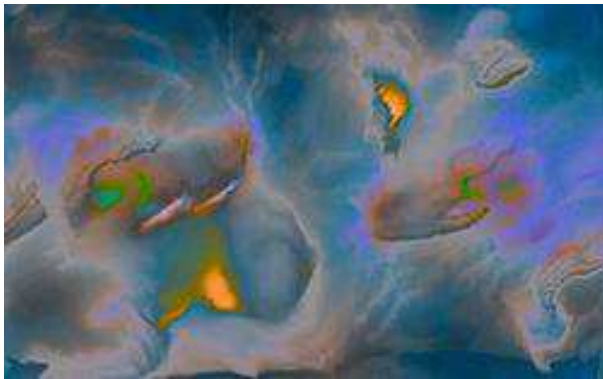


# *Beyond the Trees:* *Wallpapers in Dialogue with* *Emily Carr*



Sara Ludy  
*Cloud Pond 2*, 2015  
computer-generated animation  
Courtesy of the artist



Emily Carr  
*Deep Forest*, circa 1931  
oil on canvas  
Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Emily Carr Trust

TEACHER'S STUDY GUIDE  
Spring 2015

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# Vancouver Art Gallery

## Teacher's Guide for School Programs

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The exhibition *Beyond the Trees: Wallpapers in Dialogue with Emily Carr* showcases works by Emily Carr and Wallpapers, a collective comprising the artists Sara Ludy, Nicolas Sassoon and Sylvain Saily. It considers the relationship between painted and digital representations of the Canadian West Coast landscape and explores how they can coexist. Although clearly different in their aesthetic, both Wallpapers' contemporary wall projections and Emily Carr's many historical works present a mediated and subjective view of nature.

### DEAR TEACHER:

This guide will assist you in preparing for your tour of the exhibition *Beyond the Trees: Wallpapers in Dialogue with Emily Carr*. It also provides follow-up activities to facilitate discussion after your Gallery visit. Engaging in the suggested activities before and after your visit will reinforce ideas generated by the tour and build continuity between the Gallery experience and your ongoing work in the classroom. Most activities require few materials and can be adapted easily to the age, grade level and needs of your students. Underlined words in this guide are defined in the Vocabulary section.

The tour of *Beyond the Trees: Wallpapers in Dialogue with Emily Carr* has three main goals:

- to introduce students to the work of the artists Emily Carr and Wallpapers,
- to consider diverse artistic traditions and disciplines,
- to explore individual artworks within historical, social and cultural contexts.

## THE EXHIBITION: *Beyond the Trees: Wallpapers in Dialogue with Emily Carr*

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The exhibition *Beyond the Trees: Wallpapers in Dialogue with Emily Carr* is the fifth in a series of dialogues with Emily Carr organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery. The exhibition considers two contrasting representations of nature and the shift of perspective that occurs between our physical and virtual experiences.

Both the Vancouver-based collective Wallpapers (Sara Ludy, Nicolas Sassoon and Sylvain Saily) and the West Coast Modernist Emily Carr invite us to reflect on their interpretations of BC's coastal landscape; the former through the use of digitally animated patterns and the latter by means of nuanced brushstrokes of line and colour. In both, nature is viewed through powerful aesthetic filters.

Wallpapers uses technology to produce an immersive environment that both mimics and experiments with the scales and forms found in nature. Responding to the architecture of the gallery, their new site-specific works create different experiences. The first room reflects a monumental outdoor environment through its immersive movement and imagery. The second, more confined and intimate space utilizes subtle movements with defined textures and patterns to convey the experience of looking outside while indoors.

In contrast, a sizable selection of Emily Carr's Modernist paintings is presented salon style and arranged according to her use of formal elements, particularly those of line, shape, colour and movement. The mounted clusters of oil paintings and works on paper emphasize the rhythms captured in her landscape imagery, allowing us to see them as both individual works and a cohesive whole. Carr's landscapes have become emblematic of this region's forested landscape, and to present several of her paintings together is to emulate an immersive space similar to that of Wallpapers' projections.

