

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Vancouver Art Gallery and BC Parks Foundation Partner to Promote Health Through Nature and Art

This groundbreaking initiative recognizes the healing power of art and nature in supporting long-term health and wellbeing



April 7, 2025, VANCOUVER, BC // Traditional Coast Salish Lands including the xʷməθkʷəy̅əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətał (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.

On the occasion of World Health Day, the Vancouver Art Gallery is proud to launch a new collaboration with BC Parks Foundation's **PaRx**, Canada's national nature prescription program, which allows healthcare professionals to prescribe a nature-inspired visit to **Emily Carr: Navigating an Impenetrable Landscape** in support of patients' mental health and psychological wellbeing. Building on PaRx's success in over 17,000 healthcare providers issuing more than a million prescriptions for nature, this innovative initiative harnesses the proven healing power of both art and nature in supporting long-term health.

This collaboration is the first of its kind in Canada and will provide an immersive indoor art and nature experience in an urban setting. During the first year of the program, each prescribed visitor and their optional guest will receive free admission to the Gallery, thereby fostering social connections while removing financial barriers.

Visitors may return any number of times during the length of the project by retaining their PaRx nature prescription. A special printed guide for *Emily Carr: Navigating an Impenetrable Landscape* will be available,

encouraging visitors to *slow-look* at the paintings, connect to the images of nature, and reflect on how the experience makes them feel. The Gallery anticipates approximately 4,000 individuals to benefit from the social prescribing initiative during its pilot year.

Decades of research in medicine, psychology and art therapy link close engagement with art to improved physical wellbeing, reduced loneliness and improved life satisfaction, while hundreds of studies show that connecting with nature is one of the most effective ways to boost long-term health. Together, this collaboration bridges science, nature, and creativity.

While there is growing recognition that art can be a powerful healing method, the formal infrastructures that connect art to those who need it the most are still in their infancy. The development of programs that connect social prescribing with cultural organizations is vital and can alleviate significant pressure on our traditional healthcare system. Recognizing this need in the Greater Vancouver region, a formal prescription to an experience at the Gallery does not simply connect individuals to art but uses art to reduce stress, anxiety and social isolation—major public health risks linked to a wide range of diseases and negative health outcomes. Developed in close collaboration with renowned health and wellbeing experts, as well as organizations that believe in art's capacity to heal, this prescription ensures that specific individuals who could benefit from engagement with the arts have access to these experiences.

Curated by **Dr. Richard Hill**, Smith Jarislowsky Senior Curator of Canadian Art at the Vancouver Art Gallery, *Emily Carr: Navigating an Impenetrable Landscape* uses the spatial metaphor of closeness to and distance from nature to probe Carr's thinking about the BC forests and coastal landscapes she is known for painting. By immersing themselves in depictions of nature, visitors may experience their own connection to BC's landscapes. There is evidence that supports spending time in museums and galleries can reduce stress and cortisol levels; the Gallery experience—designed by Sirish Rao, the Gallery's Interim Co-CEO and Paula Toledo, the Gallery's Lead Wellbeing Consultant—not only encourages slow looking and mindfulness but also deepens a local viewer's connection to their land, language, place and community. Visitors are then encouraged to step outside and spend time exploring local parks or getting involved in protecting nature.

In conjunction with the experience, the Gallery is proud to publish *Colouring Carr*, a colouring book featuring Emily Carr's nature-inspired paintings and drawings from the Gallery's collection. Suitable for all ages, the pages in this book invite artists to slow down and connect with Carr's landscapes through the meditative act of colouring. *Colouring Carr* is available to pre-order in the Gallery Store.

For more information, please visit: vanartgallery.bc.ca/art-of-wellbeing



Media Partners:



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Image: Visitor looks at painting inside *Emily Carr: Navigating an Impenetrable Landscape*, exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery from January 25, 2025 to January 4, 2026, Photo: Vancouver Art Gallery

[ABOUT BC PARKS FOUNDATION](#)

BC Parks Foundation proudly acts as the official charitable partner and conservation financing mechanism for parks and Indigenous protected areas in British Columbia. We inspire and empower you to enjoy and protect parks and Indigenous protected areas in BC, so that they flourish for now, for all, forever.

[ABOUT PARX](#)

PaRx is an initiative of the BC Parks Foundation, driven by health care professionals who want to improve their patients' health by connecting them to nature. Featuring practical resources like quick tips and patient handouts, its goal is to make prescribing time in nature simple, fun and effective.

Each prescriber who registers with PaRx will receive a nature prescription file customized with a unique provider code, and instructions for how to prescribe and log nature prescriptions. The core aim of our program is to encourage patients to incorporate outdoor experiences in their local communities into their daily routines. Patients can also access special offers from our proud partners to reduce their barriers to nature access across Canada.

[ABOUT THE VANCOUVER ART GALLERY](#)

Founded in 1931 and located on the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh nations, the Vancouver Art Gallery is Western Canada's largest public art museum. Our mission is to create—through art—paths to share perspectives, build and engage communities and shape our collective future together. This is expressed through exhibitions showcasing outstanding examples of historical, modern and contemporary art from British Columbia and around the world; education programs that encourage dialogue and understanding; and publications that advance scholarship on a wide range of artistic subjects. Our permanent collection, representing the most comprehensive resource for visual culture in British Columbia, has more than 13,200 works. Committed to inclusivity and accessibility, we serve a broad public across the

region. Each year, hundreds of thousands of children, youth, students, families, adults and seniors of all backgrounds benefit from our programs.

We are guided by six strategic imperatives: to bring our new Gallery to life; to sustain the excellence and relevance of our programming; to build organizational and leadership capacity and ensure sustainability; to build a strong and admirable culture; and to continue to grow and deepen our fundraising and revenue capacity. These strategic imperatives are underpinned by the following core values: being respectful of the unceded Indigenous territories upon which we are situated; creating an inclusive and respectful environment; believing that curiosity is a pathway to innovation; establishing clear goals and expectations to cultivate a culture of accountability; and fostering successful collaboration through communication and active listening. The Gallery also commits to providing equitable access to everyone. We actively support accessibility, anti-racism, LGBTQ2S+ inclusion and encourage diversity in our staff, visitors, volunteers and programming.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is situated on the ancestral and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, and is respectful of the Indigenous stewards of the land it occupies, whose rich cultures are fundamental to artistic life in Vancouver and the work of the Gallery.

vanartgallery.bc.ca

