



Administrative Centre | 34589 Delair Road | Abbotsford, BC | V2S 5Y1
Tel: 604-859-7141 | Toll-free: 1-888-668-4141 | Fax: 604-852-5701

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MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

LIBRARY CELEBRATES ART DONATION VALUED AT NEARLY \$160,000

The Fraser Valley Regional Library unveils 19 never publically viewed William Allister originals.

Abbotsford, BC – Fraser Valley Regional Library (FVRL) celebrated the receipt of an exceptional gift from the estate of acclaimed Canadian artist and Delta resident – the late William Allister (1919-2008). The *International Collection* of 19 large acrylic on canvas paintings, valued at nearly \$160,000, was unveiled to the public for the first time on Saturday, May 25.

Delta Mayor Lois Jackson, Councillor Jeannie Kanakos, and Township of Langley Councillor and FVRL Board Chair Grant Ward watched as Mona Allister, a sparkly exuberant senior, revealed her late husband's paintings. "The Allisters' generosity and William's creative talents have brought inspirational works of art to Fraser Valley Regional Library," says Ward. "The library is proud to showcase and celebrate the great work of an outstanding Canadian artist."

Remarkable for their bright colours and expression of lively spirits, Allister's works can be found in collections around the world. He had more than 30 one-man gallery shows. But Allister was not just an acclaimed artist; he was an actor, novelist, filmmaker, scriptwriter, and a prisoner of war. He spent 44 months as PoW in Japan during the Second World War and his experience shaped his art. Allister once wrote, "As an artist, I would paint towards peace, paint as I'd never painted before, stretching to the limits, soaring, exploring new forms, new harmonies."

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Allister was an avid library customer and began sharing his art with FVRL's Tsawwassen Library in 2005. Each month he would loan a different painting for the public to enjoy. Library staff regularly saw customers of all ages become enthralled by the colours, textures, symbols and imaginative expressions of Allister's work.

"The Tsawwassen Library is where William found his inspiration to paint the *International Collection*," says his widow, Mona. Allister spent many hours visiting the library to enjoy the books and complete research for his paintings. As he neared the end of his life he discussed with his wife his wish that the paintings be accessible to the community.

"William could have chosen to sell his paintings to private collectors or galleries, to be enjoyed by only a select few, but that wasn't enough for him. He took so much joy in his creative expression that he wanted 'everyone' to see it, and what better place than at his library to make his art available to people of all ages and walks of life." Allister knew that with 25 libraries in its system, FVRL could easily display the 19 large canvasses for public enjoyment. Thus, FVRL was chosen to be the recipient of this generous donation to fulfill Allister's wish.

The entire collection, featuring imaginative renderings and symbols highlighting the interconnection of cultures throughout history, will be exhibited at the Ladner Pioneer Library until September 3, after which the paintings will move to their permanent locations in various FVRL libraries.

William Allister was born October 5, 1919, at Benito, Manitoba. He died on November 2, 2008 at his home at Delta, B.C. He left behind his wife, Mona; daughters Dorrie and Ada; and, a granddaughter.

About Fraser Valley Regional Library

Fraser Valley Regional Library is the largest public library system in British Columbia, with 25 community libraries serving almost 700,000 people in its service area. Established in 1930, it is funded with taxes raised in the community it serves, plus a Government of BC operating grant. The governing Board consists of elected officials representing 15 member municipalities and regional districts. With its mission "to connect people to the world of information and ideas," FVRL plays a prominent role in the communities throughout the Fraser Valley.

FVRL Member Libraries

Abbotsford Community

Boston Bar

Clearbrook

Hope

Maple Ridge

Muriel Arnason

Sardis

Walnut Grove

Yarrow

Agassiz

Brookwood

Fort Langley

Ladner Pioneer

Mission

Murrayville

Tsawwassen

White Rock

Aldergrove

Chilliwack

George Mackie

City of Langley

Mount Lehman

Pitt Meadows

Terry Fox

Yale

FOR MORE INFORMATION, OR TO OBTAIN PHOTOS OF THE EVENT, PLEASE CONTACT:

Irene Geng

Donor Relations Manager

[direct] 604-557-4706

[office] 604-859-7141 ext. 7005

[cell] 604-702-8317

irene.geng@fvrl.bc.ca

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