## ARTISTS' BACKGROUND

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### **Emily Carr (1871–1945)**

Born in 1871, Emily Carr was one of the most important British Columbia artists of her generation, best known for her work documenting the villages and totem poles of First Nations peoples of BC and her paintings of the forests of Vancouver Island.

Carr studied art in the US and Europe, where she was introduced to outdoor sketching along with new approaches to art making. In 1912, after her return to Canada, she travelled north, visiting First Nations villages, and produced her first major canvases of First Nations subject matter. In these works, influenced by her explorations of modernism in Europe, she used bright colours and broken brushwork. Carr offered these works for sale to the provincial government, which rejected the work on the grounds that it was not “documentary”—it was, in essence, too abstract, too specifically an artist’s vision. Dejected, she returned to Victoria to make a living by running a boarding house, raising sheepdogs, making pottery and giving art lessons. Between 1913 and 1927, Carr produced very little painting.

In 1927, Carr’s work was included in the exhibition West Coast Art: Native and Modern at the National Gallery in Ottawa. This exhibition was her introduction to other artists, particularly members of the Group of Seven, who recognized the quality of her work. From 1929 to 1931, Carr chose to work entirely in charcoal in order to concentrate on line, shape, form and design, and was influenced by the American artist Mark Tobey and ideas of Cubism. Subsequently, Carr began to devote most of her attention to landscape, particularly the forest, as her subject. Her paintings from the 1930s express her strong identification with the BC landscape and her belief that a profound expression of spirituality could be found in nature. They are among her strongest and most forceful works, in which she developed her own Modernist style of rich, layered coloration and increasing abstraction.

In the late 1930s, as her health worsened, Carr began to focus more energy on writing, producing an important series of books, including *Klee Wyck*, a collection of stories based on her experiences with First Nations people, which won the Governor General’s Award for Literature in 1941. She died in 1945 in Victoria at the age of seventy-four, recognized as an artist and writer of major importance.

### **Wallpapers (2011–present)**

Wallpapers is a Vancouver-based collaborative project founded in 2011 by the artists Sara Ludy (b. 1980), Nicolas Sassoon (b. 1981) and Sylvain Saily (b. 1983). Since its creation, Wallpapers has exhibited work in two contexts: online at [w-a-l-l-p-a-p-e-r-s.net](http://w-a-l-l-p-a-p-e-r-s.net) and in site-specific installations at international exhibitions and events.

Online, Wallpapers showcases the members’ work as a catalogue of digital patterns created by each artist. Each digital pattern or wallpaper from the catalogue is displayed full-screen on its own URL, like the conventional desktop wallpaper on our computer screens. Each artwork is created with the ambition to become actual wallpaper, an image with a substantial lifespan, to be looked at and experienced through time.

Wallpapers offline takes form as site-specific installations consisting of large-scale projections onto physical environments. These installations employ wallpapers from the online catalogue and project them in space on a monumental scale, producing environments that respond to specific architectural and exhibition contexts. This allows audiences to interact with and immerse themselves in augmented architectures.

Wallpapers’ work has been shown at 319 Scholes in New York and PAMI festival in London, and at Western Front Gallery and New Forms Festival 14 in Vancouver.

# Digital Art 101

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**Digital art** is an artistic work or practice that uses digital technology as an essential part of the creative or presentation process. It can be defined as any art made with the help of a computer. Pioneered in the 1970s, digital art only became a recognized and viable art form toward the end of the twentieth century, with the widespread availability of computers, appropriate software, video equipment and digital cameras, and the subsequent development of increasingly sophisticated digital tools.

## Is digital art really art?

It has been argued that digital art is not real art because it is computer-generated and consists of infinite copies with no “original.” However, it is now widely accepted as art, because it requires creativity and knowledge of art and design principles. With the use of computers, artists can create works that were never possible with existing materials. Digital art requires a creative spirit and an understanding of art, design and computer software. Digital artists are able to move easily between the worlds of art, science, math and digital technology.

