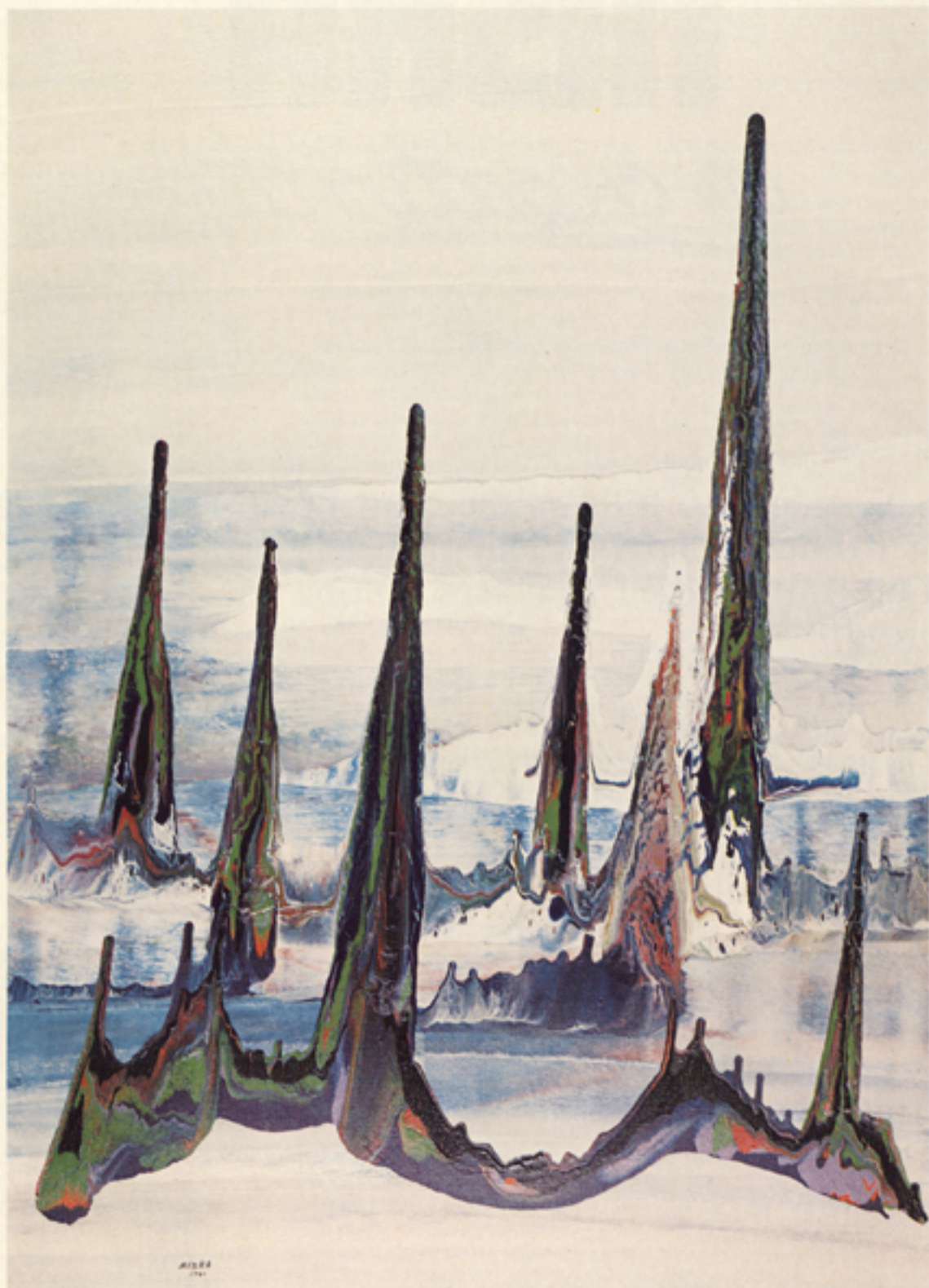


NISKA

on creativity



NISKA

Prototype for success

From :
"L'ART AU QUÉBEC
DEPUIS 1940"
By Guy Robert
Publisher : La Presse
503 pages, 1973
(page 187-190); one illustration

In this area, Niska represents a sort of prototype for success. After studying recreation management at the University of Ottawa, Niska (François Lortie) hesitated on making a definite career choice. He wrote poems, was attracted to music, he had a degree in recreation and had been painting since he was 14.

Only one thing was certain in his mind, it even became an obsession : his dream of an international career and his firm resolution to apply himself seriously, passionately if need be ! When he was 25 years old, he chose painting and immediately set to work upon four points that he felt were strategic but that most artists habitually disdained : to choose a name with a pleasant sound, two syllables and easy to remember; to develop a technique of his own that would permit his works to be identified at first glance; to build up a market based on steady sales, refusing consignment and gallery contracts but allowing collectors to exchange one

painting for another at his studio; and finally, to exhibit and participate in as many international exhibits as possible. In 1973, Niska's record was prodigious.

This could not be explained only by the artist's talent, work, temperament and dynamics. It also involved his enterprising spirit and the organization of the management and publicity of his career. At 30, he was already a member of the Leonardo Da Vinci Academy (Rome), the Lutèce International Academy (Paris) and the French Literary and Artistic Academy.

In 1971, he won four international first prizes in France and Belgium. Such a "phenomenon" may seem marginal from the viewpoint of the pretentious, elitist tradition, but on examination, it is the "stars" of the official network of museums and galleries who become marginal beside a Niska who refuses to dissociate production from distribution, who even tries to expand the number of viewers and clients to

the maximum. A painter and happy to be one, with a burst of laughter he shatters the tortured image of the morbid artist and puts his signature on works of remarkable technique (pleats, cracks, acrylic, thick impasto), rich in color and rhythm, bordering between the figurative landscapist and the non-figurative automatist.

Spontaneous, lyrical, joyful, Niska's work reflects his own confidence in life, his contagious enthusiasm and it would be mean to take umbrage at his successes; far better to rejoice with him in his success knowing full well that he does not appear to be a man who rests on his laurels. The freedom that he holds so highly can only propel him in his pictorial adventure.

Note: Guy Robert was the founder and first Director of the Museum of Modern Art in Montreal. He has published some thirty books, one of which is about Niska.

Niska, a young French-Canadian artist, is one of the most brilliant artists of the new generation... We are in the presence of a complete painter who, while reviving the formal aspects of his art, dominates it and exudes intense truth and extraordinary poetic life.

