

In Her Own Words

Selected Works and Words by Emily Carr, Myfanwy Pavelic, Katharine Maltwood



**University
of Victoria**
Art Collections

•• Both the art and words of three creative and insightful women animate this exhibition and draw us into the complex and changing worlds that shaped their artistic vision. While they knew one another and shared a common love of the west coast and admiration for one another's work, their differing approaches to life and to art offer a fascinating opportunity to explore artistic expression.

This exhibition came together as part of the 2011 Emily Carr Project and seeks, in part, to consider links between Carr's influential work and the work of two other remarkable Victoria artists. Many people have contributed to its development. Mitchell Krieger deserves particular recognition for his commitment and energy in bringing Victoria's arts community together for a collaborative celebration of Carr's legacy throughout the Fall of 2011. Jan Ross of Emily Carr House has worked closely with us as an insightful curatorial partner throughout exhibition development. And Caroline Riedel, Curator of the University of Victoria Art Collections, has drawn on her knowledge of these artists and our collections to bring together both their art and their words. We also thank the University Archives and Special Collections for loaning Katharine Maltwood's manuscripts and published work. Our team that supports exhibition installation includes Cindy Vance, Collections Coordinator, working with Cameron Northover, Mark Hovey and Darcy Douglas. Students, as always, play an important role in University Art Collection exhibitions. We acknowledge with thanks, the energy and expertise of Sophie Pouyenne, Loring Rochacewich, Gino Shifrin, and Dorothy June Fraser in the many curatorial roles that contribute to the development of this exhibition and catalogue.

Joy Davis, Interim Director
University of Victoria Art Collections

•• The Emily Carr Project is a Victoria-wide collaborative celebration of the life and work of the remarkable Emily Carr, exploring her art, poetry and connection to the people of the First Nations. The Project's partners include the Victoria Symphony, University of Victoria Art Collections, Carr House, the Vancouver Island School of Art and Intrepid Theatre. Each of the partners is exploring Carr in their own way—for example, the Symphony's concerts on October 11 and 15 include the world premiere performance of several new works by Canadian composers and feature dance, recitations of Emily Carr's poetry, elements exploring her connection to First Nations people, and video presentations of her paintings. We are grateful for special support for the Emily Carr Project from the British Columbia Arts Council.

Mitchell Krieger, Executive Director
Victoria Symphony

•• This exhibition explores the artistic visions and words, both spoken and written, of three of Victoria's best-known artists of the 20th century: Emily Carr, Katharine Maltwood and Myfanwy Pavelic. While their artistic expression led them along different trajectories each as painter, sculptor and portraitist, they also crossed paths in a number of instances as supporters of one another's artistic pursuits, in their shared search for iconic imagery from the point of view of artists on the West Coast of Canada and in their exploration of both modern and traditional means of expression.

On a personal level, Carr organized an exhibition of 15-year-old Myfanwy Pavelic's work at her People's Gallery and the two continued a correspondence until Carr's death in 1945. Katharine Maltwood, after her arrival in Victoria, visited Carr a number of times in her studio and on painting trips. She purchased two of Carr's oil and gasoline series paintings, which clearly resonated with Maltwood's own spiritually infused experience of forest and nature seen in her *Treetop Sketches* series. Scholar Rosemary Brown states that it was Carr's "search to reveal glimpses of the inner life of natural forms and her intense realization of the fundamental unity of all life that made Carr's work so appealing [to Maltwood]."¹

All three artists explored both inner and outer experiences of their worlds in their art and writing. Even prior to her arrival in Victoria, Katharine Maltwood's interest in topography, the human form and divine inspiration can be found in her writings and drawings of the Somerset Zodiac as well as in the personification of her eventual home in the sculpture *Head of Canada*. Brown says of Maltwood's affinity to nature, "her knowledge of Oriental thought and Theosophy gave her a deep sensitivity to nature's power and moral virtues. She believed that nature revealed the laws of God . . . and sought spiritual fulfillment through immersion in the vital forces of the land."²



Photograph of Katharine Maltwood and Sculpture *Aspiration*, Katharine Maltwood, n.d., photographic print, 40.5 x 50.5 cm, U982.18.1

Emily Carr also wrote extensively of her experience of natural energy, or what she called the "felt nature" of trees, at the same time maintaining a semi-realistic depiction of her surroundings. Pavelic strove to reveal the inner life of her sitters in her portraiture. Some of her best-known portraits are of well-known sitters such as Pierre Trudeau, Yehudi Menuhin and Katharine Hepburn.

