

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

ALISTAIR BELL,  
MASTER PRINTMAKER, 1913-1997.

Alistair Bell was born in 1913 in Darlington, England. He came to Canada in 1922 and settled in British Columbia in 1929. For the last 36 years of his life (1941-1997) he was a resident of West Vancouver, B.C.

Principally a printmaker, concentrating on woodcuts, etchings, drypoints and engravings, Bell also worked in watercolour and most drawing mediums. He is principally self-taught, but a Canada Council Senior Arts Fellowship enabled him to spend a year in the U.K. and continental Europe in 1959 and 1960. This included four months of studies in etching and lithography at the Central School of Arts in London, and eight months mainly living and working in several parts of France. In 1967 Bell received a Canada Council Senior Artist's Award for his work in the field of printmaking.

While working as a shoe salesman at Spencer's Department store in Vancouver and other low paying jobs in the 1930s, Bell managed to find the time and money to take a night school printmaking class from B.C. Binning in 1935, and made his first few drypoint prints in the later 1930s. For several years he eked out a living as a freelance illustrator doing drawings for department store advertisements. His interest in printmaking was reignited in the early 1940s when B.C. Binning passed on a set of wood engraving tools to him, and he began to work under the influence of the English wood engraving masters Eric Gill and Thomas Bewicke.

A series of delicate wood engravings of plants, executed in 1948, demonstrated his own mastery of the medium and marked the start of Alistair Bell's career as a serious printmaker.

Alistair Bell has exhibited his prints, watercolours and drawings internationally. Between 1954 and 1982 his wood engravings received exposure in both England and Canada. They were included in a show in England called *International Colour Woodcut Exhibition* in 1954. His engravings were also exhibited in *Plantae Occidentalis*, a display of 200 years of botanical art in BC in 1979. In 1982 he had a solo exhibition at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria entitled *Alistair Bell, Prints 1935-1981*.

Alistair Bell's works are included in many public collections including the National Gallery of Canada, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Department of External Affairs in Ottawa, the Canada Council Art Bank, the British Columbia Art Collection, and the Museo Ugo da Carpi in Italy. He is represented at galleries, museums and universities throughout Canada and the United States and has his works in numerous private and corporate collections.

For further information on Bell please see Thom, Ian. *Alistair Bell: Prints 1935-1981*. Victoria: Art Gallery of Victoria, 1982.

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The Alistair Bell Prints included in this issue of *Amphora* were obtained from the collection of Don Atkins and Bob Doull and used with the kind permission of Mr Bell's family.