

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Worlds on Paper: Drawings from Kinngait opens at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection

A Landmark Exhibition Showcasing Four Decades of
Inuit Artistry, Resilience & Community



Left: Pudlo Pudlat, *Untitled*, 1985-86, graphite, coloured pencil and felt-tip pen on paper, 51.1 cm x 66.5 cm, collection of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative Ltd., on loan to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection CD.24.4012. © Dorset Fine Arts Right: Anirnik Oshuitoq, *Untitled*, 1967-75, felt-tip pen on paper, 51 cm x 66 cm, collection of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative Ltd., on loan to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection CD.8.1632. © Dorset Fine Arts

The McMichael Canadian Art Collection is proud to steward the Kinngait Drawings Archive, a remarkable collection of 90,000 works owned by the West Baffin Eskimo Co-op (WBEC). Transferred to the McMichael's care in 1990, this vast archive chronicles over four decades of artistic production from the Arctic community of Kinngait (formerly Cape Dorset), Nunavut. These drawings illuminate the origins of Kinngait's globally acclaimed graphic arts tradition, offering an invaluable glimpse into Inuit life during a time of profound cultural transformation.

Following completion of the archive's digitization in 2023, the McMichael now unveils *Worlds on Paper: Drawings from Kinngait*, opening March 8, 2025. Curated by Emily Laurent Henderson, Associate Curator of Indigenous Arts and Culture, this landmark exhibition explores the ingenuity and adaptability of Kinngait artists from the late 1950s through to the 1990s, highlighting themes of intergenerational knowledge, community, and storytelling.

"It's been an honour to have had the time and space to devote to deeply engaging with these drawings," Henderson says of her year spent researching the archive. "You come to appreciate the gravity of the works, and the boundless imagination and vision of these artists in the first three decades of graphic art production in Kinngait. It's a unique and rare opportunity to explore the processes and experiences of individual artists, as well as what was happening within the community as a whole in this period of intense change."

These drawings were made as source images for the government-funded printmaking program in Kinngait, established in 1957. This initiative transformed local artistry into a major economic driver for Kinngait as Inuit adapted to the southern wage economy. However, in culling from these works with an eye to southern markets, southern studio managers simplified motifs, altered colours, and reinterpreted elements to align with commercial priorities. With the digitization of this archive, though, the full scope of these artists can now be experienced, offering an unfiltered glimpse into the creative visions of such celebrated figures as Kenojuak Ashevak, Pitseolak Ashoona, Kananginak Pootoogook, and Pudlo Pudlat before market influence took hold. The exhibition also highlights overlooked creators whose work did not conform to colonial preferences, expanding our understanding of the region's true artistic legacy.



Kingmeata Etidlooie (1915–1989), Untitled, acrylic paints on paper, 51.6 cm x 65.3 cm, collection of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative Ltd., on loan to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection CD.23.4020. © Dorset Fine Arts

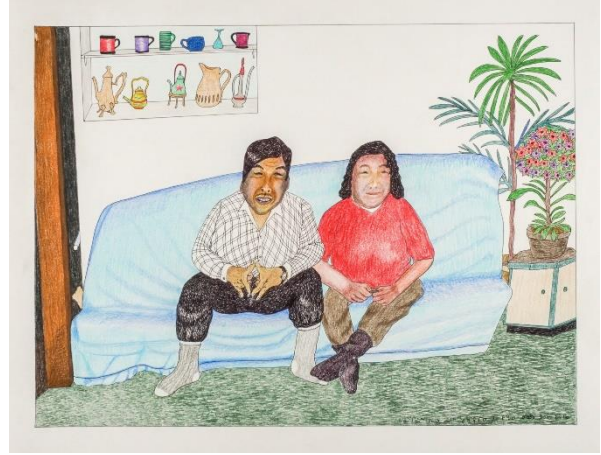
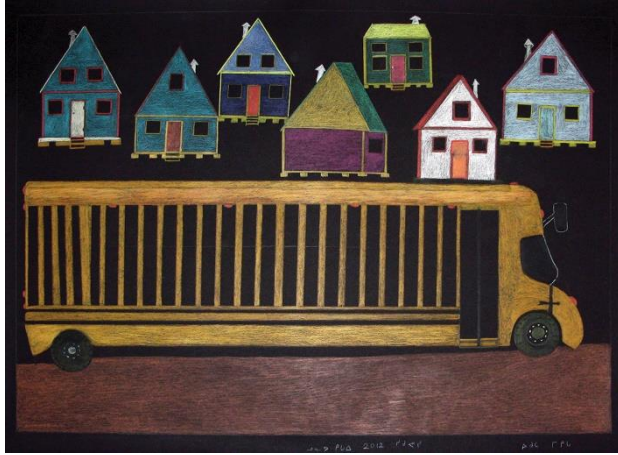
The archive is now fully digitized and is accessible through Iningat Ilagiit ("a place for family") on the McMichael website, with a trilingual, low-bandwidth version for use in northern

communities. The completion of digitization now ensures that these drawings remain available to both scholars and future generations of Inuit artists.

