

Art & Artists in Exhibition: Vancouver 1890 - 1950

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Grace Wilson Melvin

May 28 1892 - March 3 1977

D.A. (Glasgow)

Glasgow Society of Lady Artists

Scribe to the Corporation of Glasgow

Federation of Canadian Artists (Founding Member 1941)

Grace Wilson Melvin was born in Glasgow, Scotland. She graduated with honours from the Glasgow School of Art in 1918. After further study and scholarships in London and Paris, she joined the staff of the Glasgow School of Art, becoming head of the lettering and illumination section. She won the Lauder Prize for decorative art from the Glasgow Society of Lady Artists in 1927. She exhibited her work at the Royal Scottish Academy, at the National Gallery of Canada between 1928 and 1934, and with the [Royal Canadian Academy](#) in 1932.

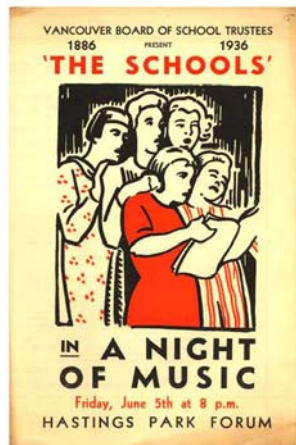


In 1927 she was "loaned" to the [Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts](#) for a year. At the end of the year, she declined to return to Scotland, instead staying in Vancouver and becoming Head of the Department of Design for the VSDAA. She also taught Lettering and Illumination, Embroidery, and Pottery.

Interestingly, she exhibited her artwork in the 1922 annual exhibition of the [B.C. Society of Fine Arts](#), a few years before moving here. This would likely have been arranged by Charles Scott. Melvin also exhibited with the BCSFA from 1936 to 1962, 1966, and in the final BCSFA exhibition in 1967.

In 1927 she exhibited an illumination with the [Island Arts and Crafts Society](#). In 1928 she wrote an article titled *Pattern* for the third edition of *The Paint Box*, the art school's annual. The article was illustrated with woodcuts by [Ada Currie](#), one of the school's students.

Melvin exhibited in the annual *B.C. Artists* exhibitions at the [Vancouver Art Gallery](#) in the inaugural show in 1932, also 1933, 1955 to 1958, 1960, and 1961.

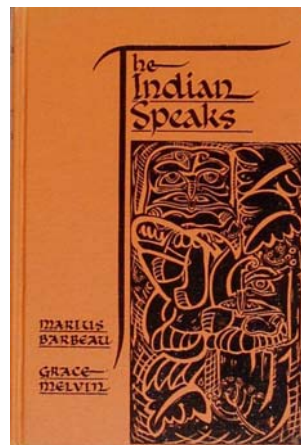


The [Spring 1936](#) edition of *The Smock Pocket*, the [Vancouver School of Art Graduates' Association](#) newsletter, noted that she was one of three jurors for the association's Fourth Annual Exhibition.

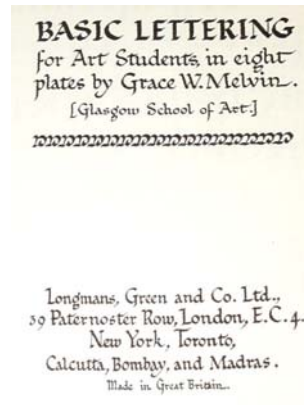


She donated artwork to an FCA fundraising exhibition for the Canadian Red Cross at the [Vancouver Art Gallery](#) in 1942.

Melvin illustrated *The Indian Speaks* for Marius Barbeau in 1943, and achieved national notice. Her solo exhibition at the [Vancouver Art Gallery](#) in 1943 consisted of 42 illustrations for the book.



She also wrote books on lettering and design, including *Structure of Design and Colour* and *Lettering for Artists and Art Students*, published for the Department of Education at the University of British Columbia. She also did a series of cards for lettering titled *Basic Lettering for Art Students*, published by Longmans, Green & Co. in England. She was the editor for a book titled *Applied Art Home Economics* published in 1940 by the B.C. Department of Education in Victoria, B.C.



