

DANCE ME TO THE END OF LOVE

A simple line drawing of three Inuit dancers leads to the lyrics of an iconic song by an internationally renowned poet/songwriter, which circles back to the collection which the drawing is a part of.

The resulting exhibition, whose foundation was Malaya Akulukjuk's *Untitled* (Dancing), turned on an examination of the lyrics of the entire song — Leonard Cohen's *Dance Me to the End of Love* — and the works within the Woodstock Art Gallery's (WAG) rich and diverse collection that in turn reflect those words.

Dance Me to the End of Love has become something of an anthem, an iconic hymn to the mysteries of love. There is, however, more to it than that: while the song follows the path of the traditional Greek hasapiko folk dance (Cohen's years on the Greek island of Hydra made a lasting impression) the impetus was Cohen's knowledge that during the Holocaust, string quartets were pressed into playing beside the crematoriums as victims were led to their death. However, as Cohen explains:

So, that music, "Dance me to your beauty with a burning violin," meaning the beauty there of being the consummation of life, the end of this existence and of the passionate element in that consummation. But, it is the same language that we use for surrender to the beloved, so that the song — it's not important that anybody knows the genesis of it, because if the language comes from that passionate resource, it will be able to embrace all passionate activity.

The exhibition is arranged with the themes of Cohen's lyrics in mind. The song's title is an opportunity to look at work with dance as its primary focus while *Show me slowly what I only know the limits of*, examines work that connects a study of life's meaning through spiritualism. *Dance me to your beauty with a burning violin*, revolves around themes of great loss, and *Dance me to the wedding now and dance me on and on* looks at the beauty, through art and music, of various concepts of love.

Ideas of love shift and morph through the WAG's permanent collection reflecting and echoing the lyricist's initial theme of sorrow. This inevitably leads to hope through the universal emotion of love that connects humanity.

Linda Jansma, Guest Curator