

Ann Rosenberg / PREFACE

Gathie Falk was born in Alexander, Manitoba, to Mennonite parents. Her father, who died when she was an infant, had moved to Canada to escape the consequences of the Russian Revolution. Although he was very musical and could easily have worked as a teacher, he chose the simple life of a farmer. Gathie moved with her two older brothers and widowed mother frequently. While she remembers being poor, she never felt deprived. There was always enough to eat, clothes to wear, toys to play with. The houses where they lived were always neat, clean and pleasant. As a child, she dreamed of becoming an artist, a musician, a writer, a movie star, a nurse, a doctor, a dancer, a missionary.

She studied music seriously. Her over-eagerness to excel coupled with a self-conscious nervousness undermined her success in music. She had a brief encounter with children's Saturday morning art classes. Due to pressing family circumstances, at 16 she began work in Winnipeg as a packer for Safeway. After coming to Vancouver in 1947, she worked in a factory, sewing pockets into suitcases. To this job she attributes her high tolerance for hard, repetitious work. She left factory employment a few years afterwards when, with some reluctance and mixed success, she became an elementary school teacher.

By 1962, she'd taken several painting courses from Jim MacDonald at the University of British Columbia's Department of Education. In 1964, she began to study pottery and sculpture at the same institution under Glenn Lewis. In 1965, she took a gamble many would fear to take. She quit her secure teaching job in order to immerse herself in art.¹

She lived first on her pension funds, against the advice of cautious friends. When that money was gone, she rented out the main floor of her house and lived in her basement for a year. She began to exhibit; her painting and her pottery were selling.² Apart from teaching three years at U.B.C.'s Studio Art Program, Falk has lived, ever since, with economical grace from the products of her home studios.