GERSHON ISKOWITZ

Life & Work

By Ihor Holubizky

Contents

BIOGRAPHY

Gershon Iskowitz (1920 or 1921–1988) was born and grew up in Poland. The circumstances of his early life—the trauma of the Holocaust and the uncertainty of the immediate postwar period, followed by immigration and adaptation to Canada—provide the context within which we must try to understand and appreciate his work, for art and life were inseparable for Iskowitz. His early figurative images represent his tragic observed and remembered experiences. In his later luminous abstract works, he created his own vision of the world as he remade himself a new man in a different place.

KIELCE TO BUCHENWALD

Gershon Iskowitz was born in Kielce—an ancient city in south-central Poland with a significant Jewish population of approximately 18,000 on the eve of the Second World War.[1] His father was Shmiel Yankl, generally referred to as Jankel; his mother was Zisla Lewis. Gershon was the third of four children; he had two brothers, Itchen and Yosl, and a younger sister, Devorah. The exact date of his birth cannot be firmly established, but he was born in either 1920 or 1921.[2]

The most comprehensive accounts of Iskowitz's early life are found in two books written at the time of the Iskowitz retrospective at the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1982: Adele Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz: Painter of Light*, and David Burnett, *Iskowitz*.[3] Both authors interviewed the artist extensively and recorded his stories. Unfortunately, there is a lack of basic documentation about him: Iskowitz kept only two key official records and a few photographs from a crucial period in his life, 1945–47, and he never saved any letters. New research has corrected many long-standing biographical errors, but his life story remains compelling—one of survival, renewal, and artistic achievement.

Jankel Iskowitz "made a modest living writing satirical pieces—poems, jokes, vignettes—for the weekly Yiddish language papers in Warsaw, Radom, and Kielce [but] did not take an active part in politics."[4] The family lived in the Jewish quarter, where most men were tradespeople or peddlers and the people were poor but self-sufficient, with their own schools, theatre, and social services. They lived in constant fear of opposition from the other townspeople—conflicts that erupted at times into pogroms. Hoping his son would become a rabbi, Jankel sent Gershon when he was only four to a nursery in Lublin sponsored by the Lublin Yeshiva, an important centre for the study of the Torah. But the boy rebelled against institutional life, so two years later he returned home and, over the next few years, attended a Polish school or was privately tutored. The family spoke Yiddish, but Gershon learned Hebrew, Polish, and some German before he turned ten. Early on he demonstrated an aptitude for drawing, and his father encouraged his talent by portioning off space in a front room of the house where he could sketch.

Gershon loved films, and the enterprising child made a deal with the owner of a local movie theatre to produce advertising posters in exchange for free tickets—and, later, a fee. He also drew good likenesses and caricatures of people within his social circle. Even as a young teenager, he knew he wanted to be an artist. He told how, when he was accepted by the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, he arranged to live with an uncle in the city and arrived there in August 1939.[5] A few days later, the German Army invaded the city, and Iskowitz returned to Kielce.

Left to right: (back row) Parents Zisla Lewis and Jankel and (front row) children Yosl, Gershon, and Itchen, c.1924, photographer unknown, Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

LEFT: Gershon Iskowitz, *Side Street*, c.1952–54, watercolour, coloured ink, and gouache on illustration board, 50.9 x 63.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Gershon Iskowitz, *It Burns*, c.1950–52, coloured ink and gouache on illustration board, 50.9 x 63.4 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

The Nazi persecution of the country's Jewish population began almost immediately. On March 31, 1941, the occupying forces established the Kielce Ghetto, a few square blocks surrounded by barbed-wire-topped walls and locked gates. The Iskowitz family and all the other Jews in the city were forced to live there. They were soon joined by Jews transported from elsewhere in Poland for "containment," and by August 1942, more than 25,000 people were jammed into this squalid area. Hunger and typhoid ran rampant, and many people died.

In his earliest surviving drawing, *Action*, 1941, Iskowitz records an incident he witnessed in the ghetto—a German soldier forcibly pulling a young girl from a woman's arms.[6] On August 20, 1942, the Nazi occupiers ordered the liquidation of the ghetto, and four days later, only 2,000 people remained.[7] Many sick, elderly, and disabled inhabitants were rounded up and shot in the streets, but the others were sent on trains to the extermination camp at Treblinka, northeast of Warsaw. Iskowitz's parents, brother Itchen, and sister all died at the camp.

Gershon Iskowitz, *Action*, 1941, pen and black ink, watercolour, and gouache on wove paper, 39.2 x 52.3 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Iskowitz and his brother Yosl were sent to the Henryków labour camp and, in early fall 1943, to Monowitz-Buna, a forced labour camp that was one of the three main sites of the Auschwitz concentration camp.[8] There, Iskowitz's left arm was tattooed with the prisoner number B-3124. In 1951, after he had settled in Toronto, Iskowitz made a drawing of his arm, recording the number.[9] While imprisoned in Auschwitz, ill-

clothed and half-starved, he worked fourteen-hour days in a cement factory and endured the naked "selection parades" carried out every two weeks by the notorious Dr. Josef Mengele. Whenever he could, he scavenged paper, ink, and other art materials and, alone at night, sketched the horrors around him and hid the drawings under loose boards in the barracks. Occasionally, guards asked him to make drawings for them and paid him with sausage or some bread.[10]

Gershon Iskowitz, *Untitled ("B-3124")*, 1951, felt marker on paper, 35.5 x 43 cm, Gershon Iskowitz Foundation, Toronto.

In late 1944, as the Russian army was advancing westward into Germany, Iskowitz and many other Auschwitz prisoners were transferred in a 250-kilometre death march to the Buchenwald concentration camp. In the rush to depart, Iskowitz had no chance to retrieve his drawings. His brother Yosl was not among the marchers, and Iskowitz presumed he had died in the camp. When he arrived at Buchenwald, he played sick: he understood the camp mentality—a bullet would not be wasted on someone who was going to die of "natural causes."[11]

Later in life, Iskowitz spoke of the horrors and his state of mind during his time in Buchenwald, of why he continued to make drawings there: "I did it for myself . . . I needed it for my sanity, to forget about my hunger."[12] He used materials he could scavenge in the camps, and as he described, he came across paper and cakes of watercolour on a work detail.[13] Only two sketches survived his time in Buchenwald, *Condemned*, c.1944–46, and *Buchenwald*, 1944–45.

Iskowitz was not alone in documenting the camps. Among Holocaust survivors, Constance Naubert-Riser writes, "were artists who had the strength to bear witness to this sinister enterprise. The more intimate nature of [such works] takes us to a real and interiorized proximity to death."[14] Their work stands in contrast to paintings by official war artists who could depict the camps only "from the outside."[15] Canadian artists such as Alex Colville (1920–2013), Aba Bayefsky (1923–2001), and Jack Shadbolt (1909–1998) documented prisoners in the weeks after the liberation of Bergen-Belsen and the destruction of war.

LEFT: Alex Colville, *Bodies in a Grave, Belsen*, 1946, oil on canvas, 76.3 x 101.6 cm, Beaverbrook Collection of War Art, Canadian War Museum, Ottawa. RIGHT: Jack Shadbolt, *Dog Among the Ruins*, 1947, watercolour and carbon pencil on paper, 78.2 x 56.9 cm, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.

Buchenwald had been constructed in 1937 as a forced labour camp with sub-camps and as a centre for "medical experiments" and extermination by Nazi doctors. The Nazi Schutzstaffel had imprisoned some 250,000 people there between 1937 and 1945, and more than 55,000 internees had died.[16] Fearing that the Germans were about to dynamite the camp, Iskowitz made one desperate escape attempt. As he scrambled over the surrounding fence, he was shot in the leg and fell to the ground, breaking his hip. He was left for dead by his pursuers, but his friends brought him back to the barracks, where he remained until the Americans arrived two weeks later.[17] The injury left Iskowitz with a pronounced limp for the rest of his life.

Gershon Iskowitz, *Escape*, 1948, oil on paper, mounted on corrugated cardboard, 28.3 x 40 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

In the end, there were approximately 21,000 survivors when Buchenwald was liberated by a division of the U.S. Third Army on April 11, 1945. Gershon Iskowitz was among them.

FELDAFING AND MUNICH

After his liberation, Iskowitz was taken first to a hospital and then to a sanatorium, with suspected tuberculosis.[18] On October 31, 1945, he was registered at the Feldafing Displaced Persons Camp south of Munich, which had been established by the United States Army exclusively for liberated Jewish concentration camp prisoners.[19] Although the camp was initially an emergency measure, by 1946 there were 4,000

Feldafing Displaced Persons Camp banknotes. Many displaced persons camps issued their own internal currency, which was paid to workers and used at the canteen for food and supplies.

inhabitants; it was a self-sustaining community with educational and religious life, a rabbinical council, and vocational training, including making coats from dyed U.S. Army blankets.[20] Iskowitz most likely remained at Feldafing until he immigrated to Canada in September 1948. The camp finally closed in March 1953.

In Feldafing, Iskowitz began to paint again. A photograph shows him posed with his portrait of the Polish Jewish author and playwright Isaac Leib Peretz (1852–1915) which he had painted from a photograph. He also continued to draw—photographs of self-portraits exist as well as memory drawings of life in the Kielce Jewish quarter and scenes from the concentration camps, including *Barracks*, 1949, and *Escape*, 1948. Many of these pieces were painted in bold, bright colours, and they can all be confidently dated to his time at Feldafing.

Iskowitz said he was accepted as a student at the Academy of Fine Arts, Munich, and over the next eighteen months travelled there by train every day.[21] His name does not appear in the official records, but at this time the academy was housed in an old castle while its original building was being restored. New students were not registered but advised to do a year of independent work or be a "guest" of the academy.[22] In all probability, Iskowitz audited classes.

Gershon Iskowitz and portrait of Isaac Leib Peretz, Feldafing, 1946, photographer unknown, Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Iskowitz described how, during these months in Munich, he received advice about form and composition from the Austrian Expressionist artist Oskar Kokoschka (1886–1980)—encouragement that was very important to him.[23] In June 1946 Kokoschka was a candidate for a professor's position at the Munich Academy, and it's possible that he came to the city at that time. There are, however, no records of a visit in either the Munich Academy files or the Kokoschka Archives. Kokoschka travelled to the United States in 1947 and lived for much of that year in Switzerland. His first recorded postwar trip to Munich was not until September 1950, for the opening of his exhibition in the Haus der Kunst.[24] If there was a meeting between Iskowitz and Kokoschka in Munich, it was almost certainly by chance and informal. Nonetheless, it is clear that Kokoschka's work was important to Iskowitz and offered him an inspirational model—a "meeting of minds."

Other stories Iskowitz told of his time at Feldafing relate to surreptitious trips to Paris and to Modena, Italy, for group exhibitions that included some of his war and memory sketches. He indicated that he visited galleries in Munich, where he may have seen works by Edvard Munch (1863–1944), Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), Henri Matisse (1869–1954), and Kokoschka, who were included in 1947 exhibitions.[25] He also said that he painted sets for the Bavarian State Opera in Munich "part-time"—*Aida, La Bohème, Lucia di Lammermoor*—and used

the money to buy art supplies.[26] As with so much from this time, none of these accounts can be verified.

Gershon Iskowitz, *Portrait of Mother*, 1947, oil on board, 50.8 x 40.6 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

COMING TO CANADA

In the turmoil following the war, the victorious powers had to alleviate devastating shortages of food, fuel, and housing for millions of displaced Europeans even as they tried to disarm Germany, reopen schools, and restore some semblance of a functioning democracy.[27] Iskowitz was one of an estimated 250,000 Jewish refugees who passed through the displaced persons camps.[28] A number of relief organizations worked with diplomatic missions and the Allied military in assisting Holocaust survivors. Many had no home to return to, and emigration was the only option. Iskowitz had lost all his family members and, moreover, he would have heard about the continuing anti-Semitism in Poland and yet another ugly pogrom in Kielce: "The Feldafing court helped investigate the perpetrators of the Kielce pogrom of 1946 and publicized information about the Nazi murderers of Lithuanian Jews who were thought to have been in the vicinity."[29] He decided to leave Europe and build a new life in North America.
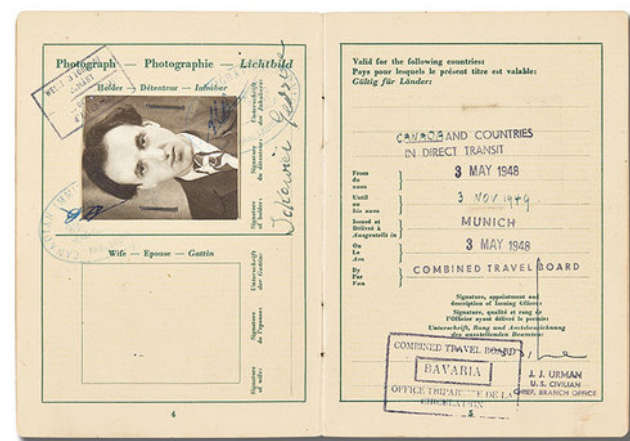
LEFT: Mourners and local residents watch as men shovel dirt into the mass grave of the victims of the Kielce pogrom, 1946, photographer unknown, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington. RIGHT: Temporary travel document, Military Government for Germany, Munich, May 3, 1948, Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Within a month, Iskowitz's emigration process was underway. His maternal uncle, Benjamin Levy, lived in Toronto, and he sponsored Iskowitz's application.[30] He deposited $162 with the United Service for New Americans to cover the cost of Iskowitz's transportation to the United States, where the Kielce Landsmannschaft (a Jewish philanthropic organization) would take responsibility for him. He offered to provide funds for his nephew until he became self-supporting.[31] Obstacles arose: on March 28, 1947, the American consul informed Iskowitz he would have to "wait two to three years under the Polish Quota"; and the Jewish Immigrant Aid Services in Canada (JIAS) told Levy they could not file an application because nephews older than eighteen years of age were inadmissible to Canada.[32] On April 12, 1948, a letter from the JIAS to the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society of Chicago noted that Iskowitz did not qualify for entry to Canada and that entry to the United States might take years. Levy requested and received a full refund of his deposit.[33]

Despite these setbacks, on May 3, 1948, Iskowitz received a temporary travel document, issued by the Military Government for Germany to stateless people in lieu of passports, which authorized voyage to "Canada and Countries in Direct Transit." On it are two "Canadian Immigrant Visa" stamps and one from the "Dept. of National Health Welfare Canada, London," dated May 16,

1948.[34] Iskowitz boarded the *USAT General Stuart Heintzelman* at Bremerhaven in northwestern Germany on September 17, 1948, and on September 28, 1948, he arrived, via Brooklyn, New York, at Pier 21 in Halifax.

A NEW BEGINNING

Iskowitz travelled by train from Halifax to Toronto, where Benjamin Levy and other members of his extended family met him at Union Station.[35] They were all strangers to him, but one of his aunts invited him to stay with her at 218 Rusholme Road until he got settled. He knew no English and, initially, he hated Toronto.[36] Over the next few years, Iskowitz moved many times, mostly from one boarding house to another. He picked up casual jobs whenever he could and visited the few local galleries–Roberts, Laing, Hart House, and Douglas Duncan's Picture Loan Society. He thought the work he saw there "provincial."

On the voyage to Canada, Iskowitz had met Yehuda Podeswa (1924 or 1926–2012) (also known as Julius and Yidel), who had been liberated from Kaufering, one of the Dachau concentration camp sites. Podeswa had also been born in Poland and aspired to be an artist, as his father had been. During his internment, he had created memory paintings,

Gershon Iskowitz, *Portrait of Yehuda Podeswa*, 1954, oil on canvas, 50.8 x 40.6 cm, Podeswa Family Collection, Toronto.

including *Early Times in the War (Burning Synagogue)*, 1945, and later he studied briefly at the Ontario College of Art in Toronto. Iskowitz and Podeswa became friends and visited each other's "studios," and in 1954 Iskowitz painted his portrait.[37] Through Podeswa and others, Iskowitz began to meet students at the art college and make some artist friends. In the 1950s he attended informal life-drawing classes at the Artists' Workshop and produced untitled life drawings and street sketches, which were probably never exhibited.[38]

In due course he received a few portrait commissions–a 1954 painting of Muriel Hirst is one possible example–and in 1953 was hired to teach an evening art class at Holy Blossom Temple, a reform synagogue on Bathurst Street.[39] The Toronto Jewish community followed Iskowitz's career closely, covering his exhibitions in the *Canadian Jewish News* and other publications.[40] He was not openly religious, although he always maintained

social connections with Jewish friends. It is most likely that the arched tops of his *Uplands* three-panelled painting, 1969–70, later repeated in the Northern Lights Septets, 1984–86, are a visual allusion to his early religious instruction, synagogue experiences, and to the popularized representation of Hebrew tablets. Nonetheless, Iskowitz never spoke of his reasons for shaping these paintings.

Gershon Iskowitz, *Yzkor*, 1952, watercolour, coloured ink, and pen and black ink on illustration board, 30.9 x 40.9 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

From 1948 until 1954, Iskowitz continued to create works from memory as he had in Munich—recollections of life in Poland, such as *Yzkor*, 1952 and *Korban*, c.1952; the Kielce Ghetto, such as *Torah*, 1951; and the Auschwitz and Buchenwald camps, such as *Escape*, 1948.[41] These were done in gouache or bodycolour on board and paper. He also branched out into portraits and flower still-life works, as in *Untitled Flowers in Vase*, n.d. His friends drove him on sketching excursions to Markham (then on the rural outskirts northeast of Toronto), and he sometimes went there by bus as well. In 1952 he made his first "pure" landscapes with felt marker—untitled works intended to express his experience and observations of the natural world in a gestural style.

In 1954 Iskowitz appeared in his first recorded exhibition in Canada—the annual show organized by the Canadian Society of Graphic Art at the Art Gallery of Toronto (now the Art Gallery of Ontario). He submitted two ink and watercolour works, *Barracks*, 1949, and *Buchenwald*, 1944–45, and listed them both at $300 each, by far the highest price of any work in the exhibition. Two well-known members of Painters Eleven were also included in the show, Oscar Cahén (1916–1956) with a wash and crayon work priced at $75, and Harold Town (1924–1990) with two "print drawings" for $35 each. Iskowitz continued to show regularly with the Society of Graphic Art until 1963.

Around this time Iskowitz became friends with Eric Freifeld (1919–1984) and William Coryell (n.d.), both graduates of the Ontario College of Art, and he painted Freifeld's portrait in oil (1955). In 1954 Coryell took Iskowitz to the "summer school for painting" at McKellar, northwest of Parry Sound, run by Bert Weir (1925–2018).[42] There artists mentored the students in exchange for food and lodging, and in these welcoming, congenial surroundings, Iskowitz blossomed. He returned every year until 1965 to his "Canadian family." His art also progressed, from literal depictions of landscapes to increasingly abstract compositions of colour and light as he looked through the trees to the sky or studied the lake below from a cliff (*Sunset*, 1962). His trees deconstructed into brightly coloured shapes, his skies into strokes of sun and cloud, sometimes with the suggestion of flames or a figure lurking within. The first of his works to enter public galleries were both Parry Sound abstracts from 1965. *Parry Sound Variation XIV* was purchased by the National Gallery of Canada, and *Summer Sound* by the Art Gallery of Ontario, both in 1966.

Gershon Iskowitz, *Untitled* (*Seated Figure*), c.1955, watercolour on paper, 29 x 22 cm, Gershon Iskowitz Foundation, Toronto.

In 1962, Iskowitz felt secure enough in Canada to move into the first independent living space he ever had—a two-room studio he rented on the third floor at 435a Spadina Avenue. He was forty-one years old, and he finally had the space in which he could paint large canvases and set his own schedule. He stayed there for the next twenty years.

A TORONTO ARTIST

The Toronto gallery scene in the early 1950s was relatively small yet lively, with few opportunities for emerging artists to exhibit and a minuscule market for the work of contemporary Toronto artists. But that was about to change, with the opening of new avant-garde spaces such as Isaacs Gallery and the formation of Painters Eleven—an ambitious group of artists determined to succeed. Within a few years, art and artists became fashionable as people flocked to gallery openings and began to buy art.

The short-lived Hayter Gallery gave Iskowitz his first solo exhibition, from September 14 to 28, 1957, but there is no record of what was shown. Two years later, Dorothy Cameron (1924–1999) included him in the opening exhibition of her Here and Now Gallery on Cumberland Street, which also featured work by Jock Macdonald (1897–1960) and Alexandra Luke (1901–1967). Iskowitz felt that Canada was now his home, and he became a Canadian citizen on February 13, 1959.
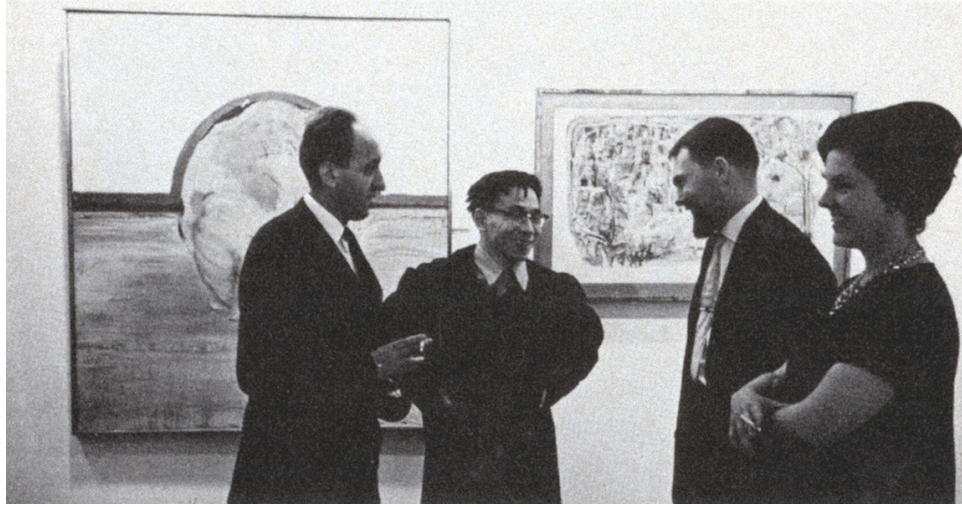
Left to right: Gershon Iskowitz, Kazuo Nakamura, Tony Urquhart, and Madeline Mary Jennings at Isaacs Gallery, c.1961–62, photograph by Tess Taconis, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Although there is no definitive date for Iskowitz's turn to non-representational art—no works dated between 1956 and 1959 have been identified—by the start of the 1960s, his work had become abstract. In March 1960 he had his first solo exhibition with Cameron, and the second in September 1961. There are no checklists for these shows, and newspaper reviews mention only recent works; one undated image is titled *Sunset*. However, Cameron was deeply moved by his memory paintings, and a press release from the 1960 exhibition mentions one Holocaust work.[43] "People were glad to see [Iskowitz] really could paint," she recalled. "Because he wanted to be an artist so much, they were always afraid it was just a dream of his."[44]

LEFT: Gershon Iskowitz, *Sunshine*, 1955, oil on board, 50.8 x 61 cm, University of Lethbridge Art Gallery. RIGHT: Gershon Iskowitz painting outdoors, date unknown, photographer unknown, Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Iskowitz's final solo exhibition with Cameron was in October 1963.[45] "There was a joy and serenity in everything he was doing," she said. "He'd taken the Canadian landscape and turned it into something we never saw in [it]."[46] The reviews in all the newspapers were equally laudatory. Shortly thereafter, she introduced Iskowitz to Walter Moos (1926–2013), a well-connected German-born Jewish émigré who had opened a Toronto gallery in 1959. Cameron closed her gallery in October 1965 but continued to be a friend and supporter of Iskowitz throughout his lifetime.

Iskowitz's first exhibition at Gallery Moos was in October 1964. He and Walter Moos developed an active professional relationship that lasted for the next twenty-four years as Moos managed all the details of Iskowitz's career and finances. Although six years younger, Moos became an "uncle" to the artist and remained committed to his work and legacy all through Iskowitz's life.

In short order, an active market had developed for Iskowitz's luminous abstract landscapes. He had regular, often annual, solo exhibitions at Gallery Moos from 1964 through to the 1980s, which

Gershon Iskowitz Gallery Moos invitation, 1966, Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

garnered positive critical attention and solid sales. Public galleries also began to take notice: in 1966 the University of Waterloo gave him a solo show, followed by the Cedarbrae branch of the Toronto Public Library. Subsequent solo exhibitions were mounted at Hart House Gallery, University of Toronto, in 1973 (remounted at Rodman Hall Art Centre, St. Catharines, in 1973); the Glenbow-Alberta Institute in 1975; and the Owens Art Gallery in Sackville, New Brunswick, in 1976 (remounted at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia in 1977).

Published biographical accounts indicate that, in the late 1960s, Iskowitz taught at the New School of Art in Toronto. The school had been founded as an alternative to the more conservative Ontario College of Art—it required no prerequisites and operated through loosely structured workshops.[47] It attracted students and instructors associated with Toronto's Spadina art scene: Robert Markle (1936–1990) and Gordon Rayner (1935–2010) were teachers, and Alex Cameron (b.1947) and Arthur Shilling (1941–1986) were students. Most likely, Iskowitz's involvement at the New School consisted of informal class critiques or the occasional guest talk. Daniel Solomon (b.1945), a friend who taught a few classes from 1969 to 1973, wrote: "Iskowitz would not have been a big part of that school. I doubt Gershon would have enjoyed teaching. He would not have had the patience for it."[48]
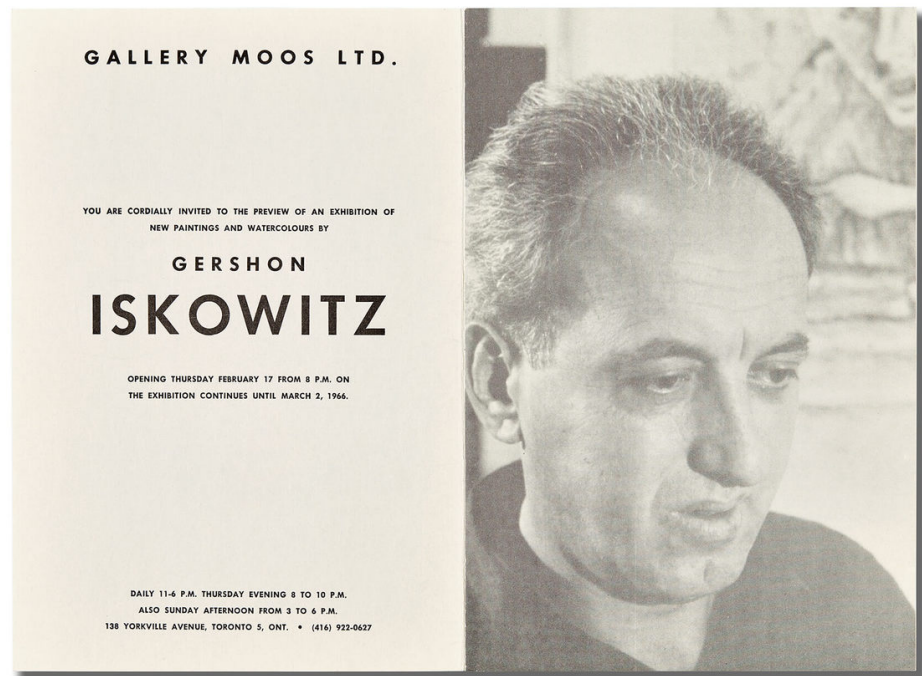
ARTISTIC TRANSFORMATION

A key moment in the Iskowitz story —and mythology—is the breakthrough that occurred in his painting following a conversation with photographer John Reeves (1938–2016), who told Iskowitz he saw an "aerial perspective" in his work and his palette.[49] Iskowitz applied for and received a Canada Council travel grant in 1967, which he used to visit Churchill, Manitoba.[50] The trip probably took place in the summer of that year, summer being when "recreational" flying is easy and the full-colour landscape spectrum is visible below.[51] Once there, Iskowitz chartered an aircraft to fly over the sub-Arctic landscape and the coast of Hudson Bay.[52]

Aerial photograph of Churchill, Manitoba, 1966.

Churchill is situated at the juncture of three ecological regions: a boreal forest of fir and spruce trees to the south, the Arctic tundra to the northwest, and Hudson Bay to the north. The vast spaces and the brilliant crystal-clear colours he saw below through the scattered cloud cover amazed Iskowitz—he felt he had found the terrain that fitted his particular sensibility. In September 1971 he flew north again, this time to James Bay, and in 1973 and 1975 he visited the area around Yellowknife.[53] Iskowitz frequently returned to these northern experiences for the rest of his life with works in oil and watercolour.
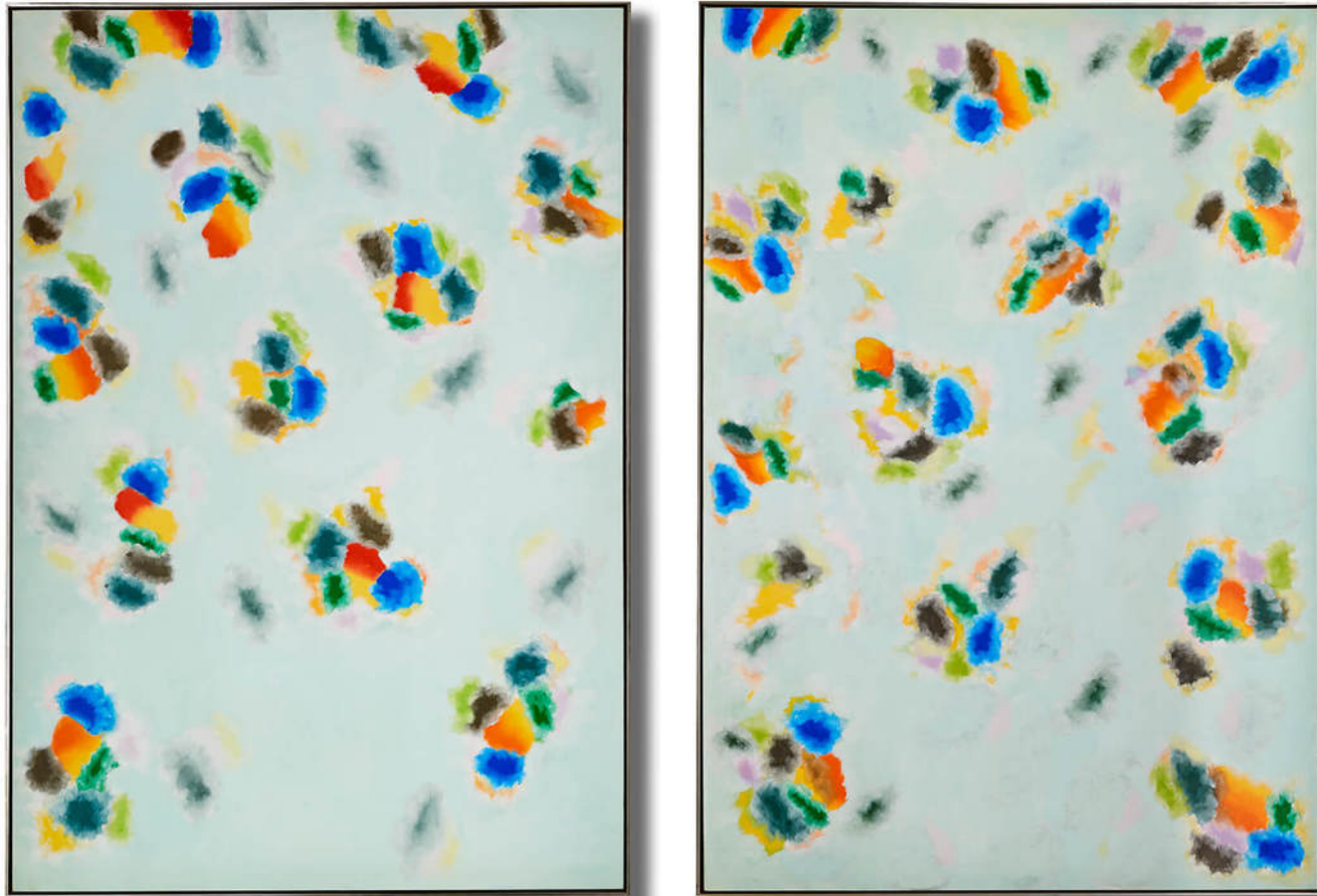
Gershon Iskowitz, *Seasons No. 1*, 1968–69, oil on canvas, 254 x 355.4 cm overall; panels 254 x 177.7 cm each, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

On his return to Toronto, Iskowitz's art snapped into a more complex abstraction, and he painted much larger works than before. The groundwork for this new creative inspiration had, however, already been laid in his Parry Sound works, with paintings such as *Summer Sound*, 1965, which had delicate cloud-like trails. In the immediate post-Churchill period, he produced *Seasons No. 1*—a diptych measuring an epic 254 by 355.4 centimetres—and *Seasons No. 2*, both 1968–69. The titles were inspired by Baroque composer Antonio Vivaldi's violin concertos *The Four Seasons* (1721–25), music Iskowitz loved and often listened to as he painted.

