



Smithsonian

National Museum of the American Indian

The Arctic Circle records, 1967-1987

Rachel Menyuk

2012

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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
Biographical / Historical.....	2
Arrangement.....	2
Scope and Contents.....	2
Names and Subjects	3
Container Listing	4
Series 1: Papers, 1971-1980.....	4
Series 2: Reference Materials, 1967-1987, undated.....	5
Series 3: Photographs, 1971-1987.....	11

Collection Overview

Repository:	National Museum of the American Indian
Title:	The Arctic Circle records
Date:	1967-1987 (bulk 1971-1986)
Identifier:	NMAI.AC.004
Creator:	The Arctic Circle (Gallery: Los Angeles, Calif.)
Source:	Witt, Ellen, 1917-2007 Witt, Bert
Extent:	634 Slides (photographs) 152 Photographs 1.6 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The Arctic Circle records include materials gathered by Bert and Ellen Witt for their private gallery of Inuit art The Arctic Circle. These materials include native artists information which is organized by community, reference material organized topically, slides from the gallery's annual print collections as well as photographs of sculptures and textiles displayed in the gallery. Much of the reference material used by the gallery pertains to native communities in the Nunavet Territory of Canada such as Cape Dorset and Baker Lake as well as other small communities throughout the Northwest Territories. Additionally photographs taken by Bert and Ellen Witt's son Tony during a trip to Canada in 1973 are included in this collection.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The archival material in this collection accompanied a donation to NMAI by Bert and Ellen Witt in 2001 that included sculptures, drawings, prints and textiles. An additional three photographs were donated by Bert Witt in 2004.

Processing Information

Processed by Rachel Menyuk, Archives Technician in 2012.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Collection Title, Box and Folder Number; National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Access to NMAI Archive Center collections is by appointment only, Monday - Friday, 9:30 am - 4:30 pm. Please contact the archives to make an appointment (phone: 301-238-1400, email: nmaiarchives@si.edu).

Conditions Governing Use

Single photocopies may be made for research purposes. Permission to publish or broadcast materials from the collection must be requested from National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center. Please submit a written request to nmaiarchives@si.edu.

Biographical / Historical

The Arctic Circle was founded in Los Angeles in 1970 as a private art gallery devoted entirely to the exhibition and sale of sculptures and graphics by Inuit artists of the Canadian arctic. Between 1970 and the late 1980's approximately six to eight exhibitions were mounted on themes illustrative of native life in the Canadian arctic. The gallery was created and founded by Bert and Ellen Witt and run out of their home on North La Jolla Avenue in Los Angeles, California. Bert Witt, sometimes accompanied by his wife Ellen and son Tony, traveled extensively in the Canadian arctic visiting many Inuit communities and forming personal acquaintances with native artists. Through the Arctic Circle, Witt supported the Arctic co-operative movement by purchasing art through co-ops in each settlement he visited or through the co-op distribution points for the Northwest Territories and Arctic Quebec.

Scope and Contents

The Arctic Circle records include materials gathered by Bert and Ellen Witt for their private gallery of Inuit art The Arctic Circle. These materials include native artists information which is organized by community, reference material organized topically, slides from the gallery's annual print collections as well as photographs of sculptures and textiles displayed in the gallery. Much of the reference material used by the gallery pertains to native communities in the Nunavet Territory of Canada such as Cape Dorset and Baker Lake as well as other small communities throughout the Northwest Territories. Additionally photographs taken by Bert and Ellen Witt's son Tony during a trip to Canada in 1973 are included in this collection.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged into three series: Series 1: Papers, 1971-1980, Series 2: Reference Materials, 1967-1987, Subseries 2.1: Artists Listed by Community, 1971-1984, undated, Subseries 2.2: Reference Library, 1967-1987, undated, Series 3: Photographs, 1971-1987, Subseries 3.1: Gallery Objects, 1979-1987, Subseries 3.2: Witt Family Arctic Trip, 1973, Subseries 3.3: Other Photos, 1971, 1975

- Series 1: Papers, 1971-1980
- Series 2: Reference Materials, 1967-1987
- Subseries 2A: Artists Listed by Community, 1971-1984, undated
- Subseries 2B: Reference Library, 1967-1987, undated
- Series 3: Photographs, 1971-1987
- Subseries 3A: Gallery Objects, 1979-1987
- Subseries 3B: Witt Family Arctic Trip, 1973
- Subseries 3C: Other Photos, 1971, 1975

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Art galleries, Commercial -- California -- Los Angeles
Inuit (Canadian Eskimo)
Inuit art -- 20th century -- Exhibitions

Cultures:

