



KNOT

KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS:
REASSESSING THE INDIGENOUS
AMERICAN HERITAGE IN ITALY

Museo Polare Etnografico “Silvio Zavatti”

Palazzo Paccaroni, Corso Cavour, 68, 63900, Fermo

Form compiled by Gianluca Frinchillucci (director)

Introduction

The Museo Polare Etnografico “Silvio Zavatti” is a specialised museum that preserves evidence of the natural environment, travel, research and art in the Arctic world. Founded in 1969 by the explorer Silvio Zavatti (1917–1985), it consists not only of American Inuit objects (from Canada and Alaska), but also of artistic and everyday artefacts of Greenlandic Inuit, Sámi/Lapps, Ainu, Siberian peoples and other peoples of northern Europe.

Over time, the Zavatti collection has been enriched by the Alaskan and Greenlandic Inuit collection donated by Jean Malaurie (1922–2024), consisting both of objects for ritual use and of everyday tools.

In 2022 Anna Maria Molinari donated her important and substantial Inuit collection, mainly of stone artefacts, originating from various Canadian areas and from Nunavut (a Canadian territory that has been autonomous since 1999).

The Library and Documentation Centre of the Museo Polare houses rich collections of travel accounts, books and catalogues (concerning the North American and European Arctic), as well as archival materials including descriptions of the objects and of the context in which they were acquired.

The museum also preserves and displays numerous artefacts that celebrate the greatest twentieth-century Arctic explorations in northern Europe, including navigation instruments, photographs, tents, snow equipment and other items, as well as natural history materials collected in the course of scientific research.

Knowledge of Things (KNOT)

Reassessing the Indigenous American Heritage in Italy

Funding 2021-2027 | PNRR M4C2: PRIN 2022

Funded by European Union NextGenerationEU and Italian Ministry of University and Research

2022RHCV5P | CUP B53D23023080006





KNOT

KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS:
REASSESSING THE INDIGENOUS
AMERICAN HERITAGE IN ITALY

Cultural Areas

Arctic; Subarctic

Collections

#01

<i>Name of the collection</i>	Silvio Zavatti Collection
<i>Collector</i>	Silvio Zavatti
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Subarctic
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	Inuit of Canada (Repulse Bay–Rankin Inlet, Baffin, Hudson Bay, Ivujivuil [northern Quebec])
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	<p>The collection consists of around fifty Canadian Inuit artefacts, many of which are utilitarian in nature, together with sculptures and other objects connected with the animal world, family life and the ritual/ceremonial context. The main materials used are ivory, stone, bone, fragments of leather and animal sinew.</p> <p>The Canadian collection is displayed together with a roughly equal number of highly important Greenlandic Inuit objects.</p>
<i>History of the collection</i>	The collection was assembled between 1961 and 1969, the year in which it was acquired by the Museo Polare of

Knowledge of Things (KNOT)
Reassessing the Indigenous American Heritage in Italy

Funding 2021-2027 | PNRR M4C2: PRIN 2022

Funded by European Union NextGenerationEU and Italian Ministry of University and Research
2022RH CY5P | CUP B53D23023080006



KNOT

KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS:
REASSESSING THE INDIGENOUS
AMERICAN HERITAGE IN ITALY

	Civitanova Marche. In 1985 it was transferred to Fermo and purchased by the municipality.
Online Database	
Web page	
Bibliography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frinchillucci, G. 2005. <i>Guida al Museo Polare “Silvio Zavatti” di Fermo</i>. Civitanova Marche: Bartolini. • Frinchillucci, G. 2005. “Il Museo Polare Etnografico “Silvio Zavatti” di Fermo, conservazione della memoria storica polare italiana.” In <i>Catalogo della Mostra Inuit e Popoli del Ghiaccio</i>, 97-99. Milano: Skira.

