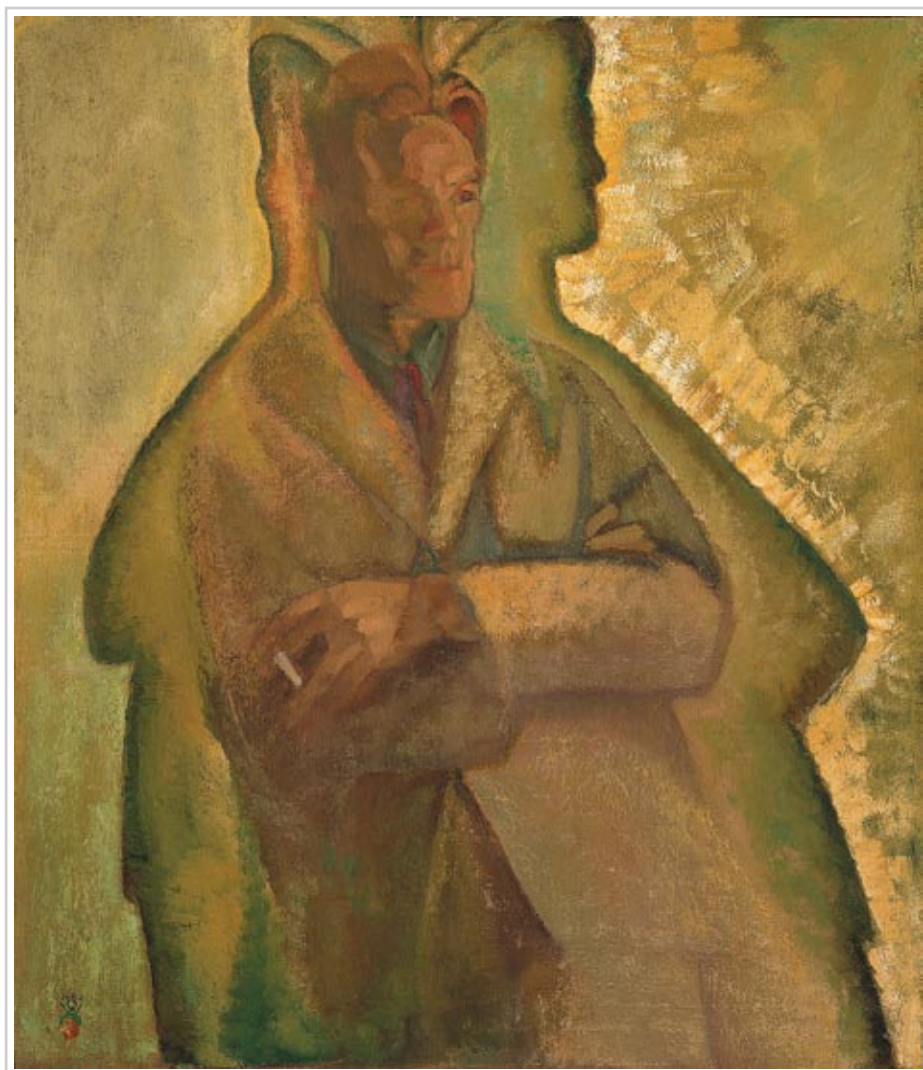


Vera Olivia Weatherbie

Portrait of F.H. Varley, 1930

oil on canvas and board
99.0 cm x 85.0 cm

Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund
VAG 86.178



Vera Olivia Weatherbie

Portrait of F.H. Varley, 1930



Image source: Vancouver Art Gallery Canadian Artist Files

Artist's Biography

Nationality: Canadian

Born: 1909

Vera Weatherbie (1909-1977) was one of the first graduates of the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts (VSDAA) in 1929. She is well known for her early association with Group of Seven painter and VSDAA faculty member Frederick Varley and her later marriage to sometime-artist/photographer Harold Mortimer Lamb. These relationships are matters of record, but it is important to remember that Weatherbie was an accomplished painter in her own right, regarded more recently as being underrated during her lifetime.