Inuit (Canadian Eskimo)

Types of Materials:

Articles
Brochures
Clippings
Photographs
Slides

Names:

Arluk, George, 1949-
Ashevak, Karoo, 1940-
Pitseolak, Peter, 1902-1973
Pudlo, 1916-1992
Witt, Bert
Witt, Ellen, 1917-2007

Places:

Arctic Region -- photographs
Baker Lake (Nunavut)
Cape Dorset (Nunavut)

Container Listing

Series 1: Papers, 1971-1980

0.2 Linear feet

Scope and Contents: This series contains information about the The Arctic Circle gallery itself including brochures and pamphlets announcing exhibits as well general history of the organization. Papers written by Bert and Tony Witt on Arctic Art are included in this series as well.

Box 1, Folder 1	Brochures and Pamphlets, 1971-1980, undated
Box 1, Folder 2	"Diary: The Canadian Arctic," Anthony Witt, 1973
Box 1, Folder 3	General Information, undated
Box 1, Folder 4	"Inuit Print Retrospective," Bert Witt, 1978
Box 1, Folder 5	"Man and the Arctic," Bert Witt, 1974
Box 1, Folder 6	"Shamanic Themes in Inuit Art: A Commentary," Bert Witt, 1979
Box 1, Folder 7	Term Paper, Anthony Witt, 1975

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 2: Reference Materials, 1967-1987, undated

1.4 Linear feet

Scope and Contents: This series includes all the reference materials Bert and Ellen Witt collected to enhance the understanding of the objects and artists highlighted in their gallery. This includes both information on Inuit artists and information on general topics relating to art.

2.1: Artists Listed by Community, 1971-1984, undated

Scope and Contents: This subseries includes information about Inuit artists from various communities in Canada. These materials were gathered by the Witt's to maintain ties with artists whose works were purchased and presented in The Arctic Circle. These include Inuit artist biographies and resumes and in some cases news articles and object catalogs regarding the artists work. Some of these materials are restricted due to small amounts of private personal information. This subseries is arranged alphabetically by community name.

Box 1, Folder 8	Arctic Bay, undated
Box 1, Folder 9	Arviat, undated
Box 1, Folder 10	Baker Lake, undated
Box 1, Folder 11	Belcher Islands, 1981, undated
Box 1, Folder 12	Broughton Islands, 1981
Box 1, Folder 13	Cape Dorset I, undated
Box 1, Folder 14	Cape Dorset II, undated
Box 1, Folder 15	Cape Dorset III, undated
Box 1, Folder 16	Clyde, 1984
Box 1, Folder 17	Eskimo Point, undated
Box 1, Folder 18	Frobisher Bay, undated
Box 1, Folder 19	George River, undated
Box 1, Folder 20	Great Whale River, undated
Box 1, Folder 21	Holman, undated Notes: The Holman community was officially renamed <i>Ulukhaktok</i> on April 1st of 2006.
Box 1, Folder 22	Igloolik, 1976, 1981
Box 1, Folder 23	Inukjuak (Port Harrison), 1976, 1984

Box 1, Folder 24	Lake Harbour, 1974, 1980
Box 2, Folder 1	Pangnirtung, 1971-1979
Box 2, Folder 2	Payne Bay, undated
Box 2, Folder 3	Pelly Bay, 1984
Box 2, Folder 4	Povungnituk, undated
Box 2, Folder 5	Rankin Inlet, undated
Box 2, Folder 6	Repulse Bay, 1973, undated
Box 2, Folder 7	Spence Bay, 1974, undated
Box 2, Folder 8	Sugluk, 1973, 1976
Box 2, Folder 9	General, 1974-1984

2.2: Reference Library, 1967-1987, undated

Scope and Contents: The reference library subseries includes information gathered by Bert and Ellen Witt on subjects relating to Inuit art. These materials include articles and pamphlets on topics such as artistic mediums, general information on native communities in the Arctic, the developemnt of the Arctic, and miscellaneous materials on Inuit life and culture. This subseries is arranged alphabetically with the miscellaneous material at the end of the subseries.