On January 25, 1947 she gave a lecture titled *Color in the Home* under the auspices of the [Vancouver Institute](#).

She submitted three ink drawings to the [1949 B.C. Graphic](#) exhibition at the [Vancouver Art Gallery](#), two of them were selected for the exhibition.



She was an outstanding illustrator and calligrapher, and illustrated the Book of Remembrance for the Canadian Engineers for World Wars I and II, which is housed in St. Paul's Cathedral, London.

You are invited to view a
group of chalk and water
colour sketches made by
Grace Melvin
in Carmel, Cal., Lancashire,
England, & Hornby Island B.C.
Vancouver Art Gallery
April 6th - May 2nd 1954.

Paintings by
Grace Melvin
in chalk and water colour.
The Arts Centre of
Greater Victoria,
1040 Moss St. Victoria, B.C.
June 14th - 27th 1955.

In 1961 a short [artist summary](#) on Melvin's personal letterhead was provided to the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Melvin's contribution to the arts in Vancouver and Canada was substantial, and her work was widely exhibited in her lifetime, and is in many major collections, yet she remains one of the lesser known artists of Western Canada. She died in 1977 at the age of eighty-four, according to data from B.C. Archives Vital Statistics.

Exhibitions

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

DATE	EXHIBITION	LOCATION
1943 May 14 - 27	The Indian Speaks	VAG

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

DATE	EXHIBITION	ARTWORK
1922 Sept. 16 - 23	BCSFA 14th Annual Exhibition	To Our Guest Requiem Illumination on Vellum
1932 May - July	VAG All Canadian Exhibition	To Our Guest The Year Amor Vincit Omnia St. Marks, Venice
1932 Oct. 5 - 30	VAG 1st Annual B.C. Artists	Life's Pageant (Illumination) Madonna (Illumination) Arbutus and Fir The Cottage in the Cove
1933 May 20 - 31	VAG Palette & Chisel Club Exhibition	Illumination The Beatitudes Luther's Cradle Hymn Life's Pageant Triptych Altar Piece Church Altar Piece
1933 Sept. 22 - Oct. 15	VAG 2nd Annual B.C. Artists	And Night Came Evening Glory, Red Roofs, B.C.
1942 Nov. 3 - 15	FCA Red Cross Benefit	(no information available)
1949 Nov. 22 - Dec. 11	VAG First B.C. Graphic	Indian Legend - The Curse of Kamalmouk Indian Legend - The Dream of Kamalmouk

References - MONOGRAPHS

Refer to [BIBLIO](#).

References - GROUP EXHIBITIONS

3rd BC GRAPHIC & CANADIAN SOCIETY OF GRAPHIC ART (refer to [BCG57](#))

100 YEARS OF B.C. ART (refer to [VAG58](#))

B.C. PAINTINGS BURNABY 58 (refer to [BAG58](#))

B.C. ARTISTS 27th ANNUAL (refer to [BCA58](#))

SPRING EXHIBITION - FCA - BC REGION (refer to [FCA64](#))

SOME PAINTERS OF THE B.C. MAINLAND (refer to [AGGV66](#))

B.C. ARTISTS' TRIBUTE TO COLIN GRAHAM (refer to [AGGV74](#))

VANCOUVER SCHOOL OF ART - THE EARLY YEARS, 1925 - 1939, by E. Theodore Lindberg

1980 Sept. 15 - Oct 15, The Inaugural Exhibition of the Charles H. Scott Gallery; no ISBN
Exhibition catalogue, 36 pages; instructor & student work illustrated in colour and b&w
Includes colour plate of Melvin's *Halleluia*, gold and oil paint on vellum

VANCOUVER: ART & ARTISTS 1931 - 1983 (refer to [VAG83](#))

BRITISH COLUMBIA WOMEN ARTISTS 1885-1985 (refer to [AGGV85](#))