Weatherbie enrolled in the first class at the VSDAA in October 1925 at the age of 16. After graduation she took "post-graduate" studies at the School in 1929/30 and later attended the Royal Academy in London, England. She won many awards for her artwork during her association with the VSDAA, including the Vancouver Exhibition Association Scholarship in Drawing & Painting for 1927/28 and 1928/29 and the Fyfe-Smith Travelling Scholarship, 1929/30. Later in 1934, she won the Beatrice Stone Medal in Painting for *My-E-En*. Her work continued to be shown with some regularity through the early 1950s in Vancouver, Seattle and at national exhibitions. Apparently shunning recognition for herself, Weatherbie appears to have been content to allow her husband to gain praise for his artistic endeavours. Whatever the reason, there is little record of Weatherbie's activities after the early 1950s.

To support herself and possibly to have readily-available studio space, Weatherbie taught drawing, composition and painting at the British Columbia College of Art. This contemporary "rival" of the VSDAA was founded in Vancouver by Varley and Jock Macdonald in 1933. The College relied on its tuition base for survival and only managed to do so for two years. It closed in 1935.

Since 1980 she has received increasing attention by having been included in a number of exhibitions. *Molly Lamb* was in the first retrospective held by Emily Carr College of Art in 1980 (Vancouver School of Art: The Early Years, 1925-1939) and *My-E-En* was shown at Vancouver Art & Artists, 1931-1983, the exhibition which opened the current location of the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1983. In 1984/85, the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria included *Portrait of Molly* in British Columbia Women Artists, 1885-1985.

Vera Weatherbie's work can be found, among other locations, in the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria and private collections.

Source: Michael Clark. "Vera Weatherbie: Vancouver Artist," *Visions in the Making: The Official Publication of the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design*. 2 (September 1995).

Vera Olivia Weatherbie

Portrait of F.H. Varley, 1930

Artistic Context

Nationality: Canadian

Training: Vancouver School of Art; Royal Academy, London

Group: B.C. Society of Artists

Peers: F.H. Varley

Provenance: purchased from Peter Varley in 1986; the artist

Subject: portraits

Other Works in the Vancouver Art Gallery Collection

Vera Weatherbie
Portrait of Louise Mackay
oil on wood panel
Gift of Ann Martinson
VAG 90.87.1

Vera Weatherbie
Dining Room at Belmont
oil on plywood
Gift of Anne Martinson
VAG 90.87.2

Vera Weatherbie
Untitled
charcoal and pencil on paper
Gift of Mrs. Louise Brittain
VAG 93.49.7

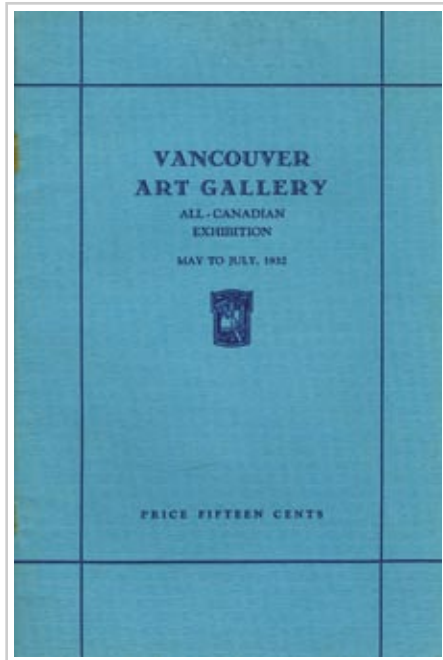
Vera Weatherbie
Untitled
charcoal and graphite on paper
Gift of Mrs. Louise Brittain
VAG 93.49.8

Vera Weatherbie
Canoe Builders
oil on wood panel
Gift of Irene Hoffar Reid
VAG 93.62.29

Vera Weatherbie
Liti
oil on canvas
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund
VAG 94.4.5

Vera Olivia Weatherbie

Portrait of F.H. Varley, 1930



Bibliography

Vancouver Art Gallery: All-Canadian Exhibition

Publication
1932

[transcription]

