

Les défenses de morse du Musée Eskimau de Churchill The Walrus Tusk Sculptures in the Eskimo Museum at Churchill

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Les défenses de morse du Musée Eskimau de Churchill

Jeannine Veisse



Nombreux sont les touristes qui entreprennent le long périple en chemin de fer à travers la forêt canadienne jusqu'à Churchill pour avoir une vision même fugitive de la toundra. Si la rencontre de l'ours blanc est hypothétique, celle de la baleine, du phoque ou de l'oie sauvage manque rarement de se produire. Avec l'hôpital, l'école, le magasin de la Compagnie de la Baie d'Hudson, la mission catholique, le Musée Eskimau appartient au quadrilatère où bat aujourd'hui le cœur de la petite ville. Même le visiteur le plus inattentif ne peut le manquer. Il entre le plus souvent sans but précis dans l'unique salle d'exposition. Aussitôt, la symphonie en blanc et noir sur fond rouge des vitrines le fascine. Il y a là, groupé par centres d'intérêt, un vaste échantillon de ce que les artistes esquimaux ont produit de meilleur durant les trente dernières années. Parmi les centaines de sculptures, la série de défenses de morse ouvrées se détache avec force et constitue l'armature colorée de l'exposition. Commandées, en 1944, par la Mission Catholique de Churchill, ces œuvres constituent un ensemble unique dans l'histoire de la sculpture esquimaude contemporaine et méritent à elles seules quelques commentaires.



1. Jacques Volant, o.m.i., Conservateur du Musée Eskimau.

Au total, on dénombre 49 scènes, 28 ayant été réalisées à Repulse Bay par Tungilik, Koverk, Kringark, Nutakraluk et Takrawa, et 21, à Pelly Bay par Fabien et Antonin Attark et Ugark.

Il faut noter que la défense de morse est utilisée pour la confection des figurines et pour leur support. L'Esquimaux reste fidèle à l'ivoire, matériau travaillé depuis des millénaires. Surélevées par quatre pieds, les défenses sont, la plupart du temps, entières, la partie supérieure étant simplement aplatie. Elles peuvent être aussi tronquées en longueur et en hauteur. La défense se résume alors à une barre large, peu épaisse, arrondie aux extrémités et souvent ourlée d'un motif géométrique.

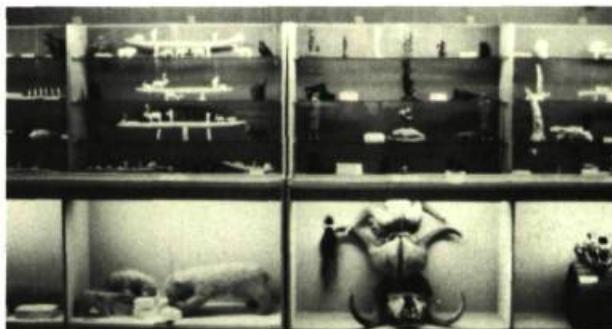
Les figurines lilliputiennes portées par la défense (un à deux centimètres de hauteur) sont semblables à celles de la Culture de Thulé¹. L'accent est mis sur la netteté souple de la ligne de contour, l'équilibre des volumes, l'absence de détails allant jusqu'à la litote. La minutie du travail, la qualité du finissage frappent. Ces œuvres, identiques sans être semblables, possèdent une unité d'ensemble tout en évitant la monotonie.

