

experienced artists, right across the Arctic and ultimately forced the abandonment of many of these settlements.

Ray's final chapter "Can This Be Eskimo Art?" is an interesting historic contribution to the ongoing—and ultimately unsolvable—debate about the authenticity of Eskimo/Inuit art. One example she uses is steak knives designed by talented Alaskan Natives but mass-produced in elephant ivory by their Seattle employers. She ends with descriptions of dubious practices and of outright fraud, helpful to the unwary tourist and the well-intentioned amateur art collector.

The collection Ray put together over her worthwhile career makes an excellent museum exhibition, offering the opportunity to trace the development of a regional art character over several hundred years. I don't care for much of the contemporary art: to me, it has none of the excitement, liveliness, or creativity of that emanating from the Eastern Arctic over the past 50 years. Dorothy Jean Ray's love for Alaskan art and artists therefore makes this book one I will gladly add to my shelf, to remind me that we art lovers, like the artworks themselves, are a diverse bunch.

#### REFERENCES

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**CARVED FROM THE LAND: THE ESKIMO MUSEUM COLLECTION.** By LORRAINE BRANDSON. Churchill, Manitoba: Diocese of Churchill Hudson Bay, 1994. 200 p., maps, b&w illus., bib., list of artists, index. Hardbound. Cdn\$35.00.

Reviewing this catalogue on the heels of another (Dorothy Jean Ray's *Legacy of Arctic Art*) was an enlightening experience. Two collections, two very different approaches to collecting: whereas Ray purchased mainly Alaskan artifacts that she judged to be of artistic or anthropological value, the Eskimo Museum is the child of dedicated missionaries who lived among the Inuit and were interested in documenting their entire culture and its history. The results are fascinatingly different kinds of collections.

Beginning in Chesterfield Inlet in 1912, the Oblate Fathers established six mission stations centered on the northwest corner of Hudson Bay, serving a diocese scattered over 2.3 million square kilometres. By 1944, the Fathers had amassed enough material to establish a small

museum in one room of the Bishop's residence at Churchill, Manitoba. This early collection already bore the eclectic signs of that which can be seen in today's modern facility: ivory cribbage boards engraved for the early whalers and other visitors of the historic past, prehistoric Dorset and Thule culture artifacts, and wildlife specimens lay alongside the soapstone carvings collected from contemporary Inuit that were shortly to become so famous. In 1948, Brother Jacques Volant was appointed the museum's curator (p. 9–10). The book is dedicated to his memory.

Lorraine Brandson, assistant and then curator of the Eskimo Museum since Brother Volant's final illness in 1986, has played a vital role in documenting and caring for the collection since the 1970s and is equally responsible for its present status and visitation of nearly 10 000 per year: an admirable achievement in a town of only 3000 residents.

The book, as much a collection as the museum itself, includes the history of the Oblate Missions; the climate and natural history of the Arctic; story excerpts from the missionaries' journals; a history of Arctic archaeology and culture; the yearly cycle of the Inuit; descriptions of Inuit tools, housing, transportation, and clothing; and a chapter devoted to, as Brandson puts it, "*silatuniq*, the wise way of understanding things" (p. 167). Her detailed account of the seasonal movement, activities, and intricate social relationships of central and eastern Inuit groups will interest both the casual reader and the anthropologist. Overall, she has achieved an excellent balance that should be the envy of many more prolific anthropologist scribes.

The text is closely accompanied by photographs of the collection illustrating the subject matter. Text and photographs together explain why the individual artifacts were collected and illuminate the entire philosophy of the museum. The result is a rare example of an art book that is truly coherent.

A review of a book so dependent upon photographs would scarcely be complete without some comment on the quality of the photography. Robert Taylor's prints vary from excellent to adequate: the lighting is uneven enough that detail is occasionally lost in the shadows, and some shots would have benefited from better depth of focus. On the other hand, the angles are selected with great sensitivity and discernment and give an accurate impression of most pieces. It's an astonishing collection, especially considering its small size—only 800 pieces—and my biggest regret is that the small size of some of the photographs does not do justice to the quality of the work.

For anyone who has visited the Eskimo Museum, for those who have been to the Eastern Arctic and missed the Eskimo Museum, and for those who will, someday, follow their dream and visit the Arctic and its people, *Carved From the Land* should fill a niche in your library.

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