Lucien Mandosse
La Revue Moderne des Arts et de la Vie
Paris, France
June 1st, 1973, pp. 1, 30 and 46; 6 ills.

THE MYTH OF POVERTY

From:
MACLEAN, December 1973,
pp. 6 and 11.

Guy Robert

A view common in Quebec is that an artist, painter, sculptor or carver cannot earn a living with his art. He has to teach, ask for grants, collect unemployment insurance benefits or reach retirement age before devoting himself to art.

Pellan and Lemieux are not really exceptions since they only lived comfortably from their art after spending many years teaching. This widespread opinion suits many people because it puts art dealers in a superior position, it gives the senior civil servants in the granting agencies and their assistants a sort of Santa Claus aura, it maintains the prestige of an in-group of so-called experts, and it reduces the artist to the distressing state of dependence and humiliation.

In this perspective, success outside the established system constitutes high treason. Outside the power cliques, there is no safety, that is: no grants, no sales and no exhibitions in certain museums.

The impudents are set upon; they are disdained and slandered, often even without their work being seen.

Recently I felt a need to take a closer look at two of those fortunate and courageous "outsiders" who, with their own hands, with energy and admirable effort, have built their own success.

Kieff, a Spaniard born in Madrid in 1936, Kieff Grediaga. He moved to Montreal in 1969 but now lives in Saint Bruno where he owns a lovely property with a magnificent garden and his studios. He is a dynamic, passionate and enthusiastic artist, an eager worker who, for three years, has been developing

a work in polished bronze with very pleasing lines and rhythm. The technique is flawless and in places rough textures produce a striking contrast. Although his work has only been on the art market for a short time, Kieff has already had major business dealings with about fifteen North American galleries and is getting ready to strengthen his commercial ties with Spain and establish contacts in Japan. Kieff is completely outside the Quebec artistic milieu. He travels frequently, exhibiting in New York and Chicago, Texas and Florida with considerable success. When he exhibits in Montreal, some reporters hastily compose amazing commentaries but these do not prevent the works from being sold nor the artist from pursuing his career as he sees fit.

Some day, Kieff may perhaps leave us to look for sympathy elsewhere, to find less pettiness and meanness and we will have lost another of those artists who have demonstrated that it is possible to earn a decent living from art in Quebec, provided that they leave!

What Kieff proves in sculpture, Niska (his real name is François Lortie, born in Montreal in 1940) has proven in painting over the last decade or so by increasing his participation in international exhibits (mainly in Europe) and his own exhibitions in Quebec. Niska's attitude toward the art market may be surprising at first. It is well known that some Quebec artists have been complaining about the galleries since the mid-1960s. Niska, however, does not waste time complaining. He organizes his publicity, his exhibitions,

his market to such an extent and with such competence that he is now free to spend his time painting in his Mont-Tremblant home since agents look after selling his work.

Niska's painting evokes a sort of abstract landscape with an automatist style that is lyrical and joyous and pleases a large clientele who remain indifferent to the scorn of certain snobs and "experts" of the cliques. A good part of Niska's success is due to an impressive publicity system upon which his distribution network is based. When I receive a release from Niska, I know that thousands of other people are also receiving it. Thus, we are all informed of the developments in the career of an artist who has the daring, the courage and the energy to mold his success with his own hands, with neither patrons nor galleries and with no grants, all outside the official and far too often pretentious channels.

Kieff and Niska make no claim to agencies. They have their talents, their sense of work and organization and a craving for independence. This happens less often than is generally thought. They are succeeding extremely well. Are there any better arguments?

NISKA,

Artist better known in Europe than at home

The internationally renowned painter, Niska, after being showered with honors in Paris, Cannes, Charleroi (Belgium), New York, Bordeaux and elsewhere, has come to Ste-Agathe to display the beauty of his works to his fellow citizens of the Laurentians. The private viewing of his exhibition took place Friday evening at the Pavillon Touristique. The exhibit will continue until the 15th of this month. Those interested in modern art or who would like to see this extremely modern art carried to its highest expression should go see the twenty or so of the most recent paintings of this master who has already introduced the Laurentian region to the most celebrated art centers of Europe.

Niska never paints what he has seen, what anybody can go to see anywhere, what just anybody can copy using a good camera. He only rarely paints what he thinks. Most of the time, he strives to communicate what he feels by a play of colors and he attempts to make us feel the same emotions that his works inspired in him. Does he succeed? It is difficult to say. For just as it is impossible for him to express in words the feelings or the reactions of his mind that inspire him, so it is also impossible for us to put into words what his paintings communicate to us. As an artist-philosopher said at the beginning of the century: "If it could be said in words, it would not be worthwhile to put it into a painting."

According to the Gospel, "a prophet is not without honor, safe in his own country and in his own house". That must be why Niska has had more acclaim in Rome and Paris than in Montreal (where he lives) and Ste-Agathe, which claims to be the artistic center of the Laurentians. Art connoisseurs from New York and Montreal were at the private viewing but there were few if any of the prominent Ste-Agathe citizens. I noticed one landscapist, who is quite well-known in Montreal and Val-David, Marguerite Dubreuil-Michaud, who spent a good hour admiring these works of explosive beauty.

And, take note, Niska is only 30 years old. Since at this age, he has already won prizes from major groups in Charleroi, Paris and the Côte d'Azur and earned acclamation in Rome, New York and Monaco, what will he be doing at the age of 50? A great French artist has written of him, "His paintings will one day rank alongside those of the masters who have written their names in fire in the heaven of art and painting."

What will that do for the world-wide fame of Mont-Tremblant, where he works, and of Ste-Agathe, where he exhibits?

A.E. Perks

LE SOMMET—The Echo of the Laurentians, p. 10. Wednesday, August 4th, 1971. The Painter Niska.

Honored Again

Our internationally renowned artist, Niska, from Mont-Tremblant, has just received yet another honor from a great foreign authority.

He received the following letter from the "Haute Académie Littéraire et Artistique de France".

"Dear Sir,"

"Following your participation in the 4th international salon in Charleroi, our President, Jean-Marie Tournebize, after noticing one of your works, would like to display it and personally present you at our international distinction meeting. This distinction test of artistic value that is recognized by 32 countries is a prize that will confirm the value of your works for the critics.

"We hope that we can include you among our price holders."

