Works by Sholl and Studebaker Added to Museum Collection

With a $1,850 grant from Museums Alaska, the Alutiiq Museum will purchase two works of art for its permanent collection—one each by Kodiak residents Hanna Sholl and Stacy Studebaker.

From Alutiiq artist Hanna Sholl, the museum will purchase Contemporary Alutiiq Dance Rattle, a modern interpretation of a traditional puffin beak rattle. The piece features a steam bent hoop of hemlock, wooden handles carved in the shape of double-bladed kayak paddles, and twenty-three dangling deer hooves—a substitution for puffin beaks. Sholl describes this piece as, “a working hoop rattle ready to be danced.”

Although known from historic accounts and collections, hoop rattles have not been made on Kodiak for over a century. In 2012, Sholl traveled to the National Museum of Finland to study ancestral objects, including a nineteenth century rattle. This piece inspired her to create rattles and reintroduce their use in Alutiiq dance performances.

From Stacy Studebaker, the museum will acquire Oliver Octopus and his Treasures, a colored art pencil drawing on black paper. Inspired by creatures living on the shore near Studebaker’s home, the drawing shows an octopus with his tentacles curled around a selection of intertidal animals. The animals are drawn in colorful detail, reflecting Studebaker’s background in both art and biology. The piece is a sequel to Olivia Octopus and her Treasures, purchased and displayed by the Kodiak Public Library.

“We’ve been working to represent a wide variety of contemporary works and artists in our collection,” said Alutiiq Museum Executive Director April Counceller. “Both of these pieces support that goal. We only have fragments and images of traditional rattles. Hanna’s piece will be our only complete example. We are particularly grateful that she made it available to us. Due to the spiritual nature of these objects, she does not sell them to the public. We are also thrilled to add an original Stacy Studebaker to our collection. This is our first example of Stacy’s work, and it reflects her deep understanding of the Kodiak environment in her bright, playful style.”

Support for these purchases comes from the Art Acquisition Fund. Established by Rasmuson Foundation in 2003, the fund promotes the development of contemporary art collections in Alaska.
museums. Three times a year, museums may submit proposals to purchase recent works by living Alaskan artists. Museums Alaska, the state-wide museum association, administers the fund.

Councillor said, “I can’t stress the value of the art acquisition fund enough. The Alutiiq Museum has a growing collection of beautiful contemporary works thanks to the fund, pieces that celebrate the Alutiiq world and tie our past to the present. We say quyanaasinaq—our sincerest thanks—to Rasmuson Foundation for continuing to support this program.”

Since the fund’s 2003 inception, the Alutiiq Museum has received $217,153.50 in grants to purchase 139 works by 42 artists. These pieces can be enjoyed in the contemporary art gallery on the Alutiiq Museum’s website at https://alutiiqmuseum.org/explore/collections/types-of-collections/contemporary-art.

The Alutiiq Museum is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and sharing the history and culture of the Alutiiq, an Alaska Native tribal people. Representatives of Kodiak Alutiiq organizations govern the museum with funding from charitable contributions, memberships, grants, contracts, and sales.