

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monumental Emily Carr Survey to Open at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 2026

That Green Ideal: Emily Carr and the Idea of Nature is the Gallery's largest exhibition dedicated to the modernist painter in more than 20 years



September 18, 2025, VANCOUVER, BC // Traditional Coast Salish Lands including the xʷməθkʷəy̍əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

In February 2026, the Vancouver Art Gallery will open *That Green Ideal: Emily Carr and the Idea of Nature*, its largest presentation of the work of Emily Carr (1871–1945, Victoria, B.C.) in more than two decades. Overlooked in her own time, Carr is now recognized as one of Canada's most important artists, whose distinctive modernist vision has profoundly shaped how British Columbia's landscape is perceived, understood and represented. *That Green Ideal* features work primarily from the Gallery's extensive Emily Carr Collection—the most comprehensive holdings of her work in the world.

"We are uniquely positioned to share the depth and significance of Carr's legacy with our diverse publics," says **Eva Respini**, Interim Co-CEO and Curator at Large. "This landmark exhibition—the most comprehensive in two decades—invites everyone, from school groups to tourists, to encounter Carr's vision of the Pacific Northwest in ways that spark dialogue, discovery and joy."

Drawing on the history of her training, Romantic influences and her deeply personal journals, *That Green Ideal* explores the intersection between Carr's inner world, the cultural forces that shaped her and the natural world around her. The title of the exhibition is a quotation from Carr's journals where she refers to her experience of working and reworking an idea, seeking to capture not only the physical presence of nature but also its spiritual essence. Ultimately, this is the first exhibition to treat Carr's idea of nature as its sole subject—it is an invitation for viewers to reflect on their own relationship with the landscapes she painted.

“Carr created a way of seeing the Pacific Northwest landscape that was so compelling that we often tend to take it for granted,” says **Richard Hill**, Smith Jarislowsky Senior Curator of Canadian Art at the Vancouver Art Gallery. “This makes it all too easy to overlook how her paintings continue to actively shape our visual understanding of our region’s natural environment. My ambition with this exhibition is to do the opposite of taking her approach for granted—to do everything possible to open the gap between Carr’s experience of nature and her transformation of that experience into a painting.”

Carr was both a careful observer and someone who sought spiritual transcendence in communion with nature. She wrote often about her painting process later in life, when she was at the height of her artistic prowess. From her own words it is clear she understood her artistic practice to be driven by a mission to depict the essence in an original way—as she put it “that green ideal”—of her encounters with the region’s dense rainforests.

Hill says, “What interests me is the extent to which Carr was not, intellectually speaking, alone in the forest as she conceived these works. I want to tease out the tension between the artist’s desire for direct communion with nature and the larger history of cultural and artistic ideas that she drew on, even as she struggled to create a new form of expression.”

That Green Ideal: Emily Carr and the Idea of Nature will be on view at the Vancouver Art Gallery from February 6 to November 8, 2026. The exhibition will be accompanied by a lavishly illustrated catalogue exploring the exhibition's theme of the relationship between Carr’s art and its relationship to her ideas about nature. The exhibition is organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and curated by **Richard Hill**, Smith Jarislowsky Senior Curator of Canadian Art.

On World Health Day 2025 the Vancouver Art Gallery announced the launch of a groundbreaking new collaboration with B.C. Parks Foundation that recognizes the healing power of art and nature in supporting mental health and psychological wellbeing. As a result of this collaboration, healthcare professionals can prescribe their patients a visit to the Vancouver Art Gallery through B.C. Parks Foundation’s PaRx program—Canada’s national, evidence-based nature prescription program.

That Green Ideal: Emily Carr and the Idea of Nature will expand this initiative by providing the foundation of the prescription experience. By examining the range, depth, and cultural variety of aesthetic responses to the landscape in Carr’s art, visitors will be able to situate their own perspectives within the history of artistic ideas that have shaped how we perceive and engage with the world around us. This is intended not only to provide a space of contemplation within the Gallery, but to enrich their own aesthetic experiences in nature. Patients prescribed a Gallery visit will be invited to explore the exhibition as part of their prescription, using Carr’s vision as both inspiration and guide.

