



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

E.P. Taylor Research Library & Archives

Description & Finding Aid:
Gershon Iskowitz Fonds
CA OTAG SC114

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Gershon Iskowitz fonds

Dates of creation:

[191-?] - 1988

Extent:

239 photographs
 13 palettes
 8 cm of textual records
 2 drawings
 1 photograph album
 1 videocassette
 1 film reel
 1 audio reel
 1 matchbook

Biographical sketch:

Gershon Iskowitz (1921-1988) was an abstract painter based in Toronto for much of his artistic career. Born in Kielce, Poland, he survived internment in Nazi concentration camps and lost his entire family in the Holocaust. Iskowitz studied art in Munich at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in 1947, soon transferring to private studies with Oskar Kokoschka. He moved to Toronto in 1949. His work developed from wartime imagery to a focus on landscapes (particularly inspired by practice in the Parry Sound area), eventually arriving at his mature abstract expressionist style in 1967. Iskowitz began exhibiting with Gallery Moos in 1964, a relationship which continued throughout his career. He taught at the New School (Toronto) from 1967-1970, and his informal mentoring of artists in Toronto is often noted. Iskowitz, along with Walter Redinger, represented Canada at the Venice Biennale in 1972. The artist established the Gershon Iskowitz Foundation in 1985, with the mandate of awarding the Gershon Iskowitz Prize to a mature practising artist; since 2007 the Foundation has partnered with the Art Gallery of Ontario to administer the Gershon Iskowitz Prize at the AGO.

Scope and content:

Fonds consists of personal and professional records of Gershon Iskowitz, including photographic documentation of his family and early life, self and studio, and works of art; publicity material including newspaper clippings about his career; personal artefacts such as identity documents; a small amount of personal correspondence; and a condolence book signed at his memorial service.

Contains series:

1. Photographs
2. Publicity material
3. Identity documents
4. Personal correspondence and notes
5. Writings about the artist
6. Sketch and notes for *Northern Lights Septet #3*
7. Audiovisual records
8. Artist's palettes
9. Condolence book

Custodial history:

Following Iskowitz's death, material now constituting this fonds was gathered by friends and maintained by the Gershon Iskowitz Foundation. It was transferred directly to the Art Gallery of Ontario in 2008.

Notes:

Immediate source of acquisition:

Material was donated by the Gershon Iskowitz Foundation.

Arrangement:

Original order of material was not apparent by the time the material was acquired by the AGO. Material was arranged by the archivist.

Restrictions on access:

Open. Access to Special Collections is by appointment only. Please contact the reference desk for more information.

Terms governing use and reproduction / publication:

Various copyright holders. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain permission to publish any part of the fonds/collection.

Finding aids:

A detailed finding aid is available.

Accruals:

No further accruals are expected.

Associated material:

There are 8 sketchbooks by Gershon Iskowitz in the Art Gallery of Ontario's permanent collection, donated by the Iskowitz Foundation in 1995.

Provenance access point:

Iskowitz, Gershon, 1921-1988
Iskowitz (Gershon) Foundation

SERIES 1: PHOTOGRAPHS

Dates of creation:

[191-?]-[198-]

Extent:

239 photographs (prints, slides, negatives)
1 photograph album
1 matchbook

Scope and content:

Series consists of photographs of Iskowitz's family; images of Kielce, Poland; portraits of the artist and images of his studio; photographs of exhibition openings; and images of art works. Series includes one album, largely empty, containing photographs of Iskowitz from the mid-late 1940s. Series also includes a hand-crafted book of matches, the cover of which is made from photographs of a group seated at a banquet table (perhaps at the 1972 Venice Biennale?).

Notes:

Physical condition:

Photograph album is in poor condition and is missing a majority of its photographs.

Location:

FOLDER/UNIT TITLE	START DATE	END DATE	CONTENTS	BOX-FILE #
[Family photograph]	[ca. 1925]	[ca. 1925]	One framed photograph of Iskowitz's family (parents and siblings); date is estimated based on children's apparent age	1-1
[Photographs: family, Poland]	[191-?]	[196-?]	61 prints; 1 negative. Most of the photographs in this file depict Kielce, Poland; date is estimated to be 1960s based on clothing and other image details. Family photographs include apparent vintage print and several copies of family group as above; image of Iskowitz's mother (?) and unidentified woman; unidentified family group apparently from 1910s. One photograph depicts men in concentration camp uniforms, Iskowitz not apparently among them.	1-2
[Photographs: portraits of Iskowitz and studio]	[ca. 1946]	[198-]	40 prints; 5 negatives, 15 slides. Includes early images of artist with his work; images of artist and studio in 1980s (?) by Doron Rescheff studio; a series of portraits of the artist with a green parrot. See also oversized photo prints (box 3).	1-3
[Openings, etc.]	[197-?]	1983	22 prints. Primarily images from Canada House and Art Gallery of Ontario exhibition openings. Two images of an unidentified gallery event, probably 1970s.	1-4
[Images of art works]	[194-]	1974	4 prints; 9 slides. 4 prints of art works from 1940s (2 concentration camp scenes, 2 portraits); 1 slide from 1961; 8 slides from 1974	1-5
[Oversized photo prints]	1961	1971	3 b/w prints, all portraits of Iskowitz: by Lois Steen (1971), by Tess Boudreau (1963), and by Michel Lambeth (1961-62)	Box 3
[Photograph album]	[ca. 1946]	[ca. 1949]	1 album containing 38 prints, dating from the period of Iskowitz's art studies in Munich.	Box 3
[Commemorative matchbook]	[1972?]	[1972?]	Hand-crafted book of matches, the cover of which is made from two photographs of a group seated at a banquet table (perhaps at the 1972 Venice Biennale?)	Box 2

SERIES 2: PUBLICITY MATERIAL**Dates of creation:**

1972-1987

Extent:

2 cm of textual records

Scope and content:

Series consists of press clippings about Iskowitx's career, and a portfolio of promotional material from Canada's pavilion at the Venice Biennale, 1972, featuring images of Iskowitx and his work. Series also includes a laminated offprint from Art in America, 1983.

