

# Jack Shadbolt

*Voices*, 1986

acrylic on canvas

left panel: 117 x 94.5 cm

centre panel: 128.5 x 94.5 cm

right panel: 117 x 94.5 cm

Collection of the Vancouver Art  
Gallery, Gift of RBC Dominion  
Securities

VAG 94.54a-c



# Jack Shadbolt

Voices, 1986



Image source: Vancouver Art Gallery Library:  
Canadian Artist Files

## Artist's Biography

Nationality: British-born, Canadian  
Born: 1909-02-04, Shoeburyness, England  
Died: 1998-11-22

Born in England in 1909, Shadbolt established himself as an artist and teacher in Vancouver in the 1930's. Though he found inspiration for his early works in the paintings of Emily Carr, the west coast landscape, the American Social Realists, and the Mexican muralists, he also had an early interest in the British Surrealist artists Paul Nash and Graham Sutherland. Travel to Europe in the late 1930's put him in touch with works by Cézanne and the School of Paris.

During his stay in New York in 1948-49, he studied the work of Picasso and primitivism, the European Surrealists, especially Joan Miro, and the American Abstract Expressionists. From these contacts, he developed a biomorphic Surrealism, a strong thread which links all phases of his career. In 1938, Shadbolt began to teach at the Vancouver School of Art, where he remained until his retirement in 1966. Since then he has received an honorary LL.D. from Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia, and the University of Victoria. He received the Order of Canada in 1972, and was made Freeman of the City of Vancouver in 1990. Along with his wife, Doris Shadbolt, he created VIVA (the Vancouver Institute for the Visual Arts) in 1988.

Source: Vancouver Art Gallery Press Release

## Artistic Context

Nationality: British-born, Canadian

Training: Vancouver School of Art; Arts Student League, New York; Euston Road Art School, London; André Lhote School of Art, Paris

Group: Canadian War Artist; Abstract; 20th century

Provenance: donated by RBC Dominion Securities in 1994; Bau-Xi Gallery; the artist

Subject: landscape; myth; ritual; transformation

### Other Works in the Vancouver Art Gallery Collection.

Jack Shadbolt  
*Bombed Buildings*, 1945  
watercolour on paper  
B.C. Art Purchase Fund  
VAG 48.4

Jack Shadbolt  
*London Bomb Ruin*, 1946  
watercolour and ink on paper  
Allied Officer's Auxiliary Picture Purchase Fund  
VAG 49.19

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Jack Shadbolt  
*Emblems After Fire*, 1950  
ink and gouache on paper  
Gift of the Vancouver Art Gallery Women's Auxiliary  
VAG 52.12

Jack Shadbolt  
*Remnants of a Dry Season*, 1949  
watercolour on paper  
Gift of the Vancouver Art Gallery Women's Auxiliary  
VAG 52.13

Jack Shadbolt  
*Medieval Town; Medieval Landscape*, 1957  
oil on canvas  
Gift of the Vancouver Art Gallery Women's Auxiliary  
VAG 57.6

Jack Shadbolt  
*Still Life Theme in Gray-Violet*, 1959  
oil and lucite on canvas  
Gift of the Vancouver Art Gallery Women's Auxiliary  
VAG 59.3

Jack Shadbolt  
*Dried Shore Grasses; Autumn Landscape*, 1959  
ink and casein tempera on paper  
Joint Purchase Awards by the Vancouver Art Gallery Women's Auxiliary and the  
Canada Council  
VAG 61.34

Jack Shadbolt  
*Fishing Boats, Collioure; Beach on a Sunny Morning, Collioure* 1957, 1957  
oil on canvas  
Transfer from Women's Auxiliary Provincial School Loan Scheme  
VAG 65.14

Jack Shadbolt  
*Beach Birds in a Cave*, 1954  
gouache and ink on paper  
Transfer from Women's Auxiliary Provincial School Loan Scheme  
VAG 65.21

Jack Shadbolt  
*Perforation Section 2*, 1967  
ink on paper  
McLean Foundation Funds  
VAG 67.55

Jack Shadbolt  
*Remembrance of Pine*, 1952  
watercolour on paper  
Gift of Mrs. Phyllis Leece  
VAG 68.10

Jack Shadbolt  
*Centennial Suite; Begetting Green*, c.1966  
silkscreen on paper  
Gift of Mrs. Phyllis Leece  
VAG 68.10

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Jack Shadbolt  
*Painter's Coal Yard, Victoria B.C.*, 1938  
oil on canvas  
Bequest of Dr. Elda Lindenfeld  
VAG 69.7

Jack Shadbolt  
*Dark Earth Calligraphy*, 1969  
acrylic on paper  
Mary Elizabeth Allen Estate Fund  
VAG 70.114

Jack Shadbolt  
*Bandscape*, 1967  
ink and acrylic on paper  
Mary Elizabeth Allen Estate Fund  
VAG 70.115

Jack Shadbolt  
*The Space Between Columns #21 (Italian)*, 1965  
oil on canvas  
Mary Elizabeth Allan Estate Fund  
VAG 70.116

Jack Shadbolt  
*The Space Between Columns (Memories of Greece); The Space Between Columns (Harbour at Piraeus)*, 1965  
oil on canvas  
Endowment Fund  
VAG 70.117

