

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

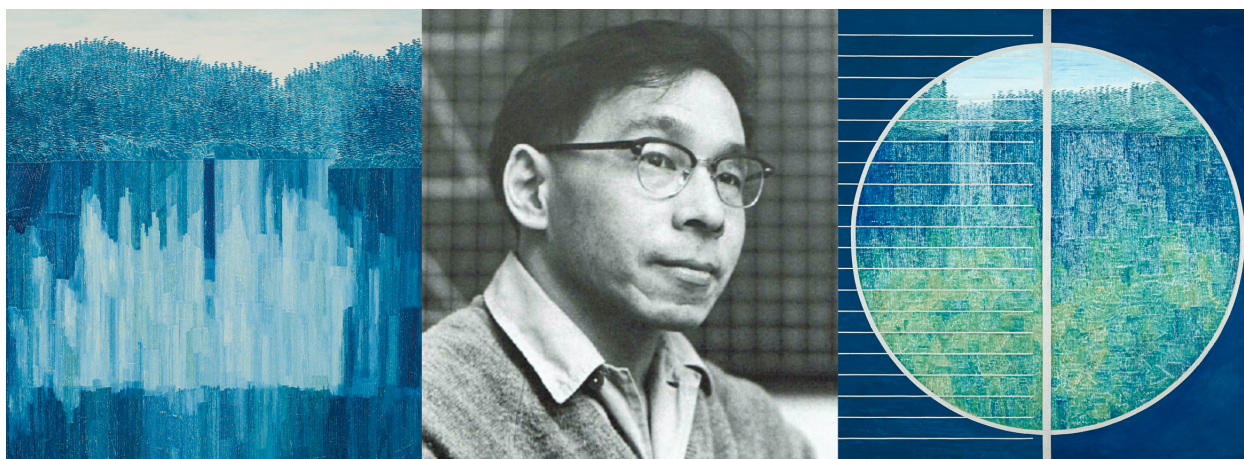
Friday, May 28, 2021

THE JAPANESE CANADIAN MAVERICK OF MODERN ABSTRACTION

Kazuo Nakamura: Life & Work

The new open-access online art book by John G. Hatch
Publishing on June 11, 2021

Kazuo Nakamura grew up during a period of intense anti-Asian discrimination in Canada and was interned as an “enemy alien” during the Second World War, but by the late 1950s, the Painters Eleven member had earned international acclaim. Though he reached a level of success that was virtually unprecedented for any Japanese Canadian artist, his name and work have not achieved the recognition they deserve. A new book shines valuable light on the life and career of this groundbreaking figure in modern art.



LEFT: *Blue Reflections*, B.C. (detail), 1964. CENTRE: Kazuo Nakamura, 1972. RIGHT: *Suspended Landscape*, 1969.

May 28, 2021, FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — The Art Canada Institute (ACI) is pleased to announce the release of *Kazuo Nakamura: Life & Work* by John G. Hatch, a new open-source online art book—available free of charge, in both English and French—exploring the artist’s early experiences as a wartime detainee, his role in Painters Eleven, and how his extraordinary success paved the way for a new generation of Japanese Canadian artists. One of the first major Japanese Canadian artists to emerge in the twentieth century, Kazuo Nakamura (1926–2002) produced radically innovative landscape paintings and abstract compositions that were exhibited and collected internationally by the 1960s—yet he has not received the same exposure as some of his fellow Painters Eleven members, such as Jack Bush (1909–1977) and Harold Town (1924–1990).

Born and raised in Vancouver, Nakamura and his family were among the 22,000 Japanese Canadians who were forcibly sent to internment camps during the Second World War. Prohibited from returning home after the war, the artist and his family settled in Toronto, where Nakamura’s art instructor, Albert Franck (1899–1973), introduced him to several of the people he would form Painters Eleven with in 1953.

“Inspired by his colleagues in Painters Eleven, Nakamura moved constantly between figuration and abstraction, experimenting with different styles and techniques as he sought to reveal the universal laws of nature found in science and mathematics,” says John G. Hatch, author of [*Kazuo Nakamura: Life & Work*](#).

Nakamura’s lifelong quest to express the underlying structure of the visible world in his art set him apart from the rest of Painters Eleven, who explored emotional states in a gestural abstract expressionist style. ACI’s new publication offers fascinating insight into the Western and Eastern influences behind Nakamura’s diverse bodies of work, including his blue/green landscapes—his most recognizable and popular works—whose reflections on water allude to the existence of another reality; his monochromatic String paintings, which were partly inspired by scientific photographs recording the traces of subatomic particles; and the Number Structure paintings, which examine numerical patterns that exist in nature and, for the artist, conveyed profound universal truths.

