christa Ouimet, Toronto, 2010.

³⁶² Bredt, Personal telephone interview with Chris D. Bredt, Ottawa, 2010

³⁶³ Smith, *Auctions: The Social Construction of Value*, 16.

³⁶⁴ Phillips and Steiner, *Art, Authenticity, and the Baggage of Colonial Encounter*, 19.

Lots for sale are evaluated by participants in relation to, “the standards contained in the more general justification for that class or work”.³⁶⁵ During the auction, both the characters of the individual lots and of the art world into which they are hierarchically arranged are assigned new meanings and values tied to new economic worth. In other words, as an arena for affixing an economic or exchange value, an auction can result in a significant re-assessment of a work or of the entire justification system for an art form. Therefore, auction institutions clearly have significance for all involved in Inuit art. Since all the players at Waddington’s 2009 auction of Inuit art could have influenced the larger field of Inuit art with their actions, the audience was generally formed of Inuit art world players (dealers, historians, collectors, artists, investors) who had a vested interest in conserving the art form. Together, these individuals worked together to solve inherently ambiguous questions concerning the price and appropriate ownership of certain works of art. Despite their common interests, the participants also attempted to manipulate the sale strategically to meet their own ends. At Waddington’s auction, the congregated audience members worked both collectively to conserve the interests of the group and individually in competition with other players.

At Waddington’s auction, the community of bidders worked together by excluding outsiders with no interests in the art form. Appadurai and Smith argued that at an auction an exclusive group of bidders gather and come to a consensus on what objects should be worth and on who should own them.³⁶⁶ Patrons have vested interests in

³⁶⁵ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 5.

³⁶⁶ Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, 21; Smith, *Auctions: The Social Construction of Value*, 14.

working together and in an effort to maintain certain boundaries. Geismar observed after listening to a curator participating in an auction of Aboriginal art:

The main work of the dealer is to try to find out where the objects are. Thus, despite the public nature of the auction space, it is not in the interest of the participants in the market to cultivate its penetration by unknown persons. Whilst it is theoretically possible for anybody to buy at auction, the kinds of knowledge necessary to make a successful purchase, and subsequent ambiguities involved, require membership of a complex social group that negotiates and enforces such value systems as price.³⁶⁷

Exclusion of outsiders at the Waddington's auction would have allowed dealers and collectors to trace the re-distribution and re-evaluation of lots while preventing any major subversion of the interests of the community. By what qualification are individuals excluded from being Waddington's participants? As Pat Fehleley argued, Inuit art is a specialized art form.³⁶⁸ Inuit art auctions attract only people with particular knowledge and interests. People new to the auctions often approach her for advice or employ her as a proxy bidder.³⁶⁹ By performing these duties, Fehleley maintains the basic knowledge requirement of the auction. Christa Ouimet's observation that almost all the people who participate in Waddington's auctions are knowledgeable about the art form confirms that at least some Inuit art expertise is required to participate at the sales.³⁷⁰

The interests of the community were served in the general comportment of auction participants. Most people sat in chairs watching, and almost everyone was very quiet, making the bidding process accessible to all. Paralleling Geismar's conclusions,

³⁶⁷ Geismar, *What's in a Price?*, 39.

³⁶⁸ Fehleley, Personal interview with Patricia Fehleley, Toronto, 2010.

³⁶⁹ Fehleley, Personal interview with Patricia Fehleley, Toronto, 2010.

³⁷⁰ Ouimet, Personal e-mail interview with Christa Ouimet, Toronto, 2010.

Waddington's auctions award community insiders who participated in the sale with generated information by allowing players to observe who succeeded in buying what.³⁷¹ For collectors, this information gave insight into which objects they should approach to buy while for dealers, the auction sheds light on swings of taste and fashion. The sculptures in the sale were arranged in its regional groupings to facilitate the dissemination of auction information, making clear which regional styles were sought after by which bidder.

To counteract any possible subversion of community interests, the auction house enforced regulations which could not be broken. When Duncan McLean began the bidding for each lot, he announced first the minimum price the object could be sold for and bidding ascended from this figure. According to Thompson in his discussion of the contemporary art market, the auction house typically places a reserve price on lots that equals about 80% of the low estimate.³⁷² This reserve is invisible to bidders. If a lot looks like it might go to a low bid, it will be "bought in", or left unsold, remaining property of the consignor. By "buying in" lots, auction houses protect themselves from owing more money to consignors than they made at the sale. The auction house also charged a "buyer's premium", or an amount in excess of the "hammer price" (winning bid placed during the auction) to buyers. Finally, consignors pay the auction house a guaranteed percentage of the "hammer price". Without these measures in place, the auction house and consignors would not have been able to turn a profit at the auction I observed. By maintaining some basic controls that are conventionally in place at all

³⁷¹ Geismar, *What's in a Price?*, 39.

³⁷² Donald N. Thompson, *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark: The Curious Economics of Contemporary Art*, 1st Palgrave Macmillan ed. (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 24.

contemporary auctions, the auction house protected itself, its consignors and the interests of Inuit art world players seeking to elevate the value of the art form.

Despite social conventions that dictate auction behavior and auction house rules, actions which undermined the values of the community were possible. In her analysis of Aboriginal art auctions, Geismar noted that “whilst price *may* be consensually determined at auction, consensus within an auction ‘community’ is not fundamentally required. The *potential* for anyone to place any bid is the founding retail principle at auction”.³⁷³ As I sat observing, the auction unfolded as a ritualistic and competitive game which involved both measures to control sales and opportunities for unexpected outcomes.

Auction participants, as individuals with particular vested interests in buying certain lots for sale, resisted auction house attempts to manipulate values and therefore acted against the desires of sellers/consignors. Buyers and sellers at auction are therefore at odds in certain circumstances. As I described in the previous chapter, the auction house uses pre-auction publications to script the sale to some degree. These auction texts uphold the auction structure and maintain the priorities of the auction house and of consignors. By denying the suggestions of price and value encoded in catalogue price estimates and texts, bidders were able to re-evaluate some of these values. Their actions had consequences for the auctioneers and for the sellers and also wider ramifications for the Inuit art canon. For example, the sale of lot 34 allowed a number of patrons to undermine the catalogue. [see figure 3.9] This lot was a wooden carving of a dog team pulling a hunter on a komatik made by an artist named Krangun in the Charles Camsell

³⁷³ Geismar, *What's in a Price?*, 27.

tuberculosis hospital in Edmonton.³⁷⁴ As described in Chapter 2, this lot was accompanied by embellishing text in the catalogue which promoted the object as evidence of a historical event that could be owned, allowing a collector to be absorbed into the historical narrative through the buying process.³⁷⁵ The estimate for the work listed in the catalogue was \$1,500- \$2,000.³⁷⁶ Contrary to my expectations, as Duncan McLean announced the start of the sale of lot 34, there were only a few bidders. McLean encouraged participation by stating that this work came from a sanatorium like the works shown in the touted film *The Necessities of Life* directed by Benoit Pilon. His words promoted a fictional relationship that the lot had with both the history of Tuberculosis epidemics among Inuit in Arctic Canada and with the narrative created by Pilon. Successful buyers could become part of the imaginary history projected onto the object through ownership. Nevertheless, the bidders did not respond and the work quickly sold for \$750, overturning the catalogue's appraisal, the desires of consignors and McLean's persuasive work while adding a new decisive chapter to the identity and real history of the object. For all concerned, similar work simultaneously received a critical evaluation that no doubt altered the structure of the hierarchy of work that supports the Inuit art canon.

4.3 The Auction Intensifies: The Auctioneer

The most noticeable figure at the auction was the auctioneer. He maintained the coherency of the auction community while still giving anyone the opportunity to participate. As a source for the dissemination of information about lots and about bidders

³⁷⁴ Waddington's, *Waddington's Inuit Art: Monday 9 November 2009*, 15.

³⁷⁵ Hillis, Petit, and Epley, *Everyday eBay: Culture, Collecting, and Desire*, 177-180.

³⁷⁶ Waddington's, *Waddington's Inuit Art: Monday 9 November 2009*, 15.

during the auction, Duncan McLean was chiefly responsible for a dynamic construction of Inuit art and the Inuit art canon as a culturally and economically meaningful art form throughout the sale. His words and actions were either upheld or denied by the subsequent actions of his assembled audience. McLean acted as a middleman, brokering the needs of buyers and sellers, as well as the needs of the auction house. As the auction director, Duncan McLean was responsible for both the successful performance and the continual engagement of the auction players. As Patricia Feheley stated, he maintained active control of the sale and his audience when he needed to, through encouragement and pace control.

In their respective interviews, McLean and Ouimet commented that to keep bidders engaged in a sale, a good pace is very important. One of the most powerful, but not the most noticeable, elements managed by the auctioneer was time. Very slightly, McLean sped up or slowed down the rate he received bids. He sought to maintain a quick but steady pace so that participants would not lose interest before the end of the sale. By accelerating the pace of the sale, the auctioneer can put pressure on his audience to stay focused and keep up. As Sutton described, bidders are more likely to place hasty and unplanned bids in an accelerating auction for fear of getting left behind.³⁷⁷ By slowing the pace of the auction for a short period, the auctioneer can individuate certain lots and emphasize the weight of the auction process. For example, during the auction of November 9th, bids were accepted at a slightly slowed pace in the auction of lot 205, a dramatically dynamic sculpture called *Leap Frog* by the artist Ennutsiak of Iqaluit.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁷ Sutton, *Christie's Since the War, 1945-1958: An Essay on Taste, Patronage and Collecting*, 9.

³⁷⁸ Waddington's, *Waddington's Inuit Art: Monday 9 November 2009*, 80.

[Figure 4.2] This gave the congregated patrons time to swivel on their chairs to see each bidder. The bidding was immediately transformed into a competitive and spectacular sport with an assembled audience. After a few minutes of heated bidding, *Leap Frog* was sold for 24,000-- \$9,000 over its high estimate.

Humour was also used to keep bidders focused during the lengthy auction. In fact, Pat Feheley noted that McLean's sense of humor made Waddington's auctions more enjoyable.³⁷⁹ During the November 9th auction, McLean made several amusing remarks to patrons and about works throughout the auction. During the sale of Lot 101, a composite sculpture by Osuitok Ipeelee of Cape Dorset called *Man with His Dog*, bidding lagged.³⁸⁰ [Figure 4.3] A few minutes into the sale, McLean commented that the amount bid for the work at the time, \$3,000, could only buy the dog. Nearly everyone in the audience giggled at this suggestion, and their attention was refocused. The work subsequently sold for \$4,250. Lot 296 (a bone sculpture entitled *Caribou and Hunter* by an unidentified artist) sold for approximately \$3,000 over its estimate to a bidder who had had to engage in a long bidding war with an absentee bidder on the phone.³⁸¹ [Figure 4.4] After the sale, McLean quipped to the winner: "Nobody on the phone, just entertaining the crowd at your expense." This enticed laughter from the audience and from the frustrated bidder. Jokes and witticisms lightened the atmosphere and put patrons at ease, which may have encouraged them to continue spending. Playful teasing by the auctioneer kept bidders from becoming embittered.

³⁷⁹ Feheley, Personal interview with Patricia Feheley, Toronto, 2010.

³⁸⁰ Waddington's, *Waddington's Inuit Art: Monday 9 November 2009*, 38.

³⁸¹ *ibid.* 117.

In fulfilling his role as director, the auctioneer worked as a middleman between various groups of implicated art world players. As Duncan McLean observed, just before the auction, he and Christa Ouimet were extremely busy dealing with buyers and consignors.³⁸² During the auction itself, the concerns of both of these groups were again managed by auctioneer. His actions were based on his knowledge and experience with buyers and sellers of Inuit art. By skillfully and strategically brokering certain information about consigned works to buyers, the auctioneer ensured his own success. The most common brokering technique used by McLean during the Inuit art auction was individuating lots at crucial moments. This was achieved through using quick, hyperbolic adjectives, such as “classic”, “beautiful”, or short descriptive phrases, to describe each work. These descriptors allowed the auctioneer to emphasize certain works during the bidding process. The words also reinforced a specific hierarchical arrangement of the works for sale in the minds of participants. The description stimulated buyers and they made it clear to consignors that McLean was making an effort to successfully sell lots. However, the words also did not over-emphasize lots (as long description would have done), which would have both attracted the attention of buyers to very few lots in the sale and increased the duration of the auction. One example of the auctioneer’s skill was the sale of lots 181 through 183 (a group of small owl sculptures by the Cape Dorset artist Tudlik).³⁸³ [Figure 4.5] McLean described them as “lovely little cabinet pieces”. In the case of these lots, the artists were well known and the pieces were masterfully executed. The only characteristics of the works that might have made collectors wary was their diminutive size. What should an art collector do with such a tiny work? How could

³⁸² McLean, Personal telephone interview with Duncan McLean, Ottawa, 2010.

³⁸³ Waddington's, *Waddington's Inuit Art: Monday 9 November 2009*, 72.

it be displayed effectively? McLean used his short statements to show audience members that exhibiting these works effectively would be straightforward in spite of their small size.

McLean also negotiated actively the needs of buyers and sellers during the auction through his active control over bidding increments. These increments can change at any point during the bidding process and they are not necessarily consensual on the part of participants. For example, if the bidding for a given lot was increasing in increments of \$50, the auctioneer might decide to increase the increment to \$100. This change might occur after the bidders reached a certain price, or it might be done to increase the excitement of a sale while scaring away non-committal bidders by raising the stakes. The lower the increment stays, the less the bidding will jump to a high price suddenly. For example, lot 359, a sculpture by Samuili Itukalla of Povungnituk called *Hunter over a Seal*, had an estimate of \$250 to \$350.³⁸⁴ McLean chose to increase the bidding in increments of \$25. This rate did not overwhelm bidders who were unwilling to pay a great sum for the mediocre sculpture. However, it also confirmed this negative evaluation and had the sale exceeded \$175 (which was the final price paid), this increment would have made the process very lengthy. Another work in the sale with the same estimate as lot 359 was lot 163, the small sculpture *Otter in a Trap* by Charlie Sivuarapik also from Povungnituk.³⁸⁵ [Figure 4.6] The bidding for this work was increased in increments of \$50, allowing the price to grow quickly. Despite the low estimate, this work was apparently anticipated to be more alluring to bidders than lot 359. This choice was rewarded as the winner paid \$600. During the sales of these two works,

³⁸⁴ Waddington's, *Waddington's Inuit Art: Monday 9 November 2009*, 129.

³⁸⁵ Waddington's, *Waddington's Inuit Art: Monday 9 November 2009*, 67.

McLean used knowledge of both his audience and his lots to effectively sell works. As Pat Feheley noted, there are many auction participants who seek out works that will sell for below their estimates and who believe that auction prices become quickly inflated.³⁸⁶ The sale of lot 359 would have catered to these Waddington's patrons. On the other hand, the sale of lot 163 accommodated the many participants who seek spectacular work for slightly lower prices. McLean's strategic use of varied bidding increments made his auction satisfying to all involved, including Waddington's auction house.

4.4 Closing the Sale: Audience Responses to Art Works

The crowd at Waddington's auction spoke and reacted almost as one to important moments, such as the establishment of new record prices for certain works. Shortly after the first lots were sold, the attention of assembled patrons was focused on the sale. The activity of the crowd was contagious in the small gallery space. Before lots 54, 55, 56 and 57, a group of well known prints with relatively high estimates by Cape Dorset artist Parr, there was a momentary silence and a quick shuffling noise as people turned to the appropriate page in the catalogue to observe the details of the works in addition to their estimates.³⁸⁷ [Figure 4.7] The individuals gathered were obviously both familiar with the highly touted artist and interested in watching or in participating in the sale. The reaction of the crowd was a social index: it suggested the social intentions and dispositions of social agents gathered. However, as Gell argued, "the idea of agency is a culturally prescribed framework for thinking about causation", and because humans are social

³⁸⁶ Feheley, Personal interview with Patricia Feheley, Toronto, 2010.

³⁸⁷ Waddington's, *Waddington's Inuit Art: Monday 9 November 2009*, 22.

animals, it is difficult for us to conceive of causation outside of social terms.³⁸⁸ Because object-identities are contextually dependent and cannot exist on their own, in certain situations where they are perceived to cause human reactions, art works can be understood to be empowered social agents.³⁸⁹ In the case of the audience response to the Parr works, the objects themselves were considered the cause of the reaction. On the other hand, perhaps it was the successful sales of these particular prints in the past or the Inuit art canon circulated in pre-auction publications that caused this perception of the works?

Other works of art often excited the crowd of participants before they were sold, or during the bidding process. An hour later, McLean announced that lot 204, an early (c. 1955) composite sculpture by Ennutsiak of Iqaluit called *Family Enjoying Musical Instruments*.³⁹⁰ [Figure 4.8] This lot had been allotted two full pages in the catalogue with several photographs of the sculpture, showing it from many angles, and an excerpt from the diary of Ron Gould, the famous collector who consigned the work. The sculpture had been given the estimate of \$15,000 to \$20,000 but the excited murmur of the crowd suggested that this appraisal of the object's worth might too modest.³⁹¹ What characteristics gave the object such power? Was it the object's high estimate, its provenance, the artist, its history in the market, its physical characteristics or all of these attributes combined? In my interview with the auctioneer, Duncan McLean argued that works excite bidders if they are rare and in demand. Their "quality" and demand seems to

³⁸⁸ Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, 17.

³⁸⁹ *ibid.*

³⁹⁰ Waddington's, *Waddington's Inuit Art: Monday 9 November 2009*, 78-79.

³⁹¹ *ibid.* 78.

be composed of all their component characteristics rather than any one in particular. The sculpture by Ennutsiak was one example of a work in demand due to its physical characteristics, the artists, its history, its provenance and its previously stated estimated worth. After a long bidding war between three or four groups of patrons, *Family Enjoying Musical Instruments* was sold for \$45,000. The audience was enthralled with the bidding, many members strained to catch a sight of each bidder after every new bid was placed and others reacting with murmurs as the price climbed higher.

At other points during the sale, works evoked reactions once they had been re-evaluated by the assembled crowd through bidding. For example, after the sale of lot 100, a gracefully poised and masterfully executed sculpture of the sea goddess Sedna by the celebrated graphic artist Niviaxie of Cape Dorset, there was an outbreak of applause from the audience. [Figure 4.9] The sculpture had been given an estimate of \$6,000 to \$9,000 and had surpassed it by reaching a sale price of \$15,000.³⁹² This pre-sale evaluation that had formed an enduring part of the object's social identity was immediately transformed through bidding. Onlookers were probably excited by this sale because it represented a positive movement in the Inuit art market which affected all of those present. In reacting to record-breaking sales, the assembled people (including the auctioneers) shared common interests as players and stake-holders in the Inuit art world.

Similarly, the crowd reacted to disappointing sales and their shared implication for the market. When Duncan McLean reached lots 220 and 221 there was again an immediate murmur followed by the sound of many catalogue pages turning. The bidding commenced for lot 220, but enthusiasm was lacking as bidders participated and then soon

³⁹² *ibid.* 36-37.

stopped raising their paddles. [Figure 4.10] The lot soon settled on the disappointing price of \$19,000, \$6,000 below its low estimate and the auctioneer moved on quickly.³⁹³ The sale of 221 was slightly more dynamic, but McLean still felt the need to encourage bidders by stating that the print of *Man Hunting at a Seal Hole* was “the most important image in Canada”. [Figure 4.11] Despite McLean’s appraisal of the print’s value, the lot 221 was sold for \$28,000, which was \$2,000 below its low estimate.³⁹⁴ After these sales had reached their anti-climatic finishes, the audience began to chatter quietly amongst themselves and I saw many patrons shaking their heads as they recorded the prices reached. From this event, I concluded that despite the apparent agency of objects in an auction and the efforts of the auction house to cast these lots as canonical and invaluable, individual bidders determined the outcome.

4.5 I leave Waddington’s, and I don’t go empty-handed: Conclusions

The auction I attended at Waddington’s was a dramatic and social process which at its core was transformative. Auctioneers, buyers, and sellers from many areas in the art world worked together within the auction context to re-evaluate and re-circulate works and corresponding value judgments. The bidding process re-negotiated the hierarchy of objects and players established in the publication and dissemination of pre-auction materials. At the auction, the auctioneer behaved as a middleman strategically negotiating the needs of all those involved in the sale. The works for sale as secondary social agents (based on their conception in layers of historic discourse) had an influence over the bidders. Bidders reacted to objects based on carefully devised bidding strategies. However, they also diverged from these when they reacted spontaneously to auction

³⁹³ *ibid.* 88.

³⁹⁴ *ibid.* 89.

events. The auction is unique because it balances individual planning with social reactivity. The auction is also cultural performance embedded in a social context that relies on a variety of players. The auction community exerted conservative control by excluding those with no specialized interest or knowledge about Inuit art, however, the auction still permitted bidders to subvert convention during the bidding process. Nevertheless, all the participants in the auction were implicated in the Inuit art world and therefore shared a common desire to see success at the auction despite their individual needs and desires.

The sales of the final lots at Waddington's were lackluster and soon over. At this point, the gallery was nearly empty and the sound the Duncan McLean's voice echoed off the bare walls. All the chairs were askew. Turned-over cups and leftover cookies littered the seats and the floor, giving the space the disheveled appearance that typically accompanies the end of a great party. At ten minutes after ten, over four hours after the auction began all the lots were finally sold. McLean thanked the remaining onlookers and noted that "Inuit art is the best art form in the world". He quietly left the podium. The remaining crowd prepared to leave. I lined up with about 20 chatting collectors in the main lobby of the auction house before I got on the streetcar with my notebook in tow and left Waddington's.

