



BLAKE WILLIAMS

6 a million summers

Surrey Sport and Leisure Complex, 16555 Fraser Highway (Aquatic)
September 1999

A Million Summers is an extensive set of murals and two-dimensional artworks. They have a strong sense of movement and flight with their images of dragonflies, feathers, and divers falling through space.

The ceramic tiles that frame the entrance depict a series of fragmented images excerpted from the larger murals at the end of the competition pool and thereby provoke a sense of questioning and discovery in viewers, inviting them inside the facility as they enter.

The four large ceramic murals installed at the end of the pool feature diving figures, two male and two female, which symbolize human ambition and achievement. Collaged around the figures are a variety of other silk-screened images: religious symbols, representing the major religions of Surrey's culturally diverse communities (Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism and Sikhism); nature images, representing the Coast Mountains to the north of the City, and the "green spaces" within the City's boundaries; Sto:lo texts and English translations, recognizing the contributions of First Nations cultures in Surrey's history; and short poetic texts in English.

In the changing rooms, 128 tiles were screen-printed with brightly coloured, charming sports and health-related pictures drawn by children from the nearby William Watson Elementary School. By contrast, the 12 delicate viewing frames laminated on the windows overlooking the garden depict black-and-white excerpts of historical and environmental text and photographs, inviting close scrutiny.

Vancouver-based artist Blake Williams is known for visual histories of communities. Queen Victoria Annex mural (1998), which he built with school children, is based on stories told by their parents and grandparents of childhood games. His 12 x 40 feet ceramic mural of Rick Hansen's Man in Motion Tour can be seen at General Motors Place. Most recently, Williams worked with 150 North Vancouver residents to produce 330 ceramic tiles for Valley Stories at the Lynn Valley recCentre.

City of Surrey Public and Community Art Collection

