

Tiktak





Tiktak

Sculptor from Rankin Inlet, N. W. T.

**A retrospective exhibition
March 4th to 21st, 1970**

**Gallery One-One-One
University of Manitoba
School of Art**

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*Design by Edward Doré
University of Manitoba School of Art*

Foreword

This catalogue was produced for a one-man show—his first—of the Rankin Inlet sculptor Tiktak. The show may be small in size but not in content. Furthermore, it is comprehensive in the treatment of Tiktak's carving themes and, inasmuch as it covers the entire period of his carving activities, it is truly retrospective.

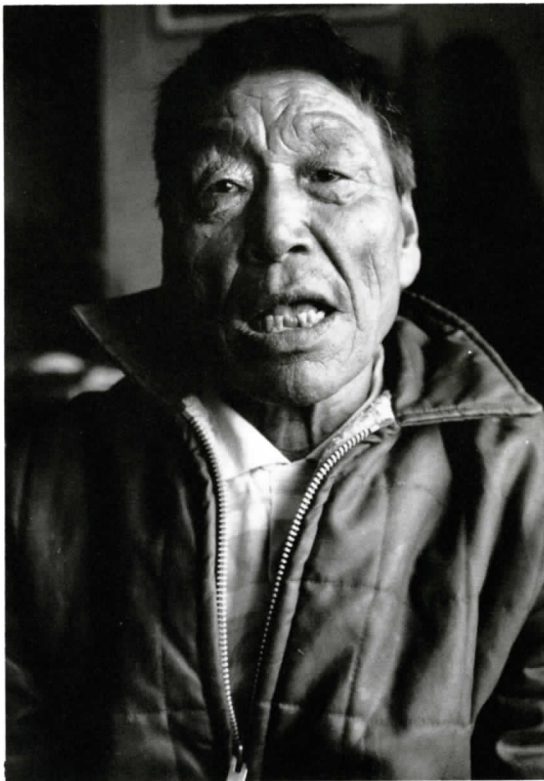
Such an exhibition, including the catalogue, could never have been assembled without the help of many. We gratefully acknowledge our debt to all those who aided us in its preparation: the generous private and institutional lenders (listed ahead of the catalogue entries); Caroline Maas for having endless patience and for working on the catalogue; J. D. Furneaux of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development; Denis Alford and Bill Riel of the National Museum of Man; Alex Gillies and Norman A. White of the Toronto Dominion Bank; Malvina Bolus, who kindly consented to let us reprint passages from articles by R. G. Williamson and George Woodcock from the Beaver; Diana Trafford (and D.I.A.N.D.) who made available to us her biographical notes on artists of the Keewatin soon to be published in book form; the Canada Council, D.I.A.N.D. (and particularly J. D. Furneaux), who made it possible for Tiktak to visit Winnipeg and thus to see his exhibition; and the Canadian Eskimo Arts Council, who absorbed R. G. Williamson's expenses to accompany Tiktak and to interpret for him in Winnipeg. However, our foremost thanks go to the artist himself.

George Swinton, Director of Exhibitions,
The University of Manitoba School of Art

Tiktak

Sculptor from Rankin Inlet

Spell him Tiktak or Tittak. But say it gently: Ti(t)ta(k). He was born at *Kareak*, a small camp between Eskimo Point and Whale Cove. In 1916. His father, an experienced hunter, initiated him in the art of hunting for caribou. He then moved to Eskimo Point. There "with only very little experience of life" he married Atunga. And there, too, their first son and daughter were born. In 1958 he moved to Rankin Inlet to work at the nickel mine. Another son and daughter were born there. In 1962 the mine closed. Having previously carved for a pastime, he took up carving "professionally" in 1963. Of his earlier carving activities he said "I have always given myself to the work of carving stone, ever since I was young, and have made small sculptures representing Eskimo faces of persons, which I sold to visitors or strangers as souvenirs of Rankin Inlet."



In 1968 George Woodcock painted a portrait of him as a "man with deep-lined mobile face who seems to be in his fifties but is not sure of his own age. He is partly crippled by a fall, so that, though he does some hunting still, he cannot go far from the settlement. A great humour, so that sometimes one feels it is a life of laughter that has creased his face. A shy giggle and oriental protestations of inadequacy when we praise his work. 'I am a bad carver.' He has been carving only five years, and maintains that he still works without premeditation, taking the stone and letting the shape that is in it emerge. He wears a singlet, his wife a cotton frock like a prairie pioneer woman, but when he comes out to be photographed, Tiktak puts on gumboots and a loud blue check jacket. A portrait of Trudeau hangs on his wall. He thinks the old life of the barren land was better than the new life. Caribou meat was better than store food, which he and his wife agree is 'too sweet'. Now, he says, he must work all the time to earn the money to live, because almost all his food is bought."

