

Julia Margaret Cameron

Carlyle, 1913

photogravure on paper
21.6 cm x 15.9 cm

Collection of the Vancouver Art
Gallery, Gift of Ann and Harry
Malcolmson

VAG 2005.25.8

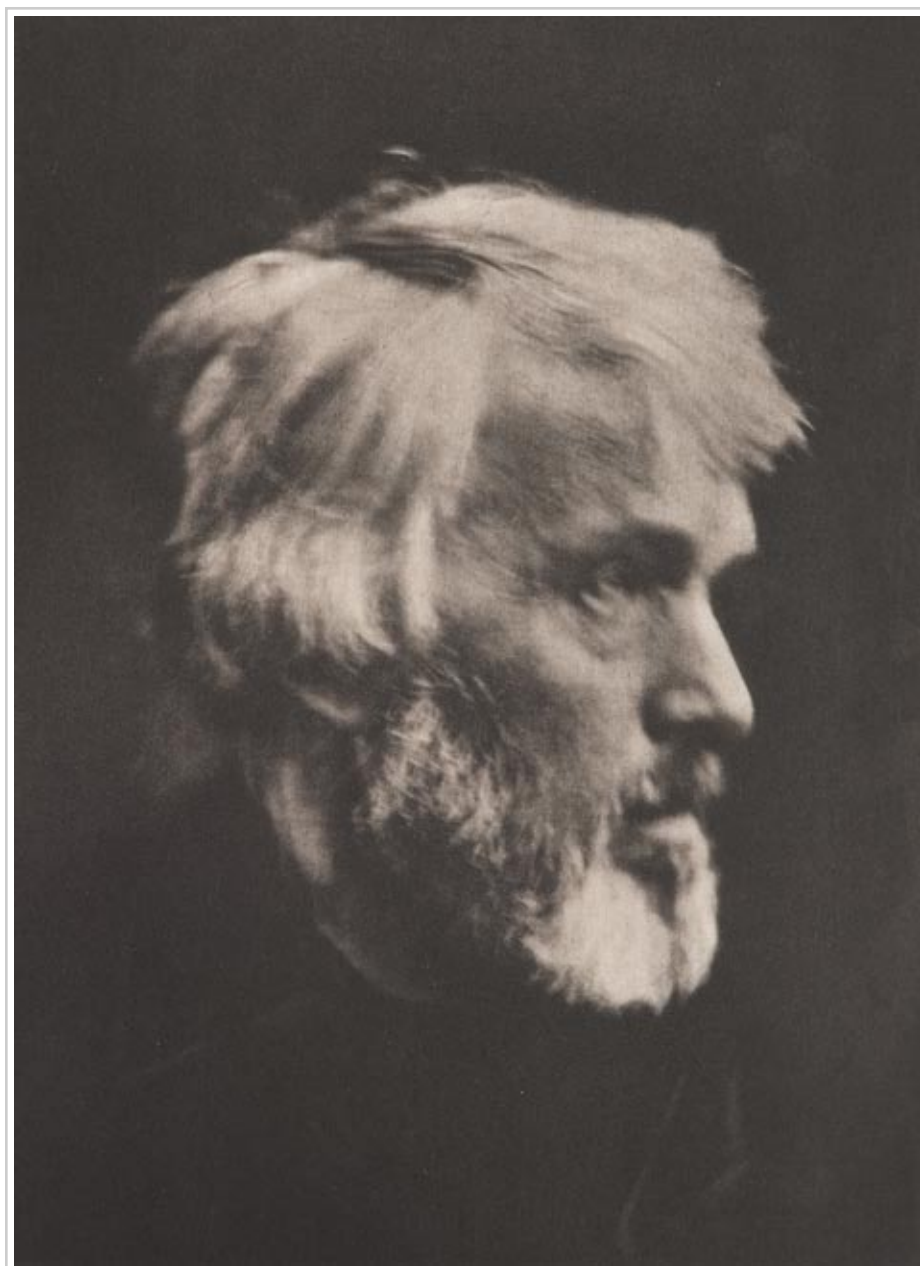


Photo: Tomas Svab, Vancouver Art Gallery

Julia Margaret Cameron

Carlyle, 1913



Image source: www.ottres.ca/tmach/globalbir/06jun/birjun11.html

Artist's Biography

Nationality: British

Born: 1815-06-11, Calcutta, India

Died: 1879-01-26

Julia Margaret Cameron was born Julia Margaret Pattle in Calcutta, India, to James Pattle, a British official of the East India Company, and Adeline de l'Étang, a daughter of French aristocrats. Julia was educated in France, but returned to India in 1838, to marry Charles Hay Cameron, a wealthy tea baron who was twenty years her senior. In 1848, Charles Hay Cameron retired and the family moved to London, England. In 1860, Cameron visited the estate of poet Alfred Lord Tennyson on the Isle of Wight. Julia was taken with the location and the Cameron family purchased an estate, Dimbola Lodge, on the island soon after.

In 1863, when Cameron was 48 years old, her daughter gave her camera as a present, beginning her career as a photographer. Within a year, Cameron became a member of the Photographic Societies of London and Scotland. In her photography, Cameron strove to capture beauty. She wrote, "I longed to arrest all the beauty that came before me and at length the longing has been satisfied."

During her career, Cameron registered each of her photographs with the copyright office and kept detailed records. Her shrewd business sense is one reason that so many of her works survive today. Another reason that many of Cameron's portraits are significant is because they are often the only existing photograph of historical figures. (Many paintings and drawings exist, but, at the time, photography was still a new, technically-complex medium.)

The bulk of Cameron's photographs fit into two categories: celebrity portraits and illustrations for literary works. Some of her famous subjects include: Charles Darwin, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, John Everett Millais, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones, Ellen Terry and George Frederic Watts. Most of these distinctive portraits are cropped closely around the subject's face and are in soft focus. Cameron was often friends with these Victorian celebrities, and tried to capture their personalities in her photos.

