



Riopelle

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ACQUAVELLA



Riopelle in his Vanves studio in 1956

Foreword

Jean Paul Riopelle is now established as one of the most unique and spontaneous artists that followed the generation of “action” painters such as Jackson Pollock and Franz Kline. In 1954 he was chosen by the eminent New York dealer Pierre Matisse (son of Henri Matisse) to have his first solo exhibition in the United States. The Pierre Matisse Gallery flourished on East 57th Street from 1931 until 1989, at first exhibiting prominent European artists such as Balthus, Marc Chagall, Jean Dubuffet, Alberto Giacometti, Yves Tanguy and Joan Miró and later including innovative post-war artists such as Riopelle, who was born in Canada. In 1990 Acquavella Galleries purchased the inventory of the Pierre Matisse Gallery together with Sotheby’s. This exhibition is inspired by Riopelle’s groundbreaking “Grands Formats” exhibition at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in 1977 with the addition of four related large-scale works on paper not shown at that time.

My warmest thanks go to the artist’s daughter Yseult Riopelle, not only for her excellent essay but also for her unflagging help with all aspects of the exhibition. Jean-Louis Prat, independent curator for numerous European museums, president of the Chagall and Jean Paul Riopelle Committees and former director of the Fondation Maeght, also deserves our special thanks for his insightful essay.

Director Esperanza Sobrino worked passionately on this show as did staff members Karen Andes, Jean Edmonson, Emily Salas and Garth Szwed.

—WILLIAM R. ACQUAVELLA

EMPREINTES JEUX DE PISTE ET JEUX DE MOTS

BY YSEULT RIOPELLE

*L'empreinte d'un homme sur un autre
est éternelle, aucun destin n'a traversé le nôtre impunément.*

—FRANÇOIS MAURIAC

La terre se nourrit d'empreintes, le ciel se nourrit d'ailes.

—MIGUEL ANGEL ASTURIAS

L'Art, c'est l'homme ajouté à la nature.

—FRANCIS BACON

Mais comment tenter de narrer une infime parcelle de l'homme et de son Œuvre? Comment hasarder d'évoquer de manière concise, en quelques chuchotements, les énigmes et les méandres de toute une vie de création... La démarche est illusoire, voire chimérique... cependant ludique.

Riopelle prénommait nûment ses oeuvres « images ». Mais



Riopelle in his rue Durantin
studio, 1952

pour le moins faudrait-il rajouter au « double sens » des images tête-bêche des devinettes de l'imagerie d'Épinal destinées aux enfants sages. L'énigme toutefois perdure.

Certaines phrases et titres évocateurs ont, au fil du temps, apporté quelques indices au moulin de ce jeu de piste instauré à dessein par l'artiste...

Tout un monde dans une feuille d'arbre... aphorisme emblématique cher à Riopelle...

Riopelle, Signes mêlés¹.. Riopelle, Chasseur d'images².. Riopelle, Tigre de papier³.. Riopelle, Mutations⁴.. Riopelle, Nordicité et Inspirations⁵..

Je suggérerais Riopelle, Empreintes... En premier lieu, Empreinte de la Nature. Empreinte de l'artiste, de son Œuvre, Empreinte du passé, du vécu, Empreinte au propre et au figuré, au cœur de l'Œuvre, telle l'interprétation des *Rois de Thulé*⁶ de Riopelle, spectres tout à la fois mythiques, fantomatiques et fragiles, réincarnés par l'artiste, toujours différents, d'un modèle reproduit presque à l'infini. Images en positif et négatif. Tel *Lac du Nord-est*, miroir de *Mascouche*.⁷

Tous ces signes mêlés et cachés dans l'Œuvre pour le plaisir sans cesse renouvelé du chasseur d'images, tel Etienne-Jules Marey armé de son fusil photographique, Riopelle gréé de son iconoscope, se retrouve sans relâche à l'affût de nouvelles proies et rencontres dont il s'appropriera l'empreinte.

Pour tenter de déchiffrer l'origine de certaines inspirations et « du savoir-faire » employés, nous pourrions aventurer de multiples allusions aux cadavres exquis, au jeu du dessin communiqué ainsi qu'aux décalcomanies des surréalistes, aux Gyotaku japonais ou aux impressions sur papier de riz par tamponnage et frottis réalisées, à partir, pour ne nommer que celles-là, des stèles de Xi'an.

Comme le navigateur au long cours, notre narrateur du haut de son nid-de-pie scrute l'œuvre en devenir et ne peut se défendre, à l'instar de l'oiseau, de voler quelques parcelles flamboyantes. Rarement, tout passionné de défis ravivés, faisant corps avec son Œuvre, sera-t-il contraint de se mettre à la cape.

Comme pour la construction d'un nid « de plein vent », chaque saison renouvelée, instinctivement, irrésistiblement, Riopelle épie, s'approprie, assimile, décompose, assemble, tisse, modèle, en milliers d'allées et venues avec une intelligence créatrice.

Broussailles énigmatiques de ses sensations et... *Que les oiseaux s'envolent monsieur Marquet*.⁸

L'Aire ou *Le Nid*, statufié dans le bronze et lové au cœur des jets charpentés à dessein, est le point d'orgue après lequel l'artiste outrepassera la main. Lorsque Riopelle se remet à la sculpture dans son atelier de Bridgehampton, les premières sculptures ouvrees dans une terre-roc, pièces en devenir d'un jeu d'échec d'où émergeront certaines répliques presque à l'identique, portent l'empreinte de la main à l'exclusion de tout outil. Exclusif contact intime et charnel du modelage. Cette communion tactile avec la matière, je l'ai entrevue lorsque j'ai servi de guide improvisé à la demande d'une amie sculpteure qui se hasardait dans la réalité de l'aveugle afin de détourner le cordon rouge dans le but ultime de pouvoir palper les sculptures exposées au Metropolitan Museum. Par la suite, côtoyant Miró dans les ateliers dirigés par le fondeur Turridu Clémenti, Riopelle intégrera des éléments extérieurs telles les chapes, éléments de moulage, « empruntées » à d'autres sculpteurs. Plus tard, dans les années 70, encouragé certainement par le burinage réinventé pour ses eaux-fortes, utilisera-t-il tout outil ou forme à portée de main pour en imprimer la Terre.

Tel le Gargantua de Rabelais, l'artiste crée avec gigantisme et dévore tout au long du *Festin*. « Puis marmottant, tout alourdi, une bribe de prière, il se lavait les mains de vin frais, se curait les dents avec un pied de porc et devisait joyeusement avec ses gens. Ensuite, le tapis vert étendu, on étalait force cartes, force dés, force tablettes et alors il jouait... » au *Picandeau*. « Après avoir bien joué, passé, tamisé et blué le temps, on était d'accord pour boire quelque peu, c'est-à-dire onze setiers par tête, et, aussitôt après avoir banqueté, s'étendre sur un beau banc ou en plein milieu d'un bon lit pour y dormir deux ou trois heures, sans penser à mal ni dire du mal. »



Le Nid, 1962
Bronze
153 cm (60¼ inches) high

Riopelle dira à brûle-pourpoint que « la forêt se trouve aussi bien tout entière dans un seule feuille, qu'il ne faut surtout pas dessiner servilement parce que ce serait, du même coup, une autre façon d'éclipser la forêt, de *perdre le contact* ». Contact pris au sens figuré et au propre, car l'artiste aimait guetter la nature, allongé à même la terre afin probablement de s'y mieux fondre en y prenant racine, et ne faire qu'un avec son modèle.

Renaissance de la forêt caduque. Résurrection des verts persistants. Ballet des saisons, des lieux, de leur lumière propre, printemps contretypé pastel de l'automne. Jeux de lumières pointés et amplifiés par l'artiste à travers sa recherche des déclinaisons et oppositions infinies en désaccords presque parfaits de la couleur, de leurs frontières, de la vibration de la gestuelle et des tons contrastés, a contrario du mat le plus feutré au brillant éminemment tapageur, trop souvent anéantis par des restaurations borgnes.

Pierre Matisse écrira à Georges Duthuit le 8 novembre 1953 au sujet des aquarelles qu'il vient de recevoir « [elles] rutilent à gorge déployée ».

Le 20 décembre de la même année, Georges demandera à Pierre de rajouter quelques lignes à son texte destiné à accompagner une prochaine exposition « "elles pointent" vers un certain contact—et un contact certain de Jean Paul avec la nature, ce qui m'a l'air un très bon signe pour son développement. C'est un des rares peintres de cette tendance (que j'appellerais absolument *concrète*, au contraire de ce qu'on commence à écrire de lui, qu'on veut ranger dans l'abstraction ce qui est ridicule) avec qui l'on peut parler des autres peintres, ceux du passé, qu'il sent non seulement en homme de métier, mais en poète. »

La Sombreuse, entre chien et loup, imprégnée de tristesse mélancolique, fait écho à *Forestine* toute de clair-obscur, pour se fondre à travers *Les Murmures de la forêt*⁹ avant de s'embraser dans la *Forêt ardente*¹⁰ et sourdre vers la canopée allégorique des feuilles-récits, feuilles-masques, feuilles-ballades, feuilles-villanelles de la série lithographiée des pointes d'argent du *Lied à Émile Nelligan*.¹¹

Pour ce qui est des compositions en diptyque, triptyque,

polyptyque tels les triptyques byzantins dans lesquels Le Christ est représenté comme Pantocrator, Maître de l'univers, du monastère de Chelandati que Riopelle a très certainement admiré lors de son incursion au Mont-Athos, structures affectionnées par l'artiste, outre la lecture panoramique, je pencherais vers une forme de ménologes dans le sens narration d'un vécu, de son vécu comme pour *le Bestiaire*¹² de 1989, canevas inspiré à l'origine de la structure du jeu de carte, ou *Le Haut et bas Canada – Hommage à Scottie Wilson*¹³ colporteur-dessinateur, réalisé en 1990. La trilogie mise en scène par *L'Arbre, Toto et la Dame de Carreau* fait ressortir le côté sombre de la Dame en opposition avec Toto blagueur et simple ou valet de deniers, tout à la fois sérieux et volage, tous deux dans l'ombre de l'Arbre de vie. Malaise avivé par la *main*. Bizarre hasard de la distribution des cartes magnifiée ici par le démembrement de la triade, au gré des expositions. Comme si l'artiste aurait aimé changer la *donne* et réinventer le *Point de rencontre*¹⁴... *Si vous prenez le chemin de droite... vous trouverez un grand village*.¹⁵

Au delà de la découverte des peintures monumentales aux couleurs dansantes et chantantes, je ne peux m'empêcher d'évoquer devant *Quinze Chevaux Citroën* les sensations olfactives de leurs pigments, de l'huile et de la térébenthine, dégagées dans l'atelier-théâtre où nous étions les invitées toutes privilégiées, ma mère, ma sœur et moi; et par association, les odeurs persistantes et âcres du garage de la rue Didot où nous sommes tant attardées enfants; les effluves entêtantes d'huile de ricin et d'essence arc-en-ciel mêlée à l'eau du caniveau; du bougnat du coin, du rouge qui tache, du pastis, du cuir imprégné de tabac, des relents âpres et surets des sacs de jute surchargés de charbon et du bouquet résiné des fagots de bois et de la sciure répandue sur le sol. Que de souvenirs... du Paris humide et glacial des années 50 où persistaient les odeurs de salpêtre des soupirs de ses caves et de buis détrempe de ses squares vert chagrin, terrains et *Point de rencontre* de prédilection des duels de matous vagabonds en quête de chattemites. Au détour du tournant de ma mémoire-feuilletoscope, je revois, assise sur le strapontin de *la Quinze Chevaux Citroën*, les routes vallonnées

et enneigées du cœur de l'Auvergne, paysage nomade ponctué des fresques publicitaires des trois frères Ripolin et de Du beau, Du bon, Dubonnet et ne peux toujours pas, malgré les patientes tentatives réitérées d'explications mécaniques de mon père, distinguer les pistons des *chevaux*.