And his old friend and neighbour Williamson delves deeply into this sad man, "now an aging, sickly frame racked with coughs and creaking on a broken hip . . . Tittak . . . from Padlei stock . . . grew up on the south Keewatin plain and came from Eskimo Point to Rankin in the latter hungry years. A timid man, he still worked labouring for the nickel mine until a fall of timbers crushed him seriously. His young are very bright, alert of eye and quick to act. His wife is calm and slow spoken. She is strong and firm and cannot hide her deep intelligence. Tittak is an artist in his bones. His sensitivity is rare, too keen to keep emotions in control as firmly as his people do. In happy times, when people came together with a drum to thrall the cadence of their singing, Tittak's artistry was there to see. His mother lived and ruled in Tittak's home, an ancient curve of tiny bones, living on beyond the normal span by many years. He loved her and revered her. Three winters past [in 1961] he came in early one morning. His face was masked and rigid with emotion. He took me in a quiet seat, and, stricken, said: 'I come to weep with you.' And weep he did. He had found his mother dead that morning.

She died as quietly as she had lived. He had wanted from her desperately a dying word, and she had left him none. He saw no shame in tears. Tittak is an honest man, and simple, strong in feeling." At that tragic time Williamson urged him on to carve and become largely responsible for Tiktak eventually dedicating himself to carving full time. The two men continue to have a wonderful rapport and have both benefited from their friendship. Some of Tiktak's most personal works, though never commissioned, were specially done for Williamson.

In May 1964 I took my first trip to Rankin Inlet. The two artists who caught my immediate attention were Tiktak and Kavik. The great breadth and strength of their work made an instant impact on me. Over the seven years I have known them they both have very consistently developed their own unique styles. This they have done in spite of the great difficulties brought about by the enormous cultural change that has taken place in the north. But they both retained cultural and spiritual characteristics that are unequivocally Eskimo. They are the best of friends and enjoy working together. Though Tiktak is the much younger of the two, his art is more archaic. It is mostly for this very odd reason that my personal choice for this first retrospective exhibition was Tiktak; obviously my choice for the next will be Kavik, when and wherever I shall have an opportunity to prepare a show for him. For the time is surely now to take penetrating looks at the best of our northern artists and to unfold panoramic views of their work.

This first attempt of taking such a look makes Tiktak's retrospective show truly an event. No longer are we looking at isolated or odd works of an occasional carver or of an exotic souvenir maker; this exhibition reveals an artist and his work. But probably more important, the exhibition also reveals to Tiktak the scope of his own work. When Tiktak will see his one-man show on March 18th, he will be able to see — undoubtedly for the first time — the main body of work accomplished in ten grimy years. The changes; where; why? What will they be? What will he think? What will he say? What will he do . . . ?

There are carvings of all periods since 1961 in this exhibition. Of the fifty carvings, more than half are Tiktak's key works. In fact, as far as I know, there are only less than ten carvings in four far northern collections which I wanted to include in this exhibition but which, for obvious physical difficulties, were not available to us. Otherwise this retrospective show represents the very best of Tiktak's total output and every phase of his work is shown by several examples.

And what about the nature of his art? Tiktak is pre-eminently an image maker. A producer of thoughts and ideas rather than of actions or events; a maker of form rather than of subject matter; a shaper of personages rather than of persons; a creator rather than an illustrator.

Tiktak also is a poet: his facts are fiction, his views vision. His visions come to form; his insights turn the imagined

into tactile shapes: the felt becomes touch; the seen, form.

Child growth from mother's body: exudes, extrudes, arches, stretches, strains, lives.

Faces: round; flat; fat; thin; old; grown; worn; timeless; wise; alive.

Man. Woman. Man and Woman. Men and women. People. *The people*. Being. Being is. Always.

Is his art question or answer? It is surely neither. It is insight, vision, symbol, metaphor, myth, dream, allegory: the unreal become known, the unknown become form, the formless given life.

References

Claude Grenier, "*Autobiography*" of Tiktak.

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Canadian Art, April 1966

Diana Trafford, *Canadian Eskimo Artists,
A Biographical Dictionary—Keewatin*
Government of the N.W.T.
(to be published in 1970).