Maltwood, Carr and Pavelic also experimented with elements of originality and tradition in their work. Each paid attention to developments in European modernism but in some ways rejected modernist developments in favour of her own vision. Pavelic, for example, explored abstraction but ultimately discovered, "[It] was too empty for me; it didn't say anything to me."³ Carr saw herself as a participant, albeit somewhat peripheral, in the establishment of a national art. After meeting Lawren Harris she wrote, "I know [the Group of Seven] are building an art worthy of our great country, and I want to have my share, to put in a little spoke for the West, one woman holding up my end."⁴ She noted, however,

a difference in life on the West Coast: "The air is denser and moister, the growth more dense and lush, the skies heavy and lowering. . . . Beloved West, don't crush me! Keep my spirits high and strong for the struggle!"⁵

In contrast, Pavelic's portraiture and landscape imagery are quite traditional in their approach, though she was a founding member of the Limners, who are often credited with establishing a modern art scene in Victoria. Their shared interest was in the human condition and included members Maxwell Bates, Robin Skelton, Herbert Siebner, Richard Ciccimarra, Karl Spreitz and Nita Forest.⁶

As for writing on life and art, Pavelic did write an autobiography which has yet to be published. She also spoke eloquently on her artistic intentions and process, which are well documented by curators and critics. Also included in this exhibition is a short book of poetry by Pavelic, written as a young woman in her twenties, and a rhapsodic poem by Maltwood about an abalone shell as a kind of West Coast "holy grail."

We hope you enjoy this selection of works from the University of Victoria's permanent collection and that the examples selected provide new insight on the artistic expression of these three remarkable artists.

Caroline Riedel, Curator of Collections
University of Victoria Art Collections

The Abalone Shell

*A cup, a dish, the Holy Grail!
For in this vessel love doth sail,
And laughter, joy and wisdom too,
Thus all our youth we do renew.*

*Deep in its depths a garden grows,
In leaves of the trees sea spray blows,
How else are the rainbows thus caught,
That reflect the sun and your thought.*

*I sought to catch Light in a trap,
You have tossed it into my lap;
Beauty that can not fade or flee,
Enshrined in this gem of the sea.*

*There are depths that we can not plumb,
And heights about which we are dumb.
How could you part with such a thing,
An offering to me to bring.*

K. E. M.

The Abalone Shell (transcribed from original), Katharine Maltwood, n.d., 1976.026-1.12, University of Victoria Archives and Special Collections

As part of our academic integration initiatives, we invited Dr. Nicholas Bradley from the Department of English to write a response to the exhibition. Dr. Bradley's research interests include Canadian literature, American literature, environmental criticism and ethnographic literature. His current research projects concentrate on contemporary poetry and poetics, and on the intersections of literature and ethnography.

.. The Painter as Writer, The Writer as Painter

The worlds of literature and the visual arts are rarely far apart, and they meet in a variety of ways. Some writers have devoted themselves to painting: one thinks of Elizabeth Bishop and Derek Walcott as modern poets for whom the vocation of painting bears strongly on the literary art for which they are renowned. Another poet, P. K. Page (a resident of Victoria for much of her life), signed her paintings under her married name, P. K. Irwin, as if to suggest that her artistic persona changed, if ever so slightly, as she moved from one medium to another. Certain historical works of art criticism are now regarded for their literary importance, such as *Vasari's Lives* (1550) and *Ruskin's Modern Painters* (1843), and some contemporary writers, including the poet John Ashbery and the novelist John Updike, have had careers as art critics. Writers have frequently resorted to painterly terms to describe their enterprise; in a strikingly idiosyncratic example, Vladimir Nabokov claimed to hear the alphabet in colour. A rumination on "The Relations between Poetry and Painting" by Wallace Stevens, the American modernist poet, illustrates the view that the two modes are closely related. "No poet," Stevens wrote, "can have failed to recognize how often a detail, a propos or remark, in respect to painting, applies also to poetry. The truth is that there seems to exist a corpus of remarks in respect to painting, most often the remarks of painters themselves, which are as significant to poets as to painters."