“Nakamura is largely known as a member of Painters Eleven, but he experienced tremendous success outside of the group during the 1950s and reached the height of his career in the 1960s, after Painters Eleven had disbanded,” says Sara Angel, Founder and Executive Director of the Art Canada Institute. “The explosion of creativity that marked this period elevated Nakamura to an elite, internationally recognized artist whose work was collected by the likes of the Museum of Modern Art’s founding director, Alfred Barr.”

Nakamura’s unprecedented professional success laid the groundwork for the next generation of Japanese Canadian artists and a more inclusive art history.

[*Kazuo Nakamura: Life & Work*](#) forwards ACI’s mission to create a central digital resource to share Canada’s most important artists, and works of art, with the world. ACI is an indispensable resource for exploring and learning about Canada’s visual arts heritage. To date, ACI has published 47 expert-authored digital books that are available free of charge. As well, the Art Canada Institute has recently developed Canada’s only comprehensive art education guides for teachers and students from kindergarten to grade 12—content that is also free and available online and serves over 700,000 educators.

To explore the Art Canada Institute’s open-source digital book *Kazuo Nakamura: Life & Work* by John G. Hatch, please visit: <https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/kazuo-nakamura>

For **media requests** or for **interviews with**:

- **John G. Hatch**, author of *Kazuo Nakamura: Life & Work*
- **Sara Angel**, Executive Director, **Art Canada Institute**

please contact: media@aci-iac.ca

For images cleared for copyright and image credits, please see the gallery on the following page.

About John G. Hatch

John G. Hatch is associate professor of art history and Chair of the Department of Visual Arts at Western University. His area of research is twentieth-century European and American art and theory, with a special focus on the influence of the physical sciences on modern art. He is the author of the Art Canada Institute publication [*Paterson Ewen: Life & Work*](#).

About the Art Canada Institute

The Art Canada Institute is the only national institution whose mandate is to promote the study of an inclusive, multi-vocal Canadian art history to as broad an audience as possible, on a digital platform, and free of charge in both English and French, across Canada and internationally. To accomplish this, ACI works with Canada's leading cultural institutions, art historians, curators, and visual culture experts, and is dedicated to the creation of authoritative original content on the people, themes, and topics that have defined Canadian art history.

To learn more about ACI and to access our free digital library, please visit us!

