HANGING EMILY:
EXHIBITION STRATEGIES AND EMILY CARR

by

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THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
Department of Curriculum Studies

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

December 1999

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Date Dec 14 99

DE-6 (2/88)
Abstract

Hanging Emily: Exhibition strategies and Emily Carr

This study examines the impact of new museological theory on museum education practice at the Vancouver Art Gallery in relation to a re-installation of Emily Carr's work. It is a case study that concerns both the negotiation of meanings around Emily Carr's work as they are situated within current and traditional art historical/historical beliefs, and the desire to offer museum visitors a more sufficient or comprehensive educational experience.

The dissertation examines the installation of Carr in a variety of galleries across Canada (National Gallery, Art Gallery of Ontario, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Vancouver Art Gallery) as a means of contextualizing a range of problems associated with museum practice. The National Gallery chapter explores issues of ideology raised by the new museology. The chapter concerning the display at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria concerns the particularities of site and place (Victoria was Carr's birthplace) as well as notions of resonance and contextualization in art displays. The discussion of the Art Gallery of Ontario concerns contextualization of a different sort, the display created with a solid foundation in educational literature. A temporary exhibition of Carr's work juxtaposed with that of Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun in Vancouver offers an entry point into a discussion of subjectivity and curatorial epistemic authority, while the resulting re-installation of Carr at the Vancouver Art Gallery (the case) is explored as one possible approach to issues raised in the earlier chapters, by the challenges of post-modern theorists to historical understanding, historiography, and museum practice.
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Acknowledgements

This work would not have been possible without my co-supervisor Graeme Chalmers, who from his suggestion of the title Hanging Emily, to his constant votes of confidence about my writing, and the example of his own voluminous and varied work in art education, has been a mentor to me. I am truly grateful.

And I am most indebted also to my co-supervisor Peter Seixas, whose encouragement has been fundamental to the completion of this project. I have benefitted greatly from his work on teaching history and historical understanding, and his assistance and emotional support on numerous academic matters has been essential to me. I am lucky to have had such kind and supportive supervisors. Thank you!

Thank you also to committee member, John O'Brian, whose knowledge of Emily Carr, the field of art history and the local art scene have greatly helped this thesis.

A special thank you goes also to Head of Public Programs at the VAG, Cheryl Meszaros for her openness, determination, and zeal. I learned so much from working with Cheryl on numerous projects while completing this thesis. She is an exemplary model to which any museum educator should aspire.

At the VAG, a hearty thanks to Susan, Susan, Brian, Kirstie, and Beverley for their friendship, and fun times on the fourth floor. And to Josie, for showing me that it can be done! Also to Cheryl and Diana for their enthusiastic work on the Emily Carr evaluation project. Thanks as well to Anne Newlands and Doug Worts for their interest and information about the National Gallery and the Art Gallery of Ontario. And also to Andrew Hunter for his frank and entertaining discussions about his curatorial work. Thanks to Lynn and Cheryl at the VAG library. A big thanks to Saroj for all her kind works and deeds that helped me to find my way through CUST. I learned so much from all my interactions with faculty, staff and students in CUST, thank you.

Finally, to my friends and family who made this a pleasant journey: To Kristen, for daily consultations about the weather, life and everything. To Barbara, for her late night phone calls and encouragement. To Jen, for her ability to see reality and calm me down. To Andrea, for her encouragement and love, plants and rollerblades and Darren and his desserts! To Patricia, for her camaraderie. To Brenda, for her interesting tales from the outside! To Keith, many thanks for the encouragement. And to best pal Lee, my dear chum and my own personal history keeper, keep up the good work! And of course, finally, a big thanks to my Mom and Dad.
Introduction

Hanging Emily: Exhibition strategies and Emily Carr concerns the re-installation of works in the Emily Carr gallery at the Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG). After an examination of installations of Emily Carr’s works in Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver and Victoria, in an exploration of museological issues of representation, and interpretation, the study then follows the development of new interpretive panels after negotiations between a curator, an educator and myself. Hanging Emily is a case study that concerns both the negotiation of meanings around Emily Carr’s work as they are situated within current and traditional art historical beliefs, and the desire to offer the viewer a more comprehensive educational experience.

Many studies, forming an area that has been called, “new museology,” examine the implicit political effects of museums (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992; Bennett, 1995). Drawing from the insights of postmodernism and poststructuralism (see also Hutcheon, 1988), these studies note the role of architecture, classification of artifacts, and labelling techniques that helped to reinforce the “hidden curriculum” of the nation-state. More recently scholars have suggested that individual exhibitions, too, merit closer critical analysis (Greenberg, Ferguson, and Nairne, 1996). Indeed, exhibitions are beginning to attract the attention of scholars from cultural studies (Bal, 1996), as well as from the fields of history (Brown, 1997; Cruikshank & Bouchier, 1999; Williams, 1995) art history (Burns, 1997; Stein, 1990; Johns, 1989) and literary criticism (Hutcheon, 1994), and journals such as American Quarterly and the Journal of American History now include regular exhibition reviews as a key site of cultural activity. The politics of museum display has been noted by museum professionals, themselves, as well, yet there are few in-depth studies that deal specifically with ways in which exhibitions might address the critiques of recent museological theory. Instead, much
of the literature in museum education focuses on a quite different but equally challenging and practical problem: how to make museum, and in particular, art museum, experiences more accessible and rewarding for the public (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994; Berry, 1998).

In addition to these two challenges, grappling with the politics of display, and creating a more accessible experience, this re-installation responds to contemporary issues concerning historical interpretation (e.g. Berkhofer, 1995). That is, which narratives, or which stories, should the gallery choose to tell about Emily Carr? Museums and galleries have traditionally presented a singular and authoritative viewpoint. As broader perspectives on what constitutes “history” emerge, the question of whose history is presented within public institutions like museums has become highly contested. As an artist who stands as a mythic figure in Canada, Emily Carr is considered meaningful for a variety of reasons to different viewers. As well, the Emily Carr collection at the Vancouver Art Gallery forms an important part of the permanent collection. Can the Gallery afford to offer a critical viewpoint or must it work to fulfil the expectations of the audience, and present Carr as a mythic figure? In a medium (the art exhibition) which is traditionally premised on chronology, stylistic development and a single narrative, how far can, or will the gallery go to present an alternative point of view? And how can the gallery provide this information to the public in a more accessible and rewarding way? These questions have caused the Emily Carr collection to be the centre of longstanding debate among gallery staff.

These types of questions about representation and authority have become of central importance to museologists. Scholars working in this area began to examine the theoretical underpinnings, frameworks and constructs of museums, in order to illuminate ideological assumptions shaping the representation of objects and ideas in museums. As
Peter Vergo, author of *The New Museology*, argues, we must now realize that,

every acquisition (and indeed disposal), every juxtaposition or arrangement
of an object or a work of art, together with other objects or works of art, within
the context of a temporary exhibition or museum display means placing a
certain construction upon history, be it the history of the distant or more recent
past, of our own culture or someone else's, of mankind in general or a
particular aspect of human endeavour. (1989, p. 3)

This realization is reflected in a number of studies that examine museums as sites to be
mined for evidence of political and social beliefs. An influential early study in this area is
Duncan and Wallach's (1980) study of how the survey museum narrates a particular view of
world history: a teleological operation which locates Western industrial society as the
"logical" and progressive pinnacle.

Other works have examined these ideas in more depth. In *Museums and the
Shaping of Knowledge* Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (1992) examines the emergence of the
modern museum, documenting its transformations over time, in response to changing
political agendas and philosophical beliefs. She argues that through history the museum
changed from a cabinet of curiosities, to an encyclopedic ethnographic collection based on a
desire to classify the world, to displays that privilege the aesthetic meaning of objects over
all others. She uses Foucault's theories to highlight the connections between knowledge
and power in the shaping of meanings for objects. Likewise, Tony Bennett (1995), in *The
Birth of the Museum*, draws on the theories of Foucault for his analysis of the development
of museums and other similar sites of cultural activities. He looks at the development of the
museum in a broader social context, positing relationships between fairs, exhibitions and
museums and tracing the genealogy and connecting them as sites of social control and
public cultural education. While Hooper-Greenhill and Bennett have provided the most
comprehensive examinations of the ideological roots of museums, many other anthologies
offer similar analyses of the politics of a wide variety of museums across time-periods
(Lumley, 1988; Crimp, 1993; Sherman and Rogoff, 1994; Pearse, 1995).
Following on this body of research are appeals for a different perspective on museums. As a result researchers are beginning to turn their attention to the examination of the more detailed workings of exhibitions themselves (Luke, 1995; Bai, 1996; Greenberg, Ferguson and Nairne, 1996). Exhibitions are at the “heart of the museum’s public face” and are the primary way in which visitors encounter the museum’s collection (Roberts, 1997). And according to Bruce Ferguson, while exhibitions have not been the centre of much close examination, exhibitions form complex manifestations of museums’ otherwise often unarticulated beliefs (Ferguson, 1996). For as Bal suggests,

Exhibitions are neither realistic nor transparent windows thorough which the visitor can get a view on the world of art “as it is.” They are the result of opining by an agent who says, not in general “Look!” but “Look at this! This is what I have selected for you to see.” (Bal, 1996, p. 158)

Both Bal and Ferguson argue that further attention needs to be given to the close examination of the workings of different types of exhibitions. For at this point, the structure and message of exhibitions tends to be glossed over as a natural and self-evident statement. Further understanding of how these exhibitions operate on a more theoretical level is necessary before practical alternatives can be derived. And better practice is the ultimate goal, as critics have increasingly argued.

While the new museology has been influential, it has increasingly begun to draw some criticism. Commenting on Douglas Crimp’s and Sherman and Rogoff’s volumes, Ivan Gaskell, chief curator at the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, voices what has now become a common criticism of new museology. He notes that,

Criticism of museums has become so prevalent...that the chorus has begun to sound merely carping. The onus is now upon critics no longer simply to complain and point out perceived flaws, and hidden ideological agendas; rather they should propose practical alternatives to the work that museums do. (Gaskell, 1995, p. 675)

He also addresses theoretical angles taken by these analyses. He feels that too often
Foucauldian and ideological critiques of museology tend to construct the notion of “museum” as a monolithic and static category, thus denying any diversity or possibility of difference. It is not just a building, but rather a complex arrangement of people and objects within it. As Andreas Huyssen puts it,

> We need to move beyond various forms of the old museum critique which are surprisingly homogenous in their attack on ossification, reification, and cultural hegemony even if the focus of the attack may be quite different now from what it once was: then the museum as bastion of high culture, now, very differently, as the new kingpin of the culture industry. (Huyssen, 1995, p. 18)

In many ways these critiques of new museology seem parallel with those of postmodernism, and where scholars once argued that it was simply enough to begin to pose the questions, we have now reached a point where practical applications of theory need to be found.

In addition to these theoretical critiques of museums and their alienating, hegemonic practices, the demand for change is rising in the field. Museum publics are changing and growing at a phenomenal pace. The Vancouver Art Gallery, for instance, increased its attendance by 45% in 1999 (“Arts notes,” 1999, p. 103). Similarly remarkable, a recent American study showed a fourfold increase in visitorship to museums from 1991 to 1997 (Knight, 1999). As museums increasingly become, as Huyssen puts it, “the kingpin of the culture industry,” there are rising calls to create more responsive and appealing environments in museums. One avenue for museums to expand their growing markets is to create blockbuster-style exhibitions, on subjects with mass-appeal, like Impressionism. These shows do little to challenge minds or create dialogue, but rather they result in what has been called the “disney-fication” of museums (Wallace, 1985), and the tendency to "vacuum clean the past" (Wallace, 1987, p. 44).\(^1\) Another means by which museums can attract more visitors is to make their environments more inviting, educational,

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\(^1\) See also the special section of *Art in America*, June 1986 concerning museum blockbusters (Conforti, 1986; Elsen, 1986; Wallis, 1986).
and entertaining (Keates, 1999; Knight, 1999, 1999b; Hooper-Greenhill, 1995; Hood, 1993; Edwards, Loomis, & Fusco, 1990). Increasingly, museums are becoming sites of edu-tainment, drawing upon the spectacle of the destination shopping mall and the theme park, the cultural sites with whom they must compete for our leisure time (Roberts, 1997; Falk, 1998; Mintz, 1998; Hood, 1993). Science museums, in particular, have most clearly addressed the needs of their visitors for user-friendly exhibits (Roberts, 1997), but art museums are now beginning to adapt their environments to improve accessibility and reduce the alienation traditionally encountered by the uninitiated visitor, with varying degrees of success (Keates, 1999; Dobbs & Eisner, 1990; Getty Centre, 1991).

As an important point of interaction between museum and audience, then, there is increasing interest in studies that deal with issues of text and exhibit development, an interest that reflects the impact of new museology. For as Andreas Huyssen suggests,

one way of judging [the activities of the new museology] must be to determine to what extent it helps overcome the insidious ideology of the superiority of one culture over all others in space and time, to what extent and in what ways it opens itself to other representations, and how it will be able to foreground problems of representation, narrative, and memory in its designs and exhibits. (Huyssen, 1995, p. 34)

Not surprisingly then, museum educators are becoming more and more interested in their role as interpreters of the collections, and specifically in the use of text in museums. If the exhibit is the primary means in which visitors encounter collections, text is the primary means in which visitors are exposed to interpretation within that exhibition.

The importance of this issue is evident in the number of studies that have emerged in the past two or three years. For example, Beverley Serrell, well-known for her practical and straightforward guide to text in museums Making Exhibit Labels: A Step by Step Guide (1983) which was essentially a guide to appropriate font size, and grammar, recently published a new book, Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach (1996). In it she argues
for a “new approach” for labelling design that focuses primarily on the importance of the conceptual framework of the exhibitions and close examination of issues of interpretation, and spends less time discussing such issues as word count. In Canada, this new interest in text is evident in the publication of Text in the Exhibition Medium (Blais, 1995), which features theoretical and practical studies by museum educators across the country.

At the National Art Education Association annual conference (1997), museum educators devoted their entire division conference to the issue of labelling, and spent over 50% of their main conference sessions discussing issues of interpretation. And in Canada, the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia recently received a large grant to research the issue of text in art galleries, in order to develop a framework for its own exhibition policy (Stephen, 1995). And similarly, my initial contact with staff at the Vancouver Art Gallery was to develop and present a comprehensive view of labelling practice.

While these examples illustrate that museum educators (rightfully so) tend to focus on practical matters, at the expense of situating their work within historical and philosophical traditions (Roberts, 1997), it is clear that there is a need for further study which is able to combine theoretical goals with practical means of implementation. One study that offers an example of what this combination of theory and practice might look like is Lisa Roberts’s, From Knowledge to Narrative: Educators and the Changing Museum (1997), a case study of the development of an exhibit at the Botanic Gardens in Chicago. She argues that educators are playing more important roles in exhibition development, and that museums are increasingly aware that they are not simply transmitting knowledge so much as constructing particular narratives. With its emphasis on the development of a specific exhibition, Roberts’ book offers a useful model for my work. Her book illustrates how my own study might be set up, since it utilises a variety of methods to examine the issues. Roberts describes it as an ethnographic study that also utilises methods such as textual and historical analysis in order to contextualize her work.
While Roberts' study offers some potential avenues in terms of possible organization of my findings, it does not offer insights in a number of areas. For one thing, it does not describe an art exhibition, which, as I will argue, offers its own particular problems in terms of interpretation and display. It also follows too closely issues of negotiation that are peripheral to the development of content, at the expense of an in-depth theoretical analysis of the choices made.

The issue of text in exhibitions is further complicated when considering the case of art museums. Studies of curatorial practices are beginning to emerge, as art curatorship in most cases still tends to follow a traditional approach, one based on art historical methods of chronology and stylistic development (Alloway, 1996; Meijers, 1996). And in an important study of art museums in 1987, Eisner and Dobbs noted that, in spite of museum education and museological research, there was still an inherent resistance to text and interpretation in art galleries. This resistance is based on the art work as aesthetic object, which is acted out in a museum context by a reliance on the artwork to "speak for itself," resistant to textual interpretation. However, displaying artworks without text/interpretation, does not eliminate a message being provided to the viewer. As Mieke Bal elaborates:

This is obviously not a way of avoiding the expository speech act; it is simply saying something else. It is saying what art is for, and saying, through the choice of exposed objects and the order in which they appear, what art is too. This restraint acts out, and thereby states, a confidence in the primacy and sole power of visual images. (1996, p. 112)

While messages are being provided in an exhibition without explicit interpretation, new museologists have pointed out that these messages serve, implicitly yet effectively, to exclude viewers who do not have the cultural capital required to understand the language of display (Bourdieu and Darbel, 1991; Huyssen, 1995). In an age which demands that museums become accountable to their publics, this type of practice is no longer adequate.

However, within contemporary art galleries specifically, there have been many developments in curatorial practice. While literature in this area remains scarce, some useful
theoretical studies of curating do exist (Meijers, 1996; Alloway, 1996; Brooks, 1996). One main avenue of practice which is attempting to evade the problems of the implicit authority of traditional art displays, is to call attention to the particular subjectivities of the curator. This has been called curator as auteur (Meijers, 1996). The voice and viewpoint of the curator are made explicit within interpretive texts in the exhibition. This allows the viewer to identify, and then pass judgement on the validity of the curator’s point of view.

Other avenues have been to call attention to the very structures which define the museum, or to the exhibition form itself. In this type of historiographic approach, the question of authority is dealt with by explicitly acknowledging the structure of the discipline of display. Text calls attention to how the display and interpretation reflect the changing interests of the society in which the museum/exhibition exists. This type of approach has been used primarily in historical or ethnographic museums, but it can also be used in art exhibitions where artwork might be hung in a “period room” type of display to contextualize the artwork and suggest the era in which it was completed. This type of display faces its own challenges, including issues of authenticity and a tendency towards the problematic creation of an authoritative stance (Kavanagh, 1995). These are just two major threads of current exhibition strategies that have been studied to date. Further study is required to find new possible alternatives.

As an artist who stands as a mythic figure in Canada, Emily Carr is considered meaningful for a variety of reasons, and in this thesis I suggest how these meanings are shaped by the particular institutions which represent her. Carr is a key figure in mainstream Canadian art history, and at the same time she also stands as an exemplar, a woman, from the West Coast, and a painter of Native culture and the land. She is used as a figurehead for a variety of causes. With this in mind, the VAG must carefully consider what story they wish to tell about her. Can the gallery offer a critical viewpoint or must they work to fulfil the expectations of the audience, and present Carr as a mythic figure? And should the gallery
focus on a particular side of Carr, presenting her as a woman artist, as an environmentalist, lover of Native culture, as a craftsperson, as a struggling early Canadian artist, or should the gallery attempt to navigate and present the complexities of the artist and her life?

This study revolves around two focal points: one is concerned with the examination of approaches to the public display and interpretation of Emily Carr and her work; and the other, clearly emerging from the first, involves the creation and analysis of a series of new texts for the display of Emily Carr's work at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Through the examination of Emily Carr as presented in a variety of contexts I address the following questions:

1. What are the approaches to the interpretation of Emily Carr as evidenced in various museum installations and what do these installations tell us about the ways that history is constructed in these contexts?

2. What impact are the ideas of "new museology" having on contemporary Canadian museum display practices and what are the implications of these practices for the display of Emily Carr?

The answers to these questions informed the creation of a new series of texts for the Vancouver Art Gallery, a project that I undertook over the course of the years 1997 and 1998. The analysis of these texts will address the question, "how might contemporary beliefs about historiography and museology inform textual interpretation in a display of historical artwork (in this instance, that of Emily Carr)?" In this project, I am aware that I play multiple roles, ranging from observer, to participant, to critic, and that all of these roles are affected as well by the particularities of space, time and social location. This thesis project is affected by a complex set of forces within the boundaries of practice, now and throughout the analysis I provide evidence of my subjectively and specifically situated position.

This thesis examines the installation of Carr in a variety of galleries across Canada (National Gallery, Art Gallery of Ontario, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Vancouver Art...
Gallery) as a means of contextualizing a range of problems associated with museum practice. Chapters One and Two provide background information for the study, Chapter One examining interpretive themes surrounding Emily Carr and Chapter Two exploring new museology and methodological issues that help to frame the study. Chapter Three concerns the National Gallery and issues of ideology raised by the new museology. Chapter Four examines the display at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, and the particularities of site and place (Victoria was Carr's birthplace) as well as notions of resonance and contextualization in art displays. The discussion of the Art Gallery of Ontario, also included in Chapter Four, concerns contextualization of a different sort, the display created with a solid foundation in educational literature. In Chapter Five, a temporary exhibition of Carr's work juxtaposed with that of Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun in Vancouver offers an entry point into a discussion of subjectivity and curatorial epistemic authority, while finally, in Chapter Six, the resulting re-installation of Carr at the Vancouver Art Gallery is explored as one possible approach to issues raised in the earlier chapters, by the challenges of postmodern theorists to historical understanding, historiography, and museum practice.
Chapter 1: Emily Carr: Background to the study

This chapter explores how Emily Carr has been constructed and defined in different times and places. I suggest some of the key themes that emerge from the literature on Emily Carr, providing background knowledge for Chapters 3, 4, and 5, and opening the way for the revisionist text project that is the subject of Chapter 6.

In October 1996, when I first examined the display of Emily Carr’s works at the VAG as a potential site for a dissertation project, the works were hung in a roughly chronological manner. A work from her student days called Chrysanthemums was hung to the right of the far wall, opposite the rotunda. The chronology then continued around the gallery, with a selection of Carr’s newspaper illustrations, her early native works, around the end wall and across the opening into the next gallery, and then back around the gallery to end up at the wall on the other side of the opening to the elevators with some of her later landscapes.

The walls were painted an institutional green, the floor was a wide open space with brushed concrete floors. A cane chair and small table were in the middle, the table holding a large three ring binder containing assorted academic articles about Carr. The space was not appealing, and as I observed on several occasions, visitors tended to float through it, not appearing to be inspired to spend a great deal of time in the gallery. It was a large and open space, stark and bare, populated by similar types of paintings, Carr’s trees and totems, most with an irritating glare from the glass protecting them, hung against a wall colour that was an odd and jarring light green. In spite of the fact that the gallery was hung, with the exception of the wall colour, in a traditionally modernist manner, the gallery did not really function as a contemplative space. The only chairs provided were not placed to provide a restful space for reflection or examination of a painting on display, but rather were provided for reading the articles on the table, since the chairs were opposite the rotunda entrance.
watched as visitors flowed by the paintings; only a devoted fan might pause to examine them in more depth. The comment book, provided in an out of the way space near the elevator behind the opening wall, noted time and time again, that the paintings were hung abysmally, the glass on the paintings, and the green wall colour distracting, with no information offered to explain the significance of Carr's acres of trees to the uninitiated visitor.  

While there was no introductory text for the display of Emily Carr's works in the gallery, there was one particularly interesting thing about this installation. There was one extended label hanging next to a painting called The Crying Totem (1928), on the wall that backs onto the rotunda (Figure 1). As I observed visitors exploring this gallery, time and time again I watched as their curiosity drew them to this singular instance of text in the room, to see what someone had to say about this particular painting. It was truly a magnet. The label read:

Emily Carr 1871 Victoria 1945 Victoria
The Crying Totem 1928 (Tanoo) oil on canvas VAG Emily Carr Trust

The owner of this house and pole was Gwiskunas, a member of Those-born-at-Qadsgo-Creek lineage of the Raven division of the Haida. His wife was Gitkuna of the Djigua-town-people lineage of the Eagle division. According to the 1904-05 field notes of C.F. Newcombe, an ethnologist and collector whom Emily Carr met about 1912, "Close to the north end of Banks Island...there lived a 'salt-water' or sea-chief whose eyes drop out of their sockets at night and hang down his middle. At meal times his friends return his eyes to their place and hold them there so that he can see to eat. They also support his eyelids. This chief not having any teeth swallowed his food whole and this consisted principally of hair-seal."

The pole was moved in 1954 to the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria.

(George MacDonald, Haida Monumental Art, p. 95-96)

How peculiar! I have often wondered how this highly evocative label entered the space. And why was this particular painting selected for such a detailed explanation? In the sea of green trees and totem poles that filled the gallery walls, this label did in fact work to focus my attention, the label attracting my attention and the story causing me to re-examine the painting. Whatever the case may be, this peculiar text label, and the odd point of rupture it created in the otherwise unremarked narrative space, was the only intervention between visitor, museum and Carr when I first visited the Carr Gallery. The gallery did not change until two years later, when an exhibition of Emily Carr and Yuxweluptun was installed (see Chapter 5).

The only details revealed in that brief text panel in the Emily Carr Gallery concerned the narrative story or subject matter of a particular Carr painting. With an entire gallery devoted to her works, she was obviously an important painter to the VAG, yet in the space nothing was revealed about the woman herself. A brief chronology of her life will help to situate this chapter.

Emily Carr was born in Victoria, BC to English parents in 1871. She studied art in San Francisco from 1890-93. In 1899 she visited a Native village in Ucluelet where the natives gave her the name of Klee Wyck, or “laughing one.” From 1899-1904 she studied art in London. She found the city taxing though, and while in London she suffered several breakdowns and was treated at a sanatorium. From 1906-1910 Carr lived in Vancouver and taught art at the Vancouver Studio Club. In 1907 she travelled to Alaska with her sister Alice where she saw her first monumental native carvings and resolved to document what she saw as the “dying heritage” of natives. She spent the next few summers on sketching trips travelling to numerous Native villages. In 1910 she went to Paris to study modern...

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3The label predated the arrival of Cheryl Meszaros, as head of public programming at the Gallery and was installed under the guidance of Anne Morrison, who was head of education at the VAG for nearly ten years before taking up the subject of Emily Carr in her Master’s thesis at UBC (Morrison, 1991).
French painting. Upon her return in 1912, a show of Fauve-inspired works was accepted fairly well in Vancouver. Carr then decided to spend more time documenting native totems and villages. An exhibition of these native works in 1913 was not well received, and she moved back to Victoria.

There Carr built a small apartment house and became a landlady, putting most of her time and energy into the building until 1927. 1927 was a turning point for Carr, now aged fifty-six. Ethnographer Marius Barbeau and Eric Brown of the National Gallery of Canada visited Carr and selected her 1913 paintings to become part of an exhibit in Ottawa of Native and Modern West Coast art. She travelled east to see the show and met the members of the Group of Seven, an event she found greatly inspiring. Back in Victoria, Carr pursued her painting again at full speed, now receiving recognition along the way. After a heart attack in 1937, she took up writing in place of painting, and in 1942 her book Klee Wyck earned national recognition, winning the Governor General’s Award for non-fiction. That same year she established the Emily Carr Trust, a permanent collection of her works for British Columbia. Emily Carr died in 1945.

Resistance and controversy

In 1990, a retrospective of Emily Carr’s work was held at the National Gallery of Canada. The celebratory hanging of the show raised the ire of some critics and academic writers, who later used the show as an impetus to re-examine Carr’s life and work in terms of various contemporary issues, including Carr’s appropriation of First Nations culture, environmental and feminist concerns (Crean, 1991; Crosby, 1991; Fulford, 1993; Mays, 1994). Later, in 1995, a retrospective exhibition of the Group of Seven similarly caused a flurry of critical press and academic reviews (Jessup, 1996; Walcott; 1996; Fulford, 1995). This public interest in the content of art exhibitions reflects trends visible and documented most thoroughly, in the United States. In most cases exhibition controversies have surrounded the telling of history in museums (Dubin, 1999; Henderson and Kaeppler,
1998; Kavanagh, 1996); however art museums have also attracted their fair share of criticism (Wallach, 1998; Luke, 1992). Recent notorious events in Canadian exhibition history include the 1.76 million dollar purchase of Voice of Fire at the NGC (Barber, Guilbaut, O'Brian, 1996), and various issues surrounding exhibitions of First Nations art (Whitelaw, 1995b). The Vancouver Art Gallery has had its own share of controversy, including the exhibition of the Piss Pope, which happened just prior to my involvement at the Gallery on the Emily Carr re-installation project ("Hate catholics, not us," 1995; "The fine art of defamation," 1995).

Given the political circumstances, it was not surprising to learn that staff at the Vancouver Art Gallery had wanted to re-install the Emily Carr gallery for some time. The re-installation was put off for several years for financial reasons, yet there was also concern over what point/s of view they would choose to put forward (Meszaros, personal communication, 1996). According to Cheryl Meszaros (CM), head of public programming (education) at the VAG,⁴ the first step towards a re-installation was the commissioning of a research study on the use of text in art galleries that I was hired to complete in Spring 1996. Shortly after this project, gallery staff, headed by CM, decided that a text project would form a large part of the re-installation and I decided to base my thesis on this emergent re-installation project.

In this project I worked collaboratively with curator, Andrew Hunter, and educator, CM, who were both interested in grappling with these theoretical ideas, yet who were feeling quite paralyzed to move in any interpretive direction with Emily Carr. The Emily Carr collection attracts a large number of visitors each year, visitors who tend to be local or national in origin, who are familiar with Carr and her writings. Many of them commented on how the Carr gallery was embarrassingly lacking in any interpretive information at all. It was

⁴Henceforth referred to as CM, to indicate the amiable working relationship that we share.
with this highly motivated and literate yet underserved group in mind that the re-installation was undertaken. This was quite a large project for the gallery, and it was one that ultimately marked a major inroad of programming material into a curatorial space, in the form of two large walls, smack in the middle of the gallery, dealing with issues of representation, memory, and historical consciousness. These walls do not provide a chronological, seamless narrative about Emily Carr. They rather point towards some of the different foci that writers have explored around Carr and her work. These two walls act with the rest of the exhibition spaces to provide a variety of entry points into the life and work of Carr.

The next step in the re-installation process was to examine how Carr has been interpreted over time. According to the opening text at the 1990 retrospective exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada, Emily Carr was,

A child of British Columbia, [who] forged a deep bond with the native heritage and natural environment of that province and [who] against many odds, fought her way through to her subjects, responding intensely and openly to their message. Her profound understanding of the meaning of that heritage and her intense search for a religious meaning in her life, resulted in the final and most important statements of her life, the vital expression of the spiritual forces of Nature. (quoted in Crosby, 1991, p. 277)

Written some forty five years after her death, this quote is notable as it covers all of the standard ways in which Emily Carr and her work have been conceptualized by art historians. In spite of work that challenges these common interpretations of Carr (e.g. Linsley, 1994; Crosby, 1991; Alexander, 1996; O’Brian, 1996; Moray, 1993) this interpretation of Carr at the National Gallery is not alone in its rigidity and fixedness.

In this chapter I examine how Emily Carr has been variously described, championed and compartmentalized over time. A study of the literature reveals several common and enduring themes that have come to define the “myth of Emily Carr.” Beneath a rather generic yet overarching “myth of a heroic modern artist,” Carr’s life and work has been structured around the notions of nature and native, with emphasis on a strong spirituality. More recent scholarship has raised the issue of “truth” in Carr’s writings, the political
implications of her depictions of Native artifacts, and her sexuality. Yet, in spite of attempts to direct attention towards different aspects of Carr's work, the central conceptual categories remain highly influential.

I am interested in how Carr has been categorized by writers in various fields, to determine some of the common tropes, or codes used to explain her life and work. In so doing I am drawing loosely from David Carrier's Principles of Art History Writing (1991). Basing his work on a translation of Hayden White's tropologies, Carrier attempts to contextualize the study of art history, in order to explore the historiography of art history (see also, Roskill, 1989; Gilmore, 1995). In particular he is interested in examining how art historians have dealt with issues of consensus and change within their field. Carrier uses the concept of "codes" to mean the finite number of ways in which an artist's work can conceivably be conceptualized by art historians. He examines the role of tropes, style and interpretive methodologies at work in various interpretations of an artist's work, establishing the common themes noticed by art historians, or as Jonathan Gilmore calls them, the "cliches" of that area of scholarship (1995, p. 41).

His is an important contribution to the field of art history because the notions of description, interpretation and stylistic development are too often seen as transparent and objective operations (Preziosi, 1995). It is a timely project, in this age of postmodern subjectivity, in that it encourages art historians and artwriters to approach their own writing from a more self-reflective position (see also Berkthofer, 1995). Carrier's work, however, operates within a rather narrow definition of the art historical field. He also looks primarily at art before the modern age, and thus the whole notion of the role of the artist's intention is not dealt with. Looking towards the artist's intention as the "true" arbiter of meaning has been a key component of the interpretation of modern art (Burns, 1996), and the intentional fallacy is a continuing obstacle for the discipline of art history (Baxandall, 1985). In the case of Emily Carr, the issue of intentionality is particularly important and her own voluminous
writings on art and her life cloud the interpretive field. In spite of the limitations however, Carrier’s work points the way towards a more fully conceived historiography of art history. This is an important task, and one that informed the development of the re-installation text project. In looking at the historiography of Emily Carr I highlight the constructed nature of history, and this emphasis was used productively in the resulting text project that is the subject of Chapter 6.

An insistence on biography

The work on Emily Carr falls primarily within the area of biography. There have been numerous biographical studies of her life; key among them are the studies by Blanchard (1987) and Tippett (1979). So much of the work on Carr comes from the area of biography, that she has become the subject of a recent historiography of biography, by Stephanie Walker (1997).

On the other hand, comprehensive studies that focus on Carr’s art works are scarce, and Doris Shadbolt remains a key figure (1979; 1990). Academic articles that provide a more contextual and historical base or that deal specifically with extending the knowledge base about Carr, by examining specific events in her life or sources for her art work, are practically non-existent. Articles dealing with Carr concentrate overwhelmingly on issues of understanding the woman at the expense of serious study of her work. These include Heather Kirk’s 1994 review article, “Will the Real Emily Carr Please Stand Up,” and John Bentley Mays’ 1994 newspaper article, “Squabble over Carr the Woman Muddies Critique of Her Painting.” Much of the literature on Carr points towards the maintenance or challenge of what is seen as “the myth of Emily Carr.” And it is the myth of Carr that is discussed at the expense of substantial study of Carr or her works themselves.

The most common thread in most recent writings that deal with Emily Carr is, most peculiarly, the acknowledgement of a firmly ensconced “Carr myth”. For art critic Robert Fulford, Emily Carr’s life reflects,
the standard modernist saga of the solitary artist whose talent and courage triumph over obscurity, neglect, poverty, and depression, making each painting into a personal victory that later generations adopt as part of their national heritage. In this case the sex of the protagonist heightens the narrative and places it firmly in women's history as well as in the history of Canadian painting. (1993, p. 34)

And as Peter Smith wryly notes:

In the span of about fifty years, Canada has seen Emily Carr transformed from an obscure regional painter into a celebrated and national heroine, beatified if not canonized for her artistic, literary and spiritual achievements. Her story was made to order for mythic exaggeration and apocryphal enlargement. She is imagined as a lonely, impoverished woman who befriended and depicted the noble savages after she had been rejected by family and genteel society; an unlettered and untutored child of nature, whose creative genius blossomed in the forest wilderness; a great artist denied all recognition and homage until her sudden discovery and salvation by keen-sighted cultural Wise Men from the East. (1980, p. 128)

And many others have also commented on the strange power of the myth of Emily Carr. While feminist art historian Susan Crean simply states that, "she's everybody's platform" (Crean, 1991), historian W.C. James more eloquently proposes that Emily Carr has been "enthroned as a kind of proto-ecofeminist heroine who understood in advance of her time the place and importance of nature" (Walker, 1996, p. x). Art historian John O'Brian situates the Carr myth in the West, suggesting that there is an "obsession" and a "public deification of Carr in British Columbia which often stumbles into bathos and Carromania" (1995, p. 7). The existence of this myth about Carr is thus readily and flatly acknowledged. Art historian Gerta Moray, suggests that this mythical image of Carr, "is revealed by the compelling, almost obsessive repetition of certain guiding ideas, which are the expression of very powerful wishes or intentions on the part of those who create and consume the myth" (1993, p. 49). Moray is interested in uncovering some of the foundations for the beginnings of this myth. She suggests that it stems from,

the desire to find a distinctive Canadian identity rooted in the land and its history, and the desire for a display of beneficence towards a native population at this time being safely neutralized by the imposition of European economic and educational institutions. (1993, p. 49)
Conflict and struggle: The modern artist

Survey texts of Canadian art history also reflect this mythic treatment of Carr, tending to focus on the challenges Carr faced to gain acceptance for her painting. For instance, in his 1974 text, Maoist Barry Lord opens his discussion on Emily Carr with: “Dare to struggle! Dare to win!” This motto of Mao Tse-tung would have appealed to Emily Carr. All through her life she waged an audacious struggle against oppression, and finally conquered” (Lord, 1974, p. 173). Similarly, in his key survey of Canadian art history, J.R. Harper notes that, “she was a dumpy little woman but she fought for her art with a giant will” (1977, p. 291). He further notes that Carr emerged in “an almost totally unsympathetic British Columbia....[where] there was not one understanding fellow artist...[to] offer words of encouragement” (1977, p. 290). And, Harper suggests that so difficult was her plight in this West Coast isolation that, “the accounts we have of her struggle against misunderstanding make it apparent that only a woman of character, determination, and an almost superhumanly powerful vision could have survived the trials she faced” (1977, p. 290).

From a general myth pervasive in popular culture, to one ensconced in the canon of Canadian art history, this common notion of Carr as mythic hero is also perpetuated in more focused studies on her life and work. This insistence on the heroic overcoming of obstacles, evidenced in the above quotes is revealed in the most recent (1987) biography of Carr. Paula Blanchard offers a career trajectory visible even in the chapter titles, with Carr’s life moving through time with headings like, Breakdown, Home, Dark Times, Glimmerings, Discovery, Banner Year, Consolidation, Last Years. We can trace the route from despair to triumph. Doris Shadbolt, an important art historical writer on Carr, also situates Carr within this “mythic” modern artist framework. In a quote addressing the notion of Carr’s eccentric personality, Shadbolt argues that,

Whatever the dramatic licence in her writing and however much she enjoyed eccentricity, she was different....The supreme statement of her difference was, of course, her stance as an artist, and her Journals repeatedly confirm how
completely she committed all her resources and personality into being that artist: her enormous will, her obstinacy, her sensory vitality, her sublimated erotic energy, her observation of nature and her identification with its forces, her yearning for spiritual fulfilment, her immense need for self-expression. (1979, p. 13)

Whether it be in a generalized format or within more specialized studies in an academic field, the myth of Carr as a quintessential example of a modern artist is constantly and strongly perpetuated.