Cameron's posed photographic illustrations represent the other half of her work. In these illustrations, she frequently photographed historical scenes or literary works, which often took the quality of oil paintings. Cameron's friendship with Tennyson led to his asking her to photograph illustrations for his *Idylls of the King*. These photographs are designed to look like oil paintings from the same time period, including rich details like historical costumes and intricate draperies.

In 1875 the Camerons moved back to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). Julia continued to practice photography but complained in letters about the difficulties of getting chemicals and pure water to develop and print photographs. Because of this, Cameron took fewer pictures in India. These pictures were of posed Indian natives, paralleling the posed pictures that Cameron had taken of neighbours in England. Almost none of Cameron's work from India survives. Cameron died in Ceylon in 1879.

Source: "Julia Margaret Cameron," *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. January 13, 2006. <http://www.wikipedia.org>.

Julia Margaret Cameron

Carlyle, 1913

Artistic Context

Nationality: British

Peers: Alfred Stiegliz; Baron Adolph de Meyer; Arnold Genthe; Theodore Zichy

Groups: photography; Pictorialist; 19th century

Provenance: donated by Ann and Harry Malcomson in 2005; Jane Corkin Gallery, Toronto, 1991.

Subject: portraiture; fancy dress tableau; Victorian society; cult of beauty

Other works in the Vancouver Art Gallery Collection

Julia Margaret Cameron
The Seven Stars, 1870
albumen print on paper
Gift of Claudia Beck and Andrew Gruft
VAG 2004.37.36

Julia Margaret Cameron
Herschel, 1913
photogravure on paper
Gift of Ann and Harry Malcomson
VAG 2005.25.8

Further Reading

Cox, Julian ed. *Julia Margaret Cameron*. Los Angeles: John Paul Getty Museum, 1996.

Gernsheim, H. *Julia Margaret Cameron: Her Life and Photographic Work*. London: Gordon Fraser, 1975.

Hill, Brian. *Julia Margaret Cameron: a Victorian Family Portrait*. London: Owen, 1973.

Hopkinson, A. *Julia Margaret Cameron*. London: Virago, 1986.

Weaver, Mike. *Julia Margaret Cameron 1815-1879*. Southampton: John Hansard Gallery and Herbert Press, 1984.

Weaver, Mike ed. *Whisper of the Muse: the World of Julia Margaret Cameron*. London: P. & D. Colnaghi, 1990.