Tessa Writing, Myfanwy Pavelic, 1954, oil on canvas, 56 x 44 cm, U993.7.165, Collection of Myfanwy Spencer Pavelic

His Connecticut was a world away from Victoria, but Stevens, born in 1879, and Emily Carr, born in 1871, were contemporaries; and his suggestion of the proximity of poetry and painting held true for Carr, even if her "poetry" was not verse but rather a poetic prose style. The significance of Carr's iconic paintings to the history of the visual representation of the West Coast is undoubted. If her substantial body of writing is less well known, it is nonetheless important to the region's literary history. Works such as *Klee Wyck* (1941) and *The Book of Small* (1942) have been noted for their literary accomplishment—*Klee Wyck* won the Governor General's Award—and, because of Carr's fascination with Indigenous life, they stand as testaments to the complex and often uneasy meetings of cultures on the West Coast. Paintings such as *Chill Day in June* and *Windswept Trees* employ the palette of greens and grays that characterizes Carr's depictions of coastal landscapes. A passage from *Klee Wyck* provides, in its description of three villages on Haida Gwaii, a comparable sense of the region's distinguishing climate: "Tanoo, Skedans and Cumshewa lie fairly close to each other on

¹ Rosemary Brown, *Katharine Emma Maltwood*, 52.

² *Ibid*, 51.

³ Bovey, *Relationships*, 25.

⁴ Emily Carr, *Hundreds and Thousands*, 5.

⁵ *Ibid*, 63.

⁶ Bovey, 25

the map, yet each is quite unlike the others when you come to it. All have the West Coast wetness but Cumshewa seems always to drip, always to be blurred with mist, its foliage always to hang wet-heavy. Cumshewa rain soaked my paper, Cumshewa rain trickled among my paints." Carr claimed that the experience of writing about a scene helped her paint it, which suggests that in some way she aspired in painting toward the condition of writing. Viewing her visual art in the context of her writing, and vice versa, gives an indication of her sustained commitment to understanding and figuring a sense of place.

In the cases of Katharine Maltwood and Myfanwy Pavelic, the connections between art and writing seem, to this observer, more elusive. Maltwood's sculpture and Pavelic's portraits, for example, appear differently connected to the artists' written works than Carr's visual landscapes do to their verbal equivalents. Yet Maltwood's writings on archaeology and mythology demonstrate her intellectual curiosity and range, and establish a climate of ideas in which her artistic imagery can be placed, while Pavelic's statements about her works serve as insightful commentaries on the paintings and her aspirations for them. Their written reflections on process and ambition shed light on their artistic visions and processes. And the ways in which writing featured in their careers link them to a range of other regional figures who likewise bridged the literary and visual-artistic worlds, such as Mary Randlett, Roy Kiyooka, and Jeff Wall. In *Tessa Writing*, Pavelic depicts the mysterious power by which the writer, like the reader, is transformed. The subject appears happily lost in her work, oblivious to her surroundings—an image of the capacity of art to transfix and transform, regardless of the shape it takes.

Nicholas Bradley, Professor

Department of English, University of Victoria



The Initial Idea, Katharine Maltwood, n.d., photographic print, 30 x 48 cm, U982.18.2

• • Archival evidence from Emily Carr, Katharine Maltwood and Myfanwy Pavelic shows us that not only did all three women work and produce art in Victoria in the twentieth century, but they also all wrote of their experiences and artistic insights. Through their writings and art we can see the confluence of new artistic style and development of personal iconic imagery in the work of all three artists.

In order to flesh out this closeness between these prominent artists progressing in almost parallel time, we must also consider the relatively early stages of Victoria's development as a city in order to broaden our view of locality and social space that we know as the home of all three artists.