L'image dit le temps, c'est inéluctable. Elle le déclare sous la forme la plus banale de la succession des moments, sous la forme subtile de combinaison et/ou de gauchissement des instants dans une même configuration; elle le signifie encore sur un mode crypté par des jeux de symboles et de correspondances.

« La Leçon de Byzance », Michel Costantini
Sémiotiques, n° 5, décembre 1993

Telle la poésie, le regard et l'interprétation de l'Œuvre, de ces œuvres, reste votre privilège tout intime. Cette Œuvre vous appartient. A vous maintenant de l'aventurer à votre « image ».

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| 1. <i>Riopelle, Signes mêlé</i> , Pierre Schneider, Éd. Maeght, Paris, 1972 | 8. <i>Que les oiseaux s'envolent monsieur Marquet</i> , 1972, triptyque, techniques mixtes sur papier |
| 2. <i>Riopelle, Chasseur d'images</i> , Guy Robert, Éd. France-Amérique, Montréal, 1981 | 9. <i>Les Murmures de la forêt</i> , 1954, huile sur toile |
| 3. <i>Riopelle, Tigre de papier</i> , œuvres sur papier 1953-1989, Galerie Simon Blais, Montréal, 1997 | 10. <i>Forêt ardente</i> , 1955, huile sur toile |
| 4. <i>Mutations de Riopelle</i> , Centre d'exposition du Vieux-Palais, Saint-Jérôme, Québec, exposition itinérante, 2003-2004 | 11. <i>Lied à Émile Nelligan</i> , 1979, lithographies |
| 5. <i>Riopelle, Nordicité et Inspirations</i> , projet d'exposition mis en forme par Yseult Riopelle et Tanguy Riopelle. | 12. <i>Bestiaire</i> , 1989, polyptyque, techniques mixtes sur papier |
| 6. <i>Rois de Thulé</i> , 1973, techniques mixtes sur papier | 13. <i>Le Haut et bas Canada—Hommage à Scottie Wilson</i> , 1990, polyptyque, techniques mixtes sur papier |
| 7. <i>Mascouche</i> , 1975, huile sur toile | 14. <i>Quintette—Point de rencontre</i> , 1963, polyptyque, huile sur toile |
| | 15. <i>Si vous prenez le chemin de droite... vous trouverez un grand village</i> , 1962, triptyque, huile sur toile |



Riopelle in his rue Durantin studio, 1952

ON NE FAIT QU'UN PAS DANS LA VIE...

BY JEAN-LOUIS PRAT

Jean Paul Riopelle n'a jamais aimé la raison, ce qui s'y attache, la côtoie ou la fonde. Toute sa vie en témoigne. Ainsi serait-il étonné de voir établi, grâce à sa fille Yseult, le catalogue complet de son œuvre, catalogue dit raisonné, ce qu'il jugeait, dans ce cas précis, une entreprise « déraisonnée ».

Ainsi se remettent en place une vie et une œuvre qui ont pris naissance à Montréal dans les années 20 (« Je sais quand j'ai été baptisé, le 7 octobre 1923, mais pas quand je suis né » déclarait Riopelle!) dans ce pays-continent, le Canada—pour lui il faut parler du Québec—dont la nature somptueuse est faite d'équilibres mais aussi de déséquilibres. Hospitalière et inhospitalière à la fois, cette terre énergique et impérieuse a forgé son caractère entier, impétueux, sans concession.

Cette nature omniprésente, terriblement dure et généreuse, contrebalançait de manière salutaire, les conventions et les

règles bien établies d'une société étouffante, entièrement soumise à des idées étriquées et conventionnelles sous la férule d'une église rétrograde. La réponse de Jean Paul Riopelle sera rapidement trouvée et menée dans une œuvre de rupture qui se trouve au point de jonction du renouvellement des idées qui se sont imposé dans l'acte de peindre des années 50. Jean Paul Riopelle occupe à ce titre une place prépondérante, entre deux cultures et deux continents, dans un débat animé et souvent sectaire qui a peuplé cette période de l'après-guerre, entre représentation et non-représentation, figuration et abstraction!

Riopelle n'a jamais renié ses origines et ses idées. Sa peinture est synonyme de liberté. Dès son installation à Paris, en 1946, il met en place un langage généreux qui trouve un large écho auprès de nombreux artistes et écrivains. Son art se développe sans oublier sa terre natale dans un esprit de curiosité et d'échanges qui marque profondément cette époque. Riopelle trouve dans cette manière de vivre et de s'exprimer une façon de dire les choses qui n'ont aucun rapport avec la ressemblance, mais qui établit un rapport juste et dru en accord à sa vérité intérieure. En renonçant à toute image perfectible, il traduit l'immédiateté des sentiments qui s'expriment avec une force et une cohérence rarement atteintes. Le geste ne nécessite plus désormais le classique maniement du pinceau et la préparation d'une toile ne demande pas la même attention que par le passé. Il faut agir vite, dans la nécessité de l'action et dans la libération d'une main qui utilise désormais le couteau en généreux aplats. Ce n'est pas une fuite en avant, ni une fatalité, mais une nécessité absolue. André Breton est séduit. Il est parmi les amis de ce temps-là. Il veut convaincre et assujettir Jean Paul Riopelle aux idées du groupe surréaliste et il déclare : « Pour moi, c'est l'art d'un trappeur supérieur ». Riopelle ne voudra jamais adhérer à un groupe, quel qu'il soit, et solitaire, il entreprend une œuvre unique à bien des égards.

Dans l'effervescence de la découverte d'un Paris d'après-guerre qui frémit sous la séduction d'une liberté retrouvée et de rencontres inopinées, Riopelle se lie d'amitié avec Alberto Giacometti,

Samuel Beckett, Pierre Loeb, Sam Francis, Joan Mitchell (qui deviendra plus tard sa femme), Pierre Schneider, Sam Szafran ou les clowns du Cirque d'hiver qu'il va voir avec ses filles Sylvie et Yseult..., mais aussi celle, décisive, de Georges Duthuit qui préfacera, quelques années plus tard, sa première exposition personnelle, en 1954, à la Galerie Pierre Matisse à New York.

Durant toute cette époque, Jean Paul Riopelle ne parle jamais du sujet en tant que tel. Celui-ci n'est jamais convoqué dans une image identifiable et dans son identité. Il est seulement évoqué et transmis avec force par un élan vital hors du commun. Le peintre est en osmose avec la nature et celle-ci est tellement enfouie en lui-même que le sujet peut disparaître. Ainsi, au détriment de la représentation, c'est dans l'instantané et par une action rapide que le peintre mène à bien son œuvre, guidé par un sentiment de conquête et un remarquable instinct.

Des œuvres sur papier, nombreuses, voient le jour. Dans les difficultés de la vie quotidienne d'une capitale qui ne le reconnaît pas encore, son énergie est intacte, sans faille, efficace et provocante. Dès 1955, installé dans l'atelier de Vanves, ses œuvres retrouvent l'esprit de Claude Monet lorsque celui-ci, pour répondre à la commande amicale de Georges Clémenceau, peignait ses grands nymphéas. Riopelle réalise une œuvre en hommage à ce génie de la peinture. Dès lors, très souvent, il s'exprime sur des espaces hors limites. Son œuvre renouvelle totalement la manière de voir et peindre les choses. Il traduit un paysage de manière abstraite où le ciel et la terre, les arbres et les feuillages, l'ombre et la lumière jouent sans fin, non identifiables, dans une débauche de couleurs prises au piège d'une matière jusqu'alors méconnue, soumise à la seule volonté et au geste du peintre. Dans les années 50, de nombreux critiques, conservateurs, marchands ou collectionneurs vont voir et lire l'œuvre de Jean Paul Riopelle comme une peinture abstraite, aidés en cela par une vague nouvelle de grands artistes qui voit le jour après la deuxième guerre mondiale à New York, avec une force exceptionnelle et dans un expressionnisme à nul autre pareil.

Jean Paul Riopelle a toujours aimé la vitesse, les belles

voitures, la ligne décisive d'une Bristol, d'une Jaguar ou d'une Bugatti. Il en possédera de nombreuses, habile conducteur dominant de superbes machines. En France, à cette époque, « la 15 chevaux » Citroën est une voiture révolutionnaire qui a marqué son temps. Il sillonne la France avec sa famille, heureux de cette liberté et le sentiment d'une vitesse dominée par la main du conducteur. Ce sera aussi le titre d'un important tableau de l'année 1952 dans lequel le peintre, transgressant le code d'une lecture trop facile, donne dans un fracas de couleurs un sens neuf à une peinture libérée. La matière à peine sortie du tube est appliquée à l'aide d'un couteau-spatule. L'action est menée tambour battant et des giclées, sorte de filaments de couleurs claires, strient la surface et accentuent le dynamisme de la composition. La tension est perceptible tant la volonté farouche du créateur est sauvegardée par ce contact physique avec l'objet de ses désirs : la peinture.

Pierre Matisse chez qui il expose en 1954 lui fait part des réactions de critiques et collectionneurs qui viennent visiter sa galerie. Jackson Pollock est sous-jacent dans son propos et Jean Paul Riopelle dans une lettre datée du 25 janvier 1954, conservée aujourd'hui à la Morgan Library, lui répond : « Personnellement je n'ai pas connu Pollock. C'est malheureux car je le crois très intelligent et sérieux. J'ai vu pour la première fois une de ses œuvres à Paris en 1951, tableau apporté par un de ses proches amis avec qui j'ai eu par la suite une longue conversation qui m'a confirmé toute la différence de conception existant entre les deux méthodes de prospection qui sont telles que loin de faire cause commune nous nous sommes immédiatement opposés. ». Le succès de Riopelle se confirme à New York où Pierre Matisse sera son marchand fidèle et attentif pour l'Amérique du nord, plus tard à Paris avec Jacques Dubourg et ensuite à la Galerie d'Aimé Maeght, son autre marchand et ami.

