

**BLANKETS TO PIGMENTS
AND PIECES
VICTORIA'S VISUAL ARTS
HERITAGE**



BLANKETS TO PIGMENTS AND PIECES: VICTORIA'S VISUAL ARTS HERITAGE.

SITUATION BRIEF # 46

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Arts are social binding agents. They provide the connectors which link communities, allowing them to express their values, reinforce them, question them, preserve them and communicate them to others. And like all glues they leave a residue by which we can trace a people's passage through space and time.

This is as true of an historic trading hub such as Victoria on the Pacific as it was of 16th century Venice on the Adriatic.

Ancient beginnings: Indigenous art

The ancient trading routes of Victoria's Lekwungen-speaking people throughout the Pacific Northwest and the inland waterways which penetrated the coastal mountain ranges comingled fish and furs with cultural products such as baskets and blankets on outward journeys. Bone and ivory carvings, copper and operculum ornaments came back in return. These same routes later carried white traders and European explorers. European arts arrived as all manner of trade goods, but also as artists themselves. And a similar history of indigenous trade routes, later overlaid with the movement of foreign people and materials, including artistic products, can be traced throughout the Indo-Pacific world. Here

it is marked, for instance, by the early arrival of Hawaiian navigators and Chinese entrepreneurs.

It may seem naïve to see the art of Coastal Salish blanket-making as something akin to a European 15th century panel painting. But the parallels as artistic markers, each at the apex of their society's cultural production, are uncanny.

In this we need to briefly address contemporary squeamishness with continuing to link art to some kind of divine force. In fact, modern theologians such as Bernard Lonergan writes eloquently of higher realms of consciousness where transcendence and art intersect. Lonergan insists “the sacred offices of the shamen, the prophet, the law giver, the priest, the preacher, the monk, the teacher share the language of the ascetics and mystics and find meaning in the pattern of form and feeling which the artist expresses in the language of art”. Twenty-five year-old Pablo Picasso was profoundly affected by African masks he saw in Paris's anthropological museum, exclaiming “Painting is not an aesthetic process; it's a form of magic that interposes itself between us and a hostile universe, a means of seizing power by imposing a form on our terrors as well as our desires”. From *Françoise Gilot and Carlton Lake, Life with Picasso, VI*



Woman Weaving a Blanket Paul Kane. Coll. ROM

In their 2017 definitive work, *Salish Blankets: Robes of Protection and Transformation, Symbols of Wealth*, Leslie Tepper, Janice George and Willard Joseph point out these blankets “exist in a supernatural realm ... The object, the maker, the wearer, and the community itself are bound and transformed through the creation and use of the Salish blanket”.

Blankets provide protective power and strength through major life changes such as birth, marriage and death. Artistic vision and technical expertise combine to lend value to the object, status to the maker and prestige to the owner. Superior skill and invention enabled women to move up the social scale from slave to aristocrat. Ownership of masterpieces, measured by both degree of refinement and quantity, exemplified the wealth and status of families, clans and indeed Nations.

But beyond this, in Salish cosmology, blankets were living objects. They mediated between the world of living and world of spirits. In the liminal other-world animals, plants, ancestors, even entire landscapes shape-shift; past and present merge; both spirits and people move between these realms assisted by appropriate prayers, songs, dances, and the knowledge of the shaman. Local Lekwungen speaking people shared a common belief that robes and blankets pre-existed in the spirit world. The weaver’s task was to bring them to the human realm. Here they assumed a life animated by their use in prayers, songs, ceremonial dances and ritual practices. Wise choice of materials (rare mountain goat hair for instance) along with perfection of form, pattern and technique improved the power of the blanket as a portal connecting one world to the other.

Archaeological evidence establishes a 500-year-old tradition of Salish textile weaving, and it is probably much older.

Early blankets were simple in design and execution, drawing on a vocabulary of forms, patterns and techniques referencing lineages, events,

stories and beliefs cached in the communal memories of elders, recalled in songs, dances and ritual celebrations. These were passed down from mother to daughter, generation to generation, protected and inherited as the knowledge of blanket weaving.

Traded as stores of wealth, exchanged as gifts and acquired as battle trophies, blankets moved along the trade routes of the Pacific Northwest. Knowledge, skill and artistic expression comingled among Nations as travel and exchange allowed. With the advent of European explorers, traders, and later settlers expanded the mix so the blanket makers adopted patterns, colours and materials from the craft practices of the newcomers but also from the flood of trade goods that inundated the coastal communities during this period.

Toward the end of the 19th century blanket weaving reached an apogee of complexity, dexterity of skill, and value. Sadly, in this same confluence of events also lay the near-demise of the art form itself. White man's scourges: disease, pandemics, alcohol, land seizure, radically diminished populations erasing community memory, beliefs and ceremonial practices. Religious conversion, the potlatch ban, confiscations of ritual regalia prompted cultural



Delegation to Edward VII 1906 wearing swuqu'alh (nobility blankets)

amnesia. The flood of mass-produced Hudson Bay Company blankets only marked the inevitable shift to a wage economy transforming the Indigenous nature of wealth and value. The practice of blanket making verged on extinction.

By means of what may seem to some an unusual reversal of paradigms, we might use the art of the Coast Salish blanket making to frame a cultural history of Victoria as an artistic nexus on the edge of the Indo-Pacific world.

Salish people and Settlers lived in different worlds. But common to both as Victoria developed its own localized artistic identity were shared roots in the unique natural landscape of the region. This common mission sought to connect audiences with a spirit of the time and place, and a reach beyond the local as both commodity and cultural transmission.

The traditional functions of art are to engage an audience by delight or to shock, teach and enlighten by symbol and metaphor, and also reinforce accepted beliefs and values. But immersed as we are today in the wash of a multimedia-saturated visual and aural culture, we do well to take a lesson from the Salish blanket. The wellsprings of Western art also lie in the sacral, as a bridge between the known and unknown, real and imagined worlds, the sacred and profane. Today we retain a secularized version of this idea. We ascribe to artists a special creative vision which in skillful hands and manipulated media brings truth to doorstep of consciousness.

Documentalists: marking colonial connections

European artists arrived in the Pacific Northwest sharing ambitions of geographical and scientific discovery with the mariners they accompanied. They were essentially documentalists, whose task it was to record what they saw, organize those findings and transmit the results to their private sponsors often for military or political ends, but more generally for expectant audiences

saturated with the ideologies of discovery, colonial aggrandizement or the progress of the scientific enlightenment. Ultimately these field sketches became books, popular prints and spectacles such the immensely popular theatrical dioramas in London and Paris, and also (along with artefacts) - museums. Artists such Paul Cane (1810-1871) and Frederick Whimper (1878-1901) accompanied overland fur traders and their Indigenous guides, or followed the traditional canoe routes along the Pacific Coast, a pattern of “discovery” that was repeated throughout the South Pacific and the shorelines of Southeast Asia.



Victoria Harbour Frederick Whimper n.d. Library Archives Canada

We might not ascribe to these artists or their art any pretensions to mediate the sacred and secular, but note how their examination of natural phenomena successfully linked the known worlds of the European with the exotic other-worlds on the frontiers of discovery and progress. What James Smithson, founder of the Smithsonian Institute, dedicated its energies to: “the increase and diffusion of knowledge”.

A role for European art on the West Coast was introduced by these explorers. Both Spanish and British ships carried professional artists. Captain James Cook's expeditions of 1776/1778, intended primarily as scientific research under the auspices of the Royal Society, carried two artists, one focusing on plant and animal documentation, the other on topography and natural landscape. John Webber's (1751-1793) scenic sketches capture the atmosphere of coastal view-scapes but were delivered through an aesthetic screen that catered to expectations for the terrifying and exotic in these strange and far-away lands, meeting the expectations of his home audiences. Inhabitants of the lands, diminutive and secondary, were subjects of curiosity. This aesthetic was applied equally to other human subjects on the voyages along Cook's routes through the South Pacific. The resulting paintings and mass-produced engravings that accompanied print publications magnified this aesthetic and intellectual framework that served to inform a society caught up in the euphoria of the scientific enlightenment, the cutting edge of new knowledge.