What will come of the transactions made tonight? In the following chapter I expound on the wider repercussions of this auction and of Waddington's auctions of Inuit art. This is followed by a summary of the conclusions I can make based on the outcome of this thesis project.

Conclusions

5.1 Repercussions of Waddington's 2009 Auction of Inuit Art

While researching this thesis, I asked Christa Ouimet of Waddington's about the consequences of the fall 2009 auction. Although each auction produces measurable results, she replied that the consequences of Waddington's sales are not immediately visible after a single sale, but after years of observation.³⁹⁵ Nevertheless, these after-effects are uniquely important. After the November 9th 2009 auction, the objects that were sold were transferred to their new owners, buyers paid the auction house the sale price plus a buyer's premium, consignors received the income for their sold lots, minus a premium paid to the auction house. As I have shown, the auctions also generated new information and capital that exceeded these apparently simple transactions. After the sale, objects exited the auction system, and took on new identities that will affect not only their future circulation but also the circulation of all Inuit art.

The Waddington's sale I attended achieved new high price points in several cases, but it was preceded and followed by online sales which were not so financially successful.³⁹⁶ I have documented how Waddington's use of media technologies to influence a quality hierarchy within Inuit art to the advantage of their own business interests. However, the long term implication and relationship between live auctions and online auctions need further analysis. At the present time, online auctions allow the

³⁹⁵ Ouimet, Personal e-mail interview with Christa Ouimet, Toronto, 2010.

³⁹⁶ Waddington's, "Prices Released", in *Waddington's Inuit Art Department website*, 2010, accessed April 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/realised/>.

auction house to offer more auctions per year that are increasingly accessible. As discussed previously, Waddington's adopted online auctions partly because these virtual sales permitted the auction house to drop the slightly stigmatized second auction session, which they did until 2007.³⁹⁷ Also as noted, online auctions offer advantages and disadvantages to buyers that will affect their relationships to live auctions in the future. Inuit art collector Mr. Chris Bredt observed that online auctions are suited to buying portable works, specifically graphic works because they objects can be shipped with minimal risks to the work and at a lower cost.³⁹⁸ Will the successes of graphic work sales online influence the ratio of graphic works to sculpture sold at live auctions? Bredt also pointed out that online sales are already stigmatized: they are known to offer less valuable works.³⁹⁹ As a result, will the reputation of online auctions as markets for affordable, middle quality works cater to a certain buyers, eliminating them from live-auctions? How will this change live auctions? A study concerning the effect of virtual technology on this market would build further on the results of this thesis.

There were also two particularly controversial side-effects of the auction I studied. These concern buyers and any other market players who re-sell or re-purchased a work especially in conjunction with restoration work commissioned by the auction house which may or may not be revealed to buyers. It is an indisputable fact that art works decay over time. Brittle bone and ivory sculpture is especially vulnerable, while graphic works fade and suffer from the degradation of paper. Sculpture can be scratched, chipped and fractured. One of my interviewees argued that while dealers are often candid about

³⁹⁷ Ouimet, Personal e-mail interview with Christa Ouimet, Toronto, 2010.

³⁹⁸ Bredt, Personal telephone interview with Chris D. Bredt, Ottawa, 2010

³⁹⁹ *ibid.*

repairs done to art for sale, the auction house is not so outspoken on the subject.⁴⁰⁰ I did not discover which lots, and to what extent in each of these cases, were restored in advance of Waddington's 2009 auction and this, too, is an important topic for future research. The other controversial topic I have not investigated is the question of fakes entering the auction market. As noted, patrons trust certain auctioneers due to their experience with an art form and their corresponding ability to tell an imitation from an authentic work. However, I did not investigate this issue because it fell outside the scope of this limited thesis project. It will be important to examine in the future how this authentication process works at Waddington's and whether any specific doubts existed among patrons before the fall auction. Thus, the movements and results of any sales of inauthentic pieces at the auction are still imperceptible, although they may be revealed in the future. As Chris Bredt noted, one of the reasons why bidders strive to both stay abreast of Inuit art literature and to stay connected to the Inuit art community is so that they can gain knowledge that will help them detect possible fakes.⁴⁰¹ He also noted that auction outlets such as eBay which protect the anonymity of bidders allow fakes to enter the market.⁴⁰² To explore the criminal market in fake Inuit art works, it would be uniquely interesting, although very difficult; to draw on the ethnographic methodology of Christopher Steiner to trace the travels of these banned objects across space and time.

In chapter one, I discussed the growing influence that international buyers have on Waddington's auctions of Inuit art. As McLean noted, these foreign buyers were

⁴⁰⁰ Feheley, Personal interview with Patricia Feheley, Toronto, 2010.

⁴⁰¹ Bredt, Personal telephone interview with Chris D. Bredt, Ottawa, 2010.

⁴⁰² *ibid.*

important in the fall 2009 sale.⁴⁰³ In our discussion, Bredt noted that while the low Canadian dollar has empowered international bidders in the past, the increasingly strength of the dollar in 2010 will shift this power hierarchy.⁴⁰⁴ It is therefore important to investigate the degree to which economic shifts in Canada and the United States have affected the market for contemporary Inuit art currently and historically. Furthermore, how will the rise of the dollar affect the international circulation of Inuit art in the coming months and years?

In this thesis, I discussed the relationships that were formed among players such as dealers, collectors, auctioneers and scholars in the context of one Inuit art auction. I did not include policy makers and artists due to constraints of space and time. The impact of auctions on Inuit artists is particularly important in the contemporary Canadian context. Consumer spending on Canadian art grows while the incomes of professional artists consistently fall below national averages.⁴⁰⁵ This is especially true in the case of Aboriginal artists, despite the prominence of their work in representing Canada internationally. Furthermore, there often exists a disparity between the low price that art is sold for on the primary market and the high price it demands much later when it is resold.⁴⁰⁶ It is important in the wider analysis of the financial viability of Inuit art-making to examine the growing impact of auctions and their dependence on the continued

⁴⁰³ McLean, Personal telephone interview with Duncan McLean, Ottawa, 2010.

⁴⁰⁴ Bredt, Personal telephone interview with Chris D. Bredt, Ottawa, 2010

⁴⁰⁵ Hills Strategies Research Inc., *New Report Reveals Ten Key Facts about the Working Lives of Artists in Canada*, ed. Canada Council for the Arts, Department of Canadian Heritage, Ontario Arts Council (Hamilton, Ontario: Hills Strategies Research Inc., 2008), 1-4.

⁴⁰⁶ Komal Kalha and Satvik Varma, "The True Image: Resale Royalty Rights of an Artist," *Halsbury Law Monthly*, December (2009), accessed in April 2010, <http://www.halsburys.in/true-image-resale-royalty-rights-of-an-artist.html>

production of Inuit art. In the course of my research, however, I was able to speak with Theresie Tungilik, an artist and the daughter of Repulse Bay sculptor Marc Tungilik, concerning her reactions to auctions of Inuit art. Ms. Tungilik commented that overall, auctions (specifically at Waddington's) have been important for the Inuit art market. In her opinion, they bring buyers, sellers and Inuit art works together.⁴⁰⁷ Tungilik also noted that auction results have been widely distributed since the 1970s in newspapers.⁴⁰⁸ She pays attention to auctions of Inuit art, and successful sales give her satisfaction.⁴⁰⁹ When asked about her reactions to sales of her father's work at auction, Theresie Tungilik noted that she feels pride and is glad to hear that these art works are sought after.⁴¹⁰ Her views support my argument in this thesis that this congregation of interested parties leads to the re-valuation of Inuit art and Inuit art works that sustains the market.

However, the financial benefits of Inuit art auctions for this artist are limited. Tungilik noted that auctions have a responsibility to remunerate artists.⁴¹¹ In response to such concerns, several of my interviewees observed that primary market dealers (who typically pay artists directly) rather than auctions are the most important vendors of recent work by current artists.⁴¹² Since auctions sell mainly historical work, they do not implicate current artists. Nevertheless, auctions often sell works by recently deceased artists whose heirs could benefit. Do auctions owe royalties? This debate is especially

⁴⁰⁷ Theresie Tungilik, Personal e-mail interview with Theresie Tungilik, Ottawa, 2010.

⁴⁰⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁹ *ibid.*

⁴¹⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹¹ *ibid.*

⁴¹² Feheley, Personal interview with Patricia Feheley, Toronto, 2010; McLean, Personal telephone interview with Duncan McLean, Ottawa, 2010.

relevant at the present time in light of many international policy changes regarding “droite de suite”, also known as artists’ resale royalty rights. In 2001, after six years of debate, the European Union adopted the “*Directive on the resale right for the benefit of the author of an original work of art*”.⁴¹³ According to this policy, any original art works re-sold in the Union require that a royalty of between 4% and 0.25% (the percentage decreases as the sale price increases) be paid to artists or artists’ estates.⁴¹⁴ The only setback to the adoption of the directive has been the many years it has taken (and is still taking) to adopt Union-wide.⁴¹⁵

A similar decision was made in India, and Australia followed in the fall of 2009, 17 days after the Waddington’s auction I studied.⁴¹⁶ The Australian legislation, called the “Resale Royalty Rights for Visual Artists”, guarantees that artists (and artists’ estates within 70 years of an artist’s death) will collect royalties of 5% on work sold for \$1000.00 or more in the secondary art market.⁴¹⁷ The establishment of the new program, which requires a body to administer the distribution of royalties, will cost Australian’s government \$1.5 million over three years.⁴¹⁸ Both the European and Australian *droite de*

⁴¹³ European Union, “Press Release: Commission Welcomes Adoption of the Directive on Resale Rights for the Benefit of the Authors of Original Works of Art,” in *European Union Online Database*, July 19 2001, accessed March 2010, <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/01/1036&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>.

⁴¹⁴ *ibid.*

⁴¹⁵ *ibid.*

⁴¹⁶ Government of Australia, “Resale Royalty Right for Visual Artists: Collecting Society to administer Resale Royalty Scheme,” in *Government of Australia, Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts*, April 7 2010, accessed April 2010, http://www.arts.gov.au/artists/resale_royalty.

⁴¹⁷ *ibid.*

⁴¹⁸ Government of Australia, “Media Release: Resale Royalty Rights for Australia’s Visual Artists,” in *Government of Australia, Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts*, May 13 2008, accessed April 2010, <http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/garrett/2008/pubs/budmr20080513i.pdf>.

suite programs demonstrate how government can work with auction houses and artists to ensure that artists are able to gain sufficient resources to continue producing work. Such a remuneration system appears appropriate for Canadian auction houses, I would argue, because the financial security of current artists ensures the future of Inuit art-- as Becker noted.⁴¹⁹ The auction system depends on the stability of art production. However, the financial pressure that royalty payments could put on auction houses dealing in Inuit art might undermine the survival of these institutions. Since Inuit art auctions are undeniably important for the Inuit art market and for Inuit art, what is the appropriate course of action? I suggest that a comprehensive study be conducted concerning artists' evaluations of the impact of that the secondary art market on their creative efforts. Such a study would also investigate artists' views concerning their rights to resale royalties and would include artists of many generations residing in the Canadian arctic and also in Southern as well as dealers, scholars, collectors, curators, policy makers and auctioneers. The goal would be to weigh the costs and benefits to the secondary market in Inuit art of adopting *droite de suite* policy in Canada.

I have argued that the relationship among auction house, artist, art historian, art critic, art collector and art dealer benefits all parties. In my case study, I showed how the work of Waddington's Inuit art department has increased the market value of Inuit art works and has given visibility to this genre of work. Waddington's has contributed to the business of Inuit art dealers (specifically in Toronto) and has played a role in maintaining the feasibility of producing and collecting Inuit art. Since 1978, Waddington's has also contributed to the field of art history through its ongoing publication of market information about Inuit art. Waddington's business also presents challenges to the world

⁴¹⁹ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 50.

of Inuit art: it competes with dealers wishing to sell early Inuit works, it does not recompense artists for secondary sales of their creations (unless they consign works directly to the auction house), and it has encouraged the success of international bidders who compete against Canadian collectors for lots.

5.2 Conclusions

In this thesis project I examined the catalogues, websites and advertisements published before the fall 2009 Waddington's Inuit art auction and observed the preview. These auction elements positioned lots into an order based on monetary value and artistic quality. They are thus implicated in Inuit art world discourse although they distribute information differently.

The catalogue and the preview were distributed to a limited audience of Inuit art enthusiasts who were knowledgeable (although in different capacities) about Inuit art, about changing tastes and about other art world players. These are the individuals who comprise the auction community. The websites and the advertisements reach a broader group of viewers who may become initiated into the auction group by researching information online and from popular periodicals and newspapers. These agents become new participants when they acquire a catalogue and/or participate in the preview.

My analysis of Waddington's pre-auction information demonstrated a close affiliation with other participants in the 'Inuit art world' who work to maintain the art form and its affiliated cultural, social and economic value. Through text and image, Waddington's catalogue and website drew directly on the work of other Inuit art experts. Its website linked users to the websites of dealers, collectors and writers. Waddington's also advertised in journals, circulated to Inuit art historians, artists, critics and collectors.

At Waddington's preview, Inuit art connoisseurs could meet each other and participate in common activities which catered to a specific notion of the Inuit art enthusiast.

Through their pre-auction publications and events, Waddington's auction house upheld the larger category of Inuit art which is divided into a quality hierarchy based predominantly on monetary value. The dissemination of information before and after auctions was the mechanism used by the auction house in the creation of social differentiation and categorization of lots for sale. In the catalogue, lots were ordered using price estimates, photographs and embellishing text. In advertisements, the "best" works were identified for viewers. This was also the case in Waddington's website. At the preview, space was used to structure lots into a hierarchy.

Despite all of the classifications and concepts promoted by the auction house and affiliated Inuit art world agents before the auction, the sale provided an opportunity for patrons to dynamically re-inscribe lots for sale. Bidding was used by individual participants who acted both spontaneously and according to plans established before the sale to either conserve or subvert the values of the congregated Inuit art community. Putting pressure on the actions of individuals, the auctioneer and the crowd as a whole had an influence at the sale.

At the auction, bidders arranged themselves strategically in the auction room to place bids which immediately exert a transformative effect on lots. Bidders typically followed plans to bid on select lots, rather than on works chosen at random. Participants diverged from their plans if they received no social support during the bidding or if they felt the need to react to auction losses or successes. Through these auctions, individuals were able to subvert the possibilities laid out in pre-auction events and publications.

Nevertheless, in an effort to conserve the ideals of the auction house and of the Inuit art community that benefits from the success of Inuit art auctions, auction house rules and social rules of comportment were in place.

During the auction the auctioneer acted as a middleman, brokering the lots consigned by sellers to the buyers gathered at the sale. Duncan McLean used time management, humor, bidding increments and descriptive language to balance the needs of buyers and sellers. Likewise, the crowd as a whole encouraged and discouraged certain auction behavior by individual participants. The audience responded positively and negatively to lots during and after bidding. These reactions demonstrated the shared interests and cohesion of the community of bidders.

Before Waddington's November 9th 2009 auction, historically established conventions determined the form of the sale and its associated events, and therefore the economy of information surrounding an auction. In addition to the formation of a social ordering of the works for sale, auction patrons who had different access to information about lots were arranged hierarchically based on their possession of knowledge/power. During the auction, however, patrons were given the opportunity to carry out the suggestions disseminated in pre-auction materials (which serve the community as a whole) or to subvert these. Overall, Waddington's Inuit art auctions shape what is known as Contemporary Inuit art because auctions visibly add the characteristic of high financial worth to the art form. This worth justifies the actions of Inuit art dealers, collectors, critics, historians and artists. Auctions also cement understandings of good and bad Inuit art typically originating from other sources in the Inuit art world. Nevertheless, unlike retail outlets and written discourse, Inuit art auctions allow individual participants to

become directly and actively involved in the creation of prices and values. The actions of auction bidders become valuable market information. Information generated at auction is transmitted widely using new technologies and differently accessible media, particularly to those implicated in the art form.

There are several broader implications of this research. The project first demonstrates how one particular auction market functions. It also sheds light on how all players implicated in an art form are actively involved in the distribution of the work. Sales and distribution of art are the mechanisms that ensure security and stability for producers, critics, dealers, historians and collectors. Waddington's achievements also reflect the historical importance of well-placed middlemen in the history of Contemporary Inuit art. These individuals have worked between apparently distant art-world players, broadcasting a notion of Inuit art which corresponds to meaningful values within the groups which are in reality, co-reliant. Middlemen operated to ensure their own success, but their actions have had much wider implications for Inuit art. Specifically, to suit the tastes of collectors and consignors, Waddington's auction house has been responsible for communicating "valuable Inuit art works" and the results of successful sales of Inuit art in Canada and historically since 1978. In light of the decline in government interest and spending in the arts, the successes of this auction house's sales of an art work that is often used to symbolize Canada are distinctly political. The auction house has effectively conserved many other branches of the interdependent Inuit art world by making visible the economic and cultural value of Inuit art and by involving many players, such as artists and curators, in their operations. As I observed earlier, Waddington's provides a single

location where buyers and sellers can gather to transact sales of Inuit art, thus re-inscribing, re-evaluating and re-circulating objects. As Duncan McLean noted:

I think if you are looking for an overall “what’s the effect of these Waddington’s Inuit art auctions over the years?”, it’s been to grow the market, and by having these successful auctions, it brought more things into the market, but, because I know all these old primary collectors that I used to go and see, guys who have been bush pilots and teachers, and nurses or whatever, they were in the arctic in the 50s and 60s and during that period and they have started to realize what their pieces could be worth, so more and more pieces came on the market so there was a good supply of early material, good material, by name artists, for like 20 years, and that helped fuel the market, get people interested, get them buying and I think we have, we provided that flow, I mean, if you are collecting and you can’t find things, you lose interest. But, if you constantly have this good supply of new-to-the-market good, early material, then I think that was —that combined with the public display of confidence and the way people spend money on Inuit art at our auctions all these years had a pretty profound on this market specifically. And I mean, yeah, we don’t sell for the Tiktoks and the Kaviks and the Pangnarks and those artists, they’re not benefiting now from the pieces they created, and you know, the young artists, who don’t put pieces in our sale are not benefiting in any dollars and cents way, but the I think that the secondary market that we’ve created has given it a good foundation for the art form for young people now, because the people buying from me are going to be the people buying from them. I’m pretty proud of how we’ve done, and Christa’s been doing this for six, seven, eight years, and it’s been great watching her. Anyhow, it’s all good.⁴²⁰

The results of this project have satisfied almost all of my research questions. I have demonstrated how Waddington’s has fostered a strong and sustainable market for contemporary Inuit art since 1978 through advertisements, catalogues, previews and more recently, through Websites. Waddington’s auctions themselves are the most vital elements of the market: they have consistently gathered together large numbers buyers, sellers and artworks since 1978, creating a tangible market for Inuit art. As discussed

⁴²⁰ McLean, Personal telephone interview with Duncan McLean, Ottawa, 2010.

above, I wasn't able to fully investigate the impacts the auctions have on producers of Inuit art over both short and long terms. This question could be answered in the future through extensive interviews with Inuit artists of all ages living in many regions Canada. I have written this thesis to shed light on how Inuit art has been served and changed by a strong secondary, auction market provided by one particular institution. Other auction houses have influenced that market also, but none have had an effect equal to that of Waddington's. I have used all the human and textual resources at my disposal in the completion of this thesis but I wish to assume full responsibility for any of the shortcomings of this project. I hope that my work will be useful for not only Inuit art collectors, dealers, curators, historians, auctioneers and artists but for those examining secondary markets for all other art forms. What is crucial to the success of an auction market is the active participation of art world players, and what is equally important to art world players, notably collectors and dealers, is the success of an auction market.

Appendix A

Duncan McLean, President of Waddington's and Inuit art Specialist
Personal Telephone Interview Transcript
March 11th, 2010

D: Hello, can I help you?

ML: HI, this is Mary-Louise Davis calling for the interview.

D: Hello there.

ML: Hi, how are you?

D: Good, thank you.

ML: Good, Good. Ahh, I will try to proceed as quickly as possible.

D: Okay.

ML: First, I just wanted to let you know that I am recording this interview.

D: Okay

ML: Um, and I have to deal with some administrative details first. I will read you a verbal consent agreement, so you can hear the details of the project and then you can decide whether or not you would like to participate or not.

D: Okay

ML: Okay, you are invited to participate in an interview for a research project about the dynamic and important auction market for contemporary Inuit Art. The interview will be conducted over the telephone. You are not obligated to answer my questions. If you do not wish to answer a question, simply do not answer. The study has only minimal risks. You should be aware that the information you provide may be made public and may be published. Through your participation in this study, the value of Inuit art auctions to Inuit art and to the Canadian art market will be exposed. The records of this study will be kept private. Recorded correspondence will be kept in a private, external hard-drive; only the researcher will have access to the original records. If you decide to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate, your decision will be kept confidential. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me, Ruth Phillips or the Research Ethics Board at Carleton. I will give you my contact information, the contact information for my supervisor and the contact information for the Chair of the Carleton University Research Ethics Board during the interview if you request it. Otherwise, I will send you this information by mail and by email immediately after this interview.

I will also send you a typed transcript containing this recorded consent so that you may keep a copy for your records. To give consent, you must agree that I, Mary-Louise

Davis, graduate student in Art History at Carleton University, have given you all the necessary information on this day, the 11th of March 2010. You must also confirm that you wish to participate in this study. Do you agree?

Please give your full name, the date and a statement of consent.

D: Okay

ML: Okay, um. . .

D: Are you still there? Did I miss something here?

ML: Yes, sorry—you must just give your name and the date.