## What are some kinds of digital art? Where are they used?

- Graphic illustrations: in advertising, logos, brochures, posters
- Illustrations: in books, comics, web sites
- 3D models: in animations, movies, video games
- Digital photo artwork to create posters, advertisements
- Digital painting
- Web sites
- Computer-generated images
- Animations
- Games

## Some useful terms related to the exhibition:

**animated GIF** (Graphics Interchange Format): a graphic image that moves on the screen. Examples include a twirling icon, a banner with a hand that waves and letters that magically get larger. An animated GIF can loop endlessly or it can present one or a few sequences and then stop. Animated GIFs are frequently used in Web ad banners.

**moiré**: a visually perceived pattern that forms when one set of lines or dots is superimposed on another set of lines or dots, where the sets differ in relative size, angle, or spacing. A moiré can be seen when looking through an ordinary window screen at another screen or background. It can also be generated by a photographic or electronic reproduction, either deliberately, by various digital imaging and computer graphics techniques, or accidentally.

**fractal art**: a form of algorithmic art created by calculating fractal objects and representing the calculation results as still images, animations and media. It is a genre of computer art and digital art, new media art forms. Fractals are infinitely complex, never-ending patterns that are replicated across different scales. Abstract fractals can be generated by a computer calculating a simple equation repeatedly. They are widely familiar, since nature is full of fractals: trees, rivers, coastlines, mountains, clouds, seashells, hurricanes, etc.

# PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: About the Artists

(intermediate and secondary students)

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**Objective:**

Students read, research and share information about the artists represented in the exhibition.

**Materials:**

- ❑ writing materials
- ❑ access to the internet
- Some useful websites:
  - [www.artcyclopedia.com](http://www.artcyclopedia.com)
  - [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)
  - <http://w-a-l-l-p-a-p-e-r-s.net>
- ❑ Artist Information Sheet (p. 8) and Student Worksheet (p. 9)

**Process:**

1. Divide the students into small groups and assign an artist to each group.
2. Provide each group with a copy of the Artist Information Sheet (p. 8)
3. Give each student a copy of the Student Worksheet (p. 9) and ask them to transfer the information about their artist to the appropriate box.
4. Have students figure out what they need to know to complete the section on their artist, and search the internet, either at home or at school. Have students explore the Wallpapers website: <http://w-a-l-l-p-a-p-e-r-s.net>. Older students can find more information; younger students, just the basics.
5. Ask each group to find/copy/sketch a piece of work by each artist on a separate piece of paper.
6. Have each group present the information on their artist while the rest of the class adds the information to their worksheets.

**Conclusion:****Discuss:**

- What were some of the most interesting things that students learned or discovered?
- Which artist and/or kinds of artwork made students curious about seeing the actual work in the exhibition?
- Which artist, ways of working or ideas did the students want to find out more about?

# Artist Information Sheet

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## Emily Carr

- Born and died in Victoria, British Columbia
- Studied art in San Francisco, England and France, travelled through BC
- Lived alone most of the time, kept lots of animals
- Wrote many books toward the end of her life, which were well received
- Painted only forest landscapes later in her life
- Worked only in charcoal from 1929 to 1931 to focus on line, shape, form and design
- Was influenced by European art movements such as Fauvism and Cubism
- Sketched outdoors using thinned oil paint on paper, made final paintings in her studio using oil paint on canvas

## Wallpapers

- Vancouver-based artists' collective composed of Sara Ludy, Nicolas Sassoon and Sylvain Saily
- Began working together in 2011
- Use computer-generated animated patterns to create digital art
- Show their work online on their website: [w-a-l-l-p-a-p-e-r-s.net](http://w-a-l-l-p-a-p-e-r-s.net)
- Show their work offline at site-specific installations where digital patterns are projected onto walls
- Draw inspiration from nature, computer wallpaper, actual wallpaper on walls
- Use mainstream 3D and/or animation software to develop their patterns



## Student Worksheet

	Emily Carr	Wallpapers
Personal Information		
Type of Art		
Known for		
Name of an Artwork		

## PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: Sketch and Paint (all grades)

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### Objective:

Students are introduced to Emily Carr's process of working by sketching outdoors and then, back in the classroom, creating a painting based on the sketch.

