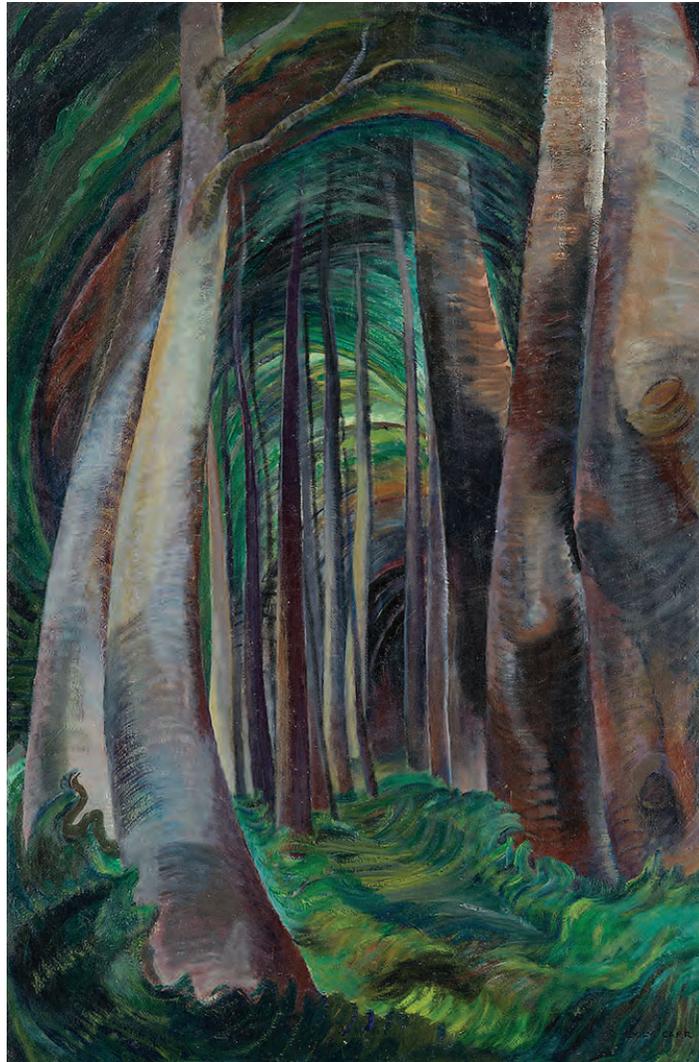


***RAPTURE, RHYTHM AND THE  
TREE OF LIFE: EMILY CARR AND  
HER FEMALE CONTEMPORARIES***



Emily Carr  
*Wood Interior*, 1932-1935  
oil on canvas  
Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Emily Carr Trust  
Photo: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery

**TEACHERS' STUDY GUIDE  
WINTER/SPRING 2020**

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# Vancouver Art Gallery

## Teachers' Guide for School Programs

The exhibition *Rapture, Rhythm and the Tree of Life: Emily Carr and Her Female Contemporaries* include works by the renowned Canadian artist Emily Carr, as well as by female Indigenous and Euro-Canadian contemporaries created during the early to mid-1900s. Drawn primarily from the Vancouver Art Gallery's permanent collection, in addition to loans from the Museum of Anthropology at UBC, this exhibition presents an expanded view of the diverse creative practices of women in this region during the first four decades of the twentieth century.

### Dear Teacher:

This guide will assist you in preparing for your class tour of the exhibition *Rapture, Rhythm and the Tree of Life: Emily Carr and Her Female Contemporaries*. It also provides follow-up activities to facilitate discussion after your visit to the Gallery. Engaging in the suggested activities before and after your visit will reinforce ideas generated by the tour and build continuity between the Gallery experience and your ongoing work in the classroom. Most activities require few materials and can be adapted easily to the age, grade level and needs of your students. Underlined words in this guide are defined in the Vocabulary section.

The tour of *Rapture, Rhythm and the Tree of Life: Emily Carr and Her Female Contemporaries* has three main goals:

- Introduce students to Emily Carr's life and works created from the early 1900s to 1940s;
- Familiarize students with female Indigenous makers and other Euro-Canadian artists working at the same time as Emily Carr in this region;
- Explore individual artworks in terms of ideas, materials, techniques and inspiration.

### Land Acknowledgment

Vancouver Art Gallery is situated on traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətaʔ (Tseil-Waututh) peoples, and is respectful of the Indigenous stewards of the land it occupies, whose rich cultures are fundamental to artistic life in Vancouver and to the work of the Gallery.

## THE EXHIBITION

### ***Rapture, Rhythm and the Tree of Life: Emily Carr and Her Female Contemporaries***

*Rapture, Rhythm and the Tree of Life: Emily Carr and Her Female Contemporaries* brings together works created in the first half of the twentieth century by female Indigenous makers and Euro-Canadian artists who worked in British Columbia, including the iconic Canadian artist Emily Carr (1871–1945). It includes artworks from the long-standing and sacred traditions of First Nations makers along the west coast in conjunction with drawings, paintings, prints and sculpture by Euro-Canadian artists. *Rapture, Rhythm and the Tree of Life* shows the breadth of female-led creative practices during the early to mid-1900s, as well as exploring early developments of Modernism within this region.

The cedar tree is an integral aspect of this exhibition. From the beginning of time to the present day, the cedar tree is known to First Peoples of the Northwest Coast as the Tree of Life. Every part of the Tree of Life, from the roots to the bark to the branches, provides First Peoples with essential materials to maintain important cultural and material practices. The Tree of Life is visible in this exhibition within its material form, in the creation of baskets, a cradle board and a hat by Indigenous artists Amy Cooper (Th'ewá:li), Mary Little (Nuu-chah-nulth) and unknown Séliš makers, who followed the time-honoured traditions of sourcing roots, bark and wood from the cedar tree. Maker Gertrude Dick (Kwakwaka'wakw) uses the motif of the Tree of Life on a button blanket featured in this exhibition alluding to its conceptual significance. The endurance of these important traditional practices during this era is a testament to the vitality and persistence of Indigenous cultures that were forced to cope with significant adversity, relocation racism and other effects of colonization.