Jack Shadbolt  
*Emblems in Transformation*, 1964  
oil and lucite on canvas  
Mary Elizabeth Allan Estate Fund  
VAG 70.118

Jack Shadbolt  
*Fetish*, 1966  
wood  
Mary Elizabeth Allan Estate Fund  
VAG 70.119

Jack Shadbolt  
*Warrior Memory*, 1969  
ink, chalk and latex on matboard  
Siwash Auction Funds  
VAG 71.1

Jack Shadbolt  
*Break-Up*, 1977-1979  
acrylic, latex on watercolour board  
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe  
VAG 83.76 a-c

Jack Shadbolt  
*Hornby Suite*, 1971  
charcoal on paper  
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe  
VAG 83.77.1

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Jack Shadbolt  
*Hornby Suite*, 1971  
charcoal on paper  
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe  
VAG 83.77.2

Jack Shadbolt  
*Hornby Suite*, 1971  
charcoal on paper  
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe  
VAG 83.77.3

Jack Shadbolt  
*Hornby Suite*, 1971  
charcoal on paper  
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe  
VAG 83.77.4

Jack Shadbolt  
*Hornby Suite*, 1971  
charcoal on paper  
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe  
VAG 83.77.5

Jack Shadbolt  
*Hornby Suite*, 1971  
charcoal on paper  
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe  
VAG 83.77.6

Jack Shadbolt  
*Hornby Suite*, 1971  
charcoal on paper  
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe  
VAG 83.77.7

Jack Shadbolt  
*Hornby Suite*, 1971  
charcoal on paper  
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe  
VAG 83.77.8

Jack Shadbolt  
*Hornby Suite*, 1971  
charcoal on paper  
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe  
VAG 83.77.9

Jack Shadbolt  
*Hornby Suite*, 1971  
charcoal on paper  
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe  
VAG 83.77.10

Jack Shadbolt  
*Hornby Suite*, 1971  
charcoal on paper  
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe  
VAG 83.77.11

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Jack Shadbolt  
*Hornby Suite*, 1971  
charcoal on paper  
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe  
VAG 83.77.12

Jack Shadbolt  
*Hornby Suite*, 1971  
charcoal on paper  
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe  
VAG 83.77.13

Jack Shadbolt  
*Hornby Suite*, 1971  
charcoal on paper  
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe  
VAG 83.77.14

Jack Shadbolt  
*Hornby Suite*, 1971  
charcoal on paper  
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe  
VAG 83.77.15

Jack Shadbolt  
*India Suite*, 1976  
charcoal on paper  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John Keith-King  
VAG 83.78 a-t

Jack Shadbolt  
*In Putting Heads Together Two Birds Make Owl*, 1972-1973  
acrylic and latex on watercolour board  
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe  
VAG 83.79

Jack Shadbolt  
*Passing Season*, 1973  
ink on card  
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe  
VAG 84.81 a-c

Jack Shadbolt  
*Untitled*, 1972  
ink on paper  
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe  
VAG 84.82

Jack Shadbolt  
*Memory of Greece (Road to Patras); Untitled*, 1960  
acrylic on paper  
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe  
VAG 84.83

Jack Shadbolt  
*Indian Village*, 1948  
oil on paperboard  
Gift of the Estate of Dr. Velen Fanderlik, Trail, B.C.  
VAG 86.22

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Jack Shadbolt  
*Silent Land*, 1985  
acrylic on canvas  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.45 a-c

Jack Shadbolt  
*Elegy for an Island*, 1985  
acrylic on canvas  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.49

Jack Shadbolt  
*Shacks*, 1941  
oil pastel on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 87.14

Jack Shadbolt  
*The Place*, 1970-1972  
acrylic, ink and latex on matboard  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 87.26 a-c

Jack Shadbolt  
*Female Nude*, 1940  
sanguine on paperboard  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Francis C. Reif  
VAG 88.41.13

Jack Shadbolt  
*Westward Drift*, 1989  
oil and drawing media on canvas  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund. Purchased in honour of the artist's 80th birthday.  
VAG 89.10

Jack Shadbolt  
*Aftermath*, 1946  
watercolour and gouache on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 89.17.1

Jack Shadbolt  
*Black Alley Serenade, Pt Grey*, 1942  
watercolour on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 89.17.2

Jack Shadbolt  
*Bird Image*, 1948  
gouache, charcoal and watercolour on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 89.17.3

Jack Shadbolt  
*Boats at Collioure; Collioure Drawing No 14*, 1958  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 89.17.4

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Jack Shadbolt  
*Collioure, Beach at Night*, 1961  
charcoal on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 89.17.5

Jack Shadbolt  
*Industrial Abstraction, NYC*, 1948  
watercolour and ink on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 89.17.6

Jack Shadbolt  
*Rainy Day, Point Grey*, 1940  
charcoal on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 89.17.7

Jack Shadbolt  
*Space Between Columns*, 1965  
charcoal on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 89.17.8

Jack Shadbolt  
*Study for the United Forces Recreation Centre; Sketch for united Service Centre Mural*, 1942  
watercolour and pencil on paperboard  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 89.17.9

Jack Shadbolt  
*Yates Street Evening, Victoria; Dominion Theatre, Yates St., Victoria*, 1946  
watercolour, gouache and ink on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 89.17.10

Jack Shadbolt  
*Vancouver Banners*, 1975  
gouache, paper and ink on paperboard  
Gift of Mr. Peter Ohler  
VAG 89.45

