

Control mapping: Peter Pitseolak and Zacharias Kunuk on reclaiming Inuit photographic images and imaging

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Abstract

Inuit have been participating in the development of photo-reproductive media since at least the 19th century, and indeed much earlier if we continue on Michelle Raheja's suggestion that there is much more behind Nanook's smile than Robert Flaherty would have us believe. This paper examines how photographer Peter Pitseolak (1902-1973) and filmmaker Zacharias Kunuk have employed photography and film in relation to Raheja's notion of "visual sovereignty" as a process of infiltrating media of representational control, altering their principles to visualize Indigenous ownership of their images. For camera-based media, this pertains as much to conceptions of time, continuity and "presence," as to the broader dynamics of creative retellings. This paper will attempt to address such media-ontological shifts – in Pitseolak's altered position as photographer and the effect this had on his images and the "presence" of his subjects, and in Kunuk's staging of oral histories and, through the nature of film as an experience of "cinematic time," composing time in a way that speaks to Inuit worldviews and life patterns – as radical renegotiations of the mediating properties of photography and film. In that they displace the Western camera's hegemonic framing and time-based structures, repositioning Inuit "presence" and relations to land within the fundamental conditions of photo-reproduction, this paper will address these works from a position of decolonial media aesthetics, considering the effects of their works as opening up not only for more holistic, community-grounded representation models, but for expanding these relations to land and time directly into the expanded sensory field of media technologies.

Keywords: *Inuit; photography; film; visual sovereignty; decolonial media aesthetics*

Introduction

The camera is an Inuit medium, in that Inuit have been participating in its development since at least the 19th century if we broaden Michelle Raheja's (2007) suggestion that there is something beyond Nanook's smile denoting he, and implicitly others who so fascinated early Western visitors to the Arctic, was far more engaged in the game than Robert Flaherty would like us to believe. Those ethnographic portraits filling museum archives do in fact have real Inuit behind them, who were not always disengaged from the photographic process, though many were forced to stand before the camera and their images were frequently manipulated for exploitative and dehumanizing purposes. The late Greenlandic artist Pia Arke (1958 – 2007) reflected on this in her 1997 photomontage *Krabbe/Jensen*. The work consists of three appropriated photographs, two of which depict unidentified Greenlanders from Ammassalik/Tasiilaq in East Greenland taken by Danish ornithologist Thomas Neergaard Krabbe in 1906 and reproduced in his 1929 book, *Greenland: Its Nature, Inhabitants and History*. Krabbe was one of an array of scientists, doctors and other travelers who came and went during Greenland's colonial period, taking pictures with them, whether for inclusion in academic publications and collections or to disappear into personal photo albums, rarely identifying those depicted. These two flank a photograph of Pia Arke's mother, Birgitte Justine Piparajik Arke, taken by Danish telegrapher Sven Lund Jensen in the artist's hometown of Ittoqqortoormiit/Scoresbysund in 1947. The differences in facial expression and body language – the uncomfortable, rigid stances of the two unidentified people versus Arke's playful smile and relaxed position – is stark; Arke's mother clearly participated willingly in the taking of this photograph, whereas the other two were forced into unnatural and exposed poses. Yet by juxtaposing the two ethnographic portraits with this third, where the photographer-subject relationship was reciprocal and positive, Arke highlights the resistance and agency of the exoticized subjects in the face of the colonizing photographer:

Both of the subjects stand frozen in their poses, but...it becomes clear that not even the woman is yielding unconditionally; there is a directness in these persons' eyes that makes an enduring impression on and challenges the viewer. The photos are disturbing because of the tension between the individuality and will power of the subjects and the way they are photographed, aimed at an impersonal registration of "types" and physiognomies. (Thisted, 2012, p. 287)

As Thisted suggests, they refuse to yield completely to the photographer's agenda and, through Arke's reframing, demand to impart their real selves into the image.

Any medium Inuit employ, in any manner, becomes an Inuit medium when it becomes a vessel for Inuit expression and experience; the medium does not come locked into its corresponding European aesthetic paradigms. Even exoticized, artificially posed photographs, such as those appropriated by Arke, hold the experiences of Inuit within them if we venture to look past the imposed context. By searching for the individual reaction and relation to the taking of these images as expressed by their subjects (as well as their names and identities) we reframe

the photographs as records of the experiences of Inuit – not necessarily in the situation assumed by the photographer’s composition – but in the situation of their confrontation with the process of photography and with the individual photographer and his motives. They become stories of people facing the artificial construction of a visual history not built upon their own experiences, but designed out of a Western need to shape Inuit people and cultures into an imagined image of them. Their persistent presence, and their refusal to submit their individuality to the photographer’s desired “type-image,” reinforce that they are not encompassed nor defined by the perspective of the photographer and his framing. As Greenlandic film historian Erik Gant, Arke’s brother, wrote, “The clenched smile: we know this is about images, and not the matter itself, aestheticizing of and notions about a ‘central Eskimo,’ which, in the matter’s paradoxical nature, we will never come close to, must always circle around. *What we actually are*, are images of something else, which are ourselves” (1998, emphasis original, author’s translation), each individual in possession of a multiplicity of identity markers and positions. If such camera-based images are to be understood truly as “certificate[s] of presence,” as Barthes (1981, p. 87) called them, they must be approached from the individual, particular Inuit aesthetic, historic and cultural contexts within which they were created.

Despite the Western introduction of various “non-traditional” media like photography, drawing and printmaking, much Inuit artistic practice in Canada today draws from a resurgence of sculpture that began in the mid-20th century in direct response to Southern interests, but with its roots in much older aesthetic practices and representing a broad-reaching reimagining and innovation of Inuit expressions. Often working with an aim to pass on and document traditional knowledge and stories, the sculpture and graphic artists who emerged during this period and after creatively and visually investigate their characters while expressing their own contemporary conditions (Igloliorte, 2010). These concerns are still present, even in Annie Pootoogook’s drawings, which transform the mundane into monumental scenes filled with quiet drama. Pootoogook’s images are no less Inuit and no less traditional despite their supposedly untraditional content. By recreating scenes and artifacts from actual lives, they propose an understanding of “tradition” as the actual experiences of Inuit throughout time.

Pootoogook and many other Inuit artists today take part in a larger discussion of remapping the face of Inuit cultural expression – pushing away outside, Western reproductions and filling the space they once occupied with Inuit perspectives. Idiosyncratic nuances and mixed Southern and Northern symbols fill Pootoogook’s images, as in the drawing *Eating Seal at Home*, 2001, where a family sitting together in a thoroughly nondescript interior eating seal meat proposes a fusion of these worlds as they are really experienced. The lives they depict are unfiltered, distorted neither by a superficial and dogmatic concept of tradition nor propagandistic assimilation. Inuit communities create the context. This position of producing, whether through art or reproductive media technologies, images of lived experiences of Inuit or of Inuit homeland itself, where the image or reproduction is qualified by the individuals behind them – the artist’s known ties to the community depicted, autobiographical elements of depiction, and for the camera-based media this essay will concern itself with, a palpable give and take between the

image and its subjects – presents what I wish to call *control mapping*, a term I will return to later. Also called photomapping, it is a cartography term for a process of mapmaking requiring reproductions to be matched with multiple site photographs for each control point, binding the reproduction to the presence of the subject itself. I would like to suggest this term as an analogy for the revisions of Inuit identity as reproduced outside of and within Inuit homeland, through art and media. Such a remapping of Inuit identities requires the direct traces, or presence, of Inuit lived experiences to define all other knowledge of and about their lands and cultures.