*Rapture, Rhythm and the Tree of Life* also features several important Carr paintings of forested landscapes. She is widely recognized for her paintings of the forest—an environment she felt a deep connection with and often described in her journals as a rapturous connection to the divine. Carr saw the vitality of the natural world and presented her personal vision of the coastal rainforest by embracing aspects of abstraction within her paintings. Her unique use of geometric shapes and wavy, visible brushstrokes captures the light, shapes and colours of the forest. Her works are considered early explorations of Modernism on the Pacific West Coast. This exhibition also highlights paintings, drawings, prints and sculptures by lesser-known Euro-Canadian artists such as Irene Hoffar Reid, Ina Uhthoff, Vera Weatherbie, and Beatrice Lennie. Each artist developed her own distinct creative practice and approach to artmaking during this era, despite cultural restraints pertaining to gender and lack of recognition within the male-dominated art world.

## EXPLORE THE WORK

The following background information highlights different types of works and artists that may be explored in the school tour.

### BASKETS

Woven basketry has been a common practice of nearly all West Coast First Nations from before the arrival of Europeans to the present. Séliš basket weavers are known for their impressive skills of artisan craftsmanship. Traditionally, weavers are women who develop specialized techniques to create baskets for specific purposes, including collecting food, carrying water and cooking. Each basket maker uses a style and design that is specific to her people and the community, but also makes individual decisions in the basket's construction. Coiling, plaiting and twining are the three main techniques used by Séliš makers. Common materials include beargrass, cedar bark, cedar root, spruce root, cattail leaves and tule. Decoration materials are maidenhair fern stems, horsetail root, red cherry bark and a variety of grasses that give weavers a choice of colours and textures to use. Some materials are dyed—shades of red, yellow, blue, purple, green, brown and black come from local plants, animals and minerals.

**Amy Cooper** (Sto:lo, Ts'elxwéyeqw First Peoples), of the Th'ewá:li First Nation, attended the Coqualeetza Residential School, which operated from 1886 to 1940 in Sardis, BC, on the territory of the Sq'ewqéyl First Nation. From 1914 to 1934, its principal incorporated carving and basketry into the school's curriculum. While at Coqualeetza, Cooper was forbidden to speak her language, Halq'eméylem, and later recalled feeling disconnected from her culture until her marriage. Cooper went on to assist Oliver N. Wells (1907–1970) in collecting first-hand accounts of the histories and practices of the seven Indigenous communities in the region. From the time of European contact to the era explored in the exhibition, weavers in many regions either adapted traditional basket forms or created new ones for trade or sale for the settler economy. Indigenous women had an important role in the economic survival of their communities during times of colonial regulation that limited the economic freedoms of Indigenous peoples. However, settlers who purchased or traded for baskets quite often did not think it necessary to record basket makers' names—several baskets shown in this exhibition are attributed to unknown Séliš Makers. The name of the maker is an important loss of detail as weavers' personal choices add to the style of their entire region, while also showing the specific material environment and beliefs of their immediate community.

### BUTTON BLANKET

For the Kwakwaka'wakw, button blankets are "robes of power." Their creation rose from the blanket trade with European settlers, which is why they are usually made with wool and red cloth from Britain. The cloth was traditionally dyed with fish eggs and crushed minerals, but as trade increased, aniline dyes were added. The buttons were made from abalone shells in the early years, but contemporary makers often use plastic buttons. Designs from the early

twentieth century often have the motif of the Tree of Life, as seen in this exhibition with Kangextola (Button Blanket) c. 1910, by Gertrude Dick (Dzawada'enuxw First Nation) (n.d., Gwa'yi). In the present day, motifs include images that represent the wearer's family, ancestry, clan histories, duties or rights and privileges. They are important declarations of identity. Blankets are worn at Potlatch for ceremonies and dances. The dancer wears the blanket around their back, slightly off the shoulders and fastened with toggles. In a broad sense, the Potlatch is a gift-giving ceremony practised by Northwest Coast First Nations and held during births, deaths, adoptions, weddings and other rite-of-passage events. It was once the primary economic system of First Nations in this region. However, the Potlatch was banned in Canada from 1884–1951 by the Government of Canada, who deemed it wasteful and excessive and jailed those who attempted to practise it. As a result, many Nations across the west coast were unable to continue passing down oral histories or practise integral traditions and, over time, lost this knowledge. Due to the remote locations of the Kwakwaka'wakw Nations, the Potlatch was practised during the ban. It is very likely that Kangextola (Button Blanket) c. 1910 was danced in Potlatch by Dick's husband, the wearer she made the blanket for.

## **PAINTINGS**

In this exhibition, there are many landscape and portrait paintings, in oil paint on canvas, paperboard, panel or paper. Oil paint is slow-drying—it consists of colour pigments suspended in oil (usually linseed oil). The thickness of the paint can be modified by adding a solvent such as turpentine—or, in the case of Emily Carr, gasoline.

Although Emily Carr (1871–1945) is now a well-known Canadian artist, she received only modest recognition during her lifetime. She was an independent woman who never married and lived in a time when opportunities for her gender—especially in the arts—were limited. Despite these restrictions, Carr gained a reputation as a painter, writer, potter, illustrator and textile artist. She was born in Victoria, BC, in 1871, the second youngest of nine siblings. In the 1890s, she studied in San Francisco and London, England. However, it was her encounter with the expressive brushwork of Post-Impressionism, seen while living in France in 1910 and 1911, that had the most significant impact on her work. Carr began making art depicting Indigenous villages on Vancouver Island in 1898, but when she returned from France in 1911, she deployed her new knowledge of Modernism in her work. In 1912, she made an extended journey to Haida Gwaii, to paint among Kwakiutl, Gitksan and Haida communities who have lived along this coast since time immemorial. Carr considered her work to be documentary in character. As she (inaccurately) saw it, Indigenous cultures were vanishing and her purpose as an artist was “to depict these wonderful relics of a passing people in their own original setting” (1913).

