



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Riveting and insightful, poetic and heartbreaking: Koffler Centre of the Arts announces the 2021 Vine Awards Shortlist

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

Toronto, ON, October 21, 2021 – The Koffler Centre of the Arts is proud to announce the shortlist for the 2021 [Vine Awards for Canadian Jewish Literature](#). Winners will be announced on **November 23, 2021** at an online Award Ceremony.

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 submissions featured literary works across a range of different subjects, many tackling Jewish themes, history, and culture through provocative characters, journeys, and dilemmas, showcasing the broad landscape writers are tackling in the Canadian colonial context,” said the Vine Awards Jury. “The jury process was a fun, active dialogue, with fascinating discussions on representation, the power and importance of storytelling, the art and aesthetics of writing style, and what makes a narrative relevant and impactful for readers today.”

"The Koffler is thrilled to celebrate another incredible year of Canadian Jewish literature with the 2021 Vine Awards selections. We are grateful to our lead donors, Lillian and Norman Glowinsky, for supporting these awards – their generosity provides vital recognition and support to writers exploring Jewish perspectives and

themes within the broader context of Canadian literature,” said Mary Anderson, Director, Literary Programs. “It was a joy to receive this year’s submissions, to communicate with an array of writers and publishers, and to work and learn alongside our distinguished Jury. I look forward to learning more about the diversity of Canadian Jewish writing through our virtual panels.”

The Vine Awards winners will be announced this year at an online Awards Ceremony on **November 23, 2021**. In addition to the ceremony, the Koffler is presenting three virtual panels featuring shortlisted Vine Awards authors on **November 16, 17 and 18, 2021**.

All online events are free and open to the public; registration required. For full details and registration, visit <https://kofflerarts.org/>

The 2021 Vine Awards Shortlist

FICTION:

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

“Storytelling with a heartbreaking comedic sense of timing that captures the resonance of powerful moments... Ludwig’s short-clipped understated prose is by turns surprising, touching, funny, beautiful, and sad.” – Vine Awards Jury

Nessa Rapoport, *Evening* (Counterpoint Press)

“Lyrical and poetic, Evening is a beautifully and sharply written, yet deeply sensitive, portrayal of grieving. Over the seven-day period of sitting shivah, what unfolds is an intricate narrative of love, sibling rivalry and the uncovering of family secrets. Ultimately, this is a story of self-acceptance.” – Vine Awards Jury

Carol Windley, *Midnight Train to Prague* (HarperCollins Canada)

“Midnight Train to Prague’s epic sweep encompasses multiple countries and multiple decades... Windley has conjured her settings so intricately, and woven her characters’ lives together so cleverly and densely, that to enter this story is to travel inside a fully realized universe, its nooks and crannies replete with treasures.” – Vine Awards Jury

HISTORY:

Paul Roberts Bentley, *Strange Journey: John R. Friedeberg Seeley and the Quest for Mental Health* (Academic Studies Press)

“A well-researched and fascinating biographical exposé of John R. Friedeberg Seeley, a renaissance man who changed the face of mental health and education in Canada in the 1950s. A staunch believer and advocate for liberal education, Seeley endured life-long personal and professional rejections, betrayals and ostracization.” – Vine Awards Jury

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

“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.” – Vine Awards Jury

Celia Rabinovitch, *Duchamp’s Pipe: A Chess Romance--Marcel Duchamp and George Koltanowski* (North Atlantic Books)

“In a history that manages to be both highly structured and kaleidoscopic, Celia Rabinovitch reveals the chess friendship between surrealist artist Marcel Duchamp and chess champion George Koltanowski. Her compelling narration is based on interviews, previous histories, and a wealth of unearthed material – from photographs to exhibition posters to score books, and by tracing those moments that the two men’s biographies intersected, including their chess matches, the gifts they exchanged, and the art objects they created together.” – Vine Awards Jury

NON-FICTION:

Rachel Matlow, *Dead Mom Walking* (Penguin Random House Canada)

“Matlow delves fearlessly into the deepest and most vulnerable facets of her story with an unforgettably honest, wry, and deeply loving voice, and while her frustration with her mother’s decision is palpable, she attempts, with great empathy, to understand and show how and why her mother came to her worldview, and to choices that seemed, on the surface, unfathomable.” – Vine Awards Jury

Rick Salutin and Gideon Salutin, illustrated by Dušan Petričić, *Gideon’s Bible: A Father and Son Discuss God, the Bible, and Life* (ECW Press)

“Part illustrated footnotes, part memoir marginalia, the book follows the conventions of Jewish Biblical commentaries, where discussions about life, history, morality, and philosophy are braided around Bible stories. The structure of the narrative is matched conceptually and aesthetically in form and content, and the father-son relationship is at the heart of this story, insightful and endearing.” – Vine Awards Jury

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.” – Vine Awards Jury

YOUNG ADULT/CHILDREN’S LITERATURE:

Michelle Barker, *My Long List of Impossible Things* (Annick Press)

“A compelling YA novel from the standpoint of a 16-year-old German girl navigating her survival through the Soviet occupation at the end of World War II. A page-turner where the reader grapples with the ethics of truths and lies and the upended norms of right and wrong.” – Vine Awards Jury

Helaine Becker, illustrated by Kari Rust, *Emmy Noether: The Most Important Mathematician You’ve Never Heard Of* (Kids Can Press)

“The book shows how and why history has elevated some thinkers to superhero status and completely forgotten others, how both systemic prejudice against women and genocidal policies against the Jewish people worked to silence so many, and how, with good fortune and tenacity, it is sometimes possible to make important contributions against the odds – all this in a prose style at once accessible and sophisticated, matched perfectly with dense, lush illustrations that bear repeated contemplation.” – Vine Awards Jury

Gordon Korman, *War Stories* (Scholastic Canada)

“Brings WWII history to life in an engaging way that is accessible for younger readers without glamourizing or sugar-coating the horrors of war... 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

Read the full Jury citations here [\[link\]](#).

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

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For further information, author and book cover images for media use, contact:

Tony Hewer

Director of Marketing, Communications and Archives

Koffler Centre of the Arts

180 Shaw Street, Suite 104-105, Toronto M6J 2W5

647.920.2398 | E-MAIL: thewer@kofflerarts.org | WEB: kofflerarts.org | koffler.digital