This entails more than just the fact of Inuit taking up media of representational control themselves. By infiltrating these methods and developing new working practices within them, at times extracting useful skills from the paradigms established around them in order to oppose the Western hegemony of these representational models, they, as Raheja writes, “[reimagine] Native-centered articulations of self-representation and autonomy” (2007, p. 1163). These are the conditions of Raheja’s term *visual sovereignty*, to which many of my arguments are indebted. This position first breaks down models of representation that have brutally defined away and structured the images of Indigenous peoples, enabling access to the “language” of reproductive media technologies and their ways of organizing and collecting perception. In Peter Pitseolak’s (1902 – 1973) photographs, this is reflected in the naturalistic presentations of mixed Southern and Inuit objects as a part of daily life during a period of rapid change and collectivization in the Eastern Arctic, against the ethnocentric model of Arctic photography. In Zacharias Kunuk’s and Igloodik Isuma Productions’ feature-film *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner*, this will be discussed through the fusion of oral traditions and the tools of cinema, contra the standards generated by Hollywood filmmaking and Arctic documentaries.

Beyond opening up these media to holistic content-depictions of Inuit life, the synthesis of traditional methods of constructing narrative, or the introduction of very individualized relations to the camera, opens up a revisiting of the reproductive qualities of photography and film and their methods of negotiating the senses through relations to place and time. This I would call *decolonial media aesthetics*, a concept first suggested by Dalida María Benfield (2012) to describe radical revisions of networked video by women in the Global South to challenge master narratives and replace them with highly personal structures, often in connection with social justice projects. I will depart from Benfield’s usage to attempt to more loosely bridge concepts of *decolonial aesthetics* and *media aesthetics*, relating them to the (older) new media of photography and film (opposed to the network- and internet-based projects Benfield and many others involved in both broader decolonial aesthetics and recent media aesthetics concentrate on), but remaining within the concerns for these media’s ontologies and their broadening perceptual effects and relations that the latter term suggests. This will be discussed in, among other issues, the extension of photographic “presence” – the photograph’s bind to an extracted moment of real time – into Peter Pitseolak’s photographic template-drawings. Finally in Kunuk’s work this presents itself in the manipulation of controlled experiences of cinematic time drawn from the nature of film as a diachronic collection of time(s).

This paper attempts to draw out some of the more subtle ways these individuals have integrated camera-based media practices into their own Indigenous contexts, worldviews and their very individual social conditions. As Hopkins (2006) noted, discussing the emergence of images of Southern objects and technologies in Pudlo Pudlat's prints and drawings from the 1950s onward, "From the start, [Western objects and technologies] were seen within the context of Inuit perspectives, aesthetics, and beliefs" (p. 342). So rather than approaching photography and film in contrast to, in conflict with or juxtaposed against "traditional" expressions, these productions of new media must be examined first within an Inuit context as any other tool of expression in relation to a history of artistic and social production – in other words, from the actual perspectives they were encountered, problematized and utilized. I will examine how Pitseolak and Kunuk have contoured camera-based media to both fit within and stretch the conventions of visual and oral traditions, forcing photography and film to repel their imposed Western connotations and speak first to Inuit. In so doing, they have broadened discussions of visuality within all media Inuit employ.

This paper should therefore not be seen as a comprehensive study of the work of each of these individuals, or even a complete analysis of the selected works,¹ but a focused discussion around the transforming relations toward camera-based media within particular works and themes. In the next section I will very briefly discuss Pia Arke's investigations of the photographic process through her pinhole camera, setting the tone for the rest of the paper's analyses of Pitseolak's and Kunuk's practices in relation to the formal qualities of camera-based media practice, by Arke's calling into question the materiality and core processes of photo-reproductive technologies in relation to the agency of their human and place-subjects. It is important to note here that this is not to conflate the different places, times and place-identities in and with which the three individuals worked.² Rather my discussion of Arke's works sets the tone for the priorities and qualities of formal revision of reproductive media technologies discussed in the core of the paper. Arke's resituating of archival photographs opens up a critical reframing of images of Inuit taken by Western (ethno-)photographers against which Pitseolak developed his alternative photographer-role, grounded in his own community. Likewise, relations to Arke's formal interventions discussed below, calling for an injection of "the viewed" (and equally, her own relations to particular places and histories) into the medium's processes, materialize in Kunuk's and Isuma's projects through their overhaul of Western narrative

¹ This is especially true of Pia Arke, whose canonical works *Stories from Scoresbysund* and *Arctic Hysteria* unfortunately are not discussed here, nor are her unique research practices, though they indeed relate to the paper's overarching themes and merit further discussion. Likewise there exists broad and compelling research into *Atanarjuat, the Fast Runner* so I have chosen to focus primarily on those areas that relate most directly to the topic of decolonial media aesthetics. For thorough discussions of the film's narrative, production and the history of Igloodik Isuma Productions and related issues see (Huhndorf 2003; Krupat 2007; Raheja 2007).

² Greenland, in many cases concerning Ittoqqortoormiit/Scoresbysund and broader East Greenland, as well as Denmark, between 1980 and 2006; Kinngait/Cape Dorset, and broader Seekooseelak/southern Baffin Island, mostly between the 1940s and '60s; and Igloodik in a north-western fringe of the Qikiqtaaluk/Baffin Region from the 1990s into the present.

structures by reshaping the storage-time capacity of film in line with Inuit relations to time and place – bringing to discussion the fundamental links between both.

In the third section I will discuss case studies drawn from Peter Pitseolak's extensive output to examine the alternative photographer-subject model he worked within, keeping in mind that his chosen role as photographer was primarily that of historian, an extension of his own privileged position in his community as a camp leader over ten families. I will also discuss his use of a photographic template in drawings, to see how transferences of photographic presence into other media expand creative techniques in both camera-based and graphic media. The following section will discuss Zacharias Kunuk's/Isuma's filmic works, primarily holding to *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner*, to examine their breaks with conventions of Western filmmaking in terms of place relations and the storage-time capacities of film. I will also discuss how Isuma enacts cultural resilience as Heather Igloliorte (2010) employs the term, in consciously turning inwards to include the community of Igloodik in production work and in establishing their audience as Inuit first. From here I will focus my discussion around a material understanding of the film medium as such, as a construction of various continui of time extracted and arranged to produce its own experiences of cinematic time. I will focus around Indigenous relations to place throughout time, including Indigenous conceptions of and ways of organizing time, and the relations between these and oral narrative, in the expanded capacities of representation brought about by the nature of film as a diachronic composition of times capable of producing unique experiences and perceptions of time. Finally I will return to the notion of control mapping, to contextualize these precedents for reclaiming media of representational control – through the conditions of visual sovereignty and decolonial media aesthetics – as a move towards remapping the images of Inuit identity from one the West has imagined to ones predicated on their connections to their own communities and inclusive of the multiplicity of individual identity – toward the actual likeness of Inuit.