In 1913, Carr mounted an exhibition of almost two hundred paintings in a rented hall in Vancouver. However, the lack of critical or financial support generated by the exhibition led

her to close her Vancouver studio and move back to Victoria. Over the next fourteen years, she painted very little and supported herself by running a boarding house, breeding dogs and producing pottery and hooked rugs—with appropriated Indigenous motifs—for the tourist market. The crucial turning point in Emily Carr’s career came in 1927, when the National Gallery of Canada selected twenty-six of her paintings, along with some of her rugs and pottery, for inclusion in the exhibition *West Coast Canadian Art—Native and Modern*. Carr travelled to Ottawa to attend the exhibition’s opening and, on her way, met with members of the Group of Seven, who recognized the quality and originality of her work. She returned to Victoria and painted with renewed vigour, extending her focus from Indigenous cultures to the landscape.

By the late 1920s, Emily Carr dropped the documentary intent of her earlier work to capture a sense of the spiritual presence that she experienced in nature. In the paintings she produced then and into the early 1930s, Carr adopted a deliberately limited colour palette of green and blue. Her compositions of smooth, geometric forms suggest the natural movement and diffused light of the forest by conveying her personal experience of the landscape. Her work became increasingly abstract as she experimented with shape, form, colour and movement. In the late 1930s, as her health declined, Carr focused more energy on writing, producing an important series of books. One of these, *Klee Wyck*—stories based on her experiences with First Nations people—won the Governor General’s Award for Literature in 1941. She died in 1945 in Victoria, at the age of seventy-four.

## PRINTS

Etching is the process of making prints from a metal plate, usually copper, from a design that has been engraved onto the plate by acid. To accomplish this, the artist first coats the plate with an acid-resistant substance, called etching ground, and then draws the design with a sharp tool. Lines are formed in the plate and hold the ink that is applied to the plate after the engraving step is complete. When the inked plate is pressed to moist paper, the design is transferred.

**Ina (Campbell) Uthoff** (1889–1971) was born in Scotland in 1889 and studied at the Glasgow School of Art from 1905 to 1912. She first travelled to Canada in 1913 and spent time in the Kootenay region of British Columbia. She returned to Glasgow at the outbreak of the Great War, but in 1919 emigrated to the Kootenays with her husband, where they set up a homestead. They moved to Victoria in 1925, where Uthoff became a teacher, artist and active member of the community. After only one year, in 1926, she established the provincially funded Victoria School of Art, where she taught almost entirely by herself. Over the next few decades, Uthoff raised her children, taught and exhibited her artwork. In 1944, she and other artists in the community opened the Little Centre Gallery on Yates Street. Eventually it moved to Broughton Street and re-opened as the Arts Centre of Greater Victoria—the precedent for the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria that is still open today.

## SCULPTURE

Sculpture is the process of making a two- or three-dimensional form using traditional materials—such as clay, stone, wood or plaster—or non-traditional materials such as found objects. Plaster is known for its versatility, as it can be easily shaped and moulded. Due to its brittleness, plaster requires extra support, so artists usually apply the material to metal or mesh armature. This exhibition shows works by Beatrice Lennie (1904–1987) and Olea Davis (1899–1977), who both used plaster in the creation of their sculptures.

**Beatrice Lennie** was born in Nelson, BC, and moved to Vancouver as a young girl. She studied at the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts, now known as Emily Carr University of Art + Design, where other artists included in this exhibition, such as Irene Hoffar Reid (1908–1994) and Vera Weatherbie (1909–1977), were her classmates. Upon graduation in 1929, she travelled to San Francisco to continue her training in sculpture, and she received a graduate degree from the California School of Fine Arts. Upon her return to Vancouver, she was an active member of the community. From 1933 to 1935, she was the head of the sculpture department at the short-lived B.C. College of Art. She devoted most of her time to teaching arts and crafts to youth, and hosted classes at the Vancouver Art Gallery and Crofton House School. She led workshops at the University of British Columbia on puppetry, costume and stage design.

**Olea Davis** studied art at L'École des Beaux-Arts de Montréal and the Ontario College of Art in Toronto before moving to Vancouver in 1926. She was a sculptor and ceramicist who exhibited regularly in the Annual B.C. Artists' Exhibition (1932–1968) at the Vancouver Art Gallery, and was commissioned to produce architectural decoration for the Hotel Vancouver in 1939. Davis was an advocate for the development of ceramic arts and in 1955 founded the Potters Guild of BC, which she continued to work with until her passing in 1977.

## PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: About the Works (all levels)

### Objective:

Students read, research and share information about some of the works and artists represented in *Rapture, Rhythm and the Tree of Life*.

### Materials:

- Writing materials
- Access to the Internet. Some useful sites: <http://canadianart.ca>, [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)
- Student Worksheet on pg 8. and Explore the Works on pg 3-6.

### Process:

1. Divide the students into five groups.
2. Cut up the Explore the Works pages (pgs. 3-6.) and assign one kind of work to each group.
3. Give each group a copy of the Student Worksheet (pg. 8.) and ask them to transfer the information to the appropriate box.
4. Have students figure out what they need to know to complete the sections on their artworks, and find them on the Internet, either at home or at school. Older students can find more information; younger students, just the basics.
5. Ask each group to find/copy/sketch either a type of artwork described on the pages or a work by a specific artist mentioned on a separate piece of paper. Do not label with the artist's name or any other information.
6. Have each group present the information on their different artwork and artists while the rest of the class adds the information to their worksheets.
7. After the presentations, lay out the images, and have the class guess which image is by which artist or kind of art.

### Conclusion:

#### Discuss:

- What were some of the most interesting things that students learned or discovered?
- Which artists and/or kinds of artwork made students curious about seeing the actual artwork in the exhibition?
- Are there any artists, ways of working or ideas that the students would like to know more about?

## STUDENT WORKSHEET:

	Description	Materials & Techniques	Artist Name(s) & Personal Information	Interesting Fact
<b>Baskets</b>				
<b>Button Blanket</b>				
<b>Painting</b>				
<b>Prints</b>				
<b>Sculpture</b>				

## **PRE-POST VISIT ACTIVITY: Seeing the Shapes of the Forest (all levels)**

### **Objective**

Students create an abstract forest collage focusing on shape and colour in response to Emily Carr's forest interior paintings.

