

# NISKA



"Sans titre"

30 x 40 pouces

1973

"Parmi ceux qui méritent une place de choix dans la galerie des dompteurs de la couleur, nous rangeons en lignée haute, l'artiste-peintre NISKA." . . . "Niska appartient à l'élite de ces artistes têtus qui veulent ne pouvoir construire que des cathédrales picturales pour la communion du Beau et du Vrai". . . . "nous pouvons dire que beaucoup des tableaux de Niska se rangeront un jour à côté des maîtres qui ont tracé leur nom en lettres de feu au ciel de l'art et de la peinture".

ROGER GEANITON, (HAITI)

Lauréal de l'Académie Léonard de Vinci,

Membre du Comité International du Centre d'Etudes et d'Echanges Internationaux (ROME)

Correspondant International de Presse

Représentant au Canada de l'International des Arts.

MARS 1967





«Marche Céleste».

# NISKA

**MEMBRE:**

Membre de l'Académie LEONARDO DA VINCI (Rome).  
Haute Académie Littéraire et Artistique de France.  
Guilde International des Arts (Monaco) (Monte-Carlo)  
Fédération Américaine des Arts. (New-York).  
Haute Académie Internationale de Lutèce (Paris).  
Société des Artistes Professionnels du Québec (Montréal, Canada)



«Les Chutes».





«Dégel sur le Lac Tremblant».



«La Fête»



«Lumière Divine».

Collection de M. et Mme Claude Babin, Montréal, P.Q.

**NISKA**





«Etude».

# NISKA

## PRIX REMPORTEÉS:

Lauréat du Septième Grand Prix International de Peinture de la Côte d'Azur (Cannes).

Lauréat du Quatrième Grand Salon International de Charleroi tenu au Palais des Beaux-Arts sous la Présidence d'Honneur de Son Altesse Sérénissime Prince Paul de Mourousy. (Belgique).

Lauréat de la Haute Académie Littéraire et Artistique de France (médaillon d'argent).

Lauréat du Prix de Paris 1971.

PREMIER PRIX DE PEINTURE du Festival International d'Auvillar 1971-72.



«Sans titre».



**Notes**

**BIOGRAPHIQUES**



**NISKA**

LORTIE Joseph Antoine François (pseudonyme: NISKA). Artiste-peintre. Né à Montréal, P.Q. (Canada), le 3 août 1940. Fils de Paul-Emile, commerçant, et d'Eva Côté. Marié le 19 août 1961, à Ville-de-Laval P.Q., avec Germaine Albert. Enfants: Monique et Florence. Etude: Université d'Ottawa, Ontario. Grade universitaire: B.A. Carrière: artiste-peintre. Différentes expositions: Galerie LIGOA DUNCAN, New-York; Galerie Raymond Duncan, Paris; Galerie Mirabelle, Montréal; la Chasse-Galerie, Toronto; Salon de l'Action d'Art, Auvillar, (France); Université d'Ottawa, Ottawa; Palais des Congrès, Monte-Carlo, (Monaco); Palais des Beaux-Arts, Charleroi, (Belgique); Terre des Hommes, Montréal; Galerie LA SCALA, Florence (Italie); Le Salon de la Femme, Place Bonaventure, Montréal; Centre d'Art TEMPLAR, Circeo, (Italie); Musée de Picardie, Amiens, (France); Grand Palais des Champs Elysées, Paris; galerie LA VECCHIA BOTTEGA, Sienna, (Italie); Centre d'Art MICHELANGELO, Tore Del Greco, Naples, (Italie); Festival International de Peinture et d'art graphico-plastique, (Bruxelles); Centre d'Art ST-LAWRENCE, Toronto; dans la province de Québec NISKA a aussi tenu des expositions solo à Rimouski, Rivière du Loup, Valleyfield, St-Jérôme, Hull, Mont-Rolland, St-Jovite, Ville de Laval, Montréal, Ste-Agathe, etc., 26 illustrations dans "Annuaire de l'Art International 1972-73", illustration du tome V "Anthologie Internationale de la Haute Académie littéraire et artistique de France" etc.,



# NISKA



"Eaux et Lumières", 30 x 40 pouces, 1973,  
Collection de M. et Mme André Lapointe Ville de Laval, P.Q.