Pia Arke - toward a decolonial media aesthetic

The child of an East Greenlandic mother and a Danish father, Pia Arke's personal history was marked by fractured and compromised relations to many places. She was born in Ittoqqortoormiit/Scoresbysund, a town in Greenland's extreme northeast founded through forced relocation during a sovereignty crisis over Denmark's control over the region.³ As a result of her

³ Since the end of the Viking era Greenland had been considered a dependency of Norway, though all contact with medieval Nordic settlements had ceased in the fifteenth century and all settlers are presumed to have died in the same period. Danish interest in North Atlantic trade and expansion led to a new colonial period beginning in the eighteenth century with Danish administration lasting beyond the breakup of Denmark-Norway union. Though Norway recognized Danish administration of the new colonial settlements, it considered East Greenland to be *terra nullis* and in 1931 a royal proclamation claiming Northeast Greenland as Norwegian territory opened a dispute that the two states brought to the Permanent Court of International Justice. In 1924, in the early stages of this dispute, a Danish committee was formed to establish a settlement in the Northeast with 21 Danish settlers and 87 Greenlanders forced to relocate circa 1000km from Tasiilaq. The community's isolation, initial restrictions on musk ox hunting and the conditions of relocation resulted in extreme inequality between the Danish settlers and Greenlanders. Today

father's work, the family moved frequently – to various locations on the West coast, to high-Arctic Qaanaaq near the American air base at Thule (a region also marked by forced relocation in the 1950s) and to Nuugaarsuk in the southern cape, an extreme axis across regions with diverse dialects and histories. The family finally settled in Denmark when Arke was twelve years-old. For the most part Arke lived and worked in Denmark until her too early death in 2007 at the age of 48. Her family's movements, among other factors not least of which being the Danish language's clear position of power up in Greenland until the 1980s (though in many ways this persists today), meant that after adolescence she could not speak Greenlandic, placing Arke in a position shared by many of her generation, when after Greenland transitioned to home-rule in 1979 the native language became a marker of "true" Greenlandic identity. While the prioritizing of Greenlandic has in many ways been regarded positively, some have argued it has also created a climate where monolingual Danish-speakers feel their identity as Greenlanders is challenged and often denied⁴ (Thisted, 2004). A position of uncertainty and an inability to completely identify as Dane or Greenlander, brought about by challenges to and condemnation of the multiplicity of positions and histories making up her individual identity, as a result of colonial currents: these are some of the concerns Pia Arke took up in her practice, not least in her experiments with a large pinhole camera she designed. In her own words:

I wanted to be inside the camera during the exposure, in order to, among other things, examine some of the concepts I encountered at the Academy, concepts like space, memory, time...I sat inside the camera-house and saw the landscape of my whole childhood stand on its head in there on all the sides of the box. The fifteen minutes it took to expose the image and the developing process mean that there are many "flaws" in the final image, a type of structure where the twenty-five years that had passed since I lived there where in a way laid out in the image. (Misfeldt 2010, p. 208, author's translation).

The camera itself was a wooden box large enough for the artist to stand or lie in. Arke was drawn to pinhole photography in what she called its "mongrel" nature (Thisted, 2012) – a fragile and fractured photo-reproductive process (as opposed to the seemingly static and decided stability in images of more conventional cameras), one where the camera mechanism mediates with a diminished agency between the contingent, natural shifts and effects of light and the resulting image exposed onto the film, a structure formed between the technological and the natural, unpredictable interventions of light and atmosphere. With this camera Arke travelled, to Nuugaarsuk in South Greenland in 1990 and then to Kronborg Castle in Helsingør, Denmark in 1996, and elsewhere, and she used these resulting photographs in a number of other projects,

Ittoqqortoormiit is marked by poverty and alcoholism and has one of the highest suicide rates in the country. For a more thorough look at Arke's crowning project dealing with this legacy see (Sandbye 2010) as well as the project's final book itself (Arke 2010).

⁴ For an opposite perspective, on the persistence of Danish as a language of power and the exclusion of Greenlandic-speakers in daily life in urban Greenland, see Julie Edel Hardenberg's account of her project of attempting to speak only in Greenlandic in Greenland's capital, Nuuk, for six months (Hardenberg, 2010).

particularly one image from Nuugaarsuk. It depicts the site of her childhood home, now torn down. The encounter, then, is equally within a space of memory and the corresponding fractured, compromised space that remains – a homecoming mediated by the camera and the artist’s bodily position within it, where a coming-to-terms with the fissure between memory and place is identified as equally unstable and processual as the development of a mixed identity itself: “The dream-like quality of the images that slowly emerge indicates that we are dealing here with an unfinished and maybe unfinishable process” (Gant, 2012, p. 254).

Another set of these images makes visible the implied physical relation enabled by the camera’s design, and by extent, the sensory interaction between artist, memory, the photographic space, the photographed space and the “writing” of the photographic image itself. In the photographs from the area around Kronborg Castle, shadowy forms cut across a three-panel image of the rocky beach. Arke created these shapes by shading the image with her body from inside the camera while the image was being exposed. Here Arke asserts a need to be within the reproduction itself, to enter the photographic process – not as a subject, or more to the point, an *object* of the camera’s agency, but injecting her body within the entire process itself, asserting her own agency over that of the camera. To take part in the imaging both by framing the situation and by integrating her body into the way information is mediated through the lens.

This constitutes a radical form of what I am calling decolonial media aesthetics (to borrow Benfield’s (2012) term and reposition it within photography and digital film), framing the rest of this paper – moving out from Raheja’s (2007) notion of visual sovereignty to renegotiate and take control, not only of the image, but of the processes of photo-reproduction and dissemination themselves, integrating the photographer’s own relations and agency into the material conditions of reproduction. Arke’s intervention into the material, indexical nature of the photographic image opens up for a discussion of the much less extreme (though still transformative) examples discussed in the following sections on Peter Pitseolak and Zacharias Kunuk, toward the issue of a renegotiation of sensory relations produced by media technologies with a decolonizing agenda. I pose these terms synthesizing what Miriam Hansen calls “a political ecology of the senses” (2004, p. 394) – cultivating awareness of the (politicized) conditions of viewership brought about by reproductive media on its conscious and subconscious levels, and the interdependency of sensory perception in same – and decolonial aesthetics (TDI 2011) as an integration of the multiplicitous and colonially-effected identities and a liberation of the postcolonial sensorium. As such, this reading positions itself specifically within those situations brought on by media technologies.

As Benfield (2012) has noted, the transformative and diverse connecting potential of new media has the capacity for a radical turn toward community-driven and globally-connected platforms for networked communications unbound by historical framings. Though Pitseolak’s and Kunuk’s work could indeed be said to have helped establish spaces for new methods of participation on the parts of makers, viewers and viewed, I wish to explore these terms more closely to the conditions of mediation themselves (in this case, through photography and digital film). I wish to suggest, in relation to Peter Pitseolak’s photography and his role as photographer

and Zacharias Kunuk's/Isuma's films, a revisiting of the ontologies of photography and film with concern for the inclusion of Inuit priorities – wherein the photograph is understood as an index of actual, physical presence in a given time and place extracted from a continuum; the film as a construction of sequences of “real time,” which in their arrangement displace the “realness” afforded to them by the photographic medium and project onto a viewer the film's own particular experiences of time. For Pitseolak, this constituted posing alternative photographer-subject relations that, in their opposition to Western models of Arctic photography, call into question gaps between the actual subjects, their indexical “presence” (the physical traces of their image onto film, as a marker of “having been”) and the context in which their images and stories have been understood. For Kunuk and Igloolik Isuma Productions, the consideration is toward integrating Inuit relations to time and space into the cinematic construction of same, while (and via) rejecting Western filmic narrative paradigms to reimagine Inuit oral narrative within the medium of film. Not only the act of Inuit taking up tools of representation themselves to take control of the imaging of Inuit histories, communities and cultures, but of creating new models of holistic representation via the mediating dynamics of photographic/cinematic storage and reproduction.