The far-out West, where both Carr and Pavelic were born, and where Katharine Maltwood arrived later in her life, occupied a distant space in the makeup of Canada. The geographic isolation became less of an obstacle for prospective settlers with each successive development in travel technology. An awareness of remote Victoria started to develop in the eyes of an adolescent Canada.

The Gold Rush of the second half of the nineteenth century brought settlers from other areas of Canada and Victoria became a centre for trade. The 1870s brought from Britain an influx of women from English society⁷ and these women brought with them the "civilizing" nature of Britain. Art-making was regarded as an activity suited to women, and so, many women in Victoria began to focus on art, performing their roles in the colonial framework.⁸

The Island Arts Club (now known as the Victoria Sketch Club), with the positive and long-standing influence of the Crease and Pemberton families, is today the longest running arts-community group west of Ontario. It was in this cultural climate of the artistic community from which Carr emerged,⁹ and to a great extent rebelled against, practicing her

own style of western modernism. These women all emerged from the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, and their agency as artists, as well as their commercial success, have served to place them prominently in the history of western Canadian art of the twentieth century.

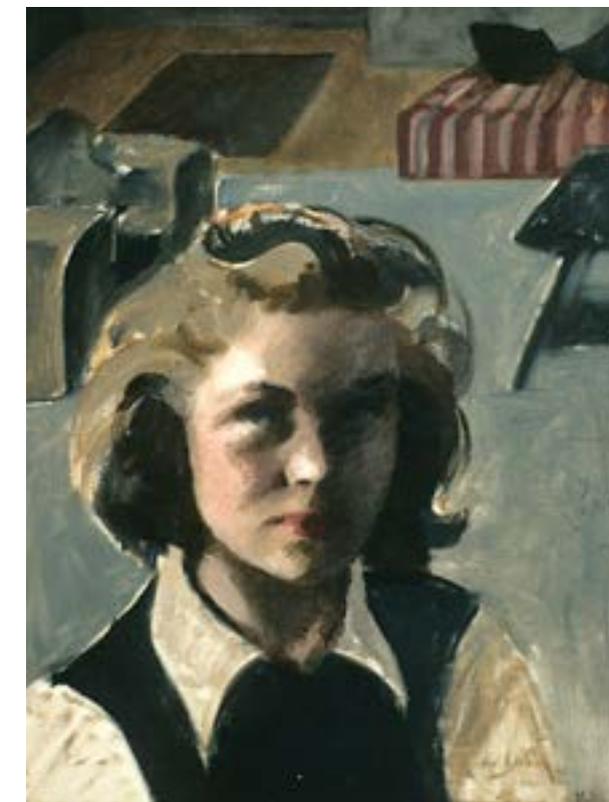
**Dorothy June Fraser, Margaret Russell
Fellowship Intern**

University of Victoria Art Collections

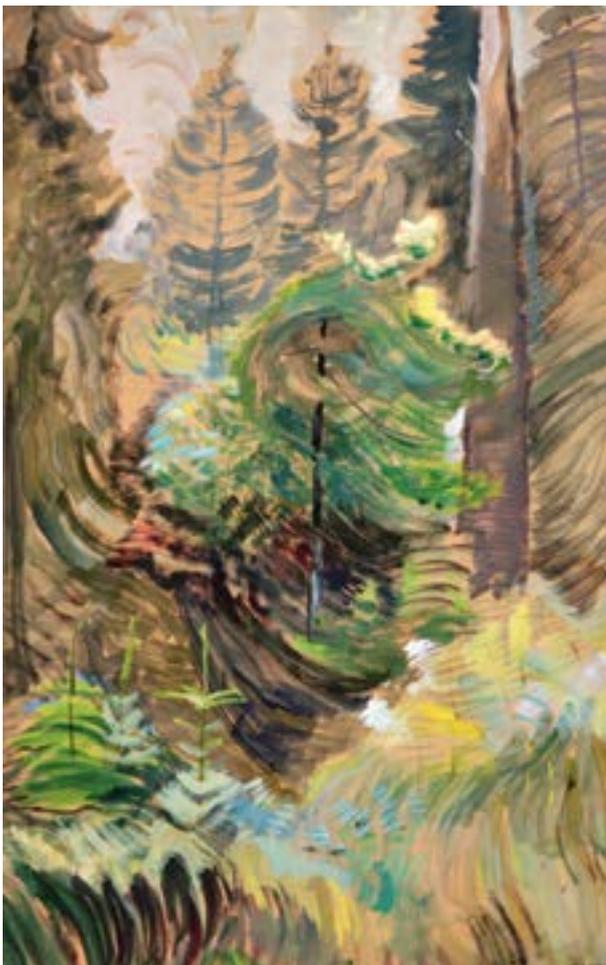
⁷ Karen Finlay, *A Woman's Place*, 11.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ John Lover, *History of the Victoria Sketch Club*, vii.



