



## 101 Emily Carr

BCSFA CGP 1871 – 1945

### Sophie Frank

watercolour on paper, signed M. Emily Carr and dated 1914 and on verso inscribed *Sophie Frank (Emily's Indian Friend)* and with a dedication from Carr on the original backing  
9 ½ x 7 ½ in, 24.1 x 19.1 cm

#### PROVENANCE

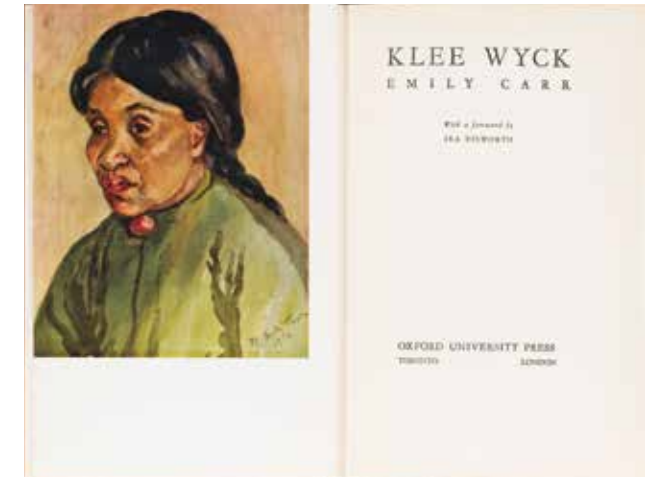
Collection of the Artist  
Estate of the Artist  
By descent to Ira Dilworth  
By descent to Jack and Edna Parnall  
(née Dilworth, niece of Ira Dilworth)  
By descent from the above to their goddaughter,  
Vancouver Island

#### LITERATURE

Emily Carr, *Klee Wyck*, 1941, pages 33 – 46, reproduced frontispiece, book is dedicated “To Sophie”  
Maria Tippet, *Emily Carr: A Biography*, 1979, pages 80 – 81 and 204, a photograph of Sophie Frank reproduced page 80  
Emily Carr, *The Complete Writings of Emily Carr*, Klee Wyck, 1993, page 35  
Susan Crean, *Opposite Contraries: The Unknown Journals of Emily Carr and Other Writings*, 2003, an earlier version of Carr’s story “Emily,” pages 162 – 166  
Gerta Moray, *Unsettling Encounters: First Nations Imagery in the Art of Emily Carr*, 2006, pages 82 – 83 and 331, reproduced page 83  
Linda Morra, editor, *Corresponding Influence: Selected Letters of Emily Carr and Ira Dilworth*, 2006, page 40  
Charles C. Hill et al., *Emily Carr: New Perspectives on a Canadian Icon*, National Gallery of Canada, 2006, reproduced pages 62 and 65

#### EXHIBITED

Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, *Emily Carr: Eccentric, Artist, Author, Genius*, 2001 – 2002  
Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, extended loan  
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, *Emily Carr: New Perspectives on a Canadian Icon*, June 2 – September 4, 2006, traveling in 2006 – 2008 to the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and the Glenbow Museum, Calgary, catalogue #199  
Vancouver Art Gallery, extended loan, 2008 – 2018



Emily Carr, *Klee Wyck* (with *Sophie Frank* reproduced as the frontispiece)

In May, when the village was white with cherry blossom and the blue water of Burrard Inlet crept almost to Sophie’s door—just a streak of grey sand and a plank walk between—and when Vancouver city was more beautiful to look at across the water than to be in,—it was then I loved to take the ferry to the North Shore and go to Sophie’s.

Behind the village stood mountains topped by the grand old “Lions,” twin peaks, very white and blue. The nearer mountains were every shade of young foliage, tender grey-green, getting greener and greener till, when they were close, you saw that the village grass outgreened them all. Hens strutted their broods, papooses and pups and kittens rolled everywhere—it was good indeed to spend a day on the Reserve in spring.