Jack Shadbolt  
*Winter Owls*, 1971  
acrylic on wove paper card mounted on mat board and plywood  
Gift of Freda Baily  
VAG 89.46

Jack Shadbolt  
*Sketch for "The Yellow Dogs"*, 1947  
pen, ink and watercolour on paper  
Gift of Estate of Johnny Wayne  
VAG 90.84.1

Jack Shadbolt  
*Still Life with Squash*, 1939  
charcoal on paper  
Gift of Estate of Johnny Wayne  
VAG 90.84.2

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Jack Shadbolt  
*Greek Landscape #2*, 1963  
india ink, acrylic wash and charcoal on paper-covered hardboard  
Gift of Estate of Johnny Wayne  
VAG 90.84.3

Jack Shadbolt  
*Summer Garden Improvisation #1*, 1990  
acrylic on canvas  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 91.23.2

Jack Shadbolt  
*Mind's I*, 1973  
ink on paper  
Gift of Sallye Fotheringham  
VAG 92.9.2

Jack Shadbolt  
*Study for the National Arts Centre Mural*, 1972  
felt-tipped pen on wove paper  
Gift of Peter Ohler  
VAG 94.24 a-b

Jack Shadbolt  
*Fragments from the Alcazar Mural, Cycle of Seasons*, 1949  
tempera and oil on plaster  
Gift of Mr. Maxwell Newhouse  
VAG 94.52 a-b

Jack Shadbolt  
*Portrait of Molly Bobak*, 1939  
watercolour and carbon pencil on paper  
Gift of Mr. Michael Audain  
VAG 94.53.1

Jack Shadbolt  
*Enchanted Garden*, 1992  
lithograph on paper  
Gift of Mr. Miloy De Angelis  
94.64.86

Jack Shadbolt  
*Jardin Fou*, 1992  
lithograph on paper  
Gift of Mr. Miloy De Angelis  
94.64.87

Jack Shadbolt  
*Winter Sun Trap*, 1993  
lithograph on paper  
Gift of Mr. Miloy De Angelis  
94.64.88

Jack Shadbolt  
*End of Season*, 1993  
lithograph on paper  
Gift of Mr. Miloy De Angelis  
94.64.89

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Jack Shadbolt  
*Captive White*, 1993  
lithograph on paper  
Gift of Mr. Miloy De Angelis  
94.64.90

Jack Shadbolt  
*Jardin Noir*, 1994  
lithograph on paper  
Gift of Mr. Miloy De Angelis  
94.64.91

Jack Shadbolt  
*Primavera #4*, 1991  
lithograph on paper  
Gift of Mr. Miloy De Angelis  
94.64.92

Jack Shadbolt  
*Invictus*, 1993  
lithograph on paper  
Gift of Mr. Miloy De Angelis  
94.64.93

Jack Shadbolt  
*Solid Citizen Cat*, 1994  
lithograph on paper  
Gift of Mr. Miloy De Angelis  
94.64.94

Jack Shadbolt  
*Birds Among Seeding Plants*, 1955  
watercolour on paper  
Gift of Annette and John Lantzius  
VAG 95.37.11

Jack Shadbolt  
*Calligraphic Landscape*, 1962  
watercolour and ink on paper  
Gift of Dr. Ralph Hislop  
VAG 95.46.2

Jack Shadbolt  
*Untitled*, 1960  
oil on board  
Gift of Mr. M.B. Kaplansky  
VAG 95.47.2

Jack Shadbolt  
*Gothic Memory*, 1961  
oil on canvas  
Gift of Dr. Rodrigo A. Restrepo  
VAG 97.57.2

Jack Shadbolt  
*Untitled (landscape)*, 1947  
charcoal and graphite on watercolour paper  
Gift of the Estate of Eunice Wilson  
VAG 98.14.1

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Jack Shadbolt  
*Autumn Tokens*, 1958  
oil on canvas  
Gift of Dr. John L. Parnell  
VAG 98.58

Jack Shadbolt  
*Still Life*, c.1938  
watercolour, ink and graphite on paper  
Gift of Susan Pond  
VAG 2001.18.2

Jack Shadbolt  
*Frost and Fire*, 1952  
ink and casein on paper  
Bequest of Joan Lowndes  
VAG 2001.36.26

Jack Shadbolt  
*Field Tokens*, 1962-1971  
ink and watercolour on paper and paperboard  
Gift of Doris Shadbolt  
VAG 2001.47.1 a-c

Jack Shadbolt  
*Ravage Dance*, 1992  
acrylic on paperboard  
Gift of Doris Shadbolt  
VAG 2001.47.2 a-c

Jack Shadbolt  
*Fire Break*, 1965-1998  
oil and acrylic on canvas  
Gift of Doris Shadbolt  
VAG 2001.47.3

Jack Shadbolt  
*At the Seraglio*, 1984  
ink on paper  
Gift of Doris Shadbolt  
VAG 2002.323.1

Jack Shadbolt  
*The Way In*, 1973  
charcoal on paper  
Gift of Doris Shadbolt  
VAG 2002.32.2 a-c

Jack Shadbolt  
*George and Mary (Mary as a Pig)*, 1963  
acrylic on paper  
Gift of Doris Shadbolt  
VAG 2002.32.3