Au cours des ans, le rôle magico-religieux des statuettes d'ivoire s'était estompé. À la fin du 19^e et au début du 20^e siècle, les figurines cédées aux marins baleiniers puis aux rares touristes de passage avaient même aspect que les précédentes. Le mystère et l'exotisme remplaçaient la magie. Elles exerçaient sur les acquéreurs un attrait certain. Cependant, dans les années trente et quarante, la répétition inlassable et presque mécanique de ces pièces annonçait une décadence irrémédiable malgré la qualité toujours bonne du travail de l'ivoire. Si l'allure des figurines demeure semblable, rien ici du froid stéréotype des statuettes unicellulaires d'autrefois. Un souffle inconnu jusqu'alors anime. Ce *souffle narratif* modifie entièrement la nature profonde de la figurine humaine ou animale, de l'objet. Naguère, la forme véhiculait un pouvoir qui servait de support à un symbole. Matériellement par absolue nécessité, elle occupait l'espace mais ne s'y situait pas. Éternelle de par sa fonction, le temps pour elle n'existe pas. Maintenant, les êtres sont de chair et d'os. Leurs gestes les rendent signifiants et interdépendants. Les femmes ne sont plus des déesses de la fécondité mais des mères accaparées par leurs enfants. La statuette d'un ours ne possède plus le pouvoir d'attirer la proie désirée, il est la cible du chasseur. Les actes accomplis sont limités dans le temps et dans l'espace. Ils s'y situent avec précision. Il est intéressant de constater que l'artiste s'attache rarement à témoigner d'un état, à rendre compte d'un résultat. En revanche, il donne préséance aux actions sur le point de se réaliser ou en train de s'accomplir. L'Esquimaux commence à atteler ses chiens ou achève de construire un igloo. L'espace tangible et l'écoulement inégal du temps font leur apparition pour la première fois. La nouveauté est de taille. Il s'agit en fait d'une manière autre d'appréhender le monde et de l'exprimer. On peut parler sans exagération de révolution.

Des Vénus stéatopyges aux idoles cycladiques, des Vierges romanes aux Christs gothiques, l'art sacré occidental a, lui aussi, pendant longtemps, transmis le message à travers ou au-delà de la forme. L'approche exclusivement descriptive a été une patiente conquête, étroitement liée à une profonde transformation des modes de penser et de sentir. Dans cette perspective, la mutation rapide et aisée dont témoigne la série des défenses de morse ouvragées du Musée Eskimau étonne. Il a suffi de quelques indications

vagues venant de missionnaires non spécialistes des questions artistiques pour que l'artiste de Pelly Bay ou de Repulse Bay regarde son monde avec des yeux neufs et l'exprime autrement. Parce que ce changement radical dans la manière d'appréhender le temps et l'espace est un événement capital en art, il est indispensable de cerner les causes qui ont pu présider à de telles transformations.

Les explications, même succinctes, des missionnaires sont arrivées à un moment propice. Depuis plusieurs générations, l'Esquimaux croyait de moins en moins au rôle magico-religieux des figurines qu'il sculptait. L'union de la forme et du fond n'était plus, sans risques de graves perturbations, indissoluble. Les motivations à reproduire des statuettes figées se faisaient moins contraignantes. Alors qu'il perdait progressivement foi en ses idoles, l'Esquimaux avait pris l'habitude d'écouter ce que, dans le domaine artistique, l'acheteur blanc souhaitait de lui. Cultivant avec étourderie le contresens, celui-ci lui demandait de reproduire scrupuleusement ce qui n'existe déjà plus. Il n'est pas exagéré de dire que la perpétuation des motifs anciens déviés de leur but a été la première adaptation de l'artiste esquimaux aux désiderata des *kablunait*. Adaptation réussie puisque, étant contraint de répéter inlassablement un nombre restreint de thèmes, l'artiste avait su conserver une grande habileté à travailler l'ivoire. Lassé des répétitions lancinantes, il était prêt à accepter toute recommandation qui lui permettrait de sortir de l'impasse. Celle des Pères missionnaires fut la bienvenue. Cependant, ce double argument n'explique pas entièrement la métamorphose. Il existe de par le monde beaucoup de sociétés techniquement moins développées ayant, au contact



1. Les Esquimaux d'aujourd'hui sont les descendants directs de ceux de la Culture de Thulé. Arrivés au Canada central vers le 13^e siècle après J.C., ceux-ci ont sculpté dans l'ivoire de morse des figurines humaines et animales de petites dimensions. Le Musée Eskimau en expose un grand nombre. Pour ceux qui ne pourraient s'y rendre, signalons que le Musée de l'Homme d'Ottawa possède des spécimens identiques.

2 et 3. Vue générale de l'intérieur du Musée. Vue plus précise sur les vitrines exposant les défenses de morse ouvragées.

avec les Blancs, progressivement perdu foi en leurs idoles qui n'ont pas voulu, ou pas su, tirer parti de leurs conseils. S'exprimer à travers des formes est un phénomène complexe. L'historien d'art peut, dans le domaine de la création artistique, constater le changement, en apprécier l'importance. Il n'est pas capable à lui seul d'en rendre compte. Déterminer les causes profondes qui ont permis à l'artiste esquimaux d'effectuer cette mutation spectaculaire dépasse en bien des points notre compétence. Le secours de la psychologie et de la sociologie paraît indispensable. La mise en lumière de ces causes aiderait, peut-être, à mieux comprendre quelles barrières condamnent d'autres collectivités aux structures fort semblables à une stagnation artistique mortelle et quels remèdes simples encourageraient chez elles un rapide renouveau.

