

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

空 / *Emptiness*: Lui Shou Kwan in Dialogue with Emily Carr



November 28, 2017, Vancouver, BC – On view from December 16, 2017 until April 8, 2018, the Vancouver Art Gallery is pleased to present *空 / Emptiness: Emily Carr and Lui Shou Kwan*. The exhibition pairs Canadian modernist Emily Carr with the founder of the New Ink Movement in Hong Kong Lui Shou Kwan.

空 / Emptiness: Emily Carr and Lui Shou Kwan includes more than forty works, featuring a selection of charcoal sketches and forest paintings that Emily Carr produced of the Pacific Northwest coast throughout the 1930s, alongside Lui's early Hong Kong landscapes and a series of unique Zen paintings that he created in the 1960s.

“Home to the most comprehensive collection of Emily Carr works in the world, we are pleased to shine a spotlight on Carr’s experimental charcoal investigations and evocative forest paintings through a comparison of the visionary works by Lui Shou Kwan that transformed Chinese painting through the powerful brushstroke he developed in his Zen paintings” says Kathleen S. Bartels, Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery. “This exhibition enlivens the Gallery’s collection by offering an intercultural perspective on Emily Carr, one of Canada’s most significant historical artists, and furthers the Gallery’s commitment to bringing greater visibility to Asian art as part of the Institute of Asian Art.”

Looking across culture, geography and time to explore expressions of the sublime in landscape painting, the exhibition draws connections by exploring how each artist experimented with abstraction and spirituality in their respective depictions of nature. For Emily Carr, it was the forest that provided an essential pathway in the contemplation and creation of her work, and for Lui this was achieved through inspiration from the scenery of Hong Kong and its surrounding islands. Each was enhanced by a revelation that through the action of painting one could achieve a sense of mindfulness.

The exhibition is organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and is curated by Diana Freundl, Associate Curator, Asian Art.

In Dialogue with Carr is an innovative series of exhibitions at the Vancouver Art Gallery that focuses on the art of one of Canada's most significant artists, Emily Carr, and forges connections with other artists working in British Columbia and abroad. Previous exhibitions in the In Dialogue with Carr series include: *In Dialogue with Carr: Douglas Coupland, Evan Lee, Liz Magor, Marianne Nicolson* (2010-2011), *Emily Carr and the Theatre of Transcendence* (2012), *Allochthonous Window: Gareth Moore* (2013), *Emily Carr and Landon Mackenzie: Wood Chopper and the Monkey* (2014), *Beyond the Trees: Wallpapers in Dialogue with Emily Carr* (2015), and *We Come to Witness: Sonny Assu in Dialogue with Emily Carr* (2016).

About Emily Carr

Born in Victoria, BC, Emily Carr (1871–1945) is widely recognized for her paintings of the British Columbia landscape. Apart from a brief period of study in Europe, Carr spent most of her career living in Victoria. She was an avid reader and remained informed of contemporary innovations in art production. Though her work is clearly situated within modernism, she selected only those tenets of this expansive movement that facilitated her quest to represent the Pacific Northwest Coast. The works Carr produced during the 1930s are the most formal and conceptual of her career. They are visibly influenced by external sources, particularly her encounters with Lawren Harris, a founding member of the Group of Seven and the Seattle-based artist Mark Tobey. While spirituality is said to have guided Carr's practice throughout her career, her works from this period are particularly infused with amplified emotion.

Working with charcoal and oil on paper allowed Carr the freedom to experiment without the complication of colour. These drawings signal an important transition in her career, as she used the medium to confront conceptual problems of volume and space when depicting the landscape. Among her most symbolic and abstract works, the drawings produced during the early-to-mid 1930s provide examples of Carr's exploration of the environment, while those from her later years illustrate her deep interest in uncovering the mystical in the natural landscape.

About Lui Shou Kwan

Born in Guangzhou, China, Lui Shou Kwan [呂壽琨] (1919–1975) is a renowned brush painter in the traditional and modern styles of Chinese ink painting, and widely recognized as the founder of the New Ink Movement in Hong Kong.

Lui's father, Lui Ts'an Ming, a scholar of considerable reputation, owned an antique shop where Lui would spend hours copying the paintings of historic and contemporary masters. His involvement with the tradition of Chinese ink painting was not restricted to any artist, school or period. He favoured the literati painters, but had equally mastered the refined delicacy applied in imperial court style painting.

Lui moved to Hong Kong in 1948, where he remained until his passing in 1975. Relying on traditional techniques as his base and traditional aesthetics as a reference, he was determined to bring Chinese painting into dialogue with modernist movements dominant in Europe and America. Though his style underwent a drastic change during the 1960s, he remained faithful to traditional media—paper, brush and ink.

Throughout his career, Lui held the classical Chinese ink tradition and Western pictorial Abstraction in productive mutual tension. Systematically exploring and deconstructing their conventions and constituents—space, geometry, gesture, materiality—he developed a distinctive body of work. The New Ink Movement that Lui inspired became a driving force for reforming traditional Chinese painting, the impact of which can be felt to this day, advancing through his published teachings, theories and in the work of his former students.

Images:

(left) Emily Carr, *Forest, British Columbia*, 1931–32, oil on canvas, Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Emily Carr Trust, VAG 42.3.9, Photo: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery

(right) Lui Shou Kwan, *Untitled*, 1962, ink, pigment on paper, Private Collection, Photo: Maegan Hill-Carroll, Vancouver Art Gallery

Presenting Sponsor:



Generously supported by:

Don and Barbara Stuart
Priscilla Lam and Francis Law
Associates of the Vancouver Art Gallery

A program of the Vancouver Art Gallery's Institute of Asian Art

Visionary Partners:

Liu Bao, Wang Ying and Liu Manzhao

**Founding Corporate Visionary Partner
for the Institute of Asian Art:**



With thanks to the IAA Development Committee:

Angela Bi, Amelia Gao, Shawn He, Liu Junjun, Mei Deng and the late Guo Quan Peng,
Fiona Yang, Yin Qing, Vivian Zhang, Cathy Zuo

-30-

IMAGES ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

MEDIA CONTACT

Johanie Marcoux, Director of Marketing
jmarcoux@vanartgallery.bc.ca, Direct: 604-662-4721

About The Institute of Asian Art

Responding to the city's geographic location on the eastern edge of the Pacific Rim, the Vancouver Art Gallery has been committed to presenting contemporary art of the Asia Pacific region for more than two decades. Launched in 2014, the Gallery's Institute of Asian Art (IAA) is a comprehensive initiative committed to advancing scholarship and public appreciation of Asian art.

About the Vancouver Art Gallery

Founded in 1931, the Vancouver Art Gallery is recognized as one of North America's most respected and innovative visual arts institutions. The Gallery's ground-breaking exhibitions, extensive public programs, and emphasis on advancing scholarship focus on historical and contemporary art from British Columbia and around the world. Special attention is paid to the accomplishments of Indigenous artists, as well as to the arts of the Asia Pacific region—through the Institute of Asian Art that the Gallery founded in 2014. The Gallery's programs also explore the impacts of images in the larger sphere of visual culture, design and architecture. www.vanartgallery.bc.ca

The Vancouver Art Gallery is a not-for-profit organization supported by its members, individual donors, corporate funders, foundations, the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia through the BC Arts Council, and the Canada Council for the Arts.