

October 8, 2013

Royal BC Museum Creates First Google Art Collection from Western Canada

Victoria, BC – The first Google Art Project collection from Western Canada was launched today. The Royal BC Museum joins five other Canadian institutions and is only the second museum in Canada to be featured among the most famous art collections in the world.



The initial batch of high resolution images includes 81 works created between 1778 and 1960 recently selected by curators from the vaults of the Royal BC Museum and Archives in Victoria, British Columbia.

“We are thrilled about working with the Google Cultural Institute in the UK to make a significant part of our collection immediately accessible to the world,” said Jack Lohman CBE, Chief Executive Officer of the Royal BC Museum. “New, dedicated onsite gallery space is part of our

masterplan, to share more of the thousands of artworks in our collections, but we actively pursued this Google Art partnership as another way to share the diversity in our collections.”

Paintings created in British Columbia by Louis Comfort Tiffany; Emily Carr, E.J. Hughes and Frederick Varley are among the first 81 works in the museum’s Google Art Project. Don Bourdon, Curator of Images and Paintings at the Royal BC Museum said, “The twenty-six works selected from our huge Emily Carr collection include her beloved forests and First Nations villages, but also samples from her ‘funny books’, arts and crafts pieces, portraits, an ink sketch, and two paintings from her time in France.”

Other artists featured in this project launch – Chief Nakapankam, Mungo Martin and Charlie George Sr, Xalxidi - are not as well known outside British Columbia, but their works, stories and contributions are exceptional.

“Mungo Martin was a great master of Northwest Coast art,” said Dr. Martha Black, Curator of Ethnology, Royal BC Museum. “His individual style and sophisticated technique are evident in the few works we selected for this project.” When he was about 72 years old, Mungo Martin became Chief Carver at what is now the Royal BC Museum. He created more than two dozen poles and built the bighouse Wawaditla in Thunderbird Park where he gave the first legal public potlatch at its opening in 1953, soon after the law against potlatching was dropped from the Indian Act in 1951.

The set of coloured pencil drawings by Charlie George Sr, Xalxidi, was created for the Reverend Dr Richard Large, c.1910, when Charlie was a young patient at the Bella Bella Hospital. These intricate portrayals include salmon, a grease bowl, the shaman and the copper among others. Together, they tell the Kwakwaka'wakw story of Soogwilis, which was published by the doctor's son in 1951, with 39 of Charlie George's wonderful illustrations.

The earliest image among those launched today is a 1778 watercolour of King George's Sound by surgeon and artist William Ellis. These works were often collected by archivists and are appreciated both for their artistic value but also as a modern-day equivalent of photographs, documenting vistas or cultures new to Europeans of the time. Paintings by Sarah Crease in 1860, of street scenes in the young city of Victoria, are among those. A more recent image included in this project launch is by the artist E.J. Hughes. His painting "Above Okanagan Lake" is a colourful oil on canvas from 1960.

To see these works, go to: <http://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/project/art-project>

The Google Art Project is one of many initiatives of the Google Cultural Institute. The combination of their technologies and expert information from museum partners creates a unique online art experience. Users can explore a wide range of works, zoom in at brushstroke level, learn about the artists, and build their own collections to share with others. Visitors to the Royal BC Museum's Google Art Project will find features for students or groups that enable work on collaborative projects. The 'Compare' feature allows examination of two pieces side-by-side to see how an artist's style changed over time, to connect trends across cultures, or to delve deeply into two areas of the same work.

About the Royal BC Museum

As the provincial museum and archives, the Royal BC Museum explores the province's human history and natural history, advances new knowledge and understanding of BC, and provides a dynamic forum for discussion and a place for reflection. Through collections, research, presentations and partnerships, the museum and archives tell the stories of BC in ways that enlighten, stimulate and inspire. Its two-hectare cultural precinct in Victoria includes a number of historically significant buildings and First Nations sites.

- 30 -

Image: Chief Nakapankam, Mungo Martin, *Raven and Whale*, 1960. Watercolour on paper.
RBCM14429

#GoogleArtRBCM
@RoyalBCMuseum

Media contact:

Royal BC Museum Media Inquiries
250-387-3207

news@royalbcmuseum.bc.ca