Une période fructueuse emplit cette décennie et de grands tableaux reflètent l'énergie de Riopelle qui, dans une évolution accomplie, explore de nouveaux territoires. Il abandonne vite les giclures, sorte de dripping qui se superposait à l'élaboration initiale

et dont il n'a plus de réel besoin pour maintenir l'équilibre de la toile. Dans de vastes compositions, les masses colorées deviennent plus compactes, plus autonomes, toujours dominées par l'autorité et la vitesse du geste. Un réseau organique, telle une mosaïque constitue cette peinture dont les couleurs plus sombres paraissent acquérir une autonomie inusitée. *La Forestine* de 1954 ainsi que *La Sombreuse*, de la même année, donnent un sens et une reconnaissance plus imagée à cette période féconde. Riopelle évolue vers de nouvelles zones de création où le sujet devient, au cours des décennies, encore plus perceptible. Il n'hésite pas à évoquer les souvenirs de son sol, de la pêche, de la chasse, de tout ce qui le constitue et l'anime depuis toujours. Les années passent mais la force est la même pour dire, dans des séquences spectaculaires, ce que doit être la vie d'un homme, attentif à l'autre, mais toujours libre. De grands triptyques sont mis en place. Ils accentuent le rapport à la nature et la hardiesse établie entre matière et couleur, toujours somptueusement retenues. *L'arbre*, *Toto*, *La Dame de Carreau* de 1962, et *Les Picandeaux* de 1967, font mieux comprendre l'attention qu'il porte à la vie, ce qui se retrouve avec entrain dans *Festin* de 1968 et *Le Lac du Nord-Est* de 1975. Ces œuvres font revivre l'idée du grand nord, des saisons, d'un temps arrêté, de celui qui passe ! Sans ambiguïté, Jean Paul Riopelle parle de ce qui l'entoure, de l'île aux grues, de l'île aux oies, du golfe du Saint Laurent. Abstrait, figuratif? Peu importe. Comme il l'explique « abstrait ce mot veut dire : venir de. Moi je voudrais que ça retourne à... » pour ajouter, lucide « on ne fait qu'un pas dans la vie ». Encore faut-il faire un pas décisif, sans concession! C'est son cas, dans la peinture.

WE ONLY MAKE ONE STEP IN LIFE...

BY JEAN-LOUIS PRAT

Jean Paul Riopelle shied away from reason, from anything connected to it, including its very foundation. His whole life bears testimony to this and hence we can imagine with what surprise he would have viewed seeing his life's work compiled in a catalogue—thanks to the efforts of his daughter Yseult—and no less a catalogue raisonné. Indeed, Riopelle would no doubt have qualified such an enterprise as “unreasonable.”

And thus we now have a compilation of his life and work, a life that began in Montreal in the '20s (“I remember when I was baptized on October 7, 1923, but not when I was born,” Riopelle once said) that country/continent of Canada. In terms of Riopelle, we are talking about Quebec with its sumptuous nature, a nature that is at once balanced and unbalanced, hospitable and inhospitable, energetic and domineering, for this is the land that forged Riopelle's predominantly impetuous and

uncompromising character.

Such an omnipresent, hardy and generous nature helped to counterbalance the conventions and deeply entrenched laws of a stifling society, a society in the yoke of a reactionary church, utterly subservient to its conventional and outmoded ideas. Jean Paul Riopelle was quick to find his response and to develop it in an oeuvre of rupture, an oeuvre at that juncture in the '50s of changing ideas about the act of painting. Jean Paul Riopelle thus came to occupy a predominant place, spanning two cultures and two continents, a major force in the lively and often sectarian debate that animated the post-war period, taking up a stance halfway between representation and non-representation, figuration and abstraction!

Riopelle never renounced his origins or his ideas. His painting became synonymous with freedom. Very early on, after settling in Paris in 1946, he cultivated a generous language that resonated with many other artists and writers. Firmly rooted in his origins, in the land where he was born, his painting developed in the spirit of curiosity and exchange that so deeply marked the times. Thus Riopelle's approach to living, to expression, became a way of saying things that had no rapport with resemblance but which enabled him to establish an immediate and direct link to his inner life. By renouncing all perfectible images, he translated the immediacy of his feelings, letting them pour forth with a degree of force and coherence rarely seen before. From this point on, the painter's gesture no longer required the classic handling of the paintbrush and the preparation of his canvases no longer called for the same attention as before. All that mattered was swiftness, being in the necessity of the action, and letting his hand, which now wielded a palette knife, express itself freely in generous swaths of paint. The gesture was no longer so much a fuite en avant or a question of fatality but an absolute necessity. André Breton, whom he counted among his friends at that time, was immediately taken in by his work and made several attempts to convince Jean Paul Riopelle to adhere to the ideas of the Sur-

realist group. Breton once declared, "To me, this is the art of a superior trapper." But Riopelle had no intention of adhering to a group and, always solitary, set about creating his own unique work—unique in so many respects.

He was transported by his discovery of Paris in the after-war period and reveled in the shared, new-found freedom, making numerous and fortuitous encounters: with Alberto Giacometti, Samuel Beckett, Pierre Loeb, Sam Francis, Joan Mitchell (who later became his wife), Sam Szafran and even the clowns at the Cirque d'hiver whom he visited with his daughters Sylvie and Yseult...but also, for this was key, with Georges Duthuit who, several years later, prefaced his first one-man show in 1954 at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York.

Throughout this period, Jean Paul Riopelle never spoke of a subject as such, nor was the notion of subject ever raised in any identifiable image. It was only ever evoked and transmitted as a force and an out-of-the-ordinary vital impetus. The painter was so totally in empathy with nature, so totally infused with nature that the subject was able to disappear. To the detriment of representation, therefore, it was instantaneous and swiftness of action that enabled the painter to successfully create his oeuvre, an oeuvre guided by a feeling of conquest and, above all, by remarkable instinct.

Numerous works on paper ensued. Despite the hardships of daily life in a capital where he had not yet gained recognition, his energy never faltered or wavered from being an efficient and provocative impulse. Riopelle settled into the Vanves studio and from 1955, he painted in the spirit of Claude Monet, when Monet painted his large lilies, personally commissioned by Georges Clémenceau. One of his works pays tribute to the master painter. This is when his expression reached beyond the confines of the canvas, bringing about a total renewal of ways of seeing and painting. He would paint a landscape in an abstract way, translating that—unidentifiable—limitless interplay between earth and sky, trees and their foliage, shadow and light in a riot of color, trapped

by what until then had been an unfamiliar medium, subjecting it, henceforth, to the sole desire and gesture of the painter. In the '50s, many critics, curators, art dealers and collectors came to see and interpret the work of Jean Paul Riopelle as abstract painting, helped along by a new wave of major artists who came to the fore in New York after the Second World War, whose expressionism and vitality were unparalleled.

Jean Paul Riopelle always liked speed and luxury cars, the decisive line of a Bristol, a Jaguar or a Bugatti. He owned a large number himself, becoming a skillful and able driver of those superb machines. In France at that period, the "15 horsepower" Citroën was a revolutionary car that truly marked the times. He would drive across the French countryside with his family, transported by the freedom and sense of speed dominated by the hand of the driver. This also became the title of an important painting from 1952 in which the painter, transgressing any facile reading, gave new meaning to this liberated painting in a great storm of color. Using material squeezed directly from the tube, he began to apply the medium with a spatula knife. Briskly, in an action of spurts or strings of light color, he streaked the surface to accentuate the dynamism of the composition. All the tension is there, so fiercely is the creator's intention harnessed by the physical contact with the object of his desires: the painting.

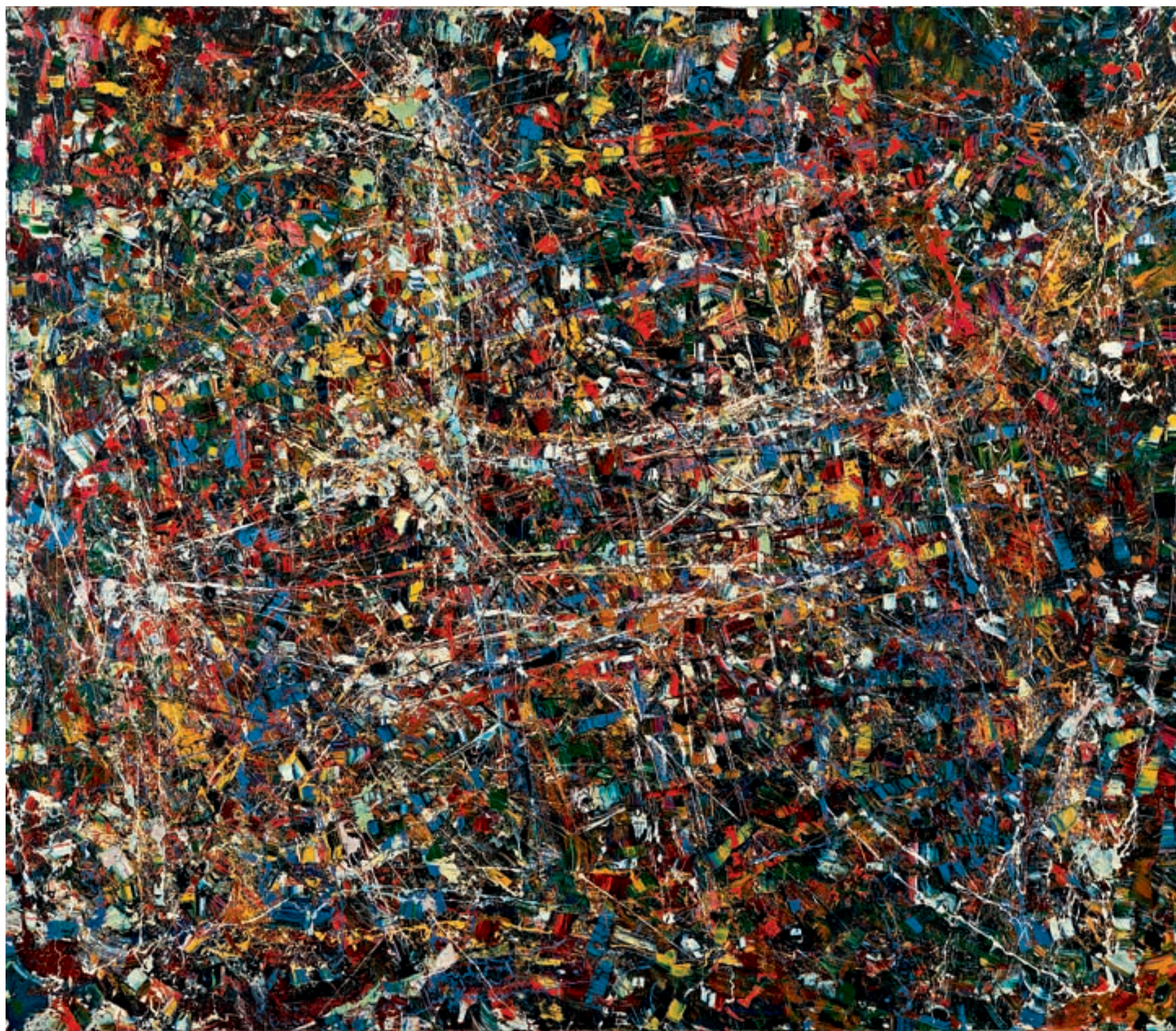
After hosting an exhibit at his gallery in 1954, Pierre Matisse sent him the various reactions of critics and collectors who saw the show. Jackson Pollock was implicitly present among them and in a letter of reply to Pierre Matisse, dated January 25, 1954, in conservation at the Morgan Library, Jean Paul Riopelle writes, "I didn't know Jackson Pollock personally. It's a shame because I believe he is very intelligent and sincere. I saw one of his works for the first time in Paris in 1951, a canvas brought over by a close friend of his with whom I had a lengthy conversation that confirmed what I feel is the ultimate difference in conception between the two methods of exploration. Far from sharing a common cause, we are directly opposed." Riopelle's success in

New York was well established by this time and Pierre Matisse continued to promote his work in North America. A few years later Jacques Dubourg became his dealer in Paris as well as his friend, the art dealer Aimé Maeght of the Galerie Maeght.