Le passage d'un style symbolique à une manière de s'exprimer minutieusement descriptive a permis de dire de quoi chaque jour était fait. Pour la première fois, la sculpture d'ivoire est témoignage attentif du mode de vie. Du mode de vie traditionnel d'abord. On



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trouve sur les défenses de morse des Esquimaux construisant un igloo ou s'affairant autour d'une traîne à chiens. Le sculpteur a aussi été sensible aux transformations qui affectaient déjà son existence et qui allaient, dans les décennies suivantes, la bouleverser. Après la Grande Guerre, avec le médecin, l'agent de la Gendarmerie, les missionnaires devinrent pour les Inuit des figures familières. Tous se convertirent au christianisme. Ceux de la côte est de la Baie d'Hudson sont depuis quarante ans des catholiques pratiquants. Sur une défense de morse, un prêtre officie devant une assistance recueillie. D'autres artistes ont taillé dans l'ivoire un Christ, une Vierge Marie. Durant la Seconde Guerre mondiale et pendant la guerre froide, les *kabluuait* sont venus de plus en plus nombreux dans l'Arctique. Ils s'y sont installés à demeure et ont apporté avec eux la technologie la plus avancée. Des avions prennent aussi leur envol sur des défenses de morse. Ils sont là comme sont présentes les traînes à chiens. L'ancestral esquimau et l'étranger révolutionnaire placés sur un pied d'égalité montrent avec quelle sérénité la nouveauté a été, sinon assimilée, du moins acceptée. Le choix éclectique des thèmes traduit, ici encore, cette surprenante faculté d'adaptation déjà mentionnée.

Leur nombre imposant, leur place prépondérante dans la collection, suffisaient à faire des défenses de morse du Musée Eskimau un ensemble digne d'intérêt. Par l'utilisation millénaire du matériau, le travail soigné et anonyme, l'allure générale des personnages, la série des défenses de morse se rattache au passé. Pour la première fois, l'artiste pose sur lui-même et sur ce qui l'entoure un regard neuf. Il sait et il sent qu'il faudra désormais compter avec l'Occident. Tout en restant lui-même, il adopte sa manière de voir et de s'exprimer. Il y a dans ces œuvres un équilibre tranquille qui, lorsqu'on les contemple avec attention, ne cesse d'émouvoir.

L'arrivée de James Houston sur la côte est de la Baie d'Hudson, en 1949, marque pour beaucoup la naissance de la sculpture esquimaude contemporaine. Ivoire abandonné pour la stéatite, statuettes de plus grandes dimensions, nombre limité de protagonistes, les différences de la sculpture moderne avec les défenses de morse ouvragées sont nombreuses. Cependant, toutes ces statuettes, qu'elles soient d'ivoire ou de pierre, se meuvent, participent à une action, racontent une histoire. La manière d'appréhender le temps et l'espace est semblable dans les deux cas. Sous des airs hypocritement conservateurs, la série des défenses de morse du Musée de Churchill annonce l'élosion artistique faussement spontanée de l'après-guerre. Réalisation-charnière, elle est à notre connaissance unique en son genre et revêt, de ce fait, pour l'historien d'art, une importance particulière.

English Translation, p. 98



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4. Hibou des neiges.

5. Homme assis.

6. Mère à l'enfant.

7. Harponnage et dépeçage de phoques sur la glace.

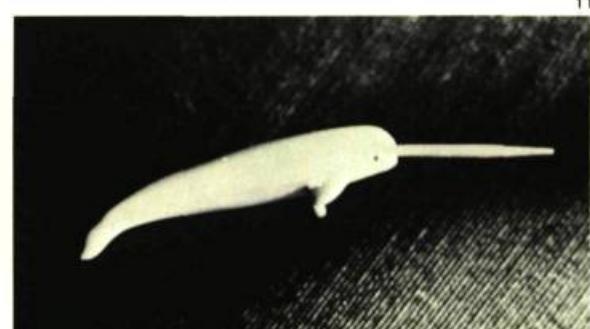
8. Narval à face humaine.