While famous for his 1778 landfall at Friendly Cove, Cook himself never put ashore on Southern Vancouver Island. However, elements of the exploration and scientific mindset certainly coloured the sketch books and canvases of a stream of early land surveyors and artist-investigators who based themselves briefly or for extended periods in Victoria. All arrived with the cultural baggage of a European professional or artistic training in Institutions such as the Royal Geographic Society, military training schools, or even the fashionable salons of London and Paris.

Edward Parker Bedwell (1828-1883), a Royal Navy officer, documented local coastal landscape, sailing on survey expeditions out of Esquimalt from 1856-1863, then continued this task on the Pacific route along the coast of Australia. His sketches became engraving and illustrations for major popular audiences

such as the London Illustrated News. Henry Warre (1794-1879), a commissioned officer in the British Army and a member of the Royal Geographic Society, spent the years 1839-1946 traveling throughout the Hudson's Bay's Oregon Territory, proceeding on to Crimea, India's Tapti River basin, New Zealand and Kabul. Probably the best known of this type of peripatetic professional was Fredrick Whymper (1838-1901) and Paul Kane (1810-1871). Whymper arrived in Victoria on a painting expedition to the Fraser Goldfields. He remained for three years during which his travels included a coastal excursion to Alaska. On his return he stayed long enough in California to found the San Francisco Art Association, then assembled a North American portfolio including spectacle views of Chicago, Salt Lake City and Niagara Falls. Back in England, his note books and sketches formed an influential image of North America through volumes of engravings, papers and book illustrations.

Pau Kane, a self-taught Irish Canadian, carved out career as an amateur explorer, anthropologist and geographer. He documented the life and habitat of the Oregon Territory from 1845 to 1848. While based in Victoria, he spent two months sketching the coast-lines and Indigenous settlements of the Salish Sea, perhaps the first "tourist artist". With a view to increased sales, he served a popular audience caught up in the Picturesque aesthetic of mid-century Victorian society which fancied an idealized New World of dramatic vistas populated by "noble savages".

The impact of these explorer artists in framing a view of the Victoria landscape and its surroundings was most successful on the intended audiences, for the most part European and Eastern North American. However, the attitude of these artists towards the subject matter, and their preferred medium - the landscape sketch - was also shared by the local Settler community. Making a brief appearance in Victoria in the 1880s Black American landscape artist and

lithographer, Grafton Taylor Brown (1841-1918), specialized in views and vistas of the town's environs. Early Settler-artists also shared a keen interest in the arts and ceremonial practices of the Indigenous population. Many, such as Margaret Maclure (1869-1938), wife of successful society architect Samuel Maclure (1860-1929), achieved a reputation for her detailed portraits of local First Nations sitters, often in ceremonial regalia.

At the core of Victoria's arts community through those early years were two generations of a single family. Sir Henry Pering Pellew Crease (1823-1905), lawyer, judge and politician, arrived in Victoria in 1858. Throughout his lengthy legal career as a circuit court judge and courts administrator he and his wife travelled the breadth of British Columbia recording the its landscape and inhabitants in sketches and drawings. Crease's wife, Sarah Lindley (1826-1922), trained as a botanical artist at the Imperial College of Art and illustrated the publications of her father, a renowned botanist. In Victoria she turned her attention to everyday life at the Fort as it evolved into a more permanent settlement. Three daughters and two sons followed their parents' artistic avocations. Daughters Mary Mayberly (1854-1915), Susan Reynolds (1854-1947), and Josephine (1864-1947) studied at their mother's alma mater in London and on returning to Victoria continued the family interest in the local landscape, also documenting Indigenous lifeways. Their sketches and drawings illustrated newspapers and magazines, even adorned tea cups! A brother, Lindley Crease (1867-1940), in addition to his own legal career, was a dedicated alpinist. His scenic watercolours captured mountain views and vistas during climbing expeditions to the Rockies and coastal ranges of Vancouver Island. Family members were key to the founding of the influential the Vancouver Island Arts and Crafts Society, (1909-1941), continuing today as the Victoria Sketch Club.



Yates Street, Victoria Sarah Crease Coll. RBCM

The Island Arts and Crafts Society nurtured and launched the careers of a more serious and determined subsequent “modernist” generations including Maude Lettice (1879-1976), Emily Carr (1891-1945), Jack Shadbolt (1909-1998), Edyth Hembroff-Shleicher (1906-1999), William Percival Weston (1879-1967), and Edward John Hughes (1913-2007). This latter group were to break out of the bounds of late Victoria Academic Realism, including the ideological and aesthetic straitjacket of the Romantic movement and the Picturesque artistic styles.

Canada: framing the spirit of the nation state

The move from colonial status to Confederation also proved a watershed for the arts. As the Canadian Pacific Railway pushed westward toward the Pacific Coast, and its anticipated destination of Victoria (alas not ultimately achieved) the focus of the Capital City as an outlier on Asian/American Pacific Rim was to

be threatened with revision. In no small part this refocus was accentuated by the arrival of C.P.R. in Vancouver in 1887 and a stream of railway artist-promoters. Provided with free passes and sometimes cash incentives, professionals were encouraged to capture and translate the scenic splendours of the route and its destinations. Their paintings were intended for the fashionable parlours of Eastern Canada, Europe and related institutional settings such as Canada's monumental temple-style railway stations and Chateausque hotels built along the route. Government House in Victoria now hosts a series of these originally intended for the (unbuilt) Prince Rupert Hotel whose namesake northern coastal city was to be the terminus of a C.P.R. rival: the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway.

Canadian artist, Lucius O'Brien (1832-1899) worked up the genre of mountain painting incorporating elements of the "sublime" aesthetic: panoramic views, towering jagged peaks, lush vegetation, soaring cloudscapes, lakes and rolling forest vistas veiled in mists - all consumed in magical lighting effects. His paintings formed the basis for the journal series "Picturesque Canada". O'Brien worked briefly from a studio in Victoria along with another CPR "tourist artist" Frederic Marlett Bell-Smith (1846-1923).



Mount Baker 1899 Frederic Marlett Bell-Smith. Coll. AGGV.

England and Paris-trained, Bell-Smith exploited the scenic wealth of Victoria's topography for both artistic and monetary effect. From the old-growth environs of the City, to topical views across the Straits to Mount Baker, or the Garry Oak meadowlands of rural Victoria, Bell-Smith's talent lay in elevating familiar local scenes to comparatives such as the Scottish Highlands over-which the late Victorian British public (besotted with the opportunities for affordable railway travel) now concentrated their gaze on coloured prints and book-plates in books and magazines.

In this there is a direct link to earlier British "orientalist" artists, such as brothers William (1769-1837) and Thomas Daniell (1749-1849) whose published paintings of "exotic landscapes" were to define the image of British India for the European general public well into the 20th century.

Maria Tippet and Douglas Cole in their book, *From Desolation to Splendour: Changing Perceptions of British Columbia Landscape Painting* (1977) comment that artists such as O'Brian and Bell-Smith "felt a mission to interpret the beauties of nature into a language that all can understand". But perhaps their mission went even further: to link the viewer to a natural world, now reconstructed via the artist's brush, with the sublime world of the numinous.

New horizons, aesthetic and intellectual, opened up by these artists directly connected Victoria with prevailing fashions and tastes of Eastern Canada and Europe. These prompted a change in the local artistic landscape which coalesced into a formal organization of artists, amateur and aspiring professional. Amateur artists such as the Crease and Maclure families founded an exhibiting club that was formally constituted in 1909 as the Island Arts and Crafts Society. Exhibitions, lectures, collaborations pivoted around a core of professionally trained practitioners and patrons including artists, Maude Lettice (1878-1976)

Sophie Pemberton (Sophia Pemberton Deane-Drummond 1869-1959), Samuel Maclure (1860-1929), designer Arthur Blomfield (a.k.a. Bloomfield 1829-1899)), photographers Harold Mortimer-Lamb (1872-1970), Harry Upperton Knight (1873-1973) others.



