

Printed Text on silkscreen print:

### William Saroyan Centennial 1908-2008

Born in 1908 in Fresno, California, he became an internationally renowned Armenian-American writer, playwright, artist and humanitarian. His fame, and his most enduring achievements as a writer, date from the 1930's. He dazzled, entertained and uplifted millions, with hundreds of short stories, plays, novels, memoirs and essays; they continue to charm and touch us today. Saroyan's talent was first projected to the world through an Armenian-English newspaper, Hairenik of Boston. In 1934, at the age of 26, with the publication of his first book *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze*, William Saroyan became an overnight literary sensation. His first successful Broadway play was *My Heart's in the Highlands*, in 1939, and in the same year, Saroyan was the first American writer to win both The Drama Critic's Circle Award, and the Pulitzer Prize, for his play, *The Time of Your Life*. He refused to accept the Pulitzer Prize on the grounds that, "Commerce should not patronize art..." and he added, "it is no more great or good than anything else I have written." Saroyan is unique among writers. He acknowledged the Armenian culture as an important source of literary inspiration, especially notable in the book-of-the-month selection, *My Name is Aram*, in 1940. Another book-of-the-month choice, *The Human Comedy*, published in 1943, was dedicated to his mother and made into an MGM movie which won him an Academy Award Oscar, for Best Writing Original Screen Story. In the last decade, this Armenian-American author and playwright, had shown a new dimension to his art in the recent discovery of a number of magnificent drawings and paintings executed over the years. It should be noted in closing that, above all, William Saroyan expressed himself in all his works humanely and powerfully, with restless enthusiasm. His major themes were aspiration, hope and honesty. Materialism and success meant nothing to him.

\*biographical research: Paul and Susie Kalinian