Accompanying the exhibition is a comprehensive publication featuring essays and reflections from a majority-Inuit team from all walks of creative life, including Susan Aglukark, Tarralik Duffy, Jimmy Manning, Kyle Aleekuk, Napatsi Folger, Jamesie Fournier, Janice Grey, Jocelyn Piirainen, Krista Ulujuk Zawadski, and Taqralik Partridge. A lead essay by curator Emily Laurent Henderson examines the archive as a living document of Inuit resilience, while additional contributions by artists, scholars, hunters, and designers explore the history of Kinngait's studios and offer personal insights on individual works. As well, McMichael's Associate Curator of Collections and Research John Geoghegan contributes an essay on the persistence of themes from Kinngait artist's earliest drawings through to the creations of today. The book reproduces all the works in the exhibition and more—most published for the first time—while exploring the archive's enduring relevance as a record of cultural and social transformation.

Emily Laurent Henderson is an Inuk curator, arts writer and poet with a practice rooted in Indigenous creative sovereignty. Henderson was the first full-time Inuk editor at the legacy publication the Inuit Art Quarterly, and in 2019 co-led a special issue of the magazine that focused on the Inuit artist collective Isuma who represented Canada at the 58th Venice Biennale the same year. A former member of the Indigenous and Canadian art curatorial team at the Art Gallery of Ontario, her articles and commentary have been featured in the Inuit Art Quarterly, Inuktitut Magazine, C Magazine, Azure, Studio Magazine, and other national titles. In 2024 her book of poetry *Hold Steady My Vision* was published by Print Studio Guelph.

Visitors are invited to join Henderson and McMichael Associate Curator of Collections and Research, John Geoghegan, for a special curatorial talk on Sunday, March 9, from 2-3 PM at the gallery. The pair will explore the cultural legacy of Kinngait, provide insight into the curatorial process behind this expansive exhibition, and reflect on themes of community and intergenerational knowledge sharing.



Left: Ohtaq Mikkigak, *School Bus and Houses*, 2012, 110.5 x 151.1 cm, Christopher Bredt & Jamie Cameron. © Dorset Fine Arts.
Right: Kananginak Pootoogook, *Untitled (Kananginak and his wife Shooyoo in their home)*, 2010, ink and colored pencil on paper, 50.8 x 66 cm, Christopher Bredt & Jamie Cameron. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Complementing *Worlds on Paper* is the adjoining exhibition *Dreaming Forward: Contemporary Drawings from Kinngait*—also opening March 8—which brings Kinngait’s artistic tradition into the present day. Since the transfer of 90,000 works on paper from the West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative to the McMichael in 1990, new generations of artists have emerged, offering fresh perspectives on their evolving community in the 21st century.

From the precise, illustrative style of Itee Pootoogook and Tim Pitsiulak to the dreamscapes of Ooloosie Saila and Shuvina Ashoona, Kinngait artists have continued to innovate, elevating drawing as a standalone artistic medium rather than a preparatory one. The introduction of large-scale works on paper in the 2000s marked a significant evolution in artistic practice, alongside capturing candid and often humorous portrayals of contemporary Inuit life. Rendered in graphite, ink, and colored pencil, these works depict the rhythms of daily life—prefabricated houses, snowmobiles, and trips to the co-op store—while also celebrating the enduring values of cooperation, care, and community.

Through their art, the creators of Kinngait offer a vivid and heartfelt perspective on the present moment while keeping a sharp eye on the future of their community.

Together, *Worlds on Paper* and *Dreaming Forward*—along with the accompanying publication—celebrate the profound cultural significance of the Kinngait Drawings Archive, honoring its creators and ensuring their stories continue to inspire generations to come.

Ces informations sont aussi disponibles en français.

Media wishing to request interviews, media tours, obtain high-resolution images or review copies of publications are asked to contact Sadie Evans at sevens@mcmichael.com or 905.893.1121 ext. 2290.

ABOUT THE McMICHAEL CANADIAN ART COLLECTION

The McMichael Canadian Art Collection is an agency of the Government of Ontario and acknowledges the support of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, and the McMichael Canadian Art Foundation. It is the only major museum in the country devoted exclusively to Canadian art. In addition to touring exhibitions, the McMichael houses a permanent collection of more than 7,000 works by historic and contemporary Canadian artists, including Tom Thomson, the Group of Seven and their contemporaries, Indigenous artists, and artists from the many diasporic communities. The gallery is located on 100 acres of forested landscape and hiking trails at 10365 Islington Avenue, Kleinburg, north of Major Mackenzie Drive in the City of Vaughan. For more information, please visit mcmichael.com.

Media Contacts

Sadie Evans

Manager, Communications, Digital & Social Media
McMichael Canadian Art Collection
905.893.1121 x2290
sevens@mcmichael.com

Grace Johnstone

Director, Communications, Marketing and Sales
McMichael Canadian Art Collection
905.893.1121 x2265
gjohnstone@mcmichael.com