The next decade was especially fertile and productive; a number of large-format canvases from this time reflect Riopelle's energetic exploration—a clear evolution—into new territories. He very quickly abandoned the act of spattering paint, a sort of superimposed layer of drippings over the initial working, feeling this was no longer needed for the balance of the painting. In vast compositions, the masses of color became more compact and autonomous, but always dominated by the authority and speed of the gesture. With their organic networks, almost like mosaics, these paintings are darker, their colors seeming to have acquired their own, singular, autonomy. *La Forestine* of 1954 and *La Sombreuse* from the same year give a clear direction and metaphorical sense to this fertile period. During the course of the next few decades, Riopelle was evolving in new areas of creativity whereby the subject became increasingly more perceptible. He had no qualms about evoking memories of his mother country, of fishing and hunting, of all that made up and gave life to his being. The years passed but always with the same force to claim, in a number of spectacular sequences, what the life of a man should be: attentive to others but forever free. He produced some large triptychs which accentuate their rapport with nature, showing a bold interactivity between material and color, always executed with sumptuous restraint. *L'Arbre, Toto, La Dame de Carreau* of 1962, and *Les Picandeaux* of 1967 give us a better understanding of his attentive approach to life, most energetically captured in *Festin* of 1968 and *Le Lac du Nord-Est* of 1975. These works bring alive a sense of the great north, of the seasons, of time held still, of time passing! There is no ambiguity whatsoever in Jean Paul Riopelle's language, that his paintings speak of his surroundings, of the Isle aux Grues and Isle aux Oies, the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Are they abstract, figurative? Does it matter? As he once said, "the word

abstract means: a coming from. What I want is a return to...," adding with lucidity, "We only make one step in life." Well, it better be a decisive and uncompromising one! Certainly, in his case, in painting, it was.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY UNITY WOODMAN



1
Quinze Chevaux Citroën, 1952
Oil on canvas
190 x 230 cm (75 x 90½ inches)

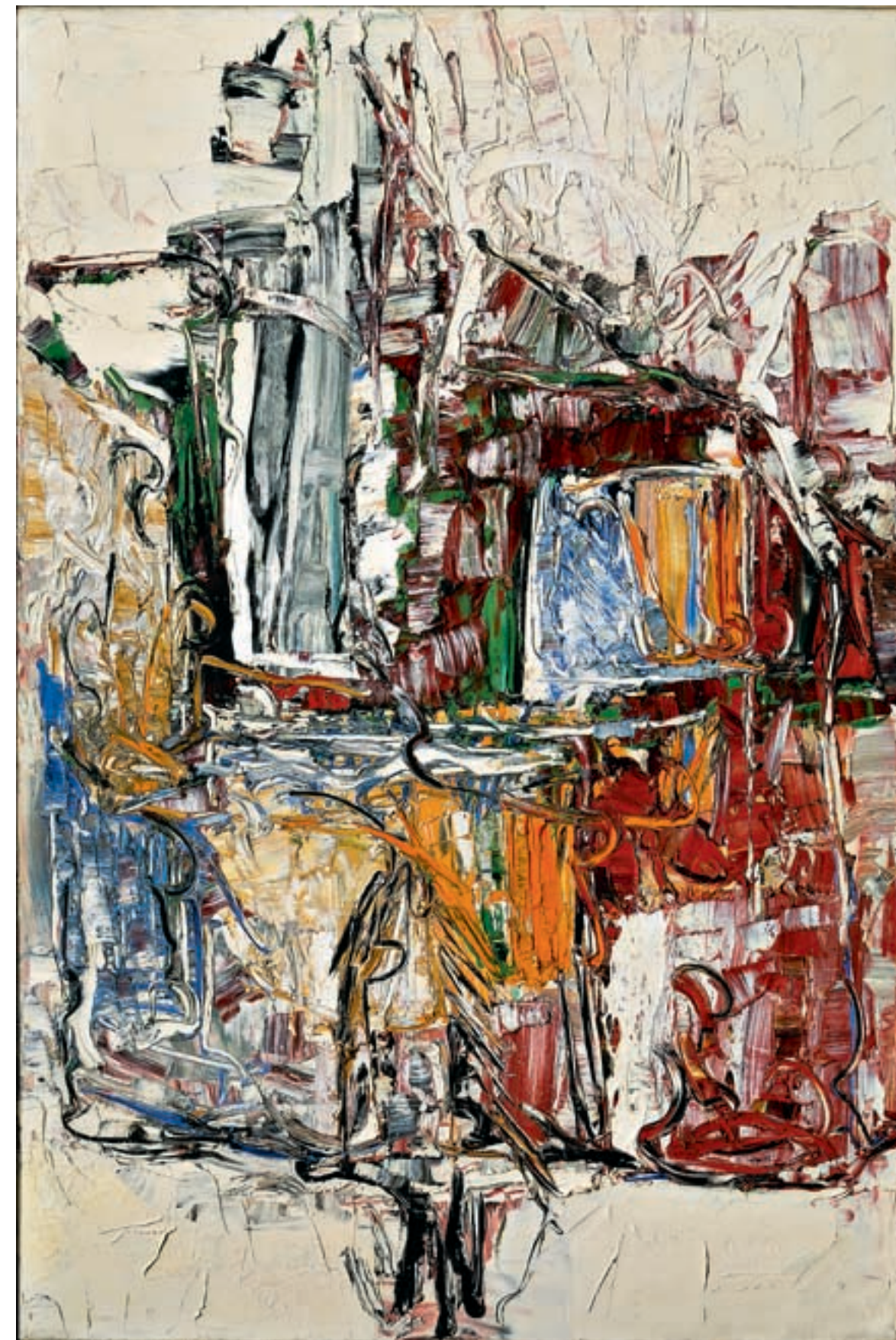
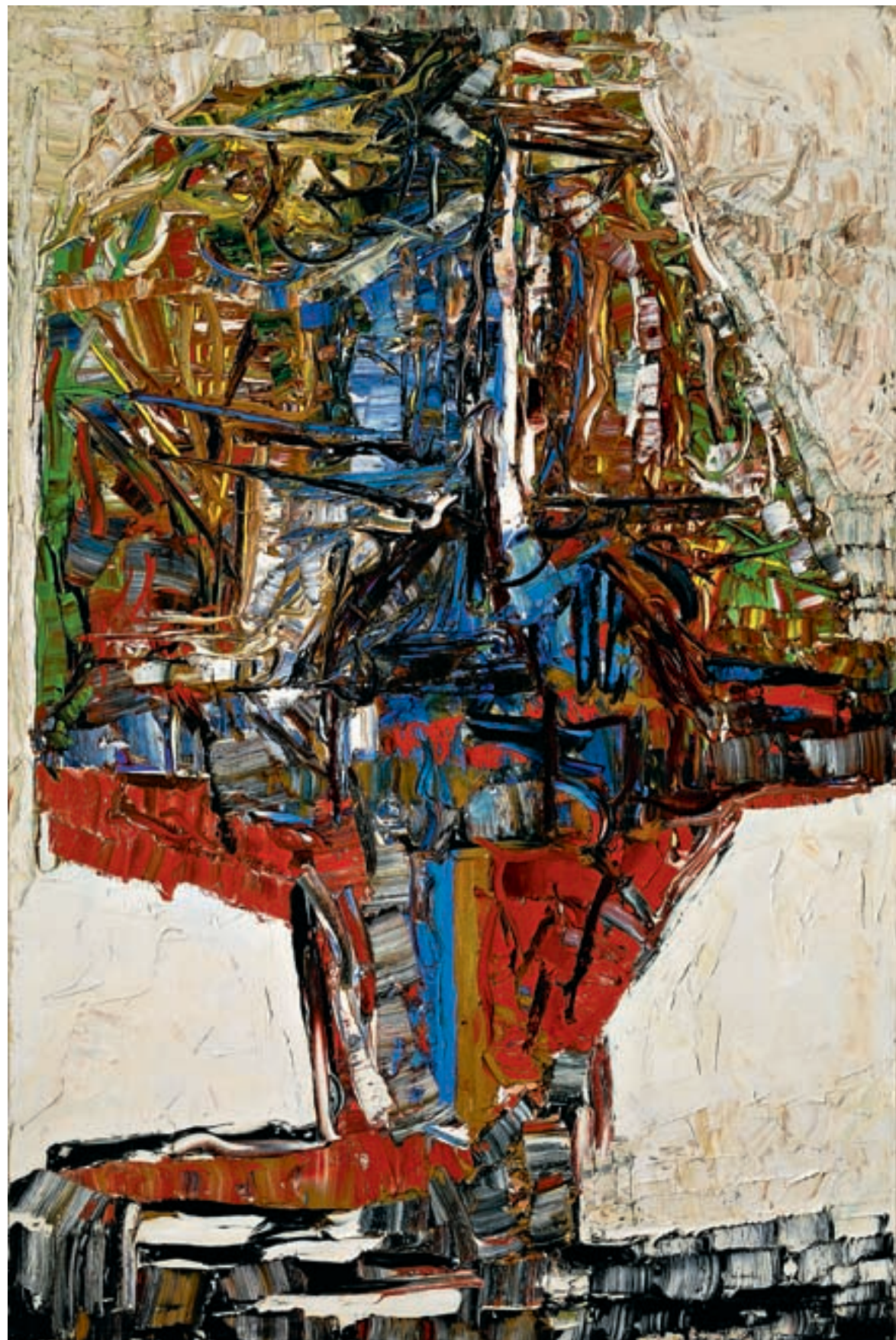


2
Forestine, 1954
Oil on canvas
200 x 300 cm
(78½ x 118 inches)

3

La Sombreuse, 1954
Oil on canvas
280 x 200 cm (110 x 78½ inches)





