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Allyson Clay launches lofty exhibit at public library

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Books, knowledge, and ideas are flying high at the Vancouver Public Library these days. Three colourful, billboard-sized banners, displaying books tumbling through puffy clouds are the work of Allyson Clay. A professor in the visual arts program at Simon Fraser University's school for the contemporary arts, Clay created the banners for the Aperture Project, a new phase of the library's public art plan. The banners, entitled Overture by Allyson Clay, are kicking off the Aperture Project, a visually striking program integrating art into the architecture of the Library Square promenade. A rotating display of various artists' large-scale photograph-based, printed artworks will hang within three of the 13 large, rectangular apertures on the third and fourth levels of the library's promenade. "Overture was considered the perfect piece to launch the Aperture Project and mark the library's 10-year anniversary," says Barbara Cole, a public art consultant and artist, contracted to oversee the library project. "Allyson's photographs of books hovering in mid-air with the sky and clouds as a backdrop insert themselves into the promenade's commanding architectural space. The photographs speak to me of how once entered, a book's magical contents are unleashed." An internationally recognized painter and photographer, Clay is an avid reader, and prose and poetry writer who loves to weave text through her artwork. The books on her banners are enlarged digital images of photographs she originally took for Heft, an exhibition shown at the Leo Kamen Gallery in Toronto last year.

"I had my friend throw the books up in the air at a Vancouver park, while I shot the photos. I am interested in the play between the physicality of books and the ephemeral ideas that they can elicit." Clay's banners will be floating in the natural light flooding the library's promenade until late October.