

This *amauti* (woman's parka) was made by Lucy Ittinuar in the 1970s. It features handmade bead fringe and floral embroidery. She incorporated commercially made bead trim along the hem and used lead fishing weights and Canadian dimes as decoration as well. In addition to adding shine to the colorful beaded parka, the dimes would have made a pleasant tinkling sound as she walked.

The beaded front panel is removable so that it can be reused. This one seems to have been made for this parka, but similar panels were first made in the nineteenth century and have been handed down through generations.

**Cover image:** Lucy Ittinuar, *Amauti*, Rankin Inlet, Nunavut, ca. 1970. Cotton, wool, glass beads, faux fur, lead, silver, acrylic yarn.

The **Dene** live in the western subarctic, including Alaska.  
The **Inughuit** (Polar Inuit) live in northwestern Greenland.  
The **Innu** live in eastern Québec and Labrador.  
The **Kalaallit** are Inuit of southern and west Greenland.



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Proceeds from the Russell and Janet Doubleday endowment funded this exhibition.  
PHOTOS BY DANIEL HUDSON

## Dressing It Up: Beadwork in Northern Communities



Women across the north have always created beautiful clothing, footwear, bags, and other objects for their families. In the past they decorated their work with dyed bird and porcupine quills, contrasting colors of hide and fur, and beads carved from stone, bone, ivory, and shell, creating pleasing patterns that also often had important symbolic meaning. Beginning as early as the mid-eighteenth century, explorers,

missionaries, and traders included glass beads in the goods they brought north to trade. Women across the north quickly incorporated colorful beads into their work. They often substituted glass beads for other forms of embellishment and also devised novel ways to use them. Distinctive bead-working techniques developed, as did regional styles that persist to this day. Working within these parameters, women expressed their creativity and displayed their skills through beadwork.



Leah Druck, Beaded Rifle Case, Fairbanks, Alaska, ca. 1988. Moose hide, caribou hide, cloth, glass beads, acrylic yarn.

## Dolls

Dolls, made as toys or for sale to westerners, document how beads were used in different communities across the north.

Two dolls from West Greenland display all the elements of a woman in her best attire. They are dressed nearly identically except for their boots. The tall red boots were typically worn by older women, while younger women wore shorter white boots, with embroidered liners topped with lace. All women and girls wore beaded collars.

A contemporary doll depicting an Innu hunter is dressed in the style of the early decades of the twentieth century, including a distinctive hat. Beadwork on full-sized clothing would have been more elaborate than that worn by the doll.



Kalaallit, Two Dolls, West Greenland, 1952-1955. Wood, cloth, sealskin, fur, hair, glass beads. Gift of Alice G. Nute.



Mary Rose Selma, Innu Hunter Tea Doll, Sheshatshiu, Labrador, 1999. Caribou hide, cotton cloth, yarn, cotton floss, glass beads, black tea.



Dene, Beaded Mukluks, Alaska, ca. 1960. Hide, fur, cloth, glass beads. Gift of the family of JoAnne and William E. Harrigan.



Innu, Moccasins, Labrador, early 20th century. Caribou hide, velvet, glass beads. Gift of Donald and Miriam MacMillan.



## Mukluks and Moccasins

Northern seamstresses, like other indigenous women across North America, often used beads to decorate the footwear they made for their family members. These

Dene mukluks have an elaborately beaded cuff, suggesting they may be dance boots intended to be worn on special occasions. The moccasins, made by an Innu woman, have a traditional design on the vamp, the top of the moccasin.

## Beaded Collars

Beaded collars are one of the most dramatic parts of a West Greenland woman's wardrobe. The collars are formed using a distinctive netting technique not commonly used

elsewhere in the north. Although the designs are strongly horizontal, the necklaces are constructed with vertical stitches. The overall design, then, must be envisioned before work is begun.



Kalaallit, Woman's Collar, West Greenland, early 20th century. Glass beads, cloth, cotton thread. Gift of Elizabeth Bedker Simpson.



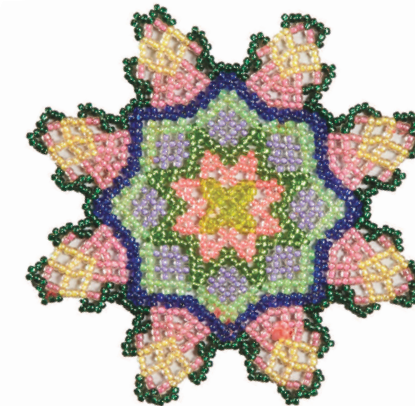
Kalaallit, Child's Collar, West Greenland, mid-20th century. Glass beads, cloth, cotton thread. Gift of Miriam Look MacMillan.



Inuit, Beaded Table Mat, Kusuluk, East Greenland, ca. 1970. Glass beads, cotton thread. Gift of Mr. Brian Plaski.

## Household Decorations

Women in all parts of Greenland have adapted the netted beadwork technique to make household decorations, ranging from flat table mats to candle holders. They use these beautiful pieces in their own homes as well as selling them to tourists. Women in Denmark have adopted this style of Greenlandic beadwork as a popular craft.



Inughuit, Small Beaded Mat, Qaanaaq, 2004. Glass beads, cotton thread.

## Beaded Sculptures

In Arviat, Nunavut, sculptor Eva Talooki began adding glass beads to her stone carvings in the 1970s. In some early carvings she included cloth, but more often she used beads

alone to represent the adornment on a woman's parka. Later, other artists also adopted this decorative technique.



Eva Talooki Aliktiluk, Beaded Figure, Arviat, 1986. Stone, glass beads, cotton thread. On loan from Robert and Judith Toll.



Mary Tutsweetok Kriqatilik, Beaded Figure, Arviat, ca. 1990. Stone, glass beads, cotton thread. The Marcia and Robert Ellis Collection.



Eva Talooki Aliktiluk, Beaded Woman (miniature), Arviat, ca. 1980. Stone, wool, glass beads, cotton thread. On loan from Robert and Judith Toll.