### **Discussion**

Abstraction occurs in art when the artist begins with a recognizable subject and alters, distorts, manipulates or simplifies elements of it. In the case of Emily Carr, bold colours and defined shapes characterize many of her landscape paintings of the forested interiors of British Columbia. Even though her subjects are recognizable, she was not attempting to portray her forest scenes in a realistic manner. In fact, as she progressed as a painter, her works became increasingly abstract—a shift that is particularly visible with her use of smooth, geometric shapes to represent tree trunks, branches and leaves, as well as a simplified colour palette of mostly greens and blues.

Guiding Questions for Students: What kinds of shapes could be used to create tree branches, trunk or leaves? Will the students' decide to make their artwork, landscape or portrait orientation? For older students, challenge them to consider perspective within their works. Ask them what their forest collage might look like from a "worm's eye" view or from a "bird's eye" view on a tree branch. Challenge students with their compositions—how will their shapes fit together to create trees, branches and leaves?

### **Materials**

- construction paper or other papers in a variety of colours
- pencils/scissors/glue
- access to the Internet
- printed image of one of Emily Carr's paintings or the interior of a forest.

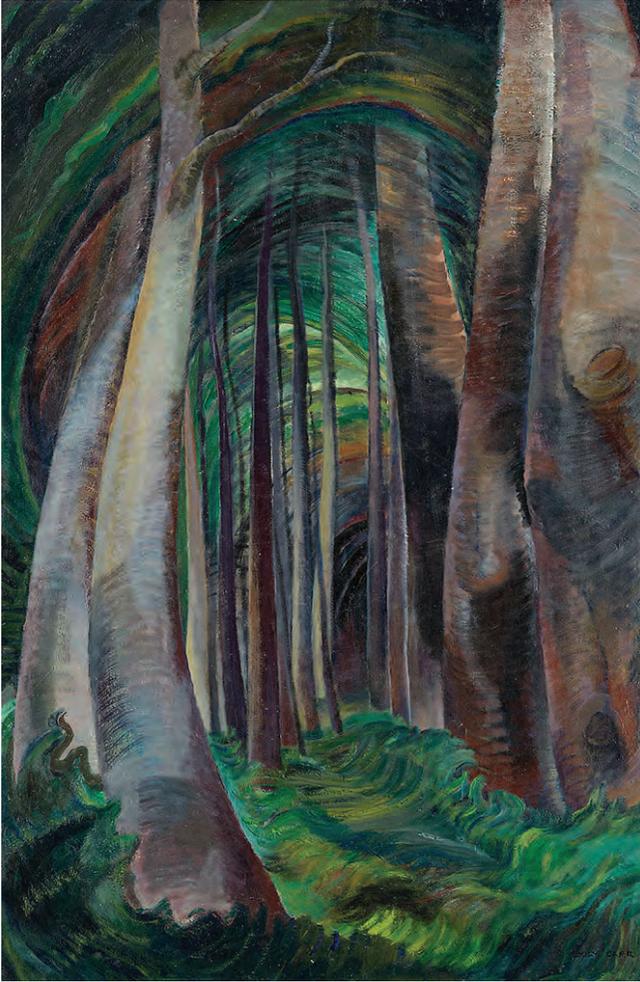
### **Process**

1. Discuss abstraction in relation to Emily Carr's style of painting and her use of simple shapes and limited colours to represent the forests of British Columbia. For younger learners, discuss what a landscape is.
2. Have students find and print an image of a Carr forest painting OR an image of the interior of a British Columbian forest of their choice. If printing is not available, have students look at some works by Carr (pg. 11.) and then use their imagination to create a forest interior.
3. Encourage students to look at their printed images as if they were combinations of simple shapes with light and dark parts. What shapes can they find? Where are the shadows?

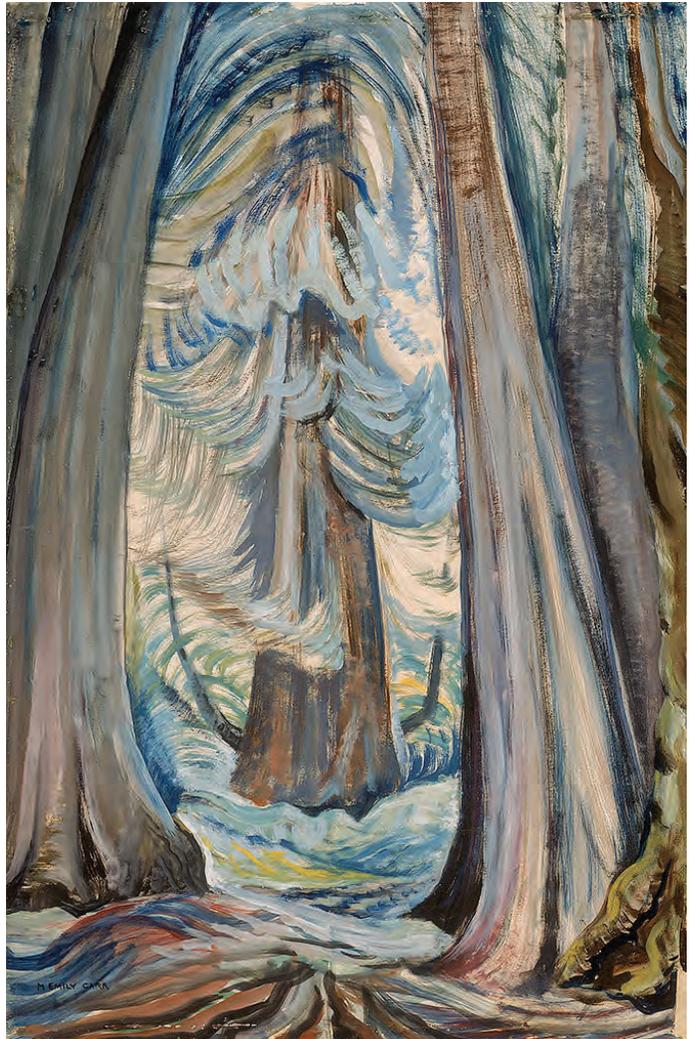
4. Provide students with a selection of paper in a variety of earth-tone colours.
5. Have them draw the major shapes they see in their printed image on different colours of paper. They may show light and shadow by creating shapes with papers of different shades of colour.
6. Have students cut out (or rip!) their shapes and ask them to consider their composition. How will their shapes fit together? How will they organize them to create a forest picture?
7. Ask students to glue their pieces onto a background sheet of construction paper (black or white) to create a bold and simplified landscape.
8. Lay the works together on the floor and follow up with students with the conclusion questions.