Jack Shadbolt  
*Untitled*, 1962  
gouache and ink on paper  
Gift of Doris Shadbolt  
VAG 2002.32.4

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Jack Shadbolt  
*As Per Memo (of Script)*, 1962  
gouache and ink on paper  
Gift of Doris Shadbolt  
VAG 2002.32.5

Jack Shadbolt  
*Bodies on a Stretcher*, 1945  
watercolour on paper  
Gift of Doris Shadbolt  
VAG 2002.32.6

Jack Shadbolt  
*Night Garden Hornby*, 1981  
graphite on paper  
Gift of Doris Shadbolt  
VAG 2002.32.7

Jack Shadbolt  
*Twenty-Five Owls for Doris*, 1970  
acrylic, pastel and watercolour on paperboard  
Gift of Doris Shadbolt  
VAG 2002.32.8

Jack Shadbolt  
*Garden Flux*, 1993  
aquatint on paper  
Gift of J. Ron and Jacqueline Longstaffe  
VAG 2003.4.56

Jack Shadbolt  
*Seated Nude*, c.1938  
oil on canvas  
Gift of Heffel Gallery Ltd.  
VAG 2003.13

Jack Shadbolt  
*Untitled*, 1947  
oil on wood panel  
Gift of Peter Ohler  
VAG 2003.17

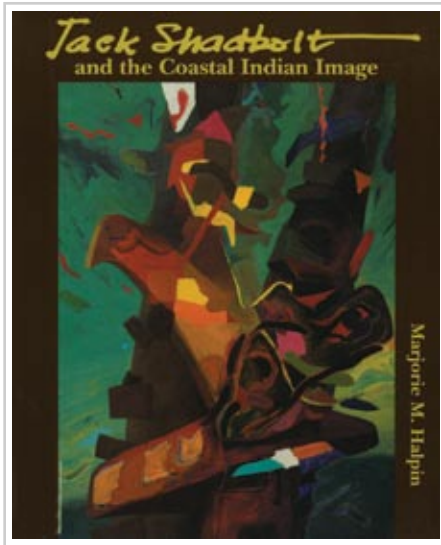
Jack Shadbolt  
*Genesis*, 1994  
acrylic on canvas  
Gift of Doris Shadbolt  
VAG 2003.32.1 a-b

Jack Shadbolt  
*The Choice*, 1984  
textile  
Gift of Sun Life Financial  
VAG 2004.8.1

Jack Shadbolt  
*Still Life: Black, White, and Ochre*, 1960  
watercolour and ink on paper  
Donated by the Estate of Anna K. Jetter  
VAG 2004.12.14

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## Bibliography

### Jack Shadbolt and the Coastal Indian Image

Publication

1986

[transcription]

### In Search of Freedom

Jack Shadbolt uses Coast Indian imagery in his work as *the nearest symbolic mythology to hand*, and because he was *originally fired* by contact with Emily Carr's powerful and brooding evocations of tragedy in her paintings of Indian villages (journalentry, p. 25). He also acknowledges Indian art as *my final clue to releasing my drawing, through design, from European bondage to the external view*—that is, painting the way the surfaces of things look to the eye. This section traces his pursuit of that freedom.

Shadbolt, who was born in England in 1909 and raised in Victoria, recalls painting with his father, an amateur who copied scenes from calendars. He traces the beginnings of his career as a serious artist to the year 1927, when he began sketching the Victoria area with his friend Max Maynard. Probably in 1930, Maynard introduced him to Emily Carr, and he fell under the spell of her art and personality. In 1968 he wrote that the most compelling influence for an artist is *to come under the immediate spell of a famous artist one admires tremendously and, at the same time, encounters personally in one's own local community, working from the same sources as oneself*. He acknowledged both Carr and F.H. Varley, from whom he had later taken a night-school course in Vancouver, as just such influences in his life—artists who, in his admiring perception, *walked clothed in magic*.

Emily Carr (1871-1945) was born in Victoria of English parents and began her commitment to painting Indian themes during a 1907 trip to Alaska. Afterwards she travelled elsewhere on Vancouver Island, to Alert Bay, the Queen Charlotte Islands, and up the Nass and Skeena rivers, visually recording Indian villages and totem poles with the urgency of a salvage anthropologist. In her autobiography, Carr writes that *Indian art broadened my seeing, loosened the formal tightness I had learned in England's schools [in Victoria]. The Indian caught first at the inner intensity of his subject, worked outward to the surfaces. His spiritual conception he buried deep in the wood he was about to carve. However, as Doris Shadbolt observes, Carr's understanding of Indian art is not in fact reflected in her work until after 1927 when she strips the poles of excessive detail, removes them from distracting settings and concentrates on their sculptural strength and expressive energy*.

Carr's ethnographic concern to represent Indian forms faithfully thus acted as a curb on her purely artistic development. After exposure to Post-Impressionist painting in France, where she studied in 1910-11, however, she developed a brilliant palette and a painterly manner that were to mark her entry into the central stream of twentieth-century art and end her credibility as an ethnographic illustrator. Carr's newly acquired French style was, in fact, *at odds with her avowed task of recording totem poles in their native settings*.