Both *Seasons* works were included in his solo exhibition at Gallery Moos, February 17 to March 2, 1970; *Seasons No. 1* was purchased by the National Gallery of Canada. This show also included thirteen smaller-scale Lowlands paintings, representing Iskowitz's impressions of the landscape as the aircraft swooped down. They were a "prelude" to his large-scale Uplands series— reflecting his impressions as the aircraft surged upward.[54] The first of the *Uplands* paintings, three-panelled, is dated 1969–70. It was selected in 1970, along with *Seasons No. 2*, for the exhibition *Eight Artists from Canada* organized by the National Gallery for the Tel-Aviv Art Museum in Israel. Iskowitz was the only artist not born in Canada. Painters Charles Gagnon (1934–2003), John Meredith (1933–2000), and Guido Molinari (1933–2004) were among the other artists included.
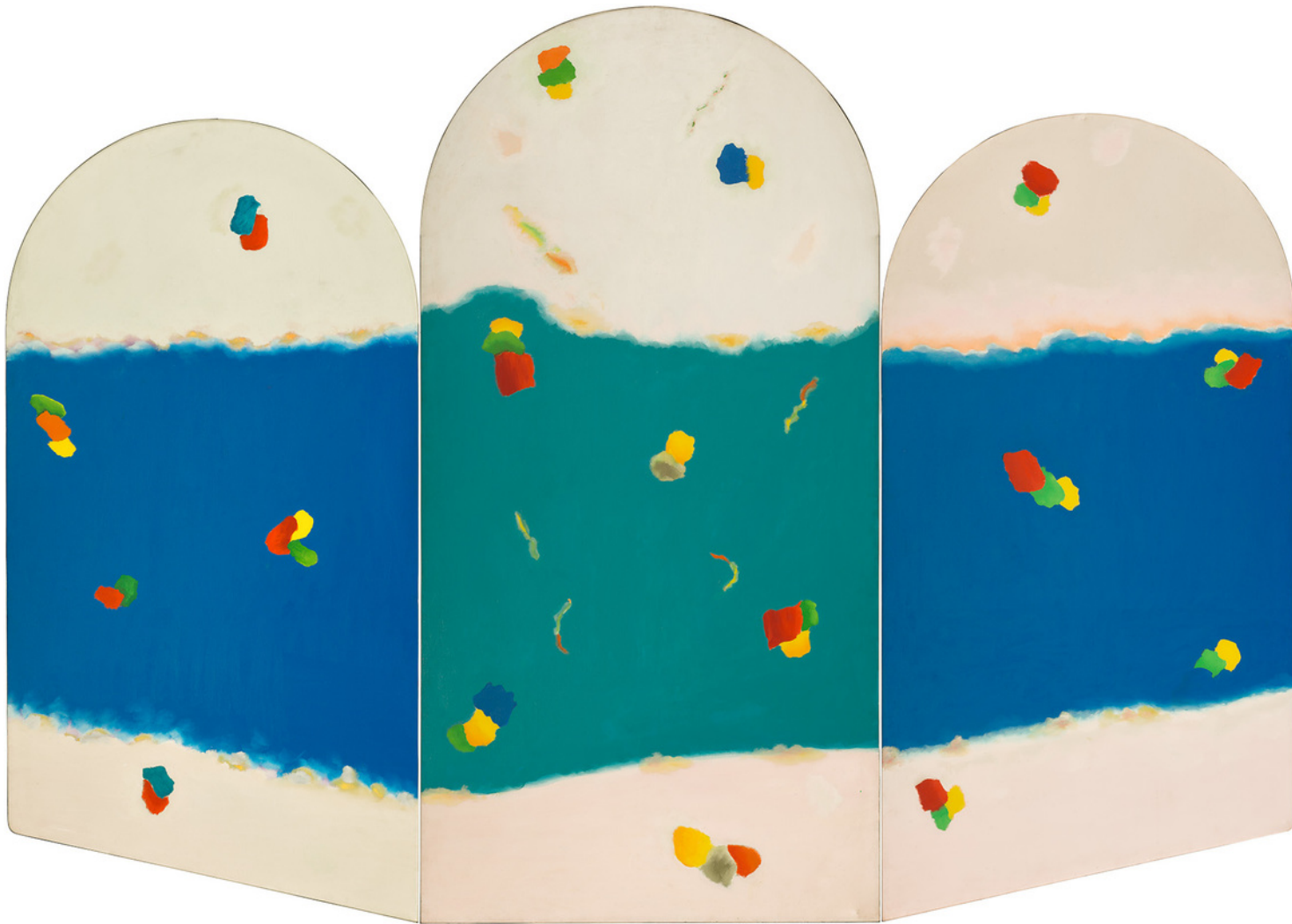
Gershon Iskowitz, *Uplands*, 1969-70, oil on canvas, 315.1 x 434.5 cm overall (irregular); left panel 273.5 x 140 cm arched at top; centre panel 315.1 x 153 cm arched at top; right panel 273.5 x 140 cm arched at top, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Over the following years, Iskowitz garnered widespread recognition and many awards. In 1974 he was elected a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. Several group and solo exhibitions in New York followed, with the *New York Times* calling him "extremely gifted in selecting and arranging lyrically beautiful colours that coalesce into a radiant composition."[55] Iskowitz was also selected for travelling exhibitions across Canada, including to the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia and the Glenbow Museum. In 1977 he received the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal and was represented in the *Seven Canadian Painters* show that toured Australia and New Zealand.

In 1972 Iskowitz was chosen by the National Gallery, along with sculptor Walter Redinger (1940–2014), to represent Canada at the Canadian Pavilion for the Venice Biennale. Four Uplands diptychs were shown in this prestigious exhibition, and Iskowitz's selection affirmed that he was considered an artist of merit in Canada. Iskowitz protested that "the biennale didn't help my art—but it makes me feel good." Walter Moos agreed: "For Gershon the biennale was a high point. It gave him that added assurance he could do even better art."[56]
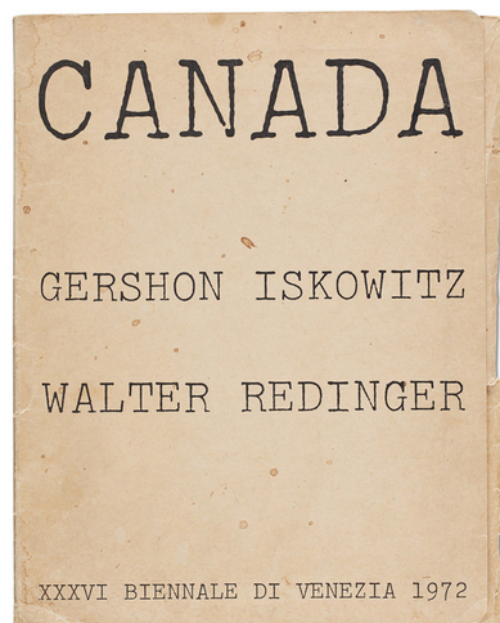
LEFT: Guests at the Venice Biennale, 1972, photographer unknown, Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. RIGHT: Cover of the 1972 Venice Biennale catalogue for the Canadian Pavilion, Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

AN ARTIST OF ROUTINE

Iskowitz's personal life was simple: once he settled into his own space on Spadina Avenue, he followed the same routine for the rest of his life. He painted at night, under artificial light, and never worked on more than two paintings at once. He had few possessions, and he kept the studio very neat. As described by filmmaker and art historian Peter Mellen: "Canvases carefully stacked against the wall. Paint tubes neatly laid out in long rows. Everything in its place."[57] Daniel Solomon (b. 1945) noted:

Graham Coughtry, Gordon Rayner, and Robert Markle parody the Artists' Jazz Band in Rayner's Toronto studio, 1965, photograph by John Reeves.

> He seemed to paint every day but there was never much smell of oil paint in his studio. He was a very tidy and organized painter. I never saw him in the act of painting. He kept that private [and] would never show me a work in progress, just finished paintings. On Tecumseth [after 1982] he had large white curtains installed on the walls to cover works in progress.[58]

Iskowitz's routine ensured he was part of an artist's village where he felt comfortable. It was roughly bordered by Tecumseth Street to the west, Yonge Street to the east, King Street to the south, and Scollard Street to the north. He could walk to Gwartzman's Art Supplies, at 448 Spadina, where he purchased the painting materials he needed. He frequented artists' hangouts: Grossman's Tavern, south of his Spadina studio; the Pilot Tavern (first on Yonge north of Bloor, then on Cumberland Street); and later the Wheatsheaf Tavern at the intersection of King and Bathurst streets.[59] At the dinner hour he had a regular table at La Cantinetta, and later La Fenice, owned by his friend Luigi Orgera. He always dressed respectably but never for fashion; his signature "fisherman's cap," recalling those worn by men in his youth, was British-made by Kangol.[60]

Iskowitz's Canadian experience could be described as a simple life driven by one thing alone—painting without encumbrance. If Iskowitz was quiet by nature, by all accounts he was confident. He did not seek approval but graciously accepted it as it came. Daniel Solomon summarized: "[Iskowitz] had a healthy sense of ego and he knew that he was a good painter—and that seemed to be what mattered. He was definitely a loner and very guarded and also very regimented in his routines."[61]

Iskowitz maintained his privacy, but over the years he became quite social. Among his friends were younger artists who lived nearby: Solomon, David Bolduc (1945–2010), and John MacGregor (b.1944). Gordon Rayner (1935–2010) had a studio in the same Spadina building. Apart from trips within Canada and New York related to exhibitions, the only two documented trips outside of North America were to Venice for the Biennale in 1972, and for the opening of his retrospective at Canada House Gallery in London, England, in 1983.[62] Solomon recalled: "He did wonder why young people wanted to travel to Europe for pleasure; he saw Europe only as a nightmare to escape."[63] Iskowitz made a new beginning in Toronto, and his life folded into a quintessentially Canadian émigré/diasporic experience: to be self-made without assimilating pressures, to have an individual dream and not conform to a collective one.
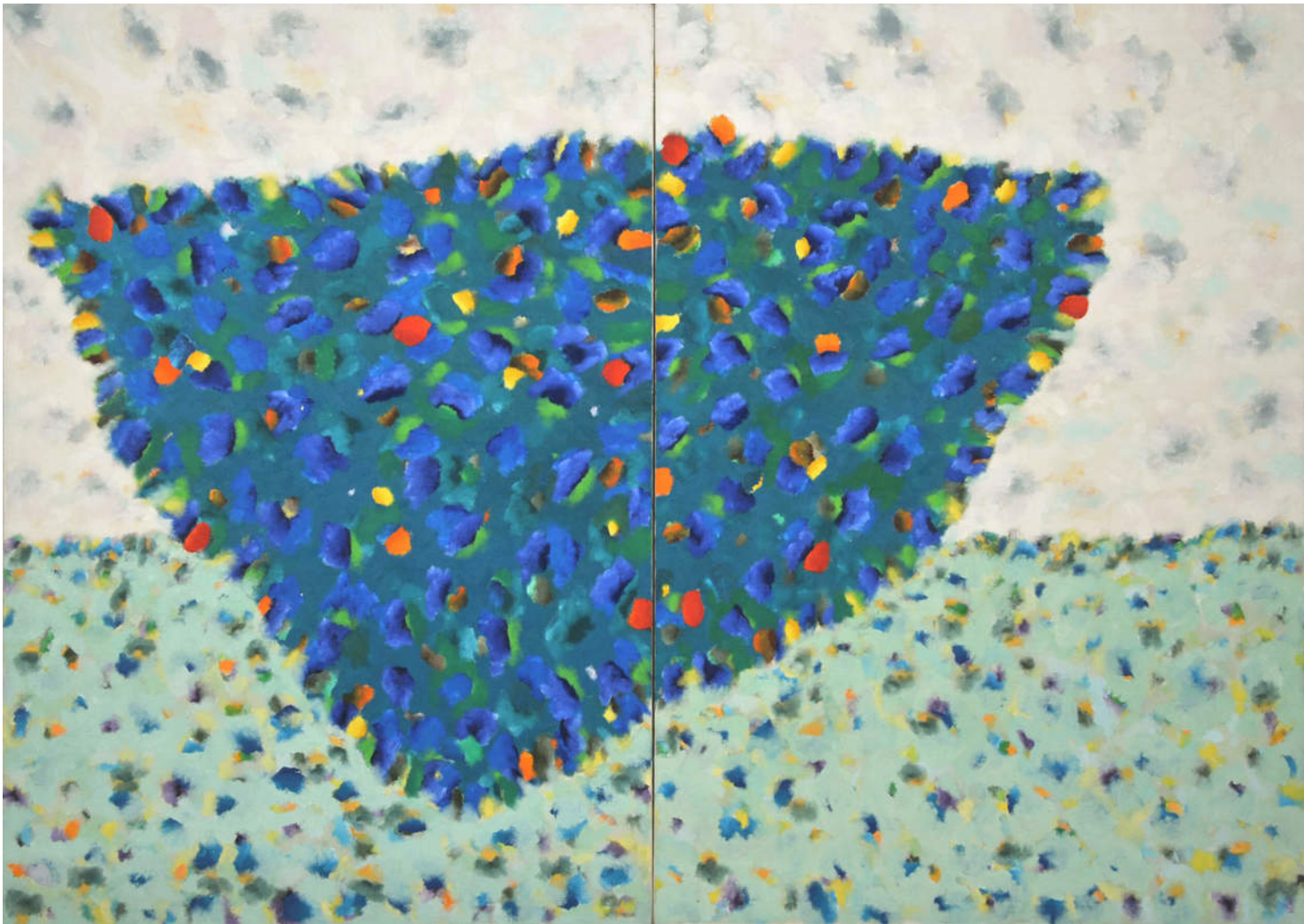
Gershon Iskowitz, *Uplands G*, 1971, oil on canvas, 254 x 355.6 cm, Museum London.

A LASTING LEGACY

In 1982 the Art Gallery of Ontario held a retrospective of Iskowitz's work. Such exhibitions were not common for living Canadian artists in major institutions at the time. It confirmed Iskowitz's stature as an artist in Canada—only sixteen years after his first, modest public gallery exhibition. Iskowitz appreciated the honour—and he decided to give up his rented studio on Spadina and purchase a one-storey building at 58 Tecumseth Street, southwest of downtown.[64]

The retrospective offered the first opportunity to view the whole arc of Iskowitz's work to that point and to study it in-depth. The show travelled to four other major public galleries across Canada and to Canada House Gallery in London, England. In hindsight art historian Roald Nasgaard writes: "It was impossible to not be moved by these richly luminous, often intensely hued pictures, so exquisitely poised at that moment when landscape references dissolve into the tangibility of colour and paint."[65]

Iskowitz in his studio, date unknown, photograph by Michel Lambeth, Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

As the retrospective was concluding, Iskowitz, who had no close family, set up a foundation as his lasting legacy. He wanted his estate (both savings accumulated from the sale of his work, now commanding high prices, and his new property) to provide financial support to artists through an annual prize. He stated:

> It's very important to give something so the next generation can really believe in something. I think the artist works for himself for the most part. Every artist goes through stages of fear and love or whatever it is and has to fight day after day to survive like everyone else. Art is a form of satisfying yourself and satisfying others. We want to be good and belong. That goes through history; we're striving for it.[66]

The Gershon Iskowitz Foundation was granted charitable status in 1985. Its charter was forged by Walter Moos and lawyer Jeanette Hlinka, who became the first trustees together with Iskowitz himself. Independent museum consultant Nancy Hushion was appointed executive director in 1989. The prize was initially administered through the Canada Council and awarded by an independent jury—Iskowitz maintained a hands-off approach to the award. The first two prizes, the only ones to be granted while Iskowitz was alive, were given to Louis Comtois (1945–1990) in 1986 and to Denis Juneau (1925–2014) in 1987. As recorded on the foundation's website:

> The impetus for the Prize was Gershon's grateful disbelief when he was awarded his 1967 Canada Council travel grant and the boost it gave to his

painting at a time when he felt his career was in a lull. With no surviving family, a practical question he faced was the future of his estate. His solution was simple enough. Just as he had received support from the Canada Council, he wanted to give his money to artists to help them along.[67]

Gershon Iskowitz died in Mount Sinai Hospital on January 26, 1988, after having been hospitalized there in October 1987.[68] His simple life in Toronto had been ordinary in all respects but one—his work. By 1960 Iskowitz's studio was a refuge where, painting alone at night, he could imagine and create a world of positive experience through colour and form. This daily routine affirmed a new life and freedom, one Iskowitz shared with fellow artists and friends through his work, and in the public realm through exhibitions. The message was simple and direct: this is who I am, this is life.

Gershon Iskowitz with painting design for a limited edition Art Gallery of Ontario umbrella, 1986, Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

KEY WORKS

Over a forty-five-year period, Gershon Iskowitz's work reflected the trauma and dramatic changes in his life—from his wartime experiences and Holocaust ordeal to his postwar survival in Europe and immigration to Canada in 1948. By the mid-1950s a newfound freedom enabled him to pursue a self-determined path that led first to his landscape painting and, by 1960, to an individual approach to abstraction that continued through the rest of his career.

BUCHENWALD 1944–45

Gershon Iskowitz, *Buchenwald*, 1944–45
Watercolour on paper, 39.5 x 52.3 cm
McMaster Museum of Art, Hamilton

Buchenwald is one of two surviving works made by Iskowitz while he was imprisoned in Nazi concentration camps. It depicts a group of prisoners, with a view of the barracks in the background. It is unlikely that Iskowitz's drawing was meant to portray specific people or a specific moment, but the scene is observed from life and was done at a moment when the outcome of the war and his own fate was uncertain. Iskowitz later said that he did such works for his own sanity, using whatever materials he could find or scavenge, and kept them hidden to avoid detection by the guards.[1] To consider *Buchenwald* only within "art terms" would be to diminish the reality of one person reflecting on the suffering of all prisoners in the camp. In this way, we can see the work as an act of hope in the face of unthinkable horror, even though it depicts "the condemned in the final stages of exhaustion."[2]

In this real-life context, Iskowitz's drawing is a primary document—he was both witness and victim—but inevitably art comparisons have been made. The American Civil War, 1861–65, was the first conflict to be recorded by the newly invented camera. Yet photograph-documents may not have the same impact today because of the saturation of images in the contemporary, internet-focused world. Users can simply choose to look away from the horror depicted.

The graphic work of German artists who saw military action in the First World War provides another comparison: Der Krieg (The War), 1924, a suite of fifty etchings, drypoints, and aquatints by Otto Dix (1891–1969), for example, and single printworks done after the war by Erich Heckel (1883–1970) and George Grosz (1893–1959). Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945), a committed socialist and pacifist who lost her youngest son in the First World War, produced a suite of seven woodcuts titled War, 1923. All these recorders of war atrocities were influenced by *The Disasters of War* engravings by Francisco Goya (1746–1828). Created between 1810 and 1820, the series depicted his impressions and horrific-satirical responses to the Peninsular War between France and Spain from 1808 to 1814.

Iskowitz's *Buchenwald* was first exhibited in the 1954 *Annual Exhibition of the Canadian Society of Graphic Art* at the Art Gallery of Toronto (now Art Gallery of Ontario) and was included in his 1982 retrospective at the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Gershon Iskowitz, *Condemned*, c.1944–46, pen and black ink and watercolour on cream wove paper, 71.3 x 54.4 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

KORBAN C.1952

Gershon Iskowitz, *Korban*, c.1952
Gouache on board, 43.5 x 53 cm
McMaster Museum of Art, Hamilton

Korban refers to the Korban Pesach, the Hebrew sacrifice of a lamb at Passover, practised since the Israelites' exodus from Egypt in biblical times. Although this ritual was "officially" ended in the first century of the Christian Era, it continued throughout the European diaspora as an important symbolic act, often expressed in the sacrifice of a chicken, as depicted in this painting.

After his liberation from the Buchenwald concentration camp in April 1945, Gershon Iskowitz embarked on memory works. He continued to make these drawings, watercolours, and gouache or bodycolour paintings until approximately 1954, six years after he immigrated to Canada. These works depict aspects of his life in Poland before the war, the pogroms and the Kielce Ghetto, the concentration camps, and, perhaps, life during his two and a half years in the Feldafing Displaced Persons Camp outside Munich.
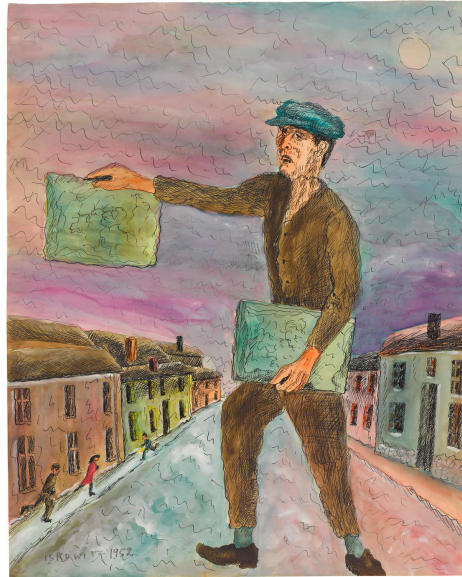
Gershon Iskowitz, *Untitled* (*Memory Picture*), 1952, watercolour on paper, 51 x 40.5 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Marc Chagall, *The War*, 1943, oil on canvas, 105.8 x 75.8 cm, Musée National d'Art Moderne Centre Pompidou, Paris.

While the subject matter of *Korban* is distinct from the traumatic events in other Iskowitz memory paintings, as David Burnett writes, it offers an important and revealing aspect of Iskowitz's need to recover the past through "the theme of the family, of its loss and yet its essential reality in memory" rather than sentiment or nostalgia: "The act of painting itself [is] approached with a literal and . . . naïve directness . . . recapturing the reality of his past [and] in a sense atoning by keeping the memories vividly before him."[1]

Iskowitz was not following the model of any other artists for these works, but they can be linked to work by other twentieth-century artists who reflected on the ruptured past of everyday life through memory paintings, most notably Marc Chagall (1887–1985), David Burliuk (1882–1967), and William Kurelek (1927–1977).

SELF-PORTRAIT C.1955

Gershon Iskowitz, *Self-Portrait*, c.1955
Oil on commercial canvas board, 50.8 x 40.6 cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Gershon Iskowitz's self-portrait, though depicting a pensive pose, exudes a confident self-assurance. It also offers strong evidence of the artist's painterly ambitions—a bold and graphic rendering with the flesh expressed in strong and "unnatural" blues and greens. The abstract background continues into the shoulders. In contrast, Iskowitz's earlier portrait paintings have clearly defined backgrounds.

The portrait is inscribed, signed, and dated 1947 on the back of the canvas board in Iskowitz's writing, but several factors suggest that the painting and the inscription were done not at the Feldafing Displaced Persons Camp but in Canada. Iskowitz did not use block script or formalize the spelling of his last name until the mid-1950s. The inscription is in black felt-tip marker, which was not commercially available until the early 1950s, and the canvas board support conforms to a North American product.

Moreover, the composition and palette are similar to portraits he made of Toronto artist friends Eric Freifeld (1919–1984) and Yehuda Podeswa (1924 or 1926–2012), dated 1954 and 1955, respectively, and bear little resemblance to the three photographic documents of Iskowitz portraits dated 1946—two self-portrait drawings and the painting of Polish Yiddish-language playwright Isaac Leib Peretz (1852–1915), produced while Iskowitz was interned in the Feldafing camp. The Gallery Moos label on the back suggests an inscription no earlier than 1964, when Iskowitz began to be represented by the gallery, and it is possible that it was signed, dated, and framed for the 1982 AGO retrospective, when it first "appeared."

Gershon Iskowitz, *Self-Portrait*, 1980, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Another self-portrait, in oil on a pressed cardboard support, has recently come to light in a private collection. It is neither signed nor dated, but the composition and palette are close to a mirror image of this work. Iskowitz's errant dating suggests he was indifferent to such details: to him, the painting was evidence enough, and he left the history to historians.

Iskowitz produced portraits all through his life, both drawings and paintings. His earliest prewar works were of movie stars drawn from photographs and caricatures of the local townsfolk.[1] After arriving in Canada, he was occasionally commissioned to create portraits,[2] and he also painted his mother, Zisla, based on a family photograph, and a Kielce neighbour, Miriam, c.1951–52, produced from memory. His last self-portrait is a drawing dated 1980, which was reproduced on the back jacket of Adele Freedman's *Gershon Iskowitz: Painter of Light* (1982).

PARRY SOUND I 1955
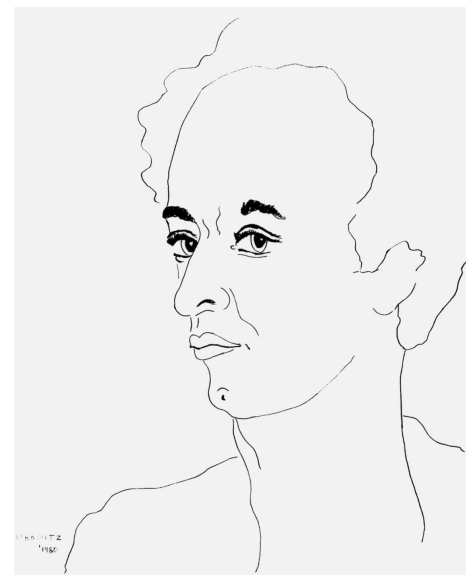
Gershon Iskowitz, *Parry Sound I*, **1955**
Watercolour on paper, 22.9 x 30.5 cm
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

Parry Sound I is a prime example of Iskowitz working away from observed subject matter toward "pure" painting. The upper band—if indeed it is "sky"—could be a setting-sun nocturne, but the foreground is composed of fluid forms in bright, possibly sun-lit, colours. The use of primary greens, reds, yellows, and blues would stay with him throughout his career, and the foliage strands reappear as abstract forms in the early 1980s, such as in *Orange Yellow C*, 1982.

Gershon Iskowitz made many trips to the Parry Sound area of Georgian Bay, Ontario, from 1954 to the mid-1960s, and the paintings—both watercolours (possibly done in situ) and oils—that resulted from them mark a critical stage in his artistic development. These breaks from the city offered him inspiration for explorations of space, colour, and light through nature and the landscape. Iskowitz's Parry Sound oil paintings are literal—trees are trees—but watercolour offered him a route to his own inventions.

Gershon Iskowitz, *Parry Sound II*, 1955, watercolour on wove paper, 22.8 x 30.4 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Iskowitz's 1960 solo exhibition at the Here and Now Gallery included a number of Parry Sound works.[1] In her *Hamilton Spectator* review of the exhibition, Elizabeth Kilbourn wrote:

> [Iskowitz] has painted the Canadian landscape in a way it has seldom been seen before. Out of waves of colour, which . . . convey physical depth and mental agony, the forms of trees and rocks and hills erupt with dramatic inevitability. The earth and sky are painted with an intense, personal and disturbing vision.[2]

Parry Sound I was removed from a spiral sketchbook, as were many other variations, and was included in Iskowitz's 1982 retrospective at the Art Gallery of Ontario. Watercolours remaining in sketchbooks (held at the Gershon Iskowitz Foundation) are similarly signed and dated.

UNTITLED 1962
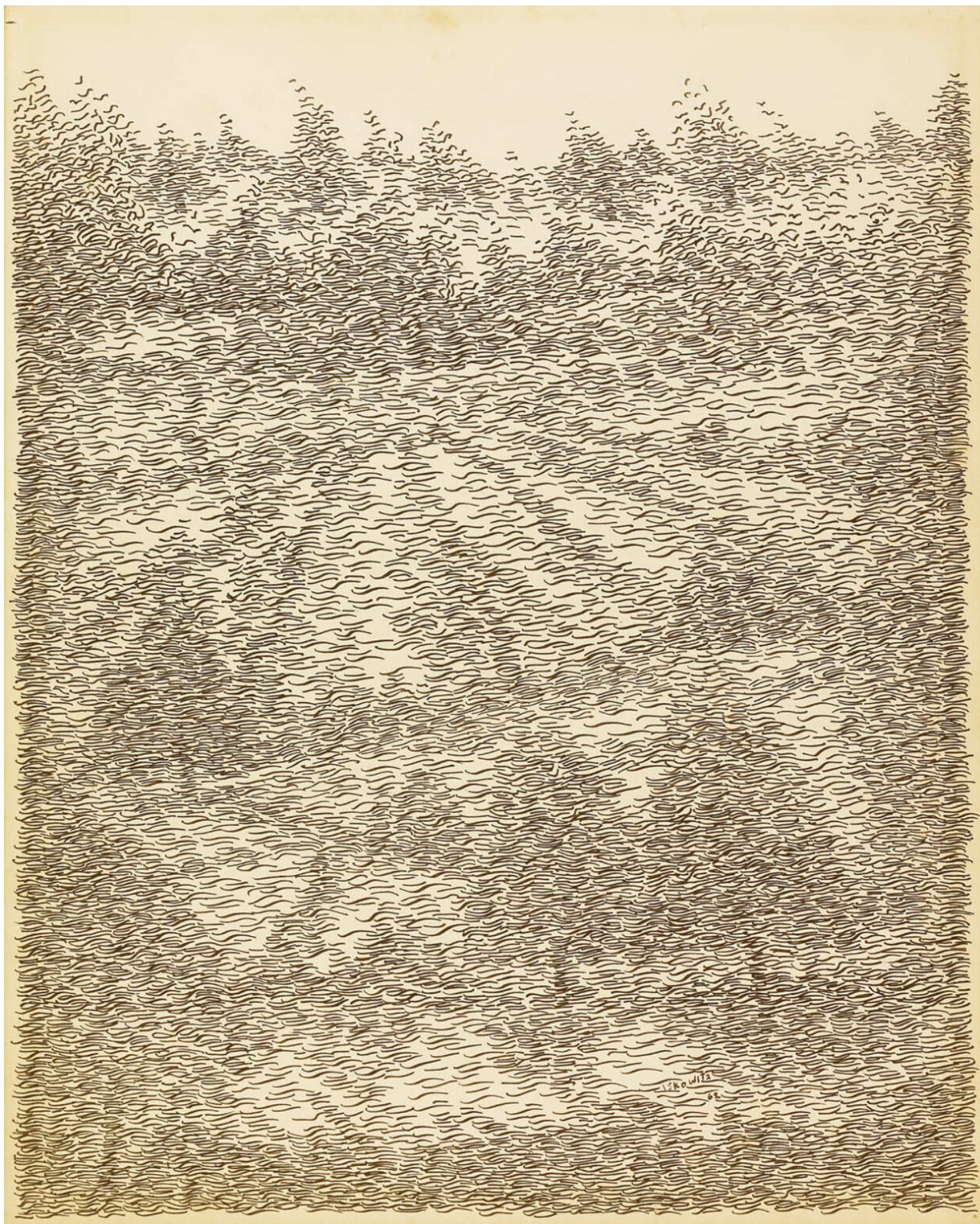
Gershon Iskowitz, *Untitled*, 1962
Ink on paper, 33.4 x 26.2 cm
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

In drawings such as *Untitled*, 1962, Iskowitz explores his ideas about style and technique in art. After moving into his new Spadina studio, he began to develop a distinct direction in his work that appears to be pointillist in appearance. There is nothing, however, to suggest that Iskowitz was copying the techniques developed by the nineteenth-century French artist Georges Seurat (1859–1891). Iskowitz did apply an exaggerated form of this technique to his painting, yet his drawings maintain a sense of order and structure.[1]

The earliest of these are landscapes from 1952 and they are distinct from his street sketches. Some of them are gestural with bold cross-hatching, which can be related to paintings of the period, such as *Untitled – Rushing Water, Autumn,* 1955. Iskowitz applied this new technique to a few portrait drawings, but the most successful works were the landscapes, a way to continue depicting or "registering" the land as his paintings became fully abstract.

Gershon Iskowitz, *Untitled – Rushing Water*, 1955, oil on board, 45 x 61 cm, private collection.

Like his paintings beginning around 1960, this drawing is a studio invention, an idealized view. Gone is the lyrical brushwork typical of his paintings, replaced by short pen strokes that control both the depth and the perception of the picture. Using as little visual information as possible, Iskowitz produces an ordered and recognizable image. The subject matter is distinctly Canadian—a scene from the Ontario countryside. By 1962, Iskowitz had mastered the illustration of forms by grouping together small strokes of pure colour. He suggests the image by varying the intensity and the spacing of the marks, and, as viewers, we complete the picture and enter into the landscape.

For most of his career Iskowitz exhibited his colour paintings and watercolours; however, drawing continued to be an important and parallel studio activity for him.[2] In 1981, he asked Gallery Moos to feature a group of 1980 works in an exhibition. The technique he developed in the 1960s was now reified and minimal, given density by varying the spacing of the marks. All were titled *Landscape* and numbered. These later works demonstrated his unique understanding of the visual world and his skill as a draughtsman.

LATE SUMMER EVENING 1962

Gershon Iskowitz, *Late Summer Evening*, 1962
Oil on canvas, 114.3 x 127 cm
Gershon Iskowitz Foundation, Toronto

Late Summer Evening preludes a significant development that characterizes all of Gershon Iskowitz's mature work after 1965–his focus on light. It was shown at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, although the exact date of the exhibition is unkown. The image is murky compared with most of his foliage paintings of the time, such as *Spring Reflections*, 1963, yet the light plays through foliage reaching out from the tree trunk suggested in the lower right corner. The leaves dissolve into patches of vivid blue, yellow, and bright green, perhaps akin in exaggerated form to the pointillism of works by Georges Seurat (1859-1891) from the 1880s.[1] Iskowitz unifies the subject through a disciplined layering of coloured shapes that mix in the eye. The "evening" in the title may be better read
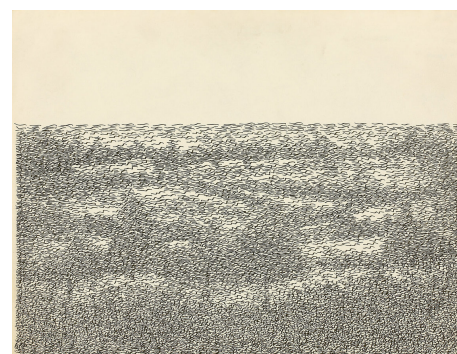
Gershon Iskowitz, *Summer Impression*, 1963, pen and black ink on wove paper, 27.5 x 35 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

through the German term *dämmerung*, a light effect that occurs when it is neither day nor night.