Self in Studio, Myfanwy Pavelic, 1940, oil on canvas, 79 x 63.5 cm, U994.1.2, Collection of Myfanwy Spencer Pavelic



Windswept Trees, Emily Carr, 1930s, oil and gasoline on paper, 85 x 54.5 cm, M964.1.110, Collection of John and Katharine Maltwood

Windswept Trees

Carr's work is often seen as expressionistic and somewhat romantic. When we see her works in oil that she mitigated with gasoline, we can see something more than this sweeping and generalized romantic intent. The use of gasoline as paint thinner allowed Carr to work with the medium in the woods, using oil in a more spontaneous,

quicken manner. Preferring this medium to all others during the thirties, when she was travelling into the woods for weeks at a time, she was able to gather the richness of the oil paint in an abbreviated way. Her works, executed differently than the nominally preferred medium of canvas, provided a distinctly different flavour on the palette of Canadian art. The element of speed in Carr's work does not diminish the quality, nor does it augment the power of her representations. The slow licking of the green, flaming undergrowth grows in the composition to a full-fledged and passionate fire in the trees. Her execution needed to be in the moment of her fire for the subject.

The Gift of Happiness

Myfanwy Pavelic described her relationship with Emily Carr to Jan Ross, curator of Emily Carr House in Victoria, who recounted the story of the gift of *Happiness* in an interview in 2011. Pavelic recalled the evolving relationship she had with Emily Carr, as well as the little biographical details that fascinate any student of art or storyteller: her fear of the monkey, Woo, and how gentle Carr was with her as a young child. In fact, Carr was gentle with all children and cared for them "as long as they didn't taunt her animals."¹⁰

Myfanwy Pavelic (then Spencer) had always had talent for music as well as art. At a young age, her mother, who knew of Emily Carr and her work, took her to be introduced to the artist, hoping that a mentorship would evolve. The two took to each other, and a friendship, as well as a mentorship, began.

Over the years, as their friendship progressed, so did Pavelic's involvement in art. Carr provided her young protégé with experience in cataloguing works and preparing them for shipment to Carr's dealer, Max Stern, in Montreal. By this time, Carr had already suffered a series of heart attacks and Pavelic

was aiding her in her studio regularly. One day she told Pavelic that she wanted to thank her for her help by giving her a piece of her work: any painting she wanted. Myfanwy immediately knew the piece.

She selected it, stating, "It's one of your happiest paintings."

Emily Carr knew then that Myfanwy had truly connected with her work. An instinctive knowing between artists had been established. Carr smiled and told Pavelic to turn the painting over. She obliged and saw scrawled on the back of the piece its simple title: *Happiness*.¹¹

In Her Own Words

*"I have done a charcoal sketch today of young pines at the foot of a forest. I may take 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. . . ."*¹²

*" . . . Sketching in the big woods is wonderful. . . . being elderly, you spread your camp stool and sit and look round. 'Don't see much here. Wait.' Out comes a cigarette. The mosquitoes back away from the smoke. Everything is green. Everything is waiting and still."*¹³

¹⁰ Interview between Dorothy June Fraser and Jan Ross, October 2011.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Emily Carr, *Complete Writings*, 671.

¹³ Ibid, 793.



