Nicotye Samayualie has emerged as one of Cape Dorset’s most committed and confident artists. Although her work has been carried by the principle art galleries specializing in Inuit art across Canada, such as Spirit Wrestler Gallery, Gallery Gevik, Gallery Indigena, and the Marion Scott Gallery, she has been promoted mainly by Feheley Fine Arts who featured her drawings at Art Toronto in 2011, 2012, and 2013. Her first group show was *A New Perspective* in 2011 and she had her first solo exhibition, *Nicotye Samayualie*, in February 2015, again both at Feheley Fine Arts. Additionally, the first prints made by Kinngait Studios after her drawings, *Cotton Grass*, *Many Buttons*, and *Polished Buttons*, were released in the annual Cape Dorset print collection in 2013. In 2014 she was an invited artist at the Great Northern Arts Festival in Inuvik and she has been selected for a residency at the Banff Arts Centre as part of the TD Bank’s Cape Dorset North-South artist exchange program.

Since 2007, it is notable that her approach to both subject matter – exclusively still-lifes and landscapes – and drawing style has solidified towards a refinement of her original vision, as opposed to working through stages or exploring different directions as might be expected from a younger artist. Her early focus on landscape has intensified and working on large-format drawings has allowed her to create expansive images of the land surrounding Cape Dorset. The artist has described her motivation in this as “My idea is to make more landscape out of my drawings…because when I was growing up, me and my family we used to go camping, hunting, fishing, everything…It’s not just landscape…Whenever I draw the landscape I think of a place we used to be when we were out camping…So in our future somebody can see, or my boys can see it in the future.” While a connection to place is part of *Composition (Landscape)*, showing the fishing lakes visited by Samayualie and her family in the springtime, it is also an interesting variation on this theme. The bird’s eye view shows the waterways and land as if from a great distance above, yet the elaborate attention to the rocks, as if seen through a microscope, collapse this sense of scale. There is a spatial disequilibrium, however, the artist maintains a visual coherence and order, bordering on the abstract, through her stylized line and limited colour choice. Interestingly Samayualie’s approach differs from that of more senior artists such as Tim Pitsiulak, who uses photographs and strives for accuracy, in the way that her drawings of the land oscillate between the actual and the imaginary.

Not unlike her cousin Annie Pootoogook, Samayualie has also developed a distinct repertoire of motifs – seemingly every day mundane objects such as buttons, sewing materials, arctic plants and domestic cooking and hunting implements – which, although they appear decorative at first glance, have a deeply personal symbolism. For example, the artist first gained attention for drawings of simple buttons; *horror vacui* compositions of thousands of individually drawn buttons. While the initial impact is largely whimsical, each shape and colour represents the artist
thinking about an incident in her life or occurring in the community. Even the colour choices are given considerable thought and meaning as she explains, “Sometimes it takes a while to decide what colours I want to use. And those certain colours that I pick make sense to me. Red colour makes me think of love. Pink to support people that have breast cancer. I think of the colour purple for people who have been physically abused in their life. And black for the deepest secret feelings in my life.” As the title suggests, My Idea, My Style, My Way is a visual artist statement where she has created a compilation of the usual elements of her drawings in one deliberately artificial composition. The fishing lure, buttons, and arctic flowers – which represent the members of her family – are shown out of their usual context, framed as if in a drawing itself which is laid over a backdrop of pebbles, similar to those in Composition (Landscape). At this early stage in her artistic development, My Idea, My Style, My Way is an exceptional drawing and assertion of her artistic vision. Equally interesting to consider is the way that Samayualie presents these motifs consciously as legitimate Inuit subject matter, and with a degree of self-reflection about how her work as a younger artist today differs from the traditional approach and subject matter of past generations of Cape Dorset artists.

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