### Entry from Jack Shadbolt's journal, 24 February 1985

*Now that preparations have begun for the exhibition of my Coast Indian-influenced work, it is perhaps time I tried to define for myself just what my relation to this native art has been.*



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First off—and this is easiest to say in a broad generalization—the Coast Indian is the nearest symbolic mythology to hand. Originally fired, I suppose, in my formative early years, by contact with Emily Carr, my interest was fanned by her powerful and brooding evocations of tragedy in the dying culture of the abandoned Indian villages with the romantic grandeur of their remnants standing against the overwhelming wilderness, an image that appealed to my youthful temperament.

But I think I also had an instinctive yearning for the theatrical drama of the storyteller—a legacy, as I now see, which came from my mother who was a perpetual dreamer of grand dreams (albeit cast in the mode of bourgeois romance). At any rate, early on, I took to loving the notion of the theatre and being an actor was one of my high-school joys which led me later to the Little Theatre movement and stage designing. So when I started to draw seriously my focal interests were the suburban landscape and the Coast Indian masks in the Victoria museum. My first teaching job was at Duncan where I lived next to the Somenos [Cowichan] Indian reserve which I drew frequently. Thus grew my interest in Indian things; and from then on masks had a special significance for me as a way to get at human states without resort to traditional portraiture.

Later, after serving my apprenticeship as a landscape-oriented artist, I was led by historical inevitability toward abstraction. Mere stylization did not seem expressive enough though it strengthened my decorative sense. But I needed more—a more psychologically involved form-relationship process. I turned toward primitive art, especially the fertile areas of African and Oceanian. Picasso,

who dismembered and reassembled the elements of the figure for greater psychological expressiveness, seemed the right intermediary for me. I had already encountered the notion of the cross-sectional image from anatomical diagrams, from Australian Bushman art, and certain flattened out medieval emblems so when I returned home again, after museum travel study, to the Coast Indian images of killer whale, dogfish and the rest where both the outside shape and the inside content are shown simultaneously in a sectional image, I knew I had my final clue to releasing my drawing, through design, from European bondage to the external view. The Indian mode of expressing things from inside out, out of deep interior identification with the spirit of the image portrayed, gave me my inventive impetus as well as helping me to my personal mode of abstraction.

As I further explored the notion of fetish my improvisational expressiveness increased. When still later I became interested in the triptych form and its consequent formalizing of the iconic format, I was led into the territory of ritual, in the functions of which I began to develop a lively interest. The ritual's capacity to handle deep, traumatic experience, by acting it out by surrogate through richly ornamental symbolic drama, brought out all my accumulated theatrical urges. It also offered a way of dealing with suggested symbolic overtones without being too explicit, thus preserving a poetic enigma of content which I craved. I found much of this quality in the Coast Indian legends.

Lastly, the concept of the Shaman appealed to my dramatic and inventive leaning and gave me the final encouragement to free-wheel my abstract tendencies into a language of form imagery free from conventional restraint or responsibility to external nature. I began to realize myself as part of nature, a creator of magic by the process of juggling forms which come alive and mysterious as they interact their creative necessities into unpredictable meanings.

In and out of my many years of off-and-on contact with Coast Indian art, I found myself in complete sympathy with the Kwagiutl psychologically transformational decorative inventiveness on the one hand and with the moody monumentality of

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*the Haida sculpture on the other and, in addition, something of the demonic ferocity of the occasional Tlingit mask. They have left me with a permanent emotional overtone of our coast landscape to be explored. Their imprint is on my mind. Whenever I look out on our wilderness I am haunted by evocations of their memory. They endow our world with the nearest tangible traces of a fading culture; and thus they give my view of nature a deeper solemnity, a nostalgia for the oneness with a wild world—and a reproach. to aspects of our pragmatic environment.*

*Yet the most permanent residue of all, for me, has been the vestiges of predilection for certain aspects of form that have a distinct Coast Indian reminiscence and the intrusion into my colour vocabulary of the handsomeness of the red, green, black, white elements that characterize so much of the Indian design tradition. And, too, the yellow, black, white combination which I love stems, it is possible, from the Chilkat blanket. And there are aspects of flat space coming from the opened-out emblematic design process of the Coast Indian decorative tradition that helped me to wean myself away from the old-depth painting idiom toward a confident negative-positive deployment of the picture plane itself.*

*All in all, it is a complex, on-going relationship which has developed between us for which I acknowledge my debt with gratitude.*

In **Red Knight**, painted in the same year as the **Killer Birds**, Shadbolt adapted his realistic 1938 sketch of a Numahl mask, gave it an entirely new context, that of medieval armour, and created a viable human image with which to make some comments of [his] own. The armour is an inside/outside image, of course, as well as another kind of mask and another image of death. This painting marks the emergence of another of Shadbolt's lifelong fascinations, setting aspects of organic and mechanical form in juxtaposition.

Figures 14, 15, 16. In the **Killer Birds** series, Shadbolt put the Indian masks he saw in one part of the old B.C. Provincial Museum on the bird skeletons he found in another. A Museum of Anthropology Southern Kwagiutl monster bird mask from the Hamatsa dance series is shown next to the painting.

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**Jack Shadbolt**  
*Publication*  
 1990

**[transcription of excerpt]**

Like his non-native contemporaries, Shadbolt appeared at this time more interested in the romance of past greatness than he was in living Indian culture per se. In 1930 when Shadbolt met Carr, the Indian population was just recovering from its lowest ebb. The view that the Indian culture was dead and that the Indians faced a choice between assimilation and extinction was almost universally held.

