

More Information on Harold C. Hanson Collection

The Inuit carvings in the collection were acquired by Dr. Hanson during a transitional period in Inuit culture. Prior to the 1950s, Inuit carving was mostly a functional or recreational activity. Increased acculturation following World War II resulted in a shift from "traditional" to "contemporary" carvings intended as trade objects. Today carving is almost exclusively an art-for-sale activity marketed through venues such as the Hudson's Bay Company, galleries and museums, and artists' cooperatives. What has not changed is the desire on the part of the carver to achieve a likeness, real or imagined, which draws from the environmental context of Arctic life. Most of the works in the Hanson Collection are carved from soapstone with the use of metal handsaws, drills, knives and files. Additional materials include walrus ivory and caribou antler. While carving is a primary form of Inuit art, it should be noted that these works represent a diverse group of people whose individual visions also find expression through printmaking, drawing, painting, and ceramics.

The Hanson Collection also includes a painting by the British artist Peter Scott, son of famed Antarctic explorer Robert Falcon Scott, which depicts Canada geese in flight. Additionally, two other paintings by the Norwegian-American artists, Emil Biørn (*Viking at Signal Fire on Mountain Top*) and Karl Ouren (*Harbor at Lofoten Islands*) were donated. Both Norwegian-American artists were Chicago residents for many years. The print donated by Hanson is a well-known image entitled "Petra" by David Roberts. These works were donated in 1993 and 1994.