

Title:

How to Buy and Shop for Authentic Canadian Inuit Art (Eskimo Art) Sculptures

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945

Summary:

Where and how to buy and shop for authentic Inuit art. How to tell real pieces from imitations.

Keywords:

buy, shop, inuit, art, eskimo , sculpture, canada, canadian, igloo, authentic, sculptures

Article Body:

Many visitors to Canada will be exposed to Inuit art (Eskimo art) sculptures while touring the country. These are the magnificent hand made sculptures carved from stone by the Inuit artists living in the northern Arctic regions of Canada. While in some of the major Canadian cities (Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Ottawa and Quebec City) or other tourist areas popular with international visitors such as Banff, Inuit sculptures will be seen at various retail shops and displayed at some museums. Since Inuit art has been getting more and more international exposure, people may be seeing this Canadian fine art form at galleries and museums located outside Canada too. As a result, it will be natural for many tourists and art collectors to decide that they would like to purchase Inuit sculptures as nice souvenirs for their homes or as very unique gifts for others. Assuming that the intention is to acquire an authentic piece of Inuit art rather than a cheap tourist imitation, the question arises on how does one tell apart the real thing from the fakes?

It would be pretty disappointing to bring home a piece only to find out later that it isn't authentic or even made in Canada. If one is lucky enough to be traveling in the Canadian Arctic where the Inuit live and make their wonderful artwork, then it can be safely assumed that any Inuit art piece purchased from a local northern store or directly from an Inuit carver would be authentic. One would have to be more careful elsewhere in Canada, especially in tourist areas where all sorts of other Canadian souvenirs such as t-shirts, hockey jerseys, postcards, key chains, maple syrup and other Native Canadian arts are sold.

The safest places to shop for Inuit sculptures to ensure authenticity are always the reputable galleries that specialize in Canadian Inuit art and Eskimo art.

Some of these galleries have advertisements in the city tourist guides found in hotels. Reputable Inuit art galleries are also listed in Inuit Art Quarterly magazine which is devoted entirely to Inuit art. These galleries will usually be located in the downtown tourist areas of major cities. When one walks into these galleries, one will see that there will be only Inuit art and maybe Native art but none of the other usual tourist souvenirs such as t-shirts or postcards. These galleries will have only authentic Inuit art for sale as they do not deal with imitations or fakes. Just to be even safer, make sure that the piece you are interested in comes with a Canadian government Igloo tag certifying that it was hand made by a Canadian Inuit artist. The Inuit sculpture may be signed by the carver either in English or Inuit syllabics but not all authentic pieces are signed. So be aware that an unsigned piece may still be indeed authentic.

Some of these Inuit art galleries also have websites so you could shop and buy authentic Inuit art sculpture from home anywhere in the world. In addition to these street retail specialty galleries, there are now reputable online galleries that also specialize in authentic Inuit art. These online galleries are a good option for buying Inuit art since the prices are usually lower than those at street retail galleries because of lower overheads. Of course, like any other shopping on the internet, one must be careful so when dealing with an online gallery, make sure that their pieces also come with the official Igloo tags to ensure authenticity.

Some tourist shops do carry authentic Inuit art as well as the other touristy souvenirs in order to cater to all types of tourists. When shopping at these types of stores, it is possible to tell apart the real pieces from the reproductions. Authentic Inuit sculpture is carved from stone and therefore should have some weight or mass to it. Stone is also cold to the touch. A reproduction made of plastic or resin from a mold will be much lighter in weight and will not be cold to the touch. A reproduction will sometimes have a company name on it such as Wolf Originals or Boma and will never feature an artist's signature. An authentic Inuit sculpture is a one of a kind piece of artwork and nothing else on the store shelves will look exactly like it. If there are duplicates of a certain piece with exact details, the piece is not authentic. If a piece looks too perfect in detail with absolute straight bottoms or sides, it is probably not real. Of course, if a piece features a sticker indicating that it was made in an Asian country, then it is obviously a fake. There will also be a huge price difference between authentic pieces and the imitations.

Where it becomes more difficult to determine authenticity are with the reproductions that are also made of stone. This can be a real gray area to those unfamiliar with authentic Inuit art. They do have mass and may even have some type of tag indicating that it was hand made but if there are other pieces

on the shelves that look too similar in detail, they are most likely not authentic. If a seller claims that such as piece is authentic, ask to see the official Igloo tag that comes with it which will have information on the artist, location where it was made and the year it was carved. If the Igloo tag is not available, move on. The authentic pieces with the accompanying official Igloo tags will always be the highest priced and are usually kept in a separate (perhaps even locked) shelf within the store.