

I S K O W I T Z



DAVID BURNETT

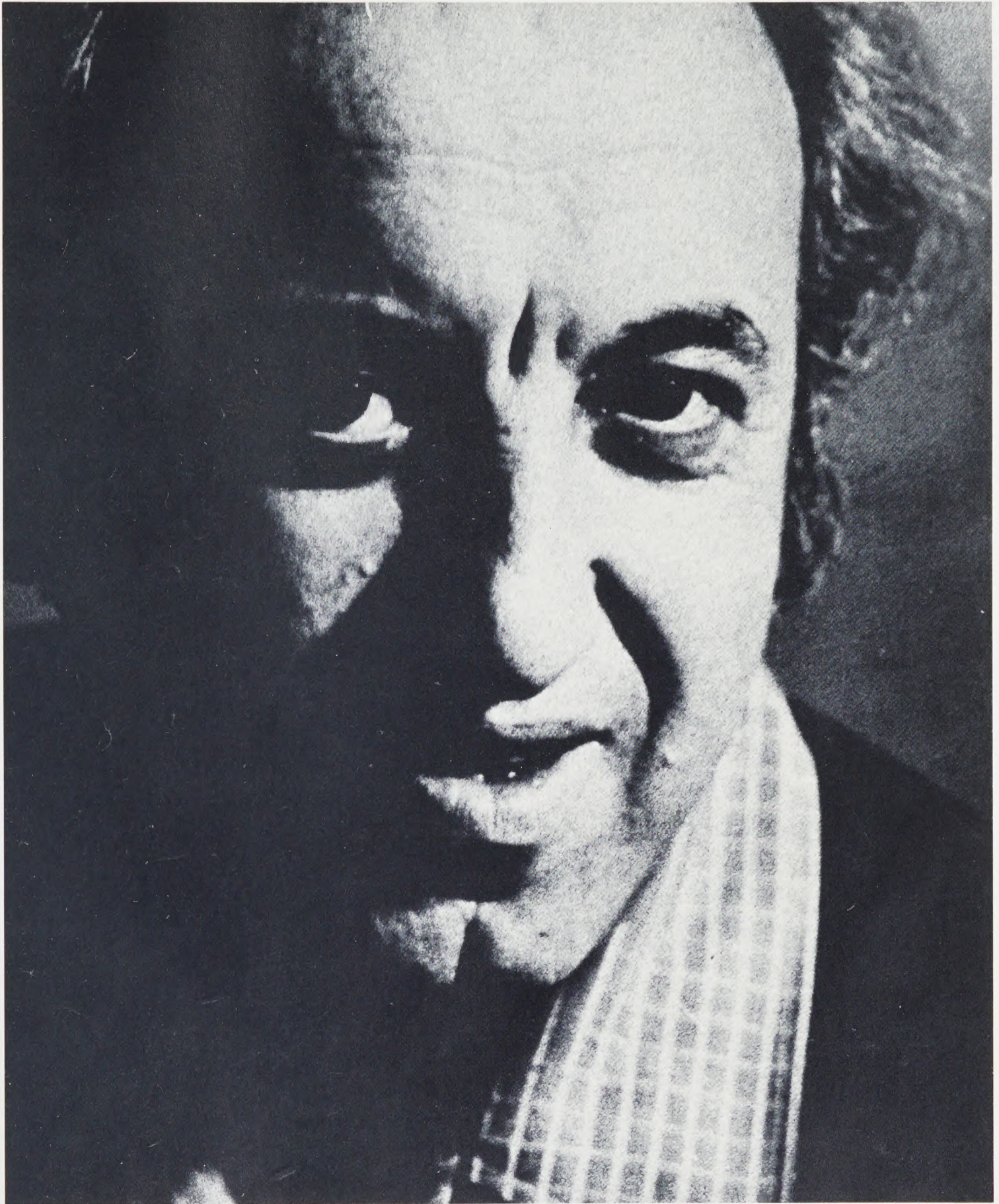


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ISKOWITZ

G. Iskowitz.



ISKOWITZ

DAVID BURNETT



Art Gallery of Ontario
Musée des beaux-arts de l'Ontario
Toronto/Ontario

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On the cover: No. 74 *Morning Blues* 1972

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ITINERARY

Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto - January 23-March 7, 1982

Art Gallery of Windsor, Windsor - April 4-May 2, 1982

Musée d'art contemporain, Montreal - May 20-June 27, 1982

London Regional Art Gallery, London - July 9-August 22, 1982

Glenbow Museum, Calgary - November 1-December 15, 1982

Canada House Gallery, London, England - February 23-March 22, 1983

LENDERS TO THE EXHIBITION

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Marilyn Schiff
Gerald W. Schwartz
Joel Siegel
Tony and Shirley Stapells
Collection of Toronto-Dominion Bank
Hana Trefelt
Mr. & Mrs. Irving Waltman
and Private Collections

PREFACE

It gives me particular pleasure to introduce this book and the exhibition it records. Gershon Iskowitz has reserved a special place for himself in the art of this country, this province, and this city. The story of how he came to make that place for himself is moving and inspiring. Arriving in Toronto in 1949 as a survivor of the Holocaust, he was determined to continue the work that was the core of his life. Isolated at first by his experiences as well as by language and culture, his early paintings and drawings made in Toronto remained rooted in his past. But slowly he turned toward the society in which he found himself and through that came to redirect his art. He began to paint the landscape around Toronto and gradually developed in his work that special and unmistakable synthesis between his perceptions of the landscape and a joyful expression of colour.

The retrospective exhibition of Iskowitz's work, covering a career of forty years, was organized for the Art Gallery of Ontario by David Burnett, the Curator of Contemporary Canadian Art. Dr. Burnett has gathered together work from the whole range of Iskowitz's career, from his stark and terrifying observations of the Nazi death camps to the great landscape-inspired colour compositions of the 1970s.

The exhibition that this book represents is a special event in terms of art in Toronto and in Canada. Iskowitz has lived in Toronto for more than thirty years and has watched and been a part of the cultural growth in the city. He has become a leading artist of his generation, turning in his work away from the devastation of the Europe that he left toward an optimistic and forward-looking expression of his experience in this country.

WILLIAM J. WITHROW,
Director, Art Gallery of Ontario

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The preparation of this book and the exhibition from which it sprang has been a most happy undertaking. Above all it has led me to the friendship of a very special person, Gershon Iskowitz, and a close engagement with his remarkable career. To work within the relationship of an artist and his work is a privilege for a curator of contemporary art. It is, furthermore, a mark of the esteem in which Iskowitz is held that owners of pictures have been so willing to lend their works. I know it is difficult for many people to be without works they treasure; I know also that their response to my request was immediate and positive. I am most grateful to all those private collectors, corporations, and public institutions who have so generously lent pictures to this exhibition. A special thanks goes to Walter Moos of Gallery Moos, who has been Iskowitz's dealer for nearly twenty years and whose knowledge and appreciation of the artist's work has been so important in putting this exhibition and this book together. I am grateful to him and to Jerry Jennings for all their help.

My thanks go also to many members of staff at the Art Gallery of Ontario: to Mrs. Eva Robinson, Registrar and Kathy Wladyka, Assistant Registrar; Barry Simpson, Manager of Exhibitions, Ches Taylor, Manager of Technical Services, John Ruseckas, Chief Preparator; Faye Craig, Photographic Services and Larry Ostrom, Chief Photographer; to Denise Bukowski, Head of Publications, Margot Boland, Designer, and Margaret MacDonald, and Vicki Michaels. In particular my thanks to Mara Meikle, my secretary, for her efficiency, patience, and calm through so many aspects of the work on this project.

Marilyn Schiff has read and edited the text and closely followed the course of the development of the book and the exhibition. My thanks go out to her for her unlimited support.

DAVID BURNETT,
*Curator of Contemporary Canadian Art,
Art Gallery of Ontario*

COLOUR PLATES



11. *Self-Portrait* 1947
Oil on canvas laid on board
50.8 x 40.6 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



15. *Torah* 1951
Gouache on board
43.2 x 53.3 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



21. *Yzkor* 1952
Watercolour and ink
30.5 x 40.6 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



34. *Apple Orchard* 1952
Oil on canvas laid on board
40.6 x 50.8 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



49. *Sunset* 1960
Oil on canvas
127.0 x 101.6 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



50. *Spring* 1962
Oil on canvas
165.4 x 140.0 cm
The Bank of Canada



53. *Self-Portrait* 1963
Watercolour
71.1 x 50.8 cm
Tony and Shirley Stapells



59. *Sextet* 1965
Oil on canvas
152.5 x 122.0 cm
Private Collection



60. *Summer Sounds* 1965
Oil on canvas
172.7 x 139.7 cm
Collection Art Gallery of Ontario
Purchase, 1966



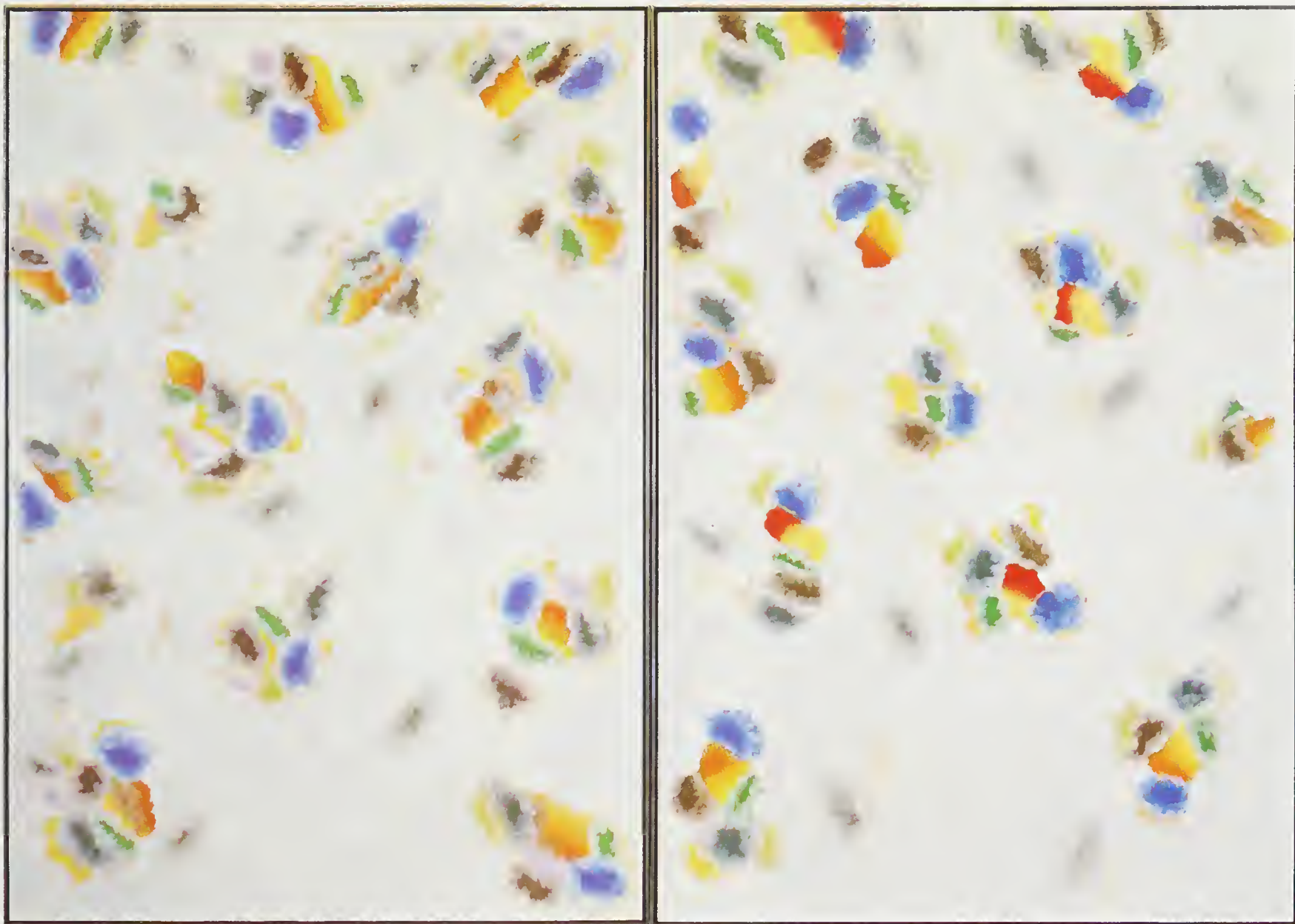
62. *Summer Blues* 1966
Oil on canvas
81.3 x 101.6 cm
Mr. & Mrs. J.T. McLeod



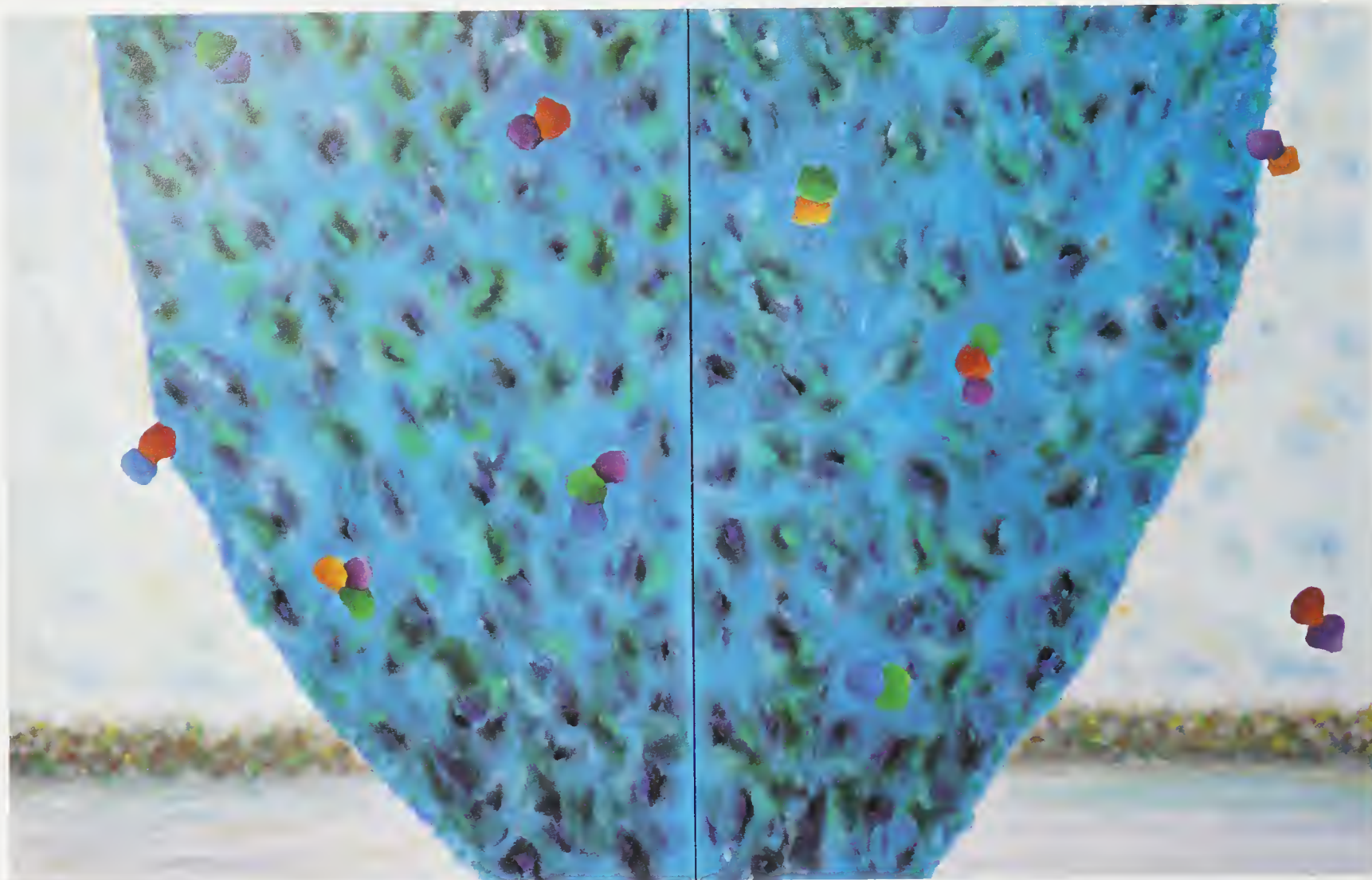
63. *Summer Skies* 1966
Oil on canvas
102.0 x 82.0 cm
Crown Life Collection of Canadian Art



65. *Autumn Landscape No. 6* 1967
Oil on canvas
122.0 x 52.4 cm
Collection of Toronto-Dominion Bank



66. *Seasons No. I* 1968-69
Oil on canvas
254.0 x 177.8 cm (diptych)
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa/
Galerie Nationale du Canada, Ottawa



70. *Uplands B* 1970
Oil on canvas
213.4 x 355.3 cm (diptych)
Courtesy Gallery Moos



71. *Landscape in Red No. II* 1971
Oil on canvas
152.0 x 122.0 cm
Courtesy Carmen Lamanna



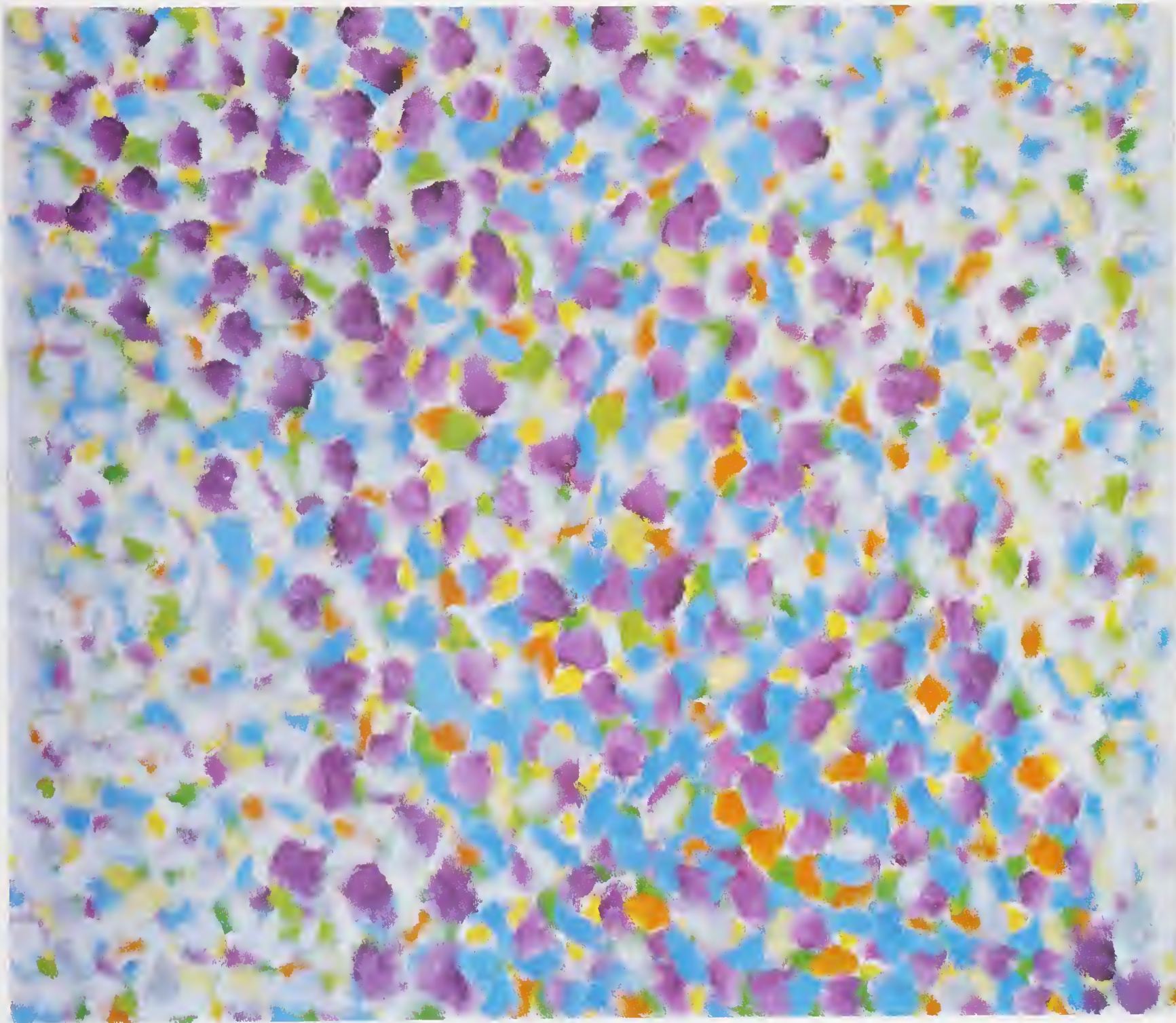
74. *Morning Blues* 1972
Oil on canvas
139.7 x 114.3 cm
Eugene and Margaret Sawkiw



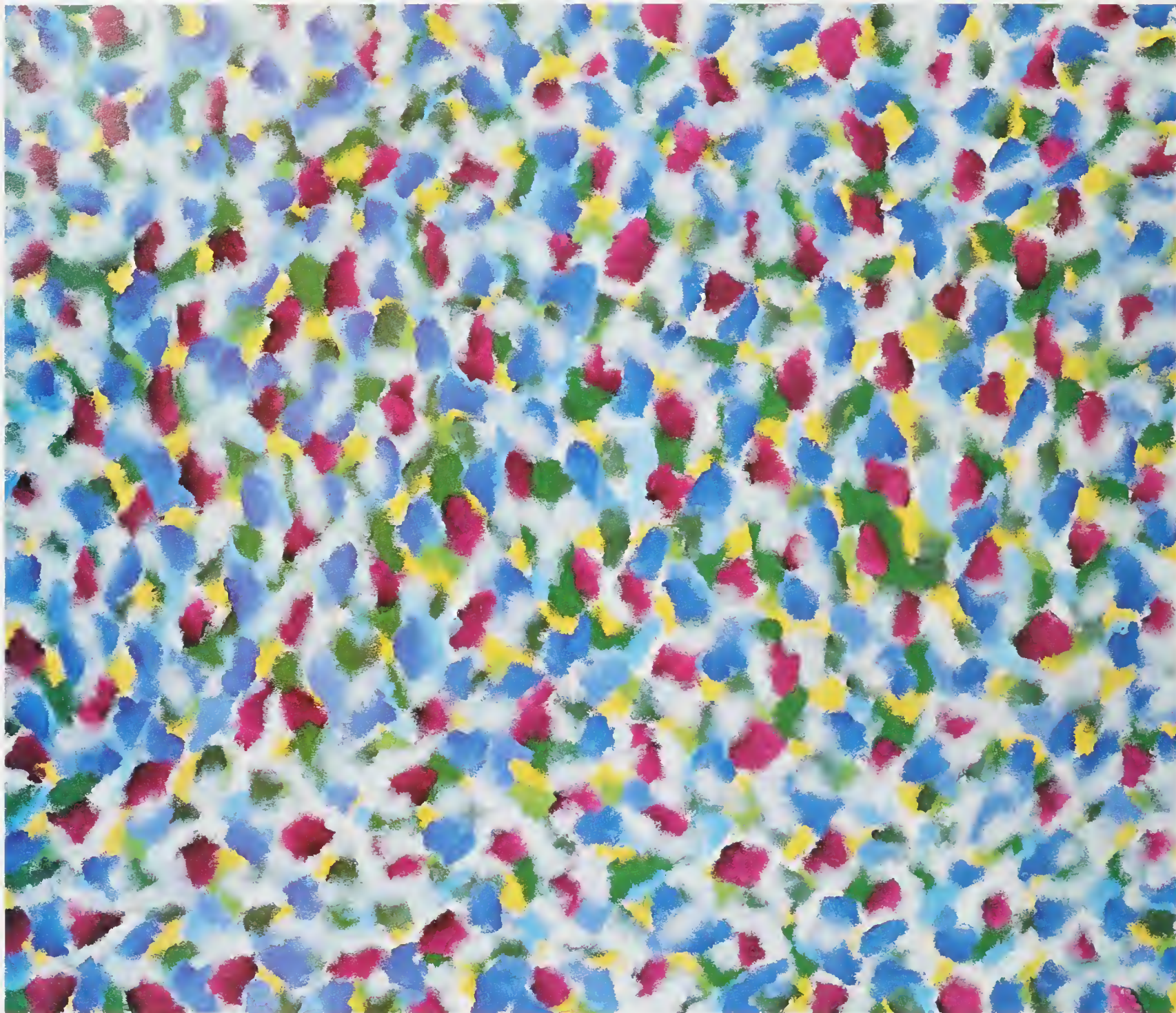
76. *Uplands H* 1972
Oil on canvas
182.9 x 241.3 cm (diptych)
Collection Art Gallery of Ontario
Purchase with assistance from Wintario, 1977



77. *Uplands K* 1972
Oil on canvas
228.4 x 355.4 cm (diptych)
Art Gallery of Hamilton,
Gift of Mr. John Morris Thurston
and Wintario, 1977



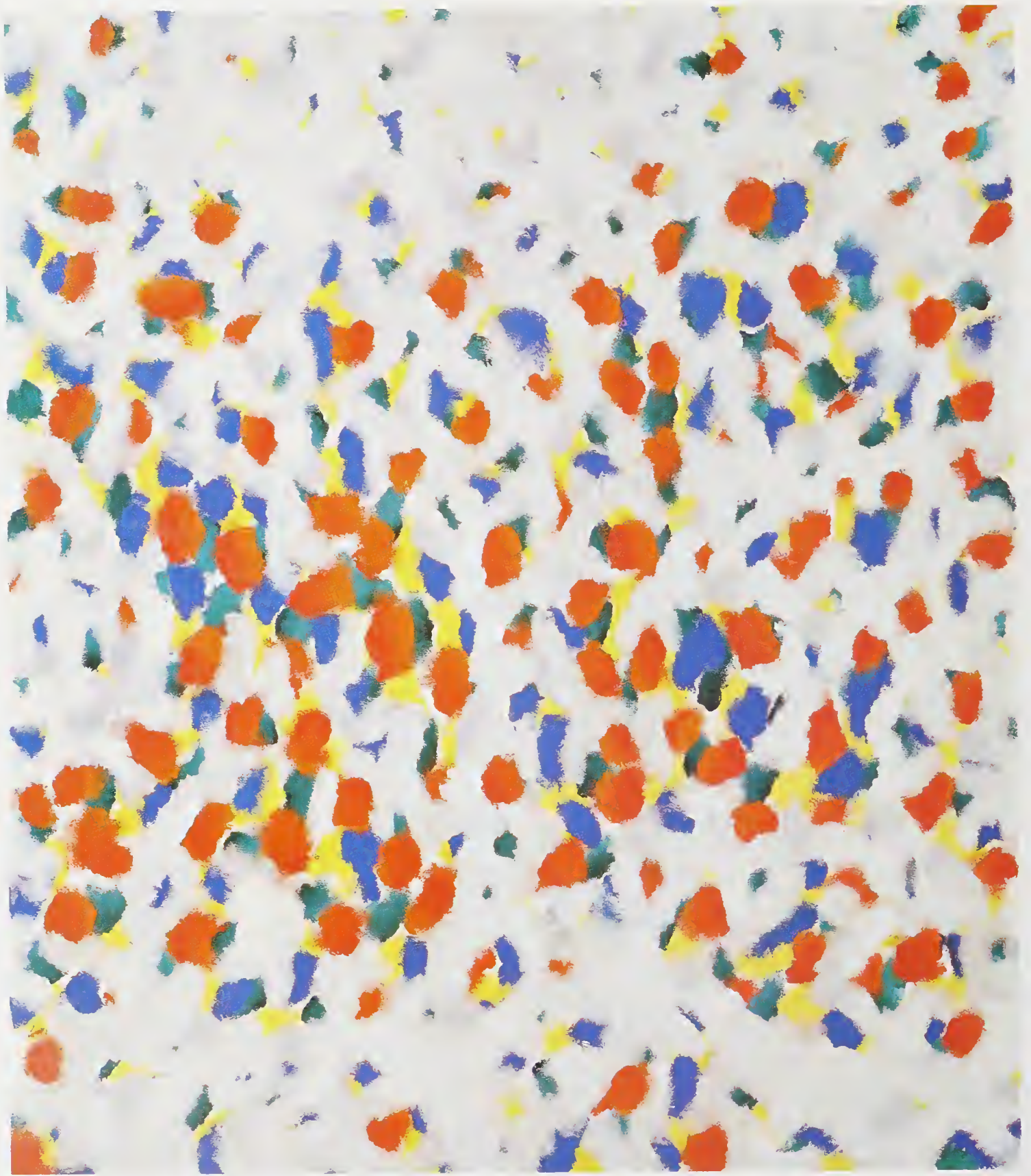
78. *Orange Blue Mauve Painting* 1973
Oil on canvas
152.7 x 178.3 cm
The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa



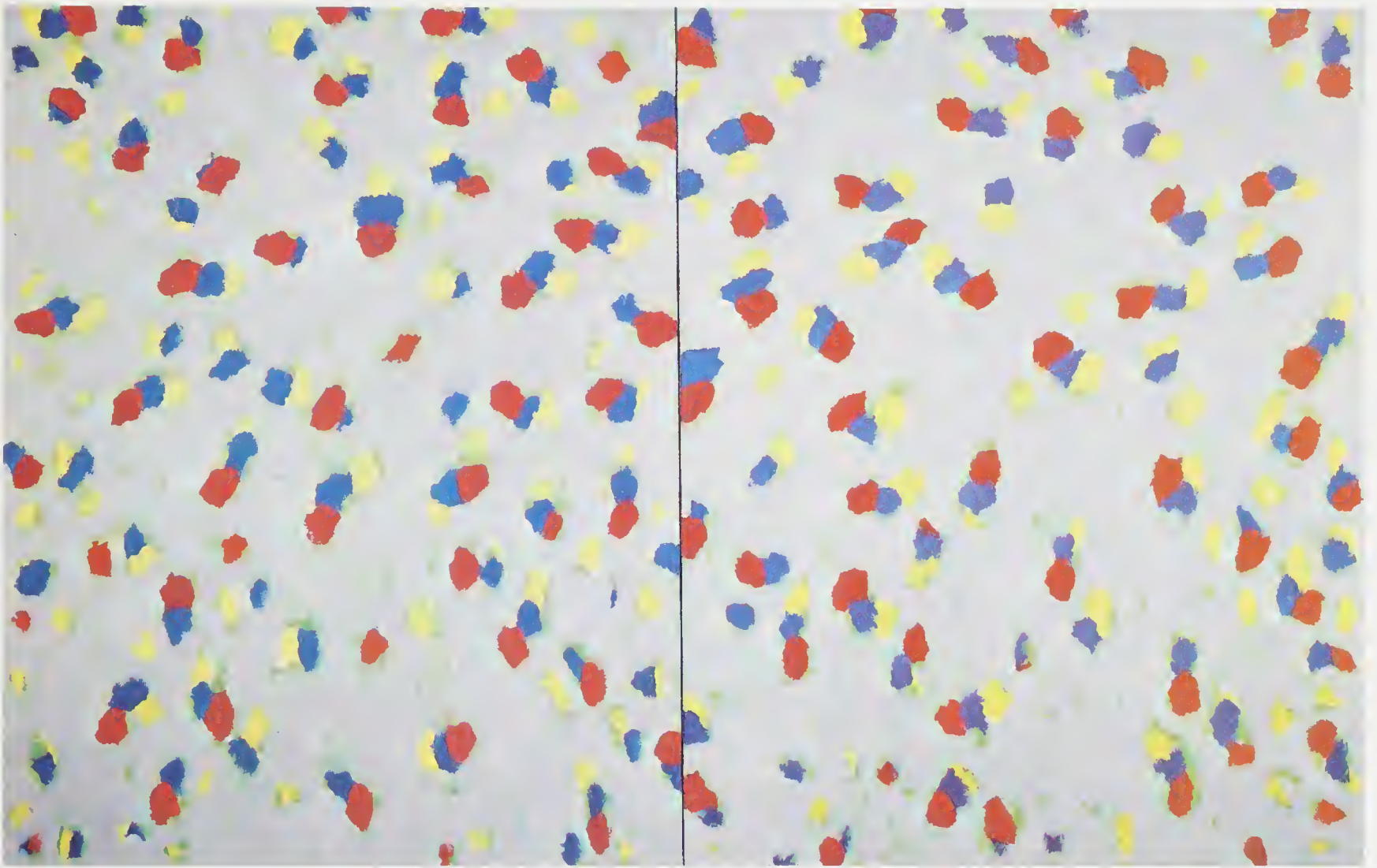
81. *Violet Blue Painting* 1974
Oil on canvas
167.6 x 195.6 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



83. *Seasons No. 6* 1974
Oil on canvas
152.4 x 132.1 cm
Mr. & Mrs. A.C. Finkelstein



84. *New Orange Red Painting* 1975
Oil on canvas
152.5 x 132.0 cm
On loan from the Canada Council Art Bank/
Prêt de la Banque d'œuvres d'art du
Conseil des Arts du Canada



85. *Variations on Green No. 3* 1975-76
Oil on canvas
123.4 x 335.9 cm (diptych)
On loan from the Canada Council Art Bank/
Prêt de la Banque d'oeuvres d'art du
Conseil des Arts du Canada



88. *Variations on Red No. 7* 1976
Oil on canvas
119.4 x 106.7 cm
David and Anita Blackwood



89. *November No. 1* 1976
Oil on canvas
132.0 x 119.4 cm
Art Gallery of Windsor,
Gift from the Queen's Jubilee Art Collection
through the Province of Ontario, 1978



91. *Newscape* 1976
Oil on canvas
152.0 x 208.0 cm
Private Collection



93. *Highland in Green No. 2* 1977
Oil on canvas
106.7 x 96.5 cm
Citibank Canada



94. *Highland in Orange No. 2* 1977
Oil on canvas
167.5 x 183.0 cm
Lavalin Inc.