### Discussion:

Emily Carr often created sketches for her landscapes out in nature, where she could study the colours and textures of the trees, foliage, lakes and sky, and observe the way light, wind and weather affected her subjects. She often began sketching in charcoal or thinned oil paint, and did the final work later, back in the studio. She would make oil paintings based on—but not exactly the same as—her sketches.

Carr wrote the following passage in her book *Growing Pains*:

“Outdoor study was as different from studio study as eating is from drinking. Indoors we munched and chewed our subjects. Fingertips roamed objects feeling for bumps and depressions. We tested textures, observed contours. Sketching outdoors was a fluid process, half looking, half dreaming, awaiting invitation from the spirit of the subject to ‘come, meet me half way.’ Outdoor sketching was as much longing as labour. Atmosphere, space cannot be touched, bullied like the vegetables of still life or like the plaster casts. These space things asked to be felt not with fingertips but with one’s whole self.”

### Materials:

For Part 1:

- drawing pads, or clipboards and sheets of paper
- coloured pencils, crayons or pastels

For Part 2:

- thicker paper for painting
- paint—preferably tempera or acrylic, but any available paint will work
- paintbrushes

### Process:

Part 1:

1. Discuss Carr's two-step approach to her painting, and tell the students they are going to go outdoors and make a colour sketch as a precursor to a painting. Read them the above excerpt from *Growing Pains*.
2. Choose an outdoor area with some greenery and one or more trees. Have the students decide on a starting perspective; for example:
  - close up, with tree trunk or branches filling the page,
  - from a distance, including grass, trees and sky,
  - looking up at a single tree, including the top of the tree and an expanse of sky.

3. Have them look closely at the greens and yellows of the leaves, the browns and greys of the trunk and branches, and the blues and greys of the sky. Remind them that landscape painters like Carr didn't use just one colour, but mixed and blended colours and shades to create rich, dense surfaces.
4. Have the students make a few colour sketches from different perspectives or angles, from close up and far away. Encourage them to fill the page with quick detail—broad strokes of colours, lines and shapes that include all the elements in their line of vision.

**Part 2:**

1. Back in the classroom, within a week after making the sketches, have the students look at their sketches and choose the one they would most like to make a painting from. What parts of their sketch do they want to leave in? What parts would they like to change? Does the composition feel balanced, or are there some areas they would like to add something to or remove something from? Would they like to combine elements from two drawings?
2. Have the students set up workspaces at their tables, where they can see their sketches and have access to paper, paint and brushes.
3. Have them paint their landscapes, encouraging them to fill the page, layering on and blending colours as they work.

**Conclusion:**

- Display the students' work: painting alongside sketch.
- Have them look at the work and talk about the similarities and differences in materials, locations, colours and composition.
- Discuss the process, how easy or hard it was to create the work, the differences between making the sketch and creating the painting.

## PRE- or POST-VISIT ACTIVITY: Experimenting with Digital Art (all grades)

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### **Objective:**

Students explore making digital art on three different websites.

### **Discussion:**

Wallpapers produces digital art in the form of [GIFs](#), fractals and other computer-generated art forms. All three artists employ the use of mainstream software to create their work, much of which is readily available to the public to work and experiment with. Several websites offer applications that use similar software specifically for the purpose of making and experimenting with digital art.

### **Materials:**

- access to the internet
- Experimenting with Digital Art Worksheet (p. 13)
- printer (optional)

### **Process:**

1. Discuss digital art. What is it? How is it made? Where have students seen digital art?
2. Give each student a copy of the Experimenting with Digital Art Worksheet (p. 13).
3. Have students visit the websites listed on the worksheet.
4. Encourage students to experiment making digital art at each site.
5. Have students fill out their worksheets.
6. If a printer is available, have each student print one of their digital artworks from their favourite website.
7. As a class, or in student groups, discuss the pros and cons of each website. Students can refer to their worksheets.
8. Display printed work in the classroom.

### **Conclusion:**

- Have students share their experiences working with the websites.
- Did they feel like they were making art?
- How was the process different than drawing or other art forms?
- What other forms of digital art would they like to experiment with?