Sophie Pemberton Dean Drummond. Time & Eternity. 1908. Coll. AGGV

The Island Arts and Crafts Society, as the name indicates, reflected a local preoccupation at the time with the ideas of the British and American Arts-and-Crafts movement. This was very much under the spell of the social Romantics in England such as architects/artists/medievalists, John Ruskin (1819-1900) and William Morris (1834-18960); and a similar social/cultural group in the United States centred around social reformer Gustave Stickley (1858-1942) and architects such as Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-1886). In Victoria leadership was provided by the leading society architects Francis Mawson Rattenbury

(1867-1935) and Samuel Maclure. Englishman, F. M. Rattenbury provided direct British influences. The British Columbia born and American educated Samuel Maclure made the North American connection. Shared by all was a taste for stripping away from objects the encrustations of ornament, and returning to a simpler hand-crafted aesthetic. Many aligned this aesthetic with seeking a return to medieval or even pre-Christian, spirituality. A London-based group of artists called themselves the “Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood”. Interestingly, they particular admired the craft values of Oriental ceramics and textiles. So did their counter-parts in Victoria. The legacy of these artists, exhibiting the strong influence of the British Arts-and-Crafts aesthetic, forms the back bone to the collections at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria and the extensive private collection held by the Union Club of British Columbia.

Indo-Pacific: mapping global trade and travel

The gold rush adopted the old Pacific fur trade routes connecting the Pacific North West with the Orient for the flood of Chinese miners and entrepreneurs from the Pearl River delta of China. Products and cultural transmissions followed. Chinatown flourished as an organizational and economic hub. By the early years of the 20th century blue-and-white Chinese porcelain became a common decorative feature on the tables and hearth mantles of many Victoria homes.

Ultimately artistic exchanges would be more direct. Classically trained Hong Kong artist Stephen Lowe (1938-1975) would emigrate to Victoria establishing both a productive studio and school. J. Fenwick Lansdowne (1937-2008) who was born and spent his early years in Hong Kong, achieved world-wide renown as a wild-life artist for his bird paintings, first specializing in North America but then produced a volume, *The Rare Birds of China* (1984).

Porcelain was the high art of China, its colours and patterns of symbols referenced the technical, historical, spiritual and cultural brilliance of the world's foremost and oldest Imperial civilization.

A wide range of these popular arts came as export wares and also prized possessions of the merchants who accompanied the flood of Chinese migrant workers. They arrived first to exploit the British Columbia goldfields in the 1850s and 60s, then to build the Canadian Pacific Railway in the 1880s. More than a century of exclusion, discrimination and even occasional violence by White Settler society followed.

Despite this a flourishing commercial art market in Victoria embraced both West Coast indigenous "crafts" and all manner of oriental goods under the banner of "curios". From early "Indian" art traders such as Samuel Kirschbeg who scouted ceremonial regalia for eastern museums the industry matured into commercial retail establishments such as J. Isaacs and J. J. Hart's "Indian Bazaar" on Johnson Street (late 1880s to the 1920s) and the "Japanese Bazar" (Marchant Futcher & Co) on Fort Street in the 1920s. Lee Due & Co. specialized in Chinese silks on View Street. Oriental paintings, ceramics and even rattan furniture all proved popular in the Victoria market.



Lee Dye Store Interior Victoria n.d. Coll. VCA

Victoria would also experience Chinese culture as monumental public art. As a capital city, seat of governance and port-of-entry for British Columbia the town revelled in the Victorian tradition of erecting processional arches to welcome important visitors. Such arches have a long tradition in uniting civilizations and cultures across the western world, from the victory arches of ancient Rome to later expressions of triumphalism in Paris, London, or even Mumbai, India. The temporary but large- scale constructs on the major streets of Victoria were erected by local civic organizations to mark the processional routes of visiting Governors General: Earl Dufferin 1876, Marquis of Lorne 1882, Earl Grey 1906, and the Duke of Connaught 1912. With time they grew more complicated and impressive.

The Chinese community, not be left out, and perhaps also to confirm loyalty to King and Empire, built distinctive arches referencing the elements of traditional Chinese temple and civic buildings. Later in the 1950s when downtown official processional events became the popular annual May Day or Victoria Day parades, Chinese arches were a familiar hallmark of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association parade floats.

China had a long tradition of formal archways. These ceremonial gateways were called Pai-fang or Pai-lou (literally “sign-board of virtues which all look up to and hope for). They trace their origins to the portals into the Buddhist funerary stupas of India where they symbolized transition from the land of the living to the dead. By the Tang dynasty they were built to honour high ranking officials, celebrate festivals, mark important events. They spanned roads leading to palaces and tombs.



Gate of Harmonious Interests, Chinatown, Victoria

The penultimate arch of this Victoria tradition can be witnessed today in the permanent “Gateway of Harmonious Interests” marking the entry to Chinatown. It was erected in 1981 to lead the restoration of Chinatown and mark its recognition as a national historic site. Mickey Lam, the Hong Kong-born Victoria city-planner, designed the arch for manufacture in Taiwan. He consciously modeled it on two well-known Chinese heritage sites: the Mo Gao burial caves in Gansu Province near Lam’s home-town and the Ping Shen Hall of the Ancestors in Yangzhou.

Today the gateway, which celebrates the commemoration of Chinatown as a National Historic site, marks a long journey to reconciliation admitted by a Government of Canada formal apology in 2006.

The CPR’s trains and steamships, particularly the Empress line of trans-Pacific Ocean liners, (Victoria’s new CPR Empress Hotel was a scenic way-stop) transformed trade routes into highways for world tourism. As well as tourists a new class of people appeared: the economic migrant. Japanese market gardeners, craftsmen and businessmen settled in Victoria and with them came a

distinctive cultural expression: the art of gardening.

By the early 20th century the Japanese art of classical gardening, represented by the contemplative gardens of Kyoto and the Imperial Palace, Tokyo, were world-renowned tourist destinations.

Developed by the ruling and scholarly classes of the 8th century, Japanese gardens ritualized both the spiritual and social underpinnings of a complex hierarchical political and social structure. Within a limited vocabulary of symbolic elements (water, sky, shrubs, trees, paths, supporting architectural elements) views and vistas deliver to the garden visitor a meditative transformative experience.

The Japanese art of horticulture was introduced to Victoria with Gorge Waterway Japanese tea garden. It was designed and built in 1906-1907 by a Tokyo professional gardener, Isaburo Kishida (b. 1842), for his son, Yoshihiro Kishida (known locally as Joe Kishida 1887-1968), and Yoshihiro's business partner, Hayato Takata (1882-1949). The two had contracted to provide an end-of-line recreational attraction for the B.C. Electric Railway Victoria tram service. A Japanese tea garden [cha-niwa or roji] is traditionally a place for quiet reflection on the beauty of nature and the art of living in harmony.



City of Victoria Archives

Japanese Tea Gardens Gorge Waterway 1912 Coll. Victoria City Archives

The Gorge garden was a great success. Japanese garden designs were subsequently commissioned from Isaburo Kishida for the Dunsmuir's Edwardian country estate at Hatley, Sooke, Jenny Butchart's garden attraction in the reclaimed lime quarries of Tod Inlet, Saanich, and the suburban Esquimalt garden of Sir Frank Barnard, manager of the B.C. Electric Railway Company and later a B.C. Premier. Japanese-style gardens were then added to Beacon Hill Park and estate style residences such as Riffington, a show-home for one of the developers of the Uplands Estates. Japanese influence would linger in the general garden landscape of Victoria, influencing for instance the design of the world-renowned 1950s Rhododendron garden of Prince Nicholas (1899-1987) and Princess Peggy Abkhazi (1902-1994).

Abandoned and destroyed as a result of the WWII assets confiscation and detainment of Japanese Canadians, the Gorge Tea Garden has now been recreated by the City of Esquimalt as an act of reconciliation with the Japanese community.

Spiritualism: art as medium

In-migration, cultural transmissions, and artistic trade goods Orientalized Victoria society in many ways. Already sensitized to spiritualities of place from First Nations cultural beliefs and practices, appreciating the landscape of the Pacific Northwest through the lens of notions about the Picturesque and Sublime, Victoria's professional and business elite shared a then widespread popular interest in "spiritualism".

As to the latter, Victoria dance halls and theatres had a reputation for stop-over performances on the West Coast circuit for "professors of the occult". "Evidence" during the seances produced at such events inspired a technique made popular in the prints of photographer Hannah Maynard (1834-1918).