## LES PROMOTIONS ARTISTIQUES MIRABELLES

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# NISKA

## The Art and the Man



**NISKA, "Salutes Pablo Picasso",** 30 x 24 inches (72.2 x 60.96 cm.), 1980.

Extracted from the book "Géodésiques" by Dr. Marcel Nadeau, November 1978.  
Book on Niska, Les Presses Libres, Montréal, Québec, Canada, 160 pages, 70 color  
reproductions; pages 100 to 155.

Translated from french by Dr. L. Robayo, A.A. Accurate International Translation Bureau.



## 100 AN OPEN-DOOR TO DREAMING

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Through its breadth and significance, the pictorial art of Niska is obviously a royal door opening wide to the realms of dreaming and higher knowledge. Here, in an unusual way, we can all witness the song of Creation. Nothing is static in the rhythm of the flames, matter and spirit are both deified.

What's more, in this work, man reveals himself in his entirety. Glorious landscapes may border on images of desolation. But what Niska wishes to translate, is the rising of invisible forces, the nostalgia of being face to face with that which remains. In other words, by his progression Niska makes an emotional appeal to us: the appeal to the Sublime, to the Beatitude.

## 102 NISKA AND HIS MASTERS

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In one way or another, many masters of contemporary art have been known to have inspired Niska: among them, Picasso, Mathieu, and Dali with their unique spirit of adventure; Pollock, Kooning, and Tobey with their unrepentant exhibitionism.

For a long time Niska has associated with all these artists of the informal, of "tachisme", and of lyrical abstraction or abstract landscapes. At present, following an original form of non-objectivism, Niska has become one of the principal proponents of renewed expressionism.

A painter of gestures, Niska establishes himself along the lines of a particularly determining model: Borduas. Borduas to whom he became quickly attached; Borduas whose fugue and inveterate taste for the unconventional always impressed him.

Similarly by a relinquishment of traditional means of painting, Niska tests for himself the possibilities of free and transfigurative forms: here, Sensation can be magically incarnated merely by the exceptional and hitherto unknown qualities of his refinement.

## 104 THE UNIVERSALITY OF AN ART

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"Create, oh painter, proclaims da Vinci, lest you not succeed in imitating through your art the various forms of nature."

A superhuman task; a program which at first glance appears excessive! However, this same Leonardo da Vinci invites us to share an experience which precisely renews numerous trends of thought of our contemporary painters. "It is not, he writes, a question of showing contempt for one's senses, if you remember certain aspects, certain times you have stopped to contemplate some stains on a wall, the ashes in a fireplace, the clouds or streams: and if you examine them attentively, you will discover there some very admirable inventions, from which the genius of the painter can take a lesson."

Niska has learnt this profound teaching. He himself has declared this principle: "It's the entire growth of the world that one must attempt to discern: our art is insignificant unless it interconnects all its diverse expressions, the changeability of the spirit."

## 106 THE GAMES OF THE UNCONSCIOUS

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The depth of his inspiration and creative power furthermore confirms, that in Niska, one can perceive the excellence of a mode where novelty is unceasingly maintained.

In "Art and Man," René Huyghe asserts: "Free of realist restrictions, modern art records the irresistible springing forth of primordial energy."

This submission to the realm of the unconscious is the quintessence of Niska's art. Bold imagination, freely flowing colours, and personal discipline all combine to determine a style.

## 108 FORM AND BALANCE

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Niska paints a universe where, in a unique way, the real and the imaginary mirror one another, creating a single rhythm free strong, which evidently rejoices in keeping us away from a very close and ever present reality.

The appropriate equilibrium to this reflection recalls the words of the artist Bazaine: "True sensibility occurs the very moment the artist first discovers that the backwash of the tree and the bark of the water are kin, that the rocks and his countenance are twins.

The ultimate transcendence of writing is to somehow reinvent the future; to resurrect creation. Thus, the lyricism of communication is prolonged.