## Experimenting with Digital Art Worksheet

1. **Kaleidoscope Painter:** <http://permadi.com/java/spaint/spaint.html>
2. **The Scribbler:** [www.zefrank.com/scribbler/](http://www.zefrank.com/scribbler/)
3. **Bomomo:** <http://bomomo.com>

	<b>Kaleidoscope</b>	<b>The Scribbler</b>	<b>Bomomo</b>
<b>PROS</b>			
<b>CONS</b>			

## PRE- or POST-VISIT ACTIVITY: Forest Forms (primary and intermediate grades)

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### **Objective:**

Students create an abstract forest collage focusing on shape, form and colour.

### **Discussion:**

Bright colours and bold forms characterize many of Emily Carr's paintings. As she progressed as a painter, her works became increasingly abstract and simplified, particularly the trees in her paintings of BC forests. Over time, Carr began to simplify her colours as well. She did not attempt to portray her subject in a realistic manner; rather, she used the real world as inspiration for abstract, personal interpretations of her subjects.

### **Materials:**

- construction paper in a variety of colours
- pencils
- scissors
- glue
- printer
- access to the internet
- printed image of a landscape OR one of Emily Carr's paintings

### **Process:**

1. Discuss Carr's style of painting and her use of simple shapes, forms and colour to represent landscapes.
2. Have students find or print an image of a Carr painting OR an image of a Canadian landscape of their choice. If a printer is not available, have students look at some works by Carr and then use their imagination to create a forest.
3. Encourage students to look at the painting or printed image as if it were a combination of simple shapes. What shapes do they see?
4. Provide students with a selection of construction paper in a variety of colours.
5. Have them draw the major shapes they see onto the construction paper of their chosen colours.
6. Ask students to show light and shadow by using different shades of colour.
7. Have students glue shapes onto a background sheet of construction paper to create a bold and simplified landscape.
9. Display work in the classroom.

### **Conclusion:**

- Have students look at the work and talk about the similarities and differences in colour, shapes and compositions.
- Discuss the process: how easy or hard it was to create the work, and the differences between creating a shape collage, a painting and a landscape.
- How do students perceive landscape and nature differently now?

## PRE- or POST-VISIT ACTIVITY: Natural Patterns (all grades)

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### Objective:

Students look closely to find repeating patterns and shapes in nature.

### Discussion:

In her work, Sara Ludy inputs algorithms similar to patterns observed in nature to create computer-generated fractals reminiscent of clouds and vines. In her work of the first decades of the twentieth century, Emily Carr used repeated abstract shapes and patterns inspired by her experiences outdoors and her exposure to the modern art trends of the time. Although the two artists are vastly different in their mediums and interpretations, both of them explore patterns in nature and the visible regularities of form found in the natural world.

### Materials:

- paper, 5"x 8" or bigger (2 sheets per student)
- coloured pencils OR pastels

### Process:

1. Discuss patterns found in nature. Where do we see patterns? What are some patterns we see when we look closely at a leaf? insects? the ocean?
2. Go outside to an area with trees, flowers, rocks and other naturally occurring things.
3. Ask students to find a natural object with a repeating pattern: a leaf, rock, flower petal, branch, etc.
4. Have students bring their items back to the classroom, and provide each student with 2 sheets of paper.
5. On the first sheet of paper, have each student copy the pattern of his/her object as realistically as possible, filling the whole sheet of paper.
6. Ask students to use coloured pencils or pastels to colour and shade their work in realistic colours.
7. On the second sheet of paper, have each student draw the pattern again—but this time to make it abstract by using flat blocks of colour, reducing parts to simple shapes like triangles or circles, changing colours such as making a rock green or a pinecone purple. They might play with size and scale. Again, have them fill the whole page and use the same drawing tools that they did for the realistic drawing.
8. Display the abstract and realistic artworks in the classroom side by side.

### Conclusion:

- Discuss the ways in which the realistic and abstract drawings relate to one another and to the original object.
- Which works draw the students' attention? Why?
- Are the realistic or abstract drawings more interesting? Why?
- Should artists show nature exactly as it is, or is it reasonable, or even important, for artists to use their imaginations and digital technology to portray a place or experience in an abstract way?