Notes:*Conservation:*

Original newsprint has been replaced by photocopies for preservation reasons.

Location:

FOLDER/UNIT TITLE	START DATE	END DATE	CONTENTS	BOX- FILE #
[Biennale portfolio]	1972	1972	Portfolio containing 11 cards with text and images promoting the work of Iskowitx	1-6
[Press clippings]	1974	1987	Photocopied press clippings about Iskowitx's career: exhibition reviews, publications, and the Iskowitx Prize	1-7
[Art in America page]	1983	1983	Laminated offprint featuring advertisement for Iskowitx's solo show at the Marisa del Re Gallery, New York.	Box 3

SERIES 3: IDENTITY DOCUMENTS**Dates of creation:**

[191-?]-[198-]

Extent:

8 items of textual records

Scope and content:

Series consists of various identity documents from throughout Iskowitx's life, from his Displaced Person's pass to his Ontario Senior Citizen card.

Location:

FOLDER/UNIT TITLE	START DATE	END DATE	CONTENTS	BOX- FILE #
[Identity documents]	1945	1986	Displaced Person's pass (1945); Temporary Travel Document, Military Government for Germany (1948); Certificate of Canadian Citizenship (large and wallet-sized formats), 1959; Social Insurance card; Old Age Security card (1986); Ontario Senior Citizen Privilege Card (1986).	1-8

SERIES 4: PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE AND NOTES**Dates of creation:**

1976-1988

Extent:

3 cm of textual records

Scope and content:

Series includes items of personal correspondence such as greeting cards and get-well cards; miscellaneous notes and pieces of paper presumably gathered from Iskowitz's residence following his death; one address book.

Location:

FOLDER/UNIT TITLE	START DATE	END DATE	CONTENTS	BOX- FILE #
[Miscellaneous personal correspondence]	1976	1988	Includes 1976 postcard sent by "Chester" from Kielce; letter of appreciation from Maureen Forrester; notification of prize by the Accademia Italia; a request from a German collector of autographs; letter from Denis Juneau on winning the Iskowitz Prize. Several greeting cards and get-well cards.	1-9
[Miscellaneous personal notes]	[ca. 1988]	[ca. 1988]	Notes and pieces of paper presumably gathered from Iskowitz's residence following his death	1-10
[Address book]	[ca. 1988]	[ca. 1988]		Box 2

SERIES 5: WRITINGS ABOUT THE ARTIST**Dates of creation:**

[ca. 1986]

Extent:

1 cm of textual records

Scope and content:

Series consists of typescript writings about Iskowitz.

Location:

FOLDER/UNIT TITLE	START DATE	END DATE	CONTENTS	BOX- FILE #
[Writings about the artist]	[ca. 1986]	[ca. 1986]	Typescript writings about Iskowitz, one titled "The Iskowitz Phenomenon" and one entitled "Chapter Vii, 1972-1982" (a draft from <i>Gershon Iskowitz: Painter of Light?</i>); and a 2pp bibliography on Iskowitz.	1-11

SERIES 6: SKETCH AND NOTES FOR NORTHERN LIGHTS SEPTET #3**Dates of creation:**

[ca. 1986]

Extent:2 drawings
1 item textual records**Scope and content:**Series consists of material related to *Northern Lights Septet #3*.**Location:**

FOLDER/UNIT TITLE	START DATE	END DATE	CONTENTS	BOX- FILE #
[<i>Northern Lights Septet #3</i>]	[ca. 1986]	[ca. 1986]	Two drawings related to <i>Northern Lights Septet #3</i> , artist's statement from Gallery Moos.	1-12

SERIES 7: AUDIOVISUAL RECORDS

Dates of creation:

[197-]-[198-]

Extent:

1 videocassette (VHS)
1 film reel (16mm)
1 audio reel

Scope and content:

Series consists of three audiovisual items relating to Iskowitz's career.

Location:

Box 2

- 1 audio reel (label: DAN / Gershon Iskowitz / 6:50)
 - 1 film reel (16mm; label: To: Gershon Iskowitz / from Gary Morrison [CTV])
 - 1 VHS cassette (label: Gerard M. Jennings)
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SERIES 8: ARTIST'S PALETTES

Dates of creation:

[19--]-[ca. 1988]

Extent:

13 palettes

Scope and content:

Series consists of a group of palettes gathered from the artist's studio following his death.

Notes:

Physical description:

Palettes are 24" x 24" squares of masonite, and are covered on both sides with patches of acrylic paint in various colours.

Alpha-numeric designations:

Numbers have been assigned by the archivist to aid in identification and retrieval; they are arbitrary and do not reflect chronology.

General note:

Reference photographs of the palettes are available from the archivist; please consult these before requesting retrieval of palettes.

Location:

Box 4

- Palette 1
- Palette 2

Box 5

- Palette 3

- Palette 4

Box 6

- Palette 5
- Palette 6

Box 7

- Palette 7
- Palette 8

Box 8

- Palette 9
- Palette 10

Box 9

- Palette 11
- Palette 12

Box 10

- Palette 13

SERIES 9: CONDOLENCE BOOK

Dates of creation:

1988

Extent:

1 cm of textual records (1 volume)

Scope and content:

Series consists of a condolence book from Benjamin's Park Memorial Chapel, with signatures of mourners from the memorial on January 26, 1988.

Location:

Box 2
