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2002 *Nuvisavik: The place where we weave*. Hull, Canadian Museum of
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prints and the tapestries, references, index.

Fibre weaving in the Arctic? Inuit women producing tapestries? This seemingly inconceivable activity north of the tree line is handsomely illuminated in the publication *Nuvisavik: The place where we weave*. The book is, in the narrowest sense, a catalogue of an exhibition of the same name showing from 21 February 2002 to 8 September 2003 at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull, Quebec. Nearly fifty tapestries, some never seen before in public, from the Pangnirtung Tapestry Studio display the meticulous skills and creative imaginations of Pangnirtung's weavers.

The facing pages from the full-coloured illustrations follow a strict protocol that includes in order: name of the drawing artist, the tapestry artist who interprets the drawing and renders the first design of an edition, the names of the weavers who make their own successive copies of the original for that edition, then the usual specifications such as materials, size, ownership. Some tapestry pictures are shown with the drawing from which they are taken.

Each illustration is accompanied by insights from the Inuit about the tapestry content. The quotations, many from July Papatsie, were gathered in conversations with Maria von Finckenstein, editor of the book and curator for contemporary Inuit art at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, and Deborah Hickman, who was general manager and artistic advisor to the Pangnirtung Tapestry Studio. The Inuit voices heighten our appreciation of the weavings by, for example, explaining what is involved in the activity depicted or elucidating a legend. They show the depth of emotion that emerges when thinking about the land and the traditions of an ancient culture. The illustrations are preceded by a picture and biography of the artist-designer. Elsewhere in the book photographs and biographies of the tapestry weaver artists are printed.

The publication covers far more than being solely an exhibition catalogue. It contains four essays that admirably delineate the evolution of the Pangnirtung Tapestry Studio, stories from the people about their life, the history of South Baffin Island, and the Studio's place in the annals of world tapestry weaving.

The Forward, by Donald Stuart, reveals that weaving was first introduced to the Arctic in order to provide a new industry. He went North in 1970 as the project's manager, choosing Pangnirtung where women are renowned embroiderers and seamstresses. Starting as fabric weavers who made utility articles such as blankets, scarves, or parka braids, and notably sashes for Queen Elizabeth and the Royal Family, the Inuit weavers' products soon became best-sellers on the southern market. An ancient craft, the weaving of functional articles is a process whereby the shuttle is thrown continuously from side to side of the warp. Tapestry weaving is a specialized form — the wefts are discontinuous, covering the warp, and enables the weaver to create textures and images. This great leap from utility weaving to high art is the story of the Pangnirtung weavers¹.

The first essay by Maria von Finckenstein points out that the Studio follows a model unknown in the rest of the world. For centuries tapestries have been created either by an artist-weaver who makes the design and the tapestry, or by a "technician-weaver" (p. 3) who faithfully copies the cartoon (design or art work) created by an artist. Following their own traditions and taking from other cultures what is viable for their way of life, the Inuit weavers pursue neither method. The Pangnirtung Tapestry Studio buys a drawing from an artist that is then presented to the team, one of whom transforms the drawing into a woven tapestry, making her own interpretation². The team consults all the weavers, most importantly the elders, about how to render the cartoon, the colours, how many tapestries will constitute the edition, and who will weave them. Some prefer editioning to producing the original. The artist-weaver who copies the original rendition does not make an exact replica and contributes her own sensibilities and variations, so that any tapestry that leaves the Studio is an exclusive work of art. The moving force within the Studio is the age-old Inuit way of cooperation and consensual decisions. The art works are not considered personal. They depict in many ways key aspects of Inuit culture: love of the land, animal life and the hunt, women's and men's work, spiritual happenings. Companionship and merriment make the venture a central part of village life.

July Papatsie, the second essayist, contributes soul to the publication. He is a well known artist, has been a research officer with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and an exhibition curator. He is a speaker of Inuktitut so that he ably bridges the generations. He learned the ancient stories at his father's knee, thus he is well-versed in his cultural traditions and history. His interviews with elders, who are artists, are informative, amusing, often moving accounts of their experiences from nomadic times to the present. The keen perception of the elders, for example, of what steps should be taken for survival and then the decision to relocate, say, from Puvirnituq (Povungnituk) to Pangnirtuuq (Pangnirtung), a journey of two months, astounds those of us who live surrounded by our creature comforts in our cocoons.

¹ I am indebted to Joanne Soroka, tapestry weaver and textile artist of Edinburgh, for her many insights about the art of tapestry weaving.

² Only one of the artists in the exhibition, Kawtysee Kakee, occasionally draws, designs, and weaves her own tapestries (p. 184).

