

Book review: Gathie Falk's memoir paints a portrait of a world-class artist

Written in plain, accessible prose, and illustrated with family photos and pictures of the Governor General Award-winner's work, *Apples, etc.* is a must-read for art enthusiasts and Vancouver history buffs alike.

TARA HENLEY Updated: June 15, 2018

ADJUST

In her new memoir, Vancouver visual artist Gathie Falk describes a telling moment in 1979.

COMMENT

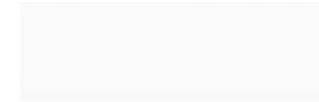
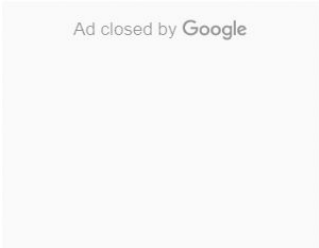
She had just been granted a divorce from her husband — an ex-con 20 years her junior, who'd heard her interviewed on CBC Radio while in the penitentiary and struck up a romance. When he got out of prison, he moved into her Kitsilano home.

PRINT

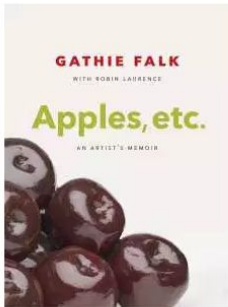
After a trying five years together, the marriage was finally over. As Falk left the courthouse, she walked past a bank and spotted two pieces of her ceramic artwork through the window, one of which was a pyramid of apples, arguably her most iconic image.

"Seeing those sculptures felt like a big, bright affirmation of who I was," she writes.

This vignette sums up the heart of Falk's book, which pays tribute to vocation, a calling in life, and how it can sustain a person in the face of inevitable suffering.



CONNECT WITH US



Apples, etc., written with the help of art critic Robin Laurence, traces the highs and lows of Falk's life, beginning with her Mennonite childhood in Manitoba.

Born in 1928 to parents who had recently fled Russia, her father died before her first birthday, plunging the family into poverty. In spite of the stress and strain of her early years — during which it fell to Falk to pay off her family's steamship passage debt and tend to her ailing mother — the artist-to-be found joy and wonder in daily life.

It's that sensibility that she's translated into her performance art, paintings and sculptures (famously of dresses, shoes and fruit) for more than 50 years.

One of the unexpected gifts of this book is the chronicle of Vancouver offered up in its pages.

Falk and her mother moved to the city in 1947, renting two rooms in a house near King Edward and Fraser.

The story of her life is also the story of our city. (One particularly revealing detail? In 1962, as a young, single school teacher, Falk bought her own home, a wartime bungalow on the east side. She was able to pay off the loans within three years, allowing her to take a leave of absence from teaching, travel to Europe and focus on her art. She never returned to teaching full-time. This trajectory would, of course, be impossible in present day Vancouver.)

Written in plain, accessible prose, and illustrated with family photos and pictures of the Governor General Award-winner's work, *Apples, etc.* is a must-read for art enthusiasts and Vancouver history buffs alike.

SUIT YOURSELF

INDOCHINO
MADE TO MEASURE

Sponsored by INDOCHINO



The spring trifecta: Three ways to diversify your suit collection



Groom finds perfectly fitting wedding suit at a great price



Whether online or brick and mortar, Indochino CEO Drew Green sees customization and personality as ...



5 Simple Steps To Take Care of Your Suit