Respectfully yours,

A.E. Perks

From :
LE DROIT
Ottawa, Saturday, July 20th, 1974

The untranslatable **NISKA**

by Michel Dupuy
(special contribution)

François Lortie was born in Montreal in 1940. As a child, he was full of enthusiasm and self-confidence. His dream was to create a world that would be beautiful, real, balanced and lasting; this creation would attract the attention of the world. To fulfil his dream, he chose painting and after making a studied and rational decision he died only to reborn as Niska, a name unconnected to any known pictorial language. The gallery easily leaves a mark in our memories. **Niska is as much the name of a work as of a man since the work of François Lortie is untranslatable and belongs to no known pictorial language.** Montreal's Mirabelle Gallery has brought some twenty of his works to Ottawa. They can be viewed until the end of the week in the assembly hall of the University of Ottawa.

Niska is an abstract painter who employs a wide range of intense colors. The material he works with is thick; it pleats like ripples on the water, like veins in stone, like the bark of a tree trunk. In each work, we are struck at first by the force of the color but one must linger to understand it better. Little by little, landscapes appear out of these abstract forms through the richness of his medium. Niska does not seek to deform or simplify what he has seen so as to create an abstract repre-

sentation. He does the opposite. His point of departure is not the external world, it is the abstraction that creates orderless matter and thought. This is the point of departure only. On his abstraction, Niska imposes a strict composition, a balance, a meaning that makes a chimerical and grandiose landscape of it.

Yet a few more seconds of attention and his canvas reveal nature's great spectacles: the unleashed force of a volcano, scorching sun setting on the sea, the bursting of spring on a lake, the flashing of a fire, the sea folded over upon itself in transparent layers. The work is almost baroque, more real than life itself. It affirms a marvelous will to live and succeed.

Niska has already earned recognition abroad and his works are found everywhere from Rome to Toronto. But this is not what counts. He is exploring a perilous path in art where many of his peers merely rediscover what has already been done. **Niska creates new things. There is a promising originality in his works.** They are not the products of a recipe repeated more or less successfully. They are, rather, a long, difficult road, an experience that goes further with each painting. Each painting is an original creation.

This is a great deal to say about a 33 year old painter but Niska has undisputable talent that gradually blends into many other areas. The greatest danger before him is to push his work beyond the limits of good taste. But he has a sense of balance and serenity that up until now has managed to keep him within the realm of pure art. **The evocative power of his work turns every viewer into a creator.**

NISKA

and International Art

By: Guy Robert
Les Presses Libres
Montréal, 1974
96 pages, 40 color illustrations

Ref. pages 64 and 66

Remember that François Lortie's ambition is to reach the widest possible public: the prospect of an international reputation remains a principal driving force; a little globe of the world in his studio serves as a constant reminder. But an international reputation cannot be built up overnight; moreover it is always subject to discussion and dispute, with few exceptions. There are still those who refuse to acknowledge that the artist Jean-Paul Riopelle, for example, has an international reputation, even if the majority of experts in the field of contemporary art accord him this outright. There are the argumentative few who dismiss Picasso's work and dispute his fame throughout the Western world.

The debate is unending. What exactly, in cold terms, is an "international" reputation and why does this expression cause so much concern? To an artist, it is simply that his works are presented, recognized and acknowledged in several countries other than his own. But who has the power to decide when an artist's work is "international"? Mu-

seums, galleries, art publications, cultural institutions? In most of these cases, though not all, there are networks and private interests operating. Thus, an international reputation is much more noteworthy when it is acknowledged in many countries by many segments of society.

How does Niska fit into all this? Since 1968, his paintings have been reviewed and reproduced in several publications in France, Canada, Monaco, Italy, the United States and Belgium, and in papers published in several languages in numerous other countries; he will appear in the 4th edition of "Who's Who in Europe", (in the bibliography are noted other publications where his name appears). We should point out that Niska's work is strongly represented in *L'Annuaire de l'art international*, 1972-1973 edition; in this 700-page document with lists of numerous artists in 20 or so countries and the names of 100 or so art galleries, Niska's work occupies 13 pages, with 11 color and 15 black-and-white reproductions; the importance

of this publications can be gauged by the famous galleries mentioned in it — Maeght, Knœdler, Marlborough, Castelli, together with names like Braque, Marini, Miro, Motherwell, Picasso, Rauschenberg, Riopelle, and buyers in Mexico, Sweden, Brazil, Switzerland, Japan, Canada, France and the United States. Niska appears on the listings of the Ligoa Duncan gallery in Paris and L'Action d'Art gallery in Auvillar.

Niska's exhibitions have been held in places far beyond his native province, although between 1966 and 1974 he held over twenty one-man shows in Quebec. Other one-man shows have been held in Ottawa, Toronto and New York. Niska has taken part in over thirty international exhibitions in Europe and will be holding one-man shows there in 1974. So the artist's reputation is gradually getting abroad. An international reputation does not miraculously appear as if by spontaneous generation, but must be won and built up through hard work and persistence, imagination and daring, over the months and years.

NISKA does not give titles to his pictures

Ref.: Niska, a painting to devour life,
by Jean-Claude Leblond
"Vie des Arts"
Montréal, Winter 1973-1974
pages 54, 55, 56, 57 and 98
5 colour illustrations

"Niska does not give titles to his pictures. One must not impose on the purchaser a title and all it invokes as allied ideas. It is necessary rather to leave him free to work it out himself, to discern the themes he finds in the picture and, there, to state a title which suits him and will be of special value for him. That is exactly the goal to be attained because, in actual fact, the work of the artist lives daily with the buyer, at a certain moment it forms an

integral part of his life. Furthermore, such is one of the great themes which tend to motivate Niska. That facing his painting, man finds himself in some way, that it brings at the same time a comfort, an encouragement, a motivation to continue, happiness and enthusiasm. And with all the ascending movements, all these spring upwards, he succeeds in making us share his faith, his confidence in life which, like a fruit, asks only to be crunched greedily."

NISKA, artist of the year

Niska, artist of the year 1975, as selected by CKVL-FM Montréal

The Management of Radio CKVL-FM is happy to inform you that they have chosen the internationally known french-canadian artist NISKA as the artist of the year 1975.

NISKA is the creator of a very particular technique easily noticeable by a great amount of crevasses and folds. Although quite young, only 34 years old, NISKA has held over 25 one-man shows and has participated on invitations in more than 30 international art shows in various countries such as Canada, France, United States, Monaco, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Belgium. A member of several international art associations around the world, NISKA is laureate of 9 international painting awards, including a silver and two gold medals in Europe. The well-known French Canadian art critic, Guy Robert, founder and first director of the Montreal Museum of Contemporary Art, recently wrote a bilingual book with 40 pages of full color illustrations on NISKA.