The third essayist, Cathleen Knotsch, is an anthropologist whose research includes contact situations in Cumberland Sound, land-use changes and the regional history of Pangnirtung, and community and economic development. She brings to life "[...] a historical context for the tapestries [for which she has] selected a number of oral and written statements about interactions and events over the past 150 years" (p. 23). Her diverse subject matter provides an understanding of Pangnirtung's history as well as an appreciation of the complex background from which the tapestries evolved. She studied the written records and talked with Inuit to learn their perceptions of: the 19th century contact period when the whalers came to Cumberland Sound; the role of Pangnirtung in the first part of the 20th century as a trade and service station; health and the part played by Church and Government; housing, the evacuation of the camps in which the dogs played a key element; the practice of identifying the Inuit by disc numbers. Knotsch completes her essay by showing that historical Pangnirtung represents a continuity with ancestral times and that the outlook for the future posits many serious problems intermingled with positive achievements.

Deborah Hickman, who wrote the fourth essay entitled "Tapestry: a Northern Legacy," is the foremost expert on Pangnirtung weaving, having spent more time with the Studio than any other manager and artistic advisor. She emphasizes that through their tapestries this group of women tell a vivid, loving "[...] story about their past, their culture, and their lives, a story that would last for three decades and beyond [...]" (p. 42). They look on their work as a communal achievement, part of their 4000 year history of survival in the Canadian Arctic.

Hickman traces the evolution of the weaving practices and techniques from those of European workshops to those developed by the Inuit seamstresses. Hand in hand with southern consultants — whose lives, too, changed in the process — they gradually mastered this complex craft. They started with the low-warp loom, *i.e.* a loom that has a horizontal warp parallel to the floor that presents many problems for the weaver, including a width restriction. It was only in 1991, after Hickman invited Archie Brennan³ to Pangnirtung where both gave several workshops, that a 12 foot wide high warp loom was installed. This loom has a vertical warp parallel to the wall and allows several weavers to participate side by side in the production, an advantage welcomed by the Studio weavers.

Fibre weavers can yield several square yards of cloth in a day. A highly skilled tapestry artist hopes to weave one square foot a day⁴. One singular adaptation made by the Pangnirtung weavers is in the finishing. Tapestry weavers in the rest of the world usually leave the threads from the multitude of elements hanging loose on the back of the piece. The Inuit weavers are so self-demanding that they painstakingly reweave the threads into the back, rendering the tapestry almost reversible. This practice echoes the technique used in Inuit clothing where the inside is as beautiful as the outside.

³ Archie Brennan, an internationally acclaimed master of tapestry weaving, apprenticed at the Dovecot Tapestry Company in Edinburgh. He continues to weave, lecture, and instruct.

⁴ Joanne Soroka, personal communication, 1975.

Over three decades since founding the Studio, the weavers have experienced an impressive growth technically and artistically. This maturation reached a turning-point in 1978 when the weavers agreed with the aims of consultant Charlotte Lindgren. She established quality standards in design and production, set her sights on the recognition of Inuit tapestries as art (something non-Inuit tapestry weavers have aimed for, alas unsuccessfully⁵), and developed a marketing system that is still in place. Between the 1980s and the 1990s the Studio averaged eight exhibitions a year and production could hardly keep up with the demand. The selection for any annual collection, as with the many levels of production, results from the collaborative efforts of the weavers, studio manager, and arts advisor.

I have a few minor criticisms of this outstanding book. Photographs of the weavers at work on the low-warp and high-warp looms would help readers learn about the skills and vision required and the problems presented. When a tapestry is named in the essays, a page number is needed to find the illustration referred to. A map would assist to visualize the vast territories of Nunavik (Arctic Quebec) and Nunavut that the Inuit call home.

As I reflected on this significant body of work I realized that we have before us a record of a luminous legacy, both of the past and the present, of importance to artists especially those who are tapestry weavers, collectors, museologists, historians. A fine publication, *Nuvisavik* celebrates the high esteem Pangnirtung weavers have won throughout the world by their vibrant tapestries. Through their collective voice they have added to the rich patrimony of their ancestors a new dimension of artistic endeavour.

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WEINSTEIN, Charles

Arctique Extrême. Les Tchouktches du détroit de Béring, Éditions Autrement, Collection Monde n° 117.

Avec l'avancement du progrès techno-scientifique et les politiques d'intégration socio-raciales, les peuples autochtones de la Russie risquent de disparaître. Cela implique la perte d'identités culturelles comme le patrimoine linguistique, les rites et les coutumes qui se sont transmis pendant des siècles et ont été les bases structurelles de la société.

⁵ Exceptions to this observation are known. Raphael, in the sixteenth century, produced the cartoons for the tapestries of the Sistine Chapel, considered sublime. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries William Morris, Frank Stella, and David Hockney have had their works translated into tapestries, now deemed to be of high artistic and monetary worth.