D: Oh, okay. It's Duncan McLean, sorry. March 11th, 2010.

ML: Thanks very much, no problem at all. Okay, I will start the questions. There are only 17, and as I go just let me know if you would like to skip one, or anything like that—rearrange, or if you have any questions yourself, feel free to jump in at any time.

Okay, so I will start with questions about the auction process itself I think, and then I have a few questions about the catalogue, and the preview and then, kind of, auction repercussions and things like that. So, um, first of all, are there any specific sales that stand out in your memory?

D: The first one.

ML: The first one?

D: The William Eccles collection in 1978 I guess mostly.

ML: And for what reason, do you think?

D: Cause it was the first one.

ML: Yes, I guess that makes sense. Cause it was the first one, hahaha. And how much work did you have to do to get that one organize, I've heard that it was quite a bit of work?

D: Well, it was thirty years ago. Probably no more, probably less than it is now, with all the other things we have to deal with. I don't remember. It was weak, I guess.

ML: In your opinion, are the actions of bidders mostly determined by the strategies and plans they make before the sale, or do they act more spontaneously?

D: Its both. You've got bidders who are very business like about it, very calculating, and you've got other bidders who are very emotional and who end up paying considerably more than they thought they would have to. There's no overall. . .there's lots of different

styles. Lots of different ways of doing it, lots of different habits. You'll find it goes from one extreme to the other—from the one who gets carried away to the one that won't go a dollar more than they thought they were going to go when they went in the room.

ML: Yeah, I have noticed that. Um, okay, how important is the order of the sale and how is it decided?

D: Um, it's not really important. As you go through different auctions, different people, different department heads that are putting together auctions, they all have different ideas, different theories about what works and what doesn't work. Some like to front load now so like, they have the good stuff at the back, others like to have peaks throughout the sale of good material, others like to have it in the mid-section, so its, again, there's no real rhyme or reason to it. I guess in the content of your sale, you don't want to have too much of any one artist, that sort of thing. But certainly the order of it is not going to matter. Maybe you wouldn't put your best lots in the first few lots of the auction, for people who come in late, but generally it doesn't matter.

ML: Yeah, its so funny. I have been reading, obviously, for this project, a lot of responses from auctioneers, and most people, you know, state that they have the secret, they have cornered the market on the right order, and there's a definite way to do it.

D: Yeah, I don't agree with that. Depending on what you're offering, if you are offering things that are rare and in demand, you could offer them at midnight somewhere and collectors are going to come out because they are hungry for this stuff. But, no, I don't think it matters a great deal. I mean when you're doing international sales, I mean if its eight or nine o'clock to you, its an hour later for them and they're still on the phone. Its not a big component.

ML: Okay, thanks! What would you consider to be the most enjoyable part of an auction?

D: Conducting it. Well, no, I always enjoyed, in years gone by, going out and finding the stuff. You know, finding the collections, finding the old timers up north, talking to them, that end of it, when you're dealing with the people who collected it originally. Doing the research—there are some great moments in that when you discover some pieces, or you figure something out. Especially years ago when you were scratching around with disc numbers and trying to figure out syllabics, that sort of thing, and that's when a lot of new stuff was discovered, years of it. So that's one aspect of it, doing the research, and conducting a good auction, you know. I mean, when its going well its fun, because you're dealing with both ends of the market—the vendor and the buyer, and you're the middleman, its good.

ML: Yup. And how do you keep bidders engaged during the auction?

D: Ah, by having good things in your auction, primarily. I mean other than that, trying to keep a good pace up and basically go they way they want to go, and certainly the inuit

sales, they look forward to it all year, it's a big event—they tend to be successful and its good theatre.

ML: Great. And how do you prepare yourself before an auction? I guess you must be pretty busy before they start?

D: Um, yeah, again, when I was doing it alone and I was doing absolutely everything, its hard even to get anything in to eat before the auction cause its you're so busy with client , but now that Christa and I are working together, Christa is taking the lead and its changing a lot for me. You know, but she is busy as hell if its just before an auction too because you're dealing with both ends—you've got clients on the one hand and other clients who are potential buyers and you're just trying to keep it all together, you know.

ML: Yeah, and how important are international bidders in your auctions?

D: More and more. Um, its still, uh, we have a lot of interest South of the Border, Americans. And there is growing interest certainly in, particularly, in France and England, we have clients in Sweden, we have clients in Croatia. And several of them, when we have an Inuit sale, we have clients who come in from England. So, its important because you can see the market growth. And important to the credibility, and it's just also very rewarding to have an international interest in it.

ML: I had a recent experience in Poland where I was describing what I was studying and the Polish people were very interested.

D: Yes, no, it all boils back to the fact that Inuit art is so great—it's so genuine, and it's so worth getting to know, etcetera. You know, it catches on.

ML: When you're acting as an auctioneer, and you survey the room, do you notice that people position themselves so they can see you or so that they can see each other, other bidders?

D: Again, there's no. . . Some people like to be in the front, within three or four rows so they can watch all the action, some people like to be at the back with their backs to the wall so nobody can see them bidding. A lot of people don't mind just getting a seat. Again, there are certain styles of doing things, but there's no overall pattern.

ML: Yeah. Okay, so now I will just ask you a few questions about the catalogue (which you are preparing right now, so thanks for taking the time to speak with me).

D: No, Christa's doing it, so. .

ML: Oh, okay. So, is an auction catalogue a necessary accessory that patrons should have when they visit the preview and when they attend the auction?

D: Yeah, I mean it—the Inuit catalogues have been important because of the record they have left behind. You can now look at forty or fifty auction catalogues, going back thirty years anyway, you can see the market, the trends. That's what's important is the record, I think. Whereas now, it's online as well. But when people come to the preview, they are either carrying the catalogue that we sent them, or they are carrying printed versions of the catalogue downloaded from online, cause they always have something. A lot of them, if they've got a lot of things, they want to make notes. If they have a lot of pieces they are interested in, they want to make notes, they want to confer, they want to look, you know. And if our catalogue is late, or whatever, certainly we hear about it from all the collectors who look forward to getting one. It's also a part of collecting art, you know, I mean being able to enjoy it, look through it, whatever.

ML: Yeas, they are beautiful.

D: Yup, yeah. You know, I think it plays an important component. There's something about having it in your hand as well, as opposed to online, and I think just about all the collectors who you go to see will have all our catalogues in their libraries.

ML: Yes. And what makes an effective catalogue, do you think? I mean, I'm sure there are a myriad of things. .

D: Um, well the way they can be most effective is having a good auction. That's really what it boils down to. After all the trappings, and this and that, it depends on what you're selling. Assuming you've got good things, then it should be. . .certainly the sculpture we do, something about the capture of the pieces, printing an image of the sculpture in a photograph, so we tend to, especially if it's an important piece, put in two or three or four different angles or details. I think that goes a long way in a catalogue to make it, especially if you're buying from the catalogue and you're not actually seeing the pieces then. And we put essays in, whenever appropriate. This time around, Christa has quite a few Judas Ullulaq pieces, and so we put in a little biography of the artist. And we try to put the provenances of the pieces in as much as we can—who's collection it had come out of, what's the story behind it, because that's such a big part of, for the collector buying these pieces, where they came from and how they were collected, and you know, that sort of thing. Basically all the possible information you could put in about a piece, we put it in and then, we put a good cover on it, and that makes a good catalogue.

ML: Yes, yup. And just about the preview, what makes a good preview? Does the placement of the objects in the room have much to do with it?

D: Um, having the pieces, you know, again, assuming that you have some good pieces, then yes, then you have to display them to their best advantage. You also have the complication of security. You have to make sure pieces don't disappear, and you also have the complication of some of these pieces can be very heavy and very cockly, so that if they land on a kid or something, you know. . .so there's those. There's safety, certainly, big pieces we've had—I mean, big piece of stone come in that are, I mean, you've got to make sure they're stable and safe cause the public is going to be in. SO, there's that

aspect of it, and then displaying things to their best, however that is, whether they should be displayed high or displayed low, whatever. To put a handsome preview together, when we have to deal with graphics, we like to put all the graphics from one area together, we put all the drawings together and we put the Baker Lake prints in another area, so it has some semblance of order to it. And after that, we just try to display things to their best—you know, you see lots of pedestals—we try to isolate the pieces and not just line them up in a row. It's actually a fun thing to do, setting up previews.

ML: Yeah, very curatorial.

D: Ah, its creative.

ML: Yes. Um, alright, and just four questions about what happens after the auction. Were there any completely unexpected results at the fall 2009 auction? Why were these results so surprising?

D: 2009?

ML: Yes, this past year.

D: Well, we were very. . . after the beginning of 2009 which was, if you remember. . . we were very relieved, it was a very successful sale, we made a million dollars plus on Inuit art in one night when most of the world was in a recession, so we were pretty happy about it. It did well, you know, and once again, it shows the strength of the art. It's in high demand, people love it, and it's still affordable. So, there was a certain relief because the sale went well, but there was no market surprises particularly. They don't happen very often. Changes in the market and changes in people's tastes and changes in what's valuable and what isn't, there are certain constants, constant factors. But it takes time, you know, it doesn't happen in "bang", one auction, change. But looking back, say over the last five years, you see certain parts of the market growing, or going up and down more than other parts or something like that, but you know, you have to look at the larger trends rather than just one auction.

ML: Yup. Okay, and how do your sales, do you think, affect other people in the Inuit art business, such as collectors, dealers, etc. ?

D: Well, the weekend we do the sales, certainly anyone in the Inuit business in Toronto, their business picks up because everybody is in town. I think overall, again looking at the long term, we have bidders who are helping raise the value of Inuit art, we have increased the market, extended the market, and the prices—I mean we have set records for thirty years, every auction, there's a record. If there's every a trend, that's one. The prices have always gone up from the one before. So if you are a collector with one-hundred and fifty pieces, you can see how that has benefited you.

ML: And in that respect, responding to that question, do think that the result of making these prices so visible, do you think that you have contributed to making the Inuit art cannon, or the highest quality works, visible?

D: Well, I think we have helped define the market—what is good and what isn't. You know, that quality is what's good, but it's the early pieces, you know—go for higher and higher and higher prices. Uh, so I think, yeah, we have had a big effect on the market, by helping to shape it, by showing these early works by known artists and by anonymous artists from the 50s and 60s consistently bringing good value, it gives collectors confidence to go and buy them. Somebody who is sitting at an auction, or five auctions, where things haven't gone very well, you're going to be less inclined to get into it yourself. But if you have just seen nothing but market advancement for over thirty years, you know, it gives you confidence to buy, so it's a much more confident and sophisticated market now than it was in the late 1970s or the 1980s when I started.

ML: Great, well, those are all my questions. Thank you very much for participating. Best of luck on the sale, and again, I will be sending you a typed transcript of the verbal consent agreement and of the interview too if you would like, and the contact information for myself and my supervisor, etc.

D: Okay, great.

ML: are there any other questions that you have?

D: No, I think that's about it. I think if you are looking for an overall "what's the effect of these Waddington's Inuit art auctions over the years?", it's been to grow the market, and by having these successful auctions, it brought more things into the market, but, because I know all these old primary collectors that I used to go and see, guys who have been bush pilots and teachers, and nurses or whatever, they were in the arctic in the 50s and 60s and during that period and they have started to realize what their pieces could be worth, so more and more pieces came on the market so there was a good supply of early material, good material, by name artists, for like 20 years, and that helped fuel the market, get people interested, get them buying and I think we have, we provided that flow, I mean, if you are collecting and you can't find things, you loose interest. But, if you constantly have this good supply of new-to-the-market good, early material, then I think that was — that combined with the public display of confidence and the way people spend money on Inuit art at our auctions all these years had a pretty profound on this market specifically. And I mean, yeah, we don't sell for the Tiktaks and the Kaviks and the Pangnarks and those artists, they're not benefiting now from the pieces they created, and you know, the young artists, who don't put pieces in our sale are not benefiting in any dollars and cents way, but the I think that the secondary market that we've created has given it a good foundation for the art form for young people now, because the people buying from me are going to be the people buying from them. I'm pretty proud of how we've done, and Christa's been doing this for six, seven, eight years, and its been great watching her. Anyhow, it's all good.

ML: Great! Well, thank you so much.

D: It's all good.

ML: Take care, good-bye.

D: Bye.

**Chris Breddt, Private Collector of Inuit Art
Personal Telephone Interview Transcript
April 10th, 2010**

MLD: Alright, so the first step in this interview process, is I have to read you the verbal consent Form.

CB: Okay, go ahead.

MLD: Okay...(form) Just give you name, the date, and say that you agree.

CB: Okay, Mary-Louis. My name is Chris Breddt today is March the 21st, and I only have one condition.

MLD: Sure!

CB: I'd like to see a copy of the final paper that you do.

MLD: Absolutely, I'd love to send you one. Thank you very much.

CB: Okay, so you've got my consent.

MLD: Great, thanks, and thanks for agreeing to do the interview with me. Can you hear me still?

CB: Yep, I hear you well.

MLD: Great okay. Um, thanks very much for doing the interview. I am very excited to hear what you have to say. Um, I've always followed that auctions, and have collected from them a few times myself with my father but I am always interested to hear what other attendees have to say about them.

CB: Okay.

MLD: So, I think I will just dive into the questions, is that okay? Do you have any questions?

CB: That's good.

MLD: Okay, great. (3:35) So what was the first auction of Inuit art that you attended?

CB: It was the Waddington's Inuit art auction in the fall of 1987.

MLD: Cool. And what was that like?

CB: Uh, it was—it was very exciting for us. It was the first time that we had ever bought anything at auction. We were—this was the first piece of Inuit art that we ever bought, and so it was kind of an introduction to Inuit art for us. We went to the auction because we had seen an advertisement for the Inuit art auction. We went to the preview and we saw a print by an artist by the name of Lucy. Um, that we were interested in, and we knew nothing about Inuit art, so we went to a few dealers to ask about the piece that we were interested in, and then we went to the auction and we bought it.

MLD: Oh, exciting! Was it was of those—what was it? What was the print of?

CB: It was a 1969 print called *Three birds with a fish* and so it was a stonecut from Cape Dorset.

MLD: That's beautiful—I think I know the one you're talking about. I really love Lucy's work, actually. I think it's hard not to, I guess. Why do you choose to collect Inuit art at the auction? Is it because you have had success there in the past, or because they always have beautiful work?

CB: I would say that, just picking up on my previous answer, one of the dealers that we spoke to before we went to purchase at auction was Bud Feheley from Feheley Fine Arts and the interesting thing in your study is the interrelationship between the role of dealers and the role of auctions. So, when you say why do I choose to collect Inuit work from auctions, I collect art from auction because of two things. Typically they will have some of the rarer, earlier pieces that are not always available from the dealers, and secondly, the prices at auction can be lower than retail prices in some instances.

MLD: And have you had experiences just at the Waddington's auctions, or have you attended auctions, at say, Ritchie's or Heffel as well?

CB: Uh, so you skipped over number three.

MLD: Oh, sorry, I figured you had answered it.

CB: Yeah, I would say that probably no more than twenty or thirty percent of our purchases are done at auction.

MLD: Okay.

CB: Do I patronize only Waddington's auctions? Um, I would say that Waddington's is the primary. We've also purchased at other auctions, although much less frequently. The other auctions that we've purchased at, Ritchie's before it went belly up use to have a small Inuit auction and we would occasionally purchase there, and then there's another—a number of other auction houses that occasionally have some Inuit art available, but it tends not to be at the same quality as Waddington's. It's clear that the Waddington's auctions are the best known, and they have most extensive, you know, selection in terms of quality and the quantity of the work.

MLD: Yeah, and this is just starting a few questions about the process of the auction. So, do you always get a hard copy of the catalogue before you go to the sale, or do you often...

CB: Absolutely, get a hard copy.

MLD: And, I'm just going on to number seven and then I will come back to number six. Do you save the auction catalogues after the auctions take place?

CB: Yes, we do. Typically we get two copies of the catalogue. We get once copy that is what we call our library copy that we don't mark up. And then we have another copy of the catalogue which we would use when we preview the auctions to mark the pieces that we're interested in and we would also mark the prices on that catalogue when we actually attend the auction.

MLD: Yep yep. So I guess you actually answered six there anyway!

CB: Yes, we would use the catalogue extensively at both-first of all before we go to the preview to identify pieces that we think we are interested in and then at the preview you know, sometimes, you know, less so with prints, but particularly with sculpture pieces. Sculpture pieces can often look quite interesting in the catalogue and then be disappointing in person or they can not stand out in the catalogue and then they can be superb when you actually see them in person. So, it's an iterative process.

MLD: Yes, absolutely. Do you appreciate the opportunities provided by the online auctions and catalogue, or do you prefer auction events and publications be offline?

CB: Um, with respect to online auctions, it would be rare that we would purchase sculpture as opposed to works on paper-prints or drawings. The reason for that is that the two-dimensional work, subject to condition issues, is much easier to purchase online than sculpture. And, you know, we are-unless we can actually get an opportunity to see the sculpture in person or we have been able to speak to somebody whose judgment we can rely on, we're rather reluctant to purchase a sculpture online.

MLD: Yeah, and the shipping, I'm sure, is also....

CB: So, in terms of online auctions, we would have frequently purchased works on paper but, you know, rarely purchase the sculpture. The other thing is, as a practical matter, the only auction house only doing Inuit art online is Waddington's and they tend not to put the top tie stuff in the online auctions. It tends to be, you know, stuff that is not the most outstanding pieces. Those are save for the actual auctions.

MLD: Yeah, which I am sure is good for the galleries, because it draws in so many people into the city.

CB” Absolutely.

MLD: Anyway, so are auction previews important to attend, and why?

CB: Yeah, I mean, absolutely. The primary purpose, if you're going to buy at auction, its important to see the pieces in person. You know, the sculpture, the three dimensional work in particular. Also the two dimensional so you can get some idea of the condition of the work. That is, a lot of times the older prints may need some restoration. You get a better sense of, you know, how good or bad the condition is of the works on paper. So there's that aspect, but there's definitely also a social aspect to it. You know, the live auctions bring people in from, you know, all across the country and from the United States and Europe. And so you get a chance to meet people on a regular basis that are part of the Inuit art collecting community.

MLD: Yeah, absolutely. And before you attend a sale, do you look to Waddington's catalogue, preview or website for information about works or do you consult other sources as well, or at all?

CB: Yeah, we would obviously look at the catalogue and but we would also consult other sources. So if there's a pieces that we see in the catalogue that we might be interested in, we might speak to other people in the field to see what their views about the piece and to get some sense as to whether they think it is an outstanding piece or so....we would do both of those.

MLD: And do you have particular works in mind before you to an auction?

CB: Absolutely. I mean, what we would do is we would-before we actually attend the auction, we will have a look at the catalogue, we will have attended previews, we would have spoken to a number of people about the pieces and we would typically we would have ranked pieces into a category of kind of “must have”. “would like to have” and “will buy if the price is right.”

MLD: Yeah. What kind of strategies do you rely on in bidding?

CB: Well, as I said, we start off with our categories, that is “Is this something that we really want to have?” We feel that it is an outstanding piece and it is important to add to our collection. Once we have done that we would try to assess what the reasonable range of price would be for that and where we would likely be within the reasonable range of prices. And, you know, with the second category of pieces, again, we would do the same kind of thing. And then, the second category are pieces that we would like to have but we're not going to go to the wall on, and normally we would establish a more reasonable price range for those. The price range for the first category, if we think that the reasonable price range is from 5 o 7, we might be prepared to go well over that just because we want the piece. You know, for the middle category, if we think that the reasonable price range is like 5 to 7, then we might, depending on-auctions are dynamic in that, if I have just been very successful but at a high price on an earlier piece, it may be

that the next piece that comes up-so the order of the auction is important in terms of how you spend your money and so forth.

MLD: Yes, absolutely.

CB: And then the third category, you know, a lot of times there will be pieces that are good but not great, but if we could get them at the right price then we would buy them.

MLD: Yep, very familiar to me.

CB: But the strategy tends to revolve around the first category, and in part where those pieces come up in auction may affect what happens, so that if we miss-there's a piece that we have to have, but we miss on it early in the auction, we might buy more pieces from the second category, that come later on. But if those pieces come before a must have piece, then we might pass on them unless they are a really good buy. You're kind of saving your ammunition for the top pieces that you're looking at.

MLD: Yeah. Makes sense. And what are your principal concerns during an auction of Inuit art?

MLD: Um....well, I think that the principal concern is to acquire pieces that you're interested in at very reasonable prices. But, that being said, if you already have a very extensive collection-we have a very extensive print collection. So, for example, we have a complete set of the 1961 Cape Dorset prints, and there are 83 of those. When I see those at auction, I am hoping to see the prices go as high as possible. Because I own them. But when I am looking at pieces that I don't own, the psychology changes. So basically what you are doing at an auction is that you are trying to gauge what the interest level is in different types of pieces, in different communities-and you know, obviously you're strategy changes if you can see the pieces by particular artist are becoming popular and more expensive, you might be willing to pay more at an auction than you otherwise thought.

MLD: Yeah. And during the auction, what makes an auctioneer "good"?

CB: I think that he has to have a knowledge and understanding of the art form and he has to keep the auction moving along. When you have 400 pieces, you don't want the auction to go for six or seven hours.

MLD: Yeah, four hours is usually long enough.

CB: Yeah.

MLD: And have you experienced pressure from international bidders at Waddington's Inuit auctions?