In the present context of revitalized native cultures, the renaissance of native carving and the militant resolve of native people to preserve their land and cultural heritage, the views of previous generations of non-native Canadians seem patronizing at best, racist at worst. But the relationship between Indian culture and modernist culture in Canada is no less important for its ambiguity. It is particularly important in any consideration of Shadbolt or Carr's work. Both artists looked to Indian art for not just thematic material but for authentication of their modernity. Carr's first exposure to national attention was formed inside just such a mutually authenticating operation. Eric Brown and Marius Barbeau's 1927 National Gallery of Canada exhibition *Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern* included Carr's studies of totem poles as well as paintings of Indian subjects by W. Langdon Kihn, Walter J. Phillips, Edwin Holgate and A. Y. Jackson. The work of these "moderns" was juxtaposed with examples of Indian art, "to mingle for the first time the art work of Canadian West Coast tribes with that of our more sophisticated artists.

In this exhibition, the authenticity of the Indian art substantiated the modern work, and the modern work aestheticized the Indian work. If the modern Canadian school was to be inspired by direct contact with "Nature herself," then it also had to account for the art of its first people, who were, in the popular as well as the anthropological imagination, closer to nature than non-natives. For the moderns, establishing continuities between Indian art and Canadian modernism was a way of releasing themselves from the European paradigm by means of appropriating the Indian heritage.

Shortly after he met Carr in 1930, Shadbolt began drawing Indian carvings, masks and rattles, and he continued to make sketching visits to the provincial museum throughout the thirties. He and Maynard also sketched on the Songhees reserve near Victoria. Things Indian fascinated him, and in the thirties he came to the crucial recognition that Indian art and indigenous modernism were inextricably bound together: "If the West Coast of Canada is going to produce any art forms at all, it must begin where the Indian left off.

Shadbolt has respected but resisted the reductive or purist impulse of modern art at almost every encounter. He is not one of those modernists who wish to reorganize life but one of those who wish to explore the dark side of human nature. This has been a fundamental ethic of his painting. While he might agree with Loos that primitive decoration gives vent to untrammelled erotic impulses, Shadbolt would add that the decorative impulse controls the very energy that stimulates it.

*India Suite* was not just a meditation on the art of the past or an exploration of the exotic as an image of the unconscious. It also embodied contemporary values. In his own mind, the composition principles of *India Suite* found a parallel in the thought of Marshall McLuhan: "What do I owe McLuhan—a respect for the insights triggered for me by his major tenets—discontinuity,



# Jack Shadbolt

## Voices, 1986



juxtaposition, enigma, transposition, metamorphosis—the 'freeing of language from the constraints of a hegemonic rationality.' Respect for these values was reconfirmed by his experience in India: "And particularly after travel in India, for example, where in the Buddhist and Hindu religions the concept of the wholeness of man seeped through in spite of the chaos of life, the kind of optimism of a spirit like McLuhan's, come hell or high water, appealed to me and helped me move over into a new concept of my own painting process. For process itself now became the animating concept. I was no longer bound to logic—to the binding responsibility to the object out there in nature. This attitude left a pronounced imprint on much of his subsequent painting, particularly a series he called *Rajasthan Memories*, which included works such as *Presences in a Field* (1978) and *Afghan Memory* (1978).

In the summer of 1976, on Hornby Island, Shadbolt made another twenty-panel drawing, this time based on Northwest Coast Indian carving. Whereas *India Suite* had extrapolated rather freely from its sources, the drawings in *Coast Indian Suite* were an accurate rendering of the original carvings. Shadbolt again worked from photographs. The specific sources for *India Suite* were not important, but identifying the designs and the peoples to whom they had been attributed was integral to *Coast Indian Suite*. His choices were based on taste and empathy. Half the works he chose were Tlingit, a quarter were Kwakiutl, and the remainder Haida, Chilkat and Bella Coola. He depicted these masks, rattles and crests as floating entities soaring through the libidinal byways of a forest at night. Although there are many drawing passages in the forest that echo the line and form of the carvings, as if to suggest that the carvings were crystallizations of a will-to-form that was in nature itself, for the most part the carvings were rendered as solid three-dimensional objects that float in front of the forest background. If the personages of *India Suite* seem like ghostly, transparent presences that animate a world of fragments, the masks in *Coast Indian Suite* are whole, solid, living beings who express terror, pathos and anger. It is tempting to read the work, which Shadbolt intended to function as a narrative or "dramatic poem," in two contradictory ways.

The ferocity of expression Shadbolt gave some of these masks was, on the one hand, a projection of fear about the "unthinkable," the Conradian

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"horror" of the heart of darkness within and without, as embodied by the art of the Coast Indian, which was, in Shadbolt's view, an art more in touch with elemental life than Western modernism. On the other hand, it is possible to read a projection of pathos, to interpret some of the expressions as sad, lamenting, angry or protesting. Thus, it is possible to see *Coast Indian Suite* as a much more personal work than *India Suite*. Shadbolt may or may not have been true to his sources by emphasizing the emotional expressionism he found there. Certainly, he felt that by embarking on *Coast Indian Suite* he was once again locating himself in his landscape. It was, as he wrote in his exhibition statement, a way of returning to "home territory" and getting back to himself after the trip to India. He used native Indian art to experience place:

"I found myself in complete sympathy with the Kwakiutl psychologically transformational decorative inventiveness on the one hand and with the moody monumentality of the Haida sculpture on the other and, in addition, something of the demonic ferocity of the occasional Tlingit mask. They have left me with a permanent emotional overtone of our coast landscape to be explored. Their imprint is on my mind. Whenever I look out on our wilderness I am haunted by evocations of their memory. They endow our world with the nearest tangible traces of a fading culture; and thus they give my view of nature a deeper solemnity, a nostalgia for the oneness with a wild world—and a reproach to aspects of our pragmatic environment."

