

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
August 1, 2006

## **One of Canada's greatest painters as you've never seen her before *Emily Carr: New Perspectives on a Canadian Icon***

**VANCOUVER, BC** – The **Vancouver Art Gallery** will present a fresh look at the life and art of **Emily Carr** (1871-1945) in the first national touring retrospective exhibition of the artist's work in more than thirty years. ***Emily Carr: New Perspectives on a Canadian Icon***, on display **October 7, 2006** to **January 7, 2007**, examines the painter through the lens of her exhibition history and extraordinary life to reveal a complex woman of extreme talent and conviction. Beginning with a partial recreation of the first exhibition of Carr's work on the national stage, *Emily Carr: New Perspectives on a Canadian Icon* also examines the artist as a modernist painter and explores how her persona and her work have been portrayed and interpreted over time.

Jointly organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and the National Gallery of Canada, the exhibition features nearly 200 objects by Carr and others, including paintings, drawings, watercolours, caricatures, ceramics, sculpture, hooked rugs, books, maps and photographs. Nearly 150 works of art from the National Gallery, the Vancouver Art Gallery and other major institutions are included, along with works from private collections.

"Emily Carr is a vital part of Canadian and British Columbian history, and we are proud to pay homage to her with this sweeping exhibition during the Gallery's 75th anniversary year," said Kathleen Bartels, director of the Vancouver Art Gallery. "As the holder of the world's most significant collection of Carr's work, the Gallery has a long tradition of exhibiting her art and contributing to the scholarship surrounding it. With this touring exhibition and the accompanying book, our visitors have the opportunity to better know the woman behind the stunning canvases."

Emily Carr began serious study of art in her late teens after leaving home in Victoria, British Columbia to attend the California School of Design in San Francisco. Returning for a brief time, Carr soon left Victoria again to attend the Westminster School of Art and study in the studios of a number of British artists. But, it was her year in France between 1910 and 1911 studying Post-Impressionist art that

Carr found most inspiring. In 1911, she returned to Vancouver with a commitment to document the First Nations cultures of British Columbia, a project she began in 1907, and produced a great number of watercolours and corresponding canvases in her new French style. These works met with mixed reception until 1927, when her paintings were included in the National Gallery's *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art Native and Modern*, where they were embraced by members of the famed Canadian painters, the Group of Seven. She returned to British Columbia to begin the most productive period of her career, venturing out into remote parts of coastal British Columbia and creating the inspired, powerful canvases for which she is best known.

*Emily Carr: New Perspectives on a Canadian Icon* begins with a reconstruction of the seminal *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art Native and Modern*, which introduced Carr's work to the Canadian art establishment. This remounting of the landmark exhibition is presented in its original spirit, with contemporary works of the time mixed with historical objects of First Nations heritage. Carr's early paintings intermingle with Haida, Tsimshian and Kwakwaka'wakw masks, house posts, carvings and textiles, as well as a selection of works by artists Anne Savage, Paul Kane, Langdon Kihn, and Group of Seven members Edwin Holgate and A.Y. Jackson.

The next section of the exhibition considers Carr as a modernist painter, drawing inspiration from the 1945 *Emily Carr Memorial Exhibition* presented the year of her death at the Art Gallery of Toronto. Gathering a selection of Carr's finest works dating from 1910 to 1942, this section illustrates the artist's skillful use of colour and form, inviting viewers to explore her unique and expressive style. Abandoning her attempts to create straightforward portrayals of First Nations life and art, the exhibition reveals Carr's exquisite endeavour to describe the fundamental nature of her subject. It is here that Carr's interests in primitivism and spirituality shine through in her paintings of First Nations sculpture and the dramatic landscape of coastal British Columbia.

The final section of *Emily Carr: New Perspectives on a Canadian Icon* provides a unique perspective on the artist from a postmodern viewpoint. It introduces the many voices that have been brought to bear on Carr and her work, and examines Carr's self-construction through her caricatures, self-portraits and writings. This section also evaluates her relationship to the landscape and considers her role in the development of cultural tourism on the northwest coast.

"As a company firmly rooted in British Columbia, Polygon is very pleased to sponsor the Vancouver Art Gallery's presentation of the province's most important artist," said Michael Audain, Chairman of Polygon Homes Ltd., a leading home builder. "Her eloquent paintings of British Columbia's

landscape and people during the province's early days give us a unique opportunity to celebrate our land and heritage.”

*Emily Carr: New Perspectives on a Canadian Icon* is on display at the National Gallery until September 4, 2006. After showing in Vancouver this fall, the exhibition will travel to Toronto's Art Gallery of Ontario from February 24 to May 20, 2007, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts from June 21 to September 23, 2007 and Calgary's Glenbow Museum from October 25, 2007 to January 26, 2008.

*Emily Carr: New Perspectives on a Canadian Icon* is organized jointly by the Vancouver Art Gallery and the National Gallery of Canada. The exhibition is curated by Vancouver Art Gallery senior curator, Ian Thom, National Gallery curator of Canadian art Charles Hill, and Johanne Lamoureux of the Université de Montréal. The exhibition is accompanied by a major full-colour book, including essays by all three curators and several notable historians and critics, published with Douglas & McIntyre.

-30-

**Presenting Sponsor:**



---

***Emily Carr: New Perspectives on a Canadian Icon* is organized jointly by the Vancouver Art Gallery and the National Gallery of Canada with the support of Polygon Homes, Ltd.**

---

**Media contacts:**

Andrew Riley, Public Relations Manager, 604-662-4722  
[ariley@vanartgallery.bc.ca](mailto:ariley@vanartgallery.bc.ca)

Dana Sullivant, Director of Marketing and Communications, 604-662-4721  
[dsullivant@vanartgallery.bc.ca](mailto:dsullivant@vanartgallery.bc.ca)

---

The Vancouver Art Gallery gratefully acknowledges the support of the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia through the BC Arts Council and Gaming Revenues, the Government of Canada through the Canada Council for the Arts, the Department of Canadian Heritage Museums Assistance Program and Cultural Spaces Canada.