Carr’s mythic status has inspired a number of popular uses of her life. As part of a televised series of historical vignettes created to promote Canadian identity, Carr’s “heritage minute” depicts her adventurous treks into the wilderness and her heroic struggle for recognition as an artist (see "Heritage Project: Emily Carr", 1999). Prominent Canadian dramatist Herman Voaden has also made a play of her life, also choosing to portray Carr’s life as tragic struggle against society’s conventions. Other plays, films, music and poems have also focused on these aspects of Carr’s life (Kroller, 1986).

**Native and nature: Two common themes**

Carr’s terrific struggle for success, and the multitudinous details of Carr’s adventurous and tenuous existence are prominent features throughout the literature. When it comes to the discussion of her art, which was her life’s work, two themes are highlighted: nature and native or what she saw as a remarkable but dying culture of the Native people of British Columbia, and the awesome forest of the Pacific coast. The consistency of this area of discussion of Carr’s work is evident in the opening text at the Emily Carr retrospective in 1990. This text preserves some of the most enduring myths of Emily Carr; that is that she has some sort of inherent understanding of nativeness, and that she has been able to capture some notion of Native sensibility in her art.

The image of Emily Carr as honourary Native emerged from early on in her career in articles such as Margaret Brewster’s account of Emily in a 1928 article, “Some women prefer Indians.” And in the important catalogue for the first Emily Carr retrospective in 1945,
where the standard for discussion of Carr's art was created, Lawren Harris describes Carr as having “a deep respect for the native art and a sincere love of the Indians themselves” (1945, p. 12). He suggests that,

it was also her life with the Indians and their native culture which led her to share and understand their outlook on nature and life, and gave her paintings of totems, Indian villages and the forest a quality and power which no white person had achieved before. (Harris, 1945, p. 21)

While in this quote Harris accords Carr with a unique perspective on Indian culture, he further suggests that she is somehow able to capture something of the sensibility, or the “nateness” behind them. He notes that her early paintings,

tell us about Indian villages, houses and totems, whereas her later paintings do not inform us, do not tell us about trees, villages and totems but are equivalents on canvas of their very life, and, as a consequence, we are inwardly moved by a vital experience. We do not thereby acquire knowledge of the subjects. We participate in a revelation of their life and so come to understand its meaning. (Harris, 1945, p. 23)

The tendency to suggest that Carr has what might be called something of an insider perspective on Native art is perpetuated in the work of Doris Shadbolt. Shadbolt's work is also enlightening in terms of its discussion of the Native influence on Carr, and its suggestion of Carr’s resulting “profound understanding” of Native culture. In her 1990 text, Emily Carr, which accompanied the latest retrospective of Carr’s work, Shadbolt noted of Carr’s later works that she

now understood through her own experience what that material was about—not from anthropologists’ explanations but from the understanding that years of studying their form and responding to them in their environment had given her. She felt the overall expressive character of native art: its tightness, its restraint, its inner tensions, its mysterious, sober and dark spirit that was sometimes daemonic, sometimes quiescent. And so she took on the Indian’s darkness in her canvases, closing them in with weighty and darkened skies, or with claustrophobic forests even when fidelity to her subject did not require her to do so....It is at a certain point that her paintings themselves tell us how, after her prolonged familiarity with Indian art and through her own painting-act in creating equivalent nature environments, she intuitively grasped the sense in which Indian art was an expression of the native’s relation to the natural and supernatural world as he understood it, and to his environment of which it was a particular part. (Shadbolt, 1990, p. 137)
Carr is thus seen as able to translate Indian elements or wisdom into a personal idiom and her work is described as somehow being able to express a Native sensibility. Gerta Moray has examined the evolution, or transmission, of this notion of what she calls the myth of Emily Carr as “mediator of the Indian” over time. She discusses Lawren Harris and Ira Dilworth’s depiction of Carr as shaman and suggests that Shadbolt preserves this myth in her work (Moray, 1993, p. 13). While the above quote amply illustrates the idea of Carr as shaman or mediator of the Indian, Shadbolt takes the connection, perhaps unintentionally, a bit further. She later notes that, “it was as though, through all the layers of training and conditioning, she had managed, like some educated primitive, to hang on to a vestige of primal spirit affinity with all the forms of creation” (Shadbolt, 1979, p. 142). Here, in light of Shadbolt’s equation of Carr and some kind of a Native sensibility, an element of primitivism emerges, an exoticism that reflects modernist appreciations of non-Western art forms (Price, 1989; Rubin, 1984). This connections among Carr’s work, that of First Nations peoples and a “true” or “authentic” expression of Native sensibilities surfaces in Carr’s co-option into the mainstream in 1927 at the National Gallery (Morrison, 1991) and continues as an undercurrent in more recent accounts such as Shadbolt’s.

The issue of spirituality

Emily Carr’s art work and writings suggest that she moved from the depiction of native artifacts, as a kind of preservation project, to try to capture the living, breathing life in the forests of the West Coast. Her stories feature animated trees and feeling flowers. Through nature Carr found a pathway to God, and while at one point in her career, she looked towards the work of Lawren Harris and tried to adopt his theosophic position, she soon abandoned theosophy and returned to the strong Christian sensibilities of her youth. While Carr felt that her goal was to try and capture the spirituality of the woods, writers have found themselves stymied in their attempts to fully capture the spiritual essence of her painted images.
An early description of her work by art critic Eric Newton indicates what would become a long time theme in the historiography of Carr; namely, the difficulty of capturing in words what she was trying to express. In 1939 he noted that

Where the Eastern Canadians have been content to stylise the outward pageantry of the landscape, she has symbolised its inner meaning, and in doing so has, as it were, humanised it. Her trees are more than trees: they are green giants, and slightly malevolent giants at that. The totem poles she often paints are haunted by the Indian deities they represent. (Newton, 1939, p. 345; quoted in Blanchard, 269)

While Newton offers an anthropomorphic explanation for Carr's work, Doris Shadbolt describes Carr's spirituality in a more vague way, suggesting that

her art is at this time completely integrated with the totality of her experience. Perhaps her paintings are best seen as expression of certain primary experiences which to some degree she projected on nature, and of course the reverse--discovered through nature....in the 1930s her paintings became free of all reference except to nature itself, which had now become her central and all-sufficient theme: nature as life-force. (Shadbolt, 1979, p. 140)

Shadbolt continues, arguing that

Carr is not the only artist to have achieved the necessary integration between observed outer reality and inner self,... but she is distinguished by the elemental level at which the integration takes place, so that she is wholly and inseparably present in everything she creates. (1979, p. 140)

The examination of the work of other writers reveals traces of Shadbolt's analyses. Paula Blanchard, for instance, notes that in later years, Carr's work began to capture more fully her notion of spirituality; that “in both substance and spirit, she was painting life itself, affirming it with more intensity and abandon as she grew older” (Blanchard, 1987, p. 239). Following Shadbolt's belief that Carr's “important” works happened only after contact with Lawren Harris and the Group of Seven (see Moray, 1993, p. 55), and implying some kind of implicit native sensibility in Carr's work, Roxanne Rimstead notes that

[only when she had abandoned the realistic and traditional landscape schools of European painting and began to incorporate the principles of abstraction and style from native art into her own work could she at last capture the vastness of the wilderness and the spirit she felt there (Rimstead, 1991, p. 45)
Revisionism

The notion that Carr's work reflects a profound understanding of Native sensibilities, that emerges from Shadbolt's interpretation of Carr's paintings remains influential. However, revisionists have held the notion up to more intensive scrutiny, pointing out the problems with such an interpretation. For instance, in "Construction of the Imaginary Indian," Marcia Crosby (1991) questioned Carr's paintings of Natives, typically seen as straightforward depictions of native villages. She pointed towards notions of primitivism and progress behind Carr's depictions of Native culture. They were painted scenes, not peopled with the Natives that helped Carr through the wilderness, but rather the scenes depicted abandoned villages and rotting poles, seen as some kind of vestiges of a 'dying culture'. Carr's native paintings, Crosby argues, are charged with the late-nineteenth century notions of exotic primitivism and the "salvage paradigm," the idea that Carr was trying to preserve for posterity a dead or dying culture.

The Native theme has attracted a lot of attention from the academic realm, and two recent theses have more closely examined the presence of native motifs and artifacts in Carr's works. Gerta Moray (1993) examines Carr's early native paintings in historical context while Ann Morrison (1991) looks more closely at Carr's first series of depictions of Native carvings in relation to an exhibition in Ottawa in 1927. She examines how the politics of identity formation influenced the process and reception of these works at the Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art--Native and Modern. Both of these studies move beyond the treatment of Carr's Native themes provided by Shadbolt. These two writers challenge the suggestion that Carr somehow captures a native sensibility. They explore how the Native motifs functioned in Carr's own time, and how the political system at the time made Carr's work attractive to the culture-makers of the East.

Finally, and most significantly, as I mentioned earlier, Carr's native works can be discussed within the context of the primitivism of the modern period, as artists searched out
the exotic in order to find some more ‘pure’ expression. The taking of the imagery and using it for her own goals of expression, in the attempt to capture the spirituality that she longed for, were once seen as innocuous. The issues of appropriation, authenticity and the salvage paradigm have become hotly contested by various writers in recent years (see Moray, 1993; Fulford, 1993, Crosby, 1991; Linsley, 1996).

While Moray’s work on Carr’s early Indian paintings attempts to situate Carr within the political climate of her time in respect to Native issues, an examination of Carr’s work also reveals her interest in other political concerns of her day. One of the issues that deeply touched her was the forestry industry. In paintings such as Stumps and Sky orLogged-over hillside, Carr documents the ecological damage being perpetuated by the lumber industry. Carr’s viewpoint is reflected in her journals where she refers to the sawn off stumps of trees as “screamers,” and fallen trees that looked like “tombstones.” Carr thus appears to have been conscious of, and concerned about, the devastation of the forests, a consciousness that John O’Brien believes Carr has only recently been given credit for (O’Brien, 1995, p. 9).

Carr’s biographers have all devoted some energy to the question of why Carr never married, or had any known lovers, but remained, it seems, an eccentric single woman. One of the niggling issues surrounding Carr’s sex life, or lack thereof concerns what Carr termed, “the brutal telling.” Described in a letter to Ira Dilworth some fifty years after the event, the “brutal telling,” is thought to refer to an unpleasant interchange between Carr and her father about the subject of sex. The issue has attracted the attention of all of her biographers who posit varying degrees of violence and import to the story (see Adams, 1992, pp. 43-44).

While Shadbolt briefly situates Carr within a broader modernist eroticism found in the physical act of painting (Shadbolt, 1979, p. 140), few have closely examined sexuality in Carr’s work. Linsley notes this avoidance, and suggests that to date, no real work has been...
done in this area because of Carr’s status as a modern heroine and problems with the
discussion of sexuality in the local contemporary climate (Linsley, 1996). Joan Murray is
one exception who brings attention to this area in “The Passion of Emily Carr.” She
discusses the “mesmerizing sense of strong male energies” in the numerous totems that
Carr depicted, and wonders if an examination of the latent sexuality in Carr’s forests might
bring new meaning to our understanding of the artist and her work (Murray, 1990). Another
more pronounced, but brief, feminist reading of Carr’s work is provided by art critic Robin
Laurence. She suggests that,

> In the early forest scenes there is a sense of overwhelming masculine
> presence which is at first static almost hieratic, then charged with the dynamic
> of tumescent tree trunks thrusting upwards against a corresponding downward
> pressure of thick foliage. Natural growth is dangerously sexualized as Carr
> explores the stylistic and morphological means to bring her art and her
> unconscious forward. (Laurence, 1991, p. 26)

Blanchard offers a more traditional view of Carr’s sensuality and her status as both woman
and artist. While she is quick to deny that she is suggesting a universal feminine way of
seeing the world, she suggests that Carr’s

> extraordinary empathy with living things extended beyond sentient beings to
> the very cellular level of the most immovable trees. There was nothing
> cerebral about it. It was immediate, physical and direct, and in that sense it
> was sexual, even maternal. (Blanchard, 1987, p. 201)

While these writers have begun to examine Carr in a feminist light, in most cases,
these issues tend to be sublimated within the more common themes used to describe Carr
and her work. For instance, in a thorough study of Carr’s first book, *Klee Wyck*, Roxanne
Rimstead notes that,

> Carr could find a sense of community and belonging only outside her culture
> in a new symbolic order. She developed a love of region and sense of
> bonding by reaching into a space beyond the exclusionist reality of
> patriarchy--into nature and native civilization, and her own female subjectivity.
> (1991, p. 31)

Rimstead argues that Carr’s reliance on the nature and native theme was an attempt to
escape her patriarchal society. Throughout this study, Rimstead examines a variety of ways
in which Carr's work might be seen as subversive, employing feminist theories of writing, as well as Native political writers to support her interpretation. Yet in this quote, we see that she does not supplant or depose the standard and time-honoured codes of nature and native, but rather, she inserts a political and feminist angle within this accepted framework.

One of the most intriguing things about Emily Carr is the way in which her own writings have come to influence the interpretation of her life and art. While she began to write short stories when her doctors informed her that she was not well enough to paint, Carr also kept a journal and corresponded regularly with her friends, creating what Doris Shadbolt has called the “voluminous output of the obsessive letter-writing Carr” (1990, p. 22). Ironically, it was through the publication of a group of short stories called *Klee Wyck*, which won a Governor's General Award, that served as her first big break into Canadian culture. In her highly personal and evocative style, Carr reflects on First Nations' culture, nature, her family and life, in the process providing a great deal of insight into her beliefs about painting. Carr believed that her writings and paintings were one and the same, striving in both to express her feelings about the spirituality she saw in the landscape.

The notion that Emily Carr took creative liberties when it came to the writing of her autobiography has received a great deal of attention by historians. In her 1979 biography, Maria Tippett notes a tendency in Carr's writing for self-aggrandizement. The incidents that are perhaps skewed in date or detail, or changed in flavour that figure in Carr's writing are all part of what Tippett calls, “a pleasant fondling of the past for Emily” (Tippett, 1979, p. 248). Tippett notes that “where she found gaps in her memory, fictitious characters and incidents were invented to bridge the holes” (p. 249). Paula Blanchard, in her 1987 biography, suggests that “writing was giving back to her precious odds and ends of her own life, and (though she did not admit it) allowing her to rearrange them to suit herself” (Blanchard, 1987, p. 237). Peter Smith sees Carr's autobiographical writings as, “self-dramatized” and “sprinkled with factual errors and distorted memories, and coloured by an overlay of pure
This issue has also been specifically addressed in several articles. Peter Sanger's, "Finding D'Sonoqua's Child: Myth, Truth and Lies in the Prose of Emily Carr," whose examination of Carr "lies," was later heavily criticized by Timothy Dow Adams, in "Painting Above Paint': Telling Li(v)es in Emily Carr's Literary Self-Portraits." Sanger argues that Carr's inaccuracies were not mere forgetfulness, but that "they are too consistent and radical to be accidental" (1987, p. 221), providing discussions of numerous factual discrepancies involving whether or not she had help on her trips to Native territory, or with her artistic development. Adams allows that Sanger's point about inaccurate factual details in Carr's autobiographical writings, but he uses autobiographical theory to argue that these discrepancies often point to a reconciliation of life and self, that Carr adjusts the facts to represent herself, as she sees herself. Adams calls upon Carr's own words to make this point: "Distort if it is necessary to carry your point, but not for the sake of being outlandish. Seek ever to lift the painting above paint" (Carr cited in Adams, p. 47). Adams' reference to autobiographical theory has been further explored by Stephanie Walker, in her book dedicated to the discussion of what she calls the "biographical image" of Carr. Both writers suggest that what is remembered incorrectly is just as important to the construction of self as what was actually true.

And if we are to accept any or all of Carr's writings as "true" then we have found the roots for part of Carr's "myth." Carr herself was quite interested in the presentation of her own history according to what she saw as the characteristics of the modern heroic artist. As Maria Tippett notes, the particular codes adapted by Carr were in wide circulation at the time. Tippett suggests that,

Emily's theme of struggle and rejection, later embellished and enlarged upon in her autobiographical writings, evoked sympathy and even approval; the myth that it was somehow beneficial for artists to live and work in deprived and hostile conditions was widely accepted.... Canadians in the 1920s were particularly sympathetic to struggle stories; part of the success of the Group
of Seven was due to the fact that they had been cast, by themselves and their supporters, in the role of abused but heroic artists. (1979, p. 143)

While Carr's writings offer a fascinating view into Carr's conception, or construction of herself, they also serve as an important key to understanding her painting. Descriptions of her feelings about nature, Native culture, and the goals of her work, have all been used by these writers. Naturally the writings form an important core of biographer's work on Carr. Yet it has also been adapted by art historians to describe her paintings, though she seldom describes any of her individual works, but rather focuses on her wider hopes, goals and inspirations of her work. In her 1979 book, Doris Shadbolt juxtaposes excerpts taken from Carr's journals, letter and books with the paintings. With Carr's distinctive and evocative prose style, Carr's writings serve this purpose well, providing a seemingly direct way to capture the intentions of the works. Many other writers turn to Carr's own words in this way including, most recently, Robin Laurence (1996) who, with the exception of a very brief introduction, designed a whole book using this approach, juxtaposing paintings with quotes from Carr's books and journals.

Conclusion

An examination of the writings on Emily Carr provides insight into some of the reasons that a re-installation of the Carr gallery at the VAG has been avoided. Scholarly literature on Carr as well as more journalistic and popular discussions reveal a strong mythic presence that turns around several recurring themes. Carr's biography features predominantly in the discussion of the artist. The biographical treatment of Carr turns on a common modernist theme, namely her heroic struggle to succeed as an artist, against all odds. Misunderstood, eccentric, and isolated, Carr's heroic biographical image is further augmented by her gender, and the late age at which she achieved recognition. Combined with these factors, her thematic interests in nature and Northwest Coast Native art and culture also add to Carr's great usefulness for a number of causes. It is a peculiar combination,
where she stands as a fixed mythic figure in the national history, at the same time that interpretations of Carr are malleable, and have recently become hotly contested. While the literature reveals a traditional biographical slant, recently Carr has become the subject of much debate, by writers who wish to assert her usefulness for explorations of feminism, First Nations issues, and environmental issues. Carr at once reflects a strongly mythic historical presence, as her life and work equally touch upon many contemporary issues. As well Carr’s autobiographical writings allow for a further level of interpretation, a reflection of the personality and intentions of the artist. This level has made Carr particularly appealing for historians and art historians working in a modernist tradition. These various interpretive threads suggest that Carr is at once timeless and current. The recent debates about Carr indicate that her enduring presence easily bears the weight of the interpretive issues stemming from revisionism in art history and museum practice; the issues that form the focal point of this thesis. And, as we shall see in later chapters, it is this complex intersection of fixed myth and mutable interpretation that makes Carr a particularly tricky subject for a re-installation at the Vancouver Art Gallery.
Chapter 2: Museology and methodology: Background to the study

The real issue, I think, is not how to purge the museum of values--that in all likelihood would be an impossible task--but how to make those values manifest, how to bring them up to consciousness for both ourselves and our visitors. We delude ourselves when we think of museums as a clear and transparent medium through which only our objects transmit messages. We transmit messages too--as a medium we are also a message--and it seems to me vital that we understand better just what those messages are. (Weil, 1989, p. 31; cited in Heumann Gurian, 1991 and Coxall, 1991)

In this, Hirschhorn Museum director Stephen Weil aptly sums up the key distinction between what might be termed the "old" and the "new" museology. For while the "old" museology focused on museum methods, the new museology has been primarily concerned with the study of the theoretical underpinnings, frameworks and constructs, the assumptions that underpin the representation of objects and ideas in museums. This past decade has been a period of heightened awareness and interest in museums, and the concerns of the new museology have attracted scholars in a variety of fields. However, while this has been important and necessary work, more recent critics have begun to search for practical applications of these theoretical ideas to museum display.

I explore the new museology, making special reference to methodologies that have been employed in the study of museums and their practices. After providing an introduction to some major figures and their key assertions, I will explore how this new museology has affected museum professionals, looking first at the growth of audience studies and the recognition of the need to provide more diverse perspectives. I will then examine how curators of history and art museums are dealing with the issues brought about by the new museology. I will be looking at rising interest in the exhibition itself as a discourse of the museum, and as an important site where meaning is created within the museum. Finally, I will examine some of the methodologies being used to study exhibitions suggesting that the broadly based, and eclectic methods of cultural studies are promising in the examination
of exhibitions and how they produce meanings.

**New museology**

The beginnings of the recognition that museums are not transparent media emerged with Carol Duncan and Allan Wallach’s 1980 article, “The Universal Survey Museum.” This influential article attempted to explain the process of visiting a large scale art museum, relating museum visiting to a religious pilgrimage, requiring a stop and a silent moment in front of each “holy” artwork. Duncan and Wallach further suggested that the ordering of the works within survey museums had a highly important political and social effect. The arrangement of objects chronologically, and by country of origin, was ordered in such a way as to suggest an inevitable progression from less-civilized, or so-called “primitive” cultures, leading to the “advanced” modern Western cultures. Art historian Donald Preziosi suggests, art in museums tends to be used as a synecdoche, whereby each culture comes to be recognized by its particular art forms. Art thus lies at the centre of history, becoming what he calls “the Esperanto of European hegemony” (1995, p. 14). Preziosi suggests that,

> We are *disarmed* by museums, which dis-member the past so that we may re-member it anamorphically- in a manner whereby all that is visible may become legible as ethical hieroglyphs in a social history of the state or the people. (1995, p. 15)

The museum, therefore, is shown to play an important role in state identities and nationhood (see also, Kaplan, 1995). The examination of the workings of the museum to create and maintain these identities lies at the heart of the new museology.

In his 1989 book, *The New Museology*, Peter Vergo asserts that “old” museology is “too much about museum *methods*, and too little about the purposes of museums” (p. 3). According to Vergo, the new museology asks that we realize,

> every acquisition (and indeed disposal), every juxtaposition or arrangement of an object or a work of art, together with other objects or works of art, within the context of a temporary exhibition or museum display means placing a certain construction upon history, be it the history of the distant or more recent past, of our own culture or someone else’s, of mankind in general or a particular aspect of human endeavour (1989, p. 3).
Vergo suggests that there is a subtext below the visible text, (which includes the display and the accompanying panels). This subtext comprises innumerable strands which reflect the wishes, aspirations or preconceptions of the curator, scholar, director, or institution. It is the examination of these varied strands that should be the objects of inquiry for the new museology.

The museum as an object of inquiry has relevance at this particular point in time, because it can be seen as a means of looking more closely at modernity itself. Perhaps, as Andreas Huyssen suggests, the rise of museum studies is in fact, “a major cultural symptom of the crisis of the Western faith in modernization as panacea” (1995, p. 34). Donald Preziosi suggests how the museum stands as a symbol of modernity, pointing out that museums most commonly have been constricted as evidentiary and documentary artifacts; as instruments of historiographic practice. They therefore constitute a particular mode of fiction—one of the most brilliant and remarkable genres of modern fiction, and one which has become an indispensable component of statehood and of national and ethnic identity in every corner of the world. In no small measure, modernity itself is the supreme museological fiction. What can it mean to be a “subject” in a world of “objects” where some are construed as representative of others because of their material siting in the world, their “framing?” (1995, p. 13)

With these provocative statements, both Huyssen and Preziosi suggest we take a closer look at how the museum operates to create such powerful meanings. This call has been taken up by scholars in many different fields. Two particularly influential works draw on the theories of Foucault to examine how power operates within the museum itself, and also as part of a broader group of cultural sites. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill's, Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge (1992) examines the emergence of the modern museum, documenting its transformations over time, in response to changing political agendas and philosophical beliefs. Over time, the museum changed from a cabinet of curiosities to the encyclopedic ethnographic collection based on a desire to classify the world, to the art museum highlighting the aesthetic meanings of objects at the expense of others. She uses
Foucault's theories to highlight the connections between knowledge and power in the shaping of meanings for objects. Bennett likewise, in *The Birth of the Museum* (1995), draws on the theories of Foucault for his analysis of the development of museums and other similar sites of cultural activities. He looks at the development of the museum in a broader social context, positing relationships between fairs and exhibitions and museums and tracing the genealogy of these sites over time, joining them as sites of social control and public cultural education.

While Bennett and Hooper-Greenhill offer book length studies of museums, the anthology is a more common source on new museology. Many of these collections have been published, and most of them follow the same type of format, and methodological premises (see for example, Douglas Crimp's, *On the Museum's Ruins* (1993), or Robert Lumley's *The Museum Time-Machine* (1988)). Much like the above collections, studies in Sherman and Rogoff's *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles* (1994) examine the political formation of various institutions using a variety of critical theories. The studies in *Museum Culture* are concerned primarily with how museums legitimate or promote certain political ideals. The structuring concepts of object, context, public and reception, form the central frame around which most of the analyses turn. The studies focus on how these concepts function internally, and also look at museological innovation and how innovation is hampered by the inertia of the museum structure due to cultural and political authority and state identity.

While most of the work done around museums centres primarily on the historical museum or the ethnographic collection, a collection edited by Susan Pearse titled, *Art in Museums* (1995), deals specifically with the case of the art museum. This volume of studies attempts to map "the genealogy of art and museums." It is an eclectic group of studies, with many papers concerned with audiences, ranging from studies of survey instruments to more in-depth studies of visitor's meaning-making using a more qualitative
measurement system. There are also critical and historical papers tracing such things as the evolution of British or French picture galleries.

The influence of Foucault and Marxist criticism is apparent in many of these studies, most of which are concerned with pointing out how the institutions operate to promote certain political values. Drawing upon the theorizing of Pierre Bourdieu, Shearer West's study, "The Devaluation of 'Cultural Capital': Post-Modern Democracy and the Art Blockbuster" offers a good example of the types of analyses that are common to this genre of criticism. In an analysis that I find somewhat heavy-handed and mechanistic, West argues that,

the art blockbuster positively embraces the rhetoric of consumer culture and draws its mass profile from this factor. This is not genuine mass culture or the democracy of post-industrial society, but a master narrative of capitalism which is the characteristic of the contemporary western world. The art blockbuster is an imposition of commodity culture onto a gullible population of all classes (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1973), and its presentation as mass entertainment serves to mask but not obliterate its real elitism. The 'cultural capital' which attendance at art exhibitions represents is devalued by a false association between high art and the masses. (West, 1995, p. 90)

West usefully points out some of the ideological intricacies of museum visiting and by submitting the art blockbuster to this type of scrutiny, he foregrounds a particularly challenging problem facing museums, as museums grapple with economics and mass appeal, and navigating between education and entertainment (Roberts, 1997; Keates, 1999). Yet while West's analysis helps to identify problems facing museums, like other postmodern analyses, critics note that it is no longer enough to pose the questions and point out the inequities (Huyssen, 1995; Gaskell, 1995). It is now time for practical applications to be found.

**Museum professionals respond**

In *A Cabinet of Curiosities: Inquiries into Museums and their Prospects*, Stephen Weil suggests four elements by which to reconceptualize museums. They should become a site of open discourse, where the museum itself should also be discussed; there should
be a less exclusive focus on the aesthetic elements in museums; there should be a move
towards education, including a wider variety of works and different points of discussion; and
museums should move towards becoming sites for transformation, in which the
accomplishments of many are celebrated (1995, p. 109). Weil's basic points are further
politicized by Andreas Huyssen, who suggests that,

What needs to be captured and theorized today is precisely the ways in
which museum and exhibition culture in the broadest sense provides a terrain
that can offer multiple narratives of meaning at a time when the metanarratives
of modernity, including those inscribed into the universal survey museum
itself, have lost their persuasiveness, when more people are eager to hear
and see other stories, to hear and see the stories of others, when identities
are shaped in multiply layered and never-ceasing negotiations between self
and other, rather than being fixed and taken for granted in the framework of
family and faith, race and nation. (1995, p. 34)

While one might argue that much of their drive to change comes not so much from
developments in the new museology as from its new role as the "king-pin of the culture
industry" (Huyssen, 1995, p. 18), museum professionals are addressing these calls for
more diversity in, and accountability from, museums. Taking their cue from the "culture
industry" and their competitors for the public's limited leisure dollar, museum professionals
have become increasingly interested in the quality of visitor's experiences in museums
(Hooper-Greenhill, 1995).

Current trends in museum studies on a practical level indicate that in some ways the
field has begun to move rapidly away from its past. Much of the research on museums has
tended to be concerned with how directly audiences learn the material presented in
exhibition form, examining such things as, how many visitors read labels, how many words
they will read, and how much information is retained by the end of the visit. Strongly based
on psychological models, these studies are filled with terms like "motivate," "effective," and
"strategies" (Ham, 1994; McManus, 1989; Screven, 1995).

In contrast with this top-down approach to the visitor more recently museum
professionals are attempting to understand their visitors and to work from their needs and
interests. Much of the literature that has been emerging from museum professionals is very much concerned with what Lisa Silverman (1995) calls “meaning-making,” and with Michael Baxandall’s (1991) assertion that the space between the object and the label is, and should be, an active one.

An excellent example of a study that examines these types of issues is an article by Douglas Worts (1995). Looking at visitor response cards as a means to look into how people make exhibits personally meaningful, Worts provides a powerful insight into the art-viewing process. He shows that people do indeed engage with artworks in highly idiosyncratic ways and suggests that the museum learn to value these approaches, by providing contextual material in order to appeal to a wider array of response-types.

There has been a great deal of activity in Quebec with regards to studies of the museum profession. One of the recent publications from this area is Museums: Where Knowledge is Shared (Côté and Viel, 1995). This book, following on the developments of the new museology, investigates the move from the concepts of object to visitor, and knowledge to desire. According to the cheery editors, “museums must become places of enchantment, presenting us with new realities or giving us new ways of looking at things, enabling us to rediscover the human adventure” (Côté and Viel, 1995, p. 20). In this volume, “the question of a museum’s publics is omnipresent, shaping the ways that bodies of knowledge are built and transmitted, sometimes...preferring a holistic approach in which the public itself becomes an element of the meaning” (Côté and Viel, 1995, p. 21). This book, I think, realistically reflects the impact of the new museology on museum practice in many ways. While the role of the visitor in creating meaning is addressed, and the importance of the public is emphasized, these studies deal with real-world situations. It also highlights the tension between museum theory and practice.

There are several points of tension here. First, while part of the book advocates diversity and allowing for varieties of meanings, most of the studies are based on visitor
surveys and other quantitative measures that serve to provide standards and
generalizations, factoring out the particularities that they hope to embrace. And secondly,
studies that attempt to examine individual meaning making in exhibitions, like Worts’ study,
do not, after all, provide easy answers for the production of more useful educational
exhibits. Another important aspect of these studies is that they focus on the consumption of
exhibitions. The emphasis is on how the meaning has been received; what the visitor has
absorbed from the exhibition. Among museum educators there is little discussion of what
that meaning is, or should be. This is not surprising, especially in art museums, because
museum educators tend to play little part in the development of the exhibition itself (Dobbs

Art and the politics of exclusion

This separation between curators and museum educators is especially severe in art
museums. This is illustrated in an article dealing with the National Gallery of Canada where
Anne Newlands describes how the gallery, through the use of “educational theme rooms,”
is making its collections more accessible and more rewarding for its visitors. These areas
include extended thematic labelling, seating areas, books, and video and audio materials to
help enrich the gallery experience. While following recent museological ideas that exhibits
should become more issue-centred instead of object-centred (Côté and Viel, 1995, p. 21),
it is telling that these rooms were installed adjacent to the “actual” galleries, so as not to
“interfere with the contemplation of art” (Newlands, 1991, p. 362).

The notion that one should view art, contemplate art, isolated within a white room,
remains one of the strongest stumbling blocks for the new museology. Art viewing remains
tied to a modernist framework, a fact which has been explored and documented by many.
Nancy Hushion suggests the traditional viewpoint present in art galleries is that art should
stand by itself without interpretation. Curators expect visitors “to work at understanding --to
look and to see” (1995, p. 241). However, without offering the tools necessary for
interpretation, art galleries perpetuate what Raymond Montpetit (1995) calls a “closed loop model of communication.” This closed loop means that art galleries end up speaking only to themselves and other initiated parties, those who enter the gallery with some prior knowledge of art.

This closed loop has important ramifications for new museologists, like Phillip Wright who discusses the politics of displaying art without mediation. He argues that a class-centred, insider perspective is presented as self-evident and necessary, in effect, maintaining art museums as elitist institutions. Wright’s work in many ways reflects the classic examination of the “closed loop model” by sociologists Alain Darbel and Pierre Bourdieu (English translation, 1991) who examined the visiting public of museums in various towns in France. Studying the results from a sociological viewpoint, the two posited that art museums, while supposedly geared to the public, in all of its various factions, actually promote an elitist and exclusive view. The public that visits museums comes from a higher class background, and those who fall outside of this group feel quite unwelcome. They found that this perspective was promoted by the institution itself, and the style of exhibitions. With no mediation between art and viewer, viewers without an educational background in art (usually those from middle- or lower classes) were unable to make sense of the artworks, and felt subliminally excluded, while those who possessed the “tools” for the interpretation of art (normally those of higher classes), felt affirmed by the museum experience.

**Exhibitions as a particular site of exploration**

As Gaskell and Huyssen point out, the new museology has focused on the museum as a monolithic entity, and museum educators have looked primarily at how to improve the consumption of the exhibition’s message, created by the curator. More recently, the exhibition itself is being looked at as a unique object of study (see Greenberg, Ferguson and Naimé, 1996). The importance of the exhibition to the new museology is
suggested by Bruce Ferguson who notes that:

art objects themselves are the continuing subject of rigorous re/decontextualization, and institutions of art, especially museums, have become de rigueur subjects of much interdisciplinary work. Both the art object and the museum in which it is found then are the special subjects of a new critical industry whose criticality often ignores the genres, systems, histories and architectonics of exhibitions and their reception. Uncannily, which is to say unconsciously, the active catalytic ingredient—the institutional tone of forceful articulation—the systematic delivery of art in a dynamic moment from object to concept—the exhibition—has been overlooked. (Ferguson, 1996, p. 176)

Ferguson offers a probable reason for this lack of attention, suggesting that it is due to the fact that, “the exhibition is more often than not glossed over as a “natural” form within the life of an institution” (Ferguson, 1996, p. 178). Timothy Luke elaborates on this idea:

Museum exhibitions...do not simply present uncontestable eternal facts, even though the narrative rituals enacted by their formal styles of presentation would have viewers believe they do. Actually, the rituals of museum showings are intensely charged with rhetoric and they are always intended to guide their many diverse audiences to particular constructions of the aesthetic texts formally presented in these settings. (Luke, 1992, p. 230)

These statements have interesting connections to the Bourdieu and Darbel study of the implicit exclusion at work in the art gallery.

While the “forms” of exhibitions might seem somehow impenetrable to Ferguson, he points out what might be considered the next direction for the new museology. Indeed, this notion has been taken up by many recent authors. Mieke Bal, for instance, highlights the importance of the exhibition as an object of study suggesting that,

If there is anything that would differentiate the “new” museology from the “old” or plain, museology, it is the serious follow-up on the idea that a museum installation is a discourse, and an exhibition is an utterance within that discourse. The utterance consists neither of words nor images alone, nor of the frame nor frame-up of the installation, but of the productive tension between images, caption (words) and installation (sequences, height, light combinations) (1996, p. 128)

The exhibition also plays an important role in the new museology for Andreas Huyssen,
who suggests:

One way of judging its activities must be to determine to what extent it helps overcome the insidious ideology of the superiority of one culture over all others in space and time, to what extent and in what ways it opens itself to other representations, and how it will be able to foreground problems of representation, narrative, and memory in its designs and exhibits. (1995, p. 34)

This challenge has been taken up by at least two volumes that deal explicitly with the curatorial challenges posed by the new museology. I have selected one that deals with history, Making Histories in Museums (Kavanagh, 1996) and one that deals specifically with art, Naming a Practice: Curatorial Strategies for the Future (White, 1996) in order to look more closely at the differences between the practices of history museums and art galleries. These differences are characterized by a move towards increased interpretation in the case of history museums, and the continuing challenge of formalism in the case of art museums.

Crew and Sims suggest the changing curatorial context for history museums:

Increasing the importance of historical interpretation in the exhibition changes the way artifacts are used. Objects continue to document the story line of the exhibition, but their provenance dictates less about how they are used. What assumes greater importance is the context in which artifacts are presented and the authenticity of the historical concepts that the artifacts represent. (Crew and Sims, 1991, p. 170)

Gaynor Kavanagh (1996) continues this line of inquiry and offers specific case studies as insight into how curators in history museums have begun to deal with contemporary issues. Issues such as representation, historiography, object-truth, authorial voice, and monolithic narrative have all been addressed by the authors, who deal with history as it is displayed in a variety of contexts. These studies reflect on the nature of history itself, as well as how the visitor is involved in the process. Kavanagh notes:

Engagement with histories in museums can be on levels which stimulate the imagination, provoke discussion and increase the ability to question how and what we know. In other words, history in museums can help develop skills as well as knowledge. From this, it has to be acknowledged that history in museums is at least as much about the present as it is about the past, as much about how people feel as it is about what they know, as much about responses as it is about facts. (Kavanagh, 1996, p. xiii)
Examining the notion that history can never be complete, Jonathan Bell notes that visitors as well as curators bring “mythological” notions of history to the exhibit. Acknowledging the discomfort that these uncertainties can bring, Bell calls upon some theorists for relief:

To think is to generalize, to abstract, otherwise there is only a mass of detail (Lowenthal, 1985). History can provide real knowledge of the past, but it is always subjectively biased. Sartre has convincingly argued that all knowledge, including historical knowledge, is constantly changing and progressing. He denies the possibility of any systematic, analytic, unchanging history (Sartre, 1976). Our responsibility is to produce a history which is a truth for us which, from our own position we cannot go beyond. (Bell, 1996, p. 32)

He further suggests that curators avoid “neurotic self-scrutiny” and realize that,

We are telling a story which we know can be no more than a partial story, but it can also be a true story and interesting as well. What is now known as ‘the past’ is not what anyone ever experienced as ‘the present’. History is always an account, a narrative. Not only is the experience of past reality not possible, our constructions of it must be partial if they are to make sense. (Bell, 1996, p. 32)

While Bell discusses historiographic issues, Kath Davies (1996) looks at the other side of display, examining what happens at the intersection of historical artifact and “objet d'art.” During the 1970s and early 1980s, what she calls the heyday of industrial archaeology, these “objects were collected as ‘totemic symbols’ which were, as Colin Sorenson (1989: 71) explains, ‘expected to perform unaided the immense task of explanation and evocation’.” By displaying the machines in this way, the objects were viewed almost as “objets d'art- beautiful and noble in their power.” This type of display had interesting consequences for the history behind the machines, as the,

[r]epresentation of the people who worked, designed, maintained, or benefited from them are disregarded. It is almost as if human presence would complicate and detract from the majesty of machinery. Awe rather than empathy is inspired by the ‘Hall of Power’ approach. (Davies, 1996, 106)

Davies continues, arguing for the importance of the human element, in displays of this type.