Vancouver Art Gallery
All-Canadian Exhibition
May to July 1932

Judging Committee

Willie Dalton (Chairman)
H.A. Stone
H. Mortimer Lamb
J.W.G MacDonald
G.L. Thornton Sharp
J. Vanderpant
W.P. Weston

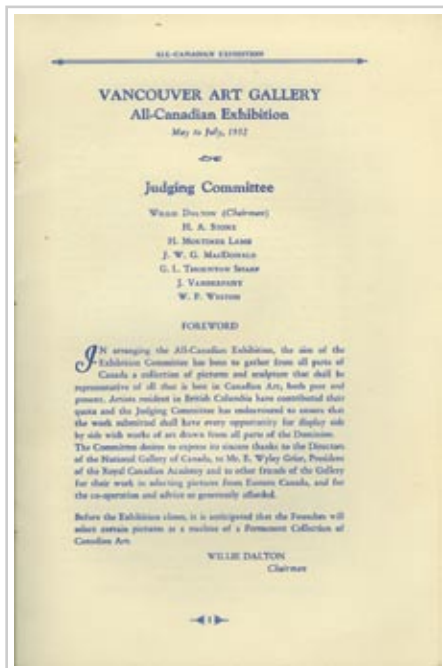
FOREWARD

In arranging the All-Canadian Exhibition, the aim of the Exhibition committee has been to gather from all parts of Canada a collection of pictures and sculpture that shall be representative of all that is best in Canadian Art, both past and present. Artists resident in British Columbia have contributed their quota and the Judging committee has endeavored to ensure that the work submitted shall have every opportunity for display side by side with works of art drawn from all parts of the Dominion. The Committee desires to express its sincere thanks to the Directors of the National Gallery of Canada, to Mr. E. Wyley Grier, President of the Royal Canadian Academy and to the other friends of the Gallery for their work in selecting pictures from Eastern Canada, and for the co-operation and advice so generously afforded.

Before the Exhibition closes, it is anticipated that the Founders will select certain pictures as a nucleus of a Permanent Collection of Canadian Art.

Willie Dalton
Chairman

122 Portrait—F.H. Varley - - - - Vera O. Weatherbie



Vera Olivia Weatherbie

Portrait of F.H. Varley, 1930

Further Reading

Arnold, Grant. "The Terminal City and the Rhetoric of Utopia," *Collapse*. 5 (2000): 30-94.

British Columbia Women Artists 1885-1985. Victoria: Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 1985.

The Thirties. Burnaby: Burnaby Art Gallery, 1971.

Vancouver: Art And Artists 1931-1983. Vancouver: The Vancouver Art Gallery, 1983.

Exhibition History

Exhibitions at the Vancouver Art Gallery

All-Canadian Exhibition. May - July 1932

Face to Face: Four Centuries of Portraits. June 19, 1999 - October 31, 1999.

Rhetoric of Utopia: John Vanderpant and his Contemporaries. August 21, 1999 - February 13, 2000.

75 Years of Collecting: The Road to Utopia. September 23, 2006 - January 1, 2007.

Selected Exhibitions Outside of the Vancouver Art Gallery

Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada. 1930-1931

Vancouver, Vanderpant Galleries. 1931

Archival History

Toronto Star Weekly Review
Miscellaneous History
1931-01-24

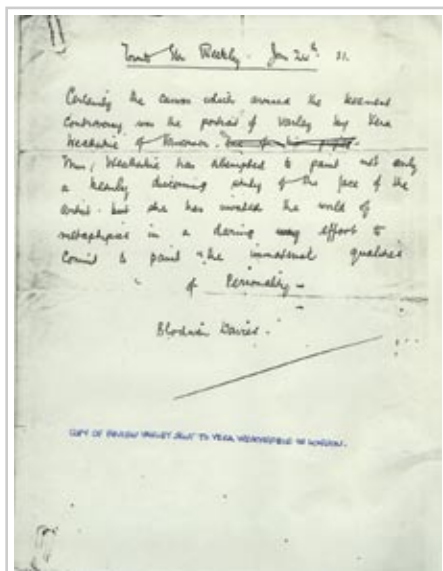
[transcription]

Toronto Star Weekly Jan 24th

Certainly the canvas which aroused the keenest controversy was the portrait of Varley by Vera Weatherbie of Vancouver. Miss Weatherbie has attempted to paint not only a keenly discerning study of the face of the artist but she has invaded the world of metaphysics in a daring effort to commit to paint the immaterial qualities of personality.