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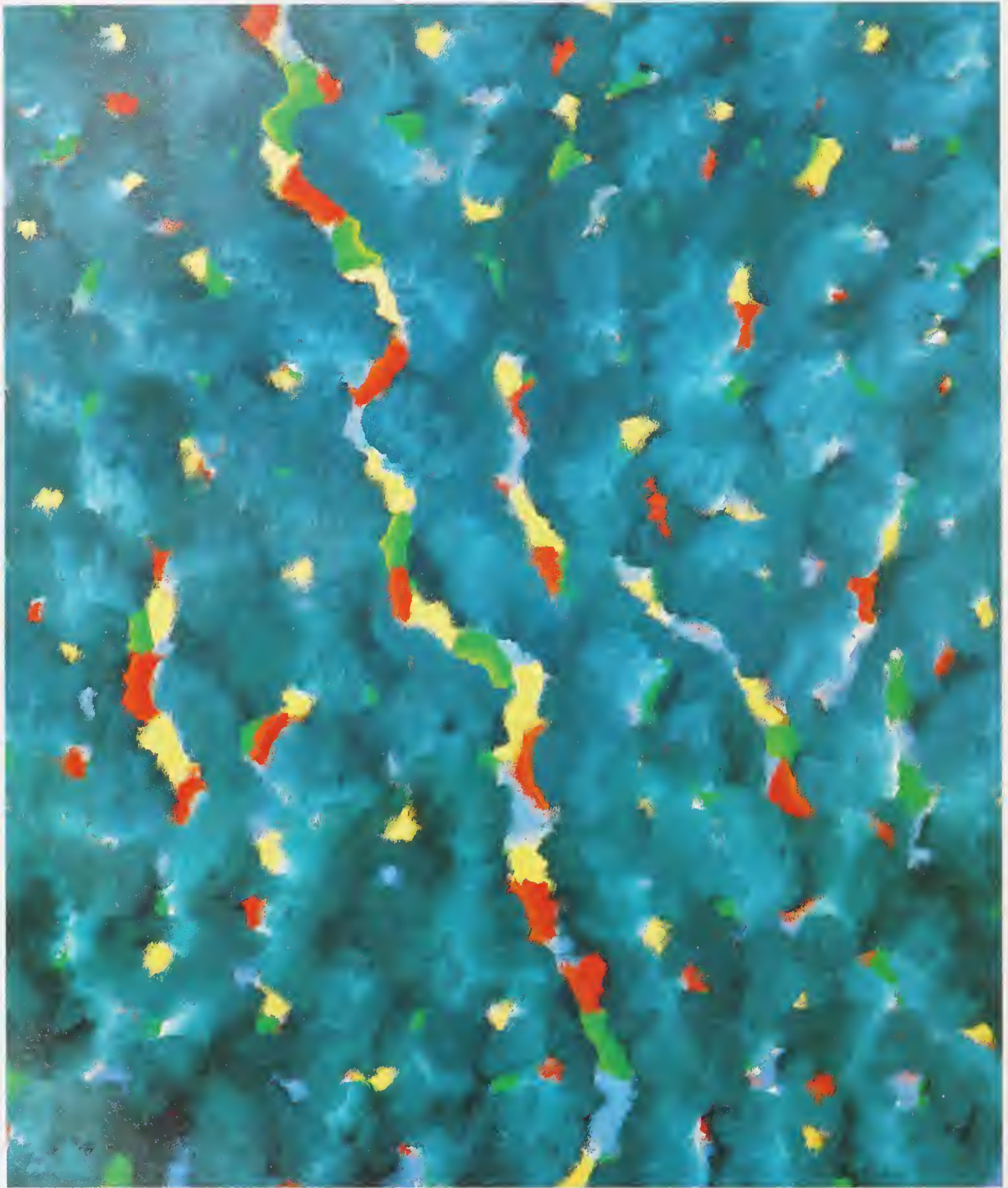
97. *February 6th* 1978
Watercolour
32.4 x 55.3 cm
E.A. Magner



101. *Autumn J* 1978
Oil on canvas
96.5 x 81.3 cm
Mr. & Mrs. James H. Morlock



106. *Violet A* 1981
Oil on canvas
99.1 x 134.6 cm
Gerald W. Schwartz



108. *Night Greens D* 1981
Oil on canvas
190.5 x 160.0 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos

ISKOWITZ

I

To see the art of Gershon Iskowitz is to understand how it is rooted in the directness of experience. We do not see his paintings determined by the theory or the history of art; we do not see his art filtered through a response to other art. We discover a commitment to make pictures which began in childhood and matured through his witness to events which were fragments from one of the most obscene episodes of human history. We watch as that witness to terror becomes a responsibility of memory, Iskowitz keeping before him the desolation of loss and the evil that had extorted that loss - loss of family, of country, of the expectations of a young man. And later comes a renewed response to the present, no longer expressed through events but through his experience of landscape. That experience transforms the meaning of his art, from a reflection on perception to the creation of vision, from a use of painting as a response to things seen to painting as the creation of experience itself.

Yet the transformations we can trace are bound to the life of one man. We must understand the singleness of expression that exists in a drawing like *Condemned* (No. 3) and a painting like *Highland in Orange No. 2* (No. 94). There is a unity that exists between the circumstances of appalling brutality contained both in the subject and in the circumstances of the drawing and the joyful exuberance of the painting. That unity transcends the bleak art history assumptions about change within an artist's career. To understand an artist's work is not to reconcile the pictorial events at the beginning of his career with his work of thirty years later; that simply reduces the life of a man to a pattern of change. And anything which ignores the integrity of a life distorts the meaning that its expression through a body of work has. This danger applies to all artists of originality; it is brought into sharp relief by artists who stand outside the mainstream. Iskowitz is such an artist.

It was once the fashion to approach the work of an artist in terms of his biography. The result was to create giants or eccentrics but the approach rested on one major assumption: that art making rested on

invariable conventions and that issues as to what constituted art were not in question. As those issues came under increasing criticism in the course of the nineteenth century two other approaches were added (the biographical was not replaced but rather shifted to the reactionary end of the spectrum); one was the psychological, the other the formal (or perhaps more accurately the morphological). The effect of each of the three approaches is, for different reasons, to drive a wedge between the artist and his work. It was to the issue of authenticity of artistic expression that Barnett Newman addressed himself when he wrote about the art of the first half of the twentieth century being "the search for something to paint."¹ He did not mean literally casting about for concrete subject matter, nor justifying non-representational art, but that the making of art is the necessary expression of personal conviction. For Newman this had to do with what it meant to be an individual. This is why, in presenting his great series of paintings *The Fourteen Stations of the Cross* in 1966, he wrote a text on its subject matter.² He began, "Lema Sabachthani - why? Why did you forsake me? Why forsake me? To what purpose? Why?" And he identified this as the question that has no answer.

This overwhelming question that does not complain, makes today's talk of alienation, as if alienation were a modern invention, an embarrassment. This question that has no answer has been with us so long - since Jesus - since Abraham - since Adam - the original question.

For Newman, the search for something to paint meant overcoming the sense of loss that arose when attention was diverted from "the question that has no answer." Criticism of his stance invariably failed to address the issue. The attempts to explain his work in terms of iconography or the reproof that he, a Jew, should choose to relate the central series of his work to the Passion of Christ are, for different reasons (one benign, the other bitter), irrelevant to his meaning. Both drive that wedge between the artist and his art.

I do not, of course, intend that we should approach Iskowitz in terms of the meaning of

Newman's work. Far from it. But the reference is valuable in that Newman by his paintings and his polemics boldly asserted the essential indivisibility of the man and his work which stands above the conventions in which the history of art is generally written. It is an assertion that faces the work, one that does not despair, one that does not fall back on the notion of "expressionism" to cover that aspect of an artist's work that cannot otherwise be explained. Self-expression is only a means of drawing attention to one's existence, it neither explains nor justifies artistic activity.

The strength and value of Iskowitz's work lies in the absolute and naïve unity between his subject matter and its painterly manifestation. It lies in the essential singleness of his artistic expression over forty years of work. The changes that occur - and they are only too evident in putting *Condemned* next to *Highland in Orange No. 2* - arise from a dynamic relationship, the lived relationship, between the artist as an individual and the drive that necessitates his working day in and day out. It is in this sense that I use the word naïve: not to imply an ignorant roughness but in the sense of being natural, of an unconcern with the sophistication of artistic conventions, of the sense that his styles of work have always arisen from a simple necessity to give form to what he saw. The miracle of his work is that his naturalness and directness have carried with them both an intensity of expression and a unity of pictorial structure. For Newman, the ambition of his work was pitched at reclaiming what he felt was the lost heroic and mythic character of man; Iskowitz's work has always been the direct, intuitive response to his own immediate condition. His work has arisen directly from his experience of reality; shifts in the form and appearance of his work can only be seen in relation to the intuitive response of making manifest his own reality.

The meaning of the work lies not in the image alone, but also in the act of forming the image and in the circumstances of the formation. And, in the case of Iskowitz's earliest surviving works, it lies in the very fact of their survival for their real meaning as expressive acts is inseparable from their physical condition. The condition of *Condemned* is fragile, the

paper is cheap wrapping paper torn and discoloured, creased by folding, its surface rubbed. The drawing was made in the Buchenwald concentration camp in 1945. Commencing at the beginning of the year, Iskowitz worked slowly on the drawing, completing it shortly before the liberation. It was, over the months of its creation, folded and unfolded, concealed to avoid detection by the camp guards, and is one of only two works that Iskowitz carried out with him at the end of the war. The subject of the drawing, a severely emaciated man of indeterminate age, was killed.

The drawing is a rare and powerful document both for having been made and for having survived. It belongs, within the history of art, to a special group of works which have both documented and described the horrors of war in terms of individual human violence - not in the reconstruction of events but in living witness to the present: the witness of, say, George Grosz or Francisco Goya. But it differs from both of those, for the artist endures the same suffering as the subject of the picture. They are both prisoners, both victims. The categories of the observer and the observed which separate them is far less important than the condition that binds them together. It is only the arbitrariness of the chance which brings death or allows survival. It is not a drawing of observation so much as it is an act of self-reflection. The reality of the work is brutal and frank precisely because it is the artist's own reality, a special sense of self-portraiture. It is close, perhaps, to the poetry of a man like Wilfred Owen, a young army officer killed in the last days of the First World War, who through four years in the trenches of France and Belgium felt the necessity to write despite (and perhaps because of) the likelihood of immediate death.³ Still it is not close enough; there is no parallel.

It is simple, even obvious to describe a painting like *Highland in Orange No. 2* as self-expressive; what it represents and how it came about allow this. The picture is one resulting from the experience of the northern Canadian landscape, which has stimulated Iskowitz since the mid-1960s. To describe the painting as self-expressive not only allows for the freedom of a personal style but also relates it to

the history of painting in Canada. The expressive, painterly treatment of the northern landscape established the standard by which Canadian painting has been defined. But the notion of the self-expressive has come to take on the character of an opaque residue. It is what is left (essential but obscure) after the descriptions of style, after the facts of biography, after the web of art history connections have been accounted for, analyzed away. Self-expression as a means to describe the unity of the artist and his work has come to be a way to avoid the particular choices, conscious and unconscious, that an artist makes with regard to his necessity to work. The man who drew *Condemned* is the same man who painted *Highland in Orange No. 2*. The compulsion to draw, when the very act courted death if discovered, is the undiminished need to paint now. The disregard of anything that might interrupt the regimen of work is the essence of Gershon Iskowitz. It must be also the essence of his work.

II

The group of works by Iskowitz to have survived from the years 1941 to 1953 represents only a fragment of his artistic activity (Nos. 1-28, 35, 36). It stands as a rare document in the history of Canadian art. The drawings and gouaches and oils are vital not only in the nature of what they represent but also by virtue of their becoming a part of the history of Canadian art through the refuge Iskowitz found in this country. A refuge from the destruction of a way of life, from the destruction of family, and from the memory of survival through one of the most heinous persecutions in human history. The very existence of the works marks the presence of a major human document. But its true value is realized in the fact that Iskowitz has transcended the horror of the past by his continued commitment to painting. His work has become a celebration of life through his interpretation of the landscape. It is invested with a value beyond the analysis that can be brought to any part of it.

Gershon Iskowitz did not make a conscious decision to be an artist: the issue never seems to have been in question. Yet it was, in many respects, an unusual direction to have taken. He was born in 1921 in Kielce, a town in southern Poland with a population of about 50,000 situated about one hundred and thirty kilometres south of Warsaw. He was the third of four children, his brothers being born in 1916 and 1918, his sister in 1926. His interest in drawing and painting, a major factor in his life even as a very young boy, met with little support from his family and none at all at school. He received no formal art teaching. He was neither concerned nor discouraged by these attitudes and on his own initiative he approached the local movie house manager with an offer to paint posters for display in return for free tickets. The manager's initial scepticism of the offer was dispelled when he saw the drawings of the nine- or ten-year-old boy. Iskowitz developed his present working habits at that early age when he would wander the streets of Kielce late at night and then work on his drawings into the early hours of the morning.

He graduated from school in Kielce in 1939 and enrolled at the Warsaw Academy of Art for the fall semester. His intention was shattered by the rapid turn of events in early September. The German invasion of Poland, unannounced and unprovoked, began on the first of September. Kielce was entered on the third after a preliminary bombardment of the railway station and train tracks. The town was sealed and a curfew imposed. The young people were put to forced labour and Iskowitz became part of a squad detailed to clean up the military barracks. In 1940 he was taken off to a camp near Lublin and worked on road-making as part of the preparations for the invasion of Russia. He escaped from this camp in December of 1940 and made his way back to Kielce. A ghetto was imposed in Kielce in 1941, and Iskowitz was again sent into forced labour, this time at a factory making horse-drawn wagons for army use.

He remained with his family in Kielce until the "resettlements" began on 20 September 1942. The deportations continued until some eighteen thousand Jews from Kielce had been taken to the death

camp at Treblinka north of Warsaw. Amongst that number were Iskowitz's father and mother, his eldest brother, and his sister. They were all put to death. Iskowitz and his remaining brother were forced to continue working at the factory. This routine was broken when Iskowitz was taken to work at the concentration camp at Mijdanek but after a short time there he was returned again to the factory in Kielce. He and his brother remained until September 1943 when they were transported to Auschwitz. They were separated at the camp, and the brother was subsequently killed.

In September or October 1944 Iskowitz was transferred again, this time to Buchenwald. He spent six and a half days of every week on work parties, the half-day respite on Sunday being the only way to measure the passage of time. And somehow he avoided, day by day and week by week, the arbitrary decision that meant death. Even the knowledge that the war was coming to an end was no promise of security. Iskowitz heard a rumour that all the remaining inmates of the camp would be killed before the Allied troops arrived. He and a number of others broke out of the satellite compound of Buchenwald where they were billeted, an event recalled in the 1948 painting *Escape* (No. 12). As he ran away he was shot by a guard and left for dead. Later in the day fellow prisoners picked him up and carried him back to the camp. There, suffering from desperate malnutrition and severe injuries, he was amongst the few survivors liberated by the American forces who reached the camp on 11 April 1945.

Through those years of the war Iskowitz continued to paint and draw despite the conditions and in defiance of the ever-present dangers of punishment or death should he be detected. Yet it was those conditions that demanded he continue. The work, the interest, the commitment, and the exercise of skills were necessary for the continued existence of the drive and incentive for survival. It was a special drive for it meant not only to survive against all odds of success but also to transcend the knowledge that survival was a wholly arbitrary matter. The phenomenon of an individual's survival against hopeless odds has often been described, never

more sharply perhaps than by Viktor Frankl, a psychiatrist who also spent the war years in Nazi concentration camps.⁴ Frankl tells of two aspects he observed amongst those people who retained the inner strength to survive: first, a determination to retain the continuity of their lives, keeping their own pasts alive and second, engaging in some activity that concentrated their attention and held an intrinsic value for them.

For Iskowitz the need to paint has never been in question. The activity of painting and the continuity of his ambition to be an artist are one and the same. His conversation even now will take him back again and again to his childhood. "I was six years old when I started. I couldn't copy. I just did what I did. There was no art school, no art teachers. It wasn't until much later that I learned something about art history."⁵ He is insistent that it has never been the intervention of other experiences, whether those of the war or subsequent years, that determined his drive. He emphasizes the wholeness and continuity of his ambition which began in childhood, at the time when he began to paint, at the time when his family was the core of his life. Everything stems from there.

Of the work he did during the war only three pieces are known to survive. The earliest, *Action* (No. 1), dates from 1941 and was made of an event he witnessed in Kielce when a young child was torn from its mother and murdered. The other two, *Buchenwald* (No. 2) and *Condemned* (No. 3), were both made at Buchenwald. He left the drawing *Action* behind in Kielce in 1943 when he was transported to Auschwitz. It was recovered for him by a friend who returned there after the war. He had to leave a large group of works behind at Auschwitz. When he knew that he was to be transferred from there he tried to recover them from their hiding place but the opportunity to do so undetected was denied him. He kept *Buchenwald* and *Condemned* concealed under the floor boards of the barracks and was able to take them with him after liberation. These three works, therefore, are special documents both in their witness to the history of the events they relate and as personal statements of a man for whom the making of

pictures had been and would remain the core of his life.

These three works differ from the other early pieces in two important respects. First, they were made directly of the subjects and events rather than being memories of events, and second, they precede any substantial training or even knowledge that Iskovitz later gained about other art. They were formed directly out of experience, out of a need to give form to what was seen and felt rather than from events contemplated and set down into conventionally developed artistic terms. The drawing is simple, the understanding of how the relationship between three-dimensional form and two-dimensional line is rendered remains naïve; the details of description are awkwardly made. But there is a power in giving expression to feeling that is as unquestionable as it is extraordinary. Look simply to the contrast of gesture between the SS soldier and the mother and child in *Action*. The rigid geometry of the soldier's arms, modified only by the ugly distortion of his hands with their over-long thumbs and gripping claw-like fingers, contrasts with the enfolding arms that unite the mother and child. The outrage at the event is expressed precisely because the way in which the two embraced figures are drawn denies their separate existences.

Looking at this drawing brings one immediately to the meaning which resides not in style but in the need to give form to the horror of an event. For this he has only the simplest of graphic schema and a system of cross-hatching that, serving the whole range of chiaroscuro and of surface texture, had been developed into a complex range of differentiated tones. It is a way of drawing learned and developed in the most direct and yet most difficult way - by looking at and observing the natural world and seeking its transformation into two-dimensional terms. It is a way of drawing that emerged from the representational structure of the graphic schemes he had developed as a child.

What is remarkable is how the necessity of working, of standing witness, led Iskovitz to develop the means of making such striking observations, means which could unify the details in the large-scale head of *Condemned* and the complex interac-

tion of the figures in *Buchenwald*. *Buchenwald* strikes right to the core of horror. At one level there are no individuals, there are only groups; one group moves towards death, the other remains. Nothing can explain why the division should occur where it does, and for a moment the groups remain linked by the corpse at their feet and the gesture of an arm. But as we look closely we find that each figure is separate from the group, each person is differentiated from all the others by his features, his expression, and his reaction to what is happening. And there is a third level, a level of irony found in the strength engendered by the solidarity of the group; the whole composition pivots on the figure to the right, hands to his face, on the very edge of those who remain, held into the group by the arm around his waist.

The determination to work demanded also a continual struggle for materials to paint with and paper to draw on. He was able to bribe certain guards for materials by making sketches of them. His major supply of materials while in Buchenwald came about through a lucky chance. He was sent on a work party to nearby Weimar where he spent about a week cleaning away rubble from the bombed city. He came across a supply of watercolour cakes and pieces of card from a destroyed art supply store. Concealing these under his coat he carried them back to Buchenwald. He made a drawing ink by dissolving the black watercolour blocks in ersatz coffee.

Iskovitz spent the time from liberation until the beginning of 1947 in hospitals or convalescent homes. After a short time in the Buchenwald area he was transferred to a hospital near Munich - part of the movement westwards to avoid being overtaken by the Russians advancing through Germany. As his health improved he began to work again and in 1946 registered at the Munich Academy of Art although he was unable to begin studies until January 1947. This was the first time that he came into contact with the broad range of art or with formal teaching.

The art he saw in Munich excited him but the teaching at the Academy did not. The approach was traditional, and he became impatient with the type

of work students were expected to produce. He stayed only one semester at the Academy but he remained in Munich, continuing with his own work and looking at the work of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century masters that could be seen in the commercial galleries. He recalls seeing work by Corot, Courbet and the Barbizon School, Monet, Matisse and Max Liebermann, early Kandinsky, and above all Bonnard. He also saw and was deeply impressed by reproductions of Chagall's work which he came across in magazines in 1947. He made one important personal contact in those years, with Oskar Kokoschka. The great Austrian painter visited the Munich Academy in 1947, saw Iskovitz's drawings of his wartime experiences, and was deeply affected by them. The two men met once or twice a week over a period of four or five months; those meetings constituted the most significant instruction Iskovitz had as an artist outside of his own observation of the work of others.

The works that Iskovitz made in Munich between 1947 and 1949 (outside the Academy studies) remained rooted in the past. He expanded the technical range of his work, experimenting with oil paints and gouache as well as continuing with pen, ink, and wash, but the subject matter all refers to his wartime experiences. More than just recalling those experiences, many of the works that survive both from the Munich and early Toronto periods are actually reconstructions of pictures he had made during the war and had had to leave behind. It was as if the justification for his being able to continue to work lay in the perpetuation of all that had happened. Besides the concentration camp subjects, a major group of works refers to the burning of Kielce in 1942 at the time of the "resettlements." This event, in which he was very nearly killed, physically and emotionally ripped the past from the present; he endured the loss of childhood and adolescence, the separation from his family.

Three portraits of the mid-1940s bring us sharply up against the meaning of his work, the drawing *Condemned* from 1945 and two oil paintings of 1947, a *Self-Portrait* (No. 11) and *The Artist's Mother* (No. 10). To look, first, at the *Self-Portrait* and *Condemned* is to see two reflections of the self, for in a

very real sense *Condemned* was as much a mirror held by Iskovitz to himself as it was a record of someone else; he gave substance to himself through his observation of the other. The *Self-Portrait* of 1947, which in structure is so similar to *Condemned*, stands as another aspect of the same thought: the one who faces death, the other who must face the fact of having survived.

In contrast to the reality both of death and of survival that exists in *Condemned* and *Self-Portrait*, *The Artist's Mother* is a vision of memory. It is like an image set down from a dream, uncertain despite the frontality of the pose which conflicts with the way in which the figure barely separates itself from the vague mist of the background. Details are unclear, the hands lack definition, the dress and ground are similar in texture. And in the painting of the face there is nothing to indicate the quickness of personality, like the immediacy of a glance caught in the complex of light and shadow. There is only a statement of the features, the essence of memory seeking to recall what was once so close and so familiar.

To see these three portraits and to recognize them within the context of Iskovitz's life is to come immediately to the meaning which his work held for him. It explains the impatience he felt with the training he received at the Munich Academy; for his work was not (nor has it ever become) concerned with art but with the grasp it provides to the complexity of reality, the complexity realized in these three pictures as he faces the realities of death, of living, and of memory. Everything for him is contained in manifesting those realities through art.

Iskovitz had family in Canada. A brother of his mother's had emigrated to Canada shortly after the turn of the century and settled in Toronto. This uncle learned after the war that Iskovitz was alive and contacted him, urging him to leave Europe. He sponsored his emigration to Canada, and in September, 1949, Iskovitz sailed for Halifax. From there he went directly by train to Toronto. He stayed with his relatives for just a short time before moving into his own place, soon beginning to work again. He made drawings of Toronto street scenes and views

on the Toronto Islands and earned money from portraits of relatives and friends but the works he valued were still those of the past. He brought just a few works with him from Munich. *Barracks* (No. 8) and *Waiting* (No. 9) both refer to Buchenwald; *Barracks* recalls the housing in the satellite work camp at Buchenwald where Iskowitz was held towards the end of the war, *Waiting* is of the barracks of the main compound. Other works refer to earlier events *Action* (No. 13) of 1948-9 was made of Kielce in 1942 and *Selection Auschwitz* (No. 7), a drawing made in 1947, is a new version of a drawing Iskowitz made at Auschwitz in 1944 showing the Nazi camp “doctor” making the selection of those to go to the gas chambers.

The theme of the family, of its loss and yet its essential reality in memory, is also referred to in the works he brought to Canada. *Ghetto* (No. 6) is again a memory of Kielce of the 1941-42 period, a rough and awkward drawing that contrasts with the sensitivity of *Through Life* (No. 4) in which the children do not so much sit on their mother’s knee as become (remain) a part of her. She does not hold them; her hand is bent, hanging limp and useless; she does not respond to them. It is a rare and special work amongst the group for although its subject was clearly a closely personal vision of the present and future, of the family and its destruction, its value is in the universality of its relevance and appeal.

Iskowitz found the transition to life in Canada harsh. He had to confront both a language barrier and a society whose values and experiences were very different from his own. And despite the warm welcome of his relatives, he met no understanding of his need and determination to be an artist. He made portraits in order to live but the work that remained important to him did not change in the first years in Toronto from what he had been doing in Munich. The theme of the “Mother and Child” reappears in *Memory (Mother and Child)* (No. 16), a loose and indistinct image in contrast to the rigidity of the harshly drawn *Hunger* (No. 17). And the formalizing of memory comes about in the drawing *Yzkor* (No. 21), an image of remembrance referring to

Yizkor, memorial services held on four occasions during the Jewish religious year.

Yet while there is no alteration in Iskowitz’s commitment to his memory of the past there comes, around 1952, a significant shift in the manner in which he gives it form. The nature of that shift is to move the emphasis from drawing to colour and in technique from watercolour washes over pen and ink to the opacity of gouache. *Moon: Buchenwald* (No. 22) refers to experiences at Buchenwald, and six works: *It Burns* (No. 23), *Burning Town* (No. 24), *Explosion* (No. 25), *Barrier* (No. 26), *Torah* (No. 15), and, in a slightly different mode, *Burning Synagogue* (No. 35) refer to the time of the Kielce “resettlements” in the fall of 1942. With their houses on fire people scatter in all directions in panic, desperate to save themselves and their possessions. But the course of destruction is overwhelming and *Explosion* engulfs the figures in the fire from which there is no escape. *Barrier* changes the mood and the pace of this group of works. Now all is destroyed and the figures exist only as shadows, memories, outlines, and silhouettes. It is as if the figures, at first reacting to the terror of particular events, have been transformed into memory, that the literal engulfing of the fire and destruction has been represented in terms of calm and in terms of a vividness not of violence but of colour.

Those memories of destruction, of fear, and of loss now find an equivalence in colour, not by a symbolic system of colour but by the reality of the act of painting itself. The act of painting is approached with a literal and, I would say, naïve directness. In these works he was recapturing the reality of his past, recapturing and in a sense atoning by keeping the memories vividly before him. The meaning of the work is closely tied to the fact of working on it. His approach is similar to the way that a child describes an event in a drawing. First he draws the outlines of the forms - as with the houses and the synagogue that appear in *Burning Synagogue* and *Burning Town* - and then he proceeds to destroy the buildings by painting over them with fiery colours. But within this group of Iskowitz’s work the extreme simplicity of that procedure is not inevitable. In *Explosion*, for instance, the spontaneity of

the event is given over directly to the supremacy of colour. The event, or rather Iskowitz's witness of it in memory, is given immediately in colour.

His notion of colour composition in these works is simply stated, reaching its most organized in *Side Street* (No. 20) and *Torah* (No. 15). In the latter, for instance, he works with an opposition of red to blue across the diagonal of the picture with modifications of the two primaries through mauve and purple, heightened here and there by yellow. In the opposite diagonal the gradual changes of red and yellow in the sky are matched, in the bottom right corner, by subtle modulation from purple to mauve. This colour construction is played against a simple linear perspective, the opposing visual tensions between the colour and perspective seeking to express the dynamics of the scene. Those tensions are literally interpreted so that the steeply canted angle of the two running figures is a logical result of the structure. The rabbi clutching the Torah is preceded by a girl whom Iskowitz identifies as a friend, Miriam, who did not survive the war.⁶ The choice of including these two figures is matched with an equivalent directness and literalness in the pictorial structure. Roughly stated though it may be in a picture like *Torah*, the essential point is quite clear – that the reality of memory and of the activity of painting are, for Iskowitz, indivisible.

This group of gouaches also includes the germination of another aspect of Iskowitz's work only fully developed during the 1960s, that is the notion of working in a series. This idea prevails not only in terms of the similarity of subject, style, and technique but in terms of a dynamic set up within the process of moving from one picture to another. We can describe within the series a force in which the changes from one work to the next become dictated by the dynamics of the work process rather than the continuity of narrative. Even at this early stage in Iskowitz's career, we can see the importance of that dynamism within a series of related works to the meaning of his artistic activity. This aspect has dominated his work over the past fifteen years or so where the interaction of memory (in the colours of a landscape) with the autonomy of the coloured surface of the painting must be worked through in a

series of pictures. If we look forward to the pattern of development in the works from the mid-1960s we find formal changes occurring regularly, sometimes each year, sometimes over a two- or three-year period as a particular aspect of painterly activity reaches a point of saturation. It is a pattern that became familiar in the painting of many artists during the 1960s and 1970s. I want to indicate here how the germ of that pattern was implicitly contained in Iskowitz's work at an early stage, at a stage when his work was still deeply immersed in the privacy of memory and in the expression of experiences that could not be shared.

III

In terms of subject matter, Iskowitz's work of 1952 was still substantially occupied with the events of the war, yet the manner of his work indicated, if not a new direction, at least the potential for a change of approach towards the process of working. That change of approach is found in 1952 with a group of works that marked the beginning of a major shift in the direction of his career. That direction is the one towards which his work is still aimed, his painting of the Canadian landscape.

Iskowitz had not neglected landscape; he had gone on sketching outings with Kokoschka in Munich and he had worked on the Toronto Islands from the start of his new life in Toronto. But it was in 1952 that he began to reach out, to seek other contacts. He began going to the Artist's Workshop at Sherbourne and Bloor Streets to draw from the model, a practice he continued until 1959 or 1960. The Workshop offered no instruction and the artists paid a small fee for the hire of the model. More significant both in the immediate and long term was that he began in 1952 to take his first trips out into the countryside north of Toronto. He worked first in the Markham and Uxbridge areas and then in 1953 went to Lake Simcoe. He still remains closely attached to those areas and even now, during the summer, will take the bus to Markham to spend a

day sketching. This despite the fact that the area has changed radically; the open fields where he drew and painted in the 1950s have now given way to suburban development. The very sense of his attachment and constant return to particular places or areas is important for our understanding of the meaning that the landscape came to have for him, even as he expanded his horizons to the Parry Sound and McKellar Lake regions in the mid-1950s and then to Northern Ontario and Manitoba in the later 1960s.

In the early 1950s it was a matter of record and, with the exception of very few artists, a matter beyond argument, that the notion of art in Canada, or rather of a Canadian art, was found quintessentially in the painting of landscape. Furthermore, this meant the particular style of landscape painting developed and practised by the Group of Seven and their followers. That style, developed out of late-Impressionist and Art Nouveau manners had met initial criticism for its lack of naturalism. Lack of naturalism meant, of course, that the style looked different from the placid academic style of nineteenth-century landscape paintings. In time, however, the original distress at the appearance of the work waned and the Group's manner of painting came to be seen not as radical interpretation in painterly terms of the landscape of the North but rather as a true response to "real" appearances. In other words it became natural. It followed the classic form of the transformation of the cultural into the natural, so that to doubt its truth was like a violation of nature itself. The conditioning that this brought to the audience for art in Toronto in the 1950s was a major barrier to artistic change. The challenge this raised was first, and most forcefully, met by that group of artists who formed Painters 11 in 1953.⁷

For Iskowitz, that particular challenge was not his. Although he had begun to make contact with other artists, it was in a mainly social context and he had no contact with the Painters 11 as a group. The matter of making art was then and has remained for Iskowitz largely an isolated matter. He knew the work of the Group of Seven and enjoyed in particular the work of Thomson, Harris, and Varley.

