

Dr. Ron Burnett

Passion For the Arts



Mission: Continuing to grow Emily Carr's status as one the world's leading art and design universities.

Asset: A caring, nurturing institution that places great value on enhancing the lives of Emily Carr students.

Yield: Turning out some of the world's best artists and designers who continue to win major awards in every field Emily Carr teaches.

What do *Gen-X* author/artist **Douglas Coupland**, *For Better or For Worse* cartoonist **Lynn Johnston**, *smash-LAB* partner/designer **Eric Karjaluo**, and Emmy-award winning *Family Guy* animator **Lindsay Pollard** have in common? All are graduates of Emily Carr University of Art + Design.

Since 1996, Dr. Ron Burnett, president and vice-chancellor of Emily Carr, has been working tirelessly to run one of the world's leading art and design schools. When Burnett isn't administering the 85-year-old art school, he's busy with his writing: the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts inductee has penned over 150 journal articles and reviews, and has published three books. (Burnett's 1995 book, *Cultures of Vision: Images, Media and the Imaginary* has been translated into Mandarin for the Chinese market, and his most recent book, *How Images Think*, was translated into Turkish.)

Burnett's passion for the arts led to a career in running the prestigious art and design university, one of B.C.'s oldest post-secondary schools. "The arts in general are part of our culture, and creativity is at the heart of everything that we do as a society. My career choice was a natural outcome of this philosophy," says the British-born educator.

According to Burnett, nearly eight per cent of Canada's GDP is culture-based, and approximately 1.1 million Canadians work in the creative industries. These statistics underline the importance of the creative sector to Canada and BC.

During the last seven months, Pixar Studios, known for its computer animation blockbusters *Finding Nemo* and *Wall-E*, and Digital Domain, the visual effects company behind the feature films *Titanic* and *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, announced their studio openings in Vancouver. These openings, are due to Vancouver's wide talent pool in the areas of visual arts, digital design and film production.

In his October speech for the Business Council of BC's 2020 Summit series, Burnett said that the creative industries are not an economic luxury but a fundamental part of the economy. "Businesses in Canada invest far less in culture than nearly any other western country," says Burnett. "We need to work together to make sure the cultural sector grows and stay competitive."

Under Burnett's leadership, Emily Carr's enrolment has more than doubled, from 835 students in 1996 to 1,725 students at present. Students come from across Canada and from over 45 countries. The school has grown from a single building on Granville Island to occupying part of 18 acres of land east of its main campus (along with UBC, BCIT and SFU) known as the Great Northern Way Campus, and three off-site buildings leased to supply studio space to students from all disciplines.

In November, Emily Carr established a cutting-edge 3D research studio, in partnership with California-based Kerner Group, whose special effects division worked on the feature films *Terminator Salvation*, *Transformers II*, and *Star Trek*. The studio will be used for stereoscopic, live-action filmmaking.

Lynn Leboe, a Kerner Group director and BC native, told the *Vancouver Sun* in November, "There's no infrastructure in Canada able to do this. We feel this stereoscopic lab will be a catalyst for growth for the entire creative supply chain."

In June, Emily Carr entered into a five-year research collaboration agreement with the BC Children's Hospital to study the impact that design has in healthcare, and to create solutions to enhance the hospital experience for patients, especially children. "The administration at Children's is extraordinary and they have recognized that designers need to influence and help improve many of the day-to-day processes of care," says Burnett. "This was a natural."

Despite running the university for nearly 14 years – longer than most university presidents – Burnett never tires of his job: "Every day is a challenge for me and every day brings new ideas, new projects, new possibilities. I actually feel as if I'm just starting the job," says Burnett, who, in 2002, was awarded the Queen's Jubilee Medal for service to Canada.

More recently, the French Government recognized Burnett by making him a Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters. The award acknowledges Burnett's significant contribution to the world of culture.

With student enrolment growing, a world-renowned faculty mentoring future artists and designers, and talented graduates earning accolades across the globe, Emily Carr's future looks bright.

A job well done, Dr. Ron Burnett.



Creativity, Research + Innovation for a Sustainable World

Established in 1925, Emily Carr University of Art + Design is one of Canada's premier, post-secondary universities specializing in undergraduate and graduate art and design education and research.



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