Peter Pitseolak

Peter Pitseolak began experimenting with photography on the cusp of an era of heightened Southern interest and intrusion in Inuit homeland, and in a period of renewal and change in Inuit arts. Having established substantial trade and hunting relations, working for a time for the Hudson's Bay Company, and as the son of an important community leader, in the 1940s Pitseolak established the Keatuk camp in the region of Kinngait/Cape Dorset, becoming a leader over ten families. As has been noted (Wise, 2000) his personal wealth, family history and his particular situation in his community would have placed Pitseolak in an elite position relative to other Inuit in the region, with very different relations to Southern authority figures under the growing forced collectivization and settlement policies of the era. He purchased his first camera in 1942 after having encountered photography several years prior, taking photographs for visiting Southerners. He would go on to actively photograph for over two decades. The majority of his photographs are snapshot-like images of relatives and friends, but this in itself is significant in that the assertion of a personal history, belonging to a figure whose identity in some ways stands apart from the overarching, stereotypical image of Inuit, opposes master narratives and usurps paradigms of Arctic photography that tend to level-out difference and present a fictitious, universal white field over diverse local cultures, languages and histories. Pitseolak was also concerned with documenting traditional hunting and trapping practices and a number of his photographs were explicitly posed for these purposes, in Pitseolak's own words, to “show how for the future” (Pitseolak, 1993, p. 15). His images were constructed with a reciprocal and participatory subject-photographer relationship, with goals of (among others) depicting his own personal history or preserving skills he knew and had connections to, wherein

details of his small, transforming community come through in subtle and surprising ways. Though not necessarily indicative of a reflexive, artistic impulse, this method of integrating himself into the process of photography through evident relations to his subjects, as well as the candid descriptions of expanding Southern material influences in Kinngait, presented a unique position in the history of Arctic photography of the particular, local and individual over the universal, wherein the actual lived conditions laid down in his subjects “presence,” including their implicit relations to their photographer, align with the photographer’s agenda.

Pitseolak’s position to art production also has a different origin to the story of Cape Dorset arts, having practiced watercolor painting since the late 1930s, over a decade prior to the boom in Inuit arts in the Eastern Arctic of the 1950s. As Dorothy Eber – a friend and colleague of Pitseolak who collaborated with him in writing his text illustrated with photographs from throughout his life, *People from Our Side* – accounts (1998), in 1939 Pitseolak made a number of watercolor paintings after receiving paint supplies from John Buchanan, then Lord Tweedsmuir, who for a period worked as a trader for the Hudson’s Bay Company. Pitseolak based one of these early paintings that he gave to Tweedsmuir on a photograph of another Southern trader in the Hudson’s Bay Company magazine. This incident is particularly significant as it is perhaps the first moment Pitseolak worked with a photographic template (though in this case the photograph was not his own). As will be discussed later in this section, Pitseolak continued this practice, creating numerous drawings, prints, paintings and sculptures, integrating photographic presence into art media; as Eber notes: “[templates] helped him to make Inuit life ‘real’ – that was his expression – to render true-to-life representations of the Inuit world...it was always his intention to leave a record” (1998, p. 57). These conditions of incorporating the transformed social relations of photography, and the particular associations to place implied by them, into visual art suggest *as an effect* a broadening of an Inuit visual and artistic lexicon and an intriguing integration of perceptual memory into artworks.⁵

In 1956 the West Baffin Co-operative was founded following James Houston’s projects to introduce Inuit arts to a Southern audience, enabling the rapid growth and proliferation of new, collaborative art practices. It is during this period that Pitseolak’s work with photographic templates expanded. Despite the number of innovative artists who arose from Houston’s project, the early methods of marketing and distributing the new sculpture and prints (in exhibitions organized by the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, and far removed commercial art dealers) and the means by which Inuit art was consumed by a growing Southern audience contributed to a commercialization and dilution of their aesthetics in the South:

Their immediate popularity set audience expectations, which in turn had an influence on succeeding generations of artists who, in repeating the same themes and often the same compositions, ironically reinforced stereotypes of Inuit life, as if untouched by the modern world. (Lalonde, 2010, p. 27)

⁵ Though, again, it should be noted Pitseolak likely would not have explicitly considered this in producing these works, so rather, I am suggesting this as an effect of these unique recontextualizations, paired with Pitseolak’s altered situation of reproduction.

This coincides with a tradition of photography utilized by anthropologists on the hunt for “vanishing cultures;”⁶ ethnographic photographs were constructed by anthropologists and others to highlight visual signals of exotic *Otherness*, designed for consumption by the armchair traveler and to feed the European hunger to consume, explicate and confiscate all cultures on earth, and so art images were often consumed in the same manner under the program of primitivism. Pitseolak likely understood and experienced this himself, having encountered and engaged researchers, missionaries and even Robert Flaherty, director of *Nanook of the North*.

Pitseolak shifted between many roles as camp leader, artist and self-appointed local historian and documenter.⁷ His photographs have almost exclusively been exhibited in contexts that highlight their historical value, such as at a retrospective exhibition at the McCord Museum in 1980, as if presenting a unified historical archive of Inuit life in the Eastern Arctic over a period of mass upheaval and change. This inevitably leads to a misrepresentation, given the absence of images depicting the want or trauma that just as often resulted from the period’s policies, an absence stemming likely from Pitseolak’s relative economic stability and closer relations with new Southern bureaucrats in the region afforded to him by his elite position, as well as his desire to present a positive image of Inuit life for future generations. The significance of these images emerges through the traces of a different encounter between photographer and subject, a nearer image of camp life in Seekooseelak than that presented in ethnographic Arctic photography of the time, and a socialization of photography as a process taken inward into community. Pitseolak most likely considered his photography primarily as a tool in his ambition to document life as he experienced it in his community, filtered through his particular position within those histories. Though they likely did not always hold artistic relevance for him, they occasionally served as templates for his own artworks and inspired others, not only integrating the camera-object into his community’s day-to-day, but – by extension – introducing the participatory nature of reproductive media and visual properties of photography with implications for developments in Inuit arts. They do not necessarily present a reflexive self-identity study, but the inclusive and participatory dynamics visible in his images – which cannot be seen as a comprehensive Kinngait-Inuit history, but *his own* history – have an important resonance for their position as imaged history in the question of who possesses and controls that history, as Therese Harlan writes:

Creating a visual history – and its representations – from Native memories or from Western myths: this is the question before Native image-makers and photographers today ... What Native photographers provide is the possibility of a Native perspective unclouded by white liberal guilt or allegiance to Western heroes. (1995, pp. 26-32)

⁶ For example, in the photographs accompanying a LIFE Magazine article on the Ihalmiut of Ennadai Lake in the Kivalliq Region, Nunavut, with the accompanying tagline: “Stone Age Survivors: Eskimo Family.” (Marcus, 1998). Though indeed this practice continues today. English photographer Jimmy Nelson’s recent book *Before They Pass Away* (2013) is a prime example of the repetition of narratives of doomed cultural extinction.

⁷ Roles his grandson, Jimmy Manning, has revised and taken up in his photography in recent years.