But he did not read the challenge of their work in terms of breaking the hold that aesthetic held on art in Canada. Many years later in an interview he recalled that when he exhibited in the early 1960s his landscapes were criticized because they did not look like the work of the Group of Seven. "But," he remarked, "when I went North, [I found] it didn't *look* like the Group of Seven."⁸ His reason for turning to landscape must be seen in the context of his earlier figurative work; it was largely, if not exclusively, dependent on matching his own need to paint with the reality of his feeling. He had an interest in but not a concern with the other art being made around him. Regardless of the increasing sophistication of his technique and its blossoming into a brilliant understanding of the luminescence of colour, his work and its process have always been naïve in the particular sense of the word that I described earlier.

We can follow closely the way that Iskowitz approaches the painting of landscape, first by depicting objects in space and then by gradually transforming the immediacy of vision into coloured light. It was a process he had already been through, at least in its early stages, with his figurative and narrative pictures. But it is with the landscapes of 1952 and in the years following that we see the full range of technique in drawings and paintings. Thirty years later he continues to make landscape drawings and it is interesting, briefly, to anticipate the direction of his work, its change and its essential unity, by looking at some drawings of 1952 (Nos. 28 to 33) in comparison to a work (Fig. 1) of 1980, *Landscape No. 2* (Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, N.Y.).

Given that the years of practice have brought him the ability to make each mark of the pen tell, the principal shift in the later drawings is to allow space and light as represented by the paper alone to describe the landscape. In the earlier drawings it is the graphic means themselves that describe space by marking both the development of perspective and differentiation of space with textures. In the later drawing the marks of the pen are used to carry the eye across and through the sheet of paper so that it is the movement of the eye which builds the space, not the explicit descriptions of the pen.



Fig. 1
Landscape No. 2 1980
 Pen and ink
 43.2 x 58.4 cm
 Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, N.Y.

Iskowitz's experience of working with colour had been, up to 1952, principally with watercolour and gouache techniques. In these the luminescence of colour came through the thin painted layers over the white paper and the subtlety of the colour lay in the gradual mixture and flow of the water-based colours. The technical demands of oil paint, with the layers of colour being modified optically, the one by the other, is quite different. Coming to terms with those demands was what Iskowitz addressed in the landscapes of 1952. It was a lesson slowly learned. *Apple Orchard* (No. 34) of 1952, one of the earliest of the group, shows how his first approach was simply to try to adapt his earlier techniques to oil paint. In a pen drawing there are different conventions of line types, the outline to describe form, cross-hatching for texture and three-dimensionality, scribbled lines to give substance to a background.⁹ The line, whether contour or hatching, is for the most part a convention to describe something which does not, in fact, exist in nature. But with paint there is one vital and real point of contact between the paint itself and the perceptions of the natural world; both are appearances of coloured light. In paint it is possible to equate the experience of perception

positively; that was the lesson to be learned. In *Apple Orchard* Iskowitz still largely depends on linear forms to describe specific shapes, the trees and fences, as well as the generalized atmosphere of the meadow and the sky.

We find in a picture like *Parry Sound* of 1954 (No. 37) the initial stages of Iskowitz coming to terms with the medium in the way the density of the pine foliage is *painted* rather than drawn. The reflections in the lake do not need a precise description of form and Iskowitz can maintain a looseness in the painting of the water and sky. He transforms the description of the scene into one in which the illusion of atmosphere and the material quality of paint draw equivalent. But in another way there seems to be as much interest in the structure of paint as in the description of forms. The reality of the activity is beginning to lie first within the work itself, not in the illusion it produces.

More striking in this regard is one of the *Landscape* paintings of 1954 (No. 39). Iskowitz gets away from the convention of landscape that insists on a "view," a balance of compositional elements and a rational description of space. This is not so much a painting of a particular place as it is a painterly engagement with the raw complexity of form, light, colour, atmosphere, and movement. He can see the fullness and unity of nature, less concerned with the spatial linking between separate parts or the unity gained by aerial perspective,¹⁰ and more concerned with the way that the whole field of vision is packed with a continuity of coloured "events." (Recognizing that and coming to terms with it in the context of paint had been at the core of Cézanne's work many years before; the problem Cézanne took for his own was concerned with a statement about vision and not about style.)

In the *Landscape* painting we can see Iskowitz beginning to find how vision is expressible not only through conventions of perspective but through the fullness in the act of painting itself. It is an early, intuitive, perhaps even accidental recognition of the truth of vision he was to pursue. The trees, the stream, the middle ground foliage, and the light from the sky are treated with almost equivalent forces of colour through the structure of paint.

The two small paintings *Dusk* (No. 44) and *Swirling Night* (No. 46) of 1955 in giving so little emphasis to naturalistic description turn the activity of paint into the primary purpose of the works. In choosing after sunset subjects he limits the descriptive demands to broad sensations of light and dark and heightens the values of the painting itself. A more complex night scene of 1955, *Midnight* (No. 47), the largest picture of the group, makes an interesting comparison with *Apple Orchard* of just three years before. The changes are striking not only in technique but also in the direction of his interest, of what he is doing through his painting. It is not only that he works in painterly not draughtsman-like terms but that the dynamics of vision are equivalent to the dynamics of the act of painting.

Small and crudely painted works though they are, this group of pictures of the 1950s is seminal to Iskowitz's work at several levels. Most important is that they register a major shift in attitude towards the meaning of his work within his life. They emphasize the present and his presence in the here and now. They are not located in the past, that past of sorrow and terror and of loss, nor do they show a sense of homelessness in his adopted country. Earlier it was as if the reality of who he was resided in the past and his need for identity could be realized only by keeping the fullness of that experience before him; as if he were a surviving memorial to all he had known and loved and lost. But it was a private matter, as the works themselves were private. They were not made as documentary evidence but as necessary expressions first to keep his mind alive and then to give purpose to the loss of the past.

Gradually he 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. There could be no real understanding of the horror he experienced and the loss he suffered. Such deep loss cannot be spoken, only suggested to the real or imagined experience of others. And what was part of the experience of so many people in Europe was relatively rare in Canada. Iskowitz began to show how he had to think in terms of the circumstances in

which he found himself, carrying the expectations and assumptions of such a society. This was not undertaken in any concern with or expectation of the effect of his work on other people but rather as a matter of facing, painfully, the fact of what he now was and where he was. It was, in a new sense, a matter of survival.

The turn outwards, towards the landscape in 1952, was not a total break with the earlier work for he continued to paint wartime subjects into 1953, but with the exception of a few portraits, landscape quickly became the sole subject. Landscape, even if seen through the particular vision of one man, is part of the experience of all. The cycle of nature is a fact and a symbol of continuance and continuity. It is pervasive, too obvious a symbol unless its generality is grounded in the specific experience of a man's life that takes it from the commonplace and invests it with a heightened value. Iskowitz's turn towards the painting of the Canadian landscape had this heightened value.

It was at precisely the same time that he became more involved with the artistic life around him. In 1953 he began some part-time teaching at Holy Blossom Temple and the YMHA. He first exhibited work in the 1954 annual show of the Canadian Society of Graphic Artists held at the then Art Gallery of Toronto. He continued to exhibit with the Society through 1963. He first showed with the Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolour in 1958, a year after his first one-man show at the Hayter Gallery, Toronto.

IV

The oil paintings of the early and mid-1950s were small and heavily painted. Density of paint and emphatic brushwork predominated over colour. Even when the colour was chromatically strong it lacked luminosity. The colouristic values he sought, however, did exist in his watercolours, as an important group made at Parry Sound in 1955 clearly shows. Here, for the first time, he uses

colour as the principal structural means for making a picture. Largely disregarding local colours, he conceives colour in terms of the interaction of hues to build up an overall sense of light. Although there is still an explicit representational base in these works, their strength lies in the way that the luminosity of the colour activates the whole surface.

The direction implied by these works of the mid-1950s was realized in the early 1960s. Landscape remains the main emphasis but in a few instances the approach is more openly subjective and self-conscious. This occurs in two self-portraits in which his image of himself all but disappears under the texture and colour of the paint. The more explicit of the two, *Self-Portrait*, 1963 (No. 53), is a watercolour. The face appears almost as an after-thought, a reflection suddenly and unexpectedly caught. In the other picture, *Seated Figure* (No. 54), an oil painting of the following year, the figure is barely discernible. This picture retains the figure more as a ghost image, an intention rather than a fact, for the fact of the painting lies in the fullness of its painted surface. These two pictures, by their very retention of figurative images (particularly the introspection of self-portraits), show how far the content of his painting has shifted from the earlier figurative works. The 1947 *Self-Portrait* (No. 11) and the portrait of his friend *Eric Freifeld* (No. 48) of 1955¹¹ depend on a gestural moulding of paint to draw the figure out from the ground. In contrast to works of the early 1960s (and as we shall see also in the landscape-inspired works of the same period) the relationship of figure to paint is inverted. The emphasis of the paint, which earlier had been used to make the figure stand out, is now used to make a surface autonomous in itself, sealed and unified. The appearance of the figure is all but a memory, a reference only to the starting point in nature.

The starting point for the landscapes in the early 1960s is principally the tree. Occasionally the sky is also taken as subject, for instance in the important if not wholly satisfactory canvas *Sunset* (No. 49) of 1960. With the evening sky as his subject Iskowicz avoids any context or reference to the earth and by that he isolates the scale of the natural event. He transforms it into an event whose parameters are

drawn only within the picture itself. It has no value as a "view" and because of its isolation from a spatial scheme it also loses any value as a particular description, as a picture of a special time and place. The subject is kept abstract and generalized and by that its particularity, its reality in fact, exists only within the picture. Curious as it is, *Sunset* can be seen through events over the next few years to contain the essence of Iskowicz's development. And after the slow changes in the previous decade, progress through the 1960s is swift and sure.

Sunset marks an important step but the core picture is unquestionably *Spring* (No. 50) of 1962 followed by a similar work, *Forest* of 1963 (Fig. 2). It



Fig. 2
Forest 1963
Oil on canvas
165.1 x 139.7 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos

is from here that the direction for the work of the next two decades is set. In both these pictures he concentrates his attention on a single tree. He moves very close so that the foliage fills the whole frame of vision, allowing only a small area of open sky in *Spring*, eliminating even that in *Forest*.

Spring exists as a play of colours. Coloured lights like sparkles penetrate and dissolve away the foliage. Or rather they transpose the foliage so that nothing can distinguish foliage from flashes of light. Leaves, light, wind, all the perceptions of the artist are expressed equally through coloured light. It is to be seen not in terms of a description of particulars but as the reality of the painter's experience. An experience which he makes confidently and on a grand scale. Everything that was to occur, that was to make Iskowitz's work, is contained here; the interchange with natural events, the pre-eminence of colour, the loss of particular distinctions between earth and trees and sky, the boldness of scale.

But it was the step beyond *Spring*, in some ways a very short one, that was the most dramatic. What was stated in the next group of pictures set not simply the style, but the justification for the work he has continued to do in the years since then. This group of works made between 1964 and 1966, both oil paintings and watercolours, must be closely examined.

Sextet (No. 59), *Summer Sounds* (No. 60), and *Autumn Images* (No. 61) date from 1965; *Summer Skies* (No. 63) was made the following year as was the richly painted but more loosely structured *Summer Blues* (No. 62). These pictures mark a radical abstraction from *Spring* and *Forest*. The three pictures of 1965 depend on similar formal structure. Starting about one-sixth from the lower edge of the canvas the flow of colour fans out; downwards to establish a base in the lower part of the picture, upwards in lighter, looser strands of colour. These channels of colour, emerging out of a misty ground, are surrounded on all sides by a wide margin. The relationship between negative and positive is ambiguous so that the distinction between the image and its containment within the whole frame sets up a strong visual pulse.

The dynamics of this structure separates these paintings from anything that he had done before. Yet it is clear how close they are to *Spring* and *Forest*, the paintings of trees; the thicker and shorter masses of colour in the lower part are like roots, the upper parts fanning out like branches and foliage. And this reference to the tree is, in some pictures, put into a wider context - in *Summer Sounds* for instance, the upper part of the painting is predominantly blue, like a tree standing out against the sky.

There is a point in the works of the mid-1960s when the fluidity of the paint and the fanning effect of the colour structure become the motivation of the pictures, like an expressive growth from a central core. There is an equation of growth between the natural development of the tree and the dynamic development in the gestures of painting. But as that internal creative gesture of the picture emerges more and more strongly so the retention of the representational elements becomes less relevant; the *Parry Sound* watercolour of 1965 (No. 57) and the small *Untitled* oil painting of 1964 (No. 56) in particular are free of naturalistic references.

The tree remains the most important starting point for the pictures of the mid-1960s, but the sky also continues to be a subject. If we look back at the treatment of the skies in the gouaches of 1951 and 1952, at the *Sunset* painting of 1960 and watercolours like *Sunset* (No. 52) of 1962, we can see how the paintings of 1965 and 1966 depend almost as much on them as on the tree paintings like *Spring* and *Forest*. The two watercolours *Sunset* of 1962 and *Autumn Sky* of 1964 are particularly interesting in the move towards an autonomous colour structure while still being directly inspired by the late afternoon sky. Whereas in *Sunset* a sense of the horizon remains, this disappears from the 1964 watercolour as Iskowitz relates in structure and form the moisture-laden atmosphere of the sky through the fluid washes of watercolour. This relationship is further exploited in the 1966 paintings *Summer Skies* (No. 63) and *Autumn Sky* (No. 55) where the flow of colour is developed more in response to the act of painting than to an interest in depicting particular natural forms.

This development goes even further in *Summer Blues* (No. 62) both by its adoption of the horizontal format, relatively rare in his oil paintings at that period, and the somewhat eccentric formal organization. And what is here undeniable is that the colour structure essentially determines the painting. It is a simple colour structure, with a principal axis between the primaries red and blue and the mediation of yellow and green used in such a way as to heighten the contrast of the red-blue duel. Iskowitz shows here that the interest in colour is not to approximate an impression of skies or trees but to be the reality of the painting. Everything lies within that.

Though vitally dependent on the experience of the landscape, his paintings were made in the studio. Not only that but they were invariably painted at night under artificial light. This practice has changed little over the years. He will go to the studio late at night and spend a couple of hours reading, or perhaps taking a nap. Around midnight or later he will start to work, often beginning with drawing before turning to painting. Sometimes he may spend the whole night drawing and not reach the point where he wants to paint. Even when painting, the routine of work is slow and deliberate for by working only with oil he must build up layer by layer, allowing time for drying. He may spend a whole night on a single colour, or on modifying a colour that he had laid down previously.

Careful scrutiny of the sequence of Iskowitz's work in the mid-1960s shows clearly how he develops the gradual shift from the references to landscape - to skies and trees - towards the development of an autonomous painted structure - to something that arises from the dynamics of its own making. But this development, whether to retain an expressive link with nature, or whether to lose all representational value, has only marginal interest in itself. Such a pictorial development was not in itself unusual, nor was it new; Kandinsky and Mondrian had both taken it, resolved it in fact before Iskowitz was born, and painters subsequent to them had assumed that transformation from external to internal reference. In painting in the United States the equivalence developed in the 1940s between painterliness and feeling, painterliness and anxiety gave

way, in the late 1950s, to the autonomous, self-developing painted structure that in its independence asserted a reality available to everyone.

This, in the mid-1960s, was what was happening in Toronto around Iskowitz. And in his own work he developed by 1967 an individual manner of painting that had, superficially at least, all but submerged representational elements under the freely developed painterly surface. More than that he had arrived at an "image," at an identifiable, strongly stamped out form (in line with the notion of the "systemic")¹² which was capable of bearing variation without being fundamentally altered.

The emergence of such strongly identifiable and yet flexible images is established in related series of paintings made in 1966 and 1967. The first stage is, in essence, a transitional mode and occurs in only a small group of works of which *Spring No. 4* and



Fig. 3
Spring No. 4 1966
Oil on canvas
111.8 x 96.5 cm
Whereabouts unknown



Fig. 4
Summer Landscape No. 3 1966
 Oil on canvas 111.8 x 96.5 cm
 Whereabouts unknown

Summer Landscape No. 3 (Figs. 3, 4) are examples. In these paintings the links with the immediately preceding series of works are clear, but the coloured forms are more boldly asserted so that the paintings become a series of colour veins distinctly separated the one from the other. The next series of paintings, a more numerous group, breaks up - or perhaps better, breaks into - the streams of colour, dividing them into smaller areas, rationalizing the structure; *Autumn Landscape No. 6* (No. 65) for instance disposes thirty-six forms in six rows and six columns. Within each of the forms the predominant colour is seen to emerge out of a complex substructure.

The appearance of these paintings brings them, at first glance, into the broader development of painting in the 1960s. The strongly stated image, the full colour, the tendency towards a regular rhythmic pattern, the engagement of the whole surface so as



Fig. 5
 Morris Louis
Lambda 1960-61
 Acrylic resin on canvas
 266.7 x 391.2 cm
 Collection Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
 Gift of the Women's Committee Fund, 1965

to reduce the sense of a distinction between figure and ground, the serialization of paintings - all these elements which could be found in Iskowitz's work were part of the currency of the day. It was a currency in which the example of Morris Louis' great series of paintings known as "unfurleds" made between 1958 and 1960 were prominent (Fig. 5).

Those paintings are characterized by two aspects of technique, first that paint is poured onto and stained into the raw canvas, and second the colours are unmixed on the canvas; the structure of colour and form is instantaneous and coexistent.

The similarity between work of this sort and Iskowitz's is superficial and deceptive. He has, in essence, nothing to do with that direction of painting. His concern is less radical, evolving from a notion and tradition of painting that is fundamentally Impressionist; his notion of painting is one in which his use of colour forms an analogy to the atmospheric structure of colour in nature. His concern in building up a picture is not, as it was with Louis, to establish the literal character of the surface, but to retain the fiction of the painted surface, to retain not a description but an impres-

sion of naturalistic space, as something which is made up layer on layer.

In Toronto around 1960 this distinction could be found in the different attitudes to painting taken by Jock Macdonald and Jack Bush. Macdonald's painting, even in the last two or three years of his life and even with his elimination of representational elements, was always dependent on symbolic values and their base in nature. Bush, on the other hand, even in his loosely painted works of around 1960, had come to realize that his concern as a painter rested on the literal character of painting.

Iskowitz had little contact with these artists although he had been very impressed by Macdonald's exhibition at Dorothy Cameron's Here and Now Gallery in 1960. He knew and admired Bush's work and he was aware of the work of Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland, but he recognized little if any similarity between their concerns and his own. We are, with Iskowitz, looking at a closely personal career and one whose changes are gradual and self-referential. What is difficult to estimate, of course, is the extent to which the pace of change in his work was affected by the work around him. There was a freedom and openness in painting in Toronto in the 1960s that at least presented an atmosphere in which new work could be developed less hampered by hidebound attitudes. Such an atmosphere surely had an effect on anyone open to his surroundings even if, as with Iskowitz, his own interests were firmly independent.

Such independence, such concern with the internal process of his own work, makes each stage of Iskowitz's work clear. In *Autumn Landscape No. 5* (No. 64) and *Autumn Landscape No. 6* the connection with the earlier pictures is apparent with the foliage-like fan and counterbalancing root-like structure. The formal structure has been simplified and the balance of the horizontal and vertical axes is set by a firmly symmetrical arrangement. This pattern remains consistent through the series only changing in relation to the overall size of the canvas so that the coloured areas remain consistent in size: *Autumn Landscape No. 3* (Fig. 6) which is just 127 x 96.5 cm has four rows rather than six; *Autumn*



Fig. 6
Autumn Landscape No. 3 1967
Oil on canvas
127.0 x 96.5 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos

Landscape No. 1 at 180.3 x 142.2 cm has six rows across and seven deep.

At first sight changes of this kind seem to be largely a matter of common sense: consciously they were probably developed this way. But by keeping the coloured areas approximately similar in size a deeper sensibility towards the nature of the image is implied. A sensibility which is in contrast to the direction that advanced painting was moving in the 1960s, in contrast to the way that the fiction of painting was, for many, giving way to a literal consideration of the canvas itself. Iskowitz does not, in essence, change his approach to the activity of painting. We can look back to paintings like *Summer Sounds*, to *Spring*, and even into works of the mid-1950s like the *Landscape* painting of 1954 and find complete consistency. The notion of a landscape space built up layer on layer from foreground to background is gradually transposed into the multiple layers of colour where the form and colour which predominate have emerged gradually out of the mass of colour beneath.

With the paintings of 1967 the nature of Iskowitz's mature work was manifested; the relationship between the interpretation of nature and the dynamics of painted colour were established. More than that he had affirmed what being a painter meant for him. He showed that his concern was not with the issue of painting itself, the issue that was being argued in the 1960s, but rather with personal values, with self-identity through a positive, material expression. For even if his notion of painting was still rooted in an earlier tradition its purpose was immediate and direct. He said in an interview, "I don't try to prove anything. I don't try to prove that I am a painter. It happens that I express myself in this way. . . . Why do I paint? It is just a certain kind of expression: my expression."¹³ But there is an equivalence between the accumulation of nature and the accumulation of the painted surfaces. The evocation of memory is both realized and gradually modified in the process of the work. His work is not an abstraction from nature, but rather the juncture between two levels of reality, the reality of experience and the reality of expression through painting.

V

In 1967 Iskowitz took his first trip into the far North. It came about through a chance remark by John Reeves, a photographer who did work for Dorothy Cameron. Iskowitz knew Reeves through his own association with Cameron's Here and Now Gallery. Reeves had mentioned that he had flown over the Manitoba landscape and had been strongly reminded of Iskowitz's paintings. Iskowitz was excited by this connection and it motivated him to apply for a Canada Council travel grant to go to Churchill. He was powerfully affected by the experience particularly by a helicopter flight over the area. "I saw all those things that were happening in my paintings." Flying close to the ground, turning, rising, and falling he was involved with the pattern of colours from trees, to lakes to rock, not statically like a map but dynamically, with rapidly changing layers of colours.

The experience of the northern trip (which he has repeated on a number of occasions) led directly to

major changes in his paintings, most notably in the two series *Lowlands* and *Uplands*. He has described how these two series came from the swooping dives and climbs of the helicopter; the *Lowlands* as the pilot dove down, the *Uplands* as he pulled up over hills and trees. It is important to recognize, however, that the changes this trip brought about operated essentially within the structure for painting that he had already developed in the pictures of 1966 and 1967. What we see here is a situation where a particular experience can be exploited precisely because the artist knows how the experience can be used. His previous work had prepared for the possibility; "I saw all those things that were happening in my paintings," tells everything about the relationship between experience, memory, and painting.

Towards the end of 1968 the first substantial result of the northern trip of 1967 is seen. The new vision the experience had raised led Iskowitz into two different directions, both of which have continued to the present time. One direction was established by two major paintings of 1968-69, *Seasons No. I* (No. 66) and *Seasons No. II* (Fig. 7). The other

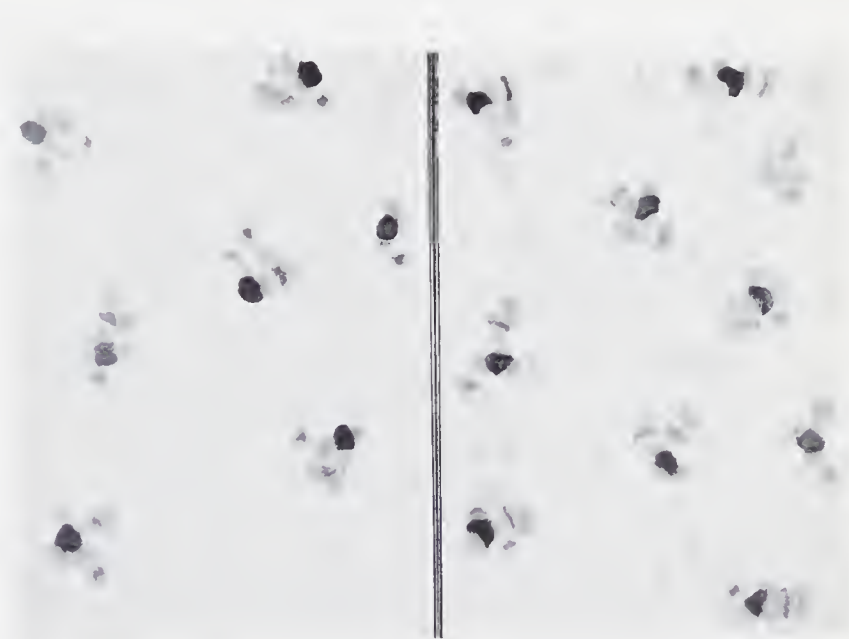


Fig. 7
Seasons No. II 1968-69
 Oil on canvas
 254.0 x 355.6 cm (diptych)
 Courtesy Gallery Moos

direction, and the dominant one at the turn of the decade, was that of the *Uplands* series.

We have seen in the paintings through the 1960s, and particularly those of 1967, a strong sense of symmetry and tightness of formal organization. Expressed in a different way, this characterizes the *Uplands* series. In contrast, the two *Seasons* pictures appear, at first sight, to oppose this. Their structure seems quite arbitrary, establishing no image, and scattering colour across the surfaces. And the colour itself, rather than being concentrated into tightly defined shapes, say like *Autumn Landscape No. 5* appears in loosely grouped clusters that seem as though they have broken through the upper skin of paint. Others seem to lie just beneath the surface. There seems to be a strong atmospheric quality, like glimpses through mist or cloud of trees and lakes and, to press that analogy, a featurelessness, an unending sequence of trees, lakes, and hills. In this sense these pictures are as representational as anything he had done in the previous six years. But, in contrast, they develop two new pictorial features. One is simply their scale; at 254 x 355.6 cm these paintings are much bigger than his previous works and exploit the special effects that colour on a large scale brings.

The second new feature is that the paintings are diptychs, two separately stretched canvases abutted together. The interest in developing the diptych came out of an exhibition he had in 1966 at Gallery Moos of watercolours from the *Parry Sound Variations* series. Two rows of nine pictures each were hung very close together. Iskowitz was struck by the flow of colour this brought between one picture and another. By transposing this effect into the oil paintings he was able to exercise a freedom in gesture without giving up overall control. The diptych form establishes a simple binary relationship between left and right. Further, the physical division in the centre controls the illusion, maintains the tension between depth and surface. It was an important development for Iskowitz and one that he has continued to follow. But it is characteristic of his intuitive approach to painting that the decision to make *Seasons* as a diptych was not originally planned; he had made one painting and as he was

working on another realized how the flow from the first was being continued in the second. He still works in the same way, allowing the particular course of a painting to determine whether or not to extend it into the diptych form.

The direction and the radical development that the *Seasons* pictures marked, however, were not to be the predominant concerns in the immediately succeeding years. Instead, he explored different possibilities in the very large paintings of the *Uplands* series made between 1969 and 1972. The series comprises eleven pictures, beginning with a three-part work *Triptych* (No. 70) in 1969-70 followed by ten diptychs designated *Uplands A* to *Uplands K* (omitting the letter "I" from the sequence). The series of paintings is a mature and confident statement, the assertion of a mode of work and an approach to painting wholly his own, justifying the decision of the mid-1950s to make the landscape the source of his work. Now matching the scale that painting in general had been taking through the 1960s and spurred on by the new scale and perspective he had on the landscape itself he began to work on a very large picture, *Triptych*. Ten feet high at its tallest point and just over thirteen feet across, it is still the largest painting he has done.

Triptych is a strange picture, rich in colour but flat in texture and disturbing in the references that it evokes. Roald Nasgaard in 1973 described the picture this way:

Its round-arched altarpiece format with wings in perspective, its radically flattened landscape image with an à-la-Friedrich suggestion of the lyrical sublime, and its overlay of symbol-implying, freely floating forms point to a struggle to find new solutions to the presentation of an *andachtig* confrontation with the landscape.¹⁴

The reference to the landscape painting of the German Romantics is interesting and valuable. This group of artists, working in the early nineteenth century, were convinced painting was capable of giving expression to the deepest of feelings, both sensually and symbolically. But whereas Caspar David Friedrich, the greatest painter of his genera-

tion, succeeded in reaching this potential as much through a finely paced understanding of the limitations of painting, others confused passion with painterly integrity. Perhaps the most intense of the group was Philipp Otto Runge who once wrote, "I need to find words or forms or *something else* to express my innermost feelings."¹⁵ It was Runge, more than any of the Romantics, who sought to give expression to a universal and religious will through the painting of landscape.

The theory and painting of this tradition lie outside Iskowitz's experience. He cannot say what it was that encouraged him to have stretchers made in the triptych form (and the fact that the central part is higher and wider than the outside parts was not originally his intention but a misunderstanding on the part of the stretcher maker). He was attracted by the notion of a painting of such a width and shape that the spectator would feel immersed in the painting. And there is no question but that he equated the involvement in the activity of painting and the immersion in the colour and space of landscape with an expression of his own reality. But the painting, marvellous in its richness of colour, is lost in its physical presentation to a theatricality which draws away from the integrity of the painting itself. That loss was soon reversed in the great series of *Uplands* paintings for in these he grasps with the greatest boldness and forcefulness the strength of painting itself, of shape and colour.

The *Uplands* paintings are all diptychs, their invariable form having a large and brilliantly coloured shape apparently floating across the picture, a sensation heightened by the appearance of a horizon line. This form is bold in its eccentricity as it evokes a double view, both standing in the landscape and moving over it. The horizon line is static and stable but the large forms that stand before it do not describe the landscape but call up the experience of memory. It is as if the picture is something "brought back," something that lives within the experience of the artist which stands against, and may even be in conflict with the static concept of landscape. This notion of painting landscape can properly trace its heritage to the late *Waterlilies* paintings of Monet, in the sense of drawing together the totality of

landscape - sky, trees, and water become a single image, part substance, part reflection and, in total, painting.

The reference to Monet is not a matter of seeking to establish a pedigree (a matter of respectability and value), but rather it points to what sort of painter Iskowitz is and what the meaning of his work is. That meaning is contained within the notion of late-Impressionism and stands quite separate from the specialized concern with the formal and literalist character of painting. The forms of the *Uplands* pictures float, and they do not simply imply but explicitly *state* a condition of illusion. He brings together on the planes of the picture the singleness of memory with the flatness that is the truthful condition of painting. What would be a mark of failure in formalist painting is for Iskowitz the natural result of the function of his painting. "I always try to get endless space," he has said, "that won't stop the eye, so that it can look through."¹⁶

Iskowitz had been exhibiting regularly at the Gallery Moos since 1964 but it was through the *Uplands* series that his work was brought to a wider audience. Paintings from this series formed the core of the paintings shown at Venice in 1972 when Iskowitz was chosen, along with Walter Redinger, to represent Canada at the Biennale. For Iskowitz his inclusion was a major mark of recognition, a statement of the value of his achievement. Iskowitz's work received favourable comment from the international press but very little reflective criticism. There has, in general, been a lack of serious critical response to Iskowitz's painting even in the past ten years through which his reputation has been widely acknowledged. There have been, to date, only a couple of articles of critical substance that make serious attempts to deal with his art rather than to record (often incorrectly) his biography. The fact is that Iskowitz has been totally his own artist. All but uninterested in the theory or politics of art, he offers what he has which is his friendship and his painting. His work exists on its own terms but at a time when the assessment of art is so heavily dependent on categorizing, the purpose and contribution of an artist can be lost or diluted. Iskowitz is not a radical artist, his work is not a

source for others in a direct sense and it stands outside of the mainstream. It must be seen in the context that he has built for it.

VI

The *Uplands* series was, as one can now look back on it, pivotal in the development of Iskowitz's paintings; as important to the end of the sixties as *Spring* had been to the beginning. For at the beginning of the 1960s the purpose in Iskowitz's work had been to find ways in which the reality of his lived experience, expressed by his reaction to the landscape, could be related to his need to make paintings. With the *Uplands* series he presented that experience on a major scale, with a boldness and brilliance of colour and a freedom in the interpretation of landscape that went beyond a simple Impressionist response. He forged in these paintings the unity between the reality of the self (through his memory) and the reality of the activity of painting. With that achievement established the work of the past decade has built on the freedoms that come with a full control and confidence in the purpose of the technical capacity to make precisely the paintings he wants.