9. Oiseau; peut-être une sterne.

10. Personnage hybride mi-homme, mi-poisson.

11. Narval.

Les photos sont de
Jeannine Veisse



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In Mooney's studio, there is a complete series of photographs taken in Michigan, near South Bend, which give a very good idea of this preoccupation. They are photographs of the underwood where the shadows of the trees are stronger, as he himself says, than the trees; photographs where the reflection (in the water of a lake) is more important than the object reflected. It is in this sense that we are dealing with environmental sculpture. And in West Virginia, Mooney has made sculptures with real tree branches. In Indianapolis, *Springflow* is placed on a mound of grass, like a signal ("It is like a forefinger"), like Kosso Eloul's *Now*, in London, Ontario (cf. *Vie des Arts*, Vol. XVII, No. 67, p. 48), and the title itself well expresses the artist's sensitivity to the seasons. How could it be otherwise in the Midwest: in California, do people know what the seasons are?

To confirm this tendency, Mooney's work in Edinburgh, born of his encounter with Richard Demarco. Demarco, an artist and gallery owner, is the creator of *Edinburgh Arts*, and is famous for his organization of artists' and critics' journeys in quest of a common, and probably mythical, Celtic heritage, from Malta to Northern Scotland, via Italy, Yugoslavia, Brittany, Cornwall and Ireland — Stonehenge itself, whatever its religious function, may be described as a gigantic minimalist and environmental sculpture. Here, light was the medium: sculpted sun, summer solstice. In Edinburgh, Mooney's work consisted of unrolling a long, thin piece of cheesecloth on the neo-classical architecture of the Athens of the North, and of photographing the results. He called it *Passing Line*: one which passes, and which must be crossed. Again, this is close to Christo, and at the very heart of spatial and temporal, and therefore sculptural, considerations. Spatial: a line to be crossed, a boundary, a borderline state. Temporal: the mobile line is, once again, a forefinger, pointing out, in very sense, the passing of time (*lasting* architecture versus ephemeral sculpture; 18th century architecture versus 20th century sculpture, etc.). It is with a certain irony that Mooney looks on Robert Adam's neo-classicism, partially responsible, a century later, for the Beaux Arts style which paradoxically triumphed in Chicago at the time of the Columbian exhibition of 1893, killing, for a while at least, the Chicago school (Sullivan being replaced by the New Yorkers McKim, Mead and White).

All these elements culminate in Mooney's present projects, in which Richard J. Daley, Mayor of Chicago, who died shortly before Christmas 1976, took a keen interest. Whether they will be realized is uncertain as yet. The plan is to create, between the Museum of Science and Industry and Navy Pier, a huge kinetic and luminous environment with projectors and laser-beams reflected by mirrors. It is in keeping with Lake Michigan, the parks, the living museum of modern architecture on its shores; it is the continuation of the Daniel Burnham plan and the 1893 exhibition. How many know that Chicago had been called the *City of Light* and that the World Exhibition of 1900 was largely an attempt to emulate and even surpass Chicago in Paris, to the extent that what was temporary here was built there *for good* (Grand-Palais, Pont Alexandre III)? Sullivan, for his part, had constructed the *Golden Door*, a great archway dedicated to light, facing the east which he constantly sought. Mooney is passionately concerned with the entry of light into a city, the narrow Mediterranean streets (Valletta, which he visited with Demarco), which let in the sun and the moon. I am also thinking of Le Corbusier's *guns of light* in La Tourette, of Nancy Holt's sun-tunnels in Utah (cf. *Artforum*, April 1977). In Chicago itself, one of the most justly famous vistas is that of the Wrigley Building, a 1924 sky-scraper covered with shiny ceramics, like a tempting sugared almond. From the other side of the river, a battery of flood-lights has illuminated the building every evening since its inauguration. Mooney has told me that what he prefers in this setting is the series of projectors itself: light.