These discussions show that history curators are aware and committed to facing the challenges posed by changing historical practice and new museology. Crew and Sims’
(1991) emphasis on issue-based exhibits, the acknowledgement of the mutability of historical accounts, and the use of “evocation,” and “awe” in exhibitions have particularly important ramifications for art museums. Referring to art museums, and their aim to serve the public, Sherman and Rogoff suggest that, “the historical dichotomy between art, which is associated with pleasure, and artifact, connoting instruction, has made it difficult for museums to sustain this definition, which also constitutes one of their fundamental self-justifications” (1994, p. xii). The dichotomy between “awe” and instruction appears in material that deals directly with curating art exhibitions. Naming a Practice (White, 1996) provides two useful examples, one dealing with the exhibition of contemporary art, and one with historical art, that point out some of the deeply ingrained notions about what it means to hang art in a gallery.

Sharon Brooks, talking about the contemporary art scene, starts her discussion by summarizing the traditional methods of hanging modern art. Modern art exhibitions, she notes, have traditionally been “demonstrative, didactic and programmatic,” portraying linear progressive development, using categories, and teleologies. While perhaps these messages were not overtly stated, the message was instead inscribed in the structure (1996, p. 99). Mieke Bal elaborates:

This is obviously not a way of avoiding the expository speech act; it is simply saying something else. It is saying what art is for, and saying, through the choice of exposed objects and the order in which they appear, what art is too. This restraint acts out, and thereby states, a confidence in the primacy and sole power of visual images. (1996, p. 112)

This is an apt characterization of how the modernist art exhibition operates, a form that Brooks hopes to overcome in her own curatorial work.

Brooks presents the notion of “assemblage” as a replacement for these so-called modernist structures of art exhibitions. In order to represent her point of view adequately, I will quote her at length. By combining and re-combining disparate fragments, Brooks
proposes that,

Assemblage offers a kind of utopian yet unprescribed sense of the future, a futurity that springs from the relationships between things as much as from the latent potentialities of things themselves. It is the spaces between, in the relational field formed by the assemblage of works, that reflective criticism is often able to find something not seemingly contained in the works, but nevertheless generated by them. (1996, p. 99)

She further suggests that,

The tendency of modernist formats to treat works objectively as members of a class or representatives of something already named, may be transformed by selecting and arranging works into provocative relational structures that engage the concerns, memories, and imagination of the observer. (p. 99)

And she believes that,

By engaging the singularity and irreducibility of works, and exploring their affinities with other works, other times and other subjects, something else may be produced, something that neither the curator nor the spectator can actually control (p. 99).

In proposing “assemblage” as a means of escaping the dominance of modernist notions of exhibition design, Brooks calls on what other writers have called the curator as “auteur” approach (see Heinich and Pollack, 1996; Alloway, 1996; Meijers, 1996). Many of the papers in Thinking about Exhibitions document these types of exhibitions, many of them international, most in contemporary art settings, and often “authored” by well-known artists. According to Debora Meijers, this use of the “auteur” reflects our new era where,

[t]here are more general indications today that traditional notions of chronological development and separate styles are no longer acceptable. There are doubts regarding history as an evolutionary process....This feeling of a lack of direction runs parallel to doubts about the possibility of describing this process in a scientific way. These doubts find expression in the ‘linguistic turn,’ a blurring of the boundary between the discipline of history and literature. The same goes for art history. An exhibition designer who regards his activity as art is not essentially different from the historian who becomes increasingly aware of the literary dimension of his historical account. (1996, p. 18)

One might ask whether this leads to the sort of “neurotic self-scrutiny” proposed in the context of history museums, but perhaps this tendency is counterbalanced by drawing upon artists to act as curators? Considering the exhibition to be a kind of “art work” itself, is
an interesting and potentially fruitful idea. The oft-cited exhibition called *Mining the Museum* by artist-curator Fred Wilson is an excellent example of this type of work (Corrin, 1994). Wilson, of African-American and Native-American descent, selected objects from the Maryland Historical Society collection and installed them in such a way as to point out the hidden lives of the slaves who polished the priceless silver, and pressed the trousers commonly seen in the display cases at the museum. The problem of the inherent objective and authoritative voice of the museum is taken care of, but many other problems emerge.

For, if the art exhibition is indeed, as Carol Duncan suggests, a public space, constituting “an arena in which a community may test, examine, and imaginatively live both older truths and possibilities for new ones” (1995, p. 134), then one has to consider carefully who is allowed to speak within that arena. While Fred Wilson’s revisionist history was acclaimed, other interpretations have caused controversy (see Henderson & Kaeppler, 1997).

The desire to call attention to the constructed nature of exhibition narratives emerges in Wilson’s installation. It also emerges in Brooks’ idea of “assemblage.” Yet her notion of assemblage is challenging, and it reveals some of the difficulties that continue to face curators. While Brooks hopes to open up a new type of dialogue or relational structure within exhibitions, throughout her writing she reflects, perhaps unknowingly, a strong reference to the type of modernist sensibility that she hopes to escape. She reflects the interests of museum professionals in terms of audiences, noting that,

> Where modernist exhibitions sought to educate and inform its not yet fully modern public, I think of the audience engaging and participating in the presentation of works, not in an essentialist sense, but as viewers with specific lives and perspectives. (Brooks, 1996, p. 104)

We might fully agree with this perspective, as well as the previous discussions of the possibilities of assemblage. But a closer examination reveals how Brooks reflects formalist perspectives about art viewing. Believing that we should be “returning to the specificity of visual culture as a form of cognition in its own right,” Brooks suggests that this assemblage
technique “gives works room to breathe” (p. 104). And she hopes to create “a relationship that invites the formative participation of viewers attentive to the unformed spaces between” (1996, p. 104).

“Attentive” is a key word here, instantly bringing to mind all of the traditional discourses about art (or objects) being somehow capable of speaking for themselves, and about art exhibitions being directed only at the initiated audience. “Attentive” also suggests a dichotomy between paying attention to the “intended” message, versus Brooks’ espoused exhibitions of unlimited potential meanings. What is perhaps not acknowledged here is the extent to which she herself as curator is responsible for the meanings of those unformed spaces.

In the same volume, Rosemary Donegan comes from a more traditional viewpoint on the problems of curating today. She too, acknowledges the importance of the audience, drawing on the work of Paulo Freire to suggest that people make sense of the world through their own lived experiences, that in fact, viewers themselves create meaning in exhibitions (see also, Silverman, 1995). After noting this, however, she focuses primarily on the work of the curator in constructing the exhibition’s message. She characterizes the curator’s work, like the historian’s work, as “the process of ferreting out materials...locating the gaps and omissions, figuring out why they exist, what their significance is and what their relationships with already located materials might be.” She talks of the process as a “weaving” of various narratives “into a conceptual framework informing both the content and form of the exhibition” (p. 106).

Her work seems very self-conscious and in tune with the ideas behind the new museology, yet there are inherent contradictions within it too. There are inklings of modernist notions about the primacy of the visual object. As she describes her work:

The analysis involves a continuous process of assessing the visual power-the aesthetics-- of individual images and of discerning the meanings and significance that are underscored or released by possible groupings of the
images and documents. It is vital to allow the existing materials to govern the possible meanings and to avoid imposing pre-set assumptions upon them. (p. 106)

While the notion of “releasing” meanings from objects is heavy-handed, I like the suggestion that the combinations or groupings of objects might produce quite different readings. Donegan emphasizes her role as researcher and creator of meaning in this particular context, while simultaneously suggesting the multiplicity of meanings that might exist.

Donegan mentions a few times the notion of interaction between audience and text, of allowing a dialectical exchange to happen. She also discusses the idea of being an educator and trying to perceive viewers' responses as she's constructing the exhibition. Yet at the same time it is clear that she approaches the exhibition with a definite message in mind. And while Brooks talks a great deal about allowing unintended things to occur in her assemblages, her ideas are not quite as progressive as she'd like them to be, relying as they do, on the visitor's ability to be “attentive” to the messages implied, and on allowing the works “room to breathe” there seems to be less time spent on helping the visitor to wade through what might be obscure and difficult terrain.

After examining the literature on curating within art museums from a professional perspective, it becomes clear that the project of new museology proposes exceedingly difficult challenges to museum practice. And, as Donald Preziosi, suggests,

Although there has appeared over the past decade a useful critical literature on the subject of museums, it has at the same time become clearer than ever that significant progress in understanding the remarkable properties, mechanisms, and effects of museological practice demands nothing less than a substantive rethinking of not a few of our more comfortable historical and theoretical assumptions and modes of interpretation and explanation. (1995, p. 13)

Cultural studies

In the previous sections I have outlined how Preziosi's daunting call for a rethinking of interpretation in exhibitions is beginning to be addressed, within the frameworks of museum
practice and Foucauldian museum theorizing. However, the subject of exhibitions has been taken up in a more theoretical way in the humanities. Coming from the arena of the new museology, scholars have begun to look more closely at exhibitions, to begin to examine more closely the ways in which exhibitions operate within different contexts. The exhibition has become an active topic, especially among those who would place themselves within the area of cultural studies.

According to Ghislaine Lawrence, cultural studies is “characterized by reflexiveness on its origins and by awareness of its theoretical base. It is a prime intention of this type of research to make clear how social meaning gets made in museums or elsewhere” (Lawrence, 1991, p. 25). Cultural studies analysts draw on a wide range of methodological frameworks or theories for their work as might be inferred from the diversity of the subject areas. Coming from the perhaps more “strictly” defined area of museum research, with its social scientific base, a brief look at how cultural analysts view theory might be helpful at this point.

The foundation for cultural studies research is that, “theory is not a language, not a thing, not a whole. It is rather, a way of interacting with objects....[it is] a practice, a form of interpretation” (Bal and Boer, 1994, p. 9). The diversity of what might be used as the methodological basis within cultural studies is daunting, and I find it useful to return to Jonathan Culler’s notions of theory, which he sees as,

the nickname for an unbounded corpus of works “that succeed in challenging and reorienting thinking in domains other than those to which they ostensibly belong because their analyses of language, mind, history or culture offer novel and persuasive accounts of signification, make strange the familiar and perhaps persuade readers to conceive of their own thinking and the institutions to which it relates in new ways.” (Culler, 1994, p.13)

For Culler, the key is that, “a discourse only accedes to the status of theory, by this definition, when it is taken up by readers from other fields” (Culler, 1994, p. 13).

Several general works have informed my understanding of cultural studies.
Relocating Cultural Studies (Blundell, Shepherd, & Taylor, 1993) offers a good summary of the history of cultural studies, and through this the authors point out the importance of political concerns through time. Field Work: Sites in Literary and Cultural Studies (Garber, Franklin, & Walkowitz, 1996), connects notions of ethnography and cultural studies with the broadening interest in these issues by other traditional academic “fields.” And finally, The Point of Theory: Practices of Cultural Analysis (Bal & Boer, 1994) is useful as a means of understanding some of the methodological concerns of cultural analysts. This volume discusses theoretical concerns and developments. It offers numerous case studies, in which “the point of theory” becomes both clear and accessible.

From the vantage point of cultural studies, an important early work within the field of museum studies itself, is Helen Coxall’s (1991) work on the semiotics of museum texts. She looked at the text in several different museums using linguistic analysis as a methodology. She examines how the choice and use of language conveys social and ideological meanings. She is interested in looking at how texts convey these meanings drawing on linguistic studies like Kress and Hodges Language as Ideology (1979), and Fairclough’s (1989) study Language and Power for her theoretical underpinnings.

By examining the lexical and syntactical choices (that is the choice of words and grammar) in a text it is possible to find first, evidence of the position of the writer; second, what they were saying; third what they were choosing not to say and why; and last, who they appeared to be addressing. (Coxall, 1991, p. 134)

Coxall’s work stands as somewhat of an anomaly within the museum field since, as she aptly suggests, museum professionals focus primarily on the physical aspects of text, such as the font style, and the maximum number of words that most visitors will read, leaving the question of meaning itself unexplored.

Two works on exhibitions

Two sources, Timothy Luke’s Shows of Force: Power, Politics, and Ideology in Art Exhibitions (1992), and Mieke Bal’s Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis
(1996), deal specifically with the unique qualities of exhibitions and use potentially suggestive methodologies for my own work on the re-installation of Emily Carr at the VAG. These two books provide examples of two distinct vantage points along the methodological spectrum, the former stemming from a more traditional type of art criticism, and the latter, drawing from the broader boundaries of the cultural analyst.

Timothy Luke examines art exhibitions using critical and political criticism to suggest the ways in which the display of art works offers meanings that go far beyond the purely aesthetic. Luke notes that his goal is “to connect art criticism to cultural and political criticism. As a strategy for dealing with the ineluctable undecidability of interpreting the significance of aesthetic texts,” he draws upon issues of social critique, political theory, and cultural demystification, “as they have been framed by critical theory” (Luke, 1992, p. 232). Luke’s work is interesting in its particular attention to the political nature of the showing of art within exhibitions. Drawing on the context, including the curator, artists, museum and perhaps most importantly, the sponsors, he provides an interesting vantage point on contemporary American culture.

His theoretical sources range from Baudrillard and Barthes, to Benjamin, and Adorno. Drawing on the work of Baudrillard, Luke takes the notion of “semiurgy” (as the making and manipulating of meaning), and suggests that his critiques can be seen as “studies of the semiurgic qualities of art exhibitions” (Luke, 1992, p. 4). While Luke therefore draws on semiology, his is not the version of semiology practiced by Coxall, a version that Justin Lewis calls a “glorified form of linguistics” (Lewis, 1994, p. 21) which focuses almost entirely on the dissection of, or re-membering of, the message. Instead Luke, like Lewis, accords a more interactive, or broader stance to semiology, and argues that “artworks and art exhibitions should be considered as complexly coded texts, which are always scripted out against a backdrop of larger cultural forces and political institutions (Luke, 1992, p. 228).

Luke also sees his work as challenging traditional art historical methods. "Art historical
discussions," he notes,

often center so exclusively on the art object's figure, the artist's apparent intentions, and the style movement's reputed requirements that the truly fascinating questions surrounding the social ground of art, the psychosocial context of artistic subjectivity, and ideological manufacturing of an aesthetic school's attributes get totally lost in rhetorical fog. (1992, p. 232)

Luke instead asserts:

[M]y critical theorizing about art exhibitions as displays of mythic power or shows of legitimizing force also has not settled into the methodological thickets of art history. All human discourse finally gets down to hunting and grunting for some sort of plausible closure or small shards of sensible meaning. Yet situating an artist in the context of a larger stylistic school or judging whether this painted trope expresses that artist's real intentions simply has not been enough for this analysis. (p. 232)

For my purposes Luke's work is useful primarily for its discussion of the nature and purposes of exhibitions. And unlike the studies presented in Thinking about Exhibitions (Greenberg, Ferguson, & Naime, 1996), which consists primarily of short discussions on contemporary, international exhibitions and curatorial strategies, Luke provides; a) more extended look at exhibitions, b) more-contextually relevant choice of exhibitions for my purposes, focusing on exhibitions within contemporary American culture, and c) a look at historical artists. His theoretical framework and interests are also useful, if more politically-oriented than my own. If Luke's work has a specific shortcoming it is that he relies heavily on the sources used by the curators themselves to explain the artists and their works. And as this is a straightforward work of criticism, Luke's work is thus limited for my own uses.

A more theoretically interesting book on the subject of cultural studies and exhibitions is Mieke Bal's Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis (1996). Bal explores the notion of "exposure" which places certain objects on "view" whether it be in an exhibition or in an academic piece of writing. The act of placing an object on display entails the use of certain conventions, and a "rhetoric of persuasion" can be analyzed to yield important insights into differing conceptions of culture, and aspects of power and authority within it.
Bal draws on a wide variety of theoretical positions, ranging from her own theories of narratology, which she approaches from a structuralist perspective, to deconstructivist (Derrida, Culler), feminist (Tickner) and semiological (Bryson, Coxall, Barthes) theories, to name a few. In her eclectic range of theoretical perspectives, Bal follows what Sacvan Bercovitch describes as a cultural studies perspective which, "claims to make interdisciplinarity an enterprise in its own right-- a bricolage of methodologies (semiotics, deconstruction... psychoanalysis and so on) that challenges the very foundation of disciplinarity" (Bercovitch, 1994, p. 247). Bal's facility at bridging disciplinary gaps is evident in her own publication history, which has made her a well-known figure in art history as well as in literature, and cultural studies. She has written books on such diverse topics as Biblical narrative, narrative theory, and Rembrandt.

Bal examines a variety of different areas, from art exhibitions, new museology texts, and academic writing, using the notion of "exposing" as a structuring device. In terms of her work around art exhibitions, she examines how the authoritative voice "hides" just below the surface of every "utterance" the museum makes, whether in the text itself (e.g. Coxall), or within the arrangement of the art works. At times in her analysis she wonders whether exhibition designers can ever provide a narrative that is able to sufficiently overcome the constative nature of the museum environment, so powerful and persuasive are its rhetorical constructs.

Bal's methodological tools are wide ranging, "selected and employed in an integration of rhetoric and the theory of narrative (narratology)" (1996, p. 130). Like Luke, Bal wants to move beyond art criticism's attention to the singular object, hoping instead to use rhetoric to read the "apparently incidental acts of museum display" (1996, p. 130). Bal moves further from Luke's position in her attempts to address both sides of the exhibitions, hoping to,
yield on the one hand, an integrated account of the discursive strategies put into effect by the museum's expository agent (the curators), and on the other hand, the effective process of meaning-making that these strategies suggest to the visitor. The reading itself, then, becomes part of the meaning it yields. And this seems an important insight, for what are museums for if not visitors? (1996, p. 7)

She is also quite interested in the role of the subject in the process. She therefore suggests that,

Cultural studies should be renamed cultural analysis. The analysis through which the argument for such a renaming is built up have in common a cohabitation of theoretical reflection and reading in which the "object" from subject matter becomes subject, participating in the construction of theoretical views. They also share a contemporaneity. This is not an indifference to history but a foregrounding of the active presence of the object or text, in the same historical space as inhabited by the subject, "me" (1996, p. 12)

While many new museological studies tend to deal with the history of museums and practices, Bal's attention to the role of the subject means that while "interested in detailed readings of objects, the analysis is not geared toward an archaeology of meaning but toward the interaction with and through meaning that constitutes cultural practice, now." (1996, p. 12).

Bal sees museum studies within, and as a leading paradigm of cultural analysis, and she outlines several ways that cultural analysis might be applied to museum studies. She advocates the systematic analysis of the "narrative-rhetorical structure" of different museums in order to deepen our insight into their particularities and effects. She also advocates the in-depth study of museums, focusing on two aspects, its foundation and history and its discourses. This, she argues, will allow us to understand where new directions may be taken, and what seems to be inherent within the institution. While these studies are being published, Bal suggests that they tend to be general and inordinately focused on the past rather than on how they operate in the present. Bal's concern with looking at how the museum is operating in the present stems from what she sees as the inherent notion of progress, or the idea that we have necessarily learned something from the past that is
typically associated with the study of history (1996, pp. 128-129).

Finally Bal points to another methodological concern; the need for self-critical analysis. She argues that "there is a serious problem, of logic and of politics, with the self-righteousness of many so-called critical studies of ethnocentric practices. If discourse confines us all, the critic is there too" (1996, p. 129). I have encountered this notion also through Culler's phrase about context as being:

"just more text": Context is not given but produced; what belongs to a context is determined by interpretive strategies; contexts are just as much in need of elucidation as events; and the meaning of a context is determined by events. He suggests instead "frame" in order to make more apparent the idea that "we" are shaping the interpretation, to make clear our role in the process. (Culler quoted in Bryson, 1994, p. 67)

Following these comments about reflexivity, then, let me outline the ways in which I attempt to provide ample information about the context from which this study emerges. I have presented lengthy background discussions of Emily Carr and museological theory. Here, and in the following chapters I use lengthy quotations from sources, and include photographs and the complete text panels on which my analyses were conducted in order to help the reader make their own interpretation of the exhibitions. I insist throughout the thesis that this is an interpretive project that stems from a subjective, yet well-informed viewpoint, pointing out my role in the process of interpretation while offering the reader insight into my process and situatedness (Fine, 1994).

The thesis is formed around exhibition analyses conducted at the National Gallery, the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Vancouver Art Gallery. I conducted interviews with educational staff at these institutions, and took photographs and detailed notes of my visits. I then analyzed the exhibitions following the work of the theorists discussed in this chapter. My work at the Vancouver Art Gallery on the re-installation provided a more complex series of interactions, where I became both participant and observer, in a case study that reflected my beliefs in the action research process (May,
1993). As I discuss further in Chapter 6, I move from an insider to an outsider perspective in the analysis of the resulting text project, but I call attention to this rather arbitrary positioning, augmenting my analysis with discussions with staff involved in the project as well as visitor studies conducted by myself as well as by independent researchers (Foo & Ramos, 1999).

**Conclusion**

Almost a decade has passed for the new museology, and there is now a call for new practical alternatives, rather than to simply provide an analysis of how the exhibition is culturally reproductive. Examining institutions as political entities is valuable work, but interest is beginning to turn to explorations of how meaning is produced in museums, and how to create exhibitions that deal more adequately with these museological issues. The perspectives I have provided suggest that museum professionals, while attempting to move beyond them, are still dealing with entrenched modernist notions of curating and art display. Within the context of history museums, interpretation has become a focal point for consideration. These concerns have similarly affected art curators, but primarily those who deal with contemporary art or temporary exhibitions. Large scale, and historical art displays remain less amenable to revisionism, or explicit and self-reflective interpretation. Drawing on the work of cultural studies, then, I explore how the particular rhetorical interests of fields like history, and art history intersect within the context of a display of historical artworks by Emily Carr, installed in four institutions across Canada.

As stand-in objects marking pinnacles of artistic genius, as objects that mark key moments in a teleology of stylistic development, as objects of aesthetic beauty, "that the traditional art museum is so largely premised on the self-sufficiency of images is by no means well understood." (Weil, 1995, p. 49) In comparison, in history museums the idea is more often that, "objects are ‘pegs on which to hang a story” (taken from a book ironically called, Getting Yesterday Right, quoted in Davies, 1995, p. 107). The notion of
the "story" itself, and how the objects are marshalled in to play a part in it is of key concern, especially in its resulting significance as "history." This tension, between the historicizing function of art and the formalist appreciation of art is further complicated by the musealization of the artworks; that is, the effect of the museum context (Huyssen, 1995). Donald Preziosi aptly describes this museum effect:

Museums do not simply refer to the past; rather they are places within the present that establish an ambivalent figuration of the past and the future. The function of this museological "past" is to signal alterity, to separate out from "the present" an Other which can be formatted so as to be legible in some fashion as generating the present. The past becomes a sign of what is lacking in the present. Museums, in other words, perform the basic historiographic gesture of separating out of the present a past so as to compose the relics of that past into a genealogy for the present (1995, p. 14)

Throughout the analysis of exhibitions that comprise the next four chapters, this tension emerges, as past and present merge, separate, and are filtered by the curatorial practices that must reflect the political context and function of each institution. As I analyze the following exhibitions, several recurring issues raised in this chapter emerge. Chapter 3 offers a discussion of following the lines of the first wave of new museology, with an interest in examining the political operations of the display of Canadian historical art, or what Preziosi refers to as art as "ethical hieroglyphs" which re-constructs history in a teleological and palatable manner (1995, p. 15). Chapter 4 examines notions raised by the tension between curating history and art, where the display of Carr, most often reflects an interest in portraying a history of this local artist. Chapter 5 examines issues of curating contemporary art, or creating temporary exhibitions, this more flexible environment providing an opening for a more subjective and individual interpretation, using the curator as "auteur" (Meijers, 1996). And Chapter 6 looks at these preceding issues in conjunction with notions of practice, and how to find a comfortable place somewhere in between the auteur and the authority, the history and the aesthetic, the linear and the open-ended. The analyses presented in this thesis are therefore situated within broader theoretical concerns about
representation, as well as the widespread turn towards visitor studies and more attentive educational practices at museums.
Chapter 3: Carr at the margins: The National Gallery of Canada

This chapter examines the display practices in the Canadian Art section at the National Gallery of Canada in light of new museological theory. As a national institution, this gallery might usefully be explored in terms of its ideological function for the nation-state, theorizing following the work of Duncan and Wallach (1980) and Bennett (1995). In light of such broadly based analysis, I suggest that the display of Carr and other artists in the Canadian Historical Galleries function as place-holders in a teleological view of Canadian art history. Chronological and geographical issues emerge as key concerns in this undertaking. Yet, I further suggest that in spite of this insistent and orderly progressive narrative, the display is not quite as uncomplicated as it might first appear and it points towards a more complex reading of issues and ideologies than one might first presume. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of some of these complicating factors and ruptures in the narrative that are found in attempts to provide contextual material at the Gallery.

National museums have been usefully explored as sites of implicit and explicit ideological operations (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992; Bennett, 1995; Duncan, 1995). Writing in 1980, Duncan and Wallach's concept of the universal survey museum first explored the architecture, environment and activities of the museum as ideologically situated, positing that the combination of elements provided a venue in which the political power of the state is enacted. The architecture stands as a monument, and the collection represents the wealth and power of the state. Additionally, the actions of visitors were likened to those of the religious pilgrim, dutifully worshipping at this ideological presentation.

On the most basic level, the architecture of the National Gallery of Canada clearly serves this political function. Built in 1988 by Moshe Safdie, the Gallery does in fact function primarily as a monumental and nationalistic structure. Supremely situated across the water
from the Parliament buildings, designed in a congruent architectural style, the building's symbolic message is clear. Culture and politics are tightly combined. The interior of the building continues this symbolic function, with a large glass-walled Great Hall to welcome visitors while providing them with a clear view of the parliament buildings across the water. A gently sloping promenade offers the same view while bringing visitors to the entry point of the Canadian Historical Collection.

**Canadian collection**

The Canadian collection occupies a key position within the Gallery, and the political and cultural symbolism is carried through in its organization of the Canadian collection; the layout is both self-contained and highly structured. The Gallery's presentation of this developmental narrative is created by the selection and combination of art works within the ordered layout of the 13 gallery spaces that comprise the Canadian historical art section of the museum (Figure 2). For example, the gallery spaces are self-contained, and arranged in a large rectangular progression around three interior courtyards. The layout of the space creates a directive path that is actually quite difficult to avoid. The main spaces are smoothly integrated, and smaller side galleries are not linked. They do not open into one another, so it is hard to avoid following the determined route through Canada's history in art. Finally, reinforcing the chronological narrative of the Canadian collection, the exit to this section brings the visitor back around to the starting point.

The layout of the galleries creates a linear chronology of major artistic movements and artists in Canadian art from the late 17th century to the 1960s, forming a teleological trajectory which enforces the overall narrative. The overall message here is one that

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5 For a more indepth analysis of the Safdie building, see Whitelaw, 1995; Schmertz, 1988.
celebrates Canadian-ness, or according to director Dr. Shirley Thomson,

We believe that the National Gallery of Canada, in bringing together the best works of artists through time and across the country, makes visible both what we hold and value in common and the rich diversity of our viewpoints and traditions. As one form of cultural expression, the visual arts serve as a record of who and where and how we were. Today that record is part of our common heritage, an expression of our national identity in the landscape, peaceful or rugged, majestic or humble, and in the faces of the settlers, ecclesiastics, homesteaders, coureurs des bois, soldiers and native people who have preceded us. (as cited in Whitelaw, 1995, p. 278)

Finding, "our common heritage," and "our national identity" in the landscape, Thomson's message stands as a summary of the primary symbolic message of the Canadian galleries. In other words, "the Canadian galleries tell the story of Canadian art's emergence out of a derivative past to find its own unique and therefore national (ist) voice" (Whitelaw, 1995, p. 235). This narrative first outlines the development of a unique Canadian artistic vision in the Group of Seven and then Canada's increasing contributions to the international art scene in the development of abstract art in the 1950s and 1960s. While this trajectory follows the development of abstraction it also marks the pronounced regional divisions that comprise a diverse Canadian identity. These differences are noted, but throughout the space the cultural and economic importance of central Canada is underscored and highlighted (Whitelaw, 1995, p. 148). A strongly chronological, and developmental narrative is presented which illustrates the emergence of uniquely Canadian artistic vision, culminating in the work of the members of the Group of Seven. The move towards a distinctly Canadian artistic style is then followed by the development of abstraction in Canada, a style that is shown in connection with the international art scene. In this display,

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6Anne Whitelaw's dissertation, Exhibiting Canada: Articulations of National Identity at the National Gallery of Canada (1995), offers an indepth analysis of ideological workings at the National Gallery. She focuses primarily on the junction between historical and contemporary art, and the points of friction surrounding the Gallery's role as conferring status to artists.

7For an analysis of how the National Gallery used a reproduction program for similarly nationalistic ends, see Zemans (1995).
the National Gallery enacts a traditional narrative of art history, namely that "art history and the museum have worked to promote the idea of the historical period as itself unified and homogenous, or dominated by a singular family of values and attitudes" (Preziosi, 1989, p. 383).

Initial forays into the analysis of the ideological underpinnings of museums suggest that,

visitors to a museum follow a route through a programmed narrative—in this case, one or another version of the history of art. In the museum, art history displaces history, purges it of social and political conflict, and distils it down to a series of triumphs, mostly of individual genius. Of course, what the museum presents as the community's history, beliefs and identity may represent only the interests and self-image of certain powers within the community. Such deceit however, does not necessarily lessen the effectiveness of the monument's ritual structure as such. (Duncan 1991, p. 92)

In terms of the installation of Canadian Historical art at the National Gallery, then, we follow from room to room first examining early religious commissions in Quebec, then non-religious commissions, including portraits and landscapes, on to Victorian paintings, and the emergence of the Group of Seven, and the emergence of abstraction in Montreal in the fifties. Works by Plamondon, Légaré, Kane, Kriehoff, O'Brien, Morrice, Thomson, Harris, Pellan, and Borduas help to create the trajectory. Explicit interpretation is not offered, but rather transitions are suggested by visual comparison from room to room. The display is an example of what Wright describes as "a history of style, as written by those-in-the-know, divided up by media (oil paint, watercolour, printing, etc), subject, schools and movements, nationalities and occasionally by individual artists or patrons" (Wright, 1989, p. 125). He notes that in most historical art displays there is hardly ever any discussion and/or illustration of the Weltanschauung (the attitude to, and concept of, the world as perceived in a certain epoch)... or of the relationship between the patron, the art market, and the artist's task or ego; or of the society, the politics, and the personal circumstances of creators or patrons; or of the ritual and social meaning of the works of art; or of the prevailing circumstances of war, peace, or the economic situation in society or of the individual at the time of a work's creation, and so on (Wright, 1989, p. 125).
Instead we are offered a history of style, a visual representation that depicts the heroic trajectory of the Group of Seven and the move to abstraction.

Carr at the National Gallery

Given this strongly programmatic narrative then, Emily Carr's marginalized representation in the National Gallery is not surprising. Emily Carr's work is first encountered in a side gallery in relation to the work of members of the Canadian Art Club, installed in main gallery A107. During an interview, gallery educator Anne Newlands explained that Carr is included there with artists in Canada who were interested in exploring the tenets of modernism and abstract art, such as Lyman, and Brymmer. Later on in the chronology, near gallery A110, we encounter Carr again, but this time Carr is given more space. Some of Carr's later works are shown in conjunction with works by other BC artists. Each time we encounter Carr she hangs off the main path of the tour, in a smaller side gallery. Newlands suggests that there might be a couple of reasons for this; that it might have been purely an aesthetic choice on the part of the curators, since a lot of Carr's works are smaller in format than those of her peers, and perhaps they looked better in a more intimate context. She also mentioned that Carr might be marginalized since she does not easily fit into the central agendas of the main narrative. She was not, for instance, a member of the Canadian Art Club, and then further on the path, she was not from Ontario like many of the members of the Canadian Group of Painters featured in the main room (Newlands, personal interview, 1997). While in some respects Carr is sidelined, in today's climate, it is important for the gallery to refer to these marginalized artists, as the side galleries help to broaden the narrative without derailing the smooth developmental flow. And even if the Gallery decided to re-hang the permanent collection giving more space to these marginalized artists, the possible configurations are limited by the past collecting policies of the Gallery, policies that did not necessarily reflect this newer version of history.
In more detail

Whatever the ultimate reason might be, it is clear that this insistence on a strongly developmental narrative of the evolution of Canadian painting requires that some artists and movements be marginalized. This marginalization feeds into the notion of the museum as a ritualized and ideologically-based space where the intersection of power and knowledge come together to reproduce and validate the idea of nation-state (Bennett, 1995). The space functions to illustrate or to promote a particular viewpoint about the nature of artistic development in Canada. It offers a reading of Canadian art history, which, as Whitelaw has suggested, functions to promote an heroic view of Canada's great artists and artistic movements. At the same time, this presentation of stylistic development "also underscores the parallel development of Canada as an autonomous nation" (Whitelaw, 1995, p. 281).

A very particular and linear narrative is constructed in this display. Events that do not fit into this narrative are marginalized or even erased. This reflects Donald Preziosi's notion that,

All history is perforce a production, a deliberate selection, ordering and an evaluation of past events, experiences and processes. Any museum, in incorporating selections and silences is an ideological apparatus. In addition, every museum generates ways of not seeing and inhibits the capacity of visitors to imagine alternate histories or social orders, past or future. (Preziosi, 1989, p. 70)

And similarly, according to Eilean Hooper-Greenhill "the apparently democratised environment of the museum marketplace, [can have the effect] of soothing, of silencing, of quieting questions, of closing minds" (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991, p. 136).

And yet, while the ideological reading of the display of historical art offers insight into the role and function of the National Gallery, at the same time it is important to move beyond such a critique, which has tended to view the survey museum as a monolithic and static category. Upon closer examination, numerous points of rupture emerge, as various communities whose history is not provided equal time in the space have been addressed
in Gallery publications and in the display itself to a much smaller extent.

For example, the introduction to the self-guided tour through the Canadian Historical Galleries contains a disclaimer which highlights this central theme and addresses its limitations. The introduction notes that "one way to look at [the works]... is to view them as the response by a European immigrant population to first living in, and then developing a sense of belonging to North America." Then it continues,

of course, the history of art in Canada actually dates back thousands of years. The artistic heritage of the first peoples of Canada is of exceptional quality and diversity. Modern and historical works by artists of native ancestry can be found in... [separate areas of the National Gallery and in] our sister museum, the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

Thus, while the contribution of Native art to the development of art in Canada is duly acknowledged, and acknowledged in a very direct way (it is of "exceptional quality"), it is relegated to the far margins and periphery of this particular narrative of Canadian art history. Thus begins a common theme.

Therefore, while Carr is not directly on the mainstream route through the history presented, she is an important figure for many interests, given her status as a woman, an artist from British Columbia, and her love of nature and Native culture. It is not surprising then, that Carr is featured in the section "Different Voices," in the self-guided tour of the Canadian collection, where she is discussed along with Marc-Aurele Fortin, Carl Schaefer, Bertram Brooker and Paraskeva Clark. This section is introduced by "to see the work of other artists committed to modern art in Canada." Fortin and Schaefer are discussed as artists from other parts of Canada painting around the time of the Group of Seven but not directly involved in the Group. Carr, Brooker and Clark are discussed as members of the Canadian Group of Painters who benefited from the Group of Seven's encouragement.

While the tone in the self-guided tour attempts to assuage critics of the history presented, a history which focuses on white settlers in Canada to the exclusion of First Nations people, the narrative presented in the Canadian galleries is not so accommodating.
It is not self-reflexive, and it does not go far to acknowledge its exclusions and its shaping of the developmental history of Canadian art. With the introduction of this self-guided tour, the National Gallery manages to address its critics, without actually having to alter the physical layout of the space.

Having said that, however, a closer look at the physical space reveals that this strongly nationalistic narrative does in fact have its own points of rupture and complexity. Anne Whitelaw (1995) analyses how this complexity is created in the junction between the historical and the contemporary Canadian galleries. She suggests that it is in the contemporary galleries where evidence of the contested nature involved in the Gallery's role in the validation and canonization of contemporary art emerges. The role of the contemporary galleries in problematizing this process of history making is likewise indicated in the self-guided tour, where Gallery A114 is described as a transitional space:

This last room of our tour is a constantly changing exhibition space. The paintings here, like those you have seen throughout the Canadian Galleries, bear witness to the rich diversity of language and ideas with which artists have addressed their situation with the Canadian environment. An immigrant population has become increasingly defined by its own heritage in Canada. The debate between nationalism and internationalism has waxed and waned, and is still a matter of vibrant concern. The need for and importance of representation and of abstraction continue to be debated today. (Self-Guided Tour Guide NGC, 1992, p. 31)

The difference between historical and contemporary art displays is a very important distinction to make, and it is one that has been made in the literature on the rhetoric of exhibitions (Pearse, 1995). Contemporary art displays, because of their unfixedness in the canon, are by nature more open to a flexible interpretation (Whitelaw, 1995; Ferguson, 1996). Elaine Heumann-Gurian suggests that there are three categories of museums: Establishment, self-consciously liberal, and counter culture institutions that are respectively right, left and far left in political nature. She suggests that museums drift right as success increases (Gurian, 1992). With success and stature comes responsibility and thus an attempt at a more objective, universal narrative. As the Enola Gay debacle at the
Smithsonian showed, revisionist histories do not fit well into such institutions.⁸ At the National Gallery in recent years there have been a number of controversies, most notably perhaps regarding the purchase of Barnett Newman's *Voice of Fire*, (Barber, Guilbaut, O'Brian, 1996) and the inclusion/exclusion of artists in contemporary exhibitions (Walcott, 1996; Whitelaw, 1995b). While these contemporary quandaries are unavoidable, historical exhibitions, like the recent Group of Seven show, and even the Emily Carr retrospective of 1990, are more easily dealt with, by providing neutral, heroicizing narratives that confirm the status quo.⁹

In spite of this conservatism, however, attempts are made at the National Gallery to address alternate viewpoints. And, Duncan and Wallach's ideological ritualistic perspective on museum visiting must also be questioned, as it fails to address the complexities of the individual visitor as well as the complicating factors of the displays in the Historical Gallery at the National Gallery. Throughout the galleries a series of interpretive sites and a reconstructed cottage interrupt the progression of paintings. These two instances in particular serve to interrupt a simple reading of the space as teleological and developmental.