aci-iac.ca

IMAGES

Download image files here: <http://bit.ly/kazuo-nakamura>

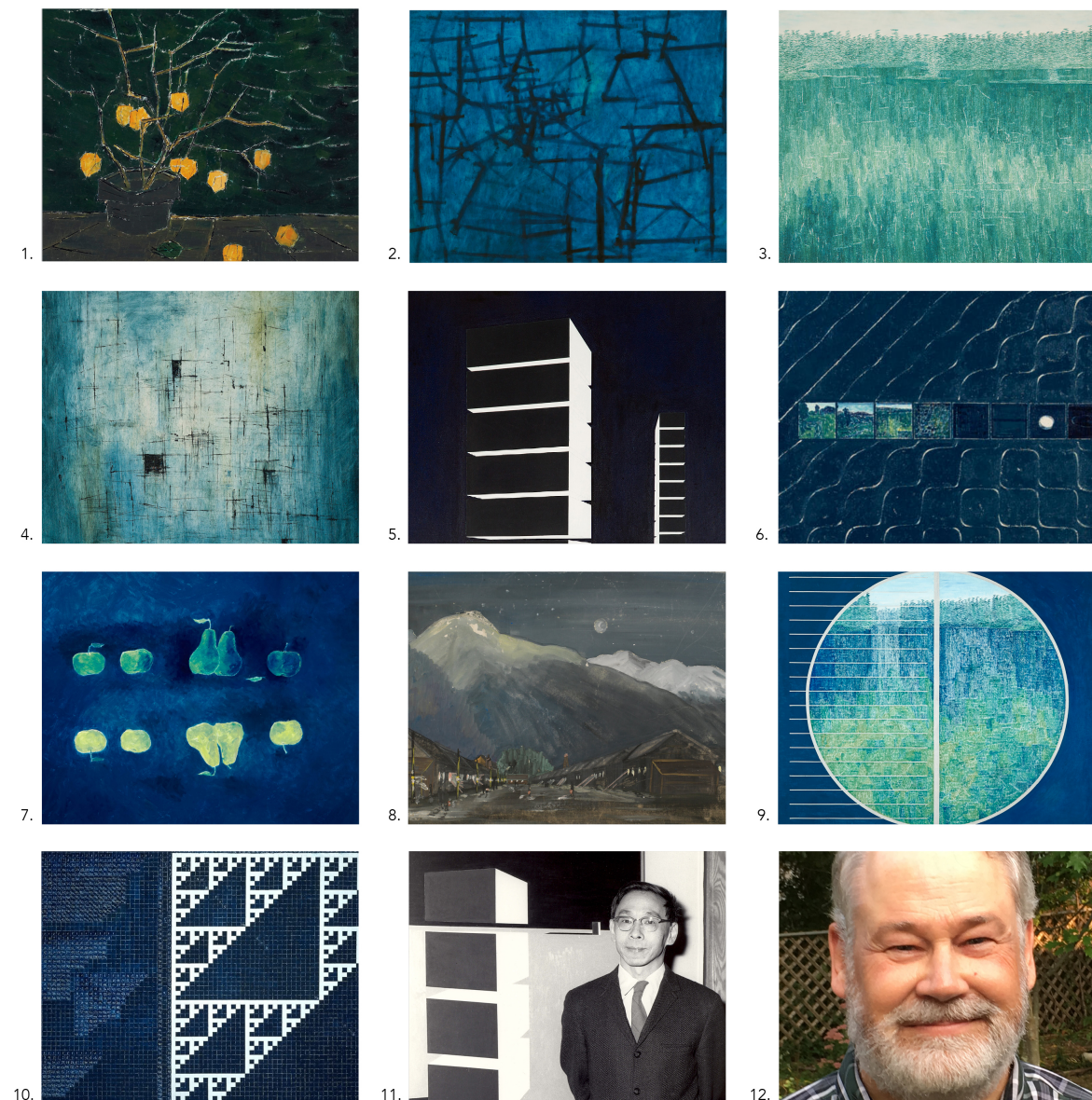


IMAGE CAPTIONS & CREDITS

1. Kazuo Nakamura, *Autumn*, c.1950, oil on tempered hardboard, 61.1 x 48.3 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, purchase with the assistance of the Estate of Christian Claude, 2001, 2000/1150. © Art Gallery of Ontario.
2. Kazuo Nakamura, *Inner Structure*, 1956, oil on hardboard, 60.8 x 78.8 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Gift of Mr. Charles McFaddin, Toronto, 1985, 85/115. © Estate of Kazuo Nakamura.
3. Kazuo Nakamura, *August, Morning Reflections*, 1961, oil on canvas, 93.7 x 121.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (9525). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada. © Estate of Kazuo Nakamura.
4. Kazuo Nakamura, *Morning Mist*, 1951, oil on board, 78.7 x 61 cm, Collection of John and Katia Bianchini. Courtesy of Heffel Fine Art Auction House.
5. Kazuo Nakamura, *Block Structure*, 1956, oil on Masonite, 123.2 x 97.8 cm, private collection. Courtesy of Christopher Cutts Gallery, Toronto.
6. Kazuo Nakamura, *Spatial Concept/Evolution*, 1970, oil on canvas, 83.9 cm x 106.5 cm, Christopher Cutts Gallery, Toronto. Courtesy of Christopher Cutts Gallery, Toronto.
7. Kazuo Nakamura, *Reversed Images*, 1965, oil on canvas, 81.3 x 86.4 cm, private collection. Courtesy of Waddington's Auctioneers and Appraisers, Toronto.
8. Kazuo Nakamura, *March 18, March 18, 1944*, gouache on card, 28 x 35.5 cm, Canadian War Museum, Ottawa, purchase (20190036-017). Courtesy of the Canadian War Museum.
9. Kazuo Nakamura, *Suspended Landscape*, 1969, oil on canvas, 109.2 x 114.3 cm, private collection. Courtesy of Waddington's Auctioneers and Appraisers, Toronto.
10. Kazuo Nakamura, *Number Structure and Fractals*, 1983, oil on canvas, 71 x 101.7 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (39855). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada. © Estate of Kazuo Nakamura.
11. Kazuo Nakamura with his work *Suspension*, n.d., photographer unknown. Collection of The Robert McLaughlin Gallery Archives, Oshawa. Courtesy of The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.
12. John G. Hatch, author of *Kauzo Nakamura: Life & Work*.