## **Conclusion**

- Invite students to look at all of the artwork and talk about similarities and differences in colours, shapes and compositions.
- Have them discuss the process. How easy or hard was it to create the landscape?
- Do the students perceive landscape, particularly forests, differently now?



Emily Carr  
*Wood Interior*, 1932-1935  
oil on canvas  
Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Emily Carr Trust  
Photo:Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery



Emily Carr  
*Three Cedar Trunks*, c. 1937  
oil on paper  
Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Emily Carr Trust  
Photo:Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery

## PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: Discover the Tree of Life (all levels)

### Objective:

To understand the importance of the cedar tree, known to coastal First Nations of this region as the Tree of Life, students learn about its significance to the Kwakwaka'wakw.

### Discussion:

For thousands of years to the present, coastal First Nations in British Columbia have followed longstanding traditions of honouring, gathering and using the cedar tree to sustain life. Because of its significant cultural and spiritual legacy within many Nations—including Séliš, Nuu-Chah-Nulth and Kwakwaka'wakw—the cedar tree is understood as the Tree of Life. It is a key natural resource renowned for its versatility; the roots, bark, wood and branches have important roles in the production of material goods and regalia such as baskets, canoes, Bighouses, clothing, totem poles and Bentwood Boxes. The Tree of Life is also integral to spiritual beliefs and cultural practices, including Potlatch ceremonies. In this exhibition, students will see the Tree of Life in two ways: in the material form of Baskets, a hat and a cradle board, as well as a motif on the back of Kangextola (Button Blanket) c. 1910, by Gertrude Dick (Dzawada'enuxw First Nation) (n.d., Gwa'yi).

### Materials:

- Tree of Life worksheet on pg 14.
- Pencils
- Access to the internet and website: [https://umistapotlatch.ca/enseignants-education/cours\\_4\\_partie\\_2-lesson\\_4\\_part\\_2-eng.php](https://umistapotlatch.ca/enseignants-education/cours_4_partie_2-lesson_4_part_2-eng.php)
- **Optional:** Blank piece of paper for sketching (size up to teacher's discretion), drawing tools available in the classroom (pencils, markers, crayons)

### Process:

1. Hand students Tree of Life Student Worksheet on pg 14.
2. Have students work in small groups to access the web page listed above. On the left side of the page, under Lesson 4 links, have students take turns reading through the information on the following tabs:
3. Tree of Life
4. Red Cedar Bark
5. Prayer to the Young Cedar
6. Red Cedar Bark Ceremonies
7. Ask students to fill out the worksheet as they read in their groups.
8. Together as a class, discuss students' answers to each question.
9. Optional: Hand each student a blank piece of paper and ask them to sketch the Tree of Life, including its bark, branches and roots. If students are unsure what cedar trees look

like, show images to the class (pg 15.) or, if there is a cedar tree on school property, take the class to look at it. Ask them to notice the texture on the bark, the size of branches and shape of the tree. Now that they have learned about the Tree of Life, do they see cedar trees differently? They may adapt their sketches to include their new knowledge of the cedar tree.

### **Conclusion:**

1. Ask students what was unexpected or surprising that they learned about the Tree of Life?
2. Do they understand the cedar tree differently now?
3. Where have they seen material goods made from the Tree of Life in real life (example: Totem Poles in Stanley Park)?

## TREE OF LIFE STUDENT WORKSHEET

What is the Tree of Life, and why do the Kwakwaka'wakw consider it special?

List the items made from:

- Wood
- Inner bark
- Branches
- Roots

Pick one photo from the Red Cedar Bark page and describe how the Tree of Life is being used.  
Draw something interesting that you discovered in these photos.

What are words of thanks, and why say them?

Why is dancing important to the Kwakwaka'wakw?

What is the T'seka and when does it happen?



Gertrude Dick  
Kangextola (Button Blanket), c. 1910  
Courtesy of the Museum of Anthropology

### *Tree of Life*



## PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: Twist, Scrunch, Layer: Modernist Sculpture (all levels)

### Objective:

Students create an abstract sculpture out of recycled paper and cardboard focusing on shape, form and movement in response to *Nightflight* (1938) by Beatrice Lennie.

### Discussion

The term Modernism refers to an artistic movement that emerged in Western Europe during the late nineteenth century. Modernism responded to the experience of contemporary industrial life, which rejected conservative traditions in art, such as the realistic portrayal of subjects. Without the constraints of literal depiction, artists began to explore art's ability to express emotions, spirituality, personal experiences and even observations or concerns related to modern life. With non-traditional materials, exploratory techniques and a variety of unique subjects, artists from this era embraced the idea of "art for art's sake." Emphasis was on the works' aesthetic qualities, such as its colours, forms or textures. As a result, abstraction was an integral aspect of the movement's visual language.

**Beatrice Lennie** (1904–1987) was one of only a few women working in sculpture in the 1930s and 1940s in Canada. *Nightflight* (1939) is a plaster sculpture that was made as a study for a large work she intended to cast in metal. She used a variety of triangular shapes rising above a swirling mass of cloud-like forms to suggest the idea of flight through the atmosphere. By painting the plaster black, Lennie encourages the viewer to think of the night sky. Lennie was inspired to create this sculpture after hearing a talk by an aviator. It was made during the time when commercial flights had started to operate between Vancouver and Montreal.