By 1960 Iskowitz had established a regular studio practice of painting at night under artificial light. His works had become studio inventions, and in contrast to those from the 1950s, which were created on small, commercially prepared canvas board, they expanded in size. "I don't paint what I see but what I have seen," he said in 1977.[2]

AUTUMN LANDSCAPE #2 1967

Gershon Iskowitz, *Autumn Landscape #2*, 1967
Oil on canvas, 129.5 x 99.1 cm
Art Gallery of York University, Toronto

Gershon Iskowitz's 1967 paintings were his first compositions with strong colour "ovoid" forms "floating" on a toned-down neutral ground. Here, bright red shapes touched with green and yellow on their amorphous edges float against a light background. Although Iskowitz's studio practice over the last twenty years of his career did not present sudden or dramatic shifts, in 1967, before his trip to Churchill, Manitoba, a bold and critical element appeared with a suite of simplified paintings that included *Autumn Landscape #2*.

The year before, Iskowitz had painted the prototype canvas titled *Summer Song*, 1966, which was most likely purchased immediately from Gallery Moos by Imperial Oil for its collection. The 1967 series of twenty paintings of varying size appeared in Iskowitz's solo exhibition at Gallery Moos in November and December of that year. Each one was titled *Landscape*, preceded by spring, summer, or autumn. The largest group was "autumn," with eight numbered variations. Iskowitz's use of "landscape" in the title reinforced the interpretation that his work derived from nature, and he did refer to leaves when speaking of the 1967 works.[1] However, he rarely offered details about his inspirations and process beyond a few repeated poetic and idyllic responses to interviewers' questions. He expected the compositions to speak for themselves.

Gershon Iskowitz, *Summer Song*, 1966, oil on canvas, 165.1 x 127 cm, collection of the Estate of Dr. Luigi Rossi, Kelowna Art Gallery.

The few extant colour images from this 1967 suite show that two of the autumn landscapes have red ovoids and one has purple. Two of the spring and summer paintings have similar different-hued green shapes, whereas *Spring Landscape #1* uses yellow with three red and green blips on the contour edge bleeding outward. *Autumn Landscape #2* could simply be a reference to green leaves becoming yellow, then red in autumn. In all likelihood, Iskowitz applied the titles rather than "painting to them."

Another puzzle remains: Iskowitz said of his 1967 works that "everything was falling down. The leaves were falling down."[2] If so, he represented them in flight, not on the ground. Alternatively, the ovoids may represent cloud formations that are not "cloud-coloured." As Theodore Heinrich writes, "[Iskowitz] not only completely abandoned representation [but] altered his position with relation to it. The first new orientation in place of looking at was to look straight up from the ground level, the other was to be up at some height and look straight down." And, he continues: "This might be termed intimate cartography, poeticized by its sensibility to season change and the times of day or night, clear or overcast as expressed by light."[3]

LOWLANDS NO. 9 1970

Gershon Iskowitz, *Lowlands No. 9*, 1970
Oil on canvas, 121.9 x 93.9 cm
Vancouver Art Gallery

The Lowlands series represents the first body of work to draw directly on Gershon Iskowitz's 1967 trip to Churchill, Manitoba, and the flights over the surrounding landscape.[1] These thirteen works are unique in his oeuvre because they all share a boldly coloured central band with a "stem" that extends to the bottom of the canvas. The one exception is a Lowlands painting dated 1969–70, which has two stems. Iskowitz explained that, while flying in the aircraft over the landscape, the Lowlands paintings reflect the "swoop down," and the Uplands paintings that followed reflect the "swoop up."[2]

If the stem element represents an estuary—the tidal mouth of the Churchill River emptying into Hudson Bay—then the band across the top is sky and the flanking forms at the bottom edge are the land that creates the mouth of the estuary. Yet the two accompanying elements and top band are done with the same light colours and horizontal paint technique. Of the series, only *Lowlands No. 9*, with its blue central band, seems to represent water; other band-stems in the series were painted in green and purple, and one in orange. Are the colour differences another landscape observation of this sub-Arctic experience in summer? Most likely the Lowlands series is a painted invention that reflects Iskowitz's experience of flying in the North.
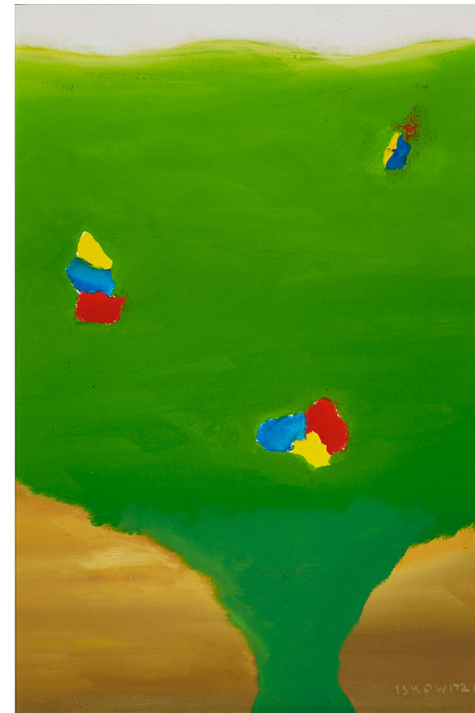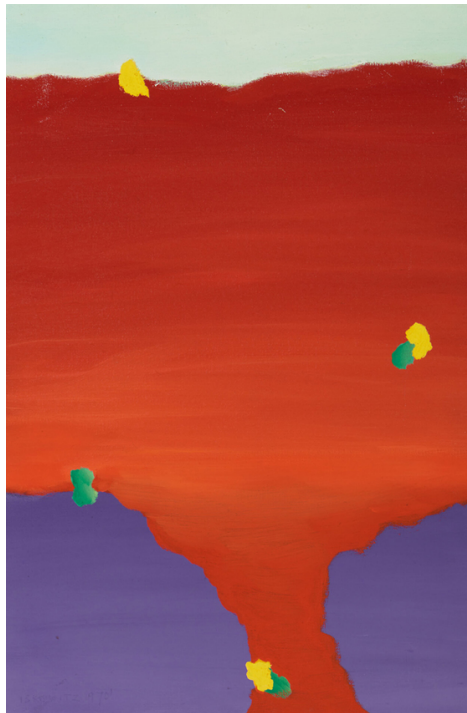
LEFT: Gershon Iskowitz, *Lowlands No. 2*, 1969, oil on canvas, 50.5 x 33.5 cm, Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa. RIGHT: Gershon Iskowitz, *Lowlands 1*, 1969, oil on canvas, 49.5 x 33.7 cm, private collection.

The small clusters of two or three "blips" with different and assertive colour-optical combinations seen in *Lowlands No. 9* represent a new element in Iskowitz's work, one that occurs in all the Lowlands paintings. Are these clusters rising or falling? Iskowitz adds yet one more shape paradox with the lighter painted areas along the top and bottom to the left and right. Are they negative space, and we are looking through the mass of the blue central band? This uncertain pictorial space bears no resemblance to the kind of nonrepresentational painting dominated at the time by Canadian artists such as Jack Bush (1909–1977), Yves Gaucher (1934–2000), and Guido Molinari (1933–2004). Nor do these Lowlands pieces fit comfortably into any of the then-current abstract categories of colour-field, hard-edge, or systemic optical painting. They are unique.

A previously unexamined approach to the Lowlands paintings is to compare them with Iskowitz's 1969–70 three-panelled *Uplands* painting.[3] His largest painting to date, it comprises three rounded-top panels reminiscent of Hebrew tablets and windows in churches, synagogues, and helicopters. As in the Lowlands series, a dominant central band crosses the panels—blue for the flanking left and right sections and cupric green in the centre. The ground, or upper and lower bands, is white. Again, blip-clusters are distributed across the

work—five each on the left and right, and seven in the centre—but in a balanced, not irregular, distribution. There are also six colour "trails," which do not appear in the Lowlands series but reappear in later works.

The *Uplands* three-panelled painting was begun in 1969 and completed in early 1970. The earliest Lowlands paintings, *No. 6* and *No. 10*, are dated 1969 (Iskowitz does not appear to have numbered the works in the order of production). In this period he was inventing a painting language that would be his alone, one that he would continue to develop throughout his mature period.

UPLANDS E 1971

Gershon Iskowitz, *Uplands E*, 1971
Oil on canvas, diptych, 228.6 x 356 cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Gershon Iskowitz's Uplands, a suite of nine diptych paintings produced between 1970 and 1972, overlaps with the Lowlands series and the *Uplands*, 1969–70, three-panelled painting. They were designated *A* through *K* (letters *I* and *J* were not used).[1] *Uplands E* marks the midpoint of the series, with a more open structure than some of the others. The floating central form is registered by blip-clusters and diffused ovoids that

Claude Monet, *Water Lilies (Agapanthus)*, 1915–26, oil on canvas, 200 x 425.4 cm, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City.

continue into what may appear to be the ground—a subtle overall transparency. The horizon line is likewise diffused, pushed back to a just-visible trace in the upper corners of the panel.

As in the Lowlands paintings and the ovoids of *Autumn Landscape #2*, 1967, the blip-clusters create a central and eccentric biomorphic form. Each of the Uplands paintings has a horizon line in a different latitudinal position and at

different degrees of registration. In three of them, *Uplands B*, *G*, and *H*, the central component has a strong primary colour that defines the contour: two are blue and one is red. The other six have a more open structure.

In writing about these elusive works, scholars have tried to explain them though analogies and art history. David Burnett compares them to the late *Water Lilies* paintings by Claude Monet (1840–1926) because both the subject and the painting itself transcend literal illustration.[2] Roald Nasgaard writes of the Uplands paintings:

> These diptychs are strange combinations of panoramic landscapes and abstract forms. . . . Both cloud-curtain and landscape are executed with large Impressionistic brush strokes, more like tachist patches, brushed into one another and coalescing into a variegated all-over blanket of colour.[3]

Iskowitz's friend, artist David Bolduc (1945–2010), commented in 1971: "They are like weird galaxies, like *Star Trek* gone mad."[4]

These were Iskowitz's most ambitious works to date in terms of scale and complexity, and they firmly established him as an artist of note. *Uplands E*, *F*, and *G* were first shown at Gallery Moos in November 1971, and Brydon Smith, the curator of contemporary art for the National Gallery of Canada, wrote that he found them "very beautiful." Four months later, the National Gallery requested a loan of *Uplands C*, *E*, *G*, and *H* to include in the Canadian exhibition at the prestigious Venice Biennale— and it went on to purchase *Uplands E* for its own collection.[5]

Gershon Iskowitz, *Uplands F*, 1971, oil on canvas, 228.5 x 356 cm, Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa.

Four of the series were selected for the Iskowitz retrospective at the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1982.

Iskowitz had first used the diptych format in two Seasons works in 1968–69, *Seasons No. 1* and *Seasons No. 2*. He was fascinated to realize that, as he explored his way through a series of works, the paintings were never in conflict with each other but could even be paired. He returned to this dual format periodically throughout his career, including his last paintings.

LITTLE ORANGE PAINTING II 1974
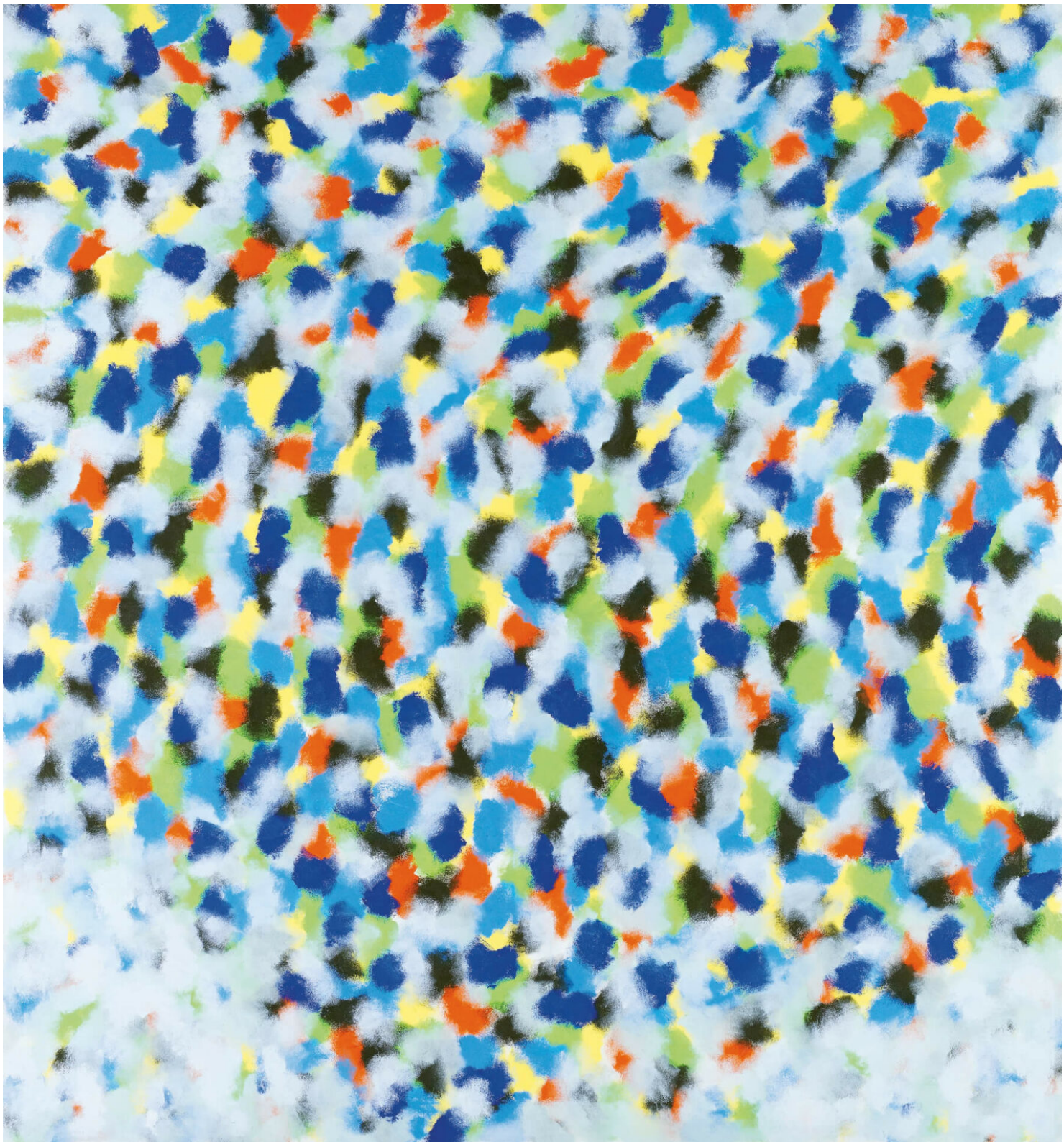
Gershon Iskowitz, *Little Orange Painting II*, 1974
Oil on canvas, 177.8 x 165.1 cm
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

Little Orange Painting II is a signature work from Gershon Iskowitz's mature painting of the mid-1970s, when, following the Uplands diptychs, he frequently returned to single-panel images. Here, Iskowitz further develops the massed ovoids from the 1967 Landscape suite and the dynamic shapes from the Uplands series but expresses them with a new focus, as if zooming in on a small area of an Uplands painting.

At the same time, Iskowitz explored ways to "uncover" the space between the clustered, polychromatic patches. From a distance, the strong blues, greens, and purples come forward and "float" on a grey background. Yet, on closer examination, the greys are painted on top of the coloured areas. Iskowitz has reversed the

Gershon Iskowitz, *Seasons*, 1974, oil on canvas, 178 x 610 cm, Art Museum at the University of Toronto.

convention of atmospheric perspective, where we perceive dark colours in the foreground and light colours retreating in the distance. *Little Orange Painting II* is one of the few paintings in which Iskowitz used black, but sparingly. As with the Lowlands and Uplands paintings, he suggests a sense of movement, across, up, and down the image plane, without a horizon line.

The 1970s was a decade of high creative productivity for Iskowitz, who now followed a disciplined routine and studio practice. Peter Mellen described his painting process as intuitive, applying one colour, then another, to achieve structural balance and harmony on his own terms. In Iskowitz's words: "There's no explanation. I don't even know myself how the painting will come out."[1] Colour was a keystone of his art: he contemplated each carefully, always mixed his own, and frequently cited colour in his titles. As Toronto artist Daniel Solomon (b.1945) commented: "Iskowitz and Jack Bush are the only two people [in Toronto] who thought specifically about carefully constructed colour relationships and how paint sits on the surface of a canvas."[2]

UNTITLED 1977

Gershon Iskowitz, *Untitled,* **1977**
Watercolour on paper, 42.8 x 56 cm
Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

In 1977 and 1978 Gershon Iskowitz produced a large body of watercolour works, most of them untitled. He made this series by dropping paint onto dampened paper, creating ovoid blips and clusters of selected colours that float in ethereal groups on a neutral background. This process was careful and measured, to avoid overbleed (losing the shape) or muddying the strong chromatic patches. Whether lighter blue, green, and yellow as in this painting, or vivid reds, blues, and greens in the majority of them, they are jewel-like in their clarity and transparency and appear to move and flutter on the paper. The yellows may recede while the blues and greens protrude. No two of them are alike in composition, and as often in Iskowitz's work, they reflect his "experience of the experience" in his painting practice.[1]

The watercolours have strong affinities with the oil paintings, though they were created in a wholly different and equally disciplined way. With oils Iskowitz painted in layers, and he could add colour or adjust shapes over time. The watercolours, in contrast, could not be corrected later. But Iskowitz had much experience with watercolour, from his youth in Poland, through his war and memory paintings, to his Parry Sound works after 1955. Always, though, they were a separate and parallel part of his studio practice. His first series, Western Sphere, dates from 1969, and the images are larger than the untitled works.

Gershon Iskowitz, *Untitled*, 1977, watercolour on paper, 42.8 x 56 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

The exact number of watercolours Iskowitz produced is unknown, but it could be well in the hundreds. Thirty of them are still held in the Iskowitz Foundation inventory, and dozens have been sold in the secondary auction market over the past fifteen years. In addition, Iskowitz produced one hundred smaller ones that were included in a deluxe, signed edition of Adele Freedman's *Gershon Iskowitz: Painter of Light* (1982).

SUMMER G 1978
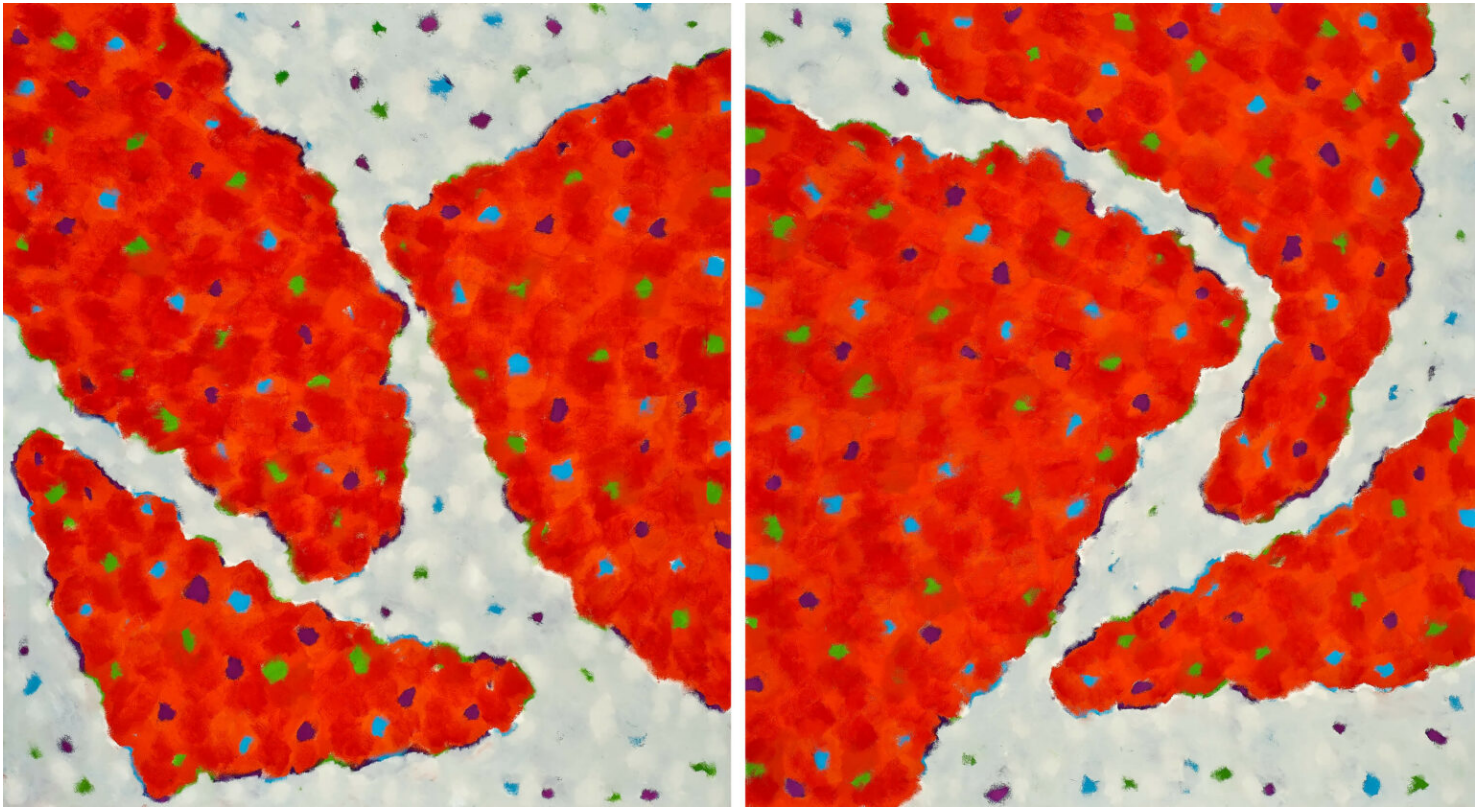
Gershon Iskowitz, *Summer G*, 1978
Oil on canvas, diptych, 167.7 x 305 cm
Winnipeg Art Gallery

Summer G is a prime late-1970s example of Gershon Iskowitz's continuing use of the diptych format and a dominant red—an "Iskowitz red."[1] Here, he uses a complex blend of small red ovoids that create biomorphic forms comparable with those in the bold central shapes in the Uplands diptychs. Small blue, purple, and green ovoids float across the two panels, both on the red figures and grey-white neutral ground. As with the Lowlands series and *Little Orange Painting II*, the reds could occupy negative or positive space. This fluctuating play presents an inversion of atmospheric perspective—a device used by landscape painters since the sixteenth century where lighter, cooler colours appear to be in the background and stronger colours in the foreground. In Iskowitz's abstract works, he embraces both options.

The ovoids create balance and overall harmony across the two canvases, but the red forms have a hard and abrupt division in the centre. In this approach to the diptych, Iskowitz was unique: most other artists have created a single composition across two conjoined canvases. In *Summer G* the centre line is activated by an apparent misregistration of the reds, which do not match in the middle, thereby creating a directional paradox. They could be moving toward the centre or away from it. Conversely, the right could be descending and the left ascending, or the other way around. But as Iskowitz has already established in earlier works such as *Autumn Landscape #2*, 1967, and *Lowlands No. 9*, 1970, it can be all these possibilities, a multidirectional potential for perspectives and perceptions.
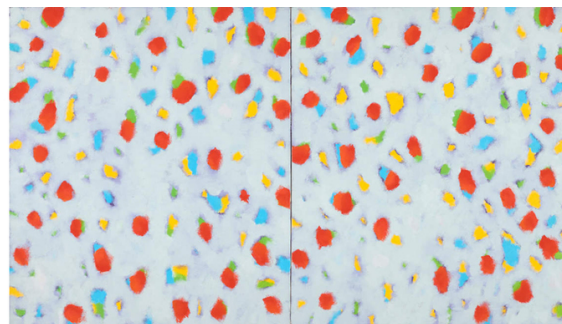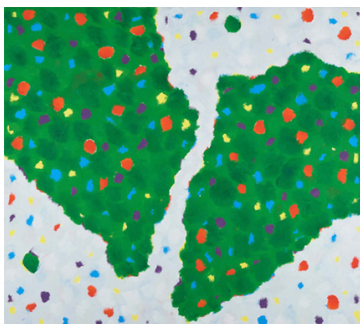
LEFT: Gershon Iskowitz, *Deep Green No. 8*, 1977, oil on canvas, 178 x 198.5 cm, Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa. RIGHT: Gershon Iskowitz, *Red Grey Painting*, 1976, oil on canvas, 107 x 183 cm, Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa.

ORANGE YELLOW C 1982
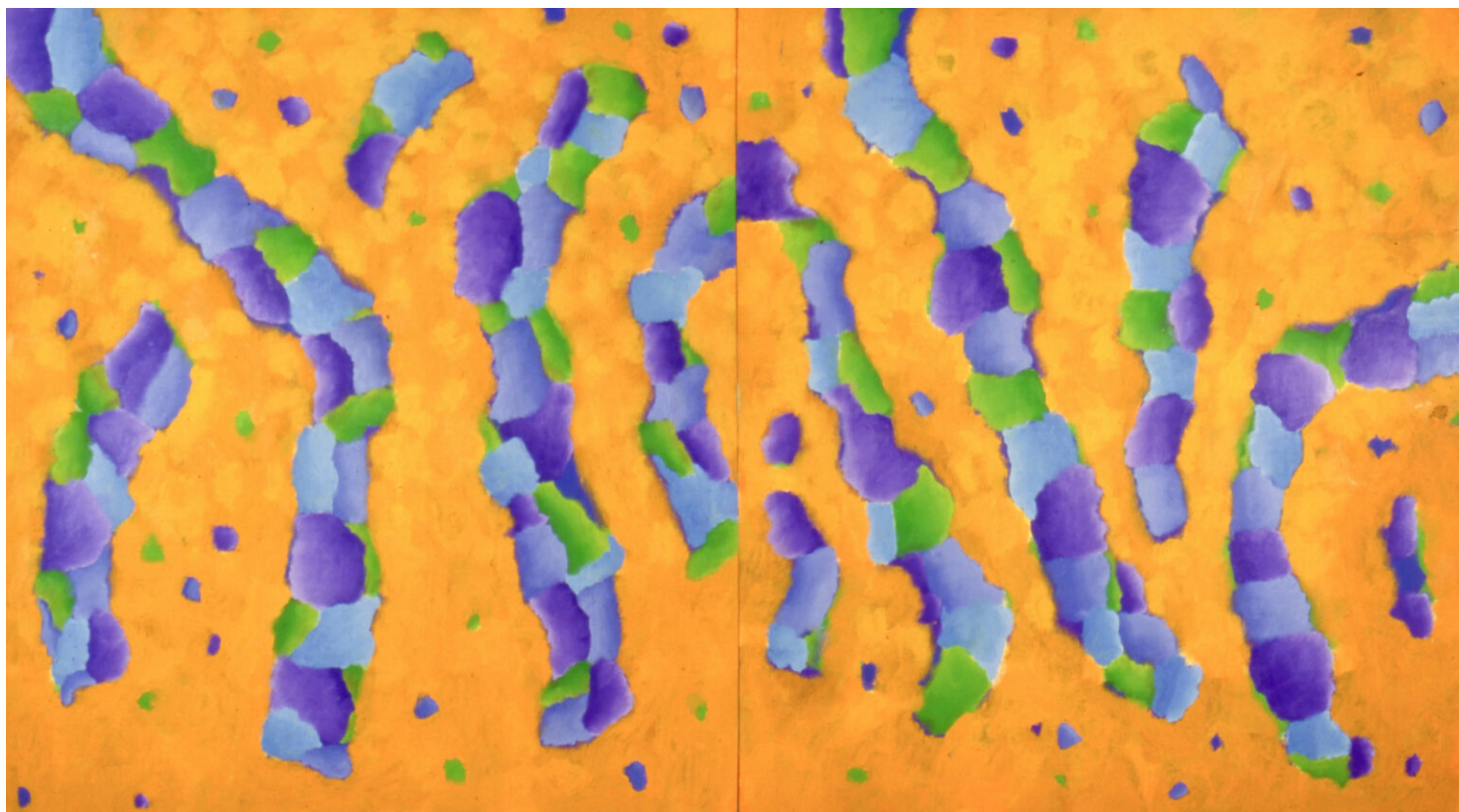
Gershon Iskowitz, *Orange Yellow C*, 1982
Oil on canvas, diptych, 127 x 228 cm
Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston

In *Orange Yellow C*, vertical strands of purple, green, and blue float on a bright orange-yellow background speckled with blips of the same colours. In 1981 Iskowitz began to create paintings with vivid overall colours, rather than the pairings of expressive and lighter pigments he had done in previous works. He emphasized lively strands, such as those that first appeared in the Parry Sound works of the mid-1960s—for example, *Parry Sound Variation XIV*, 1965—and then continued in the *Uplands* triptych, 1969-70. Offering a strong example of Iskowitz's return to these earlier compositions, *Orange Yellow C* also shares the same centre-line diptych disruption as *Summer G*, 1978. The 1982 painting, however, is less disjunctive because of the painterly harmony between the blips and the strands, and their balanced distribution across the two canvases.

Gershon Iskowitz, *Parry Sound Variation XIV*, 1965, watercolour on wove paper, 48.1 x 63.2 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

As in earlier works, the lengths could be floating on top of the orange-yellow ground or appearing through the ground (as with the "leaves" in *Autumn Landscape #2*, 1967). They have no determined direction (as with the red forms of *Summer G*), up or down or across, and none of them terminates at the bottom edge of the painting; two terminate at the top edge, one at the far-right edge, and two "collide" in the centre line. Viewers can imagine they are looking up or down through clouds, though the whole composition is an abstraction rather than a reference to observed nature.

NORTHERN LIGHTS SEPTET NO. 3 1985

Gershon Iskowitz, *Northern Lights Septet No. 3*, 1985
Oil on canvas on shaped plywood in seven sections, overall: 233.5 x 410.2 cm
University of Lethbridge Art Gallery

In 1984–85 Gershon Iskowitz produced twenty-two paintings, both single canvases and diptychs, titled *Northern Lights*. All have similar compositions, with ovoid blips clearly expressed on the grounds. Also in 1984, he embarked on six known multipanelled works that return to the rounded arch-top shape of the *Uplands* three-panelled painting, 1969–70.[1] Iskowitz used the term "polytych" to describe these works because he painted them on seven separate but joined sections. They are the first he created on canvas mounted on an ingenious plywood support that had circles cut out of the plywood to reduce the weight. The Septet variations have identical shapes and dimensions.

Northern Lights Septet No. 3 is the only Iskowitz work that was accompanied by a Gallery Moos press release. In this text Iskowitz returns to recollections and inspiration from the 1967 Churchill, Manitoba, trip, but he also emphasizes his current work ethos: "It is the most recently completed painting which is the most important one."

Gershon Iskowitz, *Septet No. 5*, 1985, oil on canvas on shaped plywood in seven sections, overall: 233.5 x 410.2 cm, Macdonald Stewart Art Centre Collection at the Art Gallery of Guelph.

> The importance lies in the *series* of paintings.
>
> I had in mind for a long time to paint a polytych where I could really create lots of space and depth in terms of the sky and flying shape. I drew a lot of plans to develop the shapes of this polytych, and by trial and error evolved this shape. I must caution the viewer: the entire painting lies flat on the wall! It is not three-dimensional. Now, take another moment and have another look, because each shape forming the polytych is different, and yet the entire composition is harmonious. It seems to me that the seven-part shape of the canvas is something new, as nobody ever did this before, and I feel that such a painting as this, if seen in reality, translates really well what I wanted to say.[2]

The paradox of direction and movement is now actualized in a pronounced optical distortion in the left and right segments, which each comprise what appear to be three overlapping arched pieces but are in fact seven individual paintings mounted as one. The centre panel in each of the *Septets* is the only one that is not distorted.

No apparent colour system is applied, though *No. 3* and two other Septets have a dark-blue central panel. The other two have, respectively, a red central panel and an orange one. The most frequently used ground colour—in four of the Septets—is blue, while another one is purple. Nor is there any discernible progression in the distribution of the ovoid blips, though they follow the column-like arrangement of the *Four Seasons*–titled paintings from 1967. Curator Roald Nasgaard writes:

Gershon Iskowitz, *Untitled (Sketch for Septet)*, c.1984, pencil on paper, Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

> [The *Septets* are like] giant tablets or stained glass windows, or segments of an altarpiece. Stylistically, these works resemble the abstracted colour-field landscapes, but Gershon has upped the expressive ante. They are less lyrical, somehow shriller, the colours searing rather than glowing. They are magnificent but not benign, more hieratic than secular. What had precipitated such a reorientation toward something Mystical? We can only speculate.[3]

NOT TITLED C.1987

Gershon Iskowitz, *Not Titled*, c.1987
Oil on canvas, 96.5 x 83.8 cm
Gershon Iskowitz Foundation, Toronto

Ovoid blips of pink, blue, and green appear with a warm orange-yellow ground in this unsigned, undated work. There are, in fact, no signed or 1987-dated Iskowitz paintings, and his last solo exhibition at Gallery Moos was in 1986. Gershon Iskowitz continued to produce work after that show, and there are signed and dated paintings from 1986. Nine unsigned canvases are ascribed to 1987, including two diptychs. However, there is strong evidence that, from the late 1960s on, Iskowitz signed and dated works only when he had completed a series. Given that Iskowitz never seems to have worked on more than two paintings at a time, it's likely, then, that he had not finished this series. He was hospitalized in late fall 1987, where he remained until he died on January 26, 1988.

