

Art & Artists in Exhibition: Vancouver 1890 - 1950

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Alistair Macready Bell

October 21 1913 - December 1997

Atelier Sketch Club

Canadian Society of Graphic Artists (Member 1947-70)(Reg. Rep. 1956)

B.C. Society of Artists (Member 1949 President 1953-55)

Canadian Painters and Etchers (Member 1954)

Canadian Group of Painters (1959-61 President 1960-61)

Canada Council Senior Fellowship (1959)

Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (ARCA 1965)

Printing and Drawing Council of Canada (1976)

Alistair Bell was born in Darlington, England. He came to Canada in 1922, and later arrived in Vancouver in 1928, according to an exhibition registration form provided to the [Vancouver Art Gallery](#).

Bell was a member of the [Atelier Sketch Club](#), a group formed by art students taking Evening Classes at the [Vancouver School of Art](#). The group put together an [exhibition](#) at the [Vancouver Art Gallery](#) in 1940. As an evening student Bell studied under [B.C. Binning](#).

He exhibited work in the [1944 British Columbia At Work](#) exhibition at the [Vancouver Art Gallery](#).

Bell was on a list titled "[Leading Vancouver Artists](#)," provided to the [Labour Arts Guild](#) on April 10, 1946 by the [Vancouver Art Gallery](#) to assist in the Guild's call for entries to the second annual B.C. At Work exhibition.

He exhibited artwork in the juried 1948 [17th Annual B.C. Artists](#) exhibition at the [Vancouver Art Gallery](#).

He exhibited with the [B.C. Society of Fine Arts](#) in their [39th Annual Exhibition](#) in 1949. Later that year he submitted three works to the [B.C. Graphic](#) exhibition at the [Vancouver Art Gallery](#), but only one of them was selected for the exhibition.

Bell had solo exhibitions at the [Vancouver Art Gallery](#) in 1942, 1944, 1951 and 1989, the first two shows with his wife. When the Art Gallery expanded in 1951, Bell had the first solo exhibition in the new space, showing a collection of his drawings. The Art Gallery Bulletin noted that this was the first time they were able to display special exhibitions in addition to a "comprehensive review of all sections of the permanent collection".

Bell received two senior Canada Council grants - a travel grant in 1959 and a scholarship in 1967. He won the C.G. Jefferys award from the Canadian Society of Graphic Artists in 1956. He exhibited his

work extensively, including many international exhibitions and a duo show at the National Gallery of Canada in 1961.

Bell retired from his full-time job at Dominion Bridge in Vancouver in 1967, and began working as an artist full-time. He specialized in graphic works, including woodcuts, wood engravings, etchings, and lithographs. He also worked in watercolour, pencil, crayon, pen, and other medium. He was represented by the Bau-Xi Gallery in Vancouver for many years, and had at least twelve solo exhibitions at their galleries in Victoria, Vancouver and Toronto.

In 1971 the Burnaby Art Gallery mounted a large retrospective of Bell's work dating from 1935 to 1970. The exhibition consisted of 62 artworks. The poster for this exhibition had extensive information on Bell on the reverse side, noting among other things that [Lawren Harris](#) was a patron and advisor of Bell's, and that Bell had produced approximately 900 drawings and watercolours, and 100 editioned prints, to that point in time. Bell kept meticulous records about the production of his prints, the numbers sold and the remainder to be printed.

In 1982 Bell donated a huge collection of his work, almost 200 pieces dating from 1935 to 1981, to the [Art Gallery of Greater Victoria](#). This collection was exhibited at the AGGV, with Ian Thom writing the exhibition catalogue. The same year Thom wrote an article about Bell for *Artswest* magazine, which featured one of Bell's prints on the cover.

The Vancouver Art Gallery Library has a large file on Bell, which includes transcriptions of two interviews with the artist, numerous exhibition catalogues, newspaper clippings, and other material.

Bell's work is held in many collections, including the National Gallery of Canada, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England, and in many corporate and private collections.

Exhibitions

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

DATE	EXHIBITION	LOCATION
1942 Feb. 3 - 15	Alistair & Betty Bell - Duo Exhibition	Vancouver Art Gallery
1944 Mar. 28 - Apr. 16	Alistair & Betty Bell - Duo Exhibition	Vancouver Art Gallery
1971 Sept. 9 - 30	Drawings & Graphics 1935 to 1970	Burnaby Art Gallery

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

DATE	EXHIBITION	ARTWORK
1933 Sept. 22 - Oct. 15	VAG 2nd Annual B.C. Artists	Burrard Bridge Gasworks
1934 Sept. 21 - Oct. 14	VAG 3rd Annual B.C. Artists	Corner in Chinatown
1940 April 2 - 14	Atelier Sketch Club Group exhibition	Porpoise Bay
1944 Nov. 21 - Dec. 10	Labour Arts Guild 1st B.C. At Work	Erecting Bulkheads Gantry "A" Fitting-out Dock

1946 July 2 - 28	VAG Jubilee Exhibition	Vegetable Gardens
1948 Sept. 18 - Oct. 10	VAG 17th Annual B.C. Artists	Bridges Cannery Floats
1949 May 3 - 22	BCSFA 39th Annual	Logs in the Creek Figure Design Head
1949 Nov. 22 - Dec. 11	VAG First B.C. Graphic	Boats in the Creek
1950 April 25 - May 14	BCSA 40th Annual Exhibition	Zoo Sketch Polar Bear
1983 Oct. 6 - Nov. 27	Printmaking in B.C. 1889-1983	Boats in Winter (colour woodcut 1953)

References - BIBLIOGRAPHY

Refer to [BIBLIO](#).