Here are the main points of his grand project. Firstly, at the Museum of Science and Industry a series of laser beams would be reflected from dome to dome and on Lake Michigan. The lake surface itself would, for certain programmes, act as a mirror. Real mirrors will be used so that the beams return to the Museum. Similarly, at Navy Pier, laser beams would be reflected from tower to tower and towards the lake, sent back by the mirrors, the whole weaving a sort of network, a piece of lace, a luminous cobweb. Subsequently, the *wall of light*, large, oblique rays would originate along the lake between the Museum and the jetty; they would be changed every half-hour, creating formal patterns both in the sky and on the lake. They would contrast with the more subtle laser beams, visible only in a hazy or polluted atmosphere. Finally, with technical aid of General Motors, sealed beams would be used. There would be a light sculpture inside the Museum and one, or several, between the Museum and the Pier, the lake surface providing reflection and refraction, for one of the sculptures might be under water. When submitting his project to the City, Mooney observed that "the city of Chicago has long distinguished itself with its use of light in decoration and festivities, such as the Christmas lights on North Michigan Avenue and the lighting of the *Buckingham Fountain*, a 1927 fountain equipped, ten years ago, with an electronic programme, featuring 653 coloured lamps. Here we find the timeless custom of fireworks which doubtless owes something to those

dramatic storms which streak the Chicago sky with lightning flashes".

In conclusion, we may point out that John David Mooney's multiple sketches for his sculptures have had an unexpected effect, that of making him return to lithography (which he had formerly studied) and of revealing to him the possibilities of silk-screens, of which he has created a superb example. After having contemplated the prairie and the lake stretching to the horizon, Daniel Burnham stated with fine aplomb: "Whatever man undertakes here should be either actually or seemingly without limit." In his own unique way, John David Mooney is working in this direction, by confining, and then freeing light... as far as the eye can see.

1. Part of John David Mooney's plans was able to be achieved during the *Lake Festival* at Chicago from the 13th to the 19th of August. Sixteen searchlights flashed forth beams of bluish light six kilometres long, strategically arranged on both sides of a large bay bounded on the north by Navy Pier and on the south by the Aquarium and the Planetarium. These rays sketched in the sky, black toward the lake or pink and red toward the city, bowers of luminous greenery, and seemed an aisle of honour of crossed swords for the three-way marriage of the lake, the sky and the city. Every ten minutes, their arrangement was changed; then the beams swept the sky, caressing as they passed, like a white wing, an airplane, a sky-scraper, massing on the clouds where they formed milky moons, white dots on the vast scarf of the night. A work of art whose proud beauty is due not only to its greater than monumental size suitable to the imposing frame of Chicago, but also to its fleeting character: a work of art that, in short, brings to life again by these two qualities the reviving tradition of royal entries into cities and arches of triumph erected for visiting sovereigns. On the 19th of August, at a quarter to midnight, the candles were snuffed out and Chicago, like Cinderella, went on its way toward autumn, not without a pang of sorrow.

(Translation by Eithne Bourget)

THE WALRUS TUSK SCULPTURES IN THE ESKIMO MUSEUM AT CHURCHILL

By Jeannine VEISSE

There are many tourists who embark on the long and complicated journey by rail across the Canadian forest to Churchill just for a fleeting vision of the tundra. If a meeting with the polar bear is uncertain, one with the whale, the seal, or the wild goose rarely fails to occur. With its hospital, its school, its Hudson's Bay Company store and its Catholic mission, the Eskimo Museum belongs to the quadrilateral which is to-day the heart of the little village. Not even the most unobservant visitor can miss it. Most often he goes aimlessly into the only exhibition gallery. Immediately the symphony of the show-cases, in black and white on a red background, fascinates him. There may be seen, grouped in centres of interest, a broad sample of the best produced by Eskimo artists in the last thirty years. Among the hundreds of sculptures, the series of carved walrus tusks stands out powerfully and forms the coloured framework of the exhibition. Ordered in 1944 by the Churchill Catholic Mission, these works make up a unique ensemble in the history of contemporary Eskimo sculpture and deserve some comments for themselves alone.

In all, forty-eight scenes may be counted, twenty-eight having been produced at Repulse Bay by Tungilik, Koverk, Kringark, Nutakraluk and Takrawa, and twenty-one at Pelly Bay by Fabien and Antonin Attark and Ugark.

It must be noted that walrus tusk is used for the making of figurines and for their support. The Eskimo remains faithful to ivory, a material worked for thousands of years. Raised on four stands, the tusks are, most of the time, whole, the upper part simply being planed. They can also be shortened in length and height. Then the tusk boils down to a wide bar, not very thick, rounded at the ends and often bordered by a geometric motif.

