François Lacasse lives and works in Montreal. He obtained a Master’s Degree in Visual Arts at the Université du Québec in Montreal in 1992. Since then he has participated in a number of exhibitions in Montreal, Hull and Toronto including a solo exhibition at the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal (2002), at Plein Sud, Longueuil, and at Galerie René Blouin, Montreal. His works are included in the collections of the National Gallery of Canada, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal, the Musée du Québec, the Art Bank and in numerous corporate and private collections.

In his early works from 1992 to 1996, Lacasse incorporated enlarged fragments from artworks by such artists as Francisco Goya, Felix Vallotton and James Ensor. He then proceeded to cover these figurative elements with painted motifs, rendering them almost indistinguishable. In the following 1997–1998 series, the art-historical references become even more obscure. The artist cropped and enlarged the fragments more tightly and partly concealed them with layers of paint medium and ink. Réduction I in the NGC collection is an example of Lacasse’s works from 1999 onward where the figurative imagery disappears altogether, leaving layers of seemingly dripping forms and bands of colour. The means by which the artist had veiled the appropriated images is now the focus of his later bodies of work and according to the artist: “le voilé comme effet laisse place au voile lui-même.”

In his production from the last twenty years of which Large Impulses XV (2008) and Phase VII: expansion II (2015) are prime examples, the process of making is key. Lacasse tips and tilts his canvases in order to steer the liquid paint and ink. Jean-Émile Verdier eloquently describes the artist’s process:

Since 1999 François Lacasse has taken the risk of delivering just that, nothing more than the shapes the medium takes in accordance with the physical conditions the painter has imposed on it: viscosity, colour, obstacles, slope, drying time. The paint flows, on its own, liquid in motion, running down, mixing or not depending on how quickly it dries, making its way over the textured surfaces it traverses, the obstacles it encounters. The painter continues this process until he reaches a limit beyond which any further act would take the work into a different drama; it is that limit that will create the image.

The artist investigates the materiality of painting and the complexity of perception through the use of colour and various application methods. Lacasse does this by contrasting opaque agglomerations with almost-transparent washes. The layers of paint also create a sense of depth, which the viewer is left to decipher.

Even though the references to European masters are no longer featured in Lacasse’s recent works, new influences from the tradition of abstraction are evident as the artist draws attention to his image-making process. Notably, there are some affinities with Morris Louis’ “veils,” Helen Frankenthaler’s “stain paintings” and Jackson Pollock’s “action paintings.” Unlike the Abstract Expressionists, Lacasse is not interested in immediacy or spontaneity but chooses to focus on the strategies of distancing and calculated randomness. He is also concerned with the possibilities of painting in the postmodern era. According to the artist, “the fact that it (painting) combines a real space and a figurative space, that it can be an object as much as an image, still leaves room in my opinion, to develop a language or a syntax that hasn’t been fully explored. [...] It’s in terms of what can be thought and presented by this medium that we can envisage the renewal of painting.”

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