Maynard's manipulated photo-montage images have been linked to the Symbolist and Surreal streams of European art during that time. And Maynard herself achieved an international reputation.



Untitled Photograph (Time for Tea?) 1893. Hanna Maynard Coll. RBCM

Another more serious vein of Orientalism is illustrated by the arrival of Katherine Emma Maltwood (1878-1861) and her husband John, emigrating from England. Following previous visits to the City, they settled in Victoria in 1938. Maltwood, whose aesthetic roots lay in the English Arts-and-Crafts Movement, studied at the Kensington School of art and developed a successful career in England as a sculptor. Married to a wealthy businessman the two travelled extensively as she pursued her antiquarian interests in the ancient religions of Britain, North and South America, the Middle East as well as India and the Far East. Believing in the mystical significance of her work the two established

a museological shrine at their Saanich home comprised of her own works and artefacts from their travels.

The Maltwoods' choice of Victoria may not have been accidental. In Victoria Katherine followed in the footsteps of a close friend, Lilly Adams Beck (1862-1931), with whom she shared a deep interest in Theosophy. Lily Adams Beck, née Elizabeth Louisa Moresby, was a British writer of short-stories, novels, biographies and esoteric books, under the names of L. Adams Beck, E. Barrington and Louis Moresby. Theosophy, with its intellectual roots in both Brahmanic Hinduism and Buddhism, included mystical beliefs in pantheistic evolution and reincarnation. (Beck died in Japan in 1931).

Theosophy was not new to Victoria, which opened one of the first Lodges in Canada in 1892. Maltwood and Beck had both been involved in the promotion of Theosophy in London. A popular and prolific writer, Beck had authored a stream of books on oriental religions and novels of a spiritual nature including one that was a thinly disguised artistic biography of Katherine Maltwood. In it a youthful Katherine undertakes a journey of spiritual enlightenment through northern India. Beck moved to Victoria in 1919. Her Fairfield house, featuring an oriental garden and collection of Eastern art, became an international pilgrimage destination for her readers. In their Victoria retirement years the Maltwoods purchased a wilderness acreage in Saanich which Katherine used as material for several volumes of sketches. Many of the landscape sketches are Symbolist explorations of the spirituality embedded in nature. Some clearly reference images of Indigenous people. Theosophy was to profoundly influence the works of Emily Carr and members of the Group of Seven such as Lawren Harris (1885-1970).



Maquette for “Canada Rising” in Katherine Maltwoods London Studio ca 2012. Coll. UVic Libraries

The Maltwoods were representative of a coterie of local Asian art collectors. Blue and White porcelain set off the drawing rooms of late 19th arts-and-crafts homes. The Island Arts and Crafts society sponsored lectures on Chinese ceramics. Artefacts flowed in along Victoria’s trading connects with China and Japan but also came to city as Vancouver Island became a magnet for retiring British military and administrators from India, Singapore, Hong Kong, and southern China.

The Greater Victoria Art Gallery was founded in 1946. Its first professional director, Colin Graham (1915-210), recognized both the local interest in accumulating collections and Victoria’s deep tradition of demographic and commercial ties with the Far East. Long-time Shanghai resident, Hilda Hale (1907-2003), whose husband had retired as head of the Far East office of Thomas Cook, assembled a group of local ex-pats to form the Victoria Asian Arts Society.

Together they attracted the interest of major collectors and dealers across Canada, the United States, and particularly in Japan, to found and develop the Asian Art collection at the Gallery. It now boasts one of the largest collections of this kind in Canada.

Regional roots: the power of place

The cultural landscape of First Nations, the geography of the Pacific Northwest, and spiritualism can be examined in two Victoria case studies.

One is the artistic career of Emily Carr. The second, perhaps less well known, but in its day Victoria's largest public art project up to that time, was the mural commissioned to decorate the walls and ceiling of the Province's largest and most important ceremonial social space, the ballroom of Government House.

Victoria's two foremost Arts-and-Crafts architects collaborated on the design and construction of the Rockland Avenue Vice Regal residence in 1901 when it replaced an earlier building destroyed by fire. Decorative artist and designer James Alfred Jervis Bloomfield (1879-1951) completed the mural in 1903. It was unceremoniously painted over as part of a general facelift of the house, oddly enough for a visit of HRH Princess Elizabeth and her husband in 1953. Any chance of a recovery or restoration disappeared with destruction of the house by fire three years later.



Ballroom Government House. Murals by James Blomfield. 1903. Coll. RBCM

Bloomfield was born into a British immigrant family of artists, but his career was given a boost when Governor General Lord Aberdeen sponsored his art education in England. Unfortunately, visual evidence of the mural is limited to a few faded photographs, but a detailed description of it survives from press coverage subsequent to its unveiling to a curious Victoria public in 1903. Presumably Bloomfield's own words lie behind the newspaper accounts which outline a "historicoethnological plan" based on "pictorial records of the British Columbian Indian tribes, the totemic legends, working them up in all sorts of cunning devices". Between the soaring arches lining each side of room appeared "colossal figure(s) of an Indian warrior with muscular arms extended. On (each) breast appears a shield of once great tribes, with the armorial bearings copied from the totems of the tribe". Bloomfield claimed to have based his designs on images provided by an unnamed Haida carver whose drawings had been acquired by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington and the Anthropological Museum of Berlin. True to his artistic training Blomfield executed the mural in a

swirling Art-Nouveau style. And he managed to also work into it the “Imperial cypher and arms of the Province as well as armorial crests of Sir James Douglas and Sir Joly de Lotbiniere, the serving Lieutenant Governor of the day. The figural images were interlaced with winged eagles, dogwood, pine and oak leaves, and skunk cabbage.

From today’s perspective charges of colonialism and cultural appropriation could be levelled at Blomfield’s graphic vision. In the day it seemed to succeed in garnering public acclaim. The subject matter would not have surprised the local artistic or naturalist scientific communities whose members had documented a long collective interest in West Coast indigenous arts. At the time of the mural’s execution two Island Arts & Crafts club artist members, Margaret Maclure (1869-2938, wife of architect Samuel Maclure) and Martha Douglas Harris (1854-1993) youngest daughter of former Governor Sir James Douglas) were collaborating on a book, *History and Folklore of the Cowichan Indians*, published in 1901. For over 50 years the “Indian Warriors” gazed down on gatherings of visiting VIPs and the local social and political elite - perhaps to no small effect.



Emily Carr in her Studio. Harold Motimer-Lamb photographer

The second case-study is the life of Victoria-born Emily Carr. Now recognized as one of Canada's foremost artists, her work and career are well known. Following an artistic training in San Francisco, London and Paris, Carr returned to British Columbia in 1905. From her studios in Vancouver and Victoria she produced a stream of drawings, painting, books and even pottery. Like other local artists of her generation, her early years included expeditions to the remote Indigenous villages dotting the northern coastline. The resulting sketches and paintings defined her early career. Later she would profoundly influence Canadian painting, and indeed the public perception of Canada itself, through the swirling Expressionist style with which she captured mystical forces embedded in the ancient forest landscapes of British Columbia. There can be little doubt Carr had digested in her own mind the profound emotional and spiritual impact of those often desolate and near-abandoned First Nations village sites of her earlier travels.

The period between the wars witnessed an evolving scene of artistic personalities. Traditionalists, such as English immigrant illustrator Arthur Pitts (1888-1972) and Mildred Valley Thornton (1880-1967) dedicated their careers to recording the everyday lives of coastal First Nations maintaining a Realist or Post-Impressionist style. Pitts, like Carr, travelled from Victoria to Alaska in pursuit of subject matter. He turned eyes by commissioning a hand-knit wool suite of clothes from a Tsartlip wool-knitter. Thornton, an Ontario transplant via Saskatchewan and American trained, also identified with her subjects to extent of dressing in "Plains-Indian" clothing. Emily Sartain (1841-1927), a professional botanical artist when she arrived from England in 1949, developed a Canadian career from her Victoria studio, ultimately being recognized as "the Audubon of Canadian flowers".