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Voices, 1986

Much of the anxiety here is, again, that of the uneasy colonial. The art of the Indian is the only guide to a feeling of rootedness. But Shadbolt still felt, despite the great revival of native carving he had seen in his lifetime, that the pathos inherent in Indian art derived from a past that had disappeared with the coming of Europeans.

Perhaps anxieties like these made *Coast Indian Suite* a somewhat problematic work. The overly literal attention to his sources, which he felt sufficiently stated his and their case without a great deal of modification on his part, paradoxically blunted this point about the relationship of these works to what he understood as the process of abstraction. Shadbolt had come to credit "the Indian mode of expressing things from inside out" with pointing him to the way out of "European bondage to the external view." By making strongly modeled drawings, he distanced his subject, according to his own logic, by seeing them through European eyes. The way he staged the carvings, emerging directly from the dark of the forest without human agency or mediation, unwittingly gave voice to notions of native peoples as absent, fading and out of sight. But whatever criticism is levelled at the work for its "cross-cultural" uses, it is clear that in producing *Coast Indian Suite* Shadbolt intended to re-establish the relationship between himself and the spirit of the West Coast, and by so doing to declare his debt to those local traditions.

The butterfly theme continued to play a prominent role in his paintings throughout the seventies. Works like *Event on the Rocks* and *High Range Country*, both from 1977, reintroduced a landscape element into the ongoing series. The mountainous and barren places in these works were a contrast to

### Further Reading

Halpin, Marjorie M. *Jack Shadbolt and the Coastal Indian Image*. Vancouver: UBC in association with the UBC Museum of Anthropology, 1986.

*Jack Shadbolt*. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1969.

Lindberg, Ted. *Jack Shadbolt: Seven Years*. Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1978.

Tamlin, Illi-Maria. *Jack Shadbolt: Cross Cultural Notations*. Peterborough: Art Gallery of Peterborough, 1984.

Thom, Ian M. *Jack Shadbolt: Early Watercolours*. Victoria: Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 1980.

Watson, Scott. *Jack Shadbolt*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1990.

Watson, Scott. *Jack Shadbolt: Act of Painting*. Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1985.

# Jack Shadbolt

## Voices, 1986

## Exhibition History

### Exhibitions at the Vancouver Art Gallery

*Art in B.C.: Jack Shadbolt.* December 14, 1996 - May 1997.

*In Memorium: Jack Shadbolt.* December 19, 1998 - May 2, 1999.

*75 Years of Collecting: First Nations: Myths and Realities.* May 6, 2006 - August 27, 2006.

### Selected Exhibitions outside of the Vancouver Art Gallery

Bau-Xi, Vancouver. *Jack Shadbolt: Recent Paintings.* November 3, 1986 - November 16, 1986.

## Archival History

### Acquisitions Justification

*Acquisition Record*  
1994

[transcription]

### Jack Leonard Shadbolt 1909 Shoeburyness, England

Voices, 1986  
acrylic on canvas  
left panel: 117 x 94.5 cm  
centre panel: 128.5 x 94.5 cm  
right panel: 117 x 94.5 cm

Provenance: The Artist  
Donor: ABC Dominion Securities



Jack Shadbolt's place in the history of Canadian art is well established. Born in England, he came to Canada in 1912, settling with his family in Victoria. He studied art at the Vancouver School of Art, Ecole des beaux-arts (Paris), and the Art Students League (New York). He served in the Second World War as an official war artist and on returning to Canada, headed the Drawing and Painting departments at the Vancouver School of Art. He has taught and lectured for numerous institutions including the University of Saskatchewan Emma Lake Workshop. He received the Canadian Guggenheim International Award and Canadian Government Overseas Fellowship to study in Europe in 1957. He has received Honorary degrees from UBC, Simon Fraser University, and the University of Victoria. In 1972 he was appointed to the Order of Canada. Shadbolt currently lives in Burnaby and continues to be an influential artist and strong supporter of the west coast art community.

Shadbolt has executed numerous public commissions including murals at Edmonton International Airport, Confederation Centre in Charlottetown, and the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. He has exhibited internationally throughout his

# Jack Shadbolt

Voices, 1986

career with shows at the Carnegie International (Pittsburgh), Tate Gallery, a thirty year retrospective organized and circulated by the National Gallery of Canada, and a major exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery. He has also exhibited in solo exhibitions in commercial venues throughout Canada and the United States. Collections include major Canadian galleries, corporate and private collections.

