

John Kyle

1871 - 1958

John Kyle was born in 1871 in Hawick, Scotland. After leaving school he worked as a watchmaker and jeweller while taking art classes at night school. After a spell teaching art at a school, he won a scholarship to the Royal College of Art on London. On leaving the College he studied in Bruges and Paris before taking up a school headship in Scotland.

Moving to Canada, he took a post in Vancouver in 1905 as Art Supervisor for City Schools. He wrote and illustrated magazine articles on art and crafts, displayed paintings at Studio Club exhibitions and in 1908, with five other enthusiasts, he created the B.C. Society of Fine Arts (BCSFA). The following year he became one of the founders of the Island Arts and Craft Society (IACS) and exhibited in the annual shows of both the IACS and the BCSFA.

Kyle was appointed Director of Technical Education for the Province in 1913, a position he held until 1938. He became dedicated to organizational initiatives, the introduction of night school classes in art, correspondence courses for isolated regions and taking the cause of art education to every school board in the province. Appointed Director of the Teachers Provincial Summer School in Victoria in 1927, a post he held for nine years, he is credited with giving Emily Carr the first public exhibition of her unique West Coast paintings. Given his range of professional duties, it is not surprising that his own career as an artist had tapered off from this time.

After retirement he was elected President of the IACS in 1939. At that time the Society was in a state of decline, and it was a tribute to Kyle's energy that he was able to sustain the ailing organization through the War years until his resignation, at the age of eighty, in 1951. Fittingly, he was to enjoy a major retrospective solo exhibition of twenty oil and watercolour paintings at the new Art Gallery of Greater Victoria in 1957.

Teaching to the end, he died in 1958, described in the Province newspaper as "an outstanding educationalist and one of the most influential men in the history of British Columbia Arts and Crafts."



JOHN KYLE
FATHER OF PROGRESSIVE & TECHNICAL EDUCATION
IN BRITISH COLUMBIA
SEPTEMBER 1914 - 1916

*Royal Museum of British Columbia Archives,
D-07295*