

Roosman unveils 'The 26' at the AGB

By Nate Smelle

For more than eight decades, artist Arne Roosman has used his imagination and skill to creatively express his interpretation of the world. Born in Tallinn, Estonia, Roosman developed his artistic abilities while living as a refugee in Germany during the Second World War. After the Nazi regime was toppled by the allies, he then moved to Sweden where he studied art before moving to Canada in 1957.

Throughout his career, Roosman has employed his creativity as a painter, illustrator, lithographer, and as a designer of books, stage sets and murals. Over the past 25+ years, he has been practicing his craft while living in the Bancroft area.

On the evening of Friday, Nov. 4, Roosman unveiled his second exhibition of 2022, The 26, at the Art Gallery of Bancroft. The 26 is a collection of paintings, each dedicated to a letter of the English alphabet and a corresponding type of plant that begins with that same letter.

Roosman began bringing the story of The 26 to life with his paintbrush 10 months ago at his home/studio in Coe Hill. When coming up with the idea for the show, he initially planned to intertwine the alphabet with edible flowers and herbs.

Although the paintings of The 26 appear on the gallery walls in chronological order, Roosman worked on the paintings randomly. To further enlighten his paintings' admirers about the nature of the plants featured in his exhibit, he has placed a label containing information about the plant's qualities beneath each painting.

A crowd of more than 30 showed up to be a part of Roosman's reveal of The 26, with some traveling to Bancroft for the show from as far away as Connecticut. When Noelle and Joseph Meyer discovered that Roosman had completed The 26 they decided to make the long trek north. 'Arne and my Mother were good friends growing up and now we have become pen pals,' Noelle said. 'When we found out he was doing the exhibit we decided to come up, see the show and visit for a few days. Arne is such a wonderful man and amazing talent!'

Once everyone had a chance to wander the gallery and enjoy the show, Roosman thanked everyone for coming out to see his work and explained how throughout his career he has developed a special relationship with each of the letters in The 26. When asked if any of the letters stand out to him, Roosman said 'My favourite letter 'K', in a way is a strange one, but you have to consider the fact that I'm a topographer also by trade, with all my other trades. Topography is a fascinating thing? It has its own power. And the 'K' is sitting there, or standing, being solidly on the ground in all that greenery.'



Now that The 26 are on display at the gallery, Roosman has already begun working on his next project ? a mural to be on permanent display in the community of Golden Lake. Having completed the design for the mural, he is now painting the scene on each of the panels. Once the paintings are finished, he said the image will be transferred onto a large sheet of aluminum.