In art-world convention, unsigned works are not usually ranked as completed. Nevertheless, we can include this painting in Iskowitz's oeuvre. It has all the hallmarks of Iskowitz's work over the previous twenty years: the minimalist ovoid compositions of the 1967 season-titled paintings (as in *Autumn Landscape #2*), and the green and blue palette for the ovoid blips from the 1984–85 Northern Lights Septets. But unlike the Septets, *Orange Yellow C*, 1982, or any previous paintings, the orange-yellow ground is a complementary hue to the blips.

An examination of Iskowitz's late works and a comparison with signed and dated 1986 paintings strongly suggest that all but one large diptych were finished. It would be dismissive to relegate them to mere curiosity or conversation piece. In art history, "late works," for a senior artist, can be a pejorative or derogatory term, implying that the "best works" came earlier or that the artist is settling into a comfortable and familiar style. The evidence is clear that in this painting, Iskowitz was still working toward new solutions in his practice.
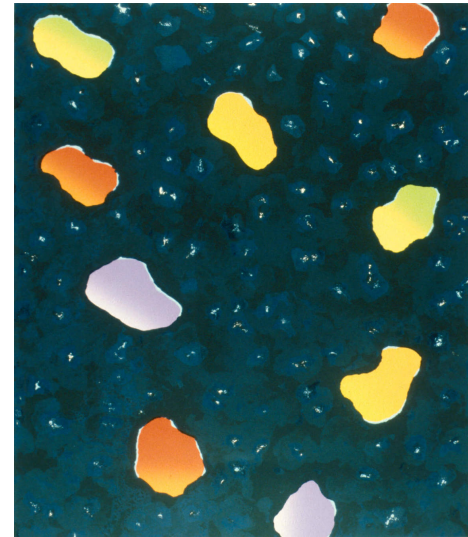
Gershon *Midnight #2*, 1987, lithograph on wove paper, 105.7 x 89.9 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES

As a survivor of concentration camps in Poland, Gershon Iskowitz became a witness to the Holocaust in his drawings and memory works from the years 1941–54. After some time in Canada, he began to paint landscapes around Parry Sound, though his expression vastly differed from the Group of Seven's nationalist ideals. A breakthrough came in 1967 after a flight to Churchill, Manitoba, when he discovered his unique Canadian landscape in abstract panoramic images of land and sky painted in brilliant, luminous colours. Although he was familiar with current art movements, his style remained entirely his own. His legacy lives on through the Gershon Iskowitz Foundation and many works in public and private collections.

A WITNESS TO THE HOLOCAUST

Iskowitz recounted that in the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps, he drew with scavenged materials to preserve his sanity and to forget about his hunger.[1] Only three of his works from 1941 to 1945 still exist: *Action*, 1941, *Buchenwald*, 1944–45, and *Condemned*, c.1944–46. Following his liberation from Buchenwald in May 1945—beginning in 1947 and continuing after immigrating to Canada in 1948—Iskowitz made memory drawings, watercolours, and paintings. Earlier examples of these sketches depict impressions of the camps, such as *Barracks*, 1949, or of events, such as *Escape*, 1948. Other works, such as *It Burns*, c.1950–52, and *Torah*, 1951, depict the pogrom—the

Gershon Iskowitz, *Torah*, 1951, gouache and brush and black ink on illustration board, 43 x 53.3 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

persecution of Polish Jews in his hometown of Kielce as the war began. But Iskowitz also created images that recalled everyday prewar life, such as *Korban*, c.1952, and *Market*, c.1952–54. These memory works are all rendered in a stark, naive style, and they document the destruction around him, the humanity of the survivors, and how he related to the experience as a survivor.

After the Allied victory, exposing and documenting the realities of the German camp system and the sheer number of its victims became part of the liberation effort: artists were commissioned to accompany the troops, and governments sent journalists, photographers, and newsreel crews to capture images that revealed the atrocities inflicted within these compounds.[2] Canadian war artists such as Alex Colville (1920–2013) and Aba Bayefsky (1923–2001) documented the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp following its liberation in 1945, but they could give only an outside perspective, distanced by the fact that they witnessed the effects of the camps but not the reality of life inside them.[3]

Iskowitz, in contrast, created his works from the perspective of a victim and a survivor, and his sketches are better compared with those by Otto Dix (1891–1969), who saw military action in the First World War, and Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945), who lost a son in that conflict. The earliest and most significant "visual essays" in European art that depicted the horrors of war was Francisco Goya's (1746–1828) suite of eighty-two engravings titled *The Disasters of War,* 1810–20, in which Goya recorded his response to the Peninsular War between France and Spain from 1808 to 1814.

LEFT: Gershon Iskowitz, *Barracks*, 1949, watercolour, pen and black ink, and gouache on wove paper, 38.3 x 50 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Francisco Goya, *Plate 57* from *Los Desastres de la Guerra / Disasters of War*, plates produced between 1810 and 1820, from the first edition, 1863, etching on thick vellum, 15.4 x 20 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Iskowitz was far from the only visual artist to document Holocaust experiences. The exhibition *Art from the Holocaust*, held at the Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, in 2016, displayed one hundred works from the art collection of Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Israel. The images of Auschwitz, Theresienstadt, and Schwarzheide by Czech artist Alfred Kantor (1923–2003) were published in *The Book of Alfred Kantor* in 1971. Bill (Wilhelm) Spira (1913–2000), an Austrian cartoonist, and Jan Komski (1915–2002), one of the first prisoners of Auschwitz, both created small works of art capturing life and death in the concentration camps. It is difficult to make a general statement about the artists—those who did not survive and those who pursued art after the war—but their works bear testimony to the atrocities they endured. Yehuda Bacon (b.1929), as one example, survived Auschwitz as a young teenager (Iskowitz was a very young adult) and pursued art after the liberation. Initially, he too made memory and memorial works. In a 2005 interview, he stated:

> I am somehow obliged because I survived to tell the story of the people who didn't survive [and] I had to draw [and] say what I experienced in the hope that someone would learn from it. In Israel they have one day of commemoration of the Holocaust every year . . . but that is mainly for the other people who didn't experience it. For us, the ones who survived, we live with it every day. We don't have to have a special day.[4]

Toronto film producer Harry Rasky (1928–2007) met and interviewed Iskowitz for his 1987 documentary *Mend the World*, his attempt, Rasky said, "to find meaning or perspective in the Holocaust, largely through the painted works of artists who lived through those days of human agony." In Rasky's interview transcript, Iskowitz is quoted as saying: "Even in the camps, I saw the sunset. It kept me alive . . . I got very inspired, not just for painting, I got very inspired with life."[5]

Iskowitz continued to depict his experiences after the war and through the early 1950s. Like Viktor Frankl, Elie Wiesel, and Primo Levi, whose published memories opened scholarly discussions about the relationships between trauma and memory and brought insight into victims' personal experiences, Iskowitz exhibited his Holocaust work in group exhibitions in the 1950s;[6] the traumatic period of his life in the Kielce Ghetto and in Auschwitz and Buchenwald were mentioned in relation to exhibitions in the early 1960s,[7] but it was not until 1966 that they were reproduced in an article in the national weekly arts and culture magazine *Saturday Night*.[8]

Gershon Iskowitz, *Market*, c.1952–54, coloured ink, gouache, and pen and black ink on illustration board, 51.9 x 60.7 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Iskowitz's art dealing with his wartime experiences brings to mind what the French writer Charlotte Delbo, a survivor of Auschwitz, described as "deep memory," a recollection of experiences of death of such magnitude that they seem to exist outside the life of the person who remembers them.[9] Iskowitz's portraits of his neighbour *Miriam*, c.1951–52, and his mother, as well as images of Kielce and the camps, draw on memory not to articulate a connection between life before the war and the losses that followed but to convey, in vivid colour, the artist's emotional relationship to his past. Though from the mid-1950s on, Iskowitz, like Levi, sought to be known for subjects separate from the trauma he had experienced, art reviewers and members of the interested public never forgot his work as an artist of the Holocaust.[10]

Gershon Iskowitz, *Miriam*, c.1951–52, coloured ink, watercolour, and gouache on illustration board, 37.7 x 26.8 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

A DIFFERENT ÉMIGRÉ ARTIST

Gershon Iskowitz was very different from other émigré artists who came to Canada. Two who arrived before him in 1911-12, for example, the English artists Arthur Lismer (1885-1969) and F.H. Varley (1881-1969), emigrated voluntarily, attracted by the opportunity for skilled employment with the Toronto design company Grip Limited. For them and other British artists who settled in Toronto and Vancouver, Canada represented cultural continuity with the homes they had left, and they were immediately welcomed by local artists they met through work or social groups.[11] They went on to play a key role in generating a national art movement through the Group of Seven. In the 1920s these painters explored ways to depict the natural landscape in raw colours and bold brush strokes, quite unlike the genteel, domesticated scenes earlier artists had preferred. Their inspiration, however, was rooted in the Western European modernist tradition, particularly in Scandinavia and the "Mystic North."[12]
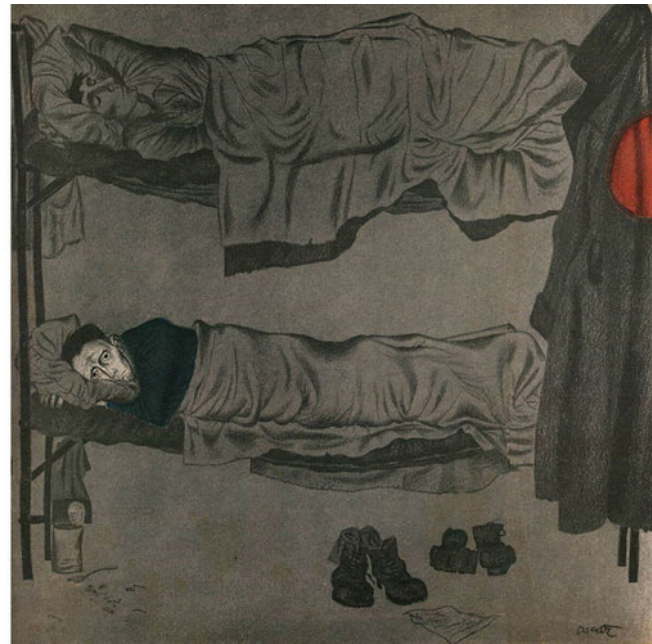
LEFT: Gershon Iskowitz, *Selection, Auschwitz*, 1947, pen and black ink, watercolour, and gouache on illustration board, 40.8 x 50.3 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Oscar Cahén, illustration for short story "Mail" by John Norman Harris, *Maclean's*, tear sheet, 1950, collection of The Cahén Archives, Vancouver.

In contrast, the immigrants to Canada in the years immediately following the Second World War were often driven by desperation: the countries they left in eastern and southern Europe were not only culturally different but had been severely damaged. Iskowitz's experiences as an artist and as a new arrival to Canada have remarkable parallels with those of the painter and illustrator Oscar Cahén (1916-1956), though there are also important differences.[13] Both men were young, Jewish, and embarking on an artistic career when the Nazis' rise to power curtailed their ambitions. Iskowitz's family was Polish, of limited means, and largely lacking connections to a network beyond their small town; Cahén's background was prosperous, cosmopolitan, and connected, through his father's work, to important intellectual communities across Europe. Iskowitz was imprisoned in concentration camps and a displaced persons camp before he immigrated to Canada; Cahén managed to escape to England on the eve of war, but one year later he was arrested, deported to Canada with other "enemy aliens," and placed in an internment camp for two years.

As Cahén and Iskowitz sought to establish themselves in the conservative Toronto art scene during the early 1950s, Cahén drew on his connections to European modernism to help guide the Painters Eleven with their experiments in abstraction. For example, Cahén's *Growing Form*, 1953, takes cues from the postwar graphic compositions of British artist Graham Sutherland (1903-1980) and the vibrant colours that characterized works by CoBrA, a group of postwar artists that included prominent members such as Karel Appel (Dutch, 1921-2006) and Asger Jorn (Danish, 1914-1973) who were active in Europe. Iskowitz followed a different path, and there is no indication that new trends in art were of interest to him. He remained fiercely independent, moving from remembered images like *Yzkor*, 1952, through his vision of the Canadian landscape (as in *Sunset*, 1962), to large colour compositions such as *Uplands H*, 1972. None of his works fit neatly into any defined category—Canadian or otherwise.
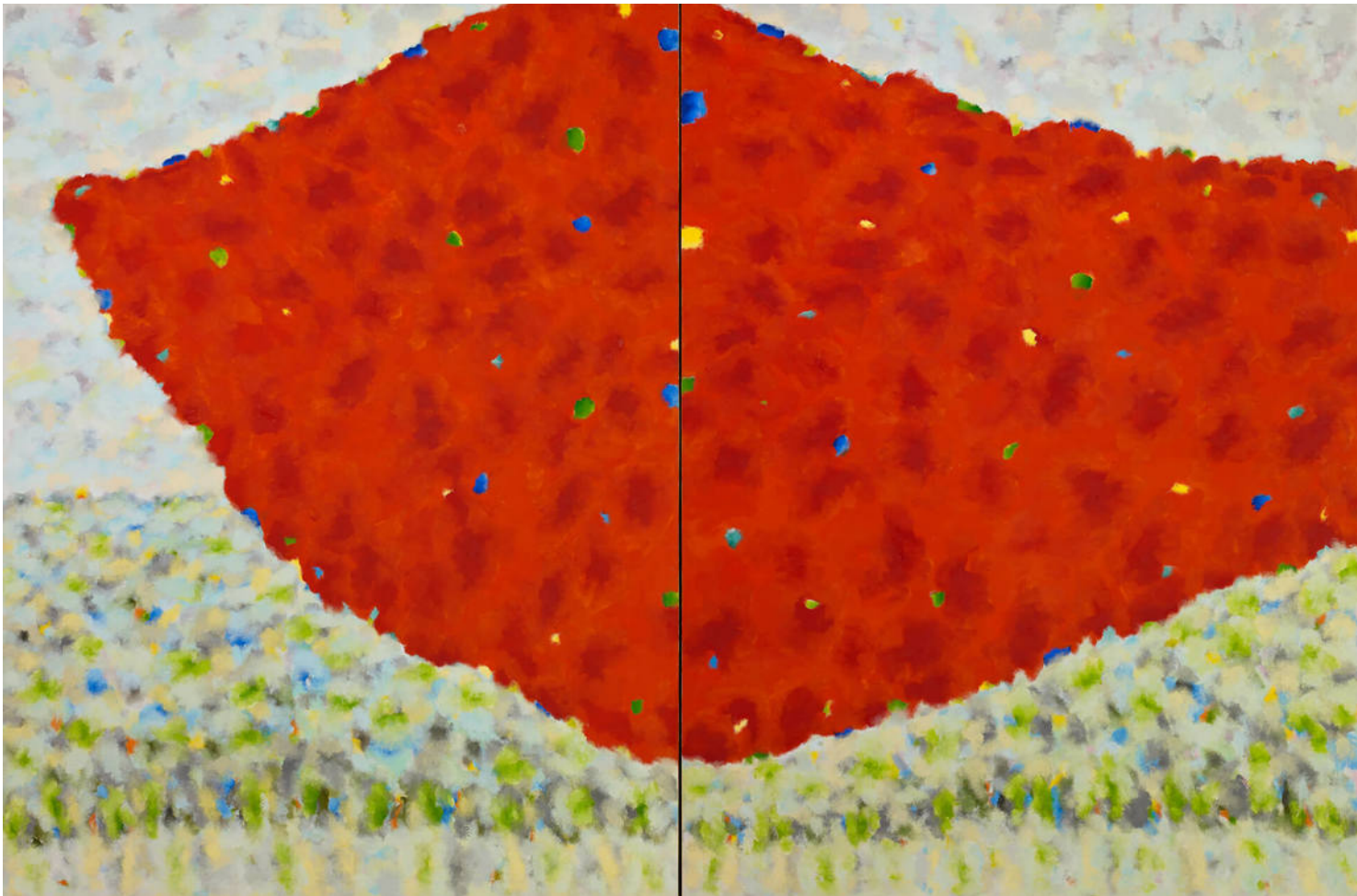
Gershon Iskowitz, *Uplands H*, 1972, oil on canvas, diptych, 182.9 x 241.3 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

In his private life, too, Iskowitz was different: he didn't aspire to marry or have a family, and he disdained politics. "I don't give a damn about society," he said. "I just want to do my own work—to express my own feelings, my own way of thinking."[14] In the years immediately following his arrival, the conditions of art and culture in Canada began to change significantly. The Massey Commission on the development of the arts and sciences in Canada, begun in 1949, led to significant national cultural initiatives, including the formation of a Canada Council for the Arts to provide funding to artists and cultural organizations. Between 1967 and 1976, Iskowitz would receive six Canada Council grants for his work, establishing him as a Canadian painter in his own right.

By the late 1960s Iskowitz's abstract pieces had become larger, with reduced elements—as in *Autumn Landscape #2*, 1967—and they fit with the progressive art being made at that time. Works by Painters Eleven members Jack Bush (1909-1977) and Harold Town (1924-1990), for instance, echoed the dominant trends in painting in the United States and Europe as well as in Canada.[15] Since the 1950s abstraction had gained a wider reception in Toronto following exposure to works by Montreal's Automatiste painters, led by Paul-Émile Borduas (1905-1960), and the influence of important exhibitions such as *Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America* in 1951 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The influence of British modernists, including Henry Moore (1898-1986), and American Abstract Expressionists such as Willem de Kooning (1904-1997), Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), and Mark Rothko (1903-1970) was evident throughout this period.[16]

In 1966 Harry Malcolmson was the first art critic to position Iskowitz in the Toronto art scene. In the text he wrote for Iskowitz's solo exhibition at Gallery Moos,[17] he grappled with questions of how Iskowitz's abstract style fitted into the contemporary scene:

> [Iskowitz's] Canadianism comes out directly in [his] subjects [of] this country's landscape, in particular the Ontario landscape [and] by now is a local painter in the best sense of the term. His personal vision and warmth at first foreign has passed into the community and after a period of time has become an integral part of it.
>
> Canada remains a country in a close and vital relationship economically and psychologically with its landscape . . . In Iskowitz's case his style has less in common with his Ontario contemporaries (such as Gordon Rayner and Harold Town) than with the modern generation of Quebec landscape painters . . . and in particular the flowing discontinuous surfaces of the 1960-63 [Jean] McEwen paintings.[18]

Gershon Iskowitz, *Summer Sky*, 1966, oil on canvas, 101.8 x 81.5 cm, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.

Critic Kay Kritzwiser's review of the 1966 exhibition described Iskowitz's recent work as a "lyric abstraction" that he was now applying "to a countryside usually painted with Group of Seven eyes. Iskowitz," she wrote, "makes us look at it anew."[19] In fact, as Malcolmson had astutely noted, Iskowitz had turned his view away from the horizon line, which defines a view of the land, and looked instead to the sky. He used colours from the land and applied them to the sky, and, because the sky has no shape or form, the works became abstract. Theodore Heinrich reiterated this point more than a decade later in an article related to *Little Orange Painting II*, 1974, and *Seasons*, 1974.[20]
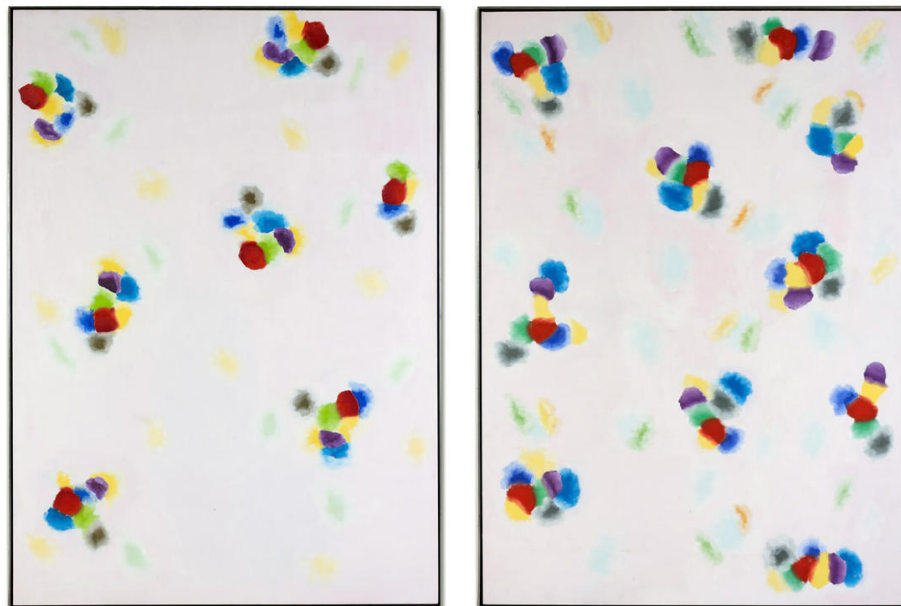
Gershon Iskowitz, *Seasons No. 2*, 1968-69, oil on canvas, 254 x 355.4 cm overall; panels 254 x 177.7 cm each, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

On the few occasions when Iskowitz talked to art critics about his art practice, he defended his independence and refused to be described by any of the common labels. In a 1975 interview with Merike Weiler, he said:

> People say, oh, Gershon Iskowitz is an abstract artist. . . . But it's a whole realistic world. It lives, moves . . . I see those things . . . the experience, out in the field, of looking up in the trees or in the sky, of looking down from the height of a helicopter. So what you do is try to make a composition of all those things, make some kind of reality: like the trees should belong to the sky, and the ground should belong to the trees, and the ground should belong to the sky. Everything has to be united.
>
> Now, most of my work comes visually from memories, and the colour is also self-invented. I reflect things I've seen before up north, but you've got to look for a while to see the fact. If it becomes too obvious, it's no use, it's just a decoration. I think *Season I* and *[Season] II* reflected the Northern Lights, even without my knowing it. And the Uplands series . . . is a new evolution for me of flying shapes . . . the whole landscape. But it's nothing to do with documentary. It's above all that, it's something you invent on your own.[21]

Iskowitz was expressing something beyond the literal, just as instrumental music is formed with sound, tempo, and interval (the space between the sounds), not words. For him the sky was a universal view, one we can all experience regardless of where we live.

THE TORONTO LOOK

Group exhibitions, formed around themes—common style, subject matter, or what is new—are a useful way of tracking how an artist is written into a history of art. Although Iskowitz was selected for multiple group exhibitions with fellow Toronto artists, his positioning within the story of art in Toronto—and Canada—has remained apart.

Iskowitz began showing in Toronto just as commercial galleries began to multiply. Isaacs Gallery—the home for cutting-edge Canadian artists such as Gordon Rayner (1935–2010), Graham Coughtry (1931–1999), Joyce Wieland (1930–1998), and Michael Snow (b.1928)—included him in a group show in 1957, and, three years later, Dorothy Cameron gave him his first solo exhibitions at her Here and Now Gallery. When he moved over to Gallery Moos in 1964, he was in international company: the Twentieth-Century Master group exhibitions that Walter Moos initiated in 1961 with artists such as Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), Georges Braque (1882–1963), and Marc Chagall (1887–1985), and Canadian artists establishing international careers, such as Jean-Paul Riopelle (1923–2002) and

LEFT: Gershon Iskowitz in Toronto, winter c.1948–49, photographer unknown, Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.
RIGHT: Pamphlet for *Iskowitz: New Paintings*, September 15–October 2, 1961, Here and Now Art Gallery, Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Sorel Etrog (1933-2014).[22] From then on, Moos managed Iskowitz's life and career very well.
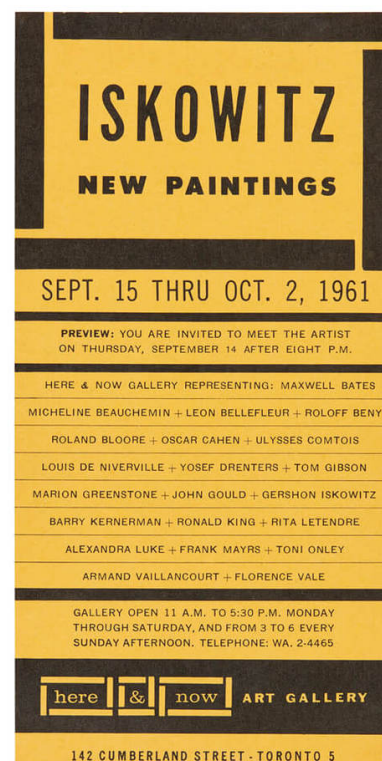
After his frequent visits to Gallery Moos, Iskowitz often dropped into the other galleries in the Yorkville area: Mira Godard, Gallery One, Waddington & Shiell, and Jared Sable Gallery (later Sable-Castelli). He continued on to Isaacs and Carman Lamanna on Yonge Street and visited the David Mirvish Gallery on Markham Street, where his friend Daniel Solomon (b.1945) worked.[23] There he would have seen large brilliantly coloured works by contemporary American Abstract Expressionist and colour-field painters including Hans Hofmann (1880–1966), Robert Motherwell (1915–1991), Frank Stella (b.1936), and Helen Frankenthaler (1928–2011), along with the Canadian Jack Bush (1909–1977). Around his studio on Spadina, he became a father figure to a younger group of artists who were exploring a wide diversity of styles and were often represented by Isaacs.[24] All these developments signalled a profound shift in the Toronto art scene—and Iskowitz kept abreast of it all.

The first significant group exhibition for which Iskowitz was selected presented a story of art in Toronto. In 1972 curator Dennis Reid organized *Toronto Painting: 1953-1965* for the National Gallery of Canada. He placed Iskowitz in a section titled "The Toronto Look: 1960-1965," though there was no common approach among these artists, which included both figurative and abstract work by Snow, Wieland, Coughtry, and Rayner. When the Art Gallery of Ontario mounted *Toronto Painting of the Sixties* in 1983, the one Iskowitz painting included, *Summer Sound*, 1965, had also been in the National Gallery exhibition.

In 1975-76 Iskowitz was selected for *The Canadian Canvas*, a multi-gallery partnership sponsored and circulated by Time Canada Ltd. Alvin Balkind, the curator of contemporary art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, chose the ten Ontario artists in the show. In his words, he "wanted to find very able, but little known (even unknown) artists and to mix them together with artists of known quality."[25] Senior abstract painter Jack Bush was included, along with younger abstract painters Ron Martin (b.1943) and David Bolduc (1945-2010) and the figurative painters William Kurelek (1927-1977) and Clark McDougall (1921-1980). Iskowitz was next selected for the *Exhibition of Contemporary Paintings by Seven Canadian Painters from the Canada Council Art Bank*, which was shown at the Art Gallery of Harbourfront, Toronto, and circulated to galleries in Paris, New Zealand, and Australia in 1976 and 1977. Other artists chosen were Claude Breeze (b.1938, the only figurative painter of the group), Paterson Ewen (1925-2002), Charles Gagnon (1934-2003), Ron Martin, John Meredith (1933-2000), and Guido Molinari (1933-2004).
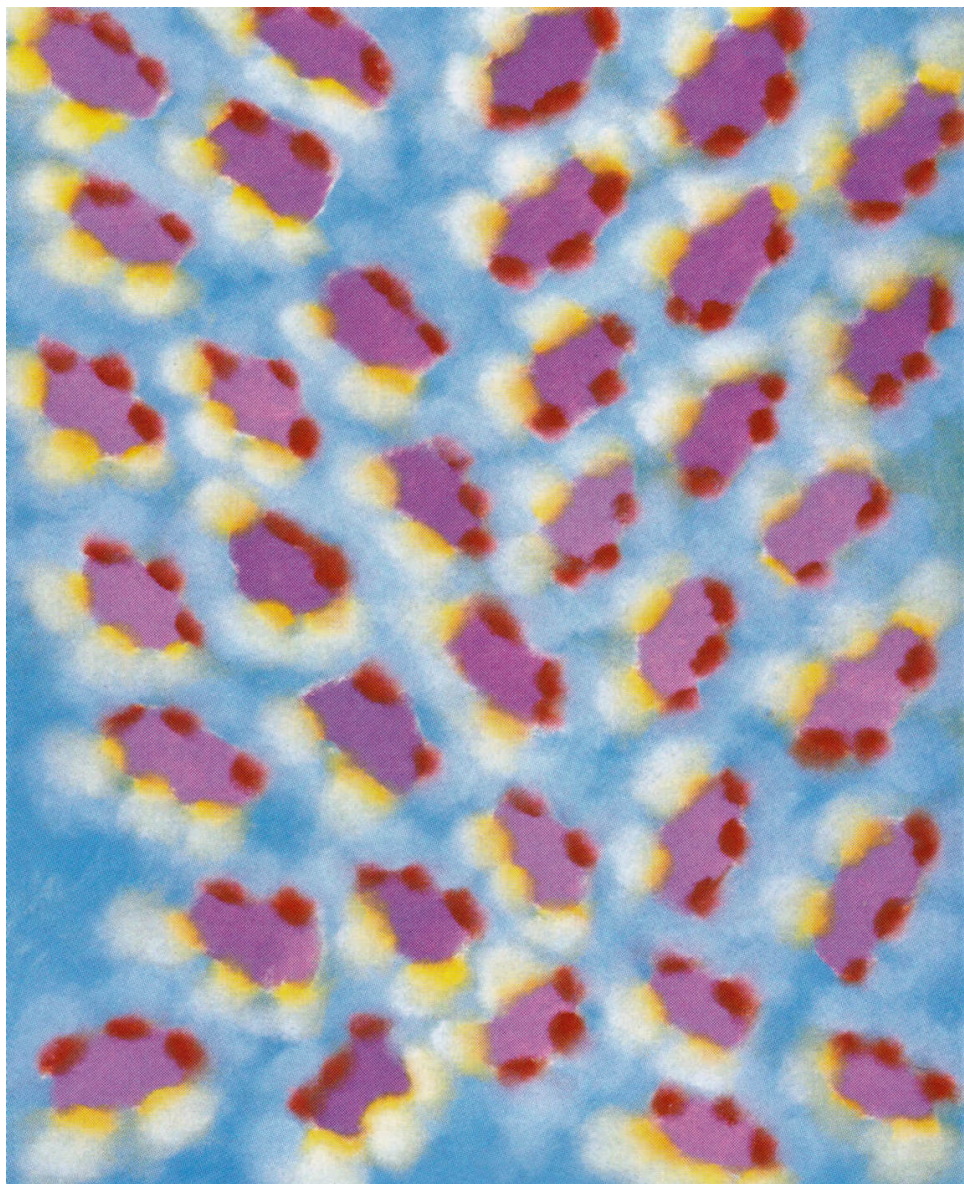
Gershon Iskowitz, *Autumn Landscape #7*, 1967, oil on canvas, 97.5 x 80 cm, private collection.

None of these exhibitions laid claim to any stylistic commonality, but they offered an interim report of art in Canada in the moment.[26] Iskowitz could be paired with no other artist: his "look" was unique.

LEGACY

Mark Cheetham writes of Gershon Iskowitz: "Knowing an artist's biography can be a trap for the ways we see and think about their work, because too often life's events and art's purposes do not align as perfectly as we might wish."[27] Iskowitz was a Holocaust survivor who worked through that trauma in his powerful and disturbing memory works from 1947 to 1954—for example, *Through Life*, c.1947; *Yzkor*, 1952; and *Burning Synagogue*, c.1952–53. But it was his later innovative abstract work—paintings such as *Little Orange Painting II*, 1974; the Lowlands series, 1969-70; and the Uplands series, 1969-72— that garnered him significant critical recognition.

LEFT: Gershon Iskowitz, *Through Life*, c.1947, pen and black ink, watercolour, and gouache on illustration board, 52.7 x 42 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Gershon Iskowitz, *The Wall*, 1952, pen and black ink and oil paint on grey laid paper, 60.5 x 45.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Iskowitz added something different and individual to art in Canada, but he did so on his own terms. Through his rigorous discipline and lifelong determination to be an artist, he set an example of integrity rather than ambition—for which he was admired and respected by younger artists such as David Bolduc, Daniel Solomon, and John MacGregor (b.1944). He felt no need to subscribe to a "Canadian lens" or other forms of discreet assimilation. Iskowitz identified himself simply as an artist, and he may be best seen as a deterritorialized Polish Jew and Canadian, but never as a "hyphenated" Canadian.

Iskowitz's legacy is twofold: his paintings and his foundation. An extensive body of work by him continues to be admired and exhibited in major public institutions—including the National Gallery of Canada, Art Gallery of Ontario, Winnipeg Art Gallery, and Vancouver Art Gallery—as well as in corporate and private collections across the country. But individual works by Iskowitz are not specifically iconic, a term that is best applied to pictorial art such as *The West*

Wind, 1916–17, by Tom Thomson (1877–1917). Over time, Thomson's lone tree and shoreline has become a stand-in for the Canadian wilderness. In contrast, the iconic for Iskowitz rests in the body of his work over time, a consistency of vision that stands for him.