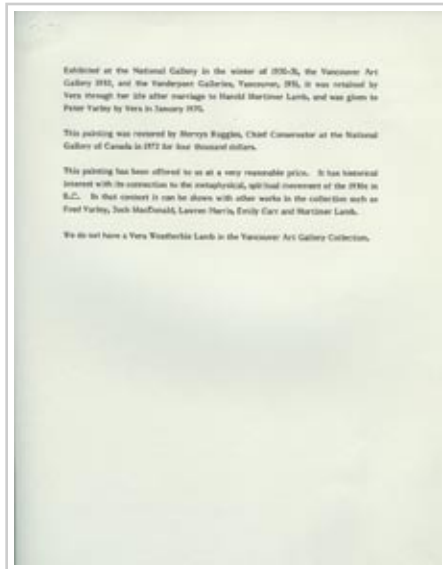
Blodwin Davies

[COPY OF REVIEW VARLEY SENT TO VERA WEATHERBIE IN LONDON]



Vera Olivia Weatherbie

Portrait of F.H. Varley, 1930



Aquisitions Justification

Acquisition Record
1986

[transcription]

Vera Weatherbie Lamb

Portrait of F.H. Varley 1930

39" x 33.3/4"

Oil on canvas

Vendor: Peter Varley

Vera Weatherbie Lamb was born in Vancouver, studied at the Vancouver School of Art and the Royal Academy, London. She exhibited regularly in the British Columbia Artists' Annual Exhibition and with the Royal Canadian Academy and the Seattle Art Institute. She was also a member of staff of the British Columbia College of Arts.

This painting certainly shows the influence of the painter Fred Varley, with its strong planar structure and loose full brushwork of heightened colour, reflecting the subconscious process of the artist and the symbolic spirit of the subject — Varley himself. Probably in connection with the exhibition of this work at the National Gallery of Canada, in the "Toronto Star Weekly", January 21, 1931, Blodwin Davies described it as, "Certainly the canvas which aroused the keenest controversy was the portrait of Varley by Vera Weatherbie of Vancouver. Miss Weatherbie has attempted to paint not only a keenly discerning study of the face of the artist, but she has invaded the world of metaphysics in a daring effort to commit to paint the immaterial qualities of personality."

The painting also has an historical interest as an expression of the relationship between Vera and Fred. Varley often signed his work using his thumb print with his initials and surname arched over the curve. "In this case, Vera used her first name and last initials over her thumbprint, then Fred added his own print overlapping hers as a gesture of affection and good luck for the portrait." Peter Varley.

Peter Varley felt the painting should be dated 1930 — probably painted at the Parakontas Studio on Bute Street, Vancouver, where Fred Varley had studios for himself and students.

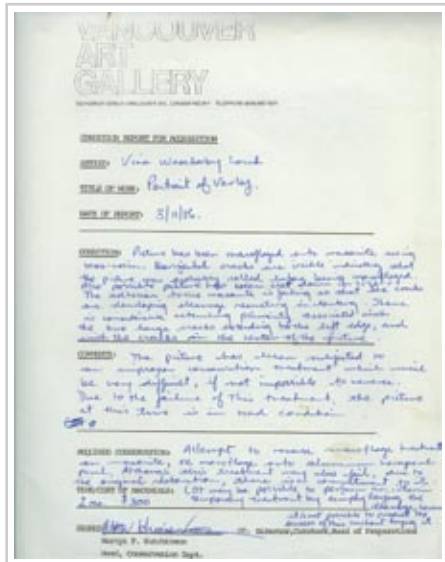
Exhibited at the National Gallery in the winter of 1930-31, the Vancouver Art Gallery 1932, and the Vanderpant Galleries, Vancouver, 1931, it was retained by Vera through her life after marriage to Harold Mortimer Lamb, and was given to Peter Varley by Vera in January 1970.