CB: Absolutely. I would say that particularly starting in the mid 1990s, that the collectors, international collectors, particularly from the United States started to dominate the market. And, the response for that was the Canadian dollar was very weak, and the American's didn't have to pay and of the taxes that Canadians have to pay. So, if you're spending a sixty cent dollar and you're paying PST and GST, you immediately start off with about fifty percent price advantage. More recently, as our dollar has become stronger, that has become less of a concern, but certainly the international buyers for a period of time there, essentially controlled the top end of the market. The only exception that I would say in and ivory, and so in that period of time, we would be more likely buying whalebone and ivory at auctions simply because the pressure from foreign buyers would be less.

MLD: Hmmm. Would you say that Waddington's auctions are equally suited to new and experienced bidders?

CB: It's an interesting question. What I would say is that the auction processes, by definition, are designed to be fair to all bidders, but there are some things that make the auction—that make more experienced bidders better at the auction. A couple of things that I would point out: first of all, there are reserves and a lot of time you may be bidding against yourself if the prices begin before the reserve. And by that, what I'm getting at is that it's not improper if a piece has a reserve of a 5 thousand dollars and the bidding starts at three, and you put a bid in at three, there doesn't actually have to be another bidder in the room. Sometimes, the auctioneer will say, "Okay, I've got a bid at the desk, and he could try to bid you up to five thousand dollars, and you don't really realize that you are bidding against yourself. So there's that thing. The other thing is that, as the prices in the Inuit art market have increased over the past ten years, there's become an increasing concern with fakes and forgeries. And buyers that are inexperienced may be less in tune to whether there is a particular concern about a particular piece at auction, whereas a more experienced buyer might say, "They say that's a piece by John Pangnark, but it doesn't look right to me."

MLD: Yes, they don't have that connoisseurship skill.

CB: Right. And you know, what I would say is that experienced people at auction would not necessarily rely on Waddington's to ensure that the piece is genuine and the provenance is good.

MLD: Hmmm. Interesting. Very complicated process in many ways, unless you have a knack for connoisseurship already.

CB: Well, you have to understand that—I don't know how much you know about—do you know some artists from Arviat?

MLD: Yes, I do.

CB: Do you know what a Pangnark is? Well, a Pangnark is a very—it's not like Ashweetok. It's not a very elaborate piece of art, so those pieces would be easier to fake then, you know, carving an Ashweetok caribou. And same thing with Andy Mikki. And the result has been that—I think it's kind of well known in the sophisticated collector community—that there are a number of fake pieces that are circulating from some artists. A lot of time they show up online auctions, like eBay or something like that. And then someone says, "Oh jez, I just bought an Andy Mikki and I only paid three-hundred dollars for it." And then they put it into the Waddington's auction. So, in terms of if you're buying pieces like that . . . if you're father, who has been collecting since the 60s, and bought a piece, you live in Ottawa . . . the snow goose galleries. . . its probably legitimate. But if you went off online last week and bought an Andy Mikki for three hundred dollar, I would look at it pretty carefully.

MLD: Yeah, a few years ago I think there was something like ten Lucy Tasseors at one auction. You kind of have to wonder where they're all coming from.

CB: Yeah, I mean it's just one of those things. You have to look pretty carefully at the pieces, at the style and also ask questions about the provenance.

MLD: Absolutely. Alright, moving on. Are Waddington's Inuit art auctions good places to network among collectors and Inuit art dealers?

CB: Yes. What's happened it that, particularly the fall auction, and to a lesser extent the spring auction are places where the serious collectors and many of the significant dealers get together. Certainly the dealers in Toronto experience a real sales boost during the auctions because of the people coming to town, and when they come to town they make the tour of the galleries. But it's also an opportunity for collectors to get together. My wife Jamie and I, for example, have been holding a brunch at our house on the Sunday of the fall weekend where we get together with a bunch of collectors and dealers who come in from out of town, so it is a real networking opportunity.

MLD: Wow. And do you enjoy participating in the auction? Would consider it to be fun?

CB: Absolutely! We look forward to it.

MLD: Did you attend the fall 2009 Inuit art auction at Waddington's and could you describe your experience if you did?

CB: Yes, we did, and so, you know—it's a weekend of events, so there would have been friends of ours, dealers and so forth who would have been coming in on Friday. I think we went for dinner with a collector and a dealer on Friday night, or had them over to our house. We would have previewed the auction both on Saturday and Sunday. We had a brunch at our house where we invited twenty or thirty people on the Sunday morning, and then we would have gone back because Waddington's has a function Sunday afternoon or evening to get the collectors together. And then we attended the auction on the Monday evening and purchased a number of pieces.

MLD: Great, sounds good. Thank you! And finally, the last question. Are Inuit art auction important for Inuit art? Why or why not?

CB: Well, I would say there are both pluses and minuses. From a collector's perspective, the auctions are really important. And they are important for two reasons. One is that the fact that there is an objective market for the pieces validates the art. That is, a lot of art work, it goes into an art gallery and then you purchase it. And then you turn around the next day and there's really no market for it. You know, you couldn't put it in a Sotheby's or a Heffel auction. So the fact that there is a market place for top tier Inuit art, you know, gives a lot of comfort to collectors because they are buying pieces and they can, on a regular basis, see objectively what people are prepared to pay for those pieces at auction. I think the other thing, from the plus side, is that it's clear the auctions have had an impact in terms of drawing in people internationally and also pushing up the prices. You buy at a dealer, you pay a fixed price. But if you think about it like this, if a dealer has an early Cape Dorset print from 1969 or 1960 and then, how are they going to fix the price? Well, if the print has been sold at Waddington's within a two or three years previously at a particular auction, it gives you an idea of what the market was for it. So it certainly has that effect. It is also a place where, if you are collecting some of the older pieces, it provides a good source to buy those. The business of dealers is primarily contemporary, with some access to older material. But certainly, they don't have the access to older material that comes out of the Waddington's auctions. So all of that is positive. To some extent, it has a negative affect on the dealers. There's always a competition between Waddington's and the dealers to get the good, old collections. And, Inuit art dealers, they're business is a mix of selling contemporary and historical stuff. And there's no question that trying to survive on selling the contemporary stuff is becoming more difficult. Most of the collectors collect some contemporary, but collect more heavily from earlier pieces. It tends to be the people who are less collectors, who just happen to buy a piece of art, who are less aficionados, who buy a lot of the contemporary stuff. So that, as the auction houses become more and more successful and start to sweep up more and more of the supply of older stuff, it certainly has made it to some extent more difficult for the dealers to get that stuff. And to the extent where they can't get it, it affect their business. Now the other side of that is the auction houses push the prices up, so when they do get it, they get more money than they otherwise would have.

ML: It is a very complex relationship, that for sure.

CB: So if have you spoken to dealers, Mary-Louise, you would see the plusses and minuses.

MLD: Yes, in my interviews I found that there are many advantages and disadvantages to having such a strong auction market, especially in Toronto. Well, those are all my questions, so thank you very much for participating.

Christa Ouimet, Waddington's Inuit Art Specialist
Personal E-mail Interview Transcript
March 28th, 2010

Catalogue

1. How long before the fall 2009 Inuit art auction was the catalogue published?
A. Approximately 3 weeks prior to the sale.
2. Was it published online and in hard copy at the same time?
A. Yes
3. Did the number of catalogue buyers reflect the number of people who participated in the Nov. 2009 auction?
A. More catalogues are sold than there are active bidders.
4. Is an auction catalogue a necessary accessory that patrons should own before they visit the auction preview?
A. The estimates are on the tag attached to the object along with the lot number so it's not imperative but it is a very useful tool especially if one wants to compare works or follow along in the auction. One could and some do print out the PDF of the catalogue online prior to attending.
5. Could you describe what percentage of auction participants likely relied on the online catalogue?
A. I have no idea but during auction season we get approximately 5000 hits on our inuit.waddingtons.ca website.
6. What makes an effective Inuit art auction catalogue?
A. Large photos of the objects, detail photos. Flow from one section to another. Accurate content.
7. How important was extra information (detailed notes below catalogue entries, longer articles in addition to these) in the fall 2009 Inuit art auction catalogue?
A. Collectors want as much provenance and background information about the artwork as possible. They are knowledgeable and passionate about all aspects of Inuit culture and stories behind the art. It adds content and can be used as a reference.
8. Could you briefly explain how Waddington's generates their pre-sale estimates?
A. Estimates are based on past auction results of similar works and our experience and knowledge of what collectors are seeking. One must always stay aware of shifting trends and be able to predict future trends. There is strategy as well in where you sit your estimates, the mind of the potential buyer is always taken into account when setting estimates.

9. Do pre-sale estimates affect the outcome of a sale?

A. Sometimes they do, sometimes they mean nothing.

10. How important is photography in the catalogue? What is the purpose of catalogue photographs?

A. They are integral – some collectors buy from the photos alone. It creates a record of items sold, it is a permanent reference to an item.

Preview

11. What are some of the decisions that were made regarding the arrangement of objects in the preview room before the fall 2009 auction?

A. We set the preview up to best display the items themselves and to create a walk around flow for our clients.

12. How important is the arrangement of the preview room?

A. It is very important to create a pleasant experience for clients.

13. Briefly summarize what makes an effective Inuit art auction preview:

A. We like to make an impact upon entering the room with either a gathering of important works or one very important piece. Islands of pedestals are used for both convenience of viewing and for security. Cabinets are also utilized for more delicate or unstable pieces of high quality.

14. Who from the auction house attends the preview, and what is their role there?

A. If you mean who works the previews, it is our regular staff members including other specialists as well as part timers that work for us on a regular basis.

Website and Advertisements

15. How important are advertisements for Waddington's Inuit art auctions? What makes a successful ad?

A. Showing the prices and the highlight pieces from a prior auction generates interest for both consigners and buyers. You have to advertise to keep your name in people's minds.

16. I noticed that in the fall 2009 Inuit art auction catalogue, Inuit Art Quarterly (IAQ) magazine was advertised. Before this, you typically advertised with them, but not the other way around. Why did IAQ choose to advertise in a Waddington's catalogue in 2009?

A. They approached us for the ad space – I assume it is good exposure for them.

17. Describe how the Inuit art department website contributed to the success of the fall 2009 Inuit art auction:

- A. The website keeps you relevant and easily accessible, having the catalogue online is a convenience for collectors. I can't say that it directly affected the values we achieved for the works as serious collectors would participate no matter what.

18. Who visits the website?

A.

19. In 2007 your website contained Inuit art market data. Why is this no longer available?

A. The database was shut down as it was not cost effective. It took a lot of maintenance and there wasn't enough interest (people buying searches) to be able to maintain it.

20. Is the katilvik.com website still being updated?

A. To a degree – for the same reason.

Auction

21. In your opinion, are the actions of bidders mostly determined by the strategies and plans they make before the sale, or do they act more spontaneously?

A. Honestly I believe it's a bit of both. I think a lot of buyers go in with a plan and I do overhear them making deals not to compete for certain works with each other but then there's always some outside elements or unexpected happenings that can disrupt them. Competition often gets the better of the bidder and sometimes the bidder has to decide very quickly what the work is worth to them.

22. What is the role of the auctioneer at Waddington's Inuit art auctions?

A. Just to auction the works. Sometimes they were involved in the auction but sometimes they are not.

23. What were some of the decisions regarding the auction order that were made in advance of your fall 2009 sale?

A. I order the catalogue based on price level and settlements, I also try to keep the order interesting for example I would split up a group of the same artist or settlement so that people who are sitting through the auction don't get bored with it. I try to keep like items together as well as a section for miniatures.

24. How important is the order of the sale?

A. I think it's pretty important – for instance I have to judge the quality of one work by an artist over another and list the one that I feel most people will be chasing first, so that whoever loses out on that one item say by Tiktak – can then try his hand at the next Tiktak if he didn't get his first choice. This preserves the price levels for both items.

25. Do you think that Waddington's auctions serve as important social networking events for many people professionally involved in contemporary Inuit art?

A. Absolutely. The preview itself is the one time all involved can gather.

26. What did you consider to be the most enjoyable part of the fall 2009 Inuit art auction?

A. The successful sale of the Gould collection. It was a special collection to me as I worked on it for some time. Seeing it do well and please the original collector of the works was very rewarding as well as providing fine material for my collectors. I also made a connection with the consigner and his family and will always stay in touch with them. Another highlight was our Sunday evening event with the throat singers.

27. Are art buyers always insecure and in need of constant reassurance (either by other buyers or by sellers)?

A. Most of our buyers are pretty confident. They know what they want and they feel that they are experts in their own right. When someone first starts collecting they want your advice. Seasoned collectors often want to show case their collections.

28. How important were international bidders in the fall 2009 auction? Has this pattern changed significantly since you have been with the auction house?

A. It has been an internationally collected art form for a long time but I am seeing more strength in European buyers in recent years. International participation was very strong in the fall auction. The auction was very heavy in early graphics and some of our most passionate print collectors are from the U.S.

29. Briefly describe how patrons arranged themselves in the auction room. Did they position themselves so that they could see the auctioneer or so they could see other bidders?

A. They usually want to be in the auctioneer's sight. But there always seems to be a gathering at the back of the room for people to chat and to attempt to stay low profile. When bidders try to be subtle with their bids they risk the auctioneer not seeing them so it's not recommended but you see it in every auction.

30. What percentage of the participants at the fall 2009 auction were new-comers? Is it common to have new bidders at the auctions? Do these new individuals bid differently than people who have frequented many auctions?

A. We do get a handful of new buyers every sale. I can't say I've noticed the difference in bidding styles but they do require more guidance prior to the auction.

General Questions

31. How have Waddington's auctions of Inuit art changed over the years?

A. The live auctions have gotten smaller. We used to do two sessions but slowly have begun selling more works online instead of holding a second session. This was a

response to client's urgings. Many were traveling and did not want to stay an extra day to bid. There was also a certain stigma attached to it – consigners felt that only the lower valued stuff was sold on the second day so if their works went in the second session then that would affect the price for it. We had never intended to organize it this way and essentially, a day does not make a difference in my opinion – if a collector wants something they shouldn't care when it's sold. But it was becoming a battle so we listened and re-organized.

32. Are there any specific sales that stand out in your memory?

A The Klammer auction of spring 2005 was the most enjoyable collection to catalogue. It was mainly one consigner and it was the most superb collection. It doesn't get any better than handling museum quality works by some of the best Canadian artists.

33. In your opinion, how knowledgeable about Inuit art (and the appropriate retail value of Inuit art works) is the average Waddington's patron?

A. I think it varies quite a bit. Some become experts in certain area because they have focused collecting it for so many years. For the most part they are less knowledgeable about values and very knowledgeable about the artists themselves, the communities, history, geography etc.

34. Duncan McLean commented both in 1998 and 2008 that the market for Inuit art is immune to economic recessions. Do you agree?

A. I don't think anything is immune to recessions and you see this in the fact that the galleries have been having a tough time since the recession. I do think that perhaps many of our most devoted collectors are in a unique position in their professions and aren't usually the first hit hard in times of economic hardships. They are quite aware of the rarity of good early material and will not pass up an important work when it comes on the market. Also Inuit art is a relatively affordable art form – a masterpiece can be purchased for \$25,000. I do see the economy affecting us to a degree though – when dealers are not doing well, our business feels that. There is a particular price level that dealers would bid at but right now they are not buying.

35. Do you think that Waddington's Inuit art auction patrons prefer certain types of work over others (such as canonical works versus contemporary)? Does this preference affect what comes up for auction?

A Our collectors seek fine, early sculptures and graphics from us – the more contemporary works are sold in galleries.

36. Have Waddington's Inuit art auctions shaped or affected the Inuit art canon?

A. I think so, the ever increasing value of certain works, record prices being achieved constantly shapes the market.

Results

37. Were there any completely unexpected results at the fall 2009 auction? Why were these results so surprising?

A. Changes are usually gradual in the market – there were no great surprises.

38. Was the fall 2009 auction of Inuit art a success? What made it thus?

A. It was a huge success with very healthy price levels for some very important works.

39. What were the most significant repercussions of your fall sale of Inuit art?

40. How do Waddington's sales affect other people in the Inuit art business (collectors, dealers, curators, artists etc.)?

A. I have been told that there is an increase in buying at galleries after the auction and the weekend itself bring all the collectors into town generating business for all.

**Pat Feheley, Inuit Art Dealer
Personal Interview Transcript
January 27th, 2010**

ML: I will just begin the questions. What was first auction of Inuit art that you attended?

P: The Eccles in 78'

ML: Really? What was that like?

P: Um, it was the first time I'd been at an auction, which was kind of fun. Actually, in terms of, yes, I had been at auctions before but not Inuit, like I had gone to Sotheby's um it always just like. . .

ML: Yeah, good fun

P: So I had been to London, which I know Inuit had been in because my dad had bought stuff at Christie's, but that was the first auction I was aware of being specifically Inuit.

ML: Yeah, I think there were a few other smaller one and then the Christie's sale in Montreal.

P: Yeah, because in fact the Christie's sale in Montreal I actually say it.

ML: It was really neat going through the old catalogue and seeing how things were catalogued it at different times and how things have changed.

P: Well, at Waddington's it's been a real learning curve there.

ML: Oh yeah, absolutely. Yes, hopefully I will be able to ask Duncan some questions about the cataloging.

P: Yes. Now you've seen all the catalogues, haven't you?

ML: Yes.

P: Because I actually have a full set here.

ML: Oh wow. That is impressive. I have been trying to compile a full set at Carleton but they have too much. . (trails off)

P: I actually have to do some cleaning out of the book shelves. Now, if you send me a list of what you need I may be able to (can't hear but assume it something about giving me some catalogues).

ML: Okay, so the Eccles auction, it was very busy? How many people do you remember, about?

P: I really don't remember. It was in the old Wadd's, it was a relatively full room.

ML: And now do you go to the auctions regularly?

P: Yeah, I only miss them for very specific. . I really have to. Its sometimes on behalf of clients. They'll go through the gallery because things retail at higher prices at auction these days. Ah, but also there's just a lot of value-added.

ML: Absolutely. Just thinking back, how do the current auctions compare with the earlier ones, like in 78'?

P: Well, uh, the internet has just so revolutionized the auction business, and the gallery business that there are two parts to your question. One would be yes, I think that when they were dealing with the Eccles, they were very good at getting the word out. But you know, really since the internet it really has increased the international bidders. Has it increased the crowds? I don't think so. You'll sometimes get an insane number of telephone bidders. And quite frankly, I live in Toronto but. . and you can only be on the phone if you are bidding, but they are talking about having them simply online. Watching Maynard's auctions or auctions sitting on the Westcoast, there is a much wider audience.

ML: I have read the Waddington's catalogues online and I am wondering whether a lot of people read the catalogues in passing and whether more people read it versus the fewer people participating or whether having the catalogues online means that a greater number of people become interested?

P: Um, I would think that that is the case. That and Duncan, he and I quite a number of years ago probably in the bid to get in as a dealer, I am probably answering another questions, as a dealer I should consider auction to be certainly from the point of view of the early material whether, um, as a dealer in an aboriginal presence for about 30 years now, auction market gives us a stability for the market, so that's an advantage, but it also brought in a lot, to directly answer your questions, yeah, the online catalogues just (expand maybe) And also you know since auction became so sexy which right when that started then you know, then they started with all this value added so you look at a catalogue from the 80s and there's one photograph for every twenty lots. Now you've got, there almost vying with private galleries. They've got essays and all this stuff which is actually stealing what we do to a great degree. I'm not aiming that at the Waddington's Inuit, its where they're trying to be. And so I think the combination of the online and that drives me absolutely crazy and it must for any of the dealers who buy at auction which, unless they live in the same city, buy for their own inventory, and everybody knows that that piece was in Waddington's last year. So that's been really revolutionary, and those two things sometimes get into dealers faces. I still think that it's a mixed blessing. However, like anything else in Inuit art, we're finally recognizing Inuit art. Art galleries have put up with Inuit art for years so, they reality of the markets. .

ML: Yes, and I guess that in some ways you can probably promote contemporary artists here and host events with the older more canonical works and then it increases visibility and things like that.

P: Exactly. So as I say it, I actually consider for, before he was online and before there was this much internet involved, every so often, not every year, but when he had a really good (size sale I would).

ML: Before the auction takes place do you find that people who buy from the auction rely on the catalogue, website, and the preview for information, or do they rely a lot on outside sources of information by other people in the past? Or are they looking primarily at publications that come from Waddington's?

P: I think that depends on the level. Dedicated collectors have read all the sources, they probably know more than Waddington's does about some of the pieces. So, on that level, the level of the true collector. However, for the other collectors there are two other sources of information. One is, for my out of town clients, my photographs. But if photographs you still really can't tell; something may look great in a photograph and really not "sing". So that's one (source). Certainly a number of us do that for clients. And secondly now it's become a service which they pay for. So there are different levels of information.

ML: Yes. I was noticing in the most recent Waddington's catalogue, one print appeared in good condition, but when I saw it at the preview it had ageing and foxing.

P: Yeas, and that's the reality when you're doing appraisals. What's more important to me than the Waddington's price list is one thing I will do for each auction, (is go to the view) especially if I am doing an appraisal a few years later. Auctions are notorious for that kind of thing

ML: Here is a slightly diverting question, do you enjoy participating in the auction and do you agree with it being a fun or entertaining activity?

P: Well, Duncan less so in recent years. You know Duncan used to make them quite enjoyable. Now you get the odd thing, but he used to comment on all the things. But no, not when you've been going to auctions for this many years, twice a year. Um, I watch people have fun. Particularly some people, there was a couple who came to me with the catalogue before hand and they were all excited about it. But not when you've gone as much as I have. And they're long, god they're long!

ML: Yeah, four hours. . .

P: And then the years when he was having them the next day. . and you had to be back the next morning for three hours.