Pitseolak's photographs immediately reveal a very different photographer-subject relationship than that established by most Southerners even in such simple, snapshot-like portraits as *Three Inuit Men Wearing Parkas*.⁸ The men are at ease, aware of one another – and most importantly, aware of the camera and the purpose of the photograph. Their natural, spontaneous positions contradict precedent in Arctic photography – contrasting both the tight, composed portraits highlighting traditional dress and propagandistic images which almost overemphasize a blending of traditional and Western lifestyles. The blending is subtle: though the men all wear duffel coats and sealskin boots as well as Western-style sunglasses (as opposed to the iconic ivory goggles, for example), their clothes are not the subjects. Pitseolak places himself directly in the image's implicit community; as Wise writes:

Through a subtle inversion of the medium and positioning of the subject, Pitseolak enacted a profound reversal of the authoritative stance between subject and observer. As such, the power of cultural representation was seized back from that succession of dominant interlopers...and placed into the hands of the 'subject' itself. (2000, p. 61)

Pitseolak participates actively in the presence of the photograph, via his participation in the dog sled trip when the image was taken, which would have been a unique and foreign experience for Euro-Canadian photographers of the time, but which for Pitseolak was a consistent element of his own community and life. Engaging Barthes' phenomenological principle: "Since photography is pure contingency ... it immediately yields up those 'details' which constitute the very raw material of ethnological knowledge" (1981, p. 28), this moment – while it certainly may have been posed – draws upon *inside* "ethnological knowledge," neither bound in a fascination with the distinctive Northern clothes, environment and customs nor their juxtaposition with the men's sunglasses, but instead reveals the individuals' experiences with them free from Western notions of culture as defined and encapsulated in objects. The subjects are just themselves, mundane even, which presents Inuit not as cultural objects loudly proclaiming an *Otherness*, but as living people, who go on living after the picture is taken. Such quiet, spontaneous moments reflect on the ways Inuit have incorporated Western objects not to the abandonment of tradition, but to enhance their own lives, and even enable or ease the continuation of traditional activities, to which Pitseolak was uniquely situated, not only by insinuating his engagement with a *particular* scene, but because he knew and was himself implicated in the scene's broader context.

This image depicts acculturation as it was experienced. Still Wise proposes a possible "conflict of interest" in Pitseolak's role as photographer given his elite position; he describes the photograph *Self-Portrait, Reading* as "within a Western cultural context" (2000, p. 50). This

⁸ The majority of Peter Pitseolak's photographs were untitled and undated. The descriptive title here and all following titles are based on their database entries in the Canadian Museum of History's collections where the majority of the negatives are permanently housed.

assumes that, for Pitseolak, Inuit identity could be stripped off by an exchange of objects and symbols. My assertion is that above all else, when an image is of an Inuk *by* an Inuk, the cultural context is undeniably Inuit. Pitseolak's particular position undoubtedly altered his relations to his subjects, but given the personal connection many of these images have, one could rather read this self-portrait and others as a reflection of the multiplicity of individual identity Gant (1998) discussed. Likewise, Pitseolak and the explicitly Southern objects in many of his photographs remain located in his homeland. In that Pitseolak situated much of his photography specifically for his community's communal memory – the title of his text being *People from Our Side* – I would rather read such an image as an extension of his own, individual cultural context – nevertheless, an Inuit context, and through his and others' presence, firmly situated within Inuit homeland. These images establish a space in the imaged-history of that homeland where culture does not exist in a vacuum, and where diverse identities coexist, a binding of place to the actual conditions of the people inhabiting it and an intervention into the leveling lineage of Arctic photography that I would classify under, to again borrow Raheja's (2007) term, visual sovereignty.

Identity is not only extended into the photographs themselves. While they may have primarily served as tools toward a final drawing, Pitseolak's photographic templates extend into visual art the presence of the individual and the conditions of their connection to their land as laid out in "the real" of the photograph. Here I wish to discuss these works as contributions to a cross-media conversation within Inuit arts, where the aesthetics and processes of media influence and discuss one another as part of a broader visual lexicon. The degree of engagement and planning Pitseolak brought to constructing these photographs suggests that they often were more than templates. As Eber (1998) writes, in 1952 and 1953 he created a series of drawings based on the story of Taktillitak, who drifts away on an ice flow and runs out of food. He builds his own grave and prepares to die but after dreaming of seals he regains his will to live. He then kills enough seals to build a float to take him home. Eber writes that Pitseolak "...had campers at Keatuk camp act out the story and photographed it scene by scene. We see the old-style Inuit grave with rocks around the body, the avataq (seal) float and the weeping friends. He made a bow and arrow so that he could photograph the actor pretending to use it" (1998, p. 56). Nothing about the photographs appears unfinished, and details that likely could have been improvised in drawing were constructed for the photographic versions. Considering the importance Pitseolak placed on preserving traditional stories and skills, it seems reasonable to assume that these photographs also served a purpose. Meanwhile the cross-media influence seems to go both ways; through the framing of dramatically outlined hills above Taktillitak, striking horizontal lines formed by bands of ice, rock and sky also present in the subsequent drawings could be seen to draw both from Arctic landscape photography and from graphic media's visual properties, suggesting a possible interest in the different methods of composing space in both photography and printmaking even when he was composing templates. Nevertheless the extension of photographic presence into other media as well as the telling of oral narrative through still images – opposing a normative condition of photography as static and the relations presented

within as locked in a closed field – illustrate the conditions I suggest as decolonial media aesthetics, particularly in that they extend the photograph’s presence – and the relations to space and time this implies – to a traditional narrative. A decolonial media aesthetic in photography does away with Arctic photography models – vast, abandoned landscapes, ethnographic portraits, isolated consumable scenes of “traditional” activity disconnected from a contemporary whole – and opens up for use the dynamics of reproductive media in manifold ways that reinvigorate culture from within, by transmitting the photographed subject’s presence and lived position to the land into visual and narrative arts.

Works such as a 1967 drawing on a walrus tusk that Eber (1998) discusses likewise reject a singling out of one image as a final work, but reveal the myriad means by which Pitseolak examined image-production. He photographed various back-shots of women in amautiit and a woman leaning over a barrel of fish, then traced the images onto the tusk, with carbon paper in between. Though not carved into, the tusk reflects on Inuit sculptural traditions. Later the photograph of the woman and fish was replicated in a drawing. Showing his appreciation for the different qualities of these media, Pitseolak altered all of these images to better suit the material. The photograph stands alone, the woman’s body centered and filling the frame, all of the elements monumental. In the tusk it completes a series of scenes of women, drawn at the bottom and using more space to balance the composition. In the drawing Pitseolak added a spear on one side of the woman, opposite the net, which appears in the photograph and the tusk, framing her. He also added an ulu beneath her in the foreground, making use of the potential for spatial distortion in graphic media, which would have looked unnatural and flat in the photograph and cluttered and unharmonious on the tusk. The striking black outlines left on the photograph from tracing likewise thicken and roughen the lines of the body and garments, essentializing it, so bringing it closer to the aesthetics of graphic art, and by the palpable physicality of it, carving.

On regeneration and renewal in oral histories, Candice Hopkins writes:

In art, since the dawn of mechanical reproduction, the copy is understood as subversive: Its very presence...challenges the authority of the original. Replication in storytelling, by contrast, is positive and necessary. It is through change that stories and, in turn, traditions are kept alive and remain relevant. (2006, p. 342)

Yet perhaps we could apply this understanding (albeit broadly) to the regeneration of form into different media and their corresponding visual properties, and not least their extensions of a photographic presence in these works by Peter Pitseolak, in spite of the history Hopkins references, as well as Benjamin’s (1936) claim of the loss of the “aura” of the original as a result of reproductive technologies. Benjamin himself addressed this perceived loss brought on by photographic reproduction through the gain of radical new ways of seeing, and the social mobilization and understanding these could foster: “The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject” (1936). Pitseolak’s concern for the conditions of reception –

that they “make real” Inuit contemporary histories and culture, enabling an inclusion of diverse identities within visual history – and his expansion of presence into other media that I have argued for, activated the relation of the individual to the process of photography on expanded fields which I identify as decolonial media aesthetics, in that they displace colonial patterns of Arctic photography that erase individual identity. Instead, through the openly depicted conditions of individual acculturation, expanded identities and the bound connection between identities and place, the photographic field integrates the perceptual realities of Inuit in the particular time and place of the image. Likewise the use of photographic templates extends this open presence into both traditional, oral media and new artistic practices, integrating these conditions of presence into both cultural heritage itself and the new-found expressions of it. Aside from these suggestions, what is certain from his own writing is Pitseolak readily took up the reproductive power of the photograph to propose, in place of Western histories, an individualized Inuit history, one which could be widely disseminated to serve his own community.

