

INUIT SCULPTURE

SCULPTURE OF THE ESKIMO. Swinton, George. 1987. Toronto, McClelland and Stewart. 255p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 0-7710-8372-6. Can \$24.95.

Inuit art is a rapidly developing, innovative phenomenon. That a book on Inuit sculpture first published in 1972 should now be reprinted in paperback attests to its value as more than a catalogue of recent fine works. This book endures because it draws the untutored enthusiast into the world of the artist, exposing the reader to the traditions, concepts, and motivation of Inuit sculpture through a well-considered progression of text and photographs.

The book starts with a poem and a short series of photographs, an introduction of illustrated text, and a 'museum without walls'—a lengthy photo-essay that explores the great variety of Inuit sculpture. Then comes the main illustrated text, in ten brief chapters that outline the ecological and cultural environment of Inuit art and its development through prehistoric and historic periods up to the present day (1972). The author tackles the difficult topic of contemporary sculpture since its flowering in the early 1950s, and its place within the world of art. The final section, occupying roughly half the volume, is a photo-catalogue of the work of major artists, organised by area and containing photographs of over 600 carvings.

The brief text provides a valuable interpretative framework for the wealth of visual material, and is the author's platform for presenting his view of art as a cultural expression. It is thus an anthropological work in itself, a well-researched argument that secular sculpture was established in the Arctic over 1000 years ago, continued unbroken through the contact and historic periods, and is currently an art form of great cultural significance to the Inuit. Related to this view is an emphasis upon acceptance of the artist's concepts. In arguing that we accept Inuit concepts of what is successful art, the author strives for recognition of the successes of individual artists. The message of this book, then, is that Inuit sculpture is not a homogeneous body of charming, primitive souvenirs, but work of great individuality and integrity. It reminds us in turn that the people too are individuals; on these grounds alone the book was well worth reprinting.

Sculpture of the Eskimo is a large-format book, thoughtfully laid out. In the catalogue, picture captions appear at the top of each page in the same arrangement as the plates; in the text, plates are almost always on the page containing the reference to them. Quality of the plates is surprisingly high, considering that there are over 800 photographs from twenty different sources. Almost all are black-and-white, and the quality of reproduction equals of the original publication. There is a wide-ranging bibliography current to 1972, and, true to the author's aims, an index of artists. (Karen Digby-Savelle, Harston House, Harston, Cambridge.)

NO POLAR INSTITUTE FOR CANADA?

CANADA AND POLAR SCIENCE. Adams, W. P., Burnet, P. F., Gordon, M. R. and Roots, E. F. 1987. Ottawa, Circumpolar and Scientific Affairs Directorate. 129 p, softback. ISBN 0-662-15414-2. Obtainable from the Circumpolar and Scientific Affairs Directorate, DIAND, Ottawa K1A 0H4, Canada.

In September 1985, following the Arctic Policy Conference at McGill University in Montreal, a working group was established to make recommendations to the then Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the Hon. Mr David Crombie, concerning the *setting up* of a National Polar Institute for Canada. The Institute would