## 110 GUIDED CHANCE

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"That which you call chance," asserts Nietzsche, "that is your genuine self which is revealed in that which happens, and in that which happens to you." Pierre Reverdy reiterates this point: "Art begins where chance ends."

What is the role of chance in painting? Between discipline and liberty, there exists an obvious paradox, the latter being attached to a dialectic which must be taken on and resolved in order that the power of inspiration can be exalted.

Sensibility, but also and above all, intelligence! As someone seduced by the incandescence of a substance, the artist will know how to choose, elaborate, and retain the elements for the most perfect of works.

Niska expounds on this point: "I have painted and painted pictures; but in the final analysis, the only valid criterion for beauty is: enchantment!"

## 112 DREAM AND REASON

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Fundamentally speaking, Niska takes advantage of automatism while going beyond it: with an ingenious and free dynamism he teaches as well as transcribing a brand of Salvation.

An arrangement whereby the unexpectedness of the unconscious can be realized, a conquest whereby dream and reason are allies, this assertion of Niska becomes an autonomous art, robust and complete.

## 114 IMAGINATION

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Within this communion, the artist aims at enlarging, at getting beyond the human condition, at transfiguring it; but all the while the imagination is at work at the very source of this flight into the unknown.

Concerning imagination, Baudelaire exclaimed to himself: "What a mysterious faculty, this queen of the senses! (...). She decomposes all of creation, and, with newly amassed materials at her disposal following rules whose origin can only be detected within the very abyss of the soul, she creates a new world, she produces sensation anew."

Surely such signals in a painter spell utopia? The values exhibited by Niska resolve this hypothesis for him.

## 116 TO BE AVAILABLE

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To know how to collect one's thoughts in order to learn. To know how to listen, how to observe. To know how to listen to the silence, this "voiceless hymn" of which Gabriel d'Annunzio spoke.

Niska, the painter, has wished to place himself at the very core of movement, at the very core of germination of all that lives. Under the artist's palette, the awesome displays of the Heraclitan development become iridescent.

In other words, Niska has made himself absolutely available; in this way abundance can surge forth.

## 118 THE SENSE OF A STEP

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In order for his pictorial project to succeed, Niska had to pursue, against the world, a road which he himself had discovered after multiple attempts: to develop, to perfect a technique, with its own characteristics, and which may permit infinite possibilities for renewal. By this mastery, it is certain that the artist will be able to realize the gigantic step: it is he who "knows" and who "knows how to create"!

Moreover, there are other elements which must be noted and with which Niska is constantly preoccupied. The work of art is not merely "technique"; each painting must ratify a moment of grace. It must celebrate the depths of an actual experience. Art is neither a copy nor a simple imitation of reality. Art is creation, transformation or metamorphosis on behalf of the magic of the universe. In this sense, Paul Klee notes the following: "Art does not reproduce the visible, it materializes the visible."

By his art, Niska is therefore intent on arousing in us the most effective emotions. The strength to do and to act, the springing forth of speech, this new realism which is offered, for the most part, as Spectacle.



## 120 THE SEARCH FOR BEAUTY

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A Spectacle, we have said. This fleeting moment, —but one that we wish to immortalize—, Niska knows full well how to take it and to present it to us in all its profusion, in all its vivaciousness. A stunning equilibrium! The work of Niska is: a lively sensitivity, grandiose, and one which is rendered according to the fullest brilliance of an ecstatic subject matter.

There is really nothing contradictory in this search for beauty. Always there is this one goal: to paint a sparkling world where elation and an enthusiasm for life are the chief trademarks. Niska himself could have penned the words of Poliakov: "Each and every grand master develops only one unique theme. This theme, far from being superficial, emanates from the very depths of his soul and is inexhaustible regardless of the quantity of works that may follow."

## 122 THE VARIOUS PATHWAYS

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Niska didn't always have an easy life as an artistic painter. He declares: "We harvest the fruits of our labour. I have searched for a long time, experimented; and I have finally discovered. One must never become discouraged. The acorn of an oak will take approximately two summers to germinate; likewise the olive-tree will take approximately one hundred years for it to be crowned king of the trees!"

