



spent on a rocky promontory overlooking a lake. These experiences are internalized and might not appear in his paintings for months or years.

When they do reappear, they take on a new reality – that of Gershon's inner world. Sometimes there are glimpses of nature – views down towards the hills and lakes from the sky, or views through the trees up into the sky. Details of shore and horizon can often be distinguished through a soft haze of transparent colors. At other times, blobs of resonant, vibrating colors float by like leaves in the wind. In some, strange, mysterious shapes seem to hover over the landscape, like a magic tapestry of color, or a threatening wall of water.

“My paintings are not abstract. They're real. They're very, very much real. I see those things.”

There is still another level at which his paintings may be experienced. After looking at them a long time, colors begin to fluctuate. Some come rushing out at you, others pull you into the depth of the painting. They appear to come alive before you, glowing with vibrant luminosity. Real space becomes infinite space – space through which you can float weightlessly.

The paintings go beyond any reference to the landscape and become an expression of pure color and space, of a universal experience. As David Bolduc said, “They are like weird galaxies, like Star Trek gone mad.”

Gershon would never use these words to describe them. The only clue lies in the way he works. Although he paints every night, he never knows what will happen. Relying on his intuition, he applies first one color, then another. If he feels they don't go well together, he tries another color, then another color, until it satisfies him. Night after night this process goes on, during which he often applies up to 30 layers of color to get the effect he wants. At one point the blues may predominate, a week later the reds. Through these endless transformations the painting slowly emerges, as if it had a life of its own.

“There's no explanation. I don't even know myself how the painting will come out. I'm just like innocent. I start a painting like when I was born, and have to face life for the first time.”

Gershon Iskowitiz has been working in Toronto for over 20 years, as long as Harold Town. But how many people have

1 Gershon Iskowitiz  
*Uplands, Series G*, 1971, diptych, oil on canvas,  
100" x 140"  
Photo: Eberhard Otto

2 Gershon Iskowitiz  
*Uplands, Series E*, 1971, diptych, oil on canvas,  
95" x 140"  
A detail of this work is shown on the cover.  
Photo: Eberhard Otto

3 Gershon Iskowitiz  
*Uplands, Series F*, 1971, diptych, oil on canvas,  
95" x 140"  
Photo: Eberhard Otto

heard of him? It comes as no surprise to discover that three of Canada's most promising young artists consider him to be one of the most important painters working in Canada today. David Bolduc, John MacGregor and Dan Solomon are all close friends of Gershon's, and have learned a great deal from him. They have great admiration for Gershon as a man and as an artist. They resent the fact that he has received so little recognition. Gershon, however, would be sure to laugh and say, “Do you want me to cry or something?” He is somehow far above it all – floating through the azure sky like one of the prophets in a painting by Chagall.