# VOCABULARY

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**abstract/abstraction:** a style of art that can be thought of in two ways:

- a) the artist begins with a recognizable subject and alters, distorts, manipulates or simplifies elements of it;
- b) the artist creates purely abstract forms that are unrecognizable and have no direct reference to external reality (also called non-representational art).

**algorithm:** a procedure or set of rules to be followed in calculations or other problem-solving operations, especially by a computer.

**contemporary:** created in the last thirty years. Most contemporary artists are living artists.

**Cubism:** an early twentieth-century avant-garde art movement pioneered by Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso. In Cubist artwork, objects are analyzed, broken up and reassembled in an abstracted form—instead of depicting a subject from one viewpoint, the artist depicts it from a multitude of viewpoints to represent the subject in a greater context.

**Fauvism:** an art movement (whose name means “wild beasts”) that originated in France at the end of the nineteenth century. Fauvists were concerned with creating fresh and spontaneous images, and used brilliant colours in an arbitrary and decorative way.

**fractal art:** a form of algorithmic art created by calculating fractal objects and representing the calculation results as still images, animations and media. It is a genre of computer art and digital art, [new media forms](#). Fractals are infinitely complex, never-ending patterns that are replicated across different scales. Abstract fractals can be generated by a computer calculating a simple equation repeatedly. They are widely familiar, since nature is full of fractals: trees, rivers, coastlines, mountains, clouds, seashells, hurricanes, etc.

**GIF:** (Graphics Interchange Format): a bitmap image format. An animated GIF is a graphic image that moves on the screen: a twirling icon, a banner with a hand that waves, letters that magically get larger. An animated GIF can loop endlessly, or it can present one or a few sequences and then stop. Animated GIFs are frequently used in Web ad banners.

**installation:** art that is created from a wide range of materials and installed in a specific environment. An installation may be temporary or permanent. The term came into wide use in the 1970s.

**landscape:** artwork in which the subject is a view of the exterior physical world. Traditionally, landscapes have been paintings or drawings depicting natural scenes and are often concerned with light, space and setting.

**Modern/Modernism:** a historical period of art practice—from 1850 to 1970—during which approaches to art embraced new ideas in science, political thought and many other areas. The Modernists rejected the restrictions of past art traditions and stressed innovation over all other values.

**moiré:** a visually perceived pattern that forms when one set of lines or dots is superimposed on another set of lines or dots, where the sets differ in relative size, angle, or spacing. A



moiré can be seen when looking through an ordinary window screen at another screen or background. It can also be generated by a photographic or electronic reproduction, either deliberately, by various digital imaging and computer graphics techniques, or accidentally.

**new media art:** a genre of art that encompasses artworks created with new media technologies, including digital art, computer graphics, computer animation, virtual art, internet art, interactive art, video games, computer robotics, 3D printing and art as biotechnology.

**salon style:** a style that came about in France in the seventeenth century, when art graduates held public exhibitions. Clusters of paintings are hung close to each other on walls, often from floor to ceiling, in multiple rows.

## RESOURCES

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### **Print:**

- Bennett, Bryan, and Constance P. Hall. *Discovering Canadian Art: Learning the Language*. Toronto: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1984.
- Carr, Emily; introduction by Robin Laurence. *Beloved Land: The World of Emily Carr*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1996.
- Hill, Charles C., et al. *Emily Carr: New Perspectives on a Canadian Icon*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre/National Gallery of Canada/Vancouver Art Gallery, 2006.
- Rhodes, Richard. *A First Book of Canadian Art*. Toronto: Owl Books, 2001.
- Thom, Ian. *Art BC: Masterworks from British Columbia*. Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery/Douglas & McIntyre, 2000.

### **Online:**

- [www.artcyclopedia.com](http://www.artcyclopedia.com)
- [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)
- [www.digitalartforall.com](http://www.digitalartforall.com)
- [www.thebookchook.com](http://www.thebookchook.com)
- <http://w-a-l-l-p-a-p-e-r-s.net>

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