Another key thought has governed the conduct of Niska: what is thing called History? What will remain of men after their passing here below, if not the ideals they have nourished and for which they have poured forth their energies "It is necessary, he tells us, to be positive, forever and ever; enthusiasm and love must unceasingly blaze a trail for us. If it is important to choose a route, it is even more important to remain on this route if we really want to take the trip that we have set out on!"

Such are the natural aptitudes that have made Niska the painter we both recognize and admire.

## 124 THE REFUSAL OF PASSIVENESS

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The itinerary of Niska deals with the refusal of passiveness. "There is but one law, he constantly repeats: one must work, work. Inspiration does not arrive freely at one's door! Inspiration must be prepared and is even more beautiful for having been prepared."

Niska once again confides in us: "I have wished to set all the wheels in motion to succeed in the artistic career of a painter. The material organization. The financial organization. Right up to the field of advertising. Moreover, we must act with all the means at our disposal; nothing can really be ignored!"

## 126 THE DETRACTORS OF A WORK OF ART

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Any innovator will inevitably have some detractors. Niska is no exception to the rule.

Mustn't Niska's painting be fairly easy? What a marvelous ease! Essentially, his painting sets in motion the unconscious forces which seek to become manifested in the most crystal-clear form.

Isn't it something chimerical? Yes undoubtedly, as in every great objective. Why bother reproaching the alchemist who so eminently deploys the subject matter before us?

A colouring spree? Disorganized movements? Sheer extravagance? The work of Niska can be equally well classified under gigantism and grandiloquence. All the same, we would still be far from the truth pursued by Niska!

Picasso one day expressed: "Each masterpiece has come into the world with a certain proportion of ugliness in it. This unseemliness is part and parcel of the creator's fight to say something new and in a different way." But, what is this ugliness?

Niska lets them talk; Niska lets them shout! He often relates to us furthermore how a Pollock during the latter's life was criticized, detested, rejected, only to be widely acclaimed in this day and age.



## 128 TO NAME A PAINTING

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Usually, Niska does not title the painting he has just produced; he leaves this for the spectator who, from that time onwards, ingests the work, meditates on it, inhabits it, and decides, in some way, its appropriate symbolism.

Concerning a Max Ernst painting entitled, "Sign for a School of Gulls", Marcel Jean remarked: "This title isn't just any metaphor arbitrarily decorating the effects of paint and smudges, it engulfs the spectator with the ultimate significance of an authentic mythology."

In this vein, the paintings of Niska can lay claim to the tribute of Max Ernst: the artist right from there the reflection of his own identity.

## 130 THE VOICE OF INTUITION

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With much verity, but also with much humour and simplicity, Salvador Dali declared: "If I am inspired, it's because I always trace from the start the two diagonal lines of a painting."

Similarly the work of Niska has at its foundations laws that are no less real.

Within a precise and well-built frame, the chief inspirational elements may be elaborated on. In any personal style, no matter what its basis is, what matters most is the lending a voice to intuition.

## 132 A WITNESS FOR HUMANITY

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What really counts for an artist, is to be capable of transmitting an aesthetic emotion in the most absolute way possible. In a painting, one ought to be able to appreciate the glistening of a material, the very sources of a vision or of a future change.

On this level, Niska's quest, through his strength, his particular harmonies, resides in the most noble expressions of forces of our epoch: the will to get away from this robotized world nurtured by an artificial and cold abstraction, in other words, to rediscover one's soul!

## 134 FOR WISDOM'S SAKE

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Through this decisive antigeometry, Niska therefore describes the marvelous conquest of new spaces. Devoid of vanity, but with a modicum of pride, as if he wished to reveal to us the sense of Paradise regained. To make us seers, beings somehow ready for the innermost visitations: such is wisdom.

The breath of the Immaterial has certainly sprung forth from the heart of Niska's work; thus we can recall the magnificent words of Novalis: "We are more closely in league with the intangibly invisible than with the visibly tangible."

## 136 ART AND DESIRE

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In "Le Mythe de Sisyphe", Albert Camus proclaims that: "To create is to shape up destiny."

