

## Degrees of Separation

### From Piero della Francesca to Jessica Stockholder

Edward Burne-Jones's painting *The Golden Stairs* 1880 started as an idea in 1872, one year after the artist's visit to Italy where he had sketched scenes from Piero della Francesca's *Legend of the True Cross* c1452 in the Church of San Francesco in Arezzo. Burne-Jones actually began the painting in 1876. His friend, the critic FG Stephens, later wrote how flesh tones, composition and faces in his art had changed, and how it 'now resembles in many points the art of Piero della Francesca'.

Several decades later Marcel Duchamp may well have seen *The Golden Stairs* in the form of Felix Jasinski's etching after the painting, published in 1894 and known to have circulated and been admired in France. This image, as well as other influences such as the serial chronophotographs of Étienne-Jules Marey and Eadweard Muybridge, would inexorably lead to Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase (No.2)* 1912.

The Canadian artist Emily Carr saw Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* during a trip to New York in 1930. She had seen reproductions before, but on encountering the work in a gallery was struck 'dumb' by its 'gripping power'. Several months later, inspired by the movement and energy of Duchamp, she produced some of her most powerful paintings of British Columbia's forests, such as *Tree (spiralling upward)* 1932–3.

A fellow Canadian, Jessica Stockholder, has also felt a strong affinity to the landscape of British Columbia, and has acknowledged how Carr's paintings have influenced her thinking about landscape and, in particular, 'the way in which human beings and the structures that we make intersect landscape'.

*The Golden Stairs* 1880 is on view at Tate Britain. *Nude Descending a Staircase (No.2)* 1912 is now in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Emily Carr's work is held in various Canadian collections.



Piero della Francesca, *Legend of the True Cross* c1452 fresco cycle, detail showing the Queen of Sheba in adoration of the Wood with handmaids, Church of San Francesco, Arezzo

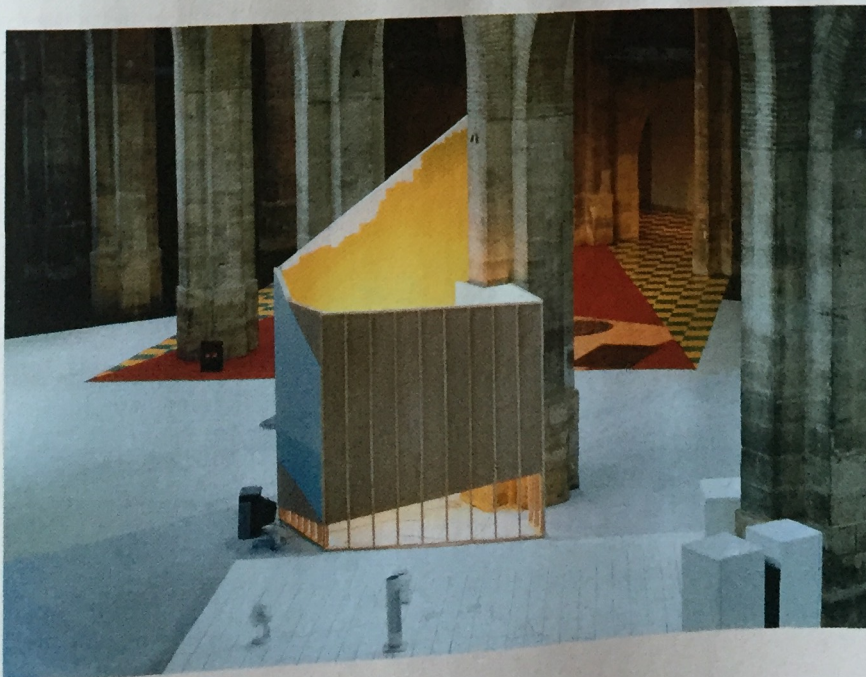
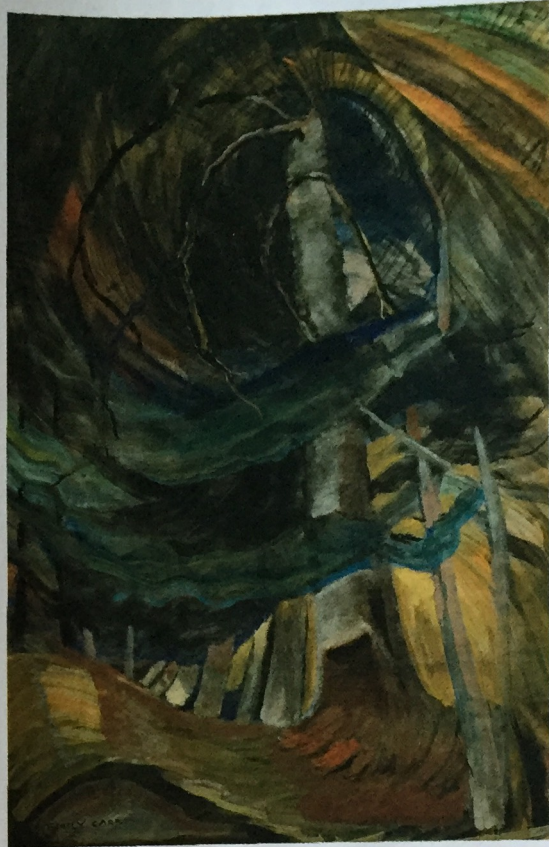


Edward Burne-Jones, *The Golden Stairs* 1880, oil on canvas, 269.2 x 116.8 cm



Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)* 1912, oil on canvas, 147 x 89.2cm

Emily Carr, *Tree (spiralling upward)* 1932-3, oil on paper, 87.5 x 58cm



Installation view of Jessica Stockholder's *TV Tipped Toe Nails & the Green Salami* 2003 at CAPC musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux