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Spirit of the natural world lit up: *Emily Carr: Into the Forest*



Image Credit: Emily Carr, *Path Among Pines*, c. 1930, oil on paper, Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Emily Carr Trust, VAG 42.3.82, Photo: Rachel Topham, Vancouver Art Gallery

Media is invited to an exhibition preview of *Emily Carr: Into the Forest* on **Thursday, May 11, 2017, 9:00 a.m.** at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Media attending please RSVP to Justin Mah (jmah@vanartgallery.bc.ca)

April 28, 2017, Vancouver, BC – The Vancouver Art Gallery unveils its latest exhibition *Emily Carr: Into the Forest* on **May 13, 2017**. Home to the most comprehensive collection of Emily Carr's works in the world, the Gallery is pleased to showcase forty-five paintings of the vast West Coast forest in all its coloured vitality by this internationally renowned artist.

Emily Carr: Into the Forest reflects Carr's direct engagement with and deep affection for British Columbia's landscape as a site of artistic and spiritual inquiry. Far from feeling that the forests of the West Coast were a difficult subject matter, Carr exulted in the symphonies of greens and browns found in the natural world. With oil on paper as her primary medium, Carr was free to work outdoors in close proximity to the landscape. She went into the forest to paint and saw nature in ways unlike

her fellow British Columbians, who perceived it as either untamed wilderness or a plentiful source of lumber.

Emily Carr took on a strong individual and mystical representation of her surrounding landscape and explored her oneness with the universe, which she believed was inherent to nature. By animating the natural forms in her paintings, Carr unified natural and spiritual elements into an innovative compositional style that was emblematic of the development of modernist art in Canada and the West Coast.

“Since her first solo show at the Gallery in 1938, Emily Carr’s work has been a focal point of the Gallery’s collection and exhibition program for more than seventy years, and we are fortunate to have so many significant pieces from throughout Carr’s career,” said the Gallery’s Director Kathleen S. Bartels. “*Into the Forest* bracingly illuminates Carr’s lively forest paintings from the 1930s, which remain the most sustained and important depiction of the BC landscape in the first half of the 20th century.”

The Gallery’s Senior Curator—historical, Ian M. Thom, elaborates that “by confronting the forest directly, Carr celebrated the natural world through her masterful images of the coastal forest landscape. Through her unique synthesis of the spiritual and natural, Carr’s forest paintings have shaped the way British Columbian’s perceive their natural surroundings.”

In a passage from her journal, Carr wrote in 1935:

Sketching in the big woods is wonderful. You go, find a space wide enough to sit in and clear enough so that the undergrowth is not drowning you... Everything is green. Everything is waiting and still. Slowly things begin to move, to slip into their places. Groups and masses and lines tie themselves together. Colours you had not noticed come out, timidly or boldly... Air moves between each leaf. Sunlight plays and dances... Here is a picture, a complete thought, and there another and there....

Emily Carr: Into the Forest is organized by the Vancouver Gallery and curated by Ian M. Thom, Senior Curator–Historical.

About Emily Carr

Emily Carr (1871-1945) is one of Canada’s most renowned artists. Born in Victoria in 1871, Carr trained in San Francisco, London and France. Her first important body of work was executed in 1912 when, using the new sense of colour and paint handling she developed in France in 1911, she turned her attention to the totemic art of the First Nations of British Columbia. This work was not well received when it was first exhibited in 1913, and for many of the years that followed, she rarely painted. In 1927 she was included in the *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art: Native and Modern* at the National Gallery of Canada, where her work was widely praised. Encouraged by fellow artists, notably Lawren Harris, Carr returned to painting and continued to paint actively until 1942, when ill health curtailed her practice. In later life, she devoted more time to writing; her first book, *Klee Wick* won the Governor General’s Award for Literature in 1941. She is best known for her attention to the totemic carvings of the Indigenous people of British Columbia and the rainforests of Vancouver Island.

Presenting Sponsor:



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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 innovative ground-breaking exhibitions, extensive public programs and emphasis on advancing scholarship all focus on the historical and contemporary art of British Columbia and international centres, with special attention to the accomplishments of Indigenous artists and the art of the Asia Pacific region—through the Institute of Asian Art 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

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