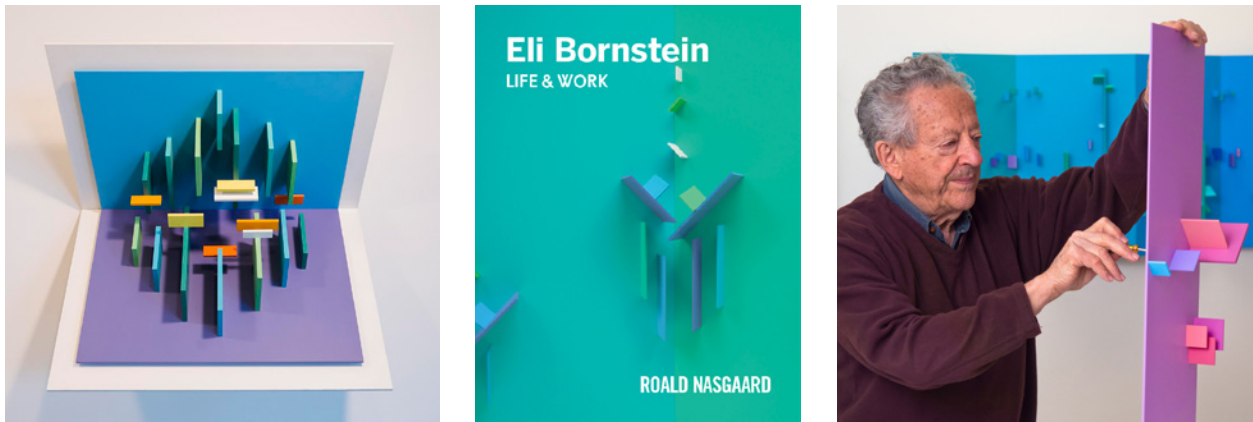


As legendary Saskatchewan artist Eli Bornstein celebrates his 102nd birthday this month, a new book commemorates his career and contribution to Canadian art.

Eli Bornstein: Life & Work, the new open-access online art book by Roald Nasgaard, publishing on December 18, 2024, tells the story of the Saskatoon-based artist's unique contributions to modern art in Canada. With a particular focus on his turn to nature to produce magisterial works in three dimensions, the book celebrates Bornstein's influential sixty-five-year career.

A selection of press images is available through the link at the end of this release.



LEFT: *Double Plane Structurist Relief No. 3*, 1967–69. CENTRE: Cover of *Eli Bornstein: Life & Work*. RIGHT: Eli Bornstein, 2019.

December 18, 2024, FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—*Eli Bornstein: Life & Work*, a free, open-access online art book now available in English and French, traces the nearly seven-decade career of the acclaimed Saskatoon-based artist Eli Bornstein (b.1922) and his quest to create a distinctive form of abstract art inspired by nature. Not strictly a painter or a sculptor, Bornstein spearheaded what he dubbed the Structurist Relief, an art form that combines elements from both mediums.

Written by Roald Nasgaard, an expert on the history of abstract art in Canada, *Eli Bornstein: Life & Work* is the first comprehensive look at the innovative artist's singular vision—one that has earned him accolades, including the Saskatchewan Order of Merit in 2008 and the Order of Canada in 2019. Focusing on the central themes of Bornstein's art, which evolved out of his close study of twentieth-century modernism, the book makes a compelling case for the enduring influence of nature on Canada's artists.

Abstract art on the prairies

When Eli Bornstein moved from his home in Wisconsin to Saskatoon in the early 1950s, the prairie city's art scene was quite conservative. While still completing his master of science degree at the University of Wisconsin, Bornstein joined the Department of Art at the University of Saskatchewan and became one of the first creators in the province to make abstract art. In fact, his monumental public commission for the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, *Aluminum Construction (Tree of Knowledge)*, 1956, was the first abstract public sculpture in Saskatoon, inspiring heated controversy when it was unveiled.