EARLY BRITISH COLUMBIAN WOMAN ARTISTS (refer to [HG95](#))

BEYOND THE CANVAS - Artists, Stories and the Sea by Jennifer Breckon and James P. Delgado

Featuring the Mary and Bill Everett Family Collection

2000, ISBN 0-9695221-4-2; exhibition at the Vancouver Maritime Museum; illust. in colour
Includes Foreword by Patricia E. Bovey, Introduction by James P. Delgado; list of works
Essay *A Collector Recollects* by Bill Everett
Exhibition included work by **Melvin**

References - GENERAL

WHO'S WHO IN NORTHWEST ART edited by Marion Brymner Appleton

"A Directory of Persons in the Pacific Northwest Working in the Media of Painting, Sculpture, Graphic Arts, and Handicrafts".

1941; published by Frank McCaffrey, Seattle Washington.
Short entry for Melvin.

ISLAND ARTS AND CRAFTS SOCIETY - List of Exhibitors**VISUAL ARTS BRITISH COLUMBIA** (refer to [VABC77](#))**FROM DESOLATION TO SPLENDOUR****Changing Perceptions of the British Columbia Landscape**

1977, by Maria Tippet and Douglas Cole

Clarke Irwin & Co., ISBN 0-7720-1048-X

159 pages; illustrated; foreward by Jack Shadbolt

Includes references to Melvin, colour plate of *Red Mountain and Garibaldi Lake*
(1927 gouache on paper)

BRITISH COLUMBIA ART COLLECTION 1974-80 (refer to [BCAC80](#))**MELVIN, GRACE WILSON**

Royal Canadian Academy of Arts - Exhibitions and Members 1880 - 1979

Evelyn de R. McMann, University of Toronto Press 1981, ISBN 0-8020-2366-5

Lists 2 illuminations on vellum exhibited in 1932.

MELVIN, Grace Wilson

A Dictionary of Canadian Artists, Volume 4, Little - Myles, 3rd Edition Reprint 1989

Colin S. Macdonald, Canadian Paperbacks. ISBN 0-919554-15-6

VANCOUVER ARTIST: Grace Melvin

2001 July; by Michael Clark, Emily Carr Institute of Art + Design.

Visions newsletter, Volume 7 Issue 3, page 10.

One page biography with 2 illustrations of her work.

BIOGRAPHICAL INDEX OF ARTISTS IN CANADA

2003, Evelyn de R. McMann, University of Toronto Press, ISBN 0-8020-2790-3

250 pages; 9 pages of *works cited* referenced to 8,800 artists

9 references *cited* for Melvin.

VANCOUVER PUBLIC LIBRARY - B.C. ARTISTS FILES (refer to [VPL](#))**Clippings**

"Two examples of illumination by **Grace W. Melvin** would be admired by even the uneducated public. There is no need for any special education to perceive their beauty. They take us back to the work of centuries ago, which would hold its own if it were exhibited now."

From "[B.C. Society of Fine Arts](#)" by [Bernard McEvoy](#)

Vancouver Daily Province, April 28 1928

" ... Among those contibuting paintings and drawings are: ... Grace W. Melvin ... "

From "[Noted Artists Offer Paintings For Red Cross](#)"

Vancouver Daily Province (presumed), November 1942

"The staff consisted of [F.H. Varley](#), [J.W.G. Macdonald](#), [Charles Marega](#), [Kate Smith Hoole](#), and **Grace Melvin**."

From "[A Short Art History of British Columbia](#)", by [Charles H. Scott](#)
Behind The Palette, June 1947

"The quality of painting in B.C. exhibitions has been greatly strengthened by the inclusion of works by former students. This reflects the good work of a loyal and enthusiastic staff consisting at present of **Grace W. Melvin**, [Fred A. Amess](#), [B.C. Binning](#), [J.L. Shadbolt](#), and a number of other teachers, past and present, in the Day, Evening and Saturday Morning Classes."

From "[A Short Art History of British Columbia](#)", by [Charles H. Scott](#)
Behind The Palette, June 1947

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