

**Sale Name:** Important Indigenous Fine Art Auction Sept. 6th 2023

## LOT 40 - Kenojuak Ashevak - Birds From The Sea 28/50



**Artist Description** Kenojuak Ashevak ᑭᓃᓂᓄᓐ ᐱᓂᓂᓐ (1927 – 2013 Inuit / CAD) C.C., Onu, R.C.A. Born in an igloo in an Inuit camp, Ikirasaq, at the southern coast of Baffin Island. Kenojuak Ashevak became one of the first Inuit women in Cape Dorset to begin drawing. She worked in graphite, coloured pencils and felt-tip pens, and occasionally used poster paints, watercolours or acrylics. She created many carvings from soapstone and thousands of drawings, etchings, stonecut prints and prints — all sought after by museums and collectors. She designed several drawings for Canadian stamps and coins, and in 2004 she created the first Inuit-designed stained-glass window for the John Bell Chapel in Oakville, Ontario. In 2017, the \$10 bill released in celebration of Canada's 150th birthday features Kenojuak's stone-cut and stencil printed work called "Owl's Bouquet" in silver holographic foil. During Ashevak's stay at Parc Savard hospital in Quebec City, 1952 to 1955, she learned to make dolls from Harold Pfeiffer and to do beadwork. These crafts later attracted the attention of civil administrator and pioneer Inuit art promoter James Archibald Houston and his wife Alma. Houston introduced print-making to Cape Dorset artists in the 1950s, and he and his wife began marketing Inuit arts and crafts, including an exhibit of Inuit art in 1959. She was hesitant at first, claiming that she could not draw and that drawing was a man's business. Yet the next time that she visited the Houstons, the sheets of paper that Alma had given her were filled with pencil sketches. In 1958 her first print, Rabbit Eating Seaweed, was produced from one of her designs on a sealskin bag, and by 1959 Kenojuak and other Cape Dorset Inuit had formed the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative as a senlavit (workshop) for aspiring Inuit artists, later known as Kinngait Studios. Fellow members included Pitloosie Saila, Mayoreak Ashoona, and Napatchie Pootagook. Her reception in southern Canada was rapidly favourable. In 1963 she was

the subject of a National Film Board documentary by producer John Feeney, Eskimo Artist: Kenojuak, about Kenojuak, then 35, and her family, as well as traditional Inuit life on Baffin Island. The film showed a stonecutter carving her design into a relief block in stone, cutting away all the non-printing surfaces; she would then apply ink to the carved stone, usually in two or more colours, and carefully make 50 "shadow" prints for sale. With the money she earned from the film, Johnniebo was able to purchase his own canoe and become an independent hunter to help provide for the family, which now included a new daughter, Aggeo, and an adopted son, Ashevak. Ashevak created several pieces of work to commemorate the creation of Nunavut, the third Canadian Territory, including a piece commissioned by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Nunavut Qajanatuk (Our Beautiful Land) for the signing of the Inuit Land Claim Agreement in Principle in April 1990; Nunavut, a large hand-coloured lithograph to commemorate the signing of the Final Agreement early in 1994; a large diptych titled Siilavut, Nunavut (Our Environment, Our Land) in April 1999, when the Territory officially came into being. Kenojuak became the first Inuit artist inducted into Canada's Walk of Fame in 2001, and traveled to Toronto with her daughter, Silaqi, to attend the ceremony. Up until her death, Kenojuak contributed annually to the Cape Dorset Annual Print Release and continued to create new works. She was one of the last living artists from the West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative. Since her death, prices for Kenojuak's work have reached new records, including \$59,000CAD paid for a copy of Rabbit Eating Seaweed. In 1967, she was made an Officer of the Order of Canada and was promoted to Companion in 1982. In 1970, Canada Post placed her 1960 print Enchanted Owl on a stamp to commemorate the centennial of the Northwest Territories. In 1974, she was elected a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. In 1980, Canada Post used her 1961 print Return of the Sun on a seventeen-cent stamp as part of its Inuit postage stamp series. In 1982, she has appointed a Companion of the Order of Canada. In 1991, she received an honorary doctorate from Queen's University. In 1992, she was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Toronto. In 1993, Canada Post featured 1969 drawing The Owl on a stamp for its Masterpieces of Canadian Art series. In 1999, a famous piece of hers, the "Red Owl" was featured on the April issue of the 1999 Millennium quarter series. Her initials in Inuktitut were on the left of the design, the first time the language had appeared on circulation coinage. In 2001, she was inducted into Canada's Walk of Fame. In 2004, she created the first-ever Inuit-designed stained glass window for the John Bell Chapel at Appleby College in Oakville, Ontario. In 2008, she received the renowned \$25,000 Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts from the Canada Council of the Arts. In 2012, she was appointed a member of the Order of Nunavut. In 2017, the Bank of Canada unveiled a commemorative \$10 banknote in honour of Canada's 150th birthday; Ashevak's print Owl's Bouquet is featured on the note. Source Wikipedia

## Description

*Skin Stencil 28/50 - Cape Dorset - Baffin Island 1960*

Titled, Numbered, Dated & Signed Across Lower Border

Sheet - 19.5 ins x 24.5 ins (49.53 cm x 62.23 cm)

Unframed

Paper: Natural

## Provenance:

Private Collection

**Quantity: 1**



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