In the first case, there are four theme rooms adjacent to the main galleries. Installed in 1989, the theme rooms concern the topics: Patronage of the Arts in Early Canada; Academic Training of Canadian Artists Abroad; Modern Art in Canada: The Beginnings; and The Painter Speaks: Canadian Abstract Painters. These theme rooms offer in-depth materials to explore selected issues concerning the works on display. The themes are introduced through a selection of works of art, photographic documents, texts, books as well

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⁹For information on how the National Gallery exhibition of the Group of Seven failed to address contemporary concerns about Canadian identity, or current scholarship on the Group, see (Fulford, 1995; Jessup, 1996).
as audio and video productions. They are a substantial attempt to help the visitor gain some understanding of the themes that inform the narrative constructed in the gallery space. At once, a visitor-centred approach, it is interesting to note that these spaces are well-removed from the main gallery spaces, indeed, they are often hard to find at all. While the educational imperative of the National Gallery has long been acknowledged in its policy statements, it is interesting to examine the statements a bit closer. In A building programme for the New National Gallery of Canada (1983), for example, special didactic areas were proposed to help visitors "learn." These areas installed,

in conjunction with certain galleries will contain displays giving information about, and interpretations of, the art exhibited in nearby galleries. Although the visitor should be able to see the didactic display in close proximity to the associated gallery, he should also be able to bypass...[so as not to have it interfere] with the contemplative nature of the examination of works of art. (as cited in Newlands, 1991, p. 362)

In this emphasis on the contemplative examination of art, the National Gallery reveals a continuing belief in the formalist foundations of traditional art historical practice, that in its most profound stage asserts that the works of art can speak for themselves. This notion is one that continues to plague art museum educators as they attempt to work directly in the gallery space to help visitors who might not have the necessary background knowledge to make sense of the objects on display. As one journalist notes:

They're all show and no tell. They don't label their collections well. They don't put works in context. They don't tell you the stories behind the pieces. And they certainly don't explain why the art was deemed important enough to be on display. In short, art museums are making a lot of would-be art lovers feel stupid. (Keates, 1999)¹⁰

The continuing struggle to create educational spaces in this institution is revealed by the fact that in spite of evaluation reports that suggested the Gallery make changes to the theme rooms, the suggestions have not been enacted (Newlands, personal interview, 1997). Additionally, theme rooms were proposed for all areas of the collection, but to date, only

¹⁰See also Bourdieu and Darbel (1991), and Dobbs and Eisner (1990) for accounts of how art museums implicitly alienate their publics.
the four theme rooms exist (Newlands, 1991, p. 363). Anne Newlands indicated that the permanent collection, as well as educational gallery initiatives tend to be low on the list of financial priorities, a problem that is common to art museums, whose primary responsibility tends to be acquisition and presentation, at the expense of education, appreciation and interpretation (Getty Centre, 1991, p. 46).

Another example where there is a point of rupture in the rather smooth developmental narrative is the sudden appearance of a reconstructed cottage interior along the gallery walk, a cottage originally located at Go Home Bay on Georgian Bay. Suddenly the path through the gallery takes the visitor into a cottage space, with wooden walls, and floor. The walls of the cottage are covered by mural panels painted by Tom Thomson, Arthur Lismer and J.E.H. MacDonald and commissioned by Dr. James MacCallum. MacCallum was an important early patron of these artists who bequeathed his important collection of 134 paintings to the National Gallery of Canada in 1943. The room offers an opportunity to get a sense of a particular historical time period. It is an odd space in this context which otherwise features a diachronic succession of artists and schools that highlights the teleological organization of objects in the museum. Now suddenly we are provided with a period room, the synchronic underpinnings of which suggest the art historical counterpart of interest in the zeitgeist (Preziosi, 1989, p. 122). And what is suggested about the zeitgeist? This cottage structure is highly useful. It is a symbol that at once evokes all the heroic, rustic, manly adventure championed by the members of the Group of Seven, while at the same time it cleverly, if subtly, might suggest the importance of monied patrons like McCallum to promote and maintain this emerging artistic trend.11

11For information on the Group of Seven see, a contemporary account (Housser, 1926); an early retrospective exhibition (Mellen, 1970); a recent retrospective (Hill, 1997). For information on the patronage of the Group see (Vipond, 1981; Knutson, 1995). For information on the McCallum bequest see, (Reid, 1969).
Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the ideological workings in the National Gallery and its representation of the history of Canadian art. This follows what I call the first wave of exhibition analysis, focusing on the politics of display. While it is important to examine museums in this light I suggest that we must also begin to look beyond such a critique, to look at the poetics of display, and to explore the particularities of the exhibitions in question. This is a traditional display of art, but a closer look reveals some points of rupture in the smooth narrative thread, as well as some attempts at the educational contextualization of art. Emily Carr, seen in this light, is by her status as a woman and west coast artist relegated to the margins of the history. Yet at the same time, the elaboration on this marginalized placement in the self-guided tour, and other interventions in the gallery space and the issues raised in policy documents reveal that staff at the Gallery are very aware of the political dilemmas that accompany an institution of this type and stature. In the next chapter on the Art Gallery of Victoria and the Art Gallery of Ontario I will continue to explore the politics of museums, this time in a regional museum, while suggesting that we attend more closely to the contextualization of art and the poetics of display: an important aspect of the displays in Victoria and Toronto.
Chapter 4: Resonance and Context: Carr in Victoria and Toronto

This chapter examines an Emily Carr exhibition at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria (AGGV), the city of Carr's birth, and the provincial capital of British Columbia. The analysis of this exhibition and gallery builds from the examination of ideological issues at the National Gallery of Canada. The politics of the AGGV form an important context for the resulting exhibition of Carr's work, however, in Victoria, the display of Carr serves a particular local function. The display in Victoria highlights the role of Carr, not as an historical place holder exemplified by a series of art works, but rather as a local historical figure, and what Pierre Nora (1989) has called a "lieu de memoire." This chapter explores the resonance of Carr as a local "personage" who permeates and emerges from the seams of the exhibition narrative in this gallery space.

Set against the previous discussion of Carr at the National Gallery of Canada and the ways in which history is presented there as teleological, and somewhat seamless, and as an example of academic interest in the political functions of museums, the Klee Wyck: The life and art of Emily Carr exhibition at the AGGV provides a point from which to examine more complex issues of representation and history writing in art museums. The display, with its lengthy text panels, abrupt juxtapositions of art, journal excerpts, newspaper clippings and photographs allows for the discussion of issues of curatorial voice and intention, the perceived role of the viewer, as well as some of the distinctions between the display of history versus the display of art. At the same time, however, the exhibit challenges these traditional beliefs about the austere and aestheticized experience of the art display (consciously or not) and instead offers a strongly historical and resonant portrait of Carr, the artist and the person. In this, the focus moves from the aesthetic appreciation, or wonder, of the object, to a rich and evocative exploration of the historical figure, as well as the place of the figure in this particular geographic milieu. Explicit and not so explicit cues are
made available to the viewer which create a context in which Carr is made to resonate, to
reverberate, to echo, in a way which other displays have not. Finally, this resonance, with its
appeal to the perspectives and responses of the viewer provides an ideal opportunity to
explore the rupture between education and curating in art galleries and how this gulf is being
addressed in other institutions. To this end, I discuss the Canadian Historical Galleries at the
Art Gallery of Ontario, and how staff there have utilized research findings on museum
education to develop an installation which is self-described as "visitor-oriented."

Introduction to the space

At first glance, the Emily Carr exhibition, Klee Wyck: The life and art of Emily Carr, is not primarily as an art display, but rather as a more complicated combination of
elements that make the order of the title, "life and art" ultimately significant. I suggest that
spatial issues here play an important role in this coding of the exhibition theme; coding
which is also cemented by the curious combination of objects on view. These two
elements, the layout and the objects figure strongly in the viewers' apprehension or
construction of Emily Carr, the historical figure. It is a far cry from the National Gallery's
display, a presentation of paintings by Emily Carr, a woman artist from British Columbia.

The exhibition was situated in a small room in the AGGV called the Drury Gallery
(Figure 3). This is not a main exhibiting space of the AGGV, but a small space seemingly
chopped off of a larger room, divided from a larger gallery. The dividing wall opens up at
each end creating a u-shaped traffic pattern through the Emily Carr exhibition. This gallery
space itself is not coded as a traditional high-modern style art gallery with high, clean, stark,
white walls, and hardwood floors, spare furnishings, and art works displayed in austere

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12This temporary show was on view at the AGGV when I visited in the fall of 1997. The gallery does not have
a permanent installation of Carr's works, but regularly recombines their works to create thematic exhibitions, such as
Watercolours and drawings of Emily Carr (1977) and Emily Carr sky paintings (1982).
isolation for aesthetic contemplation.\textsuperscript{13} Instead, here, with the exception of white exposed track lighting, Emily Carr's works are displayed in a space that reads more like a cramped study hall, or a rather unsophisticated and underfunded local history museum. Instead of the sharp white, or deep complementary hues found in many art galleries today, in the Drury gallery, the overall tone is beige. Grey-beige walls are covered in a burlap, or canvas-like fabric, which complements a carpeted floor. But more importantly for the overall non-art space effect are the maple-toned glass-topped display cabinets that ring the perimeter of the room and the large room-length table that fills the centre of the room, dominating the space and controlling the traffic pattern (Figures 4 & 5). Comfortable chairs surround the table, which is topped with a jumbled assortment of books and binders of Emily Carr information. A stack of extra chairs waits near the exit opening of the room. While there are artworks on display, provisions are made to accommodate, and to encourage, a more-indepth study of Emily Carr.

While the table fills the space and directs the traffic pattern in the room, it is the series of display cases which really affect the use of and experience in the room. The angled glass-topped cabinets draw the viewer to the walls, closer to the art works, and closer to the artifacts displayed in the cases. What a different feeling this creates! Artworks are traditionally hung to allow the visitor to choose, to self-select an appropriate distance for viewing the works, far enough away to get an overall view of large works, or close enough to examine fine details. In the Drury gallery, the table constrains the ability of the visitor to choose an appropriate viewing distance, while the cabinet likewise enforces a certain perspective. The viewer wanders along a cramped track through the space of the room. There is no room to adopt the typical gallery walk, with the disaffected stepping back, hand on chin, head

\textsuperscript{13}"Coded" here refers to those environmental cues that affect behaviour and expectations in physical spaces. For an analysis of how the layout and appearance of traditional art gallery settings alienates novice visitors, see (Hood, 1993; Kaplan, Bardwell, & Slatker, 1993).
cocked sign of appreciation by a well-informed visitor (Duncan, 1995).

The hanging of the room encourages an entirely different approach to the works. While the cabinets control access to the paintings they also change the perspective of the exhibition. As consumers, viewers are familiar with the display case being a common means of showing valuable objects behind the protection of glass. This type of installation seems more like the kind found in a history or science museum; but since the cabinets are solidly fixed features in the room, some effort is made to use them. The cabinets are used as display space for various "artifacts" relating to Emily Carr. This feature of the room poses a peculiar problem for an art curator, and looking at the exhibition it seems as though the curator might have been strapped for ideas or objects to place in them. There seems to be a haphazard quality to the display in the cabinets: yellowed newspaper clippings are taped to old sheets of white copy paper (Figure 6); 8 x 10 photographs of Emily, her family home, and her studio, are mounted in mats but they are unframed and not labelled (Figure 7); a display of assorted pamphlets on Carr are fanned out in one case; an assortment of unlabelled pottery pieces lie in another (Figure 8). What is interesting about these minutiae made visible is that they most often remain unremarked; unlabelled and undescribed. There is a sense that anything and everything "Emily Carr" appears in this singular room.

The cases are filled with an interesting assortment of memorabilia and artifacts of Carr and the points of connection between Carr, the Gallery and the city. And we might wonder what happens when these non-sequitrous objects are combined with the other elements of the exhibition; the lengthy introductory text panel, and the paintings with their own accompanying text panels which are comprised of excerpts from Carr's own journals. What I think results from this cacophony of voices, images, silences and speeches, is a startling example of a "lieu de memoire," and a highly resonant exhibition. Scholars Pierre Nora and Stephen Greenblatt offer these terms to describe something of what happens at a point in between memory and history, as a struggle to hold onto the past meets with a struggle.
against the process of time, loss and forgetting. In the poetics of this exhibition, curator Nicholas Tuele takes us beyond the objects to a "felt intensity" of the voices behind them (Greenblatt, 1991, p. 47). Carr's role in this community emerges in complex ways, not as a whole, and harmonious object, but rather as a partial, reconstituted, and subjective "lieu de memoire," (Nora, 1989) the Drury gallery becoming a place to find traces of Carr.

A closer examination of the introductory text panel provides insight into the complex threads that constitute this resonant place. In the second display case, after a photograph of Carr, there is an extended text panel that introduces the exhibition (Appendix 1). It is a lengthy text and a revealing one that alludes to the understanding of Carr at the gallery as well as some of the political issues that affect the gallery and its Carr holdings. As I read the text panel several key issues emerged, most notably, the politics of this particular institution in relation the Vancouver Art Gallery, a concern for Carr's intention and personality as an artist, as well as acknowledgement of the viewer's position and concerns. The ideological underpinnings of the AGGV concerning Emily Carr become apparent while examining the text panel, and the supporting material displayed in the cases. Unlike the relatively seamless presentation of artworks at the National Gallery, here, Tuele provides a complex arrangement of signs and clues. If the exhibition at the National Gallery is perhaps most effectively examined in terms of its nationalist agenda, this poetic exhibition at the AGGV offers a rich site in which to explore a broader range of exhibition utterances. Bruce Ferguson describes some of the possibilities for this type of analysis:

It is possible to trace more specifically the form of any speech act or utterance and start to assess its aesthetics: its intangibles, its expressive qualities, its patois and dialect, its emotional mytho-poetics. We can look carefully at its iconic functions. We can judge its ritualistic abilities to perform effectively and we can adjudicate its inventive uses of tropes; its persuasive forces. We can evaluate a speech act’s sense of conviction, its logic or its convulsive irrationality, its acuity or its obliqueness, its hard edges or its soft contours or its contradictions and oxymoronic surfaces and unconscious subtexts and its encrustations within other texts and discourses that precede it. The poetics and politics of exhibitions are interrelated and interdependent. (Ferguson, 1996, p. 185)
Upon closer analysis, the display at the AGGV, with all of its rough edges, and unpolished surfaces reveals, "textual gaps, pauses, ellipses and other tell-tale signs of strategic interruptions in its conventions and conformisms; its slips of tongues and anxious 'parapraxes'" (Ferguson, 1996, p. 187). These interruptions take the analysis from a general, "ideal, semi-autonomous place where art merely apes the rituals of contemplative religion with its misplaced social authority" (Ferguson, 1996, p. 187), to explore the particularities of the institution's social character, and its work to promote or maintain its various identities, local, regional, national.

The text panel begins by conveying Carr's importance as exhibition subject matter. Curator Nicholas Tuele notes that Carr's "reputation has evolved from a provincial one to a national one and her work is now receiving international attention," citing exhibitions that occurred in Vancouver, Ottawa, China and the U.S in order to firmly establish Carr's importance as an artist worthy of attention. He goes on to situate the AGGV within this international coterie, pointing out that, "as well, this institution has contributed to the scholarship and general knowledge about the artist and her work through an ongoing exhibition program." This point might rest merely as an innocuous situating of the show within a wider artistic community, yet to a viewer with some knowledge of the local politics surrounding Emily Carr, the statement is the first of many throughout the show that jar and disrupt the examination of the art works and point the viewer instead to the institution and its role in creating and promoting Carr. This statement might have been passed by, was it not followed by more direct points.

"In this small exhibition which includes the Gallery's entire Carr holdings...." And here it is. After beginning to discuss the particular configuration of works on display, beginning to outline a curatorial thesis for the show, after a paragraph of content about Carr's beliefs about her own process of painting, Tuele drops this sly phrase. Tuele uses it to make a
transition from the discussion of Carr to the work of the exhibition itself, and for this it might pass by unremarked. But in the context of the politics of Emily Carr at the AGGV, the phrase takes on a more active role. "Small," and "entire," are the two key words here, which point towards an historic and heated issue at the gallery.

**The Emily Carr Trust Collection**

In 1941, four years before her death, Emily Carr had her lawyer draw up an agreement which set aside 45 of her oil paintings to become the Emily Carr Trust collection. The trustees were Carr's two friends, Lawren Harris and Ira Dilworth, and it was a somewhat loose agreement, and paintings were added to and sold from the initial group of works without changing the Trust document. As Trustee, Lawren Harris had ultimate control over the dispersal of the works in this collection. He also obtained control of another group of works that remained in Carr's possession at the time of her death. Harris designated the works that were to be sold, choosing mainly early works, and works from her studies in France.¹⁴ As with the informal handling of dispersal of works in the Emily Carr Trust, in this second Trust, inadequate records were kept as to the contents and sales from this collection.

Similarly vague was the wording concerning the intended placement of this collection of works. Carr intended the works to go to British Columbia and Canada, and any proceeds from the sale of works from the collection to go to a scholarship fund for Canadian artists. However, the actual legal document was loosely worded and it was not entirely clear as to which gallery in British Columbia the works were to be sent. In an Appendix, Carr biographer Paula Blanchard sets out some of the complexities surrounding the Trust Collection. She offers several reasons for the Trust being housed in Vancouver, suggesting that it was due in part to Carr's gratitude to the director of the Vancouver Art Gallery, A.S.

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¹⁴In the exhibition catalogue, *Emily Carr in France* (1991), VAG curator Ian Thorn is among one of many who lament the wholesale dispersal of works from these periods, as it has created large chronological gaps in the VAG's collection.
Grigsby since Carr had had many solo exhibitions at the VAG. Blanchard also notes that Victoria was unable to house the collection at the time, but suggests that the decision to send the works to Vancouver was made "partly no doubt as a parting shot at her native city" (Blanchard, 1987, p. 296). Carr had always felt that Victoria did not offer her much support, and certainly not an artistic community. Whatever Carr's reasons or intentions, the wording of the legal document was not clear, and as a result the Victoria and Vancouver art galleries contested the location of the collection. The case was taken to court and in 1966 the Emily Carr Trust collection became the permanent property of the Vancouver Art Gallery.

This might seem like a somewhat esoteric historical account of Emily Carr's bequest, but it becomes important background information for the display at the AGGV. Since, curiously enough, the small underlying point about the Trust collection that emerges from the text panel is augmented by substantial textual material in other areas of the exhibition. The issue emerges early on in the exhibition, for just after a photo of Carr, the text panel, a chronology of Carr's life, and a display of pamphlets on Carr, a display of newspaper clippings appears.

In the first case along the second wall of the show are four sheets of white copy paper on which are pasted six newspaper articles (Figure 6). On the top right hand page is pasted a yellow clipping from the AGGV Bulletin, the gallery newsletter (1966). It details the final settlement of the continuing debate over the final location of Carr's Trust Collection.

As there did not exist in Victoria at the time of her death a public gallery with adequate facilities for the permanent housing and display of her work, the collection of 164 paintings and drawings which Emily Carr bequeathed to the people of British Columbia was placed by her trustees in the Vancouver Art Gallery, which in 1951 erected its Emily Carr Wing for the purposes of displaying it. This year the trustees of the collection decided to make a final disposition of these splendid works. After friendly negotiations with the V.A.G. and the AGGV an arrangement has been worked out under which the AGGV has been given the legal right to have continuously on its premises not less than a quarter of the collection, technical ownership devolving on the V.A.G. The agreement further provides that the collection shall be so rotated between the two galleries at three year intervals that it may be seen in its entirety in Victoria during each twelve year period.
The plan will not go into full operation until a program of cleaning and restoration of the oil paintings approaches completion.

Doubtless this eminently satisfactory arrangement would have met with the approval of Miss Carr, who more than once endeavoured to create a public gallery in Victoria and who on her 70th birthday stated that it was one of her dearest wishes that her work should be seen and appreciated by the people of her native city. (AGGV bulletin, 1966)

This article, complete with handwritten date, and old hole-punch marks, its yellowed and slightly dog-eared state, together with the opening text of the exhibition, points towards the tension that continues to exist between the AGGV and the VAG.

While the newsletter article, produced for the members of the AGGV, asserts that there were "friendly negotiations" that ultimately led to an "eminently satisfactory arrangement," the article alludes to the complexities that lay behind the agreement. The article notes that the collection of paintings was "bequeathed to the people of British Columbia" by Emily Carr, but suggests, only in a cursory way, how the paintings ended up in Vancouver and not in the provincial capital city, Carr's own home town. The article suggests that the reason for the paintings' move was due to the fact that "there did not exist in Victoria at the time of her death," adequate facilities for the collection. While pointing out this seemingly minor technical detail, the article further suggests that, in fact, Carr would have wanted the collection to remain in Victoria, noting that having the pictures return in some way to Victoria would have met with the,

approval of Miss Carr, who more than once endeavoured to create a public gallery in Victoria and who on her 70th birthday stated that it was one of her dearest wishes that her work should be seen and appreciated by the people of her native city.

While indeed, Victoria was Carr's native city, what is not mentioned here is the fact that Carr was extremely unhappy with the response of the city to her attempts at establishing a gallery in Victoria. These, her only political efforts, were unsuccessful and this failure, coupled with her longtime distaste for local Victoria arts organizations is perhaps part of the reason the collection ended up in Vancouver (Blanchard, 1987, p. 296).
The article reveals some of the negotiations that took place to settle the legal title of the collection, the end result of which was that "the AGGV has been given the legal right to have continuously on its premises not less than a quarter of the collection, technical ownership devolving on the V.A.G." The article further outlines how the agreement further stipulated how the paintings would circulate between the galleries.

Two other articles in the display case add to our partial understanding of possible residual feelings in Victoria about Vancouver possessing the Trust collection. An article from a Vancouver newspaper, with the headline, "Carr Art Can't Lure Politicians" for example, briefly outlines that Vancouver can't find funds for the restoration of the Carr paintings in their care. Dated 1978, this short article resonates a bit more clearly in context with the outline of the Trust agreement which notes that the paintings must be conserved prior to the agreement taking full effect, effectively precluding the paintings travelling to Victoria at least fifteen years after the agreement was struck. The Emily Carr: Art and Process show, the subject of Chapter 6 was, to my knowledge, the first travelling show that attempted to follow the mandate of the trust agreement, travelling to AGGV, as well as to the Kamloops Art Gallery. In the introductory text to the show that followed the one that I am exploring in this chapter, the text panel suggests that in spite of this gesture, (the Art and Process show would arrive later in the year), the AGGV is still feeling slighted by the trust agreement. A paragraph in the text panel reads:

Sadly, the Gallery owns a very modest selection of our most well-known artist's paintings. Much larger holdings are to be found in the Emily Carr Trust Collection housed at the Vancouver Art Gallery. (Exhibition text AGGV January 1999)

Tuele also seems to allude to the difficulties he faces when he tries to put together a show on Emily Carr, going on to note, somewhat peculiarly, that,

The demand from the national and international museum community is such that it is difficult to satisfy - particularly as the curators caring for the collections must balance today's needs against long-term considerations from a conservation perspective. (Exhibition text AGGV January 1999)
Given the newsletter clipping and the history of the Trust collection, we might read this statement as a rationalization of his position to himself. It is an odd statement to offer the public in a brief introductory text, since these two selected statements comprise almost half of the text panel. It seems that the tension between Vancouver and Victoria over Emily Carr remains; at least in the eyes of the gallery in Victoria.

**Curatorial voice in the text**

While this so-called crucial phrase in the introductory text panel might seem to be to a rather ambiguous and minute example of the particular identity of this institution, the point comes into much sharper focus as we turn to a more detailed examination of this complex exhibition. While the display occupies a small gallery space, Tuele has gone out of his way to provide for as many varied approaches to the local icon as possible. It does seem that indeed every piece of Carr knowledge has been brought out into the space. And he provides a very lengthy text panel to introduce us to the subject matter.

The length and content of this panel is one of the most noticeable differences between the display at the National Gallery and the one here at the AGGV. Questions of authority, concerning both exclusionary and more personable, or subjective, approaches are raised. Reference as well as adherence to art historical mores is made concerning formalist interpretations of Carr's work, the acknowledgement of other authority figures in the field, and a strong turn to autobiography and artist intentionality. The intricacies of this text panel merit closer attention.

The voice of the text panel raises questions of authority and subjectivity. The voice itself moves from an neutral third person voice in the first paragraph, adding weight to the discussion of where Carr’s work is situated in a broader context. In other words, the AGGV is not simply lauding its own local artist, but this artist has been conferred high status by other more respected renowned figures in the art world. After this initial neutral voice, the
text swings to first person plural, "we." Concurrent with this change in voice is reference to the work of the staff at the AGGV in hanging this particular show. "We have included some interesting quotations from her books wherein she describes her paintings or the inspiration for them," and further down "we have included some maps which show the First Nations' villages which she visited." These statements refer to the curator and staff. There is no curatorial subjectivity here, but rather authority is shared by all the staff. The use of "we" allows for a certain transparency in the text. Exposed to the reader is the fact that this exhibition was composed, gathered, and created by a certain and particular group of people. The subjectivity of the choices made is further highlighted in the discussion of the choice of quotations as they are deemed not "pertinent", not "essential", "crucial" or "important", but rather "interesting." This suggests a certain personal attachment to the choice of quotations that is not bound up in truth claims or disciplinary knowledge (Bal, 1996).

This freedom and openness, this transparency of curatorial intent, marks the beginning of an exhibition that offers many crucial interruptions, points of rupture, and textual pauses; points where a close reading of the exhibit reveals much more than one might first suppose. Points concerning the political situating of the gallery, its collection, and its use of Emily Carr in perpetuating a particularly local figure. Far from the authoritative, affirmative and demonstrative perspective posed at the National Gallery, here at the Victoria Gallery, a reading of the exhibition reveals an opining, conflicted viewpoint about the subject matter. It is a highly discordant narrative.

On the one hand while we might note the use of "a" curatorial voice as offering an opening, or a voice with which to argue, it is imperative to look further beyond that aspect to see just how this voice operates. Is the visitor truly invited to participate, and if so, how? Looking closer at the narrative, it becomes clear that behind this voice, distinct, and collaborative, there lies a fairly strong authority. While some of the authority, in terms of what is expected for a viewing of art appears to be given up--here there are no white walls, the
space is not elusively presented, it is cluttered, and full of signifiers that are not common to an art viewing space—in other ways, a more direct assumption and point of view is presented. A statement such as, "Another important observation we might make about Carr and her work is how much ahead of her time she really was," hides a top down perspective within its seemingly cajoling and friendly "we." Again it is the "we" that both includes and excludes. How are "we" to gauge such an opinion? What sort of knowledge do "we" need to make these types of claims? Here, the text panel reveals a leaning towards the formalist foundations of art history. This appeal to formalism or to connoisseurship, emerges in other parts of the panel as well. For instance, her works are described as "distinctive and powerful," and she was "remarkably successful in charging her paintings with significance." These are broad statements that ask the viewer to "see" the proof. But it is proof that requires a context.

**Personality and reference to intentionality**

Similarly, following this interest in traditional beliefs about art makers, a large portion of the exhibition is based on the notion of personality. And while this biographical approach might reflect a historical perspective-taking, in most cases the interest here is not so much in the physical aspects of Carr's life, but rather in pursuing the notions of biography common to art history, particularly to the intentionality found in older conceptions of the discipline. In this exhibition there is an overwhelming notice given to the psyche involved with making art, and the intentionality of the pieces. Carr's own words appear throughout the display, reflecting her opinions about the act of making art. Her observations, perspectives, and beliefs are literally held up beside the works on view. And the viewer is encouraged to explore the works with this information in mind. Within the opening text panel itself, this notion shines through. For instance, it is noted that "Carr herself spoke eloquently about her artistic interests and intentions..." Other phrases add to the effect, phrases such as "clearly, for Carr," and "by her own admission."
This interest in artist intentionality carries on beyond the introductory text panel to inform a major aspect of the exhibition. Forming a crucial part of the display is the use of textual fragments, or anecdotes gleaned from the journals juxtaposed against the paintings on display. Tuele introduces this aspect of the show in a simple enough way: "we have included some interesting quotations from her books wherein she describes her paintings or the inspiration for them." The texts are long excerpts from Carr’s diaries, which were chosen perhaps to evoke Carr’s sentiments about her working methods.

There are 15 lengthy quotes hung next to selected works, mainly located on the long back wall of the installation (Figure 5). They are large 8.5 x 11 panels that hang above the small identification label for the painting. Most of the quotes concern Carr’s working methods and interest in the land, including for example, the text which hangs next to the work B.C. Forest (n.d), (Figures 7 & 9), which has two dated journal excerpts. At the bottom of the label, the source of the quote is provided. The text of this interpretive label reads:

Sunday, January 18th, 1931

I have done a charcoal sketch today of young pines at the foot of a forest. I may make a canvas out of it. It should lead from joy back to mystery—young pines full of light and joyousness against a background of moving, mysterious forest. Last night I dreamed that I came face to face with a picture I had done and forgotten, a forest done in a single movement, just forms of trees moving in space. That is the third time I have seen pictures in my dreams, a glint of what I am striving to attain. Perhaps some day I shall get things clearer. Every day I long for the woods more, to get away and commune with things. Oh, Spring! I want to go out and feel you and get inspiration. My old things seem dead. I want fresh contacts, more vital searching.

November 12th, 1932

Listen, this perhaps is the way to find the thing I long for: to go into the woods alone and look at the earth crowded with growth, new and old bursting from their strong roots hidden in the silent, live ground, each seed according to its own kind expanding, bursting, pushing its way upward towards the light and air, each one knowing what to do, each one demanding its own rights on the earth. Feel this growth, the surging upward, this expansion, the pulsing life, all working with the same idea, the same urge to express the God in themselves--life, life, life, which is God, for without Him there is no life. So, artist, you, too, from the deeps of your soul, down among dark and silence, let your roots creep forth, gaining strength. Drive them in deep, take firm hold
of the beloved Earth Mother. Push, push, towards the light. Draw deeply from the good nourishment of the earth but rise into the glory of the light and air and sunshine. Rejoice in your own soil, the place that nurtured you when a helpless seed. Fill it with glory--be glad.

Quotations from Hundreds and Thousands: The journals of Emily Carr by Clark Irwin, 1966

This juxtaposition of texts both interrupts and supports an interpretation of the paintings on view. They give a presence to the artist herself, in this case revealing an interest in God as impetus for her work as well as her ability to find God in the forest. Carr's highly evocative language influences our resulting interpretation of BC Forest, as we are perhaps pointed towards the sweeping brush strokes, finding in them a pulsing thrusting organic sway.

This device, of using the artist's own words as an interpretive frame for the paintings on view, offers a means for the curator to defer some of his/her authority. It is an easy way out of the authority position that reflects a stream of traditional art historical methodology, particularly along the lines of artistic genius. As Luke notes of his own critical practice, "situating an artist in the context of a larger stylistic school or judging whether this painted trope expresses that artist's real intentions simply has not been enough for this analysis." He continues, noting that "such art historical discussions...often center so exclusively on the art object's figure, the artist's apparent intentions, and the style movement's reputed requirements that the truly fascinating questions surrounding the social ground of art...get totally lost in rhetorical fog" (Luke, 232). While this effort to get at the artist's intentions is thus a common practice, in recent years it has assumed a place of greater importance, particularly as beliefs about the intangibility of history have become pervasive (Meijers, 1996; Berkhofer, 1995). The deference to the creator's point of view seems to stand as the last concrete tie to objectivity, and as a result, many curators, I suggest, use this belief as an
easy way out of the interpretive bind. I explore another example of this transference of authority in Chapter 6.

Interestingly enough, while the inclusion of these excerpts from Carr's journals works to transfer a claim to interpretation from the curator to the artist, the curator cannot completely erase himself from the process. These are, after all, excerpts, consciously selected and combined with the paintings. Tuele and his staff, then, lurk. These are combinations selected for us to see: the excerpts are not sequential, nor do they directly refer to the paintings on view. The selections are not situated or introduced in any way; that is, there is no attempt to situate or contextualize the proposed "point" of the combination. Instead, the combination of artist's voice and curator's selection sit in an uneasy combination. This creates a powerful interaction, a point of rupture. The labels do not explain, but rather, they suggest, evoke and resonate.

**More points of rupture**

As Stephen Greenblatt suggests, "a resonant exhibition often pulls the viewer away from the celebration of isolated objects and toward a series of implied only half-visible relationships and questions" (Greenblatt, 1991, p. 45). The provocative combination of quotes and paintings is but one of the examples of how a smooth seamless narrative is effectively interrupted in the exhibition space. Tuele, whether consciously or not, provides a number of other instances where "half-visible relationships and questions" emerge.

The objects that fill the display cases below the paintings greatly augment the resonance of the exhibition. The juxtaposition of journal excerpts and paintings work to suggest something of the personality of the artist, effectively pulling the exhibition away from isolated aesthetic appreciation of objects. Yet the material in the cabinets below the

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15This has resulted in an increased role of artist's in curating their own exhibitions, see Chapter 5, as well as the work of Fred Wilson (Corrin, 1994), and (Meijers, 1996).
paintings insists that we examine tangible evidence of Carr's life. What is interesting about these minutiae made visible is that they are, more often than not, unremarked, and unlabelled. Photographs of Carr's local family home, her family, her pets, her studio, all remain unidentified. Small examples of Carr's pottery likewise sit without comment. Brochures and pamphlets, by no means an exhaustive or coherent collection, are fanned out. For all their variety and diversity, these sources are unexplained, and yet they lie in display cases as though their presence is important to an understanding of this person. Again, this creates a point of rupture and a series of questions emerge. An easy path is not laid out for the viewer, but rather the eye circulates from painting, to quotes, to photographs and newspaper clippings in the display cases. Are we to trust that all of these items play an important role in creating a story about Emily Carr? Are they equally important? There is no distinction between the materials in the display cabinets, no sequential development of ideas, or time, or themes.

There are two separate elements of material in the display cases that raise interesting questions about the narrative that is being constructed. On the back are a series of cases that contain pages from an early sketchbook by Carr (Figure 10). There is a text panel that introduces them. We learn that it is an illustrated story by Emily Carr about her school time in England. The text reads:

“The Lighter Side of Emily Carr”

In late summer 1899, twenty-eight year old Emily Carr set out for London, England, to continue her art studies. She became ill on board and recovered barely in time to disembark. It was a prelude to five troubled and tumultuous years away from Canada.

Emily's destination was London's Westminster School of Art situated behind Westminster Abbey amid crowded narrow streets. She enrolled in an exhausting 40 hours of classes per week and quickly made both friends and enemies. Emily's inherent insecurity was aggravated by her unfamiliar surroundings and sophisticated classmates. Nothing in her past experience had prepared her for life in a large city and she missed the familiar landscape of British Columbia. Compatible housing was also a problem but seemed to resolve itself during Emily's second year in London when she settled into Ms.
Dodd’s ‘Home for Governesses and Ladies’. The 54 girls and women boarding there shared dormitories with 5 beds per room, divided by curtains. Such close contact inevitably led to many stressful and funny situations. It is this period in her life that Emily documents with satirical cartoons and doggerel verse, in “The London Student Sketchbook.”

The cases that follow this text panel show colourful matted illustrations and accompanying verse. There are no identification labels alongside these illustrations, and while I did not note the significance of this at first, since Carr’s pottery is similarly without identification labelling, it turns out that these illustrations are photocopies, and not artifacts. This inauthenticity, that runs counter to our common expectations of a display case in a museum, is heightened by the presence of another cabinet on the other side of the room. This cabinet holds a small, very colourful watercolour done by Emily Carr (Figure 11). Like the sketchbook, the watercolour is accompanied by a poem written by Carr. However, in this instance, while the painting is similarly matted and not framed, it is carefully labelled and therefore identified as a "real live work of art." Figures 6, 7 and 8 show the rather haphazard placement of objects in the display cases, and in the case next to the watercolour (Figure 11) there is a newspaper clipping mounted on copy paper accompanying a photograph of Carr’s house. Clearly, this is an odd combination of types of materials, some authentic, museum-type objects, and some rather haphazardly displayed material. The combination, unmitigated by a curator’s explanation, raises questions about what is to be gained and why certain elements were chosen.

While the combination of disparate elements is at times jarring, it serves to highlight the pieced together nature, or the constructedness of the display. The display combines, without explicit explanation, authentic artifacts and reproductions. It juxtaposes fragments that illuminate elements of Carr’s life story with traces of the institution’s history as collection and caretaker, as lieu de memoire, and participant in the preservation of Carr’s memory for Victoria. These disparate elements, in their bringing together of the historical elements and the more recent traces of institutional events help to bridge the gap between the time of the
artist and the time of the visit to the gallery.