### Materials

- Square or rectangular piece of sturdy paper or cardboard for each student to use as their sculpture's base (size up to teacher's discretion)
- Recycled paper and cardboard of various shapes and sizes (scraps are useful too!)
- Scissors, glue sticks, glue gun
- **Optional:** pencil crayons, markers or tempera paint

## Process

1. Gather recycled paper and cardboard of various textures, colours and sizes from around the school and/or ask students to bring in upcycled cardboard (for example: cracker or cereal boxes, egg cartons, paper cups) from home.
2. Show students *Nightflight* (1939) (pg 18.) and discuss what inspired the work. Encourage students to think about how Lennie's sculpture shows movement. For older learners, introduce Modernism and discuss how art changed in the early twentieth century regarding artists' ideas and processes. Encourage students to think about how their sculptures are able to show movement by using different shapes to create an interesting form. Experimentation is essential!
3. Hand each student a paper or cardboard base to build their sculpture on.
4. Using the recycled paper and cardboard, ask students to use both organic and geometric shapes for their sculptures by tearing or cutting the materials into usable pieces.
5. It may be helpful to demonstrate some techniques for construction. Consider showing students how to:
  - a. Glue each end of a strip of paper to the base to create a standing loop or twirl
  - b. Accordion fold, braid, twist or scrunch paper
  - c. Cut a small slit (1/2 inch each) into two pieces of cardboard so students are able to attach the pieces together by sliding one slit perpendicular into the other
  - d. Layer and attach pieces to one another with glue and/or glue gun so their sculpture becomes 3-D
6. **Optional** (if time and materials permit): After the glue has dried, ask students to decorate their sculptures using pencil crayons, markers or tempera paint. For older learners, encourage them to consider how the form of their sculpture may affect their colour choices.
7. Display finished artworks in the classroom.

## Conclusion:

- Ask students to look at the works and talk about the similarities and differences in use of materials, shapes and forms.
- Discuss the process. What are some things the students had to take into consideration while creating their work?
- Did the students find any unexpected challenges or surprises?



Beatrice Lennie  
*Night Flight*, 1938  
plaster, paint  
Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift  
of Mrs. Louise Brittain  
Photo: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery

**Example of student works:**



Image Source:  
<https://theartofeducation.edu/2018/04/02/3-cool-projects-to-use-up-scrap-projects-at-the-end-of-the-year/>

## **PRE/POST VISIT ACTIVITY: A Portrait of You, A Portrait of Me (all levels)**

### **Objective**

Students explore portraiture by creating a blind contour portrait of a classmate followed by a self-portrait.

### **Discussion**

During the first half of the twentieth century, Euro-Canadian women's role in society was believed to be in the home; the only careers considered suitable for (unmarried) women were that of teachers and nurses. As a result, the pursuit of an artistic career was limited. Women artists were largely barred from membership in Canada's major art societies, and from holding important positions in museums and galleries. Artists represented in this exhibition, such as Vera Weatherbie (1909–1977) and Irene Hoffar Reid (1908–1994), had formal art educations and exhibited their work in galleries across the country. Yet gaining recognition for their established art practices was a more of a struggle than that of their male contemporaries.

Portraiture was a genre of art that was widely accessible to women artists—not only within this era, but throughout history—because portraits could be done in the home and were often smaller in size. Irene Hoffar Reid created self-portraits while balancing her responsibilities of motherhood and domestic tasks. Vera Weatherbie was an established portrait artist and was recognized through her ability to capture not only the likeness of her sitters, but also their personalities. Throughout history, portraiture has been an important way for women artists to represent themselves in their own perspectives, explore identity and critique restrictive beliefs within the male-dominated art world.

### **Part One: Blind-Contour Portrait Drawing (optional warm-up for Part Two)**

#### **Materials**

- Newsprint or sketching paper
- Drawing tools available in the classroom (markers, pencils, crayons or pencil crayons)

#### **Process**

1. Discuss with students the difference between a self-portrait and a portrait of someone else. What kind of choices do artists make when creating a portrait of themselves versus someone else? For older learners, discuss the role of women in the early twentieth century and why portraiture is an important genre for women artists.
2. Ask students to sit at tables across from one another in pairs.
3. Hand out the newsprint or sketching paper and markers.
4. Explain to students that they will draw a portrait of their partner, but they cannot look at their paper, hand or marker. They must keep their eyes on their sitter (partner)! They also

- must keep their drawing tool connected to the paper the whole time they are drawing.
5. Have partner A draw partner B for approximately 1 minute (up to teacher discretion).
  6. Repeat, so partner B draws partner A.
  7. A minute goes fast, so repeat the activity as many times as possible until students feel comfortable drawing their partner's features without looking at their hand or paper.
  8. **Optional:** ask students to choose their best drawing and colour the different features of the face.