The references to landscape still remain. Iskowitz still draws from nature, he still draws of nature. But his concern is no longer with reconciling the reality of being in the natural world with the painting, with a sort of justification between the two parts. His concern is always with two things, the activity of painting and the glory of colour itself. This is found not only in the finished canvases themselves but in the way that Iskowitz regards his painting materials. He keeps his tubes of paint neatly lined up, hues grouped together. There is a joy and surprise at the colour as he squeezes it from the tube, a delight in the material itself. In working on a painting he makes up a palette on a piece of Masonite about two feet square. He builds up and mixes colour on these palettes in a way which is almost diagrammatic of the way of making the painting.

In starting work on a new picture he will often begin setting up a relationship between two or three colours across the whole surface of the picture. Then he works over that structure layer after layer, perhaps building up to thirty layers. And as the structure develops it is a constant process of concealing and revealing, of modifying one colour, moving on to another, and then back again to bring it in harmony with the changes each layer brings. A whole night's work of laying down one colour may later be totally covered over, remaining only as a glow. That working process, that joy with the use of colour, the technique of building and covering, of investing each picture with a history of fact on fact: all these aspects are essentially the meaning with which Iskowitz can now work. And not only do we not find any essential change in the work of the past ten years, we should not expect it. Everything that he is and everything that he does is tied into the demand, unexplained and unquestioned, to paint.

But to say that we should not expect and that we do not find any essential change is not to say that the work has remained static. The work is, in essence, the man in himself - always the same and yet at each moment different. It takes special character to maintain a commitment and to progress against the volatility, the fickleness, and the ignorance of fashion. This, often the occasion of bitterness and disenchantment in a mature artist, has not been of concern to Iskowitz, for his firm commitment to his art has endured through circumstances that were calculated to deny it.

The paintings of the past decade are built on the variety of the works of the 1960s, some are very broadly formed, dependent on a complex orchestration of colours deriving their motivation and effect from a dynamic movement within the colour relationships. Others are more closely related to the structure that was developed from the *Uplands* series with strong hues and clearly defined forms set into a contrasting substructure. It is no surprise, only an affirmation of the nature of Iskowitz's work as a whole that the most recent paintings, those of 1981, for instance *Night Violet A* (No. 107) and *Night Greens D* (No. 108), are built on a pattern in which small but vibrant patches of colour burst

through a dominant hue, a purple or dark green. These paintings are very close in spirit to the sparkle of colour through the leaves of the trees that made up *Spring* (No. 50) and *Forest* (Fig. 1) of 1962 and 1963.

While the major series of paintings of the early 1970s was undoubtedly the *Uplands* pictures it was not his only occupation. These years saw the creation of some of the most brilliant and freely painted pictures he has ever made, for instance the *Sky Blue No. 3* (No. 72), and *Landscape in Red No. II* (No. 71), of 1971, and *Summer Painting No. 2* (No. 75) of 1972. In these the dominant colour is modified and heightened by the smaller clusters of contrasting colours. The brilliance of red in *Landscape in Red No. II*, for instance, gains its value not only by the contrasts with the clusters of colour but also through the way that similar hues are scattered about the surface. The eye cannot draw similar colours together into a coherent image because each colour is itself modified, in quality and quantity, wherever it appears by the other colours that cluster around it. The result is one which denies the establishment of a pattern. The eye must move and jump and fill with the whole surface.

There is a clear inner framing in these three pictures of the early 1970s, a form that he had developed in the mid-1960s with pictures like *Autumn Images* of 1965 and *Summer Skies* of 1966. In those earlier pictures the frame had been used as a device to establish the independence of the image in contrast to the still apparent references to the sky and trees. But in the pictures of the early 1970s the tension between painting in itself and the naturalistic perspective had been resolved – the boldness of the *Uplands* series had seen to that – so that the margins do not so much assert and isolate an image as much as they heighten the intensity of the colour contrasts. This approach continues through the 1970s and pictures like *Orange Painting No. 1* (No. 96) and *Highland in Green No. 2* (No. 93) of 1977 follow a very similar approach to those works of 1971 and 1972.

This connection or point of reference to the paintings of the mid-1960s is important because it was this group of works that was reinterpreted in

the mid-1970s in quite a different way. It is a way that, at first, seems to stand in reaction to the *Uplands* paintings with their ambiguity between the horizontal and vertical planes and their sharply defined forms. In this type of painting like *Spring* (No. 80), *Seasons No. 6* (No. 83) of 1974, and *New Orange Red Painting* (No. 84) of 1975 the paintings are “all-over” even when there are large areas free of intense colour. There is no sense of a shape around which margins can be drawn; every part is equal in density. This form also continues in the late 1970s as we see in paintings like *Lilac C* (No. 102) and *Autumn J* (No. 101) of 1978. The immediate source of pictures of this sort is most clearly to be found in *Seasons No. I* (No. 66) and *Seasons No. II* (Fig. 7). But one can again trace the direction back into works of the mid-1960s like *Autumn Images* of 1965 (No. 61), *Untitled* (No. 56), 1964, and *Autumn Reflections* (No. 51). And in drawing these connections the implication still remains of the reference to landscape, there within the layers of the surface. But it is hidden within the structure and the result is no essential distinction between image and ground. There is only the density of colour – just a little deeper, just a little more insistent than in the works of the 1960s in which the ambiguity in the reference to trees and sky became so strong that there was no value gained in clinging to it.

There is an extension of this particular “all-over” form in a number of large diptychs which Iskowicz made in the mid-1970s. They are some of the most dynamic paintings of his career, works like the *Variations on Deep Blues No. 3* (No. 86), 1975-76, *Variations on Green No. 3* (No. 85), 1975-76, and the glorious *Highlands No. 2* (No. 87), 1975-76. Their power comes from the artist’s ability to maintain the flow and the dynamics of the pictures across a width of some eleven feet. This is particularly the case in *Highland No. 2* with its wonderful swirling motions of colour. Again one must not think in terms of a series of separate directions but of a complex interweaving; a work emerges out of the one before, but each has a place in the wider spectrum, a tight interlocked network of relationships. *Highland No. 2* refers back in one sense to the 1962 *Spring* as much as it projects forward to the 1978 diptychs *Summer*

H and *Autumn A* in which the forms of the *Highland No. 2* have been interpreted through the *Uplands* series.

Ultimately, however, as one scans the works of the past twenty years their essence does not lie in a historically developing pattern but in a single freshness and spontaneity of vision. Every time he begins a new work it is as if he always hopes to capture that moment when the vision of the landscape, the imagination, and the memory of experiences are united in the intuitive expression of the painting. To recognize this is to recognize that Iskowitz is and has always been a painter to whom the relationship of the lived experience of vision and of painting is the essential core of all his activity. At any point that painting becomes about painting, at any time at which the work seems to be concerned with the nature of formal properties then painting is in danger of being lost to a studied construction. When that happens or threatens to happen to Iskowitz he must stop and redirect himself. And that redirection invariably means going back, starting again, and recapturing the excitement of the living experience of vision and the living experiences of painting.

NOTES

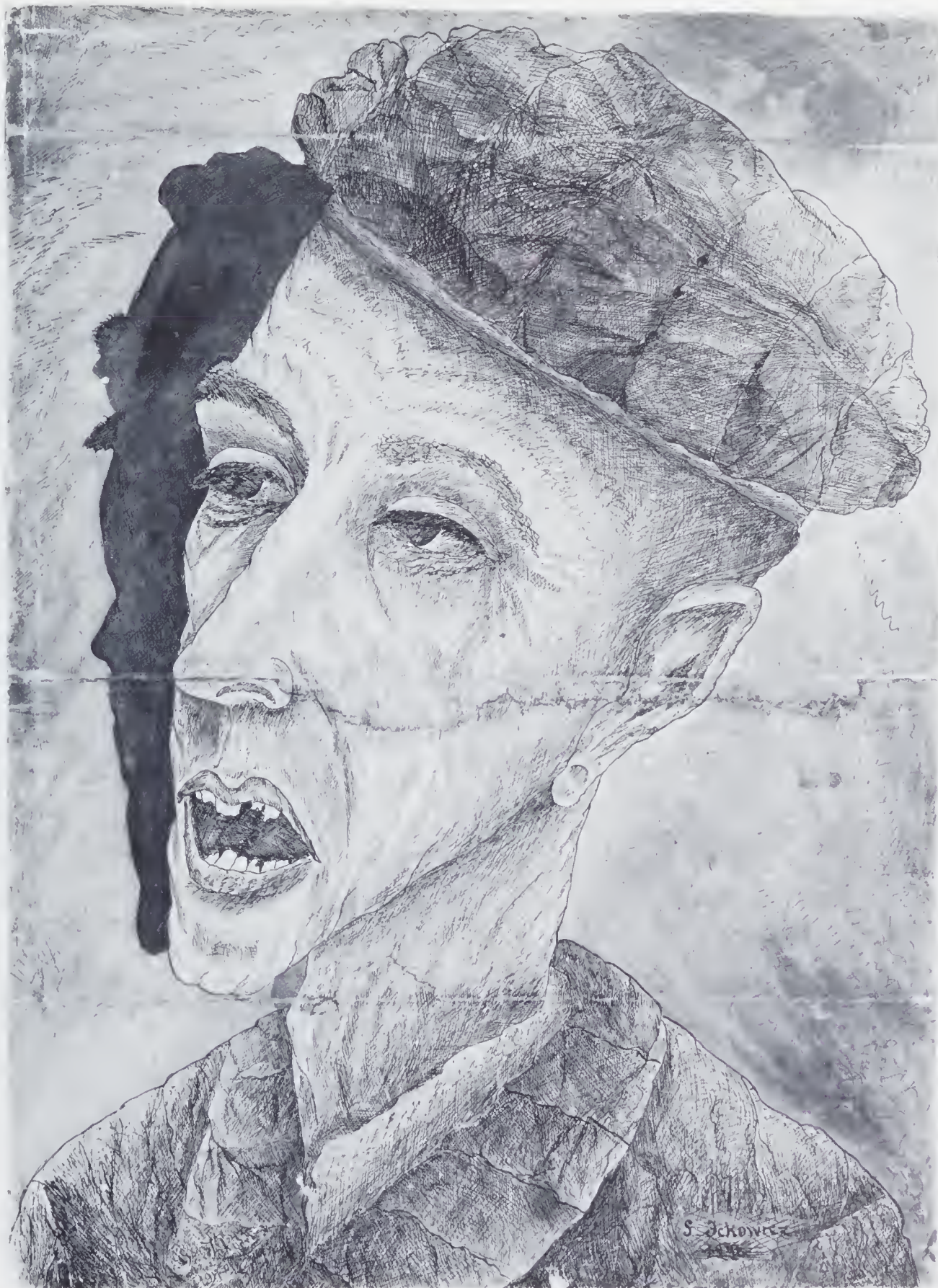
1. Barnett Newman, "The Problem of Subject Matter" in Thomas B. Hess, *Barnett Newman* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1971), p. 39.
2. Barnett Newman, *The Stations of the Cross: Lema Sabachtani* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1966).
3. Wilfred Owen (1893-1918) wrote some of the best poetry to come out of the First World War.
4. Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning. An Introduction to Logotherapy: A newly revised and enlarged edition of From Death Camp to Existentialism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963).
5. See "Gershon Iskowitz: J.D. interviews the artist," *Bulletin Beth Tzedec Congregation*, Vol. 22 (n.d.): 23.
6. See also the portrait of Miriam, No. 18.
7. The group was formed after the *Abstracts at Home* exhibition at Simpsons in October, 1953. The group first showed together at the Roberts Gallery in February, 1954.
8. See Adele Freedman, "Art: Gershon Iskowitz: colours of joy from the heart of darkness," *Toronto Life Magazine* (October, 1977): 189.
9. For an excellent description of techniques and style see Philip S. Rawson, *Drawing* (Oxford University Press, 1969).
10. "Aerial perspective" is often wrongly described as being a representation of landscape from a high viewpoint. It is, in fact, the phenomenon of tone and colour change of objects in a landscape in proportion to their distance from a spectator.
11. Eric Freifeld made a portrait of Iskowitz at this time.
12. The notion of the "systemic" was described by Lawrence Alloway in *Systemic Painting* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1966), pp. 11-20.
13. See Theodore Allen Heinrich, "The intimate cartography of Gershon Iskowitz's painting," *Artscanada*, XXXIV, No. 2 (May/June, 1977): 16.
14. Roald Nasgaard, "Gershon Iskowitz," *Artscanada*, XXX, No. 3, (August, 1973): 57.
15. Philipp Otto Runge in *Hinterlassene Schriften*. See Rudolf Bisanz, *German Romanticism and Philipp Otto Runge*, p. 65.
16. Heinrich, *art. cit.*, p. 17.



1. *Action* 1941
Watercolour and ink
38.1 x 55.9 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



2. *Buchenwald* 1944-45
Watercolour and ink
38.1 x 50.8 cm
Mr. Arthur Hammond



3. *Condemned* 1945
Watercolour and ink
68.6 x 50.8 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



4. *Through Life* 1947
Watercolour and ink on board
54.6 x 32.3 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



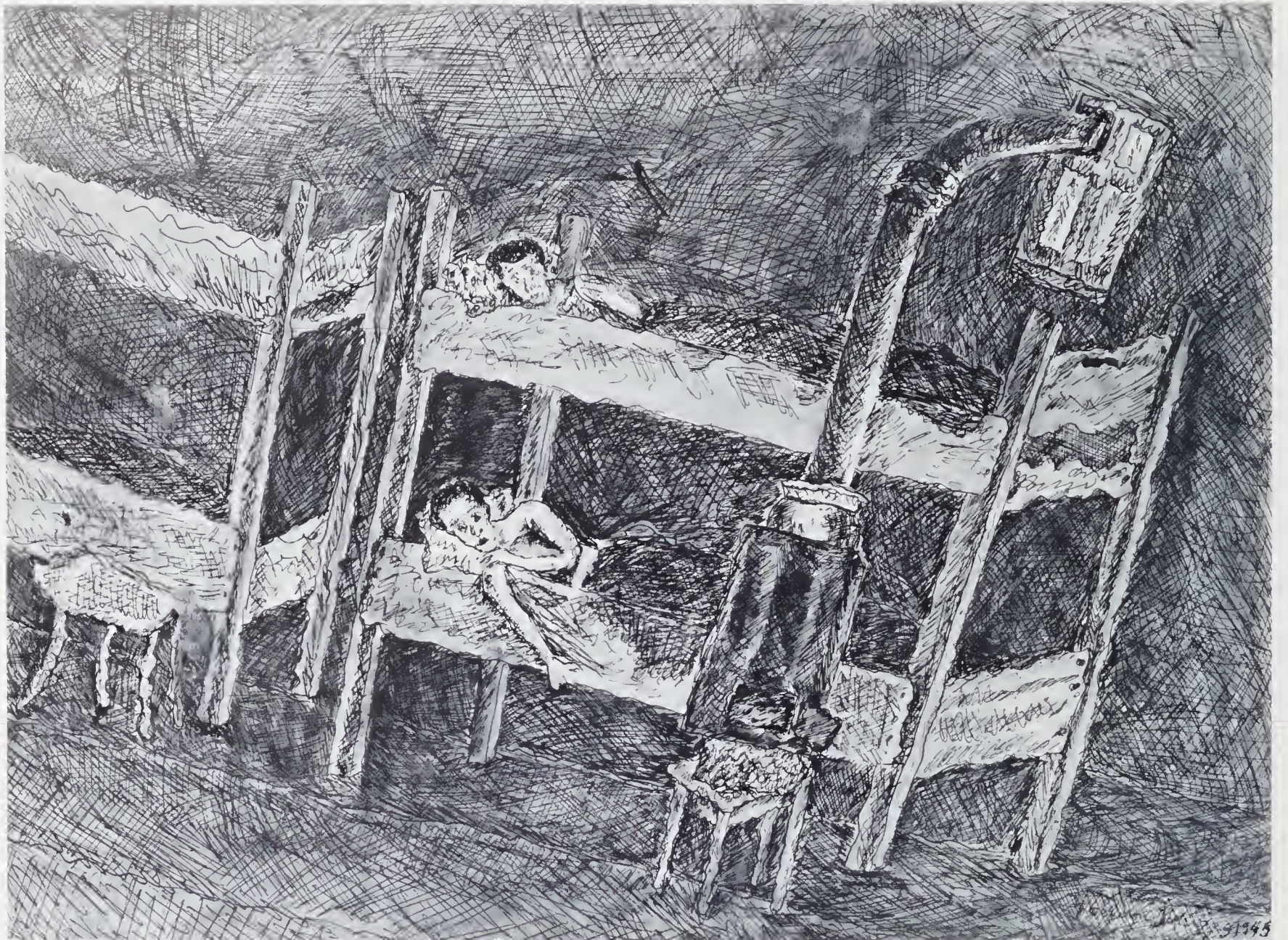
5. *Dybbuk* 1947
Watercolour and ink
26.7 x 36.8 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



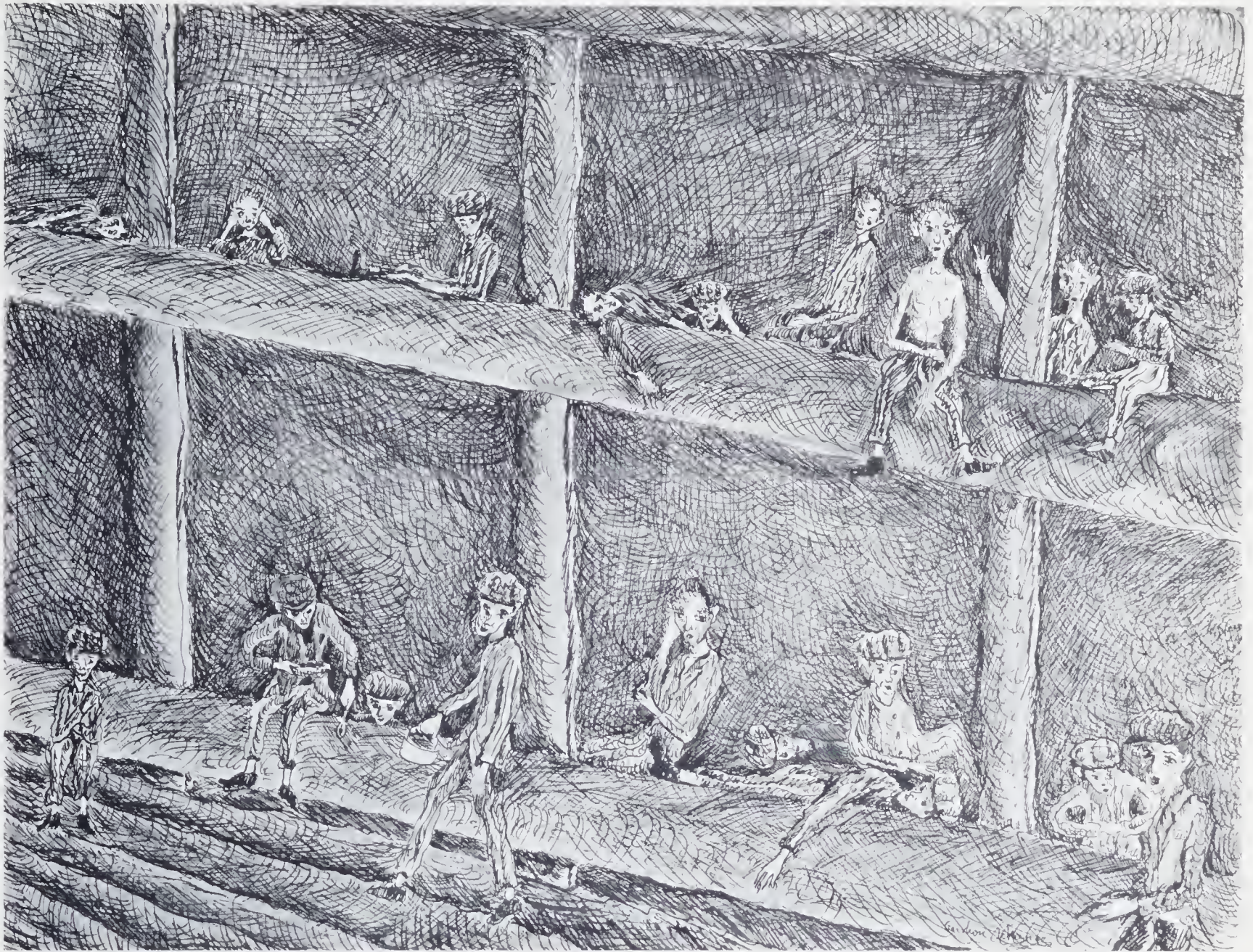
6. *Ghetto* 1947
Watercolour and ink
35.6 x 48.3 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



7. *Selection Auschwitz* 1947
Watercolour and ink
40.6 x 50.8 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



8. *Barracks* 1947
Watercolour and ink on board
38.1 x 50.8 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



9. *Waiting* 1947
Watercolour and ink on board
41.9 x 54.6 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



10. *The Artist's Mother* 1947
Oil on canvas laid on board
50.8 x 40.6 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



11. *Self-Portrait* 1947
Oil on canvas laid on board
50.8 x 40.6 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



12. *Escape* 1948
Oil on canvas laid on corrugated paper
36.8 x 45.7 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



13. *Action* 1948
Oil on canvas laid on board
40.6 x 58.4 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



14. *Yzkor* 1949
Gouache on board
30.5 x 40.6 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



15. *Torah* 1951
Gouache on board
43.2 x 53.3 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



16. *Memory (Mother and Child)* 1951
Watercolour and ink
50.8 x 24.3 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



17. *Hunger* 1951
Watercolour and ink
51.0 x 33.0 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



18. *Miriam* 1951-52
Gouache on board
38.1 x 26.7 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



19. *The Wall* 1522
Watercolour and ink
59.7 x 45.7 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



20. *Side Street* 1952
Watercolour on board
50.8 x 61.0 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



21. *Yzkor* 1952
Watercolour and ink
30.5 x 40.6 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



Gershon Iskowitz 1952

22. *Moon: Buchenwald* 1952
Oil on board
25.4 x 34.3 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



23. *It Burns* 1952
Gouache on board
50.8 x 66.0 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



24. *Burning Town* 1952
Gouache on board
30.5 x 40.6 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



25. *Explosion* 1952
Gouache on board
50.8 x 63.5 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



26. *Barrier* 1952
Gouache on board
50.8 x 61.0 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



27. *The Water Carrier* 1952
Gouache on board
29.8 x 39.4 cm
Mr. Arthur Hammond



28. *Untitled* 1952
Felt pen
21.1 x 27.9 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



29. *Untitled* 1952
Felt pen
27.9 x 21.1 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



30. *Untitled* 1952
Felt Pen
21.1 x 27.9 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



31. *Untitled* 1952
Felt pen
21.1 x 27.9 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



32. *Untitled* 1952
Felt pen
21.1 x 27.9 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



33. *Untitled* 1952
Felt pen
21.1 x 27.9 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



34. *Apple Orchard* 1952
Oil on canvas laid on board
40.6 x 50.8 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



35. *Burning Synagogue* 1953
Gouache on board
48.3 x 35.6 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



36. *Market* 1953-54
Gouache on board
50.8 x 61.0 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



37. *Parry Sound* 1954
Oil on board
40.6 x 50.8 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



38. *Landscape* 1954
Oil on masonite
27.9 x 36.5 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



39. *Landscape* 1954
Oil on board
29.7 x 35.1 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



40. *Parry Sound No. 1* 1955
Watercolour
22.9 x 30.5 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



41. *Parry Sound No. 2* 1955
Watercolour
22.9 x 30.5 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



42. *Parry Sound No. 3* 1955
Watercolour
22.9 x 30.5 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



43. *Parry Sound No. 4* 1955
Watercolour
22.9 x 30.5 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



44. *Dusk* 1955
Oil on board
27.3 x 21.6 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



45. *Autumn Skies* 1955
Oil on canvas laid on board
25.4 x 35.6 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



46. *Swirling Night* 1955
Oil on canvas laid on board
20.3 x 25.4 cm
Hana Trefelt



47. *Midnight* 1955
Oil on canvas
60.5 x 69.7 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



48. *Eric Freifeld* 1955
Oil on board
50.8 x 38.1 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



49. *Sunset* 1960
Oil on canvas
127.0 x 101.6 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



50. *Spring* 1962
Oil on canvas
165.4 x 140.0 cm
The Bank of Canada



51. *Autumn Reflections* 1962
Oil on canvas
125.4 x 100.0 cm
Private Collection



52. *Sunset* 1962
Watercolour
24.0 x 33.5 cm
Private Collection



53. *Self-Portrait* 1963
Watercolour
71.1 x 50.8 cm
Tony and Shirley Stapells



54. *Seated Figure* 1964
Oil on canvas
68.6 x 58.4 cm
Dr. & Mrs. J. Giblon



55. *Autumn Sky* 1964
Watercolour
71.1 x 88.9 cm
Tony and Shirley Stapells



56. *Untitled* 1964
Oil on canvas
50.8 x 76.2 cm
Joel Siegel



57. *Parry Sound* 1965
Watercolour
66.0 x 78.1 cm
Tony and Shirley Stapells



58. *Parry Sound Variation* 1965
Watercolour
58.4 x 45.7 cm
Dr. & Mrs. J. Giblon



59. *Sextet* 1965
Oil on canvas
152.5 x 122.0 cm
Private Collection



60. *Summer Sounds* 1965
Oil on canvas
172.7 x 139.7 cm
Collection Art Gallery of Ontario
Purchase, 1966



61. *Autumn Images* 1965
Oil on canvas
76.2 x 61.0 cm
Jacob and Dorothy Hendeles



62. *Summer Blues* 1966
Oil on canvas
81.3 x 101.6 cm
Mr. & Mrs. J.T. McLeod



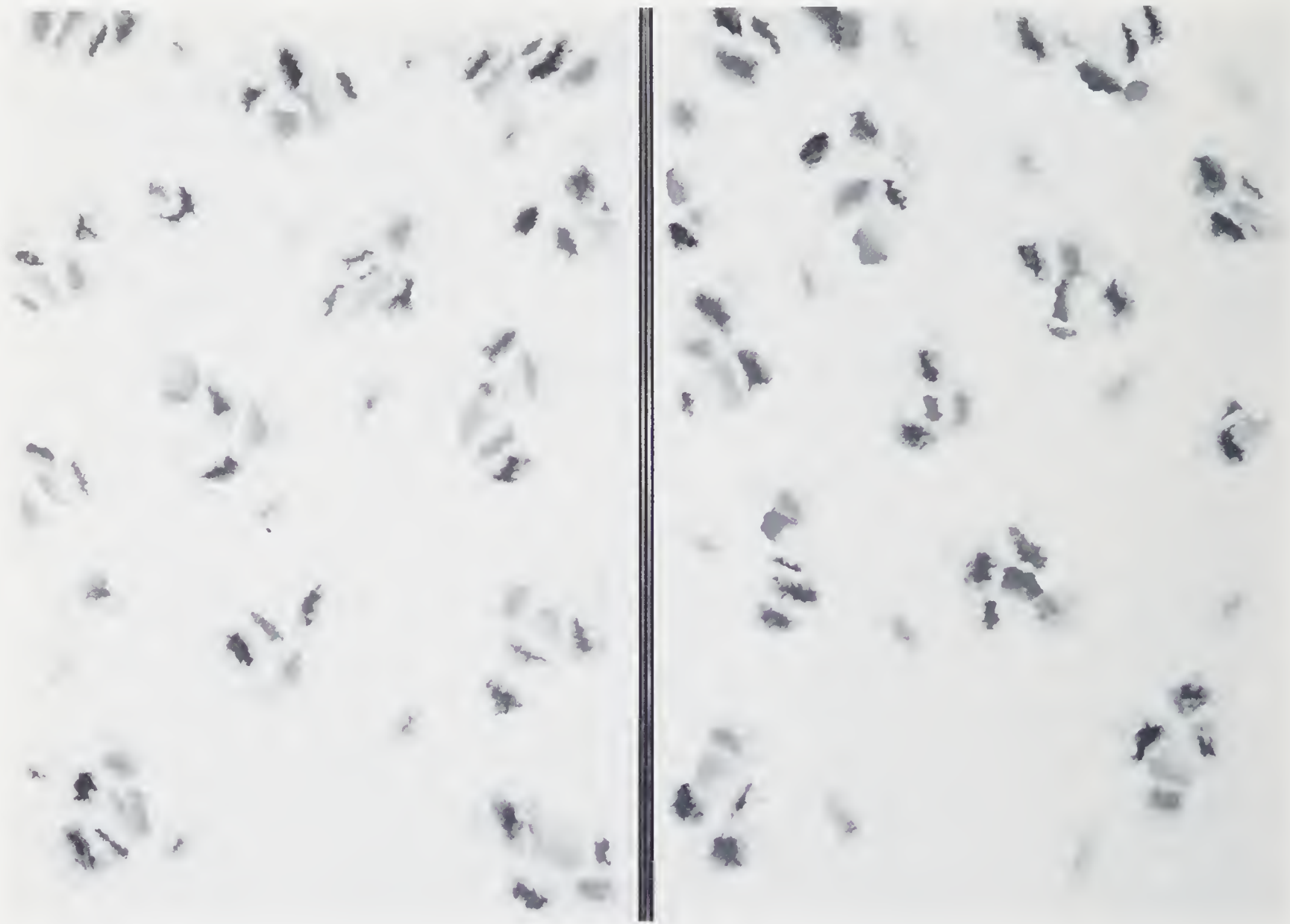
63. *Summer Skies* 1966
Oil on canvas
102.0 x 82.0 cm
Crown Life Collection of Canadian Art



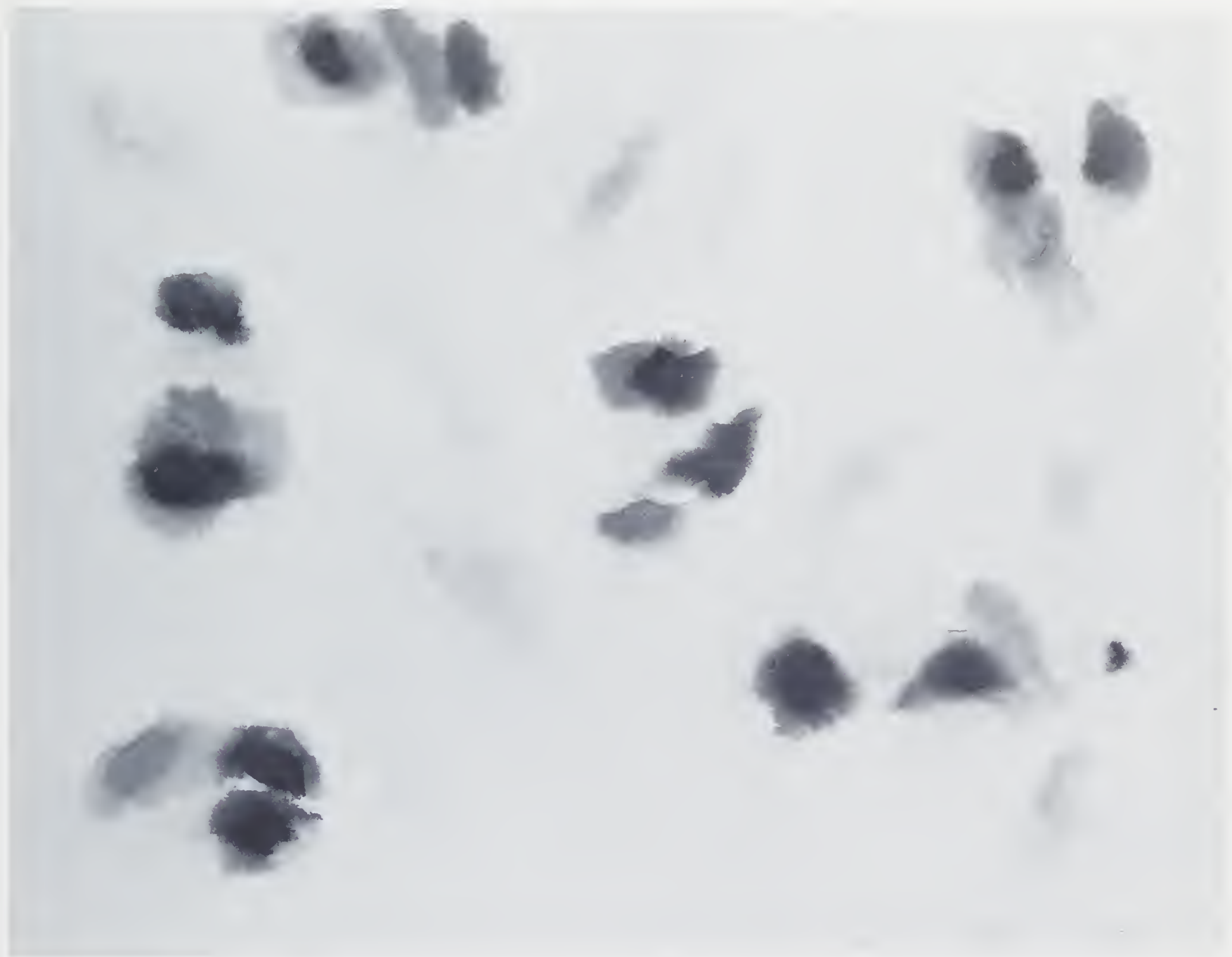
64. *Autumn Landscape No. 5* 1967
Oil on canvas
152.4 x 127.0 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



