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Bill Reid works grace SFU halls

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Often, when people are forced to unload possessions in a move they give away their least valuable acquisitions. However, when Allan Waisman, one of the architects of Simon Fraser University's applied science building, had to downsize to a smaller condo SFU got two of Bill Reid's sculptures. Waisman says his recent donation of the most famous contemporary Northwest Coast artist's works, was as much about keeping promises as unloading possessions. "I had lunch with Jack Blaney when he was the president at SFU, a few years back. I promised him that if I sold my place I would give SFU these two plaster busts," remembers Waisman, a retired partner in Architectura. The architectural firm, one of the largest in Western Canada, was recently sold to an Edmonton company.

Reid's monumental busts of figures in Haida mythology stand several feet tall, encased in clear glass, on the 3,000 level of the AQ in front of the Robert C. Brown hall. The plaster moulds are of Bear Mother, the mother of all mankind, and Dog Fish Woman, the keeper of the undersea world. Their completed sculptures and others crafted by Reid sit in a giant canoe that he also made. The whole piece, eventually cast in bronze, was finished in 1996 and became known as the Jade Canoe because of its jade-like patina. It is the focal point of the entrance to Vancouver's International Airport, which was designed by Architectura.

Waisman used to visit Reid regularly at his Granville Island studio in the 1980s. Architectura was around the corner from Reid's studio. The Simon Fraser art gallery and University Advancement will hold a public donor reception Wednesday, March 17, 11 a.m.