Niska Exhibition at the Windsor Hotel in Montreal

In the context of its cultural activities, CKVL-FM is pleased to announce the holding of a NISKA exhibition at the Windsor Hotel in Montreal (Dominion Square), this Spring, from Friday the 11th of April until Sunday the 20th of April, 1975, inclusive. Please note that the exhibition will be closed on Sunday the 13th.

Official opening

On Friday the 11th of April, 1975, at 8 o'clock p.m., CKVL-FM invites you to the official opening of this famous artist. Come discover and meet NISKA. A cocktail will be offered with the compliments of your Radio CKVL-FM, 96.9 on your dial.

P.S. Please consider this press release as a personal invitation for you and your friends. None will be mailed due to the present postal service situation.

Press Release

In keeping with its new program orientation, the Management of CKVL has as its intention, to encourage and promote talented Quebecers and to reveal their originality.

NISKA was our first choice because: he is a young artist with a brilliant future and has never received any grants whatsoever. He has created a technique that is easily recognized, by its cracks and pleats that are original with him. He has had 30 solo exhibitions and has participated in more than 30 others all over the world. He has won ten first prizes in international competitions, including two silver and two gold medals in Europe. Guy Robert, founder and first Director of one of the most important museums, the Museum of Modern Art in Montreal, has found NISKA noteworthy enough to write an art book on him.

CKVL-FM is pleased to honor this great artist and hopes that its choice will stimulate talent in other Quebec artists.

The FM Management anticipates repeating its project for encouraging talent and in 1976 will select another artist who will have made a contribution to Quebec culture.

PORTRAITS OF ARTISTS

NISKA, one of the most brilliant artists of the new generation.

The young French-Canadian artist is one of the most brilliant artists of the new generation. Already noticed by major collectors in his country (his *Nuit orientale* was just bought by Dr. Paquin for \$5,292.), in the United States and Europe, at 33, he is a member of the Leonardo da Vinci Academy in Rome, the French Literary and Artistic Academy (which presented him with a silver medal) and the American Arts Federation. Since February 1971, he has been in succession winner of the Côte d'Azur seventh international prize for painting (in Cannes), of the fourth international Grand Salon of Charleroi and first prize for painting at the Auvillar international festival 1971-1972.

At the same time his activities multiply on the international art market; Niska exhibits in Canada, in Toronto and Montreal, in the United States, in New York, in France at the Duncan Gallery in Paris and at the Auvillar, Salon de l'Action d'Art, where his works can always be seen.

Such a rapid and great success is due to precise reasons. Niska's paintings are those of a superb and sincere artist. His art is both symbolic and lyrical and is impressive for its evocative force, the nobility of its touch, the burst of color, its epic element and its flight toward the absolute. This pictorial richness is always tamed by a severe and strict composition and by an admirable knowledge of the laws of classical painting.

We are in the presence of a complete painter who, while reviving the formal aspects of his art, dominates it and brings out of it an intense truth and extraordinary poetic life.

Lucien Mandosse
La Revue Moderne des Arts et de la Vie
Paris, June 1973
cover page in color and back cover pages, plus page 30 with 4 more reproductions.

Niska "is on an upward path that we believe will lead him to the height of celebrity".

It is certainly no exaggeration to proclaim Niska's paintings as masterpieces. It seems clear that the artistic genius of this man has not yet reached its peak since, indeed, this master of color has undertaken a cosmic adventure.

Looking at his paintings, one has the impression of being at a bursting of Nature, at the beginning of time before the organization of terrestrial matter when everything must have been in agitation.

Moreover, some paintings give rise to the sensation that we are being thrown down the bottom of a grotto where stalagnites are colored by light jiltering in through crevasses opening on the Universe.

Craving boundlessness, Niska seems to impose movement on shapes and hurl them into the Cosmos. From his rich palette he crystalizes the galaxies and immobilizes meteorites; he plunges us into a sea of colors with a strange splendor.

Like all who admire the great painter's works, I felt the charm and magnetism they emanate. The magic of the

tones and shapes that springs forth communicates an impression of space and freedom. To contemplate one of Niska's paintings is to breath an immense gust of air that invigorates to the point that one is renewed in the depths of one's being.

Pierrette Paré-Walsh
Idéal-Féminin
Montréal, July/August, pp. 1, 11, 12, 13, 14

NISKA

A painting to devour life

by Jean-Claude Leblond

Réf: "Vie des Arts"
Montréal, Winter 1973-74
pages 54, 55, 56, 57 and 98
5 colour illustrations

Niska is falsely inscribed in the rule which says that the artist corresponds with the classic images which have been conceived of him, to an aznavourian conception of an idyllic Bohemian and, at the age of thirty-two, he proves the exception. Proud to say to anyone who is willing to hear him that he lives off his painting and lives well; Niska (pseudonym of François Lortie) sees as far and as big as his work can reveal itself, in certain ways, mystical.

An outcome of tachism whose extension, whose evolution it tries in a way to be, the painting of Niska answers an aesthetic concern which respects colours to the point of allowing each to emerge clearly, to stand out well, without upsetting the balance of the whole, the invisible link which ties them one to the other and causes them to be interdependent, while preserving their identity.

By vigilant, perspicacious treatment, the form, almost always ascending, shows cones, lunar landscapes, geological phenomena of Cappadocia, at the same time as the acrylic paint permits him acrobatics of piling up materials here, passionate brushwork there and, here and there a creasing of the thick paint which, as intended, seems no less to yield to a certain point to the force of chance.

In *Visions*, we face, in predominance green then yellow, the same phenomenon of outbursts toward the upper part where each new tower, each mountain, comes like a palpitation of the heart, like so many throbbings of life. On the right, almost at the middle, a white blob is imposed like brain matter which would direct, orchestrate the movement all around it while sending its points in all directions, thus sweeping the horizon like a beacon in the night. Nevertheless, between each of these points, the universe is made up, if we look toward the lower part, of a play of colours which derives from floral design, which would resemble the plumage of a peacock or else the coat of a wolf. The whole comes to an end on coloured projections of dreams which, cast forth, lose themselves in the night.