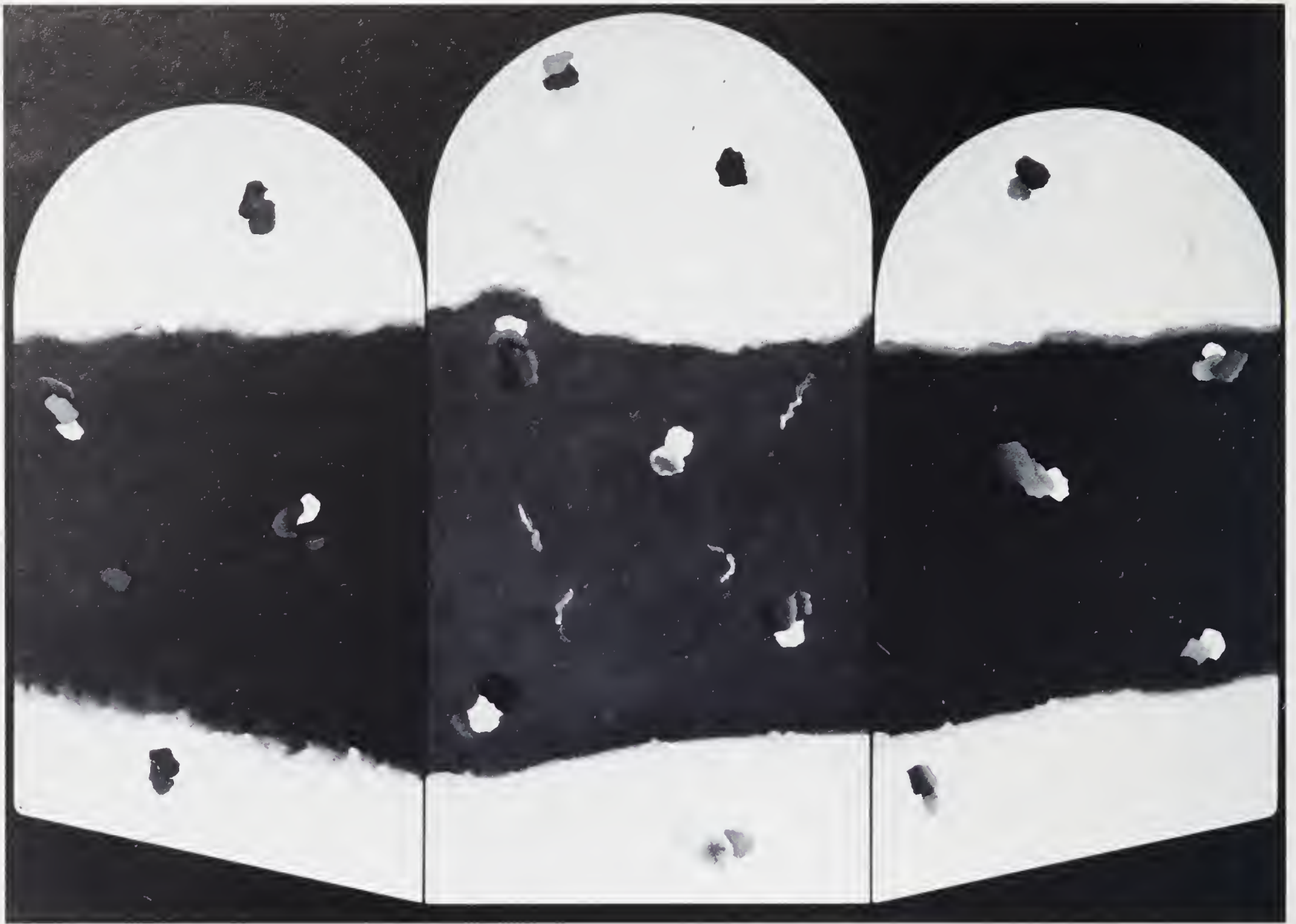
65. *Autumn Landscape No. 6* 1967
Oil on canvas
122.0 x 52.4 cm
Collection of Toronto-Dominion Bank



66. *Seasons No. I* 1968-69
Oil on canvas
177.8 x 254.0 cm (diptych)
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa/
Galerie Nationale du Canada, Ottawa



67. *Western Sphere No. 11* 1969
Watercolour
47.0 x 62.0 cm
On loan from the Canada Council Art Bank/
Prêt de la Banque d'œuvres d'art du
Conseil des Arts du Canada

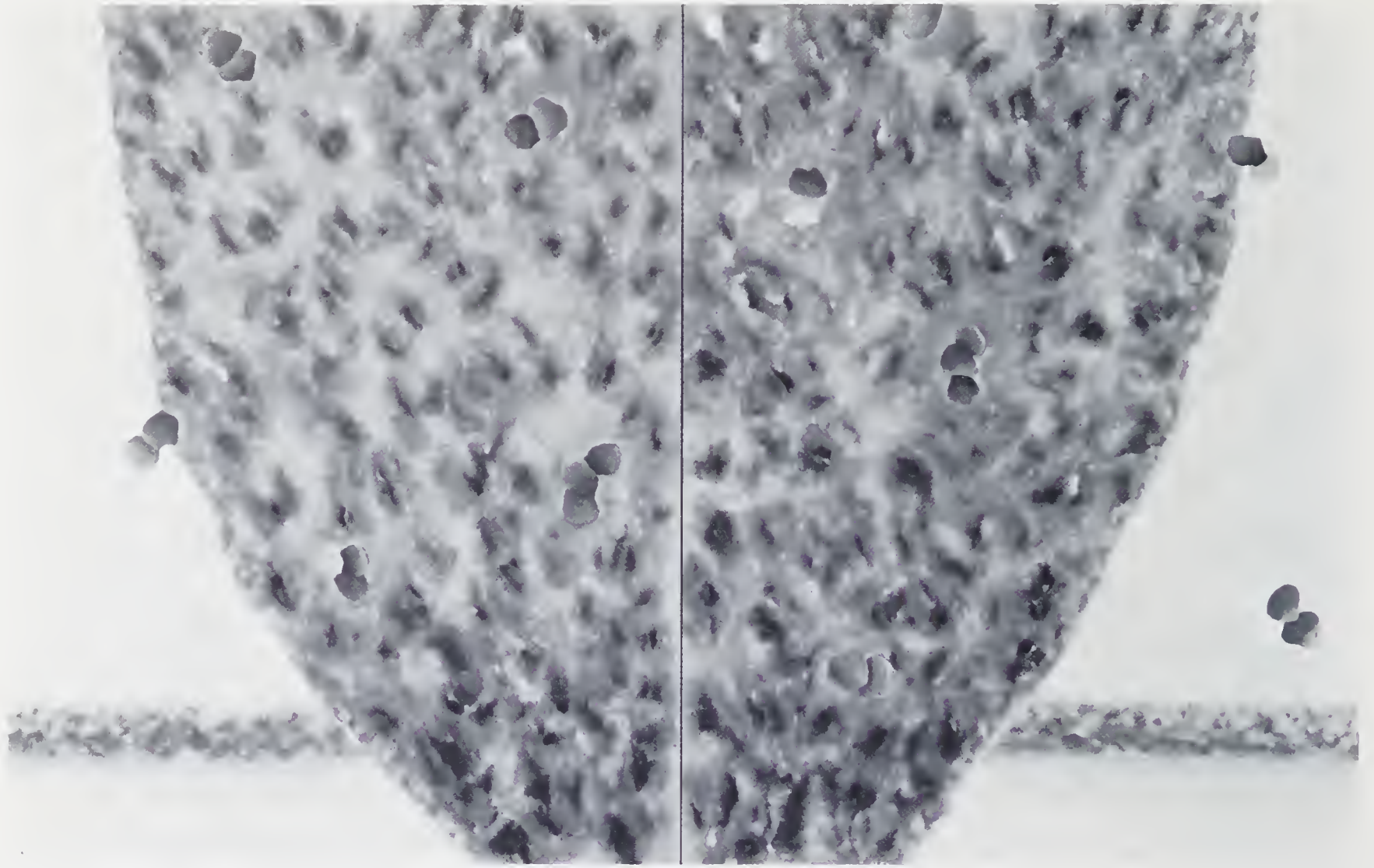


68. *Triptych* 1969-70
Oil on canvas
274.3 x 139.7; 304.8 x 152.4; 274.3 x 139.7 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



ISKOWIT 2 1970

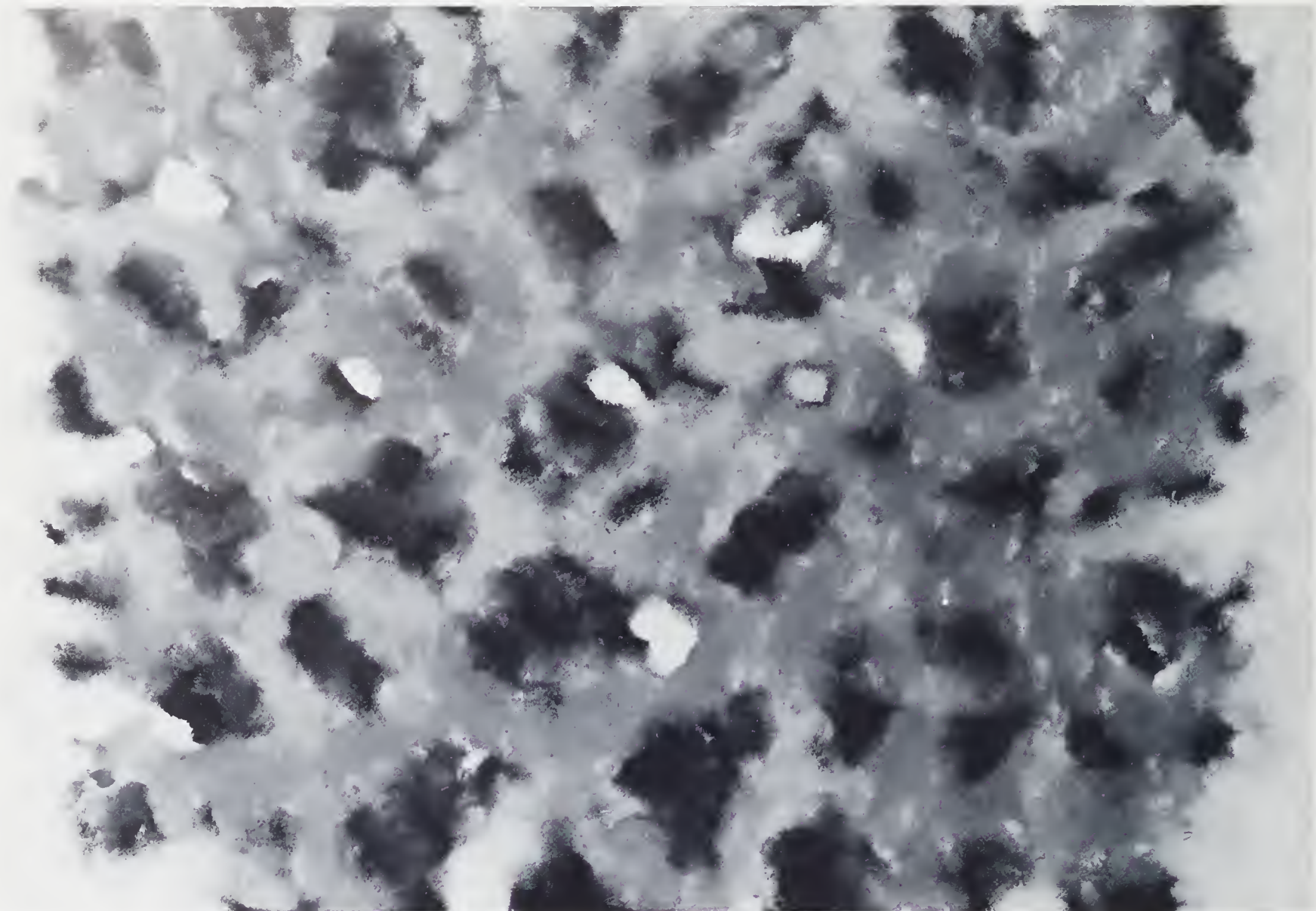
69. *Lowlands No. 13* 1970
Oil on canvas
152.4 x 121.9 cm
Mr. & Mrs. Jules Loeb



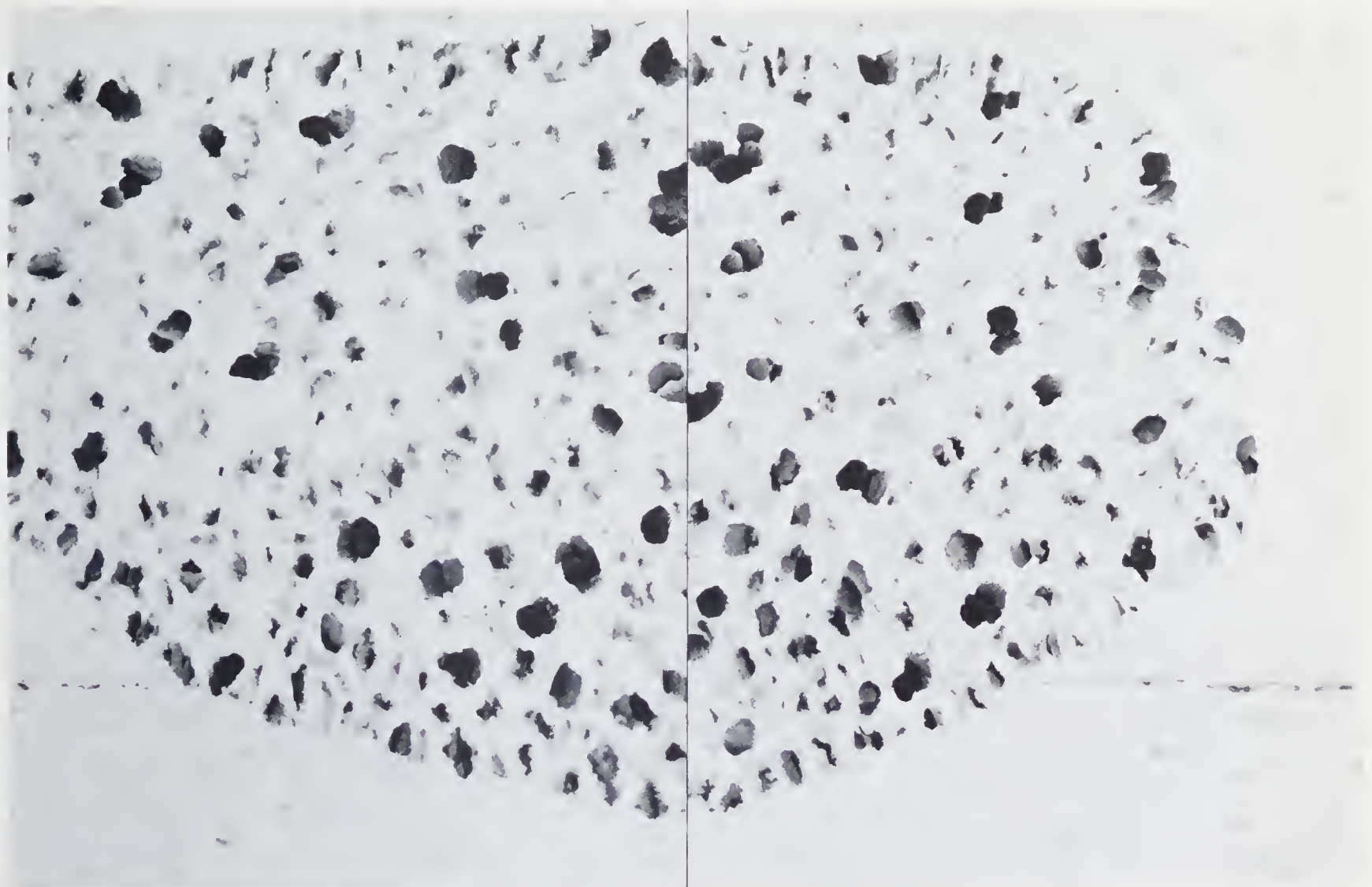
70. *Uplands B* 1970
Oil on canvas
213.4 x 355.3 cm (diptych)
Courtesy Gallery Moos



71. *Landscape in Red No. II* 1971
Oil on canvas
152.0 x 122.0 cm
Courtesy Carmen Lamanna



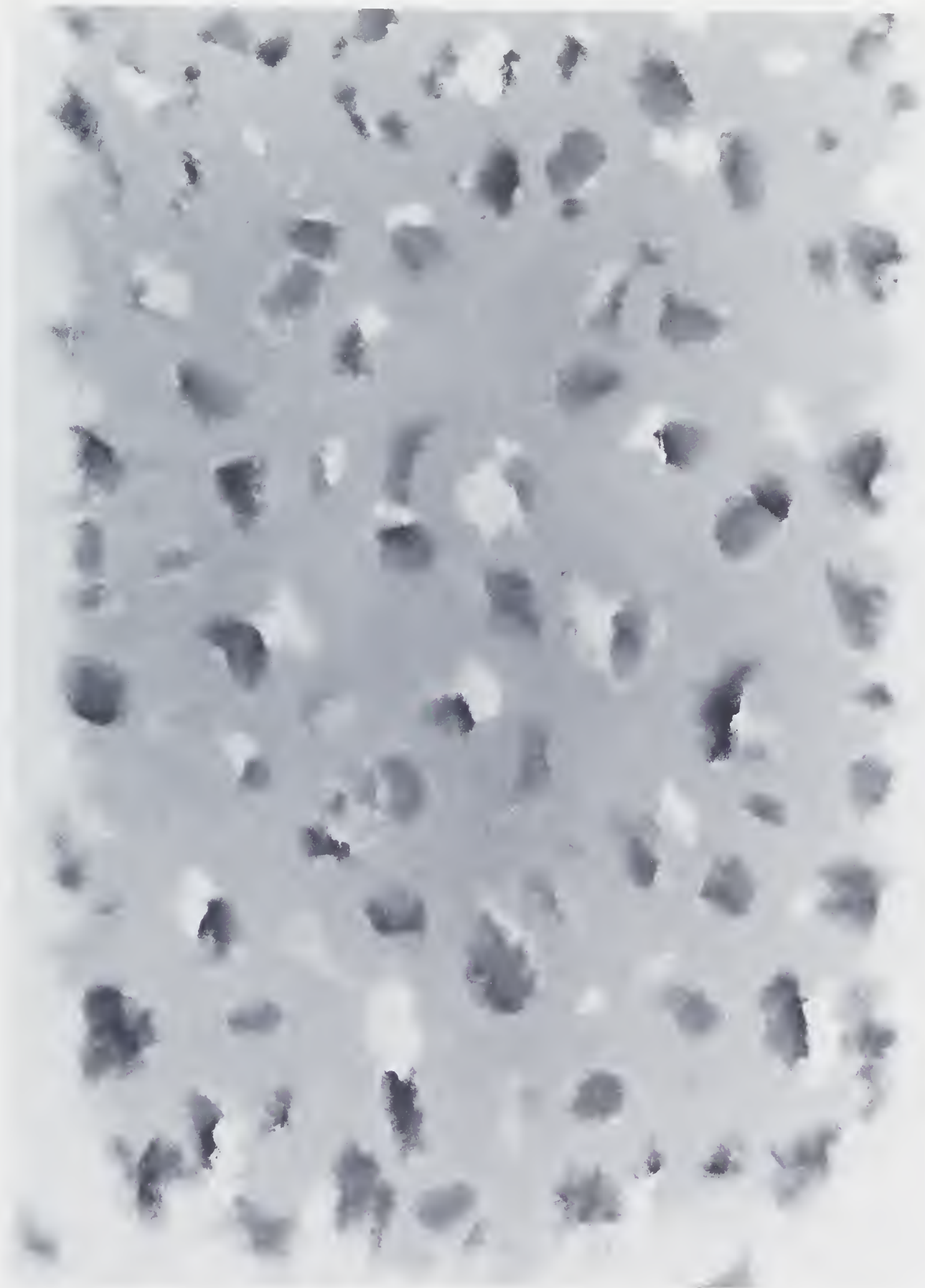
72. *Sky Blue No. 3* 1971
Oil on canvas
76.2 x 112.0 cm
Dr. & Mrs. A.N. Lofchy



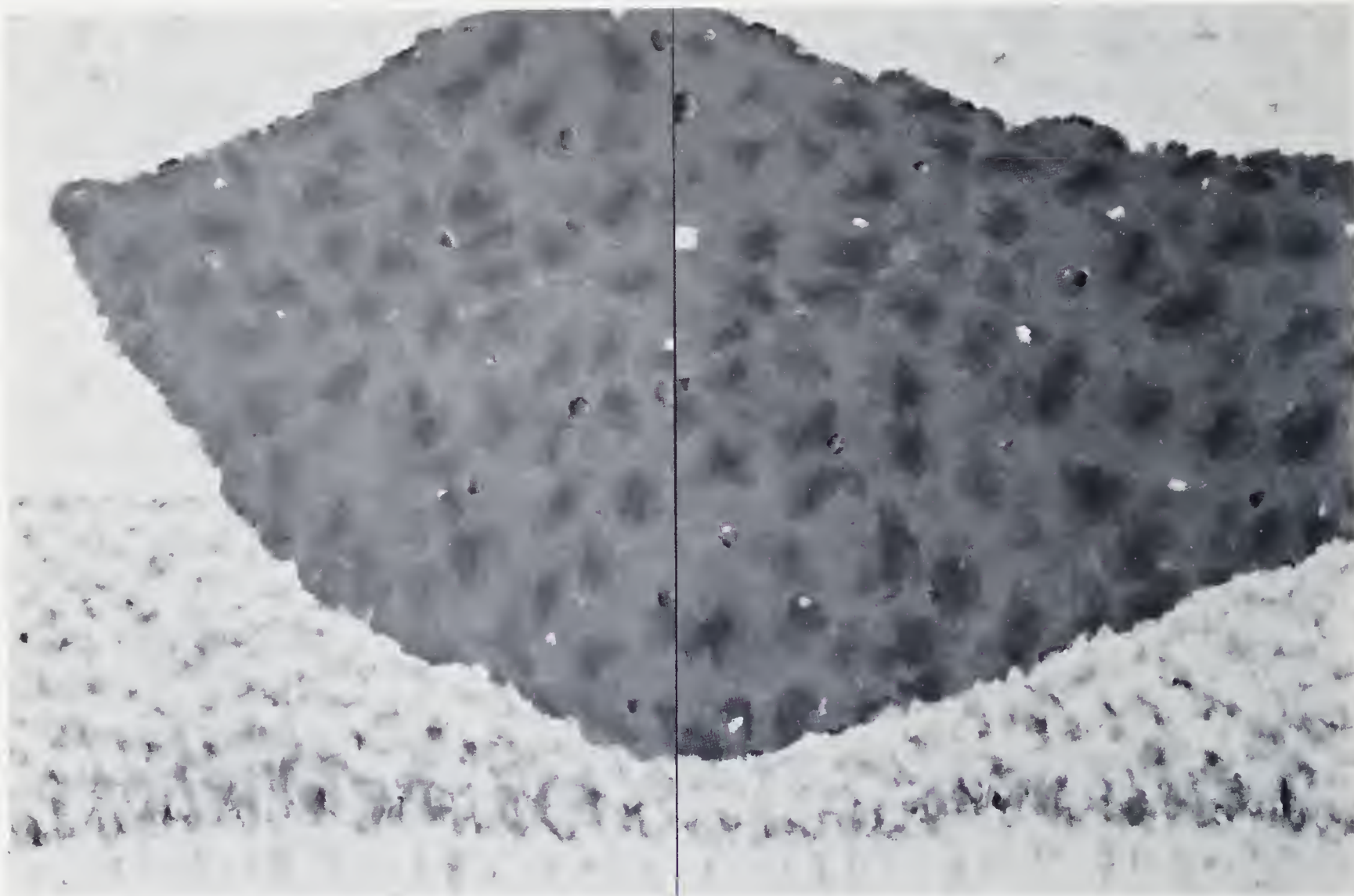
73. *Uplands E* 1971
Oil on canvas
228.6 x 355.6 cm (diptych)
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa/
Galerie Nationale du Canada, Ottawa



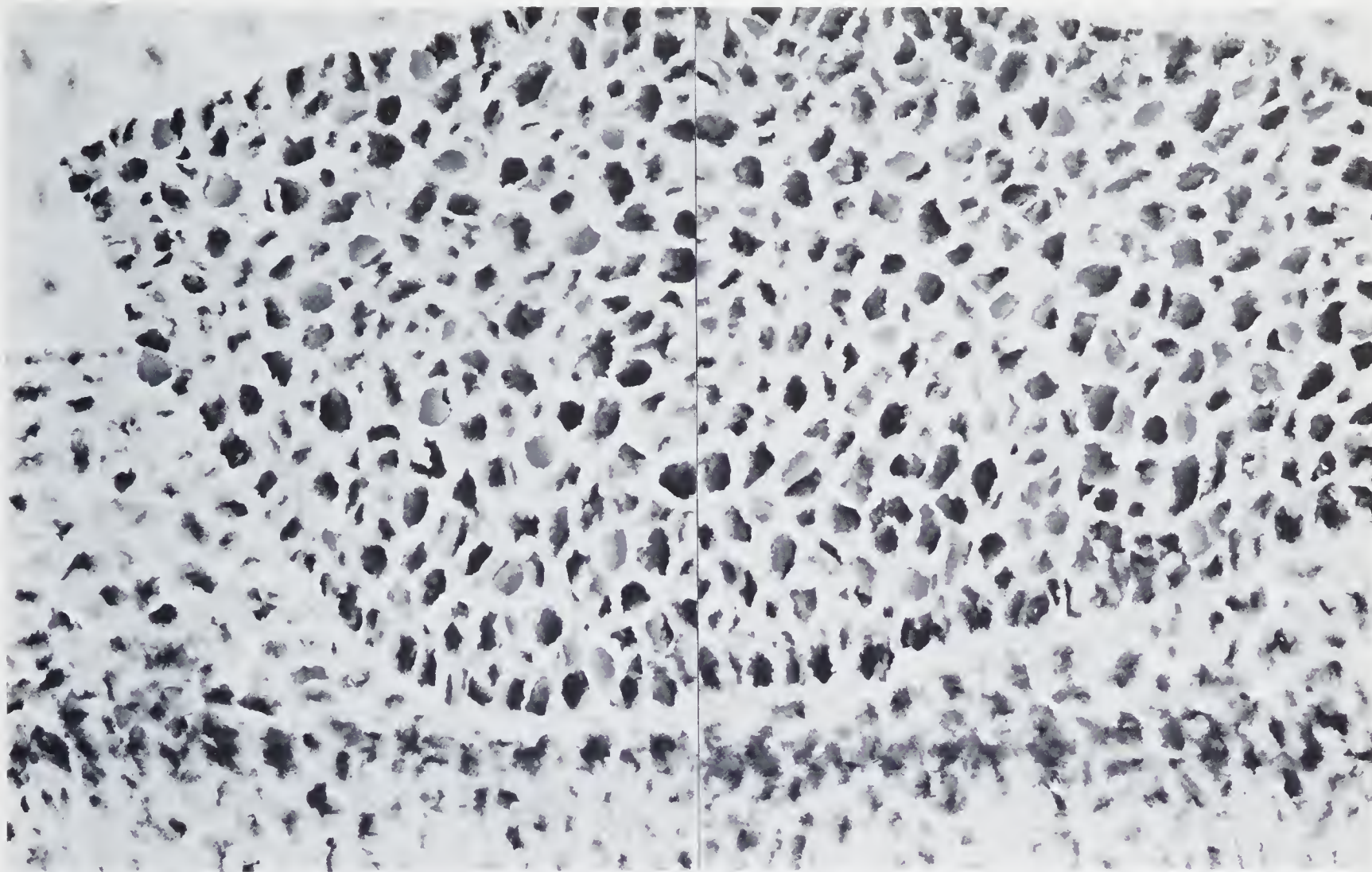
74. *Morning Blues* 1972
Oil on canvas
139.7 x 114.3 cm
Eugene and Margaret Sawkiw



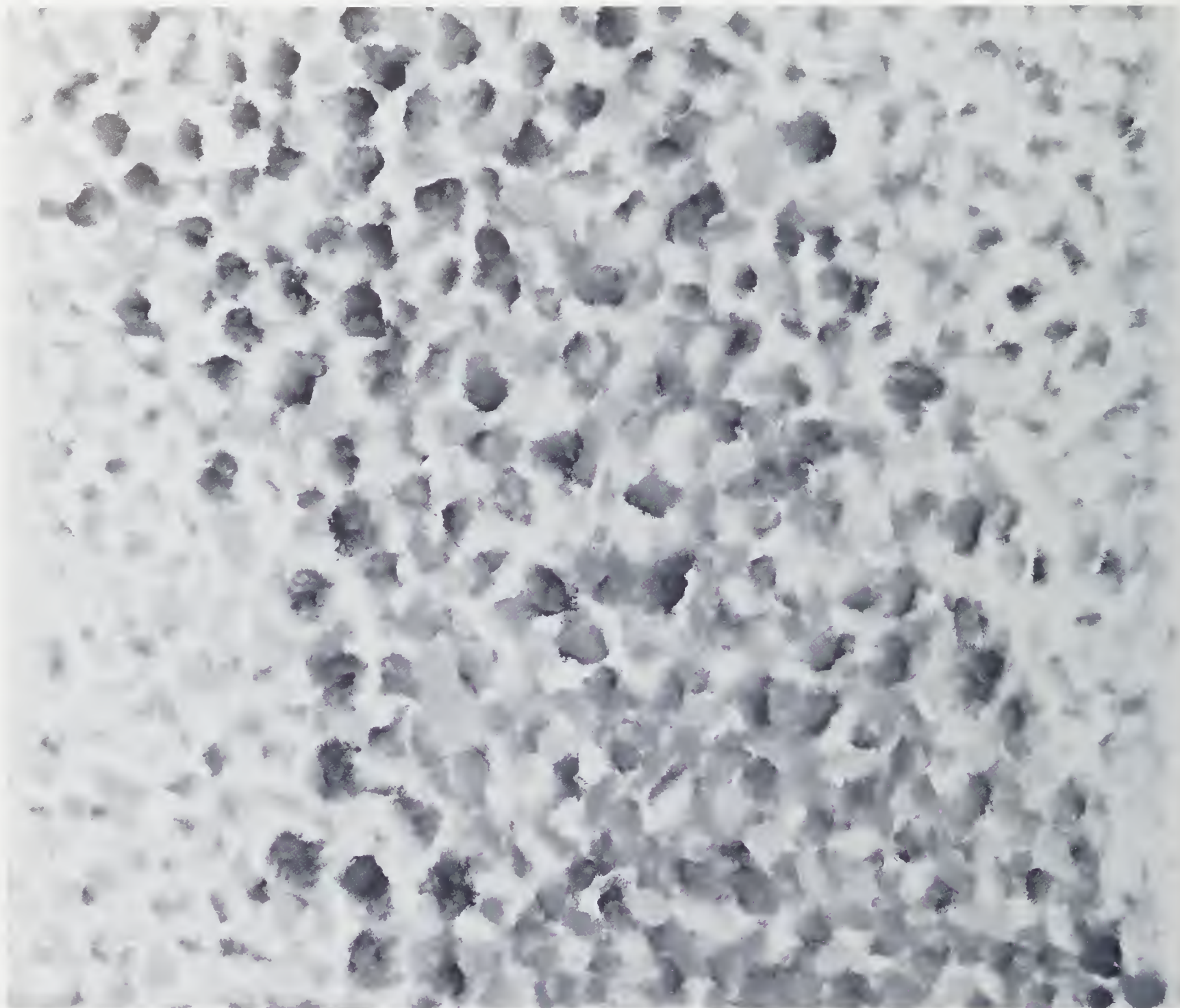
75. *Summer Painting No. 2* 1972
Oil on canvas
111.0 x 80.0 cm
Mrs. Peter MacLachlan