4
L'Arbre, Toto, La Dame de Carreau, 1962
Oil on canvas in three panels
200 x 400 cm (78½ x 157½ inches)

LEFT TO RIGHT

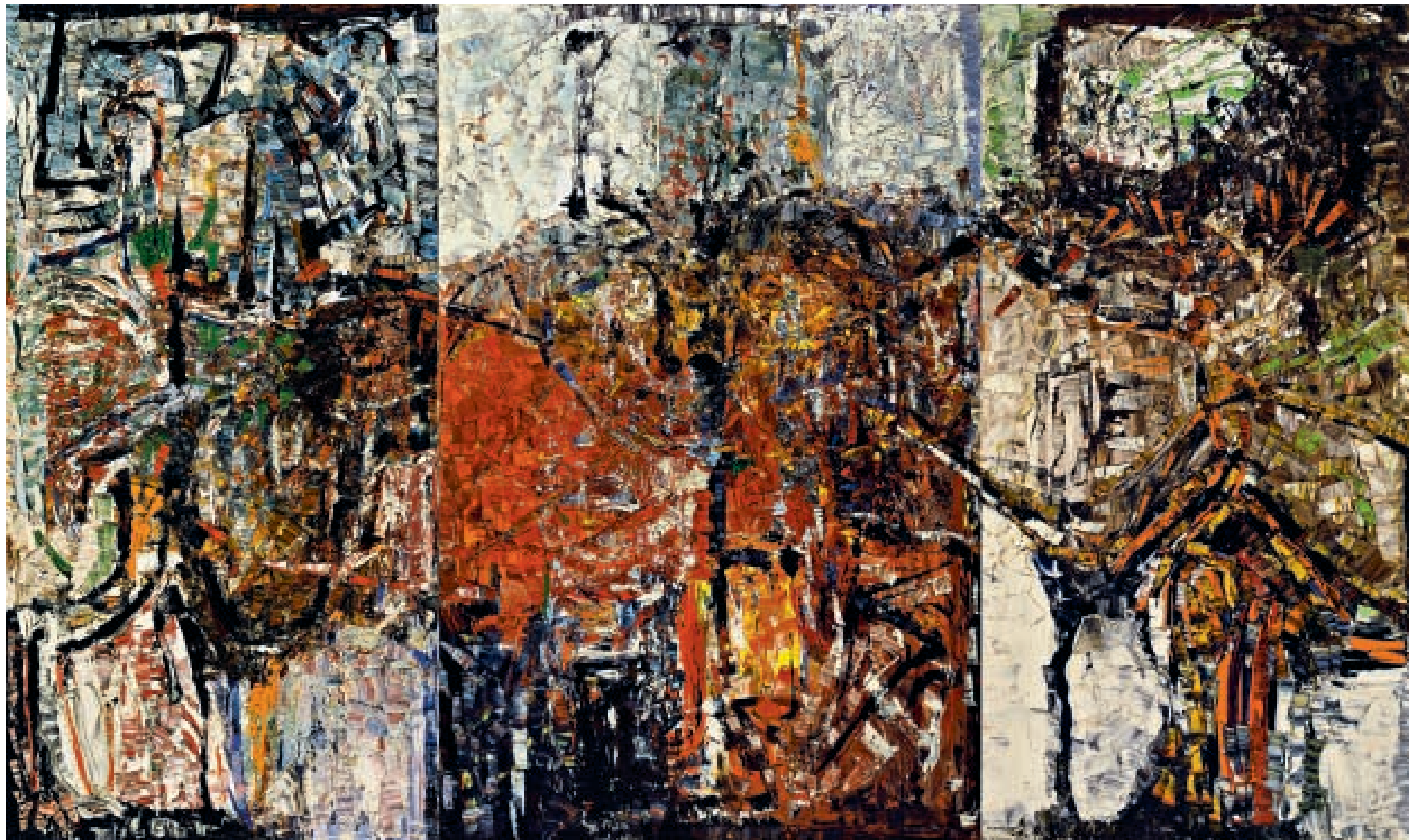
L'Arbre, 1962
200 x 133 cm (78½ x 52½ inches)

Toto, 1962
200 x 133 cm (78½ x 52½ inches)

La Dame de Carreau, 1962
200 x 133 cm (78½ x 52½ inches)



5
Les Picandeaux, 1967
Oil on canvas in three panels
195 x 374 cm (77 x 147 inches)



⁶
Festin, 1968
Oil on canvas in three panels
275 x 460 cm (108½ x 181 inches)

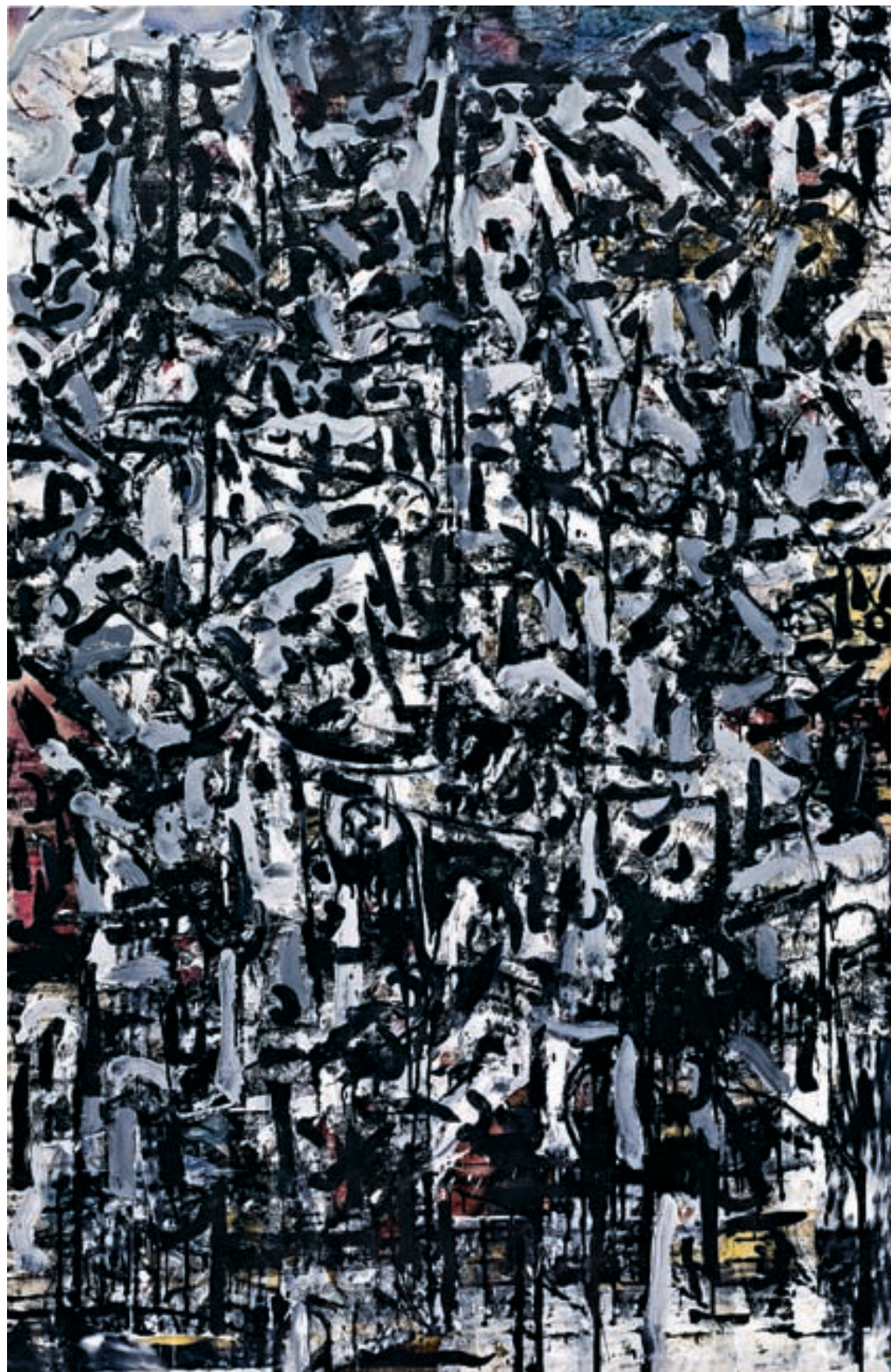


7
**Le Lac du
Nord-Est, 1975**
Oil on canvas
200 x 300 cm
(78½ x 118 inches)

8

Grey and Black Streaks, 1964
Mixed media on paper laid down on canvas
137 x 226 cm (54 x 89 inches)

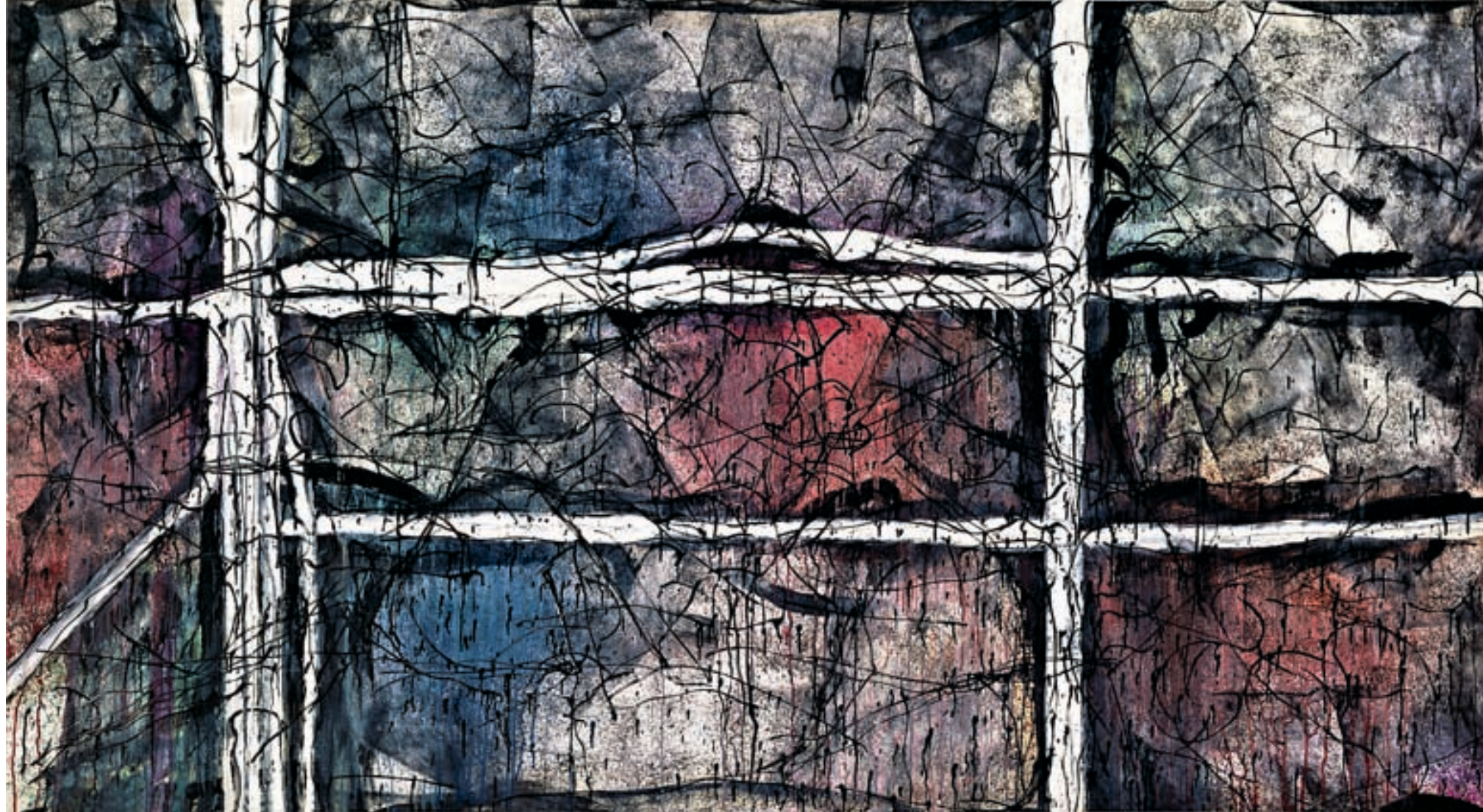




9

Untitled, 1964

Mixed media on paper laid down on canvas
210 x 137 cm (82½ x 54 inches)



10
Dark Background with White Squares, 1964
Mixed media on paper laid down on canvas
131 x 235 cm (51½ x 92½ inches)

11

**Dark Background, White Squares
with Black, 1964**

Mixed media on paper laid down on canvas
140 x 235 cm (55 x 92½ inches)





Riopelle, Patricia
and Pierre Matisse, 1960s

Chronology

1923

Riopelle is born in Montreal in October 1923 to Léopold and Anna Riopelle, first cousins.