R. G. Williamson, *The Spirit of Keewatin*,
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The Beaver, Summer 1969

Lenders to the Exhibition

Prof. Jean Beetz, Montreal	JB
Prof. and Mrs. E. Capadoccia, Hamilton	EC
Dr. and Mrs. R. M. Cherniack, Winnipeg	RC
Mr. William Eccles, Toronto	WE
Mr. and Mrs. Norman Hallenday, Ottawa	NH
Mr. and Mrs. M. Cory Kilvert, Winnipeg	CK
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Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Twomey, Winnipeg	JT
Prof. and Mrs. R. G. Williamson, Rankin Inlet	RW
Mr. and Mrs. David Wright, Ottawa	DW
Department of Indian Affairs & Northern Development, Ottawa	DIAND
National Museum of Man, Ottawa	NMM
Toronto Dominion Bank, Toronto	TDB
Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver	VAG

Catalogue of the Exhibition

While it is no longer possible to establish an absolute chronology of the artist's work, all dates used in this catalogue are reasonably reliable. They are based on identification tags, purchase records, personal interviews, various photographic records and the author's six visits to Rankin Inlet.

All sculptures are made of Soapstone unless stated otherwise.

Abbreviations

h.-height w.-width d.-depth l.-length

For identification of collections see list of lenders to the exhibition.

1

Man

1961 h. 5¾" w. 1½"
Collection DW

2

Man-Image

1961 h. 8"
Collection GS

3

Family

1961-1962 h. 4½" w. 11¼"
Collection GS

4

Couple

1962 h. 3¾" w. 4¾"
Collection AM

5

Couple

1962-63 h. 5½"
Collection DW

6

Mother and Child

1963 h. 8¼" d. 4½"
Collection RW

7

Woman

1963-64 h. 7" w. 5½"
TDB TD-567

8

Seated Man

1963-64 h. 7"
Collection GS

9

Seated Man

1963-64 h. 5½"
Collection JT

10

Double Figure

1963-64 h. 5¼"
Collection JT

11

Man

1963-64 h. 7"
Collection RW

12

Man with Load

1964 (?) h. 9¼" w. 3½"
Collection JB

13

Mother and Child

1964 h. 4½" w. 5¾"

Collection GS

14

Head

1964 h. 7¾"

Collection AM

15

Head

1965 h. 5¾" w. 4½"

Collection CK

16

Head

1965 h. 5¾" w. 4½"

Collection GS

17

Joyful Man

1965 h. 7" w. 4¼"

Collection SS

18

Walking Man

1965 h. 6½"

Collection GS

19

Mother and Child

1965 h. 6¼"

Collection JT

20

Mother and Child

1965 h. 6¾"

Collection JT

21

Mother and Child

1965 h. 7"

Collection AM

22

Man

1965 h. 8¾" w. 2¾"

TDB TD-173

23

Mother and Child

1965 h. 5" d. 5"

TDB TD-161

24

Mother and Child

1965 h. 8½" w. 2¾"

TDB TD-180

25

Man

1965 h. 8"

Collection CS

26

Mother and Child

1965 h. 8¾"

Collection RW

27

Mother and Child

1966 h. 19¼"

Collection DW

28

Mother and Child

1966 h. 8¼" w. 3¼"

TDB TD-833

29

Man

1966 (?) h. 8" w. 3¼"

TDB TD-835

30

Head

1966 h. 9¾" w. 7"

TDB TD-766

31

Head

1966 h. 12¼" w. 8"

TDB TD-771

32

Woman

1966-67 21¼" w. 8½"

Collection NH

33

Seated Man

1967 h. 6"

Collection GS

34

Owl (with human face)

1967 h. 10¾"

Collection RW

35

Hooded Woman

1967 h. 11¾" d. 6¼"

Collection LS

36

Pregnant Woman

1967-68 h. 9" w. 7"

NMM IV-C-3757

37

Carving with Six Faces and Vessel

1967-68 h. 15¼"
VAG 70-7

38

Carving with Five Faces

1967-68 h. 16¼" d. 9"
Collection EC

39

Carving with Three Faces

1967-68 h. 8" l. 20"
Collection RL
(on loan to Vancouver Art Gallery)

40

Mother and Child

1967-68 (?) h. 11½" d. 7½"
NMM IV-C-3758

41 a and b

Carving with Nine Faces

1968 h. 10" w. 27"
NMM IV-C-3668

42

Carving with Eight Faces

1968 h. 13¼" w. 12½"
NMM IV-C-3668

43

Standing Figure

1968 h. 10" w. 4¾"
Collection WE

44

Man

1968 h. 10¾"
Collection GS

45

Head

1969 h. 7¼" w. 5¾"
Collection RC

46

Two Faces (whalebone)

1969 h. 7" w. 12½"
Collection JT

47

Head (whalebone)

1969 h. 6½"
Collection GS

48

Quadruple Heads and One Face

1969 h. 11¾" w. 10¼"
DIAND 4190-1

49

Triple Heads

1969 h. 10⅞" d. 6"
DIAND 4836-2

50

Mother and Child

1969 h. 12½" d. 9½"
DIAND (not yet accessioned)













































41 a



41 b