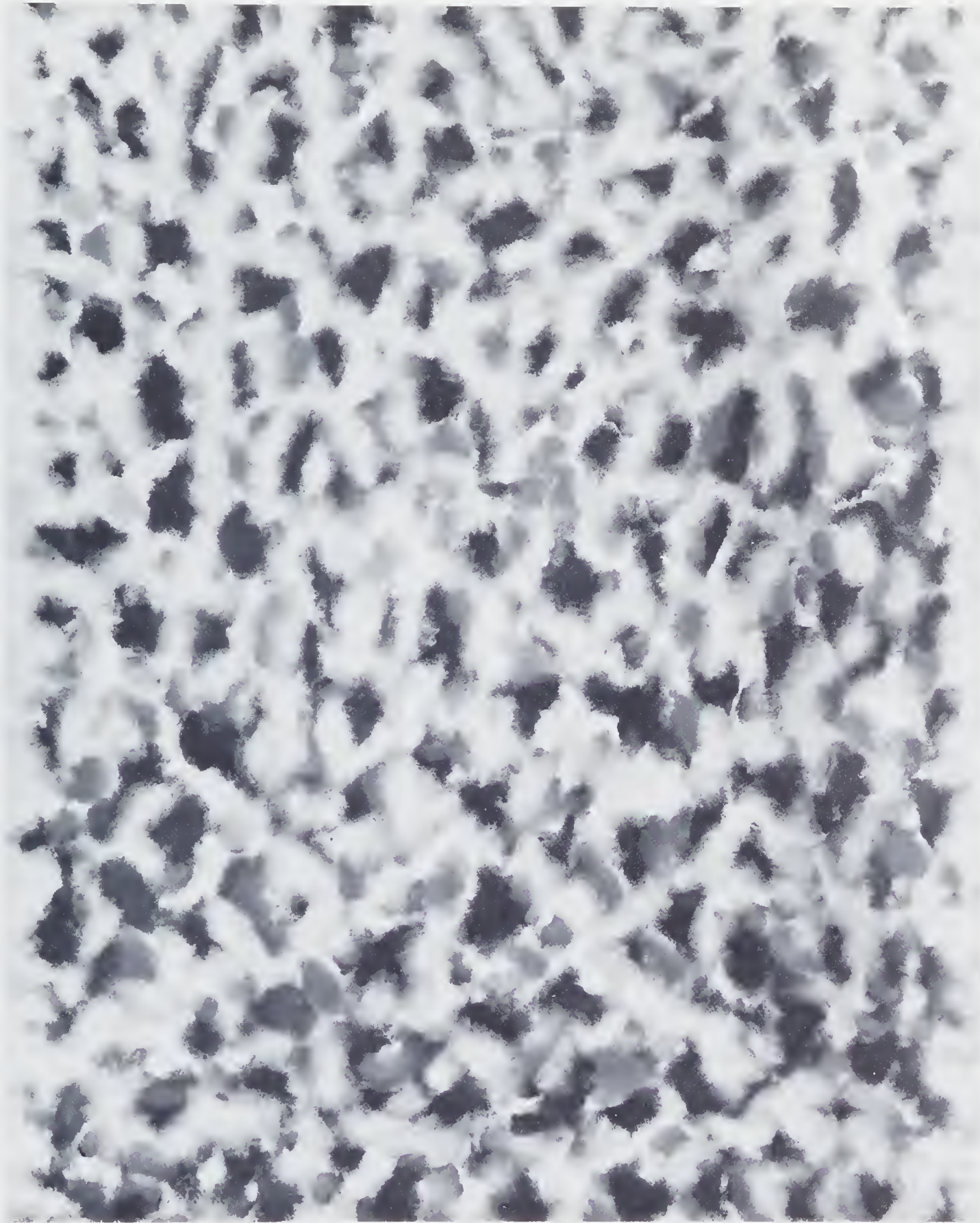
76. *Uplands H* 1972
Oil on canvas
182.9 x 241.3 cm (diptych)
Collection Art Gallery of Ontario
Purchase with assistance from Wintario, 1977



77. *Uplands K* 1972
Oil on canvas
228.4 x 355.4 cm (diptych)
Art Gallery of Hamilton,
Gift of Mr. John Morris Thurston
and Wintario, 1977



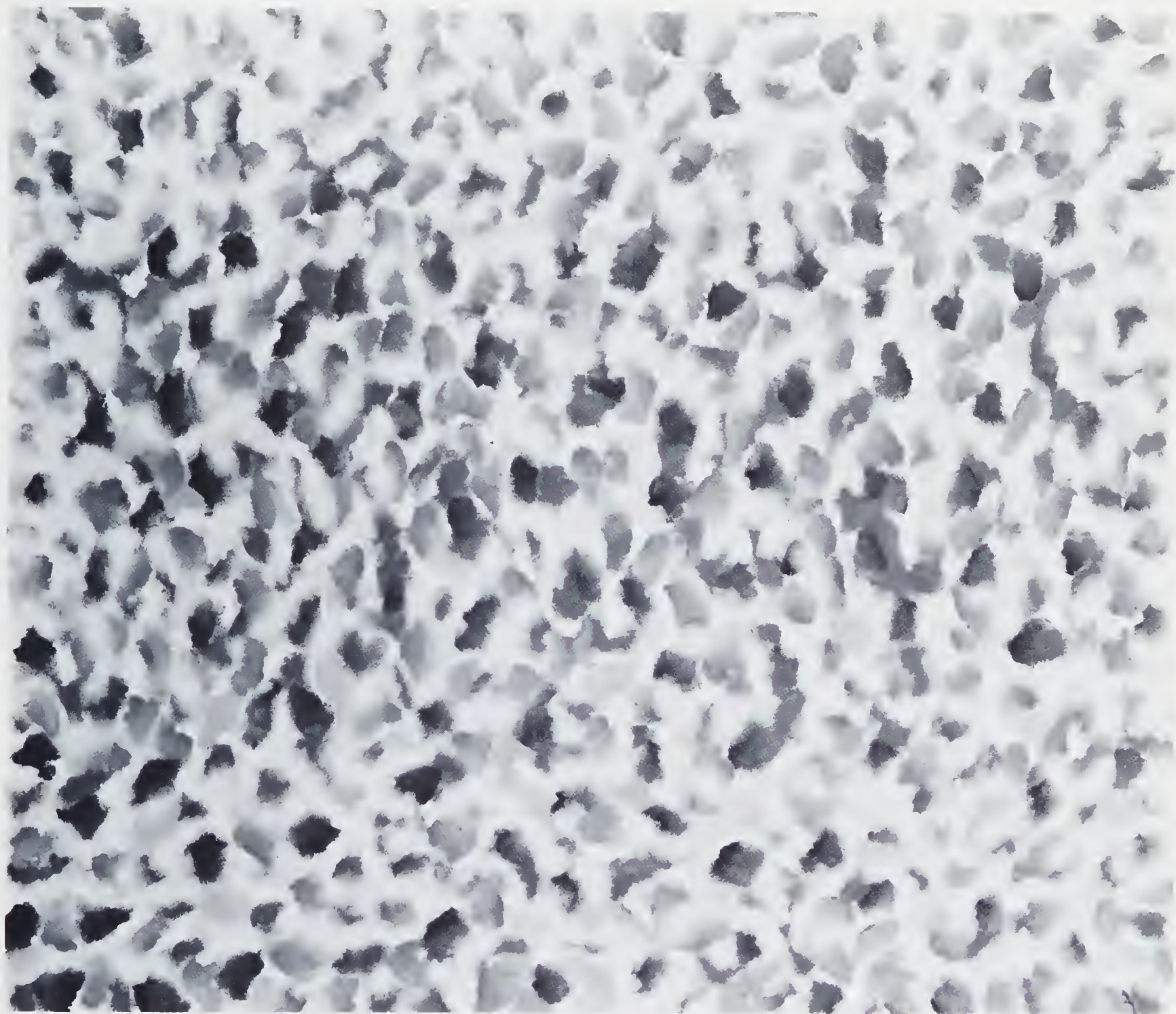
78. *Orange Blue Mauve Painting* 1973
Oil on canvas
152.7 x 178.3 cm
The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa



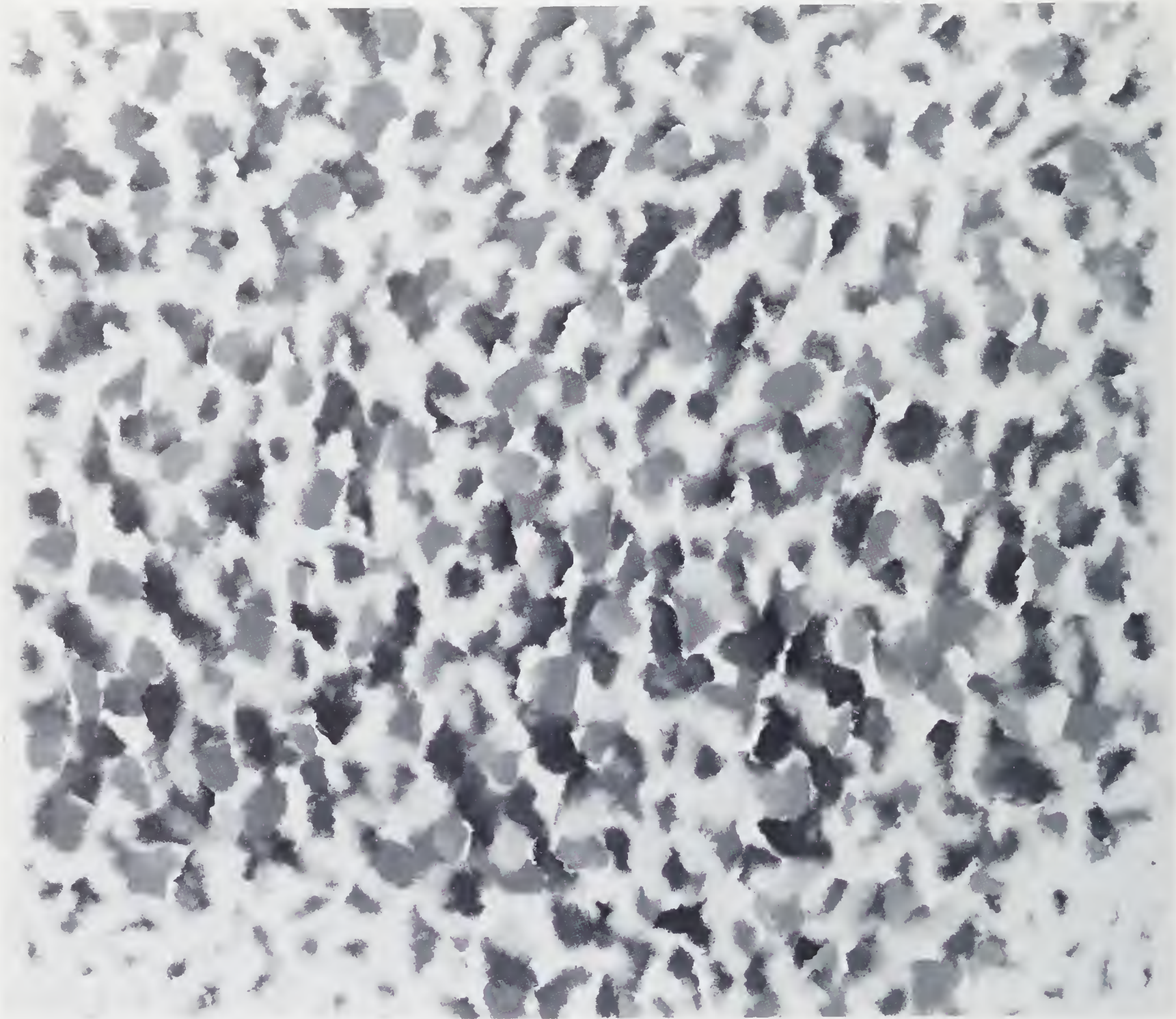
79. *Ultra Blue Green* 1973
Oil on canvas
157.6 x 127.0 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



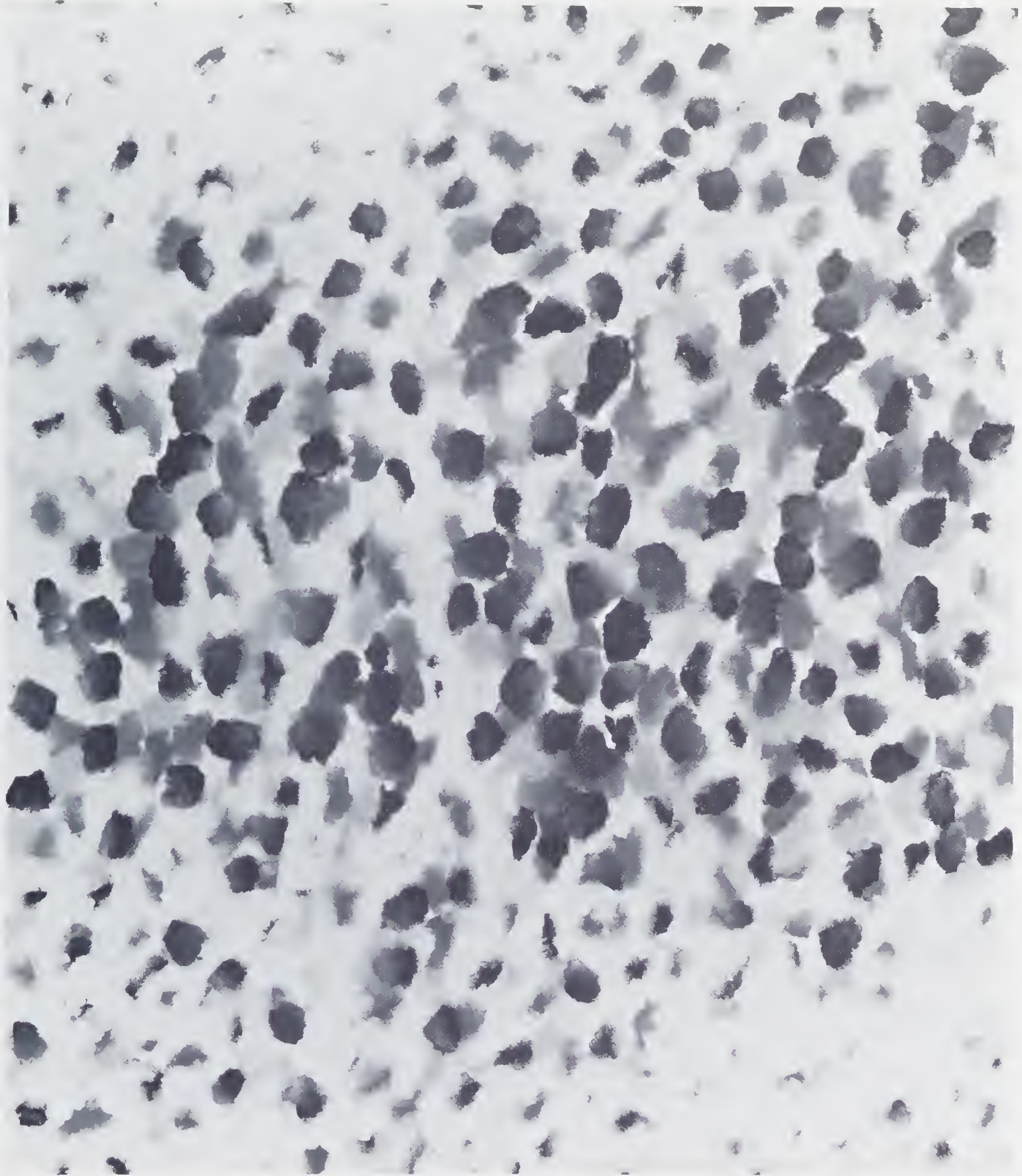
80. *Spring* 1974
Oil on canvas
153.0 x 137.5 cm
On loan from the Canada Council Art Bank/
Prêt de la Banque d'oeuvres d'art du
Conseil des Arts du Canada



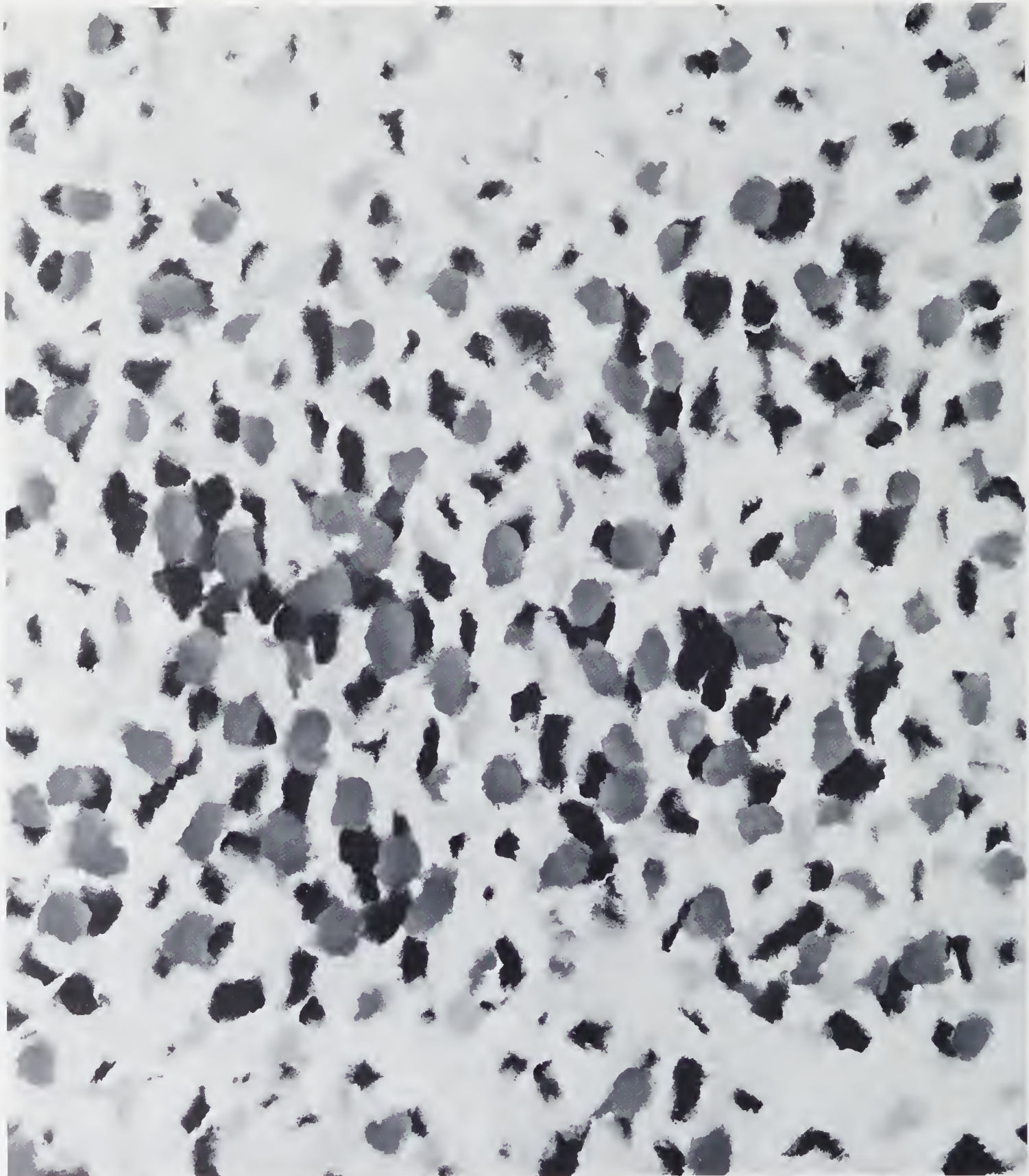
81. *Violet Blue Painting* 1974
Oil on canvas
167.6 x 195.6 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



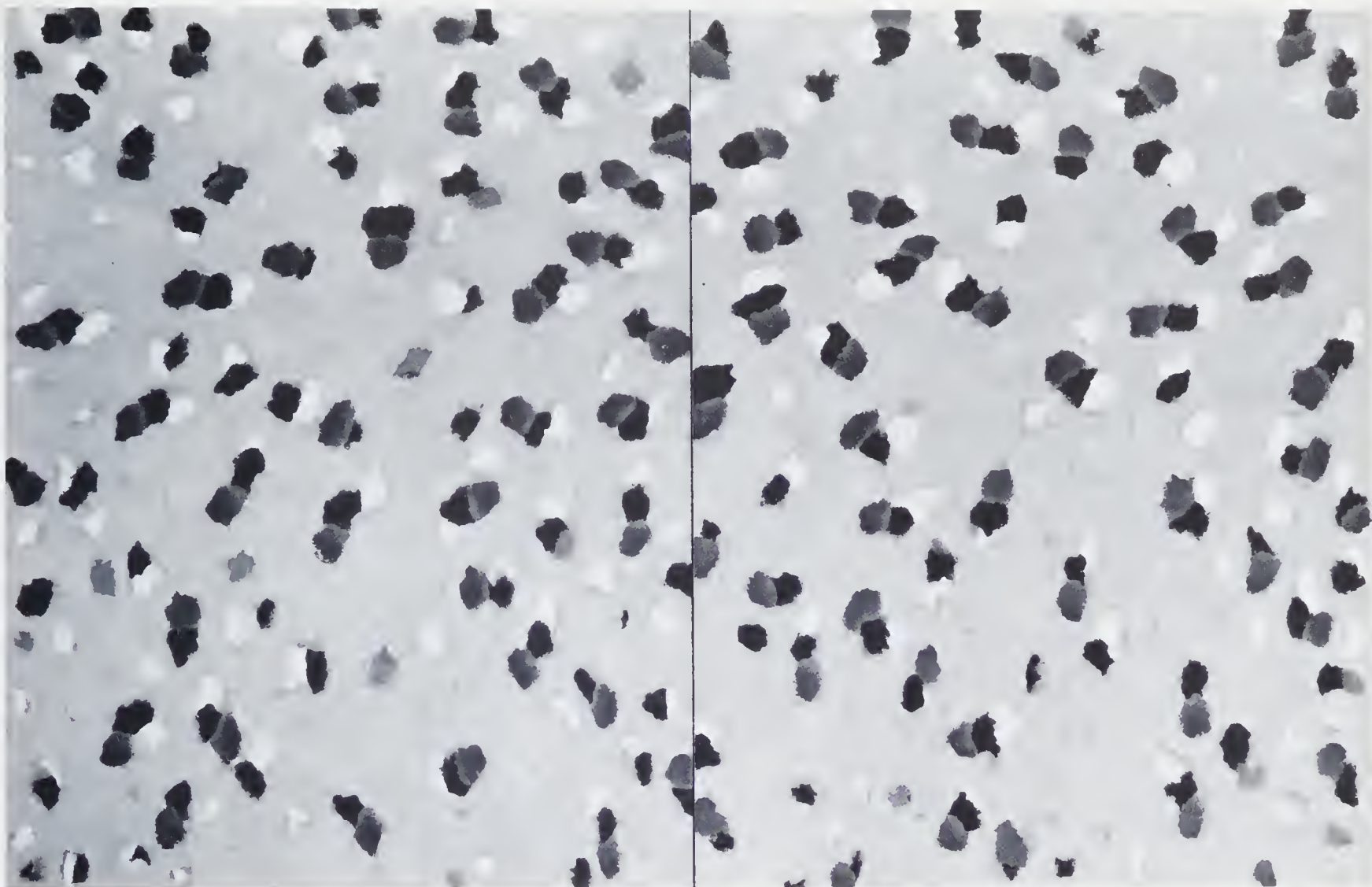
82. *New Green Red Painting* 1974
Oil on canvas
167.6 x 195.6 cm
Mr. & Mrs. Irving Waltman



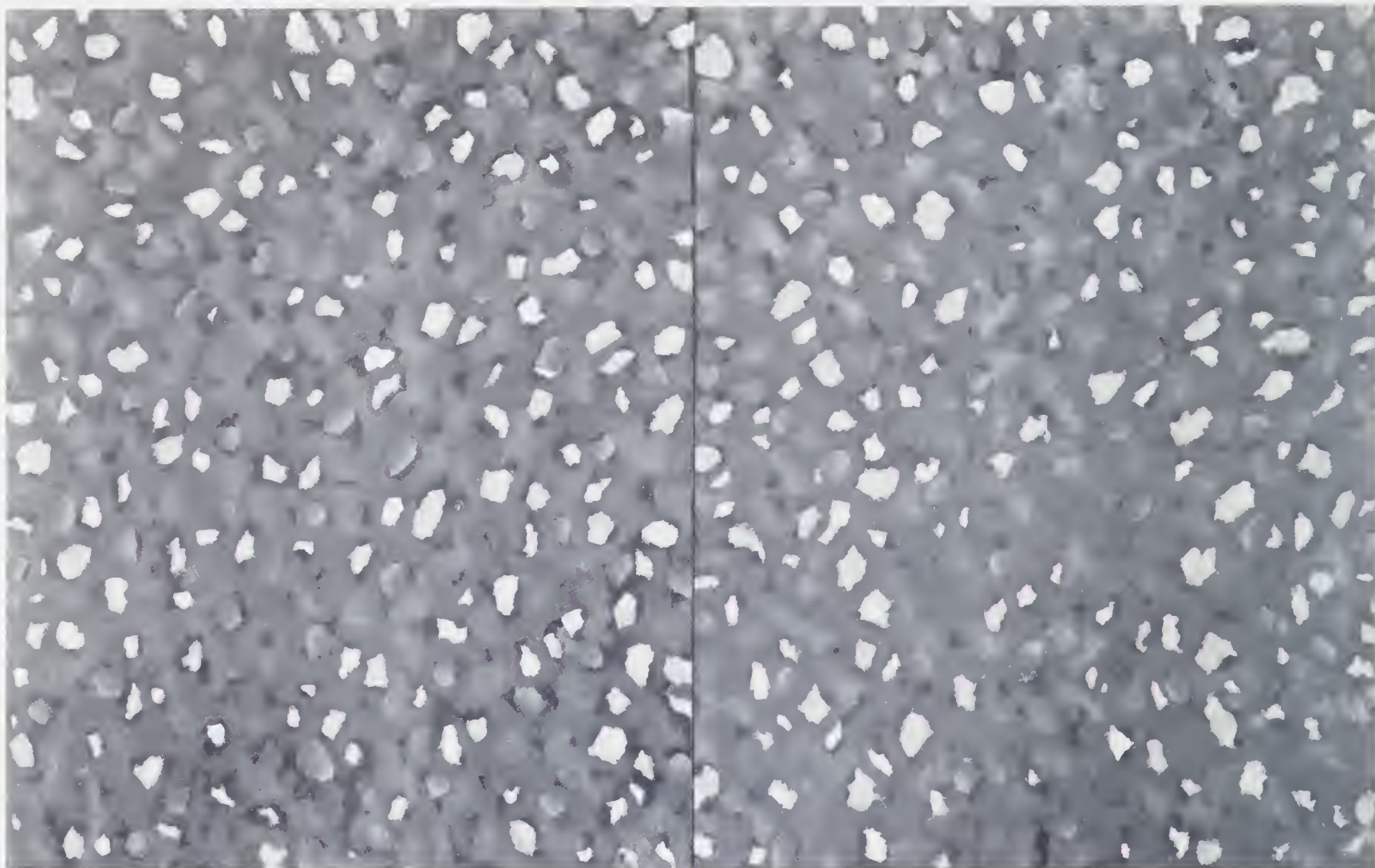
83. *Seasons No. 6* 1974
Oil on canvas
152.4 x 132.1 cm
Mr. & Mrs. A.C. Finkelstein



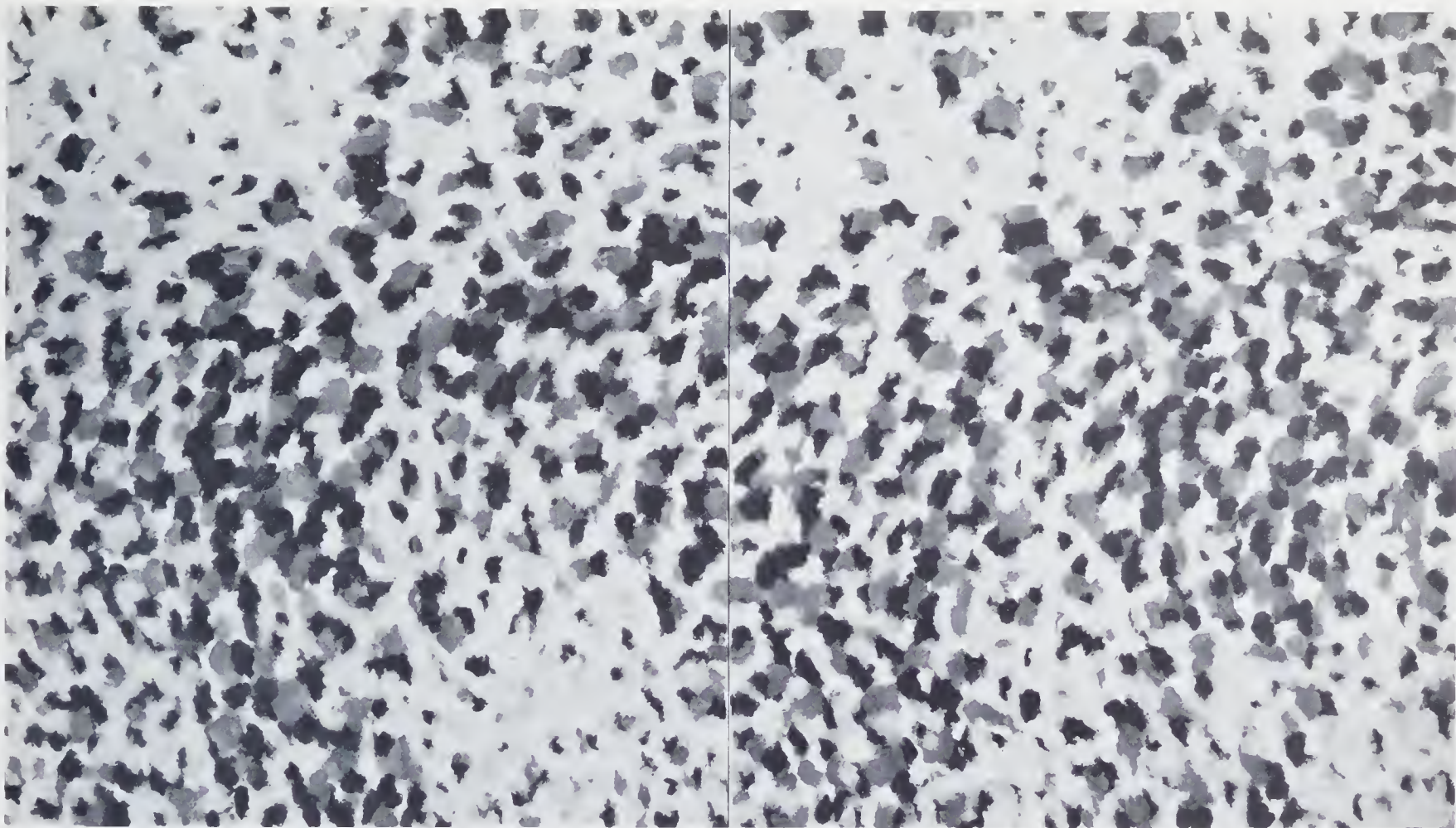
84. *New Orange Red Painting* 1975
Oil on canvas
152.5 x 132.0 cm
On loan from the Canada Council Art Bank/
Prêt de la Banque d'œuvres d'art du
Conseil des Arts du Canada



85. *Variations on Green No. 3* 1975-76
Oil on canvas
123.4 x 335.9 cm (diptych)
On loan from the Canada Council Art Bank/
Prêt de la Banque d'oeuvres d'art du
Conseil des Arts du Canada



86. *Variations on Deep Blues No. 3* 1975-76
Oil on canvas
223.5 x 355.6 cm (diptych)
The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts,
Purchase, Horsley and Annie Townsend Bequest



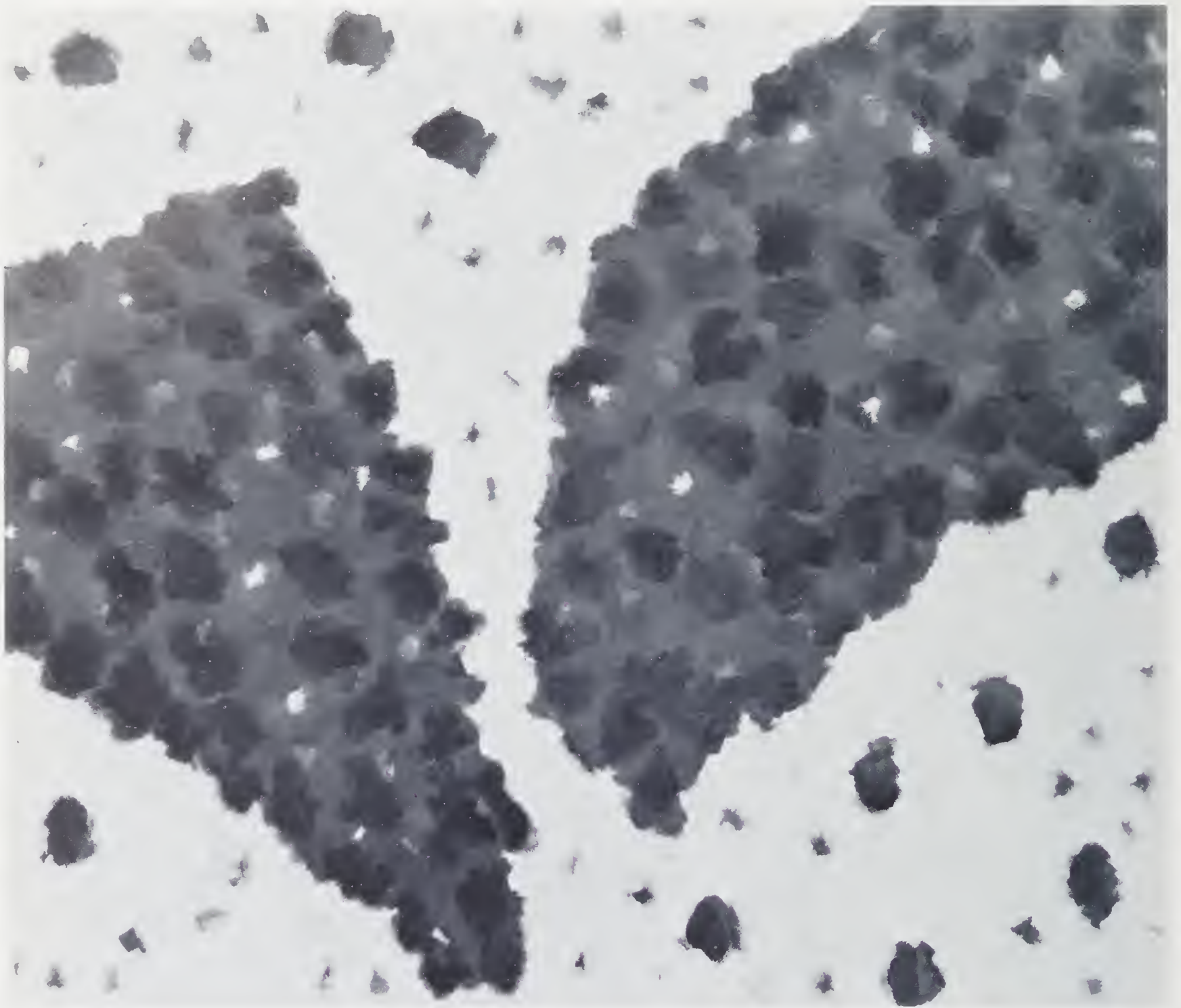
87. *Highlands No. 2* 1975-76
Oil on canvas
216.0 x 387.0 cm (diptych)
On loan from the Canada Council Art Bank/
Prêt de la Banque d'oeuvres d'art du
Conseil des Arts du Canada



88. *Variations on Red No. 7* 1976
Oil on canvas
119.4 x 106.7 cm
David and Anita Blackwood



89. *November No. 1* 1976
Oil on canvas
132.0 x 119.4 cm
Art Gallery of Windsor,
Gift from the Queen's Jubilee Art Collection
through the Province of Ontario, 1978



90. *Deep Red No. 6* 1976
Oil on canvas
195.6 x 228.6 cm
Richard J. Roberts and Garth H. Drabinsky



91. *Newscape* 1976
Oil on canvas
152.0 x 208.0 cm
Private Collection



92. *Midnight Blue No. 7* 1976
Oil on canvas
140.0 x 120.0 cm
Gerald W. Schwartz



93. *Highland in Green No. 2* 1977
Oil on canvas
106.7 x 96.5 cm
Citibank Canada



94. *Highland in Orange No. 2* 1977
Oil on canvas
167.5 x 183.0 cm
Lavalin Inc.