Throughout his career, Jack Shadbolt has been engaged by the art of the indigenous peoples of British Columbia. He studied masks at the Provincial Museum while a student and has periodically returned to this subject matter since that time. In 1986, Shadbolt was given an exhibition at the Museum of Anthropology which traced his involvement with masks and indigenous culture. The planning of this exhibition and its success led Shadbolt to this material again and during 1985 and 1986 he produced a number of works which revisit northwest coast mask images. *Voices*, also reflects Shadbolt's interest in the movement to preserve both the forests and culture of native people (similar ideas are expressed in the VAG paintings *Silent Land* and *Elegy for an Island*, both 1985).

*Voices* would be an important complement to the gallery's holdings of Shadbolt's work from the eighties and add another significant Shadbolt canvas to the collection. The Vancouver Art Gallery currently holds the most significant and representative public collection of works by the artist. It includes over fifty works in a range of media.



## Acquisitions Justification

### Acquisition Record

1994

### [transcription]

Jack Leonard Shadbolt  
1909 Shoeburyness, England

*Voices*, 1986  
acrylic on canvas  
left panel: 117 x 94.5 cm  
centre panel: 128.5 x 94.5 cm  
right panel: 117 x 94.5 cm

Donor: RBC Dominion Securities

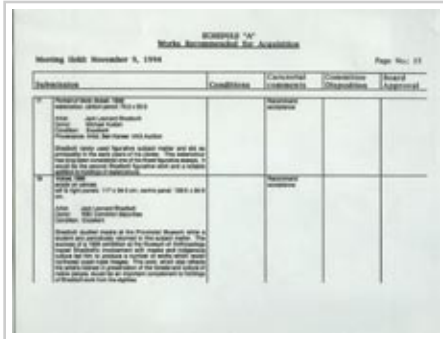
Throughout his career, Jack Shadbolt has been engaged by the art of the indigenous peoples of British Columbia. He studied masks at the Provincial Museum while a student and has periodically returned to this subject matter since that time. In 1986, Shadbolt was given an exhibition at the Museum of Anthropology which traced his involvement with masks and indigenous culture. The planning of this exhibition and its success led Shadbolt to this material again and during 1985 and 1986 he produced a number of works which revisit northwest coast mask images. *Voices*, also reflects Shadbolt's interest in the movement to preserve both the forests and culture of native people (similar ideas are expressed in the VAG paintings *Silent Land* and *Elegy for an Island*). This work would be an important complement to our holdings of Shadbolt's work from the eighties and add another significant Shadbolt canvas to our holdings.

The work is in excellent condition.

Recommendation: Accept gift

Ian M. Thom  
Senior Curator

Jack Shadbolt  
Voices, 1986



**Board Minutes**  
*Acquisition Record*  
1994-09-09

[transcription of excerpt]

**SCHEDULE "A"**  
**Works Recommended for Acquisition**

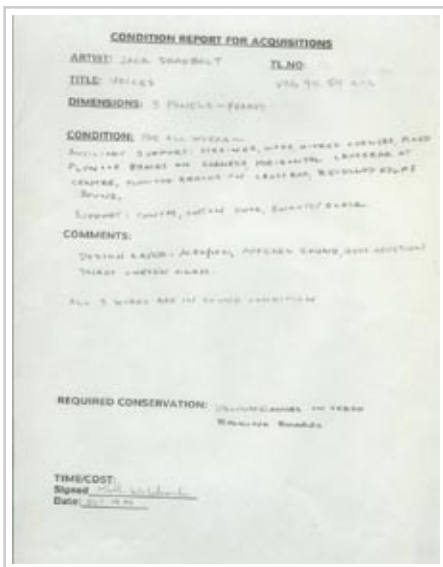
**Submission**

18. Voices, 1986  
acrylic on canvas  
left & right panels: 117 x 94.5 cm; centre panel: 128.5 x 94.5 cm.

Artist: Jack Leonard Shadbolt  
Donor: RBC Dominion Securities  
Condition: Excellent

Shadbolt studied masks at the Provincial Museum while a student and periodically returned to this subject matter. The success of a 1968 exhibition at the Museum of Anthropology that traced Shadbolt's involvement with masks and indigenous culture led him to produce a number of works which revisit northwest coast mask images. This work, which also reflects the artist's interest in preservation of the forests and culture of native people, would be an important complement to holdings of Shadbolt work from the eighties.

**Curatorial Comments:** Recommend Acceptance



**Condition Report for Acquisitions**  
*Conservation*  
1994-10-19

[transcription]

**CONDITION REPORT FOR ACQUISITIONS**

**ARTIST:** JACK SHADBOLT  
**TL. NO:** VAG 94.54 a-c

**TITLE:** VOICES

**DIMENSIONS:** 3 PANELS—FRAMED

**CONDITION:** FOR ALL WORKS—  
AUXILIARY SUPPORT: STRAINER, WOOD, MITRED CORNERS, FIXED PLYWOOD BRACES ON CORNERS, HORIZONTAL CROSSBAR AT CENTRE, PLYWOOD BRACES ON CROSSBAR, BEVELLED EDGES SOULD.

**SUPPORT:** CANVAS, COTTON DUCK, SLIGHTLY SLACK.

Jack Shadbolt  
Voices, 1986

**COMMENTS:**

DESIGN LAYER: ACRYLIC, APPEARS SOUND, GOOD ADHESION  
SLIGHT UNEVEN GLOSS

ALL 3 WORKS ARE IN SOUND CONDITION

**REQUIRED CONSERVATION:** VACUUM CANVAS ON VERSO  
BACKING BOARDS

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