"When people asked my father what he did for a living, he replied 'Bourgeois'... because he was his own boss. He'd been a groom when he was young. After that he studied architecture at the Monument National. He built houses. He loved drawing."

1931

The first artistic activity Riopelle can recollect dates from around 1931. **"In order to draw outdoors, I built myself a sort of tent-studio in the backyard and rigged it up with an electric bulb. One day it started to pour rain. I touched the bulb and got the most terrific electric shock, the shock of art!"**

1933

From the age of ten, takes drawing and painting lessons with Henri Bisson, teacher at Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague, in Montreal, where he goes to school.

1941-1942

Studies at Montreal's École Polytechnique. He continues to draw in the evenings and on Sundays: **"anything, nature."** His first landscapes date from this period. He also takes correspondence courses in architecture for about two months and is particularly interested in perspective. A keen photographer, he takes pictures of the scenes he paints in addition to portraits and landscapes.

1940-1945

The war sparks an influx into North America of a number of European intellectuals, artists and musicians, who are credited with opening a breach in Quebec's cultural isolation. **"It wasn't as dramatic as all that. For example, we got to know the work of André Breton during this period, but the man himself, during his stay on the Gaspé and the Laurentians, saw virtually no one, he wrote *Arcane 17*. The influence of Père Couturier was more direct. He invited some starving modern painters (who were not always Catholic) from New York, who were only too happy to share their wisdom for a respectable fee. This is how we met Fernand Léger. Before that, French Canadians had been oriented towards the Ateliers d'Art Sacré run by Georges Desvallières and Maurice Denis. Compared to that, Père Couturier really opened things up."**

1942-1945

Takes a few courses at the École des Beaux-Arts, then enrolls in the École du Meuble. Meets the painter Paul-Émile Borduas, who is his teacher there. Sees Borduas frequently outside of school and, under his influence, creates his first abstract works. He works with a few friends from the École du Meuble in a shed in Montreal. This is the birth of the group that, two years later, would be labeled "automatist." He also visits painters. **"The most important influence on me was certainly Ozias Leduc. When I visited him, he was an old man. He lived in a hut, everyone thought he was crazy. He was a great painter. He could spend three, four years on a painting. When he painted a tree, he followed its progress meticulously through the seasons. In the spring, he put buds on the branches; in the autumn, he made the leaves fall; in winter, he put snow on it. Gradually, a thick crust would form—and then he would work on the painting again for twenty minutes and finish it, and it would be a masterpiece. I also very much admired James Wilson Morrice, who was a friend of Matisse."**

Riopelle with his daughters
Sylvie and Yseult in front of his first
Citroën, around 1954



1946

First group exhibition of the “automatist” circle, which includes work by Riopelle and Marcel Barbeau, Paul-Émile Borduas, Roger Fauteux, Fernand Leduc and Jean-Paul Mousseau.

Constrained by the conservatism that prevails in Montreal, he undertakes his first voyage of discovery to France in August 1946. **“I saw Rouen and, in the museum, Géricault. I spent two weeks in Paris, where I went to the Louvre and saw the exhibition at the Musée du Luxembourg of work that had been stolen by Goering. I decided to live in the Île-de-France, where the light is at its most beautiful.”** In the fall, he travels to New York, where he frequents William Hayter’s engraving studio. Despite all his travels, he produces more than a hundred pen-and-ink drawings and watercolors this year.

Marries Françoise Lespérance during a brief visit to Montreal and the two of them return to Paris immediately.

1947

Organizes an exhibition of the work of the “automatist” group at the Galerie du Luxembourg with the poet Gérard Jarlot, author of *Un Chat qui aboie*, and Fernand Leduc. This is where he meets Georges Mathieu who, soon afterwards, organizes a second show which includes the work of Wols, Hans Hartung and Camille Bryen.

Also meets Pierre Loeb, who is hoping to establish a new group. Among them, Maria Helena Vieira da Silva, Georges Mathieu, Zao Wou-Ki and Riopelle. **“Pierre had decided there should be a weekly meeting. I think there was only one. But that was enough for the photograph in which we all appear.”**

Meets writers associated with Surrealism, such as Pierre Mabille and Aimé Césaire, and a few painters, such as Jacques Hérold and Francis Picabia.

Becomes friends with Georges Duthuit, whom Breton considers one of the most important minds of the day. Son-in-law and defender of Matisse, expert in Byzantine art, writer, aesthetician and poet, Duthuit was also extremely interested in contemporary art. He was among the first, if not the first, to recognize and champion the work of artists such as Nicolas de Staël,

Bram van Velde, Sam Francis and Riopelle. **“He was the most youthful man I’ve ever met. Labels meant nothing to him. What attracted him was the personality of a work, of a man. He was outside the system. He became passionately enthusiastic, or he remained unmoved. It was as simple as that.”**

Meets Samuel Beckett at Duthuit’s house. **“I remember him as being very keen on Brouwer’s work.”**

Meets Nina Dausset, who runs the Galerie La Dragonne, meeting place of the Surrealists. **“There was a little bar across the street, with a billiard table. The Surrealists would go there to let loose a little. Everyone went to Saint-Germain-des-Prés in those days, nobody went to Montparnasse, it was too 1930s.”**

1948

Following the birth of his eldest daughter, Yseult, Riopelle spends 1948 in Montreal and St. Hilaire. A turbulent year, marked by the publication of the controversial manifesto *Refus global (Total Refusal)* in August and its subsequent public defense. In December Riopelle and his family set sail for Paris once again, this time for good.

Beginning in 1948 he participates in various Salons, particularly the Salon de Mai.

1949

Nina Dausset mounts Riopelle’s first solo exhibition at her gallery, the Galerie La Dragonne.

Meets Nicolas de Staël and becomes friends with Serge Charchoune.

“We were outsiders in Paris, as we would have been anywhere. But we were in contact with people who were also trying to get their work shown. Paris represented the possibility of surviving.”

Sylvie, Riopelle’s youngest daughter, is born.

1950

The young painter’s style develops enormously during this period. Riopelle experiments with highly varied techniques and media: painting with a brush, impasto layers of paint that evoke sculpture, lines of paints sprayed on the canvas and paint applied with a knife.

Exhibits at the Galerie Raymond Creuse in Paris.

1951

Participates in the exhibition “Vé-hémences confrontées” (the title was given by Georges Mathieu) presented by Michel Tapié at Nina Dausset’s Galerie La Dragonne, which includes work by Bryen, Hartung, Mathieu and Pollock.

Michel Tapié also organizes an exhibition of his work at the Studio Paul Facchetti.

1952

Begins to work in a studio on rue Durantin in Montmartre, which is loaned to him by Henri Fara. **“This was the first time I had my own studio.”**

The family travels widely in France. **“Travelling is a bit like dreaming. Perhaps you travel to find titles for work you’ve already painted. If you didn’t, you’d have to pester friends for titles.”**

Exhibition at the Galerie Henriette Niepce in Paris.

Organizes the first exhibition of Sam Francis at La Dragonne and establishes a long-lasting friendship with him.

Signs the text “Rupture inaugurale” out of solidarity with Breton’s group, which seals the break between the Surrealists and the Communist Party.

1953

Joins the Galerie Pierre Loeb in Paris. His success in Paris extends to New York when his work is included in the exhibition “Younger European Painters” at The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. His work in the show is remarked upon by the critics.

Buys his first vintage cars, which will become a passion. Riopelle and his friends Alex Costa, Daniel Andrisse and Paolo Valors will eventually build a race car and enter it in the 24-hour race at Le Mans around 1960.

1954

From 1954, Riopelle exhibits regularly in the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York. He represents Canada in the Venice Biennale, together with Paul-Émile Borduas and B.C. Binning. His friend Alberto Giacometti also takes part.

1955

Participates in the São Paulo Biennial, travels to the Unites States, and becomes friends with Franz Kline, whose work he admires. Meets Jackson Pollock briefly, on two occasions. He had first encountered Pollock’s work in 1949, in the pages of Life magazine. **“I don’t see any similarity in our work. What mattered to me around 1945–49 was Miró’s still lifes,**

and some of Matta's work from 1940–45. Gorky too, but less so."

Meets Joan Mitchell, a young American painter who will later become his companion.

1956

Solo exhibitions at the Gimpel Fils Gallery in London and the Galerie Jacques Dubourg in Paris.

"It was through [Charles Gimpel] that I discovered the work of the Welsh painter Peter Lanyon. Jacques Dubourg, who became my dealer after the death of Nicolas de Staël – he only wanted to represent one painter at a time – really loved painting. His personal collection was the best I'd ever seen an art-lover put together. And it wasn't built with money, either."

1958

Returns to modeling sculpture.

"In fact I've always made sculpture. But because I didn't have the money to cast them in bronze, they were lost or broken. The sculptor I most admired at the time was David Hare, who worked in Paris and Vitullo. I also liked Étienne Martin, his fabric sculptures and interiors."

Meets Delahaye, "a great sculptor," and, with the sculptor Roseline Granet, takes over his foundry. "Being a metal-caster is one of the most beautiful jobs in the world. I used to want to be a mechanic, and before that a hockey player. Later metal-casting, in my eyes, became the best all-round trade."

1960–1961

Solo exhibitions in Paris at the Galerie Kléber and the Galeries Jacques Dubourg in 1960.

Spends more than one year in East Hampton in the United States. Rents a studio, where he works on several projects, including sculptures of chess pieces. Most of his oil paintings from East Hampton will not survive because of the poor quality of the paint he uses.

Explores an increasingly wide range of techniques and materials. "Because I found people who worked with them."

1962

Sam Szafran, a painter and pastellist Riopelle met a few years earlier, chisels the bronzes that are exhibited for the first time in Paris, at the Galerie Jacques Dubourg. Szafran will introduce him to pastels and will be involved in his collage work of 1967.

Exhibits his sculptures in Paris for the first time, at the Galerie Jacques Dubourg.

From the end of the 1950s, references to nature in his work become more explicit. "Since there is no longer any common symbolic language, another relationship is needed. For me, this relationship is my contact with nature. Now, contact with nature means documenting nature. There are a thousand ways to create a work of art, but for me the simplest is drawing, and learning about stones if I want to draw stones, or about heads if I want to draw heads, etc."

Represents Canada again, this time alone, at the Venice Biennale, where he is awarded one of three Unesco Prizes.

1963

The National Gallery of Canada organizes a retrospective of his work, which travels to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and the Art Gallery of Toronto (now the Art Gallery of Ontario). Riopelle has arrived. The Toronto International Airport commissions a painting, *Point de rencontre (Meeting Point)*. At 4.3 x 5.5 meters (14 x 18 feet), it is the largest painting he will ever make.

