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May 8, 2009

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Annie Pootoogook's Drawings of Contemporary Inuit Life Opens in New York June 13

Thirty-nine drawings that chronicle the realities of contemporary Inuit life by renowned artist Annie Pootoogook (Inuit, b. 1969) will be on view at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian in New York, the George Gustav Heye Center, beginning June 13. Celebrated for her unflinching portrayals of social and economic realities, this will be the largest exhibition of her work in the United States. "Annie Pootoogook" will close on Jan. 10, 2010.

The exhibition will open concurrently with an exhibition by artist Andrea Carlson (Anishinaabe/European) at the museum.

Pootoogook's detailed work describes everyday life in her home community of Cape Dorset, Nunavut. Her scenes of Inuit traditions include the less romantic but real integration of modern technologies such as video games and televisions as well as domestic abuse and tragedy. Her method, carefully outlined shapes in black filled with blocks of solid color, recalls traditional Inuit drawing while the subject matter reflects the unvarnished viewpoint of her generation. Other drawings are more personal and abstract, illustrating an emotional landscape of mental anguish, such as "Sadness and Relief for My Brother," and the austere but compelling, still life of the artist's prescription-medicine bottle, cup and a single dangling key in "Composition (Annie's Tylenol)." Cheerful domestic scenes such as a family opening Christmas presents ("Christmas") are depicted with the same precision and calm attention to detail as the emotion-laden composition "Memory of My Life: Breaking Bottles."

Pootoogook is the daughter of artists Napachie and Eegyvudlu Pootoogook and granddaughter of renowned artist Pitseolak Ashoona. She began drawing in 1997 under the encouragement and support of the West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative. In November 2006, she won the prestigious Sobey Art Award, which targets influential artists 39 or younger who have exhibited in Canada during the

previous 18 months. She exhibited at the 2007 Biennale de Montréal and, in the same year, had works at both the Basel Art Fair and documenta 12.

A catalog for the exhibition, published by the Illingworth Kerr Gallery in Calgary, Canada, and the Confederation Centre Art Gallery in Charlottetown, Canada, will be available. It includes essays by exhibition curator Nancy Campbell, Wayne Baerwaldt and Deborah Root.

The exhibition is organized and toured by the Illingworth Kerr Gallery at the Alberta College of Art + Design, Calgary, Canada.

The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian in New York, the George Gustav Heye Center, is located at One Bowling Green in New York City, across from Battery Park. The museum is free and open every day from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Thursdays until 8 p.m. Call (212) 514-3700 for general information. By subway, the museum may be reached by the 1 to South Ferry, the 4 or 5 to Bowling Green or the R or W to Whitehall Street. The museum's Web site is www.americanindian.si.edu.

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