Iskowitz appreciated the acclaim he received during his lifetime and the opportunities that came from living and working in Canada. That led to his second important legacy, the Gershon Iskowitz Prize. In 1982, the year of his retrospective at the Art Gallery of Ontario, he began working on plans for an independent charitable foundation that would provide financial support to Canadian artists of merit. "It's very important to give something so the next generation can really believe in something," he said.[28] The Gershon Iskowitz Prize was first presented in 1986 and continues to be awarded annually. Winners have included General Idea (active 1969–1994) in 1988; Françoise Sullivan (b.1923) in 2008; Michael Snow in 2011; and Rebecca Belmore (b.1960) in 2015.

The Gershon Iskowitz Prize past winners. [1] Françoise Sullivan [2] Rebecca Belmore [3] Michael Snow [4] General Idea [5] Shary Boyle [6] Valérie Blass [7] Brian Jungen [8] Stan Douglas [9] Janet Cardiff and George Miller.

The Gershon Iskowitz Foundation was not mandated to promote Iskowitz's oeuvre, but it is responsible for the artist's inventory. On its tenth anniversary, in 1995, it gifted 148 works by Iskowitz—paintings, watercolours, drawings, printwork, and sketchbooks—to thirty-two public gallery collections across Canada.[29] In 2006 it formed a partnership with the Art Gallery of Ontario, renaming the prize the Gershon Iskowitz Prize at the AGO and adding a solo exhibition of the recipient's work at the gallery to the cash award.[30]

Gershon Iskowitz, *Uplands B*, 1970, oil on canvas, 213 x 335 cm, private collection.

STYLE
& TECHNIQUE

A largely self-taught artist, Gershon Iskowitz's work can be separated into three distinct phases: figurative memory paintings depicting his life before and during the war; landscape paintings from his visits to Parry Sound, Ontario, 1954 to the late 1960s; and from 1960 on, a rapid move into abstract painting. His materials were consistently basic and essential: oil on board or canvas for paintings; watercolour on paper; and ink on paper for drawings. Yet defining Iskowitz's style is elusive: he never spoke of influences, and his work cannot be mistaken for that of any other artist. He painted his own personal vision—and that makes his art unique.

A SINGULAR STYLE

There is an unmistakable "look" to Iskowitz's work, especially in his abstract paintings. In those final decades of his life, the elements of colour and form in his oeuvre did not vary dramatically, as can be seen by comparing *Autumn Landscape #2*, 1967, and a late untitled painting from 1987. Nevertheless, his work does not fit easily into any of the contemporary schools and movements—whether hard-edge, minimalism, abstract expressionism, or action painting. Iskowitz was largely self-taught, and he did not borrow from other artists in any obvious ways. Though he expressed an interest in paintings by some other Canadian artists—David Milne (1881–1953), Jack Shadbolt (1909–1998), and Kazuo Nakamura (1926–2002)—there is no direct link between their work and his.[1]

In spite of this self-determination, some art scholars and critics have tried to fit Iskowitz into known categories, ranging from Holocaust artist to colour-field painter. Beginning in 1960 and continuing through to his 1982 retrospective exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario, reviews of his exhibited works often referred to the tragic circumstances of his pre-émigré life—for example, "Gershon Iskowitz: Transmuting Personal Tragedy into Art."[2] Only three surviving sketches can be positively dated to the war years: *Action*, 1941, drawn as Iskowitz witnessed the brutality of Nazi soldiers in the Kielce Ghetto, and

Gershon Iskowitz, *Ghetto*, c.1947, watercolour, gouache, and pen and black ink on card, 35.5 x 48.4 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

two from his time in concentration camps: *Buchenwald*, 1944–45, and *Condemned*, c.1944–46. Simple and raw in style, these visual documents bear witness to the horrors of the time and express Iskowitz's empathy with the suffering he observed. They have a strength and integrity that can come only through personal experience. As he waited in the Feldafing Displaced Persons Camp outside Munich in 1946–48 and for some years after his arrival in Toronto in September 1948, Iskowitz worked through his emotions in ink and watercolour memory sketches: images of prewar Poland, such as *Through Life*, c.1947, *Korban*, c.1952, and *Market*, c.1952–54; of events that took place in the Kielce Ghetto, such as *It Burns*, c.1950-52, and *Torah*, 1951; and of camp experiences, including *Escape*, 1948, and *Barracks*, 1949.

Eventually, Iskowitz began to paint interior scenes and floral still lifes—for example, an undated, untitled 1950s floral painting in the collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario. These images, along with Parry Sound landscapes such as *Summer* and *Street Scene Parry Sound*, both 1955, can be compared in some respects with works by other artists such as Kazuo Nakamura, who took a

contemporary approach to landscape. Rather than creating a pictorial view, they painted beyond landscape as nature, and into the nature of painting itself. As Iskowitz noted years later, his Parry Sound landscapes were more important for starting a new life and his personal sense of renewal—not to "paint like the Group of Seven"—than for adapting to the styles and subject matter of art in Canada.[3] In this way, they too are autobiographical.

LEFT: Gershon Iskowitz, *Untitled Landscape*, 1960, watercolour on paper, 40 x 76.2 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery. RIGHT: Kazuo Nakamura, *Plowed Field*, 1953, watercolour on wove paper, 36.9 x 54 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

As Iskowitz's work began to garner attention and approval by the late 1950s (tellingly, there are no bad reviews), he remained a complicated fit within the context of Canadian art and Toronto artists at the time. He never belonged to any artist group, such as Painters Eleven. Between 1954 and 1960 he exhibited five times with the Canadian Society of Graphic Art, but he regarded this association as an opportunity rather than a shared artistic objective. Even when he was selected for large group exhibitions in the 1970s—including *Toronto Painting: 1953-1965* for the National Gallery of Canada in 1972, and the *Exhibition of Contemporary Paintings by Seven Canadian Painters from the Canada Council Art Bank*, which toured to galleries in Paris, New Zealand, and Australia in 1976 and 1977—he shared no common style with the other artists. Indeed, Iskowitz's resolute individuality may stem from the way he worked in his studio every night: his method was not to observe but "to experience the experience."[4]

The critics who reviewed Iskowitz's paintings in early exhibitions expressed admiration for his work through his subject matter and his relationship, as they perceived it, with the Canadian landscape. Colin Sabiston praised the images in the March 1960 Here and Now solo show as "a sonnet in paint—a poet-painter's love poem to the spacious freedom of Canada's land, waterways and skies."[5] A year later, reviewing another show at the same gallery, Robert Fulford expanded on this idea:

> Gershon Iskowitz is the sort of painter who inspires words like "lyric," "mystic," "poet-painter," etc. . . . Again, he offers abstract landscapes, painted in rich evocative waves of color. Again, the colors are soft, the construction is horizontal. But in a few other pictures he veers towards the romantic . . . he is evolving what seems likely to be one of the lasting personal styles of this time and place.[6]

Gershon Iskowitz, *Summer in Yellow, No. 1*, 1972, oil on canvas, 111 x 80.5 cm, Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa.

Whenever Iskowitz was asked about his later work, he replied in generalities—that his paintings, even his abstracts, were real: "I see those things," he said, going on to explain that his challenge as an artist was to put all the parts together. "Everything has to be united."[7] Certainly he found inspiration for his work in the Canadian landscape, whether on the ground around Parry Sound or from above as he flew over the northern boreal forest and Hudson Bay. Yet, as his paintings became totally abstract in the last two decades of his life, he created his own distinctive landscape, as much looking up to the sky as looking down on the ground, such as in *Summer in Yellow, No. 1*, 1972. It's also possible that these abstracts are not only a new kind of painting. They may be formal compositions of light and space, or they may even be another kind of memory art. Iskowitz spoke of continuity in life and how, as he worked alone at night, he reflected on his early life with his family and friends in Poland. Whatever the source, the brilliantly coloured shapes that fluctuate in and out on his canvases are his own unique inventions.

If Iskowitz's abstract works are indeed multilayered in their meaning, they fit well into the current reappraisal of the term "Canadian Art." In 2017, Canada's sesquicentennial year, the National Gallery of Canada published *Art in Canada*, a new volume on its collection. In it, director Marc Meyer asked: "How Canadian is Canadian art? Is there such a thing, beyond the Canadian passport of the artists? Would it make more sense to talk about art made in Canada rather than presume such a thing as 'Canadian art?'"[8]

Installation view of *Exhibition of Contemporary Paintings by Seven Canadian Painters from the Canada Council Art Bank* at Harbourfront Art Gallery, 1976, photograph by David Lloyd.

Iskowitz always seemed unconcerned with what was said or written about his work, and he accepted it without known comment. When interviewed, he spoke simply of being human and of his work as an expression of his being. As curator Roald Nasgaard wrote as he reflected on Iskowitz's work, "The interconnectedness of [his] art and life . . . is fluid and immeasurable."[9]

PURE EXPRESSION

With works such as *Parry Sound I*, 1955, Iskowitz turned away from the pictorial depiction of what he observed to "pure" painting—the act of creating as an expression unto itself. Theodore Heinrich writes that Iskowitz's "action of pure painting" was a process and "intuitive, each stroke dictating of inner necessity its answer and successor."[10] At the time of the retrospective at the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1982, curator David Burnett described Iskowitz's work as "rooted in the directness of experience."[11] He traced this thread from the early figurative memory works such as *Escape*, 1948, *Torah*, 1951, and *It Burns*, c.1950–52, through to the later abstractions. *Explosion*, c.1949–52, an early example of the bridge between his figurative and abstract works, reveals this transition. "The strength and value of Iskowitz's work lies in the absolute and naïve unity between his subject matter and its painterly manifestation," he wrote. "It lies in the essential singleness of his artistic expression."[12]

LEFT: Gershon Iskowitz, *Explosion*, c.1949–52, gouache on illustration board, 50.9 x 63.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.
RIGHT: Gershon Iskowitz, *Parry Sound I*, 1955, watercolour on paper, 22.9 x 30.5 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

This "essential singleness" for Iskowitz was the same, regardless of the different styles of work he produced. Burnett also qualified "naïve" not as "an ignorant roughness" but as Iskowitz's unwavering focus and the self-directed discipline of his studio routine—"the drive that necessitates his working day in and day out."[13] When Iskowitz turned to the act of painting, working exclusively within the confines of his studio and no longer needing to create memory images (as in the drawings *Ghetto*, c.1947, and *Memory (Mother and Child)*, c.1951) or observe the forms in nature (as in an untitled flower painting from 1956), painting became his nature—it spoke for itself, without his having to explain hidden meanings.

Gershon Iskowitz, *Orange Violet–A,* 1979, oil on canvas, 155 x 141 cm, formerly in the collection of Appleton Museum of Art, Ocala, Florida.

Burnett concluded that Iskowitz "came to recognize that expression in painting lay in the activity of painting and that the reality of communication came through the painting itself and not the particular subject matter."[14] Iskowitz referred to this unity between an artwork and the act of painting in an interview he did with his artist friend David Bolduc (1945–2010): "Every form of art is the image of life," he said. "There has to be a certain kind of reality in it."[15] Years earlier the noted Swiss artist Paul Klee (1879–1940) made a similar self-revelatory comment while painting in Tunisia in 1914: "Colour possesses me. I don't have to pursue it . . . colour and I are one. I am a painter!"[16]

COLOUR AND SHAPES

With works such as *Late Summer Evening*, 1962, Iskowitz started to move toward abstraction, although the compositions retained elements of the pictorial. As his work became fully abstract by 1967—initially with images such as *Summer Landscape #2*—writers began in the 1970s to analyze Iskowitz's painting process, focusing on his particular use of colour and his inventive shapes. In an early 1971 feature article for *artscanada* magazine, Peter Mellen wrote:

> After looking at [Iskowitz's paintings] a long time, colors begin to fluctuate. Some come rushing out to you, others pull you into the depth of the painting. They appear to come alive before you, glowing with vibrant luminosity. Real space becomes infinite space—space through which you can float weightlessly.[17]

Gershon Iskowitz, *Summer Landscape #2*, 1967, oil on canvas, 152.4 x 127 cm, private collection.

Three years later, critic Art Perry also analyzed Iskowitz's use of colour:

> An Iskowitz red is dissimilar to any other red. It is a hyper-red, a supersaturating red, an individually and sensually encompassing red. And not to discredit Iskowitz green, mauve, blue or purple, they too have no visual counterpart. To view a color-field painting by Gershon Iskowitz is to re-experience color. Through a subtle juxtaposition of catalyst color dots and his mottled color-fields, Iskowitz not only controls but activates the whole painted surface [to] make it vibrate at a higher intensity: Iskowitz is probably Canada's finest color engineer.[18]

The colour-field painters emerging in the United States in the 1940s had been of great interest to the Toronto abstractionist collective Painters Eleven in the 1950s. The influence of expressionist-based versions of the style was evident in the work of Jack Bush (1909–1977) and Oscar Cahén (1916–1956) in particular. Exhibitions by Americans Jules Olitski (1922–2007) and Frank Stella (b.1936) at David Mirvish Gallery brought the evolving style to Toronto critics and audiences. Iskowitz did not identify as a colour-field painter—or with any category or school. Still, some critics used this term in discussing his abstract works: it enabled them to focus on the

LEFT: Oscar Cahén, *Candy Tree*, 1952–53, oil on Masonite, 123 x 75 cm, private collection. RIGHT: Gershon Iskowitz, *Tree Reflections*, 1960, watercolour on paper, 63.2 x 53.3 cm, private collection.

innovative use of colour that became his hallmark. Art historian Dennis Reid, for instance, describes the watercolour *Summer Sound*, 1965, and other similar pieces, such as *Tree Reflections*, 1960, as landscape and colour-field paintings.[19]

Merike Weiler focused on the duality she experienced in 1975 as she viewed Iskowitz's works in his first public gallery exhibition at the Glenbow-Alberta Institute in Calgary:

> In his work I see a recurring process, an alternating though uneven rhythm between structured and unstructured shape . . . . For me, Iskowitz is a duality, a curious blend of alienation and ebullience, at once an ascetic and a sensualist. In the same way, his paintings are a revelation and a camouflage.[20]

In the 1970s art historians presented two different perspectives on Iskowitz's work. Roald Nasgaard made an analogy between Iskowitz and the Romantic, lyrical sublime, especially with the German painter Caspar David Friedrich (1774–1840).[21]   Theodore Heinrich focused on Iskowitz's painting process (how he applied paint) and working method (the solitude and discipline in his studio) but also added a wry analogy: "As in the *October* canvases, [the forms] avoid becoming islands by touching an edge in peninsular fashion, much the way Spain clings to Europe while turning its back on it."[22]

DRAWINGS

While Iskowitz never made preliminary drawings for paintings, drawing was a lifelong and parallel activity for him. His earliest work, done in Poland and Germany during and immediately after the war, could only be drawing, given his limited art materials and the urgency he felt to record impressions and memories. He continued his memory drawings after he arrived in Toronto and

into the early 1950s. In this same period he also made quick life drawings (nudes) and sketches of Toronto street scenes, but thereafter he focused on two distinct subjects: portraits and landscape. By 1951 his portrait drawings took on a consistent style that continued until the last dated work in January 1987. They are immediate contour sketches that capture the essential features of his subject, without any shading or toning. Most of them are of women.


LEFT: Gershon Iskowitz, *Luigi Orgera*, 1980, felt pen, 42.5 x 35 cm, Gershon Iskowitz Foundation. RIGHT: Gershon Iskowitz, *Untitled Drawing*, 1958, felt pen, 56 x 42.5 cm, Gershon Iskowitz Foundation.

In contrast, his landscape drawings did change in style. The earliest, dated 1952, are vigorous gestural drawings done in felt pen. By 1962 Iskowitz developed a "pointillism" style, using short strokes done in ink.[23] He never exhibited the portrait drawings: he did them for himself and sometimes gave them to the sitter. In 1981, however, he asked Gallery Moos to feature a group of the later landscape drawings in an exhibition.[24]

These drawings, a series of landscapes that make use of the pointillist style and combine it with tiny ovoid line work, reveal the breadth of Iskowitz's late-career technical abilities. While Iskowitz was often considered a methodical colourist, his command of drawing technique shows a keen eye for space and detail communicated through minimal arrangement and repetition. As seen in *Landscape #2*, 1980, the composition is achieved through a bold central feature that is distinguished by vertical spires contrasted with waning diagonal lines to invoke the pitch and horizon of a landscape. The works from this 1981 exhibition offer a rare glimpse into the artist's relationship with the land— intimate and controlled. Like his paintings, the landscape drawings are an Iskowitz studio invention, an idealized view of an imagined world.
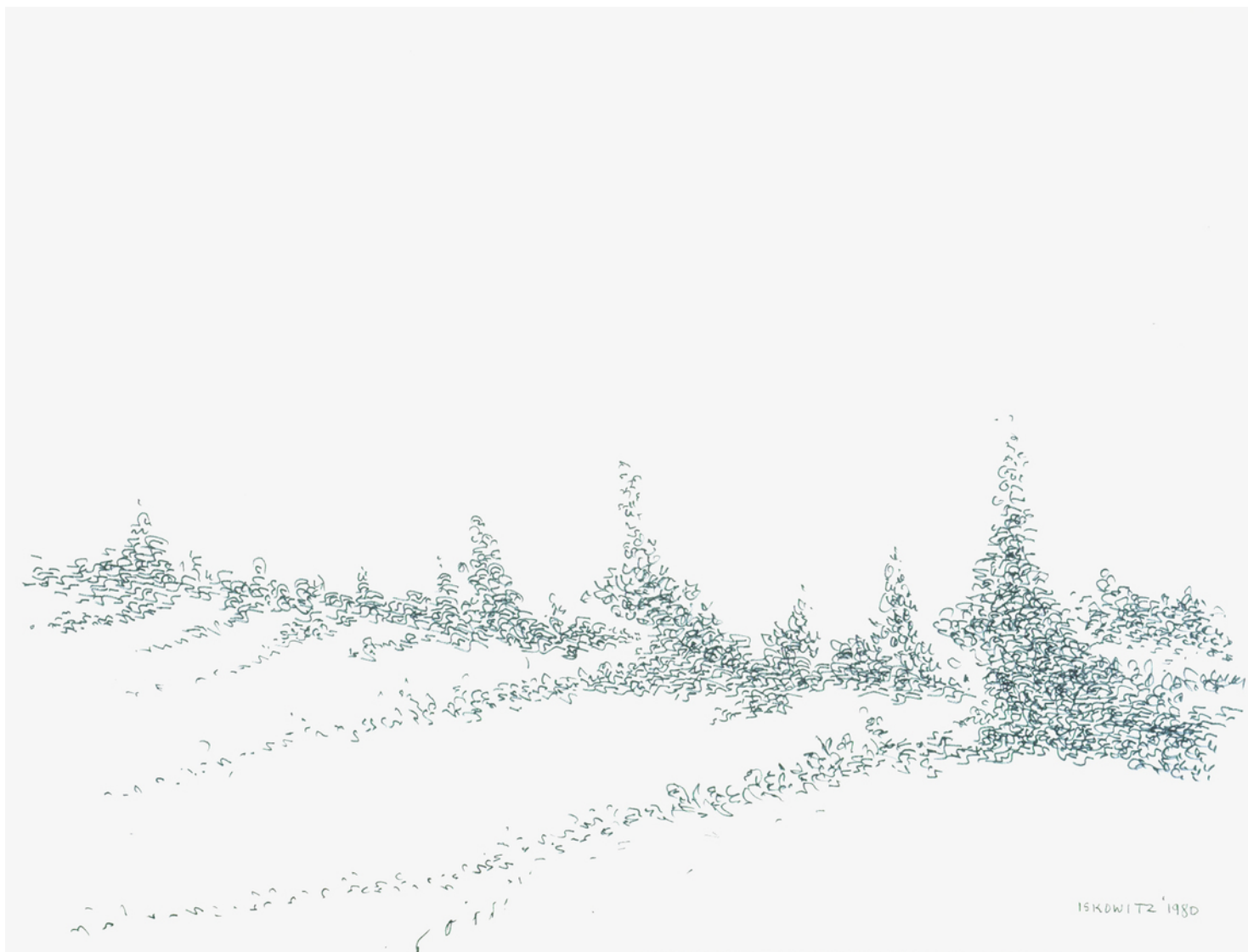
Gershon Iskowitz, *Landscape #2*, 1980, ink on paper, 43.2 x 58.4 cm, Collection Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York.

A MEASURED TECHNIQUE

For all the apparent simplicity of the abstract paintings Iskowitz was creating by the late 1960s, he achieved these results in complex and varied ways. Deep contemplation and detailed execution were required for both the ovoid and blip forms in *Autumn Landscape #2*, 1967; *Orange Yellow C*, 1982; and *Northern Lights Septet No. 3*, 1985, and the organic contours of large cloud or galaxy forms in *Uplands E*, 1971; *Uplands H*, and *Uplands K*, both 1972; and *Little Orange Painting II*, 1974.

LEFT: Detail of *Uplands K*, 1972, installed at the Art Gallery of Hamilton, photograph by Daniel Hutchinson.
RIGHT: Gershon Iskowitz, *Uplands K*, 1972, oil on canvas, 228.4 x 355.4 cm, Art Gallery of Hamilton.

Iskowitz spoke of painting layers upon layers, but the ovoid and blip forms were not always the last layer he applied. Sometimes he brushed a background colour onto the surface to create these forms, as in the detail of *Lowlands No. 9*, 1970, and *Newscape*, 1976. Other times he painted the forms directly onto a coloured ground, as in the alternative detail of *Lowlands No. 9* (in this case, Iskowitz is using both the brush techniques in one painting) and in an untitled

1987 painting. The 1987 painting also has subtler forms, yellow on yellow. These techniques are Iskowitz's own invention, and they cannot be mistaken for those of any other artist.

Dennis Reid writes that Iskowitz had only to "alter colours and their configuration in order to achieve a limitless variety of moods and feelings."[25] That is true for his 1977 watercolours, which were made with instant and direct "drops" of colour on dampened paper. An untitled watercolour in the collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts uses green, yellow, and blue; in another, entitled *AK*, 1977, the red is dominant, whereas the yellow recedes in the untitled work and the blue and green are dominant.

Gershon Iskowitz, *AK*, 1977, watercolour on paper, 42.9 x 56 cm, Gershon Iskowitz Foundation, Toronto.

Iskowitz applied no formula, but he registered the nuance of technique in the final work, as all high-functioning painters do. Like virtuoso musicians, they know what they want to achieve. The difference between the best artists or performers and their myriad competent followers is in the mind. To be "in the music," as Iskowitz was "in the painting," is "to experience the experience."[26]

Harry Malcolmson remembers Iskowitz as an unaffected person, deliberate in manner yet also spontaneous. He recalled a gathering at artist Les Levine's (b.1935) New York studio in the early 1980s that included Iskowitz, following the opening of the Canadian's New York solo exhibition.[27] As the conversation progressed, Levine declared that artists had to have in mind what they were

going to do. Iskowitz replied that before artists could begin to work, they had first to clear their minds and approach the canvas blank. In Malcolmson's interpretation, although Iskowitz did not begin a painting with a complete image in mind, his approach was methodical, and the final composition emerged only as he progressed.[28]

Style and technique were inseparable for Iskowitz. He built up his paintings with layers, and as he made adjustments to shapes and contours, he never overpainted in order to generate impasto texturing. Works such as *Ultra Blue Green,* 1973, are an accomplished example of this technique. All his paintings were rectilinear, never square, with only two exceptions, the arch-topped three-panelled work *Uplands*, 1969–70, and the 1985 Septet series. As Daniel Solomon (b.1945) wrote: "Gershon's studio practice, like everything in his life, was simple and stripped down. He used Stevenson's oil paint and bristle brushes, as basic as you can get. He had people who stretched and primed his canvas."[29] He did not mix media, nor did he engage in any hybridization or pastiche of forms. He found what worked and kept to it, and he never experimented for the sake of novelty.
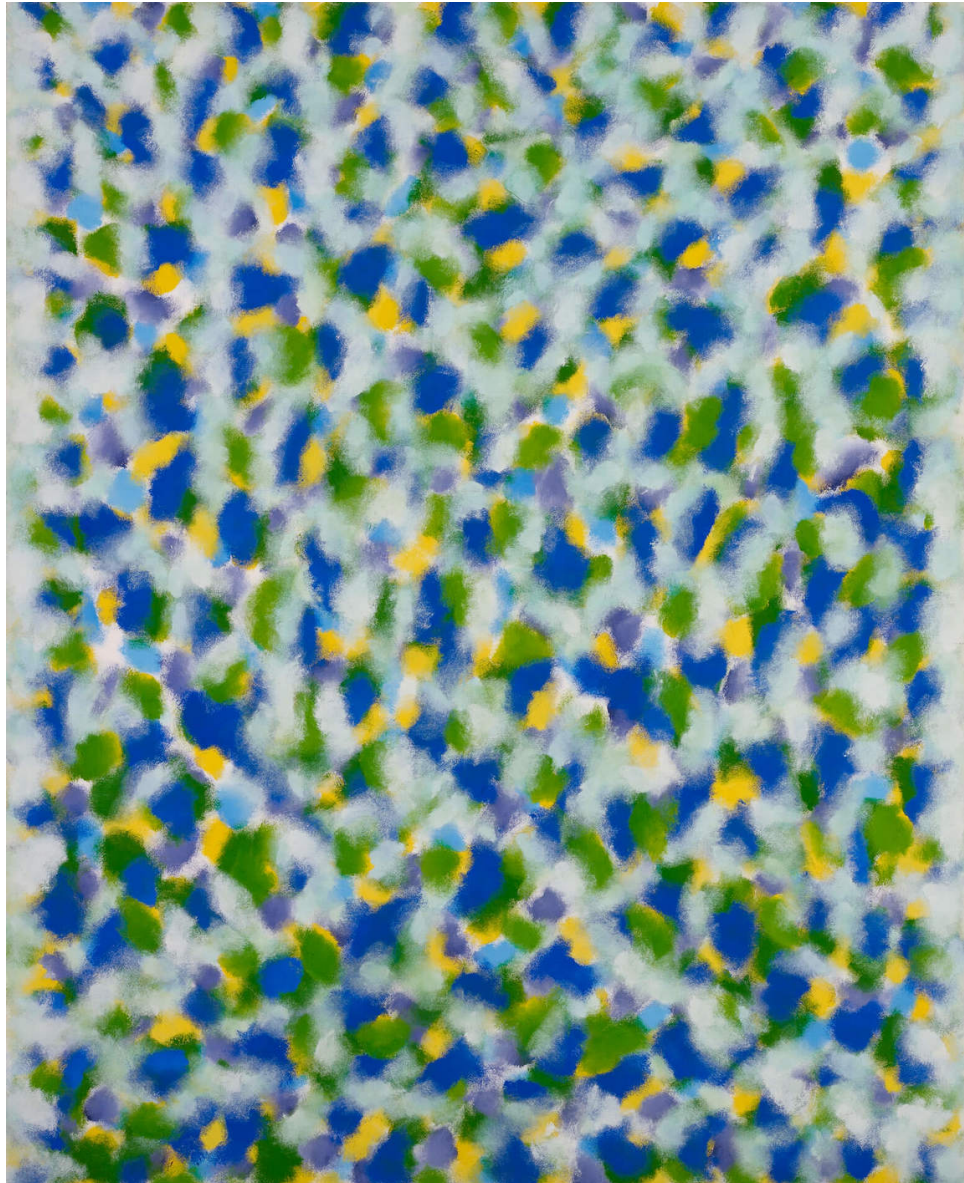
Gershon Iskowitz, *Ultra Blue Green*, 1973, oil on canvas, 157.6 x 127 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Two Iskowitz interviews—one with David Bolduc (1945–2010) and the other with Merike Weiler—offer a direct sense of his thoughts and voice. In 1974 with Bolduc, Iskowitz spoke about the process of painting as a living experience and emphasized that he did not follow any critical theories or doctrines:

> Whenever I put on a coat of paint I look at it and say: well, let's leave it until tomorrow, when it dries; and tomorrow I'll put on another coat and . . . let's leave it. Then I put on one coat—ten coats—fifteen—twenty—it depends. Then I say it's finished. That's it; I can't work anymore.
>
> All paintings, if they're good paintings, have skill, form, space, colour. It's like a landscape, a form of life. Every form of art is the image of life. There has to be a certain kind of reality in it. It can be . . . just a few blobs of paint, but it has to be a form of communication. My work is more like . . . space, and poems; and it relates to my daily living. What we do is paint; we build an image, a form. It's not an obvious form, it's private.
>
> I never look at drawings when I paint, they're just to get some ideas. Painting is entirely different . . . a direct approach. If I had to look at a little drawing and then blow it up—it would be awful. The painting would be dead, a blown-up thing.[30]

Gershon Iskowitz, *October 2*, 1976, oil on canvas, 139.7 x 119.4 cm, private collection.

In 1975 with Weiler, Iskowitz offered a similar commentary, emphasizing the daily life and working only at night, and what was revealed to him as he worked:

> The only fear I have is before starting to paint. When I paint, I'm great, I feel great. You reflect on your own vision. That's what it's about. You put in your own intelligence, your own expression, your own ability. You put yourself in any form of art. I just paint; I see and I feel and I want to be honest. It's very important; you make what you believe. It's like a plastic interpretation of life.

WHERE TO SEE

The works of Gershon Iskowitz are held in public and private collections internationally. Although the following institutions hold the works listed below, they may not always be on view. This list contains only the works held in public collections discussed and illustrated in this book; many other works by Iskowitz may be found in public collections across Canada.

