

# Fantastic Kenojuak Ashevak

40 works from the Claude Baud collection



Kenojuak Ashevak, *Custodians of ancestral lore*, 1992 © Dorset Fine Arts

From April 11 to Septembre 6, 2013  
Opening, April 10, 6:30 p.m.  
Last admission, 8:30 p.m.

A guided tour of the exhibition  
with the collector Claude Baud  
April 10, 5:30 p.m.  
Reservations: 01 44 43 21 48

With the support of L'Iglou, Art Esquimau in Douai

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Access : Metro and RER : Invalides, Bus : 28, 49, 63, 69, 83, 93  
Opening Hours :  
Free Access Monday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thursday until 7 p.m.  
[www.canada-culture.org](http://www.canada-culture.org)

The Canadian Cultural Centre presents, for the first time in France, a solo exhibition by one of the greatest Inuit artists, Kenojuak Ashevak. The exhibition *Fantastic Kenojuak Ashevak* is a tribute to the artist, who died on January 8, 2013, at the age of 85 and who was a key figure in the famous Inuit artists' cooperative in Cape Dorset, located on the southwestern tip of Baffin Island, Nunavut. At a time when Canada will once again be chairing the Arctic Council, the Canadian Cultural Centre wished to give an individual face to what is too often promoted as a homogeneous and strictly communitarian entity under the name of "Inuit art".

Kenojuak Ashevak was one of the best-known artists of the artistic capital of the Far North since the 1960s, Cape Dorset. This fame is due to the distinctiveness of her art, whose fantastic dimension is not strictly linked to the shamanic world and to the bestiary of the local tradition but blossoms according to a more personal, admirably free aesthetic. This distinctive aesthetic has contributed, which did not go without saying, to the development of the status of the artist in a community focussed on the production in studios. The renown of Kenojuak Ashevak is attested by the manifest interest of private collectors, who acquired her works as soon as she started producing prints, by her presence in major Canadian and international museums, twenty or so solo exhibitions, not to mention over two hundred group exhibitions, and by the fact that the first monograph about her, written by the Inuit art specialist Jean Blodgett in 1985, is historic as it was the first dedicated to an Inuit artist. But the art of Kenojuak Ashevak has also touched millions through a Canadian stamp illustrated by the work *The Enchanted Owl* (1960), which began circulating in 1970 to commemorate the centennial of the Northwest Territories in Canada. That same year, she also participated in Expo '70 in Osaka, Japan.



Kenojuak Ashevak, in 1980

The exhibition *Fantastic Kenojuak Ashevak* brings together 40 works from the private collection of Claude Baud, the French collector of Inuit art who contributed, with his gallery L'Iglou, Art Esquimau in Douai, to the promotion of the sculptures and prints of many artists by means of multiple exhibitions in France. Claude Baud lent works for major exhibitions, including *Les Magiciens de la Terre* (Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou, 1989), *Comme un oiseau* (Fondation Cartier, 1996) and *Grand Nord Grand Sud : artistes inuit et aborigènes* (Abbaye de Doualas, Finistère, a coproduction with the Musée des Confluences de Lyon, 2010). In 2005, the city of Nice presented, for the first time, the complete collection of Claude Baud (268 works, including 142 prints and 126 sculptures) as part of the Year of Canada in Nice.

*Fantastic Kenojuak Ashevak* also features a documentary component with a presentation of books relating to the work of Kenojuak Ashevak and to the Cape Dorset cooperative as well as, in collaboration with the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), the screening of the famous documentary by John Feeney, *Eskimo Artist: Kenojuak* (1963), which helped make the artist known around the world.

**Kenojuak Ashevak**, born in the camp of Ikerasak near Cape Dorset (Kinngait) on October 3, 1927, had a youth profoundly anchored in the ancestral lifestyle of the Inuit. In the late 1950s, she met the artist James A. Houston in Cape Dorset, where he was working as the federal administrator in charge of coming up with a graphic arts programme. Noticing her talent for the decoration of traditional objects and clothing, he encouraged her to experiment with drawing, a medium totally unknown to her at the time. In 1959 Kenojuak Ashevak joined the newly founded West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative, making her one of the first women artists of the cooperative. Closely following the process of engraving necessary to the transfer of her drawings, Kenojuak Ashevak managed to appropriate the visual possibilities offered by each new printing technique, renewing her own way of looking at things and the formal expressiveness of her drawings. Her works soon occupied an important place in the annual collections of Cape Dorset and this success resulted in her moving there definitively in 1966.

She took part in numerous exhibitions in Canada and abroad including in 1963 her first group exhibition in Paris, at the Galerie de France. In 1967, the National Library of Canada, now Library and Archives Canada, presented her first solo exhibition, *Kenojuak Prints*. In 1981, she took part in two important exhibitions on contemporary Inuit art: *Prints and Drawings* at the National Gallery of Canada and *Inuit Art: A Selection of Inuit Art from the Collection of the National Museum of Man* at the Canadian Museum of Civilization (formerly known as the National Museum of Man). In 1988, Arctic Artistry of New York presented *Kenojuak: Premier Graphic Artist of the Arctic*, her first solo exhibition in the United States. Finally, the National Gallery of Canada dedicated a large retrospective, *Kenojuak Ashevak: To Make Something Beautiful*, to her in 2002.

Kenojuak Ashevak was also in demand for commissions and reproductions of her works. In addition to the plaster mural executed for the Canadian Pavilion for Expo '70 in Osaka, Canada Post reproduced three of her works on stamps: her famous stonecut *The Enchanted Owl* (1960) in 1970, another stonecut *Return of the Sun* (1961) — for a series of stamps on the Inuit spirits in 1980 — and her original drawing *The Owl* (1969) in 1993 for a series of stamps on the masterpieces of Canadian art. The following year, Kenojuak Ashevak executed *Siilavut, Nunavut*, a lithographic diptych commemorating the signature of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Act. In April 1999, the Royal Canadian Mint issued a quarter inspired by her engraving *The Red Owl* (1975) for the Millennium Collection.

Throughout her career, Kenojuak Ashevak received numerous distinctions highlight the artistic value and international impact of her work. She was made an Officer of the Order of Canada (1967), elected Member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (1974), received the Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts (2008) and was promoted to the Order of Nunavut (2012). Her works are now part of the permanent collections of several Canadian and international institutions, including the National Gallery of Canada, the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Tate Gallery in London and the University of Michigan Museum of Art (UMMA).