



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Koffler Centre of the Arts announces the Winners of the 2021 Vine Awards

Honouring the best Canadian Jewish literature in four categories,
each with a prize of \$10,000

Toronto, ON, November 24, 2021 – The Koffler Centre of the Arts is proud to announce the winners of the 2021 [Vine Awards for Canadian Jewish Literature](#). The Awards were announced at an online awards ceremony on November 23, 2021.

The **Vine Awards for Canadian Jewish Literature** is an annual national awards program that honours both the best Canadian Jewish writers and non-Jewish Canadian authors who deal with Jewish subjects in Fiction, History, Non-Fiction, Young Adult/Children's literature, and Poetry. Each winning author receives a prize of **\$10,000**. Awards in all categories are given annually, with the exception of poetry that is awarded every three years. The 2021 Jury – comprised of authors **Zelda Abramson**, **Nathan Adler** and **Naomi K. Lewis** – reviewed 42 entries to the Fiction, History, Non-Fiction and Young Adult/Children's categories.

This year's winning titles include **Sidura Ludwig's** novel *You Are Not What We Expected* in the Fiction category. The Thornhill author's debut collection of short stories was praised by the Vine Awards' jury as "storytelling with a heartbreaking comedic sense of timing... Ludwig's short-clipped understated prose is by turns surprising, touching, funny, beautiful, and sad."

The Smallest Objective by Toronto-based writer of fiction and narrative non-fiction **Sharon Kirsch** took home

the History award. Said the jury: "With poetic prose... Kirsch has a microscopic attention to detail that matches the theme of objects put under scrutiny to divine secrets. This writing has a way of hinting at the ineffable and drawing synaptic connections that reveal a real playfulness and love of words."

Catalogue Baby: A Memoir of (In)fertility won the Non-Fiction award, a "riveting graphic novel/memoir on infertility" by Vancouver writer **Myriam Steinberg**, with **illustrations by Christache**. Added the jury, "Steinberg leads the reader through the emotional and physical roller coaster of getting pregnant — the highs and lows, her body endlessly prodded and tested, repeated success and rejection, decision-making dilemmas, mixed feelings of failure and self-doubt — all underpinned by humour and determination."

Prolific children's and young adult fiction writer **Gordon Korman** won the Young Adult/Children's Literature award for **War Stories**, which "brings WWII history to life in an engaging way that is accessible for younger readers without glamourizing or sugar-coating the horrors of war." Originally from Toronto, Korman now lives in New York.

"The Koffler Centre of the Arts is thrilled to present another exciting edition of the Vine Awards, celebrating the best of Canadian Jewish writing," said **Mary Anderson, Director, Literary Programs**. "We are incredibly grateful to our lead donors, Lillian and Norman Glowinsky – whose continued support highlights the importance of reading Canadian Jewish authors and their books. Congratulations to this year's winning authors!"

The 2021 Vine Awards Winners & Jury Citations

FICTION

Sidura Ludwig, *You Are Not What We Expected (House of Anansi)*

"A series of linked stories that draws you into the quirky world of the Levine family, characters dealing with loss, and the long shadow of absence. This is storytelling with a heartbreaking comedic sense of timing that captures the resonance of powerful moments, like that uh-oh moment when you realize something horrendous is about to happen and you have no power to stop it. Ludwig's short-clipped understated prose is by turns surprising, touching, funny, beautiful, and sad." – Vine Awards Jury

HISTORY

Sharon Kirsch, *The Smallest Objective (New Star Books)*

"In the wake of her mother's illness, and driven by lore of hidden treasure, Kirsch excavates history from ephemera found in her parent's home; she follows clues to wherever they lead in a meandering path along different research trajectories that unearth mysteries and figures from her family tree. With poetic prose, and a proclivity for listings of things, Kirsch has a microscopic attention to detail that matches the theme of objects put under scrutiny to divine secrets. This writing has a way of hinting at the ineffable and drawing synaptic connections that reveal a real playfulness and love of words. This listing is stylistic, but also a method for coping with grief. There are themes of memory and forgetting, loss and lost things, and of course the search for treasure, where things – letters, postcards, photographs, slides, seashells, and rocks – become archival documents." – Vine Awards Jury

NON-FICTION

Myriam Steinberg, illustrations by Christache, *Catalogue Baby: A Memoir of (In)fertility (Page Two Books)*

"A riveting graphic novel/memoir on infertility. Steinberg leads the reader through the emotional and physical roller coaster of getting pregnant – the highs and lows, her body endlessly prodded and tested, repeated success and rejection, decision-making dilemmas, mixed feelings of failure and self-doubt – all underpinned by humour and determination. The accompanying artwork in hues of purple adds a dramatic effect to the narrative." – Vine Awards Jury

YOUNG ADULT/CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Gordon Korman, *War Stories (Scholastic Canada)*

"*War Stories* brings WWII history to life in an engaging way that is accessible for younger readers without glamourizing or sugar-coating the horrors of war. Alternating flashbacks to the past are interwoven with the present along two adjacent narrative arcs. Two families are implicated in events coming to a head; the liberation of a small town in France, a hero's welcome, and a blood-debt stemming back to a grave miscalculation. Here are dramatic action-pact scenes with life-and-death stakes, the random luck of survival, narrative tension building to a confrontation undercut with the threat of violence, and a younger generation who must come to terms with the

past.” – Vine Awards Jury

The Vine Awards for Canadian Jewish Literature are made possible by a generous donation by the Lillian and Norman Glowinsky Family Foundation to support Canadian Jewish literature, a tradition they established with the original awards in 2004, building on the Canadian Jewish Book Awards founded in 1988 by Adam Fuerstenberg. The Vine Awards are a loving tribute to Lillian’s parents – Helen and Stan Vine – who were passionate about the arts and the Jewish community throughout their lives.

ABOUT THE KOFFLER

The Koffler Centre of the Arts is a cultural platform that explores critical ideas and concerns of our time through a year-round program of exhibitions, publications, performances, literary events, digital initiatives and arts education programs. We examine complex issues through transformative art experiences that stimulate intercultural dialogue and promote social change. Through our in-gallery and off-site programs, the Koffler engages thousands of visitors each year. From school children and teens, to newcomers and seniors, we provide vital opportunities for self-expression and community connection, including to those in greatest need.

As a Jewish organization, we value – and aim to foster – social justice and equality while nurturing a passion for learning and understanding. We position Jewish identity in conversation with diverse perspectives and global voices to examine complex issues in a respectful, constructive way. These principles support the Koffler’s engagement with the best contemporary creative minds in producing and presenting art that provides common ground for experiences shaping our shared cultural life and defining our social values.

Visit us online at kofflerarts.org

- 30 -

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