AGNES ETHERINGTON ART CENTRE

36 University Avenue
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
613-533-2190
agnes.queensu.ca
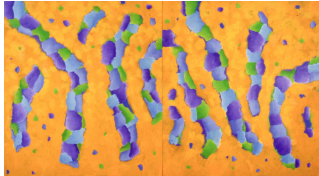
Gershon Iskowitz, *Orange Yellow C,* **1982**
Oil on canvas, diptych
127 x 228 cm

ART GALLERY OF GREATER VICTORIA

1040 Moss Street
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada
250-384-4171
aggv.ca

Gershon Iskowitz, *Summer Sky*, **1966**
Oil on canvas
101.8 x 81.5 cm

ART GALLERY OF HAMILTON

123 King Street West
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
905-527-6610
artgalleryofhamilton.com
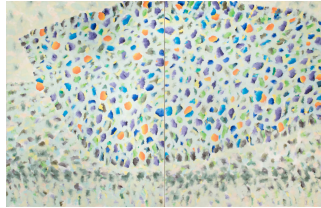
Gershon Iskowitz, *Uplands K*, 1972
Oil on canvas, diptych
228.4 x 355.4 cm

ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO

317 Dundas Street West
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
1-877-225-4246 or 416-979-6648
ago.ca
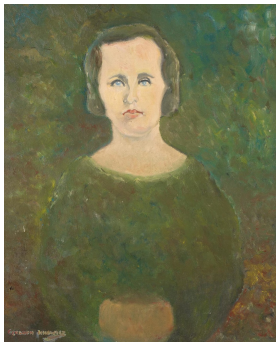
Gershon Iskowitz, *Portrait of Mother*, 1947
Oil on board
50.8 x 40.6 cm
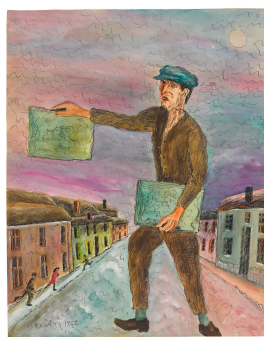
Gershon Iskowitz, *Untitled (Memory Picture)*, 1952
Watercolour on paper
51 x 40.5 cm

Gershon Iskowitz, *Parry Sound I*, 1955
Watercolour on paper
22.9 x 30.5 cm

Gershon Iskowitz, *Parry Sound II*, 1955
Watercolour on wove paper
22.8 x 30.4 cm

Gershon Iskowitz,
Street Scene Parry Sound, **1955**
Oil on board
46 x 65 cm
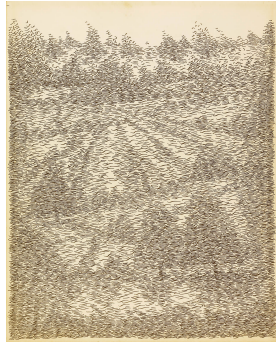
Gershon Iskowitz,
Untitled, **1962**
Ink on paper
33.4 x 26.2 cm
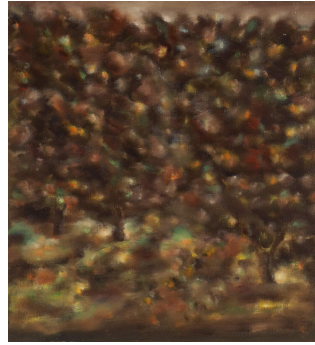
Gershon Iskowitz,
Spring Reflections,
1963
Oil on canvas
76.3 x 71.1 cm
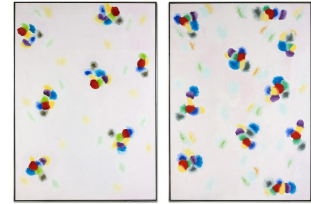
Gershon Iskowitz,
Seasons No. 2, **1968–69**
Oil on canvas
254 x 355.4 cm overall,
panels 254 x 177.7 cm
each
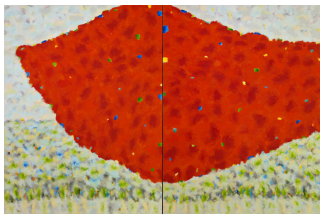
Gershon Iskowitz,
Uplands H, **1972**
Oil on canvas, diptych
182.9 x 241.3 cm
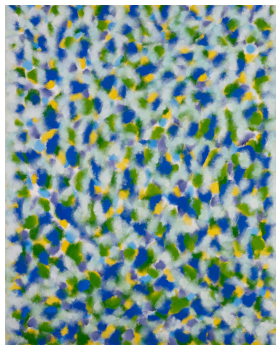
Gershon Iskowitz, *Ultra Blue Green*, **1973**
Oil on canvas
157.6 x 127 cm
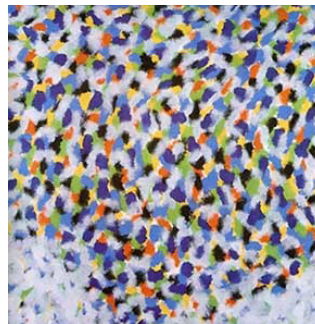
Gershon Iskowitz, *Little Orange Painting II*,
1974
Oil on canvas
177.8 x 165.1 cm

Gershon Iskowitz,
Midnight #2, **1974**
Lithograph on wove
paper
105.7 x 89.9 cm
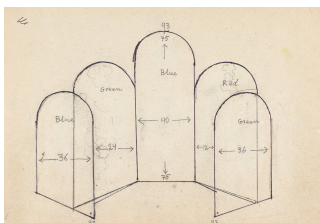
Gershon Iskowitz,
Untitled (Sketch for Septet), **c.1984**
Pencil on paper

ART GALLERY OF YORK UNIVERSITY

8 Accolade East Building
York University, 4700 Keele Street
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
416-736-5169
agyu.art

Gershon Iskowitz, *Autumn Landscape #2*, 1967
Oil on canvas
129.5 x 99.1 cm

ART MUSEUM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

15 King's College Circle
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
416-978-8398
artmuseum.utoronto.ca
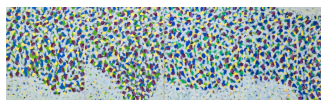
Gershon Iskowitz, *Seasons*, 1974
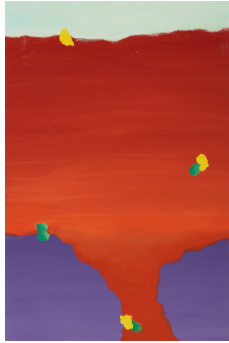Oil on canvas (in four parts)
178 x 610 cm

CANADA COUNCIL ART BANK

921 St. Laurent Boulevard
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
artbank.ca

Gershon Iskowitz,
Lowlands No. 2, 1969
Oil on canvas
50.5 x 33.5 cm

Gershon Iskowitz,
Uplands F, 1971
Oil on canvas
228.5 x 356 cm

Gershon Iskowitz,
Summer in Yellow, No.
1, 1972
Oil on canvas
111 x 80.5 cm
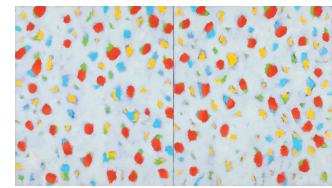
Gershon Iskowitz, *Red*
Grey Painting, **1976**
Oil on canvas
107 x 183 cm
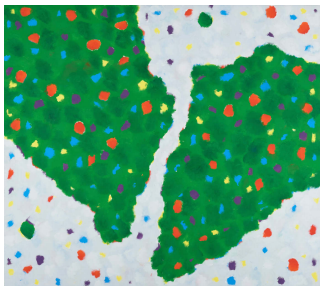
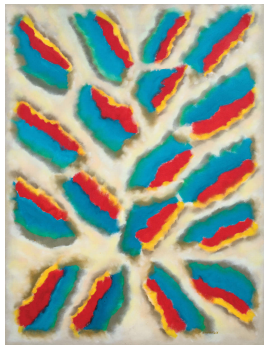**Gershon Iskowitz,** *Deep*
Green No. 8, **1977**
Oil on canvas
178 x 198.5 cm

KELOWNA ART GALLERY

1315 Water Street
Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada
250-762-2226
kelownaartgallery.com

Gershon Iskowitz, *Summer Song*, 1966
Oil on canvas
165.1 x 127 cm

MCMASTER MUSEUM OF ART

1280 Main Street West
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
905-525-9140
museum.mcmaster.ca

Gershon Iskowitz, *Buchenwald*, 1944–45
Watercolour and ink on paper
mounted on cardboard
39.5 x 52.3 cm

Gershon Iskowitz, *Korban*, c.1952
Gouache on board
43.5 x 53 cm

MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

1380 Sherbrooke Street West
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
514-285-2000
mbam.qc.ca

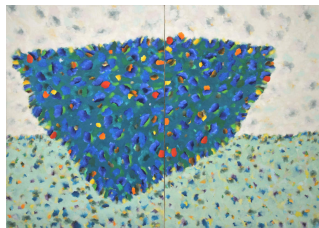**Gershon Iskowitz, *Untitled*, 1977**
Watercolour on paper
42.8 x 56 cm

MUSEUM LONDON

421 Ridout Street North
London, Ontario, Canada
519-661-0333
museumlondon.ca

Gershon Iskowitz, *Uplands G*, 1971
Oil on canvas, diptych
254 x 355.6 cm

NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA

380 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
613-990-1985
gallery.ca

Gershon Iskowitz,
Action, **1941**
Pen and black
ink, watercolour, and
gouache on wove paper
39.2 x 52.3cm

Gershon Iskowitz,
Condemned, **c.1944–46**
Pen and black ink and
watercolour on cream
wove paper
71.3 x 54.4 cm

Gershon Iskowitz,
Ghetto, **c.1947**
Watercolour, gouache,
and pen and black ink
on card
35.5 x 48.4 cm

Gershon Iskowitz,
Selection, Auschwitz,
1947
Pen and black
ink, watercolour, and
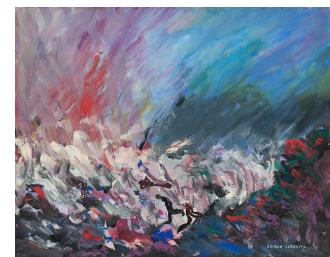gouache on illustration
board
40.8 x 50.3 cm

Gershon Iskowitz,
Through Life, **c.1947**
Pen and black
ink, watercolour, and
gouache on illustration
board
52.7 x 42 cm

Gershon Iskowitz,
Escape, **1948**
Oil on paper, mounted
on corrugated
cardboard
28.3 x 40 cm

Gershon Iskowitz,
Barracks, **1949**
Watercolour and pen
and black ink, and
gouache on wove paper
38.3 x 50 cm

Gershon Iskowitz,
Explosion, **c.1949-52**
Gouache on illustration
board
50.9 x 63.5 cm

Gershon Iskowitz, *It Burns*, **c.1950–52**
Coloured ink and gouache on illustration board
50.9 x 63.4 cm

Gershon Iskowitz, *Torah*, **1951**
Gouache and brush and black ink on illustration board
43 x 53.3 cm

Gershon Iskowitz, *Miriam*, **c.1951–52**
Coloured ink, watercolour, and gouache on illustration board
37.7 x 26.8 cm

Gershon Iskowitz, *Yzkor*, **1952**
Watercolour, coloured ink, and pen and black ink on illustration board
30.9 x 40.9 cm

Gershon Iskowitz, *The Wall*, **1952**
Pen and black ink and oil paint on grey laid paper
60.5 x 45.5 cm

Gershon Iskowitz, *Market*, **c.1952–54**
Coloured ink, gouache, and pen and black ink on illustration board
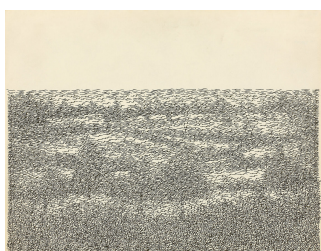51.9 x 60.7 cm

Gershon Iskowitz, *Side Street*, **c.1952–54**
Watercolour, coloured ink, and gouache on illustration board
50.9 x 63.5 cm

Gershon Iskowitz, *Self-Portrait*, **c.1955**
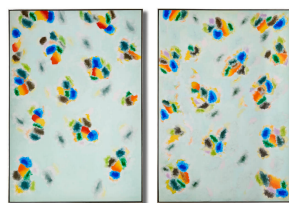Oil on commercial canvas board
50.8 x 40.6 cm

Gershon Iskowitz, *Summer Impression*, **1963**
Pen and black ink on wove paper
27.5 x 35 cm

Gershon Iskowitz, *Parry Sound Variation XIV*, **1965**
Watercolour on wove paper
48.1 x 63.2 cm

Gershon Iskowitz, *Seasons No. 1*, **1968–69**
Oil on canvas
254 x 355.4 cm overall, panels 254 x 177.7 cm each

Gershon Iskowitz, *Uplands*, **1969–70**
Oil on canvas
315.1 x 434.5 cm overall (irregular)
Left panel: 273.5 x 140 cm arched at top
Centre panel: 315.1 x 153 cm arched at top
Right panel: 273.5 x 140 cm arched at top

Gershon Iskowitz,
***Uplands E**, 1971*
Oil on canvas, diptych
228.6 x 356 cm

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

50 Stone Road East
Guelph, Ontario, Canada
519-824-4120
uoguelph.ca

Gershon Iskowitz, *Septet No. 5*,
1985
Oil on canvas on shaped plywood
in seven sections
Overall 233.5 x 410 cm.

UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE ART GALLERY

4401 University Drive West
Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada
403-329-2666
uleth.ca/artgallery

Gershon Iskowitz, *Sunshine*, 1955
Oil on board
50.8 x 61 cm

Gershon Iskowitz, *Northern Lights Septet No. 3*, 1985
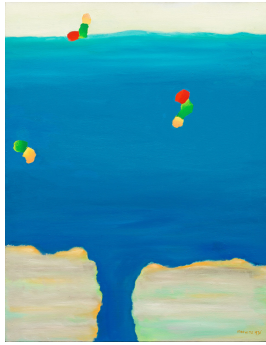Oil on canvas on shaped plywood
in seven sections
Overall 233.5 x 410 cm

VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

750 Hornby Street
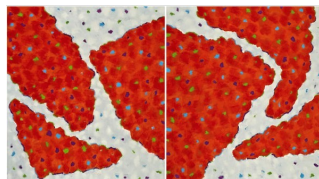Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
604-662-4700
vanartgallery.bc.ca

**Gershon Iskowitz, *Lowlands
No. 9*, 1970**
Oil on canvas
121.9 x 93.9 cm

WINNIPEG ART GALLERY

300 Memorial Boulevard
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
204-786-6641
wag.ca

**Gershon Iskowitz, *Summer G*,
1978**
Oil on canvas, diptych
167.7 x 305 cm

NOTES

BIOGRAPHY

1. "Iskowitz" is the anglicized spelling of his name that was accepted by 1955, although Iskowitz used both the "itz" and "icz" endings until that year. We accept that form throughout this text for consistency and to conform to the most current documents.

2. All the biographies give 1921, a date Iskowitz never publicly refuted. However, the Kielce Synagogue records were destroyed by the Nazi occupiers of the city after October 1939. The earliest legible extant document recording Iskowitz's personal details is the temporary travel document issued by the Military Government for Germany in Munich, May 3, 1948. There, Iskowitz's date of birth is written as November 24, 1920. Subsequent Canadian documents—his 1959 citizenship and his last Canadian passport, issued in 1982—conform to this date. All documents cited, Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, Art Gallery of Ontario.

3. Adele Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz: Painter of Light* (Toronto/Vancouver: Merritt Publishing, 1982); David Burnett, *Iskowitz* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1982).

4. Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 23–24.

5. Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 30; Burnett, *Iskowitz*, 53. There is, however, no record of Iskowitz in the academy archives. Correspondence with Krzysztof Oktabiński, Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, August 28, 2017.

6. Iskowitz told Freedman that he sketched the scene from a rooftop and hid it in the attic; friends who returned to Kielce in 1946 retrieved it for him. Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 50.

7. POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, accessed July 30, 2017, https://sztetl.org.pl/en/towns/k/399-kielce/99-history/137460-history-of-community.

8. In a 1966 *Saturday Night* magazine article, Kildare Dobbs noted that, sometime in 1942, Iskowitz escaped from Kielce and managed to remain at large in Poland for three months before being sent to Henryków. This story is not repeated elsewhere. Kildare Dobbs, "From the Ranks of Death: Buchenwald and Auschwitz: The Witness of Gershon Iskowitz," *Saturday Night*, March 1966.

9. The drawing is in the collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario. The "B series" was instituted at Auschwitz after the first "A series" tattoos, accounting for the first 20,000 prisoners.

10. Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 42.

11. Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 44, 47.

12. Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 44, 47.

13. Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 42, 47.

14. Constance Naubert-Riser, " . . . Everything We Love Will Die . . . ," in *The 1930s: The Making of "The New Man,"* ed. Jean Clair (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2008), 106.

15. Naubert-Riser, " . . . Everything We Love Will Die . . ., " 106. Also see Gerald Green, *Artists of Terezin* (New York: Schocken Books, 1988).

16. Records of the total number who died at Buchenwald vary. This figure comes from the Jewish Virtual Library, accessed February 10, 2018, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-statistics-of-buchenwald.

17. Dobbs, "From the Ranks of Death"; Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 47; interview with David Moos, July 20, 2018.

18. Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 50; Burnett, *Iskowitz*, 53.

19. Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, Art Gallery of Ontario. Iskowitz's address was Feldafing bei München, Willa Park #9, U.S. Zone, Germany. Ontario Jewish Archives (OJA), accessed February 14, 2015. The file consists of an initial application form to the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society of Canada, case no. 1763, August 13, 1946, and nine letters, the last dated June 1, 1948.

20. American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, accessed August 19, 2017, http://search.archives.jdc.org. Coats made in the clothing workshop of the Feldafing DP Camp. Reference Code: NY_12390.

21. Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 50; Burnett, *Iskowitz*, 55.

22. Correspondence with Dr. Caroline Sternberg, Archive of the Akadamie der Bilden Künste München, July 29, 2015.

23. Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 55; Burnett, *Iskowitz*, 56.

24. Correspondence with Régine Bonnefoit, Fondation Oskar Kokoschka, July 22, 2015.

25. Iskowitz described what he saw to Adele Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 55, but it is difficult to confirm details. Munich galleries active in the immediate postwar period included Haus der Kunst, the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, and Städtische Galerie, but the gallery scene was more active in Ausburg, 80 kilometres from Munich, and in Berlin.

26. Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 55. The opera productions mounted by the Bavarian State Opera in 1947–48 do not coincide with these details.

27. Chris Knowles, "Germany 1945–1949: A Case Study in Post-Conflict Reconstruction," January 29, 2014, *History and Policy,* http://www.historyandpolicy.org/policy-papers/papers/germany-1945-1949-a-case-study-in-post-conflict-reconstruction.

28. American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, accessed August 27, 2017, http://archives.jdc.org/topic-guides/jdc-in-the-displaced-persons-dp-camps-1945-1957.

29. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed September 1, 2017, https://www.ushmm.org/exhibition/displaced-persons/camp2.htm.

30. OJA.

31. OJA.

32. OJA.

33. OJA.

34. Iskowitz's Canadian Immigration stamps are both signed by "R.L. Barker" and are dated May 23, 1948, and June 28, 1948.

35. Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 61.

36. Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 63.

37. Interview with Ruth Ann Podeswa, Toronto, July 2014. The Podeswa portrait by Iskowitz is in the Podeswa Family Collection.

38. See Jo Manning, *Etched in Time* (Victoria: FriesenPress, 2016), chapter 18. Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 74; Burnett, *Iskowitz*, 58.

39. Records of the instructors' names were not recorded in the Temple Bulletins, but there is confirmation that art classes were held in 1953. Correspondence with Holy Blossom Temple, August 23, 2017.

40. See for example the profile by Ben Rose at the time of Iskowitz's retrospective at the Art Gallery of Ontario: "Largest Iskowitz Show Opens Jan. 23 at AGO," *Canadian Jewish News*, January 7, 1982. The article focused on questions of identity (with questions about ongoing anti-Semitism in Europe and discussion of Iskowitz's exhibition in Israel), and Iskowitz seems to play into the interviewer's desire to portray him a certain way, noting trips to Europe and Israel that are not documented. He did travel to London, England, in 1983 for the opening of his retrospective there.

41. Iskowitz's *Yzkor* refers to "Yizkor," a Jewish memorial prayer and public observance for the deceased. It is recited four times a year in the synagogue.

42. Freedman, Gershon Iskowitz, 76, 78, 81; Burnett, *Iskowitz*, 59–60.

43. Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 87.

44. Cameron to Freedman, in Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 90.

45. An existing invitation indicates that he showed works dating from 1941 to 1963. (Cameron changed the gallery name to the Dorothy Cameron Gallery and re-opened on Yonge Street in October 1962.)

46. Cameron to Freedman, in Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 90.

47. J. A. Wainwright, *Blazing Figures: A Life of Robert Markle* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2010), 97–98.

48. Correspondence with Daniel Solomon, January 18, 2018.

49. Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 113.

50. Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 113; Burnett, *Iskowitz*, 67.

51. There are no surviving detail documents, but the Canada Council grant was approved on March 30, 1967. Canada Council grant summary document accessed September 30, 2017.

52. There are varying published descriptions of this trip, which cannot all be reconciled. The most realistic scenario is that Iskowitz first flew to Winnipeg and then by a small aircraft to Churchill. There are no existing documents to verify the "landscape-coast" flight from Churchill. All published accounts indicate a helicopter, and if this is the case, it could only have been through a private charter company. A letter from the Canada Council to Iskowitz dated April 9, 1968, refers to a trip to James Bay, although this may have been a clerical error.

53. Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 121, 132.

54. *Lowlands No. 2*, 1969, was purchased by the Canada Council Art Bank from the 1970 Gallery Moos exhibition.

55. David L. Shirley review, *New York Times*, May 1980, quoted in Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 153.

56. Both quotations from Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 129.

57. Peter Mellen, "Gershon Iskowitz," *artscanada*, October/November 1971, 50.

58. Correspondence with Daniel Solomon, April 7, 2015.

59. Interview with artist Richard Sturm, August 24, 2017.

60. Iskowitz had summer, winter, and fall–spring versions of the same blue cap. Kangol designed a similar cap for the Beatles in 1964.

61. Correspondence with Daniel Solomon, April 13, 2015.

62. Harry Malcolmson remembers seeing Iskowitz at a party in New York, most likely in late 1983, when he had a solo exhibition at Marisa del Re Gallery. Conversation with Harry Malcolmson, Toronto, May 14, 2018.

63. Correspondence with Daniel Solomon, April 13, 2015.

64. It is likely that Walter Moos, who managed Iskowitz's financial matters, encouraged Iskowitz to purchase the building. It was registered under a company name, Newscape Inc. Iskowitz Estate Assets statement, 1988, Walter Moos Fonds, Art Gallery of Ontario.

65. Gershon Iskowitz Foundation, accessed July 22, 2018,
Gershon

66. Gershon Iskowitz Foundation, accessed May 5, 2018, http://iskowitzfoundation.ca.

67. Gershon Iskowitz Foundation, accessed August 20, 2017, http://iskowitzfoundation.ca/prize. Iskowitz received seven other Canada Council Grants through until 1976, including three "A" grants (indicating the highest amount that could be awarded to an artist), and the Victor Martyn Lynch-Staunton Award in 1974, which was administered by the Canada Council. Montreal painter Claude Tousignant was the Lynch-Staunton Award co-recipient. A 1969 grant was awarded for the creation of four "mural sized works," which were most likely the first Uplands diptychs.

68. The October date is given by documentary filmmaker Harry Rasky, who visited Iskowitz at Mount Sinai Hospital. Harry Rasky, "There Are Many 'Survivors'," *Globe and Mail*, April 2, 1988. There was no single cause for Iskowitz's hospitalization, and his death resulted from a deteriorating physical and medical condition over the years. The memorial service was held at Benjamin's Park Memorial Chapel, Toronto, on January 28, 1988, where the attending rabbi and Walter Moos spoke at the service. Iskowitz is buried at Mount Sinai Memorial Park, Toronto.

KEY WORKS: BUCHENWALD
1. Adele Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz: Painter of Light* (Toronto/Vancouver: Merritt Publishing, 1982), 42.

2. Constance Naubert-Riser, " . . . Everything We Love Will Die . . . ," in *The 1930s: The Making of "The New Man,"* ed. Jean Clair (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2008),106.

KEY WORKS: KORBAN
1. David Burnett, *Iskowitz* (Art Gallery of Ontario, 1982), 57.

KEY WORKS: SELF-PORTRAIT

1. Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz,* 17.

2. Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz,* 72.

KEY WORKS: PARRY SOUND I

1. No checklist of works for this exhibition has been uncovered.

2. Cited in Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz*, 90.

KEY WORKS: UNTITLED

1. London Ontario artist Jack Chambers, who exhibited with Isaacs Gallery, also produced comparable technique drawings, but his earliest works are dated 1963.

2. Iskowitz sketch books in the AGO collection contain numerous landscape drawings, dating from the early 1960s on. The last dated work is 1981.

KEY WORKS: LATE SUMMER EVENING

1. Georges Seurat developed a painting approach based on colour theory, which he termed "chromoluminarism" and later "pointillism," derived in part from active investigations by scientists such as Michel Chevreul. These theories had a strong influence on the Impressionist painters at the time.

2. Theodore Allen Heinrich, "The Intimate Cartography of Gershon Iskowitz's Painting," *artscanada,* May/June 1977, 13.

KEY WORKS: AUTUMN LANDSCAPE #2

1. Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz,* 113; Burnett, *Iskowitz,* 67.

2. Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz,* 113.

3. Theodore Allen Heinrich, "The Intimate Cartography of Gershon Iskowitz's Painting," *artscanada* May/June 1977, 12.

KEY WORKS: LOWLANDS NO. 9

1. David Burnett rightly asserts that Iskowitz's diptychs *Seasons No. 1* and *Seasons No. 2*, both 1968–69, are the first studio realization after the flights; Burnett, *Iskowitz,* 67. The Lowlands, however, are an extended project.

2. Burnett, *Iskowitz,* 67.

3. *Uplands*, 1969–70, has for many years been wrongly titled "Triptych," although the original title has now been corrected by the National Gallery of Canada.

KEY WORKS: UPLANDS E

1. The *Uplands* triptych is not letter-designated and is not included in the series proper.

2. Burnett, *Iskowitz,* 69.

3. Roald Nasgaard, *Abstract Painting in Canada* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre/Halifax: Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 2007), 245.

4. Peter Mellen, "Gershon Iskowitz," *artscanada*, October/November 1971, 62.

5. Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, Art Gallery of Ontario.

KEY WORKS: LITTLE ORANGE PAINTING II
1. Mellen, "Gershon Iskowitz," 52.

2. Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz,* 153.

KEY WORKS: UNTITLED
1. This phrase was coined by American novelist Kenneth Patchen in his "The Artist's Duty," *Journal of Albion Moonlight,* (New York: Self-published, 1941; 2nd ed. 1944), 253.

KEY WORKS: SUMMER G
1. This phrase was coined by Art Perry in his review of Iskowitz's solo exhibition at Galerie Allen, Vancouver, *artscanada*, December 1974, 107.

KEY WORKS: NORTHERN LIGHTS SEPTET NO. 3
1. Only two of four examined Septets are signed, titled, and dated. The earliest dating is 1984; one of them is now in a private U.S. collection. A sixth Septet, also dated 1984, was reproduced for the Gallery Moos exhibition invitation of May 11–25, 1985. The painting's whereabouts is unknown.

2. The Gallery Moos press release—Walter Moos Fonds, Art Gallery of Ontario—dates *Septet No. 3* as 1986, but the work is artist-dated "85" on the back.

3. Roald Nasgaard, "Gershon Iskowitz" in *The Gershon Iskowitz Prize, 1986 to 2006* (Toronto: The Gershon Iskowitz Foundation, 2009), 12.

SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES
1. Adele Freedman, *Gershon Iskowitz: Painter of Light* (Toronto/Vancouver: Merritt Publishing, 1982), 42.

2. Mark Celinscak, *Distance from the Belsen Heap: Allied Forces and the Liberation of a Nazi Concentration Camp* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

3. Celinscak, *Distance from the Belsen Heap*, 127. Canadian war artist Molly Lamb Bobak also visited Bergen-Belsen but decided against making any drawings of the camp.

4. BBC interview with Yehuda Bacon, accessed October 1, 2018, http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/witness/january/27/newsid_4184000/4184147.stm. Bacon studied art in Israel after emigrating and then taught at the Bezalel Academy of Art in Jerusalem

until his retirement. In another interview, Bacon said, "It was a period [after the War] in which I wanted to develop in several directions; I wanted to be a painter, not a Holocaust-painter." Yad Vashem interview with Yehuda Bacon, accessed October 1, 2018, http://www.yadvashem.org/articles/ interviews/yehuda-bacon.html.

5. Both quotes, Harry Rasky, "There Are Many 'Survivors,'" *Globe and Mail*, April 2, 1988.

6. Primo Levi published the first edition of *Se questo é un uomo (If This Is a Man)* in the United States as *Survival in Auschwitz* in 1947, but it was not until 1958, when the book was republished in Italy and Wiesel's *La nuit (Night)* appeared in French, that these accounts began to enter a wider public consciousness. By 1959 both Levi's memoir and Victor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* (first published in German in 1946, and originally translated as *From Death Camp to Existentialism)* had been translated into English.

7. Press releases for early solo shows by Iskowitz mention both his personal survivor story and his work on this theme, and those for his 1960 exhibition at the Here and Now Gallery and his 1963 exhibition at Dorothy Cameron Gallery include promises that, respectively, one and five works from this series will be shown. Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, Art Gallery of Ontario Library and Special Collections.

8. Kildare Dobbs, "From the Ranks of Death: Buchenwald and Auschwitz: The Witness of Gershon Iskowitz," *Saturday Night*, March 1966.

9. Lawrence L. Langer, "Afterdeath of the Holocaust," in *Witnessing Unbound: Holocaust Representation and the Origins of Memory*, eds. Henri Lustiger Thaler and Habbo Knoch (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2017), 16–19.

10. Interview with David Moos, July 20, 2018. Moos is the son of Iskowitz's dealer and manager, Walter Moos.

11. Immigrants to Canada in the years before the Second World War were primarily British, and social, political, and economic ties to England remained strong. See http://ccrweb.ca/en/hundred-years-immigration-canada-1900-1999.

12. The term "Mystic North" was used by curator Roald Nasgaard for his 1984 exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario, examining the relationship between the Group of Seven and Scandinavian artists, *The Mystic North: Symbolist Landscape Painting in Northern Europe and North America, 1890–1940*.

13. A 2010 exhibition by Jeffrey Spalding, *Oscar Cahén and Gershon Iskowitz: Artists Caught in Hitler's Web*, at Horton Gallery, New York City, addressed this comparison in depth. See also *Oscar Cahén* (Fredericton/Vancouver: Beaverbrook Gallery/Cahén Archives, 2017).

14. Peter Mellen, "Gershon Iskowitz," *artscanada*, October/November 1971, 50.

15. The Canadian centennial year promoted this progressive view. The enormously successful Expo 67, held in Montreal, attracted millions of international visitors and exhibited Canadian art alongside that from many other countries. Iskowitz was not included in Expo 67, but he was selected for the Ontario Centennial Art Exhibition, which travelled to eleven galleries in Ontario and Quebec. In 1970 Iskowitz was included in the exhibition *Eight Artists from Canada*, held at the Tel-Aviv Art Museum in Israel, and in 1972 the National Gallery of Canada chose him and sculptor Walter Redinger to represent Canada at the Venice Biennale in Italy.

16. Roald Nasgaard, *Abstract Painting in Canada* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre/Halifax: Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 2007), 93–98.

17. Included in the show were *Parry Sound Variation XIV* (purchased by the National Gallery of Canada) and *Summer Sound* (purchased by the Art Gallery of Ontario), both from 1965.

18. Harry Malcolmson, *Gershon Iskowitz,* (Toronto: Gallery Moos, 1966).

19. Kay Kritzwiser, *Globe and Mail*, February 19, 1966. Exhibition review, Gallery Moos.

20. Theodore Allen Heinrich, "The Intimate Cartography of Gershon Iskowitz's Painting," *artscanada*, May/June 1977, 12.

21. Merike Weiler, "Of Landscape, Dreams and Light," for *Iskowitz*, Glenbow-Alberta Art Institute, April 30–May 25, 1975, n.p.

22. See http://www.gallerymoos.com/archindex.html.

23. Details about Daniel Solomon courtesy of Harry Malcolmson, personal interview, August 18, 2018; Iskowitz's gallery going noted by David Moos, personal interview, July 20, 2018.

24. Nasgaard, *Abstract Painting in Canada*, 231–232.

25. Alvin Balkind, *The Canadian Canvas: Traveling Exhibition of 85 Recent Paintings* (Toronto: Time Canada, 1974), 54.

26. Survey books on Canadian art from the 1960s and 1970s provide another indication of Iskowitz's uncertain place in the Canadian art scene. He was not included in J. Russell Harper's *Painting in Canada, A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966) or in William Withrow's *Contemporary Canadian Painting* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1972). Withrow was director of the Art Gallery of Ontario at the time. Iskowitz was listed in the 1970 issue of Studio International, "Canadian Art Today," but his work was not reproduced.

27. Mark Cheetham, "Gershon Iskowitz" catalogue entry, *Heffel Post-War & Contemporary Art Auction*, May 30, 2018, 73.

28. Mark Cheetham, "Gershon Iskowitz Foundation," accessed May 5, 2018, http://iskowitzfoundation.ca.

29. Gershon Iskowitz Foundation files.

30. The Gershon Iskowitz Prize has been solely funded through the artist's cash assets, the subsequent sale of the Tecumseth studio building, continuing sale of foundation inventory works through appointed dealers, and the investment management of foundation funds.

STYLE & TECHNIQUE

1. Interview with Adele Freedman, summer 2015.

2. Iskowitz's early shows in 1960–61 coincided with the capture and trial of the notorious Nazi officer Adolf Eichmann. The headline comes from Lawrence Sabbath, *Montreal Gazette*, June 5, 1982.

3. Merike Weiler, "Of Landscape, Dreams and Light," for *Iskowitz*, Glenbow-Alberta Art Institute, April 30–May 25, 1975, n.p.

4. This phrase was coined by American novelist Kenneth Patchen in his "The Artist's Duty," *Journal of Albion Moonlight* (New York: Self-published, 1941; 2nd edition 1944), 253.

5. Colin Sabiston, *Globe and Mail*, March 12, 1960. All review citations from Art Gallery of Ontario Library, Gershon Iskowitz artist file, except where noted. There is no existing list of works for this exhibition, but Sabiston may have been referring to works such as *Sunse*t, 1960.

6. Robert Fulford, *Toronto Star*, September 23, 1961. Courtesy of Margaret Fulford, University of Toronto, December 22, 2017.

7. Peter Mellen, "Iskowitz," *artscanada*, October/November 1971, 52; Weiler, "Of Landscape, Dreams and Light," n.p.

8. *Art in Canada* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2017), n.p.

9. Roald Nasgaard, "Gershon Iskowitz," in *The Gershon Iskowitz Prize, 1986–2006* (Toronto: The Gershon Iskowitz Foundation, 2009), 12.

10. Theodore Allen Heinrich, "The Intimate Cartography of Gershon Iskowitz's Painting," *artscanada*, May/June 1977, 15. In the 1950s Montreal artist Guido Molinari (1933–2004) produced "automatic writing" works on paper–guided by the mind and not to achieve an imagined "picture." See David Burnett, *Guido Molinari: Works on Paper* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1981).

11. David Burnett, *Iskowitz* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1982), 51.

12. Burnett, *Iskowitz*, 52.

13. Burnett, *Iskowitz*, 52.

14. Burnett, *Iskowitz*, 61.

15. David Bolduc, "Round Midnight, Gershon Iskowitz in conversation with David Bolduc," *Proof Only,* January 15, 1974, n.p.

16. Paolo Valenti, "Paul Klee's Journeys to Italy and Tunisia," *Mediterranean Studies* 16 (2006): 200.

17. Mellen, "Iskowitz," 52.

18. Art Perry, "Gershon Iskowitz [Galerie Allen, Vancouver], "*artscanada*, December 1974, 107. Perry's use of the term "color-field" is most likely a reference to the general term applied to New York abstract painters in the 1950s and early 1960s. See http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/c/colour-field-painting (accessed May 5, 2018), but Iskowitz did not see himself in this movement.

19. Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press 1988), 310.

20. Weiler, "Of Landscape, Dreams and Light," n.p.

21. Roald Nasgaard, "Gershon Iskowitz," *artscanada*, August 1973, 56–59.

22. Theodore Allen Heinrich, "The Intimate Cartography of Gershon Iskowitz's Painting," *artscanada*, May/June 1977, 13.

23. Ironically, Georges Seurat (1859–1891), the "inventor" of pointillism, never did "pointillist" drawings—his were tonal. A 1962 Iskowitz "pointillism" drawing is reproduced in Theodore Heinrich's 1977 *artscanada* article. These works were not included in the 1982 Art Gallery of Ontario retrospective, nor are they reproduced in Adele Freedman's 1982 book, *Gershon Iskowitz: Painter of Light*, although both included a selection of the 1952 felt-pen landscape drawings. Comparable short-stroke drawings can be seen in the early 1960s work of Jack Chambers (1931–1978)—although it is not known if Iskowitz was aware of Chambers's work—and in Ann Kipling's (b.1934) Falkland, B.C., landscape drawings beginning in the late 1970s.