Lawrence Durrell was equally discerning when he expounded that: "The classic in art is that which intentionally confines the cosmology of an epoch."

On such existential grounds, the logic of Niska, the painter, springs forth spiritual perceptions, dreams; and finally this language mirrors desire itself.

## 138 THE LAWS OF UNITY

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Concerning the formulation of a painting, the fresco artist, Louis Dussour, declares: "The essential is to be in ecstasy, while attempting to honestly understand how everything is connected and constructed."

Yes indeed, according to Nietzsche, "art has no need of certitude. It is not vexed by the knowledge of where it is headed or not headed. Art is basically goal-oriented because it longs to rush forth and display itself."

In this way, art generously offers us a law of unity which can be detected not only at the level of the painting itself, but how much more at the level of the painter's complete ensemble of works!

Thus, Niska's itinerary appears to us as a labyrinth where one perceives, —far from the anecdotal,— the stages of a deep spiritualization: the multiple unfolding of a creative conscience.



## 140 CONTEMPLATION AND BEAUTY

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Niska, both the painter and thinker, reiterates Monteverdi's dictum: "Beauty is a simplicity which has been treated with the maximum intensity."

In a parallel manner, we ought to say that: beauty reestablishes the compatibility of a creation and an eternity, a relationship which we hope will transcend time most effectively.

## 142 THE STRENGTH OF AN IMAGE

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Image expands man's universe; through it, man survives himself, recognizes the innermost liberty, and last, but not least; the springing forth of creativity is offered him.

Raymond Queneau confirms this connection: "Dreaming and revelation are practically synonymous." By the immeasurable strength of an image, the artist reveals, formulates, and details the prestige of an ideal.

In the pursuit of the irrational, Niska demonstrates a passionately ostentatious art, he accomplishes the latter with a buoyant optimism that is most dazzling.

## 144 EVERLASTING JOY

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Youthfulness, ardour, enchantment. A lyricism bordering on reckless abandon! For Niska, effervescence remains an absolute value.

Exhilarating configurations, jovial ambiance. Humanism, where ecstasy is the token of the removal from one's usual surroundings and subsequent liberation.

## 146 A HYMN TO LIGHT

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André Suarez wrote to Georges Rouault: "The true artist is the one who saves the world from pain, by bestowing upon it the most beautiful expressions of love."

By art, we luminously revive our own night: Did not Mallarmé glorify this adage with his own proverb: "Every soul is a melody which must be unchained."?

Landscapes from here, landscapes from another place: Niska's poetry has been forged from this particular geography where newly illuminated spaces are outlined.

## 148 TOWARDS LIBERATION

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With regards to Niska, in particular, we should ponder at length the words of Rimbaud:

"We shall uproot painting from its ancient tendencies to just copy to ascribe its true sovereignty... One will no longer reproduce objects; one will reflect emotions with the aid of lines, colours, and diagrams that will penetrate the external world in a simplified and tamed fashion: a veritable magic."

Alexis Klimov would have said that Niska, with all his might, has taken the perilous route to Knowledge. Before our very astonished eyes, an odd and prodigious world, without parallel, unfolds.

## 150 METAMORPHOSIS

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In this description of internal exploits, Niska offers us with a jovial and inexhaustible fluency, precious moments which are the by-products of dreams and of life's games.

Similarly, we even think of the charms and airy feeling that the illusionist masters so well.

As a language of the most observant fantasy, Niska's compositions finally openly express a depth of universal and cosmic satisfaction: thus transfigured, thus illuminated, both passion and matter climb the highest pinnacles of their "raison d'être".



## 152 IN SPITE OF SOLITUDE

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This extraordinary perseverance in the uphill climb, —in spite of solitude,— is the last, but by no means least, trait that engenders Niska's priceless works.

In this "Notes sur la Peinture d'aujourd'hui", Jean Bazaine comments: "So many "isms" have pretended to liberate painting during the past fifty years, but these were nothing more than the stages of a growing shyness which attempted to face up to the challenge: at the turning point of this beautifully passionate story, that coincided with the arbitrary demands of an ever-increasing number of Schools and groups; it is about time that the painter should rediscover his solitude and that his painting no longer should be hindered by excessive etiquette."

