

FORT GANSEVOORT

FORT GANSEVOORT ANNOUNCES REPRESENTATION OF SHUVINAI ASHOONA

**Gallery's First Exhibition with Noted Inuk
Artist to be a Collaboration with Marcel Dzama**

March 28, 2022–May 21, 2020



Shuvina Ashoona, *Untitled*, 2013, Graphite, colored pencil and ink, on paper, 47.75 x 47.75 inches.

New York...Adam Shopkorn, founder of Fort Gansevoort, is pleased to announce the gallery's U.S. representation of Inuk artist Shuvina Ashoona, whose detailed, densely rendered, and imaginative representations of contemporary Inuit life in Canada have attracted international critical acclaim. Ashoona's work will be featured in the upcoming 59th Venice Biennale international contemporary art exhibition: *The Milk of Dreams*, curated by Cecilia Alemani, Artistic Director of the Biennale and Director and Chief Curator of High Line Art in New York.

The gallery's first project with Ashoona will be an online exhibition of her drawings, launching March 28, 2022. Titled 'Shuvina Ashoona,' this presentation is in collaboration with New York based artist Marcel Dzama, who selected the series of works on view, The show is a precursor to Fort Gansevoort's forthcoming solo exhibition of Ashoona's work in New York City.

Shuvina Ashoona lives and works in Kinngait (formerly Cape Dorset), an Inuit hamlet at the southern tip of Baffin Island in the Canadian territory of Nunavut. Born in 1961, she grew up in a community of prolific artists and began producing her own drawings in 1995. She works primarily in pen, ink, colored pencils, and markers. As a member of the West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative, Ashoona honed her craft through a regimented studio practice at Kinngait Studios, where she draws nearly every day. The uniquely expressive, fantasy-inflected visual style of her art has distinguished Ashoona from other artists in the West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative.

The drawings featured in Fort Gansevoort's digital exhibition cover roughly two decades of the artist's career from the early 2000s to the present. In the early aughts, Ashoona introduced color into her work, documenting the landscape and community of Kinngait. Her compositions often draw inspiration from both myths and popular culture. In many works, Ashoona combines disparate subjects into highly detailed, otherworldly compositions. The large eyes of her subjects confront the viewer with haunting directness. Her domestic scenes capture intimate views of contemporary daily life in Kinngait. Characterized by meticulous draftsmanship and nuanced use of color, Shuvina's images are infused alternately with dynamic energy and tranquil stillness.

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In an untitled drawing from 2014, two figures dressed in traditional Inuit clothing appear with their backs toward the viewer. They face a man, dressed in Western styled clothing, who stands in front of a multi-colored display of baseball caps. Some of these hats are inscribed with English text while others are inscribed with Inuktitut. The English text references large sums of money as well as places and characters from the Bible. With this drawing, Ashoona captures the ways in which Western commerce, infrastructure, and media intersect with Inuit traditions in Kinngait. Although this melding of cultures is depicted in a humorous fashion, the artist's intent remains somewhat ambiguous. By punctuating the quotidian setting of this drawing with subtle fictitious details, Ashoona suggests that she is inspecting the nature of her own reality, and more broadly, contemporary indigeneity.

Another untitled work from 2014 depicts two central figures playing a traditional Inuit game inside a high school gymnasium. Although her subjects appear in a familiar setting, Ashoona's torquing of scale and perspective imbues the scene with a surreal quality. The two boys are enlarged to a degree that bestows upon them the aspect of giants or gods. In contrast, the drawing's small foreground figures, with their backs once again to the viewer, become anonymous witnesses to the action. With theatrical flair, Ashoona renders the smaller figures at the perimeter of her composition in a way that highlights the performative nature of the proceedings. With its unconventional use of elevated perspective, the drawing creates an atmosphere of voyeurism, as if to suggest the omnipotence of the viewer – the artist and the artist's audience – looking down upon the scene.

Ashoona's work also gives prominence to the landscape and topography of her homeland in Canada, which she renders with intense precision, depicting jagged rock formations, minuscule pebbles, and the motion of water with vitality. In an untitled drawing from 2015, the artist combines a variety of textures, patterns, and colors into a harmonious composition. Here she treats her human figures and landscape with equal visual importance. Despite the harsh climatic conditions of the environment, Ashoona's subjects appear at peace in nature as they cook and forage in a communal setting.

Through keen observation of her surroundings and by exploring the depths of her vivid imagination, Ashoona continues to cultivate a highly personal and deeply poetic visual iconography.

Shuvinai Ashoona's art is included in museum collections throughout Canada including Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Ontario; Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, Quebec; Inuit Art Center, Indian and Northern Affairs, Ottawa, Ontario; The National Gallery, Ottawa, Ontario; and the Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg, Manitoba. In the United States, her work is represented in the permanent collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.. Ashoona's work is currently on view at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami in the exhibition Shuvinai Ashoona: Drawings. Her work was also recently presented in a solo exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Canada: Shuvinai Ashoona: Beyond the Visible. In 2019 The Power Plant in Canada presented the survey Shuvinai Ashoona: Mapping Worlds, that traveled to multiple Canadian venues. Her art has been exhibited extensively, both within Canada and internationally at Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow; The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto; Confederation Centre of the Arts, Charlotte Town; Leonard and Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Montreal; Yukon Arts Centre, White Horse; Glenbow Museum, Calgary; Art Canada Institute, Toronto; MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina; The Canadian Guild of Crafts, Montreal; Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai; Quebec City Biennial, Quebec City; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Esker Foundation, Calgary; Mercer Union, Toronto; Saw Gallery, Ottawa; Art Gallery of Mississauga,

FORT GANSEVOORT

Mississauga; Canada House Gallery, Banff; Stockholm Supermarket Art Fair, Stockholm; SITE Santa Fe, Santa Fe; Banff Art Gallery, Banff; Gallery 210, St Louis; Enterprise Square Gallery, Edmonton; Metro Toronto Convention Centre, Toronto; Carleton University Art Gallery, Ottawa; Nunatta Sunakkutaangit Museum, Iqaluit; Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams; and Yekaterinburg Museum of Fine Arts, Yekaterinburg.

Press contact:

Andrea Schwan, Andrea Schwan Inc.

andrea@andreaschwan.com

+1 917 371.5023