This painting was restored by Mervyn Ruggles, Chief Conservator at the National Gallery of Canada in 1972 for four thousand dollars.

This painting has been offered to us at a very reasonable price. It has historical interest with its connection to the metaphysical, spiritual movement of the 1930s in B.C. In that context it can be shown with other works in the collection such as Fred Varley, Jock MacDonald, Lawren Harris, Emily Carr and Mortimer Lamb.

We do not have a Vera Weatherbie Lamb in the Vancouver Art Gallery Collection.

Vera Olivia Weatherbie
Portrait of F.H. Varley, 1930



Condition Report for Acquisition

Conservation
1986-03-11

[transcription]

VANCOUVER
ART
GALLERY
750 HORNBY STREET VANCOUVER B.C. CANADA V6Z 2H7 TELEPHONE (604)
682-5621

CONDITION REPORT FOR ACQUISITION

ARTIST: Vina Weatherby [Vera Weatherbie] Lamb

TITLE OF WORK: Portrait of Varley

DATE OF REPORT: 3/11/86

CONDITION: Picture has been maro[u]flaged onto masonite using wax-resin. Horizontal cracks are visible indicating that the picture was probably rolled before being maro[u]flaged. Also possible picture has been cut down in size. The adhesion to the masonite is failing so that the cracks are developing cleavage resulting in [testing?]. There is considerable retouching primarily associated with the two large cracks extending to the left edge, and with the cracks in the center of the picture.

COMMENTS: The picture has been subjected to an improper conservation treatment which will be very difficult, if not impossible to reverse. Due to the failure of this treatment, the picture at this time is in bad condition.

REQUIRED CONSERVATION: Attempt to reverse the maro[u]flage treatment on masonite, re maro[u]flage [reमारouflage] onto aluminum honeycomb panel. Although this treatment may also fail, due to the original restoration, there is a commitment to it.

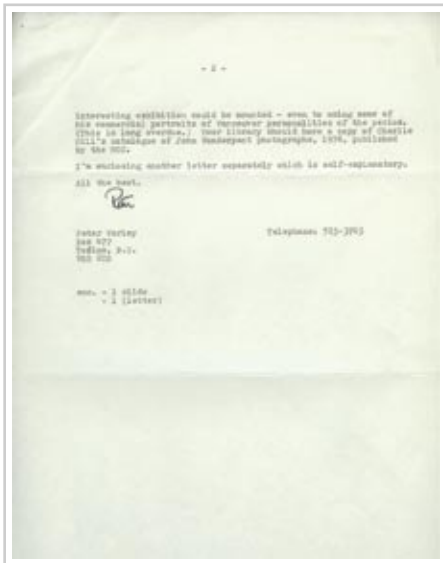
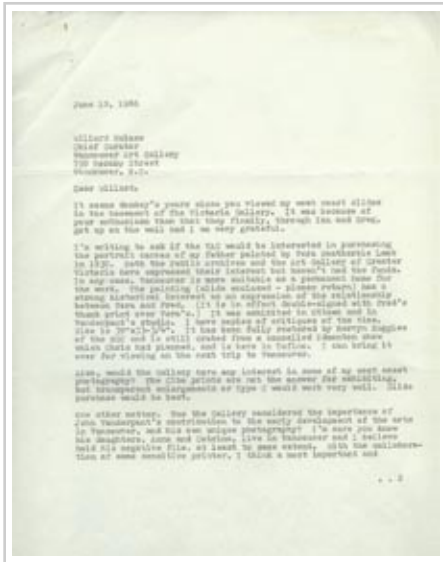
TIME/COST OF MATEIRALS: (It may be possible to perform an interim temporary treatment by simply laying the cleavage, however it is not possible to predict the success of this without trying it.)