Box 2, Folder 10	Animals Hunted and Trapped, 1971-1972
Box 2, Folder 11	Animals Hunted and Trapped: Arctic Birds, 1972
Box 2, Folder 12	Animals Hunted and Trapped: Bear, 1984
Box 2, Folder 13	Animals Hunted and Trapped: Caribou, 1972-1983
Box 2, Folder 14	Animals Hunted and Trapped: Muskoxen, 1970-1974
Box 2, Folder 15	Animals Hunted and Trapped: Seal and Walrus, 1972
Box 2, Folder 16	Animals Hunted and Trapped: Whale, Narwhal, 1976
Box 2, Folder 17	The Arctic, 1972
Box 2, Folder 18	Art, 1986
Box 2, Folder 19	Art: Archaeology, 1973-1974

Box 2, Folder 20	Art: Commercialization, 1972-1973, 1986
Box 2, Folder 21	Art: Copyright, 1986
Box 2, Folder 22	Art: Documentation, 1986, 1974
Box 2, Folder 23	Art: Eskimo, 1971
Box 2, Folder 24	Art: Inuit, I, 1967-1981
Box 2, Folder 25	Art: Inuit, II, 1973-1978
Box 2, Folder 26	Art: Printmaking Technique, 1970-1981
Box 2, Folder 27	Art: Prints, 1974
Box 2, Folder 28	Art: Prints, Cape Dorset, 1970-1975
Box 2, Folder 29	Art: Prints, Conservation, 1986, 1975
Box 2, Folder 30	Art: Sculpture, Carvings, 1970-1982
Box 2, Folder 31	Art: Sculpture Techniques, undated
Box 2, Folder 32	Art: Sculpture, Whalebone, 1974, 1982
Box 2, Folder 33	Art: Wall Hangings, 1972-1973
Box 2, Folder 34	Arts and Crafts, 1970-1972, 1982
Box 2, Folder 35	Bibliographies, undated
Box 2, Folder 36	Books and Poetry, 1971, 1976
Box 3, Folder 1	Canadian Arctic Producers, 1970-1972
Box 3, Folder 2	Communities: Arctic Bay, 1967
Box 3, Folder 3	Communities: Baker Lake, 1970-1972
Box 3, Folder 4	Communities: Belcher Lake, 1971
Box 3, Folder 5	Communities: Broughton Island, 1975
Box 3, Folder 6	Communities: Cape Dorset, 1970-1972
Box 3, Folder 7	Communities: Copper Mine, undated

Box 3, Folder 8	Communities: Coral Harbour, 1970-1972
Box 3, Folder 9	Communities: Eskimo Point, 1985
Box 3, Folder 10	Communities: Gjoa Haven, undated
Box 3, Folder 11	Communities: Great Whale, 1970-1972
Box 3, Folder 12	Communities: Grise Fiord, 1972-1975
Box 3, Folder 13	Communities: Holman Island, undated
Box 3, Folder 14	Communities: Igloolik, 1976
Box 3, Folder 15	Communities: Lake Harbour, undated
Box 3, Folder 16	Communities: Pangnirtung, 1982, 1975
Box 3, Folder 17	Communities: Pelly Bay, 1972
Box 3, Folder 18	Communities: Pond Inlet, 1982, 1971
Box 3, Folder 19	Communities: Povungnituk, 1983, 1970-1971, 1981
Box 3, Folder 20	Communities: Rankin Inlet, 1970-1972
Box 3, Folder 21	Communities: Repulse Bay, undated
Box 3, Folder 22	Communities: Spence Bay, 1974, 1976
Box 3, Folder 23	Communities: Sugluk, 1981
Box 3, Folder 24	Conferences and Seminars, 1973
Box 3, Folder 25	Cultural Events, 1971
Box 3, Folder 26	Development of the North, 1968-1983
Box 3, Folder 27	Development of the North: Business, 1973, 1986
Box 3, Folder 28	Development of the North: Conversion to Suburban Life, 1975, 1968
Box 3, Folder 29	Development of the North: Government, 1970-1980
Box 3, Folder 30	Development of the North: Oil and Mining, 1970-1977
Box 3, Folder 31	Development of the North: Whaling, 1973, 1971

Box 3, Folder 32	Development of the North: White Man's Infiltration, 1978, 1968
Box 3, Folder 33	Dog Teams and Snow Mobiles, 1976, 1971
Box 3, Folder 34	Education, 1982-1986
Box 3, Folder 35	Eskimos, 1983, 1977
Box 3, Folder 36	Eskimos: Canada, undated
Box 3, Folder 37	Eskimos: Greenland, undated
Box 3, Folder 38	Eskimos: Land, 1984-1986
Box 3, Folder 39	Exhibitions and Films, 1974-1983
Box 3, Folder 40	Games, 1972-1973
Box 4, Folder 1	"The Graphic Art of the Baker Lake Eskimos", 1974
Box 4, Folder 2	Health, Medical, Nutrition, 1972-1976
Box 4, Folder 3	Inuit: Camp Life, 1983, 1976
Box 4, Folder 4	Inuit: Life As it Was, 1972-1973
Box 4, Folder 5	Inuit Shuks, 1970-1972, 1978
Box 4, Folder 6	Inuit Tapuisat, undated
Box 4, Folder 7	The Land, 1972
Box 4, Folder 8	The Land: Glaciers of Baffin Island, undated
Box 4, Folder 9	The Land: Ice Formations, 1975
Box 4, Folder 10	The Land: Permafrost, 1972
Box 4, Folder 11	The Land: Tundra, 1972
Box 4, Folder 12	Legends and Stories, 1985-1986, 1971-1973
Box 4, Folder 13	Music, 1973-1974, 1987
Box 4, Folder 14	Northwest Territories, undated
Box 4, Folder 15	Photography, 1978, 1984