“Eli Bornstein’s primary contribution to Canadian art is his development of the Structurist Relief, an innovative art form that prompts us to see the natural world with fresh eyes,” says Sara Angel, Founder and Executive Director of the Art Canada Institute. “In many ways, Bornstein’s groundbreaking works follow in the footsteps of some of Canada’s most important and beloved artists, including Tom Thomson, Emily Carr, and Lawren S. Harris.”

Devoted to nature

Working in relief, Bornstein pursued a distinct path forward independent of the trends in modern abstract art that were emerging in Saskatchewan and elsewhere in Canada. While building his professional career as an artist, he spent many summers and sabbaticals travelling in Europe and the United States, meeting with artists such as the American Charles Biederman (1906–2004), who shared Bornstein’s view that contrary to the opinions of European modernists, nature should remain a vital component of abstract art.

As author Roald Nasgaard reveals, Bornstein’s meeting with Biederman in the mid-1950s marks “the start of what would be Bornstein’s unwavering commitment to the evolution of the Structurist Relief.” Over the next six decades, Bornstein would continue to evolve this art form through many stylistic and material innovations. His works ever more profoundly resonated with the processes and forms of nature as he intensely studied it.

Arctic inspirations

Though Bornstein has travelled extensively throughout Europe and North America, no environment has had a more profound impact on his work than the Canadian Arctic. Like many artists before him, he wanted to give expression to his own sense of wonderment at this majestic landscape. Out of his trips to Ellesmere Island during the summers of 1986 and 1987, Bornstein produced a body of watercolour paintings and Structurist Reliefs that sought to capture the ever-changing nature of the Arctic’s fjords, glaciers, and icebergs. With works such as *Hexaplane Structurist Relief No. 2 (Arctic Series)*, 1995–98, Bornstein began using Plexiglas to translate the Arctic’s iridescence into material form. His Arctic Series is perhaps the most sublime of his career.

Eli Bornstein: Life & Work advances ACI’s mission to create a central digital resource to share Canada’s most important artists, and works of art, with the world. To date, ACI has published sixty-five expert-authored digital books that are available free of charge. As well, ACI develops 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-access digital book *Eli Bornstein: Life & Work* by Roald Nasgaard, please visit: <https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/eli-bornstein/>.

For **media requests** or for an **interview** with **Roald Nasgaard**, author of *Eli Bornstein: Life & Work*, and/or **Sara Angel**, Executive Director, Art Canada Institute, please contact:

media@aci-iac.ca

About Roald Nasgaard

Roald Nasgaard, OC, is a teacher, writer, and curator. *Eli Bornstein: Life & Work* brings together his long-standing commitments to both abstract art and landscape painting. He is the author of the critically acclaimed *Abstract Painting in Canada* (2007). His major exhibitions and accompanying books include *The Mystic North: Symbolist Landscape Painting in Northern Europe and North America 1890–1940* (1984), the first Gerhard Richter retrospective in North America (1988), *The Automatiste Revolution: Montreal 1941–1960* (2009), and *The Plasticiens and Beyond: Montreal 1955–1970* (2013). He co-curated *Mystical Landscapes: Masterpieces from Monet, Van Gogh and More* for the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Musée d'Orsay (2016–17) and *Higher States: Lawren Harris and His American Contemporaries* (2017) for the McMichael Canadian Art Collection. In 2022, he shepherded into publication *Eli Bornstein: Arctic Journals 1986 and 1987*. Nasgaard's extended essay "Charles Gagnon: A Painter of Paradoxes" will appear in the forthcoming book *Charles Gagnon: The Colour of Time, the Sound of Space* (2025).

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.