Zacharias Kunuk

As Pitseolak’s photographs produced (as effects) altered connections between concepts of the visual and photographic, graphic, and carved images, and in at least one series connected these properties to oral narrative, Zacharias Kunuk and Igloodik Isuma Productions explore film as a new medium of storytelling – both for keeping alive and transforming traditional stories and for rectifying and erasing images created about Inuit from the outside. Like Pitseolak’s photographs, the mnemonic capacity of Kunuk’s work is important, but not overpowering, nor is it necessarily a focal point. As Hopkins (2006) notes:

Kunuk’s works do not aim to document, but instead creatively depict Inuit life through a combination of improvisation, drama, storytelling, *ajajas* (traditional songs) and reenactments – in much the same way in which Inuit life has been represented and experienced within Inuit communities since time immemorial. (p. 342)

Kunuk did not merely input Inuit subject matter into Western conventions of the medium, but manipulated its nuances to make the medium itself Inuit. Simultaneously these films introduce a rhythm to depictions of traditional life, relating film to the pace of life in the Arctic. Kunuk’s synthesis of these qualities has resulted in breathtaking works which carve Inuit aesthetics and ways of knowing into a medium which up until recently had only been used for surveillance and control over the Arctic.

Also like Pitseolak, Kunuk is self-taught in the camera-based medium. In 1980 he and Natar Ungalaaq (later the lead actor in *Atanarjuat, the Fast Runner*) bought their first camera, VCR and a television, two years before TV broadcasting came to their hometown of Igloodik. The moving image had a very limited presence in the Eastern Arctic, yet the factors influencing Kunuk’s work were (and are) immense in that they draw upon millennia of stories and history,

with the task of transforming them within a new medium. In Kunuk's words, "When I began to see myself as an Aboriginal person and a filmmaker I learned there are different ways to tell the same story" (2004, p. 31). In a similar vein to Pitseolak's photographs, Kunuk's films reveal and expand upon elements of traditional storytelling, knowledge, and the visual through a reworking of the medium – via time content, visual formalism and production process. His works employ film not as an interpretation of a Western medium, but as the raw material of an Inuit story.

In 1990 Kunuk along with Paul Apak Angilirq, Pauloosie Qulitalik and Norman Cohn founded Igloodik Isuma Productions. Since that time they have produced groundbreaking and innovative films and documentaries, and with the creation of IsumaTV, an online forum and archive for Indigenous filmmakers worldwide. The quality and content of their work notwithstanding, even their production process attempts to incorporate an Inuit worldview. The production team consults elders to discuss significant changes to traditional stories and gain their approval, and they then screen their films for elders prior to release (Raheja, 2007, p. 1167). Isuma also engages the community of Igloodik on a major scale. All sets and costumes are constructed in traditional ways, and Isuma brings elders to teach production staff the appropriate methods. This reflects not only a continuation of traditional knowledge, but also what Heather Igloliorte highlights as "cultural resilience," (2010, p. 45) in that Isuma does not react against outside powers that have worked to break down this knowledge, but turns inward to reinvigorate it and reflect on the actual lives and experiences of Inuit past and present, by interpreting it into new forms. "Resilience" in Igloliorte's reading incorporates survival, persistence, renewal and invention. In addition to the benefits of reinvigorating traditional knowledge and methods in Igloodik, these practices have broader significance within a vision of film production based on Inuit ways of knowing, making all of their work more conscious of process and audience perception. As Igloliorte highlights, resilience focuses the action back into the artist's own community; as Kunuk said of the second film in *The Fast Runner Trilogy*, "[*The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*] tries to answer two questions that haunted me my whole life: Who were we? And what happened to us?" (Smith, P.C. 2009, p. 29).

As such, the audience is Inuit, before all others – a consideration Isuma's first feature film *Atanarjuat, the Fast Runner* makes clear in many ways, not least of which in that it is the first film to be acted by an entirely Inuit cast, produced by a majority Inuit production crew and made entirely in Inuktitut with English and French subtitles, among the first entirely Indigenous-language films internationally⁹ (Dowell, 2006). The film underlines this significance in its first moments, when a foreign shaman who enters the large community illu says before beginning a song, "I can only sing this song to someone who understands it." This prefaces the entire film in its refusal to accommodate the outsider. As Huhndorf (2003) mentions, reviews have criticized *Atanarjuat* for leaving some cultural practices unexplained – but this reflects precisely that the film is foremost created for an Inuit audience, placing it in conflict with ethnographic documentary material. Likewise, set in a pre-contact era, the film refuses tendencies to establish Inuit history beginning with Western contact. It shifts the focus of Indigenous histories from one

⁹ An earlier case being the Saami film *Ofelaš (Pathfinder)*, directed by Nils Gaup in 1987.

inextricably attached to European colonization to one grounded in its own stories, traditions and events. And further- as Gant writes, though set in a mythic and foggy, distant past, the film's time is likewise closely connected to the local – the legend of *Atanarjuat* being specific to Igloolik – and thus the influence of the *real* historical inevitably present in transforming oral histories:

Even though the action thus is attached to the myth's powerful and antiquated time, it is simultaneously based on a locally-rooted legend, which as such contains elements of historical character, that is, true occurrences, which once not so many hundred years ago took place in the region of Igloolik in the middle of Nunavut. (2005, p. 335, Author's translation)

In oscillating between the mythic, local, historical and (in the implications of the invigoration of language and traditional skills proposed by Isuma's productions, and the application of the film medium) the contemporary, this retelling proposes an opportunity for new forms of historical representation in filmic media – a revisionist and multiplicitous dynamic that Raheja's (2007) reading of visual sovereignty underscores, in drawing particular relations to place in the present established by continuous presence throughout time. The film explores these connections to a past that, through retellings over time, is connected to the present, while simultaneously acknowledging its transformation throughout time – not least in the directors' deliberate revision of the legend. In other accounts (Krupat, 2007), the *Atanarjuat*-character returns from the ice to kill Oki and the others who killed his brother, Amaqjuaq. But rather than perpetuating a cycle of killings, in the film, Oki is banished from the community, emphasizing an inward-looking narrative of healing rather than revenge – mirrored by the film's practical implications for reinvigoration of language, knowledge of oral (hi)stories and traditional skills. In this way *Atanarjuat* both enters the past and makes the past present. Though the film contains information about traditional life, the characters and their relationships are the ultimate focus. The film makes no effort to disguise its fiction or present itself as a factual document. During the credits, production and posterity shots roll, “drawing attention to the film as a film, as opposed to an ‘authentic’ visual record of the past” (Raheja, 2007, p. 1174). This acknowledges the innate nature of the medium as a constructed visual-narrative experience, and asserts that Inuit are capable of adapting it to fit their stories, manners of telling and understanding the world, both practically and visually.