ML: Or even this year in the fall when there was only one evening. Still, there were three days of preview before it. In your opinion, how knowledgeable about Inuit art and about the retail value of Inuit art is the average Waddington's patrons?

P: From totally knowledgeable who had been at sales five years ago and three years ago to any member of the public. Inuit art is a specialized art. I think you probably have more people who do (have the knowledge) for Inuit because if you choose to go to an Inuit auction you're not interested in the wide spectrum which makes me think that you therefore already are attracted or have some pre-knowledge of Inuit art. Or why would you like going to (another kind of specialized auction like an) African tribal auction? You know, you would only do that if you had an interest. I should temper that statement by saying that I think everybody has some knowledge, since it is a specialist kind of thing.

ML: Yes, I find that sometimes if a less nice work comes on the block, the general activity of the room will go down by consensus or something like that.

P: Yeah, and there's a predictable number of people there who are only interest in getting works that are lower in value. However, I don't think anyone is likely to bid on something they have no knowledge of. They're likely to get more feverish in the case of the final objects they are trying to secure. That's something that has always fascinated me, you know, the expertise that goes into building an auction. You know, let them fall asleep and then wake them up again. It is very interesting.

ML: Yes, one of the things that I am playing with in my project is the analogy of the auctioneer as the director (who are able to manage the sale and relinquish control when they need to) and the patrons as audience members and as players and the catalogue as the script.

P: Yes, the roles go back and forth. That is a very interesting analogy. I have always thought of it as a performance art to a certain degree. I haven't thought of the audience as involved in the performance art as well. And you have the characters also, which is pretty entertaining. One character who you would have seen at the last auction sits with his range of pictures in front of him with his notes and his whatever and then when he wants to bid he gets up in a lumbering way and moves to the back of the room. And you know when he is standing up that that is what he is doing. So I am more amused by watching some of the characters.

ML: Yes, it's very ritualistic and people have a habit of sitting in a certain place and they believe that a certain place in the room is better (more advantageous). It was fascinating when I came early to the more recent sale. All the seats in the back and the front filled up first and no one wanted to sit in the middle seats until all the other spaces were filled.

P: Most of the dealers are at the back because they want to watch who's doing what. And there is a fair amount of that, because as a dealer you want to pick up information like that.

ML: So by watching certain dealers you can gain information about what buyers in there area are interested in?

P: Exactly. So I have watched. Are you interviewing any collectors?

ML: I would like to. I haven't been able to contact any.

P: There's a couple in Toronto who I think would probably be delighted to participate.

ML: Oh wow, that would be great!

P: I don't think they would mind at all, and it would be interesting to see from their perspective. And there are a number of people you could contact—even if you did it as a telephone interview it would be great.

ML: Yes, I would love to do that. (a few seconds (13 mins. into the interview) about how I find collectors interesting etc.). So this is just another question that I will probably ask the collectors to. How do you think the actions of the patrons at the sale are affected by prior planning versus spontaneous reaction?

P: I would say a combination of both. I think that probably more than half have stick to a plan and then another half who have their bidding plan and will just suddenly jump in. Anybody particularly knowledgeable should not just jump in. You particularly have two-people bidding wars where the goal is to win. But I think that is in the minority. And then you have the people who been shy and the beginning and now want to get the lot and them common sense would say you get to a certain point and its not worth it anymore but emotional reaction would say (go).

ML: They may look and see that since they have not spent anything yet they still thing that they are note spending more than their budget and everything is going according to plan.

P: Yes, I sat with a collector at this past auction who, knowing him it didn't surprise me, but he would go to a point for something and then just others would take over (the bidding).

ML: Yes, its (bidder behavior) is funny. I was reading the other day the statement that said never underestimate the insecurity of buyers at an auction. They always need reassurance. Whether it's the auctioneer doing it or other people.

P: Exactly. Well, I've found that as they slowly discover auction the validation for their purchase comes from other people. When they walk into this gallery they see something with a red dot and they say "Oh damn, that's something I really wanted". When they look at something without a red dot they are unsure. If I had four people in the gallery they would watch each other and then all say (about the same work) "Hmm, I like that piece".

They won't just wander in and say "I like that one" and buy it. There are people who are completely seduced by the endorsement of their taste because other people like it.

ML: Yes, very interesting! Well, moving on, do you think that the works that are usually presented by Waddington's meet an already existing demand for the artwork, or how much of a demand have they (the auction house) created for themselves? How much have they taken away from an existing demand?

P: I think they do create a certain amount of demand, in all levels of patrons (from the un-initiated to the connoisseurs).

ML: Do they take existing demand away from the galleries?

P: Yes, they do for the historic (or older) material. I would never have a show of old works before a Waddington's sale. I won't even have one in the two months leading up to it because people know that there are older works coming up in the auction. It has both disadvantaged us from a pricing point of view because we have to establish—that 1960s piece (that you sold around the sale), if it sells higher or lower it is embarrassing to the dealer and collectors see this. So I think that it does take away from existing demand. The thing is that no auction does well in contemporary. They're not a favorite of living artists and they certainly aren't a favorite of contemporary dealers. Duncan was doing it, but he has backed off to a certain degree so you can go there for a great early collection, but Waddington's can't touch the contemporary.

ML: I'm doing an artist survey along with this project so it will be interesting to see what they say.

P: Now something that is interesting, and that's why it would be interesting to talk to Duncan, there was a time period when Duncan was selling and he referenced it, that's why you should talk to him, a time period came when it became obvious that the people followed what he put in the sales. That's why I think it would be fascinating to follow the taste shifts. Some things would not go for anything—artistic Quebec wouldn't go for anything unless they had ivory inlay. And the bounce back to the art market, to what dealers do or what collectors do in these cases is pretty much set by the auction.

ML: I'm doing a project at CUAG about Drew Armour, and he is always going on about how he predicted the Parr trend.

P: Yes, to some degree that is true. But watch things go at auction, and if something goes for higher, think "oh good". As a dealer, that's what you have to have (knowledge of trends). So it (the auction) is following, but also leading.

ML: Yup. I attended the fall 2007 which had a lot of Lucy Tasseor works, they had been selling for high prices in recent auction before that, but at the sale they just bombed.

P: Yes, Now, some of that had to do with quality, but some of it yeah, had to do with too many on the market.

ML: So, In 1998 and 2008 Duncan McLean commented that the Inuit art market is recession proof. Do you agree with that?

P: If you look at the overall trends in the past years, I don't think you could say that. In this fall's auction, it (the market) came back. But,

ML: So, in the Inuit art market overall, what do you think is the most important function of Waddington's Inuit art auctions? I think, as you said before, they validate the art form and they promote it.

P: Well, as I said, it's a third party endorsement. In most cases as well it provides a stability.

P: They have worked very seriously on cross pollinating. You know when they are having a sale of Canadian art they will have some Inuit stuff there also. Although, how successful they are at attracting new people to the sale. . . that is a market (patrons who already frequent Waddington's sales) that they have been trying to attract.

MLD: Maybe people feel at auction like they are more in control of the price because they are able to negotiate it themselves.

P: Yes, which is really funny because people are often paying over-price for things at the auction. There are a number of good collectors who will only go to auction when they have to because there are a number of issues regarding the conditions of works.

MLD: I met one of the people who restores the works for Waddington's.

P: That's the other thing—they have taken to restoring things and having things restored. That has been received with very mixed comment. Collectors would rather know that "She never had a left arm until they put one on", you know that sort of thing, that there has been a bit of a backlash . . . they look much better and slicker and they bring in better prices. . . but again in a gallery we will do some cleaning and so on, but if three fingers on a left hand are missing the collector will make the decision (regarding restoration) not us. There's a bit of an issue happening there now because they really do slick up their stuff. Some of the works on paper are completely put through. . .

MLD: How have your interactions with Waddington's affected your business? Have the event attracted people to the gallery who would not have otherwise come in?

P: Some. The reason that we partnered was the goal to create a place where Inuit art enthusiasts would gather. That was actually a stated goal. Did it mean more clients? Only partially. It's not like it was a pile of new clients, but because they're here (in Toronto) they would come here (to the gallery). If they're here on the weekend to see the auction,

they will come here. So it was much better in terms of a marketing (strategy). . and that still works. But, as I say, I found that after a couple of years I really didn't need to do the partnering with him anymore. And I don't know if he got any more patrons. . Time will come when I don't have to do any event cause I won't have to spend any money on it.

MLD: Well, I think that those are all my questions. .

Theresie Tungilik, Artist
Personal E-mail Interview Questions Transcript
March 6th, 2010

1. Do you know about Inuit art auctions?

I have heard about auctions of Inuit art since in the 70s when my first job was with the Nauyaat Co-op and the main economy of Repulse Bay was through the arts.

2. When and why did you first hear about them?

The Co-op manger at the time was a priest and he would receive old news papers.

3. Which auctions houses have you heard of?

Mainly the Waddington Auction House in Ontario.

4. How do Inuit art auctions affect artists?

It's like an indicator as how much their artwork is really worth.

5. Do you pay attention to how well Inuit art sells at auction?

Yes, and usually I'll smile with satisfaction.

6. Should auction houses give something back to artists?

Yes, because without their artwork they too would not have any income. This would show appreciation to the artists for their creation.

7. Do you think that auction results affect the prices certain artists can get for their works?

Yes and it should.

8. Do you know if any of your work (or the work of other artists you know) has sold at auction?

I know of my Dad, Marc Tungilik's work have been auctioned.

9. If yes, which auction house sold the work?

Most of them at the Waddington Auction House.

10. If yes, how did the sale affect you (or the artist)?

I felt very proud of my dad, but then again I have been very proud of all his accomplishments. It was good to know his artwork is still being sought after.

11. Have you ever looked through an auction catalogue or an auction house's website? Why or why not?

Not really, there is none in the north and I think if I ever entered one and saw how one of my Dad's work would go for, then maybe I would have more constant interest.

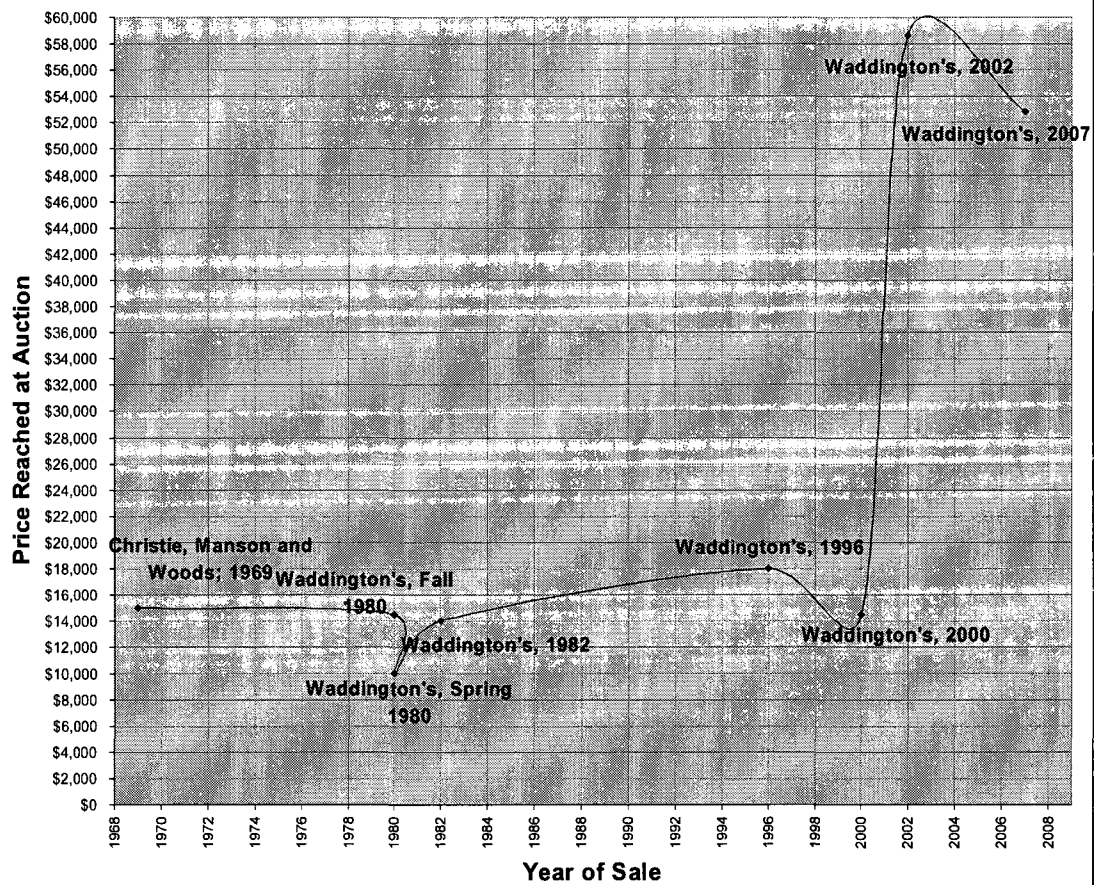
12. Have you ever attended an auction or an auction preview? Why or why not?

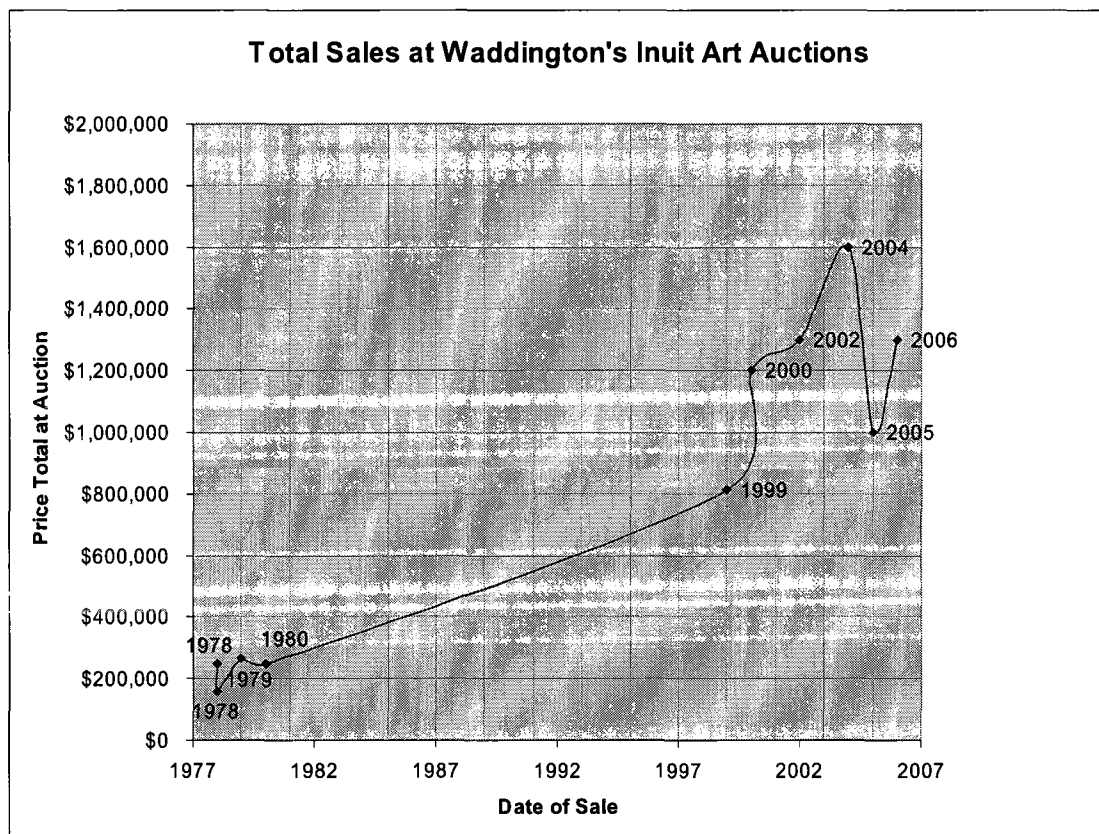
No, cost over 2 grand to go to Ontario from Rankin Inlet, Nunavut.

13. Do you think that auctions are important for the Inuit art market?

Yes they are. It brings the buyers into one spot to pick the Inuit art they want to focus.

History of Auction Sales of "The Enchanted Owl" (1960) by Kenojuak Ashevak





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[Figure 1.1] Waddington's, *Advertisement for Waddington's Auction House, "Inuit art Specialists since 1978"*, in *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 1, (2009), p. 8.

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JOHN PANGNARK
(1920-1980), Arviat

HOODED FIGURE, stone,
7.25" x 6.5" x 3.5" — 18.4 x 16.5 x 8.9 cm.
Est. \$6,000 / 9,000


Inuit Art Auction
Monday 19 April 2010 at 6pm
On View:
Sunday 18 April from 11am - 6pm
Monday 19 April from 10am - 6pm

Waddington's Inuit Art auctions offer fine sculpture, works on cloth and paper, together with artifacts and items of cultural interest. Our Inuit Art auction has been a pioneering and important event in shaping the Inuit art market for 30 years.

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Highlights from past Inuit Art Auction



[Figure 1.3] Waddington's, "Inuit Art Auction, April 2010" *Waddington's Inuit Art Department website*, 2010, accessed April 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/>.



[Figure 2.1] Long, Edwin. Babylonian Wife Auction. Reproduced in *Under the Hammer: The Auctions and Auctioneers of London* Edited by Jeremy Cooper, (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1977) p. 65.

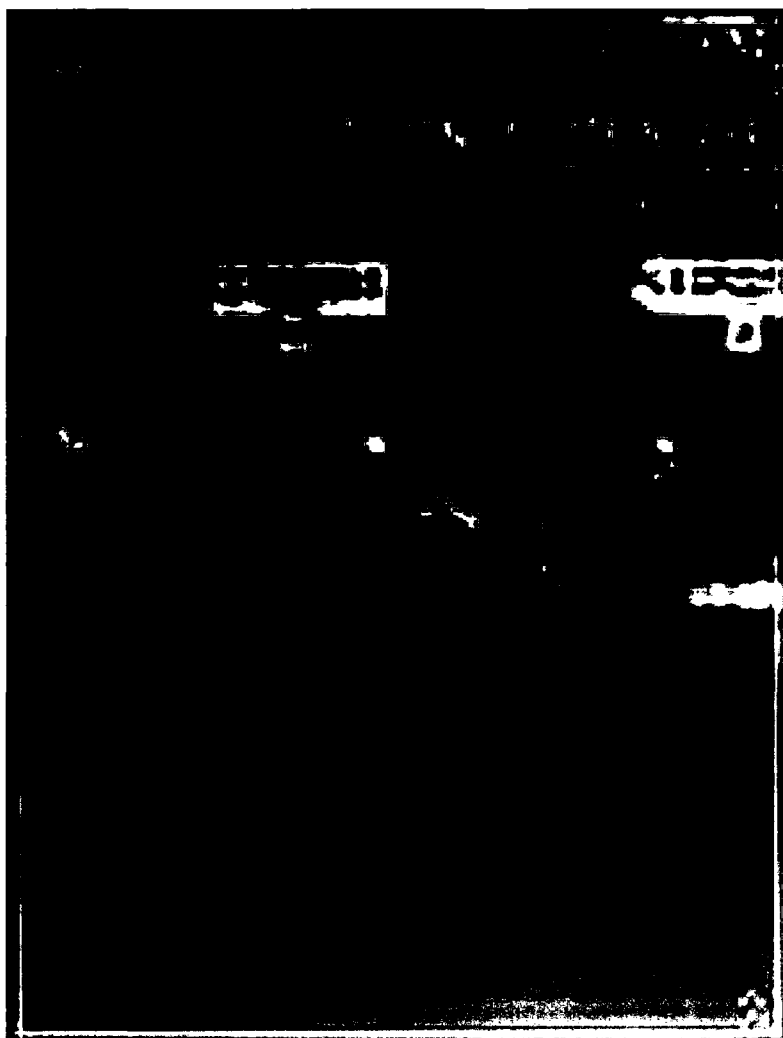


[Figure 2.2] de Heere, Lucas. Homme Sauvage amené des Pais Septentrionaux par M. Furbisher l'an 1576, 1577. Reproduced in *Inuit Art in the Quallunaat World: Modernism, Museums and the Popular Imaginary, 1949 – 1962*, by Norman D. Vorano. (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester, 2007), p. 157.

A
CATALOGUE
OF
The capital, genuine, and valuable Collection
OF
PICTURES,
The PROPERTY of
Sir Joshua Reynolds, Bart. dec^d.
LATE PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY;
CONTAINING SEVERAL FINE SPECIMENS OF THE WORKS OF
TENIERS, VANDYCK, RUBENS, POUSSIN, REMBRANDT.
BASSAN, TITIAN, CASTIGLIONE, &c. &c.
WHICH, BY ORDER OF THE EXECUTORS,
Will be SOLD by AUCTION,
BY MR. H. PHILLIPS,
At his Great Room, 67, New Bond-Street,
On TUESDAY, MAY 8, 1798,
AND FOLLOWING DAY,
At ONE o'Clock each Day.

May be viewed by Catalogues (at ONE SHILLING each) to be had as above: of Mr. LLOYD, Bookseller, Harley-Street; Mr. VARLEY, York Hotel, Bridge-Street, Blackfriars; and of Mr. PHILLIPS, at his House, No. 22, BURY-STREET, St. James's.

[Figure 2.3] Phillips, H. Auction Advertisement: A Catalogue of the Capital, Genuine, and Valuable Collection of Pictures, The property of Sir Joshua Reynolds, Bart. dec., Late President of the Royal Academy, May 8 1798. Reproduced in *Under the Hammer: The Auctions and Auctioneers of London*, Edited by Jeremy Cooper. (London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1977), p. 164.



