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From Holocaust survivor to one of Canada's most acclaimed painters and cultural philanthropists: *Gershon Iskowitz: Life & Work* chronicles one man's remarkable trajectory from Auschwitz to famed Canadian artist



TORONTO, ON — A few days after teenaged Gershon Iskowitz (1920 or 1921–1988) was accepted into the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, the Nazis invaded Poland. As a Jew, Iskowitz was sent to Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps, where he drew as a means of resilience. Surviving the war, he immigrated to Canada in 1948 where he quickly became one of its most important painters.

Today the Art Canada Institute releases its online art book *Gershon Iskowitz: Life & Work*, by Ihor Holubizky which—for the first time ever—makes the story of this Canadian hero available to audiences, free of cost, in both English and French. “The book is of critical importance,” says Sara Angel, Founder and Executive Director of the Art Canada Institute, “because Iskowitz not only created some of the most important artistic documents of the Holocaust, he became an internationally renowned abstract painter and founded the Gershon Iskowitz Prize which became the country’s most important visual arts award of its kind.”

The book also tells of Iskowitz’s 1967 transformative artistic experience when a Canada Council grant enabled him to take a trip to Churchill, Manitoba, where an aerial view of scattered clouds and vibrant colours inspired a new artistic direction. Over his mature career, Iskowitz produced a unique, coherent, and compelling body of abstract works. “For him the sky was a universal view, one we can all experience regardless of where we live,” says Ihor Holubizky, author of *Gershon Iskowitz: Life & Work*.

Iskowitz’s Canada Council-funded Churchill trip inspired him to develop a grant of his own for future generations of artists. In recent years, the prestigious \$50,000 award has been won by some of the country’s most renowned contemporary artists including Shuvina Ashoona, Shary Boyle, Michael Snow, General Idea, and Rebecca Belmore. Now with *Gershon Iskowitz: Life & Work*, the remarkable story behind this iconic name can be fully understood and appreciated.

Gershon Iskowitz: Life & Work can be read on the Art Canada Institute's website and is available for PDF download.

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ABOUT THE ART CANADA INSTITUTE

The Art Canada Institute (ACI) is a non-profit research organization based at Massey College, University of Toronto. Its Canadian Online Art Book Project—a program that since 2014 has released over 30 books, all available free of charge in both French and English—publishes on key topics in Canadian art history. The ACI is the only national institution whose mandate is to promote the study of an inclusive, multi-vocal Canadian art history to as broad an audience as possible within Canada and internationally.

IMAGES

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IMAGE CREDITS

[1] Gershon Iskowitz, *Summer Song*, 1966, oil on canvas, 165.1 x 127 cm, collection of the Estate of Dr. Luigi Rossi, Kelowna Art Gallery. **[2]** 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. **[3]** 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. **[4]** Gershon Iskowitz, *Buchenwald*, 1944–45, watercolor on paper, 39.5 x 52.3 cm, McMaster Museum of Art, Hamilton. **[5]** 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. **[6]** Gershon Iskowitz, *Lowlands 1*, 1969, oil on canvas, 49.5 x 33.7 cm, collection of La Parete Gallery, Toronto. **[7]** 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. **[8]** Gershon Iskowitz, *Uplands B*, 1970, oil on canvas, 213 x 335 cm, private collection.