In absence of a single narrator, the medium itself becomes the storyteller. The film constructs the world and circumstances of the story: good and bad roles and complicity are traded and blurred, in rejection of the Hollywood model. Traditional practices, like the community drum dance, go unexplained and scenes of intense conflict fade in and out of landscape shots, drawing the viewer away. The elongated pace is most significant because it establishes a way of seeing the world that opposes the paradigm of Western filmmaking built on intense, identifiable action. The film is no less filled with action, human drama and character for it, but the pace of the film – switching between close, detail-oriented scenes and slow, long,

distant shots – speaks to an Inuit manner of seeing the world which would be implicitly understood when told in a communal setting:

...what the filmmakers do is take the non-Inuit audience hostage, successfully forcing us to alter our consumption of visual images to an Inuit pace, one that is slower and more attentive to the play of light on a grouping of rocks or the place where the snow meets the ocean. The slowness and the sequencing match the patience one must have to hunt on the ice, wait for hours at a sea hole, traverse long distances on foot or in a dogsled, or battle more than five hundred years of colonialism. (Raheja, 2007, p. 1178)

In the same way that Inuit expression and aesthetic traditions found new interpretations in printmaking and drawing, Isuma has translated Inuit manners of seeing the world and following narrative, immediately connected to a perception of time linked to Inuit communities, which goes to the core of film as a medium. As Mary Ann Doane (1996) discusses, among the unique principles of film as a medium is its construction of the experience of a particular time content not necessarily tied to duration or recorded time, most often expressed through narrative. Despite the film camera's ability to record undifferentiated information of "the real," "the actuality's embodiment of "real time" very quickly becomes only an aspiration (actualities contain cuts)" (Doane, 1996, p. 342). In other words, the medium as practiced creates an effect of the *perception* of time, instead of "real time," which Doane contextualizes in Etienne-Jules Marey's and Sigmund Freud's different understandings of time in relation to storage: for Marey (in his experiments with chronophotography) time is infinitely dividable and incapable of being contained in its entirety by technology; for Freud, the ultimate storage entity (the unconscious) exists in a state of timelessness (Doane, 1996, pp. 342-3). Further, Freud understood information storage in memory as an incomplete and uncontrollable process, filled with gaps, and that this fractured process where information is gathered without necessarily regard for importance is then contained in a state of diachrony. When experienced against one's own perception of reality, this "discontinuous functioning of the system perception-consciousness that produces those gaps" of memory that is not recorded, itself "produces the notion of time" (Doane, 1996, p. 335). Whether or not Freud's theories are reliable in a scientific understanding of memory, they contribute to an understanding of the properties of temporality actualized in film. Both Freud and Marey rejected film because of its sensual and commercial nature, and both believed film to be incapable of storing and depicting a continuous reality – but in the fictitious time constructed by the cutting and arranging of film and the illusion of film's presentation of time in narrative, the medium presents an impression of the processes of time upon the viewer:

...I do not think it is too far-fetched to suggest that in the cinema, as in psychoanalysis, time is produced as an effect, at least in part to protect the subject from the anxieties of total representation generated by the new technological media. (Doane, 1996, p. 343)

As such, film exists in its own cinematic time engaged not primarily with 'pure' documentation, storage and presentation, but with temporalities innate to the medium's discontinuous time constructed out of stored moments, drawn from a continuum and then reordered.

As Hopkins (2006) notes, *Atanarjuat* composes an experience of time reflective of Inuit traditional life in its requirement for patience, to which I would add its inclusion of immediate and unexpected changes reflecting the unpredictability and extremity of the Arctic environment, as when Oki explodes an intense, thoughtful moment between brothers as he drives his spear into Atanarjuat's tent and kills Amaqjuaq. Time lies between two extremes – of seemingly endless, tonal expanse, and of sharp, immediate shifts and momentary flux – reflecting both the land itself and the patterns Inuit have developed over millennia to adapt to and survive it. Adaptations that Hopkins notes are likewise relevant to combating colonialism's long-spanning history for Inuit (patience), but which I would also add, are also necessary (in the ability to adapt to unexpected, rapid change as in extreme weather changes) to react to and survive the rapid, unexpected and all-encompassing colonial expansion of the 1940s and '50s that followed several hundred years of often (relatively) docile, infrequent and impermanent contact between Inuit and Southerners.

As Linda Tuhiwai Smith discusses, resituating constructions of time to speak to an Indigenous people's ways of knowing and ways of conceiving of and ordering time through daily life and relations constitutes an act of decolonizing knowledge, which opens up holistic and reinvigorated relations to lands and histories, in so much as, "Different orientations towards time and space, different positioning within time and space, and different systems of language for making space and time 'real' underpin notions of past and present, of place and of relationships to the land" (Smith, 1999, pp. 54-55). A method of decolonizing Western structures of time which inhibit these relations and traditional activities and ways of organizing community, which finds its potential in and is reified through the ontological basis of film as a medium that, out of processes of selection and manipulation of "real time," has the capacity to create its own notions of time disconnected from the lived continuum. These are the conditions I am describing as decolonial media aesthetics – in that *Atanarjuat* applies the historic binds between community, land and methods of self-examination through aesthetic and cultural patterns (visual sovereignty), to a critical approach to how these can be enacted and expressed through the perceptual and sensory capacities of media technologies. They Indigenize the time capacities of film to relate land and community within time patterns defined by the movements of Inuit life in relation to them, while likewise attempting to bridge the conditions of narrative tellings through a subversion of cinematic constructs and an alignment with community on an engaged, perceptual and conditional level that prioritizes those viewers who are already able to encounter these states of time.

Likewise Isuma's 1994-95 series *Nunavut (Our Land)*,¹⁰ at moments, slows down and focuses intensely on movements of hands when treating sealskins, or men standing in a river catching fish with their hands. The shots are highly detailed to suit the series' goal of

¹⁰ *Nunavut (Our Land)*, 1994-95, was created as a dramatic television series, but in 2002 was also exhibited in installation at the international exhibition documenta 11 in Kassel, Germany.

reintroducing daily traditional practices alongside the perspectives of elders in relation to the past in which the series is set (Huhndorf, 2003, p. 823), but within this technique, the films create rhythm, reflecting a type of visual poetry within traditional life. Through a mnemonic goal, they reach beauty in a way non-Inuit filmmakers who are not tuned into the intricacies of these techniques would be unable to capture. This capacity for poetry in the essential moments of life is not contained only to “traditional” life, which is expressed in the similarly paced short film *Sirmilik*, 2012. Interspersed with images of elders describing their experiences in the small hamlet over time, languid shots of the sea and mountains shift not sharply but naturally into quiet town scenes; peaks become basketball hoops and the movements of the waves are aligned with children playing on the court, to suggest that the time and the patterns of the land are mirrored and reacted to by the people in a harmonious way, the one complementing the other.

Conclusions: Control mapping

This relationship – arising out from and facing back to a land under pragmatic, historical, temporal and participatory conditions – is hardly absent from the imaging of Indigenous peoples through Western visual conventions, only hidden within a confining framework. For centuries the Arctic was only understood by the West as a series of measurements – in its points of extremity, distance to centers of Southern powers or as a metaphoric measure of the endurance of man, reducing vast and diverse lands to the empirical and speaking over the conditions and relations of its peoples.¹¹ At best these documents are, as Pia Arke wrote, “a narrative of the West seen from the outside” (2006, p. 1), within the scenario of its non-meetings, its mis-meetings with the non-West, its attempts to mediate Indigenous homelands and the presence of Indigenous peoples towards itself and its own self-identity. In this paper I have argued for the return of active agency into camera-based images through the effects of Pitseolak’s and Kunuk’s practices. I have suggested how, through (in Pitseolak’s work) a dissolution of the framing conventions of Arctic photography – by positioning the camera and photographer within the community being represented, and repositioning its images as the reflections of a personal history, rather than a complete, universal history – and (in Kunuk’s/Isuma’s) through expansions

¹¹ Though later, people were empiricized as well, as discussed in Nunatsiavummioq photographer Barry Pottle’s 2009 project *Awareness*, photographs which depict metal coins that were issued to Inuit under the Canadian government’s Eskimo Identification Tag System. Under this system Inuit were identified by numbers for all government purposes instead of their names, which Southerners found too difficult to spell and pronounce. Pottle’s photographs of the tags – ‘portraits’ of the objectified humans represented by them – are accompanied by portraits of the people they were assigned to, giving them back their personhood and identity (Igloliorte 2012).