In this exhibition, I find a compelling example of Pierre Nora’s concept of lieu de mémoire. Noting the strong interest in historiography, a reflexive turning of history upon itself, as well as an equally strong appeal to the power of memory, Nora suggests that they, "send us at once to history’s most elementary tools and to the most symbolic objects of our memory; to the archives as well as to the tricolor" (Nora, 1989, p. 11). In the Carr display at the AGGV, these two aspects combine, in the celebration of the local ties to Carr’s life, to provide, and present all the artifacts, and traces of Carr the Gallery possesses, heroicizing and documenting. Nora argues that

Modern memory, is, above all, archival. It relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image...The less memory is experienced from the inside the more it exists only through its exterior scaffolding and outwards signs--hence the obsession with the archive that marks our age. Attempting at once the complete conservation of the present as well as the total preservation of the past. (Nora, 1989, p. 13)

In the introductory text panel, strong beliefs in the formalist intentions of Carr as an artist, collide with the notion of the curatorial voice, the "we." The viewer is asked to move between the exclusionary voice of Tuele, the art historical authority and the distant past, the historical life of Emily Carr. Past and present interact, within the text panel and throughout the display. For example, while we are told that her work points out just "how much ahead of her time she really was," a statement showing a combination of art historical avantgardism and historical presentism, Tuele also works to bring Carr a bit closer to the present day and age. He reminds the visitor of one of the ways in which Carr’s work resonates within our current climate noting that,

Her paintings communicate to an ever-growing audience that is faced with an alarming disappearance of the natural and wild environment of our planet. She articulated her forward-looking insights about the importance of the forest both through her paintings and her writings. Ironically, even in a painting like Odds and Ends which depicts a logged over hillside, Carr finds grist for her artistic mill without irony or overt social comment.

He brings the viewer into the debate, while he simultaneously informs us of an accepted
opinion on the subject. Of course, the fact that Carr continues to appeal to the public has been noted by many scholars, including Doris Shadbolt, who suggests that Carr resonates in this day and age not only because of her environmental concerns, but also because of her gender and her interest in First Nations culture (Shadbolt, 1997, p. 6).

The inclusion of newspaper clippings in the display also helps to clarify the role of the AGGV in the politics surrounding Carr and the local community. The selection of clippings is surprising. In one case there are articles concerning an international exhibition which included Carr's work (1988), a review of Paula Blanchard's 1987 biography of Carr providing a negative assessment of the feminist leanings of the book, the Gallery newsletter from 1966 highlighting the Trust Collection settlement, and a local article discussing the closing of the old art gallery downtown in 1991 and the hopes of the AGGV to move into the location. This jumble of articles highlights the continuing significance of Emily Carr in the local environment. The insistence on the local and contemporary reverberations of Carr in Victoria brings to mind Pierre Nora's notion that, "It is no longer genesis that we seek but instead the decipherment of what we are in the light of what we are no longer" (Nora, 1989, p. 18). Whereas the display at the National Gallery insists on a teleological narrative, here Tuele provides a narrative that combines history and memory, bringing together elements that insist upon the continuing value of Carr for the community, as it preserves the traces of her presence in Victoria.

**Contextualization at the Art Gallery of Ontario**

The display of Emily Carr at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria reveals an interest in portraying this artist as more than a place holder in the canon of Canadian art history. Instead, the display contextualizes Carr in order to capitalize on her role as an historic figure for this particular community. While the efforts to contextualize Carr, to make her presence resonate in Victoria, are very informative and illustrative, we might look at other efforts being made in art museums in Canada to see just how far this approach might be taken.
At the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto staff have utilised findings about museum learning that are most commonly implemented in science and history museums in their installation of art in the Canadian galleries. The Canadian galleries stand as a prime example of a variety of ways in which art can be contextualized and visitors stimulated to make connections beyond the aesthetic realm. Among the features of this 14 room suite of galleries devoted to Canadian art are a high wall 19th century salon-style hanging, an inglenook with paintings installed "in situ," a small studio-like space with sketches and a work bench. In addition to these evocative historicizing elements, the galleries also include elements that are more directly educational.\(^{16}\)

In the area where the Group of Seven is featured, for example, technology is used to highlight and enhance the display of artworks. Computers offer easy access to background information about the training and lives of the artists. Fixed audio headset stations provide interpretations of selected artworks by the artists, their contemporaries as well as more recent critics. Separate display areas examine selected aspects of their working style, where groups of sketches are fortified with text panels explaining the process and the artists involved. And finally, testament to the gallery's work to provide interpretive materials that approach the works on all sorts of entry points, there is an isolated viewing area with audio creating an opportunity for the viewer to escape the visual stimulation of the gallery at large, to spend time "exploring a painting in depth."

While these techniques, the use of multimedia technology and the explanatory display areas, help to inform and engage viewers on a level seldom seem in an art gallery, I find the historical context materials in the gallery space to be particularly interesting counterpoints to the display at the AGGV. These interventions work to provide entry points for the viewer into the time period on view, encapsulating the key objectives of the

\(^{16}\)For a discussion of the galleries and various educational goals of the installation see Douglas Worts, 1995.
re-installation team. According to Worts (1995), the team attempted to combine their conceptual ideas about the works with a strong emphasis on being visitor centred. As a result four guiding aims for the new gallery space were developed. First, chronology would be evident but the rooms would focus on themes rather than primarily on chronology; second, no assumptions would be made about visitors' prior knowledge of Canadian history; third, visual sense of Canadian life in each period would be offered using images from popular culture in what were called "Signposts"; and finally, visitors would be asked to add their personal opinions using "Share Your Reaction" cards (Worts, 1995, p. 170).

The installation techniques in the Canadian Galleries are interesting in their vacillation between visitor-centred models of exhibition design and more traditional interests in content or analytical models. The evocative settings in the 19th century salon and inglenook galleries which act on a very physical level to address the notion of a particular historical time period, or evoking the "zeitgeist", as I explained in Chapter 3. These settings also fit into the educators' goals to draw from environmental psychology and multi-modal theories of learning to help to personalize the viewing experience. Other display tactics, such as the use of questions on display panels and the display of photographs from each period, encourage the personalization of the viewing process which is validated by the provision of "Share Your Reaction" cards. The weight, print quality and size of these cards, quite unlike the copy paper and three ring binder common to many galleries' feedback corners, suggests that the comments are indeed important to the staff and visitors. The drawings and reflections from the cards are later entered into computer stations in the galleries. They are also used for research purposes.

While the salon and inglenook area work to suggest the time period of the 19th century, these installations are somewhat under interpreted. Reference to the 19th century salon hanging occurs only in the introductory panel to the Canadian galleries as a whole, as one of the variety of ways in which the works are displayed. But there is little information
provided beyond that. In fact, the salon area itself is not well-defined, and only a careful viewer will notice the key to the works on view, a small guide that is tucked away on the side of the benches in the middle of the room.

In other areas though, more explicit textual interventions are made. The use of thematic wall headings and broadly based conceptual panels help to corral the works on view into decades of artistic production informed by certain time-bound beliefs. For example, entering from the room, "the forties", titled, Exploring Urban Life: Conceptual Landscape, World War II, there is a text panel called, Conceptual Landscape. It reads:

Many Canadian painters continued to draw their inspiration directly from the landscape during the 1940s. Others sought meaning in landscapes of the imagination, focusing on the patterns of social relations in both harmony and conflict. The intensity of war and the buoyant mood of peace are registered in a range of textured paint surfaces, suggestive colours, and explicit use of symbols. Does the way they are painted change our understanding of the images?

Another example, Exploring Urban Life, reads,

Canadian cities grew rapidly in the early 20th century and with them the complexities of urban life. Many artists, including those living in cities sought refuge in wilderness landscapes, but then the depression of the 1930s followed by the Second World War redirected the attention of some artists to the experience of urban life in the 1940s. Alienation, power, joy and conflict were prominent subjects of the time, as artists explored the complexity of human relationships in the everchanging urban space. Are the attractions of urban life always tempered by disadvantages?

The panels, like many of the interpretive materials, explicitly ask the viewer to reflect on their own histories. Unlike most displays of art which stand alone, turning on their aesthetic seemingly universal appeal, here the works are contextualized and brought into connection with a common past. We are asked to draw upon knowledge of the time period and to relate this knowledge to the paintings on view--how do they reflect the interests and aspirations of the times?

Other contextual material enforces this approach. The most interesting intervention, to my mind, is the use of photographic scrapbooks to recall the period in question. Small
gable topped stands in each decade gallery hold laminated books of photos of the time period from all across Canada. The photos reflect life in the city, with social scenes, scenes of industry and commerce, and some representations of common popular culture. As well, large comment cards are used throughout the space in order to capitalize on the emergent memories of the viewers.17

**Emily Carr at the AGO: Wonder**

In spite of the wealth of contextual material provided throughout the Canadian galleries at the AGO, Emily Carr's room is surprisingly silent.18 Her works hang on putty brownish grey walls, in a room with rather dim lighting, creating a spiritual or contemplative effect. There are no text panels in the Carr gallery, and it functions as a strong counterpoint to the more involved interpretation and evocative settings throughout the Canadian collection. It appears that Carr's work has been chosen to provide the modernist backdrop against which to place other types of display solutions. In the Carr gallery two benches are provided, but with four doorways the room really functions as a flow through into other more didactically and visually intriguing areas of the Canadian collection where various labels and displays attract the visitor's attention. Here, it is up to the physical objects themselves to attract the viewer's attention; for the wonder of the painted trees and totems to draw and captivate the imagination of the visitor. The dramatic yet dim lighting and the otherwise

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17For a discussion of how these strategies help visitors to excavate memories and reflect on the art on display see Douglas Worts, 1995.

18At the time of my visit, Worts was planning an audio tour for the Emily Carr Gallery. It was to feature excerpts from her journals, excerpts that would address issues such as her relation to the Group of Seven, to Abstraction, to Native culture and Art, to Nature, to gender and identity, and to spirituality, as well as a discussion of three specific works on display. As of Spring 1998, this audio tour has not yet been completed.
soothing and harmonious environment invites the visitor to contemplate these works as masterpieces.

Both examples of display practices at the Art Gallery of Ontario stand as a counterpoint to the resonance of the exhibition at the AGGV. While half-remarked relationships co-exist in uneasy tension in the AGGV show, at the AGO, the narrative has been carefully smoothed. Questions are posed to the viewer, and support for the exploration of those questions is provided at the AGO, yet the Gallery’s position and relationship to those same questions remains for the most part concealed from view.

**Conclusion**

In terms of new museological display practices the resonant and complex display at the AGGV, perhaps unconsciously offers a very disrupted and open narrative. There are many openings provided that take this exhibition far beyond what is offered in the National Gallery display. Here, there is a much larger sense of the artist, as well as an opportunity to look into the workings of the particular institution within provincial culture. The AGO, on the other hand, approaches the need for contextualization in a much more polished way. Here, while the gallery installation variations point toward the “constructedness” of art display practices, effectively addressing current issues with museology, the voice of the narrator is much less visible than at the AGGV. The narrative is smoother, the ruptures erased. Staff at the gallery refer to research on learning in museums and attempt to provoke the visitor to explore his or her own background interests to construct their own meanings about the works and the time period involved. Yet there is less explicit evidence of the gallery’s own perspective on the material, and little sense of the crucial role that the gallery as an institution played in the development of Canadian art. As well, while there are thematic and conceptually driven rooms in the Canadian section that point towards the constructedness of display techniques, the overall voice present in the galleries remains hidden, neutral, and authoritative. There is little or no evidence of the hand of the curator in shaping the particular
points of view on display. In the next chapter I explore another approach to curating Emily Carr, one that presents the subjectivity of the curator in a very direct way.
Chapter 5: Subjective viewpoints: Circling Carr in Vancouver

In this chapter I offer Andrew Hunter's exhibition of Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun's work as an example of the complexities of re-presenting Carr and her work on the West Coast at the AGGV and at the VAG. Hunter's curatorial work stands as an example of the first tentative steps towards addressing the problems of the permanent display of Carr at the VAG. This installation is examined as an example of a postmodern "curator as auteur" approach. Using Bal's (1996) notion of cultural analysis, I suggest that in his juxtaposition of Yuxweluptun and Carr, Hunter provides a sensitive and complex installation that operates at many levels to provide a rich and multifaceted entry point into the works of the two artists. Additionally, I argue that Hunter's approach, with its well-disclosed authorial voice, and acknowledgement of power relations effectively addresses problems of representation in a public institution. In this chapter I bring the work of Mieke Bal and others into play to analyze how this particular exhibition addresses postmodern museological issues, and how this exhibition constructs history. Finally, while the installation offers an effective means to deal with museological issues of authority and representation, I argue this approach poses limits to an effective historical representation of Carr.

While a great deal can be learned from examining exhibitions themselves, and I do examine this exhibition in depth, in this chapter I first provide a context for the analysis, briefly outlining some of the institutional politics of the Vancouver Art Gallery, as well as the issues concerning the physical layout of the exhibition spaces at this gallery. In setting this exhibition analysis into historical context I follow Cruz and Lewis (1994) who argue that too often semiology has been used without reference to its historical context which takes away its radical potential (Cruz and Lewis, 1994, p. 11). In addition, this setting will also be useful for the following chapter which examines the development of another exhibition project at the VAG.
Institutional politics: The VAG positions itself

Founded in 1931, the Vancouver Art Gallery situates itself as occupying an important position in Canada's art world. As the Gallery itself states, "the Vancouver Art Gallery is the largest Canadian art museum west of Toronto and the fourth largest in Canada" (Promotional materials, VAG, 1998). This telling statement indicates that the Gallery situates itself not as a city art gallery, nor as a provincial gallery, though clearly both audiences are served by the VAG. Throughout its materials, a clear picture emerges of an institution that would like to be respected at a national level.19

In addition to gaining respect at a national level, the VAG further strives for recognition as a forward-thinking institution with a real commitment to contemporary art practice. In this, it is not like many other large Canadian art institutions. A strong indication of the VAG's political positioning is evident in its involvement in art publishing in the early 80s. Examining the gallery's changing publication interests reveals an interest in contemporary art practice on a national and even, for a time, international level.

In 1979 the Gallery's newsletter became a glossy magazine called Vanguard. While this magazine was autonomously edited, it was subsidized by the Gallery and by national funding agencies, and for a long time it continued to be a primary vehicle for information about the local VAG exhibition schedule. Critic William Woods suggests that the development of Vanguard illustrates "an institution attempting to locate itself in an increasingly active market." He further suggests that, "indeed, the ability to publish a critical magazine instead of a promotional newsletter helped the VAG to present itself as a forward-looking institution, to be associated with progressive criticism" (Wood, 1991, p. 140). The magazine expanded to become a national force for contemporary art, and

gradually the focus shifted away from local practice to wider concerns, situating Vancouver in relation to art practice at a national and international level. The association with Vanguard was a high point in the Gallery's trajectory, but eventually momentum was lost, funding denied, and the magazine folded in 1989.

While this important vehicle for contemporary art criticism in Vancouver has been lost, the VAG continues its commitment to contemporary art practice in its exhibitions and collections, which are, according to the VAG, "principally by contemporary artists." The Gallery also remains highly committed to establishing a reputation at a broad level, a goal evident in its mission statement:

The Vancouver Art Gallery exists to serve the many purposes of art. As a public institution, aware of the essential role art plays in shaping and clarifying culture, the Gallery pursues this goal through the highest quality collections, exhibitions, programs and the services of its personnel. The focus of these pursuits is contemporary in the conviction that through such a focus on visual art the Gallery can contribute locally, nationally and internationally to the evolution of a living culture. (VAG promotional materials, 1997)

The variegated nature of this mission statement results in a constant tension in the exhibition schedule. While maintaining a position as a force on the contemporary art scene is important to the Gallery, exhibitions must also bring in visitors and appeal to a broader audience that may not be able to appreciate contemporary art. Therefore, Gallery resources are divided among three types of installations: permanent, anchor and contemporary. The Emily Carr Trust collection of paintings is an important part of the VAG's permanent collection. Anchor installations draw in large crowds, and are primarily drawn from other institutions. Finally, contemporary shows tend to be in-house projects directed at the initiated local arts culture (Augaitis, Meeting VAG, October 1998).

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20This mission statement was in place throughout my work at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Currently, with the arrival of a new director, Alf Bogusky, the mission statement is being reworked, as part of efforts to become a more hospitable and responsive environment for its visitors.

21For information on the Trust Collection and Carr's importance to British Columbia see chapter 4.
Gallery space at the Vancouver Art Gallery

An imposing building, full of contrasts, the Vancouver Art Gallery offers a variety of environments in which to view art. Built in 1910 as a courthouse for a growing city, and expanded in size before it was originally completed, the Gallery is an imposing classically-styled landmark in downtown Vancouver. By the time the courthouse became the new home of the Art Gallery in the early 80s, it was a designated heritage building. This heritage status posed problems for the design team headed by Canadian architect Arthur Erickson. The courthouse needed major renovations in order to meet conservation standards, to meet seismic standards, and to provide suitable exhibition space. The two portions of the courthouse ended up providing a solution to the design problems. The team negotiated with the heritage board for a total gutting of the interior of the first, larger part of the courthouse in exchange for retaining the entire interior of the smaller addition.22 Today, Gallery staff work in heritage offices with courtrooms for conference rooms. The exhibition space is a re-designed modern gallery with some elements retained from the old courthouse. It is a sometimes odd, sometimes spectacular, combination of old and new.

The entrance to the Gallery is not in fact found at the top of the imposing set of stairs at the Robson Street entrance to the Gallery (in fact this entrance is totally sealed off, although the pediment is used to hang the Gallery's advertising banners). Nor is the entrance located on the Georgia Street façade between two imposing lion statues, as it was when the building was used as a courthouse. Rather visitors must enter the Gallery beneath a modernist overhang which opens into a unimposing lobby space. From there, visitors proceed into the exhibition space (Figure 12).

The Gallery has four floors of exhibition space which all turn onto a light-filled rotunda,

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22 For a discussion of the move of the Vancouver Art Gallery to the old provincial courthouse, see Stan Douglas, "Introduction," in Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art (pp. 11-19) Vancouver: Talonbooks. See also Brian Foreman, Lecture notes: Vancouver Art Gallery Heritage Building (Vancouver Art Gallery, public programming division).
a focal point which retains all of the elaborate classical detailing of the original courthouse. Each floor of the Gallery has an entirely different feel to it, which is impacted by the choice of floor covering and by other architectural details. The first floor “reads” like a modern art gallery. Hardwood floors are complemented by white walls, and the open space is broken only by a few large square pillars. The marble floored rotunda is flanked on either side by two marble staircases which lead up to the second floor. This space is often used for concerts or other events. The feeling on the second floor is entirely different. This level is carpeted and is often used for important temporary exhibitions. While at the first level, the viewer has a choice to head right or left into the gallery, or straight-through the rotunda and to the exhibition space at the other side, on this second level, the viewer is confronted with an exhibition entrance sign, and given the choice to turn right into the show, or left, into what is sometimes used as a temporary gift shop space. While there is no means to cross the rotunda, you can see across the second floor through to the other side of the gallery. This vantage point, a framed view into the gallery space, is sometimes used for great impact, framing a choice artwork, or didactic material (e.g. Figure 13).  

While roughly forming a straightforward square path, the second floor space has two large “high-wall” galleries that add visual impact. These galleries can be seen from galley ways on the third floor.

After the magnificent staircase from the first to the second floor gallery, wayfinding becomes a lot more challenging at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Navigating between floors in the Gallery is perhaps the most awkward and daunting task for the visitor. As a result, security guards are positioned at the entrances to each floor to assist with the task. The confusion exists because there are escalators between floors two, three, and four. To make matters more confusing the escalators are placed singly at each of the four corners of the rotunda. That means that you have to walk across the rotunda or through the gallery in order

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23Photograph of the view from the second floor entry way across to the framed view of the didactic panel wall for the mask show, summer 1998.
to navigate up and down. At floor three, therefore, you do not enter the exhibition space via the rotunda but along one side of the rotunda directly in the exhibition space. Once up on the third floor however, the traffic pattern resembles a figure eight. You can walk through the rotunda, and peer over a railing down to the ground floor, or you can follow the narrow passage ways that run alongside the high-walled galleries of the second floor. These small hallways display photographs or smaller artworks.

The third floor is, at the moment, used to display “Art in BC,” the Gallery’s idea of a permanent collection. The works rotate frequently but the content is basically the same. On this floor the most constant exhibition is the Emily Carr display, which occupies one entire side of the gallery space. With open rectangular rooms with little definition between galleries, and a polished concrete floor, this floor has what has been referred to as “a bowling alley-like” feel to it (Meszaros, personal communication, 1997).

Finally, escalators take you to the fourth floor; a floor that has several different environments. Nearest the escalators, the gallery space is modernistic, with requisite white walls. The rotunda is not visible at this level, but smooth rounded walls direct you around it, moving you smoothly from one side of the Gallery to the other. One side the Gallery appears more museum-like, with an intricately detailed tin molding coffered ceiling and wall-frieze details. This space is disconcerting though, since the level of detail seems oddly close. It's as if a floor has been arbitrarily added in between levels, and you're hovering near the ceiling. The carpet beneath your feet adds a disjointed feeling of comfort and closeness, that contrasts greatly with the grand architectural details. Finally, on the other side of this floor there is an open studio space with large windows opening out to a view of the downtown core. It is the most eclectic floor of the Gallery, generally used for smaller, and in-house exhibitions.

**Hunter's exhibition: Emily Carr and Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun**

The Emily Carr and Lawrence Paul Exhibition was installed by curator Andrew
Hunter just as I was beginning my work with the Gallery to re-install the Emily Carr collection. He was involved in the planning of the rehang of Emily Carr and during the course of the project, as things changed and were pushed back a year, Hunter went ahead and created this exhibition of Yuxweluptun and Carr, at the encouragement of Yuxweluptun himself. As this exhibition illustrates, Hunter was quite interested in contemporary museological issues and the problems surrounding the interpretation of Emily Carr at the Gallery.24

Cognizant of the conservative climate of museums and galleries, Hunter has nevertheless worked to overcome traditional limits of art curating throughout his career. His challenging exhibitions have caught the attention of critics, and he has been described in the Globe and Mail as one of Canada's up and coming young curators (Milroy, 1997). Originally an artist, Hunter turned to curating because he preferred "the whole shooting match" of putting on a show ("Andrew Hunter," 1997). Hunter came to the Vancouver Art Gallery after working for five years in Hamilton, Ontario at the Hamilton Art Gallery, where he took delight in re-hanging and re-combining works from the permanent collection in startling ways. In Hamilton he worked under curator Ihor Holubizky, who "taught [him] to run with things, to be irreverent, to pick away at the façade of the museum" (Milroy, 1997). As Hunter explains, "I want to push this idea that curating and the museum process is a very subjective thing" ("Andrew Hunter," 1997).

At the Vancouver Art Gallery, a larger and more conservative institution, Hunter found that he was pushed to bring his ideas back into line and follow more traditional academic guidelines for art display (Laurence, 1996). Yet that is not to say that the staff at the Vancouver Art Gallery did not see the dilemmas of representation and authority that Hunter was interested in exposing. The ideology of the VAG is in constant tension, riding the line between survey museum and art gallery of the avant-garde. It asserts its place as

24For a more in-depth discussion of these issues see Chapter 6.
the largest art institution in Western Canada, while at the same time attempting to keep itself known as a progressive and up-to-date part of the contemporary art scene. Therefore, while maintaining a certain conservative presence in Vancouver, staff at the Vancouver Art Gallery are also interested in these contemporary museological issues, and Hunter had some measure of leeway in which to explore them. In 1995, for example, Hunter produced an exhibition that created a stir around the notions of censorship and artistic freedom, when he displayed Andre Serrano's *Piss Pope* alongside Goya's *Disasters of War* series.

This exhibition employed the same curatorial strategy as the Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun and Emily Carr exhibition, using artworks in a non-traditional manner. The postmodern museological challenge, according to senior VAG curator Daina Augaitis is that "museums have developed some very set ways of viewing work and it can be challenging to get beyond these categories" (cited in Weggler, 1996, p. 46). Art tends to be displayed according to the art historical conventions of biography, chronology or style. Augaitis suggests that juxtaposition, as an installation strategy, offers a means to address the postmodern concerns of display. By juxtaposing artworks of different historical periods, the curator is able to illustrate broader social issues that affected both artists. She feels that these types of shows help to fulfil part of the Gallery's mandate to bring the uninitiated viewer into dialogue with ideas and issues. Thus the Carr and Yuxweluptun show was intended to illustrate some broader social issues that concerned both artists; namely First Nations people and the environment.

In this installation, Hunter was initially interested in using the works of Yuxweluptun to

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as he puts it, "probe about Carr," and to create a dialogue between Carr's work of the 20s and 30s and recent work by Yuxweluptun. While the resulting exhibition grapples more directly with Yuxweluptun's work than was perhaps first imagined by Hunter, the show offers a rich source of information at many levels of engagement, from the casual visitor, to the highly interested and engaged researcher. The show both visually and textually illustrates just how complex and necessarily tentative these negotiations of history in public spaces have become in our time. I suggest that Hunter's approach to curating, as seen in this example, reflects current historiographical and museological interests in authority and subjectivity. The show offers a truly self-conscious narrative perspective into its own creation, following what has been called a curator as "auteur" approach. The exhibition operates at both a visceral visual level, and a textual intellectual level. And its core organizing strategy of juxtaposition indicates a genuine interest in using history to speak to the present.

The exhibition was installed on the third floor, which usually displays BC art, on a semi-permanent basis and often from the VAG's own collection. The airy rotunda forms the centre point of this floor, a point that allows visitors to interrupt the circular flow of their path through the exhibition space. The Yuxweluptun show was displayed in a familiar modernist sense with a smooth neutral coloured concrete floor and white walls hung with large colourful paintings. Low black leather modernist couches punctuate the space. For the most part, the works are grouped in pairs, alternating Carr, Yuxweluptun, Carr, her small neutral paintings of grey and green forests dwarfed in both size and colour by those of Yuxweluptun (Figure 14).

The self-scrutinizing, subjective and linguistic nature of this exhibition becomes clear in the introductory text panel which reads (in part):

Standing in this room, in the spring of 1996, Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun and I began a dialogue about Emily Carr, an artist he both values and critiques....We considered the problems of perpetuating Carr's view as an...
authentic view of "Indianness." In the context of Carr's ongoing presence here at the Vancouver Art Gallery, this installation began as a polite exchange about relationships between the work of Carr and Yuxweluptun, reflecting my initial desire to question some of the assumptions around the work of Carr. Through a juxtaposition of Yuxweluptun's and Carr's paintings, I wanted to raise questions, to use Yuxweluptun's work as a tool to probe around Carr.

In our discussions on the phone and at the studio, it became obvious that Yuxweluptun was not interested in just a simple exchange with Carr, he had no desire to speak "through" Carr....[he] insisted that his work also have an independent presence equal to Carr during the installation....A true dialogue flows both ways.

Through our process, Yuxweluptun has reminded me of my position of control within the institution. He has refused to allow me to use his work strategically and demands that I stick my neck out as he has done through his paintings. Yuxweluptun encourages me to publicly question my own position, attempting to make the power transparent. (Exhibition Text panel, VAG 1996)

This panel clearly sets the stage for a different type of art exhibition. Lengthy, difficult, and directly addressing its own creation, Hunter works to provide the viewer with some insight into the workings of the curatorial process itself. Speaking about his work in an interview with local art critic Robin Laurence, Hunter suggests that his role in the show is about numerous issues, including his own implication in the inequities faced by Yuxweluptun, but that he is also attempting to undermine the notion of institutional authority in this installation. He suggests that "it's not about baring my soul and apologizing for anything, but trying to engage these issues. It's about burying another face of racism" (cited in Laurence, 1997, p. 57).

Background information about Yuxweluptun

Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun is a local Coast Salish artist, who was educated at the

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27The honesty and forthrightness of Hunter's objectives stand in particularly high relief when compared with an exhibition of contemporary First Nations art at the National Gallery Land, Spirit, Power, where the curators' role was not made explicit in the creation of the show. The curators preferred instead to let artists statements to do all the talking. As Anne Whitelaw has pointed out, while this technique illustrates a desire to let this disenfranchised group of artists speak, it also has the effect of eliding the interaction between the institution and the art and artists (Whitelaw, 1995, p 45). This dialogue about context and politics was perhaps as significant as the works themselves.
Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design. Born in Kamloops to an Okanagan mother, and a Coast Salish father who were both highly active in British Columbian politics, Yuxweluptun continues the work of his parents albeit in a different forum. Yuxweluptun's highly political work does not simply reproduce the formal elements used by many traditional First Nations artists, but uses traditional native forms in a Surrealistic manner. Attenuated figures stand in Dali-esque landscapes. The title of one work, *Red Man watching white Man trying to fix hole in the sky* (1990), offers a good insight into Yuxweluptun's highly politicized subject matter. Yuxweluptun's artist's statement also offers insight into his views on painting and politics:

Land claims have always concerned me: fishing rights, hunting rights, water rights, inherent rights. My home, my native land. Land is power, power is land. This is what I try to paint….Land is far more important than taking monetary wealth from the outlanders. I am tired of your usufructuary rights, I am fed up with being a usufruct person. I am tired of being fruct around by all of you. (Yuxweluptun, 1995, p. 1)

In this exhibition, following the introductory panel, Yuxweluptun has indeed refused to be used as a means to get at some essence of understanding Carr. Hunter has created an installation which builds upon the politics inherent in the work itself; the startlingness of the juxtaposition with Carr adding to the effect. With the brilliant colour and sheer size of his canvases, a viewer need not read the copious wall panels in order to come to the conclusion that the show is primarily about Yuxweluptun and not Emily Carr. Yuxweluptun's works dominate the space. The riotous and in-your-face quality of the distressing content of his works ensures a more than fleeting glance at the large and colourful scenes. I find that

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28 For more information on Yuxweluptun, see the 1995 exhibition catalogue, *Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun: Born to Live and Die on Your Reservations* (Watson, 1995), and the doctoral dissertations *Landscape and Identity* Beer (1999), and *Materializing nature*, Willems-Braun (1996).

Carr's smaller, sweeping rhythms simply cannot compete with Yuxweluptun's riveting works. Yuxweluptun demands to be heard.

**Two issues: Indian Art and the British Columbia landscape**

Hunter has organized the theme of the show around two separate issues. One speaks of respective notions of "Indian Art," and the other speaks of the notion of the land. These two themes ostensibly form the issues around which the artists will "converse." This exhibition chooses First Nations, and the environment as two points of connection between Carr, the historical, and Yuxweluptun, the contemporary artist. The use of two dichotomous points of view from two very different time periods offers a rich field of possibilities to explore the issues at hand. Hunter's choices serve to reveal some of the current complexities surrounding representation and history-making. It is an uneasy combination.

In the section dealing with First Nations, for instance, we find that Carr is spoken about but is not really given a voice, while concerning the perhaps less problematic issue of the land, Carr is allowed to speak. Emily Carr, as a prolific journal writer with strong interests in her subject matter, offers great possibilities as an artist to be subject for this type of exhibition, yet her writings are not tapped into as strongly as they might have been. Rather than Yuxweluptun being a tool to probe around Carr, as Hunter had originally intended, Carr is situated in many ways as a standing target, a sitting duck, or a monolithic entity against which Yuxweluptun's strongly political works might sound.

In some ways, Carr is used as a place marker, as a stand-in for history, and specifically for the history of the treatment of natives in Canada. For example, in the section dealing with First Nations issues, the exhibition text suggests,

Emily Carr's images of totem poles and buildings seem to be about mourning. In works such *Totem Forest* and *A Skidegate Pole*, she mourns, in paint, the loss of a culture that she and others of European descent believed was dead or dying. This belief in the inevitable disappearance of First Nations communities along the Northwest Coast following their decimation by
disease brought by the colonizers, was based primarily on the temporary decline in the production of "traditional" material culture...that Europeans valued so highly. However, Carr and her contemporaries failed to recognize, or value, the non-traditional political activities (the legal struggle against church and state over the banning of the Potlatch, for example) of the various First Nations communities they depicted as in decline....(Exhibition Text, VAG, 1996)

Of course, the argument is not totally without grounding. Carr did work to document what she saw as a dying culture; her first forays into the wilderness were about recording what she found there. Yet her relationship with First Nations people and culture is more complex than indicated here.

The complexity of the issue under discussion is alluded to in other text panels, where this same sort of generalizing is accompanied by a disclaimer. For example, Hunter allows, "Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun recognizes a sincerity in Carr's depiction of First Nations subjects," or, "Yuxweluptun values Carr’s work as one painter admiring the work of another." And then these concessions are followed by a stronger commentary about the period in which Carr lived, and an association of Carr with the broader mentalité of the era. For example, after pointing out Yuxweluptun's belief in the "sincerity" of Carr's work, the text follows:

However, he also points out this lack of knowledge about the real issues facing the communities she depicted. He sees this as unavoidable--like most of her contemporaries, Carr was unable to recognize social and political issues being engaged in culturally diverse First Nations communities.

And in another instance, Hunter both acknowledges and distances recent academic responses to Carr, noting that Yuxweluptun,

does not raise the issue of cultural appropriation common to much recent criticism of Carr...and, in fact, his primary criticism is not necessarily specific to Carr. Instead, he is critical of the projection and reception of Carr’s work as somehow authenticating a Romantic view of "Indianness" at the expense of presenting the difficult realities of First Nations experience.

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30For a discussion of Carr's wilderness sketching trips and her intentions regarding the documentation, see G. Moray (1993).
The suggestion that she was, "unable to recognize" the issues affecting First Nations people, and the characterization of Carr as a synecdochic figure from that time period are a great disservice to Carr and her work. Hunter avoids dealing with Carr on a deeper level by referring to the fact that Yuxweluptun's criticism actually has little to do with Carr or her work itself. Hunter then alludes to a broader historiographic level, to the "recent criticism" and the "projection and reception" of Carr's work, substantiating Yuxweluptun's position without having to explore some of Carr's own beliefs about the issues at hand. Hunter's elision of Carr's perspective offers an entry point to problematic concepts of historical truth, interpretation, and artist's intention (Berkhofer, 1995; Bryson, 1991). And the narrative of this show does indeed provide insight into the biases and beliefs of its creator. But, in the end, the exhibition text does not allow for a considered view of Carr's beliefs about this issue. This perspective is glossed over in order to provide fuel for Yuxweluptun's fire. This is useful technique to be sure, but one that does not begin to get at a better understanding of Carr, her work and her life.

In the section dealing with environmental issues, Hunter allows more of a sense of Carr to emerge. Here, perhaps the two artists are more in alignment, and the issue on a whole less contentious, than the other section of the show. Two of the works shown in this section are Carr's Scorned as Timber, Beloved as Sky, and Yuxweluptun's Red Man Watching White Man Trying To Fix Hole In Sky (Figure 15). Here, Hunter allows Carr to speak, using a selection chosen from Hundreds and Thousands, Carr's last collection of journals. Carr speaks about how nature will eventually recover from the ravages of man and his machines:

There is nothing so strong as growing. Nothing can drown that force that splits rocks and pavements and spreads over the fields...Man can pattern it and change its variety and shape, but leave it for even a time and then it goes back to its own, swamping and swallowing man's puny intentions. No killing nor stamping down can destroy it. Life is in the soil, touch it with air and light and it bursts forth like a struck match. Nothing is dead, not even to the spirit's leaving there is life, boundless life, restless and marvellous, fresh and clean.
It is an enticing quote that points towards two of Carr’s lifelong themes: nature, and spirituality. Hunter goes on to discuss the differences between the perspectives of the two artists. While Yuxweluptun is also concerned with the encroaching presence of man and industry on the land, he does not believe that the damage is irreversible. He also approaches the topic with a far more political stance, addressing the issue of land claims, in paintings like *Thou Shalt not Steal*. The juxtaposition of the works in this section, and throughout the show indicate, on a purely visual, and often visceral level, the main thrust of the show. These two artists depict BC, via First Nations and environmental subjects quite differently. It is not necessary to read through the voluminous wall panels in order to grasp the particular point here.

**Voice, authority and the curatorial field**

However, it is necessary to read the panels in order to get at a third area of interest for this exhibition. As I suggested at the beginning of this analysis, Hunter uses the panels as a means to directly address the viewer, not as a hidden anonymous voice of the institution, but as a person, who has been given the authority to speak in this venue. Further on in the panels, Hunter speaks to the uneasy position between curator and institutional representative.

So, like the giant figure who stands in the left foreground of *Red Man Watching White Man Trying To Fix Hole in Sky*, Yuxweluptun stands watching as I (the tiny lab-coated man atop the shoulders of a mysterious masked figure) attempt to fill a gap. As in the painting, I have reached a precarious point. Assisted by a structure of Yuxweluptun’s devising, I attempt to manipulate an unruly patch (an exhibition) and to stabilize the scene (the gallery/museum)—to keep this very Western structure intact while engaging the powerful presence of Yuxweluptun’s paintings which foreground issues of geographical and cultural sovereignty and challenge traditional definitions of First Nations art and culture.

This text also illustrates how Hunter prefaces this discussion nicely in relation to one of the paintings on display, which offers him a means to insist on his subjective position as
interpreter of the paintings on view. Throughout the text panels, Hunter offers these little morsels of information, which seem to function almost like carrots for the weary work horse who plods through acres of text. If the traditional viewer approaches text in galleries and museums with the hope of finding an explanation of the works on view, here and there Hunter offers a tiny reward, a reassurance that he too, finds the art challenging. In the introductory panels, for example, Hunter constantly brings the discussion of the art back to "I. "Looking at Night in a Salish Longhouse, I am lost. I have no idea what is being acted out." This type of statement reassures a viewer who may not feel comfortable in front of such imposing contemporary works as these by Yuxweluptun. The first person approach works to draw the viewer in, as it works to insist upon the subjectivity of the exhibition itself. The lengthy opening panel, as well as a Postscript panel, reinforce the fact that there is an individual's point of view on display, in the combination and theorizing of the works. Hunter is there, functioning as "a voice with which to argue" (Bal, 1996, p. 13).

This insistence on a third point of view within this exhibition reflects the curator as "auteur" approach (see Heinich and Pollack, 1996; Alloway, 1996; Meijers, 1996). According to Debora Meijers, this use of the "auteur" reflects a new era where,

These doubts find expression in the 'linguistic turn,' a blurring of the boundary between the discipline of history and literature. The same goes for art history. An exhibition designer who regards his activity as art is not essentially different from the historian who becomes increasingly aware of the literary dimension of his historical account. (p. 18)

This method of curating, premised on the belief that exhibitions are always already arguments, the insertion of a subjective voice, that of the curator, allows for an entry point into the traditionally hidden, yet always present rhetoric of authority and knowledge implicit in the display of objects within a respected public sphere. For it is never simply "Look," but rather, "Look" with an implicit "this is how it is," following close behind (Bal, 1996, p. 2). By asserting that the exhibition offers a particular, and individual, rather than a generalized perspective on the objects displayed, the "auteur" disrupts the naturalized codes of
viewing objects within a gallery or museum.

