“New Beginnings” and “Frozen Moments” Renew Arctic Connections at the Smithsonian’s Natural History Museum on May 20

Greenland Celebrated with Exhibitions and Festival

Several new exhibitions devoted to the culture, peoples and landscape of Greenland will go on view May 20 at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History. The opening of “New Beginnings” and “Frozen Moments” will coincide with the museum’s three-day Festival of Greenland, May 20 through May 22. The exhibitions will be on view through July 17. The festival is free and open to the public.

“New Beginnings” contains 58 Greenlandic contemporary art pieces, including paintings, sculpture, jewelry and decorative arts. The “New Beginnings” exhibition was arranged by the Greenland Home Rule Government’s Information Department in cooperation with Greenland Tourism and has toured in Denmark and other locations in Europe.

“Frozen Moments” is an exhibition of 61 photographs by renowned Greenlandic photographer Ivars Silis. He captured nearly 35 years of his life experiences in Greenland through his camera lens - from the impact of the Home Rule to Greenland’s changing culture and the country’s magnificent landscapes.

Also presented are three cases exhibiting 25 ethnographic objects from the Smithsonian’s Greenland collections, including a collection of mischievous ‘tupilaks’ from remote East Greenland, where shamanic practices were miraculously transformed into tourist art after the arrival of Western visitors.

“Despite sharing the same continent, Greenland is virtually unknown to most Americans,” said William W. Fitzhugh, director of the Smithsonian’s Arctic Studies Center. “It’s been 100 years since Robert Peary explored northern Greenland, and 80 years since Knud...
Rasmussen brought the first Greenlandic Inuit to Washington in 1925. This exhibition and festival re-establish direct contacts and gives the Greenlandic people their first chance to present their rich art, culture and Inuit-Danish heritage directly to the American people.”

Two companion exhibits will also go on view in the museum’s Constitution Avenue Lobby on May 20.

- “Rasmussen’s Circumpolar Research” will feature objects from the museum’s renowned collection dealing with Knud Rasmussen’s Fifth Thule Expedition (1921-1924) from Greenland to Alaska, during which he found that all of North America’s Arctic peoples spoke the same language and shared a similar culture. Today scientists see this as evidence of a thousand-year-old migration of Eskimo people from Alaska.

- A special Smithsonian Institution Libraries exhibit will showcase several Greenlandic volumes in the museum’s Rare Books collection that highlight the contributions of early Danish scholars of Greenland.

In addition to the exhibitions and festival, the Smithsonian Associates will hold a reception on May 20 and an all-day seminar on May 21 highlighting Greenland’s leading scholars, artisans and performing artists. For tickets and information, call (202) 357-3030 or visit www.residentassociates.org.

General information about the exhibitions and a schedule of events for the festival are available online at www.mnh.si.edu/greenland.

The Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History, located at 10th Street and Constitution Avenue NW, in Washington, is the most visited natural history museum in the world. Opened in 1910, the museum is dedicated to maintaining and preserving the world’s most extensive collection of natural history specimens and human artifacts. It also fosters critical scientific research as well as educational programs and exhibitions that present the work of its scientists and curators to the public. The museum is part of the Smithsonian Institution, the world’s largest museum and research complex. The Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History is open every day 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Special summer hours - 10 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. - are from May 26 through Sept. 4. Admission is free. The Museum’s Web site is www.mnh.si.edu.