95. *Deep Lilac No. 2* 1977
Oil on canvas
106.5 x 96.5 cm
Dr. & Mrs. Paul Chapnick



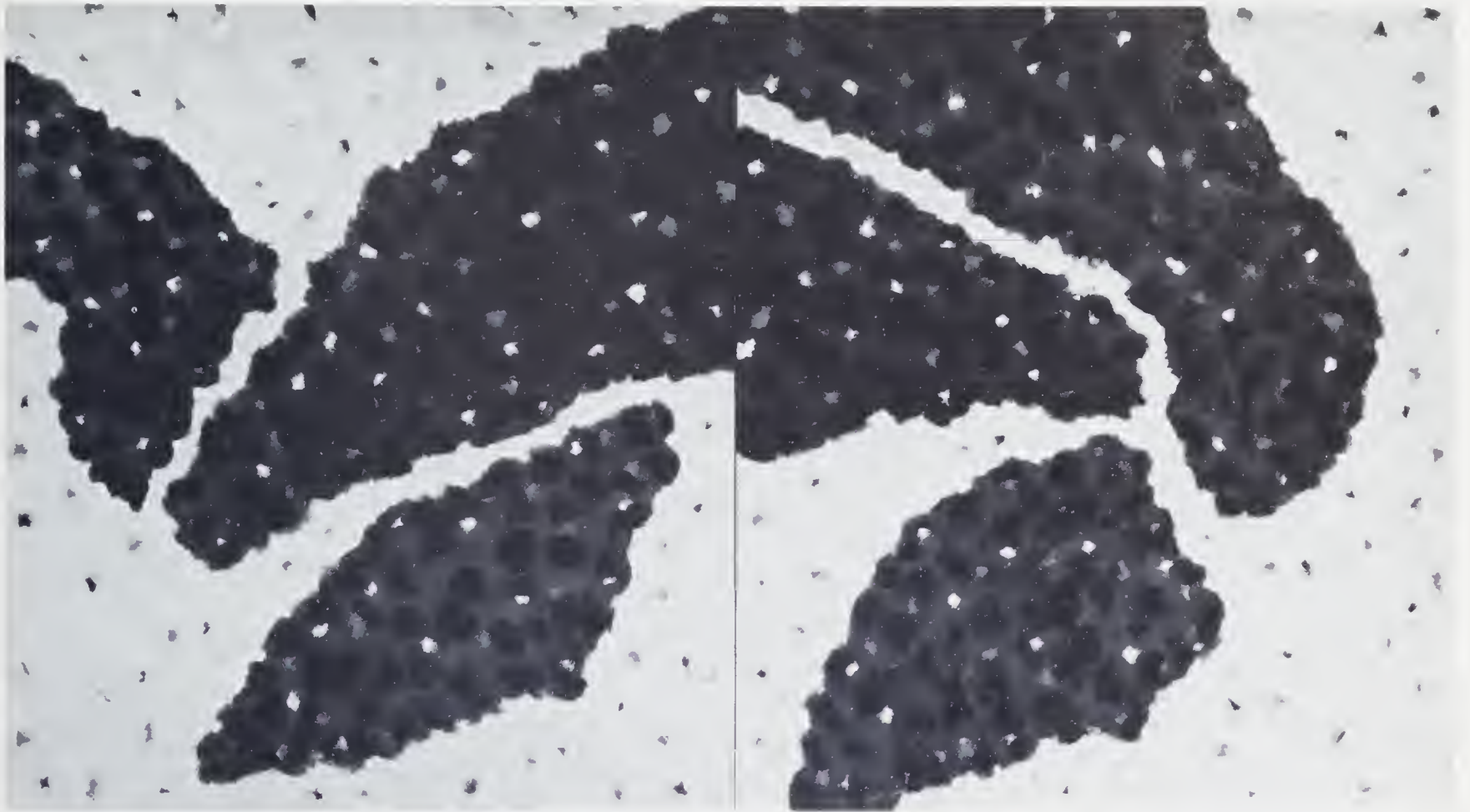
96. *Orange Painting No. 1* 1977
Oil on canvas
104.0 x 101.6 cm
Gulf Canada Limited



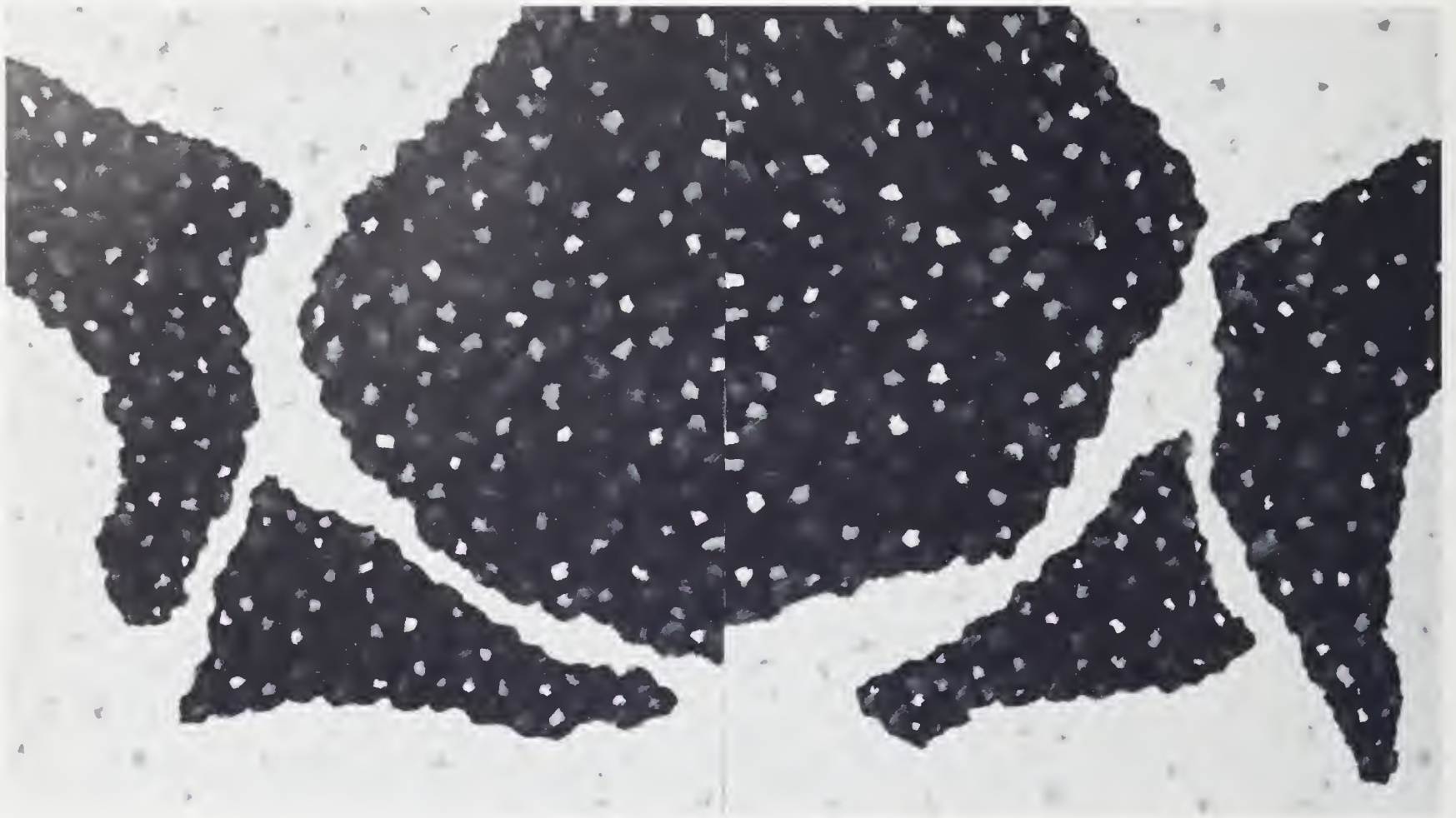
97. *February 6th* 1978
Watercolour
32.4 x 55.3 cm
E.A. Magner



98. *Untitled* 1978
Watercolour
55.3 x 32.4 cm
Marilyn Schiff



99. *Summer E* 1978
Oil on canvas
218.4 x 386.1 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



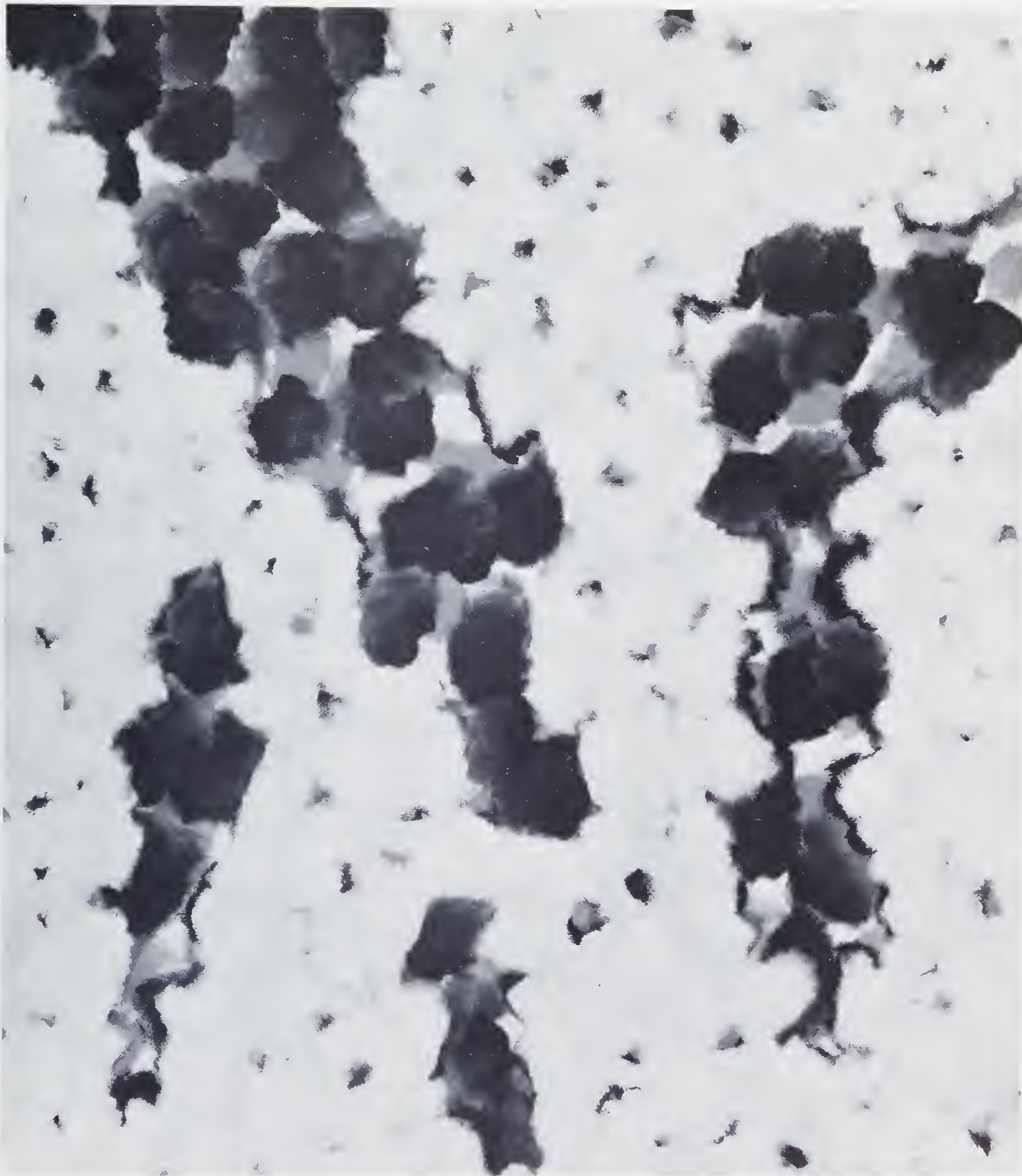
100. *Autumn A* 1978
Oil on canvas
218.4 x 386.1 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



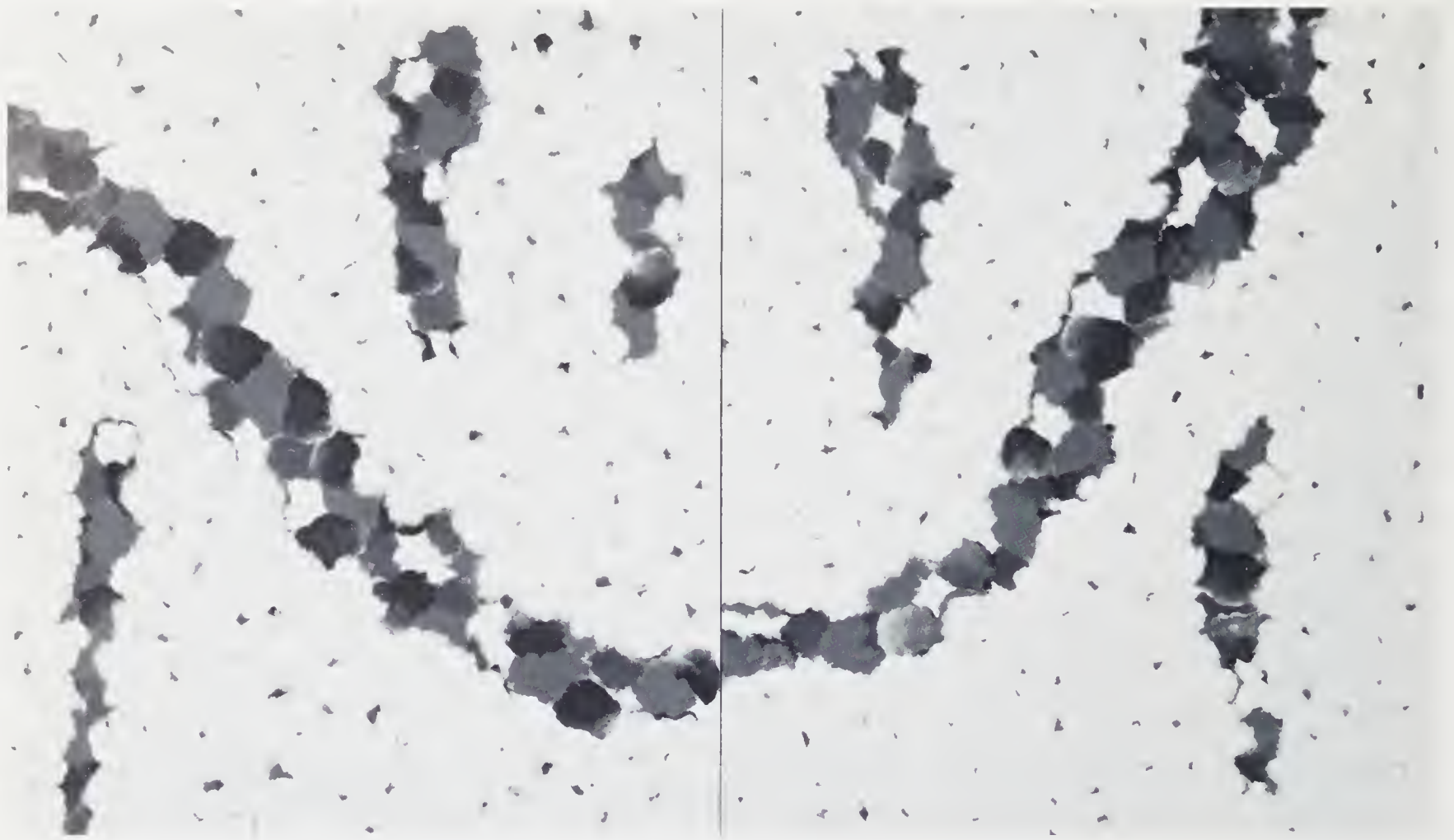
101. *Autumn J* 1978
Oil on canvas
96.5 x 81.3 cm
Mr. & Mrs. James H. Morlock



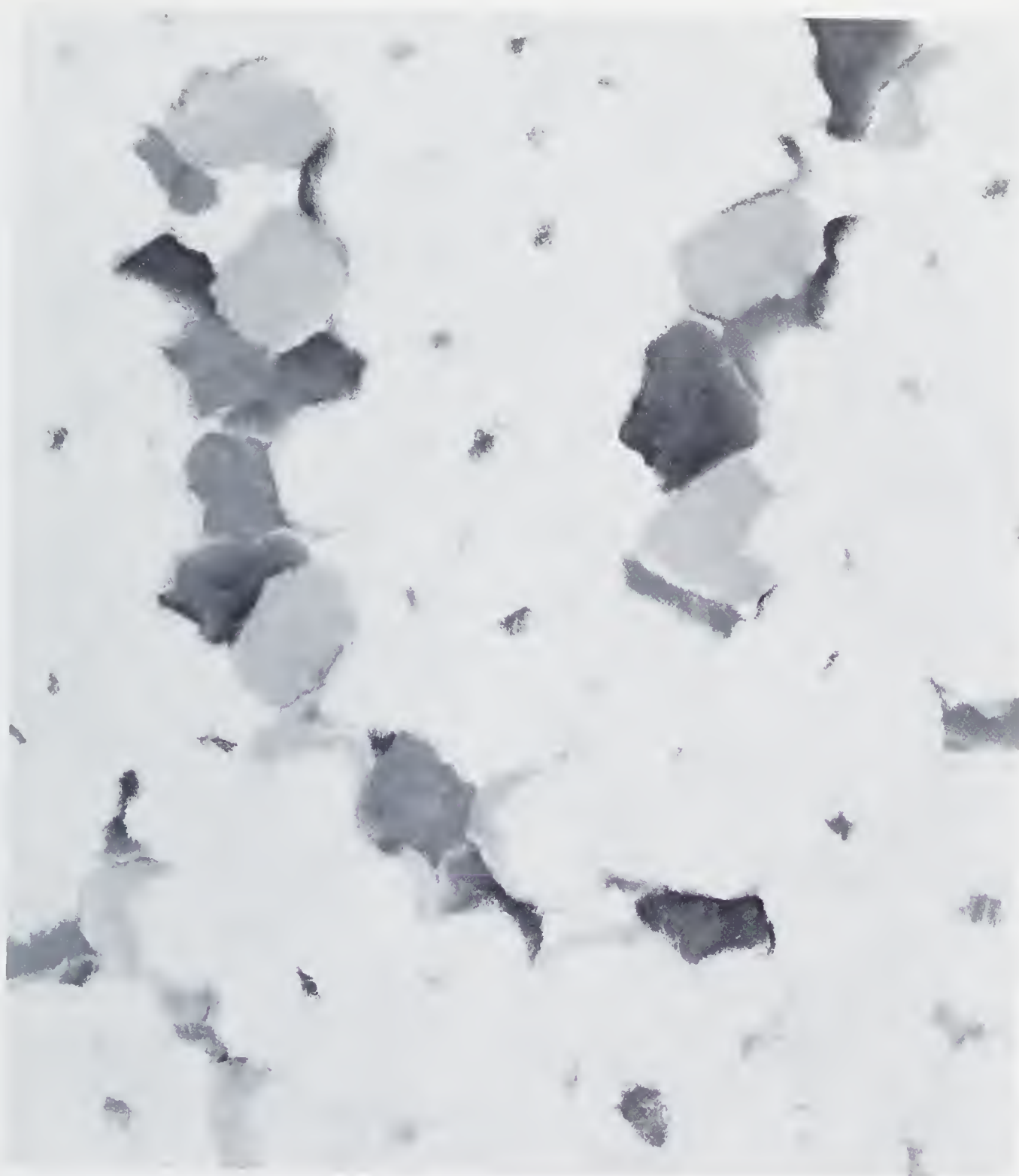
102. *Lilac C* 1978
Oil on canvas
96.5 x 81.0 cm
On loan from the Canada Council Art Bank/
Prêt de la Banque d'oeuvres d'art du
Conseil des Arts du Canada



103. *Red F* 1979
Oil on canvas
160.0 x 137.2 cm
H. Reisman



104. *Mauve C* 1979
Oil on canvas
203.2 x 345.4 cm (diptych)
Courtesy Gallery Moos



105. *Orange B* 1980
Oil on canvas
91.4 x 86.4 cm
Collection of Mrs. Ellen M. Kyriazi
Lausanne, Switzerland



106. *Violet A* 1981
Oil on canvas
99.1 x 134.6 cm
Gerald W. Schwartz



107. *Night Violet A* 1981
Oil on canvas
190.5 x 160.0 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos



108. *Night Greens D* 1981
Oil on canvas
190.5 x 160.0 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos

CHRONOLOGY

- 1921 Born in Kielce, Poland
- 1939 Registered at Warsaw Academy of Art. At outbreak of war in September put to forced labour.
- 1942 September 20 "resettlement" of Jews from Kielce began. Iskowitz's mother, father, and sister taken to Treblinka concentration camp.
- 1943 September. Iskowitz and brother transported to Auschwitz.
- 1944 Fall. Iskowitz transferred to Buchenwald.
- 1945 11 April. Liberation of Buchenwald by U.S. forces. Iskowitz in hospital in Buchenwald and later near Munich.
- 1947 January to May. Studied at Munich Academy of Art. Private study with Oskar Kokoschka.
- 1949 September. Emigrated to Canada and settled in Toronto.
- 1952 Attended Artist's Workshop, Toronto (until 1959-60). Began sketching trips to Markham and Uxbridge.
- 1953 Part-time teaching at Holy Blossom Temple and YMHA. First trip to Lake Simcoe.
- 1954 First exhibition with the Canadian Society of Graphic Artists. Part-time teaching at McKellar Lake.
- 1957 First one-man exhibition, Hayter Gallery, Toronto.
- 1960 First one-man exhibition with Here and Now Gallery, Toronto. Associated with the gallery until it closed in 1963.
- 1964 First one-man show at Gallery Moos, Toronto.
- 1967 Part-time teaching at Three Schools (until 1970). First trip to Churchill, Manitoba.
- 1972 Represented Canada at Venice Biennale with Walter Redinger.
- 1975 One-man exhibition at Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary.
- 1977 One-man exhibition at Martha Jackson Gallery, New York.

ONE-MAN EXHIBITIONS

1957

Toronto, The Hayter Gallery. *Paintings by Gershon Iskowitz*. September 14-28.

1960

Toronto, Here and Now Gallery. *Gershon Iskowitz*. March 4-28.

Toronto, Victoria College, University of Toronto. *Pictures on View in Alumni Hall, Victoria College: Gershon Iskowitz*. November 15-December 13.

1961

Toronto, YMHA. *Gershon Iskowitz*. April 9-23.

Toronto, Here and Now Gallery. *Iskowitz: New Paintings*. September 15-October 2.

1963

Toronto, Towne Cinema. *Gershon Iskowitz*.

Toronto, Dorothy Cameron Gallery. *Gershon Iskowitz: Oils, Watercolours, Drawings 1941-1963*. October 11-31.

1964

Kitchener, Landmann Gallery. *Gershon Iskowitz*. April.

Toronto, Gallery Moos. *New Paintings by Iskowitz*. October 1-14.

1966

Toronto, Gallery Moos. *New Paintings and Watercolours by Gershon Iskowitz*. February 17-March 2.
Waterloo, Waterloo University. *Gershon Iskowitz: Retrospective Exhibition*.

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

1967

Toronto, Gallery Moos. *New Paintings by Gershon Iskowitz*. November 23-December 6.

1969

Toronto, Gallery Moos. *New Paintings and Watercolours by Gershon Iskowitz*. January 28-February 10.

1970

Toronto, Gallery Moos. *Paintings and Watercolours by Gershon Iskowitz*. February 18-March 2.

1971

Toronto, Gallery Moos. *New Paintings by Gershon Iskowitz*. February 6-19.

1973

Toronto, Gallery Moos. *New Paintings by Gershon Iskowitz*. March 24-April 12.

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

St. Catharines, Rodman Hall Arts Centre. *Gershon Iskowitz-Paintings*.

1974

Toronto, Gallery Moos. *New Paintings by Gershon Iskowitz*. March 2-21.

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

1975

Toronto, Gallery Moos. *New Paintings by Gershon Iskowitz*. March 15-April 3.

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

1976

Toronto, Gallery Moos. *New Paintings by Gershon Iskowitz*. February 14-March 4.

Calgary, Canadian Art Galleries. *New Paintings by Gershon Iskowitz*. May 1-8.

Sackville, Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University. *Gershon Iskowitz*. December 3, 1976-January 4, 1977.

1977

Halifax, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. *Gershon Iskowitz*. January 10-February 15.

New York, Martha Jackson Gallery. *First New York Exhibition: Gershon Iskowitz*. February 5-March 5.

Toronto, Gallery Moos. *Gershon Iskowitz '77*. March 19-April 7.

Toronto, Gallery Moos. *Gershon Iskowitz '77*. March 19–April 7.

1978

Toronto, Gallery Moos. *New Paintings by Gershon Iskowitz*. March 18–April 6.

1979

Winnipeg, Thomas Gallery. *Gershon Iskowitz, Paintings and Watercolours*.

Toronto, Gallery Moos. *New Paintings by Gershon*

Iskowitz. September 15–October 4.

Calgary, Gallery Moos. *Gershon Iskowitz*. April 6–May 8.

1980

Ottawa, Robertson Galleries. *Gershon Iskowitz*. March 18–29.

1981

Toronto, Gallery Moos. *New Paintings and Drawings by Gershon Iskowitz*. January 17–February 4.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1954

Toronto, Art Gallery of Toronto. *31st Annual Exhibition*. (Canadian Society of Graphic Artists.)

1957

Hamilton, Art Gallery of Hamilton. *24th Anniversary Exhibition*. (Canadian Society of Graphic Artists.) April 5–28.

1958

Toronto, Art Gallery of Toronto. *Graphic 58: 25th Anniversary Exhibition*. (Canadian Society of Graphic Artists.) May 2–June 1.

Toronto, Art Gallery of Toronto. *33rd Annual Exhibition*. (Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolour.) November 28, 1958–January 4, 1959.

1959

London, Ontario and Halifax. *26th Annual Exhibition*. (Canadian Society of Graphic Artists.)

1960

Toronto, Toronto Central Library. *Exhibition of Members' Drawings*. (Canadian Society of Graphic Artists.) April.

Toronto, Art Gallery of Toronto. *14th Annual Sale of Canadian Art*. (Woman's Committee of the Art Gallery of Toronto.) November 3–20.

1961

Hamilton, Art Gallery of Hamilton. *12th Annual Winter Exhibition*. February.

1962

Toronto, Art Gallery of Toronto. *The Ernie Taylor Benefit Exhibition and Sale: Paintings and Sculpture donated by Ontario Artists*. April 18–May 6.

1963

Hamilton, Art Gallery of Hamilton. *14th Annual Winter Exhibition*. February.

Toronto, Art Gallery of Toronto. *30th Annual Exhibition*. (Canadian Society of Graphic Artists.) May 3–June 2.

1964

Winnipeg, Winnipeg Art Gallery. *9th Winnipeg Show*. October 24–November 7.

1965

Toronto, Art Gallery of Toronto. *39th Annual Exhibition*. (Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolour.) January 8–February 7.

Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada. *Sixth Biennial Exhibition of Canadian Painting*. June 4–August 22.

1966

Winnipeg, Winnipeg Art Gallery. *10th Winnipeg Show*. November 5–30.

1967

Ontario. *The Ontario Centennial Art Exhibition*. (Ontario Council for the Arts: circulating exhibition in Ontario.)

1969

Hamilton, Art Gallery of Hamilton. *20th Annual Exhibition of Contemporary Canadian Art*.
Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada. *The Canada Council Collection*.

1970

Hamilton, Art Gallery of Hamilton. *21st Annual Exhibition*. October.
Winnipeg, Winnipeg Art Gallery. *12th Winnipeg Show*. November 12–December 7.
Tel-Aviv, Tel-Aviv Museum. *Eight Artists from Canada*. (Organized by the National Gallery of Canada and the Cultural Department of the Hadassah-WIZO Organization of Canada.) Helena Rubinstein Pavilion. November 12–December 12.

1972

Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario. *Contemporary Canada*. April 14–June 11.
Venice. *La Biennale di Venezia 36th* (with Walter Redinger). June 11–October 1.
Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada. *Toronto Painting 1953–1965*. September 15–October 15; Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario. November 10–December 10.
Hamilton, Art Gallery of Hamilton. *23rd Annual Exhibition of Contemporary Canadian Art*. October 5–29.

1973

Toronto, Beth Tzedec Synagogue. *Art '74: Exhibition and Sale of Canadian and International Art*. December 10–13.

1974

Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario. *Opening Exhibition*. October 24–November 3.

1975

The Canadian Canvas. (Circulated by Time Canada Ltd.) January 16, 1975–March 21, 1976.
Guelph, McLaughlin Library, University of Guelph. *Made in Canada*. April 27–May 22.
Toronto, Art Gallery of York, University of Toronto. *Toronto Collectors: Dr. Henry Levison*. October 30–November 19.
Toronto, Marlborough Godard Gallery. *Art in the Corporate Environment*.