Nuit de Noël succeeds in bringing out a presence in the infinity of the night, in making light dawn in darkness, in a sort of pagan nothingness, the advent of something that goes beyond the ordinary, that goes further than the unusual and that confers on it at the same time an odd strangeness, as if the time had come for the impossible to occur.

Of a spirited, impetuous nature, possessed of an unshakable self-confidence, in the goals and the career he pursues, Niska paints emotion almost in the pure state. Each of his canvases reflects this almost as authentically as a mirror gives back the features of a face. Consequently, we are in the presence of a tangle of emotion and the rational which, however, does not succeed in overlapping adequately, in bringing and sustaining a balance with its opposite.

However, it is this, in my eyes, that forms all the nobility, all the depth of Niska's work: this total authenticity, without pretence, this entity, this force of nature, untamed, inviolate, savage, unreasoned, this virgin forest which would give itself as greedily as a torrent and in which we never cease being astonished by new discoveries.

Niska does not give titles to his pictures. One must not impose on the purchaser a title and all it invokes as allied ideas. It is necessary rather to leave him free to work it out himself, to discern the themes he finds in the picture and, there, to state a title which suits him and will be of special value for him. That is exactly the goal to be attained because, in actual fact, the work of the artist lives daily with the buyer, at a certain moment it forms an integral part of his life. Furthermore, such is one of the great themes which tend to motivate Niska. That facing his painting, man find himself in some way, that it bring at the same time a comfort, an encouragement, a motivation to continue, happiness and enthusiasm. And with all the ascending movements, all these spring upwards, he succeeds in making us share his faith, his confidence in life which, like a fruit, asks only to be crunched greedily.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

NISKA and the critics

"The French-Canadian painter of whom so much has been said and who will be the subject of even more comment in the future, Niska, in the full ripeness of his talent is now reaching his peak."... "His works give forth an impression of creative force."... "Some people have discovered new horizons and now there are some discoverers of even more fabulous dimensions."

Aude François
France-Amérique
New York, February 25, 1971, p. 5

Niska at Duncan: "A most individual technique."... "The entire collection is an exciting one, inventive, rich in imagery and full of visual delights."

Dorothy Hall
Park East
New York, February 18, 1971, p. 4

"Niska works almost exclusively in acrylics. He is the creator of a personal style that is easily distinguished because of its many highly individualistic cracks and pleats."

Les Cahiers d'Art
Leonardo da Vinci Academy
Rome, January 1971

"Niska: Daring."

Henry de France
Apollo
Brussels, Belgium, October 1970, p. 4

Niska's paintings "reflect a highly individualistic style."... "The artist has a superb sense of color and all his works are integrated."

W.Q. Ketchum
The Ottawa Journal
Ottawa, August 1, 1968, p. 12

"Whatever the themes, and they are most often drawn from nature, the artist transforms it in paintings in which the abstract reigns and in which, at times, a sort of crystalization, sublimation, leaves only a trace of the figurative."... "Like a magician with his wand, Niska magnifies everything."... "In refined, studied impasto with a completely new technique that sometimes is evocative of the very creation of the elements, rocks, water, he applies chromatism to both delicate and highly contrasting tones alike. While his works demonstrate a mature conception and solid structure, they reflect the reactions of his vibrant temperament and impetuously translate his emotional impact."

Renée Carvalho
La Revue Moderne des Arts et de la Vie
Paris, France, February 17, 1970, pp. 1, 25, 26 and 28.

"I am convinced that you have never seen anything like it before! Above and beyond the multiplicity of colors teaming in each painting, one is surprised by the completely original surface texture that is at once smooth and polished but also cracked. This blending of opposite elements is the key to Niska's unquestionable success."

Emmanuel Cocke
Photo-Journal
Montreal, March 5 to 12, 1969, p. 47

"The most widely known painter of this region, if not of the province, the famous Niska."

A.E. Perks
Le Sommet
Ste-Agathe, March 23, 1971, p. 12

Wayne State University

College of Liberal Arts
Department of Humanities

Detroit, Michigan 48202

November 8, 1976

Mrs. Johanne L. Bourque
Public Relations Director
Centre d'Art Niska Inc.

Dear Mrs. :

Many thanks for the very beautiful book on the artist Niska. I truly appreciate your kindness in sending me this lovely book. I received it last Friday, and I spent the evening viewing and reading it. The book is splendid, indeed.

I am highly impressed with the art of Niska. I have not seen anything like it. There is something primordially beautiful about Niska's work and there is a sense of past, present, and future in his art. It is very unusual, striking, and beautiful.

Next Fall, I will be teaching a course in 20th Century Art here at Wayne State University. And I will include some of Niska's work in the course. I will attempt to obtain about 10 slides of Niska for teaching purposes.

Again, Mrs., I am grateful for your gift of the book on Niska. Many thanks.

Sincerely,

Richard Studing,
Professor

Department of Humanities
Wayne State University
Detroit, Michigan, 48202.

NISKA

on Creativity

The man who follows the crowd, will usually get no further than the crowd. The man who walks alone is likely to find himself in places no one has ever been before.

Creativity in living is not without its attendant difficulties, for particularity breeds contempt and the unfortunate thing about being ahead of your time is that when people finally realize you were right, they'll say it was obvious all along.

You have two choices in life: you can dissolve into the mainstream, or you can be distinct. To be distinct, you must be different. To be different, you must strive to be what no one else but you can be...

NISKA,

a painter liberated from all conventions

Since the recognition of the values of impressionism, artists throughout the world have tried to experiment with colours in a freer way. How many have really succeeded and found a place of mention in the numerous gallery of artistic production? How many have failed to impose a powerful view of their inner sensations because they lacked this unshakable conviction, this mastership, gained from experience which is a prerequisite to any acknowledgement of artistic value?

Among the real "color tamers" we find on the upper list, a young Canadian painter named NISKA. In an era where it is so difficult to innovate in discovering new pictorial shapes and shades, he drives himself almost blindly into a non-figurative form of expression right at the beginning but in a personnel approach and technique so very different from whatever has been demonstrated so far.

Non-figurative or non-objective painting is always a challenge, a strong call full of promises, an attack towards the absolute and unknown. It asks for a lot of courage and determination because in undertaking such an attempt, the artist has to shed any past conventions recognized by such great names for so many centuries; while his starting anew will probably be judged and appreciated by a very slim elite which in turn could respond in a very exacting way.