[Figure 2.4] Waddington's. Photograph of C. M. Henderson's and Co., Auctioneers, circa 1863, Reproduced in Waddington's auction house history website, Toronto, (2010), accessed April 10th, 2010, <http://www.waddingtons.ca/pages/home/index.php?c=about/history.php>.

291-3

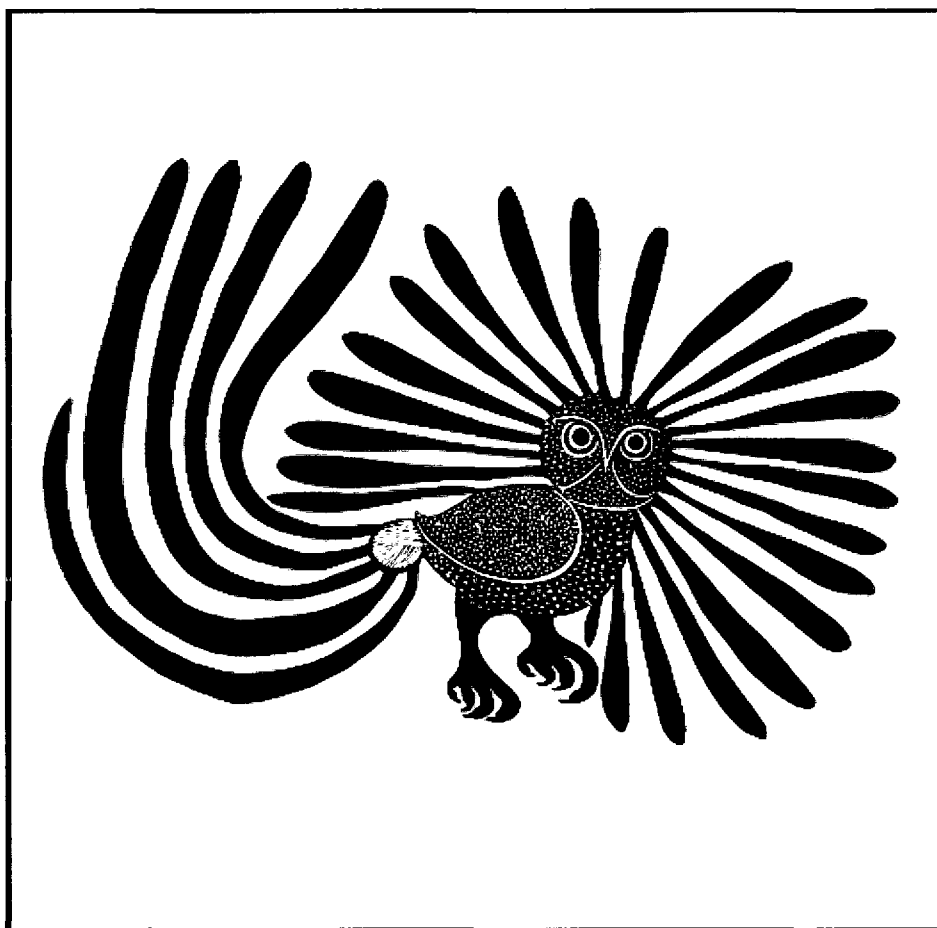
AUCTION SALE.
HENDERSON'S AUCTION ROOMS,
No. 65, Yonge Street.

Unclaimed Goods by Auction.

THE subscriber is instructed by the Grand Trunk Railway Company, to sell by Public Auction, at the above rooms, on **TUESDAY, the TWENTY-EIGHTH FEBRUARY, 1865,** the following unclaimed Goods;

- No. 1—14 Empty Oil Barrels,
- 2— 1 Catty Tea,
- 3— 1 Case Men's Boots,
- 4— 1 Bag Coffee,
- 5— 6 Spades,
- 6— 2 Castings,
- 7— 1 Keg White Lead,
- 8— 6 Hay Forks,
- 9— 1 Wheel,
- 10— 1 Bundle Iron,
- 11— 1 Barrel Water Lime,
- 12— 2 Bales Tow,
- 13— 1 Barrel Harness,
- 14— 1 Barrel Sundries,
- 15— 1 Case Sundries,
- 16— 1 Bundle Dry Hides,
- 17— 1 Saw in Frame,
- 18— 1 Box Tools,
- 19— 1 Box Personal Effects,
- 20— 1 Roll Sole Leather,
- 21— 1 Tierce Salt Meat,
- 22— 1 Mill Saw in Frame,
- 23— 1 Lot Bar Iron,
- 24— 1 Lot Bundles Iron,
- 25— 1 Bundle, 12 dozen Wooden Bowls,
- 26— 1 Trunk Sundries,
- 27— 1 Box Clothing,
- 28— 1 Iron Cog Wheel,
- 29— 2 do do

[Figure 2.5] C. M. Henderson's. Advertisement for auction sale: Henderson's Auction Rooms. *The Canadian Gazette*, (1865), p. 298-299.



[Figure 2.6] Ashevak, Kenojuak. The Enchanted Owl (1960, green tail), Reproduced for *Waddington's Online Inuit Art Auction Catalogue*, November 5th, 2007, (2007), accessed Oct. 15th, 2009, <http://www.waddingtons.ca/auctions/view.php?id=5november2007i&o=0&lot=0183>.



—Star photo by Ron Bull

SOAPSTONE FIGURE, one of set of six Eskimo carvings depicting two hunters who seek revenge on giant who has forced them to hunt for survival, is dusted by Duncan Mc-

Lean in preparation for auction at Waddington, McLean and Co. Ltd. Thursday. Carving is part of private collection of Eskimo art that belonged to the late William Eccles.

[Figure 2.7] Bull, Ron. Duncan McLean prepares for auction Eccles Collection of Eskimo Art, *The Toronto Star*, (1978), p. B6.



[Figure 2.8] Ashevak, Kenojuak. The Enchanted Owl (1960, red tail), Reproduced in *Inuit Art: An Introduction*, By Ingo Hessel. (Vancouver, Toronto, Berkeley: Douglas & McIntyre, 1998) p. 40.

Waddington's

Auctioneers & Appraisers Established in 1850

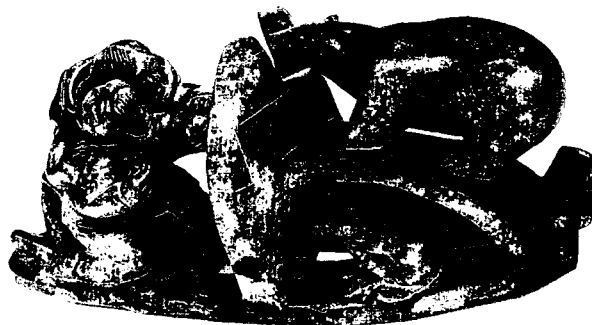
AN IMPORTANT COLLECTION OF APPROX. 200 CARVINGS AND 75 PRINTS

INCLUDING: Some 60 stone carvings from the classic 1950's period by such artists as: Levi Qumalok, Johnny Inukpuk, Thomasiapik Sivuarapik, Peter Angutikirq, Silasiapik, Sevoui Airarani, Isah Qopakualuk, Timothy Ottochie, Samson Nastapoka, Silassie Tuki, Isapik, Charlie Sneeguapik (Sivuarapii), Luke Arngha'naaq
also major works by such known artists as Henry Evaluardjuk, John Tiktak, Pauta Saila, Latcholassie Akasuk, Barnabas Angmasunqaaq, George Arlook, Andy Mamgark, Johnny Kavik, Davidee Nivixie, Nooveya Ippellie, Manasie Akpaliapik, Etungat, Abe Angik.
Prints, drawings, engravings and lithographs, by such artists as Parr, Kenojuak, Kananginak, Kiakshuk, Pauta, Pitseolak, Oonark, Agyhagayu, Lucy, Pudlo.

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7TH, 1988
AT 7:00 P.M.

ON VIEW:

December 6th: 9:30 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.
December 7th: 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.



Isah Qopakualuk, Pov: "Blind Man & Bear Legend"
16", c. 1953.



Unidentified, Inukjuak:
8 1/2", c. 1953.

For further information regarding catalogue availability
please contact the offices of the auctioneer:

189 QUEEN STREET EAST, TORONTO, ONTARIO M5A 1S2 TELEPHONE (416) 362-1678

[Figure 2.9] Waddington's. Advertisement for December 1988 Auction of Inuit Art: An Important Collection of Approx. 200 Carvings and 75 Prints. *Inuit Art Quarterly*, vol. 3, no. 4 (1988), p. 24.



[Figure 2.10] Atchealak, David. An Inuit drum dancer (date unknown, Pangnirtung),
Reproduced in *Waddington's Past Inuit Art Auctions Results website* (2010), accessed
March 12th, 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/past/>.



[Figure 2.11] Talirunili, *The Migration* (c. 1960s, Povungnituk), Reproduced in *Waddington's Past Inuit Art auctions Results website* (2010), accessed March 12th, 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/past/>.

Inuit Art Specialists

Christa Guilmet
416.847.6184

Christa Guilmet studied art history at Carleton University.

Christa as head of Waddington's Inuit Art department, handles all aspects of the department, including research, cataloguing and client relations working directly with Duncan McLean. She has worked with major collections, nationally and internationally.

Christa has worked closely with both clients and Inuit art experts for over 8 years to become a respected authority on Inuit art.

Christa possesses an instinct and love for the Inuit art form and culture, which she brings to her work.



Duncan McLean
416.847.6183

President of Waddington's and head of the Inuit and Native North American Art departments, joined Waddington's in 1978 following studies in anthropology at Trent and York Universities.

Duncan is recognized as one of the leading international experts in Inuit art and credited with helping to build the highly successful Inuit Art market. Duncan's Inuit Art auctions attract clients from across North America and Europe and have realised over \$12 million in top, record-setting prices.

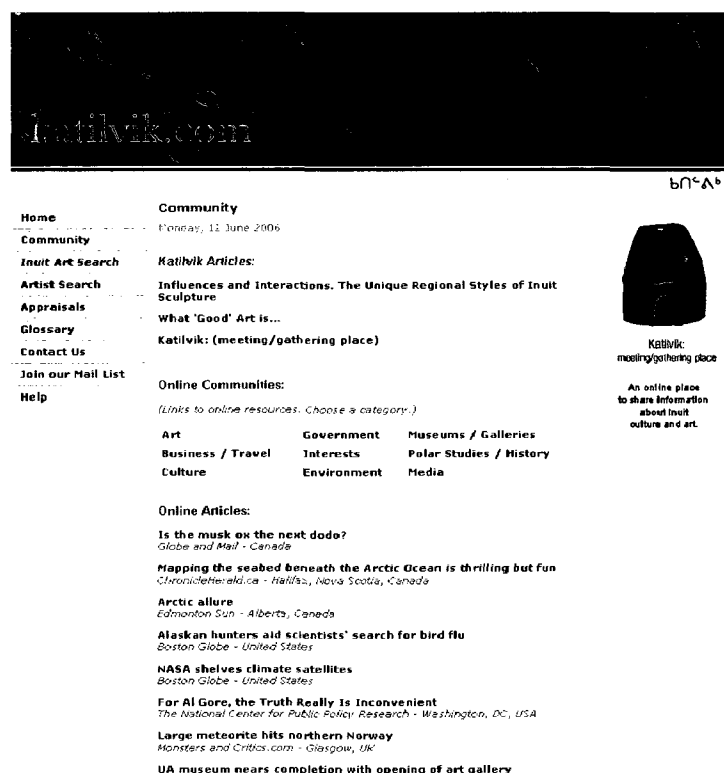
Duncan is also a respected Canadian art expert and was also responsible for the Canadian Art department at Waddington's until the creation of Joyner Waddington's Canadian Fine Art in 2007.



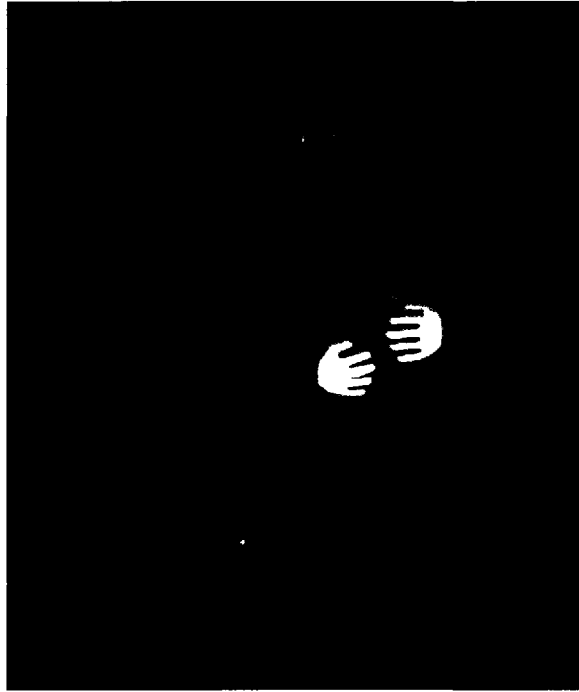
[Figure 2.12] Waddington's. Inuit Art Specialists, in *Waddington's Inuit Art Department website* (2010), accessed April 4th, 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/specialists/>.



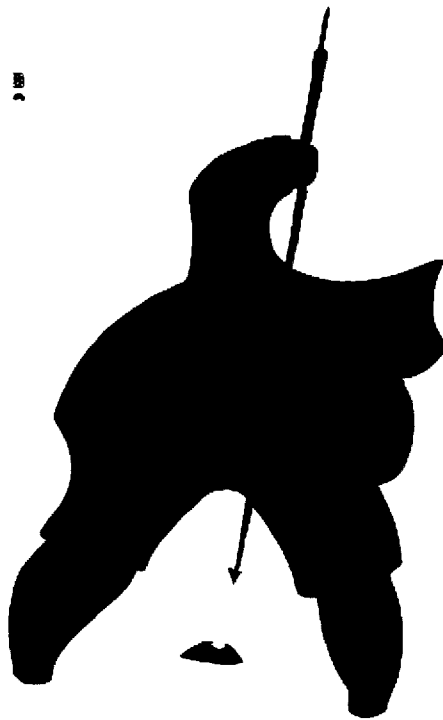
[Figure 2.13] Talirunili, *The Migration* (c. 1960s, Povungnituk), Reproduced in *Waddington's Past Inuit Art auctions Results website* (2010), accessed March 12th, 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/past/>.



[Figure 2.14] Waddington's. *Katilvik: Online Inuit Art Community website* (2007), accessed February 22nd, 2010, http://www.katilvik.com/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1.



[Figure 2.15] Unknown artist. Mother and Child (c. 1950), Reproduced in *Waddington's Past Inuit Art Auction Results website* (2010), accessed April 4th, 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/past/>.

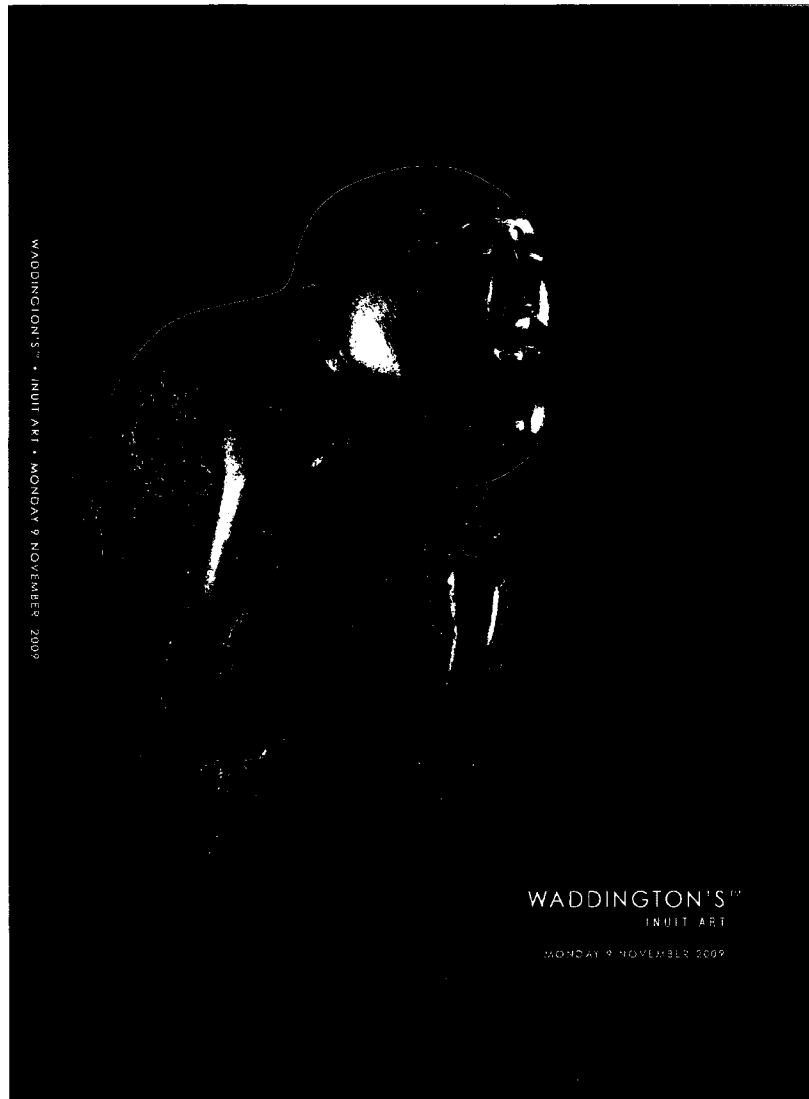


NIVIAKIE (1926-1986), EE-1071, Cape Dorset
 MAN HUNTING AT A SEAL HOLE IN THE ICE, 1959, walrus, 121 x 11 x 11 cm
 LAYMAN 217 x 117 = 22.2 x 20.1 cm
 EE-1071, 1959

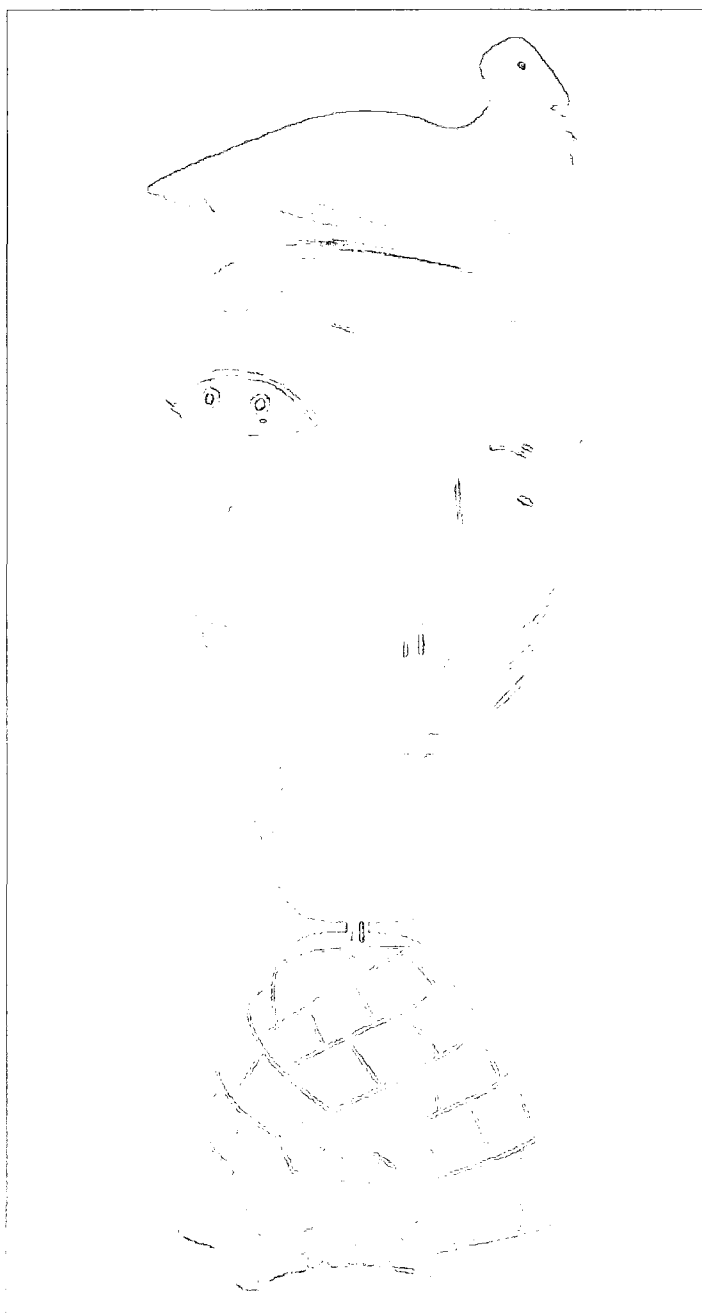
[Figure 2.16] Niviaxie. Lot 221, Man Hunting at a Seal Hole in the Ice (1959, Cape Dorset), Reproduced in *Waddington's Inuit art auction catalogue, November 9th, 2009*, (Toronto, Waddington's: 2009), p. 89.



[Figure 2.17] Unknown artist. Mother and Child (c. 1950), Reproduced in *Waddington's Past Inuit Art Auction Results website* (2010), accessed April 4th, 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/past/>.



[Figure 3.1] Waddington's. *Waddington's Inuit Art Auction Catalogue: Monday November 2009*, (Toronto: Waddington's, 2009).



