

The period leading up to our annual exhibition is inevitably one of furious activity, stress and – as our history shows – some controversy.

Hanging committees are typically under pressure from members bidding for the more favourable placements or seeking special consideration such as the grouping of their pictures.



But one particular event stands out. According to a piece in the Victoria Daily Colonist, dated August 18 1957, “the biggest boner in Victoria Art history was pulled back in the 1930s by members of the Island Arts and Crafts Society – they hid Emily Carr paintings behind a door at one of their exhibitions.”

It is assumed that the hanging committee at that time felt that these *avant-garde* pictures had little merit, at least in the eyes of those more predisposed to genteel English watercolours than bold totems or sensuous trees and skies. Perhaps the committee felt themselves justified in protecting the sensitivities of a

culturally conservative Victoria public.

The committee may well have been mindful of the warning issued by past Society president, Dr, Edward Hassell, artistically a die hard conservative, but otherwise a well-respected resident medical officer at the Royal Jubilee Hospital. In his diagnosis, the good Doctor expressed the fear that Emily had suffered “an attack of Neo- or Post-impressionism,” a virus imported from her time in Paris which would leave her permanently squint-eyed.

In 2005, a Times-Colonist reporter good-humouredly reported that our Club still wears the philistine image of this slight like a paint-spattered smock. Indeed, by the turn of the century, *War Canoes*, a work of the now iconic Emily Carr had sold for \$1,018,750 at the Heffel Fine Art Auction House in Toronto, and a record \$1,121,250 was bid on a forest scene titled *Quiet*.

But perhaps we should show some mercy to those hapless hangers. The scale of this vindication would have astonished even the likes of Uhthoff, Maynard and Shadbolt, Carr’s staunchest contemporary admirers in the Society.