Everyone who is lucky enough to set foot in NISKA's workshop will nevertheless be unanimous in praising the high standards of quality that prevail and the esthetical value of all his works. His wonderful sense of originality and astonishing good taste do not hinder the lavish expression of his own personality. NISKA remains himself at all times, assured yet balanced, spontaneous and resourceful yet controlled

and disciplined. Each finished canvas is a literal creation, a fresh discovery. It permeates a thoughtful research and laborious execution. Stoppiness or "laissez-aller" is intolerable to NISKA. When the theme could be weak, the technique is superb and counterbalances the total effect.

NISKA's only ambition is to realize the supreme goal of any real good painter: to translate on canvas a definite emotion or sensation felt at a certain instant and captured at a precise moment in time and space to react in the future.

This powerful dynamism which brings NISKA to consider a subject matter or a central theme among highly moral or religious attitudes and sentiments, vibrates all over each one of his masterful works.

In spite of the clash of shapes and colors he achieves a vigorous taming of the elements to present a very impressive final perspective.

NISKA is among the stubborn breed of young artists who will be satisfied only by erecting majestic cathedrals where to offer the communion of Truth and Beauty. His art is the reflection of a strong will to master the self-expression only to pour it out in a geyser of unsuspected images bringing the creation of a non-objective work that will later carry an important inner message and create an impact that lingers on whoever admires it.

NISKA's particular and peculiar technique is pure revelation in painting. His work is pathetic without being desperate. Showing a deepest inspiration, it reveals an enthusiasm sufficient enough to bloom and reach the high peaks of the intellect that in turn engenders a productive exaltation close to this esthetical ideal that everyone

dreams of in fighting for a worthwhile cause.

NISKA is not the least reluctant to admit the close resemblance that his works bear to those of famous other artists who are working towards the plentyful life of expression in picture through the satisfying subtleties of non-figurative paintings.

In the range of the already acknowledged international production of this kind of discipline we can safely declare that NISKA has already crossed the threshold over formal conventions.

He asserts a self-conquest in each one of his works. It means a personal triumph every time he finishes a canvas. His unique style testifies to the fact that chance or mere luck has nothing to do with the final results he obtains. The painting has a real value in as much as it reaches its primary goal: translate the artist's message.

In that realm, we can easily prophesy that many of NISKA's works will one day stand in the Hall of Fame besides those of the Great Masters who once wrote their names with fire letters in the skies of art and painting!

Roger Geanion

Laureate of the Academy Leonardo da Vinci
Member of the International Committee of the Center
of International Studies and Exchanges (Rome)
International Press Correspondant
Delegate in Canada of the International of Arts
Member of the International Association of art critics.

This text was published in French in "Art and Poetry"
international magazine of French Culture which is the
official Publication of the Society of Poets and Artists of
France, Fall 1975, Vol. 17, No. 72, cover page in color
and pages 23, 24 also.

NISKA'S PAINTINGS, a modern and abstract introduction to the Quebec scenery

by André Pelleret (translation)

Shapes, shades, colours familiar to those who enjoy Quebec's vast spaces - be they naturalists, fishermen, hunters, campers - can be found in Niska's paintings. That our Quebec scenery has inspired those paintings is obvious to the expert's eye.

Niska has a marked preference for:

- the peaks of rocks, beaten and eroded by the waves and winds of the Gaspé coast;
- the bright fall colours of Laurentian forests;
- the mute immensity of the Canadian Great North.

Niska's manner: its ambivalence

The painter's technique has its roots in the method that consists of throwing paint on the canvass, which - with time and experience - he converted into a technique truly his own; but his manner is always abstract and modern. Yet, after Niska has moulded his masses of acrylic paint on the canvass, only a little imagination is needed to suggest here and there a landscape and things familiar and loved. Modern art with a glimmer of figurative: here lies the ambivalence. This suggestive quality explains perhaps the infatuation of such a large public at so many Niska exhibitions: because his paintings are suggestive, because they do tell things, they fascinate his public. What other explanation is there for the fact that more than a thousand of Niska's paintings were sold during the last decade?

Niska's work - investing in paintings

It is when a painter's reputation is about to be well established on the international scale that one may take one of the shortest steps towards fortune by buying his paintings. Art collectors do buy paintings but their main object is to invest, to safely tie up their capital. Seen from such an angle, the acquisition of a Niska is without the shadow of a doubt a wise investment. Having received eleven famous international awards, participated with distinction in over 100 exhibitions held in nine different countries, Niska - for his age - is probably closer to international fame than any other Quebec painter residing in the Province. The value of works painted by him only three years ago has already doubled since their date of purchase; and many of the paintings he turned out in the last eleven years have increased a hundredfold in value.

Nature's lovers and Niska's paintings

A Niska is poetry made visual, either ambered or sparkling, at one time tender, at another passionate; rock - earth - plants - running water - skies - the bowels of the earth:

- the hugeness of the Quebec territory and its mysteries,
- the savage strength of solar energy,
- the melancholy of winds and of deserts that are not real deserts,
- the blinding light reflected by the prismatic colours of crystallized snow,
- the blue ice of the Canadian Great North endless nights.

All this beauty, all this mystery can be found, from a constantly new angle, in Niska's works. Occasionally, Niska

lets some other aspect of his continuously pregnant genius pour out on his canvasses. But for the last ten years, his main source of inspiration for the entirety of his works obviously lies in Quebec wild life themes, always probed into more deeply. The artist's mastery of colours is undoubtedly one of his most striking accomplishments. Their multiplicity and his arrangements are simply fantastic. According to the chosen theme, his use of them is so discerning and appropriate as to attract attention to his:

- blues: cold and unquiet,
- browns: alive, reassuring, realistic,
- yellows: effervescent, provoking, mischievous,
- reds: explosive, violent, imaginative, etc.

Because some of the artist's messages are revealed to nature's lovers, the latter, in the end, find themselves rather at home in Niska's paintings. This is why they are so infatuated with them, often acquiring them.

Who is Niska?

In my humble opinion, to mention a great artist's daily life, the side-lights on his art, is to hurt, even betray the mission this artist has set for himself; the legend that begins to build itself around him is thus stifled, and a man of genius lowered to the level of an average man.

It is the quality of this artist's mission, its enormity; it is the temperament of this man who is believed to be a genius that ought to be our prime concerns, as they are all he has to enhance his talent, his art and perhaps even his genius. Talent or genius is not enough: a great strength of character is required also. An intense desire to create is essential to success, in order to face whatever may happen.

Then, to command respect for a new technique, to impose one's manner, aggressivity is also essential.

