Emily Carr 1871-1945

PNW/Canadian Artist/Painter

Photographs of Emily Carr through the years (1871-1945)
Emily Carr was one of the important, and perhaps most original, Canadian painters of the first half of the twentieth century; she was also one of the only major female artists in either North America or Europe of that period. She had 10 brothers and sisters. When Emily was 8 years old, she drew a picture of her father's dog that so impressed him, he arranged for her to take drawing lessons. When she was in her twenties, she attended the California School of Design. She studied art in London and Paris, and taught art to women when she returned home to Canada.

At that time, art was dominated by men, and not considered a serious occupation for women. As a painter, Carr didn't feel like her art was appreciated, so she gave it up for 15 years. Emily eventually met some artists and began painting again when she was 56 years old. She began painting nature scenes and her work was getting recognized and was appreciated.

World Map - Canada, Victoria, British Columbia
Emily was born in the city of Victoria, in the province of British Columbia. A province is similar to a state. It would take about 2 hours to fly from Portland to Victoria, OR about 5.5 hours to drive there, that includes a ferry ride across the harbor.

Kispiax Village, 1929
Emily had a love of nature, especially the trees of British Columbia and the villages of the Coastal Indians.
How many of you have hiked in a forest? What did you see when you were there?
Emily made several visits deep into the forest encountering native villages and people of a different language and culture. These totem poles belonged to the Kispiax, known as "People of the Hiding Place." These totem poles, today, are considered historical monuments.

Indian Church, 1929 aka Church in Yuquot Village
The painting's original title was Indian Church. In 2018, after consultation with Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations on whose territory the church was located, the Art Gallery of Ontario renamed the painting to Church in Yuquot Village.

Big Raven, 1931
Emily was influenced by a Spanish artist in France who influenced Cubism. *We learned about him last year… Can you name him? (Picasso).* Picasso was known for making pictures look angular and geometric, a trait common in Cubism. *Can you see how the sky is made up of white rectangular sections?*

In 1971 Canada created a stamp honoring Emily Carr, based on her painting *Big Raven.*

Reforestation, 1936 & A Rushing Sea of Undergrowth, 1932-35
Emily said "Art is art, nature is nature, you cannot improve upon it.... Pictures should be inspired by nature, but made in the soul of the artist. It is the soul of the individual that counts." In these pictures, Emily wanted to show the liveliness of the forest, using color and texture to suggest movement in the still painting.

Tree in Autumn
In this piece, Emily shows a tree transitioning from summer to fall. *What happens to many trees during Fall/Autumn?*

If we were to step into this painting to look closer at the tree, would we be standing higher than the lake in the background or at the same level? How do you know? (the position of the base of the tree relative to the lake, the lake/mountains are smaller, which helps us understand perspective and know they are farther away)

Gitwangak, Queen Charlotte Islands, 1912
Emily, like many artists, experimented with different styles. The Big Raven was more of a cubist style, while Gitwangak has an impressionist style with visible brush strokes.

Totem Walk at Sitka, 1907 and photograph of the area
Here we can see a photo of the area Emily was painting and her finished watercolor piece. These Totem poles were moved from their original sites to be displayed in the St Louis World's Fair in 1904 and eventually were established in Sitka National Historical Park in Alaska.

Notice how some of the trees and Totem poles are larger and their bases are lower in the painting; this helps us understand that they are closer to us and the trees/poles in the background are smaller, have their bases start higher on the page, and have less clear details are farther away.