

Emily Carr's Adventure to Art

Bonnie Cheng
Mrs. Talbot
Grade 9 Art
November 12, 2001

Emily Carr's Adventure to Art

Emily Carr, one of Canada's favorite and best-known artists had accomplished a lot in her lifetime. She was born on December 13th, 1871 on Vancouver Island in a small town of Victoria. However she had sadly passed away on March 2nd 1945 because of poor health conditions. Her dreams were always to become an artist and create her own Canadian style. Yet, she had overcome lots of problems in which she faced them with courage, imagination and humor.

Her inspirations of becoming an artist all started out when she was a child. She was nicknamed "Small" in her family since she was the smallest child out of five children who were all girls. Emily was different from all her sisters. They liked to play Ladies but she didn't. She even thought animals were better companions than her sisters. She longed for a dog when she was 8 years old but she wasn't allowed. So she decided to draw one and figured out drawing was fun. When she showed her father, he was impressed. He decided to arrange her into drawing lessons. She discovered drawing was so much fun that she couldn't stop at all. However she was always getting into trouble such as not listening in class. In order to avoid all the scolding from people, she decided to go out to the woods in where she had discovered the beauty of nature. She liked the woods so much that she said, "Some day when I am really an artist I shall be able to paint these mysterious forests." (Carr) When Emily was 15, her mother had died. Two years after her mother's death, her father had also passed away and left a trust fund to provide the needs of his five children. Emily wanted to go to France or England but the trip was too expensive so she went to San Francisco where it was closer and cheaper.

In the late 1893, Emily Carr's family couldn't afford her studies no longer so her experience in San Francisco had ended there. In her three years of study in San Francisco, her work was "humdrum and unemotional--- objects honestly portrayed, nothing more." (Newlands) Years had passed, so did her childhood. She was still determined to become a real artist. When she was back in Canada she would go on as many painting trips as she could. She was interested in doing paintings on totem poles so she decided to visit the West Coast where the native people were. She arrived to an Indian village where she was called "Klee Wyck" which means "Laughing One." She felt very comfortable in their village and the Indian people liked her as well. She decided to paint pictures of the traditional ways before they disappear. When she drew the totem poles, she wanted to develop some new techniques. She wanted to describe the mood, "I want to show the strength of these poles and the spirit of the people who lived here. I want to show the emptiness now. I need to develop some new techniques." (Carr) Another white artist, Theodore Richardson had visited the village and praised Emily's art on how much Indian flavor it had. She was very happy when he had said that. Yet he left the city. Emily had learned a lot from the Indian people. They taught her to be bold in her style. "Find the spirit with the feeling of the spirit in your heart." (Indians)

When she arrived back to Vancouver, she still had a great desire to paint the forest. However, she needs to earn money to buy food and pay for her expenses. She was

hired to teach art in Ladies' Art Club of Vancouver but the ladies had no interest in learning how to draw. They only had interest in chattering and didn't want criticism in their paintings. Emily was such a serious artist while the Ladies' Art Club wasn't so serious about art. Emily had also taught children art, which she found, was more successful. They were more eager to learn art than the ladies. She saw one of the children struggling to draw a flower and she said to her, "Cathy, are you trying to make an exact copy? That's what cameras are for! Be creative! You want to sketch of a flower that will let you feel it growing and let you see it enjoying the sunlight!" (Carr) The children she taught thinks she was a different sort of teacher because the other teachers want exact copies not like Emily's way which was much more interesting.

Her inspirations of going to France were still there and she fulfilled it in 1910 when she was 38 years old. Artists there were developing paintings with spirit, which would express its mood and motion. She felt confident that this style could create her own technique. Her instructor, Harry Gibb taught her how to show mood in her paintings and remarked her, "Emily, you will be one of the great painters...ah hem... women painters of our day." What he said had made her sort of furious, because women were capable of as much talent as men. She went back to Canada after a year and planned an exhibit of her new art work. However, the visitors didn't come and compliment her, they came and laughed at her work. Her heart had sunk since no one liked her artwork; she decided to go back to the woods of British Columbia. Yet, another problem occurred. She had no money and couldn't make money for selling her painting or teaching art since no one liked her art.

In order to pay her rents, she had to become a landlady. 15 years of being a landlady, she had hardly painted at all. She hated to be a landlady but her pets kept her spirits up. She had brought a monkey named Woo who made messes but delighted everyone. She started to consider she was not an artist until one unexpected phone call from Eric Brown who was from National Gallery of Canada. He wanted to see her paintings. At first she didn't want to but she allowed him and was waiting for his criticism when suddenly a glow of happiness flowed over her. He had complimented her work and wanted to set her paintings to Ottawa. There, she met the Group of 7 and was thrilled. She continued to paint again. At age 56, her life began again. She started to paint with the sense of mystery, power and beauty. Group of 7 asked her to send some of her paintings to an exhibition. Letters of great encouragement were given back to her. She started using dark colors for aging trees and the shadows. Light colors for the new growth. She also redid paintings based on her old ones.

Galleries started purchasing her paintings and people finally understood her art and liked her style. No one ever criticized her art anymore. However she was worried she might start to paint in the hope of making a fortune. Yet, she was a strong character who loved art too much to be affected by fame or money. Years pasted, her health had become worse. She suffered heart attacks and strokes, which didn't stop her from painting though. When she was too ill to paint she started writing. She wrote about her childhood, Klee Wyck, and her accomplishments. She won an award for "Klee Wyck" for non-fiction in 1941. Sadly she died of a stroke on March 2nd 1945.

Emily Carr had developed a distinctive Canadian style in art. She was also the first major woman artist to be recognized in Canada. She would be always be one of Canada's favourite and best-known artists.

like what colours and how the colours match or not match,.....what;s the contrast...how does the background bring out the objects in the front...bs

Emily Carr, Self Portrait was a portrait of her. The colours she used were yellow, brown, blue and green. It makes her look lonely. Her eyes looks depressed. The lips are sort of like a frown. The background is a lot lighter than the object. It shows that the object is alone. I don't really like this portrait because it doesn't really show a good impression of Emily to me.

Emily Carr, Woo, was a painting of a monkey she drew when she brought it. I liked the colours on the background. It seemed like a cheerful picture with the bright colours on the dress. The bow stands out the most because it had the brightest colour.

Emily Carr Cumsheewa, was a painting of a crow.