As we have seen in the discussion of the National Gallery of Canada and previous chapters, the presence of a "voice with which to argue," is a fairly recent phenomenon in the art gallery, and one that is not without its limitations. For, if the art exhibition is indeed, as Carol Duncan suggests, a public space, constituting "an arena in which a community may test, examine, and imaginatively live both older truths and possibilities for new ones" (1995, p. 134), then one has to consider carefully who is allowed to speak, and how, within that arena. Hunter has been cautious in his argument, to allow a wide berth for the politics intimated by Yuxweluptun's work. He is most unassuming, and the most permissive when dealing with his role as an epistemic authority figure mediating between Yuxweluptun and the institution, in his introductory panels.

Yet it is not a simple matter to navigate between the professional role as curator, or even curator as "auteur," and the individual beliefs and opinions that this "auteur" approach allows. Speaking of their work analyzing contemporary art exhibitions in France, Heinich and Pollak recall,

We found the emergence of an authorial position through the expedient of the exhibition particularly interesting to analyze in that it introduces, in the midst of the realm of personal abnegation that is the museum, a criterion of singularization, bestowed with a legitimacy where it would ordinarily be disparaged as an indication of 'deprofessionalization'. (Heinich and Pollak, 1996, p. 235)

Hunter's texts reflect this tension. He is allowed to speak to this collection of paintings, and therefore occupies an authority position, legitimately allowed to voice his opinions, in his chosen manner, in a public space. Discussions of the creation of the exhibition and the negotiation of meanings around the works reflect Hunter as "auteur" of the display. Flashes of uncertainty and emotional response draw a sympathetic response from the viewer, and reassure the viewer of the validity of their own reactions to the works, further indicating Hunter's subjective position as interpreter of the works. Yet while he both acknowledges
his privileged status and provides his honest and open opinions, a further tension seems to exist concerning his professional role. While Heinich and Pollak comment on the legitimacy being accorded to curators as creators or auteurs, on their becoming artists themselves in a sense, Hunter's texts suggest that perhaps, in his position, at this point in time, he must also continue to assert his voice in a more recognizable, professional and authoritative "curatorial" way. There are elements, cues that point to a body of knowledge, a professional language, that subtly indicate why he is allowed to speak in this space. For, interestingly enough, Hunter reverts to a more imposing means of interpreting the works in the two thematic panels, dealing with Indian Art and Landscape. Here, he speaks in the third person about the art. He interprets the paintings through an anonymous amalgamation of art historical experts. "In works such as Totem Forest and A Skidegate Pole, she mourns, in paint, the loss of a culture that she and others of European descent believed was dead or dying," or, "in a work such as Night in a Salish Longhouse, Yuxweluptun depicts spiritual aspects of First Nations culture Carr could not see or comprehend." Of course, the use of "believed," in the first example reflects a self-conscious historicization of Carr's perspective, but it remains largely a broad and neutral statement of fact, that runs counter to the rest of the texts in the show. There are no "I"s in these panels, Hunter has disappeared. Perhaps this neutrality is an unintended result of an attempt to cement the thematic connections between the two artists but it is a curious point on which to reflect, especially if these panels are interpreted as being the main body of the show, a more fixed and traditional centre surrounded by well-intentioned introduction and conclusion panels.

The success of the Emily Carr and Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun show, where Hunter manages to walk the fine line between the authority of a traditional museum narrative, and the audacity of an auteur approach, is further illustrated by a comparison to another exhibition held in Vancouver at the Museum of Anthropology (MOA). This student-curated show entitled "What is a masterpiece?" was held in 1995-1996 as part of an anthropology
course and it later became the subject of an article by historian Susan Crane (1997). This "masterpiece" show confronted visitors with large signs at each exhibit stop. The questions were stark in the muted boutique lighting of the gallery. They were point-blank confrontational questions, along the lines of "Why is this a masterpiece? Who decides?" Each station addressed a different museological issue surrounding the display of works from non-western cultures, and it was the visitor who was "asked" to explain. Crane argues that viewers may tend to be disarmed by the appearance, or suggestion of a curatorial presence within an exhibition. The show, and her discussion of it, offer an interesting point of contrast to Hunter's exhibition. Both shows attempt to deal with First Nations subject matter and issues of the museum as a Euro-centric value-laden institution, whose modus-operandi is often left unexamined.

Crane discusses this particular exhibit in terms of resistance among the public to the notions of historians' work. She suggests that "even where museums or educators actively depict the process of historical interpretation, they may have discounted active public resistance to this operation," (Crane, 1997, p. 63) feeling that some of the massive amounts of feedback and confusion resulting from MOA exhibit were a result of general resistance to the ideas of the show.

At the MOA, however, I think that visitors were concerned more with the style of conversation, rather than the content, itself. While the display did indeed attempt to address key issues in the writing of history in public spaces, I think that it is the manner in which it was presented, and not the content, or interpretation itself at fault here. The tone of the labels was so direct, so unforgiving, and so challenging, that even the most empathetic visitor was disarmed, or threatened. While these students wanted to address the role of the curator in composing history, the questions themselves were phrased anonymously, directly, and without much assistance for the viewer. The result was resistance to the method, not the message.
How different is this approach from the Carr and Yuxweluptun show at the Vancouver Art Gallery! It likewise deals with highly sensitive issues, and the installation and Yuxweluptun's works themselves are extremely provocative, yet somehow, the exhibition, even the segment Native Land Claims, did not incite the same furore that the MOA display did. Perhaps the works themselves played the largest role, the subject matter effectively dealing with many of the issues. But, I think that the way in which the viewer was asked to think about the exhibit was extremely helpful. Hunter's personalized labels serve to diffuse the setting. He asks you to think about the issues, he offers you his own viewpoint, he offers the artist's viewpoints, but he does not close the door for further interpretation.

Carr representation

The overall effect of the show is encapsulated in one particular installation where, most provocatively, Hunter has installed one of Yuxweluptun's paintings directly over one of Carr's. Carr's space within the VAG, characterized by institutional green walls, is encroached upon by the installation of a Yuxweluptun painting (see Figure 16). It seems as though the Yuxweluptun show seeps over into Carr's space. A combination of factors operate to create this effect. In the green area, no labels for the show appear. The room is simply Carr paintings, forests, totems, smallish sized works, with no labels other than the standard tombstone markings. Yet down the wall near the start of the Yuxweluptun show, suddenly a bright red, black and white painting appears. This Yuxweluptun painting hangs high on the wall, over three Carr paintings, which are hung at standard height.

The installation of this single work, over the Carr paintings serves as what Bal calls a

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31 "Tombstone" is a term commonly used by museum professionals to indicate standard labels for art, who painted it, when, materials, when the artist lived and died, who gave it to the museum. I use the term provocatively to suggest Carr's role here, as monolith: dead, stand-in artist for the generalized white men.
"detypifying measure" that helps the visitor get away from "the holistic representation, from the synecdochic trope" that characterizes the gallery walk (Bal, 1996, p. 51). It seems to operate as a dig, a comment offered by Hunter to the installation of Carr in the wider gallery. He is not able to address Emily Carr in a direct way, nor will Yuxweluptun let himself be subsumed into Hunter's desire to "probe around Carr." So Hunter makes a jab at the permanent collection, one last sidelong swipe at it. He creeps into the space that belongs to Carr. It is a gesture. It operates outside the temporary exhibition literally and figuratively. It destabilizes the viewer from the chronological walk through Carr's works in the permanent collection; totems, no totems, abstraction, sky. It is a move that points towards the larger problem at hand: what to do with that permanent collection? How can we speak about Carr here?

At the same time, while I can read the imposition of that painting in Carr's space as a gesture, a simple pointing out, about broader curatorial ideologies, it also reads, in Carr's gallery, as a synopsis of Hunter's show. This Yuxweluptun painting installed as it is, speaks volumes. Not simply a painting, this is more like a sign. And the sign reads loud. It screams in fact. In capital letters. Black word on red background, "Native." White word on black background, "Land." Red word on white background, "Claims." NATIVE LAND CLAIMS. Yuxweluptun's work is offered a space that allows it to speak to, to confront Carr's work. In this installation, the tables are turned and First Nations are allowed to resist a symbol of the oppressor, the Victorian society that brought disease and took their children.

It is a provocative installation, heightened not only by its simple presence in the green room of Carr's works, but also by how Hunter speaks of it, interestingly enough, from the vantage point of the previous gallery:

Thou Shalt Not Steal is the title of the large text painting that boldly declares "Native Land Claims" over top of Emily Carr's paintings in the next room. Thou Shalt Not Steal has been lifted by Yuxweluptun from the Ten commandments, a message sent by the god of the Old and New Testaments to Moses as guiding laws for his people. This commandment is
now repeated as a harsh reminder of an oath not kept by the European culture that brought these words to this region. Yuxweluptun's title suggests the law but not the punishment—*life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand*...(Exodus, 21:22-25)

In this exchange between artist and curator, "thou" is me. I am implicated in Yuxweluptun's accusations of theft. I try to maneuver out of the way of his accusation, to stand with him, detached from the European explorers/colonizers and their destructive effects on the land and culture he claims as his own. I attempt to separate myself as an individual from this legacy, what Lawrence sees as my legacy, a lineage I cannot avoid as he says he cannot avoid his own. There is no safe position. (Exhibition text panel, 1996, VAG)

The installation of this particular work summarizes the point of the whole show, so directly, and powerfully. "For Yuxweluptun, any consideration of the current state and fate of the land is inseparable from land rights and land claims to the point where no depiction of the British Columbia landscape, no matter its intent, can be separated from these issues" (Exhibition text panel, 1996, VAG). And while Hunter does allow Carr "to speak" by including a couple of her statements about nature, he does not allow her to address Yuxweluptun. She is used as a stand-in for her society. Here she must be the scape-goat and she is not allowed to speak to the challenges. It is a useful, powerful and important exhibition to be sure. However, Carr is simply not given equal time. She is a means to an end.

**Conclusion**

In this institution, Carr is not the marginalized place holder that she is in the National Gallery. Here, she serves as the tie-in to the developmental narrative presented in Ottawa, the strongest tie that British Columbia has to the national history of Canadian Art. In Vancouver, then, Carr is always on display, occupying the centre and not the margins. And in this show with Yuxweluptun, Carr's role as a canonical figure combines with her representation of the West Coast landscape and Native culture. In her status and in her choice of subject matter she is doubly set up to serve as a useful stand-in for the generalized white man that Yuxweluptun wishes to critique. In the National Gallery as in this
In this chapter I have suggested the ways in which Andrew Hunter's show addresses contemporary museological issues, including authorial voice and narrative. The show offers a strong visual narrative as the textual elements take into account calls for a more open and subjective voice in curatorial work. The show calls attention to its genesis, its biases, and its constructed nature, reflecting current calls for methodological openness in academic practice (Tierney and Lincoln, 1995; Fine, 1994; Ferguson, 1996; Berkhofer, 1995). In addition, Hunter's work, while it does marginalize Carr, offers a highly useful example of making the past speak to the present. Carr provides a focal point against which the issues represented by Yuxweluptun's work are further illuminated. Hunter further acknowledges, by means of the Thou Shalt not Steal installation in Carr's space, the continued difficulties in making inroads on the problematics of dealing with canonical and historical iconic artists.
Chapter 6: Hanging Emily, but nicely, at the Vancouver Art Gallery

In this chapter I analyze the exhibition Emily Carr: Art and Process, curated by Ian Thom at the Vancouver Art Gallery (March 21- June 7, 1998), the exhibition with which my educational text project was initially installed. The show travelled, in truncated form, to the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria (June 21- September 30, 1998), and then to the Kamloops Art Gallery (November 14- January 24, 1999). Given the exhibition possibilities discussed in chapters 3, 4 and 5, and the resulting museological and political context established in the process, we can now profitably examine how the re-installation at the Vancouver Art Gallery both challenges and succumbs to existing modes of representation and practice. This text project and exhibition provide opportunities to examine how this particular institution and team answered some of these questions. This exhibition at the VAG draws from Chapter 4, and the sense of resonance and historical presence of Emily Car created in the exhibition at the AGGV, while the VAG show does not move too far beyond accepted and traditional approaches to curating art. The Art and Process show also points towards the issues of subjectivity and authority raised in Chapter 5, acknowledging the need for multiple points of view, without capitulating to the explicitly subjective stance presented in the Emily Carr and Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun show. Finally, the Art and Process exhibition works to represent Carr as the important figure that she is in this particular place, in the process revealing art historical mores that reinforce her status as an artist worthy of examination, a presentation that reflects the political role of the institution, discussed in relation to the National Gallery in Chapter 3.

Chapters 6 stands apart from the other chapters in that it provides an analysis as well as a discussion of the process that informed the development of the exhibition. In particular this discussion focuses on the creation of two large walls of interpretive text that I created as a result of conversations with the Head of Public Programs, CM. The text panels
emerged from other projects that I was hired to complete at the Gallery. They reflect not
only my interest in the museological issues described in the thesis, but also the research that I
have undertaken in curriculum design, teaching art history and social studies and
historiography. Chapter 6 begins with an exhibition analysis, which is rather arbitrarily
separated out from the process of development, in which I was a central participant. The
second part of this chapter goes on to dissect, or augment (depending on your point of
view) this analysis with a discussion of the process that resulted in the text project. As I
weave through the two parts of the chapter, then, the reader should be aware of my dual
role in this particular exhibition, a role in which I am not uncomfortable (Fine, 1994; Tierney
and Lincoln, 1997). As always, I attempt to provide clues as to my own positioning
throughout the analysis, and in the second part of the chapter I go further, to outline how the
project evolved, as well as the intentions behind certain decisions affecting the final project.

While the Emily Carr and Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun show was a fruitful example
by which to examine issues raised by postmodern new museological theory, I was
interested in pursuing the development of an exhibition that did not stem from an "artist-
curator" or "auteur" approach. What other means could be used that would begin to open
up the closed, didactic and seemingly seamless narratives common to the art exhibition
medium? This exhibition project was an attempt to point toward the issues raised by
postmodernism, without becoming subsumed by them. The project asks, following
historian Susan Crane's musing, "How can historians share ideas about historical
consciousness with similarly interested people rather than educate people about history:
how can we do this with a public that expects to learn the facts?" (Crane, 1997, p. 63,
emphasis added) Its goal is to provide a variety of openings and spaces in which visitors
can sense the process of constructing history, while learning about Carr, and while working
to produce their own constructions of her and her work. In this chapter I suggest ways in
which the resulting exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery addresses these theoretical
concerns. In particular I illustrate how, while using an open and fragmented framework, the exhibition provides for a variety of types of learning, reflects the historiography of Carr, and introduces some of the details of Carr's history.

The escalator to the 3rd floor of the Vancouver Art Gallery brings you to the Gallery's collection of Canadian Art. This floor is semi-permanent, with paintings and feature exhibitions rotating through the VAG’s large collection of Canadian historical and contemporary paintings. While the other areas of the floor rotate, Emily Carr is always on view. Just after the re-installation, the UP escalator brings you up to face some works by local artist Toni Onley, part of a temporary show called *Five Abstract Painters* (Thom, 1998) (Figure 17). To get to the Carr exhibition *Art and Process*, requires a turn right and then a walk through the rotunda. On the top arch of the rotunda is the title, "Art in British Columbia" (Figure 18). On the back wall of the gallery visible through the rotunda, reads the title: *Emily Carr: Art and Process*, on a rich medium blue wall with two views of Carr's *Skidegate*, a small watercolour sketch on the left and an oil painting on the right. This title wall also features the caption: "Placer Dome sponsor." This was a large exhibition at the VAG that filled half of the third floor galleries, using many different elements to provide a multi-layered experience of Carr and her work. The show consisted of paired works, grouped throughout two galleries, one of which was further divided by two small false walls. A third room featured Carr's paintings hung singly. Two smaller rooms on either end of the installation contained supplementary educational materials, one room dedicated to a comment area and a video seating area, and the other serving as a library/ reference room that was coded as a small living room. The contextualization of this exhibition space, with its coloured walls and interpretive elements, seemed even more noticeable given the stark contrast to the spare hanging of the *Five Abstract Painters* show across the rotunda.
The introductory text

On either side of this small wall are two text panels. To the left is one that talks about materials and methods used by Carr, in six short paragraphs concerning her use of watercolour, oil, pencil, charcoal, sketch, and the transition to a final work. To the right of the title wall is another text panel, the introduction to the show. The introduction is quite brief, consisting of a 100 word explanation of the thesis of the show and another 96 words for acknowledgments. The text reads:

Throughout her life Emily Carr produced a large number of works in a variety of media. The purpose of this exhibition is to examine her use of sketches to create final works. While the show does not touch on all of the media Carr used (omitting her ink drawings, ceramics and hooked rugs), it does touch on most of the media she used in her mature career. The shifts in focus and emphasis and her use of a variety of materials for expressive purposes are, I hope, evident in the series of pairs of works that the exhibition brings together.

The Vancouver Art Gallery has been fortunate to work with several institutions to realize this exhibition and tour. We are grateful for loans from the British Columbia Archives, and the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria and the National Gallery of Canada which have supplemented works in the Vancouver Art Gallery collection. The generous sponsorship of Placer Dome, Inc., and Placer Dome North America has enabled the Vancouver Art Gallery to mount the exhibition and to have it travel, in modified form, to the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria and the Kamloops Art Gallery later in 1998.

Ian M. Thom
Senior Curator
Vancouver Art Gallery

A brief exploration of the introductory text is revealing. Notice, for example, the change in subject pronouns between the first and second paragraphs. Thom takes responsibility for the thesis of the show, albeit in a deferential way. In the acknowledgement section, the subject changes to "we," and refers to the institution in general. As well, the subtly mentioned fact that the show will travel reverberates among those who understand the politics behind the installation. As I discussed in Chapter 4 (AGGV), the stipulation that

32Ian Thom is a long-time curator at the VAG. He is interested in working on projects with the education department, allowing CM to work with two large walls in the exhibition, and also collaborating on other projects, including the Telling Tales exhibition which opened a year after Art and Process. In Telling Tales, the introductory panel illustrated the curatorial/programming collaboration, as it ended with a question, a technique written about in many museum education studies (see Serrell, 1997).
the Emily Carr Trust collection must travel throughout British Columbia on a rotating basis figured largely in the small exhibition at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. In the Victoria exhibition, it was clearly mentioned in the opening text, as well as in supporting material, that the Vancouver Art Gallery had not been fulfilling its obligations in this regard.

Thom puts forward as the thesis of the show a tentative and a very formalist statement; simply that the purpose is to "examine her use of sketches to create final works." It is a constative statement surrounded by numerous disclaimers, modifiers that perhaps suggest some hidden complexity to the topic. After a vague start to the text panel, ("throughout her life," "large number," "variety of media"), Thom offers a strong thesis statement (the purpose of this exhibition is) and then hedges a bit, acknowledging that "while the show does not touch on" all of Carr's chosen media, it touches on "most" of the media in her "mature" career. Thus while Thom starts off ostensibly providing a broad survey of Carr's working methods, "most" and "mature" indicate that there is a subtle selection process in effect.

A Carr aficionado might further note that the material indicated in brackets as elements missing from this show--"ink drawings, ceramics and hooked rugs"--were all products of particularly interesting times in Carr's life. These objects might not interest a connoisseur, perhaps, but they are certainly key reference points and markers for a biographer or someone interested in Carr and the contextual details of her life. These were the products created not for aesthetic consumption by the artistic community and high art world, but they were rather created as means for a struggling Carr to support herself during difficult financial times before she attained fame and standing in the art world. In a way, Thom acknowledges the viewer who arrives with an interest in Carr the woman, saying yes, I know you exist, but I will not be focusing my attention on these issues. The brackets create an interesting linguistic space, as Thom the curator speaks an aside to a particular group of viewers. But whereas in the case of the Yuxweluptun, curator Andrew Hunter allowed himself the room
to expand, in a more direct way, on the reasons behind such a choice, here Thorn follows a more traditional "neutral" academic path, with only a subtle suggestion of his role as selector of the works.

The last sentence of Thom's statement, likewise hints at his role as the authoritative voice; the selector and connoisseur. In this last phrase Thom again offers a bracketing device, here using commas to separate the key element in the sentence, in the phrase "are, I hope, evident." At first glance, it was the "I" that caught my eye, as throughout the rest of the introductory panel, Thorn speaks primarily through "the exhibition," or "the Vancouver Art Gallery." The "I hope" personalizes the statement, adding a hint of subjectivity as it introduces an element of uncertainty to what is otherwise a very constative panel characterized by such statements as, "the purpose of this exhibition is to..." And yet, at the same time that these two words appear to open the subject of the exhibition up to further scrutiny, or perhaps to debate, the next word works to close down this potential questioning. "Evident," as in "obvious, unmistakable, can't you see it?" Without overstating the case, because it is important that Thom uses a personal pronoun here, the word "evident" does have a negative connotation to it, particularly to those who may not have the background art knowledge to understand. Exactly what does he mean, by "the shifts in focus and emphasis and her use of a variety of materials for expressive purposes?" Focus and emphasis are rather vague terms and their placement in the sentence implies that they are somehow more important for us to remark upon than the different materials Carr used? This sentence, the thesis of the show with the use of "evident" stands as a red flag for the novice viewer, and maybe even for me. What if I don't get it? It is supposed to be obvious. The use of language in museums has come under a great deal of scrutiny (Coxall, 1991), and this particular phrase in Thorn's text reflects the most common and firmly entrenched of the museum metaphors, which according to Stephen Weil, is the notion that objects can speak for themselves (Weil, 1995, pp. 11-13).
Thorn offers another text panel on the left hand side of the opening wall of the exhibition. It is a panel that resembles a glossary, presenting brief descriptions of artists' materials that Carr used; namely, watercolour, oil, pencil, charcoal, sketch, final work. The first couple of examples listed on the panel simply describe the medium in question, without reference to Carr's production, but further down the panel, references are made to how the medium was used specifically by Carr. While no specific works are mentioned in the text, by referring to Carr's own process, Thom begins to bridge the gap between general artistic information and interpretive help for the exhibition on view.

There is a small catalogue to accompany the exhibition which is on sale in the exhibition space. It reveals Thorn's great sensitivity to the subject at hand, reflecting as well considerable knowledge of Carr. I particularly like the way Thom opens his essay:

Emily Carr was not a naturally gifted painter. Her mature works are often the result of considerable struggle. Of a canvas entitled, *The Mountain*...Carr wrote:

I thought my mountain was coming this morning. It began to move, it was near to speaking, when suddenly it shifted, sulked, returned to obscurity, to smallness. It eluded me again and sits there, mean puny, dull.

I include this statement by Carr not to lessen her achievement, but to point out that there is much more to simply putting paint onto the canvas in making one of her canvases. (Thorn, 1998, p. 4)

This short selection cleverly sets up a provocative introduction using Carr's own description of her process to really highlight the process of creating one of the paintings on view. Thom uses Carr's words, in conjunction with his own to both suggest the ways in which she worked, sketching and dabbling on site before finishing a work in the studio, where she might edit out certain details or condense them in her final product. He provides a rich text which combines a sense of the artist's own thinking about her process of creating, with his own assessment of that process. Thom provides a real sense of the artist at work.

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33Available for a suggested donation of two dollars, the 13 page catalogue has an opening page dedicated to the sponsor's message, a page of introductory text by Ian Thom (page 3) and then a 5 page essay with 8 illustrations (4 pairs of sketches and final works).
While some textual information is provided to introduce the thesis of the show, it is
the visual arrangement of works which speaks most strongly. The pairs of paintings and
preparatory sketches on display make evident Thom's point about Carr's working
methods. There are 49 works on view, and they are hung in pairs throughout the two rooms
of the exhibition, which are painted a rich blue colour (Figures 19 & 20). The rooms are
attractively hung, and small portable walls break up the otherwise long space into a more
comfortable human scale. Blue painted benches allow visitors to sit and examine the works
in more detail. In a final gallery room, painted a lighter blue, works are hung singly, seeming
to be an unrelated aside, a display of Carr's works that don't fit the message of the show.

The display of works is supported by educational areas. At either end of the
exhibition is a room designated for programming activities. On the west end there is a small
video room, running a newly-produced video on Carr, The life and times of Emily Carr
(Beard, 1997). Near the top of the side wall of this room the words "comments welcome," are painted, and below, square post-it-like notes paper the wall. Pencils and additional
notes are available for visitors to voice their opinions about the exhibition. The comment
wall is a feature that has become commonplace for all VAG exhibitions. It allows visitors
to respond to the art that they have seen. The temporary, non-permanent nature of the
taped on notes and the randomness by which they are placed on the wall helps to encouage
visitors, who might otherwise feel intimidated by the formality of the gallery
atmosphere, to respond and participate in the dialogue on the wall.

The comment wall has taken different forms at the Vancouver Art Gallery. In an exhibition of Spero and Golub's work, for example, comments were encouraged on two large spools of paper that curled down the wall and onto the floor, creating a very visual "running" commentary. Most comment walls at the VAG lately take the form of the one used in Art and Process, using post-it notes stuck onto a designated area.

My observations at the Gallery indicate that the post-it notes encourage an amount of non-engaged
comments (i.e. I love Vancouver), and other short commentary, such as "Emily Carr is great!" or "This sucks." I think that it is important to offer a place for any sort of response, whatever it might be (only comments with offensive language are removed). The comment wall in the Art and Process show was not particularly well-placed, as people who wished to read the wall or add comments to it had to stand in front of visitors who were watching the video. The room, with low lighting for the video and dark blue walls, was also too dark for such an activity. I asked that CM place
At the other end of the exhibition a reading room included two wicker armchairs and a low table placed on a red oriental style rug, creating a pleasant space to sit and read through collected reference materials about Carr on a bookshelf on the back wall. In this library, along with these references and all of the books that Carr herself wrote, examples of Emily Carr’s pottery stood on a plexiglass-covered wall shelf, with one of her hooked rugs and two framed photographs of Carr on the wall, and, without any explanation, in a corner of the room a chair is hung by a rope from the ceiling (Figure 21). But more about that later.

**The text walls**

The two ancillary rooms provide educational support for this installation of Carr’s work. However, within the largest of the three gallery spaces, taking up two huge light blue-grey walls of hanging space is the most prominent part of the educational project: two walls that display interpretive text material (Figures 22 & 23). These are the interpretive projects which resulted from my collaboration with the programmer, in an attempt to address new museological issues and the problem of representing Emily Carr in the Vancouver Art Gallery. The process by which they were developed is discussed in the second part of this chapter. Their size, and location within the show, smack in the middle of the exhibition space facing the introductory panels, mark these interpretive walls as a major inroad of programming material into a curatorial space. In many museums it is common to find "educational" sites sidelined from the main galleries (as at the National Gallery), with reproductions used instead of artifacts due to the perceived increased potential of handling by visitors. In the Emily Carr site, the text walls occupy a large space within the galleries themselves, and, an original work of art is situated within one of these walls--the educational space--which has the effect of further blurring the boundaries of

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a comment binder in the reading room, as it would allow viewers a place to sit, reflect and respond to the exhibition in a more relaxed environment. That's not to say that the binder lacks its share of non-related, "Vancouver is a nice city," comments, but people did write in more detail in this venue.
display and education within the museum.

The wall on the left hand side called, "Cultural Contexts and Critiques," uses a non-linear text layout and 10 large headings with 16 smaller texts to suggest in a very visual manner that there are a variety of facets of interpretation surrounding Carr and her work (Figure 22). The wall on the right hand side called, "Journeys and Journals", uses a large map as a backdrop with place names, dates and autobiographical excerpts from Carr's writings, to suggest some of the parameters of Carr's worlds (Figure 23). Neither of these walls provides a chronological, seamless entry point into learning about Emily Carr. A more active approach to reading and comprehending the walls is demanded, and a more fragmented interpretation of Carr and her works is implied.

**Cultural Contexts and Critiques**

The physical layout of the context wall suggests that it does not function as a large narrative or story about Emily Carr. The selected texts are not displayed in a chunked paragraph format as much current museum education literature suggests (Ham, 1994), but rather they form a web around a self-portrait, with large subheadings punctuating the space between larger blocks of text, the whole effect one of fragmentation and multiplicity. The texts reflect some of the numerous facets of Carr's life that have attracted critical attention. Radiating around a self-portrait, the comments follow large headings: heroic, political, environmentalist, formalist, beautiful, feminist, spiritual, salvage paradigm, authenticity, appropriation. The visual format, with the casualness of the web orientation acts to disrupt the typical didactic "reading" format of museum text, creating what Bal (1996) calls a "detypifying measure," that by its unexpectedness calls attention to itself. These text walls also attempt to value the complexity of discourses that have recently begun to surround

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36 Recent research on text use in art galleries suggests that while tradition curatorial practice limits the use of labels in art galleries, visitors in fact, greatly appreciate having didactic information available in gallery spaces. For a more detailed review of the literature on text use in museums, see Knutson, (1995) *Text use in museums*, unpublished manuscript, Vancouver Art Gallery.
Emily Carr. And as Bal suggests, "one way to respect and value complexity is by showing it: by refraining from over-ruling the object of exposition by a simplifying narrative" (Bal, 1996, p. 172). The large headings are not connected directly to the texts themselves, either. And in many cases there are two or more quotes that relate to each heading, or in some cases reflect two of the adjacent headings. So, one could approach the wall, theoretically, in a random-access way, searching out those headings that were personally appealing and reading the nearby texts that expand on the notions.

While there is therefore, an important element of randomness and personal choice to the arrangement of the texts, there is also an underlying logic to the presentation. The physical layout has a strong central focal point with the self-portrait and radiating headings, but there is as well a reading order logic that develops from a text along the far left hand side that serves as a good introduction to the idea that Carr and her work have served a variety of causes (Shadbolt), to texts along the left hand side that speak to Carr's strong iconic role (texts around the "heroic" heading), to more varied interpretations across the right hand side of the wall ("feminist," "spiritual" headings) and along the bottom ("appropriation" and "authenticity" headings). This order is further emphasized by the concluding reference in the lower right hand corner, that directs the viewer to look for the textual materials in the Carr library in an adjacent room.

The semblance of a rational reading order is also evident in the selected text by Doris Shadbolt, taken from the introduction of the *Emily Carr Omnibus*, a collection of all of Carr's books. It is not visually coded as an introduction to the wall or the purpose of the wall, but rather appears as a relatively long text along the left hand side of the wall. If the

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37 My original intent was to have a staff-written introductory panel for the wall along the left hand side. Or even to have the Shadbolt quote coded as an introduction to the debates around Carr. Layout issues also altered the placement of the "formalist" quotes which were originally towards the left hand side. The longer quotes that deal with the issue of Carr using Native subject matter ended up along the bottom, which could be seen as being in a low profile position, below eye level, or alternately in a position where they might be read more as a result of their closeness to the viewer.
placement subtly suggests that it might be an introduction, its content certainly sets the
context for the text wall, laying out in broad terms the relevance and varied ways in which
Carr is currently valued by different groups. Shadbolt notes that,

[Emily Carr] has been drawn into the intense critical discussions which are part
of our present-day socio-cultural climate. First of all, because of the important
role played by native North-West Coast culture in her art and life, she has
become pertinent to the broad dialogue centring in native issues. Her story
as that of a woman who surmounted the gender prejudices endemic to her
time to achieve her goals with such distinction gives her relevance in the
context of ongoing feminist discourse. And her deep commitment to nature in
all its manifestations speaks to the environmental dilemmas that face us now.
As a consequence, the presence of Emily Carr resonates in our midst today
with a reverberation different from that of ten or fifteen years ago and perhaps
even more strongly that ever before. (Shadbolt, 1993, p. 6)

In this wall the objective was to expose some of the range of opinions circulating around
Carr, both in the present day, but also from her own time. Primarily selected from academic
texts, these snippets were lifted whole from their respective sources, chosen for their
affective quality, their approachable, evocative language, and their succinctness. The texts
had to offer a reward to the reader.

For instance, a selection from Susan Crean's article offered a great deal of
interpretive material about Carr's paintings, and her context. The quote offers commentary
about the sexuality in Carr's work:

She did her best work after 1927 and her 56th birthday, when she finally
figured out how to paint the forest primeval from the inside instead of the
outside (as European tradition had it), how to portray its silence and its life
force. What emerged was huge, raw and sexually charged, an astonishing
vision for a woman her age and of her age. And right there I think we have
part of the explanation for the experts' discomfort with Carr and her genius.
How could that batty old baglady who lived on the fringes of late Victorian
Victoria, who was well past menopause and probably a virgin, be credited
with such a vision? (Crean, 1991, p. 18)

However, towards the end, Crean also addresses the reception of Carr's work, the critical
debates to which Shadbolt's earlier quote alludes, and Crean offers a possible reason for
this--her gender, her age and her place on the outskirts of the art world. Yet to see the
phrase, "batty old baglady," is provocative, unexpected even, in a venue where the
expectation is to see dry, academic, and didactic texts. Here, it's about personality, and personal opinion.

The texts were chosen too in the hopes that they would inspire dialogue, debate, and laughs. The texts are fragments selected directly from published works, and yet they are roughly anecdotal and do provide some narrative closure. However, they are not didactic and their random placement is echoed within their own structures where they contain traces of being clipped, and taken out of a broader context within an article or book on Carr. They do not read as a chronological historiography of work about Carr, although there is a great deal of interplay among the quotes, where authors refer to other circulating opinions on the artist as they make their own cases. For instance, the Crean quote refers to "the experts' discomfort," the selection from Robert Fulford notes that "her legacy has become a battlefield in the culture wars," and Edyth Hembroff-Schleicher's selection addresses the notion that "many labels have been pinned on Emily."

The framing effect

This technique, the presentation of short excerpts from academic writings with an insistence on dialogue rather than explanation was part of an attempt to grapple with historian Susan Crane's questions about museum practice and history making:

Historians have yet to make their most abstract and theoretical work accessible to a general public. The metahistorical approaches of Hayden White or Jorn Rusen are not inappropriate ways to present history to the public, particularly with a recognition of what Rusen calls the "intersubjectivity" of historical memory and public participation in the construction of collective memory; but how can we present such notions to a public which expects to learn "facts" about history? (Crane, 1997, p. 63)

The text wall offered a way to get into these types of debates in a non-didactic, but rather suggestive or provocative way. Instead of building upon current practices suggested in museological literature concerning text in museums (Cote and Viel, 1996; Roberts, 1997; Hooper-Greenhill, 1993), where the emphasis is on creating more accessibly didactic material, to make the point more clear, more direct, more concise. Here the goal was to find
ways to open the dialogue, to find a way to encourage a personal construction of meaning, and to provide a variety of alternative opinions about Carr.

The literature on text use in museums was informative for practical questions such as how long visitors will read text panels, and how to visually attract viewers' attention. And the project tangentially drew from the idea of the notion of chunking text (Ham, 1994; Bicknell and Mann, 1994; Kool, 1985; Screven, 1995, 1994), where information was organized by size, from large headings and a broad level of information, working down to a smaller size font and more detailed information, so that the most casual visitor could receive a quick overview of the thesis being presented.

These ideas were helpful, but for the resulting Emily Carr text project, the focus was not on developing a chunked exhibition with a strongly didactic message. Instead, we sought a more open-ended result that used different, and conflicting interpretations as impetus for dialogue and debate, following a constructivist approach (Hein, 1998). The intent was to use these snippets as primary sources, creating a more productive and process-oriented display. These notions stem from curriculum theorists in art history and history (see Addiss and Erickson, 1993; Holt, 1990). A variety of opinions on Carr circle her self-portrait, reflecting in a visual way Jonathan Culler's (1994) notion of "framing." A context for Carr is suggested by these quotes from her critics. With their fragmented commentary, the quotes suggest both aspects of their varied authorship, as well as the museum's own selection process (Figure 24).

In a subtle way the wall indicates the performative nature of writing history, suggesting that these surrounding opinions about Carr are "something we do, not something we find, that it is a process of making," that in turn disrupts the "positivistic connotations of 'givenness'" (Bryson, 1994, p. 68), a suggestion of Culler's notion of framing that stands in opposition to the common, authoritative, and constative, museum-speak. The notion of framing, of looking to context, is a way of acknowledging an uncertainty
in the authority of "text" itself and shoring up this level of interpretation with supporting material. The wall provides evidence of historical times and opinions; it shows the structures in which this image of Carr was constructed and contested; it becomes a context for the creation of Carr in our consciousness. Culler's notion of frame and context provides a more solid platform for an interpretation of the text, a supportive backdrop, a broader foundation. While this form of evidence offers a more satisfactory resting point, Bryson calls attention to the fact that once we move to this outside level, once the move is made beyond the text itself, that "it is by no means clear why it may not be taken again; that is, "context" entails from its first moment a regression "without brakes" (Bryson, 1994, p. 68).

This particular display works through the notion of a fixed and singular interpretation of Carr, of that iconic notion of Carr, as a heroic woman artist. Instead, it attempts to break down the elusive notion of a personality, and provides interpretations amenable to a variety of points of view. To present the notion of regression "without brakes," diverse sources and topics were used; from the overly heroicizing: "Carr speaks for British Columbia like Winston Churchill spoke for England," (Canadian Advocate, n.d.) to the overly subjective: referring to Carr's late works as "art that has cast off sexual fear and social isolation in its oneness with the cosmos" (Laurence, 1991, p. 26). The wall presents the common translations of Carr's work, within the Canadian canon (see Reid, 1979), to more recent speculations, hypotheses, and personal, (yet always couched in academic theory) reflections about the importance of this artist to our local, regional and national history.

The fact that these are opinions that are presented with authors and dates attached is a crucial element of the design. The range and provocative nature of these opinions about Carr serves both to open up the thesis of the show while also serving as a means to skirt the contentious issue of representation in museums (see Henderson and Kaeppler, 1997;

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38 I use "text" in this occasion as meaning some definitive version of Carr, some definitive biographical image, some standard iconic beliefs about Carr.
Ferguson 1995; Huyssen, 1995). Part of the reason that the Carr gallery remained untouched for many years was a paralysis on the part of curators and staff. Carr, as a much loved local figure, presented a great challenge to those who might wish to produce a revisionist exhibition about her (see Mays, 1991, Fulford, 1993). Recent revisionist exhibitions, like the Smithsonian's interpretation of the Enola Gay, have proven that various publics (in this case, a group of American veterans) are indeed ready and willing to challenge interpretations that do not reflect their beliefs about the subject matter (Henderson and Kaeppler, 1997). So, the style of this Contexts and Critiques text project is particularly useful. Authority is transferred from the universal institutional voice to the multiple, named voices represented on the wall. And while these voices are authoritative in their roles as scholars of Emily Carr, the variety and provocative nature of the viewpoints seems to invite the public visitor to engage with, and debate these opinions.