“In British Columbia, nature is not something distant—it is part of the rhythm of our everyday lives through the forests and oceans that surround us. *That Green Ideal: Emily Carr and the Idea of Nature* deepens this connection by inviting visitors to explore how Carr herself turned to the natural world for renewal and transcendence”, says **Sirish Rao**, Interim Co-CEO and Director of the Gallery’s Art of Wellbeing Lab. “Through the Gallery’s ongoing prescription initiative, guests will be invited to experience her vision as part of their own journey of healing and thriving. It is a profound reminder that art, like nature, has the power to restore us.”

We acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia.



Generously Supported by Andy Sylvester

-30-

[Download the media package here](#)

Images (Left to Right):

Emily Carr, *Cedar*, 1942, oil on canvas, Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Emily Carr Trust

Emily Carr, *Grey*, 1929–1930, oil on canvas, Private Collection

Emily Carr, *Red Cedar*, 1931, oil on canvas, Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of Mrs. J. P. Fell

ABOUT EMILY CARR (1871–1945)

Emily Carr is one of Canada's most renowned artists, celebrated for her modernist depictions of the landscapes of British Columbia. Born in Victoria in 1871, Carr defied the expectations of her time with a fierce independence and a resolve to travel widely in pursuit of her artistic training. She studied at the California School of Design in San Francisco, the Westminster School of Art in London, and later in France, where she developed a distinctive post-Impressionist style and a fauvist-inspired palette that would define much of her later work.

Carr first turned her attention to the art and cultures of Indigenous peoples in 1907 and, following her transformative studies in France, undertook an ambitious sketching trip to Haida Gwaii in 1912. There she created a significant body of watercolours and canvases that fused her French training with her deep engagement with the monumental forms of totem poles and village sites. When exhibited in 1913, these works met a mixed reception and sold poorly, forcing Carr to set aside painting for nearly fifteen years while she ran a boarding house in Victoria.

Her career was revived in 1927, when her work was included in the *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art: Native and Modern* at the National Gallery of Canada. There she met members of the Group of Seven, including Lawren Harris, whose recognition and encouragement emboldened Carr to embrace her vision fully. Over the next fifteen years, until ill health curtailed her practice in 1942, she produced the powerful, swirling landscapes and forest scenes that remain her most celebrated achievements.

In later life, Carr also turned to writing. Her first book, *Klee Wyck* (1941), a memoir of her encounters with Indigenous communities, was awarded the Governor General's Award for Literature. Today, Emily Carr is remembered as a pioneering modernist whose art gave form to both the spiritual force of the British Columbia landscape and the enduring presence of Indigenous culture.

ABOUT THE VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

Founded in 1931 on the ancestral and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, the Vancouver Art Gallery is recognized as one of North America's most innovative visual arts institutions. The Gallery's celebrated exhibitions, extensive public programs and emphasis on advancing scholarship all focus on historical and contemporary art from British Columbia and around the world. Special attention is given to the accomplishments of Indigenous artists, as well as to those of the Asia Pacific region—through the Centre for Global Asias (formerly the Institute of Asian Art) founded in 2014. The Gallery's exhibitions also explore the impact of images in the larger sphere of visual culture, design and architecture.

The Gallery's new Art of Wellbeing lab furthers its commitment to community by promoting the role of art in fostering health and wellbeing. Developed in collaboration with healthcare professionals, researchers and Indigenous Elders, the lab creates opportunities for individuals to engage with art in ways that support mental, emotional and physical wellbeing.

Committed to inclusivity and accessibility, the Gallery welcomes hundreds of thousands of visitors each year to share perspectives, build community and shape our collective future through art.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is a charitable 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.

