

Traverse City Meeting Review

Saturday, 08 December 2007

I.A.S. Traverse City Meeting Report by Claude M. Weillt's hard to think of a more perfect place to hold an autumn meeting than Traverse City, Michigan with two beautiful sunny days and the autumn colors at their best. So it was that more than eighty I.A.S. members and friends came together for its annual meeting at the Dennos Museum Center. Friday, October 19, the first day of the meeting was also the fifth anniversary of the I.A.S.'s organizational meeting.

Of course, the Dennos Museum, with its major collection of Inuit art, offered an ideal venue for the meeting. Our Inuk guest artist was Anita Issaluk, from Winnipeg, Manitoba, whose soapstone carvings have caught the eye of collectors of Inuit art in a big way. A native of Chesterfield Inlet, she watched her father carving as a child and started doing so herself in 1996. Her work was recognized in the Winter 1999 issue of the Inuit Art Quarterly. Anita gave a carving demonstration for early arrivals on Friday afternoon. Aside from her contribution to our meeting, she also participated in the activities of the Bioneers, a green group, also meeting at the Museum. This was followed by a reception in the museum's Sculpture Court and the formal opening of the meeting at which greetings were made by Gene Jenneman, the Director of the Dennos Museum; Philip Leavitt, President of the I.A.S.; and Dennis Moore of the Canadian Consulate in Detroit. Immediately following the official opening, great excitement was generated by the lottery and sale of the 2007 collection of Cape Dorset prints which had been mounted on the walls surrounding the Sculpture Court. Prior to its beginning, Diane Bolander, the DMC's education director, gave a tour of the prints with commentary on print making techniques. The great majority were snatched up by the thrilled lottery winners; disappointing some who had great hopes to be the lucky ones. The Dennos Museum Store will assist them in finding the items they wanted. During the entire afternoon and early evening, our marketplace thrived. Along with the Museum's store, several galleries and I.A.S. members displayed a beautiful, wide-ranging selection of Inuit prints, sculpture and other artifacts. Also, in the Museum's Dutmers Theater, a variety of Inuit short films were being shown, among them ones featuring the preparation for printing two prints by Germaine Arnkatauyok made during our last year's meeting in Indianapolis and another featuring Kenojuk Ashevak, showing not only her family's winter journey to an Inuit community but also the creative process involved in her prints and the steps through which they are taken from inception to finished product. Early the following morning, the marketplace re-opened and films were shown again. The official meeting resumed at 10 a.m. with a full complement of attendees. Ms. Issaluk again demonstrated her carving skills while offering a running commentary on how the idea for her pieces were generated; demonstrating the tools used for carving and how the finishing touches were put on them. Following this, she showed off her skills as a musician, using a guitar to accompany herself in songs which she had composed; providing beforehand, a brief history of how they came to be. Their titles were: I can Hear the Land; Where my Heart is and For the Northern Heart. After lunch, Dennis Moore thanked the I.A.S. for its efforts in promoting Inuit culture and Gene Jenneman gave a brief talk about Inuit Art collections and how they might be preserved by giving them to museums such as the Dennos. Several visitors to the Arctic northlands then gave illustrated talks highlighting their travels. Bob O'Hara, a long-time Inuit art collector and donor to the Dennos Museum, gave a fascinating view of his nearly annual trips in the last thirty to forty years; living mainly off the land. Terry Tarnow, manager of the Dennos Museum Store and Eliot and Alisa Waldman described their Adventure Canada tour to Lake Harbor, Pangnirtung, Cape Dorset and various Greenland communities. In Cape Dorset, carver and I.A.F. board member, Nuna Parr hosted them and they partook of typical Inuit fare and watched some of his children help finish his sculptures. These talks were followed by a group bus outing to visit the home of Dudley and Barbara Smith, gorgeously located on the shores of the Grand Traverse Bay. To some extent their home had been remodeled to provide for proper viewing places for their fabulous pieces of sculpture and prints. After savouring their collection and partaking of refreshments, the group continued on to Boskydel Vinyard for a wine sampling. This winery is owned by Bernie Rink, whose enthusiasm for Inuit Art, led to its great popularity in this area of Michigan. Last and not least, a fine dinner was enjoyed at the Leland Lodge. The annual business meeting of the I.A.S. was held on Sunday morning at which various developments were discussed such as the securing of 501c3 designation giving us non-profit, tax exempt status and allowing its supporters to write off donations for which no services were rendered. Sites for the next annual meeting were discussed. . The Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan was suggested. Cranbrook has a substantial collection of vintage Inuit art. Chicago will also be considered. Three new Board members were elected: Betty Lou Cooke of Greenbush, MI, Lane Phillips of St. Paul, MN and Chuck Hudson of Virginia Beach, VA. New officers will be elected at the next board meeting. Having finished its official business, the meeting adjourned until next year. The Society wishes to express its gratitude to our board member, Carolyn Drake, for taking the lead in organizing a superb program; to the Dennos Museum and its staff for offering such a marvelous venue and support for the meeting; and to the Canadian Consulate General in Detroit for providing its financial support. It is grateful to Nathanael Green, a high school senior from Lexington, Kentucky who attended this year's meeting with his family and last year's in Indianapolis and produced an unusually perceptive essay on the beguiling qualities of Inuit art. Last and certainly not least, we wish to thank those members and friends who came to Traverse City and whose enthusiastic support portends a bright future for our Society.