#02

Name of the collection	Jean Malaurie Collection
Collector	Jean Noël Léonard Malaurie
Cultural areas	Arctic
Ethnic group / community / cultural context	Inuit (Alaska)
Description of the Collection	The American Inuit collection consists of about six artefacts from Alaska (Kotzebue and Savoonga) and from the Fosse Basin (north-eastern Canada). Of great

Knowledge of Things (KNOT)
Reassessing the Indigenous American Heritage in Italy
Funding 2021-2027 | PNRR M4C2: PRIN 2022

Funded by European Union NextGenerationEU and Italian Ministry of University and Research
2022RH CY5P | CUP B53D23023080006



KNOT

KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS:
REASSESSING THE INDIGENOUS
AMERICAN HERITAGE IN ITALY

	<p>importance is a mask in whale bone and feathers acquired by Malaurie in Kotzebue (Alaska). The other artefacts consist of two model boats made of wood, walrus skin and fabric, and of walrus tusks from Igloodik (Fosse Basin, north-eastern Canada). Three further sculptures, two depicting hunting scenes and one an animal subject, are of uncertain provenance but can stylistically be attributed to a Canadian context.</p>
<i>History of the collection</i>	<p>Malaurie donated around twenty objects to the museum, including sculptures whose iconography and materials are common to the American Inuit peoples but which in fact come from the far eastern Siberia, or from villages (clearly of Inuit culture) located not far from the American border. Other objects and archival materials come from Greenland.</p>
<i>Online Database</i>	
<i>Web page</i>	
<i>Bibliography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Frinchillucci, G. 2005. Guida al Museo Polare “Silvio Zavatti” di Fermo. Civitanova Marche: Bartolini.● Frinchillucci, G. 2005. “Il Museo Polare Etnografico “Silvio Zavatti” di Fermo, conservazione della memoria storica polare italiana” In Catalogo della Mostra Inuit e Popoli del Ghiaccio, 97-99. Milano: Skira.

Knowledge of Things (KNOT)
Reassessing the Indigenous American Heritage in Italy

Funding 2021-2027 | PNRR M4C2: PRIN 2022

Funded by European Union NextGenerationEU and Italian Ministry of University and Research
2022RH CY5P | CUP B53D23023080006



KNOT

KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS:
REASSESSING THE INDIGENOUS
AMERICAN HERITAGE IN ITALY

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Zavatti, S. 1999. “Uomini verso l’ignoto.” Il Polo 25-26: 255.
--	--

#03

<i>Name of the collection</i>	Molinari Collection
<i>Collector</i>	Anna Molinari
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Subarctic
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	Inuit (Canada)
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	<p>The collection consists of 131 sculptures made of stone, bone, horn and ivory, sometimes combined with one another. It is representative of the complexity and stylistic variety of all the regions inhabited by Canadian Inuit, with a prevalence of works from the territories of Nunavut. It brings together carved statues produced using traditional techniques and iconographies of high ethnographic value, alongside new artistic experiments (described as post-contemporary) arising from the intentional encounter between Inuit artists and avant-garde artists from the United States.</p> <p>Naturalistic subjects linked to the animal world predominate, together with mythological and shamanic figures, hunting scenes and scenes of family and</p>

Knowledge of Things (KNOT)
Reassessing the Indigenous American Heritage in Italy
Funding 2021-2027 | PNRR M4C2: PRIN 2022

Funded by European Union NextGenerationEU and Italian Ministry of University and Research
2022RHCY5P | CUP B53D23023080006



KNOT

KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS:
REASSESSING THE INDIGENOUS
AMERICAN HERITAGE IN ITALY

	<p>everyday life. There are also work tools, games and stylised human figures. The stone sculptures, stone being the material par excellence, are often made of serpentinite in various shades of green, or of grey or black steatite (soapstone). It is not uncommon for Inuit artists, owing to the scarcity of raw materials locally, to travel long distances in search of other types of stone or high-quality quartz.</p> <p>Sculptural techniques involve the use of hand tools such as axes, saws and chisels, together with files, scrapers and sandpaper to scrape and polish the works with great care. To rough out the shape some artists use small electric tools, after which they work exclusively by hand.</p>
<i>History of the collection</i>	The collection was assembled in the second half of the twentieth century and was donated to the museum in 2022.
<i>Online Database</i>	
<i>Web page</i>	
<i>Bibliography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Molinari, A. 1999. Inuit: un'arte in cammino. Milano: Seti Arte.● Zanin, D. 2023. "L'arte scultorea degli Inuit canadesi." Il Polo 1-2: 107-121.

Knowledge of Things (KNOT)
Reassessing the Indigenous American Heritage in Italy
Funding 2021-2027 | PNRR M4C2: PRIN 2022

Funded by European Union NextGenerationEU and Italian Ministry of University and Research
2022RH CY5P | CUP B53D23023080006