All great men, all those who enlightened the times they lived in, who left us a priceless cultural heritage, had the above characteristics as a common denominator. Considered from this angle, details related to a painter born in Quebec, living in Mont-Tremblant, Quebec, ought to be most interesting. I have known Niska since 1969. I thought of writing this article about Niska as far back as 1973, but in order to know him better, I waited another two years. What follows is therefore not something quoted from a previous article, it is based on my own relationship with Niska, both as a man and as an artist. For, in order to know how he related to his children and his wife, to sport, poetry, music, to his art, I became a frequent caller at his house, I invaded his life and became acquainted with the husband, the father, the artist.

Niska - a force of nature

François Lortie - for this is the name of the man I am talking about - was born in Montreal; he obtained a M.A. in Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Ottawa, while at the same time improving his skills as a concert pianist as well as his marked abilities for drawing and painting.

Sociable, hospitable, jovial, François Lortie constantly suppresses an effervescent temperament. Passionately active, he must continuously keep in check his fire, impetuosity, aggressivity, pride, arrogance which are the main characteristics of his personality.

His overflowing vitality is equaled only by his never satisfied desire to do better, to go higher.

A fierce worker, he is less demanding and fastidious with others than he is with himself.

To date, he has met with both poverty and success; lack of understanding and worship; good and unfavourable critics; he has been through the crucible of time.

Niska's only aim has always been to be recognized as one of the world's best painter, if not the best.

He knows of only two means to achieve this goal: to paint intensely, with all his might. To struggle against all in order to attract attention to his art, his work, his talent.

Seeking success with tenacity, Niska has the talent, personality, temperament it takes to reach the goal he has set for himself.

As an artist, he has succeeded from a financial point, but this is only one aspect of his career. There is something more important to Niska; to obtain full recognition for this talent on the international scale.

François Lortie has proved that it is possible for a talented artist bent on success to earn a living with his art. On the other hand, Niska never solicited nor received a scholarship of any kind: this would have been contrary to his idea of what an artist should be.

Throughout the world, Niska has been more honoured for his art than many of his contemporaries. But for him this is only a beginning, not an end. For Niska, the struggle has just begun. Undoubtedly, he fits the bill. He belongs to the race of great men with a strong personality who, by means of their talent and courage, have imposed their art, and whose genius has illuminated the human race.

Niska - his work, his future

Men go, some of their works remain. Like others, artists go too; only the works of geniuses will still glow through the dust of centuries.

No doubt Niska will be one of the great painters of his time. When we all shall have fallen into oblivion, Niska's name will be even more famous than it is today. Many factors - some of which we are unable to grasp - can decide of the full recognition of his genius, either today or tomorrow. What matters for us who are living in the same century, is the enjoyment and benefit we derive from his art, of which he is so generous.

His paintings: the revelation of Quebec's beauty which haunts, fascinates and enraptures Niska. Obsessed by the urge to describe it, to transpose on canvass such beauty and immensity, Niska untiringly pursues his task as if it were a challenge, with love, zeal, desperation.

In those works of art, Nature's lovers will always find a patch of wild life which is familiar to them:

- the timid will find the aggressivity he cannot express,
- the mystic will perhaps detect the influence of cosmic and solar radiations;
- as for the Quebecer, Jean-Baptiste, he will always see the reflection of his country's aspirations as well as his pride of being part of a Quebec's so extraordinary that it can inspire an artist of genius to create paintings that are alive, realistic, paintings that are as moving as they are magnificent.

André Pelletier
Writer
Ecological Reporter
(Translation)

NISKA In the Front Ranks of the World-Wide Cultural Elite
GOLD MEDALIST

From the International Art Academy of Paris (LUTECE)

Niska is the pseudonym of a French-Canadian painter whose real name is François Lortie.

Internationally renowned, he participates in enumerable exhibitions and wins prestigious prizes that place him in the front ranks of the world-wide cultural elite.

He is in all the major international competitions: prize-winner in Monaco, Rome, Paris, the U.S.A., in many other events (particularly, the gold medal from the Lutèce International Academy).

The first page in color of this "livre d'or" is a reproduction of one of his works entitled:

"Tant que brillera le jour"
(As long as day is light)

This title is from a poem by Irène Lefebvre:

"Au temps où la femme!"
(A time for woman)

This poem inspired the master, Niska, to create this marvelous painting.

This noble man, modern painter, delicate and sensitive poet, Niska, represents to perfection the artistic youth (he was born in 1940) who marches upward toward the ideal of light, justice and international friendship.

Irène de Saint-Christol
Director of the A.I.L.

Irène de Saint-Christol is Director of Cultural and Artistic Events at the International Academy of Paris. This text appears on page 6 of the "Livres d'or" (Golden Book), of the Lutèce International Academy published in 1973 when Niska had been selected to illustrate in color the cover page of this prestigious international publication.

Critica d'arte-oggi

Rivista d'Arte Contemporanea Internazionale
Revue Internationale d'Art Contemporain
Review of Contemporary International Art

Artemercato Internazionale

Bollettino Ufficiale delle Quotazioni d'Arte
Mensile bilingue italiano-francese
Bulletin Officiel des Cotations d'Art
Mensuel bilingue italien-français
Official Bulletin of Art Prices
Monthly edition in italian and french

Europa Unita/Europe Unie

Mensile bilingue italiano-francese di Politica, Economia,
Attualità e Arte
Mensuel bilingue italien-français de Politique, Écono-
mie, Actualité et Art
Monthly edition in italian and french of Politic, Econo-
my, Actuality and Art

Il Centauro Pittori e Scultori Contemporanei

Annuario di Critica d'Arte e Quotazioni

Il Centauro Peintres et Sculpteurs Contemporains

Annuaire de Critique d'Art et de Cotations

Il Centauro Contemporary Painters and Sculptors

Annual of Criticisms and Quotations

Pittura e Scultura d'Oggi

Antologia della Pittura e della Scultura Contemporanea
Collana - Documenti di Storia dell'Arte -

Peinture et Sculpture d'Aujourd'hui

Anthologie de la Peinture et de la Sculpture Contem-
poraine
Collection - Documents de l'Histoire de l'Art -

Painting and Sculpture Today

Anthology of Contemporary Painting and Sculpture
In the series - Documents on the History of Art -

Opere e Progetti di

Architetti e Designers Contemporanei
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Oeuvres et Projets

d'Architectes et de Designers Contemporains
Collection - Documents de l'Histoire de l'Art -

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in your correspondence)

Oggetto: PITTURA E
Sujet:
Subject: SCULTURA D'OGGI

Dear Sir,

We take great pleasure in informing you that the first of four sections of the Examining Board (this section is composed of Nicolo Panepinto, Director of PANEPINTO Publications, Pier d'Isa Spadieri, Director of Italo-Suisse de Culture de Rome, Calogero Panepinto, Artistic Director of CENTAURO, and the Art Critics Antonino De Bono, Flora Toscano, Francesco Benedetto Rossi and Marzia Valente) at their meeting at the Panepinto Publishing House have decided, from documents already in the CENTAURO files to have you appear in the "PITTURA E SCULTURA D'OGGI" (Anthology of Modern Painting and Sculpture, a collection of documents on the history of Art) and to reserve an entire page for you on which a biographical and critical sketch illustrated with a reproduction of one of your works in black and white will be published.