The Lilliputian figurines carried by the tusk (one or two centimetres in height) are similar to those in the culture of Thule¹. The accent is placed on the supple clarity of the contour line, the balance of volumes, the absence of details going so far as litotes. The meticulousness of the work and the quality of the finish are striking. These works, identical without being similar, possess a unity of ensemble while avoiding monotony.

With the passing of time the magic-religious rôle of the ivory statuettes has toned down. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, the figurines parted with to whalers and then to the occasional passing tourist had the same appearance as the earlier ones. Mystery and exotic quality replaced magic. They exerted a certain

attraction on purchasers. However, during the Thirties and Forties the unflagging and almost mechanical repetition of these pieces foretold an irreparable decadence in spite of the still good quality of the work. Even if the appearance of the figurines remains similar, there is nothing here of the cold stereotype of the unicellular statuettes of the past. An unknown inspiration animated them until that time. This *narrative inspiration* completely modified the profound nature of the human or animal figurine and of the object. A short time ago, form conveyed a power that served as support for a symbol. Material through absolute necessity, it occupied space but was not located in it. Eternal by reason of its function, time did not exist for it. Now, the creatures are of flesh and bone. Their movements make them significant and interdependent. The women are no longer fertility goddesses but mothers monopolized by their children. The statue of a bear no longer has the power to attract the desired prey, it is the hunter's target. The acts accomplished are limited in time and space. They find themselves located there with precision. It is interesting to realize that the artist rarely applies himself to bearing witness of a state or reporting a result. On the other hand, he bestows priority on actions on the point of taking place or in the process of happening. The Eskimo is beginning to harness his dogs or is completing the building of an igloo. Tangible space and the uneven passing of time make their appearance for the first time. Novelty has become very important. It is a matter, in fact, of another way of comprehending the world and expressing it. Without exaggeration, one can see this as revolutionary.

From steatopygous Venuses to Cycladic idols, from Romanesque Virgins to Gothic Christs, Western sacred art has also, for a long time, conveyed the message through or beyond form. The exclusively descriptive approach has been a patient conquest closely linked to a profound transformation of the ways of thinking and feeling. In this view, the rapid, easy change evidenced by the series of carved walrus tusks in the Eskimo Museum is astonishing. A few vague suggestions from missionaries who were not specialists on artistic matters were enough for the Pelly Bay or Repulse Bay artist to look at his world with new eyes and for him to express it differently. Because this radical change in the manner of comprehending time and space is an important event in art, it is indispensable to perceive the causes which have been able to foster such transformations.

The explanations of the missionaries, although brief, occurred at an auspicious moment. For several generations the Eskimo had believed less and less in the magic-religious rôle of the figurines he sculpted. The union of form and background was no longer indissoluble, without risk of serious disturbances. Motivations for producing statuettes after a set pattern were becoming less restraining. At the time when he was gradually losing faith in his idols, the Eskimo had got into the habit of listening to what the white purchaser wanted from him in the artistic field. Thoughtlessly encouraging misinterpretation, the buyer asked him to reproduce exactly what already did not exist any more. It is no exaggeration to say that the perpetuation of ancient motifs deflected from their goal was the first of the Eskimo artist's adaptation to the demands of the *kablunait*. A successful adaptation, since, being restricted from incessantly repeating a limited number of themes, the artist had been able to retain a great skill in working ivory. Weary of throbbing repetition, he was ready to accept any suggestion that would allow him to emerge from the blind alley. That of the Missionary Fathers was welcome. However, this double point of view does not entirely explain the change. In the world there are many less technically-developed societies which have, on contact with whites, progressively lost faith in their idols, which have not wanted or not known how to make use of their advice. To express oneself through forms is a complex phenomenon. The art historian, in the domain of artistic creation, can realize the change and appreciate its importance. He is not capable, by himself alone, of rendering an account of it. To determine the profound causes that have permitted the Eskimo artist to accomplish this spectacular change greatly surpasses our powers. The assistance of psychology and sociology appears indispensable. The clarification of these causes would perhaps help us to better understand what barriers condemn other societies to structures greatly similar to a fatal artistic stagnation and what simple measures would favour a rapid renewal among them.