Perhaps Niska, this most audacious painter, is in the process of accomplishing before our very eyes this phenomenal show of force! The essential is the constant message that he has wished to deliver to us.

Marcel Nadeau  
November 1978

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## BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHY OF NISKA

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Niska, the pseudonym for François Lortie, was born in Montreal on August 3, 1940. He was the seventh, in a family of five girls and seven boys.

Since his infancy characterized by a long convalescence following a near-fatal accident, Niska has interested himself more particularly in the parallel domains of music, poetry, and painting.

From 1959 to 1963, in Ottawa, he devotes himself to university studies in physical education and recreational administration.

In 1963, he becomes a physical education teacher in Rimouski; but, at the end of three years, Niska wants to make a drastic change in his life's direction. He is guided by a single dream: to be free, to become a full-time painter!

Spring 1966: the first exhibition of his pictorial works.

In the autumn of 1966, Niska leaves Rimouski in order to live in Mont-Tremblant near Saint-Jovite in the Laurentians, north of Montreal, Canada.

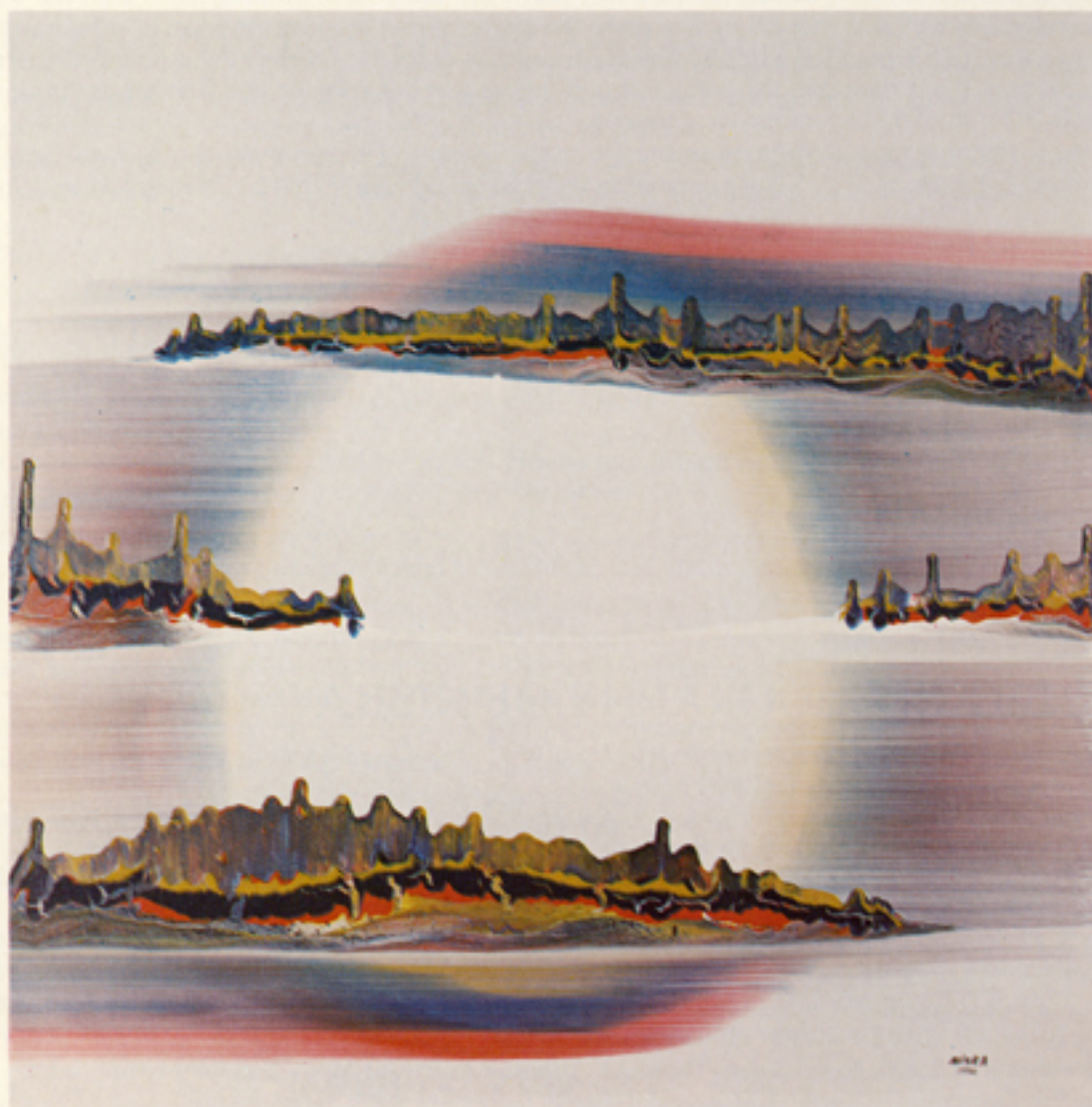
From 1966 to 1968, Niska is a physical education teacher in Saint-Jovite. He paints more and more, so much so that by 1968 he will consecrate himself entirely to painting thereby making it a veritable career.