References - GROUP EXHIBITIONS

**SOUVENIR CATALOGUE OF EXHIBITIONS OPENING
THE NEW VANCOUVER ART GALLERY** (refer to [VAG51](#))

3rd BC GRAPHIC & CANADIAN SOCIETY OF GRAPHIC ART (refer to [BCG57](#))

100 YEARS OF B.C. ART (refer to [VAG58](#))

B.C. PAINTINGS BURNABY 58 (refer to [BAG58](#))

2nd BURNABY NATIONAL PRINT SHOW (refer to [BAG63](#))

4th BURNABY NATIONAL PRINT SHOW (refer to [BAG67](#))

5th BURNABY NATIONAL PRINT SHOW (refer to [BAG69](#))

B.C. ARTISTS' TRIBUTE TO COLIN GRAHAM (refer to [AGGV74](#))

PAPERWORKS: Contemporary works on paper by BC artists (refer to [AGGV78](#))

PLANTAE OCCIDENTALIS (refer to [UBC79](#))

PRINTMAKING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA 1889-1983 (refer to [AGGV83](#))

VANCOUVER: ART & ARTISTS 1931 - 1983 (refer to [VAG83](#))

PROFILES OF A HERITAGE - Images of Wildlife by British Columbia Artists

Published by Centennial Wildlife Society of British Columbia and Liane Davison

1987, no ISBN, Traveling Exhibition Curated by Liane Davison

Sofcover, not paginated, works illustrated in colour and black & white

Includes Foreword by Patricia Bovey, Introduction, biographies, artist statements

Includes early artwork by [Louis Springett](#), [Alan Brooks](#), [Edward Scrope Shrapnel](#), [Alistair Bell](#), [Frank Beebe](#).

SEYMOUR ART GALLERY - A NORTH SHORE BEGINNING (refer to [SEY90](#))

GENERATIONS - FIVE DECADES OF ART IN WEST VANCOUVER 1912 - 1962 (refer to [WVMA99](#))

A MODERN LIFE: Art and Design in British Columbia 1945-1960 (refer to [VAG04](#))

OUR CHANGING LANDSCAPE (2008) (refer to [BAG08](#))

References - GENERAL

Perception - Journal of the B.C. Art Teachers' Association

1961 May, Volume 2, Number 2, (88 pages - unpaginated), published "twice annually"

Includes biographical summaries and reproductions of 5 woodcuts by Bell and 4 by Sam Black

Creative Canada - Volume Two, by University of Toronto Press

1972; ISBN 0-8020-3285-0

Includes a full page of concise information about Bell.

VISUAL ARTS BRITISH COLUMBIA (refer to [VABC77](#))

BELL, ALISTAIR MACREADY

Royal Canadian Academy of Arts - Exhibitions and Members 1880 - 1979

Evelyn de R. McMann, University of Toronto Press 1981, ISBN 0-8020-2366-5

BRITISH COLUMBIA ART COLLECTION 1974-80 (refer to [BCAC80](#))

ART BANK CATALOGUE (refer to [AB87](#))

BELL, Alistair Macready

A Dictionary of Canadian Artists, Volume 1, A - F, 5th Ed. Revised & Expanded 1997

Colin S. Macdonald, Canadian Paperbacks. ISBN 0-919554-21-0

Biographical Index of Artists in Canada

2003, Evelyn de R. McMann, University of Toronto Press, ISBN 0-8020-2790-3

250 pages; 9 pages of *works cited* referenced to 8,800 artists

14 references cited for Bell, including CC2, M, and RCA listed above.

WATERFRONT by James P. Delgado, Executive Director, Vancouver Maritime Museum

"The illustrated maritime story of Greater Vancouver"

Published by Vancouver Maritime Museum and Stanton Atkins & Dosil Publishers

2005, ISBN 0-9732346-5-2, 186 pages hardcover first edition with dust jacket

Artwork reproduced includes Bell print.

VANCOUVER PUBLIC LIBRARY - B.C. ARTISTS FILES (refer to [VPL](#))

AMPHORA - Featured Artist (refer to [AMP128](#))

Clippings

"Congratulations are due to the Atelier Sketch Club for their ambitious exhibition. This self-organized group of evening school students are meeting every Friday in the Holden building and an invitation is extended to all students to join."

"Evening School", by Fred Amess

From *Behind The Palette*, Vancouver School of Art Annual 1939-40

"Art Group, Youth Share City Gallery"

Daily Province April 4 1940

"Atelier Sketch Club Takes A Bow"

News Herald April 3 1940

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