Swinhoe's Pheasant 1995. Fenwick Lansdowne artist

The aesthetic and philosophic roots of the arts in Victoria's settler community has informed several generations of artists to the present day. Interest in oriental spiritualism would be continued by artists such as Jack Marlow Wise (1928-1996) in his intricate graphic meditations on the Hindu/Buddhist mandala. An entire school of wild-life artists such as Fenwick Lansdowne (1837-2008) and Robert Bateman anchor the West Coast conservation movement. Fifty-seven contemporary Victoria artists count themselves as nature and landscape painters, most exploring the intellectual and spiritual space between abstraction expressionism and scientific realism.

Modernism: fine art, crafts and populism

The decline in the need for Coast Salish blankets paralleled the transfer of the skill among women to knitting. Sylvia Olsen in her book, *Working with Wool: A Coast Salish Legacy & the Cowichan Sweater* (2010), describes how the "Indian" or "Cowichan Sweater" became a ubiquitous uniform for the outdoors,

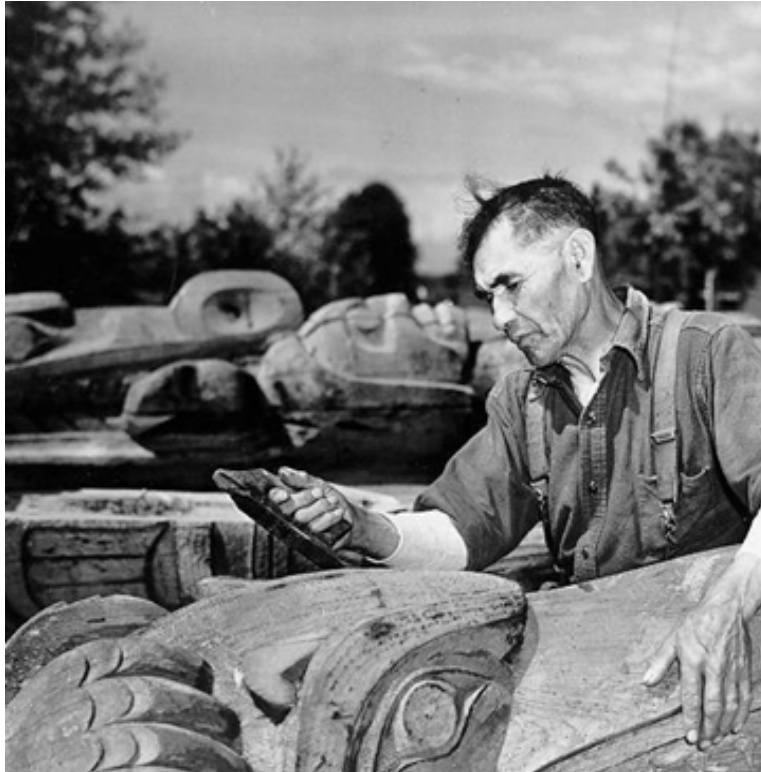
treasured by thousands from loggers and fishermen to royalty. A utility garment and fashion statement the sweater and accompanying toque has lasted over fifty years achieving world-wide popularity. Work from the most skilled and creative knitters was highly prized.

One striking observation of how two creative worlds, Indigenous and Settler, in the fabric arts remained poles apart is best illustrated by the commercial success of Island Weavers as a craft production studio. Enid Murray had retired to Victoria from India. She had studied at the Scotland Technical College in Galashiels. Opened in 1932 soon the Murrays had ten looms operating at their Victoria Langley Street studio, and by the 1950s sales outlets in Victoria, Vancouver and Seattle. They also supplied woolen fabric to numerous Pacific Northwest clothing manufacturers.

More recently, blanket making has re-emerged as a fine art in hands of a cohort of First Nations artists represented in major galleries with access to the international art market. In the local Coast Salish communities creative expression rooted in the traditional aesthetic has been reinvented in the hands of master weaver Rita (Louis) Bob and Myrna Crossley.

Starting in the late 1950s local First Nations art regained a place in the popular imagination, and local art collections. Inspired by Kwakwaka'wakw Chief Mungo Martin (1879-1962) and Henry Hunt (1923-1985) who founded the BC Provincial Museum First Nations carving program, and two generations of Hunt family carvers, the West Coast carving tradition underwent a dramatic revival. Around the Hunts gathered an ever-growing circle of young West Coast Indigenous artists who adapted the traditional totem, the mask and flat surface formal images to a new medium, the limited-edition lithographic print. Production was centered at the local craft printing studio of Vincent Rickard's Pacific Editions. These print editions had a profound impact on the development

of a world-wide appreciation for West Coast indigenous art from the 1960s forward.



Mungo Martin carving a pole

The revival of traditional West Coast art-forms started a process of repairing links with a younger generation of First Nations people, many suffering the trauma of residential school alienation from their culture and families and also their ancestral heritage, bringing that rich historical legacy forward into the present. Thus, this period of cultural revival is often referred to as a “renaissance” of North West Indigenous arts.

As aspiring Indigenous artists from throughout the Pacific Northwest made their way to Tony Hunt’s (1942-2017) studio in Old Town Victoria, a stream of artists came with Canada’s post-war boost to immigration which dramatically changed the local arts scene. And the banner the migrants flew was abstract expressionism. These artists clustered around three nodes in the cultural

landscape of Victoria: the emerging University of Victoria at its new Gordon Head campus, the new Art Gallery of Greater Victoria settling into its new Rockland manor home, and Old Town.

As the University built its modernistic campus the art department, founded earlier in what had been the British Columbia Provincial Normal School, and now the University's Faculty of Education, transitioned into a Faculty of Fine Arts. Lead professors Donald Harvey (1930-2015, British, Slade trained), John Dobreiner (1920-1985 New York trained), Peter DGLISH (1930-2016, Slade and Ecole de Beaux Arts) and print-maker Pat Martin Bates (Canadian) attracted an ever-growing cohort of students. While the early curriculum of the Visual Arts Department emphasized painting and sculpture, Prof. Pat Martin-Bates developed one of Canada's foremost print-making teaching studios. Prof. Martin-Bates and her students went on to profoundly influence and popularize an emergent school of West Coast Expressionism.

Annual exhibitions organized by the Island Arts and Crafts Society developed a local market for their works. In 1932 the Society created something of stir in Victoria's rather staid and conservative art enthusiasts. Parallel to the main exhibition that year a "Modern Room" was created. The exhibition list contained the town's forward-look artists. Emily Carr headed the list; others were Max Maynard (1903-1982) and his student Ron Bladen (1918-1988), Jack Shadbolt (1909-1988), John Macdonald, and Edyth Hembroff (1906-1994). All were edging toward variations of expressionism. The IACS and its popular exhibitions hosting an ever-widening range of artistic practice, from panel and free-standing sculpture to handicrafts such as needlepoint and "parchment work", carried on until 1956. Out of its membership, the following year, was born the Victoria Sketch Club, a vibrant organization with annual shows to the present day.

The IACA exhibitions were both a promotional and sales opportunity for local artists. The painters however enjoyed a long association with the picture framing, art and photography shop of Joseph Sommers. Opened in the early 1890s, by 1920 it had become Joseph Sommers and Sons, the name it operated under until finally closing 1940.