1976

Kitchener-Waterloo, Kitchener-Waterloo Gallery. *Ontario Now: A Survey of Contemporary Art*. January 8–February 1.
Edmonton, Edmonton Art Gallery and Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario. *Changing Visions: The Canadian Landscape*. February 13, 1976–April 17, 1977.
Toronto, Harbourfront Art Gallery. *Exhibition of Contemporary Paintings by Seven Canadian Painters from the Canada Council Art Bank*. (Circulated to Canadian Cultural Centre, Paris; National Gallery of New Zealand.) October 9–November 7.

1978

Toronto, Harbourfront Art Gallery. *A Toronto Sensibility*. February 17–March 19.

1980

East Hanover, New Jersey, Nabisco World Headquarters. *Contemporary Canadian Art: A Selection of Work from the Canada Council Art Bank*.

CATALOGUE OF THE EXHIBITION

- Height precedes width.
1. *Action* 1941
Watercolour and ink
38.1 x 55.9 cm
Verso: *Iskowitz 1941 Action. Painted in Kielce, Poland.*
No. 1 was made in Kielce. Iskowitz concealed this and another drawing in the attic of the house in which he was living. No. 1 was recovered by a friend of Iskowitz's after the war.
Courtesy Gallery Moos
 2. *Buchenwald* 1944-45
Watercolour and ink
38.1 x 50.8 cm
Signed lower left: *G. Ickowicz 1946* (Last two digits covered over, *Buchenwald*)
The drawing was begun at the end of 1944 in Buchenwald. "Ickowicz" was the original form of the artist's name. The spelling was changed to Iskowitz in the course of the 1950s to relate the phonetic pronunciation of his name to anglicized spelling. He continued to sign works with the "Ickowicz" form into 1955. Many of the pre-1955 works were inscribed some time after they were made, and for that reason bear the "Iskowitz" spelling.
Mr. Arthur Hammond
 3. *Condemned* 1945
Watercolour and ink
68.6 x 50.8 cm
Signed lower left: *G. Ickowicz 1947*; lower right: *G. Ickowicz 1946*
No. 3 was begun at the beginning of 1945 in Buchenwald.
Courtesy Gallery Moos
 4. *Through Life* 1947
Watercolour and ink on board
54.6 x 32.3 cm
Signed lower left: *Gershon Ickowicz 1947*
No. 4 was made in Munich. The inscription was made later and was originally dated 1951, but subsequently changed to 1947.
Courtesy Gallery Moos
 5. *Dybbuk* 1947
Watercolour and ink
26.7 x 36.8 cm
Signed lower left: *Gershon Iskowitz 1947*; lower right in pencil: *Gershon Iskowitz 52*
The inscriptions were added later. The drawing was made in connection with a stage set-design Iskowitz made for the Jewish Theatre in Munich.
Courtesy Gallery Moos
 6. *Ghetto* 1947
Watercolour and ink
35.6 x 48.3 cm
Signed lower right: *Gershon Ickowicz*; verso: *Iskowitz "Ghetto" 1947*
Courtesy Gallery Moos
 7. *Selection Auschwitz* 1947
Watercolour and ink
40.6 x 50.8 cm
Signed lower right: *G. Ickowicz Auschwitz 1944*; verso: *Iskowitz 1945 Selection Auschitz [sic]*
The inscriptions were added later. No. 7 recalls one of the parades at Auschwitz in 1944, observed by Iskowitz, with the "camp doctor" selecting victims for the gas chambers.
Courtesy Gallery Moos
 8. *Barracks* 1947
Watercolour and ink on board
38.1 x 50.8 cm
Signed lower right: *Gershon Ickowicz 1945*; verso: *Iskowitz 1945 "Barracks"*
On the verso of No. 8 is a pencil drawing of a double bunk. The drawing recalls the barracks of a satellite compound of Buchenwald where Iskowitz was held in 1945.
Courtesy Gallery Moos
 9. *Waiting* 1947
Watercolour and ink on board
41.9 x 54.6 cm
Signed lower right: *Gershon Ickowicz*; verso: *Waiting Buchenwald*
Courtesy Gallery Moos
 10. *The Artist's Mother* 1947
Oil on canvas laid on board
50.8 x 40.6 cm
Signed lower left: *Gershon Ickowicz*; verso: *Gershon Iskowitz Artist Mother*
Courtesy Gallery Moos
 11. *Self-Portrait* 1947
Oil on canvas laid on board
50.8 x 40.6 cm
Signed on verso: *Iskowitz "Self Portrait" 1947*
Courtesy Gallery Moos
 12. *Escape* 1948
Oil on canvas laid on corrugated paper
36.8 x 45.7 cm
Signed upper right: *G. Ickowicz 52*; verso: *Escape 1948*
No. 12 refers to Iskowitz's attempt to escape from the Buchenwald satellite camp shortly before his liberation. He was shot and severely wounded in the attempt.
Courtesy Gallery Moos
 13. *Action* 1948
Oil on canvas laid on board

- 40.6 x 58.4 cm
Signed lower right: *Iskowitz 1945*; verso: *Iskowitz "Action" 1945 16 x 20*
The painting recalls an event observed by Iskowitz in Kielce in 1942. The inscriptions were added later.
Courtesy Gallery Moos
14. *Yzkor* 1949
Gouache on board
30.5 x 40.6 cm
Signed on verso: *Iskowitz 1949 "Yzkor" #1 (Munich)*
Courtesy Gallery Moos
15. *Torah* 1951
Gouache on board
43.2 x 53.3 cm
Signed lower left: *Gershon Iskowitz 1951*; verso: *Gershon Iskowitz Torah 1951*
The inscriptions were added later. The girl in No. 15 recalls Iskowitz's school friend Miriam (see No. 18).
Courtesy Gallery Moos
16. *Memory (Mother and Child)* 1951
Watercolour and ink
50.8 x 24.3 cm
Signed on verso: *Iskowitz Memory (Mother and Child)*
Courtesy Gallery Moos
17. *Hunger* 1951
Watercolour and ink
Signed lower right: *G. Iskowitz*; verso: *Iskowitz 1951 Hunger*
51.0 x 33.0 cm
The inscriptions were added later.
Courtesy Gallery Moos
18. *Miriam* 1951-52
Gouache on board
38.1 x 26.7 cm
Signed lower right: *Gershon Iskowitz 1952*; verso: *Iskowitz 1950 Miriam*
The inscriptions were added later; the date "1952" was altered from "1951."
Courtesy Gallery Moos
19. *The Wall* 1952
Watercolour and ink
59.7 x 45.7 cm
Signed lower left: *Gershon Iskowitz 1952*; verso: *The Wall 1952*
The inscriptions were added later. The drawing is a reference to the novel *The Wall* by John Hersey, about the Warsaw Ghetto and the Uprising. The book was first published February 27, 1950.
Courtesy Gallery Moos
20. *Side Street* 1952
Watercolour on board
50.8 x 61.0 cm
Signed lower right: *Gershon Iskowitz, 1952*; verso: *Iskowitz, 1952 Side Street*
Courtesy Gallery Moos
21. *Yzkor* 1952
Watercolour and ink
30.5 x 40.6 cm
Signed on verso: *Iskowitz "Yzkor" 1952*
Courtesy Gallery Moos
22. *Moon: Buchenwald* 1952
Oil on board
25.4 x 34.3 cm
Signed lower right: *Gershon Iskowitz 1952*; verso: *Iskowitz 1952 "Moon" Buchenwald. Fiery Moon* (crossed out)
The inscriptions were added later.
Courtesy Gallery Moos
23. *It Burns* 1952
Gouache on board
50.8 x 66.0 cm
Signed lower right: *Gershon Iskowitz 1952*; verso: *Iskowitz It Burns 20 x 26*
The inscriptions were added later, and the date on the recto
24. *Burning Town* 1952
Gouache on board
30.5 x 40.6 cm
Signed lower right: *Gershon Ickowicz 52*; verso: *Burning Town*
Courtesy Gallery Moos
25. *Explosion* 1952
Gouache on board
50.8 x 63.5 cm
Signed lower right: *Gershon Iskowitz*; verso: *Explosion 1949*
The inscriptions were added later.
Courtesy Gallery Moos
26. *Barrier* 1952
Gouache on board
50.8 x 61.0 cm
Signed lower left: *Gershon Iskowitz 1952*; verso: *Barrier*
The inscriptions were added later.
Courtesy Gallery Moos
27. *The Water Carrier* 1952
Gouache on board
29.8 x 39.4 cm
Mr. Arthur Hammond
28. *Untitled* 1952
Felt pen
21.1 x 27.9 cm
Signed lower right: *Iskowitz 52*
Courtesy Gallery Moos
29. *Untitled* 1952
Felt pen
27.9 x 21.1 cm
Signed lower right: *Iskowitz 52*
Courtesy Gallery Moos
30. *Untitled* 1952
Felt pen
21.1 x 27.9 cm
Signed top right: *Iskowitz 52*
Courtesy Gallery Moos
31. *Untitled* 1952
Felt pen
21.1 x 27.9 cm

- Signed lower right: *Iskowitz 52*
Courtesy Gallery Moos
32. *Untitled* 1952
Felt pen
21.1 x 27.9 cm
Signed upper left: *Iskowitz 52*
Courtesy Gallery Moos
33. *Untitled* 1952
Felt pen
21.1 x 27.9 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos
34. *Apple Orchard* 1952
Oil on canvas laid on board
40.6 x 50.8 cm
Signed on verso: *Iskowitz 1952*
Apple Orchard
Courtesy Gallery Moos
35. *Burning Synagogue* 1953
Gouache on board
48.3 x 35.6 cm
Signed lower right: *G. Ickowicz 1952*; verso: *Burning S Iskowitz 1952*
The date on the recto was changed from 1953 to 1952.
Courtesy Gallery Moos
36. *Market* 1953-54
Gouache on board
50.8 x 61.0 cm
Signed lower left: *Gershon Iskowitz 1952*; verso: *Market*
The inscriptions were added later. The date appears to have been altered from 1954.
Courtesy Gallery Moos
37. *Parry Sound* 1954
Oil on board
40.6 x 50.8 cm
Signed lower right: *G. Ickowicz 55*; verso: *Iskowitz 1954 16 x 20 "Parry Sound S" oil on board*
The date on the recto was changed from 54 to 55.
Courtesy Gallery Moos
38. *Landscape* 1954
Oil on Masonite
27.9 x 36.5 cm
- No. 38 was made at Markham.
Courtesy Gallery Moos
39. *Landscape* 1954
Oil on board
29.7 x 35.1 cm
No. 39 was made at Markham.
Courtesy Gallery Moos
40. *Parry Sound No. 1* 1955
Watercolour
22.9 x 30.5 cm
Signed lower left and lower centre: *Iskowitz 55*
Courtesy Gallery Moos
41. *Parry Sound No. 2* 1955
Watercolour
22.9 x 30.5 cm
Signed lower centre: *Iskowitz 55*
Courtesy Gallery Moos
42. *Parry Sound No. 3* 1955
Watercolour
22.9 x 30.5 cm
Signed lower right: *Iskowitz 55*
Courtesy Gallery Moos
43. *Parry Sound No. 4* 1955
Watercolour
22.9 x 30.5 cm
Signed lower right: *Iskowitz 55*
Courtesy Gallery Moos
44. *Dusk* 1955
Oil on board
27.3 x 21.6 cm
Signed lower left: *G. Ickowicz 55*; verso: *Dusk \$40.00*
Courtesy Gallery Moos
45. *Autumn Skies* 1955
Oil on canvas laid on board
25.4 x 35.6 cm
On verso: *1955 Autumn Skies*
Courtesy Gallery Moos
46. *Swirling Night* 1955
Oil on canvas laid on board
20.3 x 25.4 cm
Hana Trefelt
47. *Midnight* 1955
Oil on canvas
- 60.5 x 69.7 cm
Signed lower right: *G. Ickowicz 1955*; verso: *Midnight*
Courtesy Gallery Moos
48. *Eric Freifeld* 1955
Oil on board
50.8 x 38.1 cm
Signed lower left: *G. Iskowitz 55*
On the verso is an unfinished landscape painting in watercolour. No. 48 was made as a companion to a portrait of Gershon Iskowitz by Eric Freifeld.
Courtesy Gallery Moos
49. *Sunset* 1960
Oil on canvas
127.0 x 101.6 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos
50. *Spring* 1962
Oil on canvas
165.4 x 140.0 cm
Signed lower right: *Iskowitz 62*
The Bank of Canada
51. *Autumn Reflections* 1962
Oil on canvas
125.4 x 100.0 cm
Signed lower left: *Iskowitz 62*
Private Collection
52. *Sunset* 1962
Watercolour
24.0 x 33.5 cm
Signed lower left: *Iskowitz 1962*
Private Collection
53. *Self-Portrait* 1963
Watercolour
71.1 x 50.8 cm
Signed lower right: *Iskowitz 63*
Tony and Shirley Stapells
54. *Seated Figure* 1964
Oil on canvas
68.6 x 58.4 cm
Dr. & Mrs. J. Giblon
55. *Autumn Sky* 1964
Watercolour

- 71.1 x 88.9 cm
Signed lower right: *G. Iskowitz 64*
Tony and Shirley Stapells
56. *Untitled* 1964
Oil on canvas
50.8 x 76.2 cm
Signed lower right: *Iskowitz 64*
Joel Siegel
57. *Parry Sound* 1965
Watercolour
66.0 x 78.1 cm
Signed lower left: *G. Iskowitz 65*
Tony and Shirley Stapells
58. *Parry Sound Variation* 1965
Watercolour
Signed lower right: *Iskowitz 65*
Dr. & Mrs. J. Giblon
59. *Sextet* 1965
Oil on canvas
152.5 x 122.0 cm
Signed lower right: *Iskowitz 65*
Private Collection
60. *Summer Sounds* 1965
Oil on canvas
172.7 x 139.7 cm
Signed lower right: *Iskowitz 65*
Collection Art Gallery of Ontario Purchase, 1966
61. *Autumn Images* 1965
Oil on canvas
76.2 x 61.0 cm
Signed lower left: *Iskowitz 65*
Jacob and Dorothy Hendeles
62. *Summer Blues* 1966
Oil on canvas
81.3 x 101.6 cm
Signed lower right: *Iskowitz 66*
Mr. & Mrs. J.T. McLeod
63. *Summer Skies* 1966
Oil on canvas
102.0 x 82.0 cm
- Signed lower right: *Iskowitz 66*
Crown Life Collection of Canadian Art
64. *Autumn Landscape No. 5* 1967
Oil on canvas
152.4 x 127.0 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos
65. *Autumn Landscape No. 6* 1967
Oil on canvas
122.0 x 52.4 cm
Collection of Toronto-Dominion Bank
66. *Seasons No. I* 1968-69
Oil on canvas
254.0 x 355.6 cm (diptych)
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa/Galerie Nationale du Canada, Ottawa
67. *Western Sphere No. 11* 1969
Watercolour
47.0 x 62.0 cm
Signed lower right: *Iskowitz 69*
On loan from the Canada Council Art Bank/Prêt de la Banque d'oeuvres d'art du Conseil des Arts du Canada
68. *Triptych* 1969-1970
Oil on canvas
274.3 x 139.7; 304.8 x 152.4; 274.3 x 139.7 cm (triptych)
Courtesy Gallery Moos
69. *Lowlands No. 13* 1970
Oil on canvas
152.4 x 121.9 cm
Signed lower left: *Iskowitz 1970*
Mr. & Mrs. Jules Loeb
70. *Uplands B* 1970
Oil on canvas
213.4 x 355.3 cm (diptych)
Courtesy Gallery Moos
71. *Landscape in Red No. II* 1971
Oil on canvas
152.0 x 122.0 cm
Courtesy Carmen Lamanna
72. *Sky Blue No. 3* 1971
Oil on canvas
76.2 x 112.0 cm
- Dr. & Mrs. A.N. Lofchy
73. *Uplands E* 1971
Oil on canvas
228.6 x 355.6 cm (diptych)
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa/Galerie Nationale du Canada, Ottawa
74. *Morning Blues* 1972
Oil on canvas
139.7 x 114.3 cm
Eugene and Margaret Sawkiw
75. *Summer Painting No. 2* 1972
Oil on canvas
111.0 x 80.0 cm
Mrs. Peter MacLachlan
76. *Uplands II* 1972
Oil on canvas
182.9 x 241.3 cm (diptych)
Collection Art Gallery of Ontario, Purchase with assistance from Wintario, 1977
77. *Uplands K* 1972
Oil on canvas
228.4 x 355.4 cm (diptych)
Art Gallery of Hamilton, Gift of Mr. John Morris Thurston and Wintario, 1977
78. *Orange Blue Mauve Painting* 1973
Oil on canvas
152.7 x 178.3 cm
The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa
79. *Ultra Blue Green* 1973
Oil on canvas
157.6 x 127.0 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos
80. *Spring* 1974
Oil on canvas
153.0 x 137.5 cm
On loan from the Canada Council Art Bank/Prêt de la Banque d'oeuvres d'art du Conseil des Arts du Canada
81. *Violet Blue Painting* 1974
Oil on canvas
167.6 x 195.6 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos

82. *New Green Red Painting* 1974
Oil on canvas
167.6 x 195.6 cm
Mr. & Mrs. Irving Waltman
83. *Seasons No. 6* 1974
Oil on canvas
152.4 x 132.1 cm
Mr. & Mrs. A.C. Finkelstein
84. *New Orange Red Painting* 1975
Oil on canvas
152.5 x 132.0 cm
On loan from the Canada Council Art Bank/Prêt de la Banque d'oeuvres d'art du Conseil des Arts du Canada
85. *Variations on Green No. 3* 1975-1976
Oil on canvas
123.4 x 335.9 cm (diptych)
On loan from the Canada Council Art Bank/Prêt de la Banque d'oeuvres d'art du Conseil des Arts du Canada
86. *Variations on Deep Blues No. 3*, 1975-76
Oil on canvas
223.5 x 355.6 cm (diptych)
The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Purchase, Horsley and Annie Townsend Bequest
87. *Highlands No. 2* 1975-76
Oil on canvas
216.0 x 387.0 cm (diptych)
On loan from the Canada Council Art Bank/Prêt de la Banque d'oeuvres d'art du Conseil des Arts du Canada
88. *Variations on Red No. 7* 1976
Oil on canvas
119.4 x 106.7 cm
David and Anita Blackwood
89. *November No. 1* 1976
Oil on canvas
132.0 x 119.4 cm
Art Gallery of Windsor, Gift from the Queen's Jubilee Art
- Collection through the Province of Ontario, 1978
90. *Deep Red No. 6* 1976
Oil on canvas
195.6 x 228.6 cm
Richard J. Roberts and Garth H. Drabinsky
91. *Newscape* 1976
Oil on canvas
152.0 x 208.0 cm
Private Collection
92. *Midnight Blue No. 7* 1976
Oil on canvas
140.0 x 120.0 cm
Gerald W. Schwartz
93. *Highland in Green No. 2* 1977
Oil on canvas
106.7 x 96.5 cm
Citibank Canada
94. *Highland in Orange No. 2* 1977
Oil on canvas
167.5 x 183.0 cm
Lavalin Inc.
95. *Deep Lilac No. 2* 1977
Oil on canvas
106.5 x 96.5 cm
Dr. & Mrs. Paul Chapnick
96. *Orange Painting No. 1* 1977
Oil on canvas
104.0 x 101.6 cm
Gulf Canada Limited
97. *February 6th* 1978
Watercolour
32.4 x 55.3 cm
Signed lower left: *Iskowitz Feb. 6. 1978*
E.A. Magner
98. *Untitled* 1978
Watercolour
55.3 x 32.4 cm
Signed lower left: *Iskowitz 78*
Marilyn Schiff
99. *Summer E* 1978
Oil on canvas
218.4 x 386.1 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos
100. *Autumn A* 1978
Oil on canvas
218.4 x 386.1 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos
101. *Autumn J* 1978
Oil on canvas
96.5 x 81.3 cm
Mr. & Mrs. James H. Morlock
102. *Lilac C* 1978
Oil on canvas
96.5 x 81.0 cm
On loan from the Canada Council Art Bank/Prêt de la Banque d'oeuvres d'art du Conseil des Arts du Canada
103. *Red F* 1979
Oil on canvas
160.0 x 137.2 cm
H. Reisman
104. *Mauve C* 1979
Oil on canvas
203.2 x 345.4 cm (diptych)
Courtesy Gallery Moos
105. *Orange B* 1980
Oil on canvas
91.4 x 86.4 cm
Collection of Mrs. Ellen M. Kyriazi, Lausanne, Switzerland
106. *Violet A* 1981
Oil on canvas
99.1 x 134.6 cm
Gerald W. Schwartz
107. *Night Violet A* 1981
Oil on canvas
190.5 x 160.0 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos
108. *Night Greens D* 1981
Oil on canvas
190.5 x 160.0 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos

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Note

Catalogue No. 51 is showing in Toronto only. The following works will not travel to Calgary or England: Nos. 4, 6, 9, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 27, 30, 31, 32, 33, 36, 38, 41, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48, 52, 54, 55, 61, 63, 67, 68, 69, 72, 73, 75, 77, 79, 82, 83, 85, 90, 91, 95, 96, 97, 100, 103, 106, and 107.

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GERSHON ISKOWITZ

A FORTY YEAR RETROSPECTIVE

CANADA HOUSE CULTURAL CENTRE GALLERY
TRAFALGAR SQUARE, LONDON

2 MARCH - 5 APRIL

MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, FRIDAY 10.00-17.30, THURSDAY 10.00-19.00, SUNDAY 12.00-17.30, CLOSED ON SATURDAY

GERSHON ISKOWITZ

A FORTY YEAR RETROSPECTIVE

This exhibition has been specially selected from a much larger retrospective of Gershon Iskowit's work which was on view at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto in early 1982. Dr David Burnett, Curator of Contemporary Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, who organised the exhibition and produced a book on the artist's work, has chosen the forty paintings in the present exhibition to illustrate the development of Iskowit's work over the period from 1941 to the present day.

Iskowit is one of Canada's leading painters and this exhibition provides the first opportunity to see his work in Britain. He represented Canada at the Venice Biennale in 1972 and was included in a group touring exhibition of works from the Canada Council Art Bank which went to the Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris in the late 1970s, but apart from that he has had virtually no exposure in Europe. He was born in Poland in 1921 and after periods in concentration camps during the war took up his studies at the Munich Academy of Art in 1947. In 1949 he emigrated to Canada and settled in Toronto. His artistic career has developed steadily since the early 1950s when he began exhibiting in Toronto. During the last forty years he has exhibited widely across Canada in group and solo exhibitions.

Iskowit has said about his painting that it "... is just an extension of myself. It's a plastic interpretation of the way I think. You reflect your own vision. That's what it's all about. Art is like evolution and life, and you've got to search for life, stand on your feet and continue. The only fear I have is before starting to paint. When I paint, I'm great, I feel great."

*Griselda Bear, Visual Arts Officer,
Canadian High Commission, London,
January 1983*

Biographical information

- 1921 Born in Kielce, Poland
- 1939 Registered at Warsaw Academy of Art. At outbreak of war in September put to forced labour.
- 1942 September 20 "resettlement" of Jews from Kielce began. Iskowit's mother, father, and sister taken to Treblinka concentration camp.
- 1943 September. Iskowit and brother transported to Auschwitz.
- 1944 Fall. Iskowit transferred to Buchenwald.
- 1945 11 April. Liberation of Buchenwald by U.S. forces. Iskowit in hospital in Buchenwald and later near Munich.
- 1947 January to May. Studied at Munich Academy of Art. Private study with Oskar Kokoschka.
- 1949 September. Emigrated to Canada and settled in Toronto.
- 1952 Attended Artist's Workshop, Toronto (until 1959-60). Began sketching trips to Markham and Uxbridge.
- 1953 Part-time teaching at Holy Blossom Temple and YMHA. First trip to Lake Simcoe.
- 1954 First exhibition with the Canadian Society of Graphic Artists. Part-time teaching at McKellar Lake.
- 1957 First one-man exhibition, Hayter Gallery, Toronto.
- 1960 First one-man exhibition with Here and Now Gallery, Toronto. Associated with the gallery until it closed in 1963.
- 1964 First one-man show at Gallery Moos, Toronto.
- 1967 Part-time teaching at Three Schools (until 1970). First trip to Churchill, Manitoba.
- 1972 Represented Canada at Venice Biennale with Walter Redinger.
- 1975 One-man exhibition at Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary.
- 1977 One-man exhibition at Martha Jackson Gallery, New York.

List of works

Action 1941

Watercolour and ink
38.1 x 55.9 cm

Verso: *Iskowitz 1941 Action*.
Painted in Kielce, Poland.

No. 1 was made in Kielce.

Iskowitz concealed this and another drawing in the attic of the house in which he was living.

No. 1 was recovered by a friend of Iskowitz's after the war.

Courtesy Gallery Moos

Buchenwald 1944-45

Watercolour and ink
38.1 x 50.8 cm

Signed lower left: *G. Iekowicz 1946* (Last two digits covered over, *Buchenwald*)

The drawing was begun at the end of 1944 in Buchenwald.

"Iekowicz" was the original form of the artist's name. The spelling was changed to Iskowitz in the course of the 1950s to relate the phonetic pronunciation of his name to anglicized spelling. He continued to sign works with the "Iekowicz" form into 1955. Many of the pre-1955 works were inscribed some time after they were made, and for that reason bear the "Iskowitz" spelling.

Mr. Arthur Hammond

Condemned 1945

Watercolour and ink
68.6 x 50.8 cm

Signed lower left: *G. Iekowicz 1947*; lower right: *G. Iekowicz 1946*

No. 3 was begun at the beginning of 1945 in Buchenwald.

Courtesy Gallery Moos

Selection Auschwitz 1947

Watercolour and ink
40.6 x 50.8 cm

Signed lower right: *G. Iekowicz Auschwitz 1944*; verso: *Iskowitz 1945 Selection Auschwitz* [sic]

The inscriptions were added later. No. 7 recalls one of the parades at Auschwitz in 1944, observed by Iskowitz, with the "camp doctor" selecting victims for the gas chambers.

Courtesy Gallery Moos

Barracks 1947

Watercolour and ink on board
38.1 x 50.8 cm

Signed lower right: *Gershon Iekowicz 1945*; verso: *Iskowitz 1945 "Barracks"*

On the verso of No. 8 is a pencil drawing of a double bunk. The drawing recalls the barracks of a satellite compound of Buchenwald where Iskowitz was held in 1945.

Courtesy Gallery Moos

The Artist's Mother 1947

Oil on canvas laid on board
50.8 x 40.6 cm

Signed lower left: *Gershon Iekowicz*; verso: *Gershon Iskowitz Artist Mother*

Courtesy Gallery Moos

Self-Portrait 1947

Oil on canvas laid on board
50.8 x 40.6 cm

Signed on verso: *Iskowitz "Self Portrait" 1947*

Courtesy Gallery Moos

Torah 1951

Gouache on board
43.2 x 53.3 cm

Signed lower left: *Gershon Iskowitz 1951*; verso: *Gershon Iskowitz Torah 1951*

The inscriptions were added later. The girl in No. 15 recalls Iskowitz's school friend Miriam (see No. 18).

Courtesy Gallery Moos

Hunger 1951

Watercolour and ink
Signed lower right: *G. Iskowicz*;
verso: *Iskowitz 1951 Hunger*
51.0 x 33.0 cm

The inscriptions were added later.

Courtesy Gallery Moos

It Burns 1952

Gouache on board
50.8 x 66.0 cm

Signed lower right: *Gershon Iskowitz 1952*; verso: *Iskowitz It Burns 20 x 26*

The inscriptions were added later, and the date on the recto

Explosion 1952

Gouache on board
50.8 x 63.5 cm

Signed lower right: *Gershon Iskowitz*; verso: *Explosion 1949*

The inscriptions were added later.

Courtesy Gallery Moos

Barrier 1952

Gouache on board
50.8 x 61.0 cm

Signed lower left: *Gershon Iskowitz 1952*; verso: *Barrier*

The inscriptions were added later.

Courtesy Gallery Moos

Untitled 1952

Felt pen
21.1 x 27.9 cm

Signed lower right: *Iskowitz 52*

Courtesy Gallery Moos

Untitled 1952

Felt pen
27.9 x 21.1 cm

Signed lower right: *Iskowitz 52*

Courtesy Gallery Moos

Apple Orchard 1952

Oil on canvas laid on board
40.6 x 50.8 cm

Signed on verso: *Iskowitz 1952 Apple Orchard*

Courtesy Gallery Moos

Parry Sound 1954
Oil on board
40.6 x 50.8 cm
Signed lower right: *G. Iskowicz*
55; verso: *Iskowicz 1954 16 x 20*
"Parry Sound S" oil on board
The date on the recto was
changed from 54 to 55.
Courtesy Gallery Moos

Landscape 1954
Oil on board
29.7 x 35.1 cm
No. 39 was made at Markham.
Courtesy Gallery Moos

Parry Sound No. 1 1955
Watercolour
22.9 x 30.5 cm
Signed lower left and lower
centre: *Iskowicz 55*
Courtesy Gallery Moos

Parry Sound No. 3 1955
Watercolour
22.9 x 30.5 cm
Signed lower right: *Iskowicz 55*
Courtesy Gallery Moos

Spring 1962
Oil on canvas
165.4 x 140.0 cm
Signed lower right: *Iskowicz*
62
The Bank of Canada

Parry Sound Variation 1965
Watercolour
Signed lower right: *Iskowicz*
65
Dr. & Mrs. J. Giblon

Sextet 1965
Oil on canvas
152.5 x 122.0 cm
Signed lower right: *Iskowicz*
65
Private Collection

Summer Sounds 1965
Oil on canvas
172.7 x 139.7 cm
Signed lower right: *Iskowicz 65*
Collection Art Gallery of On-
tario Purchase, 1966

Summer Blues 1966
Oil on canvas
81.3 x 101.6 cm
Signed lower right: *Iskowicz*
66
Mr. & Mrs. J.T. McLeod

Autumn Landscape No. 6 1967
Oil on canvas
122.0 x 52.4 cm
Collection of Toronto-Dominion
Bank

Seasons No. 1 1968-69
Oil on canvas
254.0 x 355.6 cm (diptych)
National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa/Galerie Nationale du
Canada, Ottawa

Landscape in Red No. II 1971
Oil on canvas
152.0 x 122.0 cm
Courtesy Carmen Lamanna

Morning Blues 1972
Oil on canvas
139.7 x 114.3 cm
Eugene and Margaret Sawkiw

Uplands II 1972
Oil on canvas
182.9 x 241.3 cm (diptych)
Collection Art Gallery of On-
tario, Purchase with assistance
from Wintario, 1977

Orange Blue Mauve Painting
1973
Oil on canvas
152.7 x 178.3 cm
The Robert McLaughlin Gallery,
Oshawa

Violet Blue Painting 1974
Oil on canvas
167.6 x 195.6 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos

New Orange Red Painting 1975
Oil on canvas
152.5 x 132.0 cm
On loan from the Canada Coun-
cil Art Bank/Prêt de la Banque
d'oeuvres d'art du Conseil des
Arts du Canada

Highlands No. 2 1975-76
Oil on canvas
216.0 x 387.0 cm (diptych)
On loan from the Canada Coun-
cil Art Bank/Prêt de la Banque
d'oeuvres d'art du Conseil des
Arts du Canada

Variations on Red No. 7 1976
Oil on canvas
119.4 x 106.7 cm
David and Anita Blackwood

November No. 1 1976
Oil on canvas
132.0 x 119.4 cm
Art Gallery of Windsor, Gift
from the Queen's Jubilee Art

Midnight Blue No. 7 1976
Oil on canvas
140.0 x 120.0 cm
Gerald W. Schwartz

Highland in Orange No. 2 1977
Oil on canvas
167.5 x 183.0 cm
Lavalin Inc.

Lilac C 1978
Oil on canvas
96.5 x 81.0 cm
On loan from the Canada Coun-
cil Art Bank/Prêt de la Banque
d'oeuvres d'art du Conseil des
Arts du Canada

Orange B 1980
Oil on canvas
91.4 x 86.4 cm
Collection of Mrs. Ellen M.
Kyriazi, Lausanne, Switzerland

Night Greens D 1981
Oil on canvas
190.5 x 160.0 cm
Courtesy Gallery Moos

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"List of works" copyright of
Art Gallery of Ontario, 1982,
taken from the book, "Iskowicz",
by David Burnett

Front cover: *Landscape in Red No.*
1971, oil on canvas, 152 x 122 cm
courtesy Carmen Lamanna

Art Gallery of Ontario
Musée des beaux-arts de l'Ontario

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