Therefore, we invite you to participate in the ITALIAN-SWISS Exhibition-Meeting of Modern Painting and Sculpture which will take place in Rome in four sections (one devoted to sculpture and the other three to painting). Participation in the exhibit is optional and independant of publication in the Anthology. No participation fees are required of you in this exhibition. You will receive a copy of the exhibition program.

I look forward to meeting you.

Respectfully yours,

The Director General
Nicolo Panepinto

NISKA
C.P. 112, Mont-Tremblant
Province de Québec (CANADA)

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"The public is enthusiastic about your lovely exhibition and until now, the critics have been too. I enclose Zavalishim's review (in Russian and you should have it translated) in a New York Russian newspaper; it must be very favorable judging from the reaction of the readers who flock to see your works for themselves. People who go from gallery to gallery to see all the exhibitions in New York tell me that yours is the most spectacular and original." "I have therefore decided to extend your exhibit until 20 March." (three whole weeks longer than the two that had been planned from 16 to 27 February 1971).

Mrs. Ligoa Duncan,
(personal letter to Niska)
Ligoa Duncan Gallery
New York, February 24, 1971

"The Niska exhibit, a real explosion in the experimental process."... "Over all, I judge there is a good understanding of composition, of spatial organization, rhythm and colour."... "The works are always tied to demonstrate truth, here we are at that demonstration, a great deductive coherence. A fecund hand in lyrical projection, a spontaneous play, a liberation."

Luc-Bernard Duquette
Director of Dept. des Arts
C.S.R. du Bas-St-Laurent
Rimouski
L'Écho du Bas-St-Laurent, Feb. 1966

"Niska, 100% pure Québécois... we should be proud of him. His international reputation reminds us that not all real talent is in the big cities."... "We talk about Niska often because it is impossible to pass over his endless incomparable creations in silence; he produces continually and is always getting better." "Soon Niska's works will have been all over the world."

Denise Gervais
L'Écho du Nord
St-Jérôme, Feb. 1971, p. 24

"This already acclaimed artist."... "An unparalleled technique."

Georges Joran, Director
Les Cahiers d'Action d'Art
Bordeaux, France, 3rd trimester, 1970

"Niska is a French-Canadian whose talent is proven more and more every year. A true creator, he unrestingly explores his art and compares it with both internal and external reality to translate it, showing great nobility of means."

Jean de Vezere
France-Amérique
New York, October 22, 1970, p. 11

Niska's works are "almost exclusively abstract and all remarkable for their dramatic, brilliant color and unusual textures."

Jenny Bergin
The Ottawa Citizen
Ottawa, August 1, 1968, P. 17

"Congratulations to Niska who has attained international stature."

Éloi Lefebvre
La Vallée de la Diable
St-Jovite, April 16, 1970, p. 6

"We cannot help but pay Niska eloquent homage. He is a Quebecer from our part of the world who has talent, vigor, imagination. Not only did Niska know how to create a technique in painting, he also uses it very effectively to stir up in us certain states of mind, deep feeling, emotional shocks and true esthetic satisfaction." "We believe that Niska is on the path to a splendid international career and we are convinced that he will not disappoint us."

Odette Moyen and Diane Neault
Le Soleil
Valleyfield, April 15, 1970, p. 25

NISKA



SYMPHONY IN COLOURS

GOLD MEDALIST
from Minister of Cultural Affairs, Italy

If we could, we would like to give the above title to an Anthology, for it well expresses the main characteristic of this powerful painter, it emphasizes the astonishing visions and colours of his paintings. His technique and style are really his own and he intends to introduce them to critics as well as to the public at large. Without any hesitation, we can certify that he has indeed succeeded: the most demanding public ever to come to our museum has expressed a deep admiration for his works. Some crowds have a magnetic power: our rooms were full of people anxious to look at the works of Niska, the Canadian. But our visitors left with some disappointment for the paintings were not for sale. How frustrating!

"For me, a painting must be a thing of loveliness, of happiness, of joy. Yes, of joy! There are enough boring things in life: one must create something else", exclaims Niska. How right you are, dear friend; your works indeed are full of joy and happiness, and nothing

more appropriate, it would seem, has ever been said about them. Bravo! What Niska has brought to Italy are not paintings but astonishing works of art that are a proof of what a MAN can give to relieve our mental anguishes. Niska's main preoccupation is to put on the stage works of art different from any works of art ever gathered in the world's art galleries. Each of them expresses, with different shades of colours, a new aspect of his genius, but each is always of an exquisite beauty.

Niska's dynamics cannot possibly be confused with those of an ordinary painter: even if he did not sign them, we would easily recognize his paintings for his style is unique, his technique truly his own.

For Niska, colour must shine, dance and most of all leap forward. The purpose, the obsession of his painting - as well as his whole life - is to undertake, to rise: Excelsior! If such is his torment, we may assure him that he has already reached the olympus of the

art of painting because what we see in his works transcends the possibilities of any artist who could not master COLOURS with GENIUS!

In spite of countless obstacles and difficulties on his path, this vastly cultured painter offers us an art, the itinerary of which follows that of a dream he had as a child.

Niska's childish dream has become real, for everything in him is dream and reality, a reality conquered at the price of heavy sacrifices: but ART is not ungrateful when it comes to MASTERS.

Guglielmo Ara
Curator, Museum Jules Rodin
Naples, Italy

Following this art show a Gold Medal mounted on a silver plate was presented to Niska by the Honorable Adolfo Sarti, Minister of Cultural Affairs, Italy.