The Daily Colonist carried a laudatory description of a water-colour painting by Samuel Maclure which appeared in Sommer's window in 1897. However, Victoria's art enthusiasts had to await the Post-WWII rapid economic and population explosion for a major repositioning of the art market for local artists. From the mid 1960s a new generation of artist and patrons found exposure and sales opportunities through a flowering of commercial galleries: Bente Rehm's Pandora's Box and, and the Print Box Gallery run by Nita Forrest (1926-1996) both showcased what would become the Limner group in their early years. Stephen Lowe established his own gallery in the Empress Hotel. Indigenous artists Tony Hunt (1942-2017) and John Livingstone (1941-2022) opened Arts of Raven specializing in contemporary First Nations arts and crafts. Bessie Fitzgerald established the Wagon Wheel Gallery in Saanich which ultimately became a chain of British Columbia studio craftshops in Victoria Vancouver, and Banff under the name "Quest: for Handicrafts". The first in Victoria opened in 1960. Among her suppliers were local potters such as the Leonard. B. (Ossie) Osborne(1911-, Jan and Helga Grove, Wayne Ngnan (1937-2020) and others were joined by First Nations silversmiths such as Haida, Bill Reid (2020-1998). By the end of the 1920s Victoria's curios shops had developed into a major industry represented by establishments such as Faith Grant's Antiques started in 1929 which anchored a row of craft, antiques and design shops on Fort Street. Allan Edwards' Green Door studio and gallery launched the careers of Stephen Lowe and Brian Travers-Smith (1931-) both born in China. Others on the street by the

early 1960s included Jeffrey's silversmiths established in 1947, W.M. Carmichael silversmiths, founded in 1929, also Ego Interiors, a modernist art design and studio started in 1963 by principals, Armenian Egyptians Joseph Shushan Egoyan (1924-2019). Along with Ego Interiors, Standard Furniture founded in 1912 and run by several generations of the local Denny family, they introduced Modernist furniture makers to the local market. Standard Furniture's suppliers included Vancouver-based Bush & Morrison along-side its extensive selection of imported Danish Modern. Kilshaw's fine arts and antiques auctioneers, which owes its origins the family roots in auctioneering in the late 18th in England, opened its doors in 1949. Lunds Auctioneers, also on Fort Street, became a competitor in 1970s.



Store front window of Standard Furniture showing Bush and Morrison items in the early 1950s.

The Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, repurposing the historic Spencer Mansion in 1951, prospered under the direction of its first professional director, Colin Graham (1915-2010) and a young curatorial team. It had actually been

founded in 1946 with an exhibition of work by Zhang Shuqi (1900-1957) at the Empress Hotel. Its first home, titled “The Little Centre” was in part of an automobile showroom. The gallery provided a venue for local artists, loan exhibitions from the National Gallery and visiting artists. Serious collecting began in 1950 with the donation several 19th C. European paintings, old master drawings and 18th C. Ukiyo-style woodcuts by Utamaro (1753-1806).

However, the core of the more youthful art scene, populated by a mix of students, recent art-school graduates, Canadian drifters, immigrants and American draft-dodgers coalesced in the semi-vacant buildings of Old Town where they found abundant and cheap studio space. The centre of activities was a narrow alley-way, once lined with gambling dens, linking two blocks of Chinatown, Fan Tan Alley. Painters, sculptors, print-makers, Indigenous carvers, graphic designers, furniture designers and makers, craft jewelers stayed or passed through. Numerous informal galleries came and went. By 1972 they had their own public gallery, Open Space, a rehabilitated warehouse. In the 1960s Bente Rhem operated a commercial gallery on Store Street mainly catering the Old Town artist community. Through the 1960s and 70s over 50 artists were to call Old Town their home, some settling permanently. Many were to become house-hold names: Joe Average, Tony Hunt, Jean J. Andre (1932-2021), Norvel Morisseau (1931-2007), Glenn Howarth (1946-2008), and curator/artist Robert Amos. In part this was facilitated by a local businessman and arts patron, Welshman Michael Williams (2016-2000) who was buying up older near-abandoned heritage buildings for restoration then seeking out artists to fill them as part of his Old Town revitalization ambitions. An avid collector, Williams often accepted art works in lieu of rent. French trained designer J. J. Andre (1933-2022) was to draw from the talent pool of Victoria’s Old Town group when he assembled the technical team to realize his plans for the highly successful walk-

through diorama exhibitions for the new Royal BC Museum under construction by the late 1960s.

Book publishing house, Sono Niss Press, with offices above its printing plant, Morriss Printers, was home to a group of senior local artists who called themselves The Limners, the name inspired by their shared interest in figural art. Under the patronage of publisher Richard (Dick) Morriss the group included Canadians portrait artist Myfanwy Pavelic (2016-2007), sculptors Elza Mayhew (1916-2004) and Bob Di Castro (1923-1986), painter Vicky Husband; Germans, abstractionist Herbert Siebner (1925-2003), and the husband and wife master potters Jan (1930-2018) and Helga Grove (1927-2018), Austrian film-maker Karl Spreitz (1927-2016) and fabric artist Carol Sabiston. University faculty members print-maker Pat Martin Bates and English poet Robin Skelton (1925-1997) were members. Art gallery director, Colin Graham (1916-2007, was made an honorary member.



Elza Mayhew with Stela 1 and 2 at UBC 1963.

While feverish cross-influences and inspiration flowered among these groups of artists, each defined by a locale or association of aesthetic interests, nothing quite combined Victoria's long-time Arts-and-Crafts aesthetic predilections with East-West cultural influences like the cluster of craft potters which focused on Victoria from their studios scattered in the various rural settings of lower Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. Indeed, a shared "back-to-earth" lifestyle was as much a mark of craft clay-working as was the shared interest in both the aesthetics and techniques of Oriental wares. All worked in shadow of the British lead by Bernard Leach's studio and residential apprentice program stabled in St. Ives, Cornwall in the 1930. Leach brought together English and Scandinavian/German Bauhausf arts-and-crafts influences with interests in the parallel Japanese mingei movement focusing on the use of natural materials to produce wares for everyday use.

Walter Dexter had studied in Sweden and Chinese born Wayne Ngan apprenticed with Bernard Leach in St. Ives Cornwall. Both spent an extensive part of their careers pushing the boundaries of the Japanese raku firing process and glazing techniques. Leonard Frank (Ossie) Osborne (1911-2004) and his wife Mary studied with Bauhaus graduate Marguerite Widenhain in California, opening a teaching studio in Saanich in 1960. Jan and Helga Grove produced a steady stream of popular dinner wares and larger sculptural pieces from their Langford studio which they ran for over 40 years starting in 1965. Both had apprenticed with Jan's master-potter father in Luben, Germany, where the influence of the Bauhaus was rekindled after WWII.

However, nothing sums up the craft ceramics scene of these years better than the "Fired Up" group of 14 potters that gathered under the leadership of the internationally successful artist, potter, teacher and writer Robin Hopper (1939-2017) at the Metchosin studio of 'Chosin Pottery he established with his

partner Judy Dyelle in 1986. Hopper researched Oriental glazing techniques in China and Japan, writing extensively about glazing formulations and producing a wide range of wares that constantly explored the decorative possibilities of those traditions. Dyelle also sought inspiration in the visual effects achieved by Japanese glaze painting for her feather-weight porcelain medium. Dexter was a founding member along with Denman Islander Gordon Hutchins whose work with iridescent and Korean crystalline glazing made his work highly prized among international collectors. The biannual exhibitions of the Fired Up group which started in the Hopper's two-and-a-half acre "Anglojapanadian" woodland garden began a tradition that continues to the present day.

Art Education: a legacy across generations.

Victoria has a deep and multifaceted tradition of education in the visual arts. The early history of this would be familiar with the local Coast Salish where weaving and other craft skills were passed down through a system of female mentorship.



Art Room at St. Ann's Academy, Victoria

Structured Settler training in the practice of art such as drawing and painting, but also crafts including needle work, ceramic decoration, were offered to female students attending St. Ann's Academy. Two influential professional artists, both Montreal nuns, Sister Mary Sophie (nee Antoinette Labelle 1849-1922) and Sister Mary Osithe (nee Elizabeth LaBossiere 1867-1941). Art instruction began at the school in 1871 and by the 1890s the curriculum included sketching, water-colour, oil painting, needlework and theatre sets and costume design. Osithe, whose skills also included architectural design, arrived in 1897 and expanded the program to include china painting. She added night classes for the public, staying as head of the art department until her death in 1941. The art programs at the convent school trained several generations of the Order's school teachers and students. But it was also a for-profit venture intended to subsidize other charitable works, especially the Order's schools and hospitals, throughout the BC, the Yukon and Alaska. Art instruction was especially important to the marketing of the school as providing "finishing" instruction for young ladies of wealthy families, both local and throughout the Pacific Northwest. In particular the intention was to provide them with the domestic skills necessary for middle or upper-class home-life.