24. Gerard Jennings, who worked at Gallery Moos from 1980 to 1992, said that Iskowitz did not want to be identified with his most intimate moments, which the portrait drawings represented, although three were illustrated in Adele Freedman's *Gershon Iskowitz: Painter of Light*—including a self-portrait. Conversation with Adele Freedman, May 12, 2018.

25. Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, 384.

26. Patchen, "The Artist's Duty," 253.

27. Conversation with Harry Malcolmson, Toronto, May 14, 2018. The date of the studio gathering was most likely late 1983, in conjunction with Iskowitz's solo exhibition at Marisa del Re Gallery.

28. Conversation with Harry Malcolmson, May 23, 2018.

29. Correspondence with Daniel Solomon, April 8, 2016.

30. "Round Midnight, Gershon Iskowitz in conversation with David Bolduc," n.p. "Round Midnight" is also the title of a classic 1944 jazz composition by Thelonious Monk—and an intentional secondary reference.

GLOSSARY

abstract art
Visual art that uses form, colour, line, and gestural marks in compositions that do not attempt to represent images of real things. Abstract art may interpret reality in an altered form, or depart from it entirely. Also called nonfigurative or nonrepresentational art.

Abstract Expressionism
A style that flourished in New York in the 1940s and 1950s, defined by its combination of formal abstraction and self-conscious expression. The term describes a wide variety of work; among the most famous Abstract Expressionists are Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, and Willem de Kooning.

Academy of Fine Arts, Munich
Founded as the Royal Academy of Fine Arts by Maximilian I Joseph, king of Bavaria, in 1808, the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich has its roots in a drawing school established in the city in the late eighteenth century. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the academy became a major centre for painters trained in the Academic style, closely associated with the Munich School of influential German artists. It changed its name to its current version in 1956.

Appel, Karel (Dutch, 1921–2006)
An abstract painter and sculptor, Karel Appel was involved with the Nederlandse Experimentele Groep (Dutch Experimental Group, 1948) and was a founder of CoBrA (1948–51), an influential group of young European artists active in the years following the Second World War and closely associated with its Amsterdam members. After moving to France in 1950, he showed widely in Europe and North America through the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. His work incorporates the intensity and affinity for *l'art brut* that emerged in CoBrA's reaction against artistic convention.

Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
One of the largest museums in Atlantic Canada, the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia was founded in 1908. Its collection includes more than 17,000 works, with a focus on work by artists with strong connections to Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada as well as work by historical and contemporary Canadian artists more generally. Its collection of folk art, anchored by the work of Maud Lewis, is especially notable.

Artists' Workshop (Toronto)
The Artists' Workshop was located in a coach house near Sherbourne and Bloor streets. First presided over by Barbara Wells, she was succeeded by John Sime, who folded it into the Three Schools of Art.

atmospheric perspective
The effect by which more distant elements and objects appear to take on the colour of the atmosphere, decrease in saturation, and increase in brightness, appearing hazy and less distinct. In landscape painting, atmospheric or aerial perspective is often employed for dramatic effect: the background and more

distant elements are rendered with less definition, creating depth and a sense of space in the image.

Automatistes

A Montreal-based artists' group interested in Surrealism and the Surrealist technique of automatism. Centred on the artist, teacher, and theorist Paul-Émile Borduas, the Automatistes exhibited regularly between 1946 and 1954, making Montreal a locus of mid-century avant-garde art. Members included Marcel Barbeau, Marcelle Ferron, Jean-Paul Mousseau, Jean-Paul Riopelle, Fernand Leduc, and Françoise Sullivan.

Bacon, Yehuda (Czech/Israeli, b.1929)

A Jewish artist and Holocaust survivor, Yehuda Bacon depicted his experiences in the Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, Mauthausen, and Gunskirchen concentration camps in ink drawings, which attempt to reconcile the artist with his traumatic history. Drawings of the gas chamber and crematoria at Auschwitz that he created following his liberation were used as evidence in the trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961 and 1962 in Jerusalem.

Bayefsky, Aba (Canadian, 1923–2001)

Commissioned as an Official War Artist for the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1944, Bayefsky was a painter and teacher at the Ontario College of Art in Toronto. In 1945 he documented the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp after its liberation. He remained committed to confronting anti-Semitism in his art for the remainder of his career and created a number of works exploring his own Jewish heritage. Bayefsky was awarded the Order of Canada in 1979.

Belmore, Rebecca (Anishinaabe, Lac Seul First Nation, b.1960)

Widely recognized for her contributions to Canadian art, Belmore is a prominent performance and installation artist known for her politically charged work addressing the unresolved issues of history, trauma, and identity in the colonial spaces of Canada and the Americas. Among her most recognized works is the performance video *Vigil*, 2002, which calls attention to the hundreds of Indigenous women gone missing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. In 2005 Belmore became the first Indigenous woman to represent Canada at the Venice Biennale.

bodycolour

Watercolour pigment mixed with gum or binder and white pigment added to make it opaque. Bodycolour is often used interchangeably with gouache, although the terms and techniques have slight differences in history and composition, with bodycolour being traditionally made with an animal-derived binder and gouache with gum arabic (acacia gum).

Bolduc, David (Canadian, 1945–2010)

One of Canada's foremost abstract painters of his generation, Bolduc continued the modernist tradition of Jack Bush, Jules Olitski, and Robert Motherwell and is known for lyrical and contemplative works that consider how layers of colour influence the reflection of light. He draws on Chinese calligraphy, North African designs, and Persian miniatures. His works are in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, Art Gallery of Ontario

in Toronto, and Art Gallery of Alberta in Edmonton.

Borduas, Paul-Émile (Canadian, 1905–1960)
The leader of the avant-garde Automatistes and one of Canada's most important modern artists. Borduas was also an influential advocate for reform in Quebec, calling for liberation from religious and narrow nationalist values in the 1948 manifesto *Refus global*. (See *Paul-Émile Borduas: Life & Work* by François-Marc Gagnon.)

Braque, Georges (French, 1882–1963)
A seminal figure in the history of modern art. Working alongside Picasso from 1908 to 1914, Braque developed the principles of major phases of Analytic and Synthetic Cubism and, along with the latter, the use of collage. After the First World War he pursued a personal style of Cubism admired for its compositional and colouristic subtleties.

Breeze, Claude (Canadian, b.1938)
Also known as C. Herbert, Claude Breeze began creating the brightly coloured Pop Art–influenced paintings for which he is best known in Vancouver in the 1960s. Breeze was the first Canadian artist to depict mediatized violence in his work, and his paintings often address social and political issues. An educator as well as a painter, he has held teaching positions at universities across Canada and is currently professor emeritus at York University in Toronto.

Burliuk, David (Ukrainian/American, 1882–1967)
The central figure in the Russian Futurist movement of the early twentieth century, David Burliuk was a painter, poet, and critic who promoted avant-garde art in the pre-Revolutionary Russian Empire, participating in and appearing at exhibitions that included performances. Following the Russian Revolution, Burliuk spent from 1920 to 1922 in Japan before moving to the United States.

Bush, Jack (Canadian, 1909–1977)
A member of Painters Eleven, formed in 1953, Bush found his real voice only after critic Clement Greenberg visited his studio in 1957 and focused on his watercolours. Out of these Bush developed the shapes and broad colour planes that would come to characterize a personal colour-field style, parallel to the work of Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland. With them, Bush participated in Greenberg's 1964 exhibition *Post Painterly Abstraction*.

Cahén, Oscar (Danish/Canadian, 1916–1956)
Born in Copenhagen, Cahén attended the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts and taught design, illustration, and painting at Prague's Rotter School of Graphic Arts before his family's anti-Nazi activities forced him to flee to England. He was deported to Canada as an enemy alien and settled in Montreal before moving to Toronto in 1943; he was one of the founders of Painters Eleven in 1953. (See *Oscar Cahèn: Life & Work* by Jaleen Grove.)

Cameron, Alex (Canadian, b.1947)
A student of the New School of Art in Toronto in the 1960s, Alex Cameron developed a style of painting that featured boldly textured pigment and

dynamic use of colour. Influenced by Painters Eleven member Jack Bush, for whom he worked as an assistant, Cameron's work moved from abstract, conceptual canvases in the 1970s to abstracted landscapes that draw on the Canadian landscape tradition of Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven.

Cameron, Dorothy (Canadian, 1924–1999)

A prominent Toronto art dealer, Dorothy Cameron opened her Here and Now Gallery in 1959, changing its name to the eponymous Dorothy Cameron Gallery by 1962. In 1965 Toronto police raided her gallery's exhibition *Eros '65* and charged Cameron with obscenity for displaying a work by Robert Markle showing two nude women touching each other. Despite arguments for the merits of the work and the exhibition, Cameron was found guilty. She closed her gallery, but re-emerged as an artist in the late 1970s, creating sculptural work.

Canadian Society of Graphic Art

Founded in Toronto in 1904 as the Society of Graphic Art and chartered in 1933 as the Canadian Society of Graphic Art, the society was an organization of artists interested in printmaking, illustration, and drawing. From 1924 to 1963 it hosted annual exhibitions, producing *The Canadian Graphic Art Year Book* in 1931. Notable members included Bruno Bobak and Charles Comfort. Once among the largest artists' organizations in Canada, the society disbanded in 1974.

Carmichael, Franklin (Canadian, 1890–1945)

An original member of the Group of Seven, Carmichael created landscapes in watercolour as well as in oil. He was a founding member of the Canadian Group of Painters and the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour. Like so many of his colleagues, he earned his living primarily as a commercial artist and, in 1932, he became head of the Graphic Design and Commercial Art Department at the Ontario College of Art (now OCAD University), Toronto.

Chagall, Marc (Russian/French, 1887–1985)

A painter and graphic artist, Chagall's work is characterized by colourful, dreamlike images and a defiance of the rules of pictorial logic. Although he employed elements of Cubism, Fauvism, and Symbolism, Chagall did not formally align with any avant-garde movement.

colour-field painting

A term first used to describe Abstract Expressionist works that use simplified or minimalist forms of flat or nuanced colour, as in paintings by Morris Louis. It was later applied to works by such artists as Kenneth Noland and Barnett Newman in the United States and Jack Bush in Canada, whose geometric or abstract motifs highlight variations in colour. Post-Painterly Abstraction, a description coined by the critic Clement Greenberg, includes colour-field painting.

Colville, Alex (Canadian, 1920–2013)

A painter, muralist, draftsman, and engraver whose highly representational images verge on the surreal. Colville's paintings typically depict everyday scenes of rural Canadian life imbued with an uneasy quality. Since his process

was meticulous—the paint applied dot by dot—he produced only three or four paintings or serigraphs per year. (See *Alex Colville: Life & Work* by Ray Cronin.)

Comtois, Louis (Canadian/American, 1945–1990)
Louis Comtois was a Montreal-born abstract painter whose work, often juxtaposing rectangular panels of different sizes and colours, shows the influence of the Montreal Plasticiens as well as hard-edge painting. He moved from Montreal to New York City in 1972, switching from acrylics to oils and encaustic in the 1980s and adding experimentations in texture and surface treatment to his primary concern with colour.

Coryell, William (n.d.)
A Toronto artist in the 1950s and graduate of the Ontario College of Art (now the Ontario College of Art and Design University). William Coryell attended a "summer school for painting" run by fellow artist Bert Weir in Parry Sound, Ontario, in the mid-1950s.

Coughtry, Graham (Canadian, 1931–1999)
An influential painter and teacher known for his conceptual use of colour, expressive brushwork, and abstract representations of the human figure. Coughtry's first exhibition was with Michael Snow in 1955; he went on to represent Canada at the Bienal de São Paulo of 1959 and the Venice Biennale of 1960.

cupric
An adjective meaning of or containing copper, "cupric" is often associated in chemistry with "oxide" and refers specifically to substances containing copper with a valence of two.

de Kooning, Willem (Dutch/American, 1904–1997)
Although a prominent Abstract Expressionist, de Kooning was not concerned with strict abstraction—figures appear in the dense and riotous brushwork that characterizes much of his work. Among his most famous works are those of the Women series, first exhibited in 1953 to much critical scorn.

Dix, Otto (German, 1891–1969)
An Expressionist painter and printmaker who created harshly satirical, sometimes grotesque depictions of figures from Weimar Germany, Dix was a pioneer of the Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity) movement. War, prostitution, and human depravity were central themes of his work.

Etrog, Sorel (Romanian/Canadian, 1933–2014)
A painter, illustrator, draftsman, and filmmaker, Etrog was known principally as a sculptor, creating variously sized abstract works reflecting the human form. One of his many commissions was the bronze statuette known from 1968 to 1980 as the Etrog, the award for excellence presented to Canadian filmmakers, subsequently called the Genie. His work is in important public and private collections in Canada, the United States, and Europe.

Ewen, Paterson (Canadian, 1925–2002)
Born in Montreal and later settling in London, Ontario, Ewen was involved with

the Automatistes, the Plasticiens, and the London Regionalists, although he was never fully identified with a single movement. His mature works embraced experimentation with colour combinations and textures, and the use of gouged plywood as a painting surface. These invoked landscape and natural elements through abstract and geometric gestures. (See *Paterson Ewen: Life & Work* by John Hatch.)

Expressionism

An intense, emotional style of art that values the representation of the artist's subjective inner feelings and ideas. German Expressionism started in the early twentieth century in Germany and Austria. In painting, Expressionism is associated with an intense, jarring use of colour and brush strokes that are not naturalistic.

figurative

A descriptive term for an artwork that depicts or references recognizable objects or beings, including humans. Figurative art is often representational and takes source material from the real world, although its subjects may be overlaid with metaphors and allegory. The term arose in popular usage around the 1950s to describe artwork in contrast with the Abstract Expressionist movement as well as nonfigurative and non-objective art.

Freifeld, Eric (Russian/Canadian, 1919–1984)

Eric Freifeld was a Russian-born figurative painter and influential instructor at the Ontario College of Art (now the Ontario College of Art and Design University), where he taught drawing and served as chair of the fine arts department. He initially gained recognition in Edmonton, where he had moved with his mother and sister at the age of five. Freifeld's interests and output were broad, but he is perhaps best known for a series of structural, minutely detailed watercolours that placed him among the leading Canadian artists of his generation. A 1986 retrospective exhibition at the Rodman Hall Art Centre in St. Catharines, Ontario, and the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto was organized following his death in 1984.

Friedrich, Caspar David (German, 1774–1840)

One of the major Romantic painters, and the most exemplary of the movement's German practitioners. Friedrich's dramatic landscapes—seascapes and mountains, forests and farmland—are both realistic and symbolic, painted in meticulous detail but expressive of the artist's deeply held mystical and spiritual beliefs.

Gagnon, Charles (Canadian, 1934–2003)

A Montreal artist who worked indiscriminately across a variety of media, including film, photography, collage, and box constructions, as well as painting. During 1956-60 Gagnon studied in New York, immersing himself in the city's avant-garde world of experimental art. Back in Montreal his painting, especially his use of hard edges, was often associated with that of his Plasticien contemporaries.

Gallery Moos

An important part of the emergent Toronto art scene in the city's Yorkville

neighbourhood in the 1960s, Gallery Moos was founded in 1959 by Walter Moos, who remained its owner and director until his death in 2013. The gallery's early exhibitions brought a mix of Canadian, American, and European artists to local audiences, with a focus on modernist work. It launched and sustained the careers of a generation of Toronto artists, including Sorel Etrog and Gershon Iskowitz. From 1982 to 1992 Gallery Moos operated an outpost in New York City, New York, expanding its reach into the American art scene. The gallery moved to what would be its final space, in Toronto's Queen West Arts District, in 1992.

Gaucher, Yves (Canadian, 1934–2000)

An internationally recognized abstract painter and printmaker, associated with the Plasticiens. Gaucher's inquisitive nature made him an individualistic figure and artist who drew from many sources, including jazz and atonal music, Georges Braque, Mark Rothko, and the New York Abstractionists. He fought to modernize printmaking and open the medium up to experimental and innovative techniques. Gaucher founded the Associations des peintures-gravures de Montréal in 1960 and was named a Member of the Order of Canada in 1981. (See *Yves Gaucher: Life & Work* by Roald Nasgaard.)

General Idea (Canadian, active 1969–1994)

A prolific, provocative, and socially critical artist collective comprising AA Bronson (Michael Tims, b.1946), Felix Partz (Ronald Gabe, 1945-1994), and Jorge Zontal (Slobodan Saia-Levy, 1944-1994). General Idea formed in Toronto out of the countercultural scenes of the experimental free school Rochdale College and Theatre Passe Muraille. Their conceptual projects included those associated with Miss General Idea and series dealing with the AIDS crisis. The collective founded *FILE* in 1972 and the artist-run centre Art Metropole in 1973. (See *General Idea: Life & Work* by Sarah E.K. Smith.)

Glenbow-Alberta Institute

An art and art history museum in Calgary, Alberta, the Glenbow-Alberta Institute was formed following Eric Lafferty Harvie's donation of his collection of historical artifacts from western Canada to the province of Alberta in 1966. Now the Glenbow Museum, it is dedicated to the art and culture of western Canada, with important historical, artistic, archival, and library collections. Exhibitions at the museum focus on both art history and contemporary art.

gouache

An artists' material, gouache is watercolour that is mixed with white pigment and the binding agent gum arabic, rendering it opaque. Gouache has been used in numerous painting traditions from antiquity, including manuscript illumination and Indian and European miniatures.

Goya, Francisco (Spanish, 1746–1828)

Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes was an influential painter of the Spanish Enlightenment whose expressive style would guide the Romantic, realist, and Impressionist painters of the nineteenth century, particularly French artists including Edouard Manet. Though he rose to prominence as a court painter for the Spanish monarchy, Goya's drawings and etchings of the horrors of the Napoleonic Wars and Spanish struggles for independence in the early

nineteenth century, none of them published during his lifetime, would prove some of his most enduring work.

Grip Limited

A Toronto-based design and advertising firm established in 1873 to publish the weekly satirical magazine *Grip*. In the early twentieth century Grip Limited employed several artists who championed a distinctly Canadian style of landscape painting: Tom Thomson and some members of the future Group of Seven—Franklin Carmichael, Frank Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald, and F.H. Varley.

Grosz, George (German/American, 1893–1959)

A caricaturist and scathing social critic, painter, and draftsman associated with Dada in his early career, Grosz became a pioneer of the Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity). His avidly anti-war work grew out of his participation in the First World War. His late career focused on landscape and still-life painting, though it retained a bleak tone.

Group of Seven

A progressive and nationalistic school of landscape painting in Canada, active between 1920 (the year of the group's first exhibition, at the Art Gallery of Toronto, now the Art Gallery of Ontario) and 1933. Founding members were the artists Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Frank Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald, and F.H. Varley.

hard-edge painting

A technical term coined in 1958 by the art critic Jules Langsner, referring to paintings marked by well-defined areas of colour. It is widely associated with geometric abstraction and the work of artists such as Ellsworth Kelly and Kenneth Noland.

Hart House Gallery

Now the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, part of the Art Museum at the University of Toronto, Hart House Gallery is an exhibition venue and collecting institution associated with University College at the University of Toronto. Current acquisitions for the collection focus on work by living Canadian artists, especially emerging and mid-career artists of First Nations and culturally diverse backgrounds.

Hayter Gallery

Part of a scattering of short-lived commercial art galleries to appear in Toronto in the late 1950s, the Hayter Street Gallery lasted a single season. It was located at 77 Hayter Street in a small neighbourhood around Gerard Street West that was a hub of the Toronto art and culture scene in the 1950s and 1960s.

Heckel, Erich (German, 1883–1970)

A founder of the influential Expressionist group Die Brüke (The Bridge, active 1905-13), in Dresden, Germany, Erich Heckel was a painter, printmaker, and sculptor. Before the First World War, Heckel was best known for woodcuts of nudes and landscapes featuring bold outlines and vivid colours. After the war,

his colour palette became more subdued, his paintings more conventional. Heckel was declared a degenerate artist by the ruling Nazi party in 1937.

Isaacs Gallery

A Toronto art gallery opened in 1955 by Avrom Isaacs. Originally called the Greenwich Gallery, it supported emerging Canadian artists—including Michael Snow, Graham Coughtry, Joyce Wieland, and Robert Markle—and hosted poetry readings, experimental music performances, and film screenings.

Jorn, Asger (Danish, 1914–1973)

Born Asger Oluf Jørgensen Vejrum, Asger Jorn was a painter, sculptor, graphic artist, ceramicist, lithographer, and theorist. He was one of the founders of the post–Second World War avant-garde group CoBrA, which sought to further free artistic expression through adopting an abstract, primitivist style. Later, he was a founding member of the groups Mouvement International pour un Bauhaus Imaginiste (International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus) and International Situationniste (Situationist International). Jorn's art and philosophy were governed by a belief in the necessity of collective participation as a way of bringing society to art.

Juneau, Denis (Canadian, 1925–2014)

A member of the second generation of Montreal Plasticiens, Denis Juneau was a painter and sculptor. As a geometric abstractionist, he is best known for his bold colours and for paintings that experiment with the geometry of the circle and the line. Influenced by the techniques of the hard-edge painters, his work minimizes evidence of the artist and often includes optical illusions.

Kantor, Alfred (Czech/American, 1923–2003)

An artist and Holocaust survivor, Alfred Kantor produced drawings and watercolours depicting daily life in the Terezín (Theresienstadt) Ghetto and Auschwitz-Birkenau and Schwarzheide concentration camps. Kantor created works throughout his imprisonment, but while some were safeguarded through the war, many were destroyed, only to be recreated following his liberation. In 1971 his illustrations were published with captions as *The Book of Alfred Kantor*.

Klee, Paul (Swiss-German, 1879–1940)

Primarily known as a painter of prodigious energy and imagination—his output comprises an estimated nine thousand artworks—Klee was also a printmaker, art writer, and beloved teacher, first at the Bauhaus and later at the Düsseldorf Academy.

Kokoschka, Oskar (Austrian, 1886–1980)

A painter, printmaker, and writer celebrated for his deeply expressive portraits and landscapes. An important figure in European modernism, Kokoschka sought to give visual form to the immaterial aspects of our world. Spiritual, psychological, and emotional forces are rendered through turbulent forms and luminous effects.

Kollwitz, Käthe (German, 1867–1945)

Best known for her printmaking, Käthe Kollwitz began her career working in a

realistic style. During and after the First World War, she created dark, emotionally wrenching portraits of death, war, and poverty and, in 1920, turned to woodcuts in an expressionist style. She was an advocate for women artists and served as a prominent member of the Prussian Academy of Arts from the 1920s until she was forced to resign by the Nazi government in 1933. Her granite monument to the death of her youngest son during the First World War stands in a cemetery near Ypres, Belgium.

Kurelek, William (Canadian, 1927–1977)

Born on a farm in Alberta to Ukrainian immigrants, Kurelek was a painter of *trompe l'oeil* objects, scenes of his childhood farm life, religious subjects, and apocalyptic visions influenced by the Cold War and current events. His suffering from an unspecified mental illness and periodic admissions into psychiatric hospitals led him to devout Catholicism in the mid-1950s. In 1959 Toronto gallerist Avrom Isaacs gave Kurelek his first solo exhibition. In the 1960s Kurelek became one of the most commercially successful artists in Canada. (See *William Kurelek: Life & Work* by Andrew Kear.)

Levine, Les (Irish/American, b.1935)

An important figure in twentieth-century Conceptual art, whose work addresses questions of consumerism and disposability. Levine is noted particularly for his pioneering use of mass media, including television, radio, billboards, posters, and telephone conversations; he was among the first artists to work with videotape. Born in Dublin, he lived in Canada in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Lismer, Arthur (British/Canadian, 1885–1969)

A landscape painter and founding member of the Group of Seven, Lismer immigrated to Canada from England in 1911. He was also an influential educator of adults and children, and he created children's art schools at both the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto (1933) and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (1946).

Luke, Alexandra (Canadian, 1901–1967)

An Abstract Expressionist painter and a member of Painters Eleven, Luke trained at the Banff School of Fine Arts and the Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts in Massachusetts. A significant figure in early Canadian abstract art, she was included in the exhibition *Canadian Women Artists* in New York in 1947.

Macdonald, Jock (British/Canadian, 1897–1960)

A painter, printmaker, illustrator, teacher, and a pioneer in the development of abstract art in Canada. Macdonald began as a landscape painter but became interested in abstraction in the 1940s, influenced by Hans Hofmann and Jean Dubuffet. Macdonald was one of the founders of Painters Eleven in 1953. (See *Jock Macdonald: Life & Work* by Joyce Zemans.)

MacGregor, John (British/Canadian, b.1944)

One of the artists to show at Toronto's influential Isaacs Gallery in the 1960s, John MacGregor's abstract-influenced work addresses concepts of time. A prominent figure in Toronto's 1960s art scene, MacGregor is one of a generation of artists who marked the emergence of the city's contemporary art market.

Markle, Robert (Mohawk/Canadian, 1936–1990)

A painter and graphic artist who worked primarily in tempera and ink, Robert Markle was known for his bold, sexual female nudes. His piece *Lovers I*, showing two women embracing, led to an obscenity charge against the gallerist Dorothy Cameron when she displayed it as part of the exhibition *Eros '65* in 1965. Later in life, Markle began to incorporate elements of his Indigenous identity into his work.

Martin, Ron (Canadian, b.1943)

An abstract painter, Martin is concerned with the process and performance of artmaking. Since 1965 his paintings have been shown globally in solo and group exhibitions, including at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, and the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Matisse, Henri (French, 1869–1954)

A painter, sculptor, printmaker, draftsman, and designer, aligned at different times with the Impressionists, Post-Impressionists, and Fauvists. By the 1920s he was, with Pablo Picasso, one of the most famous painters of his generation, known for his remarkable use of colour and line.

McDougall, Clark (Canadian, 1921–1980)

A painter from St. Thomas, Ontario, a small town south of London, Ontario, Clark McDougall depicted scenes from his local community, including the landscape and architecture of southern Ontario. His later work is defined by the stark, black enamel outlines and acidic colours for which he became best known.

Meredith, John (Canadian, 1933–2000)

Born John Meredith Smith, John Meredith, like his brother, Painters Eleven member William Ronald, used his first two names professionally. A painter known for his calligraphic style, he created abstract works in vivid colours, progressing from dense to looser, more open compositions through his career.

Milne, David (Canadian, 1881–1953)

A painter, printmaker, and illustrator whose work—principally landscapes—displays the tonal brilliance and concern with process of his Impressionist and Post-Impressionist influences. Milne lived in New York early in his career, where he trained at the Art Students League and participated in the Armory Show in 1913.

Minimalism

A branch of abstract art characterized by extreme restraint in form, most popular among American artists from the 1950s to 1970s. Although

Minimalism can be expressed in any medium, it is most commonly associated with sculpture; principal Minimalists include Carl Andre, Donald Judd, and Tony Smith. Among the Minimalist painters were Agnes Martin, Barnett Newman, Kenneth Noland, and Frank Stella.

modernism

A movement extending from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century in all the arts, modernism rejected academic traditions in favour of innovative styles developed in response to contemporary industrialized society. Modernist movements in the visual arts have included Gustave Courbet's Realism, and later Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Fauvism, and Cubism and on to abstraction. By the 1960s, anti-authoritarian postmodernist styles such as Pop art, Conceptual art, and Neo-Expressionism blurred the distinction between high art and mass culture.

Molinari, Guido (Canadian, 1933–2004)

A painter and theorist who was a member of the Plasticien movement in Montreal. His work, beginning in the mid-1950s, set new models for geometric painting internationally. His "razor-edged" Stripe Paintings create the illusion of a dynamic space, evoked by the viewer's active engagement with how colours appear to change as they rhythmically repeat themselves across the canvas.

Monet, Claude (French, 1840–1926)

A founder of the Impressionist movement in France. Monet's landscapes and seascapes are among the canonical works of Western art. Introduced to *plein air* painting as a teenager, Monet returned to it throughout his life as a means of exploring the atmospheric effects and perceptual phenomena that so interested him as an artist.

Moore, Henry (British, 1898–1986)

One of the twentieth century's most important sculptors. From its beginning, Moore's work was influenced by non-European sculpture; later he also drew from natural sources, such as bones and pebbles. His technique most often involved carving directly into his material, whether wood, stone, or plaster.

Moos, Walter (German/Canadian, 1926–2013)

The founder of Gallery Moos in Toronto, Walter Moos was born into a German Jewish family of art dealers who operated a gallery in Karlsruhe, Germany. Moos fled to France and Switzerland during the Second World War before arriving in New York City, where he spent twelve years. In 1959 he moved to Toronto to open his gallery, becoming an important fixture in the cultural scene that emerged in the city's Yorkville neighbourhood. A champion of modernist art, Moos played a key role in fostering the careers of Canadian artists, including Sorel Etrog and Gershon Iskowitz.

Munch, Edvard (Norwegian, 1863–1944)

Prefiguring the Expressionist movement, Munch's work prominently represented the artist's own emotions—fear, loneliness, sexual longing, and dread. A revered and prolific painter, printmaker, and draftsman, Munch is best known for his painting *The Scream*.

Nakamura, Kazuo (Canadian, 1926–2002)

A member of Painters Eleven, Nakamura embraced science and nature in his early abstract landscapes. Later, he created a body of work known as the Number Structures, which explores the connections between mathematics and aesthetics. The Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto held a posthumous retrospective of his work in 2004.

National Gallery of Canada

Established in 1880, the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa holds the most extensive collection of Canadian art in the country as well as works by prominent international artists. Spearheaded by the Governor General the Marquis of Lorne, the gallery was created to strengthen a specifically Canadian brand of artistic culture and identity and to build a national collection of art that would match the level of other British Empire institutions. Since 1988 the gallery has been located on Sussex Drive in a building designed by Moshe Safdie.

New School of Art in Toronto

The New School of Art was founded as an alternative to the more conservative Ontario College of Art (now Ontario College of Art and Design University) in 1965. It required no prerequisites and operated through loosely structured workshops, attracting students and instructors associated with Toronto's Spadina art scene.

Olitski, Jules (Russian/American, 1922–2007)

Born Jemel Devikovsky, Jules Olitski moved to the United States with his family as a young child. He became famous in the 1960s for his intensely coloured spray-gun paintings, which were shown at the Venice Biennale in 1966. In these works, Olitski's non-primary colours overlap and bleed into each other, creating atmospheric fields of colour. His later work returned to a gestural technique, using greys and earth tones to create iridescent surfaces.

Ontario College of Art (now OCAD University)

The name given in 1912 to what had previously been the Ontario School of Art (founded 1876), and what would become the Ontario College of Art and Design in 1996. In 2010 the institution was renamed OCAD University, to reflect its new status. OCAD University is located in Toronto and is the oldest and largest art school in Canada.

Painters Eleven

An artists' group active from 1953 to 1960, formed by eleven Abstract Expressionist Toronto-area painters, including Harold Town, Jack Bush, and William Ronald. They joined together in an effort to increase their exposure, given the limited interest in abstract art in Ontario at the time.

Peretz, Isaac Leib (Polish, 1852–1915)

A prolific Yiddish writer of the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, Peretz is credited for creating a modern Yiddish literature and was a proponent of the language as a place of Jewish cultural identity. His poems, plays, humorous sketches, and especially his short stories experimented with form and brought

psychological realism to his characters. His role as mentor to a generation of Jewish writers in Warsaw ushered in a new literary era for the Yiddish language.

Picasso, Pablo (Spanish, 1881–1973)
One of the most famous and influential artists of his time, Picasso was a prominent member of the Parisian avant-garde circle that included Henri Matisse and Georges Braque. His painting *Les demoiselles d'Avignon*, 1906–7, is considered by many to be the most important of the twentieth century.

Podeswa, Yehuda (Polish/Canadian, 1924 or 1926–2012)
Born into a family of artists, Yehuda Podeswa was a painter and Holocaust survivor. He created memory paintings while he was interned at Kaufering, a satellite camp of the larger Dachau concentration camp in Germany. After the war, Podeswa moved to Toronto, where he studied at the Ontario College of Art (now the Ontario College of Art and Design University).

Pointillism
A painting technique developed in 1886 by Georges Seurat and Paul Signac as an offshoot of Impressionism. In this style, rather than broken brushstrokes, artists used thousands of small dots of intense and complementary colours that coalesced to make their images. In this way they developed an understanding of how the human eye works and the reality of light as a spectrum of colour.

Pollock, Jackson (American, 1912–1956)
Leader of the Abstract Expressionist movement, best known for his drip paintings of the 1940s and 1950s. Pollock is also closely associated with action painting, in which the act of painting is gestural and the artist approaches the canvas with little notion of what he or she will create.

Rayner, Gordon (Canadian, 1935–2010)
A prominent artist in Toronto from the early 1960s, Rayner explored in both painting and sculpture the complex relationship between representation and abstraction. He was a member of the Artists' Jazz Band.

Redinger, Walter (Canadian, 1940–2014)
A sculptor from southwestern Ontario who also produced paintings, drawings, and prints, Walter Redinger was one of the artists represented by Toronto's influential Isaacs Gallery in the 1960s. His large-scale fibreglass sculptures feature organic forms and draw on surrealist influences. In 1972 he represented Canada at the Venice Biennale alongside Gershon Iskowitz.

Reeves, John (Canadian, 1938–2016)
A noted portrait photographer, John Reeves began capturing notable Canadians for the magazines of the 1960s. Later projects included photographing the artists of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative (now Kinngait Studios) from the late 1970s to 1998, and, in the 1980s, jazz musicians. Reeves was also a broadcaster who hosted a radio program, *Toronto in Review*, on the CBC for a short time in the 1970s.