Happiness, Emily Carr, 1939, oil on paper, 85 x 54 cm, U990.17.1-1, Gift of Nikolai and Myfanwy Pavelic



Yehudi Menuhin—Standing (Blue), Myfanwy Pavelic, 1982, acrylic on canvas, 137 x 86 cm, U993.7.59, Collection of Myfanwy Spencer Pavelic



Katharine Hepburn, Myfanwy Pavelic, 1980, acrylic on canvas, 107 x 79 cm, U984.23.1, Collection of Myfanwy Spencer Pavelic

Myfanwy Pavelic's Portraiture

Myfanwy Pavelic was a dedicated portraitist, and in her lifetime she had the opportunity to paint many well-known actors, politicians, musicians and conductors. She has been the only Canadian artist to be featured in the British National Gallery of Portraiture for her painting of Yehudi Menuhin. Her subjects were often connected to her through friendships, and this is shown through her work with both Menuhin and Katharine Hepburn. As a young girl, she saw Menuhin play in New York, a child prodigy. Forty-five years later they met and became fast friends. Her desire to portray the connection between people is also explored in her *Relationships* series from the mid-1980s. Other subjects are presented more formally. She required all of her sitters, including Pierre Trudeau, to come to her studio in Sidney. This marks Pavelic's integration of professional and personal life. Indeed, her work as a portraitist required her ability to show both the minute and grand movements and gestures of her subjects. Her process reveals that not only did she do minor and major works in both the "preparatory" medium of charcoal as well as the "high art" medium of oil paint, but that she also used the photograph as part of her production. Many of her works after the 1970s were based on photographs by Karl Spreitz, as well as on her intensive preparatory process.

In Her Own Words

Self Portraits

"I love nature... But what I love about it is its limitlessness. People have a boundary, and a depth, you can go into that depth—it's really the inside that interests me, much more than their look."¹⁴

About Her Process

"I don't do a sketch as a preliminary to a painting because then all I have been feeling has gone into the drawing and I need a new "something"—call it an inspiration if you like—in order to work on the paintings."¹⁵

On Her Approach to the Relationship Series

"As I have said many times before, I cannot separate drawing and painting from living. Each new paper or canvas holds for me the same possibility for discovery and growth—as each new day. Possibility, yes, but only after countless hours—eager—hesitant, sometimes seemingly hopeless hours, there will come that rare moment of realizing a deeper understanding. And, from that small step forward—one starts again."¹⁶

Creating Portraits

"The better I knew the models, the easier it was for me. I remember asking Karl [Spreitz] to help me by photographing them. Karl had a way of talking to people that I didn't. Somehow, just by what he said, he would give them an idea of where to sit. He would walk around with his camera, and at first they would be stiff and uncomfortable. Then they'd relax when they could see he wasn't busy getting them posed. Very often, I would see the very thing that I like, and I'd start working."¹⁷

¹⁴ Bovey, *Inner Explorations*, 49.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 47.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 53.

¹⁷ From the autobiography of Myfanwy Pavelic, edited by Robert Amos (unpublished).



Blue Sky (Pierre Trudeau), Myfanwy Pavelic, 1991, acrylic on canvas, 121.5 x 91.5 cm, U000.31.9, Gift of Dr. Michael C. Williams



Head of Canada, Katharine Maltwood, 1912, sandstone, 38 x 34 x 39 cm, M964.1.362, Gift of John and Katharine Maltwood



Canada, Katharine Maltwood, n.d., photographic print, 50.5 x 40.5 cm, U982.18.10

Head of Canada

Maltwood's feminist start began at the Moira School in England. Raised in a family that promoted artistic endeavours, as well as having attended an all girls' school in her early years, shaped Maltwood into an artist who not only expressed her views but actively participated in the arts in England as well as the Arts and Crafts movement in the United States. Though her art practice was connected directly to her influences from Victorian England, she saw promise in the nation of Canada. When Maltwood and her husband relocated to Canada directly preceding World War Two, it was not a random decision. Her monumental sculpture, *Primeval Canada Awakening to her Destiny* was made earlier in her career, before she moved to Canada. This connection to her future home is embodied in her *Head of Canada*. This sculpture can be seen as an epitome of the feminist spirit early in the twentieth century as well as a testament to the universality that the proponents of Theosophy sought in their religious explorations. Maltwood's sculpture clearly represents her ties to Canada, nationhood and feminism.