Overall, art education in Victoria, particular under the teaching practitioners such as Ina Uhtoff (1889-1971) and John Kyle (1971-1958), was shaped by the radical revolution of arts training in London in the wake of the 1851 Great Exhibition. Influential architects such as Matthew Digby Wyatt (1820-1877) and Henry Cole (1808-1882) joined luminaries such as crafts exponent William Morris (1834-1896) and art critic John Ruskin (1819-1900) to expose what they saw as an impoverishment of design by mass production. With blessing of powerful figures such as royal consort Prince Albert, Cole was put in charge of revitalizing the teaching curriculum of the network of British industrial

design schools established earlier in century. These included the prestigious South Kensington School of Design for which the South Kensington Museum (Victoria & Albert Museum) was created as a learning resource. The Glasgow Government School of Design, renamed the Glasgow School of Art in 1853, was also an early experimental laboratory for this reform. The new teaching philosophy, focusing on practical instruction amalgamating fine and applied arts, theory, design and craft practice, was exported informally by newly-trained artists and art educators moving out into the new Dominions. It was also picked up by the Colonial Office which set out to reform art schools in India along these lines. One of the leading exponents, John Lockwood Kipling (1837-1911) (and father of the better known Imperialist writer, Rudyard Kipling - a sometime visitor and enthusiast for Victoria), was sent out to India to survey and report on traditional crafts practices in India. J. L. Kipling was then appointed Principal of the new Mayo School of Industrial Arts to implement the new arts-and-crafts influenced curriculum. Victoria, still captive within the British Imperial Indo-Pacific trade and communications network, was fertile ground for similar initiatives.

The Arts-and-Crafts ethos remained a constant in Victoria's informal art education scene. Margaret Grute and a circle of enthusiasts formed the Victoria Pottery Club in 1925. Grute taught night-school pottery classes in to the late 1940 and in the 1920s taught summer school classes for teachers at the behest of B.C.'s organizer of technical education, John Kyle. In the 1931 the group established a pottery centre in the Old Kingston Street School. Instructors included fine-china retailer Montague Bridgeman, William Menelaws (1887-1966), Adaline Baxter (1881-1951), Arthur Checkley (1873-1964) and Ina D. D. Uhtoff (1889-1971)

The role of local women in art education was also exemplified by Ina D. D. Uhtoff (nee Jemima Duncan Dewar Campbell 1889-1971). Born in Glasgow

she trained at the influential Glasgow School of Art, homesteaded briefly in Kootenays with her husband. She returned to Scotland where she taught school during WWI and was admitted to Royal Scottish Academy. She then moved back to Victoria where she establishing a teaching studio. Instrumental in forming the Island Arts and Crafts Society and, intimate with the circle that included Emily Carr, Samuel Maclure and others, she then founded the Victoria School of Art which she merged with Kingston School of Pottery in 1938. She acted as the school's principal until it demise in 1942, for lack of students during war-time. Her career included contract teaching in local schools including Glen Lyons. During the School's run the progressive curriculum and teaching received accolades and support from the Province's Department of Education. The school's programs were accredited by the Vancouver School of Art. In 1945 Uhtoff founded a small art gallery, the Little Centre, a precursor to the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria established shortly thereafter. Throughout her teaching career Uhtoff maintained a robust artistic output, regularly showing her art in juried and invitational exhibitions in both Victoria and Vancouver, and also the Glasgow Institute of Arts. After WWII the tradition of private art schools has continued with establishment of the Victoria College Art founded in 1973 (offering a provincially accredited diploma) and Vancouver Island School of Art founded in 2004 (adult-focused offering courses at a more popular level), and the Pacific Design Academy which opened its doors in 1991.

Private studio instruction has remained an important part of the Victoria cultural landscape. Czeck artist and sculptor, Jan Zak (1914-1986) whose local teaching studio between 1951 and 1960 was profoundly influential in introducing abstract expressionism to many students including Elza Mayhew (1916-2004), Robert DiCastro (1923-1986), Jack Wilkinson (1927-2007) and Eric Metcalf. Hong Kong trained Stephen Lowe (1938- 1975) passed on his fusion of Lingan-style

Chinese painting with the western impressionist tradition to his many students at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, his teaching studio and his public gallery in the Empress Hotel up to his untimely death at the age of 37.

Today numerous senior artists such as L.A. trained Bill Porteous, and Ives Vial from Lyon France open up their private studios for advanced mentorship and training.



Commercial Illustration by John Kyle

If Ina Uthoff is representative the powerful influence of an art educator in the local cultural landscape the career of Howard John Kyle (1871-1958) demonstrates a much wider impact. Son of a fine art dealer, he first studied jewelry and watch making, then went on to win a Queens Prize and Bronze medal during his studies at the Royal College of Art in London. Gaining experience as an art teacher at technical schools in England and Scotland Kyle accepted the position as Art Supervisor for Vancouver schools in 1906 where he introduced night-school classes for the general public. His career was meteoric. He quickly gained a reputation as an author and columnist on art technique, then 1910 was appointed Art Master at the Vancouver Normal School, in 1913 moving to Victoria to take up the directorship of Technical Education for the Province. During the war years he set up programs correspondence course for

tradesmen, then went on to distance courses for elementary children in remote locations. By 1937 the department under his direction offered a complete Elementary High School correspondence curriculum to thousands of students across British Columbia. Kyle personally taught summer school art courses for teachers and it was his office that founded the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts (now Emily Carr University). He was instrumental in founding the B.C. Society of Fine Arts in Vancouver in 1909; in Victoria he was president of the Island Arts and Crafts Society and saw it transition to the Victoria Sketch Club in 1956. He is credited with giving Emily Carr her first public exhibition. He encouraged the Victoria High School to offer weekend art classes for children. After Kyle's retirement from public service in 1938 he continued teaching for his correspondence courses and exhibiting his own works until his death in 1958.

The careers of Kyle and Uthoff overlapped with that of Victoria-born, Allan Whitcomb Edwards (1915-1991), who was introduced to the English school of water-colour painting by lawyer-artist and playwright (also a Glasgow School of Art graduate) Archibald Fairbairn. Edwards trained as a commercial artist in Toronto, then via the Meizinger foundation in Detroit embarked on an international career as a fashion designer. He worked for a number of high-end department stores such as Saks, Wanamaker's, Macy's and Bloomingdales; as advertising illustrator in L.A. for Revlon, Max Factor and Lear, then as an architectural illustrator for Burton C. Schutt Architects. This led to his appointment as senior design consultant for Hilton Hotels as they built out their international hotel chain. Edwards would often interrupt his peripatetic career with extended visits to Victoria, exhibiting his work with the Island Arts and Crafts Society, the Vancouver Art Gallery and the RCAA. Returning to Victoria in 1952 he established his own art school, gallery, craft-shop and design studio. He resuscitated the near-defunct Federation of Canadian Artists and served as

its president. While in Victoria he would teach and mentor local artists and craftspeople to whom he would give commissions for his various projects. In 1971 he commissioned Stephen Lowe and Carol Sabiston to provide paintings and tapestries for the prestigious Canadian-owned Heathrow Airport Skyline hotel in London England. To supply fabrics for these commissions Edwards set up a design studio and fabric printing factory in Vancouver. From his Victoria studio also came numerous, and quite aspirational, presentation drawings for the coterie of local Modernist architects building the new University of Victoria Gordon Head campus and other major institutional commissions. In his retirement Edwards founded the ArtSpring art gallery and cultural centre on Salt Spring Island which thrives to the present day.

But it is Kyle' influence that pervades British Columbia art education to this day. Within the system he established professional artists, who were to go on to national and international acclaim, taught in Victoria Schools inspiring countless students to embrace artistic careers. Jack Shadbolt taught at Lampson Street School, ultimately studying in New York and London, teaching at the Vancouver School of Art, then becoming a Canadian war artist, and Canadian pioneer in abstract art. Bill West, sculptor and stage designer, became a founding faculty member in the University of Victoria's Theatre Department. Ecole Beaux de Beaux Arts trained Ives Vial who merged his studio art practice with art therapy took his collaborative techniques to local schools. As artist-in-residence at the Victoria Art Gallery he reached a wider youth audience. Harry Stanbridge, a major Canadian hard-edge abstract expressionist founded the art department and devoted his career to Spectrum School a local magnet for kids interested in the creative arts.