For instance, the quote that has provoked the most comment is Globe and Mail critic, John Bentley Mays' assertion that,

Carr was a genuinely gifted painter, but hardly the innovative, consistently original artist her fans would like her to have been. I am completely at a loss to understand what serious people find attractive about Carr's opinions, those hackneyed warblings about nature, the pious twaddle on the subject of God or 'nature.' (Mays, 1991, p. C 11)

Brief, strongly worded, and located in a central position at eye level, this quote had the tendency to provoke the Carr lovers in the audience. One elderly woman pointed to the quote and with a frown, told me, "You know...they never built a statue to a critic!" (Personal Interview, May 1998). With its variety of perspectives the text wall creates a dynamic display which provides what Bal terms "a voice with which to argue" (Bal, 1996, p. 13). These are obviously subjective opinions about Carr and not a top-down authoritative institutional voice. Thus the Gallery can present a revisionist point of view, without having to take direct responsibility for those views about Carr.
Journeys and Journals

While the Context and Critique wall works to suggest the historical interest and writing surrounding Emily Carr, the Journeys and Journals wall provides information about Carr, her life and works. This text display uses quotes from Carr's autobiographical writings. The quotes are overlaid onto an outline map of North America and Europe. Each quote indicates or suggests something about the contexts in which Carr herself lived. The quotes were chosen for their evocation of a place, a time, and an activity, as well as for their reflection of some aspect of Carr's character. This wall was imagined as a way to counteract the common, and self-proclaimed notion that Carr was a little old lady on the edge of nowhere. They illustrate, in small vignettes, her friends, her travels, her studies, and her stage coach riding in order to illustrate something of her character. While giving a sense of the historical period in which Carr lived, they also highlight aspects of her art training, her connection to the broader art world, and figures of importance in Canada, as well as her feelings about nature, native culture, religion, and sense of nationalism. From the quotes emerge a strong sense of Carr the writer, and she was an excellent writer, (winning the Governor's General Award in 1941 for her fiction writing). This display offers a unique chance to explore how Carr constructs herself through her engaging and descriptive journals.

Like the other text display, the visual appearance of the Journeys and Journals wall, as small bits of text with dates and place names radiating across the map, indicate that this is not a typical exploration of the themes of Carr's life. The arrangement forces a meandering through. Dates are jumbled across the wall, and the quotes are not sequentially numbered. If a visitor wishes to establish a chronology of Carr's life, a meandering path must be established by the reader (Figure 25). As it stands, the geography of the map, the dates, 39

39Ideally I wanted this wall to have a chronology along one side, in order to offer some sense of organizational path for those who wished to create one. Also I hoped that the wall would have photographs of Carr at different sites, in order to further contextualize the history and also to enliven the text-heavy wall. These issues are discussed further in the following section.
and place names work, as do the large headings on the context wall, to guide the visitor's eye. Only by reading through the vignettes can one discover more about the themes of the wall. There are numerous levels on which the quotes might be interpreted, accessing notions of place, activity and personality.

For example, this passage, with its description of her method of travel, suggests the difference between Carr's era and our own:

**1904 Cariboo, British Columbia**

I loved Cariboo from the moment the C.P.R. train spat me out of its bouncy coach. It was all fresh and new and yet it contained the breath and westernness that was born in me, the thing I could not find in the Old World.

I will admit that I did suffer two days of violence at the mercy of the six-horse stage-coach which bumped me over the Cariboo Road and finally deposited me at the door of One Hundred and Fifty Mile House where my friend lived, her husband being manager of the Cariboo Trading Company there. (Carr, Growing Pains p. 418)

Or, in another example, Carr gives a sense of what she finds while looking out the train window:

**1933 Pemberton, BC**

Settling down in the train with the creatures comfortably arranged for and my eye all agog to absorb the scenery. Mountains towering--snow mountains, blue mountains, green mountains, brown mountains, tree-covered, barren rock, cruel mountains with awful waterfalls and chasms and avalanches, tender mountains all shining, spiritual peaks way up among the clouds.

Seton and Anderson lakes, shut in by crushing mountains...The train slowly crawling along the lake side on the trestled ledge. (Carr, Hundreds and Thousands p. 679)

Some of the quotes provide insight into her self-concept. While showing Carr's connection with important figures in the art world in Toronto, this quote also indicates Carr's self-doubt:

**Monday November 14th 1927, Toronto**

...Went with Miss Buell and Mrs. Housser to tea at Mr. A.Y. Jackson's Studio Building. I loved his things, particularly some snow things of Quebec and three canvases up Skeena River. I felt a little as if beaten at my own game.
His Indian pictures have something mine lack—rhythm, poetry. Mine are so
downright. (Carr, Hundreds and Thousands p. 656)

In another selection we see Carr creating her own mythic image. This vignette offers
insight into Carr's ability to weave a good anecdote, indicating her rising importance in the art
world, while adding a romantic, tragic element about her commitment to her nature studies.

1937 Victoria

The weeks in hospital sauntered slowly by till Eric Newton, noted Art Critic for
the Manchester Guardian, paid a visit to the West. Eric Brown, Director of the
Ottawa National Gallery, had asked Mr. Newton while out west to select
some fifteen pictures of mine and ship east. Finding I was in hospital Mr.
Newton came there to see me.

He said, "As I drove over the Island Highway I saw Emily Carr
pictures in the woods no matter in which direction I looked. You have caught
the Western spirit." Folding his hand over my two sick ones he added, "Get
better, these hands are too clever to lie idle."

I turned my face away. What good getting better if I was never to
roam the woods again, paint-sack on shoulder, dog at heel? (Carr, Growing
Pains p. 459)

Finally, other selections indicate something of Carr's commitment to her country. She reflects
on her trip to London when she was young:

1900 London

Mrs. Radcliffe...a widow...was Scotch by birth and raising, had spent her
married life in Canada, but by inclination she was pure London through and
through. Almost her first question to me was, "And how do you like London?"

"I hate it."

Her brown starey eyes popped...She said "Dear me, dear me!" four
times. "London is the most wonderful city in the world, child!"

"It is stuffy, hard and cruel—Canada...is..."

"Canada!" biting the word off sharp. "Canada is crude!"..."London will
soon polish Canada off you, smooth you, as your English parents were
smooth. You are entitled to that....Make the most of your opportunities in
London, child."

"I am Canadian, I am not English. I do not want Canada polished out
of me." (Carr, Growing Pains p. 359)

Another example from later in her life, illustrates the strong sense of nationalism that
influenced Carr’s work:

**Sunday November 27th 1927, Ottawa**

I feel as if I have met the “worthwhiles” on this trip, people who really count and are shaping a nation. They are all so big and broad, so kind to the younger struggling ones, so proud of the bigness of their country, so anxious to probe its soul and understand it. (Carr, Hundreds and Thousands p. 660)

These last three examples illustrate, in a direct way, how Carr situated herself in relation to her country and whom she saw as its shaping forces. The former text, like the romantic tale of Eric Brown's visit to her, provides insight into Carr's ability to tell a good tale, and to construct herself both as artist and tragic figure, and as fiercely proud of her Canadian roots. The Ottawa example is less dramatic in tone, but it serves to situate Carr within the mainstream artistic circle of central Canada. The first two examples provide a narrative setting expanding beyond the mere facts of her nationalism. In addition to the central theme of the texts, a viewer might find references to Carr’s abilities as a storyteller, to her strong ego and a sense of herself as an artist, or to her life-long sense of alienation from others.

And I do not think that these sorts of allusions are missed by the interested viewer. For example, referring to a text on the revised map wall (Spring 1999), one viewer found that this was a poignant example of Carr's interest and location in Canada, finding in this quote an inverse comparison. She relates the American city to the Canadian one, where, this viewer suggested, we as Canadians perhaps more typically find ourselves occupying the secondary, unfixed, or inferior position in the comparison, and not as the standard to which to draw the comparison.

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40 In Spring 1999, the two text walls were relocated, to a new installation of Emily Carr on the refurbished fourth floor of the Gallery. See part two of this chapter for information on this process.

41 One of the things that I found most interesting about my interviews with visitors was the sheer diversity of opinion and the sensitivity with which they responded to Carr and these text panels. To date, while researchers have begun to advocate a different approach to visitor studies, much of the research on visitor response to exhibitions has focused primarily on cognitive outcomes, and not on the affective learning that takes place. For one of the few good examples I’ve seen of a more broadly based and qualitative approach to visitor studies, see Douglas Worts, (1995).
Vignettes, narrative closure and practical issues

In these examples from the map wall, it becomes clear that while the text creates a fragmented and open-ended structure of interpretation for the exhibition, each snippet can be read and absorbed on its own merit. Anecdotes and vignettes form the foundation of the map wall in particular, but also that of the context wall, with a real emphasis on providing small self-contained, free-standing text samples that would provide the viewer with a sense of closure. This sense of closure also turns on the use of humour. This move away from a dry didactic treatment of exhibition materials, towards a more dynamic and provocative format in this case resulted in the use of delight and surprise to encourage reader perseverance, dialogue and debate.

Lisa Roberts (1997) discusses the continued resistance to the use of humour in museum work, and the eternal debate over the line between education and entertainment. One of the classic uses for the museum is as a place that confers social status, and the introduction of humorous or lighthearted elements in installations is still hotly contested. Roberts describes her own experiences in exhibition development and the problems seen around the notion of credibility that emerges around the introduction of wry commentary or humour in these educative spaces. And as Gurian likewise explains, in addition to privileging certain kinds of learning at the expense of others,

Nor do we want to appear friendly, because we believe that informality would reduce the importance of our work. If the audience is having fun, we may be accused of providing a circus and not behaving in a sufficiently reverential manner (Gurian, 1991, p. 183).

If these restrictions were lifted, she explains, we might begin to see different types of installations.

This "different" type of installation also took as its foundation a markedly different view of its ideal visitor. The text display is aimed at an audience that is perhaps already familiar with Emily Carr and therefore highly motivated to search out information concerning
Carr. Premised on the belief that there are different levels of knowledge and interest among the audience, the text walls offer various points of entry. The purpose of the walls acts itself out in a visual as well as in a literal way, with the radiating headings, or facets emerging from around the self-portrait, or the map with various highlighted destinations. The text in the map wall is more approachable, while the context wall provides material for the more motivated, or more theoretically interested viewer. Indeed, while planning and selecting the texts for this wall, CM made reference to the fact that it was a group of peers to whom this wall was addressed. Care was taken to ensure that selections from local authors, such as John O'Brian and Doris Shadbolt, were included. Current terms were also selected, such as "salvage paradigm" and "appropriation". The choice of authors as well as headings reflect this element of the audience.

While in the development of the text walls, an appeal was made to an initiated group of people, this is not to say that novice viewers are excluded. The texts were also chosen with an eye towards the average visitor, who might pick up on the concepts even if they do not know who the authors are. And throughout the exhibition a variety of types of environments and forms of information can be found. The text walls, for example, are self-referential to a large degree, and do not directly appeal to the artworks on display. This is not a common practice in exhibition design, which insists on the power of learning directly from the objects on display. However, the walls function alongside a whole range of entry points and experiences. The exhibition itself is a traditional examination of technique, and it uses comparison as a means of delivering its message. This formalist exhibition is supported by the text walls, but also by the video room, and a library. The library is coded as a comfortable approachable living room space, in contrast to the more contemplative exhibition floor. Care was taken to create an exhibition environment that was inviting and

42This approach reflects an interest in Harvard's Project Zero "entry points" theory of museum learning, premised on Howard Gardner’s (1993) multiple intelligences theory.
comfortable, with the recognition that the austere white-walled gallery alienates novice visitors (Hood, 1993). It features easily accessible information about other aspects of Carr's life such as her books, pottery and rug hooking, but it also includes a humorous reference accessible only to those with considerable knowledge about Emily Carr. The chair hanging from the ceiling mentioned earlier, is in fact a reference to Emily's notoriously cantankerous personality. She had the chairs suspended by ropes from the ceiling in order to make room for her studio work. And, if she didn't appreciate a visitor to her studio, she would refuse to bring the chairs down, making a subtle yet strong point about her opinion on the visit. There is no label accompanying the hanging chair, indeed it is hidden in the least visible comer of the library (Figure 21). However, for the people who might know of Carr and have made the pilgrimage to experience her work in person, the chair offers a positive reinforcement for that prior knowledge, all the more powerful because of the Gallery's silence concerning its presence.

It is an interesting and provocative statement, one that relates back into the politics of art exhibitions and the point of this exploration in text use in museums. It offers the same type of reinforcement by exclusion that art museums have traditionally offered within their exhibitions. The closed loop model (Montpetit, 1995) whereby the museum speaks only to those who have prior art knowledge, provides an insider privilege that reinforces those in the know, while it renders inferior those without such prior knowledge (Bourdieu and Darbel, 1991). Here, the chair is an ironic reminder of this model, within an exhibition which takes as its premise addressing the needs of viewers on a variety of levels, in a number of different ways, to focus on sharing ideas and constructing opinions in an open-ended way. The work of the text walls, interpretive areas and the exhibition itself, combines with the chair to create a larger picture of Carr and avenues for exploration in an exhibition design that works to address postmodern challenges. In one further twist, however, a self-portrait of Emily Carr
hangs in the centre of the Contexts and Critiques wall. In an unintended irony, and one that works well for the postmodernist, Carr paints herself facing away from the viewer. She faces her painting on the easel, and we do not see her face. In a way, in spite of these interventions, and attempts to explicate her, she continues to resist us.

Part Two: Creating the text panels

As the self-portrait alludes to a certain resistance to exposure, so too does the text project hide from its final product the traces of its own process. In this chapter I have analyzed the exhibition that resulted from my involvement with the staff at the Vancouver Art Gallery, and in that analysis I have somewhat problematically tended to erase the process of its development (Tierney and Lincoln, 1997). Yet throughout the analysis I have scattered small indications of my position as both analyst and creator of parts of the resulting project. By not totally erasing my subject position I leave the door open for the reader to notice, and reflect upon this dual position. In the following section, I will elaborate more fully the actual process of the exhibition's development and my place within that development. This position is one that is fruitful to explore, following Bal's assertion that "if discourse confines us all, then critic is there, too" (Bal, 1996, p. 129).

The text display project explored the notion of countering the homogenizing nature of modernity and the teleological types of displays discussed in Chapter 3, beginning to take into account the cultural politics of difference (West, 1990) and the belief that there are multiple points of view that an institution such as the VAG is ethically bound to reflect. What might happen if display practices began to find ways,

to trash the monolithic and homogeneous in the name of diversity, multiplicity and heterogeneity; to reject the abstract, general and universal in light of the concrete, specific and particular; and to historicize, contextualize and pluralize by highlighting the contingent, provisional, variable, tentative, shifting and changing [?] (West, 1990 cited in Hutcheon, 1994, p. 182)

While the initial stages of exhibition analysis in this chapter yield meanings and interpretations that illustrate how the project might address some of these concerns, a
discussion of the process of development helps to ground this project. I suggest that the specificity and temporality of this particular project is a crucial factor to consider, providing much needed context to begin to more fully understand the results. To this end, Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the logic of practice provides a useful means to characterize the field in which this project emerged.

In this I also follow Ghislaine Lawrence, who has advocated an ethnographic approach to museum studies where the course of study is "not of individual visitors but of the whole communication process in which all who are involved, both as producers and consumers are implicated" (Lawrence, 26). Bal notes that in addition to site-specific analyses of exhibitions and the ways in which institutions interact with the narrative structures presented within their walls, there is also a need for self-critical analysis, since "there is a serious problem, of logic and of politics, with the self-righteousness of many so-called critical studies of ethnocentric practices." (Bal, 1996, p. 129). This is a difficult endeavour and Pierre Bourdieu advocates that one must work,

> to objectify more completely one's objective and subjective relation to the object. One has to endeavour to reconstruct retrospectively the successive stages of the relationship, because this labour, which is first exerted on the person who performs it (and which some authors have tried to write into the texture of their 'work in progress', as Joyce put it), tends to remove its own traces. (Bourdieu, 1988, p. 1)

With this in mind, throughout the preceding exhibition analysis I have not attempted either to erase myself, or to spend much time addressing my contradictory positioning, as analyst and participant in the exhibition's development. Instead, this call for methodological accountability brings me to allow small traces of these contradictions to remain, while here I will expand the discussion to include a detailed analysis of the generative stages of the exhibition, as well as a critical view of my own interactions within the politics of practice at the Gallery. Here, I suggest that Bourdieu's notion of practice and broader notions of critical constructivism and action research methodology are useful means to bring together some of
the disparate elements involved in production of meanings at the Gallery (Kincheloe, 1997; May, 1993). In this I work to join the interests in critically examining the production of meaning in exhibitions (Bai, 1996; Ferguson, 1996; Luke, 1992) with an exploration of how meaning gets made in museums, looking at how the specifics of practice, field and habitus interact to produce an exhibition which fits within a standard of practice while at the same time, it attempts to move beyond its confines.

By turning now to a discussion of the process of development that resulted in the exhibition, I call attention to the importance of the diachronic, the process that resulted in the product. Since, as Polkinghorne has argued, "the meaning of research results is not independent of the process that produced them" (1997, p. 6). And following Polkinghorne, to simply conclude with an analysis of the texts, "disregards the processes of discovery and decision that are essential to the actual production of research" (1997, p. 4). While I might have produced what I consider to be an ideal set of text panels for the exhibition, informed by my understanding of curriculum and museological theory, this is not enough. Rather, my concern was to focus on the point of intersection between theory and practice, which is the greatest contribution of educational research. The actors, the temporality, the site, all the components that make up the contingent, emergent, logic of practice at the Vancouver Art Gallery on this occasion, are essential factors affecting the research project.

Bourdieu suggests that there are two important factors influencing practice. The element of temporality, namely, the situatedness, context and temporal restrictions which create the environment for practice to occur are a major factor. But, he also suggests that doxic knowledge is an important factor of practice. By this he means the framework of taken-for-granted assumptions and knowledge which inform our daily activities. Using Bourdieu's ideas as a means to structure this examination of the development of the text project, then, calls for a closer look at the chronology and stages of development that resulted in the realization of the text walls for the *Emily Carr: Art and Process* exhibition in Spring 1998.
The idea for the text project emerged in February 1996 after I had been hired to provide a research report for the Gallery on the use of text in art galleries. CM explained to me that this was the Gallery's first step in re-installation of the Emily Carr gallery. It turned out to be the first step in what ended up as a very lengthy process, and one that has since continued to evolve. During introductory meetings with CM and Andrew Hunter in 1996, about the Emily Carr Gallery, both suggested that while it desperately needed a re-installation, it had not yet been addressed by the Gallery (personal communication, 1996, Meszaros and Hunter). Among the prominent reasons cited for this lack of attention were low funding and staffing priorities (a common problem faced by permanent installations), as well as a hesitancy in placing a strong curatorial interpretation on Carr (a retrospective of Carr's work at the National Gallery had recently sparked public debate in the press and among academic writers).

In December of 1996, after discussions with CM, in which it was agreed that I would work with the curator, and programmer on a project to re-install the Emily Carr Gallery I received a confirmation letter from CM, that included the following:

I have reviewed your dissertation proposal with great interest, and I am in complete support of your involvement in the Emily Carr project. It is clear that you have an understanding of the complex and shifting terrain that you will be exploring and that you have chosen a methodology that mirrors the reflective nature of the project the VAG is undertaking....(Personal communication, Meszaros, 1996)

A copy of this letter was forwarded to other members of the management team at the VAG (including the director). It was also to serve as official notification of our agreement for my department. The dissertation project was officially underway.

The wording in this part of the letter is significant for the process and ultimate result of the project. The wording carefully acknowledges a certain responsibility to me and my work,

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43See Knutson 1995, Text Use in Art Galleries. For more detailed information on how this project emerged and its relation to my areas of interest see the introduction.
while ultimately protecting the Gallery. "I am in complete support of your involvement in the Emily Carr project...the project the VAG is undertaking." It was only my "involvement," however limited or direct it might turn out to be, that was being sanctioned here. At the same time, I too was concerned about protecting my own interests, writing into my proposal allowances for saving the dissertation should the re-installation fail to transpire.

As it turned out, my involvement in the project would mark a continuous tension between myself, CM, and the rest of management. Throughout the course of the project, in a roughly chronological order I would come to be mandated to work collaboratively with curator and the head of programming, to work as observer, to work as participant, to work under the programmer, to work alone, and to work collaboratively with the programmer. These various roles reflect perhaps my curious position at the Gallery, but they also reflect more broadly on the continuing distinction between educational and curatorial activities at the Gallery. While the texts occupy a significant position within the curatorial space of the Emily Carr gallery, they are seen by staff as an educational move, and therefore authorship is not granted and they are not signed, in effect speaking volumes about the distinction of roles and the boundaries of practice at this site.

In some ways I resisted the suggestions of action research methodologists to rely primarily on the aims of the participants for the generation of research questions and changing directions during the process (Brause and Mayer, 1994; May, 1993). Instead, I envisioned my role to be of central concern, building the project around my own research interests. At the same time, while I had particular avenues and questions in mind for the project, I was content to follow the project as it happened, believing that the resulting project, or non-project was an important aspect to record. After the initial discussion of my thoughts about the project I watched and waited, following the directions of CM, and providing what was requested as requested. In this the dissertation might be said to have developed as per CM's understanding of the museological issues as set out in my
proposal, and also as a case study following action research methods. We had, of course, already established that we had similar points of view concerning new museological issues. The resulting text project was not then a matter of my decision to explore some issues and create an "ideal" installation for Emily Carr. Rather it was important to follow the process through its evolution, to follow the vagaries of practice. And, it turned out that it was indeed an interesting process.

Stages in the process

Emerging as a possible technique from the text research project was the notion of "chunking text" (Ham, 1991; Bicknell and Mann, 1994; Kool, 1985; Screven, 1995). Advocated by the museum education literature and taken up by other researchers (i.e. Serrell, 1996; Roberts, 1997), chunking text (grouping like information together in nested paragraphs) expands the amount of information persons can remember in short-term memory, while allowing reader's some direction and choice in their work. The research literature suggests that exhibit designers first create an effective conceptual framework with no more than seven subheadings. The information to be presented is then "chunked," divided up into different levels of information, nesting the paragraphs by hierarchical organization using gradations in font and label size. This helps to facilitate decision making, and "skimming," among the visitors. This format allows the viewer to quickly look at an exhibit, grasp the theme, and decide which areas merit further attention.44 This organization is similar to the format of a newspaper or a magazine, where headlines, captions, and layout are used to help direct the viewer.

CM was interested in this idea of using levels of text, yet after preliminary discussions of possibilities for this approach, progress on the labelling project seemed to

44One of the best recent instances of this type of installation that I’ve seen was the Baule: African Art/ Western Eyes, exhibition curated by Susan Vogel at the Art Institute of Chicago in March 1998. She used large headings to thematically organize each room, wall panels to discuss the theme, and detailed object labels for each object on view. It was an excellent example of a coherent conceptual framework coupled with well-written and engaging texts.
stall. I was hesitant to proceed, since this type of exhibition calls for something a lot more involved than what we alone could accomplish. To re-install Emily Carr along these lines would entail a full-scale team effort with stronger curatorial assistance than it appeared that we had. While I was to pursue the development of a chunked exhibition, I had no indication of the paintings that would be involved, and more importantly I had, on the one hand, no idea of what organizing concepts would be palatable to the Gallery, and on the other, a clear sense that the staff at the Gallery were also unclear as to what these concepts should be. After a burst of initial excitement, progress on the project seemed to be stalling. At this point, I had met with Andrew Hunter and CM only to discuss the feasibility of the project, and no further meetings were scheduled. I also sensed that change was happening at the Gallery. I spoke with CM about the potential problems of continuing along this notion of chunking, and that there really needed to be a totally involved curatorial team effort in order to work. Chunking an exhibition required that the texts needed to form a really tight and coherent plan, and I emphasized that I was not clear on what was it that we were going to say about Emily Carr.

In January 1997, during a meeting with CM, I learned that there had indeed been some changes at the Gallery, which meant that the re-installation was postponed. Andrew Hunter was leaving the VAG to work in Kamloops. My queries about what was to be "said" about Emily were addressed in a memo which outlined a new approach for the re-installation, which would be overseen by Ian Thom. Whereas the project was originally envisioned by CM and myself as a collaborative effort between the curator, programmer and myself, the focus had changed and I was now asked to take on the writing of the text

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45 For a detailed discussion of a full-scale team effort, see Roberts, (1997).
My questions about the content of the labels and the framework had been addressed at a meeting of senior management staff. A memo was drawn up which outlined how I was to proceed. The new approach would begin with a 100 word introductory label. Then work would proceed on a series of labels that each addressed a different theme concerning Carr's life and work. These thematic texts would not deal directly with specific works, but they would rather function as stand-alone panels that would be able to remain in the gallery as works rotated in and out of the space, for loans, or conservation purposes. The themes chosen by the staff were: Carr's relationship to native culture; her relationship to the larger art world; her construction of herself (self-image); her relationship to the landscape; Carr's relationship to the spiritual; Carr as a woman artist; and Carr's working methods. The date of installation for this new format was unclear.

The date for the new installation was pushed back again as what was originally to be "the re-installation" became an exhibition Emily Carr and Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, curated by Andrew Hunter, and discussed in Chapter 5. Hunter left the Gallery shortly afterwards. I began work on the introductory label in the spring of 1997 and was beginning to do some preliminary work on the thematic labels when I was offered a full-time summer position at the Gallery. The position was not to develop the text panels for the Emily Carr gallery but rather to work on a special tour program for Emily Carr, with the understanding that along the way, I would also be able to finish up research for the text panels.

The program was developed for a fledgling English as a Second Language (ESL) project that catered to the large number of adult ESL colleges in Vancouver whose students were primarily from Korea and Japan. Many of these students had already completed university degrees at home, or were taking a year off, often times after their second year. In

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46 This move might be attributed to a number of causes, or more likely it might be seen to reflect a melange of the factors. The conferring of this new responsibility might suggest a growing sense of trust on the part of CM. Money, time, staffing issues all played a more important role in my being asked to take on this role, I think. Also a sense of responsibility on the part of CM, who I believe, felt obligated to try and find a way to follow through on her offer of the Emily Carr gallery as a research site for me.
my experience these students are highly motivated and many have good language skills before they arrive, coming to Vancouver to become proficient English speakers.

The program that I designed took into account the nature of this particular group, as well as my own emerging beliefs about curriculum development in art galleries. CM encouraged me to try something different with the program, as the previous attempt was closely modelled on their current school tour format and she felt that it had not been particularly successful. School programs at the VAG, as at many galleries, continue to focus on the Feldman model of art criticism (Feldman, 1979). This model follows a four step process to analyze art, starting with description, then moving through analysis, interpretation and judgement. This method is highly formalist and as implemented in the school programs, it is premised on the belief that students should be able to glean the information they need from a careful observation and analysis of visual forms. This works well in museums where educators promote their programs on the basis of the unique and special type of learning that can only come from working with authentic objects.

I took CM's encouragement to heart and began to design a program that did not follow the Feldman model, but that attempted to introduce viewers to some of the different sorts of skills and means by which they could begin to look at Emily Carr's work. In this I drew heavily from recent literature on art history and social studies teaching that advocates inquiry-based learning (Holt, 1990; Addiss and Erickson, 1993). In the resulting program, then, students were introduced to a variety of means by which they could examine Emily Carr and her work. Formalism was discussed as one method, but they were also encouraged to examine more contextual approaches, looking at Carr as a woman artist (a feminist angle), examining her use of native subject matter (a socio-political angle), and Carr's interest in spirituality (a biographical angle). The in-gallery activities focused on group discussion, and writing, while pre-visit activities provided historical context for the students (including a map exercise outlining Carr's travels and a writing exercise reflecting on
Vancouver's past). One underlying message of the project was that Carr can be interpreted in different ways, using different interpretive angles to provide insight into the myriad ways that art historians analyze art, to present a view that attempts to dissect the standard heroic view of Carr. The other strong message, found primarily in the map activity, challenged the notion that Carr was an isolated, unaware, figure, suggesting instead, that she was aware and involved in the art world, and a product of her time and social and historical context.

The resulting tour program, pre-visit activity package and teacher's guide were finished up in early September 1997. While over the course of the summer, as the ESL tour emerged and met with a very positive response from CM and the other members of the programming staff, it seemed that the labelling project was on hold yet again.

In the fall, plans were again announced that a re-installation would occur the following year, to open in March. Meanwhile, the ESL program was in the process of re-inventing itself. The program had difficulties with staffing throughout its development. Before I was hired to revamp the program, the ESL coordinator left during the implementation process of an earlier version of the program. I worked on a new tour program through the summer, but a coordinator was needed to implement the program in the fall. Meanwhile, a financial crisis in Asia began to impact the market for the tour, as many of the ESL colleges began to fold, and CM decided that it would be in her best interests to change the program from a guided to a self-guided model.

However, work from the ESL project was not wasted. The material had been presented, and received with enthusiasm by members of the programming staff, who appreciated the emphasis on the contextual issues surrounding Carr and her work. The ESL project was used to inform the development of new school programs, and there was a general feeling that the material I had produced would continue to be useful for new
programming directions with Carr.\textsuperscript{47} So it was not too surprising to hear CM propose that material from the ESL project be reconfigured slightly for use as two text walls in the gallery. As it ended up, the map wall came directly from the ESL pre-visit activity package, and the context wall came primarily from a collection of evocative quotes that I had gathered and formed into background material for a study guide for the ESL animateurs.

\textbf{The process: Mediated, framed and constituted}

For Bourdieu, the logic of practice is premised on two factors, one of which is \textit{temporality}, which I have discussed throughout the reconstruction of the process in chronological terms. The other important factor for Bourdieu's notion of practice is \textit{doxic}, or taken-for-granted knowledge, that implicit understanding for the rules of the game. Put more poetically, for Bourdieu, practice is informed by a kind of objective finality without being consciously organised in relation to an explicitly constituted end; intelligible and coherent without springing from an intention of coherence and a deliberate decision: adjusted to the future without being a product of a project or a plan (Bourdieu, 1990, pp. 50-1)

What Bourdieu calls the habitus, the ingrained systems of perception, thought, appreciation and action which are durable and transposable, frames our actions, and behaviour. This is so ingrained, that

the dispositions durably inculcated by the possibilities and impossibilities, freedoms and necessities, opportunities and prohibitions inscribed in the objective conditions...generate dispositions objectively compatible with these conditions and in a sense pre-adapted to their demands. The most improbable practices are therefore excluded, as unthinkable, by a kind of immediate submission to order that inclines agents to make a virtue of necessity, to refuse what is anyway denied and to will the inevitable. (Jenkins, 1992, p. 81)

As a consequence, history tends to repeat itself and the \textit{status quo} is perpetuated. This

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{47}The summer that I spent at the Vancouver Art Gallery was terrific. Energy levels were high and I was included in departmental meetings where we discussed new school programs and the ESL project. As well, CM taught a course for the Faculty of Education, and we were all granted time off, in order to attend. CM had selected a number of challenging theoretical articles (including Foucault and Bourdieu) that stimulated discussion among the staff.}
process of cultural and social reproduction is responsible for the apparent 'continuity and regularity' of social structure.

While this is a structuralist account of action, Bourdieu is interested in the unspoken actions that inform practice and the disjuncture between official accounts of behaviours and what people actually do (Jenkins, 1992). Habitus provides a framework, but successful practice emerges through improvisation or what he refers to as a feel for the game (Fowler, 1998). It is this improvisation within a set field of possibilities that I find to be useful for conceptualizing the text project at the VAG.48 Throughout the process, an implicit notion of boundaries for practice emerged.

These boundaries followed quite closely notions of formalist art curating techniques. While these sentiments were not often raised in conversation, there was no question that the resulting text project would follow certain accepted guidelines. CM was interested in innovating within and among these guidelines. She was keenly interested in new museological theory as well as literary and cultural/critical theory to which her publications attest (Meszaros, 1998, 1999). The development of the ESL project and the resulting text panels came to reflect the intersection of my interests in historiography and CM's desire for an innovative interpretive project. Her work at the VAG has been consistently challenging the taken-for-granted ways of programming in an art gallery. CM argued for, and implemented an open studio project. She created reading rooms and added comment areas. And she argued for the introduction of this text project, within the actual gallery space.

Yet, this process has been successful, I believe, because it has taken place within the boundaries that constitute the possibilities of practice here. She has been successful in her quest for innovative programming because she couches her attempts to broaden notions of art museum programming by referring to accepted experts in the wider museum

field. For example, using research on learning in a variety of types of museums (Davis, 1996; Gardner, 1993), the open studio project provides multi-modal and hands-on learning opportunities for visitors. Reading rooms provide supplemental information for visitors, comment areas encourage visitors to respond on a personal level to the exhibitions on display (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994). Throughout this process, she has augmented her beliefs about the future direction of her work at the Gallery, with disciplinary knowledge. The expert's opinion is one that holds much power within museums. And it is through a gradual introduction of experts' opinions and her own ideas, that the institution is beginning to adapt and change its programming.

The art historical expert is another expert to whom CM turns in her quest to provide innovative programming. As I mentioned in Part One of this chapter, in the creation of the context wall of the text project, for example, CM envisioned her audience not as the common visitor but rather as comprised of her peers and colleagues. She saw this particular wall as a chance to communicate to the initiated viewer, that the programming department, too, shared knowledge of contemporary theories of art history, choosing terminology and authors (i.e. salvage paradigm, Doris Shadbolt) that would indicate that this wall reflected the latest in theorizing about Emily Carr, as well as a solid knowledge of the standard references in this particular area of study.

Of course, I too, had my own conception of the field within which I wanted to situate my work on the text project. I was working to find a position somewhere between the needs and desires of the Gallery, CM, and my own research interests. After this process I became aware of just how thoroughly the doxa permeated my own work; after working with CM and watching carefully, as an outsider, I came to see just what sorts of things would be acceptable, and how carefully CM worked to navigate between the boundaries of accepted and innovative practice, to further her own beliefs about the possibilities of educational programming at the VAG.
And nor do these boundaries exist solely among the staff at the Gallery. CM had previously encountered the outside limit of these boundaries in some of her early projects at the Gallery. An interpretive dramatic performance in the Art Gallery for a show on Andy Warhol, had, taken the public completely off guard (Meszaros, 1998). Confronted with an odd character representing Warhol's type of friends acting out loudly in the middle of a gallery, visitors were startled, and they shrank to the sides of the gallery, or left the room, not being aware that this was a scheduled performance. These sorts of expectations about what constitutes a gallery experience form another layer of the field within which museum educators might work (Getty Centre, 1991; Knutson, 1998). And it is towards these expectations that the text project and exhibition ultimately bow.

The shifting and pressing deadlines, the change of curator, the return of the project to the programming department, and the implicit understanding of the possibilities, all of these factors impacted the resulting text project. Thus, while the project works to open a dialogue around Emily Carr and her work, at the same time, the display makes concessions to an authoritative approach. The project addresses the theoretical concerns raised by this thesis, but in a way that reflects the particularities of this specific institution, these participants and this time line. The project reflects the possibilities of practice, informed by theory. I do not hold it up as an example of the ideal solution, but rather I situate the text project as an informative and useful solution for this particular institution facing its own set of constraints.

The text project provides a valuable means to open up the interpretive field around Carr, suggesting some of ways that she might be interpreted and presenting her life and travels as a means to provide some historical context for the artist. While the format and range of opinions presented is challenging, at its core the message is neither new, or provocative. The message about Carr in the text wall project does not provoke in the way that the installation of Yuxweluptun and Carr did. Rather, the perhaps controversial opinions are somewhat neutralised in this presentation, hidden as they are among other texts with
opposing meanings. And the text project, in many ways, yields to an authoritative perspective, albeit numerous authorities, but an authoritative perspective nonetheless. An objective and neutral, unnamed curatorial authority is softened by the number of opinions that are offered, as well as the variety of entry points throughout the exhibition. Yet, the text project actually reinforced its authoritative position in that it turns to academic opinions on Carr. There is no named curator (though Thom might be implicated as he both signs his introduction, and the unsigned text project was installed directly opposite his introduction), but the quotes are both named and qualified, in terms of their academic position.

The continuing cycle of practice

The scale of this project and its new format mark the text wall project as a large accomplishment for the programming department. Working from a mandate with a new commitment to improve visitor services at the Gallery, CM and her co-workers moved from an exploration of museum education literature on text use in galleries, to this installation of large, educational site directly in the gallery space. The text project addressed many of the theoretical concerns raised by the new museology, gently pushing the boundaries of expected practices at the Gallery, while remaining within temporal, situational and field constraints. The project was successful, and like all of the other projects developed at the Gallery, it became a model for future practice, a new standard against which educational practice might be measured.

The text project has therefore been an impetus for similar installations in other exhibitions. For example, soon after the Art and Process show, the Down from the Shimmering Sky featured a prominently displayed version of the Context and Critique wall (Figure 13). A prime location was secured for this text wall, facing the introductory wall, and stunningly framed by the rotunda. There was a great vista across the rotunda from the entry point to the exhibition, across to the text wall, which included a poster-copy of the signature mask for the show, the original of which was hanging on the entry wall of the exhibition.
While this text project had a very prominent and important location in the show, its placement caused other logistical problems. The physical layout of the exhibition meant that the wall was at odds with the traffic flow. Benches stood between the wall, on one side, and a large series of television monitors on the other, and as a result visitors had to choose whether to pass in front of people watching the video, or reading the text.

In the summer of 1998, the next stage of analysis began, as I was hired to provide a report summarizing findings about what visitors expect and experience while visiting museums (Knutson, 1998). CM was earnestly continuing, now with the help of the Marketing department, to learn from the research findings at other institutions. This was to begin a process of evaluating and improving the Emily Carr text project. This research study formed the impetus for developing additional educational sites in a new installation of Emily Carr on the newly renovated fourth floor of the Gallery.