Box 4, Folder 16	Shamanism and Spirits, 1973-1974, 1986
Box 4, Folder 17	Travel in the Attic, 1972
Box 4, Folder 18	Tupilak, undated
Box 4, Folder 19	Miscellaneous, 1970-1986
Box 4, Folder 20	Miscellaneous: Men, 1972-1986
Box 4, Folder 21	Miscellaneous: Women, 1972-1982

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 3: Photographs, 1971-1987

634 Slides (photographs)

Scope and Contents: The photographs in this collection are divided into three subseries. The first subseries includes images of gallery objects including slides and prints. The second subseries consists of images from the Witt's family trip to the Arctic in 1973. The third subseries includes prints miscellaneous trips and events in the years 1971 and 1975.

Box 4, Folder 22	Accompanying Photographic Material, 1975, 1986
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3.1: Gallery Objects, 1979-1987

634 Slides (photographs)

65 Photographs

Scope and Contents: The slides and photographs in this subseries are images of works of art displayed at the Arctic Gallery between 1979 and 1987. The annual print collection slides are divided by community; Baker Lake, Cape Dorset, Holman and Pangnirtung. The sculptures and textiles came from various locations and in some cases include captions on the back of the photograph with the artist and price of the piece.

Box 5	Annual Print Collections: Baker Lake and Cape Dorset, 1979-1987 433 Slides (photographs)
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Box 6	Annual Print Collections: Holman and Pangnirtung, 1980-1987 197 Slides (photographs)
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Box 6	Sculptures and Textiles: Slides, 1986 4 Slides (photographs)
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Photo-folder 1; Photo-folder 2; Photo-folder 3	Sculptures and Textiles: Prints, 1986 65 Photographs
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3.2: Witt Family Arctic Trip, 1973

66 Photographs

Scope and Contents: In 1973 Bert and Ellen Witt took their 15 year old son Anthony (Tony) to the Arctic. The photos in this subseries are mostly prints taken by Tony although there are a few photographs taken by Bert with Tony in them. The photographs highlight both the land and the people the Witt's visited throughout the Canadian Arctic and all of the images include descriptive captions with names and dates. The photographs are arranged alphabetically by location.

Photo-folder 4	Baker Lake, 1973 3 Photographs
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Photo-folder 5;	Cape Dorset, 1973
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Photo-folder 6; Photo-folder 7; Photo-folder 8	23 Photographs 1 Negatives (photographic)
Photo-folder 9	Churchill, Manitoba (Before the Trip), 1973 1 Photograph
Photo-folder 10	Coral Harbour, 1973 1 Photograph
Photo-folder 11	Eskimo Point, 1973 4 Photographs
Photo-folder 12	Hudson's Bay, 1973 3 Photographs
Photo-folder 13	Igloolik, 1973 1 Photograph
Photo-folder 14	Northwest Territories, 1973 3 Photographs
Photo-folder 15	Pelly Bay, 1973 6 Photographs
Photo-folder 16	Rankin Inlet, 1973 2 Photographs
Photo-folder 17	Repulse Bay, 1973 9 Photographs
Photo-folder 18	Southampton Island, 1973 1 Photograph
Photo-folder 19	Spence Bay, 1973 9 Photographs
Box 8	Oversize, 1973 7 Photographs

3.3: Other Photos, 1971, 1975

21 Photographs

Scope and Contents: This subseries includes photographic prints from Bert Witt's travel to the arctic in 1971 as well as photographs from a gallery opening of arctic art attended by Bert Witt in Ottawa in 1975. Additionally there is one photograph of Inuit artist Pudlo Pudlat from 1975, though it is unclear who the photographer was.

Photo-folder 20	Igloolik, Pelly Bay, Repulse Bay, 1971
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	3 Photographs
Photo-folder 21	Opening of Kananginak Exhibition, Roberston Galleries, Ottawa, 1975 17 Photographs
Photo-folder 22	Pudlo Pudlat, 1975 1 Photograph

[Return to Table of Contents](#)