SIGNED [Mervyn F. Hutchinson in ink]
Mervyn F. Hutchinson
Head, Conservation Dept.

cc. Director, Curators, Head of Preparations

Vera Olivia Weatherbie

Portrait of F.H. Varley, 1930



Peter Varley Correspondence

Correspondence
1986-06-10

[transcription]

June 10, 1986

Willard Holmes
Chief Curator
Vancouver Art Gallery
750 Hornby Street
Vancouver, B.C.

Dear Willard:

It seems donkey's years since you viewed my west coast slides in the basement of The Victoria Gallery. It was because of your enthusiasm then that they finally, through Ian and Greg, got up on the wall and I am very grateful.

I'm writing to ask if the VAG would be interested in purchasing the portrait canvas of my father painted by Vera Weatherbie Lamb in 1930. Both the Public Archives and the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria have expressed their interest but haven't had the funds. In any case, Vancouver is more suitable as a permanent home for the work. The painting (slide enclosed — please return) has a strong historical interest as an expression of the relationship between Vera and Fred. (It is in effect double-signed with Fred's thumb print over Vera's.) It was exhibited in Ottawa and in Vanderpant's studio. I have copies of critiques of the time. Size is 39"x33-3/4". It has been fully restored by Mervyn Ruggles of the NGC and is still crated from a cancelled Edmonton show which Chris had planned, and is here in Tofino. I can bring it over for viewing on the next trip to Vancouver.

Also, would the Gallery have any interest in some of my west coast photography? The Ciba prints are not the answer for exhibiting, but transparent enlargements or Type C would work very well. Slide purchase would be best.

One other matter. Has the Gallery considered the importance of John Vanderpant's contribution to the early development of the arts in Vancouver, and his own unique photography? I'm sure you know his daughters, Anna and Catrina, live in Vancouver and I believe hold his negative file, at least to some extent. With the collaboration of some sensitive printer, I think a most important and

-2-

interesting exhibition could be mounted — even to using some of his commercial portraits of Vancouver personalities of the period. (This is long overdue.) Your library should have a copy of Charlie Hill's catalogue of John Vanderpant photographs, 1976, published by the NGC.

I'm enclosing another letter separately which is self-explanatory.

All the best.
[signed Peter]

Peter Varley
Box 477
Tofino, B.C.
VOR 2Z0
Telephone: 725-3705

enc. — 1 slide — 1 (letter)

Vera Olivia Weatherbie
Portrait of F.H. Varley, 1930



Peter Varley Correspondence

Correspondence
1986-10-07

[transcription]

October 7, 1986

Helle K. Viirheid
Registrar
Vancouver Art Gallery
750 Hornby Street
Vancouver, B.C.

Dear Helle:

When I was speaking to Lorna Farrel-Ward about getting the canvas of Vera Weatherbie Lamb's to the gallery she told me that costs would be looked after. An invoice for its transport is enclosed.

It was a pleasure to meet you last Friday. I greatly appreciate the trouble you and the staff went to in getting the crate into the gallery on such short notice.

I'm also enclosing photocopies of material with reference to the painting and Vera. The review of Blodwin Davies in my father's handwriting was sent to Vera when she was attending The Slade School in London. I believe it would have been in connection with its exhibition at The National Gallery, although it may also have been shown in Toronto. It was shown also at The Vanderpant Galleries.

The work has an extra interest in the signature. As you know, Varley often signed his work using his thumb print with his initials and surname arched over the curve. In this case, Vera used her first name and last initials over her thumb print, then Fred added his own print overlapping hers as a gesture of affection and good luck for the portrait.

Going by the date of his note to London, I assume the painting should be dated 1930 — probably painted at the Parakontas Studio on Bute Street where Fred had studios for himself and students.

If the painting is acquired by the Gallery I will send Varley's original note.

Yours sincerely,

[signed Peter Varley]

Peter Varley
Box 477
Tofino, B.C.
VOR 2Z0
Tel. 725-3705

encs.

Vera Olivia Weatherbie

Portrait of F.H. Varley, 1930

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