From then on, the exhibitions will multiply at a very brisk pace and will soon launch Niska into the international field.

It is worthy noting that Niska is a member of countless societies: notably: le Centre d'Études et d'Échange Internationaux de Rome (since 1969), la Haute Académie Internationale de Lucece, Paris (since 1971), l'Association Belgo-Hispanica de Bruxelles (since 1973), The American Federation of Arts of New York (since 1970), la Guilde Internationale des Arts de Monte Carlo, Monaco (since 1973).

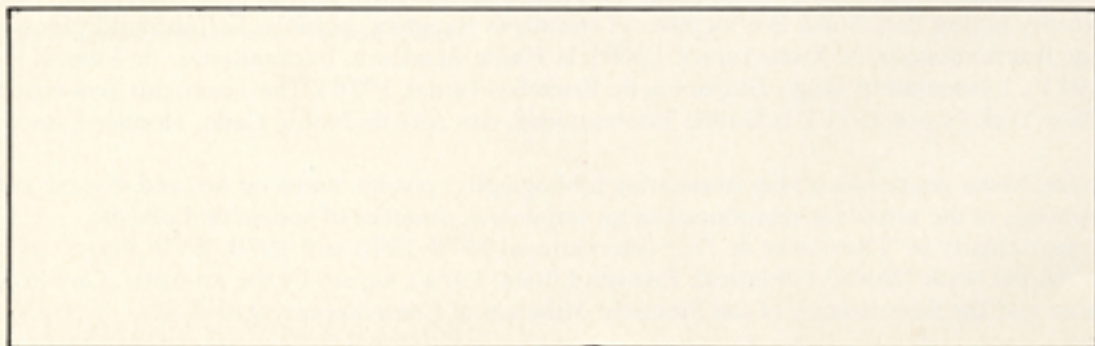
Moreover, Niska possesses a very interesting bibliography: poems, notes on art, and diverse studies. Also, paintings of the artist are reproduced in an impressive number of specialized artistic reviews: particularly in "l'Annuaire de l'Art International 1972-1973 and 1978-1979, Paris; furthermore, the book "Niska" (Montreal, Presses Libres, 1974), signed by the art critic, Guy Robert, the founder and the first director of the Montreal Museum of Contemporary Art.





**NISKA, "Untitled", 40 x 40 inches (101,6 x 101,6 cm), 1980.**  
Collection of Maryse Lanthier & Claude Brodeur, St-Jérôme, Québec.

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Don de l'artiste

Joseph-Antoine François Lortie est né en 1940 à Montréal. Il prit le nom de Niska à l'âge de 25 ans. Bachelier en éducation, il choisit la carrière de peintre en 1968. Il a participé à plus de 120 expositions dans 11 pays, notamment au Grand Palais des Champs Elysées, à Paris; au Palais des Beaux-Arts, à Charleroi, en Belgique; au Palais des congrès, à Monaco; au Centre national des arts, à Ottawa. Il est récipiendaire de nombreux prix et distinctions lors de compétitions internationales.