When the University of Victoria brought together the academic Victoria College and the Provincial Normal School specializing in teacher training, the art

education department of the latter provided the core professoriate for a new, first-in-Canada, Faculty of Fine Arts. The Art Education Department headed by art and music teacher Prof. A. Wilfred Johns (1905-1982) within the Faculty of Education continued and expanded under a series of chairs including well-known multi-media artist, Bill Zuk who joined the faculty in 1974. Johns launched an art exhibition program within Education Faculty, an initiative which ultimately established the University of Victoria Art Gallery which merged with the Maltwood Museum, becoming the cluster of UVic on and off campus, University of Victoria Legacy Art Galleries.

As the University of Victoria built out its new Gordon Head campus it was quick to incorporate public art in the building program. Major early works were the bas-relief panels by George Norris (1928-2013) fronting the Library Building and works by other local sculptors including Elza Mayhew, William (Bill) West (1921-2007) and free-stand totem poles by the Hunt family and Charles Elliott. The First Peoples House constructed in 2010 was designed to accommodate major commissioned carvings by John Livingston (1951-2019), Moy (Morris)



University of Victoria Ceremonial Furniture Suite

Sutherland Jr.(Nuu-chah-nulth)Jr, Luke Marston (Coast Salish), Doug Lafortune (Coast Salish). Xwa Lack Tun (Rick Harry, Squamish Nation), Chris Paul (Coast Salish), Dr. Charles TEOSEN-TET Elliott OBC (Coast Salish, 1941-2023) Rande Cook (Kwakwaka'wakw), and Tony Hunt Jr. (Kwakwaka'wakw, (1962-2017). The First Peoples House on campus also features an exhibition galleria for the University's First Nations prints and drawings collection.

In 1994 philanthropist Dr. Michael Williams commissioned a ceremonial furniture suite for use at University of Victoria Convocations. The five items in the suite were a collaboration of eleven British Columbia First Nations Arts under the direction of John Livingston.

Professor Johns had already created a mural for the Normal School and it was moved to the new Campus in 1963. Large-scale murals have followed over the years by William West (Phoenix Building), Herbert Siebner (Student Union Building) Rick Rivet (Matthews Building), Ted Harrison (Turpin Building). Textile artist Carole Sabiston provided large-scale fabric works for the Phoenix Theatre and Michael Williams Building. The University's art holdings, now comprising over 25,000 items including a major Asian art and First Nations print collections, provide for some 2,500 works to enhance public spaces. Ongoing curated installations can be found in the McPherson Library, the Maclaurin Building the First Peoples House. The University's public art program provided a model program for local public art programs such as those of the City of Victoria launched in 2018 and the District of Oak Bay "Art Alive" sculpture installations started in 2014.



Pearson College Metchosin Victoria B.C.

The Uhtoff-Kyle teaching legacy, by now embodied in the DNA of local art education, was to reveal itself in the launch of the Metchosin International Summer School of Arts in 1984. The founders selected the coastal forested campus of Pearson College (United World Colleges) as its home in 1984. (Even the facilities are a stunning example of West Coast Modern design by architects Ron Thom and Barrie Downs.) The school was the brain-child of Robin Hopper (1939-2017), craft potter, educator, and author of numerous texts on ceramic making techniques. True to its name the school has built a world-wide reputation and student following for its expert international faculty and multidisciplinary curriculum. The annual intense residential program crosses many media including ceramics, weaving and fabric arts, print-making, bookbinding, various painting, sketching, illustration and calligraphy techniques, sculpture, toolmaking, book binding, and needlework along with mind and body wellness seminars.

An ancient tradition meets modern practice

In a converted Chinatown carriage factory Kwakwaka'wakw artist Tony Hunt established an informal training studio for aspiring First Nations youth who travelled in from throughout the West Coast to learn print-making and carving from the Hunt family. Together with Richard Hunt, his brother, and John Livingston (adopted) a new generation of indigenous artists emerged becoming the back-bone to a thriving First Nations arts economy of carvers, textile artists and print-makers. The imprint on this scene, and its multi-generations of artists, was to mark Victoria and give shape to its artistic community for some fifty years.

In 2019 Carey Newman, master-carver, opera tenor, filmmaker and author of Kwakwaka'wakw and Coast Salish descent, unveiled what may be the most influential contemporary work of art made in Victoria: "The Witness Blanket". Inspired by the work of the ongoing Canadian Reconciliation Commission, but prompted in particular by the terrifying hundred-year brutal history of the First Nations Residential School system, the Witness Blanket merged Modern Movement Constructivism and contemporary mixed-media installation-work exemplified in Victoria by sculptors Jan Zak and Bill West, Robert Wise and textile artist Carol Sabiston. However, Newman's direct reference here was the thousand-year West Coast First Nations tradition of the woven blanket.

Witness Blanket was assembled from 800 donated objects or personal artifacts, many from survivors or their families, all reclaimed from residential schools and related institutions.

In the book accompanying the art work (*Picking up the Pieces* by Cary Newman and Kirstie Hudson, 2019) Newman explains, "Symbolizing the protection, identity, ceremony and generosity Indigenous people derive from blankets, the artwork explores the storied role of community, children and memory". An eight-by-forty-foot Cedar lattice woven with these found and



Witness Blanket Cary Newman 2019 Coll. MHR

recovered mementos invites contemplation of cultural genocide on a vast scale - as it intersects with the power of survival. The “Blanket” is now lodged permanently at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg.

As a dense collection of memories and stories Witness Blanket is at once instructive, monumental and argumentative. But it is ultimately an expression of hope, a dialogue across generations and communities, Indigenous and Settler. In some ways, therefore, the work is itself a summary trajectory of artistic practice in the Pacific Northwest with Victoria as a reference point.

These arts have been forever multi-faceted, shape-shifting, evolving – but in the human imagination unchanging - rooted in a cultural landscape where place, identity and meaning meet.

Observations

- The role of the visual arts in telling the story of Victoria, and its relations to the world beyond its shores, has been sadly neglected. Galleries dedicated to

this mission such as the Emily Carr Gallery on Wharf Street and the Provincial Archives Gallery have been defunded and closed. The solution is an expanded Art Gallery of Greater Victoria specifically tasked with telling this story, and in particular presenting the art of its most famous daughter, Emily Carr, in permanent galleries.

- The high art of the Lekwungen Peoples, the Coast Salish blanket and allied arts, has been ignored. This lacuna needs to be addressed, either through a separate institution addressing the life and cultural heritage of local First Nations, or a permanent exhibition in the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.
- The artistic heritage of Victoria, collected and stored in institutions such as the Royal BC Museum, the Art Gallery of Victoria, the B.C. Provincial Archives, the Special Collections Division of the University of Victoria Libraries, the B. C. Provincial Art Collection remains for the most part hidden. Only the University of Victoria exhibits a substantial part of its Modern era art holdings on permanent exhibition in public spaces on campus. A massive effort consisting of loans to schools, temporary exhibitions in non-museum public spaces, and a collaborative pan-institutional data-base dedicated to Victoria's art history would start to address this issue.

Resources

- Robert Amos. Artists in their Studios. 2007.
Robert Amos: Harold Mortimer-Lamb: The Art Lover. 2013
Robert Amos. Where Art is Born: Artists in their Studio Series. 2007
Daina Augaitis, Allan Collier, Stephanie Rebbic. Modern in the Making: Post-War Craft and Design in British Columbia. 2020.
Greg L. Bellerby. Mark Tobey. 1983.
Helen Bergen Peters. Painting During the Colonial Period in British Columbia 1845-1871. 1979
Roger Boulet Frederic. Marlett Bell-Smith (1846-1923). 1977
Roger Boulet and Terry Fenton. Vistas: Artists on the Canadian Pacific Railway. 2009

Patricia E. Bovey. Robin Hopper: Ceramic Exploration 1957-1987. 1987.

Patricia E. Bovey. Art and Dynamics of the Limners. 1996

Patricia E. Bovey, Michelle Jaques. Carole Sabiston: Everything Below all of the Above. 2014.

Patricia E. Bovey. Myfanwy Pavelic: Inner Explorations. 1994'

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