Sophie, seated on the floor of her house, saw me coming through the open door and waved the papoose cradle. Two little girls rolled round on the floor; the new baby was near her in a basket-cradle... Sophie herself was small and square. Her black hair sprang thick and strong on each side of the clean, straight parting and hung in twin braids across her shoulders. Her eyes were sad and heavy-lidded. Between prominent, rounded cheekbones her nose lay rather flat, broadening and snubby at the tip... She had a soft little body, a back straight as honesty itself...

—EMILY CARR



Emily Carr in her studio at 646 Simcoe Street (detail), January 1934  
 Photo: H.U. Knight, City of Victoria Archives, M00669

THIS WATERCOLOUR HOLDS a pivotal place in Emily Carr's life and work. It represents her Squamish First Nations friend Sophie Frank, who features in *Klee Wyck*, Carr's book that she dedicated "To Sophie" with this very portrait as its frontispiece. At her death, Carr bequeathed the painting to her friend and literary executor, Ira Dilworth. In a 1944 letter she had written to him of her deep and transcendent friendships with a few individuals—notably himself, Lawren Harris and Sophie. On the back of the picture Carr attached a note: "The original Portrait of Sophie ... at my death the property of Ira Dilworth, because the life of Sophie meant so much to him. He understood her womanliness and my love for her. To him she was more than just an Indian, she was a symbol."

But to Carr, Sophie was much more than just a symbol. The two women had met soon after Carr moved to Vancouver in 1906 to work as an art teacher. Sophie, who was a basket weaver, called at Carr's studio at 570 Granville Street, sold her a basket, and their friendship began. Carr made frequent visits to Sophie at her home in Eslha7an, Mission Reserve No. 1, in what is now North Vancouver. She got to know Sophie's aunt Sara and her other women friends, and noted their resilience and resourcefulness in the face of heart-wrenching poverty—a resourcefulness that Carr, the cash-strapped artist, would likewise come to adopt.

In 1906 Carr would have been 35 years old, and though we do not know exactly how old Sophie was, this was a friendship between two young women with widely different life stories, but with some deep affinities. By Carr's account, Sophie had 21 children, most of whom died in infancy due to tuberculosis. Carr knew that her own mother had buried two infant boys, and she had watched both her mother and her remaining brother die of the disease. Due to her artistic vocation she herself could not marry, so she valued her access to Sophie's family and felt her losses keenly. Throughout her writing Carr praised the wisdom of Indigenous parenting, and to Dilworth she described Sophie as "maternal from the soles of her feet to her black Indian hair." She acknowledged that Sophie was her teacher on Indigenous ways of thought, telling Dilworth in 1944, "I feel that knowing George Clutesi will make you and Lawren [Harris] understand entirely the feelings I had for Sophie the Indian. Sophie was not English taught & had no education or fine expression like George, but she had the Indian mind like George."

This painting of a pensive and slightly melancholy Sophie is one of a group of stylistically similar watercolours that Carr made of Sophie's circle in Eslha7an, such as her aunt Sara and her friend Susan, who also appear in Carr's writings. They stand out for their psychological engagement and fluid handling, with bold touches for highlights and abbreviated outlines. In a journal entry made in 1927, when Carr visited Sophie on her way back from Ottawa, where she had participated in the *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art, Canadian and Modern*, she declared her feelings



**EMILY CARR**  
**Sara [Sophie Frank's aunt]**  
 watercolour on paper, circa 1908  
 12 x 10 in, 30.5 x 25.4 cm  
 Sold sale of *Fine Canadian Art*, Heffel Fine Art  
 Auction House, November 24, 2005, lot 192

Not for sale with this lot

for Sophie: "Sophie was terribly glad to see me ... Her love for me is real and mine for her ... Out in the spaces there is a bond between us where color, creed, environment don't count. The woman in us meets on common ground and we love each other." Yet the sense of introspection and longing that the portrait conveys signals the dark realities of colonial relations—irredeemable rupture and loss.

We thank Dr. Gerta Moray, Professor Emerita, University of Guelph, and author of *Unsettling Encounters: First Nations Imagery in the Art of Emily Carr*, for contributing the above essay.

**ESTIMATE: \$50,000 – 70,000**