## **Part Two: Self-Portrait Painting**

### **Materials**

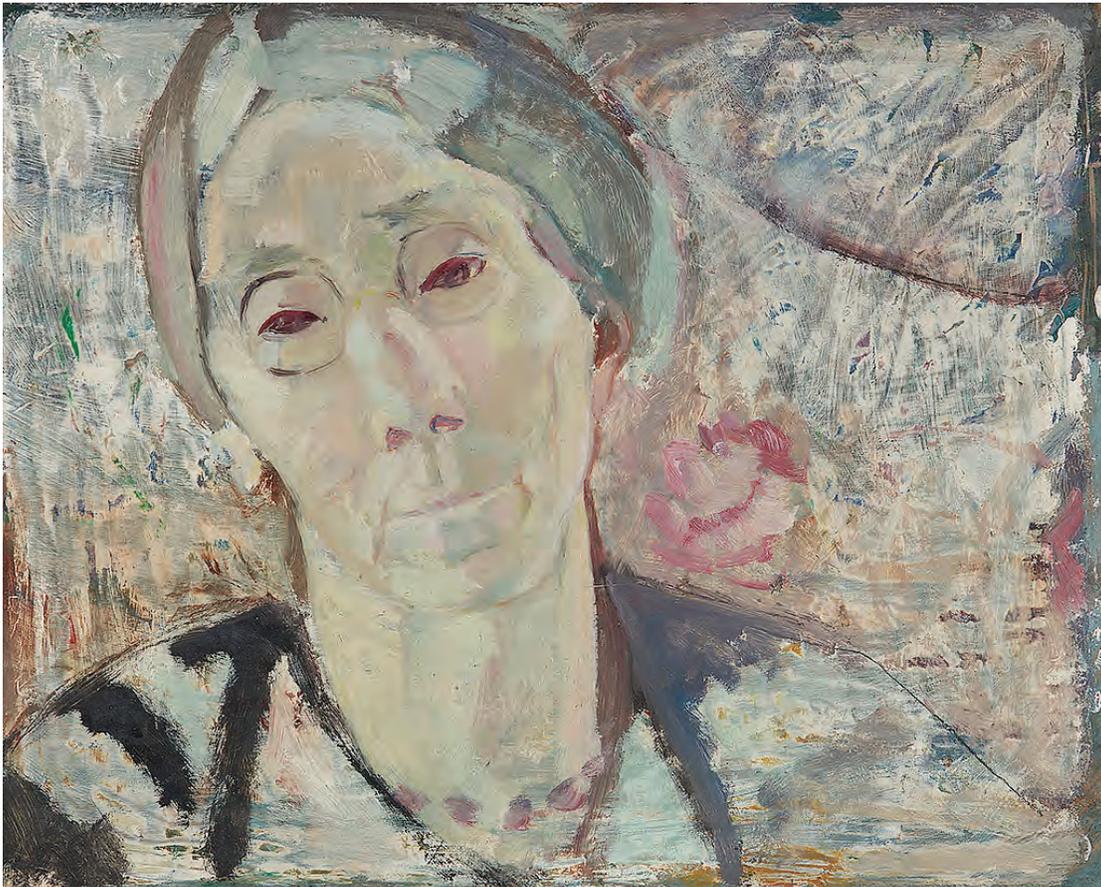
- Large sheet of heavy paper such as watercolour, railway board or Bristol
- Tempera paint (watercolours can be used as a substitution), brushes, water containers, aprons
- Oil pastels for drawing (pencil crayons can be substituted if using watercolours)
- Chalk pastels (**optional:** Q-tips)

### **Process**

1. If Part One is skipped, discuss with students the difference between a self-portrait and a portrait of someone else. What kind of choices do artists make when creating a portrait of themselves versus of someone else? For older learners, discuss the role of women in the early twentieth century and why portraiture is an important genre for women artists.
2. Hand each student a large sheet of paper.
3. With oil pastels, ask students to draw a large U in the middle of their papers (for the shape of the face), followed by neck, shoulders, ear and hair, and then, features of the face. Learners shouldn't worry about creating the likeness of themselves but understand how all their features fit together (for example, shoulders extend from the bottom of the neck, not the bottom of the head). **Optional:** Depending on the level and abilities of the group, the teacher can introduce mirrors so students can see the shapes in their features.
4. Using their palettes of tempera paint, ask students to paint their shirt, background and skin colour (in that order). When the background is dry, paint hair.
5. Set the portraits aside and let dry.
6. After the paint is dry, ask students to outline their portraits, including their facial features, in a darker-coloured oil pastel. This will be helpful for creating definition in the eyes, mouth and nose.
7. Use chalk pastels to add colour in the eyes, mouth and cheeks. They may smudge the chalk with their fingers or Q-tips to spread it where they like. Students may also use the chalk to add details on their shirts, hair and backgrounds.
8. Display finished self-portraits in classroom next to their choice of blind-contour portrait.

## Conclusion

- Discuss with students the different choices they made when creating their self-portraits, including colours and details.
- How would they describe the experience of making a drawing of someone else, versus a painting of themselves?
- What have they learned about creating a portrait? If they could do the project again, what different choices would they make?



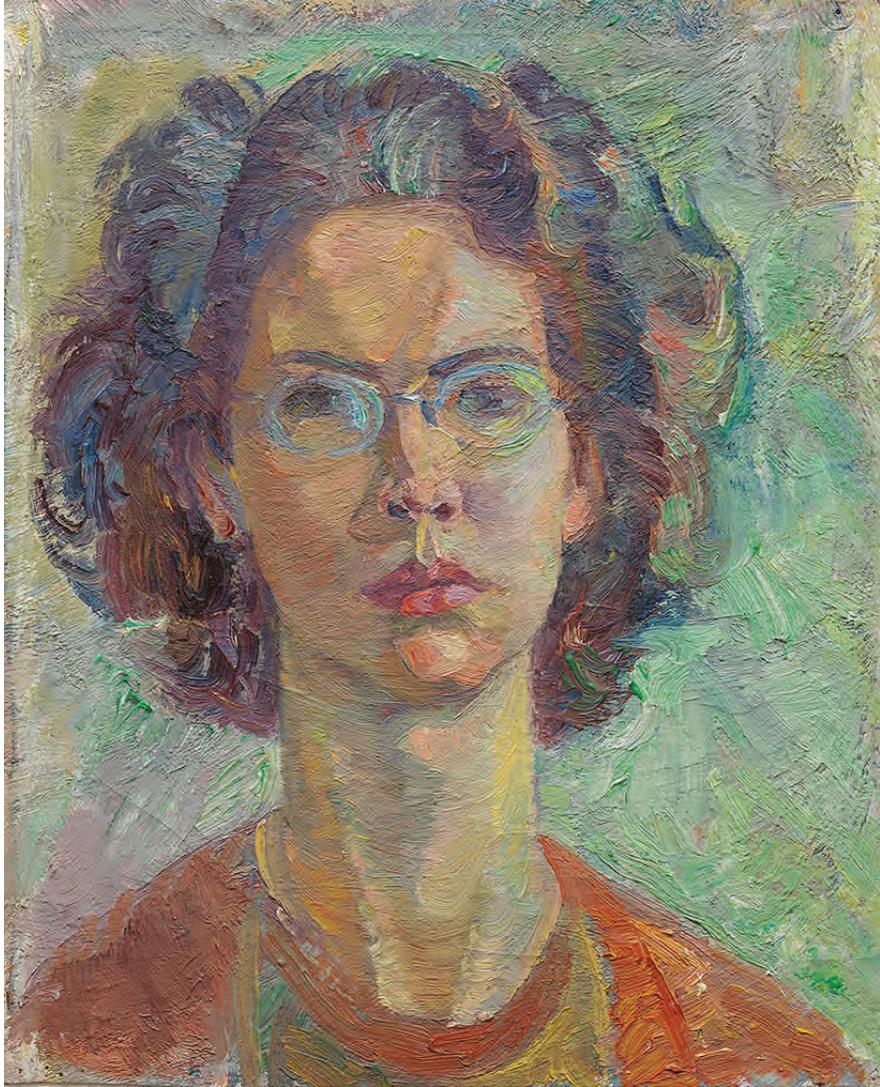
Vera Olivia Weatherbie

*Portrait of Louise Mackay*, c. 1940

oil on panel

Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of Anne Martinson

Photo: Tim Bonham



Irene Hoffar Reid  
*Self Portrait*, c. 1929  
oil on paperboard  
Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Acquisition Fund  
Photo: Vancouver Art Gallery

