

# **Miss Carr, In Seven Scenes**

*words by Emily Carr, adapted by Jeffrey Ryan*

## **Oh, These Mountains!**

Oh, these mountains! They won't bulk up.

Something has spoken to the very soul of me, wonderful, mighty, not of this world. Chords way down in my being have been touched. Dumb notes have struck chords of wonderful tone. Something has called out of somewhere. Something in me is trying to answer. It is surging through my whole being, the wonder of it all, like a great river rushing on, dark and turbulent, and rushing and irresistible, carrying me away. Where, where? I long to hear and yet I'm half afraid.

Oh, you mountains, I am at your feet—humble, pleading! Speak to me in your wordless words!

## **A Glimpse of God**

Emily Carr, born Dec. 13, 1871 at Victoria, B.C., 4 a.m. in a deep snow storm, tomorrow will be sixty-two. It is not all bad, this getting old, ripening.

Do not forget life, artist. A picture is not a collection of portrayed objects nor is it a certain effect of light and shade nor is it a souvenir of a place nor a sentimental reminder, nor is it a show of colour nor a magnificence of form, nor yet is it anything seeable or sayable. It is a glimpse of God interpreted by the soul.

A few minutes more and the New Year will come. The present moment, that's all we have. This looking forward and looking back is unprofitable. I have done? I will do? No, I AM DOING.

## **Rhythm and Space**

Rhythm and space, space and rhythm, how can I learn more about these?

I woke with this idea. Try using positive and negative colours in juxtaposition. Try working in complementaries; run some reds into your greens, some yellow into your purples. Red-green, blue-orange, yellow-purple.

The arrangement, the design, colour, shape, depth, light, space, mood, movement, balance, not one or all of these fills the bill. There is something additional, a breath that draws your breath into its breathing, a heartbeat that pounds on yours, a recognition of the oneness of all things.

Form is fine, and colour and design and subject matter but that which does not speak to the heart is worthless.

Oh, that mountain! I'm dead beat tonight with struggling.

## Letters

### Reams of Horrid Letters

I've written reams of horrid letters to picture galleries that *won't* return my exhibits. National Gallery had three for *three years*, Toronto Watercolour had three for *two years*. Why should one have to beg and beg to get their own belongings? I wrote Brown straight from the shoulder. He'll ignore it like always, as if I did not exist, weren't worth a glance even from his eye.

### Mr. Hatch Wrote

Mr. Hatch wrote acknowledging the two paper sketches I sent him. He found their vigour and profoundness appealing. Said few people *understand* them. Now I can't see *what* there is to be understood. Perhaps folk would like a numbered bit on the back:

1. a tree,
2. a root,
3. a grass,
4. a fool looking.

### Compliments, Hanna Lund

Yesterday I got this letter.

Dear Madame Emily Carr:

Just a few words to express my great admiration for your beautiful picture, "Peace." To me this picture represents Divinity and I have often been sitting in front of it this last week.

Compliments,  
Hanna Lund

When I read it I cried hard.

### A Movement Floating Up

I am sixty-three tomorrow and have not yet known real success.

I am painting a sky. The subject is sky, starting lavender beneath the trees and rising into a smoother hollow air space, greenish in tone, merging into laced clouds and then into deep, bottomless blue, not flat and smooth like the centre part of the sky, but loose, coming forward. There is to be *one* sweeping movement through the whole air, an ascending movement, high and fathomless. The movement must connect with each part, taking great care with the articulation. A movement floating up. It is a study in movement, designed movement. A movement floating up.

### I'm Just Whizzy!

I'm just whizzy! Sold four pictures.

Received \$120 for picture "Shoreline." Gallery took \$30 commission from \$150 sale price to Mrs. de Pencier. Also got \$75 for three sketches from Miss de Pencier. What a help to finances!

Mr. Band has bought "Nirvana" for \$200, Mr. Southam "Haida Village" for \$150, and Lawren Harris another for \$200. A number of others are over in the East being sat on and considered.

Toronto Art Gallery has purchased "Western Forest," "Movement in the Woods" and "Kispiax Village" for \$1,075. I was stunned when I opened the letter. It is wonderful.

Ottawa has bought two canvases, a paper sketch, "Blunden Harbour," a Haida village and "Sky" for \$750. Madame Stokowski, wife of the composer and conductor, bought a small canvas for \$75. Mr. Southam bought a small Skidigate sketch in oils for \$150 and Mrs. Douglas a French cottage for \$15. An old Vancouver pupil took a Pemberton sketch, also for \$15. How lucky I am, or rather, how well taken care of!

15  
15  
150  
75  
750  
\$1005 Goodness!

## Uncovered

Perhaps what brought it home was the last two lines of a crit in a Toronto paper: "Miss Carr is essentially Canadian, not by reason of her subject matter alone, but by her approach to it." I am glad of that. I am also glad that I am showing these men that women can hold up their end. So I have decided to stop squirming, to throw any honour in with Canada and women. It is wonderful to feel the grandness of Canada in the raw, not because she is Canada but because she's something sublime that you were born into, some great rugged power that you are a part of.

I have uncovered "The Mountain."

I think that one's art is a growth inside one. I do not think one can explain growth. It is silent and subtle. One does not keep digging up a plant to see how it grew. Who could explain its blossom? It can only explain itself in smell and colour and form. It touches you with these and the thing is said. These critics with their rules and words and theories and influences make me very tired. It is listening; it is hunting with the heart. How can one explain these things?

All texts from *Hundreds and Thousands* by Emily Carr (Public Domain)  
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