289
DAVID RUBEN PIQTOKUN, W3-1119, Toronto
TO TRAP THE MISCHIEVOUS BIRD-MAN,
stone, signed and dated 2006,
28.5" x 11" x 10" — 72.4 x 28 x 25.5 cm

Est. \$6,000/9,000

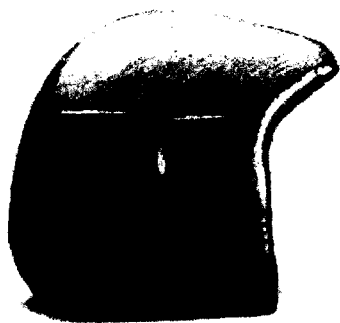
[Figure 3.2] Piqtoukun, David Ruben. Lot 289, To Trap the Mischievous Bird Man (2006), Reproduced in *Waddington's Inuit art auction catalogue, November 9th, 2009*, (Toronto: Waddington's, 2009), p. 115.



34. Sedna Lives, 1995
limestone, African wonderstone,
Arizona pipestone
33.2 x 74.0 x 12.3
Private Collection

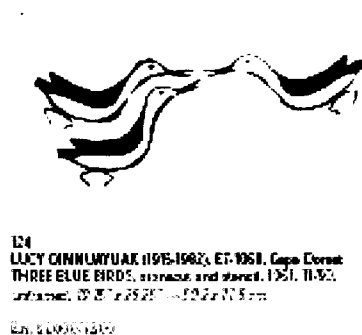
In the old stories, Sedna ruled our lives. Even though her importance has diminished, her image will always be in our memory and art.

[Figure 3.3] Piqtoukun, David Ruben. *Sedna Lives* (1995), Reproduced in *Between two worlds: Sculpture by David Ruben Piqtoukun*, Edited by Darlene Wight. (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1995), p. 21.

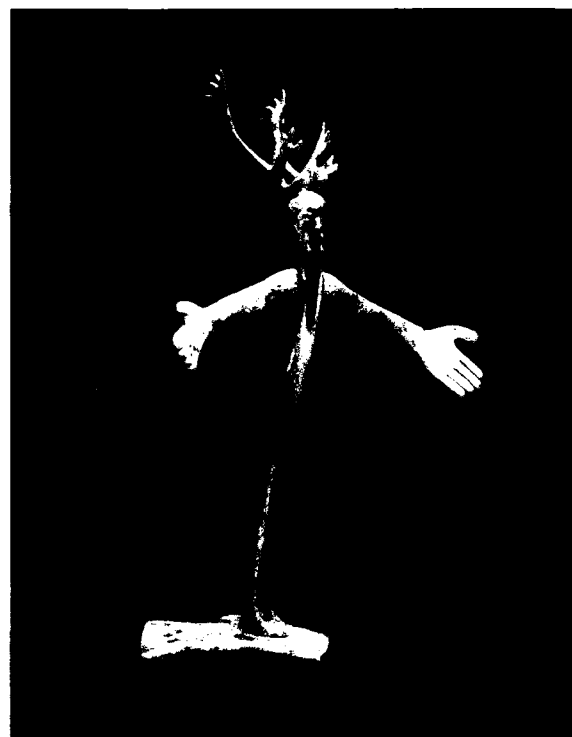


13:
JOHN PANGNARK (1920-1982), ET-924, Arctic
HOODED FACE, stone, algal (in plabell), 2.75" x 3.1" x 1.1" — 7 x 7.6 x 2.8 cm.
En. 01500-2050

[Figure 3.4] Pangnark, John. Lot 195, Hooded Face (c. 1970s), Reproduced in *Waddington's Inuit art auction catalogue, November 9th, 2009*, (Toronto: Waddington's, 2009), p. 76.



[Figure 3.5] Qinnuayuak, Lucy. Lot 124, Three Blue Birds (1961), Reproduced in *Waddington's Inuit art auction catalogue, November 9th, 2009*, (Toronto: Waddington's, 2009), p. 50.



[Figure 3.6] Assivaaryuk, Peter. Lot 87, Caribou Shaman (date unknown), Reproduced in *Waddington's Inuit art auction catalogue, November 9th, 2009*, (Toronto: Waddington's, 2009), p. 30.



115

KENOJUAK ASHEVAK (1927-), E7-1035, Cape Dorset
WOMAN WHO LIVES IN THE SUN, stonecut, (yellow), 1960, artists proof 3, framed, 23.25" x 28.25"
 — 59.1 x 71.6 cm.

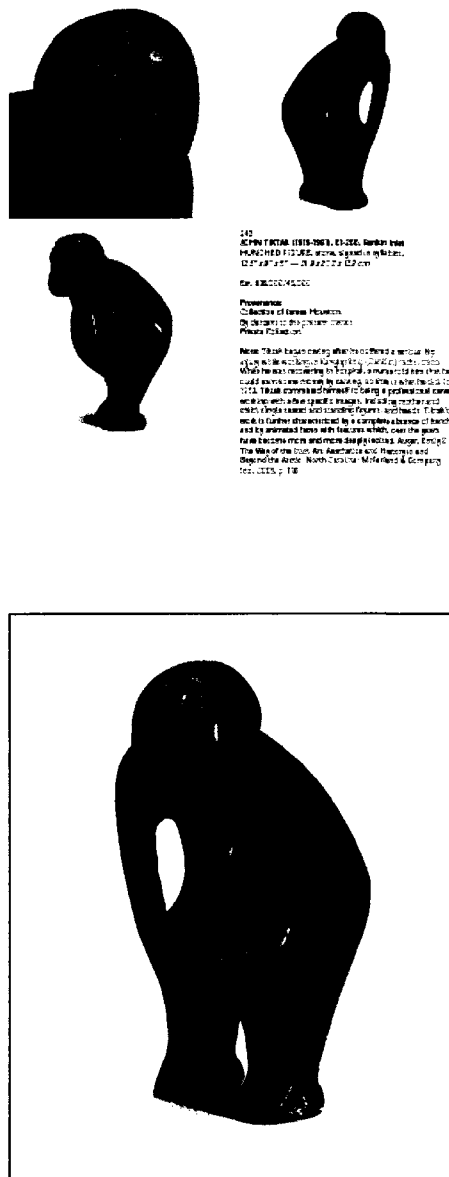
Est. \$10,000/15,000

Note: In the Eskimo culture the sun is feminine, 'belonging to woman'. In her very personal style, Kenojuak portrays a joyful woman wearing the classic chin tattoo.
Art of the Eskimo: Prints, Signum Press, Montreal, 1974, pg. 23

In Inuit mythology the sun and the moon were originally a sister and brother who had an incestuous relationship. In her anguish at discovering the identity of her lover, the sister rushed out of the snow house carrying a brightly burning torch. She was followed by her brother, whose torch was extinguished as they rose to the sky, where she became the sun and he the moon.
The Inuit Print, The National Museum of Man, Ottawa, 1977, pg. 69

Half of this print edition was pulled in red, the other in yellow.

[Figure 3.7] Ashevak, Kenojuak. Lot 115, *Woman who lives in the Sun* (1960), Reproduced in *Waddington's Inuit art auction catalogue, November 9th, 2009*, (Toronto: Waddington's, 2009), p. 47.





34
KRANGUN
DOG TEAM PULLING HUNTER ON KOMATIK, wood, leather, fur, caribou,
 ca. 1960, bears stamp to the underside, Edna Craft, Charles Carmichael
 Hospital, Edmonton, *57 x 26.5 x 57" - 13.3 x 67.3 x 12.7 cm.*

Est. \$1500/2,000

Note: In 1946, Governor General of Canada Lord Alexander opened The Charles Carmichael tuberculosis hospital in Edmonton. It was named after Charles Carmichael (1879-1961), a geologist and map-maker dedicated to the exploration of Canada's North. Between 1946 and 1963 the hospital operated an occupational therapy program for aboriginal patients. In 1960, the hospital donated a collection of over 400 arts and crafts items made by patients in the program to the Royal Alberta Museum.

[Figure 3.9] Krangun, Lot 34, Dog Team Pulling Hunter on Komatik (c. 1960),
 Reproduced in *Waddington's Inuit art auction catalogue, November 9th, 2009*,
 (Toronto: Waddington's, 2009), p. 15.

INUIT ART

AUCTION

Monday 9 November 2009 at 6 PM

VIEW

Saturday 7 November 11 AM - 4 PM


Sunday 8 November 11 AM - 4 PM

Monday 9 November 10 AM - 2 PM

**Lot numbers in red indicate items from
 the Ron Gould Collection of Inuit Art.**

[Figure 3.10] Waddington's, Lot numbers in red indicate items from the Ron Gould
 Collection of Inuit Art. In *Waddington's Inuit art auction catalogue, November 9th,
 2009*, (Toronto: Waddington's, 2009), p. 3.

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Inuit Art Auction Highlights

Monday 19 April 2010 at 8pm

VIEW
 Monday 19 April from 11am - 4pm
 Monday 19 April from 10pm - 3pm

Waddington's Inuit Art auctions offer fine sculpture, works in cloth and paper, together with artefacts and items of cultural interest. Our Inuit Art auction has been a pioneering and important event in shaping the Inuit art market for 30 years.

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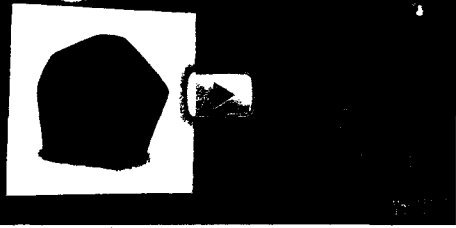
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Chief Curator
[Sandra Macpherson](#) 416.647.6191
 or order from our [online store](#)

Absentee Bids
 or order from our [online store](#)

Inuit Highlights – Spring 2010

Waddington's Inuit Art Auction, 19 April 2010



0:00 / 1:49

With over \$500,000 spent in one evening, Inuit art has again shown great strength at auction. Our spring 2010 offering was dominated by many works by Barnabas Arnasungaaq, Judas Ulluluaq, John Pangnark, the great classic period pieces and early graphics from the Kinngait Studio (Cape Dorset), all of which did extremely well maintaining the trend of an ever strengthening and expanding market.

Despite economic uncertainty, an unusually strong Canadian dollar and a cloud of volcanic ash, our international buyers were again active acquiring several highlight pieces. Such is the passion of Inuit art collectors everywhere.

1 2 3

[Figure 3.11] Waddington's. Live Auctions. In *Waddington's Inuit art department website* (Spring 2010), accessed April 4th, 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/19april2010/highlights/0/>.

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GEORGE AKIKULU (1940-)
REACHED BY A POLAR BEAR

Inuit Art Online Auction

Auction Starts:
Monday 22 March 2010 at 9 am
Auction Ends:
Thursday 25 March 2010 at 2 pm *

Live Preview: Tuesday 23 March from 10 am - 5pm







This auction includes a selection of sculpture & works on cloth and paper

[View the Auction Highlights](#)
[View the Online Catalogue](#)

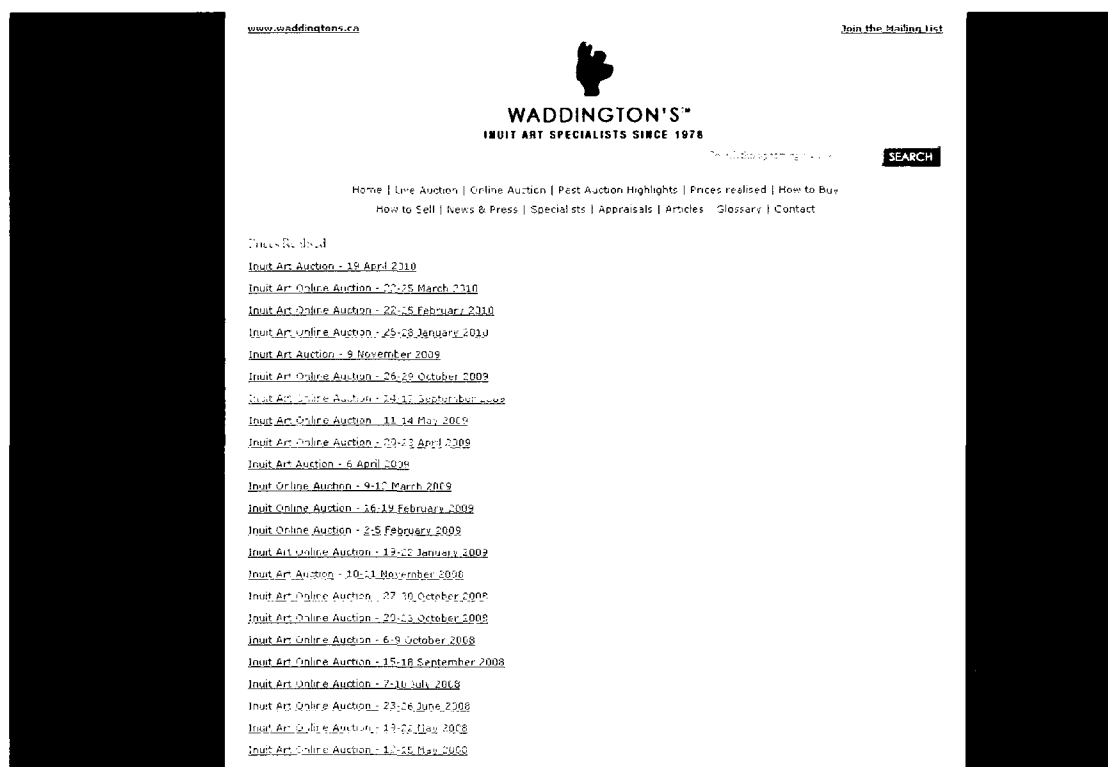
Search the online auction

Download Photo Booklet PDF (9.1 MB)
Download Catalogue PDF (64.6 KB)

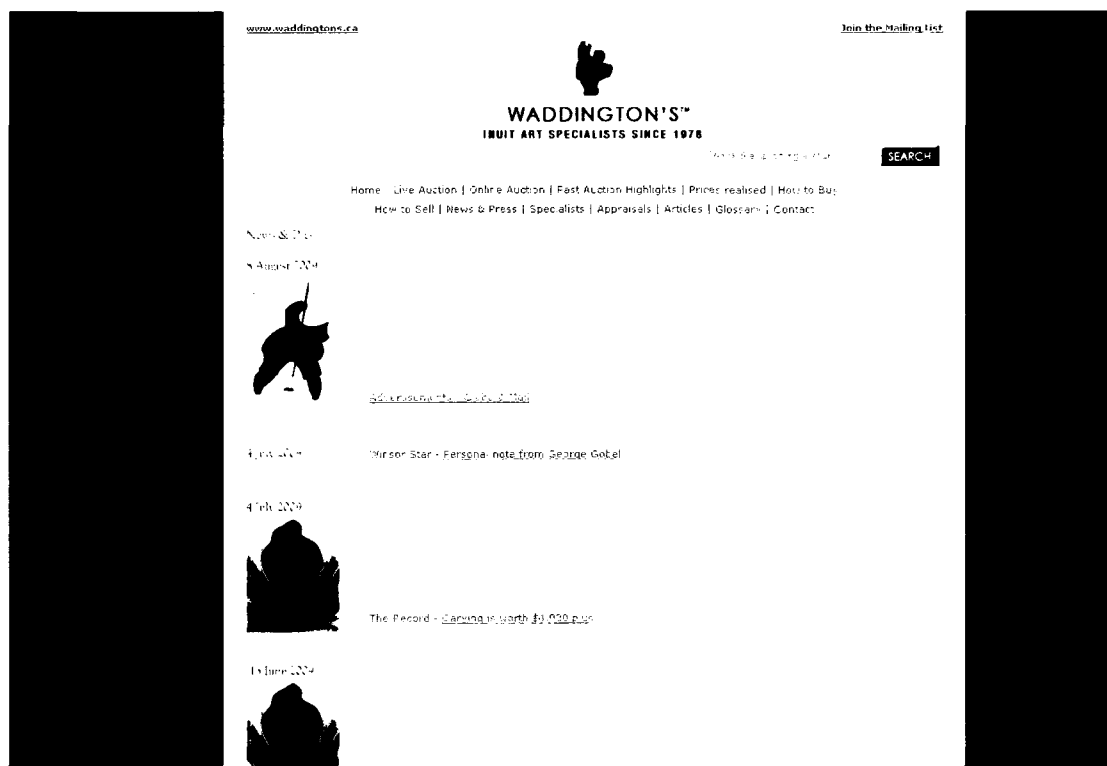
Selected lots

 LOT 17: TOMIAY TAPPAHIE JP. (1964-). Iqilut WAUPTING POLAR BEAR EST. \$100 / 200	 LOT 18: TOMIAY TAPPAHIE JP. (1964-). Iqilut POLAR BEAR WITH CAUGHT SEAL EST. \$150 / 250	 LOT 20: SAHINIYIASSAR (1905-1966). Kangasut STANDING WOMAN EST. \$250 / 350
		

[Figure 3.12] Waddington's. Online Auctions. In *Waddington's Inuit art department website* (Spring 2010), accessed April 4th, 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/online/>.



[Figure 3.13] Waddington's. Prices Released. In *Waddington's Inuit art department website* (Spring 2010), accessed April 4th, 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/realised/>.



[Figure 3.14] Waddington's. News and Press. In *Waddington's Inuit art department website* (Spring 2010), accessed April 4th, 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/press/>.



[Figure 3.15] Waddington's. Inuit Art Articles. In *Waddington's Inuit art department website* (Spring 2010), accessed April 4th, 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/articles/>.

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KARL FABERGÉ, Moscow
RUSSIAN SILVER-GILT AND
CLOISONNÉ ENAMEL KOVSH,
1899-1908
Price realised: \$142,800

NIVIAXIE, Cape Dorset
MAN HUNTING AT A SEAL HOLE IN THE ICE
Price realised: \$64,600

TOM THOMSON,
VIEW FROM A HEIGHT, ALGONQUIN PARK, FALL, 1916
Price realised: \$1,207,500

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[Figure 3.16] Waddington's. Advertisement for upcoming auctions: "Waddington's, Canada's Auction House since 1850." In *Vernissage* (Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada) Vol. 10, no. 1 (2009), pg. 4.



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CANADA'S MOST TRUSTED AND RESPECTED AUCTION HOUSE SINCE 1850

JOYNER
CANADIAN FINE ART

SEEKING CONSIGNMENTS FOR OUR FALL AUCTIONS

<p>INUIT ART AUCTION Consignment Deadline: Friday 4 September</p>  <p>NIV AXIE, Cape Dorset MAN HUNTING A SEAL HOLDING THE REEF Price realised: \$64,600</p>	<p>JOYNER CANADIAN FINE ART Consignment Deadline: Monday 31 August</p>  <p>WILLIAM KURTJEK, R.C.A. BALSAV AVENUE AFTER HEAVY SNOWFALL Price realised: \$241,500</p>	<p>INTERNATIONAL ART Consignment Deadline: Friday 2 October</p>  <p>ARTHUR JOHN FISLEY (1861-1937) A DEAD HEAT Price realised: \$221,000</p>
<p>INTERNATIONAL PRINT AUCTION Consignment Deadline: Friday 11 September</p>  <p>ANDY WARHOL (1928-1987), MAO, Colour silk screen Price realised: \$45,600</p>	<p>DECORATIVE ART & DESIGN AUCTION Consignment Deadline: Friday 9 October</p>  <p>KARL FABERGE, Moscow Russian Silver-Gilt and Cloisonné Enamel Kowsh Price realised: \$142,800</p>	<p>FINE JEWELLERY AUCTION Consignment Deadline: Friday 30 September</p>  <p>18k White Gold Diamond Necklace Price realised: \$45,600</p>

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[Figure 3.17] Waddington's. Advertisement for upcoming auctions: "Waddington's, Canada's most trusted and respected Auction House since 1850." In *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto: Canada Newspapers Co., Ltd.) Reproduced in *Waddington's Inuit art department website* (Spring 2010), accessed April 4th, 2010, <http://inuit.waddingtons.ca/articles/globe-aug2009/>

WADDINGTON'S™
 INUIT ART SPECIALISTS SINCE 1978

**SEEKING CONSIGNMENTS FOR
 OUR FALL INUIT ART AUCTION**
Consignment Deadline: 11 September 2009

Spring 2009 Auction Results:
www.waddingtons.ca/inuit

Inuit Art Specialist:
 Christa Quimet 416.847.6184
co@waddingtons.ca

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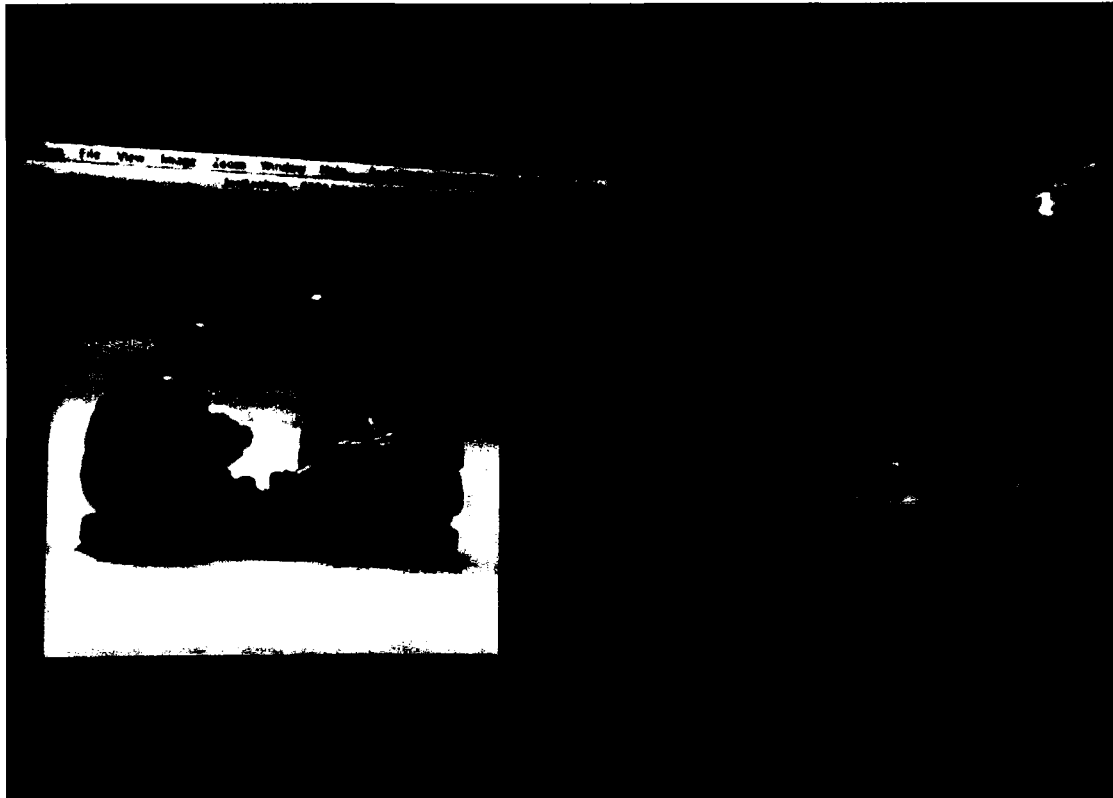
www.waddingtons.ca