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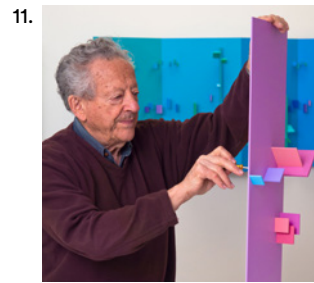
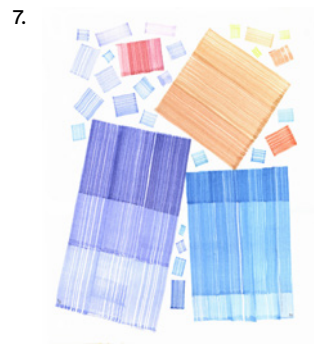
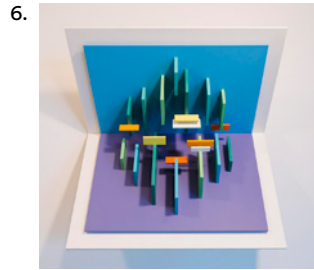
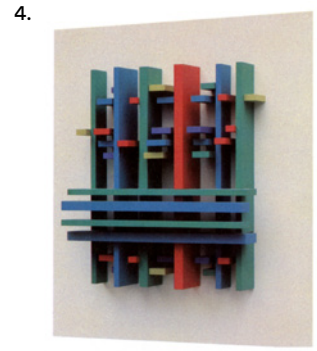


IMAGE CREDITS

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1. Eli Bornstein, *Head*, c.1947, marble, 12.7 × 7.6 × 8.9 cm. Collection of the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Gift of the T.B. Walker Foundation, 1947 (1947.46). Courtesy of the Walker Art Center.
2. Eli Bornstein, *Saskatoon*, 1954, gouache on gesso panel, 58.5 × 74 cm. Private collection. Courtesy of Eli Bornstein.
3. Eli Bornstein, *Aluminum Construction (Tree of Knowledge)*, 1956, welded aluminum on stone base, 458 cm (height), Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Building, Saskatoon. Photo credit: Roald Nasgaard.
4. Eli Bornstein, *Structurist Relief No. 3-1 (Canoe Lake Series)*, 1964, oil on wood relief, 68.6 × 61 × 15.2 cm. Private collection.
5. Eli Bornstein, *Structurist Relief No. 1*, 1966, acrylic and wood on a wood support, 86.5 × 61 cm. Collection of the Nickle Galleries, University of Calgary (NG.1970.060.002). Courtesy of the Nickle Galleries. Photo credit: Andy Nichols, LCR Photo Services.
6. Eli Bornstein, *Double Plane Structurist Relief No. 3*, 1967–69, enamel on Plexiglas and aluminum, 66.7 × 66.7 × 34.3 cm. Collection of the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Purchased 1973 (1973.011.001). Courtesy of the University of Saskatchewan.
7. Eli Bornstein, *Arctic Study No. 38*, 1987, watercolour on mat board, 41 × 33.9 cm. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of the University of Saskatchewan, University Archives and Special Collections.
8. Eli Bornstein, *Hexaplane Structurist Relief No. 2 (Arctic Series)*, 1995–98, acrylic enamel on aluminum and Plexiglas, 67.2 × 182.2 × 15.9 cm. Collection of the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Gift of Dorothea Adaskin, 2005 (2005.001.001). Courtesy of the University of Saskatchewan.
9. Eli Bornstein, *Tripart Hexaplane Construction No. 2*, 2002–6, acrylic enamel on anodized aluminum and concrete base, 205.3 × 107.8 × 107.8 cm. Collection of the University of Manitoba, Gift of Eli Bornstein, 2007. Courtesy of Liv Valmestad. Photo credit: Liv Valmestad.
10. Installation view of *Untitled Hexaplane Structurist Relief*, 2004, by Eli Bornstein on the Canadian Light Source Building, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, date unknown, photographer unknown. Courtesy of Eli Bornstein.
11. Eli Bornstein installing his work for *Artist in Focus: Eli Bornstein* at Remai Modern, Saskatoon, 2019, photograph by Troy Mamer. Courtesy of Remai Modern.
12. Roald Nasgaard, author of *Eli Bornstein: Life & Work*.