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Art show and book celebrate the life and legacy of Josh Silburt

By Louise Rachlis

The work of Josh Silburt (1914 - 1991), a prolific Jewish Canadian artist, political activist and cartoonist, will be shown at the Cube Gallery from February 5 to 17.

It will be the first gallery show of Silburt's work in a decade and will celebrate both his fine art paintings and his political cartoons. The show's vernissage on February 6 will also celebrate the launch of a new book, *A Colourful Life: The Art and Drawing of Josh Silburt* by Ottawa resident Allan Silburt, the artist's youngest son.

Josh Silburt was born in Plum Coulee,

Manitoba, in 1914 and spent most of his childhood in Winnipeg before riding the rails to Toronto in the early-1930s. As a teenager, he enrolled in night school classes at the Winnipeg School of Art under the direction of LeMoine FitzGerald, later a member of the Group of Seven.

Silburt was part of the Willowdale Art Group, based in north Toronto, which focused on interpreting the Canadian wilderness, building upon the style of the Group of Seven.

Allan Silburt, 55, remembers road trips where he'd "sit and amuse myself at the side

the road," while his father and the other artists worked.

He said putting the book about his father's art together was "a huge amount of work, but a joy for me to ... bring it to life. It has been my passion."

Allan started writing the book three years ago, but the actual curatorial work began in 1999 after his mother, Beth, died and he realized someone had to take responsibility for cataloguing and setting up a database.

"The book is intended ... to establish the breadth of his career, and his place in that slice of history. That was something I really

wanted to do, and had to do, to secure the legacy of this artwork. He's not a Tom Thomson where others are writing the story, so someone had to write it."

According to Allan, there are more than 1,000 of Silburt's paintings in people's homes, and they get passed down by generations to new owners who don't know his father's story.

"We're re-establishing a footprint for the art so people can know more about its history and its worth," he said.

Allan, an engineer and CEO of Insight

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