Moving from a symbolical style to a descriptively detailed manner of expression has permitted saying what each day was made of. For the first time, ivory sculpture is an exact evidence of the way of life; the traditional way of life, first. On walrus tusks we find Eskimos building an igloo or working busily around a dog sled. The sculptor has also been sensitive to the changes already affecting his existence and which were, in the following decades, to cause an upheaval in it. After the Great War, the doctor, the Mountie and the missionaries became familiar figures to the Inuit. All of them converted to Christianity. Those of the east coast of Hudson Bay have been practising Catholics for forty years. On a walrus tusk a priest officiates before a collected crowd. Other artists have carved a Christ and a Virgin Mary in ivory. During the Second World War

and the Cold War, the *Kablunait* came in greater and greater numbers to the Arctic. They settled there and brought the most advanced technology with them. Airplanes, too, take off on walrus tusks. They are to be seen on the carvings just like dog sleds. The ancestral Eskimo and the revolutionary foreigner on a footing of equality show with what serenity change has been, if not assimilated, at least accepted. The eclectic choice of themes expresses, here again, the astonishing faculty of adaptation previously mentioned.

Their impressive number and their predominant place in the collection were enough to make the walrus tusks in the Eskimo Museum a group worthy of attention. Through the use of the material for thousands of years, the careful anonymous work and the general appearance of the figures, the series of walrus tusks is linked with the past. For the first time, the artist now rests a new gaze on himself and on his surroundings. He knows and feels that henceforth he will have to reckon with the West. While remaining himself, he adopts the Western manner of seeing and expressing himself. There is in these works a tranquil balance that never ceases to affect when viewed attentively.

James Houston's arrival on the east coast of Hudson Bay in 1949 clearly marks the birth of contemporary Eskimo sculpture. Ivory abandoned for soapstone, larger statues, a limited number of characters, the differences in modern sculpture with worked walrus tusks are many. However, all these statuettes, whether of ivory or of stone, move, participate in an action, tell a story. The manner of comprehending time and space is similar in both cases. In a sparsely conservative atmosphere, the Churchill Museum walrus tusk series presents the falsely spontaneous artistic blossoming of the postwar period. A turning-point in production, it is, in our opinion, unique in its kind and, by this fact, carries particular importance for the art historian.

1. The Eskimos of to-day are the direct descendants of those of Thule culture. Having arrived in central Canada about the 13th century A. D., they sculpted small human and animal figures in walrus ivory. The Eskimo Museum exhibits a large number of these. For those who cannot go there, we can report that the Ottawa Museum of Man possesses identical specimens.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

THE OPENING OF THE ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO'S NEW CANADIAN WING

By Roald NASGAARD

On September 24, 1977 the Art Gallery of Ontario opened its new Canadian Wing to the public. The unveiling of what is Stage 2 of the expansion programme of the Gallery has been awaited with some impatience. When Stage 1 was opened in 1974 the focus of attention was inevitably on the Henry Moore Sculpture Centre and Henry Moore's \$15 million gift of his own work which the Centre would display. The accompanying fanfare tended to overshadow the contents of the other galleries which opened with Stage 1 and was interpreted by some as an affront to Canadian art and artists whose exhibition would have to await a further stage of the building programme. Thus the Art Gallery of Ontario would for another few years present the people of Ontario, and the world, with a Henry Moore Sculpture Centre but no Tom Thomson wing and Rembrandt, Poussin and Monet would continue to overshadow Krieghoff, Paul Peel and A. Y. Jackson. The latter would appear only on occasion in temporary installations around the Walker Court, or in the Gallery of Contemporary Art or the Zacks Galleries.

The impatience was normal enough and shared by members of the curatorial staff of the Gallery. They were anxious to acquire the sort of overview of the extent and quality of the Canadian collection which could be had only from a large representative hanging heretofore denied because the collection was scattered in various display and storage areas or on loan to the offices of civic or provincial officials. The true significance of the opening of the Canadian Wing will, however, be understood only when it is remembered that this is the first time in the history of the Art Gallery of Ontario that the institution can put on permanent display its extensive holdings of Canadian art dating from the mid-eighteenth century to the present.

The following report on the Canadian Wing is essentially a factual and descriptive discussion of the appearance of the new building when it opened to the public in September. It may be of some interest first, however, to review the history of the Art Gallery of Ontario from its begin-