



GERSHON ISKOWITZ

Triptych, 1967-70

oil on canvas, center 120" x 60", sides 108" x 55"

Photo: T.E. Moore, courtesy Gallery Moos,
Toronto

to concentrate on an arrangement of large, colored patches – orange in No 4 and dark blue in No 1 – on a pale grey-blue ground. The patches animate the surface by receding (No 4) or advancing (No 1) while remaining tied to their ground by mediating smaller patches of yellow and green. Without the titles one might overlook the landscape source of these pictures and focus on their purely abstract concerns, were it not for the apparent organic, non-abstract analysis of the fan-like pattern of the patches. These two pictures propose a new concentration on the tension between representation and pure picture making.

Triptych (1969-70) precedes the *Uplands* series which formed the core of the Venice 1 and now the Hart House exhibitions. Its mid-arched altarpiece format with wings in perspective, its radically flattened landscape image with an à-la-Friedrich suggestion of the lyrical sublime, and its overtones of symbol-implying, freely floating elements point to a struggle to find new directions to the presentation of an *andachtig* confrontation with the landscape.

panamic landscape views of the *Uplands* series (B, C, D, G, H and K are exhibited), across which hover more intensely colored ominous shapes which, however much they depend on natural light and color phenomena, are now the product of imaginative distillation of immediate experience into painterly forms. But landscape space decidedly persists throughout these pictures, reminding us of their source in lofty experiences of the northern landscape seen from a helicopter or from rocky heights. It recedes across an expanse of water, indicated by a series of horizontal brush strokes (or by indications of reflections in *Uplands H*), to be stopped by a horizontal band of mist-shrouded trees extending in a straight line from edge to edge. Above rises a vast sky, forming the third of three bands each of which is rendered in enlarged Impressionist color patches of predominantly pastel hues (pink and pale green) whose

suggesting a state of contemplative reverie reminiscent of landscapes of the mid-60s.

This mottled application is carried over into the large central forms which hover above the landscape, either floating freely, or attached to one side, or suspended from above like curtains. Though the color patches of the landscape tend to be brushed into those of the foreground form, the background-foreground distinction prevails; on the one hand because of the intenser, darker colors of the latter, and on the other, through its consequent greater materiality.

The increasing materiality is most strongly affirmed in the third and shallowest layer of depth in the pictures, which really coincides with the surface. It is accentuated, as in *Uplands B*, by freely floating dyads and triads of color-patches of pure blue, red, orange, green or lilac (with the occasional shift in hue, as from red to orange). These are almost hard-edge, asserting their solidity in contrast to the immateriality of the scene behind. When scattered across the canvas they measure the