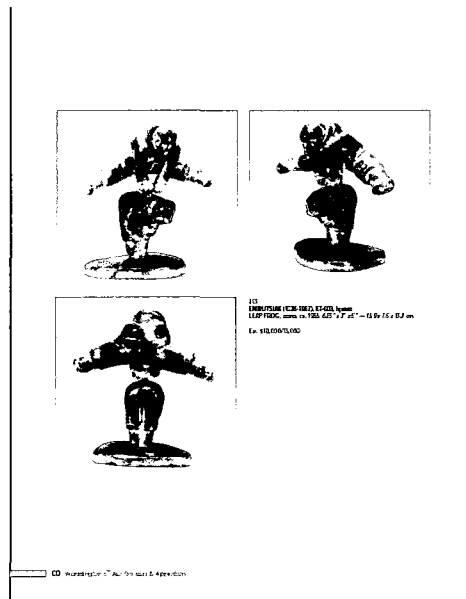
Unidentified,
 MOTHER AND CHILD. ca. 1950

PRICE REALISED: \$25,200

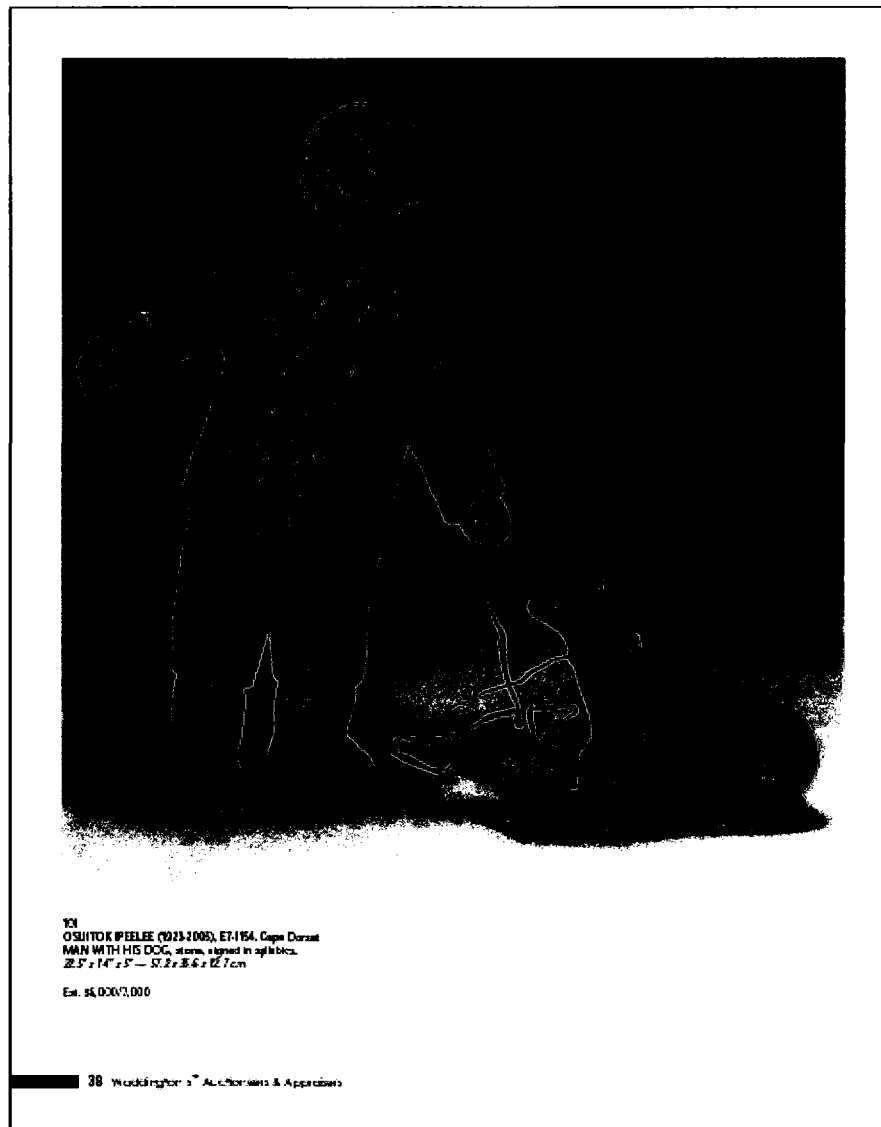
[Figure 3.18] Waddington's. Advertisement for upcoming auctions: "Waddington's, Inuit Art Specialists since 1978." In *American Indian Art* (Scottsdale, Arizona: American Indian Art, Inc.) vol. 33, no. 1 (2009), pg. 14.



[Figure 4.1] Waddington's. Waddington's Auction of Inuit Art, November 9 2009. in *Waddington's Channel, YouTube* (November 9th, 2009), accessed December 20th, 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/user/waddingtons#p/u/25/w7Pnf9w7gcc>.



[Figure 4.2] Ennutsiak. Lot 205, Leap Frog (c.1955). Reproduced in *Waddington's Inuit art auction catalogue, November 9th, 2009*, (Toronto: Waddington's, 2009), p. 80-81.



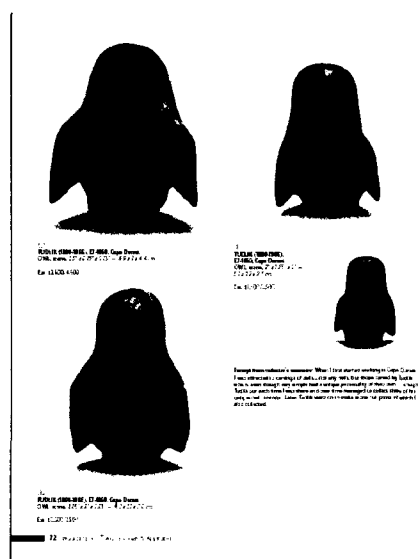
[Figure 4.3] Ipeelee, Osuitok. Lot 101, Man with his dog (date unknown),
Reproduced in *Waddington's Inuit art auction catalogue, November 9th, 2009*,
(Toronto: Waddington's, 2009), p. 38.



296
UNIDENTIFIED
CARIBOU AND HUNTER, bone antler, stone,
13" x 21" x 18" — 33 x 53.4 x 45.7 cm

Est. \$800-1200

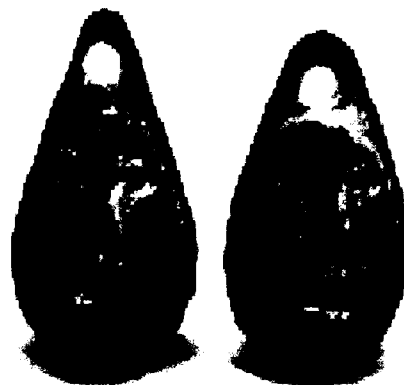
[Figure 4.4] Unknown artist, Lot 296, Caribou and Hunter (date unknown),
Reproduced in *Waddington's Inuit art auction catalogue, November 9th, 2009*,
(Toronto: Waddington's, 2009), p. 117.



[Figure 4.5] Tudlik. Lot 181, Owl (date unknown); Lot 182, Owl (date unknown);
Lot 183, owl (date unknown); Reproduced in *Waddington's Inuit art auction*
catalogue, November 9th, 2009 (Toronto: Waddington's, 2009), p. 72.



163
CHARLIE SIVUARAPIK (1911-1968), E9-1460,
 Povungnituk
OTTER IN TRAP, stone, ca. 1960, signed in
 syllabics, 27 x 12.5 x 13.5 = 5.6 x 3.2 x 3.9 cm
 Est. \$350000



164
UNIDENTIFIED
TWO AMULETS (FACES), stone, ca. 1960,
 17.5 x 7 x 3.5 = 4.0 x 1.8 x 2.4 cm
 Est. \$100000

[Figure 4.6] Sivuarapik, Lot 163, Otter in a Trap (c. 1960), Reproduced in *Waddington's Inuit art auction catalogue, November 9th, 2009* (Toronto: Waddington's, 2009), p. 67.

54
 PARR (1893-1969), E7-1022, Cape Dorset
 UNTITLED, graphite drawing, 1961,
 unframed, 24" x 18" — 61 x 45.7 cm.
 Est. \$3,000/5,000



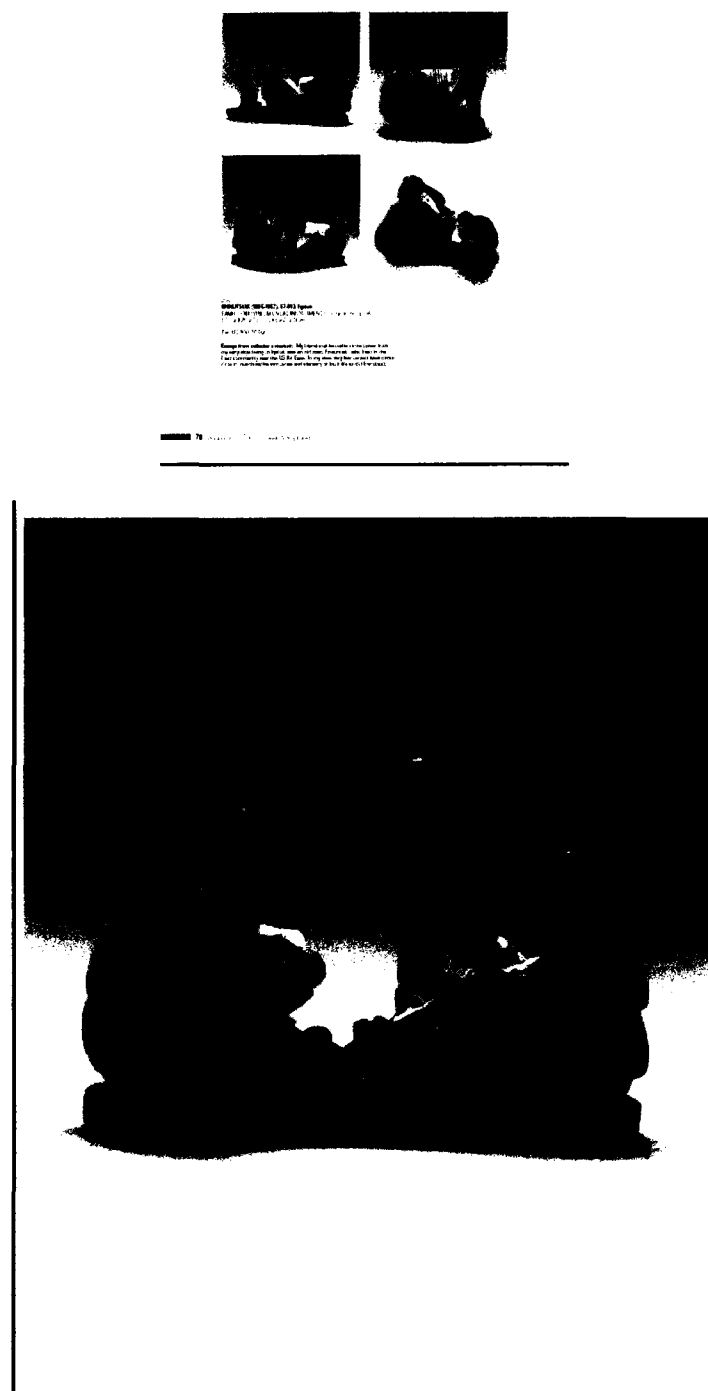
55
 PARR (1893-1969), E7-1022, Cape Dorset
 UNTITLED, graphite drawing, 1961, unframed, 24" x 18" — 61 x 45.7 cm.
 Est. \$3,000/5,000



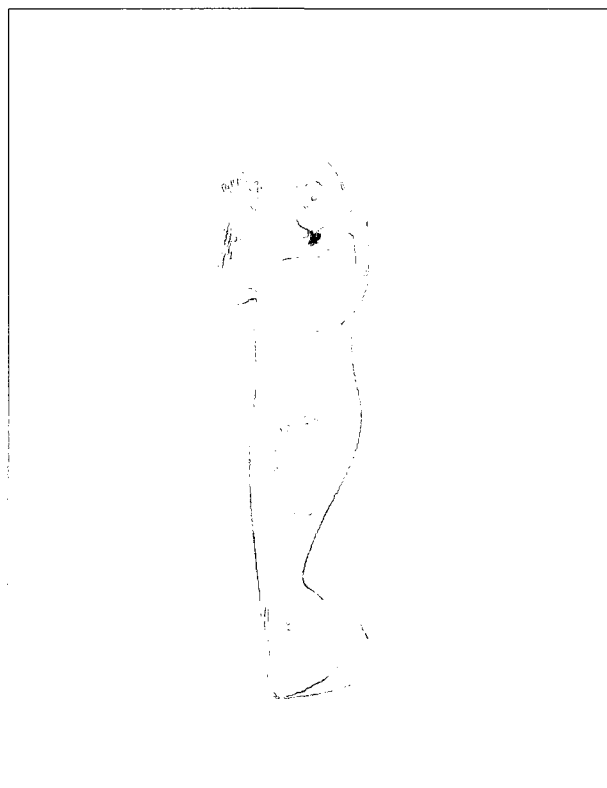
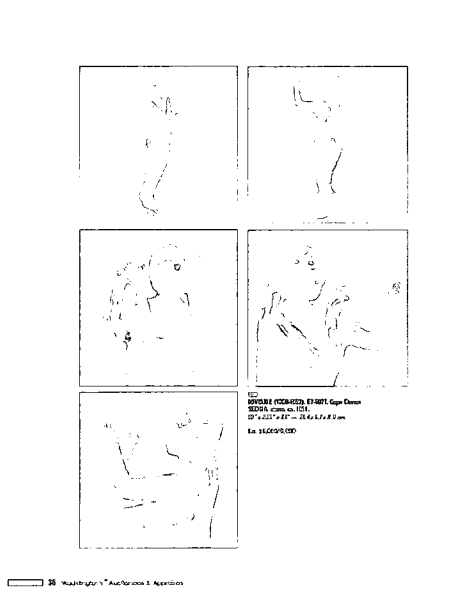
56
 PARR (1893-1969), E7-1022, Cape Dorset
 UNTITLED, graphite drawing, 1961,
 unframed, 24" x 18" — 61 x 45.7 cm.
 Est. \$3,000/5,000

57
 PARR (1893-1969), E7-1022, Cape Dorset
 UNTITLED, pencil drawing, signed in syllables,
 unframed, 18" x 24" — 45.7 x 61 cm.
 Est. \$1,000/2,000

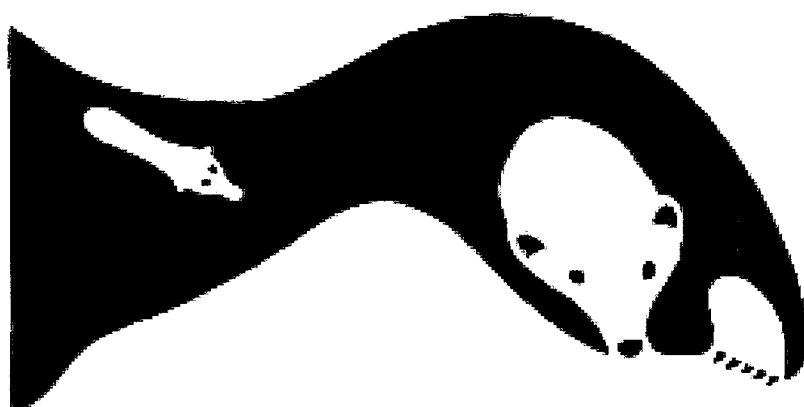
[Figure 4.7] Parr. Lot 54, Untitled graphite drawing (1961); Lot 55, Untitled graphite drawing (1961); Lot 56, Untitled graphite drawing (1961); Lot 57, Untitled pencil drawing (date unknown), Reproduced in *Waddington's Inuit art auction catalogue, November 9th, 2009* (Toronto: Waddington's, 2009), p. 22.



[Figure 4.8] Ennutsiak. Lot 204, Family Enjoying Musical Instruments (c. 1955), Reproduced in *Waddington's Inuit art auction catalogue*, November 9th, 2009, (Toronto: Waddington's, 2009), p. 78.



[Figure 4.9] Niviaxie. Lot 100, Sedna (1958). Reproduced in *Waddington's Inuit art auction catalogue, November 9th, 2009*, (Toronto: Waddington's, 2009), p. 36.



220
NIVIAKIE (1909-1959), ET-1071, Cape Dorset
POLAR BEAR AND CUB IN ICE, with his print, 1959, 1960,
unframed, 12" x 22" — 30.5 x 55.9 cm.

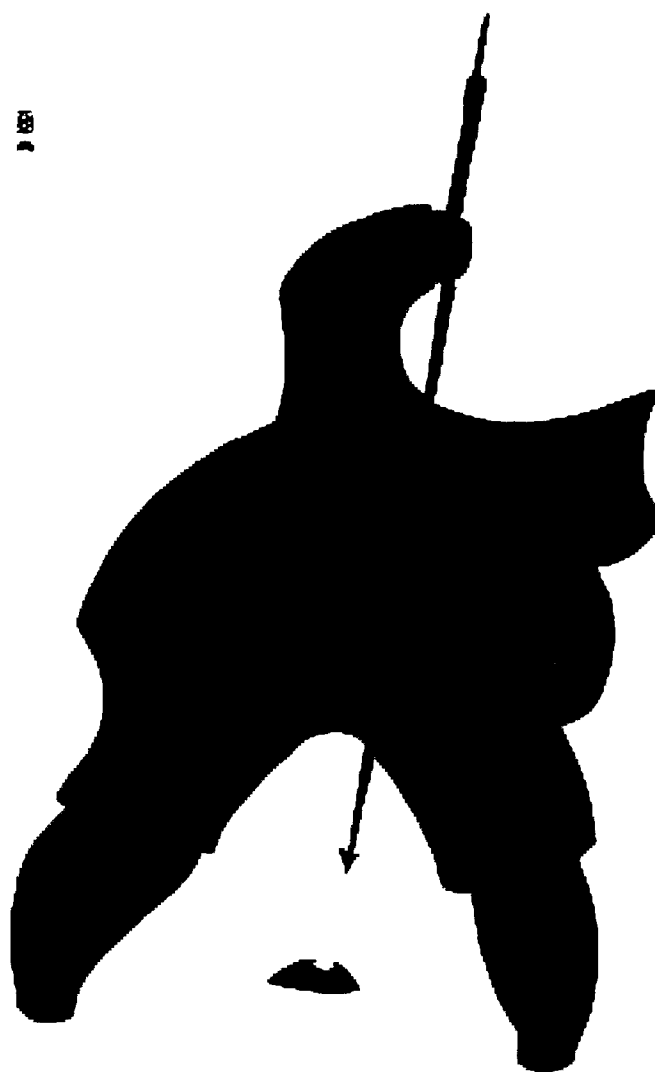
Est. \$25,000/30,000

Excerpt from *Time Magazine* article, Feb. 22, 1960: "The Eskimoes. Three months ago Nivialek and a young companion were tracking a bear. After several hours they finally caught sight of him. As they crept closer, the bear, instead of running, turned and gazed squarely at them. Nivialek moved in, raised his rifle to fire, then faltered and shrieked: 'It's dark, I'm falling!' When he awoke, he collapsed on the snow, dead within minutes. The next day, when Nivialek's companion and others returned to bury him, they found his body unharmed; the bear had not even come near him. Among Cape Dorset people there was only one explanation: Nivialek's ancestor prohibited too many hadolled the spirit of the great polar bear."



Figure 4.10

[Figure 4.10] Nivialek, Lot 220, Polar Bear Cub in Ice (1959). Reproduced in *Waddington's Inuit art auction catalogue, November 9th, 2009*, (Toronto: Waddington's, 2009), p. 88.




NIVIAXIE (1908-1998, 25-10-97, Cape Dorset)
MAN HUNTING AT A SEAL HOLE IN THE ICE, 1959, wood, May 12th, 1998,
 performed 21th 07 - 12th 08 1 cm
 Est. 500,000/40,000

[Figure 4.11] Niviakie, Lot 221, Man Hunting at a Seal Hole in the Ice (1959).
 Reproduced in *Waddington's Inuit art auction catalogue*, November 9th, 2009
 (Toronto: Waddington's, 2009), p. 89.