## STUDENT SAMPLES



Image Sources:

<https://craftwhack.com/blind-contour-drawing/>

<https://www.deepspacesparkle.com/chalk-tempera-kids-portraits/>

## VOCABULARY

**abstract(ion):** a style of art that can be thought of in two ways:

1. the artist begins with a recognizable subject and alters, distorts, manipulates or simplifies elements of it;
2. the artist creates purely abstract forms with lines, shapes or colours that are unrecognizable and have no direct reference to external reality (also called non-representational art).

**collage:** a piece of art made by sticking different materials, such as photographs, pieces of paper or fabric, on to a backing.

**composition:** the way an artwork is laid out and organized; it is the arrangement of all the elements within the work.

**contemporaries:** a person living at the same time as others.

**colonization/colonial:** a process that occurs when settlers arrive at a place in order to establish political control over it. This is done by creating new governing systems and ways of living, being and doing that make the ways of those who were there before inferior. This creates unequal relationships between the colonizer and the Indigenous people" (Smith, Monica Gray. *Speaking Our Truth: A Journey of Reconciliation*, Canada: Orca Book Publishers, 2017, p. 144).

**colour palette:** refers to the selection of colours used by an artist in their artwork (also known as a colour scheme).

**divine:** of, from or like God or a god.

**Euro-Canadian:** a Canadian who is of European descent.

**First Nations:** a term used to describe Indigenous peoples in Canada who are not Métis or Inuit. It is a general term that may also be used to describe a band, community or reserve.

**First Peoples:** another term used to describe the first inhabitants of Canada. See Indigenous.

**Indigenous:** an adjective referring to the first inhabitants of Canada, including First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

**landscape:** artwork in which the subject is a view of the exterior physical world. Traditionally, landscapes have been paintings or drawings depicting natural scenes and are often concerned with light, space and setting.

**Modernism:** a historical period of art practice—from 1850 to 1970—during which approaches to art embraced new ideas in science, political thought and many other areas. The Modernists rejected the restrictions of past art traditions and stressed innovation over all other values.

**motif:** a decorative design or pattern that is normally a distinctive feature or dominant idea of an artwork.

**perspective:** Artists use perspective to represent three-dimensional objects on a two-dimensional surface (such as a piece of paper or canvas) in a way that looks natural. It can create the illusion of space and depth on a flat surface.

**Potlatch:** In a broad sense, a gift-giving feast practised by Northwest Coast First Nations in Canada and the U.S. The feasts are held on the occasion of births, deaths, adoptions, weddings and other rite-of-passage events. Potlatches are times of song, ritual, dance and ceremony, and are the context in which ceremonial masks are seen and performed.

portrait(ure): a painting, drawing, photograph or engraving of a person, especially one depicting only the face or head and shoulders.

**rapturous:** characterized by, feeling or expressing great pleasure or enthusiasm.

regalia: the traditional and often sacred clothing, accessories and artifacts worn or carried during various ceremonies.

**residential schools:** Canadian government-sponsored religious schools established to assimilate Indigenous children into Euro-Canadian culture. Children were forced from their homes and forbidden to speak their original languages or to practise any of their own cultural ways of life.

**settler:** a person who moves with a group of others to live in a new country or area. In Canada, European settlers replaced Indigenous populations with an invasive settler society that, over time, developed a distinct Canadian identity and sovereignty.

settler economy: an economic system, often unfair, that was formed between Indigenous peoples and settlers.

**sitter:** a person who sits for a portrait.

**subject:** the main idea represented in an artwork.

**Tree of Life:** another name for and way of understanding the cedar tree by coastal First Nations.

# RESOURCES

## Emily Carr

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/emily-carr>

<https://aci-iac.ca/art-books/emily-carr/style-and-technique>

## Tree of Life

<https://umistapotlatch.ca/intro-eng.php>

<http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/cedar/>

<https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/knowinghome/chapter/chapter-7/>

## Button Blanket

<https://umistapotlatch.ca/intro-eng.php>

## Baskets

[https://www.sfu.ca/brc/online\\_exhibits/spruce-root-weaving/the-politics-of-erasure.html](https://www.sfu.ca/brc/online_exhibits/spruce-root-weaving/the-politics-of-erasure.html)

[https://nvma.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Newcomer\\_Relations\\_Online\\_Materials.pdf](https://nvma.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Newcomer_Relations_Online_Materials.pdf)

## Potlach Ban

[https://www.sfu.ca/brc/online\\_exhibits/masks-2-0/the-potlatch-ban.html](https://www.sfu.ca/brc/online_exhibits/masks-2-0/the-potlatch-ban.html)

## Women's roles in the early 20th century

[http://education.historicacanada.ca/files/108/Womens\\_Suffrage.pdf](http://education.historicacanada.ca/files/108/Womens_Suffrage.pdf)

<https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/chapter/10-7-gender-roles/>

## Modernism

[https://www.moma.org/learn/moma\\_learning/themes/what-is-modern-art/](https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/themes/what-is-modern-art/)

## Artists

<https://peoplepill.com/people/vera-olivia-weatherbie/amp/>

[http://www.pegasusgallery.ca/artist/Irene\\_Hoffar\\_Reid.html](http://www.pegasusgallery.ca/artist/Irene_Hoffar_Reid.html)

<https://www.fecklesscollection.ca/irene-hoffar-reid>

<https://www.fecklesscollection.ca/ina-dd-uhthoff>

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