



FRANÇOIS LACASSE *Grandes pulsions II* 2007 Acrylic and ink on canvas 1.9 x 1.5 m
PHOTO RICHARD-MAX TREMBLAY

François Lacasse
GALERIE RENÉ BLOUIN, MONTREAL

The Montreal artist François Lacasse is nestled in one of those rare sweet spots for a painter: where the technical means and the aesthetic end are the same, leaving the viewer sometimes wondering whether he is looking at art or craft. Sometimes there is a fine line between painting and a rapturous enthusiasm for technique.

Lacasse's sizable, muscular works are methodically poured and arranged, colour by colour, according to a deliberate cadence. The pourings accumulate, one

Installation view (detail) of Peter Kingstone's *100 Stories About My Grandmother* 2008
Four single-channel videos and installation



on top of the next, in subtle progressions of colour that build in a crescendo of rigorous design: globular, robust shapes and snaky compositions that seek an edge—all contained within the bounds of the canvas, but occasionally spilling over.

The paint has so much presence that a single liquid tipping point—a thin spill over the edge of the surface, for example—creates great suspense. Like Jackson Pollock, Lacasse understands what you might call the drama of the drip.

The works in this exhibition were separated into two groups: earlier pieces that use subtle, almost monochromatic gradations, and recent pieces in which the painter plays with more dramatic colour combinations. Titled and numbered in the classic Ab-Ex manner—*Grandes pulsions I, II*, etc.—the works embody both the freedom and the restraint of painterly investigation, Lacasse is a painter's painter, entranced by his materials, adding colour only insofar as it can contribute to the enlivening of the work's surface tensions. Each shade boosts those adjacent to it, they push one another along in a blind search for composition. Colour here is a means to an end—the painting seems to be trying to find itself.

In his studio, which sits in the shadow of Olympic Stadium (itself suitably resembling a flattened dollop of paint), the artist has painstakingly itemized and numbered jars of acrylic mixes. They are colour-coded according to their various values and warmth, and so that Lacasse can remember their true shade when dry (acrylic's colour when dry is slightly different than when wet). The scale of values and colour contrasts he uses is subtle and systematic, a painterly equivalent of the Dewey decimal system.

In the *Grandes pulsions* paintings, the resulting effect is compelling: colour writhes through a meandering closed composition, like blind, multicoloured worms seeking a way back into the canvas. There's an implied anthropomorphism here that calls to mind the underlying angst of Art Brut or Outsider art. Lacasse's work shares with those genres a deliberate lack of self-consciousness, closing in on a mode of painting that's at its most free.

Lacasse is in a place between control and spontaneity: the end is in the means, and the madness is in the method. CAMERON SKENE

Peter Kingstone
GALLERY TPW, TORONTO

Peter Kingstone's latest project finesses the Toronto artist's long-standing fascination with the place where autobiographical fact ends and narrative fiction begins. In the past, Kingstone has passed artifice off as documentary by parroting the codes of first-person representation, but with this work, *100 Stories About My Grandmother*, the only lie is his claim that the impossibly dense archive of stories he invites us to sift through are all about "my"—his—grandmother.

Building on its companion piece, 2006's *Charles L. Roberts: The War Years*—an accumulation of video fictions and artifacts that supposedly charted Kingstone's grandfather's military experience—the