1964–1965

Moves between sculpture and painting. In 1965 Jean Fournier, who mounted an exhibition of Riopelle's large-format paintings, wrote: "The sculptures broke out of the frame and, whether we like

it or not, old paintings and new became fused with the sculpture. They were now simply Riopelles. Before, there had been paintings on one side and sculpture on the other. From now on the two would be indissociable."

The beginning of the return to representation. Makes sketches of the Pyrenees, seen from his hotel room in Superbagnères. Does a series of studies for the tapestry project *Les oiseaux (The Birds)*, which is produced at the Manufacture nationale des Gobelins and finished in 1968.

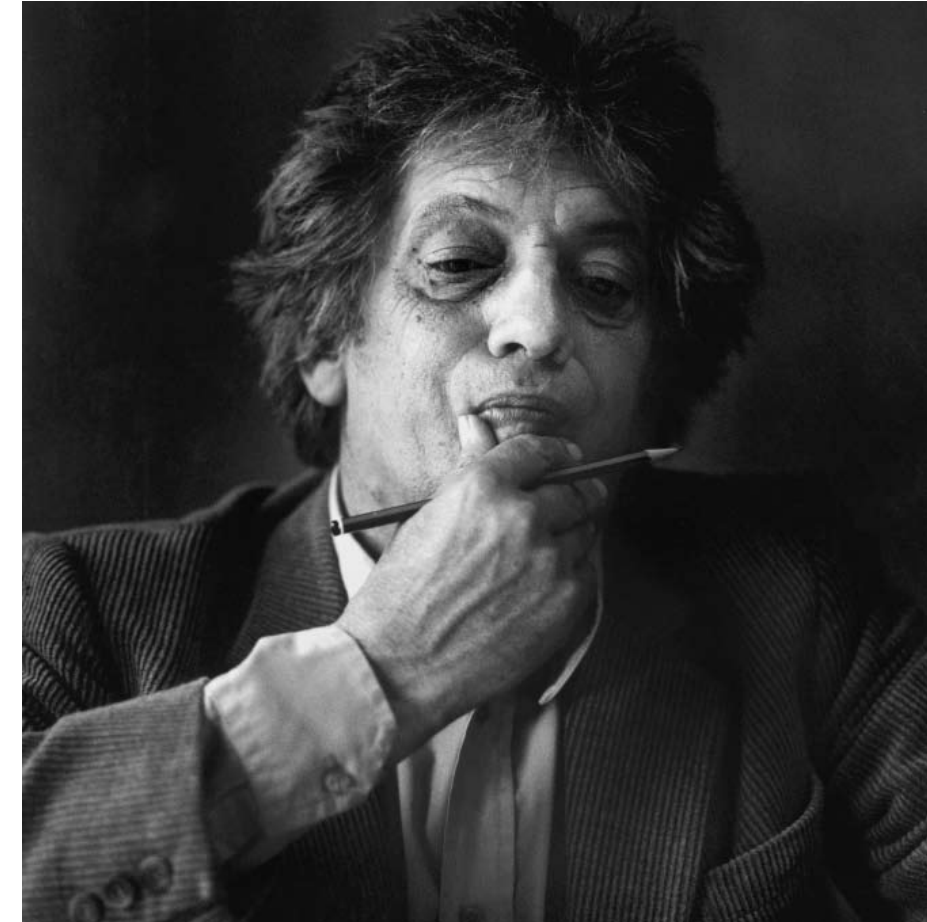
1966

Beginning in 1966, Riopelle exhibits regularly at the Galerie Maeght in Paris. He discovers engraving. "I met Aimé Maeght in the port of Golfe Juan, where he kept a boat called the Aimé II. Thanks to his Foundation and his workshops, I was able to try out techniques that I had no taste for before (engraving, lithography and, later, ceramics and enameled lava)."

1967

Large outputs of collages, made with lithographic essays.

Major Riopelle retrospective at the Musée du Québec in Quebec City (now the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec), whose director at the time was Guy Viau: the first major exhibition of his work in Quebec.



1968

Is among the "Dix-Neuf Artistes Canadiens" whose work is exhibited at the Galeries Nationales du Grand-Palais in Paris.

Begins modeling sculptures, many of which have an animal motif and some of which will be used as elements of the *La joute (The Game)* fountain.

1970

A plaster cast of *La joute* is exhibited at the Fondation Maeght. This piece contains various elements which synthesize a large number of past and future themes, such as animal motifs, string games and masks. Some techniques, such as printing with a positive-negative effect, foreshadow the mixed-media work of coming years.

Riopelle's stays in Canada, motivated by hunting and fishing expeditions, become longer and more frequent.

1972

Solo exhibition at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, which includes a scale model of *La joute*, two large collages and the *Suites* (lithographs).

At the same time, the Canadian Cultural Center in Paris exhibits a number of works from the *Ficelles* series of acrylic paintings based on Inuit string games.

1973

A trip to the Arctic inspires him to create a series of oils on canvas and works on paper entitled *The Kings of Thule*.

1974

Bronze casting of the fountain-sculpture *La joute* in Italy. Builds a studio in St. Marguerite in Quebec. From now on he will divide his time between St. Marguerite and his other studio in Saint-Cyr-en-Arthies in France.

1976

La joute is installed at Montreal's Olympic Stadium.

Spends time on the Île-aux-Oies. Among other work that results is a series of realistic drawings whose theme is the environment and goose hunting. Gold leaf makes its first appearance in his work.

In Quebec, he produces works on paper with a sanguine crayon and charcoal. At Saint-Cyr-en-Arthies, he produces a large number of charcoal drawings on paper.

1977

At St. Marguerite, executes black-and-white works in the *Icebergs* series, which he will continue at Saint-Cyr-en-Arthies.

1978

After injuring his knee, he produces the *Nouvelles Impressions* series, made up for the most part of very small-format work.

1979

Begins working with Hans Spinner in the studios of Fondation Maeght on the 61 elements that will make up the great ceramic wall (porcelain, earthenware and rope), which is completed in 1981. Like the fountain-sculpture *La joute*, this ensemble of work is a synthesis of past and future in Riopelle's work.

1980

He creates a foundation bearing his name which will host independent artists from around the world.

"The idea is to bring over the best technicians and craftspeople from Europe to work with people here and produce art... There will be workshops, it will be a place to work. I plan to bring over an entire tradition that's dying out and to save it before it's too late. I want to bring over the European masters in these trades (decorative building work and ceramics), the best craftspeople, and put them together with artists here in order to create a new tradition. The idea of the foundation is to get people to work together."

Exhibition at the Musée d'Art et d'Industrie de Saint-Étienne.

1981–1983

The use of printing essays as the base of a work or in collages, a procedure that dates back to 1967, becomes virtually systematic.

A retrospective of Riopelle's paintings from 1946 to 1977 is held at the Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, and then travels to the Musée du Québec (now the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec), the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, the Museum of Modern Art in Mexico City and the Museum of Fine Arts in Caracas.

Produces a large number of works with the theme of wild geese, an interest that first appeared in his work in 1976 and which will continue until 1992.

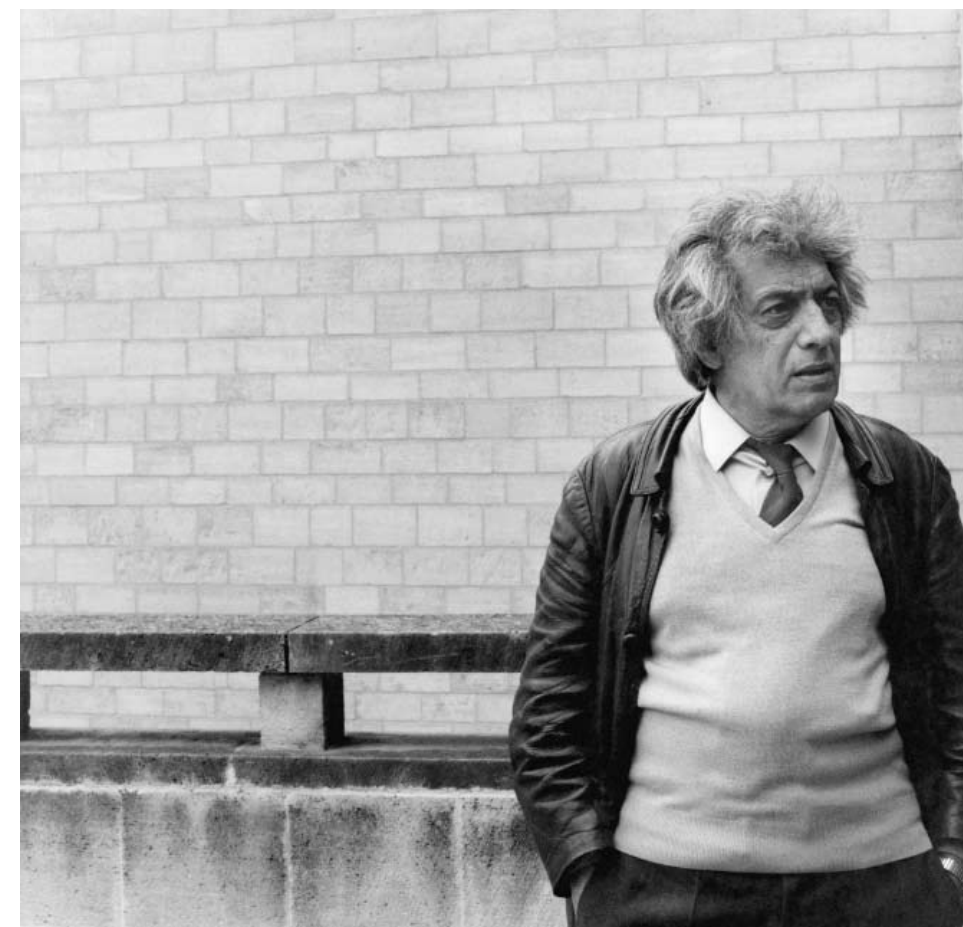
1984–1985

Riopelle, who has been experimenting for many years with ceramic techniques, creates with ceramist Hans Spinner at Opiot a series of works of enameled lava. These are exhibited at the Château-Musée de Vallauris.

An automobile accident leaves him with multiple fractures to his spine.

1987

Riopelle's daughter Yseult Riopelle begins work on a comprehensive catalogue of his work, which he describes as a **"folly."** The first of nine volumes is published in 1999.



Riopelle at the time of the 1984 exhibition at the Musée des beaux-arts de Caen

1988

Another back injury. He spends the year in the American Hospital in Neuilly and a rehabilitation center in Bazincour (France).

1989

Spurred on by Jean Fournier, who presents him with several canvases onto which he had silkscreened the lithograph *The Owls* (1970), Riopelle produces no fewer than 367 works before his definitive return to Canada at the end of the year.

To commemorate the bicentenary of the French Revolution, the Canadian government presents France with the painting, *Point de rencontre*, which is installed at the Opéra Bastille in Paris.

Louis Deledicq curates some of Riopelle's recent output in an exhibition entitled "Chemins de la création, Riopelle – Sam Szafran," held at the Château de Tanlay.

1990

A productive year, first at his studio in St. Marguerite in the spring, where he paints a gigantic mural that is initially entitled *Le Haut et le Bas Canada (Upper and Lower Canada)* and then renamed *Hommage à Scottie Wilson (Tribute to Scottie Wilson)*. Later in the year, he works in the town hall of the Île-aux-Oies.