Awareness, while serving a purpose of making the Canadian public aware of this under-discussed program, is also relevant in relation to developments in institutional practices as exemplified in Library and Archives Canada’s “Project Naming,” which gives Inuit access to their broad national archives of historic photographs from across Inuit homeland so that they can try to return the names and identities of the individuals depicted in the anonymous images constructed in the Southern drive to image the North.

of the conditions of time in film – both by applying conceptions of time bound to life on the land and by setting the narrative in a past time with implications for the present and future – Pitseolak and Kunuk have reshaped the photo-reproductive conditions of representations of Inuit people and homeland.

Their practices I have read within an understanding of decolonial media aesthetics – decolonial in that they refute framings that would attempt to mediate their presence in opposition to their own agency. Instead they reposition the conditions of photo-reproductive images within relations to place and individual perception, turning inward to reinvigorate their communities while simultaneously marking out their sovereign positions to their lands. In that these reframed conditions renegotiate the receptive and perceptive climate of photography and film, enabling new relations to these media that holistically express and extend Inuit ways of knowing into reproductive technologies, these conditions can also be considered within discourses of media aesthetics. This Pitseolak's photography has created as an effect, by repositioning Arctic photography under an explicitly individual perspective – displacing the “central Eskimo.” Through his own place and roles within his images and through their naturalistic representations of changing camp life in Seekooseelak in the 1940s-60s, Pitseolak's images bring his subjects' presence – their physical trace, their position of *being* within the visible conditions – to the forefront. His framings and his role as photographer within his community both extended and activated this presence. Further, I have suggested that by extending this activated presence into art media as well as in representations of oral narrative, Pitseolak's desire to “make Inuit life ‘real’” through drawings and prints based on photographic templates, to produce images for distribution to a Southern audience, extended these facts of presence and the relationships to space and time within them – their “visual sovereignty” – into art media.

Likewise Kunuk's and Isuma's renegotiation of the perceptual capacities of the medium of film in *Atanarjuat, the Fast Runner* construct an experience of time that reflects a time conception tied to Inuit traditional lifeways (themselves bound to the land in complementary interplay) and incorporates these relations into the ontological conditions of film. This ties into the broad, undefined time the film is set in – at once a fictitious historic time, that refers to real historic time (the assumed past of the legend), and to the progressive time of the legend's transformation as it is retold over generations, finally in the film's own retelling. This multiplicitous time, further, frames the conditions of Inuit relations to land, to Igloodik, throughout time as transforming and continuous, not least in Isuma's practical inclusion of their community into these renegotiations. Pitseolak and Kunuk have utilized the perceptual capacities of media technologies to cultivate new conditions of perception that are equally bound to place, Indigenous worldviews and identities. These subversive media practices extend Indigenous experiences, stories, histories and relations into the material language of photo-reproductive media and exploit the potential for a broadened sensory plane brought about by photography and film and the altered depictions and traces of time and place intrinsic to them.

These recentered conditions re-map the imaged histories of Inuit to bind those reproductions to their communities and their actual relations to their land. This is the situation I

have proposed to call control mapping, as they directly tie people and place (their presence transcribed in the photograph, the knowledge transmitted through the film's narrative and its human-land relations based in time) to photograph/film as disseminated reproduction. As a measurement-based reproduction of place, a control map or photomap requires the drawn or digital map to be matched with photographs from multiple perspectives for each major point in the landscape, the control points. In that we understand the photograph as trace or index (with a physical connection to its subject during the moment the photograph was taken), the presence of the subject itself *as laid down in* the photograph forms the basis for the entire reproduction, as opposed to the perception of individuals who are necessarily distanced from it. The subject itself marks out, corrects the reproduction (the "map") as a factor defining the subject and explicating it in the broader world. The reproduction is thus inextricably centered around the subject itself, the subject's presence. In this scenario, the human beings in Pitseolak's photographs – including their visible relations to him as a photographer and member of their community – and the human knowledge and relations transmitted through the narrative and cinematic time of *Atanarjuat* serve as the "controls" (the photographs in the model of control mapping) of the reproduced material, and more broadly, photographic/cinematic representations of Inuit (the map itself). Above any quantifiable metrics, they define the conditions of Inuit life and homeland, centering these reproductions not only around their own persistent presence, but around the direct connections to their land, their presence within and responses to land, marked out in time and oral narrative. These practices transform the dialogue from one of a people juxtaposed onto land, into one of a land defined by its people and their activities, productions and lived conditions and experiences throughout time.

To express this relationship of control mapping a bit more directly, I would like to end by introducing one last work by Pia Arke. With mapmaking as perhaps the ultimate reproduction of Western (mis)understanding of the Arctic in the past, Arke's series *Legends* goes directly to the site of contention. For the Western scientist or explorer, cartography describes the 'truth' of a land. Topographical maps, especially, depict the vastness and ruggedness of a land, and seemingly, unveil the struggles faced by those who live there, assuming the basic facts of location fully define their lives. But it is *the people* who define their lives, relating actively to the land, with these relations and responses to land having transformed throughout time. And so Arke places photographs from her mother's past atop of maps of East Greenland – in the foreground – while also drawing new figures and renaming all of the sites within them, with their Greenlandic place names. They state that to know a land one must know its people, because their knowledge of it extends far beyond maps, ice charts and documentary images. To know the people one must accept and understand their ways of experiencing the land, something not contained in any one method.

Zacharias Kunuk and Peter Pitseolak have enhanced and enabled the resilience of Inuit cultural expressions by repositioning Inuit visual conditions through their firm situation within their communities and their lands. The two are inseparable – not in the manner the West would characterize them as community bound and constrained by land, unable to consolidate itself with

other influences and isolated from the broader world, but with land shaped and informed by its communities equally with the influence of the land on its people, and consequently on their artistic expressions. Through this distinction, Pitseolak and Kunuk both engage in Raheja's (2007) visual sovereignty as a process where Indigenous peoples intervene in Western methods of representation to stretch, distort and deconstruct their boundaries, thereby working towards a cultural image more in-line with how they experience and come to know the world, visualizing their sovereign relationship to their land and their sovereign ownership of their images. It acknowledges that they do not struggle against the world, but take in all of the influences surrounding them, adapting and examining the world through filters of experience and knowledge that are unique to them. By revisiting the temporal qualities of media technologies and activating their perceptual capacities to expand them within Inuit place relations and ways of knowing, they have applied sovereignty not only to images, but to the imaging processes themselves, a condition I have suggested as decolonial media aesthetics. The significance of these practices as decolonizing practices follows Hansen's (2004) interpretation of media aesthetics as "a political ecology of the senses," through the inclusion of what Smith (1999) recognizes as "decolonizing knowledge." As decolonial media aesthetics, practices and altered roles such as those I have discussed in Arke's, Pitseolak's and Kunuk's work do more than present positive, community-informed representations of their own Indigenous communities. By contouring the essential elements of media technologies and human relations towards them, they create the potential for politically engaging conditions of perception across representation fields, creating an environment for inventive cultural resilience on a material level of representation through the expansion of individual relations to land and culture into these transformative realms of perception, participation and connection opened up by media technologies, transforming them again, just as they have expanded across millennia, while grappling with the persistent issues of reclaiming Indigenous identities across all fields.

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