The logistical traffic flow problem in the Down from the Shimmering Sky exhibition and this new research study on visitor expectations, illustrate the continuing cycle of educational work at the Gallery. For each new project, many things are discovered, and in the next revolution of programming concerns from the previous project are addressed. CM makes good use of researchers and consultants who are hired throughout the process to broaden the knowledge base. While the Art and Process show travelled, the Emily Carr text project remained on the third floor for a year. In 1999, the fourth floor of the Gallery underwent a major renovation with the Emily Carr collection in mind. The Emily Carr collection moved to the fourth floor in May of 1999, and thus there was another opportunity to re-visit and improve the educational aspects, including the text project.

Both walls from the Art and Process show moved up to the fourth floor basically intact. Layout of the texts changed very subtly to deal with the dimensions of the walls on this floor. The fourth floor was now entirely dedicated to Emily Carr, including an open studio area dealing with Carr's working process. Three other rooms were filled with Carr paintings.
was asked for input as to what sorts of information I felt would be helpful for this reinstallation, and was subsequently hired to work on the production of these materials.

From my analysis of the text project and Art and Process I found that there were several areas that might be improved. First of all, I felt that a chronology was sorely needed. The Journeys and Journals wall provided historical and geographical context, but without an orienting legend for the map, I felt that visitors would feel frustrated in their attempts to pinpoint concrete details of Carr's life. The recently completed research study illustrated to staff that visitors need and want information. Some of the questions that visitors commonly ask in art galleries include a desire for general and specific suggestions for looking at a work of art, for possible meanings of art work and to know how experts judge quality in art, as well as the historical period of the artist and the place of the objects in art history (Edwards, Loomis, & Fusco, 1990).

With these concerns in mind, I suggested that the Gallery provide information on how and why Emily Carr became the notable figure that she is. The resulting text panels dealt with the historical context in which Carr lived and worked, noting some of her contemporaries locally and nationally, as well as some of the many ways in which Carr has influenced, and continues to influence the artistic productions of many different Canadians working in different media, from literature, drama, dance, and music as well as numerous visual artists who have responded to Carr's work. These extended text panels were hung together in the second room of the installation on the fourth floor. These panels also included photographs, a feature which adds to the richness and drawing power of the text panels. I'd wanted to include photographs in the Journeys and Journals wall, but due to time pressures and layout problems, they were not included.

Finally, this fourth floor installation included text panels which addressed a common visitor question, "why does glass cover most of Emily Carr's paintings?" Visitors' most common comment about the Emily Carr collection has always been about the irritating glare
that occurs on Carr's paintings, due to the glass that covers them (Emily Carr comment book, VAG library). In a text panel hanging next to one of these glare-ridden paintings, this problem is addressed, noting that the paintings are covered due to their fragile condition. In addressing a visitor question that doesn't directly deal with interpretation, this text panel is yet another strong sign of the Gallery's strong commitment to take their public's interests into consideration.

And this commitment to developing a more inclusive and responsive institution, is reflected in the specialized programming that accompanied the re-installation of Carr on the fourth floor. Addressing many modes of learning, five performances were scheduled throughout the first month of the renovated gallery. Called "In the presence of Emily Carr: Dance, Dialogue, Drama," the series included, a dramatic reading of one of Carr's own speeches, called "Fresh Seeing" (1930) by Joy Coghill, poetry readings by two poets inspired by Carr (Florence McNeil and Kate Braid both published book-length works on Carr), a theatrical storytelling of Carr's writings by Melanie Ray, a dance/theatre/improvisation performance celebrating Carr by the group "plan b", a dialogue between Susan Crean and Shirley Bear, about Carr, her art and her friendship with a First Nations woman, Sophie Frank, and finally a curator's tour of the exhibition by Ian Thom. The commitment to improving museum experiences is evident in this continuing circle of events, research, revision and new educational endeavours.
Chapter 7: Conclusions

Across institutions

This examination of Carr in different institutions reveals that the interpretation of Carr is greatly affected by the institutional and ideological purposes and contexts of each gallery. This context is shaped by the size and function of each institution, and the geographical location of the site. The institutions examined can be categorized as either national repository, local shrine, or progressive city/ regional cultural site. In Ottawa, at the National Gallery, Carr, and other historical Canadian artists are used as place holders, and displayed primarily as reference points or historical markers. She serves as a stand-in for the British Columbia region, and as a woman artist working at the time that members of the Group of Seven were working to define a distinctly Canadian artistic vision. Her work is also important in this national context for the references it makes to First Nations culture. In Victoria, at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, unlike the National Gallery, Carr is used in a biographical way. She is presented as a personage, a character of local significance. Here, her artworks are secondary to a presentation which reconstructs, in a variety of ways, Carr as a historical figure. The display is not chronological and developmental, but resonant. It is partial, it is evocative. Finally, in Vancouver, at the Vancouver Art Gallery, Carr is resistant to interpretation, as the Trust collection forms a large and important part of their permanent collection. Installations of Carr's work reveal a resistance to a strong interpretive presence. This hesitancy is revealed as well in both Hunter's exhibition as well as in Thom's, which do not go far to challenge popularly held beliefs about Carr.

Interpretive possibilities

Studying the installations at the National Gallery provides an example of a traditional model of curating art. Textual intervention is minimal, but rather it is the progression of artworks that shapes the narrative. As I have pointed out, however, the presentation at the
National Gallery is not a seamless production. A strong developmental history is presented but points of rupture exist, in tangential educational installations, in the self-guided tour package and in their discussion of the politics surrounding the contemporary galleries. These interventions do not, however, interfere in the visual narrative presented.

At the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria and at the Art Gallery of Ontario, a more contextual approach to curating is taken. In Victoria, a wide array of material is presented, ranging from documentary photos, artifacts, books, artworks, to journal entries. The combination of these elements allow for a broader image of Carr to be constructed by the visitor. And the rather unmediated method by which the elements are presented, and the juxtaposition involved, creates a display which has quite a different feel to it than a typical art exhibition. And the elements that comprise the show are suggestive and evocative, in their presentation of the role of Carr in Victoria and the personality of the artist. By contrast in Toronto, the Canadian Galleries similarly work to contextualize their display in order to provide a more comprehensive set of tools for the viewer to grasp the historical context in which the works were produced. Here, however, the Gallery's contextualization is much more seamless than in Victoria, as the didactic aims of the museum staff are visible. Themes are suggested, environments are shaped, and questions are asked. There are goals for this installation of works, and these are broadly based objectives to try and capture the zeitgeist.

At the Vancouver Art Gallery, the exhibition Emily Carr and Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun presents a subjectively-based narrative. The exhibition text offers insight into the assumptions and biases of the curator, as well as information that points towards the negotiation of meanings between artist and curator during the creation of the exhibition. In this show Emily Carr is used as a fixed reference point, standing in as a member of white colonial society. Small moves are made to acknowledge how Carr's work might, in some ways, complicate this generalizing narrative, but the interpretation of Carr is primarily fixed.
She is used as symbol of historical injustices against First Nations peoples.

Also at the VAG, the *Emily Carr: Art and Process* presents a more complicated interpretation of Carr in which the main curatorial thesis exploring Carr's working process is supplemented with a large text installation that presents a variety of interpretations of Carr through time, while also providing some insights in Carr, the historical figure. Through the text project at the Vancouver Art Gallery, and the examination of various installations of Carr, the political and social context of institutions may be seen as crucial factors in how museums address, consciously or not, issues of representation and authority raised by the new museology. The text project at the Vancouver Art Gallery reveals the importance of Bourdieu's notion of the logic of practice to describe the process by which change occurs in this institution. In particular it has been important to consider CM's notion of the local art community habitus as a particular audience for her work. It has also been important to consider the daily time-bound constraints of praxis, as confines within which the resulting installation emerged. Experimentation occurs within tightly defined, yet personal, notions of disciplinary boundaries.

In terms of the display of Carr at the Vancouver Art Gallery, the resulting text project shows an interest in providing multiple points of entry to the subject of Emily Carr, her life and work. The project also provides a fragmented narrative which highlights the constructedness of messages within museums and within traditional historical accounts, allowing for viewers to see into, and perhaps enter, this scholarly debate. While the display exposes its seams, at the same time, it preserves the authority of the academic realm in which the institution has traditionally been situated. The role of Carr for this West Coast locale, and in this particular institutional history, ensures that Carr's presentation at the VAG will remain an heroic one.
Recommendations for practice

Context:

This study reveals the importance of the considering the institutional context in analyzing, and in designing, art exhibitions. The context determines not only the position and role of an artist in a locale, but also the flexibility of the institution in considering a revisionist approach, or in implementing new types of educational installations. Concerning the VAG, the combination of a desire to innovate, to be seen as progressive, and a desire to remain within accepted bounds of practice, affected the resulting text wall project.

An appropriate subject:

This re-installation has been successful not only because of the specifics of its particular site but also because of its choice of subject. As a recognized historical mythic figure, the presence of the Carr collection at the VAG creates a market for a large scale educational installation. And the large size of the Carr collection allows for a greater variety of means to access Carr, the text walls being just one of them. Also, Carr, as a well-known, iconic figure is well-suited for a display that highlights the dialogue and debate that surround her. A solid base of academic literature was required for the project, and the presence of debates about Carr in the popular press (art magazines and newspapers) provided accessible and provocative statements. As a subject, Carr's heroic public stature is strong enough to withstand these critiques, and indeed her position helps to incite the desired dialogue and debate among visitors. Finally, Carr's own voluminous journal writings are exceedingly helpful for this type of project. With their simple yet colourful style, they allow an entry point into the era in which Carr lived as well as aspects of her own personality and experiences.

Educational imperatives:

Multiple entry points: This study highlights a wide variety of possible means to engage viewers in looking at art. Contextual environments might be installed, as at the
AGO. Textual interventions might ask viewers questions, or provoke a closer examination of issues of view. Photos and artifacts, and journal entries help to personalize the artist and enrich the experience of the work on display. Visual comparisons might be made between works themselves, as in both exhibitions at the VAG. The text project itself attempted to provide materials that would operate on a number of levels of difficulty or interest. The project might have been improved by including photographs from Carr's time, in order to further contextualize the journal entries and to offer relief from a text heavy wall.

**Non-didactic text use:** This re-installation project follows the implementation of text materials in a specifically non-didactic way. The text walls do not follow methods presently advocated for text use in galleries (Serrell, 1995). Yet the fragmented layout has been successful at the VAG, having been used in a number of installations since the initial Carr project in 1997. The walls suggest, in a visual way, that there is no single interpretation being presented, and also that visitors have choices to make in deciding which interpretations reflect their own, or challenge their own beliefs. This type of installation opens up possibilities for non-didactic work. The walls offer a way to broaden perspectives on the subject matter, without having to assume absolute curatorial authority for them. The physical layout of the texts allows for viewer choice, selection, and differing levels of involvement. In this, the text walls realize the aims of constructivism in curriculum development. Personalized meaning-making is encouraged, in its fragmented presentation and in its provocative texts.

**Acknowledging the visitor's perspective:** While the use of provocative excerpts in the text project encourages the participation of the viewer in the dialogues among them, this type of installation would be improved by including viewers' perspectives. If meaning-making is to be encouraged, and viewers' perspectives appreciated and validated by museum visiting, then evidence of this validation process should be more visible in the interpretive project. This might be addressed by including a quote from an anonymous (or not) visitor alongside those from the various experts on the subject. Or the comment wall
might be more closely related to the text walls. For example, the two might be installed in
closer proximity, or reference could be made to the text walls, by repeating one of the
provocative excerpts from the text wall in the comment area, and thus encouraging viewers
to directly respond.

Authority: Finally, this text project allows for the Gallery to open up its narrative on
Carr for inspection, without undermining its authoritative position. This installation allowed the
VAG, to abdicate its authoritative position in some ways, by referring to other voices. At
the same time, however, a certain level of authority was maintained by the use of a very
particular group of voices, those of academics. Since Emily Carr is an important historical
figure, and a key draw for the Gallery's visitors, she is less open to a revisionist
interpretation. This project allows for the Gallery to acknowledge the debate that circles Carr,
particularly within this West Coast context, without taking sides in the matter.

Above all, this thesis concerning the re-installation of Emily Carr highlights the
continuing cycle of theory, research, and practice that constitutes education in museums.
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References
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2 Kate Craig: Skin, to May 3
Several video and audio works from one of Canada's most prominent video artists.

3 Emily Carr Art & Process, to June 7, examines Carr's changing working methods and the relationship between her field studies and final compositions.

4 Pan Tianshou, March 7-June 14
Brush painting from one of China's master painters.

Open Studio, Listening to the Bamboo: Find meaning, inspiration and pleasure by experimenting with Chinese brush painting

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Appendix 1: Klee Wyck: The life and art of Emily Carr text panels

There has been a steady growth in interest about Emily Carr and her art ever since her death in 1945. Her reputation has evolved from a provincial one to a national one and her work is now receiving international attention. In the past number of years, for example, Carr's work was the subject of a major retrospective at Canada's National Gallery; the Vancouver Art Gallery circulated a solo exhibition of her paintings to China; and she was included in a critically acclaimed North American exhibition entitled, "The Expressionist Landscape." As well, this institution has contributed to the scholarship and general knowledge about the artist and her work through an ongoing exhibition program that examined particular aspects of her oeuvre in the context of her contemporaries.

Carr herself spoke eloquently about her artistic interests and intentions. In her Journal of December 13, 1940, she wrote, "I've had handy, active fingers and have made them work. I suppose the main force behind all this was my painting. That was the principal reason why I went to places, the reason why I drove ahead through the more interesting parts of life, to get time and money to push further into art, not the art of making pictures and becoming a great artist, but art to use as means of expressing myself, putting into visibility what gripped me in nature" [H&T]. In this small exhibition which includes the Gallery's entire Carr holdings, we have included some interesting quotations from her books wherein she describes her paintings or the inspiration for them.

As we reflect on the distinctive and powerful paintings by this extraordinary artist, we cannot help but be impressed by a number of very important things. She was remarkably successful in charging her paintings with significance. She referred to "the alive in us as being caught up by the alive in the universe." Clearly, for Carr, the "alive in the universe" was most palpable in the mysterious, primeval coastal rain forest. By her own admission she had a natural affinity for nature over humans. "The Cedars are good. I know that. I ought to stick to nature because I love trees better than people. I don't know humans as deeply. I see their faults above their virtues and they are so hideously self-conscious." [H&T]. She did not fit comfortably into Victorian society and considered herself more closely related to First Nations people. Indeed, her friendship with some First Nations individuals led to her being called Klee Wyck which roughly translates into "the laughing one." Carr admired and empathized with Native West Coast art and it provided the inspiration for many of her major works as can be seen in Big Eagle, Skidegate. WE have included some maps which show the First Nations' villages which she visited up and down the west coast. However, it is important to note that there is ongoing discussion as to whether she actually did visit all the villages listed.
Another important observation we might make about Carr and her work is how much ahead of her time she really was. Her paintings communicate to an ever-growing audience that is faced with an alarming disappearance of the natural and wild environment of our planet. She articulated her forward-looking insights about the importance of the forest both through her paintings and her writings. Ironically, even in a painting like Odds and Ends which depicts a logged over hillside, Carr finds grist for her artistic mill without irony or over social comment. We are grateful to the Victoria Public Library for the long-term loan of this unusual Carr painting.

Finally, Carr championed the “modernist” cause of young artists aspiring to work in a contemporary manner. In a 1930 speech she said, “The world is moving swiftly and the tempo of life has changed. What was new a few years back is now old....Isn’t it reasonable to expect that art would have to keep pace with the rest?..So also with the onlooker. It (modern art) may stir and irritate him, but isn’t it more entertaining and stimulating even to feel something unpleasant then to feel nothing at all--just a void?” [Fresh Seeing]

Nicholas Tuele, Assistant Director/ Chief Curator
October 1997
Art Gallery of Greater Victoria
Appendix 2: Emily Carr and Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun text panels

Standing in this room, in the spring of 1996, Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun and I began a dialogue about Emily Carr, an artist he both values and critiques. We discussed Carr's concern for the environment and her representations of First Nations cultures. We considered the problems of perpetuating Carr's view as an authentic view of "Indianness." In the context of Carr's ongoing presence here at the Vancouver Art Gallery, this installation began as a polite exchange about relationships between the work of Carr and Yuxweluptun, reflecting my initial desire to question some of the assumptions around the work of Carr. Through a juxtaposition of Yuxweluptun's and Carr's paintings, I wanted to raise questions, to use Yuxweluptun's work as a tool to probe around Carr.

In our discussions on the phone and at the studio, it became obvious that Yuxweluptun was not interested in just a simple exchange with Carr, he had no desire to speak "through" Carr. Instead, he wants to communicate his understanding of what the real issues are facing contemporary First Nations peoples (on and off reserves)—land claims, racism, environmental disasters, the control of natural resources, among others. He argues, convincingly, that he has more pressing concerns than just an exploration of his relationship to Carr and insisted that his work also have an independent presence equal to Carr during the installation. It is essential to Yuxweluptun that his paintings be considered directly, not filtered through Carr, and further that a situation be created where the viewer is forced to view Carr through Yuxweluptun. A true dialogue flows both ways.

Through our process, Yuxweluptun has reminded me of my position of control within the institution. He has refused to allow me to use his work strategically and demands that I stick my neck out as he has done through his paintings. Yuxweluptun encourages me to publicly question my own position, attempting to make the power transparent.

Thou Shalt Not Steal is the title of the large text painting that boldly declares "Native Land Claims" over top of Emily Carr's paintings in the next room. Thou Shalt Not Steal has been lifted by Yuxweluptun from the Ten Commandments, a message sent by the god of the Old and New Testaments to Moses as guiding laws for his people. This commandment is now repeated as a harsh reminder of an oath not kept by the European culture that brought these words to this region. Yuxweluptun's title suggests the law but not the punishment—"life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand..." (Exodus, 21:22-25)

In this exchange between artist and curator, "thou" is me. I am implicated in Yuxweluptun's accusations of theft. I try to maneuver out of the way of his accusation, to stand with him, detached from the European explorers/ colonizers and their destructive effects on the land and culture he claims as his own. I attempt to separate myself as an individual from this legacy, what Lawrence sees as my legacy, a lineage I cannot avoid as he says he cannot avoid his own. There is no safe position.

Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun has shown me things that are all too clear, scenes difficult to look upon because I know exactly what they are. Equally, he has displayed things I cannot comprehend, nor ever will. I know the white-coated man teetering in the background of Red Man Watching White Man Trying To Fix Hole In Sky. I immediately recognize that hole as the hole in the ozone layer. I am as frightened as Yuxweluptun by its implications, however, where he feels assaulted and violated by its presence, I feel implicated in its existence.
Looking at *Night in a Salish Longhouse*, I am lost. I have no idea what is being acted out. This is a religious work and there is nothing in my upbringing which I can draw on to make sense of the actions of these three figures (who I believe are giants). I could press Yuxweluptun for “clues” (he has explained that the scene relates to a period fasting followed by a vision and spiritual union with a bear) but I would never truly understand the symbolism of that dark interior. I am determined to know, but fail to comprehend. Then I encounter *Burying a Face of Racism* (a monumental work in progress to be installed at the Vancouver Art Gallery later this year). The work depicts three figures about to bury a white-faced mask. Here, I am literally confronted by giants and I am, unfortunately, no longer confused. I challenge anyone to claim with a clear conscience that they have never worn that pale racist mask even, if only, for a fleeting moment.

Yuxweluptun’s paintings can be both cryptic and brutally direct, in the same way that the Spanish artist Francisco Goya’s images are in his series *The Disasters of War* (1812-14). Goya described the Napoleonic occupation of his homeland through journalistic illustrations of torture countered by strange, dreamlike visions. Yuxweluptun, like Goya, is producing images from what he considers an occupied homeland. Unlike Goya, however, (who initially welcomed his oppressors as deliverers of democracy and, by virtue of his Catholicism, was linked to the reinstatement of the Spanish Inquisition after the war), Yuxweluptun cannot be implicated in the occupation. Through what started as a dialogue about Emily Carr, however, he has clearly articulated my accountability.

So, like the giant figure who stands in the left foreground of *Red Man Watching White Man Trying To Fix Hole In Sky*, Yuxweluptun stands watching as I (the tiny lab-coated man atop the shoulders of a mysterious masked figure) attempt to fill a gap. As in the painting, I have reached a precarious point. Assisted by a structure of Yuxweluptun’s devising, I attempt to manipulate an unruly patch (an exhibition) and to stabilize the scene (the gallery/museum)—to keep this very Western structure intact while engaging the powerful presence of Yuxweluptun’s paintings which foreground issues of geographical and cultural sovereignty and challenge traditional definitions of First Nations art and culture.
Postscript

Thou Shalt Not Steal—I have returned to the Old Testament and found, following the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) and The Book of the Covenant, the word of "God" which followed the rules that Yuxweluptun refers to and it is clear that initially these rules were not meant for everyone—they were specific to the community of the "chosen" people. The Decalogue may have told this community not to steal, but it also established their relationship to the land, their claim on the land and their right to take the land of others. Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun may struggle with the contradiction between the rules and actions of the European colonizers, however, the culture of the colonizers was firmly rooted in the following text in which the god of the Old Testament outlined their plans to "cleanse" Canaan of the native population. It is a text, as with much of the Old Testament, open to biased interpretation and possible use as justification for colonialist and racist actions:

I will send forth My terror before you...I will send a plague ahead of you...I will drive them out before you little by little, until you have increased and possess the land...I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hands...You shall make no covenant with them or their gods. They shall not remain in your land, lest they cause you to sin against Me; for you will serve their gods--and it will prove a snare for you (Exodus, 23: 27-33)

Andrew Hunter
Exhibition Curator
Emily Carr's images of totem poles and buildings seem to be about mourning. In works such as *Totem Forest* and *A Skidegate Pole*, she mourns, in paint, the loss of a culture that she and others of European descent believed was dead or dying. This belief in the inevitable disappearance of First Nations communities along the Northwest Coast following their decimation by disease brought by the colonizers, was based primarily on the temporary decline in the production of "traditional" material culture (especially such large scale carvings as poles and architectural components) that Europeans valued so highly. However, Carr and her contemporaries failed to recognize, or value, the non-traditional political activities (the legal struggle against church and state over the banning of the Potlatch, for example) of the various First Nations communities they depicted as in decline. These communities recognized that new forms were required to address such age old issues as land rights. A land claim that traditionally could be established through the ceremonial erection of a pole, for example, now required the adoption of Western forms of legal and political action. It was clearly difficult to assimilate this blurring of cultural forms into period definitions of race and culture.

Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun recognizes a sincerity in Carr's depiction of First Nations subjects. However, he also points out this lack of knowledge about the real issues facing the communities she depicted. He sees this as unavoidable--like most of her contemporaries, Carr was unable to recognize the complex social and political issues being engaged in the culturally diverse First Nations communities. Raised in a strict Christian environment, Carr's religion was balanced by the modern science of anthropology which perpetuated a belief, only recently deconstructed, that when cultures adopt and incorporate aspects of another, they die--the only authentic culture being a fictional "pure" culture.

Yuxweluptun values Carr's works as one painter admiring the work of another. He does not raise the issue of cultural appropriation common to much recent criticism of Carr (Yuxweluptun is clearly not one to recognize such "traditional" cultural boundaries) and, in fact, his primary criticism is not necessarily specific to Carr. Instead, he is critical of the projection and reception of Carr's work as somehow authenticating a Romantic view of "Indianness" at the expense of presenting the difficult realities of First Nations experience.

Over the span of her career, the people who populate Carr's brightly coloured scenes of village life give way to increasingly claustrophobic depictions of decaying forms in a dense sea of green growth which appear to seal off life. Carr is blocked by the physical material of thick veil of foliage and silvery wood carvings. In a work such as *Night in a Salish Longhouse*, Yuxweluptun depicts spiritual aspects of First Nations culture Carr could not see or comprehend.
Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun and Emily Carr: the British Columbia Landscape

Like Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun today, in the 1930s and 1940s Emily Carr saw the landscape she knew and loved being decimated by clear-cut logging and mining. In works such as *Logger's Culls* and *Scorned as Timber Beloved of the Sky*, she clearly depicts the effects of industry on the landscape, articulating a distaste for such destruction, while still managing to find an element of hope and beauty within. She believed, however, that whatever violence industry could inflict on the land, the land would recover, nature would, in the end, dominate. Carr articulates this idea the following passage. It is a position clearly not shared by Yuxweluptun.

> There is nothing so strong as growing. Nothing can drown that force that splits rocks and pavements and spreads over the fields...Man can pattern it and change its variety and shape, but leave it for even a time and then it goes back to its own, swamping and swallowing man's puny intentions. No killing nor stamping down can destroy it. Life is in the soil, touch it with air and light and it bursts forth like a struck match. Nothing is dead, not even to the spirit's leaving there is life, boundless life, restless and marvelous, fresh and clean. God.50

In Yuxweluptun's work, the transformation of the landscape by logging, chemical and real estate industries, is a constant presence. Like Carr, he also images the destruction, yet there is an added urgency considering the effects of advanced technology inflicted on the environment. Unlike Carr, he firmly believes that most of the destruction is irreversible. Furthermore, Native land rights were clearly not an issue for Carr. For Yuxweluptun, any consideration of the current state and fate of the land is inseparable from land rights and land claims to the point where no depiction of the British Columbia landscape, no matter its intent, can be separated from these issues. The placement of the large text painting *Thou Shalt Not Steal* in the next room is a bold reminder of this fact.

> Land claims have always concerned me: fishing rights, hunting rights, water rights, inherent rights. My home, my native land. Land is power, power is land. That is what I try to paint. Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun

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Appendix 3: Emily Carr: Cultural Contexts and Critiques text panels

Some quotes have been edited. Complete texts are available in the Emily Carr library (North East corner this floor).

The Headings: Heroic Feminist
Political Spiritual Formalist
Environmentalist Appropriation
Authenticity Beautiful

Salvage paradigm

Emily Carr has been drawn into the intense critical discussions which are part of our present-day socio-cultural climate. First of all, because of the important role played by native North-West Coast culture in her art and life, she has become pertinent to the broad dialogue centring in native issues. Her story as that of a woman who surmounted the gender prejudices endemic to her time to achieve her goals with such distinction gives her relevance in the context of ongoing feminist discourse. And her deep commitment to nature in all its manifestations speaks to the environmental dilemmas that face us now. As a consequence, the presence of Emily Carr resonates in our midst today with a reverberation different from that of ten or fifteen years ago and perhaps even more strongly than ever before.

Doris Shadbolt, art historian, (1993)

From the earliest work and on into the work of her last years, unfolds the inner story of a vital adventure, full of intense struggle to achieve and the reward of the living embodiment in paint of her beloved woods, skies and Indian villages.

Lawren Harris, artist and friend of Emily Carr (1945)

There is an obsession with Carr in British Columbia and the west, it seems to me, not unlike the eastern Canadian obsession with the Group of Seven. The public deification of Carr in British Columbia, which often stumbles into bathos and Carromania, is one form the obsession takes. Carr is the dominant authority figure within local culture, and public references to her are deeply encoded to elicit a favourable response.

John O'Brian, art historian (1995)

Her legacy has become a battlefield in the culture wars, the subject of postmodern revisionism combined with retroactive racial justice. Just as she used native culture as a way of expressing herself, now natives (and others sympathetic to the present situation of native) are using her as a way of exhibiting and analyzing the imperialism of white Canadian culture, in her time and ours.

Robert Fulford, art critic (1993)

Carr speaks for British Columbia like Winston Churchill spoke for England.

The Canadian Advocate, undated
Carr was a genuinely gifted painter, but hardly the innovative, consistently original artist her fans would like her to have been. I am completely at a loss to understand what serious people find attractive about Carr's opinions, those hackneyed warblings about nature, the pious twaddle on the subject of God or 'nature.'


Many labels have been pinned on Emily in the last few years. One that is often mentioned of late is “environmentalist”. Emily was a naturalist, almost a nature-worshipper, and she instinctively respected and loved the great British Columbia forests and clear-running rivers and streams. Littering, or any king of destruction, was abhorrent to her and she was pained and shocked by the ruthless devastation cause by logging operations. But, again, she bemoaned this without resorting to any kind of political action. Any seeming protest about wanton destruction of woods in some of her paintings, such as *Logged Leavings, Odds and Ends*, and a favourite, *Scorned as Timber, Beloved of Sky*, was quite unconscious.

Edythe Hembroff-Schleicher, biographer and friend of Emily Carr (1978)

When I first saw Emily Carr's pictures, I saw that her conception was as big as Canada itself. The pictures were hidden away all over her house and she was working hard at the pottery. She prepares all the details herself, securing the clay, grinding it, shaping it, and finally baking and painting it. She mixes the paint with clay in the way the Indians do, and gets a remarkable effect—but the most noticeable thing about her pottery is the uncanny fidelity with which she has reproduced the fundamental designs of the northern tribes, without adapting or changing them, as so many artists do, according to some preconceived idea of their own.

Marius Barbeau, ethnographer, (1928)

When a culture is represented as going through fatal changes, the natural thing to do is save or salvage it. The “salvage paradigm” has been exploited in many ways. Predicated on the concept of a dead or dying people whose culture needs to be “saved,” those doing the saving choose what fragments of a culture they will salvage. Having done this, they become both the owners and interpreters of the artifacts or goods that have survived from that dying culture, artifacts that become rare and therefore valuable.

Her paintings of the last poles intimate that the authentic Indians who made them existed only in the past, and that all the changes that occurred afterwards provide evidence of racial contamination, and cultural and moral deterioration. These works also imply that native culture is a quantifiable thing, which may be measured in degrees of “Indianness” against defined forms of authenticity, only located in the past

Marcia Crosby, art historian (1991)

By 1934-5, her unique style had become perfectly attuned to every nuance of expressive feeling, her brush responding with a variety of swirls, flutters, streaks, sweeps, and dabs to the least emotive tremble resulting from her highly pitched attentiveness.

Dennis Reid, art historian (1973)
Using the full sweep of her arm she struck out rendering the foliage in S-curves, chevrons, and interlocking rings. Through a series of short vertical strokes she rushed her viewer from the foreground to the centre of the picture. By alternating the curves of the trees she created a surging rhythm. And in order to link all of these things into one sweeping movement she integrated each brush stroke. This infused the sky, the trees, and the earth with an energizing force that expressed one thing: God in all.

Maria Tippett, art historian and biographer (1991)

Besides being a remarkably fine painter, she demolished some traditionally cherished notions about women artists. Her colours are strong, her style deeply sculptural or bold and sweeping. She was not tied to the personal: she did not paint portraits or domestic scenes. Nor did she leap into abstraction. She was the rarest kind of woman painter, a landscapist, identifying with that larger, impersonal universe once thought the exclusive province of the free-ranging male.

Paula Blanchard, biographer (1987)

By the 1930s, she was so absorbed in her painting that she could make a forest out of a single tree.

David Alexander, BC born artist (1995)

After meeting the Group of Seven, especially Lawren Harris, she was to seek a new understanding of herself, a new religious enlightenment by which she would find God in those silent, awe-filled spaces.

Ann Davis, art historian (1992)

She did her best work after 1927 and her 56th birthday, when she finally figured out how to paint the forest primeval from the inside instead of the outside (as European tradition had it), how to portray its silence and its life force. What emerged was huge, raw and sexually charged, an astonishing vision for a woman her age and of her age. And right there I think we have part of the explanation for the experts' discomfort with Carr and her genius. How could that batty old baglady who lived on the fringes of late Victorian Victoria, who was well past menopause and probably a virgin, be credited with such a vision?

Susan Crean, art writer (1991)

In their white light and rapturous, concentric rhythms, Carr's late works are reminiscent of the art of mystics and visionaries- art that has cast off sexual fear, gender hierarchy and social isolation in its oneness with the cosmos.

Robin Laurence, writer, critic, curator (1991)
Appendix 4: Emily Carr: Journeys and Journals text panels

1890 San Francisco

We were a happy bunch of students. I do not remember that we discussed Art much; as yet we had not accumulated knowledge enough to discuss. We just worked steadily, earnestly, laying our foundations. San Francisco did not have much to offer in the way of art study other than the school itself, no galleries, no picture exhibitions. Art was just beginning out west. The school was new. Students came here to make a start. Their goal was always to press further afield. San Francisco did not see the finish, only the beginning of their art.

1899 Ucluelet

A Missionary took a liking to me. She had a very long face but a good heart. She was negotiating for my sister to accompany her back to her lonely mission up the West Coast of Vancouver Island, so that she might try out the loneliness and Indians. When the Missionary saw how interested I was in her description of these wild places, she said to me, “Wouldn’t you like to come to Ucluelet to sketch in the summer holidays?”

“I would like to frightfully,” I replied.

1900 London

Mrs. Radcliffe...a widow...was Scotch by birth and raising, had spent her married life in Canada, but by inclination she was pure London through and through. Almost her first question to me was, “And how do you like London?”

“I hate it.”

Her brown starey eyes popped...She said “Dear me, dear me!” four times.

“London is the most wonderful city in the world, child!”

“It is stuffy, hard and cruel--Canada...is...”

“Canada!” biting the word off sharp. “Canada is crude!”...”London will soon polish Canada off you, smooth you, as your English parents were smooth. You are entitled to that....Make the most of your opportunities in London, child.”

“I am Canadian, I am not English. I do not want Canada polished out of me.”

1905 Victoria

I was tremendously awed when a real French artist with an English artist-wife came to Victoria. I expected to see something wonderful, but they painted a few faraway mountains floating in something hazy that was not Canadian air...then they banged down the lids of their paintboxes, ...Canada had no scenery, they said. They said also that the only places you could learn to paint in were London or Paris. I was disappointed at hearing that, but immediately began to save. I slung an old pair of shoes across the studio rafters. When pupils paid me I shoveled the money away in my shoes.

“I am going abroad to study!” I told my astonished family.
1907 Alaska

The first year that I lived and taught in Vancouver my sister Alice and I took a pleasure trip up to Alaska.

The Klondyke rush had been over just a few years. We travelled on a Canadian boat as far as Skagway, end of sea travel for Klondyke. Prospectors had left steamers here and gone the rest of the way on foot over a very rough trail. Those who could afford to, took pack-beasts; those who could not, packed their things on their own backs.

1910 Paris

Hurrying through London, we crossed the Channel, slid through lovely French country—came to Paris.

My sister knew French but would not talk. I did not know French and would not learn. I had neither ear nor patience. I wanted every moment of Paris for Art.

My sister studied the history of Paris, kept notes and diaries. I did not care a hoot about Paris history. I wanted now to find out what this “New Art” was about. I heard it ridiculed, praised, liked, hated. Something in it stirred me, but I could not at first make head or tail of what it was all about. I saw at once that it made recent conservative painting look flavourless, little, unconvincing.

1911 Vancouver

I came home from France stronger in body, in thinking, and in work than I had returned from England. My seeing had broadened. I was better equipped both for teaching and study because of my year and a half in France, but still mystified, baffled as to how to tackle our big West.

I visited Victoria, saw that it was an impossible field for work; then I went to Vancouver and opened a studio, first giving an exhibition of the work I had done in France. People came, lifted their eyes to the walls—laughed!

“You always were one for joking—this is small children’s work! Where is your own?” they said.

1927 Toronto

...Went with Miss Buell and Mrs. Housser to tea at Mr. A.Y. Jackson’s Studio Building. I loved his things, particularly some snow things of Quebec and three canvases up Skeena River. I felt a little as if beaten at my own game. His Indian pictures have something mine lack—rhythm, poetry. Mine are so downright.

1927 Ottawa

I went up to the museum about 11:30 and asked for Mr. Brown. I entered the upper office and there they all were, Mr. Brown, Mr. Barbeau, Mr. Holgate, Mr. Lismer, Mr. Pepper, Peggy Nicol and Mr. McCurry. They gave me a royal welcome and we went down to the lower floor. There sat the exhibition all round the floor...There are ripping things of Langdon Kihn, and Mr. Holgate and Mr. Jackson. I felt my work looked dead and dull, but they say I have more of the spirit of the Indian than the others.
1927 Ottawa

I feel as if I have met the “worthwhiles” on this trip, people who really count and are shaping a nation. They are all so big and broad, so kind to the younger struggling ones, so proud of the bigness of their country, so anxious to probe its soul and understand it.

1930 New York

“Why not see New York now, while you are on this side of the continent? It is only a step across the line. New York is well worth the effort.”

I protested, “I hate enormous cities cram-jam with humanity. I hate them!”

Mr. Harris said no more about New York. I had been much interested in his telling of his reactions to New York. He was just back from there, had gone to see a big picture exhibition. In spite of myself my curiosity had been aroused. Instead of sleeping that night as I ought to have done, I lay awake thinking, planning a trip to New York. Next day I acted; curiosity had won over fright. As I bought my ticket my heart sank to somewhere around my knees, which shook with its weight; but common sense came along, took a hand, whispering, “Hasn’t it been your policy all through life to see whenever seeing was good?”

“I’m going,” I said to Mr. Harris. “Can you give me a list of New York’s Art Galleries, the most modern ones?”

1930 Seattle

Lizzie, Alice and I went to hear the Seattle Symphony. First time in years we have been out together. It was delightful as we sat there unanimously enjoying it. I couldn’t help wondering why it was that we could all meet and be lifted up in the music while had it been a picture exhibit we’d have had no shared sympathy at all. Has music something art lacks? The new art does lift one but so few understand. They refuse to be lifted.

1933 Chicago

Chicago is as windy as Victoria.

1934 Victoria

Oh! Oh! OH! I’m tired. Had a big party, some twenty-five souls, mostly artists, visitors, two Paris, three Seattle, one New Haven, three New York, on missionary, and the rest locals, but with all so recently from the other cities it was quite interesting. I showed millions of mounted sketches and many canvases, and gave them good eats, and got so tired over the last few stickers-on that I was almost crying.

The weeks in hospital sauntered slowly by till Eric Newton, noted Art Critic for the Manchester Guardian, paid a visit to the West. Eric Brown, Director of the Ottawa National Gallery, had asked Mr. Newton while out west to select some fifteen pictures of mine and ship east. He had prospective buyers. Mr. Newton wired me from Vancouver. Finding I was in hospital he came there to see me.

He said, “As I drove over the Island Highway I saw Emily Carr pictures in the woods no matter in which direction I looked. You have caught the Western spirit.” Folding his hand over my two sick ones he added, “Get better, these hands are too clever to lie idle.”

I turned my face away. What good getting better if I was never to roam the woods again, paint-sack on shoulder, dog at heel?