Maeght exhibits "Riopelle. D'hier et d'aujourd'hui." The show includes, among other pieces, large-format works on paper dating from 1989 that have been mounted on canvas.

1991

In December 1991 the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, in collaboration with guest curator Jean-Louis Prat, mounts a major retrospective of Riopelle's work to mark the opening of its Jean-Noël Desmarais Pavilion.

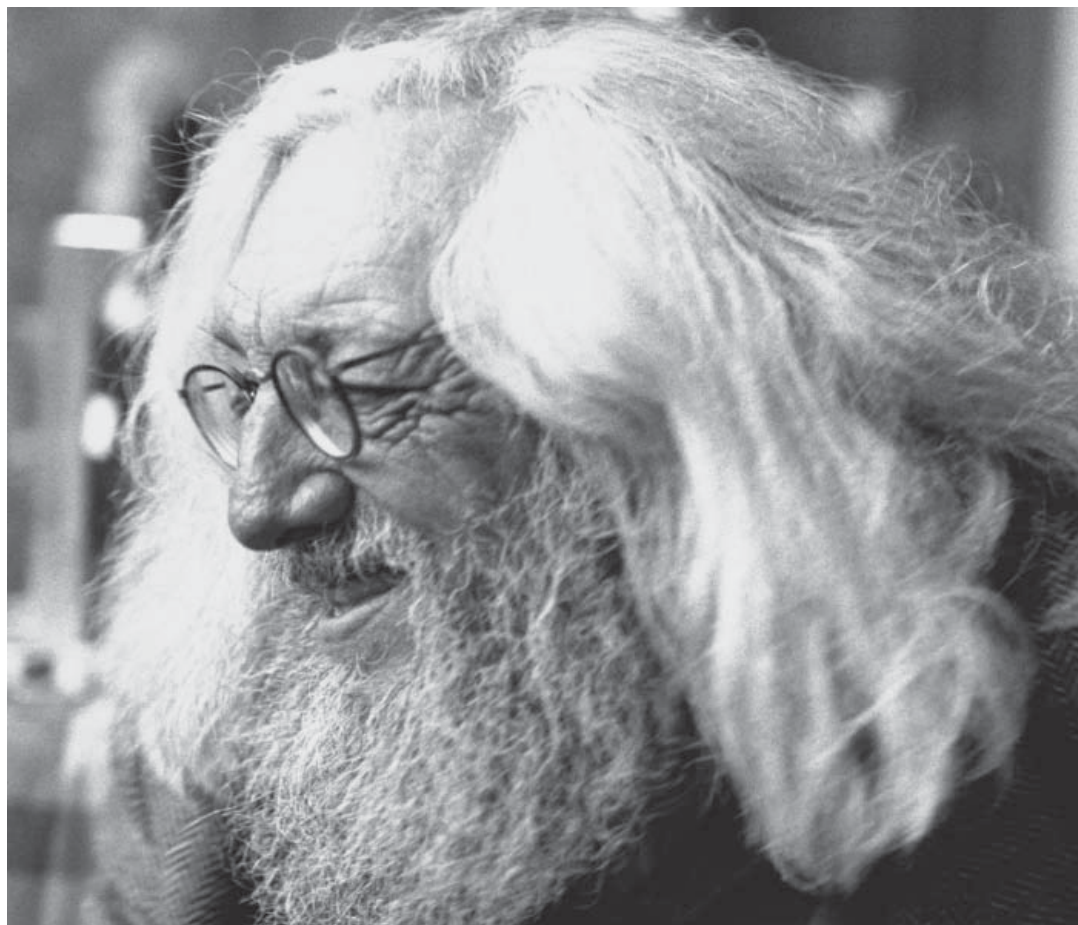
1992

In the fall, back on the Île-aux-Oies, Riopelle learns of the death of Joan Mitchell, his companion for more than twenty-five years. He creates an imposing fresco dedicated to her memory, *Tribute to Rosa Luxembourg*: **"There is no more Rosa Sorrow. Not even Rosa Happiness. All the Rosas are dead..."**

1993

During the summer, Riopelle begins work on a series of engravings with the assistance of Bonnie Baxter, an engraving technician. Maurice Perron, a co-signatory and publisher of *Refus global (Total Refusal)*, who is also a cabinetmaker, makes a wooden case to hold these engravings and some fishing flies created by Paul Marier, a fisherman and long-time friend of Riopelle's. The project, which drags on for several years, is never completed. Nevertheless, it is included in the catalogue for an exhibition at the Galerie Prince.

"I'm a bird without a cage. I can't do work to order, asking for a piece of such-and-such a size for a particular date and a particular place in a particular style. If people ask me to do Owls, then there are none, they've all left! When a job is required of you, then it's as if it's all over. But that doesn't mean the Owls might not come back some day, because they're tenacious, those Owls!"



Riopelle in St. Marguerite,
August 1993

1995–1996

The Fondation Riopelle is finally established, for a short time, in the outbuildings of the Château de la Roche-Guyon. *Rosa Luxembourg* is unveiled in France in 1995. In 1996, an exhibition is dedicated to Riopelle and his friends. It will be the last.

1994–2002

From 1994 on he divides his time between St. Marguerite and the Îles-aux-Grues, where he purchases the Manoir MacPherson, located on the tip of the island. **"It's like being on a ship. I can withstand long sieges, spend the winter there if necessary. An island is a ship without a sail."** This is where he will die, on March 12, 2002. He is accorded a state funeral.

CHRONOLOGY COURTESY
OF YSEULT RIOPELLE

Works in Exhibition

Quinze Chevaux Citroën

COLLECTIONS

Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York

Acquavella Modern Art

Private Collection

EXHIBITIONS

Basel, Bâle Kunsthalle, *Appel, Matta, Moreni, Riopelle*, 1959, number 88 (titled Composition B2).

THIS EXHIBITION ALSO SHOWN IN:

Neuchâtel, Musée des Beaux-Arts.

New York, Pierre Matisse Gallery, *Jean-Paul Riopelle, "Grands Formats," 1952–1975*, April 1977, number 1. Illustrated in color.

Paris, Musée d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, *Jean-Paul Riopelle Peinture 1946–1977*, number 20. Illustrated in color, page 39.

THIS EXHIBITION ALSO SHOWN IN:

Quebec, Musée du Québec, December 9, 1981–January 24, 1982;

Mexico, Musée d'Art Moderne, March 4–April 11, 1982;

Caracas, Musée des Beaux-Arts, May 10–June 20, 1982.

AND IN:

Montreal, Musée d'Art Contemporain, July 16–August 22, 1982.

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Forestine

COLLECTION

Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York (acquired directly from the Artist)

Acquavella Modern Art

EXHIBITIONS

Quebec, Musée du Québec, *Riopelle 67*, page 36.

New York, Pierre Matisse Gallery, *Jean-Paul Riopelle, "Grands Formats," 1952–1975*, 1977, number 5.

Paris, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, *Jean-Paul Riopelle, Peinture 1946–1977*, September 30–November 16, 1981, number 28. Illustrated in color, page 58.

THIS EXHIBITION ALSO SHOWN IN:

Quebec, Musée du Québec, December 9, 1981–January 24, 1982;

Montreal, Musée d'Art Contemporain, July 16–August 22, 1982.

AND IN:

Caracas, Musée des Beaux-Arts, number 22.

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Guy Robert, *Riopelle, Chasseur d'Images*, Editions France-Amérique, 1981, page 212.

Riopelle, des Visions d'Amérique, Les Editions de l'Homme, 1997, page 91.

Yseult Riopelle, *Jean Paul Riopelle Catalogue Raisonné*, Volume 2, Hibou Editeurs, Montreal, 2004, number 1954.009H.1954. Illustrated in color, page 161.

La Sombreuse

COLLECTION

Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York (acquired directly from the Artist)

Acquavella Modern Art

EXHIBITIONS

New York, Pierre Matisse Gallery, *Spring Exhibition, Painting and Sculpture*, 1955, number 6.

New York, Pierre Matisse Gallery, *Jean Paul Riopelle, “Grands Formats,” 1952–1975*, 1977, number 7.

Paris, Centre Pompidou, *Jean Paul Riopelle, Peinture 1946–1977*, September 30–November 16, 1981, number 29, page 55.

THIS EXHIBITION ALSO SHOWN IN:

Montreal, Musée du Québec and Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal, December 9, 1981–January 31, 1982.

AND IN:

Caracas, Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1982, number 23.

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Yseult Riopelle, *Jean Paul Riopelle Catalogue Raisonné*, Volume 2, 1954–1959, Hibou Editeurs, Montreal 2004,number 1954.024H.1954. Illustrated in color, page 167.

L’Arbre, Toto, La Dame de Carreau

COLLECTION

Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York (acquired directly from the Artist)

Acquavella Modern Art

EXHIBITIONS

New York, Pierre Matisse Gallery, *Riopelle: Paintings, Sculpture*, April 23–May 18, 1963, numbers 16, 17, 18. Illustrated.

Boston, Institute of Contemporary Art, *Painting without a Brush*, March 20–April 25, 1965

Vancouver, Vancouver Art Gallery, *Jean Paul Riopelle: 15 Paintings*, October 5–31, 1965.

Ottawa, Galerie Nationale du Canada, *Canada Art d’Aujourd’hui*, numbers 51, 52, 53.

Quebec, Musée du Québec, *Riopelle 67*, 1967, number 15, page 26.

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Les Picandeaux

COLLECTION

Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York (acquired directly from the Artist)

Acquavella Modern Art

Festin

COLLECTION

Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York (acquired directly from the Artist)

Acquavella Modern Art

EXHIBITIONS

New York, Pierre Matisse Gallery, *Riopelle Paintings, Pastels, Assemblages*, October–November, 1969. Illustrated in color, pages 16–17.

Paris, Didier Imbert Fine Art, *Jean-Paul Riopelle*, May 18–July 13, 1994, number 48. Illustrated in color.

Le Lac du Nord-Est

COLLECTION

Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York (acquired directly from the Artist)

Acquavella Modern Art

EXHIBITION

New York, Pierre Matisse Gallery, *Jean-Paul Riopelle, “Grands Formats,” 1952–1975*, April 1977, number 11. Illustrated.

Grey and Black Streaks

COLLECTION

Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York (acquired directly from the Artist)

Acquavella Modern Art

EXHIBITIONS

New York, Pierre Matisse Gallery, *Riopelle: Sculpture, Paintings and Aquarelles*, November 30–December 24, 1965, number 9. Illustrated, page 32.

Paris, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, *Jean-Paul Riopelle: Peinture 1946–1977*, September 30–November 16, 1981, number 41. Illustrated, page 62.

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Caracas, Musée des Beaux-Arts, number 31.

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Untitled

COLLECTION

Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York (acquired directly from the Artist)

Acquavella Modern Art

Dark Background with White Squares

COLLECTION

Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York (acquired directly from the Artist)

Acquavella Modern Art

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Montreal, Galerie Simon Blais, *Jean-Paul Riopelle—Papiers Géants, Oeuvres papier de grand format*, 2007.

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Dark Background, White Squares with Black

COLLECTION

Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York (acquired directly from the Artist)

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