Riopelle, Jean-Paul (Canadian, 1923–2002)

A towering figure in Québécois modern art who, like the other members of the Automatistes, was interested in Surrealism and abstract art. Riopelle moved to Paris in 1947, where he participated in the last major exhibition of the Parisian Surrealists, organized by Marcel Duchamp and André Breton.

Rodman Hall Art Centre

Rodman Hall Art Centre is a contemporary art gallery associated with Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario. It hosts regular exhibitions of work by Canadian and international artists, as well as pieces from its own collections.

Rothko, Mark (American, 1903–1970)

A leading figure of Abstract Expressionism, Rothko began his career as an illustrator and watercolourist. In the late 1940s he developed the style that would come to define his career, creating intense colour-field oil paintings that express the same anxiety and mystery that informed his earlier figurative work.

Seurat, Georges (French, 1859–1891)

An influential painter, Seurat was a pioneer of the Neo-Impressionist movement, departing from Impressionism's relative spontaneity and practising more formal structure and symbolic content. Along with Paul Signac, he developed Pointillism, a technique adopted by other painters such as Camille Pissarro, Piet Mondrian, and Wassily Kandinsky.

Shadbolt, Jack (Canadian, 1909–1998)

Primarily known as a painter and draftsman, Shadbolt studied art in London, Paris, and New York before returning to British Columbia. He taught at the Vancouver School of Art from 1945 to 1966, becoming the head of the school's painting and drawing section. Major influences include Emily Carr and Aboriginal art of the Pacific Northwest.

Shilling, Arthur (Ojibwa, 1941–1986)

Painter of expressionistic portraits of Ojibwa people, friends, and family members. Shilling was known for his bold use of colour and broad brush strokes, which convey the spiritual integrity of his subjects. To encourage talent where he grew up, Shilling built and opened an art gallery on the Chippewas of Rama First Nation lands. The 1978 National Film Board of Canada film *The Beauty of My People* documents Shilling's life.

Snow, Michael (Canadian, b.1928)

An artist whose paintings, films, photographs, sculptures, installations, and musical performances have kept him in the spotlight for over sixty years. Snow's Walking Woman series of the 1960s holds a prominent place in Canadian art history. His contributions to visual art, experimental film, and music have been recognized internationally. (See *Michael Snow: Life & Work* by Martha Langford.)

Solomon, Daniel (American/Canadian, b.1945)

An artist and professor at the Ontario College of Art and Design University, Daniel Solomon's work features vivid colours and complex pictorial space. He

moved to Toronto in 1967 and worked at David Mirvish Gallery in the city's Mirvish Village neighbourhood from 1968 to 1970, developing a friendship with the gallery's eponymous owner.

Stella, Frank (American, b.1936)

An Abstract Expressionist painter and sculptor and a major figure in American art. Stella often works in series, developing a formal theme over an extended period. Primarily a painter and printmaker, he began taking on decorative commissions in the 1990s; the Princess of Wales theatre in Toronto features decorations and vast murals by Stella.

Sullivan, Françoise (Canadian, b.1923)

Born in Montreal, Sullivan—an artist, sculptor, dancer, and choreographer—studied at the city's École des beaux-arts (now part of the Université du Québec à Montréal) in the early 1940s, where she met Paul-Émile Borduas. His vision of automatism would become a great influence on her modern dance performances and choreography. (See *Françoise Sullivan: Life & Work* by Annie Gérin.)

Sutherland, Graham (British, 1903–1980)

Graham Sutherland was a surrealist painter of landscapes and a noted portraitist whose depiction of British prime minister Winston Churchill was famously destroyed after its subject objected to the artist's representation. He participated in the 1936 International Surrealist Exhibition in London, England, but turned to representational, documentary painting during his time as an official war artist from 1940 to 1945.

Tachism

Along with Lyrical Abstraction and Art Informel, Tachism refers to an art movement of the 1950s considered the European counterpart of Abstract Expressionism. Strongest in France, it is also associated with Automatism (as practised by the Surrealists), for its emphasis on unplanned mark making, allowing imaginative expression to arise freely from the unconscious mind.

Thomson, Tom (Canadian, 1877–1917)

A seminal figure in the creation of a national school of painting, whose bold vision of Algonquin Park—aligned stylistically with Post-Impressionism and Art Nouveau—has come to symbolize both the Canadian landscape and Canadian landscape painting. Thomson and the members of what would in 1920 become the Group of Seven profoundly influenced one another's work. (See *Tom Thomson: Life & Work* by David P. Silcox.)

Town, Harold (Canadian, 1924–1990)

Town was a founding member of Painters Eleven and a leader in Toronto's art scene in the 1950s and 1960s. An internationally recognized abstract artist, he created paintings, collages, sculptures, and prints with brilliant effect and developed a unique form of monotype, "single autographic prints." (See *Harold Town: Life & Work* by Gerta Moray.)

Varley, F.H. (Frederick Horsman) (British/Canadian, 1881–1969)

A founding member of the Group of Seven, known for his contributions to

Canadian portraiture as well as landscape painting. Originally from Sheffield, England, Varley moved to Toronto in 1912 at the encouragement of his friend Arthur Lismer. From 1926 to 1936 he taught at the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts, now known as Emily Carr University of Art + Design.

Venice Biennale

Founded in 1895 as a biannual exhibition of avant-garde and contemporary art from participating countries, many of which have permanent pavilions in the Venice Giardini, a section of parkland that serves as the heart of the event. There have historically been several additions to the Biennale's programing, including film, theatre, and musical festivals. At present, the main events are the International Art Exhibition, which is held in odd-numbered years, and the International Architecture Exhibition (or Venice Biennale of Architecture), which is held in even-numbered years.

Weir, Bert (Canadian, 1925–2018)

A painter who moved from southern Ontario to Parry Sound in the 1950s, Bert Weir created gestural, richly coloured paintings of the northern Ontario bush. He hosted a summer retreat for Toronto artists in the 1950s and 1960s and taught art in Sudbury and throughout northeastern Ontario.

Wieland, Joyce (Canadian, 1930–1998)

A central figure in contemporary Canadian art, Wieland engaged with painting, filmmaking, and cloth and plastic assemblage to explore with wit and passion ideas related to gender, national identity, and the natural world. In 1971 she became the first living Canadian woman artist to have a solo exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa. (See *Joyce Wieland: Life & Work* by Johanne Sloan.)

SOURCES
& RESOURCES

After a dozen years of working in relative obscurity, as a Holocaust survivor and émigré to Canada, Gershon Iskowitz forged a new vision of painting for himself. Beginning in the mid-1960s, his work received critical attention and was shown in solo and group exhibitions nationally and internationally. Numerous reviews and articles culminated in two major publications at the time of his 1982 Art Gallery of Ontario retrospective. Two rare interviews in 1974 and 1975, plus the only two extant documentary films of Iskowitz, produced by art historian Peter Mellen in the early 1970s, offer an intimate insight into Iskowitz's thoughts. The earliest of these documentaries includes footage of Iskowitz in his Spadina Avenue neighbourhood and studio.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS
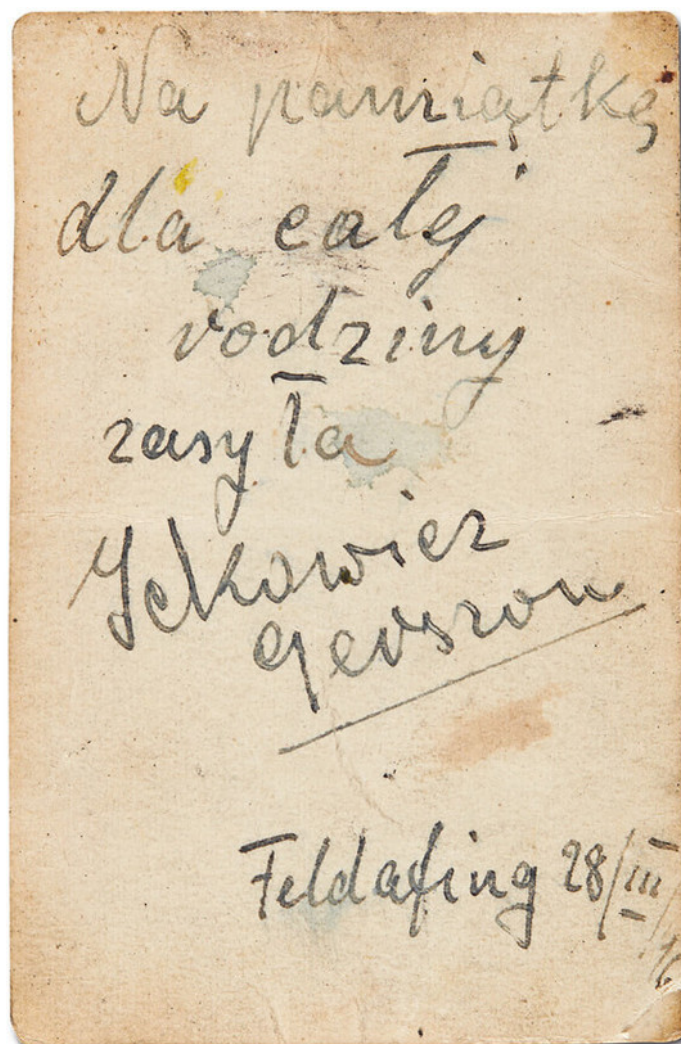
LEFT: Gershon Iskowitz in Feldafing, date unknown, photographer unknown, Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. RIGHT: Gershon Iskowitz in Feldafing verso, date unknown, photographer unknown, Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

1957	September 14–28, *Paintings by Gershon Iskowitz*, The Hayter Gallery, Toronto.
1960	March 4–28, *Gershon Iskowitz*, Here and Now Gallery, Toronto. Subsequent exhibition, September 15–October 2, 1961, *Iskowitz: New Paintings*.
	November 15–December 13, *Pictures on View in Alumni Hall, Victoria College: Gershon Iskowitz*, University of Toronto.
1961	April 9–23, Gershon Iskowitz, Young Men's Hebrew Association, Toronto; Bloor Street & Spadina Avenue location.
1963	Gershon Iskowitz, Towne Cinema, Toronto.
	October 11–31, *Survey 1941–1963 of Oils, Drawings and Watercolours by Iskowitz*, Dorothy Cameron Gallery, Toronto.
1964	October 1–14, *New Paintings by Iskowitz*, Gallery Moos, Toronto. Subsequent gallery exhibitions: 1966, 1967 1970, 1971, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979 (Toronto and Calgary), 1981, 1983, 1986, 1988 (posthumous).

1966   *Gershon Iskowitz: Retrospective Exhibition*, The Gallery of the Theatre of the Arts, University of Waterloo.

November 30, 1966–January 3, 1967*, Iskowitz: Oil and Watercolours*, Cedarbrae Regional Library, Scarborough, Toronto.

1973   March 24–April 15, *Gershon Iskowitz*, Hart House Art Gallery, University of Toronto.

November 29–December 31, *Gershon Iskowitz—Paintings*, Rodman Hall Art Centre, St. Catharines.

1974   October 16–November 2, *Paintings and Watercolours by Gershon Iskowitz*, Galerie Allen, Vancouver.

1975   April 30–May 25, *Gershon Iskowitz*, Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary.

1976   December 3, 1976–January 4, 1977, *Gershon Iskowitz*, Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, Sackville. Travelled to the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, January 10–February 15, 1977.

1982–83   January 23–March 7, *Iskowitz*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Retrospective exhibition that travelled to Art Gallery of Windsor, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, London Regional Art Gallery, Glenbow Museum. Travelled to Canada House Gallery, London, UK (1983).

1983   December 1–31, *Gershon Iskowitz: New Paintings: 1981–1983*, Marisa del Re Gallery, New York.

1984   December, (exhibition title unknown), Diane Farris Gallery, Vancouver. Inaugural opening exhibition of the Gallery.

1993   June 5–July 7, (exhibition title unknown), The Drabinsky Gallery, Toronto.

1998   June 18–August 22, *The Path of Colour: Gershon Iskowitz*, University of Lethbridge Art Gallery.

2000   January 6–February 3, *Gershon Iskowitz*, Galerie René Blouin, Montreal.

2007   November 8–December 29, (an exhibition of watercolours), Galerie Samuel Lallouz, Montreal.

2008   May 10–June 7, *Gershon Iskowitz – Rare Paintings from the 1960s and 1970s*, Miriam Shiell Fine Art, Toronto. Other solo exhibitions, 2006 and 2015.
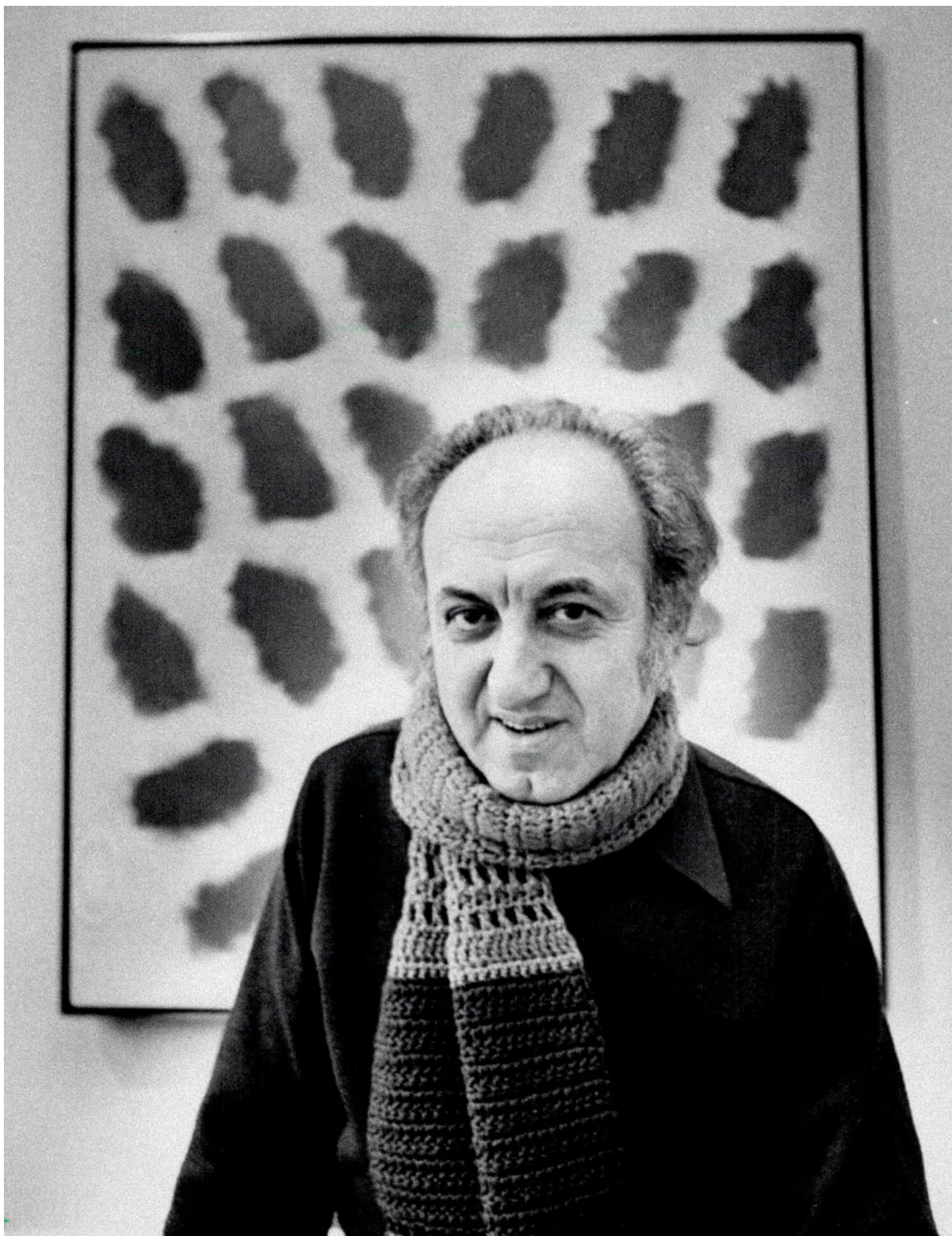
Gershon Iskowitz at the Art Gallery of Ontario retrospective, 1982, photograph by Doug Griffin Toronto Star Archives.

SELECT GROUP EXHIBITIONS AND TWO-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

1954	*31st Annual Exhibition, Canadian Society of Graphic Art*. Art Gallery of Toronto. Also 1958, 1959 in London, Ontario; 1960 in Halifax, Nova Scotia; and 1963 at Toronto Central Library.
1957	April 5–28, *Anniversary Exhibition*, Art Gallery of Hamilton. Also, Art Gallery of Hamilton Annual exhibitions in 1961, 1963, 1969, 1970, 1972.
1958	November 28, 1958–January 4, 1959, *Annual Exhibition, Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolour*, Art Gallery of Toronto. Also 1965.
1964	October 4–November 6, *Winnipeg Show*, Winnipeg Art Gallery. Also 1966 and 1970.
1965	June 4–August 22, *Sixth Biennial Exhibition of Canadian Painting*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.
1967–69	September 22–October 15, 1967, *The Ontario Centennial Art Exhibition*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Administered by the Art Institute of Ontario for the Province of Ontario Council for the Arts. Travelled through until May 1969 to London Regional Art Gallery (now Museum London) and 20/20 Gallery, London; Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, Kingston; Lakehead University, Thunder Bay; Laurentian University, Sudbury; Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery; Art Gallery of Windsor; Art Gallery of Hamilton; Belleville Library & Art Gallery; Rodman Hall Art Centre, St. Catharines; Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal; and Musée du Québec, Québec City.
1970	November 12–December 12, *Eight Artists from Canada*, Tel-Aviv Art Museum, Israel.
1972	June 11–October 1, *La Biennale di Venizia 36*, Venice, Italy. Two-person exhibition with Walter Redinger.
	September 15–October 15, *Toronto Painting 1953–1965*, National Gallery of Canada. Travelled to the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, November 10–December 10.
1975–76	*The Canadian Canvas: travelling exhibition of 85 recent paintings*. An exhibition jointly organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery, Edmonton Art Gallery, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, and the Anna Leonowens Gallery. Travelled to Montreal, Edmonton, Vancouver, Saskatoon, Toronto, Halifax, Calgary, Winnipeg.
1976–77	February 13, 1976–April 17, 1977. *Changing Visions*, organized by the Edmonton Art Gallery (now Art Gallery of Alberta) and the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Travelled to Toronto, Windsor, Montreal, Lincoln (Massachusetts), Edmonton, Winnipeg, Calgary, Burnaby, London.

1977 *Canadian Tapestries: an exhibition of 23 tapestries designed by Canadian painters and sculptors*. Initiated by Fay Loeb; exhibition organized by Marie Fleming for the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, with four other simultaneous venues: Confederation Centre Art Gallery and Museum, Charlottetown; Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary; Vancouver Art Gallery; Winnipeg Art Gallery (Artist design sketches shown only at the Art Gallery of Ontario). Artists: Maxwell Bates, Ronald Bloore, Claude Breeze, Dennis Burton, Jack Bush, Sorel Etrog, Gershon Iskowitz, Dorothy Knowles, William Kurelek, John MacGregor, Toni Onley, William Perehudoff, Christopher Pratt, Don Proch, Gordon Rayner, Otto Rogers, Jack Shadbolt, Gordon Smith, Michael Snow, Jacques de Tonnancour, Harold Town, Joyce Wieland.

1976–78 October 9–November 7, 1976, *Exhibition of Contemporary Paintings by Seven Canadian Painters from the Canada Council Art Bank*. Harbourfront Art Gallery, Toronto (later, Art Gallery at Harbourfront). Artists: Claude Breeze, Paterson Ewen, Charles Gagnon, Gershon Iskowitz, Ron Martin, John Meredith, Guido Molinari. New Zealand cities tour, 1977: Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, Hamilton, Auckland. Australia cities tour, 1978: Newcastle, Brisbane, Adelaide, Sydney, Hobart, Canberra.

1978 February 7–March 19, *A Toronto Sensibility*, Harbourfront Art Gallery (later, Art Gallery at Harbourfront). Travelled to Cleveland State University, The Canton Art Institute, and Kilcawley Art Center, Ohio.

1979 November 2–14, *Gershon Iskowitz and Ron Martin*, Harbourfront Art Gallery (later, the Art Gallery at Harbourfront), Toronto. One of four two-person exhibitions for the *Compass/8 Painters* series held between October 19 and December 10.

2008 June 6–September 7, *The 1930s: The Making of "The New Man,"* National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

2010 July 9–September 8, *Oscar Cahén and Gershon Iskowitz: Artists Caught in Hitler's Web*, Horton Gallery (formerly Sunday L.E.S.), New York.

2015–18 *Living Building Thinking: art & expressionism*, organized and circulated by the McMaster Museum of Art. Venues: October 24–February 15, 2016, Art Gallery of Alberta; August 31–December 23, 2016, McMaster Museum of Art; March 3–May 21, 2018, Vancouver Art Gallery.

2016–18 April 23, 2016–February 19, 2018, *Staging Abstraction: Paintings from the Collection*, Art Gallery of Hamilton.

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Burnett, David. *Iskowitz*. Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1982.

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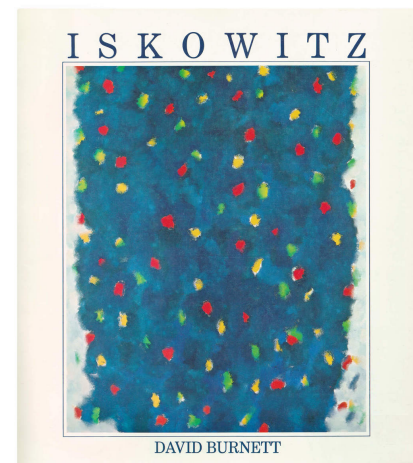
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Ihor Holubizky is an art historian and senior curator based in Canada and has been a Trustee of the Gershon Iskowitz Foundation since 2009. He has held several public gallery curatorial positions, including curator at The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto, from 1979 to 1988 and the Art Gallery of Hamilton from 1989 to 1997. He has been a guest curator for retrospective exhibitions of Don Jean-Louis, Walter Tandy Murch, and Kazuo Nakamura at The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa. In Australia he was a curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, and the Art Museum at the Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane. He was awarded a senior Canada Council grant for independent curators in 1998, and an Australia Council grant in 2004 for a research residency at the Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura & Hayama, in Japan.

Holubizky holds a PhD in art history from the University of Queensland, Australia, and has contributed writing to numerous publications on historical, modern, and contemporary topics in art and culture in North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. Some recent writing includes "The Ordinary Photograph: Its Agency and Aesthetics" for *Artmatter*; "The Best…of a hopeless situation" for *Volumes*; "Michael Belmore: Shorelines, Flux and Dark Water–the slowness of things" for *HIDE: Skin as Material and Metaphor*; and "The Enactments of Citizen Kuball" for *Mischa Kuball . . . in progress, Projekte 1980–2007*. He lectures on a wide range of topics across Canada, and in the United States, Brazil, and Australia, and was a sessional instructor in the New Media Department at the Ontario College of Art from 1986–1991.

"Over his mature career, from 1965 to 1987, Gershon Iskowitz produced a unique, coherent, and compelling body of abstract works; paintings and watercolours that drew vision and inspiration through his experiences of ever-changing light, atmospherics, and colour in nature."

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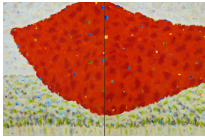
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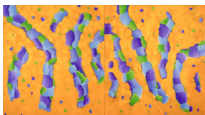
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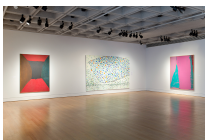
Where to See: Installation view of *Staging Abstraction* at the Art Gallery of Hamilton, 2017. Left: Jack Bush, *Black Velvet,* 1963, oil on canvas. Centre: Gershon Iskowitz, *Uplands K,* 1972, oil on canvas. Right: David Diao, *Pick Up,* 1972, aquatec on canvas. Photograph by Daniel Hutchinson.

Sources & Resources: Gershon Iskowitz, *Self-Portrait*, 1980. (See below for details.)

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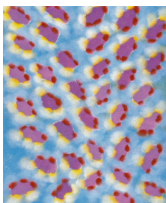
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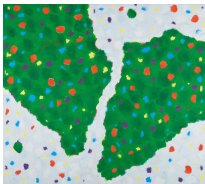
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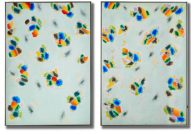

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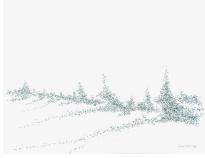
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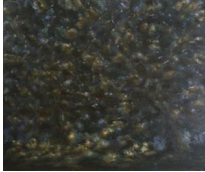
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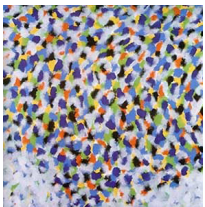
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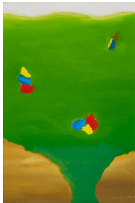
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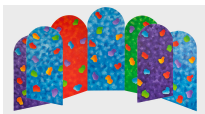
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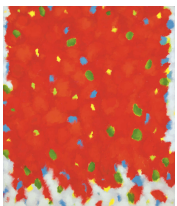
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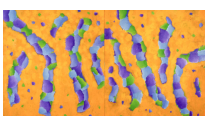
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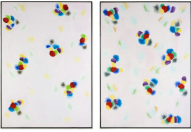

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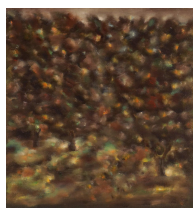
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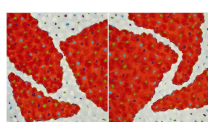
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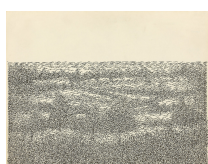
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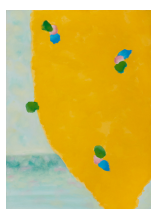
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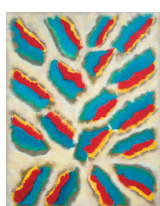
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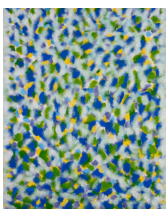
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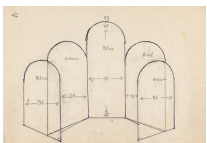
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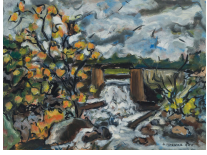
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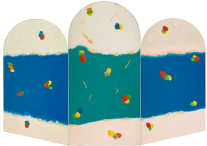
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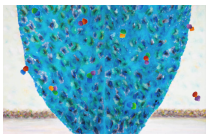
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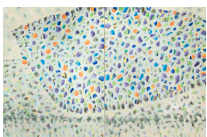*Uplands E*, 1971. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Purchased 1972 (16993.1-2). © Gershon Iskowitz Foundation.
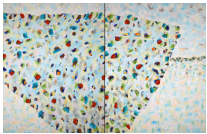
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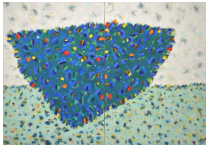
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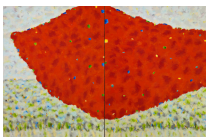
Uplands H, 1972. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Purchase with assistance from Wintario, 1977 (77/26). © Gershon Iskowitz Foundation.

Uplands K, 1972. Art Gallery of Hamilton, Gift of Mr. John Morris Thurston and Wintario, 1977 (77.2). © Gershon Iskowitz Foundation.

Yzkor, 1952. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Gift of Joey, Toby, and Alan Tanenbaum, Toronto, 1998 (39915). © Gershon Iskowitz Foundation.

Credits for Photographs and Works by Other Artists

1. Françoise Sullivan, Courtesy of the artist. 2. Rebecca Belmore, photo credit: Christinne Muschi © Christinne Muschi. 3. Michael Snow, Courtesy of the artist. 4. General Idea, Courtesy of AA Bronson. 5. Shary Boyle, photo credit: Christopher Wahl © Christopher Wahl. 6. Valérie Blass, photo credit: Maryse Larivière © Maryse Larivière. 7. Brian Jungen, photo credit: Dean Tomlinson. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto: 8. Stan Douglas, photo credit: Evaan Kheraj. Courtesy of David Zwirner Gallery. 9. Janet Cardiff & George Miller, photo credit: Birthe Piontek. © Birthe Piontek.
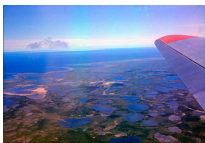
Aerial photograph of Churchill, Manitoba, 1966. Photographer unknown.

Mourners and local residents watch as men shovel dirt into the mass grave of the victims of the Kielce pogrom, 1946. Photographer unknown. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington (14393). Courtesy of Leah Lahav. © United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Bodies in a Grave, Belsen, 1946, by Alex Colville. Beaverbrook Collection of War Art, Canadian War Museum, Ottawa (19710261-2033). © Canadian War Museum

Candy Tree, 1952–53, by Oscar Cahén. Private Collection. © The Cahén Archives.
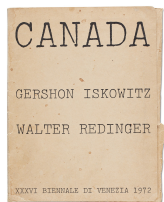
Cover of the 1972 Venice Biennale catalogue for the Canadian Pavilion, Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario.
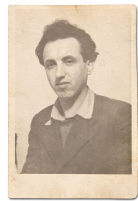
Dog Among the Ruins, 1947, by Jack Shadbolt. Art Gallery of Greater Victoria (1980.069.001).
© Jack Shadbolt Estate.

Detail of *Uplands K*, 1972, installed at the Art Gallery of Hamilton for *Staging Abstraction*, 2017, photograph by Daniel Hutchinson.
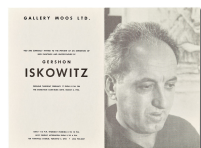

Feldafing Displaced Persons Camp banknotes.

Gershon Iskowitz in Feldafing, date unknown, photographer unknown. Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario.
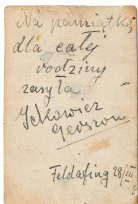
Gershon Iskowitz in Feldafing verso, date unknown, photographer unknown. Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Gershon Iskowitz Gallery Moos invitation, 1966, Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (LA.156125). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Gershon Iskowitz in his studio, date unknown, photograph by Michel Lambeth. Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario. © Michel Lambeth Estate.
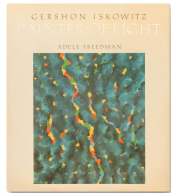
Gershon Iskowitz in front of his Tecumseth Street studio, 1981, photographer unknown. Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Gershon Iskowitz at the Art Gallery of Ontario retrospective, 1982, photograph by Doug Griffin. Courtesy of the Toronto Public Library Archives. © Toronto Star Archives.

Gershon Iskowitz in Toronto, winter c.1948–49, photographer unknown. Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Gershon Iskowitz: Painter of Light catalogue by Adele Freedman.

Gershon Iskowitz with painting design for a limited edition AGO umbrella, 1986. Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Gershon Iskowitz with portrait of Isaac Leib Peretz, Feldafing, 1946, photographer unknown. Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Gershon Iskowitz, Kazuo Nakamura, Tony Urquhart, and Madeline Mary Jennings at Isaacs Gallery, c.1961–62, photograph by Tess Taconis. E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Gershon Iskowitz painting outdoors, date unknown, photographer unknown. Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario.


Graham Coughtry, Gordon Rayner, and Robert Markle parody the Artists' Jazz Band in Rayner's Toronto studio, 1965, photograph by John Reeves. Courtesy of Canadian Art Magazine. © The Estate of John Reeves.

Guests at the Venice Biennale, 1972, photographer unknown. Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Installation view of *Exhibition of Contemporary Paintings by Seven Canadian Painters from the Canada Council Art Bank* at Harbourfront Art Gallery, 1976, photograph by David Lloyd. Courtesy of The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery Archives.
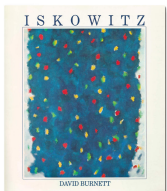
Iskowitz catalogue by David Burnett.

Oscar Cahén, illustration for short story, "Mail," by John Norman Harris, *Maclean's*, 1950. Collection of The Cahén Archives. © The Cahén Archives.

Pamphlet for *Iskowitz: New Paintings*, September 15-October 2, 1961, Here and Now Art Gallery. Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Parents Zisla Lewis and Jankel and children Yosl, Gershon, and Itchen, c.1924, photographer unknown. Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Gift of the Gershon Iskowitz Foundation, 2009 (LA.SC114.S1.f2.2). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Plate 57 from *Los Desastres de la Guerra / Disasters of War*, plates produced between 1810 and 1820, from the first edition, 1863, by Francisco Goya. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (4180).

Plowed Field, 1953, by Kazuo Nakamura. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (2000/1151). © Art Gallery of Ontario.

Spring, Cranberry Lake, 1932, by Franklin Carmichael. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Gift of Roy G. Cole, Rousseau, Ontario, 1990 (90/194). © Art Gallery of Ontario.

Temporary travel document, military Government for Germany, issued in Munich, May 3, 1948. Gershon Iskowitz Fonds, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Gift of the Gershon Iskowitz Foundation, 2009 (LA.SC114.S3.2). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario.

The Gershon Iskowitz Prize: 1986 to 2006 catalogue, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

The War, 1943, by Marc Chagall. Musée National d'Art Moderne Centre Pompidou, Paris, Gift of the artist, 1953, on deposit at the Musée d'Art Moderne de Céret. © 2013 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris. Photo credit: Scala / Art Resource NY.

Water Lilies (Agapanthus), 1915–26, by Claude Monet. Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City. Courtesy of Wikicommons.

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