

detailed knowledge of Eskimo history, culture, and character³. Qualified anthropologists and art historians have begun only recently to correct this situation⁴.

Among the numerous writers on contemporary Canadian Eskimo carving there stands, at one extreme, a faction steadfastly devoted to the theory that we are dealing here with something authentically aboriginal in every respect. Thus SAARINEN (1954:64) sees it as "perhaps the last unspoiled, indigenous and spontaneous art". This finds an echo in SCHAEFER-SIMMERN (1958:1) who speaks of "noch einmal eine unverfälschte, freisprießende künstlerische Produktion, die unlösbar mit dem Gesamtleben ihrer Erzeuger verbunden ist". Views substantially similar to the above have been advanced by others⁵. Certain adherents of this school, however, have expressed contradictory opinions on what would seem to be quite basic propositions underlying this whole issue.

a) A few stress conformity rather than divergence with the past, thereby fostering the notion that throughout its history Eskimo carving has constituted a more or less uniform phenomenon. Contemporary sculptures are presented as merely the most recent exemplifications of an ancient tradition, free from any Western influence. Thus for example, the National Gallery of Canada (1951:1) contends most naively that "as in all genuinely primitive art, there is little evolution in style to be observed. Some of the artifacts discovered in old Eskimo sites differ from present-day carvings only in being slightly smaller".

b) The first part of the above statement clashes with an exposition offered by HOUSTON (1954e:7). Injecting a distinctly evolutionary note, he asserts that "the Eskimo people of Canada, cheerfully living a difficult existence in a harsh climate, have developed over the centuries a unique art form ...".

c) Despite this assurance there are occasional hints of something amiss in the past. References by others⁶ to a 'revival' or 'renaissance' of ancient arts and latent talents carry the implication that Canadian Eskimos, after a time-lapse of unspecified length, have again taken up carving, presumably without altering their traditional ways of expression.

d) Somewhat less orthodox is the view-point shared by COPLAND (1954:67) and FALCK (1955:305) who credit outsiders with encouraging the development of modern Canadian Eskimo carving. They feel, however, in the words of the last-named author that "ici en effet, est en train de naître un art de sculpture absolument original, et que l'on s'accorde à reconnaître comme l'une des formes les plus pures de la création artistique indigène au Canada".

³ SWINTON (1958:41) states bluntly: "There has been published, reprinted, and quoted, a great deal of material, which was entirely misleading and which has established in the minds of even the not-so-gullible public a myth about various aspects of Eskimo carving that bears no resemblance to the facts."

⁴ Anonymous (1963); CARPENTER (1959); CHRISTENSEN (1955); COLLINS (1961); JENNESS (1964); MELDGAARD (1960b); RAINEY (1959); RAY (1961); and SWINTON (1958).

⁵ Anonymous (1962); Canadian Handicrafts Guild (pamphlet no. a); ELLIOTT (1962); HUME (1963); LEECHMAN (1955); MARTIN (1962); E. TURNER (1963); WINTER (1958); WOODCOCK (1960); and WYATT (1958).

⁶ Canadian Handicrafts Guild (pamphlet no. a); GILHOOLY (1962:214); IGLAUER (1964:19); and PHILLIPS (1962:8).