Julia Margaret Cameron Carlyle, 1867

Exhibition History

Exhibitions at the Vancouver Art Gallery

75 Years of Collecting: British Masters, Group of Seven, and Pop Icons.
February 4, 2006 - May 14, 2006.

Archival History

Justification

Acquisition Record

[transcription]

Cameron, Julia Margaret

b. 1815, Calcutta, India
d. 1879, Ceylon, Sri Lanka

Herschel, 1867 (printed 1913)
photogravure from Camera Work magazine, 1913, vol. 41, page 9
8 3/8 x 6 1/8 inches

Carlyle, 1867 (printed 1913)
photogravure from Camera Work magazine, 1913, vol. 41, page 5
8 1/2 x 6 1/4 inches

Donor: Harry and Ann Malcolmson
Appraised By: Stephen Bulger and Sarah Morthland
Provenance: Purchased by present donor from Jane Corkin Gallery, Toronto, 1991

Artist Biography

Julia Margaret Cameron was born in 1815 to colonialist parents stationed in India. After the death of their parents, Cameron and her six sisters were sent to live with their grandmother in Versailles, France. In 1838, Cameron married Charles Hay Cameron, a jurist and member of the Law Commission who was stationed in Calcutta. In 1863, at the age of 49, Julia's daughter and son-in-law gave her a camera to help occupy her time. She had no formal training in photography and learned the technical aspects primarily through trial and error. In 1874, Lord Alfred Tennyson asked her to illustrate his epic poem *Idylls of the King and Other Poems* and Cameron produced a major series of narrative photographs to accompany the text. Cameron actively marketed and exhibited her work, unusual for a woman at that time. She organized three solo exhibitions at London galleries and participated in international exhibitions in Europe and the U.S. Her work has been the subject of numerous retrospective exhibitions including recently at Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1998); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (1999); National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (2001-2002); National Portrait Gallery, London (2003) and J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (2003-2004). Her work is in numerous distinguished public collections including the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh; National Gallery of Art, Washington; National Portrait Gallery, London and Musée d'Orsay, Paris.



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Artist in Context

Cameron sought to frame her photographs as fine art by appropriating the subject matter, composition and motifs used in Pre-Raphaelite painting of her day. Contemporary critics praised her for her interpretive style while she was simultaneously criticized for producing out-of-focus works. While initially accidental, Cameron soon began to seek out this quality, focusing on only part of her subject's face. This was a deliberate aesthetic she chose to highlight the beauty of generalized forms and to simulate painting. The technique was also used to convey the psychological and spiritual characteristics of her subjects, rather than producing a documentary style photograph.

Work Under Consideration

Both works under consideration are excellent examples of Cameron's subject matter that focused on portraiture, often of notable Victorian men of arts, letters and sciences. Cameron's photographs are noted for their extreme intimacy and psychological intensity. They are also typical of Cameron's composition in the close-up focus on the sitter's face, and her out-of-focus style. Herschel is a portrait of Cameron's principal mentor, Sir John Herschel (1782-1871), the leading scientist of her generation who contributed to the development of the processes of photography. In this work, Cameron highlights the monumental form of Herschel's head by draping his shoulders in a black cloth and cropping the image close to his face. Cameron sought to convey his genius in the piercing, liquid quality of his eyes and the white shock of his hair, which Cameron tousled herself. Carlyle is a portrait of Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), an essayist and historian. He is portrayed in profile, also with a shock of white hair in dramatic contrast to the dark shadows cast on his face. Carlyle and Herschel appeared in Alfred Stieglitz's Camera Work issue #41, in January 1913, on pages 5 and 9 respectively.

Justification

The Gallery currently has one work by Cameron in its collection. In a little more than a decade, Cameron created a body of work that precisely captures both the individualism and cult of beauty of her Victorian society. Cameron's work was remarkably close in appearance and sensibility to the work of the Pictorialists and Alfred Stieglitz. Her work has ties to the work of Baron Adolf de Meyer, Arnold Genthe, Alfred Stieglitz, Theodore Zichy and John Vanderpant, already in the Gallery's collection. The works are in good condition.

Recommend Acceptance

Diana Augaitis
Chief Curator/Associate Director

Grant Arnold
Audain Curator of British Columbia Art

Research: Emmy Lee
Assistant Curator

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