

Noise Ghost: Shuvinai Ashoona and Shary Boyle, Justina M. Barnicke Gallery

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Shuvinai Ashoona, Monster, 2003-2004:

Courtesy Feheley Fine Arts.



Shary Boyle, Iceberg, 2007: Courtesy

Jessica Bradley Art + Projects.

By Carol-Ann M. Ryan

Two women artists: one from Cape Dorset, one from Toronto, born a decade apart. Their kinship is unexpected, but undeniable. Ashoona and Boyle share an artistic practice grounded in drawing, making pictures extracted from the imagination, yet rooted in history and personal experience. Together in one exhibition, the result is an active dialogue between the artwork, which is defined by colour and the intricate use of line. Exploiting the immediacy of their medium, these artists link mind to hand vividly.

Viewers enter narrative scenes that straddle reality and fantasy. Ashoona works in a unique contemporary visual language, composing referential elements within an imagined world. Similarly, Boyle combines fantastical images inspired by childhood, mythology and folklore with contemporary relevance and meaning. Both artists reveal a darker side in their invented scenarios, including monsters and animal-human hybrids, sometimes engaged in violent acts.

Minute detail, such as the delineation of tiny pebbles covering a vast beach in Ashoona's large-scale drawing, or the delicate patterns on Ukrainian eggs in a Boyle composition, is common. Colour energizes these works, though Ashoona's use of pencil crayon appears muted next to Boyle's application of hyper-real orange and pink gouache. Both artists tend toward a flattened composition of compressed space, containing entire narratives in a single plane, recalling traditional Inuit drawing.

This Northern sensibility is shared on another level through the Noise Ghost. The Inuit poltergeist, identified by its auditory haunting, is evidently known to both women, opening their minds to places few have seen. When it called to Ashoona, Boyle must have heard the echo.

Noise Ghost: Shuvinai Ashoona and Shary Boyle
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