Treetop Sketches

When Katharine Maltwood was in her sixties, she turned, for health reasons, from sculpture to landscape sketching. She still enjoyed country retreats at a number of properties outside Cowichan Bay, near Cordova Bay and on Beach Drive. Her tree sketches show twisted forms in vibrant colours and suggest her knowledge of Carr's work. Her titles and depictions are typically romantic, such as *November Mists Clothe the Arbutus Stems in Enchantments*, and mountains and trees often suggest faces of people residing within.



November Mists Clothe the Arbutus Stems in Enchantments, Katharine Maltwood, 1939, coloured pencil on paper, 18 x 26 cm, M964.1.450-64, Gift of John and Katharine Maltwood

Magna Mater

Maltwood's first major sculptural work carved in Portland stone (see photograph of original work, right) is a standing testament to Maltwood's ideas of iconic embodiment as well as feminism. Rosemary Brown describes a central figure that represents nature, "crouched and bound, contemplating the mass of humanity struggling out and in on either side. The figures are enclosed in a temple-like frame which critics found reminiscent of Archaic or Egyptian architecture."¹⁸ Critics' responses to this work were positive. The *Sunday Times* of April 30, 1911 praised its "truly monumental quality." Further praise came from an unnamed clipping dated July 28, 1911. The article states that *Magna Mater* expresses the elemental truth of motherhood, "not in the ordinary individual sense but in the larger universal sense."¹⁹ The article states that all supporters of the Women's Movement should "pay homage" to Maltwood's "poem in stone" and asks, "But are women really sitting at the feet of man waiting to applaud their poem. Are they not rather making their own poems, using their own god-like gifts of Creation in many ways? Not as Mothers only, but as Makers, women are coming into their own."

The fact that Maltwood kept this article and noted on it "Votes for Women" supports the notion of her sympathies with the Women's Movement and how she viewed herself as a serious artist.

The piece was accepted for exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1911. This text was included with the piece:

"Great travail is created for every man from the day he goes out of his mother's womb until the day he returns to the Mother of all things."

Magna Mater was commissioned by Elbert Hubbard, one of the key figures in the American Arts and Crafts movement. Hubbard's writings focused on simplicity in form and were widely read. He himself hand made items that included works in copper, leather and furniture. He supported feminism and women's rights. His wife, Alice Hubbard, wrote about *Magna Mater* to Katharine Maltwood:

"We have cemented Her there among the stones and time cannot move her, nor man. She is part of us."²⁰



Photograph of Magna Mater, Katharine Maltwood, n.d., photographic print, 40.5 x 50.5 cm, U982.18.4

Somerset Zodiac

Maltwood's investigation of spirituality, including the Theosophy of Mme. Blavatsky, greatly influenced her ideas and her oeuvre. The theosophical practice explored ideas of universal spirituality, and this kind of religious inquiry would be continued by many Canadian artists after her, such as Lawren Harris. Her interest in astrology also played a large part in her later practice. The *Somerset Zodiac* combines her interest in the topological findings from aerial maps and astrology and the mythology of King Arthur's Britain. This work was made in British Columbia and Maltwood's exhaustive research on Zodiac symbols as well as drafts of her Somerset manuscript are a part of the University of Victoria Archives' extensive Maltwood fonds.



Somerset Zodiac, Katharine Maltwood, n.d., wood, 170 cm diameter, M964.1.369, Gift of John and Katharine Maltwood

In Her Own Words

"I shall never forget my utter amazement when the truth dawned on me. . . . So that was the origin of the legendary lion I had been questing! A nature effigy and a god of sun-worshippers! Leo of the Zodiac! . . . Perhaps this was the most thrilling moment of my discovery. . . .

". . . To look back to the spiritual understanding of 5000 years ago is neither easy for he who writes nor he who reads. If these notes are consequently misleading it is neither the fault of the High History nor of the Temple of the stars, but that our outlook is shrouded in the mists of ignorance and material short-sightedness of universal law. . . ."²¹

¹⁸ Brown, pg. 21

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Maltwood fonds, correspondence with Alice Hubbard.

²¹ K. E. Maltwood, *The Enchantments of Britain*.

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